



THE DECLARER



Spring 2020

Volume 63 Issue 1

Peter Wright, Editor

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THE DECLARER

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The Declarer is published online four times per year by the New Jersey Bridge League (Unit 140, District 3 of the ACBL).

PLEASE NOTE:

The May 15-17 Unit 140 sectional tournament has been canceled .

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Arnie Kohn

We find ourselves in the midst of a serious epidemic. We have been advised to stay indoors as much as possible and to avoid other people. A great way to make the day shorter is to play bridge online. I recommend BBO, which is free, is simple to use, and makes it easy to compete. There are games at all levels and in all forms. You can play in ACBL tournaments, hourly for a small fee, or surf the system to play a team game or join a table for a relaxed game.

There is little need for a director, for the system does not allow you to bid or play out of turn. You cannot revoke or make an insufficient bid. There is a method to "self-alert" your conventional bids, visible to opponents but not to your partner. It is also possible for you and your partner to compose a convention card and post it for reference. Enjoy playing online until this situation comes under control.

[See also the articles on pages 3 and 10 - Editor]

KOHN'S KORNER

by Name

Bridge Bidding

The prevalence of bad matchpoint scores by beginning players is probably caused by not understanding bids made by partner. Convention Cards are your first means of communication and should be filled out completely. When the auction begins, every call one makes should be one that partner understands. Bridge bidding is actually a language whereby the partnership can tell a little bit

about their holdings at each opportunity to make a call. Calls include passes as well as positive bids in a suit or notrump. Should your opponents interfere, a pass may tell your partner more information than an actual bid. Learn which bids are forcing and which bids you are allowed to pass. A constructive dialogue between partners is more valuable than fancy conventions.

PLAYER OF THE YEAR RACE

Standings by range as of March 1, 2020

Player of the Year Masterpoints are those earned in Unit 140-sponsored events only. These comprise the annual Awards Brunch game, the four sectional tournaments held each year, the Autumnfest Newplicate and Autumnfest Charity Swiss events, and the Double Knockout team matches.

Player of the Year standings format has caught up with modern times and no longer lists separate categories for men and women. It is now consistent with the listings for Mini-McKenney and Ace of Clubs standings.

Masterpoint range	Player	Location	Score
0 - 100	Jared Schuller	Hillsborough	6.35
	Venkat Deshpande	Monroe	2.33
	J. P. Snyder	South Orange	1.97
	Mickey Jones	Orange	1.97
100 - 300	Martha Haviland	Bridgewater	5.93
	Jack Schrum	Bridgewater	5.93
	Lawrence Gordon	West Orange	3.79
300 - 1000	Zenon Komar	Summit	8.47
	Ed Lyons	South Plainfield	7.52
	Jean Lyons	South Plainfield	7.52
1000 - 2000	Ruth Yeselson	Highland Park	9.06
	Ashok Agarwala	Edison	7.19
	Komal Kamat	Plainsboro	7.19
Unlimited	Jiang Gu	Mountain Lakes	32.79
	Alexander Allen	Annandale	27.75
	Steve Arshan	Jackson	26.33

SUPPORT OUR BRIDGE CLUBS BY PLAYING ONLINE

by Brett Kunin

As a result of the covid-19 virus, the vast majority of bridge clubs in our unit have closed, and there are no sectional or regional tournaments to attend. Some clubs might not survive, as their fixed costs continue with no income generation. There is an online bridge development which may help to mitigate the situation.

I will be the first to admit that I far prefer the congeniality and social aspects of “live” games, in which I gain the “table presence” necessary for obtaining the maximum number of tricks. (I can never drop a stiff King “off-side” in an online bridge game.) Nevertheless, for those of us who are experiencing extreme bridge withdrawal symptoms, playing bridge on-line may be our only option.

The bridge community is fortunate in that the ACBL has reached out to BridgeBase OnLine, commonly known as BBO (accessed at www.bridgebase.com). BBO is now sponsoring several games which will benefit our financially struggling clubs. Three times per day (10 a.m., 5 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.), players can visit BBO with their favorite partners and, for a cost of only \$6.00 (at this time of publication), play 18 boards in an online session, \$4.00 of which will be sent by the ACBL to the players’ club(s). In addition, even lacking a partner, you can play an event **at any time** with a robot partner for the same amount, again benefiting the your club(s).

For those who have not played bridge online, there are some different rules. For example, you must “self-alert” conventional bids, rather than have partner do so, and you must also explain your alert. This really does take some “getting-used-to”; therefore, I would suggest that, before joining an actual game, practice with a number of hands would be helpful. There are also short tutorials on BBO on how to use the system.

For those who are not already BBO members: after getting onto the website, click on **Become a Member** and pick your “screen name” and password. You can then buy “Bridge bucks,” using a credit card, debit card, or PayPal, enabling you to play in any game on BBO which has a fee. Once you are comfortable and you and your favorite partner have exchanged your screen names, click on **ACBL World** and pick any game labeled **ACBLSYC** to play bridge. This will result in 80% of your entry fees being funneled back to your club(s). The expectation is that the ACBL will disburse funds received from BBO on a pro-rata basis, based on the club attendance of players in the recent past.

The effort by the ACBL and the cooperation by BBO represent a **real opportunity** for many of us to support the clubs we deeply love.

I strongly urge you to participate in this endeavor!

YOUTH BRIDGE

by Barbara Clark

Saturday, March 7, 2020, Unit 140 hosted a successful youth bridge tournament with 12 tables of enthusiastic youngsters. Many of our beginning students, who have only been learning the game since October, participated in this wonderful event. All of the kids were supportive and



helpful, providing a great experience for our newcomers. New to the group also were six kids brought from Princeton by Judy Kutin to the tournament, who were given ACBL student memberships. These youngsters were very excited and



enjoyed the game. Of the 48 students competing, 30 traveled from Orange, the remaining kids coming from New York, Connecticut, Edison, Livingston, Princeton, South Plainfield, Tenafly and Cranbury, NJ. Adding to our array of juices, snacks, brownies and pizza lunch, bridge teacher Amy Nellissen contributed healthy snack packs with a green bean, cherry tomato, celery stick and a delicious strawberry.

Jack Boge, playing with partner Avery Silverstein, returned on Sunday to play in the Round Robin Teams event. Lacking teammates, they played with two kids from Orange who were there to caddy. The pair said that it didn't matter if they won or not, but they would be happy winning one game. They came very close to achieving this objective losing one match by only 6 IMPs.



Jack Boge commented that the Orange kids had played well on Saturday and that he looked forward to seeing them in Montreal. He also suggested that we add team games for youth, which we will try to accomplish.



YOUTH BRIDGE
by Barbara Clark
[concluded]

Congratulations to all our winners!

North - South

1. **Bernard Francis – Benjamin Francis** 71.33%
Orange, NJ
2. **Precious Onyeagocha – Divine Onyeagocha** 60.17%
Orange, NJ
3. **Leo Huellstrunk – Soren Halvorsen** 59.08%
Princeton, NJ
4. **Iyahna Barrett – Amelia Johnson-Jackson** 57.00%
Orange, NJ
5. **Katherine Hwang – Amalia Kutin** 56.67%
New York, NY, and Princeton, NJ

East - West

1. **Lizbeth Torres – Derrick Zhao** 80.17%
Orange, NJ and Westfield, NJ
2. **Avery Silverstein – Jack Boge** 76.33%
Connecticut and New York, NY
3. **Autumn Tarver – Aryssa Black** 74.00%
Orange, NJ
4. **Rian Souffrant – Mike Morocho** 62.17%
Orange, NJ
5. **Ta Quan Neblett – Destiny Rodney** 46.17%
Orange, NJ



*Mike Morocho
Rian Souffanti
4th E-W*



*Leo Huellstrunk
Soren Halvorsen
3rd N-S*



*Iyahna Barrett
Amelia Johnson-Jackson
4th N-S*



*Autumn Tarver
Aryssa Black
3rd E-W*



*Jack Boge
Avery Silverstein
2nd E-W*



*Precious Onyeagocha
Divine Onyeagocha
2nd N-S*



*Bernard Francis
Benjamin Francis
1st N-S*



*Lizbeth Torres
Derrick Zhao
1st E-W*

MORE MILEAGE FROM 4NT

by Eli Duttman

This article is directed towards the intermediate or advancing player, but an advanced player may find something of value.

Players are familiar with 4NT being quantitative, after a 1NT opening. In addition to the obvious case of a natural bid, another non-Blackwood option for 4NT is what the Blue Team called a general cue bid. A general cue bid is 4NT and (sometimes) 5NT showing controls in several suits, simultaneously.

Before Easley Blackwood introduced his ace-asking device, Ely Culbertson introduced 4NT showing either three Aces or two Aces and the King of a bid suit. Please observe that the bid both *provides* and, at the same time, *asks* for information. The Culbertson 4NT is the first instance of a general cue bid.

The Neapolitan Club System, precursor to Blue Team Club, introduced *Declarative Informative* (DI) 4NT. **DI allows a partnership to employ both Blackwood and general cue bids.** 4NT is DI when:

- The bid is made without jumping,
- It occurs in the third or later round of the auction, and
- (Usually,) it follows a cue bid in a suit.

The requirements for bidding DI 4NT are:

- Two or more Aces,
- Second-round control or better in all suits bid naturally, and 2nd round control or better in all suits not bid naturally by the partnership. Please observe that, frequently, if the DI criteria are satisfied, the Culbertson criteria are satisfied and vice versa.

A currently fashionable cue bidding method does not distinguish between 1st and 2nd round controls. I'm not fashionable! Like Culbertson, Goren, and Rosenkranz, I think cue bidding 1st round controls before 2nd round controls is correct. Doing so, along with sticking to the strict DI criteria, *avoids accidents*. Bypassing a possible 1st round control showing cue bid indicates not having said control. Information is conveyed.

Two boards from play, as opposed to constructs, follow. The actions shown frequently do not follow the current fashion. Currently fashionable methods may also obtain the premium results, but *the smooth progression in the examples provided is emphasized*.

Example 1

Opener

♠ K5
♥ A82
♦ AK1054
♣ A84

Responder

♠ A3
♥ 973
♦ Q8
♣ KQJ1052

1♦ A nice 5-card suit and *all prime cards* make this hand **too** good for a (sic) 16-18 1NT opening. Even if the hand were 4=3=3=3, those prime cards make it a bit too strong.

3NT I'm too good for a 1NT opening and expect success opposite a minimum 2♣ takeout of 1♦.

4♥ As 4♦ is ambiguous, this bid confirms Clubs as trump, while showing the ♥A. Here, 4NT and 5♣ are sign-off attempts.

4NT **DI** meets the requirements *and then some*.

5NT Either repeat **DI** or Grand Slam Force.

2♣ **Not game-forcing**; instead, forcing to 2NT or to the 3-level in a suit.

4♣ With seven tricks opposite better than 1NT, must act **vigorously**. A takeout of game into a part-score is a vigorous slam try. 5♣ would show fear of 3NT and deny slam interest.

4♠ I have the ♠A.

5♦ A **crucial** Diamond feature of great importance. The Queen of partner's suit is frequently equal to a stray King.

7♣ Regardless of how 5NT is interpreted, taking the superb trump holding into account yields this bid.

[continued on next page]

MORE MILEAGE FROM 4NT*by Eli Duttman***[concluded]****Example 2****Opener**

♠ AQ
 ♥ AKJ73
 ♦ 6
 ♣ Q10765

Responder

♠ K952
 ♥ 6
 ♦ A82
 ♣ AK832

- 1♥ Routine.
- 3♦ Splinter raise of Clubs, showing slam interest, 4+ card support, and shortage in the suit bid. (To jump the bidding in an already-game-forcing situation would waste space; if used, a jump should serve a specific purpose.)
- 4♥ ♥A
- 5NT Shows the other two Aces and maximum values for the previous bids.
- 2♣ Game-forcing, except if followed by 3♣
- 4♦ ♦A, the only first-round control held outside of trumps.
- 4NT DI, pinpointing the ♠K.
- 7♣ Partner has made an **aggressive** grand slam try. Trump support will be better than four small. Save for Responder's two small Spades, everything is immediately accounted for. A 6-card Heart suit headed by the AK, the ♠A, plus four Clubs headed by the Queen in dummy will provide reasonable play for a grand, and partner has indicated a better holding than that. A 5-card Heart suit headed by the AK, good trumps, along with the ♠A and either major suit Queen, will certainly provide the requisite loser coverage. It seems that 13 tricks are there for the taking and the grand slam should be bid.

Blackwood is a "Captain and Private" affair: an order is issued and obeyed. **Cue bidding**, as in showing an Ace, or DI 4NT is **much** more flexible than jerking partner around on marionette strings. **Tell**, don't **ask**, or combine the two by employing DI 4NT.

In a hand titled, "The Right Ace, the Right Singleton," found in Charles Goren's *Contract Bridge Complete*, a slam is available if (and only if) a specific Ace and a specific singleton are present. Ham-fisted Blackwood is not able to extract such bits of information. Read the greatest-ever bridge teacher's offering for additional information.

NEW PERMANENT HOME FOR SECTIONALS

by Brett Kunin

By the time this article is published, I will have completed my term as the Unit Tournament Chair. As most of you already know, we were advised, on *extremely* short notice, that the Hungarian- American Club, the site for a substantial number of our sectionals for over 25 years, was closing. Because of the excellent relationship we had with them, I was able to convince their General Manager to permit us to hold our March sectional there, well beyond the club's original scheduled closing date.

The immediate objective of my co-chair Kelly Kiefer and myself was to secure a site for our May and August sectionals, rather than cancel them. We were able to achieve that by holding these sectionals at the Elks Club in Edison. Although the site is over 40% smaller than the Hungarian-American Club, and we will be rather "cramped," it gave us the time we needed to find a new permanent location.

I am pleased to report that we have found what we hope will be a new permanent location: the Polish Cultural Center in Clark. We have contracted with them to hold our December 2020 sectional and all eight sectionals in 2021 and 2022 at their facility. Their Exhibit Hall is huge (35% larger than the Hungarian-American Club), and we will also be able to resume holding Youth Bridge events in a separate room there.

My thanks to all who, in the interim period, presented ideas to us for possible sites.

Mark your calendars for the following 2020 Unit 140 sectional tournament dates and venues:

August 14 – 16 Elks Club, Edison
December 18-20 Polish Cultural Center, Clark

BIG GAMES

(must have 5 tables to qualify)

February - March**OPEN**

76.33%	Lynn Chapin / Donna Dulet	Little Silver
73.41%	Jeffrey Halle / Roy Samitt	Jersey
72.50%	Donna Dulet / Steve Arshan	Toms River
72.50%	Akshay Shah / Arnold Kohn	Grand Slam
72.41%	William Esberg / Robin Shamah	Jersey
72.32%	Alexander Allen / William Esberg	Jersey
72.22%	Roberta Lenorth / Jeannie Cleary	Two Rivers
72.22%	Cheryl Gorman / Charles Hage	Two Rivers
71.63%	Judy Rothstein / Jacek Leznicki	Essex
71.34%	Paul Fried / Bob Miller	Monroe
71.17%	Ashok Agarwala / Komal Kamat	SETU
70.83%	Harold Schachter / Beau Norton	Toms River
70.48%	Deborah Sack / Robert Levinson	Freehold
70.42%	Dolores Smith / Rich Jagodzinski	Four Seasons
70.21%	Steve Arshan / Donna Dulet	Toms River

[Note: Recording of 70% scores and higher is suspended pending the passing of the pandemic and the resumption of club games. - Editor]

LIMITED/INVITATIONAL

82.74%	Carole Waung / Mark Picillo	Essex
77.68%	Cindy Goldstein / Leanne Rettig	Essex
75.42%	John Gimblette / Richard Levendusky	Four Seasons
74.55%	Pam Stone / Janice Beckman	Essex
73.66%	Mark Pesner / Patricia Einbender	Essex
73.32%	Joy Scally / Peg Mittricker	Essex
72.50%	Joseph Zawadzki / Gloria Gribin	Jersey
71.83%	Jill Cohn / Robert Stricof	Essex
71.52%	Trudy Sarver / Sheila Grant	Essex
71.43%	Pam Morse / Rob Morse	Essex
71.43%	Colin Kelley / Dorothy Koernig	Canoe Brook
71.43%	Ellie Levene / Michael O'Donahue	Regency
71.24%	Corinne Driver / Betsy Taliaferro	Montclair
70.83%	Daphne Hanrahan / Wendy Peterson	Essex
70.24%	Lisa Molisani / Janet Levy	Essex
70.00%	Susan Harden / Debra Shelkowitz	Essex
70.00%	Denise Fisher / Jay Fisher	Essex
70.00%	George Kaufman / Rick Finkel	Essex
70.00%	Tracey Moreno / Allan Schwartz	Jersey

HEART STACK ATTACK

by Peter Wright

The bidding is unsurprising. As South, I open the obvious 1♠. North makes a game-forcing 2♦ response, knowing that, as a staunch “Two-over-One” believer, I will not fail to show a 4-card Heart suit if I have one. And I do, so I do. Show it, that is. North now wastes no time, asking for keycards immediately and settling sadly for everybody’s unfavorable contract, 5-of-a-major, when I report ownership of only one measly keycard.

Dealer: South
Vul: N-S

North

♠ –
♥ KJ95
♦ KQJ84
♣ AKJ4

West

♠ 104
♥ 107643
♦ A106
♣ 953

East

♠ A9853
♥ –
♦ 932
♣ Q10862

South

♠ KQJ762
♥ AQ82
♦ 75
♣ 7

The bidding:

<u>South</u>	<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>
1♠	Pass	2♦	Pass
2♥	Pass	4NT	Pass
5♣ ¹	Pass	5♥ ²	Pass
All Pass			

1. RKC 1430
2. (sigh)

Opening lead: ♠10

OK no slam. I have a great dummy, though, and the contract appears safe. I dream of taking 12 tricks by ruffing out the ♠A, but I lack the necessary entries to my hand for that.

Nope, I decide to settle for 11 tricks. I give East the ♠A (West certainly isn’t underleading it!), expecting to make lots of side tricks in that suit. I pitch a Club from dummy and East grabs his Ace. (Perhaps he’d do better to let the ♠10 ride, but who, other than a Grand Poobah, could psych that out, I ask you?) East returns the ♠9 at trick #2, which I win with the ♠K, pitching a Diamond from dummy. Next, I ruff a 3rd Spade (West discarding a Diamond) to ensure that the suit will run later on.

Now I can draw trumps and enjoy my Spades, losing only the ♦A along the way. Even if trumps split 4-1, I have no worries – I *think*. When East shows out on the lead of the ♥K at trick #4, however, I signal for a timeout.

West’s trumps are daunting in number, if not in size. I’ll need just a modicum of luck with West’s minor suit holdings to balance the demonic 5-0 trump split.

Six or seven commercials run during my timeout, but now I’m back with a plan, sort of. At trick #5, I call for dummy’s ♦K, which rides around to West’s Ace. The furshluginger opponents now have *book*. (Remember “book”? The term seems to have disappeared from tournament vocabulary. It means the enemy has had its dinner and must be sent to bed with no dessert, if I’m to make my contract.)

If West returns a Heart at this point, I go down, but he comes back with another Diamond. I win the ♦Q at trick #6, and here’s the position, with dummy on lead at trick #7:

North

♠ –
♥ J9
♦ J8
♣ AKJ

West

♠ –
♥ 10764
♦ –
♣ 953

East

♠ 85
♥ –
♦ 9
♣ Q1086

South

♠ QJ6
♥ AQ8
♦ –
♣ 7

Time to cash the ♣AK, which I do, but what next? I need to ruff back to my hand, but in which minor? Back at #3, West discarded a Diamond, so I ruff the ♣J, and West follows with a barely suppressed snarl. (If he had discarded a Club back at trick #3, he’d now have a 3rd Diamond, and I could get back to hand with a ruff of that suit. Life can be beautiful.) When my ♥8 lives, I’m in the driver’s seat. West has twice as many trumps (4) as dummy or myself, but his are all losers, since his ♥10 writhes in agony under dummy’s ♥J9. I merrily crossruff the last four tricks. E-W pack up their *book* and move to what they hope will be a more hospitable table.

Full disclosure: the printed hand analysis says 11 tricks are available at double dummy, but the analyst has peeked at the E-W cards. Me, I say that in real life I can make 11 tricks only if the defense goofs, which has been known to happen. I have consulted an oracle who characterizes this hand as “a real chess problem, even if you know 5-0 Hearts.” He further oracularizes that, after conceding the ♠A at trick #1 and ruffing a Spade at trick #2, declarer *must not touch trumps!* Instead, well, it’s complicated. Go consult your own oracle.

ROUGH WATERS vs CALM SEAS*by Francis Gupta***The Beautiful Game in the Time of Social/Physical Distancing**

The beautiful game refers to football (we call it soccer in the US), but for bridge players, the “beautiful game” could also refer to the game of bridge. Players who are familiar with both football and bridge would willingly acknowledge that it is perfectly okay to share the beautiful game designation with the game of bridge.

This is because the analogies between the sport of football and the game of bridge are countless. For instance, the key to performance in both the games is excellent team/partnership communication and understanding of the opponents’ communications. The better the team/partnership communication and understanding, the better the performance. And while working as a team/partnership is critical to performance, both games provide enough room for players to showcase elements of individual brilliance and skill while on attack/declarer play or on defense.

However, the most important single aspect that football and bridge have in common is that both are social games. By “social” I mean that players get to spend time with members of both their own team and that of the opposing team(s). This social aspect, combined with the fact that the games are a pleasure to watch, makes for a beautiful game!

With respect to bridge, the games held at bridge clubs everywhere provide the perfect venue for enjoying this social aspect of the game. Because the games at most clubs are structured as duplicate games (versus strictly social) they are more competitive. But this does not take away from the social element.

In fact, if playing three boards per round, the 20 minutes or so spent with the opponents during the round is about the perfect time to exchange some niceties and,

if possible, learn something interesting about them. If playing 24 to 27 boards, a club game lasts between 3 to 3.5 hours. This time spent with your partner, though never enough to review all of your strategy and plays, gives every partnership an opportunity to getting to know each other better.

Unfortunately, during these times of the COVID-19 pandemic, the club games can no longer be held. Though one can continue enjoying playing bridge online, it is understandable that players are missing the social aspect of the game. This is a big loss for the beautiful game. But it goes without saying, that this is a sacrifice we all have to make as we do our part to “flatten the curve.” In addition to maintaining social/physical distancing with others, wash your hands often, try not to touch your face, and, if needed, wear a mask. If we all do our part, the hope is that we can put the pandemic behind us and can get back to playing the beautiful game the way it was meant to be played: with a deck of cards and sitting face-to-face at a table with a partner and your opponents.

Meanwhile, to ease the wait of getting back to the club games, the American Contract Bridge League (ACBL) has partnered with Bridge Base Online (BBO) to hold three “Support Your Club” games online every day. The games cost \$6 per player (as of this publication date) and award black points. A majority of the proceeds goes to support the bridge clubs across the country. Currently, the game is limited to a maximum of 600 partnerships (300 tables) and sells out in a couple of minutes after it is posted online on BBO, which is exactly two hours before the start time of each game. Participating in these games is the easiest way for players to support their clubs.

NACHO AVERAGE GENDER BENDER*by Jay Korobow*

I was recently back at the Late Night Random IMP Pairs on BBO, this time partnering Helge “not a woman” from somewhere in Scandinavia. Quite possibly Helge had been abandoned enough times by someone from the “nacho” countries (no, I will not name nations) who think they must secure a male partner for their best efforts to occur. Oh, did I say “nacho”? I meant “macho” of course; please take inference at your own risk!

As is often the case, other than stating “not a woman,” Helge’s profile gave no clue of what system he (not-she) plays. Nor was “his” skill level revealed. I suspected Helge was somewhat accomplished because he gave me some grief on the prior board when I picked up ♠5 ♥9873 ♦AKQ10 ♣KQT9, heard LHO open 1♥, and my partner Helge overcall 1♠. This would be a problem in any partnership, even the most experienced ones, without some good agreements.

At that juncture I wasn’t even sure Helge knew what a cue bid was, much less whether it promised a fit (for Spades) or what other bids were forcing by me. So I guessed to bid 2♦, which was unfortunately followed by three passes! I played the heck out of the 4-2 fit (partner held ♠A8632 ♥105 ♦74 ♣A762) to make eight tricks and +90. This scored about half an IMP, as some reached 3NT and made it. And Helge was quick to point out both that 5♣ should make and that I should have found a 2♥ cue bid instead of 2♦. Sigh.

At unfavorable vulnerability I then picked up ♠AQ1082 ♥5 ♦AK4 ♣Q862 as dealer and opened 1♠. After LHO passed, Helge bid 1NT, and my RHO bid 2♥. Now what? With some partners, a double would be for takeout and a nice choice, but I doubted Helge would be on the same wavelength. Pass, 2NT, and 3♣ all were possibilities, and I chose the last one, well, because I might get to play the hand, of course! With ♠64 ♥J642 ♦986 ♣AKJ7 Helge now had an even tougher choice of calls. Confident of his ♦986 stopper! (and ♥J642!!), Helge chose

3NT, like the macho (not nacho) bidder he was. I suspect Bob Hamman, and maybe many others, would approve, but as one can see, it wasn’t a favorite to make on this night:

The bidding:

<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>	<u>West</u>
1♠	Pass	1NT	2♥
3♣	Pass	3NT	All Pass

Not unreasonably, West started off with top Hearts, and for lack of much else appealing cleared the suit to Helge’s ♥J. This brought the trick total up to eight, with actually a 75% chance of a vulnerable game making, should either the ♠K or ♠J be onside. Since East had of course shown out of Hearts, one could try a finesse of either Spade, and then try another finesse should the first one fail. Only if both Spades were offside (and misguessed) would the vulnerable 3NT game go set.

As the diagram shows, sadly East had ♠KJ93 so a happy ending was not on the horizon. Helge took an immediate Spade finesse, losing the ♠Q to the ♠K, and won the Club return in dummy. But before running the remaining Clubs preparatory to attempting another Spade play, Helge actually cashed dummy’s ♦AK. So after 1 Spade, 4 Hearts, 2 Diamonds, and three of the four Clubs were played, the position that remained was:

<u>North</u>		<u>East</u>	
♠ A10		♠ J9	
♦ 4		♦ Q	
<u>West</u>		<u>South</u>	
♠ 7		♠ 6	
♥ 108		♦ 9	
		♣ J	

When Helge cashed the final ♣J, pitching dummy’s remaining Diamond, East elected to hope the diamond ♦9 was in West’s hand, not Helge’s. Though a Spade discard might create a position for declarer to work out (dropping the now stiff ♠J, upon realizing that West cannot possibly have started with 3 spades), East’s decision to hold on to spade ♠J9 meant pitching his last Diamond. And Helge, who had had the forethought to cash dummy’s ♦AK early, was paying attention and cashed the now good ♦9! And received both “very well done partner” (from me) and an 11 IMPs reward.

I guess Helge’s evaluation of his Diamond holding was “spot on” after all. And because I have already made too many “almost” sexist comments in this article, I won’t comment on our President’s preference for immigration from the Scandinavian countries, but I wonder if he knows “not a woman” Helge?

Dealer: North	<u>North</u>		<u>East</u>
Vul: none	♠ AQ1082		♠ KJ93
	♥ 5		♥ 9
	♦ AK4		♦ QJ752
	♣ Q862		♣ 1053
	<u>West</u>		<u>South</u>
	♠ 75		♠ 64
	♥ AKQ10873		♥ J642
	♦ 103		♦ 986
	♣ 94		♣ AKJ7