



THE DECLARER



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THE DECLARER

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PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

by Arnold Kohn

In May we learned that the director of District #25 (New England) had submitted a motion for consideration by the ACBL National Board of Directors at their meeting on May 29. It advocated permission for an unlimited number of virtual regionals and sectionals, to be run by the units and districts, respectively, that had previously been sanctioned by the ACBL during the pandemic.

One of the objectives of the New Jersey Bridge League, as stated in our by-laws, is ***“to help its Affiliated Clubs grow and prosper.”*** A number of our club owners and NJBL board members were alarmed by the District 25 motion and felt that a formal statement of opposition to the District #25 motion should be prepared.

We quickly organized an executive board meeting on May 26 via Zoom. Stephanie Miller, Paul (Kelly) Kiefer, Himanshu Joshi, Brett Kunin, and I met; the opinions of board members David Sutton and Jessie Reisman had previously been obtained. We decided unanimously that the District #25 proposal would be detrimental, both virtually and when things turn back to normal, to the wellbeing of our clubs. Brett Kunin was entrusted to prepare a recommendation to be sent to District #3 director Carlos Munoz for presentation by Carlos at the ACBL meeting.

The NJBL Board’s concern was for protecting the existence of the virtual clubs as well as club survival after the pandemic. Brett’s recommendation and Carlos Munoz’s reply are printed on the next page.

NJBL Executive Committee Recommendation

The NJBL held a Virtual Meeting of the Executive Committee on Tuesday, May 26th

At the Meeting, the Committee was unanimously opposed to any actions during the current pandemic which would have a deleterious effect upon the Virtual Clubs on BridgeBase On-Line (hereafter referred to as "BBO"). Accordingly, as the largest Unit in District #3, we urge you, in the strongest possible terms, to vote against the Motion of Bob Bertoni of D#25 (which proposes that Units and Districts be given unfettered authority to schedule Sectionals and Regionals, respectively, on dates previously granted Sanctions by the ACBL). Our discussions noted not only that the Virtual clubs did experience a significant drop in attendance during the recent successful Regional held nationwide, but also that we believe that a proliferation of Sectionals and Regionals could, and probably would, devastate the Virtual clubs, to the extent that many may no longer have the financial ability to be viable and survive after the pandemic ends.

Similarly, although we agree that during the pandemic, ONLY the ACBL should have the authority to schedule Virtual Sectionals and Regionals on BBO, we again urge you to support any and all measures to ensure that their number(s) be extremely protracted, as the large numbers of pigmented points issued in such events would also drastically affect the attendance at the Virtual clubs.

We firmly believe that our actions are required under the NJBL's ByLaws, which require that one of our primary objectives is to "help its affiliated clubs grow and prosper", as yours should also be as our District Director.

Thank you.

Response from District #3 Director

From: Carlos Munoz

To: *[various board members]*

Date: May 29, 2020

Subject: Board meeting update

As previously advised, the ACBL Board held three meetings over the last two days, including one largely devoted to discussing the motion to initiate online district regionals. The general feeling was that priority must be given to providing viability for clubs and financial stability for the League. HQ staff and an outside statistical expert felt that the revenue to the ACBL would be substantially less than outlined in the motion, and the ability to support the efforts would be beyond the capacity of HQ staff. This is in question since the proposal to include players from contiguous districts plus historical attendance was not really included. I suggested that the viability of the clubs certainly must be protected and what we should discuss is the possibility of limited district regionals, perhaps one per district with a trial effort of one or two to establish parameters and viability, but must felt that any such actions should await the post Covid-19 world, which may in any case require rethinking of the greater tournament and future FTF environment. The motion failed 20-5.

Separately, we discussed Tampa, deferring any decision for the moment, although risk has been mitigated by reduction in related commitments. Florida also has begun renegotiating contracts to include specific reference to pandemics, as opposed to relying on "force majeure" – something we should consider (Florida has two or three regionals coming up before Tampa).

We also accepted reports of three online cheating charges, which resulted in disciplinary actions of suspensions of 90 to 180 days to two years. All involved relatively inexperienced players and we were assured that similar actions by more experienced players would have received harsher treatment.

The Board will be reviewing with management plans for the immediate future, now that the profitability of the online tournaments (\$200,000_ for the League) has been established, and it may be possible to bring back some furloughed employees and/or reduce the 20% payroll cuts.

ROUGH WATERS VS CALM SEAS

by Francis Gupta

Partnering with m8484

The Longest Day is an annual ACBL fundraising event to support the fight against Alzheimer’s disease by the Alzheimer’s Association. Games are hosted by clubs and the ACBL sanctioned fees raised by the clubs go directly to the Alzheimer’s Association or Alzheimer’s Society of Canada. This year, due to the covid-19 pandemic, the club games were held virtually on BBO.

This year, the Longest Day also happened to fall on Father’s Day and because many fathers and their spouses and children have plans for that special day, I paid \$0.25 extra to rent a BBO robot (or “bot”) to partner with me in the Shrine-Jersey Bridge Club’s Longest Day game. Yes, now you can partner with a bot in a club game on BBO. My bot, essentially an artificial intelligence (AI) program, was given the title **m8484** for the duration of our game. On BBO, depending on the tournament, bots substitute for human partners or even for both opponents. Once you familiarize yourself with their bidding, bots can make good partners. However, unlike Siri or Alexa, they are unable to chat and are also incapable of performing a post-game analysis.

Probably because it was Father’s Day, the game was unusually small with only 12 partnerships. Going through the roster of partnerships I was pleasantly surprised to see two other human/bot partnerships participating in the game. For those who haven’t partnered with bots, they play the 2/1 game-forcing system, and you are required to play the bot’s convention card, which can be found on the BBO website.

However, to make things easy, you are not required to memorize the card since all bot bids are transparent and explained to both you and the opponents. The same goes for your bids. Before you make a bid, you will view its meaning as per the bot’s card, and if you make that bid, the explanation will be conveyed to the opponents. Therefore, if you intentionally make a bid outside of the bot’s card, you do so at your own peril.

As an example, consider the following bidding sequence:

Bot	Opponent	You	Opponent
1♠	Pass	3♠	

Partnerships can play this as a Bergen weak raise (fewer than 7 HCP + 4 Spades) or a limit raise (11-12 HCP + 4 Spades). The BBO robot plays this as the latter. Therefore, if you intentionally bid 3♠ with a weak hand in response to the bot’s 1♠ opening bid, it will be explained to opponents as a limit raise because that is the bot’s understanding. And though this will mislead the opponents, it will also mislead the bot, who might raise to game with a minimum opener, or who might start slam bidding with a strong hand. I have learnt that it is best to bid your hand truthfully. But sometimes human judgment has to prevail, as the following hand illustrates.

This is board #11 from the Shrine-JBC Longest Day game on Father’s Day, played on BBO. With no one vulnerable, RHO, South, has dealt and passed. I am sitting West, holding:

♠ AQ832 ♥ – ♦ A10987 ♣ 732

Even though I have only 10 HCP, I open 1♠. Remember: you can see the meaning of every bid before making it, but I intentionally open with a bid not exactly consistent with the bot’s system. When I bid 1♠, the opponents are immediately alerted as:

Major suit opening: 5+ ♠; 11-21 HCP; 12-22 total points.

North passes. My partner **m8484** responds with 2♦. Again, the entire table, including me, is alerted as:

Forcing two over one: 13+ HCP; biddable ♦; 14+ total points; forcing to 3NT.

This is what I meant when I said earlier that you don’t need to memorize the bot’s card.

Since we were now in a game forcing auction, I am beginning to regret opening with 10 HCP. But I reason that, as long as we play in a Diamond or Spade contract, we are all right.

Additionally, the 2♦ response by partner does not deny holding 3 Spades, so a 4♠ contract is still a possibility. However, it does show a 4+ Diamond suit, and for that I am

[continued next page]

ROUGH WATERS VS CALM SEAS

[concluded]

glad. RHO passes, and I raise partner's bid to 3♦, saying that I like diamonds. This bid is alerted to opponents as:

Raise of minor: 4+♦; 5+♠; 11-21 HCP; 12-22 total points.

In other words, in terms of HCP, the meaning of the bid is the same as the 1♠ bid. But in terms of distribution, I am telling partner and opponents that my hand is two-suited with 5+ Spades and 4+ Diamonds.

After LHO passes, I hold my breath and hope that **m8484** reverts to Spades. But the next bid **m8484** makes is 3NT. This is alerted to opponents as:

13-18 HCP; biddable♦; 14+ total points; partial stop in♣; partial stop in♥.

Essentially, the 3NT bid limits the hand to 18 HCP and promises stoppers in the unbid suits, Clubs and Hearts.

The 3NT bid makes it clear that **m8484** does not hold 3 Spades. In a NT contract, besides not only having the required HCP for an opening hand, my hand is further diminished in value by having too few entries. And though I could see us taking perhaps 5 Diamonds, 2 Spades (with a Queen finesse) and the stoppers in Clubs and Hearts), I feel my hand will play better in a suit contract. But instead of bidding 4♦ to show a minimum distributional hand, on a whim I bid 5♦. This is alerted to opponents as:

4+♦; 5+♠; 15-17 total points.

Notice the alert does not mention HCP. Therefore, counting my Heart void as 5 points (because in a suit contract my hand has first round control of Hearts), I do have 15-17 total points.

Now that we are in game (a bot will not stop bidding until you get to game in a 2/1 system), I think **m8484** will pass. Instead, the bot raises to 6♦, a small slam. My first thought is: perhaps I should have trusted my partner and passed the 3NT contract. My second thought is: perhaps partner is on the high side of the HCP range and has a long Diamond suit. Anyway, it is too late now. 6♦ is alerted as:

13-18 HCP; biddable♦; 14+ total points; partial stop in♣; partial stop in♥.

Since the 3NT bid has already described **m8484**'s holding, the 6♦ bid gives no more information about the hand.

Here is the summary of this heart-pounding (at least as far as I was concerned) auction:

N	m8484*	S	Me*
		Pass	1♠
Pass	2♦	Pass	3♦
Pass	3NT	Pass	5♦
Pass	6♦	All Pass	

*All bids alerted to the entire table according to BBO's bot convention card and as described in the article.

The full hand is as follows:

	<u>North</u>	
Dealer: South	♠ 95	
Vul: All	♥ Q98764	
	♦ 432	
	♣ Q5	
	<u>West</u>	<u>East</u>
	♠ AQ832	♠ 106
	♥ -	♥ AKJ2
	♦ A10987	♦ KJ65
	♣ 764	♣ A98
	<u>South</u>	
	♠ KJ74	
	♥ 1053	
	♦ Q	
	♣ KJ1032	

Source: Shrine-JBC on BBO.

With ♦Q opening lead, partner makes seven. (Keep in mind that **m8484** is an AI program and has perfect recall of the count and spots in every suit.) With the ♠K onside and enough trump entries to dummy to develop a Spade winner to discard a Heart or Club loser, it is difficult to come up with a lead that holds the contract to six.

At another table, also with a human/bot E-W partnership, the bidding on this hand went as follows:

N	Bot*	S	Human*
		Pass	1♠
Pass	2♦	Pass	3♦
Pass	3♥	Pass	3♠
Pass	4♠		

*All bids alerted to the entire table according to BBO's bot convention card. Source: Shrine-JBC on BBO.

So, unlike **m8484**, this bot chose to show the 4-card Heart suit (perfectly reasonably) instead of bidding 3NT. It seems bots, like humans, also like to experiment with their bidding.

As it turned out, my bot and I had a good game. I'd like to think that **m8484** was a papa bot and was having fun on Father's Day. Now if only it could chat and say, "typ."

REMEMBRANCES

The Board of Directors of the New Jersey Bridge League offer their condolences to the family and friends of the following members of ACBL Unit 140. They will be missed at our bridge tables. We would like to remember all who support and participate in this great game. Please notify Susan Atteridge at Susan.Atteridge@gmail.com of any deaths within our membership, and indicate, when known, dates of passing and club(s) attended.

Colin Couchman
d. May 8, 2020
Frequent player at Essex

Seshu Das
d. March 31, 2020
Frequent player at Essex

Muffy Dixon
d. May 1, 2020
Frequent player at Montclair Golf Club

Tony Inguaggioto
d. April 25, 2020
Frequent player at Essex

Harry Katz
d. March 31, 2020
Frequent player at Essex

Ron Panitch
February 28, 2020
Frequent player at Grand Slam

Gary Reiner
April 30, 2020
Frequent player at Essex

Felice Shrager
April 9, 2020
Frequent player at BCCNJ

Bernice Stein
May 20, 2020
Frequent player at Shrine

KOHN'S KORNER *by Arnold Kohn*

Simple Card Combinations

With advent of "virtual" Bridge, I have witnessed some severe mishandlings of basic card holdings. Below are two examples. These are one-suit situations and could be your trump suit. Assume that you have entries to either hand

QJxx opposite Axx. Anyone can score two tricks with this holding, but to score three tricks, lead toward the Queen-Jack holding. You will score three tricks any time the King is in front of the QJxx, or the suit splits three-three.

Q109x opposite A8xx (missing the King and Jack). Lead the Queen toward the A8xx. Should it be covered with King, you have your three tricks, needing only to drive out the Jack. Should the Queen win, next lead the 10. If this loses to the Jack, you now have your three tricks in the suit. This play has a 75% chance of success.

2 - LEVEL OVERCALLS

by Ken Trock

What does a 2-level overcall look like? We're talking about competitive auctions like

RHO	You
1♠	2♣
1♠	2♥

or

LHO	Pard	RHO	You
1♦	Pass	1♠	2♣

not

RHO	You
1♦	2♥
1♦	2♠

These last two are of course jump overcalls which are generally played weak.

Say both sides are non-vulnerable and you're playing MPs (all hands here will be assumed playing MPs). You pick up ♠Kx ♥QJx ♦xxx ♣KQxxx in 2nd seat and hear RHO open 1♦. We've been taught that a 2-level overcall should be an opening hand. Yours isn't, but we've all had partners come in with 2♣, I might have once or twice myself!

Some players nowadays are willing to shade requirements for this bid in order to compete, since partner, holding ♠Axx ♥Kxx ♦xxxx ♣J10x, will be unable to balance if it comes around to them after

RHO	You	LHO	Pard
1♦	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♠	Pass	Pass	?

Had you originally overcalled 2♣ with your hand, partner would likely have competed to 3♣, where down one is a good score considering the other side can make 2♣, possibly 3♣.

What we're doing here is essentially changing the point range for the overcall from 13-18 to a good 10-18 HCP. Of course, the worse your suit, the greater the chance your lefty might be sitting over you with a trump stack as bad as AJ9xx.

Having an agreement to include the wider range of 10-18 HCP might give your partner pause in some situations.

LHO	Pard	RHO	You
1♠	2♣	3♠*	?

*weak

What would you bid with ♠xx ♥Kxx ♦Kxxx ♣Jxxx in 4th seat with both sides vulnerable?

If I could depend on partner's having a decent hand and suit, I'd be inclined to compete to 4♣. If not, then I'd be afraid we'd go down two for a bad score of -200.

Try this, again both sides vulnerable and again you're in 4th seat with ♠Qx ♥K10xx ♦xxxx ♣Kxx.

LHO	Pard	RHO	You
1♥	2♣	2♥	3♣
3♥	Pass	Pass	?

I'd feel a lot happier doubling 3♥ knowing partner committed to having a full opener with their 2♣ bid.

To me, these are the pros and cons of downgrading 2-level overcalls to 10 HCP:

Pros: Your side will be able to compete for more part scores

Cons: Overcaller's partner will have to be more restrained in their follow-ups and there's a better chance of your going for a number at the 2-level.

Either way, have an agreement with your partner.

MILESTONES

CHANGES IN RANK: Feb – Mar – Apr – May – Jun 2020

Diamond Life Master

Vijay Bhise	North Caldwell
Stephen Garreffa	Randolph

Sapphire Life Master

Kirk Elyakin	Monroe Twp
Reha Gur	Leonardo
Jun-Ming Liao	Skillman

Gold Life Master

Jason Ji	Kendall Park
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Ruby Life Master

Robert Brolin	Plainsboro
Susan Brown	West Orange
Charles Hage	Monmouth Jct
Foster Osborne	Summit
Al Steinberge	Colonia
Charlene Young	Cranford

Silver Life Master

Jane Bassett	Shrewsbury
Tina Boyer	Montclair
Victor Breinberg	Monroe Twp
Susan Jones	Manahawk
Barbara Lowenstein	Springfield
Steve Newfield	Hillsborough
Kay O'Brien	Shrewsbury
Judith Royer	Manalapan
James Schrier	East Windsor
Dougin Walker	Princeton

Bronze Life Master

Robert Abramowitz	Montville
Paul Adler	Morganville
Romesh Arora	New Providence
Molly Ball	Morristown
Cheryl Britton	Monmouth Beach
Elizabeth Carlson	Summit
Peppi Glass	Morris Plains
L Kleinberg	Flanders
Zenon Komar	Summit
William Levy	Metuchen
Lenore Mohr	Springfield
Jim Rothschild Jr	Roseland
Steven Siegel	Mendham
Enid Smith-Helck	Madison

Life Master

Merle Barnett	Monroe Twp
Fred Dougllis	Basking Ridge
Cindy Dratch	Livingston
Richard Eisenman Jr	Milford
Enid Smith-Helck	Milford

Advanced NABC Master

Jared Egerer	Mount Arlington
Jonathan Eskridge	Morristown
Lawrence Gordon	West Orange
James Heimlich	Brant Beach
Joanne Moynihan	Monroe Twp
Cynthia Prell	Morristown
Bobby Willig	Princeton

NABC Master

Marcia Fischer	Livingston
Abdul Gaffoor	Flanders
Marlene Grasso	West Orange
Gloria Gribin	Wayside
Tony Gribin	Ocean
Robin Lenorth	Eatontown
Gilbert Meierhans	Metuchen
Graham Oakes	Montclair
Allan Schwartz	Manalapan
Debra Shelkowitz	Livingston

Regional Master

Janine Beer	Livingston
Claire Bram	Union
Gopal Chari	Parsippany
Susan Chera	Deal
Mary Sue Durkin	Belmar
Jeanne Gartland	Morristown
Michael George	Wall
Milton Hall	Shrewsbury
Sheila Holderness	Montville
Joseph Jiuliano	Branchburg
Minesh Kinkhabwalla	East Brunswick
James Lawler	Princeton
John Liaci	Montville
Laine Maurer	New Providence
Tracy Moreno	Sea Girt

Regional Master (cont'd)

William Perkins	Denville
Cynthia Phelan	Short Hills
Laurie Ruben	Berkeley Hts
Donald Slaght	Mantoloking
Loretta Smith	Summit
Vivian Tobias	Long Branch

Sectional Master

Veena Arora	New Providence
Judy Bonafanti	Ocean
Kathleen Burke	Montclair
Lois Catrambone	Morristown
Lisa Celona	Summit
Gwen Coleman	Livingston
Leslie Degeorges	Millington
Suzanne Fast	Livingston
Carol Franklin	Morristown
Ellen Jemal	Oakhurst
George Kalb	Millington
Mary Kingsberry	Rumson
Amy Mackoul	Riverdale
Ellen Marshall	Belle Mead
Christine Mason	Westfield
Virginia McDonald	Rumson
Maureen McGreal	Boonton
John Overdeck	Short Hills
Shriram Phadke	Plainsboro
Carol Rosenkranz	Verona
Jacob Rosenkranz	Verona
Joy Scally	Essex Fells
June Seligman	Red Bank
Cary Silverman	Mountain Lakes
Stacey Supran	Summit
Marion Syracuse	South Orange
Esther Tesar	Kendall Park
Lisa Toffey	Summit
Melinda Udell	West Orange
William Vamvas	Ocean
Carole Wiatr	East Hanover
Susan Wyrsh	Barnegat
Joseph Zawadzki	Marlboro
Janice Zunde	West Orange

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MILESTONES

CHANGES IN RANK: Feb – Mar – Apr – May – Jun 2020

Club Master

Michael Absatz	Eatontown
Abbe Binstock	Belle Mead
Sharon Brickman	Livingston
Natalie Cancell	Somerset
Michele Cascardi	North Caldwell
Yining Chen	Livingston
Margaret Cox	Manasquan
Roberta Elliott	South Orange
Julie Fein	Somerset
Stephen Felton	Princeton
Marc Galligan	Rumson
Carol Gebauer	Springfield
claude George	Skillman
Kim Gimblette	Lakewood
Ann Hajkowski	Linden
Rebecca Holman	Monroe Twp
Richard Jacobs	West Windsor
Niels Johnsen	Colts Neck
Ann Johnson	Morristown
Judith Josephson	Randolph
George Kalb	Millington
Vijay Kotak	Plainsboro
Polly Krupnick	Mountain Lakes
Bill Lawless	Manasquan
Lori Lerner	Princeton
Denise Luft	Short Hills
Holly Lytle	Oceanport
Elizabeth McNally	Fair Haven
Barry Miller	Marlboro
Elizabeth Mueller	Holmdel
Lambi Newsham	Summit
Ellen Ostrovsky	Livingston
John Overdeck	Short Hills
Don Post	Bedminster
Richard Rosenwei	Summit
Herbert Rottenberg	Springfield
Ilene Rottenberg	Springfield
Janice Schindler	Mountain Lakes
Jeanne Shanley	Rumson
Catharine Smith	Sea Bright
Robert Sochor	Verona
Jerome Spivack	Mountainside

Club Master (cont'd)

Bryan Supran	Summit
Arman Tookmanian	Budd Lake
Janice Victor	Montclair
Pat Vogel	Little Egg Harbr
Kathryn Wagenseller	Someraet
Nancy Waldenberg	West Orange
Laura Wallenstein	Livingston
Russ White	Princeton

Junior Master

Laurie Allison	Barneгат
Ujwal Annigeri	Summit
Lisa Bayer	Livingston
Lois Bhatt	Madison
Sally Booth	Basking Ridge
Barry Braverman	Boonton
Gail Bressman	Livingston
Leslie Brittain	Jersey City
Dennis Burke	Livingston
Andrew Carlson	Summit
Michele Cascardi	North Caldwell
Yining Chen	Livingston
Nina Cohen	Deal
Deirdre Collier	Basking Ridge
Jennifer Conklin	Rumson
Sandra Dick	South Orange
Laurel Dobalo	Metuchen
Maureen Dorment	Little Silver
John Dough	Sea Girt
Margaret Drury	Morristown
Karen Dubel	Brookside
Patricia Einbender	Cedar Grove
Virginia Ekstorm	Bloomfield
Susan Fass	Livingston
Amelia Foust	West Orange
Jill Freeman	Westfield
Patricia Gains	Warren
Jayne Geller	Randolph
Martin Geller	Randolph
Marek Glowacki	Monroe Twp.
Linda Goren	Morristown
James Graef	Toms River
Sheila Grant	Montville

Junior Master (cont'd)

Larisa Gritsay	Springfield
Mary Beth Guckian	Chatham
Barbara Hutter	Livingston
Laurie Kalb Kasw	West Orange
Poonam Kapoor	West Windsor
Rajesh Kapoor	West Windsor
Anne Kinney	Morristown
Suzanne Lawrence	Summit
Leslie Margolis	Tinton Falls
Veronica Marone	Morristown
Manish Mehta	Chatham
Joanne Milot	Basking Ridge
Philip Milot	Basking Ridge
Philip Milot	Basking Ridge
Stephen Mooney	Wall Twp.
Stephen Muller	Lakewood
Wayne Naylor	Glen Ridge
Michael O Donohue	Monroe
Paul Pellicci	Mantoloking
Klara Pereplechikov	West Caldwell
Robert Rabinowitz	Maplewood
Claire Rittenhouse	Chatham
Beth Robinson	Livingston
Nancy Rosenthal	Westfield
Susan Salek	Bernardsville
Richard Seelaus	Monmouth Beach
Candace Selwyn	Summit
Robert Selwyn	Summit
Aron Shalit	Randolph
Maria Shalit	Randolph
Sheela Sonalkar	North Caldwell
Brenda Strauss	Succasunna
Gloria Tookmanian	Budd Lake
Ira Wagner	Montclair
Nancy Waldenburg	West Orange
Carole Waung	Hoboken
Joyce Weston	Chatham
James Wilson	Fair Haven
Sara Winkowski	Springfield
Eileen Wolkstein	Short Hills
Leonard Wolkstein	Short Hills
Richard Ziss	Warren

~~3NT GAMBLING IN ANY SUIT~~

by Peter Wright

One of my favorite conventions – apart from the essential ones that everyone is already deploying by the time Life Master status is achieved – is 3NT Gambling as an opening bid. The ground rules I prefer are these:

1. a 7-card suit headed by AKQ (you might hold the Jack too, but *never* a length other than 7)
2. no outside Ace or King

That’s it. Note that I *didn’t* stipulate that your suit should be a *minor*, which virtually all BPs (Best Players) insist upon for a 3NT opener. Why not a *major* suit, I ask them? Well, if it’s a major suit, they reply, we wanna *play* in that major. When I say, “No problem,” the BPs typically roll their eyeballs at me. Nevertheless, in my insufferable hubris, I conclude that they are relying on Received Wisdom rather than Sober Analysis.

But I digress. What should partner respond when you open 3NT? Why, 4♣, most often, which you pass or correct to your own suit. *But* – and this is a very beautiful *But* – if partner can supply *all* of the following, 3NT is eminently passable:

1. two sure tricks (your seven and two more = nine)
2. stoppers in at least two suits
3. a reasonable bet for a 3rd stopper – say, Q10x or Kx
4. at least one card as an entry to your suit (if partner is void, your 7-carder will be sadly marooned)

How do partners know what your suit is? Without the delicious holding just mentioned, all they need to know is that they *must respond 4♣*, so that your suit (hopefully) can become trump.

So, let’s say the partnership is blest with the following:

	<u>You</u>	<u>Partner</u>
Hand A	♠ 5 ♥ 932 ♦ AKQ8542 ♣ 98	♠ K8 ♥ A543 ♦ 3 ♣ A107643

98% of all BPs answered *Sure!* when queried about their desire to pass 3NT on Hand A. (The other 2%, bona fide pessimists, were certain that the ♠A would be sitting over the ♠K *and* that a Spade would inexorably be led.)

But suppose your suit is a *major*, like . . .

	<u>You</u>	<u>Partner</u>
Hand B	♠ AKQ8542 ♥ 932 ♦ 5 ♣ 98	♠ 3 ♥ A543 ♦ K8 ♣ A107643

95% of BPs wanted to be in 4♠ on Hand B, despite the fact that, if the ♦K holds up, 3NT scores 430 or 630, whereas 4♠ scores only 420 or 620. The same set of 2%-ers uttered their habitual moans as before, but 3% (we’re still talking BPs, remember) saw 3NT in a new light!

Now it’s true that, with bad karma, 3NT in Hand B *might* go down *several* tricks in 3NT, whereas 4♠ can go down only one. But the same risk applies to Hand A, where 3NT is the 98% BP favorite! Go figure.

So, if you open 3NT with a solid 7-card *major* and nothin’ but peewees elsewhere, when does 4-of-a-major become *de rigueur*? Answers, please:

1. partner knows 3NT is unplayable
2. partner has *ruffs!*

	<u>You</u>	<u>Partner</u>
Hand C	♠ AKQ8542 ♥ 932 ♦ 5 ♣ 98	♠ 3 ♥ Q954 ♦ K842 ♣ 10765

With Hand C, partner doesn’t know if you have Clubs or Spades but doesn’t care; 4♣ is automatic, and you are in no doubt about what to rebid.

	<u>You</u>	<u>Partner</u>
Hand D	♠ AKQ8542 ♥ 932 ♦ 5 ♣ 98	♠ 965 ♥ 8 ♦ AJ842 ♣ A765

With Hand D, partner knows you have a 7-card major but doesn’t know which one. 4♣ will get you to the correct suit.

	<u>You</u>	<u>Partner</u>
Hand E	♠ AKQ8542 ♥ 932 ♦ 5 ♣ 98	♠ 965 ♥ K ♦ AK842 ♣ A765

You won’t miss a major-suit slam, either. With Hand E, partner knows *for sure* which major you have – it *can’t* be Hearts, since partner holds the ♥K – and that 12 tricks in Spades are a slam-dunk on 23 HCP. With even stronger hands, partner could bid 6NT, 7♠, or 7NT with confidence. But you’ll *never* play 3NT when you belong in a major.

What’s the alternative to 3NT when you open with Hands BCDE? 1♠? 3♠? Neither of these bids tells partner what a golden suit you have.

MASTERPOINT RACES

Standings by range as of February 7, 2020

Mini-McKenney medallions are awarded to the players in each Unit, one per ranking level, who earn the **most total master points** during the previous year. All points of any color and source are counted. **Ace of Clubs** certificates are awarded to the players in each Unit, one per ranking level, who earn **the most master points in club games** during the calendar year. Only black points are counted; points earned in STaCs and other special games paying "pigmented" points don't count. The awards are not mutually exclusive; it's possible to win either or both in the same year. The level you compete in is the one within which you started the year.

MINI-MCKENNEY

ACE OF CLUBS

Masterpoint range

Masterpoint range	Player	Club	Points	Player	Club	Points
0 – 5	Kerry Redinger	Holmdel	36.01	Kerry Redinger	Holmdel	27.70
	Robert Carroll	Lawrenceville	25.08	Robert Carroll	Lawrenceville	20.30
	<u>James Brown</u>	Manahawkin	<u>21.65</u>	<u>Lynn Chernuchin</u>	Livingston	<u>19.53</u>
5 – 20	William Parkins	Denville	73.24	William Parkins	Denville	55.48
	Margy Whapham	Peninsula OH	57.09	Simon Thomson	Summit	37.08
	<u>Simon Thomson</u>	Summit	<u>45.86</u>	<u>Thomas Cummins</u>	Summit	<u>37.07</u>
20 – 50	Lawrence Gordon	West Orange	184.27	Lawrence Gordon	West Orange	74.22
	Allan Schwartz	Manalapan	77.46	Joy Scally	Essex Fells	48.43
	<u>David Kestner</u>	Manchester	<u>52.88</u>	<u>David Kestner</u>	Manchester	<u>41.68</u>
50 – 100	Julie Bernhardt	Nutley	110.23	Laine Maurer	New Providence	66.18
	Laine Maurer	New Providence	74.12	Tracey Moreno	Sea Girt	55.90
	<u>Roy Knapp</u>	Rockaway	<u>72.33</u>	<u>Norman Friedman</u>	Livingston	<u>54.84</u>
100 – 200	Steven Siegel	Mendham	217.15	Esther Eisenberg	Holmdel	137.13
	Esther Eisenberg	Holmdel	151.86	Sheila Holderness	Montville	90.95
	<u>Sheila Holderness</u>	Montville	<u>105.12</u>	<u>Steven Siegel</u>	Mendham	<u>69.27</u>
200 – 300	Martin Eisenberg	Holmdel	170.58	Martin Eisenberg	Holmdel	153.04
	Kathleen Riepenhoff	Skillman	156.95	Kathleen Riepenhoff	Skillman	102.47
	<u>Julie Grossman</u>	Hopewell	<u>137.98</u>	<u>Julie Grossman</u>	Hopewell	<u>93.94</u>
300 – 500	Zenon Komar	Summit	271.57	Zenon Komar	Summit	162.82
	Amber Lin	San Francisco CA	241.76	Romesh Arora	New Providence	110.90
	<u>Ira Tarnow</u>	West Orange	<u>183.26</u>	<u>Ming Li</u>	Summit	<u>100.86</u>
500 – 1000	Chung-Zong Wan	Somerset	208.98	Jacqueline Hewlett	Bridgewater	154.07
	Jacqueline Hewlett	Bridgewater	187.37	Michael Hewlett	Bridgewater	154.07
	<u>Michael Hewlett</u>	Bridgewater	<u>187.37</u>	<u>Chung-Zong Wan</u>	Somerset	<u>115.70</u>
1000 – 1500	Piotr Olszewski	Hackettstown	777.25	Piotr Olszewski	Hackettstown	322.00
	Foster Osborne	Summit	264.89	Foster Osborne	Summit	109.47
	<u>Jeffrey Halle</u>	Middletown	<u>194.79</u>	<u>Barbara Codispoti</u>	Mount Arlington	<u>104.86</u>
1500 – 2500	Wendy Lee	East Hanover	320.01	Wendy Lee	East Hanover	213.28
	Chorng-Hour Yang	Parsippany	277.87	John Anderson	Rockaway	184.76
	<u>Neeta Mone</u>	Livingston	<u>256.83</u>	<u>Chorng-Hour Yang</u>	Parsippany	<u>172.52</u>
2500 – 3500	Fredric Weiner	Sarasota FL	202.47	Mark Mohr	Springfield	128.62
	Nat Zucker	Monroe Township	198.41	Ronald Kraft	East Windsor	120.07
	<u>Himanshu Joshi</u>	Chester	<u>196.65</u>	<u>Himanshu Joshi</u>	Chester	<u>108.56</u>
3500 – 5,000	Stephen Garreffa	Randolph	629.41	Stephen Garreffa	Randolph	333.87
	Stephen Cooper	Belle Mead	565.76	Stephen Cooper	Belle Mead	286.53
	<u>Joan Brody</u>	Livingston	<u>499.07</u>	<u>Dave DuBois</u>	Westfield	<u>212.32</u>
5000 – 7500	Judy Rothstein	Livingston	606.14	Judy Rothstein	Livingston	344.75
	Alex Perlin	Metuchen	559.09	Donna Dulet	Ocean	200.74
	<u>Donna Dulet</u>	Ocean	<u>451.83</u>	<u>Betty Cox</u>	Randolph	<u>186.65</u>
7500 – 10,000	Abe Pineles	Palm Desert CA	432.42	Dennis Thompson	Lake Hiawatha	186.46
	Dori Byrnes	Morris Plains	418.43	Jesse Reisman	Livingston	164.13
	<u>Cynthia Schneider</u>	East Brunswick	<u>350.71</u>	<u>Cynthia Schneider</u>	East Brunswick	<u>160.58</u>
10,000+	Jiang Gu	Mountain Lakes	969.22	William Esberg	Long Branch	195.77
	Alexander Allen	Annandale	554.81	Alexander Allen	Annandale	116.01
	Yinghao Liu	Hoboken	315.21	Lester Sokolower	Verona	89.90

A TRIBUTE TO BARBARA CLARK

by Cheryl Angel

I extend my congratulations to my dear friend, Barbara Clark, on her appointment to the American Contract Bridge League Education Foundation Board of Trustees. The Foundation is a nonprofit organization established in 1987 with the purpose of getting more people of all ages and walks of life to play and enjoy bridge. The Foundation primarily does this by awarding **grants** for bridge educational programs and it is supported by **contributions** from individuals, families, and corporations.

I can't remember exactly when we met but it was, of course, at the bridge table. Before long Barbara asked me to teach bridge with her at Oakwood Avenue Elementary School in Orange, NJ. This is where I saw Barbara's true passion: children. Her generosity and desire to teach them the skills and values they learn from bridge (logic, discipline, partnerships, etc.) and extend them to all aspects of their lives. Barbara has changed their lives because of the positive impact of the bridge program.

Barbara served on the District 3 Board of Directors for over 10 years as the Youth Bridge Coordinator and over 20 years as Education Liaison responsible for Youth Bridge. Barbara was appointed to the ACBL Good Will and Charity Committees and the local District 3 Good Will Committee by the late District President Joan Gerard. While serving on the Board, Barbara organized a summer and winter Youth Bridge event at our District 3 regionals.

Around the turn of the century, she began her tenure on the Unit 140 Board of Directors, on which she is currently Education Chair and responsible for all Youth Bridge programs in the Unit. Within two or three years the ACBL announced an initiative called **Bridge in Schools Program**. Barbara immediately presented a proposal to Board members, which

they enthusiastically supported. Barbara's model, which continues today, is to assign an experienced bridge teacher to teach bridge in the schools. Along with members of the Unit 140 Board, she developed a bridge program that was implemented in the Orange Public Schools, where she had previously served as Director of Special Services.

Barbara's first bridge program in Orange was in a Saturday Gifted and Talented program. It was at this time that she applied for and received approval for her first of many grants from the ACBL Education Foundation, which was funded. With a \$500 budget from Unit 140 and the ACBL grant, she was able to purchase the needed supplies, and Barbara was off to the races. She recruited teachers and students to begin teaching bridge in schools. With her remarkable gift for leadership, she has convinced an amazing number of teachers and administrators in local school systems to donate their time to the endeavor of Youth Bridge. She has taken her charges to sectionals, regionals and the Youth Nationals.

Barbara is a relentless and successful fundraiser, and advocate for Youth Bridge. The depth of her handiwork was witnessed at the recent Toronto NABC, in which she raised enough funds to sponsor the attendance of 21 of her "kids" to attend the Youth Bridge events. (This was the second largest contingent in the U.S., exceeded only by Simi Valley). Her commitment to the promotion of Youth Bridge makes her a wonderful addition to the ACBL Education Foundation.

Grand Life Master Patty Tucker writes:

Barbara Clark has been a major force for bridge, especially Youth Bridge, for over a decade. Her dedication, drive and love for bridge and the kids she works with is a model for us all. The Educational Foundation could not have made a better choice!

THROWING OUT THE GERBER WITH THE BATH WATER

by Jay Korobow



Dealer: North
Vul: none

<p><u>West</u> ♠ Q5 ♥ 6543 ♦ KQ975 ♣ 87</p>	<p><u>North</u> ♠ K982 ♥ AQ8 ♦ A6 ♣ K632</p>
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East
♠ J643
♥ 1097
♦ 8432
♣ 105

South
♠ A107
♥ KJ2
♦ J10
♣ AQJ94

The bidding:

North	East	South	West
1NT	Pass	4 ♣	Pass
4 ♦	Pass	4NT	Pass
5 ♥	Pass	6 ♣	All Pass

As South in the latest episode of Late Night BBO Random IMP Pairs, my first board found my unknown partner opening 1NT while I held ♠A107 ♥KJ2 ♦JT ♣AQJ94. Slam is surely a viable option, but there is the possibility of being off two Aces, as our combined HCP total is potentially 31 (my 16 and partner's 15, perhaps.) Even bidding 4NT "quantitative" to invite 6NT might fall short on Aces if partner properly accepts with 16 HCP and a five-card Diamond suit, for example.

One worthy agreement to have, with a regular partner who shares the view that 1NT - 4NT is quantitative, specifies that in accepting the invite, you show the number of (regular not keycard) Aces along the way to 6NT. After such a response, 5NT would be "to play" because two Aces are missing, rather than "pick-a-slam" or anything else. Some play "acceptance" five-level bids are simply five-card suits in case six of a suit is best. For those that play the Baron convention that dutifully locates 4-4 minor-suit fits for slam, such bids might promise just four cards, as each partner bids up the line there. The best advice surely is to have at least some agreement that both are aware of, something late night BBO events with random partners are not particularly conducive to!

The major adjunct to 4NT-quantitative is the popular Gerber convention. Jumps to 4♣ over 1NT or 2NT ask the number of Aces whenever 4NT would be quantitative. It was invented by Bridge Hall of Famer John Gerber (who had nothing to do with the baby food empire – that being Daniel Frank Gerber). It was tailored to bidding quandaries just like this, so I trotted out a 4♣ call, hoping partner would be aware of the intended meaning.

When partner next responded the first step, 4♦, for all-or-none, I "knew" we were off two Aces, and so placed the contract in the expected-to-be-safe spot of 4NT. As some characterize it, I knew "the wheels had come off the cart" when partner now bid 5♥, obviously taking 4NT as Blackwood and showing two Aces in response. Perhaps 4♦ earlier was a cue bid showing the Ace, or a Diamond suit, but it certainly wasn't a valid Gerber response, as apparently this random partner didn't recognize the intended Ace-asking meaning.

At least we had all the Aces – or so I now believed. I tried to place the contract in 6♣; perhaps due to my Diamond shortness, but also because I would be declarer – usually a plus in these uncertain circumstances. That went "all pass," and so the ♦K opening lead was then made by my LHO, West.

I was pleased to see that barring something like ♠QJ doubleton or a defensive error, there were only 11 obvious tricks in 6NT, but a path to a reasonably likely 12 tricks in the Club slam existed: simply pull trumps after winning the opening lead, cash three top Hearts, and exit a Diamond leaving a position like this:

<p><u>West</u> ♠ Q5 ♥ 6 ♦ 975 ♣ –</p>	<p><u>North</u> ♠ K982 ♥ – ♦ – ♣ 32</p> <p><u>East</u> ♠ J643 ♥ – ♦ 82 ♣ –</p> <p><u>South</u> ♠ A107 ♥ – ♦ – ♣ QJ9</p>
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[continued next page]

***THROWING OUT THE GERBER
WITH THE BATH WATER***
[concluded]



Either East or West will have to surrender a ruff-sluff or break the Spade suit. The ruff-sluff yields the 12th trick, as does an inspired guess in Spades if the missing honors ♠J and ♠Q are split. West made the best possible effort by exiting the ♠Q, hoping I would play that as a lead from ♠QJ. Perhaps it's a form of "restricted choice" (another day, another article) in that West couldn't choose the ♠J from ♠QJ because of not holding it, or just the mathematical probability being higher that ♠J and ♠Q are less likely to be in same hand than to be split. In any event, I covered the ♠Q with dummy's ♠K and hooked my RHO East successfully for the missing ♠J. 12 tricks were now there and +920 scored up!

I was surprised to see that this fortuitous result only garnered +2.5 IMPs instead of maybe 9 or 10. After all, 6NT has no legitimate play, as the exit-endplay in Diamonds allows defenders to cash a second Diamond for down one if 6NT is the contract. I researched the results, seeing that many Norths declared 6NT successfully for +990. Some were down, and some didn't reach slam, but when they did, the opening lead was mostly the ♥10 from ♥1097. This allowed declarer to play Spades in various ways that safely develop a third trick in that suit while the ♦A has yet to be dislodged.

I was hoping, of course, that 6NT would prove to be 6 No Trump, while I was in a superior contract. (Yes, I know there's an "h" at the end of "triumph" and no "i" in "Trump." But I already made more than one bridge joke involving our President, so please try to be a little forgiving or tolerant!)
