

# Victorian Bridge Association Bulletin

December 2011

Editor: Bill Jacobs

## ANOTHER YEAR ON

A very merry Christmas and Happy New Year to you all. This is the time for resolutions, so can I offer this oldie but goodie?

*"Be nicer to your partner at the table".*

This is the true test of class: anyone who can remain polite and respectful to partner after a bad result that might be of partner's doing is a classy bridge player in my view. See page 4 for an example.

On the subject of new year's resolutions, here's one that the Australian Bridge Federation could consider:

*"We will review the Playoff Points assigned to various national events."*

Some of the allocations have become seriously out of kilter over the years. Consider the following tournaments:

Event	Entries 2011	Team X seeding	Playoff Points for winners
Gold Coast Congress	240	67	36
Victor Champion Cup (Melbourne)	70	28	36
Autumn Nationals (Adelaide)	60	23	36
Spring Nationals (Sydney)	42	18	48

Those entry totals are not one-offs: it's been like that for years. The column for team X's seeding is the seeding of a team that has entered all four events with essentially the same players: it gives an indication of the depth and quality of the fields.

It's clear that the Spring Nationals has too many Playoff points allocated to it, compared with the other events, and the Gold Coast Congress has too few. The Spring Nationals attracts fewer teams, with considerably less depth in its field.

The allocations should be adjusted.

## 5 LEAD PROBLEMS

On each of these problems, dealer is on your right, everyone is vulnerable, you are playingimps, and your hand is:

♠ 964 ♥ A87 ♦ Q54 ♣ Q1042

- |    |                  |          |          |          |
|----|------------------|----------|----------|----------|
| 1. | LHO              | Partner  | RHO      | You      |
|    |                  |          | 1♠       | Pass     |
|    | 2♠               | Pass     | 4♠       | All pass |
| 2. | LHO              | Partner  | RHO      | You      |
|    |                  |          | 1♠       | Pass     |
|    | 1NT              | Pass     | 2♥       | Pass     |
|    | 2♠               | All pass |          |          |
| 3. | LHO              | Partner  | RHO      | You      |
|    |                  |          | 2NT      | Pass     |
|    | 3♣*              | Pass     | 3♠       | Pass     |
|    | 4♠               | All pass |          |          |
|    | * simple Stayman |          |          |          |
| 4. | LHO              | Partner  | RHO      | You      |
|    |                  |          | 3♠       | Pass     |
|    | 4♠               | All pass |          |          |
| 5. | LHO              | Partner  | RHO      | You      |
|    |                  |          | 3♠       | Pass     |
|    | 4♠               | D'ble*   | All pass |          |
|    | * takeout        |          |          |          |

Sorry about the dull hand and the dull auctions, but that's bridge at the coal-face. At least your side made a bid on one of the hands.

♠ ♥ ♦ ♣

Congratulations to Laura Ginnan and Justin Howard, who comfortably won the Grand National Open Pairs played last weekend in Tweed Heads. Victorian youth bridge rulz! (sorry, rules)

Perennials Bob Gallus and Steven Weisz were equal second in the event.

**PET PEEVES**  
**Bill Jacobs**

We finish the year with my biggest peeve of all:

**The doubting trump lead**

“When in doubt, lead trumps” is an aphorism that this newsletter discussed and denounced last year. An expert panel universally loathed it, and for good reason.

It’s not easy to prove why trump leads are too frequently chosen, but let me try. I took a couple of major events, the Victor Champion Cup and ANC, and went through all the deals played at my table – about 300 of them. For each suit contract, I checked what declarer did after gaining the lead<sup>1</sup>. On **70%** of deals, declarer’s first action was to play a round of trumps.

This means that around 70% of the time, declarer’s plan starts with drawing at least one round of trumps. If you routinely choose a trump as your opening lead, then 70% of the time, you are declarer’s friend ... playing his strategy for him.

The trick is to choose a trump lead on the 30% of hands where declarer does not want to start with trumps.

There are only two classes of hands that call for a trump lead:

1. Declarer needs to take ruffs before drawing trumps – or even never draw trumps, playing the hand as a cross-ruff.
2. All the side suits are clearly worse as leads.

Here’s my big tip. If the deal, as best you understand it from the auction and your hand, doesn’t obviously fit into one of these two categories, then *don’t lead a trump*. Even if none of the three side suits stands out as an obvious lead, take your best shot in one of them: this will work out better on average than a “when in doubt” trump lead.

<sup>1</sup> Where the defence led trumps, I made a value judgment on whether declarer would have played a round of trumps had a non-trump been led.

Let’s look at recognizing the situations where a trump lead might be indicated.

Reason 1, reducing declarer’s ruffs, has a couple of sub-types:

*1a. Declarer has shown two suits. Dummy has given unenthusiastic preference for one of them.* In this scenario, declarer probably wants to ruff the side suit with dummy’s trumps, and a trump lead might limit this.

Note that it has to be unenthusiastic support. Consider this auction:

LHO	Partner	RHO	You
		1♠	Pass
1NT	Pass	2♥	Pass
4♥	All pass		

Declarer may well want to ruff spades with dummy’s trumps. But is a trump lead going to stop that? Unlikely – dummy has at least 4 trumps. On this auction, you are more likely to want to grab tricks in a minor.

But on this auction:

LHO	Partner	RHO	You
		2♠*	All pass

\* spades and a minor

there is an inference that LHO has shown unenthusiastic support for spades over a minor. Depending on your hand, you might well want to lead a trump to prevent declarer from ruffing his minor side-suit with dummy’s spades.

*1b. Declarer is outgunned in high cards.* In this scenario, declarer is only going to take a lot of tricks by ruffing or cross-ruffing.

1b applies frequently to sacrifices. The opponents sacrifice against your game – you lead a trump to limit declarer’s ruffs. But it can also be detected in other auctions, for example:

LHO	Partner	RHO	You
		1NT	Pass
2♣	Pass	2♠	All pass

What’s going on here? The opponents are in a 4-4 or maybe 4-3 fit. Because they have stopped low, you have plenty of high-cards. A trump lead may well be best for you.

The second class of trump lead is where every other lead seems worse. So a trump becomes a passive lead. This scenario occurs typically when declarer has shown a strong balanced hand, and your side suits all have a bunch of disconnected honours. Leading from one of them is all too likely to be giving a free finesse to declarer, whereas a trump lead (depending on your holding there) might be relatively safe.

OK, we are now armed to deal with those uninspiring lead problems presented on page 1. You might feel that many of them were blind guesses: well they are guesses of a sort, but some guesses are better than others. And if you make the "better" guesses, you will come out way ahead in the long term.

My process is to check whether the deal appears to fall into the two "trump lead" classes: if it does, lead a trump, if it doesn't, lead a side suit.

♠ 964 ♥ A87 ♦ Q54 ♣ Q1042

1.	LHO	Partner	RHO	You
			1♠	Pass
	2♠	Pass	4♠	All pass

A classic blind auction. Anything could be right, or wrong. But there's no compelling reason to lead a trump. This is the classic situation where most of the time, if you lead a trump, you will be doing declarer's work.

Meanwhile, all sorts of good things could happen if you lead a low club. If partner is good enough to furnish at least one of the missing high clubs, ace, king or jack, then your club lead will likely develop tricks before declarer can get active in a red suit.

Particularly playing imps, the club lead represents your best chance.

2.	LHO	Partner	RHO	You
			1♠	Pass
	1NT	Pass	2♥	Pass
	2♠	All pass		

Here is scenario 1a. Dummy might well have a doubleton heart and two or three spades. There is every chance that declarer wants to ruff hearts in dummy, and you have a real

opportunity to prevent that happening. The trump lead is a standout.

3.	LHO	Partner	RHO	You
			2NT	Pass
	3♣*	Pass	3♠	Pass
	4♠	All pass		

\* simple stayman

And here is scenario 2. Do you really want to lead from one of those side suits up to declarer's strong 2NT opening? Definitely not. A trump lead could conceivably pickle partner's trump holding, but it's much less likely than a side suit lead pickling that suit.

4.	LHO	Partner	RHO	You
			3♠	Pass
	4♠	All pass		

A trump lead can't be right. It's almost certainly declarer's plan to draw trumps and develop tricks wherever dummy is strong. And looking at your hand, that plan will likely work.

But if you can attack at dummy's weakness, you might just beat this contract. I like the ♥A lead. Hearts might be the suit you need to cash out, but if not, a look at dummy will help you decide which minor to switch to. A club lead is ok too. But not a trump, never a trump.

5.	LHO	Partner	RHO	You
			3♠	Pass
	4♠	D'ble*	All pass	

\* takeout

Here finally is scenario 1b. Partner has cards, you have cards: this is a sacrifice by your opponents. Their only source of extra tricks will be ruffs in dummy, and you can limit that source by leading one.

To finish up, here is one more lead to make:

♠ 96 ♥ 1074 ♦ 752 ♣ 109852

LHO	Partner	RHO	You
1♦	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♥	Pass	2♠	Pass
4♠	Pass	6♣	All pass

This deal was from the second set of the Pennant final played in November. Here is the layout:

Dealer: S	<i>Blaine Howe</i>	
Vul: All	♠ Q73	
	♥ KQ92	
	♦ AKQJ6	
	♣ 3	
<i>Ben Thompson</i>		<i>Bill Jacobs</i>
♠ 96		♠ A4
♥ 1074		♥ AJ53
♦ 752		♦ 109843
♣ 109852		♣ J4
	<i>Neil Ewart</i>	
	♠ KJ10852	
	♥ 86	
	♦ -	
	♣ AKQ76	

Against 6♠, the lead made was ♥4. Did you find it?

Sitting East, I was the guy who took two aces to beat this slam, but the heroes were the other three players, one way or another.

Ben Thompson listened carefully to the auction and found the winning lead. Not a trump (neither categories 1 or 2 remotely applies), nor a club as dummy's obvious shortage there makes it pointless. As between the red suits, declarer might just have more hearts than diamonds, because dummy will have more diamonds than hearts, and Ben has equal length in the red suits. So declarer is a little more likely to be void in diamonds than in hearts: declarer is going to have a void somewhere, because he eschewed Blackwood. Nice lead.

Neil Ewart's bidding was tactically sound. Down 28 imps after the first set, he was looking for a swing and this was a great candidate. Given there was no clear scientific way to investigate what might be a laydown slam, he put his opponents to a stern test. Nice bidding.

After the slam had gone down, Blaine Howe said not a word. Nor did he give off any negative body language. He calmly picked up his cards for the next deal.

Nice lack of reaction or comment.

### SETTING TRICK - PROBLEMS

#### Problem 1:

Dealer: E	♠ Q2		
Vul: All	♥ K10653		
	♦ Q85		
	♣ K32		
		♠ K83	
		♥ J9	
		♦ A42	
		♣ A10964	

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	1NT	D'ble
Pass	3♥	2♣	Pass
Pass	Pass	Pass	3NT

Partner leads ♠J, covered, and your ♠K wins. You continue ♠8, also winning, and continue ♠3 to declarer's ♠A (dummy a heart). Now comes ♦9 to ♦Q, which you win, and exit a diamond to declarer. (Partner shows odd diamonds.) South plays ♣Q, which you allow to hold, then ♣5 to ♣K, partner signalling even in clubs. Can you find a defence?

#### Problem 2:

Dealer: W	♠ AQ94
Vul: N/S	♥ 9
	♦ K86
	♣ J10642
♠ 765	
♥ AJ73	
♦ 107532	
♣ 7	

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	Pass	1♣
Pass	1♠	Pass	1NT*
Pass	2♦	Pass	2♥**
Pass	3NT	All pass	

\* 15-17

\*\* minimum range with four hearts

You lead a low diamond to partner's ♦J and South's ♦A. Now come ♣A, ♣K, ♣Q. What are your discards? On ♣K you can spare a low diamond, then when ♣Q brings declarer's tally to 8 you have to think about a likely ending.

Solutions on page 8.

## YARRAWONGA BRIDGE CLUB TURNS 30

The Yarrowonga Bridge Club celebrated 30 years of play in Yarrowonga with a dinner at the Yarrowonga and Border Golf Resort on the 17<sup>th</sup> October. Thirty-eight present and former members met to chat and remember the early days.

The original club began as an outcome of Yarrowonga Adult Education. Maggie Brown came from Wangaratta, taught eight sessions and assisted the group to become a club. For the first year the group was associated with Wangaratta – hence the name of their club, Ovens & Murray – but then became a separate entity the following year.

Twenty people turned up for those first lessons and came along to play the first night. Jan Hackett recalls getting “all dressed up” to attend that evening. Maggie came to show the new players how to score and then left the group to its own devices. The scoring took quite a long time since each board had to be scored, then the result entered onto a sheet and all the scores for each pair were totalled. Needless to say, there were quite a few errors in this drawn out process.

Much has changed since those early days. Now there is electronic scoring and the computation of the results takes only seconds and the full results and scores for each board are sent to members via email.

There were other changes along the way. The club began playing at the primary school, moved to the Senior Citizens rooms and finally found a home at the golf club. The club sincerely thanks the golf club for its continued support over many years.

The golf club’s new function room was the setting for this year’s congress, the 21<sup>st</sup> run by the bridge club. This event has also had some different venues over the years from its first jump into deep water in 1990 with Jim Borin (a leading Australian player) and a busload of people from Melbourne. The congress has been held at the Mulwala and District Services Club, the Lake Resort, the community hall and the Mulwala Civic Centre.

However, as Jan noted on the night, bridge is only a game, and it’s the people who make it really interesting. There has been a

wonderful range of players over the years, beginning with the original members, two of whom are still remembered each year. The Dee Mathews Award is presented at the end of the year to a newer player as an encouragement prize since Dee was very keen to help those who were just beginning to learn the game. The Aline Cooper event at the congress commemorates a club member who opened her home every Tuesday to anyone who wanted to come to play bridge.

People from many different countries have joined in the club’s activities. Players from England, New Zealand, the Netherlands, Germany and the US have added to the club’s knowledge and enjoyment of the game. Of particular note is exchange student Richard Ritmeijer who came “to play a few games”. Club members later discovered he was the Dutch National Junior Champion. He was delightful even though he ran rings around the rest of the group.

Amazingly, five of the original members are still playing with the club. That is a 25% retention rate few other clubs could boast. Elizabeth Barnes, Marion Bott, Bob Jeffcott, Jan Hackett and Lesley Presley all began their bridge with the first group. Fittingly perhaps, Maggie Brown was unable to attend the birthday celebrations since she was, at age 80, teaching a bridge class in Wangaratta.



Original club members: Bob Jeffcott, Jan Hackett, Lesley Presley and Elizabeth Barnes

However, many past players were able to be there, and the current members were very pleased that they could attend. Special mention must go to Val Sanderson from Wangaratta and Rita Kahn who came all the way from Queensland for the night.

**PANACHE - XVI**  
**Ben Thompson**

To borrow (and translate) from Robbie Burns, the best laid plans of mice and men oft go awry. That doesn't mean we should stop! Put yourself in East's shoes from the recent Victorian Pennant Final. On a side note, congratulations to the first country team (from Geelong) qualified directly to the Pennant finals series under the new format. They won a couple of matches and certainly justified their place.

Dealer: E	♠ A83		
Vul: E/W	♥ Q74		
	♦ K843		
	♣ K103		
♠ KQ96		♠ 10542	
♥ 109832		♥ A	
♦ Q6		♦ J97	
♣ 97		♣ AJ642	
	♠ J7		
	♥ KJ65		
	♦ A1052		
	♣ Q85		

West	North	East	South
Pass	3NT	Pass	1NT*
Pass	3NT	All pass	

\* 11-14, could have a five-card suit

David Morgan led ♥10 against 3NT and Brad Wein was obliged to win his ace. What now?

Double dummy, the killing spade switch is obvious, and the VuGraph commentators assumed Brad would find it. At the table, you don't have the privilege of looking at South's hand. You just know it's 11-14 balanced (maybe with a 5 card major).

Before you play (or commentate), ask yourself what partner needs to have to beat the contract. Clearly he has 4-7 points, enough for a few useful honours. Where do we want them to give us the best chance of building three more defensive tricks (after our two bullets)?

If partner's diamonds are good enough for three defensive tricks (eg AQxx or A10xx), he might well have led them. Remember that he doesn't **need** to have 5 hearts.

If we're scoring spade tricks, partner has to have something strong like KQxx or KJxx or perhaps QJxx/Q9xx. Very few 3 card holdings with West give us a chance (eg KQ9), and even then declarer might knock out our ♣A before we can get the 4<sup>th</sup> spade.

Again, pard might have 4 hearts only. If he's 4-4, why did he choose to lead hearts over spades? Because his hearts are better of course, so partner's very lead suggests that his spades are less likely than the raw odds to be as good as we need them to be.

OK, how about clubs? It's hard to lead away from AJ into K10, but let's focus on what partner would need to make it work. Easy really, ♣Qx(x) plus any card that stops declarer running 9 tricks. That feels the most likely of our choices, and has the merit of being a simple beat.

So Brad courageously shifted to a club. When David got in with his ♦Q at the next trick, he continued a club (Brad would shift to a low club from AQ too) and that was 9 tricks.

That didn't look so hot, but I have a lot of sympathy. Brad and David were in the Pennant Final for a reason, and part of it is their willingness to make the difficult but percentage play. It didn't work this time, but it will in the long run.

Expert aside: 3NT could have been on as few as 23 combined points. You have to be very careful about giving away the game-going trick defending a tight game. There's a delicate trade-off between setting up your tricks and forcing declarer to make his own running. My general advice is to prefer passive **opening** leads against tight-sounding contracts but be willing to attack later in the play when you have more information. At trick 2, anything Brad played could have been conceding a trick.

**The takeaway**

Don't be afraid to concede a trick if that gives you a simple path to beating a contract. Don't be afraid to look silly playing for a working layout.



**SYSTEM MUSINGS**  
**Bill Jacobs**

Last month I asked you what you would bid as dealer (all vulnerable) with:

♠ J754 ♥ KQ8654 ♦ J4 ♣ 8

This hand is certainly a candidate for a weak-two 2♥ opening (or 2♦ if you play the multi). But should you pass it instead? I can think of three possible reasons for passing:

- 1) you don't like to open 2♥ with a side four-card spade suit
- 2) the heart suit is not very robust: a 2♥ opening risks a large vulnerable penalty
- 3) you don't play weak twos

To start, let's consider reason 3). In the Fantunes system that Ben Thompson and I play, there are no weak twos. Instead our 2-level openings show minimum opening values, about 10-13 points. Here again is our table of results:

Fantunes opening	# deals	Averageimps per deal for Fantunes
1♣	300	-0.9
1♦	123	+1.4
1♥/♠	282	+0.3
1NT	398	+0.7
<b>2♣♦♥♠</b>	<b>313</b>	<b>+2.5</b>
<b>Pass</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>-5.3</b>

Look at the last two lines. Where we Pass, compared to opening the bidding with a weak-two playing Standard, we lose heavily ... over 5imps per board.

Since we tend to win imps when we open one of our 10-13 point 2-level bids, this is a case of swings and roundabouts. Nevertheless, it quite startled me to discover how badly we did when we held a weak-two in a major and were forced to pass the hand.

Weak two openings are a winning method. In fact any bid that pre-empts the opponents will tend to win more imps than it loses. So if you play weak twos, but decided to pass that hand for either reason 1) or 2), then I disagree with your judgment.

The side spade suit is not a big problem. To start with, it's not a very good spade suit: just how likely is it that your side belongs in spades rather than hearts, and you are unable to find the spade fit after a 2♥ opening? Not very likely!

As for the danger of a penalty arising from a 2♥ opening, of course the risk is there. But so is the upside of pre-emption.

It's usually best to have an optimistic outlook when bidding: the glass is half-full, not half-empty. By "optimistic", I don't mean over-bidding, or bidding to overly optimistic contracts. I mean thinking "what could go right if I make this bid", rather than "what could go wrong".

If you pass the example hand because you might miss spades, or go for 800, then you are applying the glass-half-empty principle.

If you open it because it is a reasonably descriptive bid and could cause the opponents problems, then you are applying the glass-half-full principle.

*... to be continued*

♠ ♥ ♦ ♣

**RECENT RESULTS**

**Grand National Restricted Pairs Final**

- 1 L. Attwood – V. Zhang
- 2 J. Morton – M. Saunders
- 3 B. Hardy – G. Vermont

**Victorian Pennant**

- 1 W. Jacobs, B. Thompson, L. Gold, P. Hollands, S. Hinge
- 2 D. Morgan, B. Wein, B. Kingham, J. Rosen, B. Howe, N. Ewart
- 3 L. Ginnan, L. Henbest, M. Henbest, S. Henbest, R. Drew

**VBA Matchpoint Swiss Pairs**

- 1 R. Gallus – S. Weisz
- 2 A. Branicki – M. Gurfinkiel
- 3 A. Paul – J. Hare

**VBA Grand Prix Pairs**

- 1 R. Gallus – S. Weisz
- 2 D. Middleton – P. Knightley
- 3 R. Rozen – R. Ellery

## SETTING TRICK – SOLUTIONS

### Ian McCance

#### Problem 1

Dealer: E	♠ Q2	
Vul: All	♥ K10653	
	♦ Q85	
	♣ K32	
♠ J1094		♠ K83
♥ Q742		♥ J9
♦ 763		♦ A42
♣ 87		♣ A10964
	♠ A765	
	♥ A8	
	♦ KJ109	
	♣ QJ5	

What do we know?

Partner has four spades (as there was no escape into spades from 1NT doubled) and so declarer also has four. Declarer must have ♥A, but only one other from the failure to develop hearts. So partner started with four hearts, we hope including ♥Q. However if we win ♣A declarer is in "n-1" – the count is rectified, and the hand is ripe for a major-suit squeeze on partner. We must give up our immediate trick in clubs to gain two later, either in spades and hearts or clubs.

#### Problem 2

Dealer: W	♠ AQ94	
Vul: N/S	♥ 9	
	♦ K86	
	♣ J10642	
♠ 765		♠ KJ2
♥ AJ73		♥ Q542
♦ 107532		♦ QJ
♣ 7		♣ 9853
	♠ 1083	
	♥ K1086	
	♦ A94	
	♣ AKQ	

You should retain all three of your spades. If you let one go, after the third club declarer plays ♠3 to ♠Q and partner's ♠K. Then if partner continues ♦J to dummy's ♦K, two more clubs are cashed, on which you come down to ♥AJ and ♦107, to be thrown in with a diamond to concede a trick to ♥K. That small spade is a vital exit card.

## RECENT MASTER PROMOTIONS

Graduate Master	Dael Lewis
Club Master	Paul Hobson
*Local Master	Tony Housepeters
**Local Master	Michael Lasky Phillip Nankin Elaine Richardson
*Regional Master	Leslie Goldschlager
National Master	Patrick Zhang
*National Master	Ian Bram Herman Louie
**National Master	Jacqueline Morrison
Life Master	Sue Dennett
Gold Grand Master	Stan Klofa

♠ ♥ ♦ ♣

### Drug Testing and Bridge

Suppose you have qualified for the world championships of bridge, as a member of the Australian Seniors team. Getting on as you are, you take permanent medication of beta blockers for your high blood pressure.

Unfortunately, this makes you in breach of the World Bridge Federation's Anti-Doping laws, and should you fail a randomly activated urine test, you will be subject to disqualification. To prevent this, you can apply for a "Therapeutic Use Exemption". This involves proving that there is no alternative permitted medication for your condition. You will also need to provide the WBF with a comprehensive medical history, together with the results of all examinations, laboratory investigations and imaging studies relevant to your condition.

These draconian regulations, applying to bridge players who could be well into their seventies or eighties, is all about "proving" that bridge is an Olympic sport.

Is it just me, or is this plain insanity?

The VBA is looking for a new **Victorian Masterpoint Secretary** in 2012. If you have an interest in the role, contact Cathie Lachman on 9530 9006 to find out more.