

Victorian Bridge Association Bulletin

September 2018

Editor: Bill Jacobs

THE SOAPBOX Ben Thompson



A few weeks ago, Jenny and I had a game at one of our newest affiliated clubs – Bridge@Blake – at the invitation of their tireless organisers Louise Dyskin and Eric Gordon. We made a grave error in having dinner beforehand. They have the best supper I have ever seen or tasted or heard of at any bridge club anywhere. I nobly sacrificed myself by squeezing a bit in just so I could honestly report how good it is!

Bridge@Blake was founded about 10 years ago as a social game with the important purpose of raising funds for worthwhile causes. The night we were there, they gave a cheque for \$1,000 to Rotary to support drought-stricken farmers. In Bridge@Blake's decade of operation, their total charitable giving is nearly \$300,000. What a fine and remarkable effort.

Every time I play bridge at a different club, I'm always struck by how similar and yet how different all bridge clubs are. It's wonderful that any one of us can walk into any bridge club anywhere in the world and instantly be at home, just because we speak the common language of bridge. And yet each club, even each session within a club, has its own vibe. Look for a session with your vibe, and if you can't find it – make your own!

NEWS FROM THE COUNCIL

Special Councillor Nominations

The VBA has called for nominations for the position of Special Councillor. Each year four Special Councillors are elected to the VBA Council, each representing one of the four zones (two country and two metro).

The VBA Council has appointed Michael Bryan of Moonee Valley Bridge Club as returning officer to oversee the process and ensure fairness and transparency.

Candidates for election must be current financial members of one (or more) affiliated clubs within the zone they are seeking to represent and must be endorsed in writing by the President or Secretary of an affiliated bridge club within the zone they seek to represent.

The closing date for nominations is 4.30pm on Friday October 5th 2018.

Nomination forms and the letter calling for nominations which includes a list of clubs and their respective zones can be found on the VBA website at:

<http://vba.asn.au/documents/club-notice/>

Changes to the VBA Council

Richard Giles, Special Councillor for Country West Zone, has resigned from the VBA Council due to ill health. We wish Richard the best for the future. Penny Blankfield has also resigned from the council due to personal commitments. The VBA thanks both the outgoing councillors for their contributions during their time on the council.

The resignations of Richard and Penny have created casual vacancies on council which may be filled according to the rules set out in the Articles of Association which may be found here:

<http://vba.asn.au/documents/constitution/>.

FOR STARTERS

This month, your hand is:

♠ A9 ♥ 3 ♦ QJ1093 ♣ J8764

Partner is the dealer and opens 1♥. Next hand passes and it's your bid.

Here we meet one of the most important yet anti-intuitive bids in bridge: the dustbin 1NT.

The 1NT response to a one of a suit opening bid is notable for what it *denies* rather than what it *promises*. It denies:

- support for partner's opened suit
- a 4+ card suit that could be bid at the one-level
- the 10+ HCP needed to bid a new suit at the two-level

All 1NT promises is 6-9 HCP. It does not promise a balanced hand. It's the dustbin bid: the bid that remains when any other bid is eliminated.

The auction continues:

LHO	Partner	RHO	You
	1♥	Pass	1NT
Pass	2NT	Pass	?

2NT is an invitation for you to bid a game. How do you RSVP?

It's best not to overthink these positions. You have shown 6 to 9 HCP. Therefore:

6-7 HCP = minimum = pass

8-9 HCP = maximum = bid 3NT

If you happen to have a minimum with a long suit (6+ cards), you could consider bidding that suit at the 3-level, preferring that as the final contract, rather than 2NT. Otherwise, just run with the formula above.

You have 8 HCP, a maximum. Bid 3NT. Don't worry about the major suits. Don't consider playing in at the minors. As a famous football coach once said: "*don't think ... do!*"

You bid 3NT and LHO leads the ♠7.

♠7 led	♠ KJ10 ♥ AKQ62 ♦ K5 ♣ Q32 N S ♠ A9 ♥ 3 ♦ QJ1093 ♣ J8764
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Any thoughts?

Follow the notrump formula. It's as simple as 1, 2, 3, ...

1. count your top tricks
2. work out where the extra tricks you need can come from
3. consider any threats

1. You have three top hearts, and on this lead, you can guarantee three spade tricks. So, 6 tricks.

2. Extra tricks are available from diamonds. After they take their ace, you will have four winners there. 6+4=10.

3. On this deal, communications is the threat. How will you get to take those diamonds? You are short on entries to your hand.

There are two aspects to this. The first diamond trick must involve playing the ♦K from dummy (honour from the short hand). You will then be able to keep playing diamonds until the opponents win their ♦A. But if you play a low diamond from dummy to your ♦Q, and then another diamond to the ♦K, what will you do if the ♦A has not been played?

And you must preserve your precious ♠A: that's the entry to your winning diamonds.

Play the ♠K from dummy at trick 1, and follow with the ♦K.

The full deal:

♠ 873	♠ KJ10	♠ Q6542
♥ J9854	♥ AKQ62	♥ 107
♦ A62	♦ K5	♦ 874
♣ A5	♣ Q32	♣ K109

♠ A9	♠ A9
♥ 3	♥ 3
♦ QJ1093	♦ QJ1093
♣ J8764	♣ J8764

N	E
W	S

Observe the calamity that befalls you if you greedily play the ♠J or ♠10 at trick 1.

Points to remember:

- The dustbin 1NT response: the bid you make when all other bids are unavailable.
- Don't be frightened to bid 3NT if it appears the points are sufficient. Your default position should be: if there are enough points for game, and we don't have a major suit fit, then we play 3NT.
- When dummy is laid down, practise taking some time to assess the situation. On this deal, it would be so easy to play low from dummy "to guarantee three spade tricks". That would be a classic case of winning the battle but losing the war.

Tasmanian ANC

We cannot report a lot of Victorian joy from the recent ANC. The Open Team came in third, then narrowly lost their 'Preliminary Final' to NSW, who went on to win the final.

We'd like to report which representative pairs did well, but were stuck with a vastly inferior web reporting facility that didn't even show pair datums.

But there was one outstanding outcome: Doug Newlands and Arthur Robbins won the Senior ANC Butler event, a wonderful result. Those Geelong guys do it again!

TEST YOUR BIDDING

Minimal responses after an overcall

nil vulnerable

LHO	Partner	RHO	You
	1♦	1♠	?

When partner opens the bidding with one of a suit, you are morally obliged to give him a bid if you have at least 6 HCP.

But things change if RHO puts in an overcall. Now you don't have to bid with 6 HCP, morally or otherwise. RHO's bid means that partner has another chance at this auction, even if you pass. So if you have some disgusting 6 pointer, then by all means pass.

The converse is that if you *do* bid, then that shows a little something in excess of a bare 6 HCP.

In this auction, there's not a lot of room left at the one-level, but there are three bids you can still make with minimal values, should you choose to:

- D'ble: this is a negative double, which acts as a surrogate 1♥ response
- 1NT: the normal 6-9 HCP, but here you are guaranteeing a spade stopper
- 2♦: a 6-9 HCP raise of partner's suit – you'll need at least 4 diamonds, preferably 5, for this choice

Let's give you some 7-pointers. Decide what you do over the 1♠ overcall, with each of the following hands:

- (a) ♠ 8542 ♥ 932 ♦ 954 ♣ AQJ
- (b) ♠ AQJ ♥ 932 ♦ 954 ♣ 8654
- (c) ♠ 542 ♥ 9732 ♦ J54 ♣ KQJ
- (d) ♠ 542 ♥ AQJ32 ♦ 54 ♣ 1054
- (e) ♠ 542 ♥ 932 ♦ AQJ4 ♣ 1054
- (f) ♠ KJ542 ♥ 93 ♦ 54 ♣ QJ54

Solutions over page.

TEST YOUR BIDDING - SOLUTIONS

LHO	Partner	RHO	You
	1♦	1♠	?

(a) ♠ 8542 ♥ 932 ♦ 954 ♣ AQJ

Pass. Thank heavens for the pass. If RHO had passed, you would have had a perfectly legitimate 1♠ response. Now there is nothing. Indeed, give yourself 1 or 2 more points somewhere, and you might still pass.

(b) ♠ AQJ ♥ 932 ♦ 954 ♣ 8654

1NT. Conversely, this is a whale of a hand. Your ♠AQJ are presumably sitting over RHO's ♠K. So it's like you have ♠AKQ: three solid tricks in spades. If partner now rebids 2NT, I would be bidding 3NT.

(c) ♠ 542 ♥ 9732 ♦ J54 ♣ KQJ

Pass. You were going to respond 1♥, and now you *could* make a negative double to say the same thing. But I don't recommend it: your hearts are pathetic, your distribution is non-existent, and your points are soft. You are unlikely to have a winning contract in hearts (or anywhere) unless partner can make another move.

(d) ♠ 542 ♥ AQJ32 ♦ 54 ♣ 1054

D'ble. This on the other hand is a fine collection, with 5 nice hearts. Get your heart bid in with a negative double (which doesn't show exactly 4 hearts, but 4+ hearts). A 2♥ bid would promise 10+ HCP.

(e) ♠ 542 ♥ 932 ♦ AQJ4 ♣ 1054

2♦. Not perfect, but your diamonds are nice, and partner usually has at least 4 diamonds here, whatever your methods. Your 7 points are all working hard together.

(f) ♠ KJ542 ♥ 93 ♦ 54 ♣ QJ54

1NT. 6-9 HCP and spades stopped – that's what you have. An alternative is to pass, and hope to defend a spade contract (maybe doubled). The problem with that strategy is that your 542 of spades might not turn into tricks. Better to get the essence of your hand off your chest right now.

STATE EVENT RESULTS**Victorian Mixed Pairs***Championship*

- 1 J. Gaspar – G. Gaspar
- 2 A. St Clair – D. Harley
- 3 K. Muntz – N. Ewart

Plate

- 1 E. Caplan – S. Arber
- 2 H. Snashall – R. Berlinski
- 3 R. Judelman – R. Codron

Victorian Daytime MP Championship

- 1 P. De Soyza – P. Hollands
- 2 D. Harley – S. Klofa
- 3 K. Muntz – L. Gold

CONGRESS RESULTS**Knox Congress***Swiss Pairs*

- 1 R. Kingham, A. Rose
- 2 S. Klofa – A. Czapnik
- 3 K. Nainanayake – S. Hasthanayake

Swiss Teams

- 1 M. Allison, I. Gulec, B. Kingham, S. Gluck
- 2 C. Ding, D. Nie, J. Huang, K. Zhang
- 3 S. Klofa, A. Czapnik, L. Robinson, C. Fernando

RACV Congress*Swiss Pairs*

- 1 A. StClair – K. Frazer
- 2 D. Harley – N. Ewart
- 3 J. Ebery – J. Coutts

Traralgon Congress*Swiss Pairs*

- 1 P. Nolan – M. Porter
- 2 J. Kuiper – D. Anglim
- 3 S. White – J. Rothlisberger

Swiss Teams

- 1 E. Morrish, J. Taylor, R. Graham, H. Watt
- 2 C. Watson, S. Watson, A. Farthing, D. Jesner
- 3 R. Couch, J. Tierney, H. McAdam, D. Tylee

Queen's Slipper Nationwide Pairs*Event 15 (August 4)*

- 1 R. Moss, A. Drury (South Gippsland)
- 2 B. Romeijn, J. Day (Berwick)
- 3 A. Race – C. Parkin (Yarra Valley)

Event 16 (August 8)

- 1 R. Moss, A. Drury (South Gippsland)
- 2 L. Peacock, B. Moorhouse (Bairnsdale)

UPCOMING CONGRESSES & EVENTS**Ballarat Congress**

Saturday 8th September, 11 am: Swiss Pairs
 Sunday 9th September, 10:00 am: Swiss Teams

Venue Ballarat Bridge Club
 cnr Eyre & Ripon St., Ballarat

Contact: Tim Woodley, 5342 4847

Enter: <http://bridgeunlimited.com>

Mornington Congress

Saturday 15th Sept, 10 am: Swiss Pairs
 Sunday 16th Sept, 10 am: Matchpoint Pairs

Venue St Francis Xavier Church Hall
 60 Davey St, Frankston

Contact: Lindsey Young, 9787 2235

Enter: <http://bridgeunlimited.com>

Donald Congress

Saturday 22nd Sept, 10 am: Swiss Pairs

Venue Donald Golf Club
 Wood St, Donald

Contact: Brian Brasier, 0409 754 300

Enter: <http://bridgeunlimited.com>

Macedon Ranges Congress

Sunday 30th Sept, 10 am: Swiss Pairs

Venue St Mary's Norma Richardson Hall
 14 Buckland Street, Woodend

Contact: Ron Watkinson, 0422 622 658

Enter: <http://bridgeunlimited.com>

Albury Congress

Saturday 6th October, 11 am: Swiss Pairs
 Sunday 7th October, 9:30 am: Swiss Teams

Venue Commercial Club
 Deane Street, Albury

Contact: Richard Harman, 0413 010 478

Enter: <http://bridgeunlimited.com>

RECENT MASTER PROMOTIONS**State**

Diane Davies	Moonee Valley
Rick Gaylard	Kooyong
Dianne Karlsson	Ravens
Pauline Moore	Macedon Ranges
Helen Porter	Sale
Karen Thompson	Mornington
Yuko Yoshida	Waverley

National

Patricia Bellamy	Peninsula
Sena Hasthanayake	Waverley

***National**

Gary Lee	Geelong
George Skarbek	Waverley

Silver Life

Christopher Leach	MCC
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THE BIKER KING OF BRIDGE

Well-known Melbourne writer Catherine Harris has published a story about her adventures in bridge with the inimitable Andrew Mill.



Bridge is about complete information, but it can take years to develop the skill to see what's right in front of your face. Clubs offer lessons and workshops, however if you really want to improve you take private lessons. And who better to teach them than Andrew Mill, the biker king of contract bridge.

Read the story at

<https://verityla.com/2018/07/31/the-biker-king-of-contract-bridge-catherine-harris/>

THE DOG IN THE NIGHT
Bill Jacobs

Inspector Gregory: "Is there any other point to which you would wish to draw my attention?"

Holmes: "To the curious incident of the dog in the night-time."

"The dog did nothing in the night time."

"That was the curious incident," remarked Sherlock Holmes.

- From Silver Blaze

Taking your cue from Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, try the following problems:

1.

♠ 1082
♥ AQ5
♦ 109743
♣ J9

You	North	East	South
		Pass	1♣
Pass	1♠	Pass	2♣
Pass	2♦	Pass	3♣
Pass	5♣	All Pass	

What do you lead to South's 5♣?

2.

♠ J9
♥ J97
♦ AQ1064
♣ KJ5

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ A65
♥ 4
♦ KJ9872
♣ A62

♣10

West	North	You	South
		1♦	1♥
Pass	3♥	Pass	4♥
Pass	Pass	Pass	

Partner leads the club 10, declarer plays low from dummy, and follows low when you win the ace.

What do you play to trick 2?

3.

♠ KJ10
♥ AKQ62
♦ K5
♣ Q32

	N	
♣4		S

♠ -
♥ 963
♦ KJ10
♣ AKQ10975

West	North	East	You
			1♣
Pass	1♥	Pass	3♣
Pass	6♣	All pass	

A low trump is led to your 6♣. Plan the play.

Of the many lines of reasoning in bridge, some of the most difficult to achieve relate to the dog that didn't bark in the night. The negative inference – the inference made when someone **doesn't** do something. There is no barking to alert you to the inference. If you can successfully make a negative inference, then you have come of age as a bridge player.

1.

♠ KQ763
♥ 1084
♦ AQJ
♣ Q3

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ 1082
♥ AQ5
♦ 109743
♠ J9

♠ A95
♥ KJ976
♦ 852
♣ 92

♠ J3
♥ 32
♦ K6
♣ AK108754

You	North	East	South
		Pass	1♣
Pass	1♠	Pass	2♣
Pass	2♦	Pass	3♣
Pass	5♣	All pass	

No one barked notrumps. North could have bid 3NT over 3♣. Nor did South, having heard his partner bid spades and diamonds. All that non-NT bidding suggests that hearts is a weakness for them, and, despite having the ♥AQ tenace, you should start with the heart ace, and try to cash out.

2.

♠ J9		
♥ J97		
♦ AQ1064		
♣ KJ5		
♠ 108742	N	♠ A65
♥ 652	W E	♥ 4
♦ -	S	♦ KJ9872
♠ 109743		♣ A62
		♠ KQ3
		♥ AKQ1083
		♦ 53
		♣ Q8

Partner holds at most two diamonds, but has refused to lead one, instead choosing a wishy-washy club.

Your deduction? Partner must be void in diamonds not to lead one, and you should switch to a diamond (a high one, to show your side entry in spades) for partner to ruff.

As Holmes remarked on more than one occasion: "once you eliminate the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth".

It is impossible that partner wouldn't lead your suit if he had one!

3.

♠ QJ104		
♥ AQ102		
♦ AQ5		
♣ J6		
♠ K876	N	♠ A9532
♥ 854	W E	♥ KJ7
♦ 9874	S	♦ 632
♠ 82		♣ 43
		♠ -
		♥ 963
		♦ KJ10
		♣ AKQ10975

There are two ways you can make 6♣: you can hope that LHO has one of the heart honours: finesse the heart 10, and if that loses to the jack, finesse the heart queen.

Or you can hope that RHO has one of the spade honours. Run the spade queen, and if that loses to West, later run the spade jack. A neat double-ruffing-finesse.

So it is a choice of two finesses or two ruffing finesses. All things being equal, these lines have exactly the same chance of success.

But all things *aren't* equal. The ruffing finesse line only fails if West has ♠AK and didn't lead one. The non-spade lead is the dog that didn't bark.

The Victorian bridge community lost three very long-standing members recently.

Juliet Pettitt died peacefully in August after a long illness.



She is survived by her husband John, her daughter, son and granddaughter. She was a wonderful lady and will be greatly missed by her family and many, many friends.

Juliet and husband John were long-time members of the VBA having met at bridge in the 1960s. They were part of the large group of young players in the late 60s through into the 1970s.

Mila Rogers passed away in late July. Mila was a long-standing member of the VBA, who along with her husband George, held committee roles in Public Relations and served as Vice President.



Sima Lowen passed away in late August, aged 99. Sima and her husband Walter, a past President of the VBA, were an institution around the club for many decades. She was an enthusiastic player and wonderful club member.



ALL ABOUT ALERTS

Alerting is about drawing the opponents' attention to your side's unusual bidding. It is controlled by a set of regulations issued by the Australian Bridge Federation. That document runs for 11 pages (!) so I'll save you some reading here.

With written bidding, you alert *your partner's* unusual bid by circling it and saying "Alert". Don't explain anything: wait to be asked.

If using bidding boxes, say "Alert" and optionally fish around in the box in the hope of finding the Alert card.

The definition of an "unusual bid" is somewhat opaque, but the general principle is that if a bid's meaning is not what it sounds like, then it should be alerted. Usually this involves bidding a suit that does not show length in that suit, or bidding notrumps when it does not indicate a desire to play in notrumps. It also includes natural bids that have an unexpected HCP range. Examples of alertable bids:

- Transfer bids
- Unusual Notrump or Lebensohl
- Multi 2♦ opening
- 'Pass or correct' bids
- Weak jump responses
- Inverted minor raises

Self-alerting bids

Some bids are defined as self-alerting, meaning they do not require an actual alert, as they are "obviously unusual". These are:

- Doubles and redoubles
- All bids above 3NT (except unusual high level openings, eg NAMYATS)
- Cue bid of opponents' suit
- 2♣ response to a 1NT opening bid

Asking

You can ask about any alerted bid, or unalerted bid for that matter, but only at your turn to bid or play. Most people only ask if the answer may affect their upcoming bid or play, but it is entirely up to you whether or not you ask.

When asking, ask in general terms, not using leading questions. So say: "what does 2♣ mean?", not "does 2♣ show clubs?" (which could be interpreted as code for 'I have clubs'). At the end of an auction that had multiple alerts, say: "explain the auction please", rather than asking about one specific alerted bid.

Answering

You are required to explain your partnership agreements, nothing more. If you're not sure what partner's bid means or have forgotten your agreements, try not to guess. Just say: "I don't know" or "I don't remember". (The director will adjust the result if your opponents are damaged by this failure of memory.)

If you haven't discussed a bid, say it is undiscussed. Again, do not offer a possible explanation, or how you are going to take it.

Partner fails to alert, or mis-alerts, or mis-explains

Happens all the time, right? You must stay shtum for the moment. Then ...

At auction's end, with your side declaring:

Before the opening lead, draw your opponents' attention to the problem. Explain what you think went wrong.

If your side ends up defending:

You can say nothing until the end of the play, at which point you should identify the issue.

In both situations, it may be wise to call the director, certainly if there is any possibility that the opponents were damaged by the problem.

Pre-alerting

At the start of each round, you should pre-alert your opponents to any unusual convention that they may need to arrange a defence against. Main examples are:

- Switched responses to 1♣
- Very unusual 2-level openings (eg 2NT for the minors) ... the Multi scheme does not need a pre-alert, as it's so prevalent
- A system other than some form of Standard American: eg Precision, Acol