

Table Talk

The Quarterly Newsletter of
ACBL Unit 175 (Vermont)
October 1, 2017



Editors
Mark Oettinger
Ingi Agnarsson
Dick Tracy

Editor's Message (Mark Oettinger)

It with a great deal of excitement, and a certain amount of trepidation, that your editors take on the task of publishing what we hope will be quarterly issues of *Table Talk*, starting on October 1, 2017. Those who have gone before us have done a terrific job producing a much-loved publication. The required amount of work is considerable, but isn't there at least one suitable "lesson hand" in every session that we play? Often, there are several. The trick is to preserve them, and to take the time to promptly write them up before memory fades.

The richness of the publication will be a direct function of the diversity of the contributions. We are fortunate to have a wealth of bridge expertise within our bridge catchment area, and we encourage contributions from all willing and qualified individuals. We envision a *Letters to the Editors* feature as well in the issues to come. Please write us!

Another goal of this publication is to promote bridge throughout Vermont. Many of us learned to play decades ago, perhaps in college or in the military. Some of us gave up the game for many years in order to raise families, and have only recently

“come back to the fold” as empty nesters or retirees. The demographics of the “baby boomers” also seem to be having an impact on attendance at clubs. Usually defined as having been born between 1946 and 1964, baby boomers are now between 53 and 71 years old, with the older part of the “cohort” entering retirement in droves. Even better, people who are now 65 years old went to college in the late 1960s and early 1970s, when bridge around the dorm, or in the student union, or in the cafeteria, was a near-universal phenomenon. The trend is reflected in 14-table Monday night (under 500 masterpoint) games at the Burlington Bridge Club. These people are the near-term future of our game, and we need to welcome them, mentor them, and do everything that we can to make their experiences the best that they can be. **Welcome new players!** Please let us know how *Table Talk* can be a resource to you.

Our final goal is that we create a permanent and ever-expanding archive for the content that comprises the issues of *Table Talk*, where we can preserve the articles and other bridge-related resources, organize them into logical categories, and make them readily-accessible to all who wish to access them. This will likely require a dedicated computer, a domain name, a website hosting service, and a source of funding for the associated costs. Discussions of how best to accomplish these goals are underway. Tech-savvy volunteer help is needed, and Unit funding is hoped for. For the moment, the October 1, 2017 issue is being distributed as a pdf to the Unit’s existing list of approximately 600 emails. If you have a desire to help, or have suggestions for how we might create the best possible product, please let me know.

And in the meantime, enjoy Table Talk!

President’s Message (Phil Sharpsteen, President, Unit 175 (Vermont))

It is wonderful to report that after an absence of a few years, the Vermont publication of *Table Talk* resumes this month. Three of our Unit 175 members have volunteered to edit and publish the newsletter. They are Ingi Agnarsson, Mark Oettinger and Dick Tracy. Their work will be made easier if you all submit articles of interest to them, so they will have enough material for publication. These articles can include your club news, interesting hands, lesson material, etc.

Table Talk will be posted on our Vermont Bridge Association (VBA) website, making the job of our web manager, Kim Likakis, much easier, since a lot of the information that she has had to type in will already be in *Table Talk*. Kim is looking for someone to take over the VBA website, and is willing to train her successor(s) in order to ensure an easy transition.

Finally, let's preserve the history of *Table Talk* before it is lost forever. Please send any historical *Table Talk* information that you may have to markoettinger@gmail.com, including the names of past editors, the years of their service, and copies of old issues. The editors will endeavor to archive this information for posterity.

See you all at the year's final Vermont Sectional in White River Junction, on October 27-29!

An Unusual Hand On Bridge Base (Ingi Agnarsson)

You had a stressful day and decide to unwind over a little bridge on Bridgebase.com. Here there are many ways of playing bridge. Free of charge, you can play friends, or with random "friends" you have never met (strangers), in the main open bridge room. You can play with and/or against computers, or as they refer to them on BBO, robots or 'bots', in an endless stream of hands, experiencing an seemingly endless string of strange robot decisions, or you can do some basic training. For a somewhat modest fee (25¢ or \$1.00/\$1.25 in most cases) you can play in 8- or 12-board human or human/robot games where you get matchpoint or IMP scores, and BBO and/or ACBL masterpoints (more on those in the next issue) at a reasonable fraction of what you would earn in a normal club game. Or you can do more serious training at a level from Basic to World Class. You can also watch live 'vugraph' covering of big matches featuring mostly professional players. All these activities can improve your bridge (or not...) and offer 24/7/365 access to meet the needs of even the most seriously afflicted bridgeophile.

But back to the end of your stressful day. You are sitting with three other humanoids in a ACBL masterpoint game, so you expect somewhat sane bidding

and play. On the very first hand, you are dealt cards that drain the stress from your body and capture your mind like a new episode of Game of Thrones (or, back in the day, Matlock):

♠ KQ10932

♥ -

♦ AQ10

♣ AK54

What a beauty! Apart from the 18 HCP, you have a strong six card suit (safe to add a point or three, IF you find fit). And it doesn't hurt that your suit is Spades. You have a void (5 more points, if you find a fit!), and with two tens (plus the nine of spades), all situated next to high cards, you add one more point to your potential point count, and conclude that, depending on how the auction develops, you have a hand that re-evaluates to 25 points!

Using simple loser count, this hand has only three losers, also indicating a very strong hand. Of course, point counting, adding points based on distribution and intermediate cards, and loser count, are all useful tools for evaluation, but they are fairly blunt. Much will depend on how the bidding develops. The hand is more like a 20 point hand if playing in notrump across from a balanced partner, and can be worth less than it looks if the partnership lacks a fit. I love hands that are challenging to evaluate. I don't mind a 15-17 balanced hand that can be opened with 1NT (unless it's the opponents holding the hand), but distributional hands are so much fun. Anyways, you're excited to get to bid. Will you be so lucky as to see partner opening the hand? It's partner's turn, and you see her reach for a bid (well that part is inside your mind's eye) and when you see her opening bid you literally fall off your chair. Before you read about what actually happened, imagine what would be the most favorable bid you could hear from partner, and also think about what would be the most unexpected bid. Make a few guesses, and then to fall off your chair (or to confirm your amazing insight), and see what actually happened.

What did you guess? Any opening other than 2-4♥ preemptive would be exciting. You can always hope partner opens 2♣, but that's a long shot. 1NT would put you

in immediate slam mode, but will present some challenges to bid, depending on your conventions, 1 ♠ would be really surprising, and again make you wonder how to reach a 6-7 ♠ contract. 2 ♠ preemptive would be stunning - how would you respond, and how do you figure out if there's a slam. A variety of other opening bids could be exiting. But none of these were on partner's menu. Ready for this? **She opened 4 ♠!!** Now what?

Let's recap, you hold

♠ KQ10932

♥ -

♦ AQ10

♣ AK54

And partner, bless her, has opened 4 ♠.

You obviously wonder if this was a 'miscalc,' but you need to continue based on what partner has described. You know that your partner does not have the 'traditional' 8-card suit, mostly because that would imply she is one of those players with something extra up their sleeves for those most dire times in the money game. Maybe she has a club in with her spades. Opening 4 ♠ on AJxxxx is highly unusual, so you picture her spade suit pretty clearly as AJ87654. Slaves to convention might ask for aces, but that's pretty pointless if the response is 1 ace/key card. Sophisticated slaves to convention might venture a 'voidwood' (exclusion RKC), depending on partnership agreement, that would ask for key cards outside the heart suit. But such 'sophistication' is pretty silly and an unnecessary complication for this hand (after all, partner might not be on the same page and pass 4NT, or worse, 6 ♥ voidwood - down 9!). We count tricks in our heads: there's partner's seven spade tricks, our ♦ A and ♣ AK. That's 10. If partner has nothing but the spade suit, and any three hearts, 13 tricks are unavoidable adding three of your own spades, ruffing hearts, to the trick count. Even if the left hand opponent miraculously found a lead in his partner's void, they'd be hard pressed to ruff it!

If partner has ♥xx (or say, ♥KJ) and xx-xx in the minors, the absolute worst case scenario would be a diamond finesse. But this seems very unlikely. If partner has one or zero hearts, she has some length and presumably some values in the minors (and in the latter case you might get a sluff and ruff on the obvious heart lead!). So, you simply bid the practical 7♠ and expect more or less a laydown contract. If you're in the last round of a MP tournament where you feel you need something extraordinary, you could ask for aces and if you get two, shoot for 7NT, but that's desperation. Of course, expert players might have an arsenal of conventions to find out about other relevant cards and bid 7NT on more solid grounds, in the unlikely event their cards fit for that. As it turns out, partner had something very minimal, other than distribution:

	♠ AJ87654	
	♥ 8754	
	♦ 5	
	♣ Q	
♠ -		♠ -
♥ QJ109632		♥ AK
♦ J987		♦ K6432
♣ 96		♣ J108732
	♠ KQ10932	
	♥ -	
	♦ AQ10	
	♣ AK54	

The play: after taking the ♣ lead with the Q, you draw trumps by counting to 13 in your head, and you proceed to take 11 ♠ tricks with four ♥ ruffs, and the ♦A and ♣AKQ for 7♠+2. 7NT? Down 5 at least - fatal. But I'd rather be 5 down in a speculative 7NT than being in any contract other than 7♠ based simply on partner's opening bid! On the downside, you expect a flat board - who wouldn't bid 7♠?

Combining Your Chances As Declarer (Mark Oettinger)

You are playing at Honors Bridge Club, in New York City. It's the biggest club in the ACBL, having hosted more than 21,000 tables in 2016. You've paid \$25 for

the privilege of playing a single session against a field that includes a dozen world champions. Of course, for the price, you also get an all-you-can-eat session-long buffet, and occasionally, a pre-game lecture from a luminary like Barry Rigel

It's first board of the night, and you're in first seat, sitting South. You're feeling like you shouldn't have eaten quite as much as you did...but there's no time for regrets, as you begin the evening with the following robust collection:

Dealer South: All vulnerable, Matchpoints. ♠ AJ1094 ♥ Q96 ♦ AQ9 ♣ K9 With the opponents passing throughout, the auction goes as follows:	<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
				1NT
	Pass	2♦	Pass	2♥
	Pass	3♣	Pass	3♥
	Pass	4♣	Pass	4♦
	Pass	4♥	Pass	4♠
	Pass	4NT	Pass	5♠
	Pass	6♥	All Pass	

Yes, it's aggressive, but the hands seem to fit well, and we appear to have all of the Aces (although if so, not the King of hearts). Let's not dwell on the merits of the contract, however, as this is an article about declarer play.

West leads the King of spades, and here's what you see:

♠ 63
 ♥ AJ10542
 ♦ 8
 ♣ AQ74

♠ AJ1094
 ♥ Q96
 ♦ AQ9
 ♣ K9

How do you like your chances? Make your plan before you read on.

At first glance, success appears to turn only on the heart finesse. If it succeeds, you have 6 heart tricks, three club tricks, two outside Aces, and the last trick in spades after you concede a trick to the ♠Q. 50%. Is there more to the analysis?

Yes, there's another option. You can finesse the ♦Q at Trick 2, and if it holds, you can pitch the board's second spade on the ♦A, thereby making the contract even if the heart finesse subsequently loses. Of course, you will feel pretty sheepish if you lose to the ♦K at Trick 2, and lose a spade trick at Trick 3...only to find out that heart finesse would have worked. And if you adopt the diamond finesse line and *both* the diamond and heart finesses lose, you will be down 2 instead of down 1. A glance at the round clock discloses 10 minutes left in the two-board round, and you haven't even starting the play of the first hand. You quickly decide that down 1 versus down 2 is unlikely to matter, as the contract is non-standard. You either make it and get a top, or you go down and get a bottom.

Do you take the heart finesse or diamond finesse?

Is it really a guess?

Sort of, but before you embark on the finesse of your choice, you can increase your odds by playing the Ace of the other suit first...in the hope of dropping the stiff King! Clearly, the chance of a stiff ♥K is far greater than a stiff ♦K, so the correct line is to finesse the diamond, AFTER cashing the ♥A.

My reading of the mathematical tables in the *Official Encyclopedia of Bridge* (the 1984 Edition, but these things don't change) is that the odds of dropping a particular card singleton when there are 4 cards outstanding is almost 10%. (Frank, are you listening? This is what *Letters to the Editor* is for). Therefore, the correct line gives you a combined likelihood of success of almost 60%. Sure enough, this was the actual layout:

	♠ 63	
	♥ AJ10542	
	♦ 8	
	♣ AQ74	
♠ KQ		♠ 8752
♥ 873		♥ K
♦ 10765		♦ KJ432
♣ J832		♣ 1065
	♠ AJ1094	
	♥ Q96	
	♦ AQ9	
	♣ K9	

Note that if you are fortunate enough to drop the singleton ♥K, you should abandon the idea of finessing the ♦Q, and simply knock out the outstanding ♠Q for your 12th trick. The contract is an aggressive one, and few pairs will reach it. Having dropped the stiff ♥K gives you a guaranteed path to this hard-to-reach slam, and especially if the ♥K was offside, chancing the diamond finesse risks snatching defeat from the jaws of victory. Take your likely 90+% matchpoint result, and don't take a 50% chance of turning it into a "zero."

Conventions Corner

This feature is "under construction" for future issues. In the *Conventions Corner*, we will illustrate the basic principles and uses of some common and not-so-common conventions that we feel are helpful. We strongly encourage the readers of *Table Talk* to send in articles (which can be brief) on their favorite conventions. We also welcome requests on featuring specific conventions (or addressing specific bidding challenges) of interest to our members at any level. Here's a list of a few conventions that we plan to feature in upcoming issues:

Basic

Roman Key Card Blackwood

Support Doubles and Redoubles

Intermediate

Four Suit Transfers and Pre-Accept
Maximal-Style Doubles
Support Doubles and Redoubles
Mixed Raises

Advanced

Lebensohl
Hexan
Exclusion Blackwood
Italian Cuebids

It is worth mentioning here that we are discussing posting a collection of “standard” convention cards. They would reflect basic, intermediate, and advanced versions of what seems to be the consensus cards around Vermont at the current time. These cards would evolve through feedback from readers, and would easily downloaded for use (with or without adaptation) by adventurous partnerships. This potential feature of *Table Talk* logically requires a more sophisticated technological platform than we currently have available. The current version is simply a pdf publication that is attached to emails for distribution. We envision a dedicated server, domain name, URL, and web host, so that we can post fillable forms and continuously evolving content and archives. Volunteers with ideas, tech skills and available time are urged to step forward!

Preemption and Lightner Doubles (Mark Oettinger)

Here’s an interesting hand from the Burlington Bridge Club on Friday morning, August 18, 2017. The facts have been “augmented” a bit, in the interest of illustrating some of the principles involved, but the cards are exact.

	♠ Q5	
	♥ AK8632	
	♦ AK42	
	♣ Q	
♠ 107		♠ 43
♥ 10754		♥ -
♦ QJ6		♦ 109853
♣ A643		♣ KJ9752
	♠ AKJ9862	
	♥ QJ9	
	♦ 7	
	♣ 108	

North/South are vulnerable; East/West are not. North is dealer, and opens 1♥. East, an unnamed player of Icelandic origin, known for his “active” bidding style, bids an “unusual” 2NT, showing the “2 lowest (unbid) suits,” in this case, ♣ and ♦. What do you think of this bid? Only 4 high card points? The vulnerability is ideal, he has 11 cards in his two suits, and he has a void in opener’s Hearts. On balance (in my view), it’s clearly right.

South now bids 3♠. What should West do? The minor suit fit is huge, almost certainly a minimum of 9♣ and 8♦. Plus, West has no high cards in either major suit, almost guaranteeing that North/South have game...quite possibly slam. Yes, it’s just possible that East has a strong hand, and that the opponents don’t have a game, but this seems quite unlikely, since Unusual Notrump hands are usually weak in terms of high card points. But in that case, perhaps *we* have game! Should West pass? Maybe they won’t bid their game. Or should West raise to 4♣? Should he raise immediately to 5♣? Some would argue for raising immediately to 6♣, but that strikes me as being a little dramatic. I chose the conservative (cowardly?) 4♣ option, fully planning to bid 5♣ if North/South compete to game. North does raise to 4♠, and when it comes back to me, I raise to 5♣.

This should be a “**Forcing Pass**” situation for North. North/South have “bid game on power,” and the opponents (East/West) are sacrificing. East/West should therefore not be allowed to play undoubled. Is it conceivable that East/West could make 5♣? Yes, but this will happen very rarely, and when it does, 5♣ Doubled *making* is unlikely to produce a matchpoint score that is much worse than 5♣ *Undoubled* making. What’s more important is for North/South to try and exact a penalty that is greater than the value of their presumed game...here, hoping for +800 (Down 4) rather than +620 (or +650 or +680), the value of North/South’s vulnerable game.

In accordance with “forcing pass principles,” North (in the direct seat) either Passes to show extra playing strength (beyond what he has already shown), or Doubles to show minimum, or a more defensive hand. North chose to Double (after all, one of his two Ace-King combinations is in one of East’s suits), but South, with more offense than he has had the chance to communicate thus far in the auction, persists to 5 Spades...where the auction dies. Here’s the complete auction:

Dealer North: NS vulnerable

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	1♥	2NT	3♠
4♣	4♠	Pass	Pass
5♣	Dbl	Pass	5♠
All Pass			

I chose to lead the ♦Q, and North/South have “15” tricks, making 7. Had I led the Ace of Clubs, East would have signaled dramatically with the ♣K, requesting a Heart shift. A Club continuation is obviously pointless given dummy’s singleton, so the standard “attitude” signal to my opening lead becomes “suit preference.” The ♣K therefore calls for a shift to the higher non-trump suit...Hearts. With the ♥ruff, 5 make exactly likely yielding a decent MP score for the defense.

What if North/South actually had actually gotten to 6♠? Two of the session’s six tables did. Now East has an interesting option. He can Double for an “unusual”

lead. This is called a **Lightner Double**, developed in 1929, and named (by Eli Culbertson, who did not favor its use, and who therefore anecdotally chose not to name it after himself) after its inventor, Theodore Lightner (1893-1981).

“Unusual” in the context of this auction would clearly not be a minor suit or a trump...but would be a *low* ♥. That produces a ruff, followed by a ♣ return (the *lower* of the remaining non-trump suits), and a second ♥ ruff...down *two*. Nice defense!

Neither of the pairs defending 6♠ found the Lightner defense. One pair played 6♥, which cannot be beaten. The other two tables played 4♥ and 5♥. Five of the six tables made 6. Apparently, I was the only opening leader not to start with the ♣A, and no one found the lead of the ♣A followed by the ♥ switch for a ruff. Even so, we still got 3 matchpoints out of 5, for preventing the North/South from reaching slam. Was it us, or was it them? Regardless, kudos to East for his courageous use of the Unusual Notrump! Note that “par” on the hand is 7♣ Doubled Down 5 for -1100...if the defense can find the following defense: ♦, ♦, ♦ Ruff, ♠, ♠.

This last point raises yet another interesting issue that arises in “cash-out situations.” Most players show “attitude” when following to Partner’s opening lead. Some well-practiced partnerships modify this by agreeing to show “count in cash-out situations.” Some define this further by giving count when defending “suit contracts of 5♣ or higher.” Playing at Honors Bridge Club in New York City, I once faced my opening lead. It was the ♠A (from Ace/King) against a 5♦ contract. My partner was asked by Declarer, a renowned expert, about our “carding” agreements. Partner replied, “We give count when following to Partner’s opening lead in cash-out situations in suit contracts of 5♣ and higher.” Without missing a beat, Declarer responded, “How do you know it’s a cash-out situation?” That’s a very interesting point, and in our next issue, we will delve more deeply into a possible answer. Here’s a preview.

It is often the *opening leader* (as opposed to opening leader’s *partner*) who knows that “it’s a cash-out situation.” In that case, the opening leader wants “count,” not the usual “attitude” signal in reaction to the opening lead. Can you have your cake

and eat it too? Maybe. Try this...when leading from Ace-King, the lead of the Ace asks for “attitude,” and the lead of the King asks for “count.” My first reaction to this idea was that it would create more confusion than it would afford help, but after playing it for a while, I am convinced of the overwhelming value of this “non-standard” agreement. More on this subject in later issues, and see also related further discussion in my article below on “*Leads & Defensive Carding*,” and in Phil Sharpsteen’s article entitled “*Do you lead Ace or King from Ace/King?*”

Finding A Missing Queen (Ellie Hanlon)

Finding a missing Queen is often important in fulfilling a difficult contract. Instead of throwing up your hands and thinking, “It’s all a guess,” we can often find clues from the bidding and play that will lead us to the correct answer.

Frequently, the bidding will give us a point count on one of the opponents’ hands, such as an opening 1NT or a pass by opener’s partner (generally denying 6 points and a fit). Then, as you track the high cards that you have seen, you can determine which opponent can have the missing honor for which you are searching. Perhaps this can lead to an endplay, a correct finesse, or the dropping of an honor that the particular opponent must hold.

Another method of ferreting out a missing queen is by keeping track of proven distribution. Your focus should be on the hand about which you know the most from the bidding and/or play. A hand with a long suit, or with two long suits, is simplest to count, because you can start with a certain number and quickly ascertain his remaining cards as he follows to your play. A hand of this type occurred at a recent regional. South held the following hand:

<p>♠ KQJ3 ♥ 9743 ♦ K4 ♣ 763</p>	<p>Dealer West : Love all</p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: left;"><i>West</i></th> <th style="text-align: left;"><i>North</i></th> <th style="text-align: left;"><i>East</i></th> <th style="text-align: left;"><i>South</i></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2♥</td> <td>4NT</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>5♣</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="4">All Pass</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>	2♥	4NT	Pass	5♣	All Pass			
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>										
2♥	4NT	Pass	5♣										
All Pass													

2♥ was a weak 2, and 4NT showed a strong 2-suiter in the minors.

West led the $\spadesuit 3$, and Declarer was faced with the following:

$\spadesuit 106$
 $\heartsuit A$
 $\diamondsuit AQ1098$
 $\clubsuit AKJ108$

$\spadesuit KQJ3$
 $\heartsuit 9743$
 $\diamondsuit K4$
 $\clubsuit 763$

Declarer won the $\diamondsuit 3$ in the dummy with the $\diamondsuit 8$, and next led the $\spadesuit 10$ from the board. East won the $\spadesuit A$, and led a second \diamondsuit , ruffed by West. West returned a \heartsuit to the $\heartsuit A$ on the board. Who has the $\clubsuit Q$? Engaging in a little “discovery,” Declarer next led the $\spadesuit 6$ to the $\spadesuit K$ in her hand. The King held, and Declarer continued with the $\spadesuit Q$. West showed out, but did not trump. Declarer now knew that West had started with $6\heartsuit, 2\spadesuit, 1\diamondsuit$...and therefore, $4\clubsuit$. It appeared that West chose not to ruff, not wanting the $\clubsuit Q$ to later fall under the $\clubsuit AK$. Declarer now finessed against the marked $\clubsuit Q$, thereby succeeding in her contract.

This was the full deal:

	$\spadesuit 106$	
	$\heartsuit A$	
	$\diamondsuit AQ1098$	
	$\clubsuit AKJ108$	
$\spadesuit 95$		$\spadesuit A8742$
$\heartsuit QJ10862$		$\heartsuit K5$
$\diamondsuit 6$		$\diamondsuit J7532$
$\clubsuit Q942$		$\clubsuit 5$
	$\spadesuit KQJ3$	
	$\heartsuit 9743$	
	$\diamondsuit K4$	
	$\clubsuit 763$	

I encountered two more hands recently in which finding a queen determined the success of the contract:

<p>♠ K8632 ♥ A2 ♦ J65 ♣ KJ8</p> <p>♠ AJ9 ♥ 43 ♦ 1092 ♣ A10964</p>	<p>Dealer South: Love all</p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: left;"><i>West</i></th> <th style="text-align: left;"><i>North</i></th> <th style="text-align: left;"><i>East</i></th> <th style="text-align: left;"><i>South</i></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>Pass</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pass</td> <td>1♠</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>2♣</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pass</td> <td>2♠</td> <td>All Pass</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>I opened 1♠ and South's 2♣ is Drury, showing 3♠ and 10-12 "dummy points", so I signed off.</p>	<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>				Pass	Pass	1♠	Pass	2♣	Pass	2♠	All Pass	
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>														
			Pass														
Pass	1♠	Pass	2♣														
Pass	2♠	All Pass															

East started with the ♦AK, and a ♦ to West's ♦Q. West shifted to ♥ at trick 4, which I won with the ♥A. Having lost three tricks, and needing to find both the ♣Q and the ♠Q10, I threw the opponents in with a ♥. They chose to play another ♥, giving me a sluff/ruff. I threw a ♣ from my hand, and led the ♠A, all following. I next led the ♠J, covered by the ♠Q from West, won by my ♠K. The ♠10 did not drop doubleton, so I made two.

You might ask why I did not lead a ♣ to the ♣K, and then finesse the ♠J on the way back, hoping to find the ♠Q in the East hand, thereby avoiding the loss of a Spade. With no independent information about the distribution of the Spade suit, it is a guess as to whether the ♠Q is doubleton (against the odds) or the ♠10 is doubleton. More importantly, playing a ♠ toward the board would have required one trip to my hand (via the ♣K) to take the finesse, and a second trip to my hand (by ruffing a ♣) to draw the last trump, thereby exposing me to a significant risk that East would over-ruff a ♣ in the process.

The full hand was as follows:

♠ K8632
 ♥ A2
 ♦ J65
 ♣ KJ8

♠ Q104 ♥ KQ109 ♦ Q43 ♣ Q72	♠ 75 ♥ J8765 ♦ AK87 ♣ 53
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♠ AJ9
 ♥ 43
 ♦ 1092
 ♣ A10964

I was South on this last hand:

♠ 98754 ♥ A2 ♦ 2 ♣ AJ1064 ♠ Q ♠ AKJ ♥ Q10876 ♥ KJ93 ♦ 543 ♦ KJ1096 ♣ Q987 ♣ 3 ♠ 10632 ♥ 54 ♦ AQ87 ♣ K52	Dealer East: EW vulnerable <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: left;"><i>West</i></th> <th style="text-align: left;"><i>North</i></th> <th style="text-align: left;"><i>East</i></th> <th style="text-align: left;"><i>South</i></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td>1♦</td> <td>Pass</td> </tr> <tr> <td>1♥</td> <td>2♥</td> <td>4♥</td> <td>4♠</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pass</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>Db! </td> <td>All Pass</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>North's 2♥ showed 5♠ and 5 of a minor, likely ♣. After East's jump to 4♥ (vulnerable), with such a nice black suit fit (and the Diamonds well-positioned), I bid 4♠. West doubled <i>violently</i>, ending the auction.</p>	<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>			1♦	Pass	1♥	2♥	4♥	4♠	Pass	Pass	Db!	All Pass
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>														
		1♦	Pass														
1♥	2♥	4♥	4♠														
Pass	Pass	Db!	All Pass														

West led the ♥10, and I won the ♥A on the board. I successfully finessed the ♦Q and pitched dummy's remaining ♥ on the ♦A. I next led a ♠, and East overtook West's ♠Q to play ♠AKJ. East then exited with a small ♥, West playing the ♥Q, and I ruffed on the board. Who has the ♣Q?

West should have 6 points for his 1♥ bid. So far, he has only shown up with the ♠Q and the ♥Q. East jumped to 4♥ knowing that West could have as little as 6 points, suggesting that he (East) has close to 20 points. That said, my hand and the

dummy have a combined total of 18 high card points, proving that one, or both, of the opponents have been “upgrading” their hands. Even so, West almost certainly has to have more than the 4 HCP represented by his 2 proven queens, but not *that* much more, or else East would not have jumped to 4♥.

The successful ♦ finesse at trick 2 places the ♦ K with East, and from the play of the Heart suit, it appears that East also has the ♥ K (or else West would have led it initially). That leaves only the two red Jacks unaccounted for in the opponent's' hands. Could West have them instead of the ♣Q? Yes, but consider one final (and dispositive) fact. Whether West has the ♣Q or both red Jacks, East has 15 HCP (17 if West bid 1H with only 4 HCP). When you look at the opponents' convention card, you see that they play a 15-17 HCP opening 1NT range. Why did East not open 1NT instead of 1♦? It must be because of his *shape*. He has shown up with 3♠, the auction marks him with 4♥, and he opened 1♦. If he were 3=4=3=3 or 3=4=4=2, he would have opened 1NT! He must therefore be 3=4=5=1 or 3=4=6=0, and if he is 3=4=5=1, even if he *does* have the ♣Q, you will pick it up when you start the suit by playing the ♣K.

I therefore led a ♣ to my ♣K (East followed small), led a ♣ to the ♣10 (East showing out), cashed the ♣A, ruffed a ♣...and the board was good. Making 4♠ doubled.

P.S.: I have to admit that I was initially a little disappointed with the quality of Partner's Spades, but I have learned from long experience that you can NEVER GIVE UP!

A BBO Lesson...and a Costly Misplay (Mark Oettinger)

Unquestionably, we tend to learn more from our mistakes than from our successes. Frankly, there are so many opportunities for mistakes in bridge that we make plenty of them even when we get good results. We are just far less likely to notice our mistakes when the results are good. Our ability to learn from our mistakes is made easier by access to hand records, post-game “sums” (often available from the director as soon as all scores are posted and the results are final), and on-line “club

results.” Online bridge (Bridge Base Online, commonly known as BBO, is my preference, and is by far the most popular) provides an even better opportunity for after-the-fact analysis, since it archives every hand that you play, as well as the trick-by-trick “movie” of the sequence in which the cards were played at your table. You can even review, trick-by-trick, what all of the other players did with the same cards while sitting in your seat.

Here’s one format in which you can play on BBO (and there are many, more about which in future issues). Each day from 1:00 a.m. until the following 1:00 a.m., BBO runs four so-called “daylong games.” Three are scored matchpoint-style, and one is score IMP-style. Each set is 8 boards and costs 25¢ to play. Once you start a set, you can log off and return to complete it anytime before the 1:00 a.m. deadline. Your partner is a GIB robot, as are your opponents, and each other human participant plays at an identically-constituted table. These sessions generally attract between 1000 and 2000 players/tables during the course of the day, and as is the case with a “live” club game, roughly the top 40% of finishers receive “BBO” (*not* ACBL) masterpoints. The relationship between BBO masterpoints and ACBL masterpoints (how they work and whether anyone cares) is a somewhat complex topic, and will be the subject of future articles. That said, here’s a hand from the September 2, 2017 IMP daylong game, which had a total of 989 players/tables. 1st overall finished with +46.54 IMPs (an average of +5.82 IMPs per hand...pretty impressive) and received a BBO masterpoint award of 11.53. Finishers 402-426 each received 0.01 (1/100) of a BBO masterpoint. I finished 29th with +25.64 IMPs, and earned 7.25 BBO masterpoints. One of the cool (and in some ways, annoying) things about this format is that, although you can get a “provisional result” after you finish your eight hands, you have to wait until the next morning to get your final IMP (or matchpoint) total, your rank/standing, and BBO masterpoint award (if any).

The sense that I had had a very good “session” (which included 7♠ bid and made) was borne out by the provisional result, so I went to bed looking forward to finding out my expected high placement and significant BBO masterpoint award the next morning. [My three matchpoint sessions had not gone anywhere near as well]. When the morning results were in, I took a look at the “recap sheet,” and found that I had suffered a -2.5 IMP loss on a 3NT hand that (I had felt) was a standard

contract that had simply failed due to extremely unfortunate distribution. To my surprise (and chagrin!), quite a few other players had been in 3NT making 4, for +7.63 IMPs. Could I really have done 10.13 IMPs better, finishing 3rd overall out of the field of 989, and earning 11.15 BBO masterpoints, instead of 7.25!? Had I been the victim of a better defense by the “robot opponents” at my table than at other tables, or had I misplayed the hand? Here’s the painful answer:

<p>♠ A 9 5 ♥ 8 ♦ AK 10 3 2 ♣ 7 6 3 2</p> <p>♠ K Q J 6 3 ♠ 10 8 ♥ 7 6 ♥ J 10 3 2 ♦ Q 6 ♦ 9 8 7 5 ♣ K J 8 4 ♣ Q 10 9</p> <p>♠ 7 4 2 ♥ AKQ 9 5 4 ♦ J 4 ♣ A 5</p>	<p>Dealer South: NS vulnerable</p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: left;"><i>West</i></th> <th style="text-align: left;"><i>North</i></th> <th style="text-align: left;"><i>East</i></th> <th style="text-align: left;"><i>South</i></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>1 ♥</td> </tr> <tr> <td>1 ♠</td> <td>Dbl</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>2 ♥</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pass</td> <td>2NT</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>3NT</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="4">All Pass</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>I was sitting South, but playing the hand as North, as you always play for the robots on BBO.</p> <p>On Trick 1: West led the ♠K, ♠5, ♠8, ♠2.</p> <p>Trick 2: West continued with the ♠Q, ♠9, ♠10, ♠4</p>	<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>				1 ♥	1 ♠	Dbl	Pass	2 ♥	Pass	2NT	Pass	3NT	All Pass			
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Pass	2NT	Pass	3NT																		
All Pass																					

I was ready for the third round of Spades. I would win the ♠A, and if ♥ split 3-3, I was making 10 tricks. Even if ♥ split 4-2, I would still make 9 tricks if East held the 4♥ (as, in fact, “he” did). With either scenario, if the ♦Q dropped singleton or doubleton, I would have another trick...gravy. I was feeling pretty good. It looked like I was about to make a close game and quite possibly pocket a few IMPs for my astute hand evaluation in the bidding.

Trick 3: CLUB SWITCH!

What bad luck! I was now at risk of losing three ♣ to go along with the two ♠ that I had already lost. At least I still had the ♥ split to fall back on. I therefore won the ♣A (technically, I probably should have ducked, as it’s conceivable that I could have gotten a red suit switch) and I tried the ♥’s. They failed to split, so my last chance was finding ♦Qxx onside. I brightened when the ♦J held, but when

that suit failed to split as well, I was down one. Bad luck? Nope! I blew it. Do you see my mistake?

I should have won the second round of Spades! For TWO reasons.

First, West's overcall almost certainly showed 5♠. Yes, it's conceivable that "the robot in the West" could have overcalled with KQJ10, but I don't think that robots read Marty Bergen's books (somewhat controversially, Marty sanctions **4-card overcalls** at the one level if the overcaller has three or more honors).

Second, there's the **Rule of 7**, which tells you how many times to hold up your Ace, when it's your only stopper, and when you are declaring a notrump contract. You add the combined number of cards in the suit held by your hand and dummy, and subtract that number from 7...and that's how many times you hold up. In this case, you have 6 combined Spades. $7-6=1$, so the rule says that you only hold up only once. Without digressing too much into the underlying rationale of the Rule of 7, your objective is to "sever communications," and although the rule is not foolproof, it works most of the time. And it would have worked here...even though, with the overcall, I should not even have needed it.

I Like Those Odds! (Ingi Agnarsson)

Bridge is a curious game. It is no doubt the most sophisticated of card games in terms of possible hands, bids and plays, while also being a social medium, and in part highly logical/mathematical (think chess) and in part gambling (think poker). In fact, as we all know, it is bridge, not chess, that is the ultimate war strategy game. The social and gambling part of the game are very much up to the individual players. Some players are quiet, serious, never joke and never gamble. Others (unfortunately?) never stop talking, seem to take nothing seriously, and make crazy bids that, just somehow, seem to defy probability and yield good scores. Most of us are some mixture of these extremes.

The 'personality' of bridge is intriguing, and will without a doubt separate consistent winners from those somewhat less successful. This part of the game is

beyond science, math and logic, and it's the reason that we have so many fully-employed psychologists and psychiatrists. And mind you, most of their work is not 'scientific' but more 'emotional', which simply means we don't really understand it (and in my experience, neither do they). In any case, I digress. The part of bridge that potentially evens the field is the scientific side: bridge odds.

Bridge odds deal with the probabilities of different card distributions, and how one can play the cards to maximize one's chances of a good score. Whether you are a shark, a lion, or a lamb, you can use your knowledge of bridge odds to improve your scores. We should all be doing this, and there are some priorities in terms of what odds we should all know by heart...like the multiplication table. For example, $7 \times 8 = 56$. I promise that the answer took me only a fraction of a millisecond to come up with, not because I thought fast, but because, contrary to current theory of pedagogy, there is indeed value in some learning through memorization. It speeds up our brains.

Likewise, we should all know the very basic 'multiplication table' of every day bridge odds, and unless based on strong contrary evidence, we should follow these odds. What is 8×8 ? What are the odds of 4 cards splitting 2-2? The answers to these basic questions should be equally engraved on the brains of bridge players. When the trump suit is missing Kxx, should I play the ace or finesse? Does $1 + 1 = 2$? The answers, given no additional evidence, are clearly "finesse" and "yes." However, believe it or not, the answer to both can change, given additional evidence. In this column, I intend to discuss bridge odds from the very basic to the very obtuse, but in this inaugural issue of the new era of *Table Talk*, let's start with the basic math that underlies the types of bridge hands that we are dealt.

Who doesn't like picking up a 7-card suit? Whether strong or weak, we can almost always "get some action" with a seven-carder. Don't think you get one often enough? What about voids? They're fun too, but there always seems to be that one miserable club that shows up among your spades. What are the odds of being dealt a seven-carder or a void? Which is more likely? Guess before you read on.

Let's start with how many kinds of hands there are. The answer is interesting, somewhat esoteric, and yet, almost intuitive—*post hoc*:

$$52 \times 51 \times 50 \times 49 \times 48 \times 47 \times 46 \times 45 \times 44 \times 43 \times 42 \times 41 \times 40$$

$$13 \times 12 \times 11 \times 10 \times 9 \times 8 \times 7 \times 6 \times 5 \times 4 \times 3 \times 2 \times 1$$

Why? Well, there are 52 ‘ways’ of getting your first card. The next card, however, comes from a shorter deck of only 51 cards, and so on, until you’ve been dealt all 13 of the cards in your hand. The chances of starting with ♥Q followed by ♠5 = $1/52 \times 1/51 = 1/2652$, or about 0.03% (3 in 10,000 hands). Hence, the odds of getting the 13 cards that you hold, in the exact order that you receive them (the numerator), is about 1 in 4,000 billion billion...not a number that we can comprehend. But, we do sort our hands after they are dealt to us, so a “lot” of these hands are the same, whether you get the ♥Q first or last doesn’t matter...either way, you have it. The denominator is the number of ‘arrangements’ of the 13 cards we get (13 available ‘spots’ for your first card, 12 for your second, and so on). Through this fraction, we eliminate from consideration the order in which we receive the specific cards.

The above fraction yields 635,013,559,600 possible bridge hands, roughly 635 thousand million, or 635 billion. Mind you, this respectable number is absolutely TINY compared to the number of possible bridge deals...considering all four hands. How many hands does a bridge player play in a lifetime? Most of us probably play fewer than 100-200 per week. Some play every day, even more than one session. But even the most hardcore bridge player is unlikely to play more than 500 hands per week. If they don’t celebrate anniversaries, Christmas, kids’ birthdays, or other unnecessary bridge-distracting holidays...and avoid most funerals...that’s about 26,000 hands per year. An incredibly prolific bridge career might span 70 years, and a player this devoted to bridge might play almost two million hands in a lifetime [By the way, I recommend that you minimally show up for your wedding, the birth of your first child, your favorite parent’s funeral, and your own...inevitably premature...divorce.] The likelihood that even our bridge-addicted subject will ever see *exactly* the same hand twice is so small as to be ignorable. In the entire history of bridge, it is so extremely unlikely that all possible hands have even ever been dealt, that we can also ignore that possibility.

Fine, but what does this tell us about seven card suits and voids? Well, we can look at all 635 billion possible hands and count how many of them have a 7-card suit or a void. and that will give us our answer! Luckily, there are shortcuts. Here is a summary of distribution probabilities of bridge hands:

Shape	Frequency
4432	21.55%
5332	15.52%
5431	12.93%
5422	10.58%
4333	10.54%
6322	5.64%
6421	4.7%
6331	3.45%
5521	3.17%
4441	2.99%
7321	1.88%
6430	1.33%
5440	1.24%
5530	0.9%
6511	0.71%
6520	0.65%
7222	0.51%
7411	0.39%
7420	0.36%
7330	0.27%
others	0.69%

We can then sum up the rows that contain 7-card hands, and the rows that contain hands with voids, plus some portion of the ‘others’ that belong there too.

Approximately, we find that about 3.6% of all bridge hands contain 7-card suits, and about 5% contain voids. On a typical night at Burlington Bridge Academy (27 hands), you may thus expect to hold one 7-card suit. Voids are a bit more common, but be happy if you get around three per two club sessions. On the other hands, ‘typical’ no-trump hands (4333, 4432, 5332) constitute almost half of all hands, and if you’re of the school of Mary Savko (not abashed by the odd singleton in an otherwise perfectly respectable 1NT opener), the clear majority of all hands. Is any of this useful knowledge? Well, it's useful to understand the types of hands that you are most likely to be dealt. and to have the tools necessary to adequately handle them. The strength of a NT opener, and how to respond, is typically among the first thing you discuss with a new partner, and now you’ve got stats to support those priorities! In fact, you only need a small handful of conventions to deal with >95% of bridge hands.

With my partners Phil and Mark, I play a ‘mini-roman’ (4441/5440 11-15 hcp), a tool that we particularly enjoy having at our disposal. But is it really worth having this gadget in your arsenal? Only 4.2% of hands have the right distribution (4441 or 5440), and of those hands, only 34% have the necessary strength range to fit into our agreed 11-15 HCP, so we may expect this kind of hand only about every third session. And sometimes when we do have it, we don’t even get to open the hand! Clearly, this is not a high priority gadget for starting players, but we feel that we benefit from it almost every time it occurs (if not from the results, then from the mere fun of it), so in the long run, we’re willing to reserve an entire opening bid (2♦) for it. Others may be wiser.

Next time, we’ll move into more familiar ground of how ‘missing’ cards may be distributed. For example, you are in 7♠, and are only missing ♠Qxxx. Should you play to drop it or finesse? The answer, based on bridge odds, is very clear: *it depends*. More next quarter.

Leads & Defensive Carding (Mark Oettinger)

Bridge has three basic elements:

- (1) Bidding;
- (2) Declarer Play; and
- (3) Defense.

Many players will add that Defense is the hardest of the three disciplines. They point out that Declarer has the benefit of 26 cards...half the deck, representing all of the partnership's combined resources, and can (for the most part) unilaterally control the order in which they are played. Each Defender, on the other hand, also sees 26 cards (although only after the opening lead has been selected and faced), but only controls half of them, and has to ferret out the other half of the partnership's resources through reflection on the bidding, and through inferences that are to be drawn from the partnership's agreements about leads and defensive signals.

Take a look at the bottom third of the "back" side of your convention card. If you open it up and lay it flat, it's the lower left corner. Have you *completely* filled this out this section for each of your partners? *The Laws of Duplicate Bridge* require that both partners have identically (and completely) filled out convention cards. And it's not just the law. It is absolutely essential to good results at the table that you have (and abide by) clear agreements about your opening leads, non-opening leads, attitude signals, count signals, suit preference signals, first discards, and all other aspects of "defensive carding." I guarantee you that paying a reasonable amount of attention to this aspect of your partnerships will be worth *at least* a full board per session in the scoring.

Let's consider first the card diagrams in the *Leads and Defensive Carding* section of the convention card. "Standard" leads are listed in bold. A classic example is King from KQJx, "**top of a sequence.**" A "sequence" is generally defined as including KQ10x, from which the almost universally-accepted lead is also the King. Most writers on the subject would say that KQxx is *not* a sequence, and that

the traditional lead from that holding would be a small card (usually, “fourth best”). It is also tradition to lead top of an *interior* sequence, such as the Jack from KJ10x, and again, this lead is marked in bold on the “standard” convention card. A careful student of the game will note that convention cards are not entirely uniform, and one respect in which they tend to vary is precisely in this area...leads.

There seems to be a trend these days toward “**attitude (opening) leads.**” The two basic principles are: (1) “lead low from a ‘broken’ honor;” and (2) “lead second highest from a worthless holding.” Following the first principle, one leads the underlined card from the following holdings: Kxxx, Qxxx, Jxxx, KJxx. Following the second principle, one leads the underlined card from these holdings: xxx, xxxx, and xxxxx. Note that 10s are generally considered non-honors for this purpose. Also, many writers on the topic caution against leading away from Jxx or Jxxx, as it often just doesn’t seem to work out very well. That said, leading low from that holding is probably still preferable to any other lead when leading against a heart contract with a hand such as ♠Axxx♥Qxx♦Axx♣Jxx.

When following suit to partner’s opening lead, if one is not obligated to play “3rd hand high,” it is usual to show “attitude.” Playing one’s highest “expendable” card says, “I like the suit that you led,” while playing one’s lowest card says, “I DO NOT like the suit that you led.” Here’s an example. Partner leads the ♥K against a contract of 4♠. When dummy comes down, this is what you see:

Dummy

♠ QJ32
♥ A32
♦ A432
♣ K2

You

♠ 87
♥ J987
♦ K1098
♣ A98

Partner's lead implies that she also holds the ♥Q10 (top of a sequence), and since your ♥J solidifies the partnership's Heart holding (and therefore makes it safe for Partner to lead another ♥ when she is next on lead), you "encourage" by following with the ♥8. Partner now knows that you are encouraging a ♥ continuation when she is next on lead.

Assume that Declarer wins the ♥A, and next leads the ♠Q from the board, playing low from his hand, and losing the trick to Partner's ♠K. Put yourself in Partner's shoes. She saw you play the ♥8 at Trick 1. The ♥A was on the board. The obvious inference is that you have the ♥J. If you do, Partner can underlead her ♥Q (which you infer that she has from her opening lead of the ♥K). But Partner should also consider the possibility that you might have been starting a "high-low" (also known as an "echo") from an initial holding of ♥8x, trying to engineer a ♥ ruff on the third round of the suit. It would therefore be safer for Partner to cash her ♥Q, and to next lead a third round of ♥ for you to either ruff, or to win your ♥J (if Declarer started with three ♥). Here's the full hand:

	♠ QJ32	
	♥ A32	
	♦ A432	
	♣ K2	
♠ K6		♠ 87
♥ KQ106		♥ J987
♦ 76		♦ K1098
♣ J7654		♣ A98
	♠ A10954	
	♥ 54	
	♦ QJ5	
	♣ Q103	

Defensive signaling is an inexact science, but allows the defenders to draw important inferences upon which to base their defense. We will explore this area further in upcoming issues of *Table Talk*, but in the meantime, here are a few more defensive carding principles with which you should be familiar, and that you should discuss with your regular partners. You should describe your agreements

on your convention card, and you should review those agreements before the beginning of each session.

Future Defensive Carding Topics:

Having shown attitude to Partner's opening lead, when you get in and return partner's suit, you give "current count." You lead high from 2 remaining cards, and low from 3. So, on the hand in question, if you are in with the ♣A and choose to return Partner's opening ♥ lead, you lead the ♥2, indicating to Partner that you originally started with 4♥. Partner can therefore infer that a third ♥ will not cash, and she switches to a ♦ instead, developing your ♦K for the defense.

When following to the run of Declarer's side suit, play **low from odd and high-low from even**. This can be particularly important when Partner has the Ace of the suit and needs to know whether to withhold the Ace, and if so, how many times, in order to minimize how many tricks Declarer can take. Here is a classic example:

	♠ 654	
	♥ 92	
	♦ KQJ1064	
	♣ 98	
♠ J1032		♠ 987
♥ J1076		♥ Q543
♦ 93		♦ A52
♣ 732		♣ 654
	♠ AKQ	
	♥ AK8	
	♦ 87	
	♣ AKQJ10	

After a ♣3 opening lead (MUD...middle-up-down...attitude-style) against 6NT, Declarer has 10 tricks outside the ♦ suit. At Trick 2 he leads the ♦8 toward the board. You follow with the ♦9, starting to play high-low (an "echo") to show that you started with an even number of ♦. From East's perspective, only the ♦7 and

the ♦ 3 are unaccounted for. If you started with a singleton ♦ (and Declarer therefore 3), there is nothing the defense can do to stop Declarer from making his notrump slam. On the other hand, if you had started with ♦973, you would have followed the first time with the 3 of Diamonds (lowest showing that you started with an odd number of ♦)...so Declarer can't have started with a singleton ♦. From East's perspective, the only remaining scenario, and the only one in which his play makes a difference (and a critical one) is that both you and Declarer started with two ♦ (as is the case in the illustrated hand). East must therefore duck the first round of ♦ and take the second round, limiting Declarer to a single ♦ trick, and therefore defeating 6NT by one trick. If East either takes the first ♦ or ducks twice, the slam makes. Your count signal allows East to defend with maximum information, and in this case, successfully.

Do you lead Ace or King from Ace/King? (Phil Sharpsteen)

So what do you lead from a side suit headed by the Ace and King against a trump contract? There are only two choices! You and your partner have to agree on one. Either is workable, and both are played. Probably, Ace from Ace/King is more popular, since it is easier to remember (always leading the top of a two card sequence, Ace from Ace/King, King from King/Queen. Etc. Alternatively, some partnerships use Rusinow leads, where one leads the LOWER of two touching honors (King from Ace/King, Queen from King/Queen, etc.). The partnership must be in agreement on this, so that leader's partner knows when to encourage and when to discourage.

A lead of your agreement in a side suit headed by the Ace/King has the advantage of allowing you to hold the lead, and to see both dummy's cards and partner's attitude signal, before you lead to the second trick. In the rare case in which you hold Ace/King doubleton, the standard agreement is to REVERSE your usual agreement about the order in which you play the two cards. When partner sees you surprisingly playing the two cards "against agreement," he will immediately be able to infer that you have only the Ace/King doubleton. You never forget agreements, right?

Well, now a hand from a Vermont Swiss team sectional game for a little fun on this subject! Hands are as follows:

<p>♠ 2 ♥ - ♦ QJ10876 ♣ AK10876 ♠ A10984 ♠ QJ765 ♥ 97 ♥ AKQJ1082 ♦ 2 ♦ 3 ♣ QJ954 ♣ - ♠ K3 ♥ 6543 ♦ AK954 ♣ 32</p>	<p>Dealer North: both vulnerable</p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: left;"><i>West</i></th> <th style="text-align: left;"><i>North</i></th> <th style="text-align: left;"><i>East</i></th> <th style="text-align: left;"><i>South</i></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td></td> <td>1♦</td> <td>Dbl</td> <td>1♥</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4♠</td> <td>5♣</td> <td>6♠</td> <td>7♦</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pass</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>Dbl</td> <td>All Pass</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>		1♦	Dbl	1♥	4♠	5♣	6♠	7♦	Pass	Pass	Dbl	All Pass
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	1♦	Dbl	1♥														
4♠	5♣	6♠	7♦														
Pass	Pass	Dbl	All Pass														

The opening lead is the ♥A which is ruffed. A ♦ to the ♦A draws the trump. Now a ♣ is led and the moment of truth. Do you assume that East bid 6♠ to make, in which case they must be void in ♣? A first-round finesse of the ♣10 allows 7♦X to make! West should NOT split honors, as that just gives away the show (removes any guess when East shows out).

So on this hand, East should not lead either the ♥A or ♥K, but should lead the ♠Q to set the contract! Even more interesting, if East/West persist to 7♠, the lead of the ♣A or ♣K allows 7♠ to make! Again, the ♦Q must be lead from ♦QJ to set this contract.

The moral of all of this? I guess you don't need an agreement on which card to lead from Ace/King when you should be leading the Q from QJ!

Director's Corner (Under Construction)

Club Development and Management (Under Construction)

Letters to the Editor (Bring It!) (Send to markoettinger@gmail.com)

On the Tournament Trail (Under Construction - Email Us!)

Rank Advancements (Dick Tracy)

Both in Club and Tournament action, many Vermont players have continued to advance in career achievements.

Platinum Life Master (10,000 MPs+)

Mary Savko (Barre and Florida) has surpassed 15,000 MPs. Her picture can be found in the July 2017 issue of the ACBL *Bridge Bulletin*. Frank Hacker, former Vermont resident and *Table Talk* editor emeritus has surpassed 10,000 MPs. His picture can be found in the November 2016 ACBL *Bridge Bulletin*. Lifetime achievements, to be sure!

Diamond Life Master (5,000 MPs)

Wayne Hersey (Montpelier) and Phil Sharpsteen (Jericho) have reached the 5,000 MP plateau. Congratulations!

Silver Life Master (1,000 MPs)

Dick Tracy (Sharon); Rick Clark (Waterbury); Ron Weiss (Brooklyn NY; adoptive Vermonter); and Mark Oettinger (Burlington).

Bronze Life Master

Linda Kaleita (Williston); Ken Kaleita (Williston); Karen Randle (Quechee); Israel Perlman (Bondville); and Sheila Long (Lyndonville).

NABC Master

Sheila Sharp (Shelburne).

Regional Master

Mary Cox (Burlington); Linda Aronsson (Williston); Jim Hanley (Burlington); and Mary Ann Kaplinsky (Woodstock).

Sectional Master

Doug Carlson (Quechee); and Ralph MacGregor (Williston).

Junior Master

Margaret Lawless (Burlington); and Marvelene Richards (Newport).

Apologies from the Editors for all of those we have undoubtedly omitted. Please let us know if you, or someone whom you know, has achieved a new ranking. Send updates to markoettinger@gmail.com.

Upcoming Unit and Nearby Events (greater detail in future issues)

Fall Sectional
White River Junction (Wilson Hotel)
October 27-29, 2017

Vermont Non-Life Master Sectional
Williston (Burlington Bridge Academy)
January 27, 2018

Vermont and Nearby Clubs

Lyndonville Bridge Club

70 Depot Street
Colby Library
Lyndonville, Vermont 05851
Jeanie Clermont; (802) 684-2156
Saturday, 1:00 p.m.; semi-monthly; stratified

Manchester and Mountains DBC

3624 Main Street
Multi-Purpose Room
Manchester Village, Vermont 05254
Bob Smith; (802) 362-4224

Pat Homes; pathomes@comcast.net

Monday; 12:15 (12:30?) p.m.; June, July, August, September, October; stratified

Friday; 12:15 (12:30?) p.m.; open; stratified

Website: www.bridgewebs.com/manchestermountains/

Manchester Equinox Village Open

49 Maple Street

Manchester, Vermont 05254

Elizabeth VonRiesenfelder; (802) 362-5304

Tuesday; 1:00 p.m.; 0-200 MPs

Tuesday; 1:00 p.m.; open, stratified

Sunday; 2:00 p.m.; February, March; open; stratified

Multiple sites; call first; reservations requested

Taconic Card Club

2282 Depot Street

Manchester, Vermont 05255

Kim Likakis; (802) 379-1867

Thursday; 12:45 p.m.; open

Reservations requested

Apollo Bridge Club

115 Main Street

Montpelier, Vermont 05602

Wayne Hersey; (802) 223-3922

Friday; 6:30 p.m.; open

Newport Club

84 Fyfe Street

Newport Center, Vermont 05855

Eric McCann; (802) 988-4773

Wednesday; 1:00 p.m.; exc. Jan, May, Oct, Nov, Dec; open; strat'd

Barton Bridge Club

34 School Street
Orleans, Vermont 05860
Linda Aiken; (802) 525-4617
Monday; 12:30 p.m.; open; stratified

Rutland Duplicate Bridge Club

66 South Main Street
Christ the King Church
Rutland, Vermont 05701
Raymond Lopes; (802) 779-2538
Monday, 12:00 Noon; open; stratified
Tuesday; 6:00 p.m.; open; stratified
Thursday; 6:30 p.m.; open; stratified
Multiple sites - call first

St. Albans DBC

75 Messenger Street
St. Albans, Vermont 05478
Marsha Anstey; (802) 524-3653
Monday; 7:00 p.m.; open

Burlington Bridge Club

600 Blair Park Road
Williston, Vermont 05495
Phil Sharpsteen; (802) 999-7767
Monday; 6:30 p.m.; 0-500 MPs; stratified
Tuesday; 7:00 p.m.; open; stratified
Wednesday; 9:15 a.m.; open; stratified
Wednesday; 1:30 p.m. 0-20 MPs; strat'd; *may resume Fall; pre-reg. & part. req'd*
Friday; 9:15 a.m.; open; stratified
Sunday; 1PM; open; semi-mo. exc. May, June, July, Aug; strat.; *call/check web*
Website: www.bridgewebs.com/burlingtonacademy/

Norwich DBC

43 Lebanon Street

Hanover, New Hampshire 03755
Michael Morris; (401) 215-4135
Tuesday; 6:30 p.m.; open; stratified

Eastman Bridge Club

57 Hanover Street
Knights of Columbus Hall
Lebanon, New Hampshire 03766
Jane Verdrager; (603) 865-5508
Tuesday; 1:00 p.m.; open; stratified; singles welcome/partner guar'd (Tues only)
Wednesday; 1:00 p.m.; open; stratified (partner not guaranteed for singles)
Friday; 1:00 p.m.; open; stratified (partner not guaranteed for singles)

Keene DBC

Elks Lodge
81 Roxbury Street
Keene, New Hampshire 03431
Anne McCune; (603) 352-2751
Monday; 12:00 Noon; open; stratified (partner available)
Thursday; 12:00 Noon; open; stratified (no partner guaranteed)

Useful & Fun Links

ACBL	www.acbl.org
District 25	www.nebridge.org
Unit 175	www.vermontbridge.org
Bridge Base Online	www.bridgebase.com
OKBridge	www.okbridge.com
Bridge Guys	www.bridgeguys.com
Pattaya Bridge Club	www.pattayabridge.com
Larry Cohen	www.larryco.com
Mike Lawrence	https://michaelslawrence.com/
Marty Bergen	www.martybergen.com
Baron Barclay Bridge Supply	www.baronbarclay.com
Michael's Bridge Sanctuary	www.mapiano.com/bridge.htm
Power Rankings	www.coloradospringsbridge.com/PR_FILES/PR.HTM

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