

# SIMPLE BRIDGE

*By Simon Simple*

Hi. My name is Simon Simple. This is the story of how my twin sister Vera and I learnt to play bridge the "SIMPLE" way. I hope that by following what happened to US, you, the reader will be able to also learn to play bridge the SIMPLE way.

We started with a visit to someone recommended as a good bridge teacher. He shall remain nameless, but will be referred to in the story as the 'guru'.

From here on in, the story will take the form of a discussion between us and the 'Guru' and then, following the discussion, I will recount our actual learning experiences once we started to play against other learners. I hope you will find ALL of this of interest; if not, the good thing is that you will be able to skip past anything which does not appeal to you as of interest. Who knows, it MAY be of interest when you go back to it later.

# CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1.....	5
A VISIT TO THE GURU.....	5
CHAPTER 2.....	10
THE MECHANICS.....	10
CHAPTER 3.....	12
DUPLICATE BRIDGE.....	12
CHAPTER 4.....	14
THE AUCTION.....	14
CHAPTER 5.....	22
RECAPPING.....	22
TRUMPS.....	22
DECLARER, DUMMY, DEFENDERS.....	22
BIDDING: HOW TO GET TO PLAY THE HAND:.....	23
BIDDING CONSISTS OF ONE OR MORE OF THE FOLLOWING TERMS:.....	24
CHAPTER 6.....	25
THE POINT COUNT.....	25
CHOOSING A LOW LEVEL CONTRACT:.....	27
CHAPTER 7.....	30
OPENING BIDS.....	30
THE BASIC 'RULES':.....	30
YOUR OPENING BIDS:.....	30
CHAPTER 8.....	32
RESPONDING TO AN OPENING BID.....	32
CHAPTER 9.....	35
RESPONDING TO ONE DIAMOND.....	35
CHAPTER 10.....	36
RESPONDING TO ONE HEART.....	36
RESPONDING TO THE ONE SPADE OPENING.....	37
ONE SPADE OPENING, TWO CLUB RESPONSE.....	37
ONE SPADE OPENING, TWO DIAMOND RESPONSE.....	37
ONE SPADE OPENING, TWO HEART RESPONSE.....	37
CHAPTER 11.....	38
PARTNERSHIP BIDDING.....	38
THERE ARE TWO MAJOR OBJECTIVES IN BIDDING.....	38
BASIC BIDDING, THE SIMPLE WAY:.....	38
The 'LEVELS' of bidding:.....	38
CHAPTER 12.....	41
INTRODUCTION TO REBIDS.....	41
OPENING THE BIDDING:.....	41
THE TWO LEVEL.....	42
OPENER'S REBIDS:.....	42
1NT REBID.....	42
CHAPTER 13.....	44
REBIDS.....	44
"OPENING BID 1C, RESPONSE 1D.....	45
NO TRUMP REBIDS:.....	45
CLUB REBIDS:.....	45
RAISE OF PARTNER'S SUIT (DIAMONDS).....	46
OPENING BID 1C, RESPONSE 1H.....	46
OPENING BID 1C, RESPONSE 1S.....	46
OPENING BID 1C, RESPONSE 1NT.....	46
OPENING BID 1C, RESPONSE 2D, 2H, or 2S:.....	46
OPENING BID 1C, RESPONSE 2NT.....	46
OPENING BID 1C, RESPONSE 3NT.....	46

OPENING BID 1C, OTHER RESPONSES .....	46
<b>CHAPTER 14.....</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>MORE REBIDS.....</b>	<b>47</b>
OPENING BID 1C, RESPONSE 1H.....	47
OPENING BID 1C, RESPONSE 1S .....	47
OPENING BID 1C, RESPONSE 1NT .....	47
OPENING BID 1D, RESPONSE 1H.....	47
OPENING BID 1D, RESPONSE 1S .....	47
OPENING BID 1D, RESPONSE 1NT .....	47
OPENING BID 1D, RESPONSE 2C.....	47
OPENING BID 1D, RESPONSE 2H, 2S, or 3C .....	47
OPENING BID 1D, RESPONSE 2NT .....	48
OPENING BID 1H, RESPONSE 1S .....	48
OPENING BID 1H, RESPONSE 1NT .....	48
<b>CHAPTER 15.....</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>MORE ON GENERAL BIDDING.....</b>	<b>49</b>
<i>FORCING BIDS</i> .....	49
<i>RESPONSES</i> .....	49
<i>OTHER JUMPS</i> .....	49
<b>CHAPTER 16.....</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>SOME SIMPLE HANDS TO BID.....</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>CHAPTER 17.....</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>COMPETING .....</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>CHAPTER 18.....</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>TWO HANDS ARE BETTER THAN ONE .....</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>CHAPTER 19.....</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>CHAPTER 20.....</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>TWO HANDS.... AND PREMPTS .....</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>CHAPTER 21.....</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>COMBINED HANDS IV.....</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>CHAPTER 22.....</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>COMBINED HANDS V .....</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>CHAPTER 23.....</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>COMBINED HANDS VI.....</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>CHAPTER 24.....</b>	<b>81</b>
<b>THE PRACTICE SESSION .....</b>	<b>81</b>
<b>CHAPTER 25.....</b>	<b>93</b>
<b>DECLARER PLAY .....</b>	<b>93</b>
<i>SIMPLE DECLARER PLAY</i> .....	94
<i>TRUMPS AND NO TRUMPS</i> .....	94
<i>PLANNING YOUR PLAY</i> .....	95
In NO TRUMPS .....	95
FINESSING .....	95
SUIT (or TRUMP) CONTRACTS .....	96
<b>CHAPTER 26.....</b>	<b>98</b>
<b>SIMPLE DEFENCE .....</b>	<b>98</b>
<i>LEADS</i> .....	98
AGAINST A SUIT .....	99
AGAINST NO TRUMPS .....	99
SIGNALLING .....	100
DEFENDING AGAINST SUIT (TRUMP) CONTRACTS .....	100
TRUMP LEADS.....	100
<b>CHAPTER 27.....</b>	<b>101</b>
<b>HIGHER AND HIGHER.....</b>	<b>101</b>
<i>JUMPS</i> .....	102
JUMP SHIFTS.....	102

RESPONDER'S JUMP SHIFTS.....	103
<i>HIGHER LEVEL OPENINGS</i> .....	<i>103</i>
THE 2C OPENING: .....	103
THE 2D, 2H and 2S OPENINGS: .....	103
<i>HIGHER LEVEL OPENINGS</i> : .....	<i>104</i>

# CHAPTER 1

## A VISIT TO THE GURU

**Guru:** "Hello Vera, hi Simon. Glad to see two of the younger brigade wanting to learn our great game. You realise of course that there is NO card game as interesting and fascinating as bridge. Of course if you've played other card games like, for instance Whist, 500, Euchre, or even Poker, your learning of bridge will be that much easier. It helps to have an interest in cards generally, and definitely to have some of that undefinable quality that is called 'card sense'.

**Vera:** "We've certainly played lots of card games. So, what is the main element of bridge?"

**Guru:** "Too many elements for there to be a main one, but I suppose the TRICK is the one main element. Bridge is played by four people, each of whom is dealt a hand of 13 cards, that is, every card in the pack bar the joker. Bridge doesn't need any jokers, at least not among the cards anyway. Once each of the four players has played a card from their hand, that comprises a TRICK. The hand with the highest card is the winner of the TRICK. Since each person starts with 13 cards and plays ONE card on each trick, there are a total of THIRTEEN tricks to be made during the play of any hand."

**Simon:** "That's easy enough to follow. I presume that the aces are the highest cards and the two the lowest?"

**Guru:** "Correct. And play of each trick takes place in order, clockwise. There are, of course, SUITS within which to play: CLUBS, DIAMONDS, HEARTS, and SPADES. Everyone is familiar with THEM, and like in most other card games involving tricks, when a suit is led, each hand to play MUST follow with a card of the same suit. Only if they do not have a card of that suit can they play one from another suit. Also, as with many other card games, one suit may be TRUMPS, which means that the suit in question is the 'master' suit. EVERY card in THAT suit is higher than ANY card in any other suit. BUT, you must still always follow suit when you can; NOT following suit when you are able to, constitutes a REVOKE and there are set penalties for this, so it pays NOT to revoke, or renege which is another less common term for the same thing. Sometimes a hand may be played with one particular suit as trumps, sometimes with NO trumps. That all depends on how the AUCTION has gone and what the final CONTRACT is."

**Vera:** "AUCTION? CONTRACT? What are THEY?"

**Guru:** "Before I explain those terms, let me briefly explain the way bridge is played and how it is scored. There are a number of different TYPES of bridge, but they all rely on making TRICKS, which is what scores you the points. Bridge is played in partnerships, with ONE pair trying to make a set number of tricks, and the other pair trying to prevent it. The side which is trying to make the tricks has won the 'auction', in so far as they have outbid the other side. THEY now have to make the number of tricks they have stated they will make. THAT scores them points, but if they DON'T make the required tricks, THAT scores points for the other side; just how points are scored is somewhat complicated so we'll just concentrate on the AUCTION at this stage. Since the idea is to take MORE tricks than your opponents, and since there are times when you will want a certain suit to be trumps, you have to take part in the auction to determine two things:

WHICH SIDE will PLAY the hand, and which side will DEFEND it. The side that wins the auction PLAYS the hand, and only ONE of the partnership does that. The person who PLAYS the hand becomes the DECLARER, another term you're not yet familiar with. More confusion! The second thing that is determined during the auction is which suit is to be trumps, or whether the hand will be played in NO TRUMPS. Having a suit as trumps has distinct advantages, as you will find out later."

**Simon:** "So, how does the auction start and how does it proceed?"

**Guru:** "Since there are THIRTEEN tricks altogether, if you are to make more tricks than your opponents, you need to make at least SEVEN. But, instead of the auction beginning with 'seven', just to make things more complicated, or maybe easier, the lowest bid you can make is ONE something, meaning you will make SEVEN tricks. That is one more than your opponents, so that is the logical place to start in the bidding, wouldn't you say? I guess bidding SEVEN to say you'll make ALL the tricks is simpler than

bidding "THIRTEEN". By the way, if you DO bid and make ALL the tricks, that is known as a GRAND SLAM, you may have heard the term mentioned in other games, but more of that later. Don't forget that. When I first started bridge, I thought that it was like 500 but with a dummy hand, and OPENED the very first hand I played with a bid of SIX spades. Dummy produced a lot of good cards but I struggled vainly and made eleven tricks, which was not good enough. The error of my ways was VERY soon pointed out in no uncertain terms, but it was a good way to learn that ONE means SEVEN! Since you also may want a suit to be TRUMPS if you become the 'declaring' side, it is also necessary to have some sort of hierarchy for the different suits, so that the bidding can proceed not only through the different LEVELS, but also the different SUITS, if you see what I mean."

**Vera:** "No, I don't . Please explain."

**Guru:** "Because of the structure of bridge and the involvement of BIDDING, there has to be an order which places one suit higher than another . In games like Whist, there is no particular hierarchy of suits because all that those games involve is taking tricks, either with no trumps at all, or with one suit having been arbitrarily nominated as trumps. In games like '500' and bridge, which involve bidding, there is a hierarchy of suits. In BRIDGE, the lowest suit is CLUBS, then DIAMONDS, then HEARTS, with SPADES being the HIGHEST suit. And if you have any difficulty in remembering, they actually go in alphabetic order: C, D, H and S. As well as the SUITS, a hand can be played in NO TRUMPS, and NO TRUMPS is the HIGHEST of all the denominations."

**Simon:** "I see. The order of suits is different to those in 500 but I guess the rules of bidding are much the same, or are they?"

**Guru:** " In the sense that you can bid a HIGHER denomination and still offer to make the same number of tricks, that is correct. For instance, if you bid to make SEVEN tricks with CLUBS as trumps, and that is done by simply saying "ONE CLUB", your opponents can outbid you by offering to make the same number of tricks in ANY OTHER suit, or NO TRUMPS. But if you bid ONE SPADE, the opponents must now offer to make EIGHT tricks if they want to play with a different suit as trumps. They can, of course, bid ONE NO TRUMP, which means offering to take seven tricks, but without ANY suit as trumps. The main thing to remember, apart from the order of suits and that you cannot bid a lower suit at the same level once a higher suit has been bid, is that because bridge is a PARTNERSHIP game, your PARTNER is as much involved in the 'auction' as you are, and indeed both opponents are as well. The idea of bidding is to get to play the hand, at whatever level you can win the auction against your opponents. At least in the simplest form, anyway. There's much more to it than that of course."

**Vera:** "Presumably, we keep bidding until we win the auction and then we play the hand and make our tricks, and if we get what we have bid, we win the hand?"

**Guru:** "In simple terms, yes, but scoring can become quite involved, and there are also a number of different forms of bridge, with different ways of scoring and different objectives, so I think we'd better have a little history lesson at this stage. I know I hated History at school and Henry Ford can be quoted as saying that 'history is bunk' but maybe I should give you SOME background info? I'll skip it if you like."

**Simon and Vera (in unison):** "No, please do tell us. We're quite interested in how things originate."

**Guru:** "OK, I'll be as brief as I can, but please do stop me if it gets too boring. I can't guarantee that my version of the origins of bridge isn't tainted by hearsay and a lot of untruths, but here goes anyway. It appears that bridge first came into being when four gentlemen were playing WHIST. As they were about to start another hand, one of the gentlemen in question suddenly rose up, placed his hand (his CARDS, that is!) face up on the table, and said: 'sorry, but I've got a train to catch. You play my hand for me, partner', and with that off he went. That very act and the result, with ONE hand being placed on the table for ALL others to see, and being played by the partner, gave birth to the game of bridge."

**Simon:** "That's hardly fair. If I can see my partner's hand, surely I can tell what cards I should play for both myself and partner. The unfortunate opponents still have to guess."

**Guru:** "Precisely. But you'd be surprised how even seeing BOTH the hands, it's still not as easy as all that. And that is exactly what makes for such an interesting and skilful game. You see, the person that ends up

playing BOTH the hands has all the information available about their combined hands, but still has a lot of guesswork and analysis to do to determine what each opponent may hold, and of course a lot of thinking and ingenuity is often required to make as many tricks as possible even WHEN you see both hands. The opponents also are not entirely playing in the dark, because THEY can each see ONE of their opponents' hands. While we're talking about one person playing two hands and opponents playing each of theirs, let me introduce you to a couple of bridge terms. Firstly, the person who ends up playing the two hands is known as the DECLARER, and the opponents become the DEFENDERS. The hand which is on the table, and belongs to the guy who's gone to catch his train, is known as DUMMY. 'Dummy' is, during the play of the hand, just that. Dummy SAYS NOTHING, and DOES nothing except play the cards nominated by the declarer. The French call dummy 'LE MORT' which, if you're familiar with the language, means 'The dead one'. Just like the guy who had the train to catch, dummy is no longer in the game in any way, until the next hand, when we are back to four people, two against two, until one of them once more becomes the dummy for the play of the next hand. Being dummy does have its advantages. At least you can't be blamed for making a mistake during the play of the hand!"

**Vera:** "I think I WOULD rather be dummy, but I'm sure it wouldn't suit YOU, Simon. You'd probably hog the bidding to ensure that YOU got to play the hand."

**Guru:** "He probably would, but let me say here and now, that doing that is NOT a good idea. Once you learn to bid, you must make sure you do NOT bid in such a way that you hog the contract, because nothing is more important, in an INTELLIGENT partnership, than playing the hand in the proper CONTRACT, irrespective of WHO plays it. But to get back to the 'contract': whatever the end result of the bidding, or 'auction' is, that becomes the final "CONTRACT" which means in effect that the side playing it have CONTRACTED to make a certain number of tricks, and must do so in order that the contract is fulfilled. Hence the more normal term for bridge these days: CONTRACT BRIDGE. You see, there WERE other forms of bridge in the old days, and I'll tell you about them now."

**Vera:** "This IS becoming awfully involved, but please go on. We'll get the idea I'm sure."

**Guru:** "OK. Anyway, once bridge came into being in the sense that now there was a DUMMY in each hand, so too the game evolved into more complicated forms, where BIDDING, or the AUCTION, was a more and more crucial part of the game. In the early forms of bridge, there were two forms of the game: AUCTION bridge, and RUBBER bridge. AUCTION bridge involved bidding until one side outbid the other, and then declarer had to make the required tricks. That's ALL there was to the game. If your side bid to e.g. THREE SPADES, declarer had to make NINE tricks to make the contract. It did not matter whether declarer made any more than that, and once the contract was made, 30 points were scored for every trick declarer made, but for every trick declarer fell short by, their side LOST 50 points. A good, simple, and easy way to score. THEN, the game evolved into RUBBER BRIDGE. People were wanting to be more competitive, and even play for money. There was a lot of bridge played for quite high stakes once rubber bridge came into being, and I'd better give you a more detailed run down of how rubber bridge was played, because a LOT of scoring in modern day contract bridge, especially the 'DUPLICATE' game mainly played at clubs, is based on rubber bridge, and rubber bridge is still a very popular form of the game."

**Vera:** "Playing for money sounds like a risky business. Again, I can see Simon getting into it, you don't think you can lose at ANYTHING, Simon, do you?"

**Guru:** "You probably won't in the end, but let me assure you it is NOT a good idea to start your bridge days by playing for money because you'll LOSE, nothing is surer, even if you think you might be lucky in getting good cards, because irrespective of how lucky you are in getting good cards dealt to you, SKILL is the most important factor even in rubber bridge, and until you learn your skills, there will be lots of losses at the rubber bridge table if you try it too early."

**Simon:** "Point taken. Were YOU playing for money when you opened six spades thinking you needed to make only seven tricks?"

**Guru:** "Rubber bridge can be likened to a game of tennis. First you have to score points to win the game. Then you have to win the set, then you have to win two sets and you've won the match. In bridge, you score 100 points and you've won a GAME, and if you win two games out of three, you win the RUBBER. Much the same. You win a GAME by scoring 100 points which can be made up by bidding and making contracts

that add up to 100, either in one go, or from a number of 'part' scores which add up to 100. Rubber bridge can become quite an exciting battle, especially when played by experts, but more of that later. At this stage let me tell you about the scoring and how games, and rubbers, are won. To win a game, you need to score 100 points from scores obtained when playing and making your contracts. This can be done in one hand, or accumulated from a number of hands. But as soon as the 100 is reached, you have won a GAME, and as soon as you win a second game, you win the RUBBER. To get to your score of 100, you get points for bidding and making your contracts, as follows:

If you play with CLUBS or DIAMONDS as trumps, for each trick over six that you bid and make, you score 20. Thus, ONE CLUB, bid and made, is worth 20. TWO is worth 40, and so on. That means that to bid and make GAME in ONE hand, you need to bid and make FIVE clubs. HEARTS and SPADES are worth 30 for each trick (over six) bid and made, and hence you need to bid only FOUR hearts or spades to get your game, since  $4 \times 30 = 120$ . The HIGHEST denomination is NO TRUMPS, and in No Trumps, you score 40 for bidding and making ONE No Trump (SEVEN tricks) but for every subsequent trick you score 30. That, very conveniently, adds up to 100 for THREE No Trumps, doesn't it?"

**Simon:** "I was wondering about how you scored points. Wouldn't you just bid THREE NO TRUMPS every time you thought you had a chance of making, then? And what is there to stop you from bidding more than your opponents each time, just to stop THEM scoring points for making contracts?"

**Guru:** "Much more than you think. You recall that I mentioned that in the original form of bridge you lost 50 points for every trick you fell short of your contract by. That did not prove very satisfactory and spoiled the game for those who wanted to hog the bidding, so greater penalties were introduced. In fact in rubber bridge, the penalties became such that you could lose far more than the rubber, in money terms.

As for bidding 3NT every time, that too is only a good idea if you can MAKE nine tricks in No Trumps. While you very astutely worked out that only nine tricks are required in No Trumps, it is not necessarily the easiest contract to make for two reasons: firstly, unlike in some other card games e.g. 500, declarer does not get the first play. The DEFENDERS are the first to lead to the first trick, therefore you should only bid 3NT if you have reason to believe that opponents cannot run at least five tricks in THEIR suit. Secondly, it helps to have a trump suit as long as you have at least eight cards between your two hands in that suit, because you WILL be able to make more tricks as a rule, and trumps also give you CONTROL over your opponents. That's where the bidding, in particular, becomes quite important. But right now, let me tell you how the rubber bridge scoring worked.

I'm not sure at what stage of the game, or in which FORM of the game it came about, but soon enough people got sick of the overbidders. They introduced two concepts: the DOUBLE, and to make things even more complicated, VULNERABILITY!

To start with **DOUBLE**: if you thought your opponents had gone too far and would not be able to make what they had said they would, you could DOUBLE, which effectively doubled the stakes, so I guess it probably came in with rubber bridge. Instead of losing 50 for every trick you were SHORT of your contract, you lost ONE HUNDRED. But when even THAT did not seem to deter some people, they increased the doubled stakes to 100 for the FIRST trick you were short by, then 200 for every subsequent one. AND AS IF THAT wasn't enough to complicate matters, your opponents were able to REDOUBLE if they thought they COULD make their contract! That increased the original penalties FOURFOLD! The mind boggles, but your mind will boggle even further when I tell you that, as though that wasn't enough, the concept of VULNERABILITY was also introduced. This was very much a thing peculiar to rubber bridge. When you had won your first game of your rubber, and only needed to win another to win the rubber, you became what was known as VULNERABLE. That meant that if you got your game you won the rubber, and for that you would get an extra bonus in the scoring (700 for a 'two game rubber' as against 500 for a 'three game rubber'). Being VULNERABLE automatically meant that you paid DOUBLE if you overreached yourselves, and if your opponents DOUBLED you as well, the costs could be horrendous! All this might have made for greater excitement and a fairer way of scoring, but certainly added to the complications of the game, and these complications are all part of the modern game, for better or worse.

We'll look at how the business of Vulnerability and Doubling and Redoubling works in a game of rubber bridge, but suffice to say at this stage that MODERN scoring is based on the concept of vulnerability and the DOUBLE and REDOUBLE, which are both part of the legitimate bidding vocabulary. Modern scoring



is so finely tuned now, that there is a very fine line between what you can score through BIDDING AND MAKING contracts, and through DOUBLING your opponents when they have gone too far. But let's get back to rubber bridge, if you want to persevere with all that. On the other hand, if you like, we can get straight to the nitty gritty of how bridge is played at the bridge clubs these days."

**Vera:** "Perhaps that might be a good idea. I don't think I can get much more of this rubber bridge and vulnerable business into my head. Tell us how bridge is played at the clubs, and we can then go back to how rubber bridge was, and I suppose still is, played. Don't you think so, Simon?"

**Simon:** "I'm quite enjoying this rubber stuff. Would be great to play against some of the rich and ignorant players and take them to the cleaners. One of my friends tells me that the way HE learnt was by losing money at rubber bridge. He reckons you start learning VERY quickly and then start winning. But no, I guess you're right. Let's talk about the actual way that bridge is played at the clubs."

When you go along to the club for your first session of bridge, you will be playing what is known as 'duplicate match point bridge'.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE MECHANICS

**Guru:** "Rubber bridge, as you may have guessed, could very much depend on luck: if you were dealt better cards than your opponents, you stood a better chance of making your contracts and scoring your points, all of which added to the money in your pocket. Some people were, and people like me still ARE, well known to be notoriously BAD at getting decent hands dealt to them, so it was soon enough that someone was bound to come up with a way to score which would eliminate the luck factor. Thus came into being 'DUPLICATE' bridge, and 'MATCH POINT' scoring, both of which together were meant to eliminate the luck factor so that the best PLAYERS stood the best chance of winning. Let me say here that even in this system of play and scoring, luck is not entirely eliminated. But at least it IS kept to having a minimum influence on the results.

In DUPLICATE bridge, EVERYONE plays the same hands, and results are compared to see who has done best given the same hands to bid, play, and defend."

**Vera:** "How is THAT possible? Surely everyone CANT play the same hands and not know what's in them unless there is a huge amount of duplication of hands and that would take far too long!"

**Guru:** "You're quite right in fact, NOT everyone plays the same hands against everyone else, but a system has been developed where you DO come pretty close to playing the same hands in competition with everyone else. This is how it works, and you are about to learn a few more important bridge terms and conventions. During any one session of play there will be a number of PAIRS playing. Remember, bridge is a partnership game and in this form is played as a PAIRS event. Let's say there are a total of 26 PAIRS playing in the session. That makes a total of 13 TABLES. To start with, any two pairs seat themselves at a table, the partners opposite each other. Each position at the table is assigned the position of NORTH, EAST, SOUTH, or WEST. North and South are partners, and East and West are their opponents. The directions are for convenience of terminology, though the way some people carry on you'd think they were magnetically programmed to HAVE to sit in exactly the geographic position that their direction is in! Anyway, the starting positions are normally determined by cutting the cards, with the pair cutting the highest card sitting NORTH and SOUTH.

The cards are then dealt and play begins. After the play of the hand, the hands and the result are recorded on what is known as a TRAVELLING SCORE CARD. A specially manufactured BOARD which holds the cards and score card is used for play, and the hands are contained in separate pockets on the board, so that they can stay with the board during the course of the full round of play. On the board are marked the DIRECTIONS, the VULNERABILITY, who the DEALER is, and the NUMBER of the board. The play of ONE board normally takes about SEVEN minutes. In any one session there are normally between 22 and 26 boards played.

To go back to my example of a contest between 26 pairs, 13 pairs sitting North South and 13 sitting East West. When the first hand has been played and the hands recorded and result entered, the EAST WEST pair move on to the next table and play the next board against another North South pair. The BOARD is passed back in the opposite direction. East West thus keep moving after each board and play a different hand against a different North South pair each time."

**Vera:** "But if you go round one way and the board goes in the other direction, don't you come across the board you started with half way round?"

**Simon:** "Not if you started with an odd number of tables. Half way round you'll be moving from table 6 to table 7 while the board will be moving from table 7 to table 6, won't it?"

**Guru:** "Very good, Simon, you catch on fast. The trouble is that some of the time you'll start with an EVEN number of tables, and then you'll be coming to the half way table at the same time as the board. When that happens, you have to SKIP that table and move to the next one. In every session there is someone who organises these things and controls the play and movement, ensuring that all the bridge is played according to the laws. That person is the 'director'. A director is very much necessary, and should be

called ANY time anything happens that creates a problem, and you'd be surprised how many problems DO arise that need to be referred to the director, at ANY level of play. Anyway, you play the hand, the result is recorded on the travelling score card, by SOUTH, who writes in the CONTRACT, who it was played by (N,S,E or W), the RESULT (e.g. whether the contract makes, and how many tricks, or goes down and by how many) and the actual SCORE. Oh, and also the East West pair NUMBER. Each pair has to have a NUMBER so that the scoring is easier, and both the NS and EW pairs take the number of the table they started at. Each time the result is written in by South, you'll hear South ask the EW pair for their number. As a rule, EAST checks the score and agrees by initialling the card in the space provided. All very formal but necessary in case of any disputes. When the director calls for EW to move, each EW pair moves on to the next table and passes the board BACK one table. Then they play the next board and so on. After the board has been played at every table, there are thirteen scores if there were thirteen tables and all of these scores could be different. In fact they usually are, depending on how the bidding and play has gone. YOUR score on each board is compared to the scores of the other 12 pairs and then MATCH POINTED. It's like getting a score out of ten, but match points depend on the number of times the hand has been played. THEN, all the match points are added up and finally converted to a PERCENTAGE score. Match pointing is quite easy to learn to do, but no point in me telling you how now. High percentages are not easy to obtain because of the great variety of results on each board, and it is very seldom that a score of over 70% is achieved. MOSTLY, top scores for a session are just over the 60% mark."

**Vera:** "If that is the way you score results, you're not really playing AGAINST your opponents at the table, are you? Aren't you competing against the others playing in the same direction?"

**Guru:** "Precisely. While you play against your opponents on any one hand, there is in fact a score worked out for every NORTH SOUTH pair, and a score for every EAST WEST pair based on THEIR comparative scores, and there can be no direct comparison between the pairs sitting in opposite directions. When you look at the scores as they are posted, you'll see a NORTH SOUTH column, and an EAST WEST column. The top NS score might be 68% and the top EW score 58%, and there's little the EW pair could have done to stop the top NS pair getting such a high score, and there IS an element of luck involved in who you happen to play against on any one board, and what the people who play against you do. Similarly, what people sitting at other tables might do on the same board could well affect your result on the board without any bad play on your part. But, all in all, it is a fair method to arrive at an end result which reflects the relative merits of all the pairs playing in the event. And another thing: most events are played over three or four sessions, and when the totals for the sessions are added up, the fairest result is normally arrived at. When we look through some travelling score cards, you'll be able to see exactly how the system works."

**Simon:** "That sounds like a good exercise. But tell us more about the bidding and play, and the scoring that gives you a result to PUT on this travelling score card."

**Guru:** "Yes, that seems to be a very much needed prerequisite to play doesn't it? If you don't know how you go about bidding, and how play takes place, and how a score on any one hand is arrived at, you can hardly go and play can you? OK, where to start? I guess we start from when you and your partner have sat down, determined who sits where, dealt the cards, and are ready to start. Right?"

**Vera and Simon:** "RIGHT"

## CHAPTER 3

### DUPLICATE BRIDGE

**Guru:** "Duplicate bridge is based on rubber bridge in such a way that on each hand, different conditions that may apply in a game of rubber bridge are assigned to each hand that is played. That is why I felt it was important to tell you SOMETHING about rubber bridge. You recall that in rubber bridge, when you score 100 for bidding and playing a contract, you score GAME, and then you become VULNERABLE, and then if you win a second game you win the rubber. That all takes course over at LEAST two hands, and one rubber can take a LONG time. So, to simulate what could be happening at any given stage of a game of rubber bridge, duplicate bridge gives each hand played a DEALER and a VULNERABILITY. For instance, on BOARD 1, NORTH is the dealer, and NEITHER side is vulnerable. Just like it may be when the rubber is starting. On BOARD THREE, SOUTH is dealer and EAST WEST are vulnerable, which might be the case after a few hands at rubber after East West have got their 100 for game. NOW, they are in a position to win the rubber. On hand FOUR, BOTH sides are vulnerable, in effect meaning that BOTH sides can win the rubber by bidding and making game. Having imposed those conditions, it is also necessary to create a scoring system which reflects the possible gains if either side bids game or slam. Or FAIL to make their contract, or get DOUBLED and fail. In rubber bridge, the bonus for a TWO game rubber is 700, added to whatever you have scored. For a THREE game rubber, the bonus is 500. For failing to make the contract, the penalty is 50 for each NON vulnerable undertrick if NOT doubled, and 100 for each VULNERABLE undertrick. But if you're DOUBLED, the penalty is 100 for the FIRST undertrick not vulnerable then 200 for each of the next two, and 300 subsequent to that. Incidentally that last one, 300 after the first three undertricks, only came in a few years ago; it used to be 200 for each undertrick after the first one, but this allowed for too many inequitable sacrifices by opponents....."

**Vera:** "Whoa! First you start talking about SLAMS, then sacrifices. Don't you think you better slow down and start using terms we have HEARD of, or at least explain them before using them?"

**Guru:** "Sorry, it's almost as difficult following a meaningful sequence of patter as it is to learn the game. You really need not concern yourselves with 'slams' at this stage, but for what it's worth, a SMALL slam is when you bid and make TWELVE tricks, i.e. SIX something. A GRAND slam is when you bid to make ALL the tricks. There are considerable bonuses on top of your score for slams, that is on top of whatever you get for making GAME. Game, you know about, and also that there are bonuses for winning a rubber. Well, in Duplicate, where there are different conditions for each hand, the closest approximation to rubber bridge scoring is to add a bonus of 300 for a NON vulnerable game bid and made, and 500 for a VULNERABLE game bid and made. If game is NOT bid, then there is a small bonus for having bid and made what is known as a PART SCORE: 50 added to your score for tricks made. SLAM bonuses vary according to vulnerability also, but you probably won't remember them, nor do you need to at this stage."

**Vera:** "And what about sacrifices?"

**Guru:** "Remember when I said that some people used to bid just to stop opponents playing the hand, and doubling and redoubling was introduced? Well, when the scoring included bonuses for game or even a measly extra 50 for 'part score', it may be profitable for opponents to keep bidding even if they get DOUBLED and taken down in their contract. Such a bid, normally against a GAME bid by opponents, is known as a sacrifice. When you play rubber bridge, you may at times be tempted to sacrifice just to stop your opponents winning the rubber, but doing that can just throw good money after bad. I used to just love playing against people who didn't want us to win the rubber. We eventually did anyway, or even if we lost the rubber we won the money when all their penalties were added in! Like winning the battle and losing the war! Oddly enough, in DUPLICATE bridge such conditions cannot be replicated accurately, and sacrificing CAN in fact be a VERY useful ploy on any ONE hand. For instance, if opponents have bid, and will make, a vulnerable GAME, they will score say 600. If YOU, being NOT vulnerable, overbid them and get doubled and fail by THREE tricks, you lose 500. That is a saving of 100 in real terms, and hardly worth the effort at rubber bridge, but at DUPLICATE, if YOU are the only ones to find the excellent sacrifice, and every OTHER pair has been allowed to play their game and make 600, YOUR -500 will score you 100% on the board. Minus 800 of course would score you 0% so there is a great deal of judgement involved. Sacrifice bidding is quite an art, and plays an important role in MATCH POINT play. But DON'T get too carried away with the idea once you start to play at the club, merely remember what it's about."

**Simon:** "I'll certainly remember. Sounds like my sort of game. I have never liked opponents winning the auction at ANY game."

**Guru:** "You WILL have to curb your aggression at times, Simon, if you're to make the complete bridge player, but a good aggressive attitude is certainly no handicap in bridge. JUDGEMENT though, as to WHEN to be aggressive, is equally important.....Now, what was I saying? Oh yes, the scoring at duplicate. On each hand your score is recorded and compared to all the others. Remember, 100 for GAME, plus bonuses according to vulnerability, but ALSO what you lose when you DON'T make what you have bid. So, it's not much use just sitting down at the table and bidding or not bidding according to your whim. You have to have some idea whether your hand is good enough to bid and make any contract, at least in conjunction with your PARTNER'S hand, and that is where skill in bidding and communication is so important. But before I give you a way of deciding whether or not to bid, and HOW to bid and communicate (LEGALLY!) with your partner, let me go over the MECHANICS of the bidding as it happens at the table.

The DEALER is the first person to bid. Dealer may PASS or open the bidding with any bid from ONE CLUB up, clubs being the LOWEST denomination and ONE being the starting point in terms of number of tricks, above the 'base' number which is six. Bidding proceeds CLOCKWISE and in turn. There are penalties for bidding when it is NOT your turn to bid. Each person may PASS, or make a 'sufficient' bid by bidding a number and denomination that is higher than the previous call. For instance if dealer opens the bidding with ONE HEART, the next bidder can bid ONE SPADE or ONE NO TRUMP at the same LEVEL, but must bid TWO if they want to bid clubs or diamonds. DOUBLE, and REDOUBLE, are also legitimate bids as long as the DOUBLE follows a bid in a denomination last made by either opponent, and a redouble follows a DOUBLE last made by either opponent. Bidding ENDS when there have been THREE PASSES following the last bid. Any hand may bid at any stage as long as it is their turn to bid, there are no rules as e.g. in 500 that if you pass the first time, you cannot bid again. In fact in bridge, bidding in support and in cooperation WITH your partner is a very important facet of the game. Circumstances change during the auction, so all you have to remember is that, as long as the auction remains open, you CAN enter the bidding at any time. Of course it does not pay to open with a poor hand or to PASS with a GOOD hand because, in the first case you may get too high with too little, and in the second case the others may ALL pass and you will NOT get a second chance to bid and the hand will be passed out! How to evaluate your hand, and when to bid and when not, is one of the three vital parts of the game, the others being PLAYING the hand as DECLARER, and DEFENCE.

In the old days all bidding was verbal, but today all bidding is either WRITTEN, or by use of what are known as BIDDING BOXES. Let's stick to written bidding because that is the most common.

Written bidding takes place on special bidding pads. A pass is denoted by a diagonal line, bids are made in the normal abbreviated bidding annotation, e.g. 1S, 2NT, 3C, etc. A DOUBLE is indicated by two crossed diagonal lines and REDOUBLE by TWO such crosses within the one bidding space. The FINAL pass, to denote the termination of the auction, is made by writing two parallel diagonal lines.

In bidding, the important things to note are that:

**YOU MUST ONLY BID WHEN IT IS YOUR TURN and  
BIDDING IS ONLY OVER AFTER THREE PASSES.**

And of course, that DEALER bids first, and that bidding proceeds clockwise, the same as the PLAY."

## CHAPTER 4

### THE AUCTION

**Guru:** "Let's say you're now sitting at the table having dealt the first board. Remember, once the board has been dealt, it will then be played by every other pair playing in the session, so make sure that AFTER the hand has been played you return YOUR hand to the pocket that belongs to your position, whether you're North, South, East or West. It's not uncommon at all to see people put their hands back in the wrong pockets, or to get some of the cards from one hand mixed up in another. That's why it is extremely important that you follow a proper procedure: first, when you take your hand out of the pocket, you should COUNT THE CARDS. This at least ensures that you have the correct number of cards. Then, when you play each board and finish it, you must ensure that the cards are ALL returned to where they came from. Sounds easy but that is one of the director's major problems as a rule, so try not to add to them."

**Vera:** "I CAN see how you could get all sorts of results if you put two hands in the wrong pockets. I suppose that's why it's important to record the hands so there is a record of how they were in then first place. OK, so we now know what we do to start, how the bidding proceeds, and that we can bid at any time as long as it is our turn to bid. AND the scoring. Presumably South should be someone who is good at working out the scores so that it doesn't take another five minutes to write the scores down once the hand has been played."

**Guru:** "Yes, that can be an absolute pain in the neck for a director. To help with scoring, at most clubs the table number and direction indicator board has a complete reference table on the back, from 1C making 1 not vulnerable to 7NT doubled and redoubled down 13 vulnerable, which incidentally is the highest you can score. Most people think 7NT doubled and redoubled MAKING is the highest but it isn't at all. But my main point is that a LOT of scoring does NOT need to be worked out by looking up the table. Yes, I see time and time again, people looking the table up each time, even when the contract is say TWO HEARTS making TWO, 1NT making 1, or even 3NT making 3. I suggest YOU TWO learn how to at least work out the EASY ones and only refer to the table for such things as 2D REDOUBLED making 4 not vulnerable! The PENALTIES should ALL be easy enough to calculate but I HAVE seen people look up EVERY score, even e.g. FOUR SPADES, NOT VULNERABLE, ONE DOWN."

**Simon:** "Surely that's just pure ignorance. Even I know already that you lose 50 for every trick you're down by when not vulnerable. Good grief!"

**Guru:** "Yes, exactly, but believe me, people DO do it!"

**Vera:** "Please tell us now about bidding. Or maybe do you think we should just go along and play and see what happens?"

**Guru:** "Maybe you SHOULD just go and play. Dive in the deep end as they say. But before you do that, just let me deal out a few hands for you and you can tell me what you think about them. While I do that, why don't you and Simon pop out to the kitchen and make us all a cup of tea?"

**Vera:** "Great idea. Let's do that, Simon, and leave our friend here to deal out the hands."

So off we went to make supper and after our return and a cup of tea and bickies, this is what awaited us.

**Guru:** "OK, here we go. Let's look at hand one. Would you say it's a GOOD, BAD, or INDIFFERENT one?"

**Hand 1:**

- ♠ 8 4
- ♥ K 2
- ♦ K 9 7 6 4 3 2
- ♣ J 2

Simon and Vera: "BAD".

**Hand 2:**        ♠ A 9 7 2  
                  ♥ A 6 4  
                  ♦ A Q 5  
                  ♣ Q 9 4

**Simon:** "GOOD."

**Vera:** "INDIFFERENT"

**Guru:** "Some disagreement I see. Why do you say good, Simon?"

**Simon:** "Because it's got three aces in it. I know I could make at least THREE tricks with that hand!"

**Vera:** "THREE tricks doesn't get you anywhere near SEVEN, does it? And even if you were to bid just ONE spade you would need to take SEVEN tricks!"

**Guru:** "Well, perhaps you're BOTH right, or wrong! Let's look at the next one."

**Hand 3:**        ♠ K Q 10 8 4  
                  ♥ 9 2  
                  ♦ K 10 9 6  
                  ♣ J 2

**Vera:** "That I would certainly say is about an average hand."

**Simon:** "This time I agree entirely."

**Guru:** "Good, we're getting some agreement."

**Hand 4:**        ♠ A 7  
                  ♥ Q 7 6 4  
                  ♦ A 8 5  
                  ♣ Q 9 4 3

**Simon:** "Another pretty average sort of hand. No one could argue with THAT, surely?"

**Vera:** "No, they couldn't, could they?"

**Hand 5:**        ♠ K 10 8 6 5 4 3  
                  ♥ 9 8 2  
                  ♦ 7  
                  ♣ A 2

**Simon:** "That's a GOOD hand."

**Vera:** "Who're you kidding? Load of rubbish!"

**Simon:** "SEVEN spades, and spades is the highest suit. I could outbid the opponents!"

**Vera:** "What? All on your OWN?"

**Guru:** "I think you've put your hand on the very crux of the matter Vera. But Simon MAY be right, he may be wrong. Everything would depend on who had the rest of the spades, and whether your partner had any other useful cards. I notice you've both been looking at your hands in isolation, and this is the first time either of you have mentioned 'partner'. Good, that's a start anyway. Let's look at the rest of the hands."

**Hand 6:**        ♠ A 9 7 2  
                  ♥ 7  
                  ♦ A J 8 5  
                  ♣ 9 6 4 3

**Simon:** "BAD."

**Vera:** "INDIFFERENT. In fact it's a hand that has POTENTIAL. Going on our previous discussion, it's a hand that could be VERY GOOD or USELESS, depending on what partner had."

**Guru:** "Great, Vera, you're getting the idea."

**Hand 7:**        ♠ K Q J 8 4 3  
                  ♥ K J 10 8 2  
                  ♦ 7  
                  ♣ 2

**Vera:** "Average."

**Simon:** "GREAT HAND! Depending on what PARTNER has of course, but partner would need very FEW of the right cards for us to make a heap of tricks as long as we can play in the suit with the best TRUMPS between us."

**Guru:** "Absolutely, Simon. When you have a good FIT in a trump suit, you can achieve wonders. WITHOUT a fit, on the other hand, the hand is useless. Can you see NOW that you should NEVER bid just your OWN hand without thinking about how best to communicate with your PARTNER? Let's look at the other five hands now."

**Hand 8:**        ♠ 7  
                  ♥ Q 7 6 4  
                  ♦ Q J 8 5  
                  ♣ 9 6 4 3

Simon and Vera in unison: "THAT is clearly a USELESS hand."

**Guru:** "You certainly wouldn't dream of opening the bidding with that, would you? But don't forget your partner!"

**Hand 9:**        ♠ K Q J 10 8 6 5 4 3  
                  ♥ K 2  
                  ♦ 6  
                  ♣ 2

**Simon:** "WOW. Now THAT is a GREAT hand! I could just about have a crack at game all on my own. But of COURSE, partner would still need to contribute SOMETHING."

**Vera:** "The hand certainly has a great trick taking potential in spades. But still only eight CERTAIN tricks and partner would need to be able to contribute SOMETHING. An ACE would be wonderful, and if it was the ace of HEARTS my eight certain tricks would suddenly become TEN."

**Guru:** "Very observant of you Vera. ONE good card in partner's hand can often make a world of difference, but a word of warning. DON'T bid in the HOPE that partner has a certain card or cards. THAT normally leads to disaster because partners do NOT have the cards you would LIKE them to have, their entitlement to SPECIFIC cards is no greater than anyone else's. SOMETIMES, of course, you'll have a better idea whether partner MIGHT have certain cards, and there ARE ways of finding many of these things out, as you will learn at a later stage."



**Hand 10:**  
♠ A 7  
♥ A 7 6 4  
♦ A J 5  
♣ 9 6 4 3

**Vera:** "I think that we all agree here once more that this is an average sort of hand, perhaps a bit BETTER than average."

**Guru:** "Quite. This type of hand IS a slightly better than average hand, and that's about all that can be said for it. Let's see the next one."

**Hand 11:**  
♠ 6  
♥ K J 10 9 8 2  
♦ K 9 7 6 4  
♣ A

**Vera:** "I would say that this is a GOOD hand, similar to the earlier one which had all those spades, except that this time it is a TWO SUITER. Given that a fit can be found in either red suit, the hand has excellent trick taking potential."

**Simon:** "Wow, Vera, you've certainly picked up the bridge jargon! FIT, TWO SUITER, RED SUITS, POTENTIAL. You're beginning to sound like the Guru! VERY impressive, and I can only agree with everything you just said."

**Guru:** "The sneaky devil must have been reading bridge books, Simon. She probably knows more than she's letting on!"

**Hand 12:**  
♠ A 9 7  
♥ Q 7 6  
♦ A Q J 5  
♣ Q 9 4

**Simon:** "This hand is very much the same as the last but one. Apart from then fact that it has an extra queen or jack, if I recall."

**Guru:** "Yes, not too different and a bit better than the earlier one. But that extra queen could be quite crucial in making an extra trick, and because tricks are so important towards bidding AND making your game, the queens and jacks ARE important cards, not that ALL cards aren't important, but some are more important than others. The ACES of course are the most important because THEY are the highest in any one suit, and the ace of TRUMPS is absolutely supreme, like the Joker in games where the Joker is in play. But I digress.

Before I tell you the secrets of bidding and evaluating your hand, let's just go back to the hands you just looked at and try and put them in some sort of perspective, that is, WITH PARTNER'S hand opposite. Let's just take the ODD numbered hands and then put them with the next highest EVEN numbered hand, and see what we can see, shall we?"

The hands were duly laid out and we were now looking at the following PAIRS of hands together:

**Guru:** "Let's now look at the hands as they were dealt TOGETHER. When you see bidding problems, or hands written out for both of a partnership, the normal thing to do is to make one of them WEST and the other EAST. That way they can be referred to more easily. The other thing to think about is that this is a fairly artificial situation, as you will come to realise, because when you actually PLAY the hands you will be playing them against OPPONENTS, and most of the time bidding will be competitive and not always will opponents have the courtesy to keep quiet and let you bid without their interference. For these hands, though, we'll just look to see how TWO hands make up the total hand and not just one. Bridge is definitely

a case of the whole being bigger than the sum of its parts, something worth remembering when you bid your hands. OK let's have a look at them."

<b>Hand 1+2:</b>	<b>West</b>	<b>East</b>
	♠ 8 4	♠ A 9 7 2
	♥ K 2	♥ A 6 4
	♦ K 9 7 6 4 3 2	♦ A Q 5
	♣ J 2	♣ Q 9 4

**Guru:** "What do you notice about THIS hand, taken the two hands together?"

**Vera:** "That there is a great diamond fit, with East having the two vital diamond cards. West isn't to know THAT!"

**Guru:** "No, but if EAST has an idea about WEST'S hand, that may be a different story. But what else is significant about this hand? Do the cards combine to make GAME certain, or even likely?"

**Simon:** "If you play in diamonds, you can make seven diamond tricks and the ace king of hearts plus the ace of spades, so you can make FOUR diamonds and that is only worth EIGHTY. Maybe you could come to an extra trick somewhere, your opponents may not discard properly or give you an extra trick from bad play?"

**Guru:** "What do YOU think, Vera?"

**Vera:** "Well, it looks to me also that making eleven tricks in diamonds is unlikely. We could make ten tricks in NO TRUMPS if the opponents didn't take their tricks first. We don't have much by way of stops in spades OR clubs.....but whoa! YES, we don't NEED any more than we have. I've just realised that even though the opponents are on LEAD, and even though both West's and East's clubs are pretty poor, between them, they have a CERTAIN club stop! Irrespective of which opponent leads a club, all you have to do is to play LOW from the next hand. Third hand to play will HAVE to produce the king or ace to stop us winning the first trick, and NOW, when the OTHER top card is played, it will drop the JACK, but the queen will become a trick, and more importantly, a STOPPER so opponents CAN'T run clubs!"

**Guru:** "You have struck on two very important points there, Vera. Firstly, that the opponents DO have the lead to start with, and that it is dangerous to bid No Trumps if you think that they can take a lot of tricks by running THEIR suit. But if you have an idea that you may have even a tenuous stop in opponents' suit, and have a good suit of your own, you CAN run a number of tricks in No Trumps. Nevertheless, you'll notice that the same thing is NOT likely to happen if you're playing in a DIAMOND contract. An opponent MAY lead a club to start with, but GOOD opponents will realise that if you are playing the hand in DIAMONDS, setting up a club trick by CONTINUING the suit will NOT help them. So, they will switch to a SPADE, which will set up a SPADE trick for THEM, BEFORE the queen of clubs becomes a trick. Play and defence varies considerably between TRUMP, and NO TRUMP contracts. But I wasn't even going to talk about such things until much later, you're probably totally confused by now."

**Simon:** "Yes, but I have just come to one conclusion. Correct me if I'm wrong. If I am to bid GAME and have a good fit in CLUBS or DIAMONDS with partner, I would be better off looking for the possibility of a NO TRUMP contract because NINE tricks are easier than ELEVEN. But if I have the same thing in HEARTS or SPADES, I'm better off bidding four of THEM."

**Guru:** "Right on the button, Simon. Incidentally, because of that very thing, clubs and diamonds are known as the MINOR suits (or MINORS) and hearts and spades are known as the MAJORS. Helps to keep learning a few extra terms each time, there are plenty of them to keep up with, believe you me!"

<b>Hand 3+4:</b>	<b>West</b>	<b>East</b>
	♠ K Q 10 8 4	♠ A 7
	♥ 9 2	♥ Q 7 6 4
	♦ K 10 9 6	♦ A 8 5
	♣ A 2	♣ Q 9 4 3

**Guru:** "Here are two of your 'indifferent' or average hands put together. What do you make of THEM? What do YOU think, Simon?"

**Simon:** "I suppose we could get lucky and make five spade tricks if the jack drops. Plus another three tricks, maybe even an extra trick if they let us make the queen of clubs. I suppose the two hands are not good enough to bid to game between them."

**Guru:** "No, they're not, but they DO come close though! If the opponents allow you to make the queen of hearts or queen of clubs BEFORE they take THEIR five tricks, then YOU will have NINE tricks if the spades score five tricks. So 3NT isn't such a bad contract. You'll also notice that you do not have more than SEVEN cards between the two hands in ANY suit. In other words you do not have a FIT. With such hands, you SHOULD be playing the contract in NO TRUMPS anyway, and you can see that nine tricks is marginal. Therefore you should probably be bidding NO HIGHER than TWO No Trumps."

**Vera:** "But how do you GUESS that the hands together are as you call it 'of marginal game values'?"

**Guru:** "Guesswork DOES play some part, but there ARE better ways to evaluate such things. More of that later."

<b>Hand 5+6:</b>	<b>West</b>	<b>East</b>
	♠ K 10 8 6 5 4 3	♠ A 9 7 2
	♥ 9 8 2	♥ 7
	♦ 7	♦ A J 8 5
	♣ A 2	♣ 9 6 4 3

**Guru:** "Look at these hands. NEITHER of the hands on its own is much good. BUT, put them together and what do you find? A STONE COLD eleven tricks if spades are trumps! There are at most TWO spades between the opponents. DON'T forget that each suit contains 13 cards. COUNTING them helps! Once you have drawn the opponents' trumps, and lost a heart trick, you can TRUMP two hearts in the East hand, which is almost certain to be DUMMY since WEST will have bid spades first. You two between you DID recognise the potential, which is good to see. Do you remember Simon, YOU thought the West hand was a good one, and YOU, Vera, thought the EAST hand had some POTENTIAL. Wonderful how two COMBINED hands can fit so brilliantly at times. THAT is why bidding is so important, not just because if you score 100 you make game. There is NO point in bidding games with MISFITS, or PASSING with hands that have a good fit. Have you also noticed that with THESE hands, your OPPONENTS have by far the greater preponderance of honour cards, yet it is YOU who can outbid THEM and make more tricks than them. If you cannot find a way to BID these hands, and find your FIT, it is likely that opponents will play THEIR game in FOUR HEARTS."

**Simon:** "I KNEW the hand was a good one!"

**Vera:** "No, you only GUESSED and got lucky. MY hand evaluation as EAST would have been MORE important!"

**Guru:** "Now, kids, let's not get into one upmanship. Suffice to say there ARE ways of bidding these hands WITHOUT guesswork once you learn to bid properly."

<b>Hand 7+8:</b>	<b>West</b>	<b>East</b>
	♠ K Q J 8 4 3	♠ 7
	♥ K J 10 8 2	♥ Q 7 6 4
	♦ 7	♦ Q J 8 5
	♣ 2	♣ 9 6 4 3

**Simon:** "Look at that! Another hand where two hands are better than one!"

**Vera:** "Good pun, Simon, but yet again the hands are only good because EAST has THOSE hearts!"

**Guru:** "Yes, but think about it. If East had four spades and one heart, would there be any difference?"

**Simon:** "Of course not, as long as East had the queen of hearts. I would just bid 4S anyway. It doesn't matter whether East has spades or hearts does it?"

**Vera:** "Actually, it DOES, surely? On THESE hands, you can almost CERTAINLY make THREE hearts, losing just one trick in each suit, but if you play it in SPADES there are chances for another loser aren't there? Like, if either opponent has FOUR spades you lose two spade tricks if THEY are trumps, but if hearts are trumps you can TRUMP the spade losers out."

**Guru:** "Well done, Vera, you're thinking. There's also another possibility of losing an extra trick, and that is if either opponent has a singleton HEART, if the hand is played in spades they can get a heart RUFF. Sorry, you're probably not familiar with THAT term either. I noticed you two say TRUMP, but bridge players, while they may HAVE trumps, use the term 'RUFF' when they trump something. Just another term for you to learn!"

**Simon:** "What a great shame to have such an awful East hand opposite. I would always be tempted to bid to game with the West hand, hoping that East had SOMETHING."

**Guru:** "So would I, probably! But even East's USELESS hand, as you both called it earlier, still contributes at least two tricks to a heart contract. And have you noticed anything else about the hands?"

**Vera:** "That opponents once more have a great preponderance of high cards?"

**Simon:** "They certainly have ALL the clubs. Now that I think about it, WE only have five clubs between us, so opponents have EIGHT. IF one of them has FIVE and the other one has THREE, then they have FIVE club tricks, TWO diamond tricks and two aces, and THAT adds up to THREE NO TRUMPS! So I'd be right in bidding to 4S ANYWAY, wouldn't I? And who knows, they may THEN bid to FIVE CLUBS, and as you pointed out, THAT may be too high! Boy, I'm going to LOVE this game!"

<b>Hand 9+10:</b>	<b>West</b>	<b>East</b>
	♠ K Q J 10 8 6 5 4 3	♠ A 7
	♥ K 2	♥ A 7 6 4
	♦ 6	♦ A J 5
	♣ 2	♣ 9 6 4 3

**Simon:** "THIS time I'm definitely bidding 4S on the West hand, no matter what. SURELY it's good enough to have a 'ping' at it irrespective of East's hand. And look at East's hand. MORE THAN ENOUGH!"

**Guru:** "Of course! But do you remember me telling you about SLAMS? On THIS hand it's impossible to find more than the one club loser unless someone ruffs the first round of hearts or diamonds, so the BEST contract for East West is SIX spades. Of course you could never dream that East had three aces opposite."

**Simon:** "But even three aces opposite aren't good enough unless one of them is the ace of HEARTS."

**Vera:** "But even in that case you may be able to get rid of one heart after establishing an extra trick in the East hand, or if the worst comes to the worst, you could lead a heart from DUMMY towards your KING. If the hand with the ace is sitting SOUTH, you'll make the king!"

**Guru:** "You HAVE been reading bridge books, Vera. You're not MEANT to be able to find such plays at THIS stage. THAT is known as a FINESSE, although the MOST COMMON form of 'finesse' is leading a card towards the A Q and putting in, or 'finessing', the queen when the next hand to play, plays low. This wins an extra trick every time the second hand to play has the king. Such an EASY concept, yet so many newcomers find it VERY difficult to understand! I trust YOU would have no problem with taking such comparatively SIMPLE finesses, Simon, after all, SIMPLE finesses must have been named after you?"

**Simon:** "I think you're peeing in my pocket. And there is ANOTHER thing I've just noticed. How come this is the THIRD hand where East has precisely the 9 6 4 3 of clubs? I'm becoming VERY suspicious about all this, and WHY did you send us out to make the tea?"

**Vera:** "Yes, WHY? And all these hands seem to be telling too big a story, even though the story is getting pretty exciting."

**Guru:** "Never mind, just let's look at the last two hands, shall we?"

<b>Hand 11+12:</b>	<b>West</b>	<b>East</b>
	♠ 6	♠ A 9 7
	♥ K J 10 9 8 2	♥ Q 7 6
	♦ K 9 7 6 4	♦ A J 8 5
	♣ A	♣ Q 9 4

**Simon:** "ANOTHER slam hand!"

**Vera:** "Not quite, don't get TOO carried away, Simon. You seem to have a heart and POSSIBLE diamond loser."

**Guru:** "Nevertheless a fair slam, since the queen of diamonds IS likely to drop either singleton or doubleton with NINE diamonds between the hands. But I wasn't thinking of slam necessarily at all, merely a fairly normal FOUR HEART contract. EAST may have all suits stopped, or near enough, but the hand is definitely NOT one to play in No Trumps. WHY? Because the opponents will almost CERTAINLY attack one of their suits. If it is SPADES, they will CERTAINLY be able to establish FOUR spade tricks since one of them must have at least five. If it is clubs, chances are that the same could happen if SOUTH has the king. AND, while you may have a wonderful heart suit between the two hands, the ACE is missing, and THAT will allow one of the opponents to gain the lead the moment you try to establish ANY heart tricks. They will then take their spade tricks! If you play with hearts as TRUMPS, the ace of trumps may be the ONLY trick opponents will make. A good lesson of why you should prefer to play with a suit as trumps unless you have clear indications to the contrary."

**Vera:** "OK, now tell us what you've been up to. You could not POSSIBLY have dealt all these hands at random in the time you had, OR got such meaningful hands out of them. You may have had the boards in front of you, but where did you materialise the CARDS from?"

**Guru:** "Remind me to tell you about the days I used to pull rabbits out of a hat. YOU TOO will find that a lot of the time, when you get to play the game seriously, you will need to produce some magic at the table, either when you're playing the hand as declarer, or defending. But you both seem to be VERY quick on the uptake, and I'm sure the magic will not be long in coming!"

**Simon:** "Thanks to YOUR input. Now, reveal all, I'm sure there is more to it."

**Guru:** "Why don't you write ALL the hands down, and then when you go home and are by yourselves, take EACH of the West hands and put them together with EACH of the East hands in turn, and try to work out how many tricks in what contract are possible. That will be an excellent exercise for you before we have our next session. We've looked at TWELVE independent hands today and then put them together into six deals that a PARTNERSHIP might have. Putting each of the WEST hands with each of the EAST hands will give you a total of 36 hands. We will then be able to see how the hands might FIT together in a partnership."

## CHAPTER 5

### RECAPPING

**Guru:** "Nice to see you two again. No doubt you'll have been putting your 36 hands together and trying to work out the best contracts on them. But let's leave them aside for the moment and return later. At THIS stage, I just want to go over the VERY basics which I may, or may not, have told you about. That way, we can start on the BIDDING, which is a very important part of bridge. In fact the MOST important part since you HAVE to be in a reasonable contract which at least has a CHANCE of making. There is great argument about which is the most important part of bridge: BIDDING, DECLARER PLAY, or DEFENCE. The experts insist that BIDDING is the most important, since being in the correct CONTRACT will score you the most points. That is, of course, if you can MAKE the contract. So, without being able to take your top thirteen tricks, it's not much use bidding a 'laydown' grand slam! Just let me digress here for a moment and tell you about my younger days. When I first started playing, and after I'd been playing for a few years, my peers somehow managed to spread my reputation far and wide. It was NOT a great reputation at all as far as THEY were concerned. You see, they all insisted that my BIDDING was absolutely atrocious. Whether I might have personally felt that I was merely a decade or two ahead of them in bidding judgement and psychology, I wasn't going to argue the point. You see, despite such 'atrocious' bidding on my part, my actual RESULTS were generally far better than theirs. So what did that say about my DECLARER PLAY if I was continuing to make the atrocious contracts I was ending up in ? They must have thought I was the world's greatest dummy player. What a compliment! You, too, will often be able to turn insults into compliments if you play your cards right!"

**Vera:** "Mmmm, interesting reasoning, but the word 'specious' springs to mind, I don't know why. Must have been a word I picked up in a Victor Mollo book. But never mind, let's recap and get on with it."

**Guru:** "I see you too are going to be a feisty young bridge player, Vera. That's good. O.K. Now that you've had a basic and very brief grounding on what bridge is about, let's recap on the playing and scoring aspect; the sooner you do so the sooner you can go along to the club's beginners' grade and REALLY start to learn. There IS NO substitute for being there and actually doing it, even though this course will give you the confidence to go and do it, and go and do it WELL."

Guru : "THE SUITS.

In any SUIT, the ACE is the highest card, then the KING, QUEEN (yes, you can expect an outcry from feminist groups at ANY time now!) JACK, ten, nine down to the lowly two, or 'deuce' as it was more popularly known in the early days.

### TRUMPS

When TRUMPS have been designated by the outcome of the BIDDING, the trump suit is the master suit and ANY card in that suit is higher than any card in any other suit, HOWEVER, every hand must ALWAYS follow suit and there are severe penalties for not doing so! When a hand is played in NO TRUMPS, no suit has mastery over any other in the play, but the same rules regarding following suit still apply. The play of the cards is always in order, clockwise, with the highest card winning the trick each time (don't forget the TWO of trumps will always beat ANY card of another suit). Whichever hand wins the trick has to be first to lead to the next trick and so on right through until all thirteen cards have been played and a total of thirteen tricks taken.

### DECLARER, DUMMY, DEFENDERS

This depends on the result of the bidding and which player becomes DECLARER. Remember, ONE person has to PLAY the hand, their PARTNER becomes the DUMMY, and the opponents become the DEFENDERS. The very first lead is made by the person to the left of DECLARER, and BEFORE dummy is placed on the table. Dummy's cards should always be placed on the table in an orderly manner, with the TRUMP suit on dummy's RIGHT.

## **BIDDING: HOW TO GET TO PLAY THE HAND:**

Points are scored as follows for bidding and making CONTRACTS:

Remembering that bidding begins with ONE (meaning you say you will make at least 7 tricks), for each level you bid and make, score 20 points if trumps are CLUBS or DIAMONDS. These are known as the MINOR suits. For each level you bid and make in HEARTS or SPADES, score 30 points. These are known as the MAJOR suits. In NO TRUMPS, score 40 for the FIRST level and 30 for every subsequent level you bid and make. Therefore, in order to make enough points for GAME (100) you have to bid FIVE clubs or diamonds (5x20), FOUR hearts or spades (4x30), or THREE No Trumps (40 + 2x30). Because you get bonus points for bidding and making game in all forms of bridge, it is important to bid games, since if you DON'T bid game but make the tricks for game you don't get the bonus for bidding it. You ALSO get bonuses for bidding and making SLAMS (a 'small slam' is making 12 of the 13 available tricks and a 'grand slam' is all 13 tricks) but that should be the least of your worries at the moment, just concentrate on how to bid and make game if you have enough resources between you and partner to do so. AND WHAT IF YOU DON'T?

If you have overreached yourself in the bidding, and DON'T make the tricks you have contracted for, there are penalties to be paid which can be considerably more than what you stood to gain, so you can't just keep on bidding and hope! Over the next few lessons you'll learn all about determining how high you can go on certain hands, and what the penalties are for going too far. Right now, suffice to say that DECLARER has the combined two hands to manufacture tricks with, and the DEFENCE have THEIR two hands to take as many tricks as they can in order that declarer may be prevented from making the contract. The difference is that declarer sees BOTH the hands at his or her disposal, the defenders only see their OWN hand plus ONE of declarer's two. Consequently you can see that declarer has a considerable advantage. But even when you see all the ammunition that you have available, it's no simple matter to make the best of it, and that is where superior declarer skills will achieve superior results. Also on defence, while you may have little idea what cards PARTNER may hold, you will at least see what DUMMY has and get some idea from the bidding as to what declarer may have in their hand. Bridge is an exercise in communication and problem solving, and presents a challenge on virtually every hand to declarer as well as the defenders. The only one who is in no way mentally challenged (sounds like a politically correct statement doesn't it) is dummy, who has to be just that: DUMMY, and Lord help dummy if they open their mouth out of turn. DUMMY, for the duration of the hand, has very few rights, and until you learn what they are, if you're dummy, just sit there quietly and play the cards that declarer asks you to play. Some declarers will actually physically remove a card to be played from dummy and play it, but most declarers (sensibly in my opinion) will CALL for dummy to play a card."

**Simon:** "I'm glad you went over all that. It has reinforced the very basics for me."

**Guru:** "O.K. then, let's get to the nitty gritty of the mechanics of the bidding and play before learning the SIMPLE way to bid and play and defend your hands."

Bidding is perhaps the most important part of the game, since it determines what the CONTRACT will be and WHO will play the hand. Bidding can begin at the lowest level of ONE CLUB and bids may be made at any level up to SEVEN NO TRUMPS, as long as the bid made is greater than the previous bid. As explained earlier, a bid at the SAME level may be made in a higher RANKING suit, but with a lower ranking suit the bidding must reach the next level up. There are FURTHER complications with the bidding and I'm now going to introduce another vital part of bidding: the DOUBLE and REDOUBLE. AND it will become even more complicated, I'm afraid these complexities of the bidding and scoring have developed over time and can't be simplified!

Many things also change with time, I should warn you right now! What may have had one meaning 60 years ago may have had a different meaning 30 years ago and a totally different meaning again right now. It will be necessary at times to give ORIGINAL meanings for bids just so you can see the logical development of these aspects of the game.

In the original game, the DOUBLE was a bid which could be made if a player did not think an opponent was going to make their contract. Since there are penalties to pay for not making the contract, the

DOUBLE effectively doubled the penalties (as well as declarer's score if the contract was made). To extend this further, if the person who was doubled (or their partner ) thought they WOULD make the contract they could REDOUBLE and this multiplied the gains and losses FOUR fold. Needless to say, it did not pay to miscalculate too much when the double and redouble were exercised. These days, because the bids are still a legitimate part of bidding, the meanings of the DOUBLE and REDOUBLE have taken on new meaning, and will be a most important part of the SIMPLE bidding that you will learn."

**Guru:** "The first person to bid is the person who dealt the cards (the DEALER). Most of the time you will be playing pre-dealt hands in sets of BOARDS which are marked to indicate who declarer is as well as the VULNERABILITY.

### **BIDDING CONSISTS OF ONE OR MORE OF THE FOLLOWING TERMS:**

PASS (or NO BID), a NUMBER (1 to 7) signifying the proposed LEVEL of the contract, a DENOMINATION (Clubs, Diamonds, Hearts, Spades, No Trumps in order of importance) and DOUBLE and REDOUBLE.. You can't double or redouble a pass or your partner's bid, though people have been know to try and there have been a number of amusing stories as a result. Bidding is at an end ONLY when the last bid made has been followed by three passes, so even if you pass in the beginning you can come into the bidding at any time as long as it is your TURN and the bidding has not terminated with three passes.

DOUBLE can only be made after an OPPONENT has bid a suit (including No Trumps) and REDOUBLE can only be made following a DOUBLE. The moment a suit is bid following a double or redouble the bidding continues as though the double or redouble had not occurred. But of course it pays to remember when someone doubled or redoubled, since it helps you to 'guess' where certain cards may be. And as previously stated, and this must be emphasised, your bid in a suit must always be greater than the previous bid made.

Before we start on bidding, just a couple of things: don't forget that it is TRICKS that the game is about, and TRICKS made by TWO hands, those of you AND your partner, not just those produced by your own hand. You have to assess not only the potential trick taking capacity of your own hand, but also the potential of your COMBINED hands from the information that you may have available about your partner's hand, and that is what bidding is about. There are a large number of bidding SYSTEMS currently in existence, all designed to extract the best possible result in terms of your final contract. Alas, some systems are better than others, some more complicated than others, some which suit one particular partnership and not others, etc etc. The most popular systems currently in use are ACOL (as played mainly in Britain and Australasia), STANDARD AMERICAN (played mainly in the U.S.) and PRECISION (currently played pretty well world wide but not to the same degree as the first two). I will teach you NONE of these to start with but a version called SIMPLE which will give you the basic cornerstone needed to expand into other systems according to your OWN preference.

And who better to play the SIMPLE way than you two?"



## CHAPTER 6

### THE POINT COUNT

**Guru:** "Last time you had a brief introduction as to the importance of TWO hands and how they combine to create the potential to take a lot, or a few, tricks. You've looked at another combination of 30 more deals and we'll go over THEM later, but right now it's time I introduced you to what bidding is really about, and the tools that are available for a partnership to determine their optimum contract. You can see how important it is to have at least some IDEA about the sort of hand your partner has."

**Simon:** "I can already see from the hands we put together that the most important thing is whether you have a FIT in a suit. A lot of cards between the two hands in the same suit seem to lead to a lot of tricks. And despite scattered aces and kings put together, it may not be all that easy to make a lot of tricks. Or am I wrong?"

**Guru:** "Not really. Aces and kings are VERY important in terms of trick taking potential, which is why the very first bridge systems were based on estimating the value of the honour cards. One of the few things in bridge that has stood the test of time virtually from the moment the game came into being is the 'HIGH CARD POINT COUNT'. Some bright spark diagnosed the fact that the HONOUR cards all had reasonable possibilities of taking tricks, the aces more than kings, kings more than queens, and queens more than jacks. By assigning each of the honour cards a numerical value of 4 for the ace, 3 for a king, 2 for a queen and 1 for a jack, the relative value of a hand containing these cards could be assessed quite accurately. POINT COUNT, and POINT COUNT BIDDING, has been with us ever since, in one form or another, and in pretty well all forms of bridge and all different SYSTEMS that people play."

**Vera:** "How then does the POINT COUNT work in practice?"

**Guru:** "In each pack of cards there are four aces, four kings, four queens and four jacks, thus there are a total of 40 POINTS in the pack. The average for EACH hand is therefore TEN. If YOU have more than that, you should think about trying to play the hand (given that partner will be of some help with THEIR hand, you hope) but if you have FEWER than 10 points your chances of playing and making a contract are probably not so good. Everything of course depends on the COMBINED TWO hands of your partner and you, but looking at your own hand you will need to work out whether it is even worth your while SUGGESTING to partner that YOUR side should be playing the hand."

**Vera:** "So there are a total of 40 points in every deal. How many would you need to think you can make GAME?"

**Guru:** "With a total of 40 points in the pack, and a total of 13 TRICKS to be made on each hand, if you work out some approximate ratios between tricks and points, allowing for the fact that declarer will have some added chances of doing better than the defence, we come to the conclusion that the NINE tricks that need to be made in NO TRUMPS for GAME should be achievable with a minimum of 25 points between the two hands. The same number of points should also produce game in HEARTS or SPADES (the 'MAJORS') because the extra trick can normally be manufactured by virtue of the fact that playing with a suit as TRUMPS will give declarer not only control, but chances of using one or more trumps for RUFFING purposes and thus scoring, or developing, more tricks than would be possible in No Trumps."

**Simon:** "What about clubs and diamonds?"

**Guru:** "To make the ELEVEN tricks required to make game in a MINOR you require about 28 points. Consequently, a lot of the time you may play in No Trumps even when you have a lot of cards between you in clubs or diamonds, but normally you will choose to play in a MAJOR whenever you have a fit in hearts or spades. And you must learn one thing right away: The OPPONENTS will be the first to lead, so you should NOT elect to play in No Trumps if you have any indication that you are wide open in one or more suits. In SIMPLE bidding we will be putting the emphasis on finding a TRUMP suit to play in FIRST, i.e. a FIT in a suit, and only SECONDLY whether to choose to play in NO TRUMPS or a suit, and at what LEVEL."

**Simon:** "How would you actually do your bidding to get to the correct contract?"

**Guru:** "Not all that easy, to start with. That is something you have to learn, but bidding CAN be made much simpler by following what I call the SIMPLE way of bidding. We'll have a look at some hands to start with and see SIMPLE bidding in practice. And that is with TWO partners bidding what they each have. Once you learn how to bid WITHOUT opposition, you will then find out soon enough that when you actually get to the table, opponents seemingly ALWAYS interfere by making bids of their own. But at least if you DO learn the rudiments of simple bidding without opponents, your future bidding will be much easier."

**Vera:** "I guess you have to start somewhere, and seeing there are only two of us plus YOU to supervise, let's start by learning how to bid without any nasty old interfering opponents."

**Guru:** "If you have a hand with at least TWELVE points (which is more than the average of 10), you should be OPENING THE BIDDING. In essence, this is the beginning of a conversation with partner that will determine your final contract, given that your opponents give you a free run. The most important thing in bidding, as Simon has already diagnosed, is to find a 'fit' in a suit where your combined hands contain a minimum of EIGHT cards between you. The BEST fit is where each hand has four cards, but 5-3 and 6-2 fits should also be found WHERE POSSIBLE. As a general rule, the more trumps you have between your two hands, the more TRICKS you will be able to make. Since we have decided that for the purposes of SIMPLE bidding, the LENGTH of a suit and not its quality is all important, OPEN the bidding if you have 12 or more points by bidding ONE of whatever your longest suit is, or if you have more than one FOUR card suit, your LOWEST four card suit. If you have more than one FIVE card suit, open the HIGHER of the two. By opening your LOWER four card suit you give partner the opportunity to bid your SECOND four card suit and thus locate your FIT, and by opening your HIGHER FIVE card suit you give YOURSELF the opportunity to bid the OTHER suit later, thus TELLING your partner that you hold at least FIVE cards in the suit you bid first and at least FOUR in the second suit."

"In ALL YOUR BIDDING, by both you AND partner, you should ensure that you do NOT get yourselves too high while still keeping the channels of communication open for as long as necessary, and that you don't stop SHORT when you DO have enough points to be in GAME. This may sound easy, and in fact SHOULD be, and I hope WILL be the SIMPLE way, but it is nothing short of amazing that so many novice bridge players have difficulty with knowing where the brake is and where the accelerator is!!"

**Vera:** "How can we tell how high we can bid without getting too high? I know that GAME is what we should try to bid, but not much point in doing that if we can't MAKE it, is there? How do we know how and when to stop, and how and when to keep bidding?"

Guru " Not really THAT difficult. You already know that the yardstick, in terms of points, is 25 for GAME. With anything LESS than that, you want to stay as low as possible while still not missing your most reasonable denomination to play in. Therefore ALL your bidding should be geared to staying as low as possible and only proceeding further if you have the strength to do so. For instance, you should not take the chance of being in game if you have FEWER than 25 points, or of playing in 2NT or three of a suit with fewer than 22 points. When conversing with partner about your final contract, keep this in mind and bidding WILL become simple!"

**Simon:** "When partner has opened the bidding, what should I do with MY hand?"

**Guru:** "If you do NOT have at least SIX points, and your partner wants to talk by opening the bidding, PASS and don't talk back! This will keep the bidding as low as the ONE level though the unfortunate thing may be that you have not managed to locate your best fit. If you have at least SIX points, you should respond to partner, in your best (longest!) suit IF POSSIBLE.

If you have 6-9 (possibly 10) points and can respond in your LONGEST suit at the ONE level, then do so. But DON'T bid it at the TWO level, because this may take the contract too high if No Trumps is the only place to play, your side MAY have FEWER than the 22 points required. So, with nothing better to do, you should respond by bidding ONE NO TRUMP with fewer than 11 points and no suit that you can bid at the one level.

If you have 11 (POSSIBLY 10) or more points, then you can happily bid your suit at the TWO level. And what if you DON'T have a suit of your OWN? Then you must have support for your PARTNER, which is great! That's what the idea of conversing in the first place was! You have a FIT already, so even if you DID have a suit of your own, support your partner immediately unless you have a good reason for introducing your own suit. With a minimum hand (6-9 points) RAISE your partner to TWO. With 10-12 points, raise your partner to THREE, and with more, raise your partner to FOUR (if it's hearts or spades) or look for game in NO TRUMPS."

**Vera:** "That sounds reasonable enough. So, could you go over the business of OPENING, and RESPONDING, please?"

**Guru:** "You will have, hopefully, noticed by now the difference between OPENING the bidding, and RESPONDING. To OPEN the bidding, you require a minimum of TWELVE points; to RESPOND, a minimum of SIX. Once the opener has opened and the responder responded, BOTH partners bid as much or as little as may be required to reach the optimum contract. Sounds easy? Don't you believe it, there's not enough bidding space, even one bid at a time, to get ALL the information across, so you DO have to become a fine judge of the most IMPORTANT thing to tell partner. And at the moment, you don't even have opponents interfering by bidding things of their own!

As a general principle, the OPENER must keep the bidding open if the responder bids a suit of their own, or a new suit which takes the level one level higher. There are ways of telling partner that you DON'T want to proceed too far, or that you DO want to go further. Let's examine these. Firstly, as RESPONDER. A response of 1NT is the obvious case where responder states the simple fact that they do NOT have sufficient points to enter the two level. SPECIFICALLY, they have SIX to NINE high card points. Opener can now PASS, or bid their own suit again at the lowest level, thus confirming at least a FIVE card suit and the desire to play in it rather than No Trumps. OR, opener can offer the responder the CHOICE of LOW level contracts by bidding a second suit LOWER than their first, OR continue to look for game with a BETTER hand than they have shown with their first bid, one which MAY produce game opposite the UPPER range of responder's hand. Opener can even make a bid which GUARANTEES that the partnership is in game, if all they need is a minimum of six points which partner has guaranteed by responding. Let's look at all these possibilities.

### **CHOOSING A LOW LEVEL CONTRACT:**

When responder has bid 1NT their hand has been specified very accurately point wise but not necessarily distribution wise. Apart from the fact that responder has DENIED four card support (maybe even THREE card support which is sometimes worth showing rather than a bid of 1NT) opener does not know much more. What you DO know is that responder does NOT have a four card or longer suit that could have been bid at the one level. This is important to remember.

Opener can choose to play in their own suit by rebidding it at the 2 level, or offer a choice of suits by bidding a LOWER suit. E.g. 1H - 1NT - 2D, which says : 'I have FIVE hearts and four, maybe five, diamonds, YOU choose whether we play in hearts or diamonds. BUT, in the same sequence of bidding, a bid by opener of TWO SPADES would not have the same meaning. WHY? Because by bidding 1NT responder has DENIED holding four spades, and for the 1NT responder to show a preference for hearts would take the bidding to the THREE level. Therefore the 2S bid is either incorrect OR has another, more subtle, yet LOGICAL, meaning. What that meaning is we'll see later.

The same bidding options are available for opener even when responder does not respond with 1NT but bids a suit of their own, with the only difference being that the 1NT response is LIMITED and shows NO MORE than 9, at best 10, points, whereas the response of a SUIT can be made on ANY number of points, just waiting to hear further from opener. Therefore, 1NT as a response MAY BE PASSED, thus becoming the final contract, but the bid in a suit MUST NOT be passed. OPENER'S REBIDS are nevertheless the same: A rebid in the suit opened says : I have nothing to add, this is where I want to play unless you have other ideas; the bid of a SECOND suit LOWER than the first shows no extra interest and offers a choice of suits. And a rebid in NO TRUMPS BY OPENER shows the same thing but with NO suit that can be offered as a choice, and no interest in wanting to bid the first suit again.

The OTHER option of making a minimum rebid when partner has bid a SUIT is to raise THAT suit, since a 'FIT' has now been located. Here, much the same thing applies: With a MINIMUM hand raise your partner to the TWO level.

Can you see that there is a very SIMPLE way to bid your MINIMUM hands, both as OPENER and as RESPONDER."

**Simon:** "What about stronger hands?"

**Guru:** "The stronger your hand, either as opener OR responder, the more you will want to be in game, so it is very important that you convey this information to partner while still leaving your options open without blindly guessing what your final contract should be.

As a rule, the strength of your hand can be shown by the level at which you are prepared to bid. As OPENER, when your partner responds in a suit at the 1 level, a rebid of 1NT should show a reluctance to go further, hence no more than 15, perhaps 16, points. With 17 or 18 points you should be happy to rebid TWO No Trumps, and with 19 or 20 points you can jump all the way to GAME in 3NT. After all, partner's response has GUARANTEED at least 6 points. The same applies if partner has RESPONDED 1NT: you can RAISE to 2NT with 17 or 18 points and jump to 3NT with 19 or 20."

**Vera:** "Are there any OTHER ways to show stronger hands?"

**Guru:** "Yes, by RAISING partner's response to the three level or to game when you have a FIT: raise to THREE with 17 or 18 points and directly to game with 19 or 20 . BUT NOT game in a minor, try 3NT or improvise some other way!"

**Vera:** "And are there any OTHER ways to show strength as opener?"

**Guru:** "Yes, by bidding a HIGHER suit than your first one, which takes the bidding UNNECESSARILY high if partner prefers your first suit or is UNLIKELY to have your second bid suit. Take the earlier example of 1H - 1NT -2S. Since the 1NT responder WON'T have more than THREE spades, and since preference to hearts would take the bidding to the three level, and since preference for NEITHER would mean playing in NO TRUMPS, which means TWO No Trumps, opener must have a good enough hand to justify such odd bidding. The obvious inference is at LEAST 17 points and such a bid is FORCING partner to bid at least as far as TWO NO TRUMPS and is known as a REVERSE (very much a part of the ACOL system as well as playing the SIMPLE, logical way). Note that there is no such thing as a reverse at the ONE level since 1NT is still available and is a MINIMUM contract once the bidding has been opened. ANOTHER way to bid a VERY strong hand of 19 or so points is to JUMP SHIFT on your second bid once partner has responded, either by jumping to the TWO level, or 3 level in a second suit. E.g. 1C - 1H response, 2S ; or 1H - 1S response, 3C.

Strong hands which contain only ONE suit of 6 or more cards can be shown by opening at the 1 level and then jumping to the 3 level to show a good 6+ card suit and about 16-18 points, or jumping direct to game over the response: to 4H or 4S, or if your suit is clubs or diamonds, to 3NT as long as you have some hope of cover in the unbid suits.

The good thing about all these rebids of strong hands is that if you are the RESPONDER, you can use exactly the same method of responding as opener does in THEIR rebids: Thus, a JUMP SHIFT by responder IMMEDIATELY shows a good suit and strong hand and enough to be in game at least (we haven't talked about bidding slams yet!), a REVERSE by responder on the second round is forcing to at least 2NT, and a bid of a new suit at the THREE level is also forcing. A REBID in responder's suit at a MINIMUM level is an offer to play, a JUMP rebid is a stronger hand (a jump to three is INVITING game and a jump to 4 in a major shows enough for game). All very SIMPLE if you look at it the logical way."

**Simon:** "I understand the concept of the REVERSE, but I CAN see that a lot of new players would be totally confused. If you open for instance ONE CLUB and partner bids ONE SPADE and you also have four HEARTS, seems natural enough to bid TWO HEARTS doesn't it? I can see the problems that would arise THEN if opener had a mere 12 points and responder 6 and STILL no fit! They would have to play in a MISFIT at the two level or in 2NT with 18 points between them!"

**Guru:** "THAT is why such bidding MUST show extra strength, enough to be able to play in 2NT at worst. In other words, a REVERSE is FORCING partner to bid once more, at LEAST to the level of 2NT."

**Vera:** "Am I to understand that the REVERSE only really occurs when the SECOND bid is at the TWO level and in a HIGHER suit than the suit opened?"

**Guru:** "Pretty much, yes, though introducing a new suit at the THREE level, e.g. in a sequence such as 1S-2D-3C ALSO should show extra values, though may not be quite as strong as a two level reverse. THAT is because a TWO level response has shown at least TEN high card points, and a ONE level response may be made on as few as SIX!"

**Simon:** "What about even stronger hands?"

**Guru:** "If you have more than 20 points, you will need FEWER than 6 points from partner to be in game, and our briefing to date has been that partner will NOT respond with fewer than six points, so something has to be done about such strong hands. The SIMPLE way is to OPEN 2NT with a BALANCED hand and 20 to 22 points, and a TWO LEVEL bid with 20+ points and a good suit in DIAMONDS, HEARTS or SPADES, with a TWO CLUB opening serving another purpose. SOME hands, for instance KQJ987 in both majors, may have fewer POINTS but strong playing strength, and they too can be opened with 2D, 2H or 2S because they are so strong. That hand you would open 2S and then rebid 4H TELLING partner you have game in either of the two suits on your own hand. Partner simply has the choice of suits! But NORMALLY, your 2D, 2H, and 2S openings would be simply based on a MINIMUM of EIGHT playing tricks in strength, e.g. a suit like KQJ10854 with two aces outside or AK in a side suit or even QJ109 outside would qualify since there ARE eight likely tricks in these hands.

The TWO CLUB opening can take care of all sorts of OTHER hands which may be strong but not have one or more strong or long suits, or be balanced and STRONGER than 20-22. Therefore, with 23-24 points you would open 2C and REBID 2NT and with 25-27 points open 2C and rebid 3NT.

Since partner has to be able to tell you they have NOTHING, or that they DO have something, the system of responses to the 2 level openings is as follows:

Over a 2D, 2H or 2S opening, a bid of 2NT is showing WEAKNESS (0-7 points), and a bid of 2D over the 2C opening the same thing. Opener can then REBID the opened suit (D, H or S) which is the only sequence NOT forcing on your partner to keep bidding.

The TWO CLUB opening should be FORCING TO GAME except in the sequence 2C-2D-2NT."

**Simon:** "Great. We now know it all! Let's go and play at the club!"

**Vera:** "I know you're being facetious, Simon, but maybe looking at a few hands and trying to bid them would be fun. Shall we return tomorrow night for another lesson?"

**Guru:** "By all means, the sooner I get you into a real live play situation the sooner you'll REALLY start to learn."

# CHAPTER 7

## OPENING BIDS

**Guru:** "Let's now talk about OPENING THE BIDDING". As mentioned earlier, the POINT COUNT will give you an idea of whether your hand is good enough to think that your side might be able to play the hand, and therefore score the points available for bidding and making the contract. TWELVE high card points is enough for you to OPEN the bidding. As you will learn later, there is a great difference between OPENING the bidding and RESPONDING when PARTNER has opened the bidding. THAT I cannot emphasise enough. Too many learners don't seem to realise this, and consequently they muddle through without learning the basics. It really should be quite a simple matter to work out that, while it may be a good idea to OPEN the bidding only with at least TWELVE points, far FEWER points should be needed to converse with the OPENER in order to decide on the best contract. In fact SIX. But we'll talk about RESPONDING at a later stage. At this stage we'll concentrate on JUST the OPENING BID. And to simplify matters even further, we'll talk about opening the bidding when you hold between TWELVE and TWENTY high card points. That is because in SIMPLE bidding, all hands in that range are opened with ONE of whichever SUIT is best according to the 'rules'. While I don't believe in adhering to rules at the expense of everything else, nevertheless you MUST learn the basic rules for bidding before you choose to disobey them. The basic rules for bidding in fact are based on LOGIC and COMMON SENSE, so best you learn them, FOLLOW them, and don't disobey them at all. At least not until you reach the expert stage anyway."

**Vera:** "So what ARE the basic rules for bidding?"

**Guru:** "O.K. Here are some basic rules for OPENING when you have between 12 and 20 high card points. I'll refer to them as "HCP" in future. Much easier.

### THE BASIC 'RULES':

ALL opening bids should be made at the ONE level.

ALWAYS open your LONGEST suit.

With EQUAL LENGTH suits, with five or six card suits, open the HIGHER RANKED suit; with FOUR card suits only, open the LOWEST ranked four card suit. 'FOUR UP, FIVE DOWN' is the way to remember that.

The other thing to remember is that the ONLY thing that matters is the LENGTH of the suit. I think I told you earlier that for BIDDING purposes the quality, or how many HCP you may have in any one suit, is IRRELEVANT. At least for NOW."

### YOUR OPENING BIDS:

**ONE CLUB:** CLUBS is your LONGEST (or ONLY) suit  
OR your LOWEST FOUR card suit

#### Examples of a ONE CLUB opening bid:

♠ A K Q J	♠ A Q J 7 4	♠ 9 5 2	♠ 8	♠ 7 5	♠ A 6 4
♥ A Q J	♥ 7	♥ A Q 7	♥ A K Q J	♥ A K 6 4	♥ K 6 4
♦ Q 9	♦ 5	♦ A K Q	♦ A Q 4 3	♦ Q 4	♦ A 6 3
♣ 5 4 3 2	♣ A J 5 4 3 2	♣ Q 4 3 2	♣ 6 4 3 2	♣ K J 5 4 3	♣ Q 9 6 3

**ONE DIAMOND:** DIAMONDS is your LONGEST (or ONLY) suit  
OR you have SIX diamonds and SIX clubs  
OR you have FIVE diamonds and FIVE clubs  
OR you have FOUR diamonds and FOUR hearts or spades

**Examples of a ONE DIAMOND opening bid:**

♠ A K Q J	♠ A Q J 7 4	♠ 9 5 2	♠ A Q 4 3	♠ 7 5	♠ A 6 4
♥ A Q	♥ 7	♥ A Q 7	♥ A K Q J	♥ A K 6 4	♥ K 6 4
♦ 5 4 3 2	♦ A J 5 4 3 2	♦ Q 4 3 2	♦ 6 5 4 2	♦ K J 5 4 3	♦ Q 9 6 3
♣ Q 9 2	♣ 5	♣ A K Q	♣ 3	♣ Q 4	♣ A 6 3

**ONE HEART:** HEARTS is your LONGEST (or ONLY) suit  
OR you have SIX hearts and SIX clubs or diamonds  
OR you have FIVE hearts and FIVE clubs or diamonds  
OR you have FOUR hearts and FOUR spades

**Examples of a ONE HEART opening bid:**

♠ A K Q J	♠ A Q J 7 4	♠ 9 5 2	♠ A Q 4 3	♠ 7 5	♠ A 6 4
♥ 5 4 3 2	♥ A J 5 4 3 2	♥ Q 4 3 2	♥ A 6 5 4 3	♥ A 7 6 5 2	♥ K 6 4 2
♦ A Q	♦ 7	♦ A Q 7	♦ K 6 4	♦ A 6 4	♦ Q 6 4
♣ Q 9 2	♣ 5	♣ A K Q	♣ 3	♣ K J 4	♣ K 7 5

**ONE SPADE:** SPADES is your LONGEST (or ONLY) suit  
OR you have SIX spades and SIX of any OTHER suit  
OR you have FIVE spades and FIVE of any other suit

*NOTE: IF YOU HAVE FOUR SPADES ONLY, YOU CAN NOT HAVE FOUR OR MORE CARDS IN ANY OTHER SUIT*

**Examples of a ONE SPADE opening bid:**

♠ 5 4 3 2	♠ A J 5 4 3 2	♠ Q 4 3 2	♠ A 6 5 4 3	♠ A 7 6 5 2	♠ K 6 4 2
♥ A K Q	♥ A Q J 7 4	♥ 9 5 2	♥ A Q 4 3	♥ 7 5	♥ A 6 4
♦ A Q J	♦ 7	♦ A Q 7	♦ K 6 3	♦ A 6 4	♦ Q 6 4
♣ Q 9 4	♣ 5	♣ A K Q	♣ 3	♣ K J 4	♣ K 7 5

All VERY simple indeed, wouldn't you say?"

**Vera and Simon in unison:** "Absolutely."

## CHAPTER 8

### RESPONDING TO AN OPENING BID

**Guru:** "Now that you know when, and how, to OPEN the bidding, it's important that I tell you when, and how, to RESPOND if your partner has opened. When partner has opened the bidding, the investigation of the best FIT, and best contract, then begins. Because opener has guaranteed a minimum of 12 HIGH CARD POINTS, the RESPONDER requires only a minimum of SIX to cooperate in the bidding. The reasons why responder MUST bid with as few as six HCP are obvious, or SHOULD be: OPENER will have the MINIMUM of 12 HCP, but opener may ALSO have as many as 20 HCP. With SIX HCP opposite 20, there should be a GAME biddable and makeable for the partnership. Furthermore, it is also important that when the partnership does NOT have a great number of HCP between them, the best FIT is found so that the best LOW LEVEL contract is played. Hence the need to be able to do the basic investigative work at the lowest possible level, which is the ONE level. In essence, the ONE level is for investigating FIT or ending up in a contract of ONE NO TRUMP if there is NO obvious fit."

**Vera:** "How then, does RESPONDER bid?"

**Guru:** "RESPONDER does not bid too differently to opener, except for the fact that opener will have opened a suit which will have taken away at least SOME bidding space. If opener opens ONE CLUB, clearly very LITTLE bidding space has been taken away, but if opener opens ONE SPADE, all one level bids except for ONE NO TRUMP have been taken away from responder.

At all times, responder's obligation is still to do the best they can to find a possible fit, or to announce that their hand is limited in nature and thereby WARN opener of this. BOTH of these things can be done at the ONE level: if responder has at least a FOUR card suit which they can bid at that level, they should do so, irrespective of their POINT COUNT (as long as it is at least SIX of course). If they CANNOT bid their suit at the one level because opener's bid has been in a higher suit, then they must show the limited nature of their hand, if it is less than 10 HCP, by either bidding INT or supporting opener in the opened suit if they consider that to be more sensible. Responder MAY raise opener with THREE cards only plus a 'ruffing value', but NEVER raise opener with fewer than three cards. Later, WHEN ASKED for a preference, responder may need to do so with as few as two cards. But that is later, not in the early stages of the bidding.

By and large, responder should follow the same rules as opener: bid your LONGEST suit, with equal length 6/6 or 5/5 bid the HIGHER one first, with 4/4 or 4/4/4 bid the LOWEST AVAILABLE so that your FIT can be found if you have one. Later bidding will enable further investigation if that is deemed to be warranted. While in SIMPLE bidding we do not open INT at all as opener, RESPONDER on the other hand will quite OFTEN respond INT when THEIR hand has no other option available.

Let's look at some opening bids and how RESPONDER should respond with different hands, following the general 'rules' outlined for responding."

#### "OPPOSITE A ONE CLUB OPENING

*What should you respond with each of the following hands?"*

(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)
♠ K J 4 3	♠ 6 5 3 2	♠ A K Q	♠ A K Q	♠ K 7 4	♠ 9 6
♥ A Q 6 4	♥ Q 3 2	♥ 4 3 2	♥ J 8 6 5 4	♥ K 4 3	♥ A Q 3
♦ 6 5 4 3	♦ Q 5 4	♦ 6 5 3	♦ K Q J 7 2	♦ Q 9 7 4	♦ K J 2
♣ 5	♣ Q 3 2	♣ 5 4 3 2	♣ -	♣ A Q 3	♣ K J 6 4 3

**Vera:** "Well, following your rules, I would do the following:

- (a) I would bid ONE DIAMOND. My spades and hearts are much better QUALITY but in terms of length, they are no better. If opener bids 1S or 1H next, we will have found our FIT and I can then raise them to THREE, showing support and 10-12 HCP as responder. If opener RAISES DIAMONDS,



we have found our fit and will know that we do NOT have a fit in either major. HOWEVER, because I have TEN HCP, my hand may be worth one more bid and you can show this with a bid of 2NT or 2H."

**Guru:** "Excellent! When you advance in your bridge bidding, you may prefer to bid 1H on this hand rather than 1D. There are pros and cons for both actions, so for the time being, stick with the guidelines!"

(b) " I would respond ONE SPADE. I have an absolute MINIMUM for a response, but respond I must. Spades is my ONLY suit, so I MUST bid it. I intend to PASS whatever partner bids next unless it is a REVERSE to diamonds or hearts."

**Simon:** "Wow, Vera! You've got it figured haven't you? What about giving ME a turn? On hand

(c) I would respond ONE NO TRUMP. This shows 8-10 HCP and FOUR clubs, in the purest form of bidding. With a balanced hand like this, it is much better to bid 1NT than 2C, isn't it? The balanced hand will play well enough in 1NT, and more than likely score more than clubs anyway."

**Guru:** "Quite right, Simon. In RESPONDING in No Trumps, you do not need to worry about not having a suit stopped UNLESS an opponent has bid it, though on some hands it is clearly better that you DON'T bid No Trumps if you can help it. Bidding is about using common sense, as has been stated often enough. DO NOT fall into the trap of bidding 1S just because you have those wonderful spade cards. A SPADE contract is almost certainly NOT the best result for your side since opponents will have more CARDS in that suit unless partner has four of them. Partner WON'T have FIVE spades unless they have SIX or more clubs!"

(d) **Simon:** "On this one I bid ONE HEART. We have more than enough to be in GAME, but there is NO hurry, as you keep telling us. The void in partner's club suit is a bit of a worry, so I'm definitely going to go quietly."

**Guru:** "Yes, when partner REBIDS you will be in a better position to judge where to go next. Your priority will then probably be to find a HEART fit if partner has THREE card support, but THAT is not your concern at THIS stage. Do not make the mistake of responding 1D, since with FIVE card suits you OPEN, And RESPOND, in your HIGHER. Your turn now, Vera."

(e) **Vera:** "I bid ONE DIAMOND. No reason NOT to bid normally, and that is my four card suit. Another option is to bid a direct 3NTI suppose, but while that DOES show a balanced hand of 14-16 HCP, partner may think I have four CLUBS instead of four DIAMONDS."

**Guru:** " I don't suppose it makes much difference at THIS stage, but such subtleties CAN be important if you cultivate them for when your bidding starts reaching the advanced levels."

(f) **Vera:** "This one is a tricky one. I can NOT raise clubs, since a raise to TWO shows 6-9 HCP, a raise to THREE shows 10-12 HCP, and a raise to FOUR (OR FIVE) bypasses our most obvious game, THREE NO TRUMPS. I COULD jump directly to 3NT but my small doubleton spade this time IS a worry, though it may have been of little consequence for a ONE No Trump response. I'm also worried that if opener has a bare stop in spades, or a holding like Kxx or even AQx in spades, an immediate lead THROUGH them would not be nice."

**Guru:** "Yes, YOU would be declarer in 3NT if you were to bid it immediately and that could be crucial in THREE No Trumps where every trick matters for both the declaring and defending side, but where five tricks in spades against a ONE No Trump contract will still allow declarer to score 120 as against 110 for making 3C! So what CAN you bid? Just as there will be times when you have to bid a three card suit at the TWO or THREE level, there WILL be times when you simply have no choice but to bid a short suit at the ONE level also. Since you will try to develop your imagination as well as your obedience of 'rules', bid ONE DIAMOND. Yes, partner WILL expect you to have FOUR diamonds at least, but can you see ANY further bidding which can eventuate where that can MATTER?"

**Simon:** "Too subtle for me! I'm afraid I would have bid 3NT, but I certainly see now why that would NOT have been a good idea! We really DO have a lot to learn don't we?"

**Guru:** "You're actually doing amazingly brilliantly. You'll find that when you DO learn to bid according to the RULES, when you start bending and even breaking the rules is when you REALLY start getting the best results. You see, knowing WHEN all the things you have learnt should be ignored is what distinguishes the top players from the average. You see, THEY actually THINK when they do something. That is why I'd play rubber bridge for any amount against any computer that anyone can produce. No disrespect to our Chess playing friend Deep Blue of course."

## CHAPTER 9

### RESPONDING TO ONE DIAMOND

**Guru:** "Let's look at some hands that you might have when partner opens 1D. What do you bid on each of the following?"

(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)
♠ A 7 6 4	♠ Q 4 3	♠ 5 4 3	♠ Q 4	♠ 8 5 4 3 2	♠ A 5 3
♥ 7 4 3 2	♥ A 7 4	♥ 5 4 3	♥ 8 7 4 3	♥ A K Q J	♥ K J 2
♦ K Q 5	♦ A J 4 3	♦ 6 4	♦ K 7	♦ K 3	♦ A 7 4 2
♣ 4 3	♣ 9 6 3	♣ A Q J 4 3	♣ K 8 5 4 3	♣ 8 5	♣ K 6 3

**Guru:** "You can start this time, Simon."

(a) **Simon:** "I would bid ONE HEART: you say ANY four card suit is biddable, and since it is the LOWEST available four card suit I can bid, I do so. The SPADE fit, if there is one, will NOT be missed, but if I bypass hearts and bid 1S, the HEART fit MAY be missed, in fact almost certainly WILL be missed. And even with my four small hearts opposite 9 8 6 5, the contract should be played in HEARTS, shouldn't it?"

(b) On the next one I'm not sure whether to bid TWO NO TRUMPS or THREE diamonds. 2NT shows a balanced hand of 11-12 HCP and NO biddable major, 3D shows diamond support and 10-12 HCP. I suppose three diamonds is what I SHOULD bid?"

**Guru:** "With such a close decision, you should bid what you're most comfortable with. There will be MANY times where you DO have genuine options. My personal preference is to bid 2NT, with such a completely balanced hand and honour cards in both majors. Your turn now, Vera."

(c) **Vera:** "I bid ONE NO TRUMP. I do not have sufficient HCP to bid 2C, but enough to respond. Seems like my ONLY option is 1NT."

(d) This time ONE HEART. My LONGEST suit is CLUBS but I have only 8 HCP. You say that if I have a suit I CAN bid at the one level, I should do so. Luckily, I actually have FOUR hearts, so 1H is my option."

**Guru:** "The ONLY option unless you want to mislead partner as to your strength. But whatever you do, you must NOT bid 1NT or your heart suit will be lost forever. You next, Simon."

(e) "I would bid ONE SPADE. This is my LONGEST suit. HIGH CARDS do not matter for purposes of bidding, do they? I will get the chance to show my hearts LATER, and when I do, that will also show the fact that I have FIVE spades and FOUR or more hearts, won't it?"

**Guru:** "You catch on fast, Simon. You RESPOND exactly as you'd OPEN, within the parameters allowed you after partner has opened the bidding. You have BOTH suits available to bid at the one level, so bid them the natural way, with the LONGEST first. Simple, really. Let's hear from Vera for the last one."

(f) **Vera:** "THREE NO TRUMPS is the stand out bid on this hand. Doesn't a response of 3NT generally show 14-16 HCP and no interest in either major?"

**Guru:** "Absolutely. With a different point count and the same hand, e.g. with 12-13 HCP or more than 16, you should bid TWO CLUBS, despite having only a three card suit, since raising diamonds to ANY level may not be an accurate description of your hand or result in bypassing the best game of 3NT. You CAN see, I hope, that when you RESPOND you do not as a rule need to do any more than just bid your own SUIT if you CAN. That is irrespective of how many POINTS you have because OPENER will have to bid again. They HAVE to if you respond by bidding a SUIT. Only if you bid NO TRUMPS does opener not have to bid again. And once opener bids again, you are then in the best position to make a further decision. The EARLY bidding REALLY should not be too difficult. Let's see what happens when partner opens ONE HEART."

## CHAPTER 10

### RESPONDING TO ONE HEART

**Guru:** "Here are some hands you might have when partner opens ONE HEART. What would you bid on each of them in response? Whose turn to start? You might as well, Vera."

(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)
♠ 9 5 3 2	♠ A Q 8 4	♠ 8 3	♠ A 8 3	♠ Q J 3	♠ A 5 3
♥ J 2	♥ J 4	♥ K J 2	♥ J 9 5 3	♥ Q 3	♥ Q J 3
♦ A J 8 4 3	♦ 8 5 4 3 2	♦ Q 6 4 3	♦ K Q 4 3	♦ A 8 5 3	♦ A Q 4 3
♣ J 5	♣ K J	♣ J 6 5 3	♣ J 2	♣ Q 4 3 2	♣ J 7 4 3

(a) **Vera:** " I bid ONE SPADE. I do have five good diamonds, but to respond at the TWO level one should have at least TEN HCP. And you DO NOT respond 1NT just because of your point count, do you? ANY four card suit is biddable, you've told us."

**Guru:** "Yes. If you do bid 1NT you may miss your spade fit if you have one. In fact you certainly WILL miss it. If opener has ANY four spades and raises you to two, you can look forward to doing very well in that contract thanks to your good diamond suit and club shortage."

(b) **Vera:** " TWO DIAMONDS or ONE SPADE? This time I seem to have a choice of bids. 11 HCP and a five card suit, so I guess I'd bid 2D."

**Guru:** " Fair enough. But if you DO bid 1S then DON'T bid diamonds later, or partner will expect you to have FIVE spades because of the order you bid your suits. If you respond 2D, you can later bid 2S if opener rebids 2H. The WRONG bid is 2NT. A response of 2NT does show the POINT count, but denies a spade suit. ALWAYS bid your suit(s) unless you have a VERY good reason for hiding them! Simon?"

(c) " TWO HEARTS. Awful hand, but I MUST bid because I have my required six count. SEVEN in fact! But I may never get the chance to support partner unless I do so NOW. I have a GOOD three card suit, plus a 'ruffing value' in my doubleton spade. A raise to two shows 6-9 HCP and trump support, doesn't it?"

**Guru:** "Yes, and I wholeheartedly agree. The raise to 2H is better than a bid of 1NT. Firstly, partner will PROBABLY have five hearts anyway, secondly, hearts is likely to play better than No Trumps because of the doubleton spade."

(d) **Simon:** "Easy this time: THREE HEARTS. Seems like a perfect example of a 'LIMIT' raise: four card trump support and 10-11 HCP. Inviting opener to bid on to game if they have more than a minimum hand, i.e. 14+ HCP or extra shape to make up for fewer HCP."

**Guru:** "Good. Now you, Vera."

(e) **Vera:** "This one's also obvious: TWO CLUBS. I have enough points to make a 'two over one response in a minor, so 2C is what I bid."

**Guru:** "Nothing wrong with that at all, but I believe there is a better alternative: TWO NO TRUMPS. This specifically shows 11-12 (possibly a GOOD 10 HCP), whereas 2C just shows 10+ HCP. BOTH bids DENY 4+ spades though in the case of a 2C response, the possibility of five clubs and SHORTER spades remains. Hence 2NT is more accurately descriptive of the responding hand."

(f) **Vera:** "Funny how at times you just see one obvious bid and don't think of any others! On this one I bid TWO DIAMONDS. This time I have enough HCP to be in game, but you should NOT jump directly to 3NT, should you?"

**Guru:** "No, quite right. You do not know enough about opener's hand to make such a unilateral decision. Partner may have five hearts and shortage somewhere and have to pass your jump to 3NT. You have time to discuss the end contract with partner, so just quietly bid your minor at the two level ('two over one') and see what partner rebids. Interesting you should choose DIAMONDS. Most people would bid 2C which may serve to avert a club lead if the end contract is 3NT, but the 2D bid may be much more helpful to partner in the decision to play in Hearts or No Trumps. There is nothing wrong with responding EITHER in clubs or diamonds, but I prefer, with 4-4, to bid the better suit in such a situation. It is DEFINITELY wrong to respond in No Trumps at any level, or to raise the heart suit at such an early stage when other forward going bids are available."

## **RESPONDING TO THE ONE SPADE OPENING**

When there is a 1S opening, it is no longer possible for the responding hand to show their suit IMMEDIATELY if they have fewer than TEN HCP. Therefore the most LIKELY response is going to be INT.

The INT response should be a warning to opener that responder is UNLIKELY to have even THREE spades to support opener's. With THREE card support, it is more sensible MOST of the time to RAISE 1S to 2S. This is because a 1S opening will contain at least FIVE cards more often than any other opening.. WHY? Because of our structure of bidding. If the spade suit WAS only four cards long, then there cannot be another four card suit, or the OTHER suit would have been opened FIRST. Remember, FOUR UP....Hence the ONLY time a 4 card spade suit will be opened is when the hand is COMPLETELY flat, i.e. 4333 shape.

## **ONE SPADE OPENING, TWO CLUB RESPONSE**

This guarantees that responder has at least TEN HCP. It does not necessarily guarantee at least a FOUR card club suit (see 1S opening, 2H response later). It CAN be done on a THREE card club suit when no other bid is appropriate.

Opener can REBID SPADES with a good suit, introduce hearts or diamonds to show shape, or rebid No Trumps at an appropriate level (2NT with say 12-15 HCP and 3NT with 15-18). Opener can also make stronger bids if appropriate. A raise to 3C should show EXTRA values, because the 2S REBID is available for a weak hand, as is a 2NT rebid.

## **ONE SPADE OPENING, TWO DIAMOND RESPONSE**

As with clubs, but UNLIKELY to have as few as three diamonds unless responder has four card spade support and is merely temporising. Same options for opener by way of rebids.

## **ONE SPADE OPENING, TWO HEART RESPONSE**

The two heart response GUARANTEES at least a FIVE card suit. This is the ONLY situation where a '2 over 1' response does that. That is because it makes subsequent bidding much easier. With a FOUR card heart suit, responder should bid 2C and await developments. Opener MUST bid again. If opener now bids 2H, the heart fit (4-4 at least) is found. Over the 2H response, opener has the extra option of raising responder with a THREE card suit only, and that is why the 2H bid has to guarantee at least five. A 5-3 fit in a MAJOR is preferable as a contract to No Trumps, and a 4-4 fit in a major should pretty well ALWAYS be played in preference to No Trumps.

A rebid of 3D or 3C by opener shows extra values, though it need not be as strong as a reverse at the two level. Rebids of 2NT and 3NT have the normal meaning. A jump rebid in spades shows at least a SIX card suit and extra values, sufficient to be in game but leaving the option of 3NT open. With a hand that is best suited to play in Spades, opener can jump directly to 4S.

# CHAPTER 11

## PARTNERSHIP BIDDING

**Guru:** "We have now covered OPENING BIDS, and first round RESPONSES. There's far more to bidding than that, and so that we can proceed to learn how the complete AUCTION works, I now want to summarise what the principles of bidding are about, and at the same time, what 'SIMPLE' bidding is about as well.

### THERE ARE TWO MAJOR OBJECTIVES IN BIDDING.

The FIRST priority is to locate a FIT of at least EIGHT cards so that a suit can be set as TRUMPS. At this stage we won't think about the fact that some suits score more than others and that in some cases it may be preferable to play a hand in No Trumps. Once a FIT has been found, ensure that you play the hand with that suit as TRUMPS. If NO fit is found, then play the hand in NO TRUMPS. Simple, isn't it? The complicated stuff will come later.

The SECOND objective is to reach the correct LEVEL in your bidding. Because there are BONUSES available for bidding AND making 'game', if you can do so, you should. But because there are penalties when you FAIL to make your contract, you must also ensure that you do not bid to a contract that is too difficult to make. The way you judge THAT is according to TWO criteria: firstly, your HIGH CARD POINTS, and secondly, your TRICK TAKING POTENTIAL. The high card point gives you an IDEA of the trick taking potential, and a good look at the length and quality of your SUITS should help to reinforce what you know from the high card point count.

### BASIC BIDDING, THE SIMPLE WAY:

#### *The 'LEVELS' of bidding:*

**THE ONE LEVEL:** With a high card point count of between 12 and 20, open the bidding at the LOWEST level. THAT is the ONE level. That is, unless your hand is highly distributional and you expect to make a lot of tricks WITHOUT your partner's help, or with just a little help. Opening the bidding at the lowest level allows you to get a response from partner, and to then enter into discussions as to whether you DO have a fit in one or more suits, or not. The ONE level of bidding is primarily for the purpose of finding a FIT. That is why it is necessary for you to be economical in opening the suits in a particular ORDER. We have already had some practice at OPENING the bidding, and you seem to know to always open with a bid in your LONGEST suit. If you have a FIVE card or longer suit, you will therefore open that suit. If you're lucky enough to have TWO five card suits, or even luckier still and have two SIX card suits, always open the HIGHER. This will allow you to bid the LOWER one next. If, however your longest suit is FOUR cards only, always open by bidding your LOWEST four card suit. The reason for that is logical enough. Your PARTNER will bid THEIR suit, and if that happens to be your other suit, you have now found a 'FIT'. If partner doesn't bid your other suit, you know you DON'T have a fit in that suit. With NO fit found, the next logical bidding progression is NO TRUMPS.

**LEVEL TWO:** After having opened at the ONE level, the TWO level of bidding is for agreeing your suit, or SUGGESTING that you are happy to play with a certain suit as trumps. It is also the level which you are prepared to go to with either sufficient HIGH CARD POINTS, or a sufficient FIT in a trump suit. You see, the fact that partner has RESPONDED tells you that you have at least SIX high card points opposite TWELVE. While this adds up to only 18, that is the absolute minimum, and the fact that you are playing the hand rather than defending it, which is more difficult, should enable you to MAKE either your ONE NO TRUMP contract, or your TRUMP contract at the TWO level because you will be playing with your suit as TRUMPS.

It is important to note that a lot of people learning about bidding don't appreciate the fact that if you have opened with a suit at the ONE level, and partner has RESPONDED, it is no longer possible to play in a SUIT at the one level! WHY? Because having opened and having received a response, it is common courtesy, and in bidding a MUST, to say at least one more thing to partner. Otherwise it would be like

calling someone on the phone and hanging up on them the moment the phone is answered! The ONE level of bidding is for investigating, and AGREEING a suit, OR finding that you are UNLIKELY to have a fit and deciding to play the hand in ONE NO TRUMP. You can only agree a fit by SAYING SO, and NOT by passing the moment partner mentions a suit that you also have. This is important to understand: if you have located a fit, AGREE it, it ONLY requires a raise to the next level, and if you don't go any further you WILL be able to make your eight tricks, as long as you can handle your declarer play. You should ALSO realise that if you DO have only 18 HCP between you, opponents have 22 and can probably make a two or three level contract themselves. Furthermore, when partner responds in their own suit after you have opened in yours, they COULD have ANY number of points and merely be waiting to find out more about your hand before deciding on the final contract. SO, if you OPEN and partner RESPONDS, you can no longer play in a ONE level contract unless it is in ONE NO TRUMP. Remembering this will make your later bidding much easier.

Before we go any further with our SIMPLE bidding lesson, let's look at some HIGH CARD POINT COUNT ranges which we will then try to fit into our bidding structure to make our bidding SIMPLE. You already know that with at least TWELVE points you OPEN the bidding, and with SIX or more you RESPOND. You ALSO seem to have learnt well just HOW to respond. But there's more to bidding than that, so let's look at some point count ranges that you might have either individually, or in the COMBINED hands.

Firstly, the ONE LEVEL opening bids and responses. The OPENINGS can best fall into FOUR point count ranges in the Simple scheme of things: 12-14 HCP; 15-16 HCP; 17-18 HCP and 19-20 HCP. The RESPONSES need to add in two more ranges BELOW these: 6-9 HCP and 10-12 HCP.

The 12 to 16 HCP range can be considered to be a MINIMUM for an opening bid, though of course the 15-16 HCP range is better than 12-14 which is the absolute minimum for an opening bid. The 17-20 HCP range is the MAXIMUM for a one level opening bid, and can also be split into two 'sub' ranges. You can see that all these ranges have a VERY specific number of high card points in them, and therefore help the bidding to be more accurate, as long as the principles of Simple bidding are adhered to.

The RESPONDER, in turn, can have pretty well ANY of these point counts, but also as FEW AS SIX and as MANY AS 28! With the latter, there is NO problem in responding: you just bid SEVEN NO TRUMPS, but with anything else, it is important that the maximum amount of information is exchanged between the opener and responder before the final contract is agreed to. That is why the point count ranges are important to remember, though not necessarily exactly. They WILL also help you when playing other 'systems'.

***Let's look first of all at what are more or less BALANCED hands; hands which might end up being played in either a SUIT, or in NO TRUMPS.***

The OPENER will open with a one level bid of their LONGEST suit, or their LOWEST if the longest suit is only four cards. They could have any point count between 12 and 20, though SOME 12 point hands may not be worth opening, and SOME 20 point hands may be worth opening TWO NO TRUMPS. Opener, therefore, can have between 12 and 20 HCP.

Next, let's look at RESPONDER: The responder, with at least SIX HCP, will respond, since opener may have as many as 19 or 20, and since it is important that the best FIT is located. The responder, with a MINIMUM hand (FEWER than 10 HCP), should not venture, IN THEIR OWN SUIT, beyond the ONE level. If they CAN bid their suit at the one level, they must do so, but if they can't, then they may have no choice but to make a response of 1NT. The 1NT response to an opening bid is QUITE specific, and shows a VERY limited hand and NO ability to bid a suit. Since the 1NT level has been reached, and opener has been given such specific information by responder, 1NT can now become the final contract unless opener has reason to bid something else. With a BALANCED hand and no other suit to mention, that can often be good reason to stay in 1NT. But with a SECOND suit that is LOWER than the SUIT OPENED, the opener may, in fact SHOULD, offer the second suit as an alternative. For instance, a sequence such as :

1H - 1NT  
2D

is offering responder a CHOICE of two suits as trumps. Not only that, it GUARANTEES that opener has at least FIVE hearts, and at least FOUR diamonds. WHY? Because we ALWAYS open our LONGEST suit, and with only FOUR card suits we open the LOWER. Such sequences ALSO occur when responder has bid a suit. For instance,

1H - 1S

2D

In essence there is NO difference as far as OPENER is concerned; THEIR hand is still the same even though the RESPONDER has not limited THEIR hand in any way. All OPENER is saying is that, given that responder has responded 1S, OPENER'S only real interest is in hearts or diamonds. Such a change of suit, introduced at the two level, does NOT show any extra values. The mere fact that responder has at least SIX points, coupled with the likelihood that SOME sort of fit will be found at the TWO level (remember, opener has now shown at least FIVE hearts and FOUR diamonds) also increases the chances that eight tricks WILL be makeable in hearts or diamonds, even opposite a MINIMUM response. There is also the possibility that, if there is no fit in either hearts or diamonds, RESPONDER can set a final contract of two SPADES if their spades are long (at least FIVE) and a spade contract is more desirable from their point of view.



# CHAPTER 12

## INTRODUCTION TO REBIDS

**Guru:** "You probably think I'm a bore when I keep repeating things, but I believe in covering the same ground as reinforcement from time to time. This will once more give you a brief summary of what SIMPLE bidding is about.

**Count your HIGH CARD POINTS:**

- FOUR for an ACE
- THREE for a KING
- TWO for a QUEEN
- ONE for a JACK

If the total HIGH CARD POINTS in your hand comes to at least TWELVE, you should OPEN the bidding. With fewer high card points, but a more DISTRIBUTIONAL hand, you may open the bidding if you wish. It is the number of TRICKS that your side makes that is the ultimate thing that matters, not how many high cards you have, or how many high card points. POINTS are a TOOL which HELPS you decide what your trick taking potential is.

### OPENING THE BIDDING:

If you have between 12 and 20 HIGH CARD POINTS, always open the bidding at the LOWEST POSSIBLE level, with a bid at the ONE level.

ALWAYS open by bidding your LONGEST suit. If you have EQUAL LENGTH suits, if they are FIVE or SIX card suits, open the HIGHER RANKED. If you have FOUR card suits only, always open your LOWEST RANKED. Following this rule makes your LATER bidding much easier and more meaningful to your partner.

### RESPONDING:

If your PARTNER has opened the bidding, and you have SUFFICIENT high card points to hope to get to play the contract, i.e. win the auction, the most important thing is that you find a TRUMP suit to play in if you have a FIT of at least EIGHT cards between your two hands. When partner has OPENED the bidding, you MUST respond if you have at least SIX high card points, otherwise you may not find your best SUIT, or your best CONTRACT. Finding a FIT must be your FIRST priority, and after THAT, finding your LEVEL, i.e. if you can make GAME, you must not miss it, nor must you end up playing in the WRONG game contract. 25 high card points between the two hands should be enough to make game in NO TRUMPS if you have NO suit fit or a good long MINOR suit, or to make game in 4H or 4S if you have at least an EIGHT card fit in the suit. Hence, the importance of RESPONDING with a minimum of 6 H.C.P.: partner MAY have 20 H.C.P. and still have opened with a ONE level bid.

How to RESPOND: If you CAN, respond by bidding your LONGEST suit. Follow the same principles as in OPENING the bidding. Bid your LONGEST suit, or your HIGHER RANKED suit if 6-6 or 5-5, and your LOWEST AVAILABLE if 4-4 or 4-4-4. Lowest available means whichever one comes next after the suit opened by partner, e.g. if you have four hearts and four clubs and partner opens ONE DIAMOND, you respond by bidding ONE HEART which is the lowest AVAILABLE suit you can bid.

When CAN you and when can you NOT bid your longest suit? As OPENER you can ALWAYS bid your longest suit, by opening it. But as RESPONDER, you may not be able to call your suit at the ONE level if partner has opened a HIGHER ranked suit. To introduce your own suit at the TWO level, you SHOULD have at least TEN high card points, since with fewer, you MAY get too high in the bidding if you have found no FIT. Therefore, with FEWER than 10 HCP but enough to RESPOND, i.e. specifically 6-9 HCP, you MAY bid a SHORTER suit if you can do so at the ONE level, e.g. with four SPADES and five CLUBS, if partner opens 1H and you have 6-9 HCP you should bid 1S not 2C. If you have neither a suit of your own that you can bid at a safe level, nor support for partner, then there is only one other option: you have to bid ONE NO TRUMP.

OPENING, and then RESPONDING, is all about FIT FINDING at the ONE level where possible, and LIMITING your hand by NOT bypassing 1NT unless you have other options available. USUALLY these other options are only available if you can offer partner a choice of SUITS, or a STRONGER hand.

## THE TWO LEVEL

If you do not have sufficient points for game, or even to LOOK for game, then nearly ALL your contracts should be played either in the suit of BEST fit at the TWO level, or in ONE NO TRUMP. By the time the opener and responder have each made two bids, the FIT should have been found, or ONE NO TRUMP should have been bid and passed. EITHER contract should be playable even on MINIMUM values, the LEAST being 12 HCP opposite 6. Playing in ONE NO TRUMP and NO fit, because you have the edge as declarer, you should make seven tricks. With any sort of a FIT, you should also have chances of making TWO of whatever suit you agree as trumps. That is what LOW LEVEL bidding is all about, and it SHOULD be simple enough.

### OPENER'S REBIDS:

When you open the bidding and partner responds by bidding a suit of their own, you MUST make another bid. This 'REBID' further defines the shape and strength of the opening bid. Opener's rebids are structured in such a way as to show the SHAPE as well as STRENGTH of their hand, or at least as closely as is possible on the second round of bidding (unless the bidding is still at the 'fit finding stage, e.g. 1C-1D-1S). When responder has made a bid in a suit, OPENER has the following options open to them:

- To rebid NO TRUMPS;
- To rebid their opened suit;
- To rebid a SECOND suit;
- To RAISE responder's suit.

In the first three options, opener does NOT have four card support for responder's suit. Here's what the possibilities are when opener rebids No Trumps, their own suit, or a second suit.

### 1NT REBID

By rebidding 1NT, opener conveys the following information to responder:

#### POINT COUNT: 12-16

Nature of hand: Balanced, or with shortage in responder's suit and not strong enough to introduce a new suit at a higher level.

As an example, opener has opened 1D and responder bid 1S. Opener REBIDS 1NT. They could have ANY of the following hands:

- |     |         |           |             |         |
|-----|---------|-----------|-------------|---------|
| (a) | ♠ 3     | ♥ A Q 7 2 | ♦ K 7 5 3 2 | ♣ A 7 3 |
| (b) | ♠ J 4 3 | ♥ Q 7 2   | ♦ A Q 9 2   | ♣ A 7 3 |
| (c) | ♠ K 2   | ♥ Q 7 3 2 | ♦ K J 7 4 2 | ♣ A Q J |

NOTE that it is WRONG to rebid 2H in either the first or third case, because THAT would take the bidding too high if responder had, say, three diamonds and two hearts and a minimum response. The 1NT rebid, however, would be WRONG with any of the following hands:

- |     |         |           |             |           |
|-----|---------|-----------|-------------|-----------|
| (a) | ♠ 3     | ♥ A Q 7 2 | ♦ K Q J 7 6 | ♣ 8 4 2   |
| (b) | ♠ K J 4 | ♥ A Q 7 2 | ♦ Q J 7 6 2 | ♣ 8       |
| (c) | ♠ K 2   | ♥ A Q 7 2 | ♦ K Q J 7 6 | ♣ K 4     |
| (d) | ♠ 3     | ♥ K 7 2   | ♦ A Q 8 5 3 | ♣ K 6 5 3 |

In the first case, this hand may NOT belong in No Trumps. You have a good diamond suit, a SINGLETON in partner's suit, and three SMALL clubs. Your shape and strength are concentrated in the red suits, so bid your DIAMONDS again. Partner will know that you have at least FIVE of them. Furthermore, partner has already bypassed the heart suit, so it's unlikely that they are interested in hearts anyway. A bid of 2H would be a REVERSE and hence show at least SEVENTEEN HCP.

On the next hand the only difference is that you have a singleton CLUB, and three GOOD spades. Since partner has bid spades, you should support them, even with only THREE card support. The singleton club gives you a 'ruffing' value, and even if partner has only four spades, a spade contract will play well. Better than rebidding your diamond suit, or bidding 1NT with a singleton club, or making a 'reverse' with 2H.

On the next hand, you ARE good enough to 'reverse', so you bid 2H. This tells partner that you have at least SEVENTEEN HCP, five diamonds and four hearts, or something like that, and a good enough hand to force the bidding to at least TWO NO TRUMPS. A REVERSE is FORCING TO AT LEAST 2NT. You should remember that.

On the final hand, you again have no support for partner, but a rebid of 1NT would be wrong because you CAN introduce your second suit and still ask partner which of your suits they prefer to play in, while keeping the level low. REBID 2C, which GUARANTEES that you have at least FIVE diamonds (your FIRST bid suit) and FOUR clubs (your second suit). Partner can PASS if you've located your club fit, give you PREFERENCE to 2D, rebid their SPADES if that suit is good enough, or bid their SECOND suit if they have hearts, or make any other bid which accurately reflects THEIR hand.

## CHAPTER 13

### REBIDS

**Guru:** "Now that we have some concept of the OPENING BID and how to RESPOND, we must talk about the final BASIC part of our early bidding: the REBID. You will recall that I said that if you OPEN the bidding, you can expect your PARTNER to make a response with as few as SIX high card points. There are two main reasons for this: firstly, you as opener MIGHT have as many as 20 HCP for your opening bid, therefore it is important you keep the bidding open if you DO have enough for game between you. Secondly, it is unlikely that you have immediately found your fit AND that the bid in which opener opened the bidding will be the CORRECT contract to play the hand in. You must be able to do SOME bidding at a very low level in order to determine which is the best LOW level contract for your side, even with a bare minimum of high card points. Location of a FIT is of prime importance, finding the appropriate LEVEL at which you can play the contract is the OTHER most important consideration. Sometimes one of these will be lost at the expense of the other. But one thing I must stress right now, and it's a point many learners miss and don't learn for a long time: ONCE YOU FIND A FIT IN HEARTS OR SPADES, don't even THINK about any other denomination for your contract. It does not matter what suit, or what QUALITY or LENGTH of suit you have OUTSIDE your fit. Your MAJOR SUIT is where the contract should be played. A different story if you have located a MINOR SUIT FIT. NOW, No Trumps is a feasible, and often BETTER, alternative. I HAVE been over the reasons for that before."

**Vera:** " My dad used to have a favourite song called 'Some enchanted evening'. I remember him singing away: 'Once you have found her, never let her go.....' Must remember that for whenever we find a 4-4 or better major fit, eh Simon?"

**Guru:** "Very good, Vera. Remembering that sort of thing can definitely help with your bidding, though I suspect you were being flippant. Yes, once you have found a major suit fit, there IS no point in confusing matters by looking for No Trumps, even though at the expert stage you will now and again, and I stress that it will be quite seldom, be able to determine that NINE tricks is ALL that you can hope to make, and that 3NT should be your preferred contract to 4H or 4S. But if you're like all good learners should be, THAT is not even a consideration at this stage, nor will it be for a LONG time!"

**Simon:** "O.K. then, tell us about the REBIDS."

**Guru:** "The REBIDS, once you have opened the bidding and partner has responded, should NOT be difficult. Let's assume that you have opened the bidding with a one level bid in a suit, and partner has responded by bidding a suit of their own.

A ONE level response in a SUIT does NOT limit the number of high card points, it is merely a way of finding a FIT if there is one. It MAY be done with as FEW as SIX HCP, or as many as 24! (With 25 HCP opposite an opening bid which guarantees at least 12, a bid of 7NT would be appropriate!"

**Vera:** "Unless your partner is a learner and has opened the bidding with a ten count. Or even eleven for that matter. And don't you say that you CAN open with fewer than twelve high card points if you have the right SHAPE?"

**Guru:** "Quite right, Vera. You should NEVER assume anything, and even WITH a 25 count, unless you have ALL the aces in your own hand, you should never just up and bid 7NT. You know how to ask for aces, don't you?"

**Simon:** "No, you haven't told us that yet. Have you?"

**Guru:** " I may have or I may not, but in any case, there IS a way to find out how many aces AND how many kings partner holds. THAT is using the 'GERBER' convention, where a bid of FOUR CLUBS asks partner to respond by telling you how many ACES they have. The FIRST step, 4D, denies holding any at all, the second (4H) shows ONE, the third (4S) TWO, the fourth step (4NT) THREE, and the fifth (5C) all FOUR. But since that fourth step carries you all the way to the FIVE level, we can compress the responses by bidding the FIRST step of 4D to also show FOUR ACES.

You can see that if you ask the question and partner responds NO aces and YOU also have none, you are already overboard, so the chances are NIL that you have no aces at all between you, unless someone has bid very badly indeed. So the response of 4D to show none or all four aces is never ambiguous, and allows for a bid of 5C to be used to then ask for KINGS, using the same step responses. The only difference is that you no longer show none or four with your first step since it IS possible to have none or four KINGS between the two hands. If partner responds 6C to show all four kings in such an ace and king asking sequence, I would imagine that a grand slam is almost a certainty."

**Vera:** "But what if clubs is a SUIT that you want to bid? Won't that cause confusion?"

**Guru:** "It certainly can, which is why Mr. BLACKWOOD invented HIS ace asking bid of 4NT. But I don't want to digress too much, and you WILL learn about Gerber and Blackwood later anyway. So let's get back to the REBIDS that we started on. Where was I?"

**Simon:** "You were talking about ONE level responses. What about responding by bidding your suit at the TWO level?"

**Guru:** " A TWO level response in a suit DOES show a more specific point count, at least TEN HCP. This is known as a 'two over one' response, i.e. responder bids THEIR suit at the two level, therefore they must have sufficient strength to be able to go one level higher. Note that a '2 over 1' response is made when the LOWEST available level for responder is the 2 level. If responder can bid their suit at the ONE level, they should do so irrespective of point count. For example, do NOT bid 2D over partner's 1C just because you have 11 HCP. MISSING one level of bidding is known as a 'JUMP SHIFT' and shows a hand with at least FIFTEEN H.C.P. as RESPONDER, and is GAME FORCING as a REBID by opener. But more on that later."

**Simon:** " What about a One No Trump response, which is BETWEEN the one and two levels?"

**Guru:** "A response of ONE NO TRUMP is quite specific, in that it LIMITS the responder's hand to no more than NINE H.C.P. AND shows the inability to bid THEIR suit at the two level. It is therefore NOT obligatory for opener to bid again when responder has bid 1NT, or ANY number of No Trumps for that matter."

**Vera:** " But whatever responder bids by way of a SUIT, opener MUST make a REBID which may further clarify the strength and shape of the opener's hand, correct?"

**Guru:** "Precisely. So, let us now look at opener's REBIDS when they have opened and partner has responded."

### **"OPENING BID 1C, RESPONSE 1D.**

Opener should bid their SECOND suit if it is hearts or spades. At this stage, you are still looking for your FIT. That is what the ONE level of bidding is for. If opener does not have another suit to bid, then they have the following options:

REBID NO TRUMPS  
REBID CLUBS  
RAISE RESPONDER'S DIAMONDS

#### **NO TRUMP REBIDS:**

With a MINIMUM hand of up to 16 HCP, REBID 1NT  
With a BETTER than minimum hand of 17-18 HCP, REBID 2NT  
With an absolute MAXIMUM hand of 19-20 HCP, REBID 3NT

#### **CLUB REBIDS:**

With a MINIMUM hand of up to 16 HCP, REBID 2C. This GUARANTEES at least FIVE clubs, and DENIES four hearts, spades, OR diamonds, or even a good THREE card diamond suit with 'ruffing values'.

With a 6 card or longer GOOD QUALITY suit and a better than minimum hand, REBID 3C.

With an absolute maximum and a 6+ card suit, jump to 3NT if you have stops or potential stops in the as yet unbid suits (hearts and spades).

### **RAISE OF PARTNER'S SUIT (DIAMONDS).**

Follow a similar pattern to your No Trump rebids: with support but a MINIMUM hand, raise to 2D. With support but a BETTER than minimum hand (17-18 HCP) raise to 3D, and with 19-20 HCP and diamond support, try 3NT. DO NOT jump to 4D as this means bypassing 3NT which is GAME while 4D is NOT game.

### **OPENING BID 1C, RESPONSE 1H**

Follow the same principle. REBID No Trumps if you do not have another suit to bid and cannot support partner's hearts. THREE good hearts plus a 'ruffing value', remember, is good enough to support partner. You may also rebid your CLUBS if appropriate, but if you have a secondary DIAMOND suit, do NOT introduce that suit UNLESS you have sufficient strength to do so. By bidding TWO DIAMONDS, you are REVERSING and hence showing at least 17 HCP.

### **OPENING BID 1C, RESPONSE 1S**

Exactly the same principle. Rebid No Trumps or your own suit, or raise partner. Do NOT introduce hearts or diamonds at the two level unless you have at least 17 HCP.

### **OPENING BID 1C, RESPONSE 1NT**

Since you're playing 'SIMPLE' bidding, and FIT is considered of PRIME importance, there should be no such response as 1NT to a 1C opening. Do you see why? Yes, if partner does NOT have a suit of their own, they must have CLUBS, therefore should have raised to 2C. Because of this, it is convenient to make the raise to 2C as responder showing the WEAKER raise, in the 6-7 HCP range, and the ONE NO TRUMP response as the STRONGER response, still showing club support, but a more BALANCED hand and 8-10 HCP. Since you have agreed to ALWAYS bid your suit if you can, the 1NT response to a 1C opening MUST contain at least FOUR card club support!

### **OPENING BID 1C, RESPONSE 2D, 2H, or 2S:**

These are 'jump shifts' which show a good suit and sufficient HCP to be AT LEAST in game. Your REBIDS, as opener, should be little different, and you can bid in the safe knowledge that, because partner has JUMP SHIFTED, you CANNOT stop short of game. Therefore the bidding can proceed slowly, with continued investigation as to be BEST contract, but in the knowledge that partner's jump shift is based on a GOOD suit that needs little support from you.

### **OPENING BID 1C, RESPONSE 2NT**

This shows specifically 11-12 HCP and no suit to bid, hence also probably four card club support. An immediate raise to 3C would also show the same point count but possibly a more 'shapely' hand with fewer high cards in the majors, but that is just conjecture and depends on the partnership style rather than any particular 'rule'.

### **OPENING BID 1C, RESPONSE 3NT**

This shows a balanced hand of 14-16 HCP, and by implication no four card major suit. With a four card or longer heart or spade suit, responder should quietly bid it at the one level. With fewer, or MORE, HCP, responder should bid a suit first, even if it means bidding 1D with only a three card suit. The response of 3NT should be quite specific in terms of HCP, so that opener can judge whether to bid a SLAM, or to look for one. This should also be the case for when opener opens 1D, 1H, or 1S. As a rule, when the response of 3NT is so specific, opener will PASS 3NT.

### **OPENING BID 1C, OTHER RESPONSES**

There should be NO other responses than those just covered. However, any partnership can agree on what responses HIGHER than a jump shift mean. For instance, what should a bid of 3H mean if partner has opened 1C or 1D? There are MANY bidding options which experienced players can add into their repertoire but which are not necessary for your requirements at this stage at all."

# CHAPTER 14

## *MORE REBIDS*

**Guru:** "Let's now continue with our rebids. You're probably intelligent enough to be able to make your rebids from logic by now, but no harm in going over the possibilities anyway.

### ***OPENING BID 1C, RESPONSE 1H***

Using the same principles as before, bid 1S if you have spades, bid 1NT with a minimum hand, or rebid your clubs if you have five; support hearts if you have four, or with three reasonable ones and a 'ruffing value'. Do NOT introduce a diamond suit unless you have 17+ HCP.

### ***OPENING BID 1C, RESPONSE 1S***

Now you can no longer introduce your second suit if it is hearts or diamonds UNLESS you have 17+ HCP i.e. the values for a 'reverse'. Therefore your only options with a minimum hand are to REBID clubs, bid 1NT, or support partner's spade suit. Same principles as before.

### ***OPENING BID 1C, RESPONSE 1NT***

Partner's hand is VERY specifically described, you KNOW partner has NO other suit than clubs and 8-10 HCP. You can PASS with up to 15 HCP (NO game is likely, therefore stay nice and low), rebid clubs if you think clubs will play better, RAISE if you wish to INVITE game (you should have 16 or 17 HCP: with fewer you would NOT invite, with more, you would bid 3NT). Or make another try by introducing another suit, which is now a REVERSE and shows 17+ HCP.

### ***OPENING BID 1D, RESPONSE 1H***

Continuing with the same methods, you can bid 1S if you have spades, you can bid No Trumps with a balanced hand, 1NT with a minimum, 2NT with 17-18 HCP, and 3NT with 19-20. This time,. You CAN introduce your CLUB suit even with a minimum hand, because you are showing your SHAPE (at least FIVE diamonds, and at least FOUR clubs) and NOT taking the level any higher than you would have by rebidding diamonds. The only difference is that partner can CHOOSE the better contract if it is to be between YOUR two suits! A JUMP in clubs is a JUMP SHIFT and FORCING TO GAME.

### ***OPENING BID 1D, RESPONSE 1S***

Same principle. You can NOT introduce hearts unless you have 17+ HCP. But partner has bypassed hearts, so won't HAVE hearts unless their spades are LONGER, in which case PARTNER will introduce hearts later. With a MINIMUM hand and five diamonds, even WITH four hearts as well, REBID 2D. If you have CLUBS as well, you CAN introduce THEM by a rebid of 2C as before: you are NOT taking the bidding any higher than necessary.

### ***OPENING BID 1D, RESPONSE 1NT***

The 1NT response is quite specific: 6-9 HCP and DENIES a four card heart or spade suit. Therefore your extra option is to PASS 1NT, as well as your normal options of rebidding diamonds IF you think they will play better (you might e.g. have SIX diamonds, or a balanced hand but with two small hearts or spades).

### ***OPENING BID 1D, RESPONSE 2C***

Partner's response has guaranteed at least TEN HCP. Even so, with a MINIMUM hand and four hearts or spades as well, you should STILL not introduce that suit.. Partner has bypassed the major suits, so is UNLIKELY to be interested in them, or partner is prepared to bid their major LATER. A bid by YOU in your major suit would STILL be the equivalent of a REVERSE. You CAN, however, with a balanced hand, bid TWO NO TRUMPS, which limits your hand to 14 HCP, possibly 15. You can also rebid 2D if you have no serious interest in going any further DESPITE partner's minimum of 10 HCP. With MORE than 14 HCP, say 15-18 bid direct to 3NT with a balanced hand, since you know enough now to be in game opposite 10+ HCP.

### ***OPENING BID 1D, RESPONSE 2H, 2S, or 3C***

These are 'JUMP SHIFTS' and show STRONG hands with a good suit and good enough to force to GAME, possibly slam.

### **OPENING BID 1D, RESPONSE 2NT**

A response of 2NT is ALWAYS 11-12 HCP and therefore INVITING game. It can be PASSED, you can rebid your suit TO PLAY, or you can introduce another suit at the THREE level in order to get more information from partner.

### **OPENING BID 1H, RESPONSE 1S**

Same as before, but the options of course change. You can rebid NO TRUMPS, the level depending on your point count, or you can rebid your hearts OR introduce diamonds or clubs, which does NOT raise the level but gives partner the choice of TWO suits, with hearts being at least FIVE in length, and the second bid suit at least FOUR. Because of the added likelihood of a 4-4 FIT in a MINOR, or a 5-3 or 5-2 fit in hearts, the two level should NOT be too high a level to offer to play in a TRUMP contract.

### **OPENING BID 1H, RESPONSE 1NT**

The 1NT response is limited, showing 6-9 HCP and NOT more than THREE spades. It ALSO denies any reasonable heart support, since with a three card suit to an honour and any RUFFING values, it would be preferable to RAISE to 2H. Therefore you have the option of PASSING, rebidding HEARTS, or introducing a minor suit, giving partner the same options. If you bid strictly according to the 'rules' and common sense, some quite interesting logical inferences can be drawn from certain sequences. For instance look at the sequence:

1H - 1NT  
2C - 2D

HOW MANY DIAMONDS would you say responder has? No idea? Then think about it this way. OPENER has asked for a choice between hearts and clubs therefore has at LEAST five hearts and FOUR clubs. RESPONDER has 6-9 HCP and does NOT have four spades, and does NOT have FOUR clubs since they would PASS, having found the club fit, and does NOT have even TWO hearts since they would have shown preference to 2H. They PROBABLY also do not have THREE clubs and a singleton heart or they would most likely have PASSED the 2C rebid. So with a maximum of THREE spades, ONE heart, THREE clubs, how many diamonds does THAT leave responder with? YES, at least SIX. The reason why they could not BID diamonds is because they were not STRONG enough to bid them at the two level over 1H. Such a hand was recently played during an A grade club session, and ONE pair only managed to end up in 2D. The ONLY makeable contract was: yes, TWO DIAMONDS! I hope this little exercise will show you the NEED for logic and common sense in your bidding, and why you SHOULD follow set 'rules' and deviate only when you do so for TACTICAL reasons rather than practical reasons!"



# CHAPTER 15

## *MORE ON GENERAL BIDDING*

**Guru:** "Let me now briefly go over some GENERAL aspects of bidding. You've learnt how and when to OPEN the bidding, how and when to RESPOND, and how and when to REBID. You also need to have some basic instruction on how to KEEP BIDDING after that.

Bidding can be kept reasonably simple if we can find a simple way to tell when partner wants to GO, STOP, or WAIT. CRICKETERS have a simple calling system that is based on YES, NO, and WAIT and MOTORISTS know that the RED light means NO, the GREEN light means GO, and the AMBER means STOP IF YOU CAN. Much the same in bridge, with BIDS which can be classified into three broad categories:

1. FORCING
2. INVITATIONAL and
3. NON-FORCING

Let's look at each of these in turn.

### **FORCING BIDS**

Firstly, no opening bid at the ONE level is forcing if you play SIMPLE, or if you play many other 'standard' systems such as Acol or Standard American. If you open one of anything, you do so in the realisation that partner will NORMALLY respond only if they have SIX or more points. If you have a hand which is good enough to FORCE partner to bid, irrespective of their point count, then you must open at the TWO level. As a rule, only if you have more than TWENTY high card points, or a hand of GREAT PLAYING STRENGTH, will you open the bidding at the TWO level. So, no opening bid at the one level is forcing, but a two level opening IS, unless it is TWO NO TRUMPS which shows a specific point count of 20-22 HCP.

### **RESPONSES**

Because of the agreement that opener WILL make a rebid if you respond in a SUIT, all SUIT responses are FORCING. Because of the LIMITED responses in NO TRUMPS, though, all NO TRUMP responses to the normal 1 level openings are NOT forcing. When you have described your hand by your bid, then there is no reason to treat that bid as forcing, is there? The DIFFERENCE between a NT response and a response in a SUIT is that the NT response tells your partner TWO things: that you DON'T have a fit for their suit, and that you have a certain number of points within a narrow point range. When you respond in a SUIT, you are still trying to determine whether you have a FIT, and to find out more about the OPENER'S hand.

As we noted in the section on JUMP SHIFTS, a jump shift is FORCING to GAME, whereas responses at the lowest available level are only forcing until opener makes their REBID. If you want to CONTINUE to force after that, you have to find a way to do just that.

### **OTHER JUMPS**

You recall from the earlier text that a jump to 3NT showed a balanced hand and specifically 14-16 HCP. A jump to 2NT therefore should show LESS, and since the ONE No Trump response is made on 6-9 points, logically the 2NT bid should be 10-13. However this is too great a range for accurate bidding, so we make it 11-12 which is far more satisfactory. What a jump to 2NT says is: 'we are CLOSE to having game values. If you have no more than a 13 count for your opening bid, we should not be in game so you may as well stop here or rebid your suit at the 3 level if that seems preferable.'

NOTE that you CAN bid your suit at the 2 level with 10+ points if you prefer that to bidding 2NT; 2NT is more specific in that it shows a BALANCED hand as well as the inability to bid your suit at an appropriate level.



For instance you might bid 2NT opposite a 1D opening with

♠ K 7           ♥ Q 8 6           ♦ A 7 4           ♣ Q 10 6 3  
or opposite a 1S opening with  
♠ 9 7           ♥ Q 8 6           ♦ A 7 6 4           ♣ A J 7 5

but with a hand which includes a 4 card HEART suit

♠ K 7 4           ♥ Q 8 6 2           ♦ A 7 4           ♣ Q 10 6

you should bid ONE HEART opposite a 1D opening but TWO CLUBS over a 1S opening in case you DO have a 4-4 heart fit. REMEMBER that if you JUMP to 2NT partner MAY pass with a minimum hand so DON'T bypass any important suits along the way.

You should also remember that NO TRUMP responses to a 1S or 1H opening as a rule DENY support for the opened suit, even to the extent of THREE good trumps plus a shortage in another suit, but a NT response to a 1C opening virtually GUARANTEES club support."

**Vera:** "But on the last example, why could you not bid TWO HEARTS if partner opens 1S? After all, you DO have sufficient points to bid at the two level."

**Guru:** "I'm sure I've told you this before, but the reason is that you should ONLY bid 2H over a 1S opening by partner if you have at least FIVE of them. The logic MAY seem obscure, but I can guarantee that later bidding is MUCH easier if the response of 2H over a 1S opening DOES show at least five of them. Bidding a three card MINOR suit is much easier to handle, and often sows doubt in the opponents' minds about your holding in that suit, without making bidding any more difficult for opener in terms of a REBID. If you're still not convinced, try it and you'll see the benefits in the long run."

**Simon:** "Is there any other way you can bid the hands?"

**Guru:** "As well as a jump to 2NT, the responder can show a hand with the SAME point count but WITH trump support, by 'jump raising' the opener's suit to the 3 level, e.g. with the first two hands above, you can bid 2NT OR 3C opposite a 1C opening with the FIRST hand, and 1D OR 3C opposite a 1C opening with the second. Yes, you SHOULD show your diamond suit but a bid of 3C may be better if it results in cutting opponents out of a contract in spades. There are always exceptions to the rule, as you will learn, but you should NOT ignore a MAJOR suit if you have one to bid in similar circumstances.

A jump raise in partner's suit, whether it is by responder or by the opener, at any stage, is what is known as a 'limit bid' and INVITES game. A JUMP REBID in your OWN suit says the same thing but shows at LEAST six cards in the suit. Once you get to grips with the LOGIC of the way MOST sensible systems are played, you're at LEAST half way to becoming a good bidder."

Let's just briefly look at some more examples:

	<b>You</b>	<b>Partner</b>
	1H	3H
OR		
	1C	1D
	1S	3S

There is no real difference in these two sequences except that in the first one you have IMMEDIATELY located your 'fit' and in the second case it has taken you an extra round of bidding before you have done so.

How about

1H 1S  
2C 3H

OR 1S 1NT  
3S

OR 1D 1S  
1NT 3S

All these sequences involve JUMP REBIDS or JUMP RAISES and are INVITATIONAL.

A rebid of 2NT is ALSO in a similar category, whether after a SUIT rebid or a 1NT rebid by opener.

There is a point to note here. The above sequences are limit bids by RESPONDER, or JUMP RAISES by opener, but the opener can ALSO make a JUMP REBID, either in NO TRUMPS or in support of responder's suit, to show similar 'invitational' hands, the difference being that while RESPONDER'S jumps show 11-12 points, OPENER'S jump rebids show 17-18. It should be obvious to you why. OPENER has already shown 12+ points when they OPENED the BIDDING; therefore once partner has RESPONDED with 6+ points, they INVITE with 17-18 and FORCE to game with 19 or 20. With 15 or 16 the hand is marginal for a jump raise, and with less, a simple raise of just ONE level is all you should make."

**Vera:** "Well, all that is quite clear. Clear as mud in fact, but seeing you've had all this written down, I'm sure once I read it all, it WILL become perfectly clear. I like to read things and assimilate them that way, don't you?"

**Guru:** "You're lucky. That is certainly ONE of the best ways to learn bridge. By reading books. Amazing how many people can't be bothered doing that. Of course the OTHER sure fire way is to get in there and PLAY. You learn a lot from your mistakes, and in the case of rubber bridge for money, by how much you lose!"

## CHAPTER 16

### SOME SIMPLE HANDS TO BID

**Guru:** "You now know about OPENING the bidding, RESPONDING as the partner of the opener, and REBIDDING as opener when partner has responded. Given that, let's have a look at some quite simple hands which require that very basic bidding repertoire. Let's write the hands down and then see how we could bid them, with our opponents being gracious enough to keep quiet. The WEST hand is on the left and is always the first to bid, with EAST being on the right. Here is the first one:

♠ A J 9 6 4 3 2	♠ Q 10 8 5
♥ 5	♥ A 7 4 2
♦ A 8 5 4	♦ 9 6
♣ 8	♣ 7 6 3

What would YOU bid as West, to start with?"

**Vera:** "I have only nine points so I'd probably pass."

**Simon:** "But the hand is HUGE in potential. I'D open it for sure."

**Guru:** "You do have only nine HIGH card points but you would expect to make say five or six tricks if spades are trumps, so OPEN the bidding with 1S. There are different ways of working out a point count based on lengths and shortages, the simplest one being to add ONE for a singleton, TWO for a doubleton, and THREE for a void. I don't like to do that myself, but doing THAT gives you THIRTEEN which is one more than your opening bid guideline of TWELVE. East has very little, but DOES have spade support and six points. The bid on the hand is a simple raise to 2S which shows trump support and 6-9 points. What do you do NOW as West? You may think that having already opened a nine point hand you should now PASS. But with spade support from partner, you don't expect any spade losers any more. You have SEVEN of them, and partner has at least THREE, more than likely FOUR. The KING in partner's hand should be enough to run SEVEN spade tricks. The FIT in spades has suddenly become HUGE now that partner has supported them, and with the ace of diamonds you have EIGHT near certain tricks whatever partner's raise to 2S was based on. Before you pass 2S, try to imagine what partner MIGHT have.

The ONE suit that is crucial is the DIAMOND suit, because THAT is the only suit you can see more than one loser in. How many diamonds is partner likely to have? If partner has THREE, then you have two losers in the suit if partner has NO honour cards in diamonds. But if partner has only TWO diamonds, you'll be able to RUFF two of your losing diamonds in dummy! And if partner has a diamond HONOUR, you may be able to make it by finessing somehow. All in all, the chances are that you will lose ONE diamond, ONE heart, and ONE club even opposite a SIX count and a courtesy raise from East! Yes, while there's no CERTAINTY, the chances are that you WILL make FOUR spades! On THIS hand, the result depends ENTIRELY on how WEST sees the hand, since EAST will either PASS if WEST does not bid, or merely RAISE spades one level."

**Simon:** " I think I've just noticed something! The OPPONENTS have the POINTS for game, so it's unlikely that you WOULD get a free run in the bidding."

**Guru:** "That's all the more reason why you should get into the action with GOOD hands like the West one. When such a hand is played at a club, you'll find that a LOT of Wests never bid at all and opponents play in 4H making. Have you heard about PREEMPTS yet? SOME people might consider PREEMPTING with a bid of THREE spades on the West hand, but THAT, in my view, is worse than not opening at all. A PREEMPT shows a WEAK hand and is not normally done with such distribution AND two aces!"

**Guru:** "But more about preempts later. Let's just look at the next hands, from the SIMPLE point of view. And yes, the East hand wasn't quite what West expected according to MY analysis, but still good enough to make 4S and possibly five. The ace of hearts was a definite bonus, as was the doubleton diamond, but

THAT should not have been unexpected. And playing the ace of spades off, with only TWO spades missing, is likely to bring down the singleton king without any finesse needed. Wonderful how two apparently awful hands can combine to give such a great result. And not that there would have been any harm in opening the West hand even if East had NO spade support. West would merely keep backpedalling by rebidding more and more spades at the lowest possible level to warn East if EAST turns up with a GOOD hand!"

♠ K Q	♠ 8 5 4
♥ 10 7 5 3	♥ A 9 6 2
♦ A 10 9 6	♦ 8 5
♣ A Q 7	♣ K J 6 4

**Vera:** "THIS seems to be a VERY easy hand. West opens 1D, their LOWEST four card suit. Partner responds 1H and West raises to 2H which becomes the final contract and will make THREE most of the time, with East, who will be declarer, losing just TWO trump tricks and one diamond and one spade."

**Guru:** "An excellent analysis."

♠ Q 6 4	♠ A K 10 8 2
♥ A Q 6 4	♥ J 3
♦ 7	♦ 9 8 4
♣ A J 9 3	♣ Q 10 2

**Simon:** "West has 13 HCP and hence plenty enough to open the bidding. West opens the LOWEST four card suit, 1C, and partner responds 1S. Having found the fit, West raises partner, but to TWO or THREE? Thirteen HIGH CARD POINTS but the doubleton diamond is worth two more, and is the FIT not worth something as well?"

**Guru:** "You're certainly thinking the right way, Simon, but at THIS stage of your learning, the conservative approach is best. West isn't QUITE good enough to do more than raise to TWO, but since EAST has TEN HCP, it is over to THEM to make a try for game, by raising to THREE. This is no different to having raised West's opening of 1S IMMEDIATELY, is it?"

**Vera:** "So, when EAST raises to THREE and shows 10-11 HCP, WEST is now CERTAINLY good enough to go to game BECAUSE of West's extra values in the singleton diamond!"

**Guru:** "Excellent. The way to look at it is that West's FOUR card spade support AND singleton diamond is worth at least TWO extra tricks, and opposite even TEN HCP, game must have every chance of making. As you can see, if BOTH the king of hearts AND the king of clubs are in the SOUTH hand, declarer will be able to finesse against them and more than likely end up with TWELVE tricks. Even if both the kings are 'off side', East should make GAME quite comfortably unless the spades are 4-0 and EVERYTHING goes wrong, which it NEVER does unless you're a born pessimist."

♠ Q 7	♠ J 10 8 6 4
♥ K Q 8 5	♥ A 9 7 3
♦ K J 9 5	♦ 7 4
♣ J 9 4	♣ K 8

**Guru:** "What an awful hand the West hand is, but you don't have bidding guidelines so you can PASS, do you? West has the required TWELVE HCP so opens 1D. What happens next, Vera?"

**Vera:** "East responds 1S, their LONGEST suit. And West then bids ONE NO TRUMP. Nowhere else to go is there?"

**Simon:** "But there IS for EAST. East can now bid TWO HEARTS to ask West to choose whether to play in spades or hearts, given that East has at least FIVE spades and FOUR hearts. I see now why it's necessary to have a structure of bidding like that and to be able to trust your partner. West of course will be delighted to PASS 2H and East will be able to play a nice little contract."

**Guru:** "Yes indeed. There are still six possible losers in a 2H contract, but you can see that you'd need to be VERY unlucky to lose all of them. How would you PLAY the hand, Simon? Given that on the BIDDING, the best lead by South is a TRUMP, which is something that you WON'T strike against anyone playing in the bottom grade at the club, where YOU will start your competitive days."

Simon. "I would probably be inclined to start on the SPADE suit immediately. OPPONENTS, having started with trumps, may continue them anyway, and playing on spades will allow me to set up spade tricks. If opponents realise that, they will switch to diamonds or clubs, and I'll have to do a bit of guessing. But if they try to cash their aces up, I'll make THREE won't I?"

**Guru:** "More than likely. And you WILL find that those in the beginners' grade WILL do just that! YOU, I hope, will be more subtle than that by the time you start. I'll tell you NOW, and will repeat it later. CASHING your TOP tricks, unless you have the NEXT highest card, will set up DECLARER'S tricks if you're defending, and tricks for the DEFENCE if you're declarer. Look for ways to DEVELOP tricks, or make opponents GUESS as to the location of certain cards."

♠ A Q 7	♠ J 10
♥ A K 8 4	♥ 10 9 5 3
♦ Q 8 6 4 3	♦ A 7
♣ 2	♣ K 7 6 5 3

**Guru:** "After West opens the obvious 1D, what should East bid?"

**Vera:** "East does not have enough points to make a two over one response, so HAS to bid 1H. After all, they DO have a four card suit there."

**Guru:** "Yes. This time East can NOT bid their longest suit because that would show more points. The 1H bid will certainly strike gold since WEST has such a superb hand for playing in hearts, given that East has at least four of them and six points! West's hand is worth FAR more than the fifteen high card points in it. In fact I have great difficulty in envisaging an East hand with a 1H response which would not have enough in it to have a play for GAME opposite THAT West hand. However, given that I'm trying to encourage you to be conservative at this stage, I would bid THREE hearts with the West hand. That shows values equivalent to a 17 or 18 HCP hand. East now has to decide whether to bid on to game or not. Their HEARTS aren't wonderful, but against that, they DO have the ace in West's suit as well as a five card club suit to the king. Even so, it IS a marginal decision from EAST'S point of view. With East's hand, I would say that on a GOOD day, East will decide to bid on to game and MAKE, on a BAD day they'll bid game and WON'T make. But, as in most other things, there are few certainties in bridge so you need to learn to improve your judgement. There would be NO question of East going on to game if they had the king of DIAMONDS instead of the king of CLUBS, which, as it turns out on this hand is TOTALLY useless isn't it? And game STILL has every chance of making WITHOUT the king of clubs, so you can see I WAS quite close with my estimate that few hands that East could have and respond 1H would have NO play for game at all. But at the LEARNING stage it is certainly a good idea to UNDERBID in marginal situations since if YOUR declarer play is good, that of OTHER pairs playing the same hands may NOT be and you are in for a decent score anyway."

♠ A Q J 7 5	♠ 9 4
♥ Q 10 8	♥ K J 3
♦ K 8	♦ Q J 4 3
♣ 10 7 5	♣ Q J 9 2

**Simon:** "This is an easy one isn't it? West opens 1S and East bids 1NT. Where is West to go? Nowhere of course so they PASS 1NT and that turns out to be a reasonable spot."

**Guru:** "East COULD in fact respond with a bid of 2C since they DO have a ten count. But the doubleton spade should probably sway them towards 1NT. Also, many people would rebid 2S on the West hand, but the 1NT response should be a warning that partner may NOT have much spade support. Both 2S and 1NT are reasonable contracts. However, if No Trumps makes TWO, it will score better than two spades, so this is a hand that could create a few extra "Match Points" either way, depending on the contract chosen, the

declarer play, and of course the defence. So you see, NOT quite as straightforward as it seemed to you, Simon. Now what about the next one, Vera?"

♠ A Q J 6 4	♠ 8
♥ J 9 6 4	♥ A Q 7 3
♦ A 7	♦ 9 6 4 3
♣ Q 5	♣ J 7 4 2

**Vera:** "Now THIS one IS easy. West opens 1S and East responds 1NT. West rebids 2H to give partner the choice between 2S or 2H and partner is delighted to PASS!!"

♠ K 9	♠ A 7 5
♥ A J 8 5 4	♥ Q 9
♦ Q 8 5 3	♦ K 9 4
♣ A 5	♣ 8 6 4 3 2

**Guru:** "This next one may not be quite so easy. West opens 1H and East bids 1NT. Would you do anything further as West, Vera?"

**Vera:** "Since East hasn't got any idea that I have diamonds as well as hearts AND five hearts at that, I suppose I should give East a better picture of my hand and bid TWO DIAMONDS. Don't you do that to give partner the choice of contracts? East should give West preference to 2H. I suppose when West sees East's hand, they'll regret not having passed 1NT. I guess SOME people would pass 2D as East, but that CAN'T be correct can it?"

**Guru:** "No, since East has two GOOD hearts and also knows that West MUST have five of them at least. Furthermore, hearts scores more so 2H on a 5-2 fit is preferable to 2D on a possible 4-3. Many people will also rebid 2H on the West hand, but that is really nothing short of being ignorant of the proper way to communicate, and the next hand shows WHY it is necessary to bid properly:

♠ K 9	♠ A 8 4 3
♥ A K 10 8 5	♥ 3
♦ Q 8 5 4	♦ K J 8 7
♣ Q 3	♣ J 9 6 2

West opens 1H and partner responds 1S. Look what happens if you rebid 2H. Yes, you probably WILL make two despite having only six trumps between you and dummy. But given a choice, PARTNER very much prefers DIAMONDS, and you SHOULD be able to make FOUR diamonds. Bidding is about COMMUNICATION and giving your PARTNER some decisions as well. If YOU are the only one capable of making decisions then SOLO is your game and not bridge!"

♠ 6 4	♠ A J 8 4 3
♥ A J 6 5	♥ 9 7
♦ K J 7	♦ 10 8 4
♣ A 7 5 2	♣ Q 4 3

**Simon:** "West opens 1C, East responds 1S and West rebids 1NT. East's hand isn't wonderful and the spade suit does not warrant rebidding, so 1NT would become the final contract."

**Guru:** "There is ONE thing worth noting about this hand. Sooner or later you'll learn ACOL, which is based on opening a BALANCED hand of 12 to 14 HCP with a bid of ONE NO TRUMP. Playing ACOL, West would open 1NT and East would remove the contract to TWO SPADES. YOU are more likely to play the hand in 1NT. At OTHER times, the reverse may be the case, so you can see that often, depending on which particular SYSTEM you play, the contract as well as the end result could be quite different. People keep searching for the perfect system to give you the perfect results, but there IS no perfect system, so you might as well just learn to do the BASIC things correctly first."

♠ K Q 10 6	♠ A 9 3
♥ A 7 4 2	♥ K Q 10 4



♦ K Q 6  
♣ 8 4

♦ 8 7  
♣ 9 7 6 2

**Simon:** "Is this another hand that Acol players would open 1NT as West? And if they DO, surely East would PASS and they would not get to play the hand in hearts which seems to be the best contract surely?"

**Guru:** "You catch on fast. That is the risk you take when you open 1NT, but let's leave that till later. Playing SIMPLE bidding, West opens 1H and partner raises immediately; if partner LIKES their hand, the raise is to three, but more than likely it will be to TWO (6-9) and that is where the bidding will end. If partner raises to three, West has a marginal hand to bid game. You can see that even a contract of FOUR hearts will have chances, whereas opponents can take at least FOUR club tricks and the ace of diamonds before you even start if you're playing in No Trumps."

♠ K 8 4  
♥ A Q 6 4  
♦ 4  
♣ A J 9 6 2

♠ A Q 10 9  
♥ 7 5  
♦ A 7 5 4 3 2  
♣ 7

**Vera:** "West opens 1C, 1D from East, 1H from West, 1S from East. What THEN? West could bid 1NT which is probably best; East has six diamonds so rather than pass 1NT prefers 2D. That would not show any extra points, would it?"

**Guru:** "No, not at all. ANY minimum rebid by opener OR responder does NOT show extra strength, merely confirming a desire to PLAY there. The fact that East bids diamonds at the two level in such an auction should not be confused with East making an immediate 'two over one' response, such as e.g. 1H-2D. East in fact DOES have the values for that, but with West having bid hearts and clubs, should not be inclined to do any more than rebid the diamonds at the LOWEST POSSIBLE level. WEST can see that they don't have much of a fit in diamonds, and might try 2S, despite the fact that they can be quite sure that East has only FOUR of them (with FIVE as well as five diamonds, East would have bid 1S FIRST). 2S turns out to be quite a good spot, especially if opponents FAIL to lead trumps. Look how many tricks declarer can make on a CROSS RUFF! Even a SEVEN card fit can produce a heap of tricks if you have a trump suit!"

♠ 7  
♥ K 4 3  
♦ A J 9 4  
♣ K Q 7 4 2

♠ A J 8 4 3  
♥ 8 5  
♦ K 10 8 2  
♣ 6 3

**Guru:** "The bidding on THIS one should go: 1C from West, 1S from East, 2C from West, 2D from East, END. Isn't bidding SIMPLE? West DID have an alternative bid available over partner's 1S: 1NT but East would have bid 2D over this anyway, the end result is the same. 2D is a very comfortable contract, but try struggling in any other suit or in No Trumps!"

**Simon:** "Why did WEST not bid 2D?"

**Vera:** "You dummy! Don't you remember our Guru here telling us about REVERSES? 2D would be a REVERSE over a response of 1S from East, and BECAUSE diamonds is higher than clubs, show at least SEVENTEEN HCP."

**Simon:** "Whoops. Yes, I certainly remember NOW. And if East thought West had seventeen points, East might bid to 5D or look for 3NT, both of which would be quite hair raising contracts. In fact, 3NT would have NO chance at all, but 5D might make if the ace of hearts and ace of clubs are with South....."

**Guru:** "You know how the song goes about 'IF' don't you? And my father used to say: 'if my aunt had wheels she'd be a tram'."

## CHAPTER 17

### COMPETING

**Guru:** "Earlier, you learnt how to bid without opposition interference. At least you learnt the BASICS of bidding at low levels, and how to bid constructively to determine whether you should be in game, or remain at a safely low level. There's much more to bidding than that of course, and as time goes by we'll learn about bidding in all sorts of more complex situations. Many of these situations will arise because, unfortunately, a great deal of the time, opponents are going to make nuisances of themselves by competing for the right to play the contract. They will either compete in the bidding after one of YOUR partnership has opened the bidding, or open the bidding before you even get the chance. In either case, there are points still to be scored, whether YOU end up playing the contract or not. That is because you may STILL be able to outbid the opponents at LOW levels, or bid and make your games DESPITE the opponents' bidding. AS WELL AS THAT, you will have the chance to defeat your opponents in THEIR contract, sometimes extracting a quite heavy PENALTY if they fall short of their target. So, at this stage, we need to have a good discussion about the meanings of the bids "DOUBLE" and "REDOUBLE", as well as the term VULNERABLE, because these are part of what you need to know to compete successfully in the bidding.

In the old days, the word DOUBLE meant only one thing: *'I don't think you will make your contract'*. Because most people did not bid what they did not think they could make, the term DOUBLE almost never occurred at low levels, so it was often a waste of a part of your normal bidding repertoire. Soon enough someone realised that the term DOUBLE could be far more useful in showing THREE suits that YOU could PLAY in rather than ONE suit you wished to defend. So the TAKEOUT double came into being: If an opponent opened the bidding in a suit and you wished to compete in the OTHER suits, you would DOUBLE, which said just THAT, and NOT that you wished to penalise opponents in that contract. Later, the RESPONDER'S takeout double arrived, where the RESPONDER doubled an opponent's bid in some circumstances. Originally it only occurred when there was a 1C or 1D opening and an opponent overcalled 1S. The partner of the overcaller would REGULARLY have a hand they WANTED to bid on but could NOT because a bid of 2H would now show at LEAST TEN points, and they only had 8 or 9, maybe even as few as 7, and a 4 or 5 card HEART suit. AND without a stop in the spade suit, they could not bid 1NT either so the heart fit would be lost forever, as well as the fact that the partner of the opener actually had some points. You can see the frustrations of this, until someone came up with the idea of the 'SPUTNIK' double (must have been in the 1950s!) to show exactly THAT over an interfering bid of 1S. Times have changed considerably since then, and NOW the 'takeout' double, by either opener OR responder, can be used at VERY high levels, which is not recommended for the purpose of this exercise, at least NOT until you learn a bit more about the game.

Part of "SIMPLE" bridge WILL be the take out doubles by both opener and responder, but only at the 2 level or lower. But whether you play TAKEOUT or PENALTY doubles at any level, if the FINAL bid is DOUBLED or REDOUBLED, the penalties or gains vary accordingly, and CAN be quite considerable. FEW contracts are in fact played REDOUBLED, and while the REDOUBLE does not get the chance to be used as often and effectively as DOUBLE, it still plays a considerable part in the scheme of things."

**Simon:** "You did tell us about the penalties for not making your contract, and that thing called vulnerability, but I think you'd better go over all that again if it is crucial to the scores, as it seems to be."

**Guru:** "BONUSES AND PENALTIES:

The modern game is BASED on rubber bridge and rubber bridge scoring but played using boards which simulate various conditions of VULNERABILITY, with the DEALER also changing from board to board.

The BONUSES for bidding and making game are 300 for a NON VULNERABLE game and 500 for a VULNERABLE game. Thus, for instance, if you bid and make GAME in No Trumps you score 100 for GAME plus 300 if NOT VULNERABLE (=400) or 500 if VULNERABLE (=600). Extra tricks ('OVERTRICKS') are added on at face value, i.e. spades, hearts and No Trumps 30 for each extra trick and clubs and diamonds 20 each.

PENALTIES are as follows: Not Vulnerable, for each trick you fall short by, MINUS 50. VULNERABLE, MINUS 100 for each trick you fail by. But if you are DOUBLED in your final contract, -100 for the FIRST trick Not Vulnerable, then -200 for each of the next two and -300 for EVERY SUBSEQUENT trick you are short by. VULNERABLE, this becomes -200 for the first and -300 for every subsequent one. MAKING doubled and redoubled contracts increases your score as well, ROUGHLY by double and quadruple, and your OVERTRICKS count for 100 apiece doubled Not Vulnerable and 200 Vulnerable, and 200 Not Vulnerable and 400 Vulnerable if REDOUBLED."

**Vera:** "I'm still confused about all that."

**Guru:** "No need to be. The scoring for doubled and redoubled contracts really doesn't matter much at this stage, but you WILL at some stage soon need to have a pretty good idea of how much you, or your opponents, lose in doubled contracts if you go down, since that knowledge could in some situations significantly affect your bidding. But more on that later. For now, let's get back to COMPETING."

FIRSTLY, let's look at what happens if your side opens the bidding and the opponents interfere by bidding a suit or suits of their own. By and large your bidding should not be too different in the LOGIC: if you are NOT good enough to take the bidding to a higher level then DON'T. If you can support your partner, DO SO, but only to a level which is appropriate. If you are to bid NO TRUMPS, then after the opponents have bid a suit you MUST have a stop in that suit to bid No Trumps, preferably two potential stops, but you can't ask for everything, can you? And if the opponents bid NO TRUMPS and you have more points between you and partner than the opponents (e.g. your partner opens the bidding, the next hand bids 1NT and you have, say, 11 points), DOUBLE. This is a hand you should be defending and chalking up 500, 800 or 1100. AND, if you are STUCK for a bid and don't know WHAT to bid but want to do SOMETHING, this is where the TAKEOUT DOUBLE comes in. Even people at an advanced level often forget that they can DOUBLE a contract, EITHER to penalise them OR to suggest that partner can bid something, not at the same time of course, but depending on the level of the bid and other circumstances of the auction. But a SIMPLE rule is that in ANY bidding situation, if you double opponents in NO TRUMPS, you are wanting to PENALISE them, and if you double opponents in a suit (ANY SUIT, ANY SEQUENCE) up to TWO SPADES, this is a TAKEOUT DOUBLE.

That doesn't stop partner from PASSING and CONVERTING the double to a penalty double, but YOUR double has shown the wish for partner to bid. If opponents venture to the THREE level or higher, all doubles NOW are PENALTY doubles. But you have to be able to judge well at times, and the GENERAL rule is that to want to PENALISE your opponents, you should have a GOOD holding in their suit (say at least FOUR cards headed by TWO honours e.g. AQxx or KJxx or KQxx as well as SHORTAGE in your PARTNER'S suit."

**Vera:** "Getting more and more confusing, isn't it, Simon?"

**Simon:** "Yes, I agree with THAT. But I guess we need to get the basic grounding in these things so we can then later learn from them in a real 'at the table' situation. What about when the OPPONENTS open the bidding?"

**Guru:** "If opponents are going to interfere when YOU open the bidding, why should YOU not do the same? YOU SHOULD of course, whenever possible, since you may be able to make a contract yourselves, or push the opponents to an uncomfortably high level and defeat the resulting contract. Easier said than done? Maybe, but here are some SIMPLE suggestions which will allow you to compete in the bidding when opponents open:

OVERCALLS: An overcall does not NEED to have the same strength as an opening bid. You may not EXPECT to play the final contract but your bidding may put THEM off or help partner get off to the best LEAD. And at least SOME of the time you WILL win the contract either by virtue of the fact that you DO have more points than the opponents, or because you find a super FIT with partner. You will find out during your bridge life that many high level contracts are makeable on quite FEW points and a great fit, so don't just become a point-bound walrus like a lot of players, you'll have to learn to evaluate your combined assets based on more than just points. Counting points should be merely a way to HELP you with your bidding. An OVERCALL at the lowest (ONE) level can be made on as few as EIGHT high card points, but SHOULD contain at least FIVE cards. This knowledge will allow your partner to SUPPORT you with even

just three trumps and a few good cards outside. A TWO LEVEL overcall should be a little better than your eight points minimum for 1 level overcalls, AND here is where you should pay strict attention to the VULNERABILITY, AND the quality of your suit. Why ask for trouble?"

**Simon:** "Do you bid the same way with BETTER hands? I mean, overcalling with EIGHT points is not the same as overcalling with FIFTEEN, is it? How does partner know the difference?"

**Guru:** "Partner doesn't always need to, and there ARE ways to find out, but generally partner should bid just as they would normally. For example, if you overcall 1S, partner should raise to 3S with trump support and 10-11, perhaps one or two more, high card points. But as well as that, with BETTER hands, you can use the JUMP overcall. The SIMPLE way is to JUMP in the bidding, e.g. 1D on your right, 2S by you; or 1S on your right, 3D by you, to show at least a good SIX card suit and 7 or 8 PLAYING TRICKS; for example K Q J 10 8 4 plus AK in an outside suit. This tells your partner a) how good your hand is and b) that you have a good suit to play in WITHOUT too much support from partner. A VOID in partner's hand would NOT be desirable, but even a small doubleton would be OK since you would then have EIGHT or more trumps between you.

SOMETIMES you'll have quite a GOOD hand when opponents open the bidding. You can STILL overcall if you have no more suitable action, with UP TO 16 points, maybe even more. Partner SHOULD show support if it is available and if not, you may not want to be any higher anyway. Another possibility is that you have a fairly balanced hand with about 16 points. If you have a STOP in the suit opened (but DON'T do it if you have TOO many cards in opponents' suit) you can bid 1NT which shows a specific type of hand: A BALANCED hand with 15-18 points and a stop in the suit opened. Knowing this, partner can take the appropriate action, but more on THAT later."

**Vera:** "What about the TAKEOUT double?"

**Guru:** "I was just coming to that. Sometimes when an opponent opens the bidding you may have a hand on which you would like to compete but WITHOUT any particular suit that you want to play in. That is when you can make a TAKEOUT double of the opening bid, which tells your partner that you have a desire to compete in ANY of the other three suits. Ideally you will have something like a singleton in opponents suit and 4 cards in each of the other suits, with about 11+ points. But that doesn't happen very often in the real world, and you'll have to be somewhat flexible if you are to be able to compete more often. Because of the importance of the MAJOR suits in bidding and play, your bidding will be much easier if your take out double of a one level opening bid shows something in the MAJORS: if you double 1H or 1S you GUARANTEE 4 cards in the other major, and if you double 1C or 1D you GUARANTEE at least 4-3 in the majors (there CAN be exceptions to this, but more of that later). After you have made a takeout double, partner knows some quite specific things about your hand and can take whatever action is appropriate. SIMPLE, isn't it?"

**Simon:** "In competing, is there any way that we can tell how FAR we can compete?"

**Guru:** "Not with certainty, but I will now take you into a relatively new concept that many even advanced players seem to have trouble in understanding. I'll do it the SIMPLE way by cutting out the complications that experts get involved in and give you the SIMPLE rule: If you have the same number of points as your opponents, if you take the TOTAL NUMBER OF TRUMPS between YOUR two hands, then that is how many TRICKS you can expect to make with that suit as trumps. For instance if you have 20 points between the two hands and TEN spades between your two hands, you SHOULD make TEN tricks. If OPPONENTS at the same time have ELEVEN DIAMONDS between THEM, then they can PROBABLY make ELEVEN tricks in DIAMONDS. Hard to believe, isn't it, but it is quite amazing how regularly this theory works out. Just knowing that SIMPLE rule will make your bidding, as a novice, that much better than your opponents!"

**Vera:** "More complications! And what about when your opponents play all sorts of different systems to those that WE know about?"

**Guru:** "Your opponents will not necessarily be playing the same system that you are - in fact if you play SIMPLE then they probably won't unless they have learnt it in the same 'school'. MOST people that you will be playing against in Australasian or British clubs will be playing ACOL, in other places your

opponents may be playing Standard American or Precision. Whatever the case, most LEARNERS will be playing uncomplicated systems, but you still need to know what to do when opponents open with a bid of ONE NO TRUMP, which you NEVER do playing 'SIMPLE' bridge.

**Vera:** "ACOL players open 1NT with 12-14 HCP, don't they?"

**Guru:** "Quite. The ACOL system opens the bidding with 1NT on all BALANCED hands with 12 to 14 high card points. It will help you to learn Acol as well, and it really is just ONE step to it once you learn the SIMPLE way. For our purposes, BALANCED hands that will be opened 1NT will include ALL 4333 and 4432 hands, and 5332 hands with a five card MINOR. The reason for the 'WEAK' No Trump is that it makes the opponents' bidding more difficult since the one level has been removed from the bidding, and the opponents are stepping into the unknown whereas the partner of the opener already knows the general strength and shape of the opener, and what might be in store for the next person to venture into the bidding at the 2 level. Therefore, when opponents open 1NT, it may be sensible to PASS unless you have a good suit of your own or a strong enough hand to handle what might happen later. In the old days a 1NT opening bid showed 16-18 points and often still does in Standard American systems, so people were usually reluctant to bid over it. With the advent of the WEAK No Trump, many different systems have been developed to cope with it and to compete in the bidding against it. It is a DEFINITE advantage if you can show MORE than one suit in bidding over the opponents' 1NT and the SIMPLEST system to use is to DOUBLE with 15+ points (effectively a PENALTY double since you have a stronger hand than the opener) AND to bid either LANDY or EXTENDED LANDY with say 11-14 points.

**Simon:** "What the heck is LANDY?"

**Guru:** "In SIMPLE Landy, a bid of 2C shows both majors, in EXTENDED Landy, 2C shows the MINORS and 2D the MAJORS. You will need to decide with your partner WHICH of the two you use, or you may even try some OTHER system, or stick with just bidding your suit. Once you have played at the lowest level in your club you will know that just playing a system doesn't give you all the answers and that you have to learn to extend your method of communication much further. I just hope that once our sessions of DISCUSSION are over, you will have sufficient knowledge to go to the club and start playing and THAT is how you will learn the MOST and the QUICKEST."

## CHAPTER 18

### TWO HANDS ARE BETTER THAN ONE

**Simon:** "I've just remembered something. Those hands you gave us the very first visit. We haven't had a look at them, and Vera and I went through all the different combinations like you suggested. We haven't even been over the first SIX properly yet have we?"

**Guru:** "No, and I forgot about them, perhaps on purpose, because I wanted to give you sufficient grounding about bidding in general. But now we CAN look at the hands put together, because some aspects of bidding will come out from the exercise, as well as the important recognition that the COMBINED effect of two hands depends VERY much on how they FIT together, as well as what DECLARER makes of the opportunity to play the hand. So, let's now look at the hands which I dealt out, and put them together as 'partners' and see how they fit, or how they don't fit, together, and what we can make of the COMBINED hands. Remember, it is the total tricks that declarer can make from BOTH hands that matters, and therefore there IS a great degree of skill involved in playing the hands to best advantage. So, let's look at all 36 combinations and see how the combined hands might be BID, and how they might be PLAYED. For convenience, let's make the hands WEST and EAST.

<b>West:</b>	<b>East:</b>
♠ 8 4	♠ A 9 7 2
♥ K 2	♥ A 6 4
♦ K 9 7 6 4 3 2	♦ A Q 5
♣ J 2	♣ Q 9 4

If West is first to bid, West will PASS. East opens 1S and West has enough to respond, but cannot do so at the two level; West's only option is therefore to bid 1NT. East, with a completely flat hand and just sixteen HCP, should PASS: West has denied holding more than NINE HCP, therefore East should not think that game is likely. Even with NINE HCP in the West hand, opposite East's gappy 16, the values are absolute minimum to think about making 3NT. So, discretion is required and East passes 1NT. There is no difference whether WEST or EAST is the first to bid. HOWEVER, if you are familiar with PREEMPTS, and WEST is first to bid, given satisfactory VULNERABILITY conditions, West COULD open the hand with a PREEMPTIVE bid of 3D. Now, East may well take a shot at 3NT, because nine tricks in No Trumps are a good bet. West would surely NOT have preempted WITHOUT a seven card suit and WITHOUT at least the KING of diamonds. East can therefore hope for SEVEN diamond tricks plus the two aces. The ONLY danger is in the club suit, but East should be prepared to take the risk that the queen will help stop the suit. Do you see the great importance of West's JACK of clubs? Yes, irrespective of which opponent opens up the club suit, declarer can play LOW from the next hand to play, and the next opponent HAS to play the ace or king in order to prevent the fourth hand from making the queen or jack. Now, the second high card is required for defenders to beat the jack, and the queen will provide the vital stop. You can see the importance of playing LOW and letting the lead run round to an honour, can't you? Let THIRD player come up with the big cards and throw the LITTLE cards under them, rather than sacrifice your top cards. Another such example is when the two hands may be e.g. K 7 2 (West) opposite J 8 3 (East). As long as this suit is not touched by DECLARER, the opponents can NEVER lead it without presenting DECLARER with a trick sooner or later! If a low card is led from NORTH, the king, being in last position to play, is a CERTAIN trick. If the low card is led from SOUTH, then it is simply a matter of TIME before the king or jack is established. Play LOW, and North must win the queen or ace, and now declarer has two of the next highest cards to the defenders' one! Yet I have seen a number of newcomers to the game, when a low card is led from South, um and ah and sometimes play the KING! Do you see what THAT can achieve? If the king loses to the ace, NOW a lead of the suit back will come through the jack, with the likelihood of the queen sitting over it. Declarer has turned a CERTAIN stop into NO stop at all! Playing LOW from the second hand, and allowing the lead to run round to any honour cards in the fourth hand is a habit you will do well to develop. But enough of that for now. What you WILL see from this hand is that the PREEMPT CAN help your bidding and lead you to contracts which you may otherwise not reach with normal methods of bidding."

♠ 8 4	♠ A 7
♥ K 2	♥ Q 7 6 4
♦ K 9 7 6 4 3 2	♦ A 8 5
♣ J 2	♣ Q 9 4 3

This time, even if West opens with a preempt of 3D, East should NOT bid 3NT. So, what's the DIFFERENCE? The difference is that East can NOT be sure that there are seven diamond tricks (West may have a suit headed by the QUEEN or even then JACK).

Furthermore, preempts should NOT contain an outside ace though at times this rule can be disregarded to good advantage. West's preempt has done the job if opponents don't come in (you'll note that THEY have a NINE card spade fit AND 21 HCP between them), so East should be happy to pass and hope that 3D will make.

♠ 8 4	♠ A 9 7 2
♥ K 2	♥ 7
♦ K 9 7 6 4 3 2	♦ A J 8 5
♣ J 2	♣ 9 6 4 3

If West opens with a preempt of 3D and North passes, what should EAST do? EAST knows that they have a HUGE diamond fit and that NS certainly have a NINE card heart fit at least (You should not preempt in a minor with a four card or longer major suit outside! That's just one of the little rules you should keep in mind). Passing 3D is unlikely to stop South from bidding, since NS ALSO have a combined HCP of 24. So, East's best bet is to either raise to 4D, or jump all the way to FIVE diamonds, NOT in the expectation that this will make, but in order to 'sacrifice' in advance against a possible game that NS are going to bid. In the lower grades where beginners are playing, 3D may well buy the contract, but never in higher grades, so you may as well learn how to get in opponents' way properly.

And if you look at these two hands together, you will realise one thing: there are no more than THREE POSSIBLE losers for opponents in a heart OR spade contract (hearts are of course MUCH better) so there IS game on for opponents if only they can bid it.

If EAST is first to bid and passes, which they SHOULD do with that hand, South has the opportunity to get in before West and will probably do so, but if South ALSO passes, then West should open with a preempt, because North will CERTAINLY be bidding. West can be sure of that: EAST has at most 11 HCP, SOUTH has at most 11 HCP and that leaves North with 11 HCP at WORST. North almost certainly has spades and/or hearts and will NOT pass the hand out, so West should preempt. The VULNERABILITY of course still has to be right, and West should NOT preempt VULNERABLE with this hand. But that is another matter again!

Do you see how counting up possible points in partner's hand, or opponents' hands can give you a good idea of where things are heading, and looking at your own hand TOGETHER WITH what you know about PARTNER'S can ALSO give you sufficient information about the OPPONENTS' hands to make YOUR bidding decisions much easier.

♠ 8 4	♠ 7
♥ K 2	♥ Q 7 6 4
♦ K 9 7 6 4 3 2	♦ Q J 8 5
♣ J 2	♣ 9 6 4 3

Should West be lucky enough to have the first say, and be able to preempt with a bid of 3D, there is very little chance that North will not be able to come in, even at the 3 level. If North does NOT, East can be assured that SOUTH certainly WILL. East can see that there is an almost certain SLAM on for NS, and that GAME in spades is a stone cold certainty. Therefore East should carry the preempt to 5D, and CONFIDENTLY at that! Who knows, NS may make the wrong decision, or even by some miracle pass this out without doubling. Despite the fact that they have a total of 28 HCP between them, they may well have even hands with say 14 HCP each, or 15 in one and 13 in the other, and NOT be able to do anything at

ALL over a quickly and confidently bid 3D-5D! SOMETIMES, the WORSE your hand is the HIGHER you should be bidding!!! And you can see the value of preemption. Preempting can also work in your favour by enticing opponents into the bidding at what may turn out to be too high a level for THEM. In the preempter's favour is the fact that PARTNER has heard the preempt, and knows what they can do. OPPONENTS do NOT know whether they can afford to come into the auction or not.

♠ 8 4	♠ A 7
♥ K 2	♥ A 7 6 4
♦ K 9 7 6 4 3 2	♦ A J 5
♣ J 2	♣ 9 6 4 3

Despite a mere 13 count in the East hand, if West opens with a preempt of 3D, East should have a shot at 3NT. With 10 diamonds between them and two certain tricks AND stops in the majors, East should expect nine tricks to make. Yes, East does NOT have a club stop, but East DOES have FOUR of them. That not only increases the chances that a club won't be LED, but it also increases the chances that the defence, even if they DO lead a club, will not have more than four club tricks they can take. Furthermore, with long spades in BOTH opponents' hands, a spade lead is much more likely unless the hand on lead has a good sequence of top clubs.

♠ 8 4	♠ A 9 7
♥ K 2	♥ Q 7 6
♦ K 9 7 6 4 3 2	♦ A J 8 5
♣ J 2	♣ Q 9 4

Nothing is too different on these hands if West opens 3D. East can probably have a 'shot' at 3NT with good hopes for success. While there are not two CERTAIN tricks outside the diamond suit, East can hope for one extra trick to materialise somewhere, and if it doesn't then East can surmise that opponents can almost certainly make a part score in 3H or 3S, worth 140, or even game worth much more, so playing in 3NT down one will STILL be a good score for EW. If EAST is first to bid and opens 1D (playing SIMPLE) then West could well raise to THREE diamonds, which shows 10-12 HCP and diamond support. This hand is WORTH 10-12, with SEVEN diamonds. Besides which, any other bid is likely to allow NORTH to bid a major, or make a takeout double, and allow NS to find their competitive part score in spades or hearts. West, whilst having been deprived of the opportunity to preempt with 3D, CAN still make up for it by using a bit of imagination, and 'overbidding' their hand if the opportunity presents itself.

If EW are playing Acol with a weak 1NT opening, West can either make a TAKEOUT of 2D, or PASS 1NT and hope the diamonds come in handy in a 1NT contract which will score more than playing in diamonds. IF 1NT is opened and allowed to play there, ACOL certainly will triumph over SIMPLE bidding on this hand, but if opponents have the tools to still find a major fit over a 1NT opening, West should bid to 3D at least, in competition. The problem is that West doesn't know what a good diamond fit they have, and EAST, having shown THEIR hand with the 1NT opening, will be reluctant to compete even WITH four good diamonds to support whatever West may have.

There are going to be many different circumstances, many different SYSTEMS, and many different VIEWS to take in your bridge career. All you can hope for is that you get the best results possible given the circumstances. Bridge IS a game of percentages, from the way your session of duplicate is calculated, to the options you take and the chances of different distributions occurring. It is not a game where it is possible to get the perfect result each time, so work towards the best PERCENTAGE result you can hope for.

You may have noticed that with the above six combinations of hands, WEST had a preemptive hand and a DIAMOND suit, and EAST had diamond SUPPORT in each case. THAT is certainly NOT something that happens regularly, in fact it is more likely that when one partner preempts, the other has LITTLE in the suit partner has preempted in. In MOST cases, without going into too much analysis, I can assure you that the BEST course of action to take when partner preempts is to PASS.

The above hands were the way they were in part by chance but also in part by design, to give you the opportunity to learn how important the concept of FIT is when TWO hands combine. Also, the MINOR



preempt makes bidding game in the minor much less likely, and certainly less profitable than bidding No Trump games, and the number of tricks as well as top losers can also be reasonably easily calculated, as can opponents' possible contracts or likely defence. When we preempt in a MAJOR suit, there is no essential difference in WHEN we preempt and what sort of cards we do it with, but there is the essential difference that you think about game in THE MAJOR and NOT in No Trumps, and your only other concern is whether opponents can make game in the other major rather than in a minor.

One of the later hands in fact has a SPADE preempt in the West hand, and when we get to it we'll see what similarities and what differences there should be in how you treat MAJOR preempts compared to MINOR preempts.

## CHAPTER 19

**Guru:** "Now let's look at the next set of hands, with the same EAST hands and a new WEST hand:

♠ K Q 10 8 4	♠ A 9 7 2
♥ 9 2	♥ A 6 4
♦ K 10 9 6	♦ A Q 5
♣ A 2	♣ Q 9 4

West opens 1S and East can bid straight to game. IN SPADES of course because they are GUARANTEED at least an eight card FIT. They also have sufficient High Card points to be in game. In fact with East's cards, a SLAM may be possible, but seeing we're not going to bid slams at THIS stage unless they're quite obvious, 1S-4S is probably the likely bidding. By the way, the bidding should ALSO be the same if EAST opens the bidding: 1S-4S! THAT doesn't happen very often! As you'll see later, there are more subtle ways of bidding your hands.

Now to the play. If the opening lead is a CLUB, you may even be able to make the queen and not lose a club at all. If NORTH is on lead and leads a club, DON'T play low. You have a good chance of making your queen, and that is if North has led a low club and has the king. Leading from length to an honour is a fairly straightforward and common lead. Don't let anyone tell you that it is a bad idea to lead away from a king on the opening lead. DON'T however, under pretty well ANY circumstances, underlead an ACE against a TRUMP contract. You may find that it CAN run away. Anyway, should SOUTH be on lead and lead a club, then you DO play low and run it to your queen. Do you see that if SOUTH leads a club and you run it round to your queen, you will make twelve tricks NO MATTER WHICH of your opponents has the king of clubs? Yes, if SOUTH has led away from the king, you make your queen and you have only a heart loser left. If NORTH produces the king, you can later cash the ace and then the queen after entering the East hand, disposing of West's losing heart.

On a heart lead, your one heart stop will be removed and you will certainly lose a heart trick and at some stage a club, unless you manage to sneak a trick with the queen by leading towards it. A sleepy North may decide to play low. Second hand low is DEFINITELY not a foolproof rule.

If you receive a diamond lead, you have the luxury of being able to try a club towards the queen and if North has the king, once more, without a heart lead, you will dispose of the heart loser on the queen of clubs, or make the queen for no club losers. All this, of course, AFTER you draw out opponents' trumps, which you should be able to do in two or three rounds.

Do you see how you can play the trump suit to make SURE you lose no tricks in it even if one opponent has ALL FOUR? Yes, cash the KING first. If either opponent shows out, you will be able to lead through the hand that has the jack and ensure that it never makes a trick. Finesses like that are easy to take but not so easy to uncover. For instance, many learners will cash the ACE first, and if North has ALL the trumps, the jack can no longer be picked up. Cashing the KING, because you have BOTH the king AND queen in that hand, can uncover a finesse against EITHER opponent. But that is because you have the ten and nine also. Often, a learner may BLOCK a suit by NOT cashing the honour that is on its own first. This can occur especially in a No Trump contract, which is why it is a good habit to develop to cash top cards from the SHORTER hand first.

Oh, by the way, when you REALLY learn the game and all its subtleties, you'll be able to tell me why my suggestion that declarer should try to win the first trick with the queen of clubs, should North make an opening lead of a low club, is, in fact, WRONG!"

♠ K Q 10 8 4	♠ A 7
♥ 9 2	♥ Q 7 6 4
♦ K 10 9 6	♦ A 8 5
♣ J 2	♣ Q 9 4 3

This time West does not have enough to open the bidding, but East does, but only JUST. When East opens 1C, West bids 1S and East rebids 1NT. That is as far as East is prepared to go. West does not like the prospect of a contract in 1NT and offers East the CHOICE of two suits by bidding 2D. East has more diamonds, but is also aware of the fact that West, by this sequence of bids, has shown at least five spades, but possibly only four diamonds. The system of scoring, which you remember, I hope, means that spades score more than diamonds, so East dutifully goes back to 2S and that becomes the final contract. With East having 12 HCP and West 9, the EW partnership have a combined 21 count compared to opponents' 19, so not only should EW expect to get to play the hand, they are also likely to do so because the distributions are such that opponents are unlikely to bid. Often, with such hands, an inexperienced pair get too high, so the art is to get to your best contract at the lowest possible level. That is also one of the reasons why a lot of people play ACOL. In your SIMPLE bidding, you would go through the sequence I suggested, but the people playing ACOL would open the East hand with a bid of One No Trump. West would decide that the hand is better played in Spades, and remove to 2S. That would be the end of the bidding, and the same contract would be reached in both systems, but via different routes.

With four TOP losers, two in hearts and two in clubs, and an almost certain loser in diamonds, declarer would have to hope that there are no losers in the trump suit. With the king, queen and ten in hand opposite the ace in dummy, the chances are pretty good that the jack WILL fall in two or there rounds, so 2S is more than likely to make. But the news is not going to be great for any pairs playing these hands if they don't know how to stop at a reasonable level. ANY contract above 2S will almost certainly not produce a good result unless the defenders give tricks away.

♠ K Q 10 8 4	♠ A 9 7 2
♥ 9 2	♥ 7
♦ K Q 9 6	♦ A J 8 5
♣ J 2	♣ 9 6 4 3

With these hands, the combined point count is one point LESS than the previous hand, on which we decided that any contract over 2S was going to be a struggle, if not impossible. YET...A declarer in EITHER spades or diamonds would be very unlucky indeed if TEN tricks were not possible! That is the power of FIT. The hands in fact produce a double fit, but it is the spade fit which is all important, because with TEN tricks bid and made, that equals GAME. In DIAMONDS, eleven tricks are required for game, and the defenders would need to be pretty careless to allow declarer to make more than ten. But had there been a '4-4' spade fit and a '5-4' diamond fit, the spade contract would STILL have been the chosen one because BOTH spades and diamonds produce ten tricks. There are going to be many hands where the '4-4' fit will produce one more trick than a '5-4' fit in another suit, but the reasons for that, as well as the importance of the MAJOR fits, we'll talk about later.

Should EW even get into the bidding on these hands, much less get to 4S? Yes, this hand is another one which illustrates the importance of 'upvaluing' your hand with good distribution. West has only 11 HCP but a good enough hand to open 1S. East's hand is almost good enough to jump to 4S if West opens 1S, with chances of success. And even if EW do bid to game, there is every chance that NS can MAKE 4H. You see, they also have a big fit - in HEARTS. If you think about it, it is not possible for NS to make LESS than 3H. At BEST EW will be able to take two spades and two diamonds but then they will run out of tricks. And if either opponent has a SINGLETON spade or diamond, NS will have only three losers. The ten card fit in hearts will ensure that all other losers can be taken care of! If EW both merely count their POINTS, chances are that they will allow NS, quite unmolested, to play their 4H contract. It does happen from time to time that BOTH sides can make GAME when both have a great fit. Look out for such hands, and try to get into the 'action' whenever you can, but with caution of course!

♠ K Q 10 8 4	♠ 7
♥ 9 2	♥ Q 7 6 4
♦ K 10 9 6	♦ Q J 8 5
♣ J 2	♣ 7 6 4 3

These hands do not 'belong' to EW. The most likely contract for NS is THREE NO TRUMPS. With a combined 25 HCP and no apparent fit, that is where NS would probably end up. All EW can hope is that they DEFEND the contract as best as possible and keep declarer to as few tricks as possible. WEST of

course COULD still open the bidding, with 1S, if given the chance. Odds are that North will then bid and South support or bid something of their own. Inexperienced pairs tend to have difficulties in bidding to the correct contract even when neither of their opponents have bid anything at all, but with West OPENING with 1S, their bidding is likely to be very much more difficult. They may not even BID to 3NT, which is all the more reason why you SHOULD open such shapely hands with no more than an 11 count, sometimes even less, a NINE count as in this case! You will also have to learn how YOU can bid better when opponents interfere.

♠ K Q 10 8 4	♠ A 7
♥ 9 2	♥ A 7 6 4
♦ K 10 9 6	♦ A J 5
♣ J 2	♣ 9 6 4 3

Another hand where the combined values are marginal, though better than average. If West is dealer or second in hand and chooses to open the bidding, East is not going to stop short of game. That could prove to be difficult to make. Thirteen points opposite nine WITHOUT a fit does not make for easy games, and that is the chance you take if you open the bidding. Partner will expect more, like a 12 count! But then again, you see what can happen if you DO open the bidding at an opportune time when it turns out that you do have a fit. No one is to know, and that's why bridge is so much fun. You can decide to bid and come a cropper, or you can decide to bid and it turns to gold. With time, your judgement of when to bid and when not to will become finely tuned. And even when partner bids to game when you don't want them to, even then luck can be on your side. Look at the two hands and imagine you've got 'overboard' and East ends up in THREE NO TRUMPS. Once more we see that if the spade suit behaves, there are five tricks in the suit and with three more top tricks all you need to do is find the queen of diamonds and you WILL make game.

In NO TRUMPS, the jack of spades can drop in one, two, OR three rounds and you then just have to get the diamonds 'right'. Note that if you are in SPADES on the two hands, it's no good if the jack drops SINGLETON because then you will surely lose a trick to the nine. That, to add to your two club losers and certain heart loser, will spell defeat. But in No Trumps, if you take FOUR spade tricks but not five, you will STILL make 3NT if diamonds produce four tricks. The easiest way to get those is to play the ace and then RUN the jack. Whenever SOUTH has the queen, you will make four tricks. All that presupposes that even if opponents start with a club lead, they won't be able to cash five tricks in the suit to start with. The four clubs in the East hand do increase the chances that the defence won't make five club tricks. That's why most of the time, if you have BALANCED hands and a 5-2 fit only in any one suit, you are normally well advised to select No Trumps as your denomination.

If, playing Acol, EAST opens this hand, the opening bid is ONE NO TRUMPS, and West is best advised to simply make the 'take out' bid to 2S. This is a nice comfortable contract. Not nearly as exciting as playing in Three No Trumps! But PLUS scores usually score SOME match points on most hands, so being in TWO SPADES and guessing the diamonds correctly (you should always FINESSE in the diamond suit rather than 'go for the drop') will yield you a good enough match point score anyway.

♠ K Q 10 8 4	♠ A 9 7
♥ 9 2	♥ Q 7 6
♦ K 10 9 6	♦ A Q J 5
♣ J 2	♣ Q 9 4

This time, if West chooses to open, the end result SHOULD be a BAD one for EW, because East has too many high card points to even contemplate not being in game, and with three card spade support, will no doubt raise West to 4S after finding out a bit more about West's hand. Unlucky! But then, many others may end up in THREE NO TRUMPS and that is no better a contract. Unless North had BOTH the top hearts, the defence should be able to take at LEAST four heart tricks plus two clubs, so if EW bid to game on these hands, they will score badly irrespective of which game they bid. So, 4S is not going to be a disaster. Some pairs may even be in DIAMONDS, and you can see that there is no chance of making a game in that suit at all. Finally, note what might happen if the defence slips up, which they are more likely to do if West is playing in 4S than in any other contract. They may cash up two clubs or two hearts but not both. Then, the queen of the suit they cash up will provide a discard of one of declarer's losers in the other suit. Unlikely yes, but in lower grades, and sometimes even in higher grades, such slip ups do occur. Defence is NEVER

easy and will be one of the areas of play that I'm sure will give you the greatest challenge and most satisfaction when you start to master it.

## CHAPTER 20

### TWO HANDS.... and PREMPTS

♠ K 10 8 6 5 4 3	♠ A 9 7 2
♥ 9 8 2	♥ A 6 4
♦ 7	♦ A Q 5
♣ J 2	♣ Q 9 4

Here we have the MAJOR preempt. West has a pretty awful hand, but SEVEN spades. If WEST is first to bid, West should open 3S MOST of the time, EXCEPT if EW are VULNERABLE and NS are NOT. That is because the losses could be too great compared to what there may be in it for opponents, even if NS bid and make game. West just does NOT have enough potential TRICKS to want to risk playing the hand in 3S if DOUBLED. My guiding rule for opening with a PREEMPT is that you should be within THREE tricks of what you bid at EQUAL vulnerability, within FOUR if the vulnerability is FAVOURABLE (i.e. YOU are NOT and opponents ARE), and TWO tricks if the vulnerability is UNFAVOURABLE. THAT WAY, if you stick strictly within these guidelines, your partner is in a good position to be able to decide whether to bid on to game or not. Or even to SLAM in the right circumstances. If you're going to preempt on anything at all given a seven card suit, your partner's bidding will be based on no more than guesswork, so apart from the fact that you can take more risks at favourable vulnerability, you can also tell partner that you have an AWFUL hand, or a REASONABLE hand. That is why it is IMPERATIVE that you learn about VULNERABILITY, and pay strict attention to it when bidding, and not just preempting but overcalling also.

Look at the West hand. With that suit you would expect to lose THREE spade tricks before the suit can provide any tricks. You have NO tricks outside, so you're left with FOUR tricks only. That equates to a NOT VULNERABLE vs VULNERABLE preempt AT BEST, since it is FIVE short of what you have bid. You might consider doing it at EQUAL vulnerability if you feel particularly frisky, but to my mind that is more risky than frisky and you should NEVER do it at adverse vulnerability.

If EAST gets to bid first, on the above hand East will open ONE SPADE!! What a difference THAT makes to West. Suddenly West has, instead of a FOUR trick hand, a SEVEN trick hand, knowing that East has at least a FOUR card spade suit and at least TWELVE high card points. In terms of tricks, you should expect at least THREE from an opening bid, so West should jump straight to FOUR SPADES, despite having a FOUR count, which is normally not even enough to make a response at all! But while we're on that, if you're West and East opens any other suit, you SHOULD respond with a bid of 1S despite your lack of the required point count. That is because it does not matter what opener bids next, you can keep bidding your spades until the cows come home and hope that eventually partner will get the message. Even if partner's next bid is 3NT, as long as you're not silly enough to panic and PASS, you should have a good play for game - in SPADES.

On the above hand, if opponents start off by leading hearts, they have found your weak spot and you look to have four losers: two hearts and two clubs. If opponents start by leading clubs, and do so for TWO rounds, they set up a club trick for East's queen and one of West's losing hearts disappears on it. That is why defence is such an important part of the game. Can you see your ONLY chance of making your 4S contract if opponents start off with a heart lead? Yes, you must FINESSE the queen of diamonds, by leading the seven and putting in the queen if North plays any card other than the king. If North does have the king, your queen will hold and you can take the ace and discard a losing heart on it. If SOUTH has the king, your contract was always doomed anyway, but you have just lost one more trick than you needed to! Is it WORTH it? The short answer is: YES. You should ALWAYS try to make your contract. There will be times once you become far more experienced, when you will NOT take the risk of losing the extra trick, but all beginners will learn best by trying to make their contract every time, no matter what the odds. THAT way, their declarer play will certainly improve, and so will their bidding when they realise that they have overreached in their attempts to find unlikely games or slams. It IS better to underbid and overplay, than overbid and underplay, but strangely enough, I have found that one of the most revealing characteristics of the potentially good bridge player is that they DO overbid somewhat in the early stages of their development!

♠ K 10 8 6 5 4 3	♠ A 7
♥ 9 8 2	♥ Q 7 6 4
♦ 7	♦ A 8 5
♣ J 2	♣ Q 9 4 3

This time, East has fewer points, and should West preempt, has no reason to expect that game can make. East can only hope that the contract of 3S makes. Should West open 3S VULNERABLE against NOT, showing a SEVEN trick hand, East MIGHT be tempted to bid to game, knowing that the two aces are CERTAIN tricks and West SHOULD have another trick or potential trick outside the spade suit. WHY? Because West has a SEVEN card spade suit MISSING the ace, therefore only SIX tricks in the suit. The SEVENTH must come from an outside ace or possibly KJ or KQ combination. You see why it is VITAL that you do NOT make undisciplined preempts.

EAST, if first to bid or after West has PASSED, has a perfectly normal ONE NO TRUMP opening if playing ACOL. West has the ideal opportunity to play the hand in TWO SPADES. The fact that West is WEAK is of no relevance. The West hand is NOT a hand that wants to play in No Trumps, is it? In fact, if playing the weak No Trump, you should USUALLY choose to play in 2H or 2S even with only a FIVE card suit, and ALWAYS with a SIX card suit. With a five card MINOR suit, better to PASS unless you have good reason to do otherwise (like if you have another four card suit which makes it less of a No Trump hand). With West's hand, a PASS opposite a 1NT opening is really QUITE silly. On the above hands, EVEN IF each opponent has two spades and East can run seven spade tricks, there are STILL only eight tricks in No Trumps. But imagine what happens when the outstanding spades are NOT 2-2. How many tricks does East have NOW in No Trumps? Yes, THREE! Whereas WEST still makes SEVEN certain tricks in a spade contract, with a chance for the eighth. And if East is playing SIMPLE, East opens 1C, West responds 1S, and when East rebids 1NT, the same happens: West happily removes to 2S which is a good final contract to play.

In the meantime, of course, the chances are that NS have come into the bidding and found the diamond suit, in which case the question becomes: how far can West COMPETE in spades, despite the shortage of high card points? But we're not looking at THAT aspect of bidding in this section of our analysis.

♠ K 10 8 6 5 4 3	♠ A 9 7 2
♥ 9 8 2	♥ 7
♦ 7	♦ A J 8 5
♣ J 2	♣ 9 6 4 3

EW are fortunate if West gets a chance to preempt before the opponents can open the bidding. EAST does not have enough to open the bidding, though WEST might make a weak, preemptive jump if SOUTH opens, but even that may not do NS too much damage. If WEST starts off with a 3S preempt, East should certainly bid FOUR. Not only does East expect West to MAKE 4S, East can be almost CERTAIN that NS can make at least FOUR HEARTS. Why expect 4S to make? Because even opposite a seven card spade suit to the JACK, there may be no spade losers, after all EW DO have eleven between them. East has a wonderful 'control' in hearts, enabling West to ruff any heart losers, and the ace of diamonds is worth a certain trick. Yes, the above hands fit like a glove, you might say. The ace of diamonds opposite a singleton is surely fortuitous? Well, swap East's holding in the minor suits, and what difference does THAT make? NONE at all. Only swapping East's hearts and clubs gives EW four losers. Throughout all this, we should consider that NS DO have a certain game in HEARTS. Were it not for the fact that West has a singleton in diamonds, where East happens to have the ace, FIVE hearts would make comfortably enough. It may STILL do, if either North or South has a VOID in spades. In THAT case, SIX hearts would go down only because of the diamond ruff, IF West leads the singleton diamond, or EAST finds the lead of the ace of diamonds. After West's preempt, the diamond lead by either East OR West should NOT be difficult to find.

♠ K 10 8 6 5 4 3	♠ 7
♥ 9 8 2	♥ Q 7 6 4
♦ 7	♦ Q J 8 5
♣ J 2	♣ 9 6 4 3

This hand definitely does not belong to EW. BUT, despite the fact that NS have 31 HCP between them, BECAUSE of the fact that EW do NOT have a fit, NS have less chance of making GAME, when SOME may even be looking for, or bidding, a SLAM. If you look at the EW hands, what would you say the most LIKELY game for NS was? Yes, 3NT. But if West preempts with an 'opening' bid of 3S, how likely is it that NS will be able to bid 3NT? And if NS end up in any other game contract, East will be quite a nuisance with his holding in whichever suit opponents decide to end up in. But look what is likely to happen if West ends up playing in THREE SPADES DOUBLED. FIVE top losers, plus another likely loser in hearts (unless North has the ace AND king), PLUS whatever trump losers there are. Quite horrible indeed, which is why it is not such a good idea to preempt with the WRONG hand or at the WRONG vulnerability. Imagine West playing this hand in 3S DOUBLED AND vulnerable! Yet at anything but unfavourable vulnerability, West should open 3S, because that makes opposition bidding much more difficult. MOST players these days play a DOUBLE of a preempt FOR TAKEOUT and therefore it is difficult to penalise a preempt unless one or the other of the opponents is SHORT in spades and the OTHER one doubles for takeout! It may even happen where one opponent has 15 HCP and the other one 16 and neither of them know what to do and end up PASSING the hand out!

♠ K 10 8 6 5 4 3	♠ A 7
♥ 9 8 2	♥ A 7 6 4
♦ 7	♦ A J 5
♣ J 2	♣ 9 6 4 3

Back to normality once more. This hand is not too different from an earlier one. East can provide THREE tricks for West, which is not enough to raise to game unless West has preempted 3S VULNERABLE against NOT. In THAT case, East would be justified in raising to game. One of my 'No Trump freak' friends would bid 3NT on the East hand, reasoning that West MUST have solid spades apart from the ace and that therefore nine tricks are certain unless South leads a club, would no doubt bid 3NT! He would then deserve it if South turned up with AKQ10x of clubs and West with a singleton club and king and queen of diamonds or hearts!

♠ K 10 8 6 5 4 3	♠ A 9 7
♥ 9 8 2	♥ Q 7 6
♦ 7	♦ A J 8 5
♣ J 2	♣ Q 9 4

If West opens this hand with a preempt of 3S, that is likely to be where the hand is played. The defence probably can take three heart tricks, either two top ones and a RUFF, or by leading a heart THROUGH the queen. Only if both the ace and king are sitting with North will the queen of hearts make, IF it doesn't get ruffed. A good reason NOT to preempt with the West hand because it is TOO weak, UNLESS the vulnerability is FAVOURABLE (NOT vulnerable against VULNERABLE).

If EAST is opening bidder and EW are playing ACOL, East has the perfect 1NT OPENING BID, and WEST has the obvious take out to 2S which is a comfortable spot. Note that this is NOT a hand for West to allow East to play in 1NT, even though THIS time the result may be lucky since all suits are more or less stopped and the spades are near certain to run seven tricks. It is AWFUL bidding for West to pass 1NT, that's all there is to it. I hope you can see WHY, given that West has NOT been able to see through the back of East's cards!"



## CHAPTER 21

### COMBINED HANDS IV

**Guru:** "This time the West hand is a DISTRIBUTIONAL hand. Let's see where THAT leads to opposite the more normal run of the mill hands opposite.

♠ K Q J 8 4 3	♠ A 9 7 2
♥ K J 10 8 2	♥ A 6 4
♦ 7	♦ A Q 5
♣ 2	♣ Q 9 4

Just ten HCP in the West hand, but the PLAYING strength is such that it is worth an opening bid. In terms of TRICKS, West should make five spade and three heart tricks. THAT is a large number of tricks for a mere opening bid! But not quite enough to open with a bid of TWO spades. If West opens 1S, East should bid either 2C or 2D. A 'two over one' response is forcing and East wants to find out a bit more about West's hand. West, of course, rebids 2H. East STILL wants to know more, and now bids the other minor. A new suit at the three level is also forcing, and West has no problem with the next bid: 3H. Such a sequence shows EITHER equal length spades and hearts (6/6 or 5/5) or LONGER spades (7/6 or 6/5) since each time you REBID a suit you show an EXTRA card in it. Because you open your LONGER suit, when you bid your second one for a SECOND time, you show FIVE cards in it, hence you have five or SIX in your first bid suit. East will now bid 4S even though they may be VERY interested in trying for a SLAM. West's SHAPE and opening bid makes slam a distinct possibility, but because of West's subsequent quiet bidding (when forced to bid by East's continuing probes), and the possibility of two top club losers or one club loser and one 'in the wash' in either major, EAST should settle for 4S. You can see that the SLAM, in either major, depends on locating the whereabouts of the queen of hearts, or dropping it. There HAVE been worse slams, but it does not pay to look for UNLIKELY slams in a learners' or newcomers' competition.

♠ K Q J 8 4 3	♠ A 7
♥ K J 10 8 2	♥ Q 7 6 4
♦ 7	♦ A 8 5
♣ 2	♣ Q 9 4 3

This time, if West opens 1S, East has no problem in responding. On the previous hand, East had to introduce a THREE card suit, which is perfectly allowable when it is a MINOR in response to a 1 level major suit opening. Here, East has four clubs and 10+ HCP so the response is self evident. No, NOT 2NT despite the point count and balanced nature of the hand. West, over East's response of 2C, bids 2H. The heart fit has been found and East has enough values to jump straight to 4H. A 12 count is NOT always enough to jump to game opposite an opening bid, but East's aces are valuable cards, especially the ace of spades, in West's first opened suit. Note that even if East merely INVITES with a bid of 3H, West should bid to game because of the original trick count and the extreme SHAPE of West's hand. On these hands, FIVE hearts would make comfortably enough unless one of the opponents has a singleton spade and a spade ruff is obtained.

This is NOT a hand for EW to play in a part score. Should EAST be opening the bidding, an ACOL 1NT should elicit 3S from West (FORCING, and asking East to bid 4S with at least THREE card support). After 3NT, West should bid 4H. THIS is also not a hand to be played in No Trumps., and the ten count in the West hand is worth at least fourteen because of its shape, but ONLY in a TRUMP contract! Incidentally, BECAUSE East must have at least THREE cards in ONE of the majors to have a BALANCED hand (2254 shapes are NOT opened 1NT!), West KNOWS that East has 3 or 4 hearts if East does not bid 4S over West's jump to three. The same would be the case if West jumps to 3H and East bids 3NT, because after a jump to 3H or 3S, 3NT DENIES more than a DOUBLETION. The JUMP is an INSTRUCTION, and NOT a suggestion. If you 'HOG' the hand and bid 3NT DESPITE partner's request, YOU are responsible for the consequences!

♠ K Q J 8 4 3	♠ A 9 7 2
♥ K J 10 8 2	♥ 7

♦ 7	♦ A J 8 5
♣ 2	♣ 9 6 4 3

The bidding on these hands could quite easily go: 1S from West, 4S from East! East's hand in response to a ONE SPADE opening suddenly jumps in value. The excellent FIT (almost certain to be 5/4 unless West has a completely FLAT 4333) plus the SINGLETON heart is worth an extra three points at least. Generally, count TWO for a singleton and THREE for a void in a side suit, but I don't like to get point bound like that. Common sense and imagination gets you further than bean counting, at least as far as I am concerned anyway.

If West is not first to bid, it is most likely that either North or South will open the bidding. Even if that happens, West should bid spades as an overcall, and then hearts, at the FOUR level if necessary and even if partner does not bid at all. With the above East hand, East WILL bid the moment West bids spades, but with SOME hands East might NOT bid yet still have enough to either MAKE 4S or 4H or go just one down. West's hand is VERY strong OFFENSIVELY (for PLAYING the hand) but WEAK defensively (in fact West has NO sure defensive tricks at all against a potential club or diamond contract). Furthermore, the chances of opponents running nine tricks in No Trumps cannot be discounted either. Witness the next combination of hands.

♠ K Q J 8 4 3	♠ 7
♥ K J 10 8 2	♥ Q 7 6 4
♦ 7	♦ Q J 8 5
♣ 2	♣ 9 6 4 3

East has a mere FIVE count, but four card support for HEARTS. EW have only FOUR losers in a heart contract, so can bid up to 3H and score 140. With 25 HCP between them, it is unlikely that NS will not get into the bidding, and you can see that if they DO, they have EIGHT CERTAIN tricks in No Trumps and NINE if either North OR South has five clubs. Because of East's minor suit 'stack', the ELEVEN trick game in either minor is far less likely for NS. The BEST that NS would be able to do against 4H or 4S would be to DOUBLE and defeat it ONE trick. Unless EW are VULNERABLE and NS NOT, this is likely to be a great result. In fact NOT vulnerable, you can hardly go wrong by bidding to 4H.

♠ K Q J 8 4 3	♠ A 7
♥ K J 10 8 2	♥ A 7 6 4
♦ 7	♦ A J 5
♣ 2	♣ 9 6 4 3

Again, a slightly different hand to an earlier one, but, because of East's FOUR card heart suit, the chances of making a small slam are now odds on, despite the fact that East has THREE FEWER points! With NINE cards missing the queen, even if there is a finesse position, the normal play is to 'go for the drop': any singleton or doubleton queen will bring in the suit for no losers. Note that there is a TWO way option for finessing in the suit IF you decide to do so: you can play the ACE first and then lead to the TEN or JACK, OR you can play the KING first and then lead the jack or ten and let it run if North does not cover. That is a luxury you do not need on THESE hands when playing 'for the drop' gives you a better chance of success.

♠ K Q J 8 4 3	♠ A 9 7
♥ K J 10 8 2	♥ Q 7 6
♦ 7	♦ A J 8 5
♣ 2	♣ Q 9 4

The only difference in this hand from some earlier ones is that if WEST opens 1S, East should respond 2D, and if EAST opens 1NT, West jumping to 3S, East raises to 4S because of the THREE card support. West should NOT use STAYMAN, because STAYMAN should be reserved for hands which do NOT have five card major suits OR which merely want to INVITE game. Once West has heard a 1NT opening from partner, West should decide immediately to be in game in one of the majors, the only question being how to play in the suit with most trumps.

## CHAPTER 22

### COMBINED HANDS V

This time a West hand that is quite HUGE in playing strength and weak point wise AND defensively!

♠ K Q J 10 8 6 5 4 3	♠ A 9 7 2
♥ K 2	♥ A 6 4
♦ 6	♦ A Q 5
♣ 2	♣ Q 9 4

Such huge hands are not always easy to bid to the optimum contract. West has EIGHT tricks if spades are trumps, and the king of hearts is a possible ninth. You should be prepared to take your chances in FOUR SPADES, but to open this hand 4S is liable to give away any opportunity of reaching a slam. Admittedly, East requires three aces for a slam to be on, but if East DOES have them then the slam is odds on, even when East does not have the ace of hearts. There are good reasons why a PASS to start with could be the most effective action. A strong TWO is closer to the mark as an opening bid with the West hand than a preempt. And if you DO preempt with the West hand, bid FOUR. You have only five POSSIBLE losers, so the opening of 4S is reasonable at adverse vulnerability but TOO STRONG at favourable. Partner will Never expect you to have THAT hand.

There is ONE obvious advantage in NOT opening the West hand at all. Look what happens if West opens. Whatever East does, East will not know that West has a singleton club, and with two possible club losers, EAST will not want to bid more than just game. As you can see, a small slam in spades is absolutely laydown! If West PASSES, or East gets to open the bidding first, WEST can ask for aces and if East shows up with FOUR, bid a confident grand slam (in NO TRUMPS!) ; if East shows three aces, settle in SIX SPADES, and if East shows two or one only, give up in FOUR spades. It's what WEST knows that really matters on this hand. The same thing will apply to the other hands opposite, as we shall shortly see.

♠ K Q J 10 8 6 5 4 3	♠ A 7
♥ K 2	♥ Q 7 6 4
♦ 6	♦ A 8 5
♣ 2	♣ Q 9 4 3

When East opens an Acol INT, West can ask for aces with 4C and PASS when East responds 4S to show TWO. What a simple game!

♠ K Q J 10 8 6 5 4 3	♠ A 9 7 2
♥ K 2	♥ 7
♦ 6	♦ A J 8 5
♣ 2	♣ 9 6 4 3

This time, if West passes, the opponents will no doubt enter the bidding, and THAT may count against EW. A 4S OPENING may well have shut NS out altogether. However, when NS bid to the obvious 4H, West can 'sacrifice' in 4S and poor NS will get the shock of their lives when that makes an overtrick! More likely, EITHER North OR South, because they BOTH have a spade void, will bid on to 5H, maybe even 6H. The latter will depend on whether West gets a diamond ruff or not, or the location of the ace of hearts. Plus, declarer may try to DROP the singleton king of trumps, with only three out. You certainly don't have any problem in playing the trump suit if you're in spades as East or West!

♠ K Q J 10 8 6 5 4 3	♠ 7
♥ K 2	♥ Q 7 6 4
♦ 6	♦ Q J 8 5
♣ 2	♣ 9 6 4 3

If East passes, West should bid 4S anyway, at the earliest opportunity. You may not agree that West should pass to start with, but there are times when it IS better to sit on the fence and provide opponents with a

surprise later. This, I believe is one such case. 4S of course goes down one, but opponents, as with a previous example, do have eight top tricks in No Trumps and nine if either has five clubs, so West should never contemplate passing anything lower than 4S. The difficulty arises when West has to decide whether to bid to FIVE spades. If West has been able to show the hand adequately with a jump to 4S then there is no more to be said, and EAST is the one to make that decision.

♠ K Q J 10 8 6 5 4 3	♠ A 7
♥ K 2	♥ A 7 6 4
♦ 6	♦ A J 5
♣ 2	♣ 9 6 4 3

This is what we were talking about earlier. If West passes and East opens 1NT, West can ask for aces and end up in the right spot. 6S is laydown UNLESS the missing ace is the ace of hearts. In the worst case scenario, it may be necessary to lead up to the king of hearts to make the slam, a 50% shot. Not a bad slam if, on what you know, that is the WORST that can happen!

♠ K Q J 10 8 6 5 4 3	♠ A 9 7
♥ K 2	♥ Q 7 6
♦ 6	♦ A J 8 5
♣ 2	♣ Q 9 4

This time East shows two aces by bidding 4S and West passes, giving East a momentary shock until dummy appears!

## CHAPTER 23

### COMBINED HANDS VI

**Guru:** "Another distributional West hand, but without quite the same quality of suits as earlier. Nevertheless you'll see the advantage in having TWO suits which can fit with partner's holding.

♠ 6	♠ A 9 7 2
♥ K J 10 9 8 2	♥ A 6 4
♦ K 9 7 6 4	♦ A Q 5
♣ A	♣ Q 9 4

The West hand this time is a TWO suited distributional hand. Let's see how we can bid it in conjunction with the different hands that might be opposite. You can immediately see the strength of a distributional hand when it is opposite what are known as 'controls': aces and kings. With three aces AND the queen of diamonds as well as three card support for both red suits, a slam in hearts OR diamonds is virtually laydown. The only possible loser seems to be a heart, and with West's semi solid suit and East's ace, the chances are that the queen of hearts will drop after two rounds, or may even appear singleton. That makes the GRAND slam better than an even shot, but grand slams should never be bid unless you can COUNT thirteen tricks. Too risky otherwise, and even if you bid a SMALL slam in most competitions, you will score well. The main thing is to bid ANY slam as long as it makes! Note that even if you lose a trick to the queen of hearts, you would expect to make the rest of the tricks in a heart contract, but in No Trumps, the first lead is likely to remove either of your black aces and THEN you better NOT lose a trick to the queen of hearts. Not only that, in a HEART contract you can play two rounds of hearts and if either opponent has three to the queen, leave them with it and start on diamonds and if THEY also break badly (4-1) you can ruff one with dummy's last remaining trump and thus bring your diamond suit home for no losers. Being aware of 'breaks' when bidding games or slams can make your judgement much easier. On the above hands, the likelihood of BOTH red suits breaking so badly as to make only eleven tricks in a heart contract is so low that the 6H slam should always be bid, but bidding it may be easier said than done!

If WEST is the opening bidder, West opens 1H and over East's bid of 1S bids 2D. East now forces with 3C and West rebids diamonds. At this stage East KNOWS that West has at least FIVE hearts and FIVE diamonds. East's cards in both opener's suits are wonderful, and East ALSO has a 16 count. Those two combined factors should raise East's interest sufficiently to contemplate slam in HEARTS, since hearts will always be at LEAST as long as diamonds on this bidding sequence. East therefore bids 4NT to ask for aces. When West shows one ace, that should be sufficient for East to bid 6H. East may even ask for KINGS with a bid of 5NT and look for the grand slam, though it is not the NUMBER of kings that is as important as the LOCATION of the TWO kings as well as the QUEEN OF HEARTS. All too difficult for mere learners, and all that matters really is that East recognises the value of the red cards when West shows such a two suiter and works out that a SMALL slam can be bid with good chances of success.

If EAST is opening bidder or bids BEFORE West, the slam may not be so easy to find, and it is WEST who has to recognise the potential of THEIR hand in the light of EAST'S bidding. East will open 1S and West bid 2H. If East bids 3NT to show the POINT count plus balanced nature of the hand, WEST may ask for aces and end in 6H but NOT before giving East the option of opting for DIAMONDS instead. E.g. 4NT-5S (THREE aces) followed by 6D from West. Clearly, West has TWO long suits and East should choose the better, knowing that hearts is CERTAINLY at least as long as diamonds and West has at LEAST five of each red suit. Not so easy after all, is it? Seeing both hands, VERY easy! But before you can start BIDDING slams, or games for that matter, you have to realise the potential from just the ONE hand that you're looking at and the information that PARTNER transmits to you with their bidding. It is always the COMBINED hands that determine whether you will succeed in any particular contract, and therefore it is imperative for both partners to first evaluate the POTENTIAL of their OWN hand, and then evaluate the COMBINED potential of BOTH hands after sufficient information has been exchanged in the bidding. Too many people just bid their OWN hand, and do THAT rather badly as well, may I add. But perhaps I'm just being a bit rude, bidding is NOT all that easy. Which is why we do have "RULES" for bidding! Basing these rules on common sense and logic helps a lot as well!

♠ 6	♠ A 7
♥ K J 10 9 8 2	♥ Q 7 6 4
♦ K 9 7 6 4	♦ A 8 5
♣ A	♣ Q 9 4 3

These two hands fit perfectly. Twelve opposite eleven high card points but only two losers in a heart contract. A good example of why No Trumps would NOT be a great contract. Note that if the RED suits were reversed in both hands, then four hearts would STILL be the best contract, on the 5-3 fit, rather than the 6-4 in diamonds. However, if BOTH of West's long suits were MINORS, chances are that even expert EW pairs would end up in 3NT unless opponents competed in spades, which, incidentally, they are pretty well certain to do since they DO have a ten card spade fit, albeit fewer points. Minor suit games are more often reached when opponents compete in a major, which warns you that No Trumps is likely to fail. WITHOUT any bidding from opponents, bidding the above hand is easy whatever system you play. If WEST opens, it will be 1H and East should bid directly to 4H. SOME people play a direct raise to game as weaker point wise and more distributional, but I can't see why YOU shouldn't adopt the principle at THIS stage of 'bid what you think you can make'. Easier that way! AND if EAST opens, with a bid of 1C in SIMPLE, West responds 1H and East raises to two. Again, game is reached when WEST bids directly to 4H. Playing ACOL, same result if WEST is first to bid, but if EAST bids first, the opening bid is ONE NO TRUMP, and WEST forces to game by bidding 3H. East raises to 4H, because a jump in response to 1NT specifically asks for three or four card support in the suit jumped in. West could also, because they have a SIX card heart suit, just bid 4H the moment East opens 1NT."

**Simon:** "Why not 2H? Aren't I showing 10+ points by entering the TWO level?"

**Guru:** "No, you have to be able to stop at the two level with a WEAK hand and long suit. Remember that the ACOL 1NT opening is very specific, showing 12-14 HCP. There will be many hands which are better played in a LONG suit and NOT in No Trumps, for instance:

♠ 4 3
♥ J 9 7 6 4 2
♦ 6 4 2
♣ 3 2.

THAT is a hand you would bid TWO HEARTS on. If playing Acol, you have to reserve the bids of 2D, 2H, and 2S specifically for the purpose of 'Weak Take Outs'."

**Vera:** "Why not 2C?"

**Guru:** "Because ACOL players open the Weak No Trump with ANY balanced hand which COULD include one or even TWO four card major suits. With enough points to look for game, partner of the opener must be able to somehow find out whether they DO have a fit in a major suit, and CANNOT just bid their four card suits at the TWO level because THAT has to be available for making weaker takeouts. So the bid of 2C is sacrificed and used as an ARTIFICIAL inquiry to see if opener has four hearts or spades. Opener bids 2D if they HAVEN'T, and bids their major if they HAVE. With BOTH majors, opener bids HEARTS first. This bid of 2C was invented a LONG time ago, when a No Trump opening was STRONG, 16-18 HCP, since even in those days No Trump openings could contain four card major suits. It's named after Sam STAYMAN, the first person to document it, even though it was someone else's invention!"

**Simon:** "Hardly fair, is it? Of course BACON wrote all of Shakespeare's works as well, didn't he? Seems easier to play SIMPLE, since you get a chance to bid ALL your suits and find a fit, at least MOST of the time as long as you have the required point count."

**Guru:** "There are pluses and minuses with ALL systems. The WEAK No Trump had a LOT of advantages when it was FIRST developed, and was VERY effective, but has lost a lot of them now that people have developed all sorts of ways to combat it. There is certainly a lot to be said for being able to find your fit at the ONE level, at least in my opinion anyway. Unfortunately, the SIMPLE way of rebidding means that you have to rebid 1NT sometimes with as many as 16 HCP, whereas in ACOL, because the Weak No Trump shows 12-14 HCP, when opener of a suit REBIDS 1NT, they show 15-16. This splits the 12-16

point opening bids quite nicely between 12-14 and 15-16 on all BALANCED hands, and enables rebids in No Trumps to also show 15-16 with some UNBALANCED hands."

♠ 6	♠ A 9 7 2
♥ K J 10 9 8 2	♥ 7
♦ K 9 7 6 4	♦ A J 8 5
♣ A	♣ 9 6 4 3

**Guru:** "Whether East or West is first to bid, it will be WEST who will OPEN the bidding with 1H. East responds 1S and West rebids 2D. West is NOT impressed with East's spade bid, and offers East a choice of low level contracts. East PASSES, having found the fit. This is in fact an interesting hand because there is an excellent play for FIVE diamonds: if there are no diamond losers, declarer loses just two hearts. If the queen of diamonds fails to appear after two rounds, then declarer can cross ruff for a total of TEN tricks. That means declarer should play on HEARTS FIRST! If declarer leads the singleton heart from dummy, next hand will almost certainly IGNORE the rule of 'second hand low' if they have the ACE because they will not want it to run away. Therefore if South plays LOW, the best chance is to let the seven RUN and hope South has the QUEEN! If the heart play is successful, declarer will still make eleven tricks, and if the heart play fails there are STILL further chances of eleven tricks being developed even when the queen of diamonds fails to appear. With such a big fit you can hardly go wrong. EAST should in fact give West a token raise to 3D. Normally a raise to the three level shows 10-12 HCP, doesn't it? The East hand is good enough for that because of the wonderful diamond fit, and remember that West may not have been able to, or WANTED to, jump to 3D and force to game with up to seventeen HCP. Even more interestingly, the EXPERTS' contract is FOUR HEARTS! This is almost certain to MAKE, which scores 20 more than five diamonds making five, and MIGHT make FIVE hearts when diamonds makes six! But you have to be either foolhardy or a real expert to opt for the 6-1 heart fit when you have a 5-4 diamond fit!

♠ 6	♠ 7
♥ K J 10 9 8 2	♥ Q 7 6 4
♦ K 9 7 6 4	♦ Q J 8 5
♣ A	♣ 9 6 4 3

This next hand provides a combination of cards that is not going to get to play the hand unless opponents are asleep. If West were to open the bidding and North pass, East should raise to 2H. Normal single raises show 6-9 HCP but East's heart support and singleton spade is MORE than enough. If SOUTH now also passes, West should bid FOUR! Why waste the opportunity? A FIT in hearts, plus West's distribution, makes game a distinct possibility. Yes, the secondary diamond fit is fortuitous, but would game be any LESS likely if East's spades and diamonds were exchanged? Now look at the hands again. NS have an ELEVEN card spade fit and ONLY ONE top loser. The ONLY other possible loser for them is a DIAMOND, IF diamonds are 2-2 AND a diamond is LED to start with. If West was to pass East's raise to 2H, surely North would do SOMETHING, given a second chance? After you've been playing for a while, you'll learn to recognise when YOU have a hand which has the POTENTIAL to make game at the same time as PREEMPTING your opponents out of a possible game their way. Who would think it would be right to bid to game with an eleven count when partner has raised to TWO with a FIVE count? Of course it IS possible for 4H to do down: if either opponent gets a DIAMOND RUFF, but doesn't THAT mean that they were cold for SIX spades?"

♠ 6	♠ A 7
♥ K J 10 9 8 2	♥ A 7 6 4
♦ K 9 7 6 4	♦ A J 5
♣ A	♣ 9 6 4 3

These two hands in combination are odds on to make SIX hearts, but bidding the slam is no easy matter, not even for expert pairs, so we'll forget about that. Whether West or East opens first the likely end result is 4H, unless NS push to 4S which might push EW to FIVE unless they choose to DOUBLE the 4S 'sacrifice'. Despite no aces and only two kings, the spade AND club fit for NS is such that 4S DOUBLED is likely to be quite cheap compared to what EW can bid and make! Learning to compete against opponents when you have the RIGHT hands to compete on is a vital part of the game and very much underused and BADLY used in the lower grades. Knowing how and when to compete will give you a huge advantage."

♠ 6	♠ A 9 7
♥ K J 10 9 8 2	♥ Q 7 6
♦ K 9 7 6 4	♦ A J 7 5
♣ A	♣ Q 9 4

And this combination of hands differs little, other than it is VERY unlikely that EW will bid to a slam since they have one CERTAIN loser and can not be sure there is no second loser, in diamonds. There is also the possibility that if either opponent has a SINGLETON diamond, they can obtain a RUFF since the ace of trumps will be an entry to whichever hand has it. The 6H slam is better than 50% I reckon, but I stand to be corrected. In any case, THESE two hands will NOT be bid to a slam because there is NO way that EW can see just WHAT the combined hands contain. The queen of hearts and JACK of diamonds are crucial cards, whereas the queen of clubs is totally irrelevant. So, forget about bidding THIS slam even when you get to the expert level, but remind me later to show you HOW, and WHY, you can bid the one we looked at before this. East has the same thirteen count weak No Trump opening, but the extra HEART and extra ACE makes the slam both attractive and BIDDABLE! AND much easier to bid if you're playing the WEAK NO TRUMP!"

**Vera:** "Sounds intriguing. Sure you don't want to tell us NOW?"

**Simon:** "Somehow, I think that might not be such a good idea. I reckon we should just go out and play now, what do you think, Guru?"

**Guru:** "Great idea, go and play on learners' night and see how you get on. Then come back and you can tell me all about it!"



## CHAPTER 24

### THE PRACTICE SESSION

We heard that there was a practice session at the club one Thursday evening, so went along to that rather than dive in the deep end immediately. Here's our 'report' to the Guru when we returned.

**Guru:** "How did you get on? Presumably all the others in the practice session were playing ACOL and you two were sticking to the 'SIMPLE' stuff?"

**Vera:** "Yes. I think we did quite well actually, thanks to what you've taught us so far. But it certainly makes a lot of difference when opponents ALSO get into the act of bidding, doesn't it?? Anyway here's what happened."

**Simon:** "Vera and I were East-West and what I did was to record the results at all the tables and a version of how the bidding SHOULD have gone playing SIMPLE as Vera and I were, and ACOL as I understand it. I think that was good practice. You can tell us where we might have gone wrong, or where my Acol is lacking. I certainly saw some VERY strange bidding by a lot of the people we played against!"

**Dealer West EW VUL**

♠ K Q 3	♠ J 10 8	♠ A 4
♥ K J 4	♥ 5	♥ A 10 9 6
♦ 5	♦ A Q J 7	♦ K 10 8 6 3 2
♣ K Q J 10 7 6	♣ 9 8 5 4 3	♣ A
	♠ 9 7 6 5 2	
	♥ Q 8 7 3 2	
	♦ 9 4	
	♣ 2	

The bidding:	SIMPLE				ACOL			
W	N	E	S	W	N	E	S	
1C	NB	1D	NB	1C	NB	1D	NB	
2C	NB	2H	NB	1NT	NB	3NT		
3NT								

**Simon:** "Vera opened 1C, I bid 1D and Vera bid 2C. Should she have bid more? After all, she DOES have fifteen HCP AND a good club suit."

**Guru:** "Not quite. A jump rebid in the opened suit usually shows something like 15-17 HCP and at least a six card suit, so it's close. But the singleton diamond in Vera's hand should make her wary. In Acol, the 1NT rebid shows 15-16 points, though a 2C rebid is also a reasonable bid because of the good clubs and diamond 'misfit'. Over a 1NT rebid, East has no further interest in anything other than game, and consequently bids direct to 3NT. Playing SIMPLE, West SHOULD rebid 2C in preference to 1NT, though both show the limited nature of the hand. A MISFIT with partner is not an encouraging sign, but the quality of the clubs suggests a club contract is better than no trumps. East makes a 'responder's' reverse with a bid of 2H to show extra strength and West ALSO now shows THEIR extra strength by jumping to 3NT."

**Simon:** "The contracts, and results, for the five tables of our learners' group were as follows: 3NT by West making 7 : once, making 6 once, and making 5. As well as 2D by East making 2 and 2C by West making 3! Against Vera's 3NT, North led the ace of diamonds and then the QUEEN. Vera played the king and when South's nine dropped, she continued diamonds from the top and all North made was two diamond tricks. But look at what two others did. THEY made six and SEVEN! The defence must have been awful."



**Guru:** "I agree. Although 3NT and 4S WERE made, 2S is probably the best place to play. Playing SIMPLE, South MAY decide to raise partner to TWO SPADES only, not an unreasonable decision because they have three spades only and most of the concentration of the points is in that suit. Clearly the pairs in 1NT (especially by NORTH!!), as also the pair in 2D, have a lot to learn (in 'SIMPLE' South might contemplate bidding 2D but then North should ALWAYS bid 2H anyway to give South the option of spades or hearts AND show the 5-4 or better shape).

**Dealer East NS VUL**

	♠ Q 9 8	
	♥ K 9 7 3	
	♦ Q 4 3	
	♣ J 6 4	
♠ A J 2		♠ 10 6 5 4 3
♥ 8 6 5		♥ Q
♦ 8 7 6		♦ K 10 5
♣ K Q 7 3		♣ A 9 8 5
	♠ K 7	
	♥ A J 10 4 2	
	♦ A J 9 2	
	♣ 10 2	

**The bidding:** SIMPLE ACOL

<b>W</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>S</b>
		NB	1H			NB	1H
NB	2H	NB	NB	NB	2H	NB	NB

**Simon:** " I couldn't see how this hand could be played in anything other than 2H."

**Guru:** " Once you learn to COMPETE, you'll probably come in with a 2S bid over 1H-2H from opponents! No, maybe that IS a bit outrageous, even for me. Perhaps after PASS, PASS, WEST might reopen with a TAKEOUT double."

**Simon:** " The results were: 2H by South making 4 (twice), and 1H making 3, 1NT by South making 2 and 4H by South down one!

**Guru:** "Clearly the 1NT by South got the POINT count right but forgot that you DON'T open 1NT with that sort of shape in ANY system! And the 1H's partner obviously forgot that partner MAY have as many as NINETEEN points to open at the ONE level, and therefore should show them support with this hand. No harm done this time! As for the 4H by South, THIS pair probably did not know how to stop, another very important part of bidding judgement and communication!"

Dealer South EW VUL

	♠ A Q 10 8 3	
	♥ Q	
	♦ Q 9 5 4	
	♣ J 10 9	
♠ 5		♠ J 9 7 6
♥ A 8 7 6 5 4 3		♥ K J
♦ 6 2		♦ A 7 3
♣ A 6 4		♣ K 8 7 3
	♠ K 4 2	
	♥ 10 9 2	
	♦ K J 10 8	
	♣ Q 5 2	

The bidding:				ACOL:			
W	N	E	S	W	N	E	S
			NB				NB
NB	1S	NB	1NT	NB	1S	NB	2S
2H	NB	NB	2S	3H	NB	NB	NB
NB	NB	2NT	NB				
3H	NB	NB	NB				

**Simon:** "I think there should be some competition on this hand. There certainly was from us, as per our 'Simple' bidding. Vera passed the first time, but came in with 2H later. They competed to 2S but I showed my values with a bid of 2NT and Vera decided with all those hearts that a heart contract was better. She was quite right, though the way the cards sit you CAN make ten tricks in No Trumps!"

**Guru:** "A lot of people might open the West hand with a PREEMPT of 3H, but the heart suit is not great, the VULNERABILITY is not great, and it is also not recommended that you open with a preempt holding more than one ace. So Vera was quite right, or did you forget about preempts? But West CAN come in later, especially at the 2 level, it's more scary at the 3 level. Playing Acol, the chances are that if there is a spade OPENING, it will be a five card suit, so South might raise to 2S rather than bid 1NT. Playing SIMPLE, the chances are ALSO that the opener will have five spades since with only FOUR they MUST have a 4333 distribution or they would have opened the LOWER of their FOUR card suits. Nevertheless, with a completely flat hand South is better advised to bid 1NT. As it is, one way or another, East-West should compete to 3H. This contract appears to have an EASY ten tricks but what DID happen, Simon?"

**Simon:** " 3H by West made 4, 2D by South making 2 and 3D by South making 3, 2S by North down one and, would you believe, FIVE Hearts by West down three!"

**Guru:** "I can't figure the diamond contracts by SOUTH, but you can see that there is potential for contracts played BOTH ways, so it's vital to be able to compete when the time is right. You did well, Vera. Your 3H making four would have been a TOP board."

Dealer North NS VUL

♠ 9 7 6	♠ J 4 3 2	♠ A K 10 8 5
♥ A 4 2	♥ K 9 6	♥ 5
♦ 8 7 6	♦ A 10 4	♦ K 3 2
♣ A J 6 4	♣ K 7 5	♣ Q 8 3 2
	♠ Q	
	♥ Q J 10 8 7 3	
	♦ Q J 9 5	
	♣ 10 9	

<b>The bidding:</b>	<b>SIMPLE:</b>	<b>ACOL:</b>	
W	N    E    S	W    N    E    S	
	NB   1S   2H	NB   1S   2H	
DBL	4H   4S   NB	2S   4H   4S   NB	
NB	DBL	NB    DBL	

**Guru:** "Looks like there's more competitive bidding on this hand - both ways! Also there's a chance for skilful declarer play: If East plays in 4S on the QH lead, they can play the ace of trumps and when the queen drops, later finesse trumps by running the NINE. However, in order to get to dummy to do that, declarer will need to lead a club to the jack (FINESSE) but that loses, and if North continues with another heart now, East's trump holding will be reduced to the same number as North's, and if all the trumps are drawn, NS will be able to cash heart tricks the moment they get in with the ace of diamonds! Anything could happen on this hand, especially with learners, where bad defence and bad declarer play are quite likely! How did YOU get on, Simon?"

**Simon:** "I actually played in 2S and made three. There seemed to be very little to the play. Nothing as brilliant as YOU suggested happened at all. I lost a trump, a club, and two diamond tricks. Even so, it was a good result, because the other results were: 2S making two, and then 3H by South making 3 and 2H making 2, apart from a 4H down one.

**Guru:** "You see what I mean about competing, don't you? The South in 3H making ALSO got a top board."

The play in the practice session has certainly been nothing like what one would expect, with all sorts of weird and wonderful contracts and all sorts of results. Just shows you how difficult it is to grasp even the basics despite the fact that people may have been told these basics a number of times. Let's see what happened next.

**Dealer East EW VUL**

♠ 9 7 4 2 ♥ A 10 9 ♦ K 7 5 4 3 ♣ 7	♠ J ♥ 8 7 2 ♦ A 10 2 ♣ Q 9 8 4 3 2	♠ A Q 10 8 6 5 ♥ K 5 ♦ 9 ♣ K 10 6 5
♠ K 3 ♥ Q J 6 4 3 ♦ Q J 8 6 ♣ A J		

<b>The bidding:</b>	<b>SIMPLE:</b>	<b>ACOL:</b>	
W	N	E	S
		1S	2H
2S	3H	3S	NB
NB	NB		
		W	N
		2S	3H
		NB	NB
		E	S
		1S	2H
		3S	NB

**Guru:** "This looks like another interesting competitive hand, but whereas both sides have about the same number of points, East-West have the master suit. What happened, Simon?"

**Simon:** "We did REALLY well, even though we overbid the hand. The bidding SHOULD have gone as in my SIMPLE version, but Vera thought my hand was better and raised me to GAME! South led the ace of clubs and I had no difficulty making the contract."

**Guru:** "As it happens, you can ALWAYS make 4S but the lead is a good example of a bad lead and what you should NOT do. The ace of clubs can wait. In bridge there is SELDOM any hurry to grab your tricks. Better the ace capture the king than capture thin air, I always say. But with Vera's singleton club and FOUR trumps, 4S makes irrespective. All you need to do is to take one top trump and then cross ruff. As long as YOU don't do damage to your trump holding by leading two rounds or FINESSING if NORTH switches to a trump, opponents can't stop you doing that: the ONLY lead that doesn't give a trick away is a DIAMOND, and if South leads the QUEEN, declarer can let it hold since North almost certainly has the ace. After that, SOUTH can't lead trumps without losing the king, and NORTH does not get in to switch to a trump. If South leads a LOW diamond, declarer can play low and now has the tempo to ruff out North's ace and STILL make ten tricks. As long as when North switches to a trump declarer WINS the ace and refuses the finesse, one way or another ten tricks will be made, more than likely on a cross ruff. Even if declarer finesses when North switches to the jack of trumps, which is unlikely, it is also unlikely that a novice South will see the cross ruff coming and shoot back a second trump. What WERE the other results, Simon?"

**Simon:** "The results were as follows: 3S by East making 3, and the others were 3H by South making 3 and 2H making 2. Amazing how these people make exactly what they bid, eh? AND there was one NORTH who played in 3C. It made, but wasn't the ideal contract was it?"

**Guru:** "No, but it CAN happen if East opens 1S and South makes a TAKEOUT DOUBLE. Apart from that, there are some good points to note:

Once East has opened 1S, West has enough to bid to at LEAST 2S if not 3. South should NOT be allowed to play in 2H, nor East in TWO spades. South's overcall should NEVER be made on a 4 card suit, therefore North should be quite happy to raise, even with just three small hearts. North also has useful RUFFING values, with the singleton spade. Unfortunately, the defence against South's heart contract can clear the trumps if they wish, but fortunately South has a SPADE stop, AND trick, with the king anyway.

4S by East has only three top losers, but unless South on lead cashes the ace of clubs, MOST declarers will find that 3S is the limit of the EW hands. BOTH East AND West, once East has OPENED with 1S and West supported to 2S, should be prepared to compete to 3S if necessary. Selling out to 3H will seldom

produce a good score for EW. You can see that even if you two had STOPPED in THREE spades, when you made FOUR, Simon, you would STILL have scored a top.

I will now show you some hands from one of MY learners' sessions, but this time I don't have a record of the results. We'll see how YOU might have got on."

**Dealer North EW VUL**

♠ K 7 3	
♥ 7 5	
♦ Q J 10 9 5	
♣ 7 4 2	
♠ Q 9 4	♠ A 6 5
♥ A Q 10 8 4	♥ J 6 3
♦ A 7 4	♦ K 8
♣ J 6	♣ A K 8 5 3
	♠ J 10 8 2
	♥ K 9 2
	♦ 6 3 2
	♣ Q 10 9

<b>Bidding:</b>	<b>ACOL</b>				<b>SIMPLE</b>			
W	N	E	S	W	N	E	S	
	NB	1C	NB		NB	1C	NB	
1H	NB	1NT	NB	1H	NB	2H	NB	
3D	NB	3H	NB	4H	NB	NB	NB	
4H	NB	NB	NB					

In 'SIMPLE' we prefer to raise partner's bid with three to an honour PLUS some values for ruffing. Here, the doubleton KING of diamonds virtually guarantees a heart ruff if necessary. In fact the East hand is pretty close to a THREE heart raise, which, as a REBID, is normally done on about 17 H.C.P. or equivalent PLAYING STRENGTH. In ACOL bidding, East has an added advantage. A REBID in No Trumps shows 15-16 H.C.P. therefore East has a perfect rebid here, without the need to raise hearts at all. However WEST now does have a problem since they have enough to be in game, but can't be sure of WHICH game is right, 4H or 3NT. A REBID of 3H, despite being a JUMP, is a jump in the SAME suit, and therefore INVITATIONAL and ALSO shows a SIX+ card suit. West does not want to show THAT, and all West is interested in is THREE card heart support.

Playing SIMPLE, East gives heart support immediately. Playing ACOL, West has to improvise by a) finding a bid which is FORCING, and b) finding a bid which will ASK partner to show heart support. West does this by JUMPING to 3D in a 'non existent' suit. There IS no harm in this since East is EXTREMELY unlikely to hold FOUR diamonds (can you make up a hand where following the basic ACOL principles East WOULD have four diamonds? Certainly the same applies to SIMPLE, even more so, because the SIMPLE rules are that you open your LOWER four card suit, and with FIVE of a higher suit and FOUR of a lower suit you REBID the lower after opening the higher! So you see, there is plenty of logic behind being able to bid a three card suit in order that you can investigate support for your OTHER suit, both in ACOL, and playing SIMPLE.

The OBVIOUS and straightforward lead for North is the queen of diamonds: a VERY solid sequence, so you lead the TOP card. A GOOD declarer will actually make ALL the tricks playing this hand in hearts: HOW?"

**Vera:** "Declarer wins the first trick with dummy's king and proceeds to draw trumps: they can either lead the jack of trumps and RUN it as a finesse, or play a LOW heart to the TEN or QUEEN in hand. BOTH the plays constitute a simple finesse. In the FIRST case, declarer can continue with another one from dummy if South does not cover; in the second case, declarer has to return to dummy in order that they can lead trumps through South again. Both methods work on this hand but declarer must be careful NOT to remove dummy's ace of SPADES, OR to draw more than TWO rounds of trumps. After TWO rounds of trumps only, declarer can then ruff a diamond (yes, dummy DID have a 'ruffing value!') and THEN play on

CLUBS. I count the club suit and see that if the clubs are THREE in each of the defenders' hands, after three rounds, with declarer RUFFING the third, the clubs are established. This is known as a 3-3 'break', isn't it?"

**Guru:** "Yes. Referring to 'breaks' is a common bridge term and you better make it a common part of YOUR vocabulary and play. AND counting to thirteen will also be a vital part of your play. You're doing amazingly well, Vera, so carry on."

**Vera:** "So, when clubs 'break 3-3' and, after ruffing the third club, I FINALLY draw South's last trump, probably the KING if they refused to cover the jack, I NOW use the ace of spades, which I have PRESERVED to serve as an ENTRY to get to dummy, and take two more club tricks, on which the two losing spades in my hand are discarded.

With only two trumps left in hand, I can claim, having made: FOUR trump tricks in hand, plus one club ruff in hand, two TOP clubs plus two SMALL clubs, two TOP diamonds plus a diamond RUFF in dummy, and the ace of spades. A total of THIRTEEN tricks."

**Guru:** "Absolutely perfect, Vera. And it's wonderful to see you doing some counting. NOT so difficult when you get into the habit, is it? This hand, even at a more advanced level of bridge, will produce a large variety of scores, with SOME declarers making as few as NINE tricks and only a few making all thirteen. How would you have fared, Simon? BE HONEST, NOW!!"

**Simon:** "I'll show you on the NEXT hand."

**Dealer East ALL VUL**

♠ 9 2	♠ Q J 7 5	♠ 10 6 3
♥ J 10 3 2	♥ A K 9 7 5	♥ Q 8
♦ K 9 5	♦ 10 6	♦ Q J 3
♣ K Q 4 2	♣ 7 3	♣ J 10 8 6 5
	♠ A K 8 4	
	♥ 6 4	
	♦ A 8 7 4 2	
	♣ A 9	

Bidding:				ACOL				SIMPLE			
W	N	E	S	W	N	E	S	W	N	E	S
		NB	1D			NB	1D			NB	1D
	NB	1H	NB	1S		NB	1H		NB	NB	1S
	NB	3S	NB	4S		NB	3S		NB	NB	4S

**Guru:** "SOME Souths, playing ACOL, may consider rebidding ONE NO TRUMP rather than 1S after North's 1H bid, since the 1NT rebid shows 15-16 HCP, but with 5 diamonds and 4 GOOD spades this is somewhat of a distortion. Playing SIMPLE, we don't bypass a 4 card suit under ANY circumstances. In BOTH Acol and SIMPLE, North has a standard RAISE to THREE, this being a 'LIMIT' bid which shows a fit and 10-11 HCP or equivalent. South has plenty in reserve and is delighted to bid to game. What would you suggest is likely to happen in the play, Simon?"

Simon" According to the Gospel of the Guru, West should lead the KING of clubs. Against a SUIT contract, leading fourth highest from the KQ is likely to be a costly manoeuvre, whereas leading the KING sets up an immediate trick for the defence unless declarer has a singleton. Clubs is the unbid suit so the declaring side is not likely to have too many between them. Declarer should try to set up diamonds or hearts OR BOTH for extra tricks. Because declarer will need to do SOME ruffing, it is best not to draw too many rounds of trumps too early. When declarer plays ace of diamonds and another, later ruffing a diamond, the diamonds become established. The hearts, however, DON'T break, but declarer should try THEM as well before drawing all the trumps. If declarer DOES draw trumps, West must NEVER discard



any hearts or declarer can ruff that suit out and establish tricks. Here, it should be EASY, because of the bidding, for West to hang on to the hearts."

**Guru:** "Yes, but at other times discarding may not be so easy. When discarding, determine which suit declarer is likely to try to set up, and KEEP all your cards in that suit. Because both hearts and diamonds cannot be set up due to shortage of trumps to ruff with and also shortage of entries, declarer SHOULD make eleven tricks but never more with a CLUB lead: the defence will take their club the moment declarer loses a diamond, and hearts, as you see, DON'T break. SOME declarers may lose the plot and make fewer tricks, ending up with three losers if they don't try to establish either hearts or diamonds in time."

**Dealer South NIL VUL**

♠ 6 5	♠ J 10 7	♠ A Q 4 2
♥ A 9 6 5	♥ K 8 2	♥ Q 7 4
♦ K 9 7	♦ Q 6 2	♦ A J 8 3
♣ A Q 8 5	♣ K 10 6 4	♣ 9 3
	♠ K 9 8 3	
	♥ J 10 3	
	♦ 10 5 4	
	♣ J 7 2	

**Bidding:**

**ACOL**

<b>W</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>S</b>
			NB
1NT	NB	2C	NB
2H	NB	3NT	NB

**SIMPLE**

<b>W</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>S</b>
			NB
1C	NB	1D	NB
1H	NB	1S	NB
1NT	NB	3NT	

**Guru:** "In ACOL, the West hand is opened 1NT which shows a BALANCED hand with 12-14 high card points. East bids STAYMAN which asks West to bid their major(s) and West shows a four card heart suit. East, not interested in hearts, bids game in No Trumps. In SIMPLE, E-W bid all their respective suits and West then bids 1NT. This is as far as WEST is prepared to go. East has enough for game and without any fit and two apparently balanced hands opposite each other, bids 3NT. Making the right lead is not always easy, and downright difficult at times. What do YOU make of the situation, Vera?"

**Vera:** "If WEST plays 3NT and East has bid Stayman, implying four spades on the bidding, and North selects what looks like the SAFEST lead ('through strength') and tries the Jack of spades, NS will get an EXCELLENT result, won't they? Against 'SIMPLE' bidding, the jack of spades lead may be even easier to find since ALL suits have been bid and North may be reluctant to open up their 'longest and strongest' ROUND to declarer's club suit. WITHOUT a spade lead, or with EAST playing the contract WITH a spade lead, declarer will make lots of tricks simply by leading UP TO the queen of hearts and then later taking the diamond finesse the NATURAL way: low to the KING and then back to the jack when North plays low."

**Guru:** "Another excellent analysis. As you can see, there's more to defence than just leading your longest and strongest. Sometimes it's best to make a 'safe' lead and often, during the play of the hand, it pays to lead through the strong hand rather than through weakness. Leading through strength is likely to give nothing away: partner either has cards to beat the strength shown, or not; leading ROUND to strength means you have to find PARTNER with cards to complement your own, or if you have little yourself, you're likely to damage your partner's holding. On these EW hands, as long as EW bid to 3NT they are likely to make at least nine tricks, with more tricks available if either North OR South decides to lead their only LONG suit! That's why you don't just learn rules like 'lead fourth highest of your longest and strongest'."

Dealer West NS VUL

<p>♠ A Q 5 2 ♥ A 6 ♦ K Q 3 ♣ Q 7 4 2</p>	<p>♠ 10 8 6 3 ♥ J 9 5 ♦ J 7 6 5 ♣ K 8</p>	<p>♠ 9 4 ♥ K Q 7 4 ♦ A 9 4 ♣ J 10 6 5</p>
	<p>♠ K J 7 ♥ 10 8 3 2 ♦ 10 8 2 ♣ A 9 3</p>	

**Bidding:**

**ACOL**

**SIMPLE**

W	N	E	S	W	N	E	S
1C	NB	1H	NB	1C	NB	1H	NB
1S	NB	3C	NB	1S	NB	3C	NB
3NT	NB	NB	NB	3NT	NB	NB	NB

**Guru:** "Playing both Acol and 'Simple' the bidding should be the same, with the jump to 3C by East showing club support (at least four) and 10-11 H.C.P. West has more than enough now to bid 3NT. What should North lead, Simon?"

**Simon:** " North should consider either a diamond OR a spade lead. A diamond lead should be favoured because it is the unbid suit. If South has ANY high honour in diamonds then that suit will produce the most tricks for the defence. A low spade lead is unlikely to cost if South produces any high card or cards since West was sitting over them anyway, AND dummy will be likely to have weakness there; but if partner can produce TWO honour cards in spades, then THAT suit may also work for the defence."

**Guru:** "As you can see, a SPADE lead would work better than a diamond since TWO spade tricks can be set up before declarer establishes the clubs, whereas a diamond allows declarer to play on clubs to set up two club tricks and declarer can STILL safely take the spade finesse for the extra trick. What about the DECLARER play?"

**Simon:** " I would try to SET UP the suit with tricks, rather than TAKE tricks. The HEART suit WILL produce three tricks ALWAYS and four NEVER since the jack, ten, nine and eight can't all fall in THREE rounds. Finessing EARLY can also land you into trouble if the finesse LOSES and your other stop is knocked out.

Having set up the clubs, the ESTABLISHED club tricks can be taken and THEN, who knows, if the defence aren't up to discarding properly, or by some chance have no choice i.e. can't keep two suits at the same time, NOW the heart suit MAY produce four tricks."

**Guru:** "Absolutely. Everything must be done with a purpose in mind, whether you are declarer or the defence. Start getting into the habit NOW."

Dealer East NIL VUL

♠ 8 6 4	♠ Q 7	♠ A 10 9 3
♥ K 10 6 3 2	♥ Q 8 7 4	♥ J 9
♦ Q 6	♦ J 10 4 2	♦ A 9 7 5
♣ K 9 8	♣ A 5 2	♣ J 6 4
	♠ K J 5 2	
	♥ A 5	
	♦ K 8 3	
	♣ Q 10 7 3	

<b>Bidding:</b>	<b>ACOL</b>				<b>SIMPLE</b>			
W	N	E	S	W	N	E	S	
		NB	INT			NB	1C	
NB	NB	NB		NB	1D	NB	1S	
				NB	INT	NB	NB	

**Guru:** "Playing ACOL, South opens 1NT and North has nowhere better to go. End of bidding. Playing SIMPLE, we open the lowest 4 card suit and investigate for a 'fit'. With no fit, 1NT becomes the final contract, as in Acol, but played by NORTH. Against South's 1NT, West has a clear cut heart lead and should lead '4th highest of their longest and strongest', the THREE of hearts. The play could go a number of ways but declarer should play LOW rather than go up with the queen of hearts (yes, it WOULD have held) in case East has to play a vital high card. The queen can wait till later. Then, depending on how declarer plays the CLUBS, and whether West continues hearts and with which card (cashing the KING will prove disastrous since it will give declarer a second stop when East's J or 9 drops!), the contract will make round about seven tricks. The NORMAL way to play clubs is the TWO towards the queen and then guess whether to insert the ten or play the queen. Most Easts will not think much if they hold the jack but WILL think if they hold the KING. THAT sort of information you ARE entitled to use as declarer. CASHING the ace of clubs first if you can afford to open the suit up can guard against any singletons which might make in the West hand.

Against 1NT by NORTH, East may lead a diamond or a spade, neither of which will be very successful, OR if East has listened to the bidding, they may lead the JH which proves to be more successful, and has the same result as West leading a low heart against South's 1NT. SOME declarers may have unexpected success with an 'incorrect' finesse when they lead the queen of clubs. This is NOT a real finesse since it is CERTAIN to lose whoever has the king: West covers to set up a trick for East, or East makes the king. HOWEVER, South DOES have the TEN and in this case when West covers and the ace wins, now a club towards the TEN will set the clubs up with only one loser, to East's jack! Yes, sometimes playing against the odds CAN yield unexpected (or EXPECTED!) success."

**Dealer East ALL VUL**

	♠ 10 9 3	
	♥ J 10 4	
	♦ K 10 7 3	
	♣ K J 8	
♠ Q J 7 4		♠ A K 5 2
♥ A 8 6		♥ K 7 5
♦ 5 4		♦ A 9 6 2
♣ Q 7 6 3		♣ 10 4
	♠ 8 6	
	♥ Q 9 3 2	
	♦ Q J 8	
	♣ A 9 5 2	

<b>Bidding:</b>	<b>ACOL</b>				<b>SIMPLE</b>			
	<b>W</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>S</b>
			INT	NB			1D	NB
	NB	NB			1S	NB	2S	NB
					NB	NB		

**Guru:** "Playing ACOL, East must open 1NT and West has no reason to disturb this, with no better place to go. Note that making any move on the West hand MAY take the level too high if East does NOT have spades.

Playing SIMPLE, East opens 1D and West responds 1S. East raises to 2S and that becomes the final contract. As you can see, it doesn't matter much what is led against 1NT by East, seven tricks is the limit for the hand unless the defence are in a generous mood.

In SPADES, however, West can CERTAINLY make EIGHT tricks by the simple expedient of one ruff in each hand, with only one heart, one diamond and two clubs to lose, plus a loser somewhere at the end that can't be ruffed out. BUT, if the defence are not right on the ball, there IS a chance that declarer WILL be able to dispose of that extra loser somehow. Can you see HOW, Vera?"

**Vera:** "Maybe declarer can start on clubs and then diamonds WITHOUT drawing any rounds of trumps, and unless the defence are up with the play AND lead trumps themselves, declarer will score an extra diamond ruff in a 'cross ruff' at the end of the hand?"

**Guru:** "Great! It DOES pay to think about ways to make extra tricks. Playing SIMPLE may lose out in some respects, but against that, it WILL get you into trump fits much more often than any other system, and THAT will give you a lot more practice in playing suit contracts; No Trump contracts are as a rule EASIER to play because there are fewer options! And now that we've actually entered the realms of declarer play and defence, let me take you over some guidelines for declarer play and defence, which I have jotted down from various sources."

## CHAPTER 25

### *DECLARER PLAY*

This is a very important part of the game of bridge and the one and only part of it that gives the INDIVIDUAL the opportunity to show their skills; or lack of them. At first you will no doubt do the latter, but not to worry, every baby falls over before they walk.

While you as declarer will need to have that undefinable quality of 'card sense' to achieve real brilliance, (and how many of us can aspire to that?), there are nevertheless SOME things which you can learn which will improve your play considerably. As I often say to learners of bridge: you CAN be taught WHAT to think but you can't be taught HOW to think. Hopefully the HOW to think part is already working for you, or you wouldn't be at this stage of your learning experience.

The first thing that you need to know, and have not been told earlier, is how you GET to play the hand. We know about bidding, and that whichever side wins the 'auction' gets to play the hand, but which of the partnership does that? The answer is quite simple, the partner who bid the suit FIRST irrespective of what the later sequence was or what the final bid was.

Let's say YOU are South and after the auction has ended (after THREE passes, you'll recall) and you become the declarer. It is now the turn of WEST to make the opening lead, and this is done BEFORE North (you partner) places dummy down on the table for all to see. TRUMPS are ALWAYS placed on dummy's right, not because it is a RULE of the game but because it is a universally accepted procedure that also helps all the players to remember what trumps are! Yes, it DOES happen and I've seen plenty of declarers destroy a perfectly good contract because they have played it in No Trumps when hearts were actually trumps, and vice versa. IT PAYS TO KNOW WHAT TRUMPS ARE AND NOT TO FORGET!

So, the lead is made, dummy is placed on the table, and now YOU are completely in charge. GREAT! Or did I hear you say: "Oh no! Heeeelp!" Firstly, your attitude MUST be the former and NOT the latter. You're here to enjoy bridge, be confident, and SHOW your skills at playing the hand. And if you happen to do the wrong thing, well too bad, you'll learn from it and do better next time. Bridge really is a great stimulator and a FUN game if you approach it from a positive rather than negative viewpoint.

AN IMPORTANT PRINCIPLE TO KEEP IN MIND: Because the cards are played in ORDER, if you are the FIRST to play, i.e. you have to LEAD, YOUR chances of taking that trick, unless you lead a TOP card, are the LOWEST of all since each of the other three hands has the opportunity to produce a higher card. If you are the LAST to play, you have the BEST chance because you can see all three cards played so far and there is NO ONE left to beat YOUR card. AND even if the last person does NOT win that trick, they can play their LOWEST card and save their highest one for later.

Another thing to remember is that in bridge, you play with ALL the cards that you have been dealt, and cards do not disappear anywhere (though TRICKS sometimes do!). Both declarer and defenders have to ensure that they make the MAXIMUM number of tricks out of the thirteen, but not in any particular order. What counts is the end result, and that may involve losing tricks at an early stage or taking as many as you can before the opposition do. IN THE LONG TERM, just taking all your immediately available tricks as either declarer or defenders will result in your side making the LEAST number of tricks possible, whereas working on an overall plan to make the best of your resources out of all thirteen cards will often produce far more tricks than you could imagine at this stage. Without labouring the point too much at this stage, let me tell you that it is better to WAIT for your tricks than to TAKE THEM IMMEDIATELY unless the situation clearly demands it.

Let me give you a very SIMPLE example: You hold two cards, the ace and the queen in one suit, along with that you have a smattering of other cards in other suits. If you are the first to play, i.e. lead to the trick, if you play the ACE you will certainly take the trick, but you will NOT make the queen unless your partner has the king. If you wait until the lead comes from your left hand opponent, you will make TWO certain tricks since being last to play, you can cover any card on your right with the queen or if the king has appeared earlier you can win your ace AND THEN the queen. If the lead comes from your PARTNER and you can SEE that the next hand to play (being dummy) has the king, you will also know that you can take

two tricks, OR if the next hand to play is declarer but DUMMY, on your LEFT, does not contain the king. Of course if opponents bid to seven no trumps, you might just lead the ace!

The same situation can arise for declarer as well. Whether the same holding of AQ is in dummy or declarer's hand, the way to make TWO tricks is to wait for the lead to go ROUND to the AQ. But if waiting is not a good idea and declarer has to play on that suit, at least declarer can take a 50:50 shot at making both by leading TOWARDS the AQ and playing the queen when the next hand plays low. There is now only one opponent left who can beat the queen - IF they have the king. A 50/50 chance. Why play the ace which wins ONLY when the singleton king falls under it! This is the simple art of the FINESSE, a very common term in the game of bridge, and a play without which you really won't improve your bridge. So learn the art of FINESSING and learn all the different ways you CAN finesse and ways in which you CAN'T.

After you have learnt the SIMPLE way to play a hand, and some helpful 'rules', you will then be in a position to UNLEARN some of it because you'll see that ALL rules have to be broken sometime in bridge, but that rules and guidelines must be learnt first to give you the necessary grounding in becoming an expert player rather than a parrot who does things by rote.

### **SIMPLE DECLARER PLAY**

Before you do ANYTHING else after the lead is made and dummy is placed on the table, you should just briefly stop to assess the situation. Whether you like what you see or not, take time to say: "Thank you partner" (a common courtesy) and then see if you can work out a plan to make your contract. The MOST IMPORTANT thing is to make your contract, but extra tricks should never be thrown away, and in the type of bridge which you will first learn to play at your local club, are quite important as well. But your first priority is to make your contract, so try to ensure that you DO.

How to 'take stock': Look at your LOSERS first. Some of these you will be able to do nothing about. Unless you are in a high level contract, you will EXPECT to lose a number of tricks, and as long as you don't lose too many, losing tricks is no big deal, in fact sometimes a very necessary part of making your contract. As well as your losers, you should always try to count your tricks, because unless you make the number of tricks required you won't make your contract either.

The essence of declarer play is to DEVELOP sufficient tricks to make your contract while at the same time PREVENTING your opponents taking the tricks they need to defeat YOU. In NO TRUMPS you may have little choice and will have to lose tricks to opponents while setting up tricks for yourself, but sometimes you MAY have the choice of WHICH opponent you lose a trick to. The same thing may happen in a TRUMP contract, but when you have a trump suit you have the added advantage that you maintain quite a greater degree of control over what your opponents can do and can't.

### **TRUMPS AND NO TRUMPS**

SOME things you can do with trumps that you can't do without trumps:

1. You can discard LOSERS in one suit on winners in another suit and if trumps have been drawn while YOU still have them in the hand that you have discarded your losers from, opponents can't take tricks in that suit unless YOU let them. SOMETIMES it may be necessary to discard losers BEFORE drawing trumps, but AS A RULE, and when you CAN DO SO, draw trumps FIRST. This will take care of a good part of opponents' armoury while you still retain yours. Having LOTS of trumps clearly helps!

2. You can develop extra tricks in a suit WITHOUT necessarily losing any tricks to do so. This is because you can RUFF losing tricks in a long side suit and with opponents following suit the card(s) now left in the long 'side' suit may have become tricks. A simple example: Let's say your 'side' suit is AKxxx and you have xx in your hand. After playing the ace and king and RUFFING the next one, IF BOTH your opponents have followed suit and you have been counting (up to 13, that's all you have to do) you will realise that the last two cards in that suit are now 'good'. In NO TRUMPS you would have inevitably lost the third trick while developing the extra two tricks.

3. Scoring tricks with your trumps by RUFFING can produce extra tricks, sometimes just one, other times quite a few more. When you ruff tricks in BOTH hands, this is known as a CROSS RUFF. With FOUR

trumps in each hand you can sometimes make EIGHT tricks if you can ruff with all trumps separately and cannot be overruffed. If you have managed to take a number of side suit tricks FIRST you will make a lot of tricks. A rule to remember if you embark on a 'cross ruff': Take your top cards in the side suits first, otherwise they MAY NOT take tricks later when your OPPONENTS will have trumps left and you won't! The other thing about the cross ruff of course is that you should NOT draw trumps AT ALL if you intend to score them SEPARATELY. You see, the first rule of playing a trump contract may well be "DRAW TRUMPS" but the second rule is "DON'T DRAW TRUMPS UNLESS IT'S A GOOD IDEA"!

## **PLANNING YOUR PLAY**

### ***In NO TRUMPS***

The play is simpler than when you are playing with a suit as trumps, but the principles are much the same: DEVELOP your combined hands to produce as many tricks as you need (more if possible!) while maintaining CONTROL of the hand and preventing your opponents from taking the tricks that THEY may be able to take. Sounds easy but of course isn't quite as easy as that. Nevertheless, this does give you some objectives to stick to.

Generally, it is a good idea to develop the LONGEST suit unless this is likely to take time and may lead to opponents taking too many tricks. Even a suit like 9 7 4 3 2 opposite 8 6 5 should be played on rather than A K Q opposite 9 6 2. Can you see the difference? Yes, quite clearly if you get to lead three rounds of your first suit, chances are that you will ESTABLISH TWO tricks in the suit as long as neither opponent has more than three cards in the suit. In the second case, once you take the ace, king and queen, you will establish TRICKS FOR THE DEFENCE! Better to KEEP your AKQ as STOPS. Unless something very strange happens, you will ALWAYS make THOSE three tricks later! Look at the whole hand of course to decide where your best source of tricks is, but NEVER simply cash your tricks up UNLESS doing so will lead to more tricks, OR you are in danger of not making them at all. Sometimes the opponents will be clever enough to find your weak spot and you simply have to try and take your tricks before they take theirs.

While working on establishing your tricks, or even taking them while not establishing any more, it is of PRIME importance that the channels of communication between your hand and dummy are kept OPEN and that you are able to cash your tricks without ending up in the WRONG hand with tricks in the OTHER hand and no way to get to them! This is a common error that the beginner makes, and the best way to avoid this is to think through the play where possible. Generally, cashing your high cards in the SHORT hand first will allow you to take the last tricks in the suit in the long hand.

Often you may need to LOSE a trick in a suit EARLY in order that you can take more LATER. Our earlier example of AKxxx opposite xx for instance:

If you have no OUTSIDE ENTRY to the hand with the AKxxx then it's not much use establishing the suit by playing the ace, king and a third one. Can you see the ONLY way you can POSSIBLY make good use of the suit? YES, by LOSING the first trick to the opponents while still keeping your ace and king AND one of the low cards in the other hand. Next time you have the lead, you can lead the suit from EITHER hand, and if the ace and king NOW take out the only cards left, your two other 'x'es become tricks. Furthermore, this is always a good idea since playing the ace and king will establish whatever tricks your opponents may have in the suit whether the suit 'breaks' or not. KEEPING your high cards gives you CONTROL of the hand while preparing your groundwork by losing an INEVITABLE trick early.

### ***FINESSING***

Once you get through the stage of the learner, you will learn more about finessing. The SIMPLE way to look at the 'FINESSE' is to ask yourself the question of what will happen if you play a certain card. As already mentioned, playing the ace when you have the ace AND queen will just give a potential trick away, so you lead TOWARDS the AQ and play the queen if the king does not appear. If the king is sitting 'over' your AQ you weren't ever going to make the queen anyway unless you could have engineered a way of getting that person to lead the suit. Yes, that CAN sometimes be done, but wait till you get to the advanced level!

Leading a KING when you have NOTHING to go with it will ENSURE that you LOSE it to the ace, but leading TOWARDS it will enable you to make a trick with it WHENEVER the hand that plays BEFORE the hand with the king holds the ace. Similarly if you have e.g. Qxx in one hand and Axx in the other. If you LEAD the queen it will LOSE to the king. If the next person to play has the king they will COVER the queen and when you win with the ace you will then have two losers staring you in the face, and the same if the LAST person to play has the king. But try leading TOWARDS the queen and you will, once more, have a 50% chance of making a trick with it, whenever the next person to play has the king. If, on the other hand, the hand with the queen also had the jack and ten, i.e. QJ10 opposite Axx, by LEADING the queen in THIS situation you will make ALL THREE tricks if the king is sitting trapped between an ace. No point leading TOWARDS the QJ10 since this will CERTAINLY give away a trick, and no point cashing your ace since that will only work when someone has a SINGLETON king!

And one final example of the finesse at work: Let's say dummy holds A Q 10 x and you hold x x x. Playing, or leading, the ace will give you ONE trick, leading TOWARDS it and playing the queen will give you a 50% chance of making TWO tricks, but if you can afford to 'play around' with the suit to try and make as many tricks as POSSIBLE, you can lead towards the AQ10x and put in the TEN. This MAY of course lose to the jack but MAY force the king, or even in SOME circumstances the TEN may take the trick, and if the hand sitting under dummy has PRECISELY KJx you will, by repeating the finesse, make ALL FOUR tricks in the suit. And what if EAST (after dummy) has the king and jack? Then you weren't going to make your ten OR queen anyway were you?

### **SUIT (or TRUMP) CONTRACTS**

Playing the hand with a suit as TRUMPS gives you considerably more scope to develop tricks than in No Trumps, as long as you have selected the CORRECT suit to be trumps, and that generally means at LEAST eight cards between you and dummy. While the same principles of the finesses and maintaining control apply, there are differences in trick development. BECAUSE you have the advantage of TRUMPS, you may not need to give tricks away in developing further tricks.

For instance, the example in No Trumps where you had AKxxx in one suit opposite xx. In No Trumps you had to lose a trick to develop two but if you have trumps, you can play the suit from the top and RUFF the third one. NOW, if both opponents have followed and you can get back to the hand with established tricks, you can discard other losers on them.

The suit contract also offers the RUFFING finesse as an extra that cannot be done in No Trumps. For example, if you hold KQJ109 in a side suit opposite a VOID, you can lead the king and if covered, ruff the ace out and establish four tricks in the suit AND not lose a trick in it! Or, you may have A Q J 10 9 opposite a singleton. Depending on how many tricks you need and who you think has the king, you have an option of how to play this suit: you can lead your singleton and FINESSE by inserting the nine, OR you can play the ACE and then RUN THE QUEEN, ruffing if COVERED by the king. The latter option is often better since three tricks can easily be established whenever the king is sitting OVER the AQJ109 but a finesse to the nine PLUS one or MORE ruffs may be required to bring down the king if it's sitting 'in the pocket'.

Because you will be choosing to play in a trump contract when you have a 'fit', the chances are also good that one or other of the two hands will be short in a side suit. Even if this may not lead to the ESTABLISHMENT of any extra tricks, often you may be able to use the trumps in the hand that is short in the side suit to ruff losers in that suit. NORMALLY, you do not gain anything by ruffing losers in the hand with LONG trumps since you COULD, simply by cashing the trump suit, make the small trumps anyway. So, always look for the chance to ruff losers in the hand with the SHORTER trumps. If the opportunity exists, make sure you DON'T draw trumps before getting your ruffs! This is particularly often an oversight by inexperienced declarers when they hold a 5 card suit themselves and dummy only three, but with say a doubleton elsewhere. Draw three rounds of trumps and you still have two left in hand to maintain control, but no longer any trumps in dummy to ruff any losers!

There are lots and lots of hands and examples that I can give you on all aspects of declarer play, but your purpose will best be served by actually following the possible play on one night of play at the lowest club grade so that you can in effect experience a real situation with NORMAL hands that turn up in any one session. Once you get to go and play yourself, you'll see the basic principles coming up time after time, and THEN you can read up your course for IMPROVERS and get into the next level of declarer play.





## CHAPTER 26

### *SIMPLE DEFENCE*

Defence is the most difficult part of the game, and the part that I personally love the most, especially when defending with a partner who ALSO loves it and is on the same wavelength. There is little more satisfying in the game of bridge than to combine with your partner to find a series of plays which defeat an apparently cast iron contract that other declarers are making overtricks in! But let's learn the very basic principles of defence and how to at least get started. Even the most basic of principles and their understanding will start to immediately score you points during any session of club play.

As defenders, your brief is to prevent declarer from making the number of tricks they have contracted to make. Unless the contract is a one level contract, you will never need to take more tricks than declarer to defeat them. If opponents are in game, you will only require to make THREE tricks if they are in clubs or diamonds, FOUR if they are in spades or hearts, and FIVE if they are in No Trumps. Fewer tricks, so the task should be easier shouldn't it? Not necessarily, but it certainly helps if you LOOK at it that way.

#### **LEADS**

Rushing in to take your tricks will not necessarily be the best way to get the tricks you require, that's only one way and not necessarily the best, in fact UNLIKELY to be the best. A lot of the time declarer will not have a ready source of tricks, so if you are defending, it may be quite important simply not to give anything AWAY. And as with declarer play, you as a defender, and your partner as well, must PLAN your defence rather than just play along and see what happens.

If you are the first person to LEAD, you must plan your defence just as you plan your declarer play, but BEFORE you see ANYONE'S hand other than your own. Difficult, yes, but the BIDDING will more than likely have told you at least SOMETHING about the other hands, and your OWN hand will probably give you a pretty good idea of where you should look for tricks, and whether you should do this quickly or slowly. The basic difference is between ACTIVE and PASSIVE defence. In the former case, you go for your tricks as fast as possible, in the latter, you give away as little as possible. In one case, ATTACK may be the best form of defence, in the other defence may turn out to be the best form of attack!

With the knowledge that you will need a certain number of tricks to defeat declarer will come the knowledge of how best to approach your task. Giving away tricks cheaply to declarer will NEVER help and that means getting off to the most effective LEAD for a start. Leading off your aces when you don't have the king to go with them can only play into declarer's hands, since it is declarer who is most likely to hold the king, which you may be able to capture LATER. Aces are made to take kings, not twos and threes, remember that. UNDERLEADING a good SEQUENCE of cards such as e.g. KQJ2 by leading the two gives you a chance of TWO to ONE in DECLARER'S favour that dummy OR declarer will make a cheap trick with the TEN. Leading an unsupported honour will also be as good as suicide most of the time.

There are fairly generally accepted GOOD leads, and also BAD leads. The leads against NO TRUMPS also must differ from the leads against suit contracts because of the control that declarer has in TRUMP contracts, and the COMMUNICATION that you as defenders need in NO TRUMP contracts.

Let's go back to our example of AKxxx opposite xx. This time, instead of you being DECLARER, you are the DEFENDER and on lead with the AKxxx. AGAINST NO TRUMPS, if you lead the ace and then the king you will score two quick tricks but unless you have an OUTSIDE entry, no more tricks even if you establish the suit. But if you start with a LOW card, just as you would if you were declarer, you will almost certainly lose the trick (unless partner has the queen) but unless declarer NEVER loses the lead (which is unlikely), the moment declarer loses the lead to your partner (OR you) you may be able to run four more tricks in YOUR suit. These four, plus the one outside, will defeat a 3NT contract. BUT, if you are leading against a SUIT contract, once more the same principle applies that would apply to declarer. If you lead a LOW card you may well establish the suit but declarer could win a cheap trick with the queen, and then not even lose to your ace or king, since they will have trump control and may be able to establish other suits to dispose of any other loser(s) they may have in YOUR suit.

Leading the ace will ensure that you WIN it, and it may well be possible for you to ALSO win the king and then lead a third one which your partner can RUFF. This may establish the other cards in your suit, but that will be totally irrelevant since they won't be needed and would NEVER take tricks because of declarer's trumps, but you WILL have succeeded in taking the first three tricks by cashing YOUR top two and then allowing your PARTNER to ruff declarer's WINNING trick. You will then require only one more to defeat e.g. a 4S or 4H contract.

When leading, you must decide which SUIT to lead and then which CARD to lead. As a rule, against NO TRUMPS, unless you have indications that tell you to do otherwise, you should lead EITHER your own 'longest and strongest' suit or PARTNER'S suit if the bidding tells you what it is. If partner has actually been able to bid a suit, you should lead THAT unless you have very GOOD reason not to. Partners normally EXPECT you to lead their suit, and at least you can then blame THEM for a bad result if it doesn't work out. If you lead your own suit, you stand to lose the 'post mortem' if it goes wrong.

### **AGAINST A SUIT**

contract your leads may vary considerably according to the general nature of your hand and the bidding. Whereas the simple rule of 'longest and strongest' works most of the time for leading against No Trumps, it doesn't work as often against a suit contract because most of the time declarer will be short in that suit and in control. So, you may need to look for a lead which can establish tricks for your side, either by removing declarer's ace or allowing one of your partnership to score a ruff while you still have trumps. For instance, while you may never even dream of leading an ace with a holding of Ax against No Trumps, this is not such a bad lead against a suit contract, since even if partner does not have the king, you may be able to ruff the third round if declarer can't draw your trumps quickly enough. You may even contemplate the lead of the king from Kx against a suit contract. This works wonderfully whenever partner has the ace, but can of course be disastrous also. What you should NOT do is look for a risky ruff when you have a certain trump trick anyway.

Suits headed by top honours are normally good ones to lead. Holding AKxx you will seldom need to look further; lead your ACE and watch to see what your partner plays. YES, you WILL need to very quickly learn the BASIC and SIMPLE way in which your partner can tell you whether they have TWO or THREE cards in that suit, which is quite important. In the first case you will know that they can RUFF the third round, in the latter you will know that they CAN'T!

A suit like KQJx is also a great one to lead since the lead of the KING will establish two possible tricks, as is a suit like QJ10x which will work well when partner has the king or when partner has the ace and DUMMY the king.

You should make the opening lead AFTER having decided to follow a certain line of defence. MOST people don't, and if you do, you'll be one step ahead of them. MOST of the time it is not a good idea to change your mind as to how you are going to defend, though sometimes it will become clear once dummy comes into view that you DO have to change your focus of attack. Assuming that you intend to defend in a certain way and to think BEFORE you make the opening lead, let's look at the basic type of defence that you may embark on:

### **AGAINST NO TRUMPS**

Your NORMAL attack will be to lead your best suit and to try and develop it to the extent that you make sufficient tricks in it to defeat declarer, or to keep declarer to as few tricks as possible. You WILL almost certainly get the lead quite a few times during the play of the hand, as will your partner. It is important to make the most of it when you do. If you have led your long suit, you, OR your partner, will probably continue to lead that suit until it is established unless there are better opportunities elsewhere. As a rule, your partner will follow your leadership if you are first to lead, and RETURN YOUR SUIT, and you should do the same, not blindly but with thought. It is therefore important for you and partner to be able to tell whether your suit is worth persevering with. If you follow the principle that you will normally lead your LONGEST suit unless the bidding tells you to do otherwise, and that you will lead the TOP card of good sequences, or your FOURTH HIGHEST where you have a BROKEN sequence of no more than two consecutive cards, you and your partner should be able to get a fairly good idea of the required continuation. FURTHERMORE, it is of UTMOST importance that you develop a SIMPLE system of card play which will enable your partner to tell whether you can help in the suit led, whether you LIKE the lead

or not, and whether you want your partner to continue, and vice versa. If you DON'T have the most basic signalling system, it's like driving a car with your eyes closed.

### **SIGNALLING**

The very basic signalling system uses the HIGH-LOW method of encouragement and discouragement: DISCOURAGEMENT by playing a LOW card and ENCOURAGEMENT by playing a HIGH card. But more of that later. Right now, let's continue with your defence.

### **DEFENDING AGAINST SUIT (TRUMP) CONTRACTS**

The most likely lead will be in your BEST suit. This will not only develop tricks for the defence, but also possibly hurt declarer's trump holding when you can continue with your suit and force declarer to ruff it. Leading your suit is often a good defence when you also have length in declarer's trump suit, or suspect from the bidding that your PARTNER may have long trumps.

You will also tend to lead your own best suit when you have nothing else to attack or when leading another suit will prove to be of little value. If you do not lead your longest and strongest suit you might look for your SHORT suit against a trump contract: if you get lucky you may be able to get a RUFF if you lead your SINGLETON or even DOUBLETON as long as partner gets the lead in time, while you still have trumps left. Singleton or doubleton leads are often good leads, but not when you have natural trump tricks. For instance if you have AKQ bare of trumps and a singleton, there's not a lot of sense in leading your singleton and getting a ruff. Declarer will be delighted, especially when your singleton lead pinpoints other crucial cards in the suit! As with all things in this game, THINK before you lead!

Other times, but NOT very often, you may decide to lead a suit in which you have nothing at all of any consequence, e.g. 9 7 4. In such a case, there are TWO recommended leads: you can lead the NINE ('top of nothing') or the MIDDLE card, the seven in this case, and this is known as MUD (middle-up-down). Please yourself, just make sure your partner knows which you are doing. AT ALL TIMES, when you or your partner make a lead, you should consider what it is you are trying to achieve, and what the consequences might be if you lead a certain card. Normally, you lead LOW when you hope that partner will be able to produce a high card which will set tricks up for your side, and when you do NOT have a good sequence of cards AT THE TOP of the suit. As I have said previously, it is not a good idea to either LEAD an unsupported ace or to UNDERLEAD it against a suit contract. Wait and you may get a chance to clobber declarer's king with it! Another advantage in NOT underleading aces against SUIT contracts is that your partner will KNOW that you don't have it when you lead a low card, and that could be vital on some occasions.

### **TRUMP LEADS**

Very few learners ever lead trumps on defence, and as a general rule it is probably not a good idea unless you can tell, either on the opening lead, or during the play, that you will be able to significantly reduce the ruffing power of dummy's trumps. One thing you should definitely remember for future reference is that SINGLETON trump leads are NOT good since they will more than likely allow declarer to pick up any missing honour cards from partner. And also remember, the leads against NO TRUMPS should be DIFFERENT to the leads against SUIT contracts, because you will have differing objectives in mind.

## CHAPTER 27

### HIGHER AND HIGHER

**Guru:** "So far we've really only looked at bidding hands which are of average strength, both as opening bids, and as responses. But more needs to be said, and some of it WILL be a repetition of things I've said before just to reinforce important points.

In SIMPLE, you open your LONGEST suit with 5 or more cards, or your LOWEST suit if you only have FOUR card suits. Responses and further bidding are geared to two purposes: to find a FIT and to keep the bidding to a reasonable level, whether a fit is found or whether you play in No Trumps.

By reference to the No Trump levels of 1, 2 and 3 (GAME) we can easily base our bidding to stay within certain LIMITS: since 25 points are required to make game in No Trumps, bidding should not be such as to reach 3NT with FEWER than 25 points. And since you require 22-24 points to hope to be able to make TWO No Trumps you should not bid in such a way as to have to play 2NT with less. To make 1NT, you ideally require 20 or more points between the two hands, which is why you open balanced hands with a MINIMUM of 12 points and RESPOND with a MINIMUM of 6. This takes you to 18 which may NOT be enough to make 1NT but with the advantage of being DECLARER and the further possibility that even NOT MAKING your contract may not be a bad result as long as you limit your losses to one or two down, 18 is acceptable as the lower limit for 1NT.

If you play in a SUIT, things are a little different, since FIT in a suit makes for more tricks than No Trumps, and a 5+ card suit as trumps gives you some degree of control. Therefore, playing in a SUIT, you need FEWER points than the minimum limit for No Trumps; in other words, if you play in a SUIT, you can do so with FEWER than the 22 points that we have set as the MINIMUM for 2NT. In a SUIT, unless you have a complete MISFIT, you can happily play at the two level with 17-21 points, which is why you can OPEN the bidding with 12 but you should NOT respond with fewer than SIX. If you DON'T have a fit OR a 5 card suit, you should DEFINITELY not proceed past 1NT with fewer than 22 points between the hands. With a 5 card suit and a RESPONSE from partner, you are reasonably safe in rebidding it at the 2 level if you feel so inclined, or offering partner the choice of a LOWER suit at the 2 level.

Offering a HIGHER suit implies that you are strong enough to stand being in 2 NT; this pretty well GUARANTEES a combined point count of 22+ based on the OPENING bid and the MINIMUM response; therefore, working backwards, with a minimum response of 6 HCP, your "REVERSE" has to be made up of at LEAST 16 HCP. Another way of looking at this is that all the suits below any NO TRUMP level are the "exploration" level, and you should not be exploring if you can't afford to play in No Trumps at the level of your exploration! You can, for instance, start the exploration with a bid of 1D and partner can respond with 1S; let's say you hold

♠ 6 4  
♥ A 7 5 3  
♦ K Q 9 5 3  
♣ K 4

You can bid 1NT since you can't AFFORD to be in 2NT with only 6 points in your partner's hand. But you can ALSO bid 2D, since the fact that you have OPENED and REBID your suit means you have a 5 card suit and therefore a degree of protection. This is a MINIMUM rebid which is little different to your minimum bid of 1NT, the difference being that your 1NT bid is more likely to be based on a flatter hand, e.g. 4 diamonds only and 3 clubs, or even 3 spades and a 4333 hand. What you MUST NOT do is bid your SECOND suit which, being hearts, COMMITS you to the 2NT level if you have no FIT to play in. What if partner holds e.g.

♠ K J 5 2  
♥ 8 6 2  
♦ 8 4  
♣ Q 8 5 3

You can see that after your bid of 2H you are past the point of no return and anything you end up in now will be too high! But, if you HAD rebid 1NT you probably had chances of making 7 tricks, and if you had rebid 2D you may have had chances of making that also, despite the worst possible hand opposite!

Now give your hand a few more points, e.g.

♠ Q 4  
♥ A K 7 5  
♦ K Q 9 5 3  
♣ K 4

and this time you CAN bid 2H. Not only CAN, but SHOULD, since a bid of 1NT LIMITS your hand to 15 points, a rebid of 2D ALSO limits your hand to certainly fewer than the 17 points you have, and a bid of TWO NO TRUMPS, while showing the correct POINT COUNT, does not quite show the SHAPE of your hand. Bidding 2H not only tells partner about your extra STRENGTH, it also shows WHERE your strength lies. On the hand in question, partner, with a minimum and NO fit will bid 2NT and that is where you will play the hand. With more in PARTNER'S hand, say 8+ points, partner will bid 3NT or introduce a new suit (clubs) at the 3 level to continue the 'exploration'. SIMPLE if you follow the LOGIC. The REVERSE is part of the structure of the ACOL system, but not so much Standard American, though I don't believe that you should bid 2H over a response of 1S on the WEAKER of the two hands above, in ANY system. NO system should allow themselves to have to play in 2NT on THOSE two hands, surely?!

## JUMPS

On the stronger hands, you might open the bidding at the one level, but when partner shows at least SIX points by responding, you may want to show that your hand is better than your original opening bid. Just bidding your suit again, or rebidding a second LOWER suit, bidding No Trumps at the lowest level, or supporting your partner by raising THEIR suit one level if you have a FIT, ALL these bids show not much more than you did when you OPENED the bidding. If you have MORE than your minimum opening bid of say 12-15 H.C.P. then you have to be able to show this somehow. OR, your PARTNER may have opened the bidding and you have MORE than you have shown with your first response (which requires a REBID from partner unless you have responded in 1 No Trump).

There are two ways in which the bidding can be kept open: by JUMPING in a new suit, which shows enough points for GAME, or by REVERSING, EITHER as opener OR responder, which shows enough points to play in No Trumps at the level of the reverse. The EQUIVALENT of a REVERSE is a new suit at the 3 level. SOMETIMES it may be necessary to reverse in a suit you DON'T have 4 cards in, and the same applies for a new suit at the 3 level. In ALL OTHER cases your second bid suit SHOULD have 4 cards in it (normally no more unless your first suit is longer. e.g. 6-5 etc!).

Hands on which you want to show more, but not FORCE to game, can be bid by a jump to 2 No Trumps, a JUMP REBID in your OWN suit, or a jump raise of PARTNER'S suit, or by a REVERSE. The only difference between all these is that the REVERSE is FORCING to at LEAST No Trumps at the same level, whereas the others are LIMIT BIDS which show the maximum value of the hand.

Things are not too different as responder: A JUMP RAISE in the suit opened by partner shows more than a minimum but NOT enough to bid game directly; e.g. a raise of 1H to 3H shows trump support and 10-11 points. A raise of opener's REBID of 1NT shows 11-12 points and a balanced hand, and a REVERSE is forcing the 'exploration' to at least the next lowest level of No Trumps. A JUMP rebid by responder shows a good, long (6+cards) suit and INVITES game, hence normally in the 10-11 point range.

## JUMP SHIFTS

TO SHOW MUCH MORE: Just as opener can show that there is enough for game by making a JUMP SHIFT, so too can responder. A JUMP SHIFT by OPENER is a jump in a new suit after responder's response, e.g.

1C - 1H - 2S or 1H - 1S - 3C

and shows a hand that has sufficient points to be in game; opposite a 1 level response it must show 19+ points or equivalent, opposite a 2 level response it need not be quite that strong since responder has shown 10+ points.

### **RESPONDER'S JUMP SHIFTS**

An IMMEDIATE jump shift by responder, in response to an opening bid of 1C, 1D, 1H, or 1S, should be based on two things:

1. A GOOD QUALITY suit
2. A MINIMUM of 14 H.C.P.

The idea is to show a quality suit which you may not be able to show if you bid it at the lowest level first, and suggest to partner that a SLAM may be possible. Since a response in a suit at even the minimum level will require a REBID from opener (unless you have already PASSED and hence do NOT have 12+ points), there is no need to jump with your first bid UNLESS you have these two requirements. The ACOL system also follows similar guidelines.

### **HIGHER LEVEL OPENINGS**

Finally, we come to a level that we have not yet learnt about. Sometimes you'll be lucky enough to have a hand which is SO good that you won't want partner to pass even if they have FEWER than the 6 points they should have to respond at the one level. The obvious conclusion is that you should open these hands at the TWO level, AND that irrespective of what your partner has or has not, the bidding should be kept open while further investigation is conducted.

If you have a BALANCED hand with 20-22 high card points, you have ALMOST enough points on your own to make 2NT (our guideline was a combined point count of 22-24 for 2NT and 25+ for 3NT). Even if partner contributes just 2 or 3 points you should make 2NT, so THAT is your opening bid: open 2NT.

If you have that many points but NOT a balanced hand, open with your SUIT at the 2 level. You may not even need points but good PLAYING strength may be sufficient, e.g. a hand given as an example earlier:

♠ K Q J 9 8 7  
♥ K Q J 9 8 7  
♦ -  
♣ 3

IS GOOD ENOUGH TO OPEN 2S AND REBID 4H! With just 12 high card points, you have game on your own in whichever of your two suits partner has a better holding in!

BUT because there will be OTHER, even stronger but not so distributional hands which will be difficult to bid properly any other way, it is necessary to introduce into our system the first ARTIFICIAL bid: 2C. Playing it the SIMPLE way, this shows a hand which is either good enough to FORCE to game on its own, or comes very CLOSE to it.

### **THE 2C OPENING:**

This shows ANY hand which wants to force to game, OR a balanced hand just SHORT of game. Since the 2NT OPENING is made on a balanced hand with 20-22 points, the 2NT REBID after a 2C opening shows 22-24 points, and a THREE NO TRUMP rebid shows 25-28. If you have MORE than that you are REALLY lucky, and probably have enough for a SLAM almost on your own. But let's worry about that some other time! In the meantime, what should partner do if you open 2C? The answer is: bid 2D which in turn is an artificial bid that says: I don't have much, in fact fewer than 7 points, OR with 7 or more points, bid 2NT or a suit. If the rebid of the 2C opener is anything OTHER than 2NT then keep going until you reach game!

### **THE 2D, 2H and 2S OPENINGS:**

These are based on PLAYING STRENGTH, and, as well as the 2C opening, MUST be responded to. Even if you have a YARBOROUGH, partner may have chosen to open a two suited hand which is big enough for game with a 2 level bid in one of the suits, rather than with a bid of 2C which shows no specific suit.

The NEGATIVE response to the 2 openers is 2NT which is NOT ideal since you MIGHT end up playing 3NT with that yarborough in your hand! Generally, though, No Trumps is unlikely to be the end result if partner opens 2S or 2H. If you make a response of 2NT to an opening bid of 2D, 2H or 2S and partner REBIDS the opened suit, THAT is the only case where you are allowed to pass. The 2 level openers CAN be very useful in your bidding repertoire, but at this stage don't worry about how to proceed other than know the NEGATIVE responses to the openers!

### HIGHER LEVEL OPENINGS:

It's now time to reintroduce to you the term PREEMPT. We talked about preempts during our discussion of good or bad hands and how two hands fit together. Because you have plenty of scope to bid ALL very strong hands by use of the 2 level openings, there is no need whatsoever to open such strong hands at any higher level. In essence, a PREEMPT, like the true meaning of the word in everyday life, means 'getting in first'. If you do not have sufficient high card point strength to open the bidding, but DO have a LONG suit (at least SEVEN cards), you can PREEMPT the opponents if you get the chance to bid before them. You can OPEN YOUR SUIT AT THE THREE LEVEL. Sometimes even higher! Doing so gets in your opponents' way since they have to come into the bidding at a much higher level than convenient.

There ARE guidelines which you should follow, though. Obviously, if you open with a preempt and get DOUBLED, or even go down too many undoubled, you may lose too many points on the score card, so try to base your preempts on the expectation of TRICKS that you EXPECT to make if you 'buy' the contract and partner turns up with nothing of any assistance. Much HAS to depend on the vulnerability, and a good 'rule' is the 'rule of two and three': If you are NOT VULNERABLE, then you should be within THREE tricks of what you bid, e.g. you might open 3D with a hand like:

♠ 9 6  
♥ Q 4 2  
♦ K Q J 7 6 5 2  
♣ 5

But not

♠ 9 6  
♥ Q 4 2  
♦ J 7 6 5 4 3 2  
♣ 2

VULNERABLE, you should not open the first hand with a preempt because you can count only SIX tricks which is THREE short of making your contract, but if opponents are ALSO vulnerable, why not, what the heck, bend the rules a little. Similarly, with the second hand, if OPPONENTS are vulnerable and you are NOT, it may well be worth the risk of opening the hand 3D. Much depends on the situation and your opponents, but you MUST learn to be judicious in your preempts, because preempts can ALSO preempt your PARTNER not just the opponents. PARTNER needs to know that they can trust you AND that you will. NOT make preempts which are either too WEAK, or TOO STRONG according to the circumstances. It is MOST important that you CAN trust partner's preempts.

Personally, I like to expand the 'rule' of 2 and 3 to the rule of 2, 3 and 4, depending on the vulnerability. You will be FOUR tricks short not vulnerable against VULNERABLE opponents, THREE tricks short at EQUAL vulnerability, and TWO short when YOU are vulnerable and opponents are NOT. THAT gives your partner a VERY good idea of your hand.

I have come across too many people who really have NO idea what preempts are about. They see a seven card suit and no matter what else they have, they open THREE of that suit. The same people who will preempt on anything are the first to criticise their partners when partner opens a perfectly respectable preempt and they then judge badly and bid game, or even slam, and DON'T find partner with the perfect cards that they need to make the stupidly bid game or slam. Preempts CAN help you in YOUR bidding as well as interfere with opponents' bidding, but will ONLY help you with YOUR bidding if partner can trust you to have what you have SAID you have.



Another point I want to make before we finish talking about preempts. If YOU preempt and partner bids a suit of their own, you MUST keep bidding. Partner has bid THEIR suit NOT because they want to get you out of trouble, but because that is the only CONSTRUCTIVE way they can investigate whether you have SOME support for their suit, or it is better to bid game in 3NT or YOUR suit. When partner preempts, if you hate it, you must PASS. There is no reason to think that the preempter has any more support for YOU than you have for THEM. Unless you have enough to keep going, PASS. And if you have a suit you would prefer to play in at the THREE level but not in game, well, you CAN'T. Only if partner gets doubled. THEN you CAN.

We'll meet up with preempts again at a later stage of your learning process, but this discussion I hope will hold you in good stead for when you DO get hands with long suits. Incidentally, PREEMPTIVE means getting in FIRST. If opponents OPEN the bidding, you can STILL make what are known as PREEMPTIVE JUMP OVERCALLS, but that is a misnomer in my view. Your JUMP OVERCALLS should be based on the same principles as your opening preempts, i.e. trick taking potential, but they are hardly preemptive. A worse still example of how some people think of preempts is when someone opens ONE NO TRUMP and the next opponent to bid bids THREE HEARTS for example. They have a seven card suit and a lot of rubbish, perhaps a proper preempt if they were first in hand. Do you see WHY that is SILLY?"

**Simon:** "Yes. The ONE NO TRUMP OPENING, if you're playing ACOL, which presumably you are if you have opened a fairly standard 1NT, has ALREADY allowed the opener to describe their hand pretty exactly: BALANCED and 12-14 HCP. You can't PREEMPT opponents any more. Jumping to 3H just asks the opener's partner to DOUBLE you if they can tell that you won't make, doesn't it? You're not preempting THEM because THEY know what their partner has already."

**Guru:** "Exactly. A jump over a 1NT opening HAS to be more sensible than merely preemptive. It SHOULD show a hand which is getting close to GAME. Say SEVEN OR EIGHT tricks if that suit is trumps. So you see, situations differ, and until you learn to appreciate the true meaning and importance of such things as preempts, you won't get the best out of your appreciation of the game of bridge. There IS a lot to learn, but I'm pleased to say that you two seem to have picked up a huge amount already. Now I think it's time you went and played a session of REAL bridge. Go along and play on 'C' grade night and see how you go! I expect a full report next week."

*This completed our "Introductory" lesson in bridge. Next week, we start play in "C Grade". There is a lot more to learn, but we expect to be able to do that 'as we go'. Play is the thing. We hope that the reader, having got to this stage and learnt the BASICS of Simple Bidding as well as some basic things about Acol, will follow our adventures in bridge, and learn something from each hand that we report. Those who wish to enter into the realm of other systems will get the opportunity to read about them also, but we stress the importance of first learning the SIMPLE way, and being aware of the logic and common sense of bidding and card play. THEN, the reader and any prospective partner, can start to add to their Simple repertoire as much as they feel is necessary to get more mileage out of THEIR bridge. We ourselves will be following the "SIMPLE" path, and will be reporting on our progress from Learner to Expert over the next two years, the length of time that it CAN be done in. Believe us!*

*With Best Wishes for Better Bridge and Better results,*

*Simon and Vera Simple.*