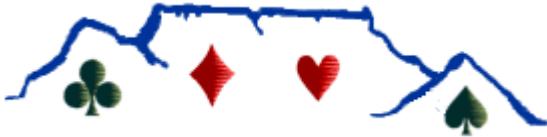


WESTERN CAPE BRIDGE UNION NEWSLETTER



Edition 12
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Message from the Editor

Dear Bridge Players

Congratulations to Andrew Cruise who is the new President of the WCBU – we wish him and the new committee every success! Also, a huge “thank you” to Tim Cope who has been the President on and off for 13 years, spread over a few decades, and who has dedicated himself unstintingly to the betterment of bridge in the Western Cape. The last year has been a very stressful one, as I am sure you will all agree, and we owe the fact that we have been able to play WCBU tournaments on BBO almost every day of the week to three persons in particular – Malcolm Siegel, who left this world all too soon at the age of 40, and who, with Andrew Cruise, set up online bridge for all of us within a couple of weeks of going into lockdown; as well as Tim Cope who, with his vast bridge experience and knowledge, guided some of this process.

The committee has unanimously supported the establishment of the Malcolm Siegel Bursary, and, to quote Tim in his President’s Report at the AGM . . . *we hope to involve someone at university level, from a previously disadvantaged background, to help set up a bridge club at the university, for the growth of the game. It is hoped that this bursary will be ongoing and broaden and transform our current demographic profile. I know that Malcolm would be proud of such a venture.*

Another project will be implemented when we return to face-to-face bridge at the bridge clubs. Kathryn Herz / Eckhard Böhlke have collated all the material that they have written for numerous newsletters into a chaptered booklet entitled *Strategy at Matchpointed Pairs Tournaments*; and Tim will have a similar booklet available entitled *Tim Cope on Bidding*. These will undoubtedly be of value to all bridge players.

It has been three years since Steve Bunker, WCBU President at the time, asked me if I would be the editor of a bridge newsletter and I was very happy to agree. My one condition was that it would not be exclusive to members of affiliated clubs and Steve concurred.

My main achievement, therefore, in regard to this newsletter was to ensure that it reached members of as many unaffiliated clubs in the Western Cape as possible, as well as social bridge players. Initially, it took quite a lot of research and spadework, but I think I managed to track down most of the viable unaffiliated clubs in the CT environs, the greater W.Cape region and the more rural areas. The number of registered members under the auspices of the WCBU is currently 950, but it is estimated that approximately 1500 bridge players are receiving copies of the newsletter – a third more than registered members. I am really pleased that I have been able to reach many more members and make them feel part of the greater bridge community.

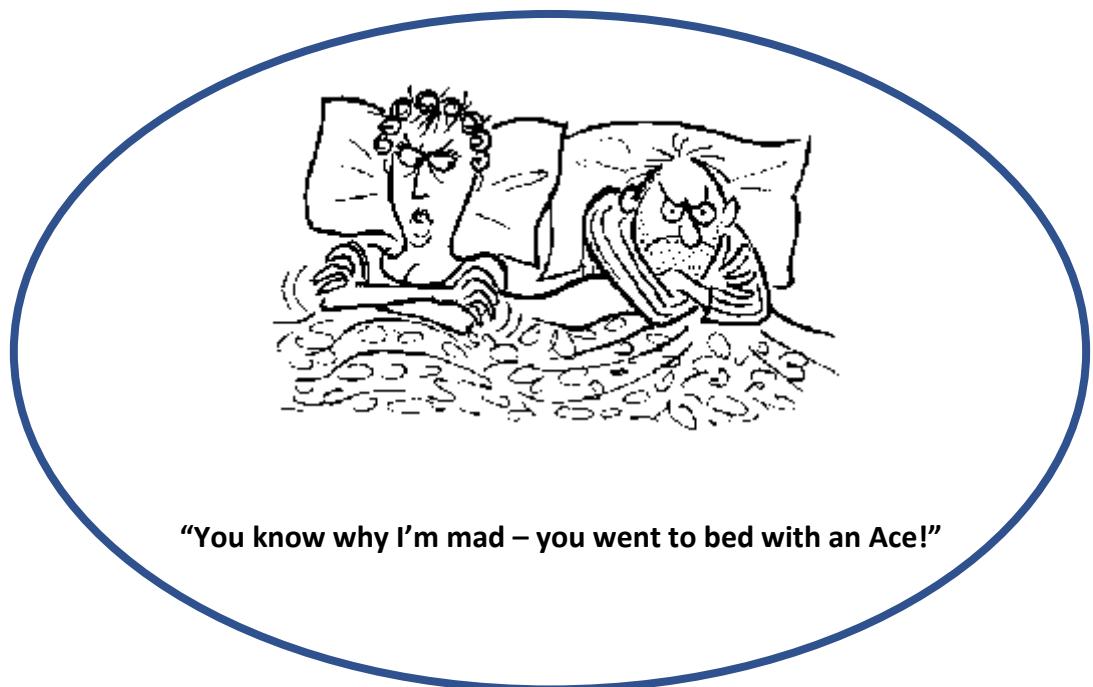
The next step was to decide what the content of the newsletter should be and I decided to strike a balance between being informative and instructive. To this end, I have reported on as many aspects as possible, such as events and activities at bridge clubs in the region as well as snippets of interesting facts. As far as the instructive aspect is concerned, I am most grateful to our bridge experts who have been contributors. Some have contributed on an ad hoc basis, but there have been regular articles in each edition from Tim Cope, Diniar Minwalla and Kathryn Herz / Eckhard Böhlke over the years. All have contributed on a voluntary basis – and the time and effort expended is high. Thank you to all of you!

I also undertook the job of editor on a voluntary basis and I have really enjoyed researching, proofreading, editing and compiling each edition, but it is very time-consuming and I feel that I need to take a break from my responsibilities for the time being. This is therefore the last newsletter that I will be responsible for, but I am sure that the WCBU Committee will ensure a smooth handover to a future editor.

And thank you, once again, to Warwick Wealth for their continuing sponsorship.

Keep well, stay safe and farewell!

Shirley Kaminer



Chairman's Message

Dear Fellow Bridge Players,

I have a challenge for all of you . . .

Teach someone to play Bridge!

Isn't this a wonderful Game? Hasn't it kept you sane and occupied during lockdown? Don't you feel you owe the Game something in return?

We have a short window - maybe 5-10 years - where we can solidify the survival of this great pastime. The bridge population is getting older, but young people are keen, and ironically the ageing population opens a fortuitous door for new players - grandchildren! And now that you all know how to play on BBO, you can tap into the younger generation's obsession with computer and phone games and play with them online.

So, teach these kids - and teach their parents while you are at it! Teach your partner! Teach your friends! We are all jointly responsible for bringing the Game back from the brink. We can't just wait for the WBF or SABF to do something, or WCBU, or your local Club - individually we must step up and make a difference. Every bridge player is a teacher in waiting . . .

And when we get back to face to face bridge and teaching in schools, volunteer! Just imagine . . . rather than the usual faces we see going to international tournaments, why can't we have some young, underprivileged kids playing for South Africa in 10-15 years' time? You can make this happen. These children are the future of the Game - if you love it as much as I do and want someone to play with and against in future, take up the challenge.

Look out for teaching materials which will be made available to all of you on our new WCBU website at www.wcbridge.co.za. When it is acceptable to do so, WCBU will also be happy to donate packs of good quality second-hand cards to anyone willing to teach. Your committee is here to help - but we can't do it all ourselves, we need *you*! Yes, YOU!

There is no doubt that the last year has been tough, many of us have struggled, and it's nowhere near over - but let's look forward confidently, hopefully, optimistically. WCBU has a new Executive Committee - in my view, a nice balance of youth and experience - you can see the members on our website here: <https://www.wcbridge.co.za/people>. Offer them your support and your help. The more you put in, the more you will get out.

At every opportunity, I am going to pointedly ask my bridge player friends and acquaintances who they have taught recently - when I get to you, what are you going to say?

Yours in Bridge,

Andrew Cruise

Defending - The Passion Continues

by Diniar Minwalla

The art of thinking in defence has never ceased to fascinate me. If we can gather all the available clues (and there are plenty available from the bidding and trick one) and use them to our advantage, we can make great inroads into this very important area of the game.

This hand came up in a friendly game and struck me as very informative.

Sitting East, you pick up the following hand:

832

5

J9876

KJT4

Not the best hand you have ever held. Your left hand opponent opens 1C (may be short) and partner makes a takeout double. RHO now bids 1D (showing 4+ hearts-some players play transfer responses to a 1C opening). You pass, and LHO bids 2H (12-14 with 4 hearts). Partner passes, and RHO raises to 4H.

<u>South</u>	<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>
1C	DBL	1D#	Pass
2H	Pass	4H	Pass
Pass	Pass	Pass	
#=4+ hearts			

Partner leads the 2 of diamonds (3rd and 5th) and you see the following dummy:

<u>DUMMY</u>	
Q5	
T987	
AKQT4	
76	
<u>YOU</u>	
832	
5	
J9873	
KJT4	

Question: What information do we have about the two unseen hands at this point?

Answer: We have ALL the information we need. We know how the missing points are divided between the two unseen hands, and we also know the exact distribution of all the four suits in the two unseen hands.

Let's ask ourselves the relevant questions to confirm the above statement:

Question1. What kind of hand does partner have for his take-out double?

Answer: A limited opening hand with a minimum of 3 cards in all the suits other than clubs. We know this because looking at dummy's points (11) added to our points (5) and declarer's opening points (12) leaves partner with a bare 12. Maybe he has 13, and declarer opened with 11. At any rate, partner does not have the 16+ kind of hand with a 5 card or longer suit.

Question 2. What do we know about the distribution of the 4 suits in the two unseen hands?

Answer: We know the full distribution of all the 4 suits in both the unseen hands. This is worked out as follows:

Diamonds= Partner has at least 3 for his takeout double , and the lead of the 2 (3rd and 5th)shows that he has exactly 3 (can't be 5 else there would be too many diamonds in this pack of cards).

Hearts= declarer has shown 4 hearts, dummy has 4. We have one, so partner has 4.

Clubs=We know from the count of the diamonds that declarer is void in diamonds.

Therefore he must have at least 5 clubs (we cannot construct a bridge hand which contains a void and does not have a 5 card or longer suit).

Spades=We can see 8 spades for the 2 unseen hands. They must be 4-4, else partner would have made a simple overcall of 1S with 5 cards and his known 12-13 points, and if declarer had 5 spades, he would have opened 1S, not 1C.

Now we have a complete picture of both the hands.

Declarer is 4-4-0-5 and partner is 4-4-3-2

So, coming back to trick 1, when dummy wins the ace of diamonds, which card should you play to this trick, and what meaning should be assigned to that card?

Assume that you are playing upside down signals (low card encourages). We have made a mention of signal priority in a previous article. The normal action when partner leads the suit is to give an attitude signal. However, looking at the diamond suit in dummy, the attitude is already known to partner, so giving an attitude signal would not be of any use to partner.

How about a count signal instead? This is usually the second priority signal, when the attitude is already known. Would a count signal assist partner? Well, you know that

declarer is void in diamonds and will not be able to follow suit to this trick, so partner will know the count immediately. This brings us to the conclusion that the most useful signal here is the third priority signal, i.e a suit preference signal. Partner knows that you have very little in the way of high card points, and you need to tell him in which suit those very few points lie. The correct card to play would be the 3 of diamonds, a suit preference signal for clubs. Partner cannot possibly misinterpret the signal, seeing that the attitude and count are already known and are of no consequence.

It is time to take a look at the full hand:

Q5	
9876	
AKQT4	
76	
K764	832
A432	5
642	J9873
AQ	KJT4
AJT9	
KQJT	
Void	
98532	

Declarer won the diamond lead in dummy and took his best chance by trying the spade finesse. His plan was that if the spade finesse won, he would be able to throw a club away on a winning spade.

Question for declarer: Do you expect the spade finesse to win?

Declarer's answer: Probably not, since west has most of the points for his takeout double, but could there not be room for just 3 points in the east hand in the form of the king of spades?

What do you make of declarer's answer? I would say it is only partially correct. Yes, the east hand has room for 3 points, but those points are most unlikely to be in the form of the king of spades. There is a very compelling reason for declarer to realize that the spade finesse has very little chance of being successful. One may not immediately agree here, the argument (after examining the east hand) being that east may have been dealt with the king of spades instead of the king of clubs.

There is no exact science that will tell us that the king of spades lies in the west hand. However, there is a very strong (negative) inference that this is the case. Think of it this way: If west had the ace and king of clubs, he would surely have preferred to start proceedings with the ace of clubs, rather than a diamond from his poor holding in that

suit. Therefore one of the two top honours in clubs must lie in the east hand, Consequently, there is no room in the east hand for the king of spades, unless west made a very dubious takeout double with a bare 12 points.

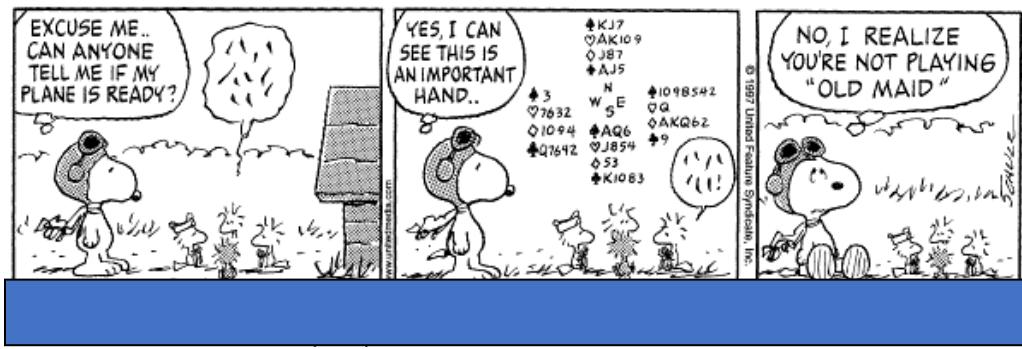
Needless to say, the spade finesse will lose, and now, based on your very useful signal of the 3 of diamonds at trick one, partner should work out what is going on and have no hesitation in shifting to ace and queen of clubs.

Admittedly, partner should switch to the ace of clubs anyway when in with the king of spades, since he knows from the play of the queen from dummy that the ace and jack lie in declarer's hand, and unless we take our club winners now, dummy's clubs will be discarded on spade winners.

Following from all of the above, let's summarize all the good things we must do in defence to improve our accuracy in this area:

1. Starting with the opening lead, we can conclude that a lead showing count is generally more useful than a lead showing attitude. On the hand in question, we did not need an attitude lead to work out how the high card points were divided between the two unseen hands. Indeed, we were able to do this easily enough at trick one, from the bidding. On the other hand, the count lead enables us to work out distribution as quickly as possible, which is very often more useful.
2. Doing a roll call of the high card points and the distribution should be second nature to every good defender. On the hand above, we were able to accomplish a full roll call on the high card points, and the distribution of the 4 suits at trick 1.
3. Every good partnership must have a good signaling system which enables the defenders to talk to each other with the cards. It is also important to agree on a signal priority system, and to vary that priority by passing the most useful signal to suit the situation.
4. Do not miss out on the negative inferences.

And finally . . . Do not be afraid to lead away from an AQ doubleton holding when the situation demands!



The construct of playing cards and the calendar

The Chinese invented playing cards in AD 1000. So herewith some interesting facts and observations about "playing cards" . . .

Did you know that the traditional deck of the playing cards is a strikingly coherent form of a calendar? Very intriguing indeed!



There are 52 weeks in the year and there are 52 playing cards in a deck.

There are 13 weeks in each season and there are 13 cards in each suit.

There are 4 seasons in a year and 4 suits in the deck.

There are 12 months in a year so there are 12 court cards (those with faces namely Jack, Queen, King in each suit).

The red cards represent Day, while black cards represent the Night.



Jacks = 11, Queens = 12, and the Kings = 13, then add up all the sums of $1 + 2 + 3 + \dots + 13 = 91$.



Multiply this by 4, for the 4 suits, therefore $91 \times 4 = 364$.

Add 1 that is the Joker and you will arrive at the number 365 being the days in a year!

Is this construct a mere coincidence or the sign of great intelligence?

Of interest is the sum of the letters in all the names of the cards, e.g., add up the letters in "one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, Jack, Queen, King" = 52!

The Spades indicated ploughing or working.

The Hearts indicated love for the crops.

The Diamonds indicated reaping the wealth.

The Clubs indicated protection and growth.



Also, in some card games 2 Jokers are used - indicating the Leap year.

This mathematical perfection is mind blowing!

The language of bidding in bridge contains only 15 words: spades, hearts, diamonds, clubs, notrump, double, redouble, pass and the numbers one through seven. But despite this limited vocabulary, a competent pair will reach their best contract on the great majority of deals.

Steve Becker

A very interesting perspective on bridge partnerships – from an expert bridge player – with thanks! (Ed)

What systems should we play, partner?

by Chris Bosenberg

I agree to play with a new partner. The discussion goes something like this . . .

2/1 or SAYC; Standard or UDCA carding? Is Attitude the priority signal?

4th highest or 3rd and 5th in suits?

Weak twos or Multi (need a longer discussion if we play Multi)?

Over weak 2s, do we play OGUST or show a feature?

Over their NT, do we play HAMILTON or whatever? X of strong NT 4 card major and longer minor?

4-way transfers over our NT? Support doubles? Michaels or Ghestem? Keycard 1430?

No Minorwood, as that would need another long discussion.

Over 2C opening is 2D waiting? Or is 2D positive and 2H is no Ace or King or 3 Queens?

That seems to be enough.

6 boards pass and the opponents put us on 80%+ score. We have not made a mistake yet, but the opponents keep having misunderstandings and appear to be trying to give us as many points as they can. ☺

Then this hand comes up:

AQx Kxx

QJ98xx Kxx

AK xxx

AQ KJxx

I decide to open 2C but am worried it will be a disaster if partner bids 2H wrong-siding it, etc.

Fortunately, partner bids 2D, I bid 2H and partner bids 2S. I raise to 3S and partner bids 4NT. I decide this is Keycard Blackwood in S and bid 5D. Partner bids 5H asking for Q of S and I bid 6D - the Q of S and the K of D.

Partner bids 6NT which is mercifully cold. Fortunately, I have the AD and not the AH - this may have been a disaster on a D lead with AD offside - we survive this system error.

Later, I find out that we are playing Kokish and I showed H and S!

Note that had I known we were playing Kokish I would have bid 3H and partner would be in a mess as partner is too strong to simply support Hearts - and we have not discussed the meaning of various other bids.

So, why are we playing this system that only one of us thought we were playing and we need about 5 hours discussion and 40 hands in the bidding room to avoid accidents to deal with the follow-up auctions?

WHY ARE WE PLAYING IT? THE MEMORY WORK IS HUGE AND THE FREQUENCY MINIMAL AND THE ADVANTAGE CONTENTIOUS.

The Kokish Relay uses a 2♥ rebid to primarily show a balanced hand with 22-23 HCP in one specific auction:

2♣¹ : 2♦²

2♥!

¹ Strong and artificial,

² 0-7 points or waiting

Because the Kokish Relay sacrifices the natural 2♥ rebid by the strong 2♣ bidder, you must rebid 3♥ over 2♦ to show a natural heart suit. Or you must start with a Kokish Relay and then rebid 3♥. This may take a few more hours of discussion. The system as published does not cater for a 2♦ and 2♥ graduated response to 2♣ which I agreed to play. Oh dear, more discussion is necessary.

Why are we playing this if we are not professionals and very few professionals play it?

It is a truism that there are not enough hands to reward brilliance in bridge. Bridge success is limiting your mistakes which can occur on almost any hand. Playing fancy systems that require hours of practice and without proper discussion creates more opportunities for errors than good results.

On the next board the opponents bid:

1D P 1H P

1NT All Pass

1NT is alerted as 18-19 and dummy, an international player, puts down a balanced 9 points. Dummy agrees 18-19 or 12-14 and we misdefend, but register another 100% as everyone made game.

You are wondering whether anyone has ever got 80% on BBO with all the luck we are having when this next hand comes up:

Opponents open 2D, Partner bids 4H and I pass holding Kxxx xx xxx KTxx

Partner's hand is AQxxx AJTxx x AQ

Hearts break 5-1 and we go 3 off for a zero.

After the game your partner says 4H was leaping Michaels (4D is leaping Michaels!).

If we are playing Leaping Michaels, we again need a discussion to avoid disasters.

For the innocent, **Leaping Michaels** is a conventional overcall in 4♣ or 4♦ made in defence to opposing 2-level or 3-level pre-emptive openings. A variant of the Michaels Cuebid, Leaping Michaels shows a strong two-suited hand (5-5 or longer) that is less suitable for a takeout double and is game forcing. Described as an overcall by some of a weak two-bid of a major, others expand its application to all weak pre-emptives at the 2 or 3-level in both the majors and minors.

Holding such two-suited hands and using Leaping Michaels, opponent's opening pre-emptives between 2♦ and 3♣ inclusive are overcalled in accordance with the following table:

Opener's pre-empt	Overcaller's use of Leaping Michaels	
	Bid	Meaning: overcaller is two-suited in...
2♦ or 3♦	4♣	Clubs and an undisclosed major
2♦ or 3♦	4♦	Majors
2♥ or 3♥	4♣	Clubs and spades
2♥ or 3♥	4♦	Diamonds and spades
2♠ or 3♠	4♣	Clubs and hearts

2 ♠ or 3 ♠	4 ♦	Diamonds and hearts
3 ♣	4 ♣	Majors
3 ♣	4 ♦	Diamonds and an undisclosed major

After (3♦) – 4♣, a bid of 4♦ asks for the major. The bids 4♥ and 4♠ are to play.

Following (3♣) – 4♦ the bid of 4♥ is played as [pass-or-correct](#).

Some partnerships prefer to interchange the meanings of the 4♣ and 4♦ bids following a 3♣ pre-empt so that 4♣ denotes diamonds and an undisclosed major. This has the advantage that the 4♦ becomes available to ask for the major suit. The 4♥/4♠ responses can then be played as natural (to play).

Leaping Michaels can be utilised after natural [two-level pre-empts](#), but also after conventional pre-empts such as [Dutch](#) Twos. Even after a [Multi 2 diamond](#) pre-empt, Leaping Michaels can be utilised to good effect:

(2♦) – 4♣ : Clubs and an undisclosed major (4♦ asks for the major)

(2♦) – 4♦ : Diamonds and an undisclosed major (4♥ is [pass-or-correct](#))

So, Leaping Michaels is a great system and resolves the problem of strong two suiters over pre-empts, but it comes up once or twice in a lifetime of Bridge and then - worse - we can forget it! For example, your opponents open 3♠ and you hold x AK KQTxx Qxxx. You bid 4♦ and partner bids 4♥ and you envisage a possible ♥ slam when you realise you are playing Leaping Michaels and have shown 5/5 in ♦ and ♥. Almost as bad, you remember you are playing Leaping Michaels, so you can't bid 4♦ as that is Leaping Michaels. So, what must you bid?

We play the last Board:

Partner opens a weak two in Spades and RHO doubles.

I hold x T9xx KQT93 Axx

I PASS and LHO opponent bids 3H and partner Passes and RHO bids 3NT.

I lead the KD and dummy comes down with Jxx AJxxx 53 xxx

Looks like they do not play Lebensohl (great system with high frequency) and we have a chance for a good board. My partner plays the 7D at first trick from J72.

Declarer's hand is AQ9 KQx A65 QJT, so my S switch is lethal for us. We get close to my zero when they make 3NT and dummy rubs it in by congratulating partner's brilliant play. Wow,

so we were not on the same page re the carding in this situation. We finish 3% behind the winners and are left to ponder what might have been.

To conclude, I had the pleasure of watching two of our best players playing overseas. They were tremendous, having practised hard, but they were not a regular partnership.

After one day of the tournament, I had to advise the tournament officials that they had decided to drop transfers over 1 Club (they kept forgetting it).

On day three the bidding goes:

2C 2D
2H 3H

This is an impossible response as they were playing Kokish. Clearly partner has forgotten and should have made a 2S relay.

The 2C opener had a big NT hand and a doubleton H and tried to escape into NT but partner would have nothing of it, cue bidding in support of Hearts. Eventually, they landed in 6NT not making. 13 IMPs thrown away – not because of marginally inferior play, but just forgetting system by World class bridge players.

My advice is that partnerships should only play systems that have a high frequency and, even then, practise them in the BBO bidding room and discuss. Leave complicated systems that require memory work and lots of practice and understanding, like those referred to above, to other players and rather enjoy lots of free points from the opponents who play them!



Snippets of Information . . .

SABF Subscriptions 2021

A reminder, if you have not already done so, to pay R100 for the 2021 SABF subscription, which is half the regular amount. Details are on the WCBU website.

New WCBU Website



We are pleased to announce that the WCBU website has a new look!

Logon to www.wcbridge.co.za to view it.

Bridge Clubs AGM's

Please note that AGM's at all bridge clubs are on hold until the clubs are able to re-open for face-to-face bridge.

National Congresses 2021

SAWBA is scheduled to take place in May, while the SABF National Congress will take place in June / July. Both of these will take place on BBO.

BBO – New UNDO Regulations

A reminder that the regulations have changed slightly in regard to UNDO's on BBO. This will still be allowed during the auction – but only for mis-clicks. UNDO's are no longer allowed during the play of the hand by declarer or by defenders.

I hate computer dealt hands



"How's that for a splinter bid!"

Strategy at Matchpointed Pairs Tournaments

Part 8: Our 8 Commandments at Matchpoints

By Kathryn Herz & Eckhard Böhlke

Since June 2019 we have published seven articles dealing with the subject of Matchpoints. We have been sharing with you some quite specific thoughts on bidding (uncontested/competitive/defensive), declarer play and defensive play. In fact, reasonable results can be accomplished without too much bending your mind around Matchpoints-specific strategies. This becomes inevitable, however, when aiming to be in the top ranks more often than not.

We'd now like to summarise the key principles of success at Matchpointed pairs tournaments by presenting what we like to call our "**8 Commandments at Matchpoints**". The majority of these will reflect some of the guidelines from the previous chapters. We will provide references inviting you to revisit the more detailed issues. Our "8 Commandments" may not be a complete guide to better Matchpoints Bridge. They reflect our experience and learnings collated over the years we have been enjoying this highly complex game. The tricky part is to not only follow each commandment, but to observe them simultaneously. Whilst our "8 Commandments" won't provide a recipe for scoring 70%, our objective is to help you achieve satisfactory results consistently and hopefully some high finishes from time to time.

1. The real competition happens at all other tables. Play your “remote” opponents!

At Matchpoints, your result for each board is calculated by comparing your score with that of all the other pairs who have played the same board in your direction. You are awarded two matchpoints for each pair you outscore and one for each pair you tie. Your result is derived from the sum of your matchpoints as a percentage of the total number of matchpoints awarded.

At Matchpoints, the magnitude of a scoring difference is irrelevant.
How many of the pairs holding our cards we outscore and how many we tie is all that matters.

A difference as small as 10 score points may result in a top score! Whether you outscore another pair by 10 or by 1100 points does not make any difference – you still win only two matchpoints. Due to the specific form of scoring, playing Matchpoints is not just about making or breaking a contract, bidding a game or slam or not, but scoring higher than the rest of the field holding our cards. Obviously, this is very different compared to Teams.

The “opponents” are not just the pair you are playing at your table,
but in fact all other pairs playing the same board in your direction at the other tables.

You have to ask yourself: against which pairs holding our cards at other tables are we competing? What is their skill level? The answer may guide you to different actions e.g. at a national championship compared to a club tournament.

2. Concentration: never take your eye off the ball!

Whilst certainly valid also at Teams, to keep concentration consistently at a high level is even more crucial at Matchpoints. At Matchpoints each board is of equal importance, since the same number of matchpoints is at stake whether the contract is a part-score or a grand slam! The only way to eliminate error is by intense concentration on every single bid and every single play.

Our Capetonian friend and world-class player Tim Cope recommends playing (or at least bidding) a couple of hands before every important match as a warm-up exercise to start the game at full concentration level. Do whatever it takes to start play at your best, e.g. be in time, at ease, wide awake! Once at the table, shut out of your mind everything not related to Bridge!

We must not get carried away by emotions risking a lapse in concentration. American top player and Bridge author Mike Lawrence's winning BOLS Bridge tip of 1988 is: "Any time you feel yourself succumbing to an emotion, whether sadness, depression, irritation, comfort, elation or ecstasy, you should fight it off. Stop and pay attention."

Keep full concentration at all times!

To do this is not always easy. Who has not experienced mulling over the bad result of the previous board and consequently making mistakes in the next board(s) due to a lack of concentration? Don't post mortem between hands. The only place errors should be discussed is in private. Your partner is the only friend you have at the table. Treat him like one. The time for heated discussion is after the session is over.

Remember, a bad hand is no excuse for getting bored and losing focus; not even the third bad hand in a row.

In this context, another general piece of advice on bidding strategy comes to mind:

Beware of any new convention, unless

- it fills a significant need **and**
- it is easy to remember **and**
- it comes up often **and**
- it replaces a bid whose natural meaning you can live without **and**
- both you and your partner are on the same wavelength. Make sure this applies not only to the first bid but also in the consecutive auction. Each time you forget a convention is likely to result in a bad score. Ask yourself if the convention really is of benefit to you.

Many players try to keep up with the latest conventions they discover being played by top players. However, they fail to understand that new conventions draw on their overall concentration capacity. Particularly at Matchpoints, where every trick will matter, the marginal benefit of a new convention is often outweighed by the marginal cost in terms of concentration.

3. Visualise the unseen hands!

Even though visualisation of the unseen hands (aka "card reading") is a general requirement at Bridge not at all limited to Matchpoints, we put it high on the list of our "8 Commandments at Matchpoints", as its importance cannot be overemphasised. Tim Cope would begin any discussion on bidding, declarer play or defence by asking, "what do we know about the unseen hands so far?" (See also the series of articles by Tim Cope in WCBU newsletter starting from edition 11 of December 2020 titled "The Unseen Hand".)

American Robert Hamman who was leading the world ranks in Bridge for many years found a very descriptive expression of the same concept (BOLS Bridge Tip 1974): "Would you try to play golf or tennis blindfolded? That does not seem a very intelligent thing to do, but most players do exactly that when they play the hand at contract Bridge. If you are ever to amount to anything at this game, you must build up a picture of the unseen hands."

Visualise the unseen hands: define the problem of the deal before trying to solve it!

Bob Hamman used this example in the framework of his famous BOLS Bridge Tip:

♠Q5♥A10932♦84♣10632



S	W	N	E
1♠	2♦	p	p
2♠	p	3♠	p
4♠			

♠AK7432♥6♦Q5♣AQ84

How do you play the hand after the lead of ♥4 (3rd/5th)?

You are in a very ambitious contract and have to make your contract to score well. So, your trick objective is 10 tricks.

Status analysis: You have two sure ♦ losers, therefore have to hold yourself to only one ♣ loser.

What do you know about the unseen hands?

- Spades: you have to assume a 3-2 distribution as otherwise a fourth loser is inevitable.
- Diamonds: ♦A and ♦K are divided as otherwise West would surely have led a high ♦ honour.
- Hearts: West has not led a singleton, as with ♥KQJxxx and holding a ♦ honour East would have bid 2♥ after 2♦. Therefore, West has obviously led from a ♥ honour (not from holdings such as KQx or QJx of which an honour would have been led). Consequently, East has at least one ♥ honour.
- Clubs: East cannot have the ♣K since otherwise he would have bid after 2♦ (holding honours in ♥ and ♦ as well).

Therefore, a club finesse is pointless. Declarer has to hope for ♣shortness with West (♣K or ♣Kx), planning the play as follows:

Trick 1: win ♥A

Trick 2: play to ♣A. If the ♣K does not fall, draw trumps and duck a small ♣ hoping for the ♣K to appear from West. Actually, the ♣K falls already at trick 2! This is not great news, as now declarer needs the West hand to contain only a doubleton spade, i.e. a 2-3-7-1 distribution exactly.

Trick 3: ♠A

Trick 4: ♠Q

Trick 5: low ♣ from dummy, covering East's ♣9 with the ♣Q, West discarding (declarer's dream has come true!)

♠Q5♥A10932♦84♣10632

♠J6♥K54♦AJ109632♣K



♠1098♥QJ87♦K7♣J975

♠AK7432♥6♦Q5♣AQ84

Declarer loses two ♦ and one ♣tricks. After such skilled card-reading we should not be surprised if the opponents eye declarer suspiciously and slide their chairs a foot back from the table.

4. Go with the field!

One of our key recommendations at Matchpoints is:

At Matchpoints, go for average plus. Avoid bottoms, tops will look after themselves.
Pick up the gifts offered to you, do not return them.

Avoid the “New York Times syndrome” trying to display brilliancies. Do not try to score a top at every hand, at the risk of ending up with bottoms. Just follow the normal lines.

“Go with the field!” applies to bidding, declarer play and defence:

At Matchpoints, our overall strategy should be one of **conservatism** when **bidding in the game and slam zones**. When in doubt, go for the plus score avoiding thin games and slams. There is no longer a premium on bidding borderline games (as there would be at Teams). Simply playing in the correct denomination is usually worth a good number of matchpoints.

Do not try to guess the optimal contract, if in doubt aim at average plus. American Jeff Rubens provides the following bidding example (The Bridge World, December 2011):

None vul; what do you bid after (p)-p-(1♠)-X, (3♠)-p-(p)-X, (p)-? holding ♠752♥K6♦J1064♣9853? There is no way to find out what your best contract is. So, don't take a wild stab. Pass 3♠X and take your chances. Failing to obtain the best possible result does not necessarily lead to a bad score in the matchpoints column.

As regards hand evaluation, a terrible hand such as ♠KQ7♥J4♦K975♣QJ65 should be opened at Matchpoints, as the field mainly count HCP and will consider the hand worth an opening bid. The same hand should be passed at Teams, as the flat distribution, the absence of Aces and over-representation of Queens and Jacks reduce the value of the hand to only some ten points.

Do not sacrifice unless you are pretty certain the following conditions apply: the sacrifice is a cheap one, the opponents' game is highly likely to be made and will be bid across the field. Otherwise remember Barry Crane's advice: “Only Jesus saves”. Advance sacrifices are the most effective, i.e. when bid before the opponents had the opportunity to exchange much information, found their fit and/or bid their game. (See also our part 5, WCBU newsletter of June 2020 on defensive bidding.)

The **tendency in defence is towards safety**. Against normal contracts, defend in a conservative fashion. Avoid leads that may present declarer with a trick he could not have scored otherwise. Opening leads should be more passive than at Teams, unless the auction strongly suggests otherwise. (See also our part 7, WCBU newsletter of December 2020 on defensive play.)

As regards **declarer play, the tendency is slightly more away from safety**. In the absence of special circumstances, it is usually right for declarer to try for the maximum number of tricks consistent with the odds. (See our part 6, WCBU newsletter of September 2020 on declarer play.)

5. Define your trick objective for EVERY hand!

When dummy comes down, take your time to think (even if dummy has a singleton in the suit led)! At EACH hand you play or defend, evaluate the contract (good, normal, bad) and the lead (favourable, normal, unfavourable), comparing it with the contracts/leads likely to be played at all other tables. Depending on this evaluation, set yourself an objective as to how many tricks you want to achieve in order to score well and plan declarer play or defence accordingly. If necessary, revise your objective during the course of play.

Your trick target may or may not coincide with the making or defeat of the contract. Overtricks and undertricks take on an importance that they do not have at IMP scoring.

A. Define the declarer play strategy (see also our part 6, WCBU newsletter September 2020)

- **In normal contracts (with normal leads)** try to make as many tricks as reasonably consistent with the odds. This may even imply the objective to limit the number of undertricks whilst giving up on making your contract. (-100 could be an excellent result if most of the other declarers go down for -200.)

- If you are likely to be in the **wrong contract**, your only hope may be that your bidding was right (though against the odds) and you should play accordingly. (See above Bob Hamman's example at our 3rd Commandment "Visualise the unseen hands!")
- In a **hopeless contract** when you have virtually nothing to lose, it would be silly not to grab an opportunity for a large gain even if the probability of success is minute!
- In a **(doubled) sacrifice** you have to play for the sacrifice to pay off, scoring better than the game of the opponents. Phantom sacrifices cannot be remedied.

B. Define the defensive play strategy (see also our part 7, WCBU newsletter December 2020)

In most hands you defend, the crucial question is whether to opt for an active or a passive defence.

An **active defence** (starting from the lead) is one that tries to reduce declarer's quick trick taking potential which can be a side suit or when ruffs may come into play. You reduce this potential by cashing/establishing your tricks before it is too late or by playing trumps to reduce declarer's ruffs.

A **passive defence** (starting from the lead) is one where we are happy to wait for the tricks to come to us during the hand rather than seek those tricks out quickly.

One common mistake at Matchpoints (particularly against suit contracts) is to get too active on defence. Against normal contracts or if in doubt, defend in a conservative fashion, whereas at Teams most often an active defence is called for.

NB: Your partnership must agree on an **efficient defensive carding method** including attitude, count and suit-preference signals! Otherwise you cannot visualise the unseen hands (see above our 3rd and below our 7th Commandments).

6. Bid aggressively in the part-score area! (see our part 3, WCBU newsletter Dec. 2019)

At Teams, the difference between -110 and -100 is zero IMP, whereas at Matchpoints it may be worth a lot of MPs. Turning -110 three times into -100 and a fourth time into -500 (for going two down doubled), we score well three times out of four, thus making a long-term profit. However, at Teams -9 IMPs remain a net loss of -9.

Though we do not want to allow the opposition to play in their chosen contract at a comfortable level (remember e.g., "*Don't let the opponents play in an 8-card fit at the 2-level.*"), we must take the vulnerability into consideration. Indeed, vulnerability is a key factor in part-score competition.

At matchpoints, measured aggression is the cornerstone of part-score bidding – here it really pays! However, avoid the "kiss of death", i.e. the dreaded score of -200 when vulnerable.

- When bidding at the part-score level, try to **determine your level of strength**. Estimate for EVERY hand what the rest of the field will be doing. Depending on your level of strength in the combined hands, define your objective in terms of score and tricks:
 - Strength level 1: 16-18 HCP: your objective is to **minimise your minus**
 - Strength level 2: 19-21 HCP: your objective is to **chalk up a plus**
 - Strength level 3: 22-24 HCP: your objective is a plus **score of at least +110**
 This valuable guideline complements the "law of total tricks" and other judgement factors such as distribution, double fit, offence/defence potential, position of honours.
- **Matchpoints doubles:** if we hold the balance of power (strength level 3 with about 22-24 HCP) and the distribution and/or the position of the high cards make outbidding the opponents unattractive, the opponents must not play un-doubled competing at the 3-level, especially

when they are vulnerable. If once in a while a doubled contract makes, this won't lose our side too many matchpoints, as we would have had a lousy score anyway.

One general guideline at Matchpoints cannot be overemphasised: **you should double the opponents much more often than at Teams**. The frequency of success is relevant. If your opponents do not make their doubled contracts from time to time you do not double often enough!

South African top player Craig Gower recommends his students to stack the red double cards in the bidding box right in front of the green pass cards, so they do not forget the "double" bid exists.

7. Learn to enjoy defence!

Less experienced players are reluctant to double (or pass) for penalty, probably for the following reasons:

- limited (self-)confidence in defensive skills, mostly due to lack of partnership agreements on leads and carding;
- the urge to be in control as declarer, whilst on defence fate would depend on both defenders, i.e. having to rely on partner to do the right thing at the right time. As a result, many players try to declare most of the hands (even though their "bidding one more" will carry them overboard more often than not);
- limited partnership understanding in terms of bidding style, thus being unable to sufficiently gauge the partnerships' defensive potential;
- modern bidding systems being based on the use of negative doubles make it more difficult
 - to know when a "X" is HCP-based and may be passed for penalty
 - to remember the exceptions when a "X" is for penalty after all.

So, how to improve your defensive play and learn to enjoy defence? We suggest starting with some "simple steps" such as

- joint partnership training (e.g. using some of the numerous good quiz books on the market)
- agreeing on an efficient defensive carding method including attitude, count and suit-preference signals! (See also our part 7, WCBU newsletter December 2020 on "Defensive Play".) Otherwise, as defenders you cannot visualise the unseen hands to define the problem you and your partner need to solve. (When listening to system discussions and agreements before a tournament, it is just amazing how much detail is devoted to conventions of all kinds, whilst attributing the lowest of priorities to leads and carding methods!)

8. Play the opponents at your table by their skill level and temperament!

You surely remember our 1st Commandment: "The real competition happens at all other tables. Play your 'remote' opponents!" At the same time, we must understand that the pair we are playing at our table are trying to score well in comparison to those pairs playing in their direction at all other tables. Their (relative) success is our (relative) failure. Consequently, we must try to make life difficult for our opponents at our table.

If you want to be successful at Bridge you have to know your opponents. You must be aware of their capabilities and be able to distinguish the tigers from the sheep. Unless you play amongst a field of strangers, usually you have a pretty good idea about the opponents' skill level and their bidding style. In fact, at the club level you often know from experience who is (un-)likely to find a penalty double or who would always bid one more.

As regards playing your opponents, there are two schools of thought:

- The late American Barry Crane, allegedly the most successful Matchpoints player of all times, was known for his **ability to size up his opponents** and to know how to vary his tactics. Against

less experienced players, he made crazy bids, but he never made the last mistake, so he got away with murder. Against stronger pairs, however, he would be more conservative and bid down the middle.

- Tim Cope recommends just the opposite: “Don’t do anything special against less experienced players, let them dig their own grave!”

We like to follow a combination of both these strategies:

- confront less experienced opponents with problems by aggressive bidding
- yet beware of overbidding when vulnerable (avoiding the -200 “kiss of death”)
- don’t drive them into makeable contracts based on distribution they would never have bid if left to their own devices
- chase those who cannot stop to bidding one level too high

You can’t win at Matchpoints unless your opponents make mistakes. It is up to you to help them along the path to disaster.

To summarise our thoughts on our 8 Commandments at Matchpoints:

**If you had a magic wand,
you would observe our “8 Commandments” simultaneously!**

“Simply” remember when playing a matchpointed pairs tournament:

- Sitting down at the Bridge table, start at 100% concentration and never allow it to slip one bit until the final card is played.
- Always bear in mind the likely actions of your “remote” opponents at the other tables and how your actions will affect the relative score.
- To do this, you have to visualise the unseen hands and to (re-)define your trick objective continuously.
- Base your assumptions on what you consider the field’s likely actions and wait for gifts offered from the opponents at your table, sometimes generously, sometimes stingily. Playing the field, it helps to tell the difference between the tigers and the sheep. Confront the less experienced opponents with problems by aggressive bidding, particularly in the part-score area, whilst avoiding costly risks such as the dreaded -200 “kiss of death” score.
- Do not forget, you are defending about 50% of the time, so you better enjoy winning defence.

By the way, nobody ever promised Bridge was easy!

Finally, let us conclude our 8 Commandments with **one additional plea**.

Our 1st and 8th Commandments describe that in order to play successful tournament Bridge you must have the desire to destroy your opponents, to crash them. However, that does not mean you should act like a gangster at the Bridge table and gloat over the opponents’ misfortunes. Your “killer instinct” shows in your bids and plays, never in your behaviour. We have no sympathy for players who are not courteous to their opponents at all times. – Therefore, our plea:

Honour your opponents!

Be nice to them and do not forget to congratulate them when they do well!

There are three good reasons:

- The game will be so much more pleasant!
- The opponents at the table may be or become your friends away from the table!
- Without opponents you could not play Bridge! You need them! Make sure they show up again at the next tournament, they might even bring some gifts.

We very much hope that our “8 Commandments at Matchpoints” will guide you to many tournament successes. Good luck and enjoy the game!

The Cape Festival

The Cape Festival took place online in December 2020.

There were 92 Pairs and 34 Teams. It was a huge success and many thanks to all who participated.

The top two winners in each section in the Teams event were:

A Grade:

1st: Team Alexander

Michael Alexander, Tim Cope, Kathryn Herz, Eckhard Böhlke

(Clean sweep for Kathryn & Eckhard, who also took gold in the pairs event!)

2nd: Team Bjerregaard

Sven-Ake Bjerregaard, Alon Apteker, Martin Lofgren, Carl Ragnarsson

B Grade:

1st: Team Matatodes

Eric Matatodes, Jill Matatodes, Wilson Mcleod, Jeanne Mcleod

2nd: Team Duff

Rose Duff, Andre van Niekerk, Ester Goosen, Glynis Dornon

The top winners in the Pairs event were:

A Grade:

1st: Kathryn Herz & Eckhardt Böhlke

2nd: Martin Lofgren & Carl Ragnarsson

3rd: Val Bloom & Neville Eber

B Grade:

1st: Leora Fintz & Laureen Harris

2nd: Peter Terblanche and Guy Wilson

3rd: Nathan Herscovitz & Graham Sacks

C Grade:

1st: Kathy Botha & Andrzej Osinski

2nd: George Raymer & Daphne Ryder

3rd: Joyce Hessen & Aaron Seiker

Congratulations to all who participated!

When Oswald Jacoby was in his eighties, he bid every time it was his turn. His partners asked why. He said: "At my age the bidding may not get back around to me again."

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