



# THE DECLARER



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Peter Wright, Editor

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## THE DECLARER

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## ANNUAL MEETING NOTICE

The New Jersey Bridge League will hold its Annual Meeting "virtually" on February 28, 2021 at 10:30 a.m. to elect nominees for the Board of Directors. The nominees are: **Himanshu Joshi**, **Pramod Khanna**, and **Jesse Reisman** (all for 2nd terms), and **Sharon Gross** (1st term). All voting will be **solely** by proxy, and voting **is important**.

Check your e-mail for both the voting hyperlink and Zoom hyperlink to attend the meeting. Check the NJBL website [www.njbl.net](http://www.njbl.net) for further information.

# WHAT THE DEUCE?

by Peter Wright

There is no dearth of textbooks on how to bid, play, and/or defend brilliantly on hands which never seem to occur in real life except for Belladonnas, Bergens, and bridge bums bingeing till the bow breaks. But tut! When a pig flies, you gotta perk up, baby!

A textbook as yet languishing unwritten should bear the pithy title *Dazzling Defensive Derring-Do Dismembered by Demented, Deadbeat Partners*. If you can think of a “D” synonym for “partner,” dinna divulge it; the deadline done disappeared. Anyway, I just thought of it: **Dingbat**, which reduces very conveniently to **DB**.

So – **every** sentence today begins with “so,” so deal with it – **so**, as I was saying, I sat serenely in the Siberian seat as West bid a pedestrian 1♥. “Oh please, **please**,” methought, “let them bid a Heart slam so I can make a Lightner double, demanding a **DB** Diamond Debut . . .” but **DB** would likely flub it and then plead not guilty on the specious grounds of not being on lead against a Heart slam.

So, after 3.7 nanoseconds of intensive ratiocination, I upped auntie to 4♣. You might argue for 2 or 3 or 5 or 6♣, but I have it on divine authority that 4♣ is unassailable. After East’s 4♥, **DB** emerged from his habitual somnolence and upped unc to 5♣, but West, in love with his singular Club, took the bait: Accepting the push to 5♥, he lumbered into my bear trap! I doubled, starting to salivate ever so subtly. Observe . . .

		<u>North</u>	
Dealer: East		♠ J85	
Vul: E-W		♥ 103	
		♦ –	
		♣ AJ1098532	
		<u>West</u>	<u>East</u>
		♠ KQ64	♠ 103
		♥ AQJ862	♥ K975
		♦ K7	♦ A109842
		♣ 7	♣ Q
		<u>South</u>	
		♠ A972	
		♥ 4	
		♦ QJ653	
		♣ K64	

. . . the bidding, if you weren’t paying attention:

<u>West</u>	<u>Siberia</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>DB</u>
1♥	4♣	4♥	5♣
5♥	DbI	All Pass	

With superhuman insouciance, I deftly detached from my hand . . . the ♣2 !!! – a master stroke worth a full complement of

three (3) exclamation points. Now answer honestly: would **you** have had the bodacious backbone to underlead an Ace at trick #1? And, even if such a death-defying deed even entered your thinkertoy, would you have led **8<sup>th</sup>-best**?

The Kantars, Kelseys, Kulbertsons, Kohenses, Klawrences, and kin have conspired to keep this taktik kloaked in a konundrum known hitherto only to experts: **Against Suit Contracts, Holding 8 Cards To The Ace, Lead The Deuce**, reducing very conveniently to ASCH8CTTA,LTD. Certain lazybones omit the comma, but you really shoudn’t, y’know?

I anticipate your next fatuous query, “What if I don’t **have** the deuce?” The answer is blindingly simple: if you hold eight cards in one suit and can’t find the deuce among them, you are unworthy of the arcane knowledge hereby imparted. Either that, or you’re playing with a pinochle deck.

See, the **deuce** is the card you **can’t not** have. Only a card of its quantum dimensions carries the RNA message that (a) you hold the Ace eight times, and, (b) you want **DB** to return a Diamond. Oh! Did I mention the corollary to ASCH8CTTA,LTD? **Be Void in Diamonds** (reducing very conveniently to BVDs).

Perhaps by now you will appreciate the portentousness, the genius, the sheer wizardry of that ♣2. Regard the hand layout and observe . . .

Dummy’s lonesome Club being a Queen, it’s a no-brainer for **DB** to cover with the ♣K, chuckle at my felicitous underlead of the Ace, grok that the deuce asks for the return of the lower of the remaining suits, oblige me with a Diamond ruff (selecting the ♦6 to show me his re-entry suit), win my Spade return, and ice the cake by giving me a 2<sup>nd</sup> Diamond ruff for down two, +500, and all the marbles.

But **Dingbat** neither chuckled, grokked, obliged, nor iced. It took him five minutes to realize he had won the first trick with the ♣K. Fighting fiercely to regain consciousness, he construed that I had pre-empted at the 4-level on a Club holding of Axx2, or better yet, that Wile E. Declarer was holding up the ♣A with the intent of using it later to pitch one of dummy’s Spades. “Better grab our ‘two Spade tricks’ now,” hallucinated **DB**, as he cashed his ♠A and continued the suit. Chortling, West claimed 11 tricks. Our +500 top became a –850 bottom.

**DB** expostulated vociferously that any “good” partner would keep an extra ♠K or two up his sleeve for contingencies like this one, then switched to reaming me out for bidding only 4♣. “With twice that many, **bid** twice that many,” he bleated. I might have demurred, but to what end?

Coming up next issue: “How **DB**, holding 13 Spades, failed to find the killing opening lead against RHO’s 7NT.”

**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 games. We would like to remember all who support and participate in this great game. Please notify Susan Atteridge at [Susan.Atteridge@gmail.com](mailto:Susan.Atteridge@gmail.com) of any deaths within our membership, and indicate, when known, dates of passing and club(s) attended.

**Don Barcan**  
d. December 2, 2020  
Frequent player at Shadowfax

**William Esberg**  
d. December 10, 2020  
Frequent player at Jersey

**Milton Landman**  
d. November 21, 2020  
Frequent player at Essex

**Barbara Lyle**  
d. October 30, 2020  
Frequent player at Princeton

**John McGillion**  
d. July 12, 2020  
Frequent player at  
Monmouth County Aces

**Pauline Pollock**  
d. January 26, 2021  
Frequent player at Shrine

**Robert Binder**  
d. November 4, 2020  
Frequent player at Essex

**Sonia Kaplan**  
Frequent player at Jersey

**Marge Levy**  
d. January 10, 2021  
Frequent player at Princeton

**Hope Mann**  
d. October 15, 2020  
Frequent player at  
Monmouth County Aces

**Tess Papp**  
d. January 27, 2021  
Frequent player at BCCNJ

**Harold Schachter**  
d. July 15, 2020  
Frequent player at  
Monmouth County Aces

**Howard Zimmerman**  
d. November 4, 2020  
Frequent player at Essex

# ***SPOT THE ERROR – PART II***

## *by Ken Trock*

This article is a continuation from the Fall 2020 issue, where we'll see if a possible error was committed in the bidding or play.

Dealer: North Vul: All		<u>North</u> ♠ J7542 ♥ Q93 ♦ J7 ♣ J62	
<u>West</u>		<u>East</u>	
♠ Q		♠ AK6	
♥ K10752		♥ A64	
♦ A4		♦ Q10	
♣ K9854		♣ AQ1073	
		<u>South</u> ♠ 10983 ♥ J8 ♦ K986532 ♣ —	

The bidding:

<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>	<u>West</u>
Pass	1♣	2♦	2♥
Pass	3♦	Pass	4♥
Pass	5♥	Pass	6♥
All Pass			

Maybe not the sexiest of auctions, but it led to a good spot. On the ♦J lead, the play was routine. Trump split and 12 tricks were there for the taking. Seasoned players will recognize a double of 6♥ out of the blue by South as a Lightner double, asking for the lead of dummy's first-bid suit. Here, that's Clubs. Or, if dummy had bid NT at their first turn, then a double out of left field of the final contact asks for an unusual lead.

Even doubling on the actual bidding, South doesn't see 6♥ getting set in his own hand. Still, the opponents expect to make 12 tricks on reasonable distribution of the cards, even with South's preempt. They're not expecting a Club to get ruffed on opening lead. As it happens, E-W have all side suits covered. So we look at the trump suit. After South ruffs a Club, West cannot pick up North's ♥Q93. Down one.

Now there's the question of whether E-W can run out to 6NT, which is a huge favorite to make. But it's going to be

tough to bid again after the double. Maybe they can bid to it originally instead of up to 6♥. Here is the next deal, playing IMPs:

Dealer: South Vul: All		<u>North</u> ♠ A85 ♥ K63 ♦ K843 ♣ J83	
<u>West</u>		<u>East</u>	
♠ Q974		♠ K2	
♥ J8		♥ 109542	
♦ Q102		♦ 95	
♣ Q975		♣ K1042	
		<u>South</u> ♠ J1063 ♥ AQ7 ♦ AJ76 ♣ A6	

The bidding:

<u>South</u>	<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>
INT	Pass	3NT	Pass
All Pass			

West led the ♠4, and it went 5-K-3. At trick #2, East guessed to lead a Club back, ducked to West's Queen. A second Club forced out South's Ace. South played a Diamond to the King on the board and finessed back to the ♦J, losing to the Queen. E-W cashed two more Clubs for down one, winning five defensive tricks with one Spade, one Diamond, and three Clubs.

It looks like the contract depends on finding the ♦Q. Could declarer have done better? Nothing is certain, but at trick #1 South should play the ♠6 instead of the ♠3! Why? The ♠4 was led by West. By hiding the ♠3, East might think West led from a 5-card Spade suit. East might picture West with something like Q10743 in spades and continue the suit, to declarer's delight. South would now have time to make nine tricks. If South drops the ♠6 from hand at trick #1, East has a lot to think about. Maybe even a Heart shift looks right from East's ♥109542.

Thanks to Michael Berkowitz for the idea on this.

*[continued next page]*

***SPOT THE ERROR – PART II****by Ken Trock**[concluded]*

For the final hand, take the North seat with me. Against an expert pair, playing MPs, Vul vs Not Vul.

North

♠ K964

♥ AQ3

♦ AQ4

♣ A65

East deals and passes, your partner passes, RHO bids 1♣ and we double. Lefty redoubles, partner bids 1H, then a pass to us. With our 19 HCP, 1NT seems like a no-brainer. But there's a real danger that partner has no points. Her 1♥ in this auction is simply trying to land safely somewhere. There's a chance you could be playing out of your own hand the whole time. OTOH, do we want to get pushed around by these guys? No! You (or I) confidently bid 1NT. LHO passes, partner thinks about it and bids 2♥. That's good, but then RHO doubles. Yikes!

The bidding:

<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>	<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>
Pass	Pass	1♣	Double
Redouble	1♥	Pass	1NT
Pass	2♥	Double	All Pass

Partner's hand:

South

♠ 8732

♥ 97652

♦ 982

♣ 9

As zero-point hands go, this one isn't bad! Alas, the ♠A and ♦K were offside. The trump King was onside but was protected. They were able to run partner out of trump to where she couldn't make the fourth Spade. 500 to the bad guys.

***YOUTH BRIDGE****by Barbara Clark***Valentine's Youth Event**

The Orange Education Foundation and the New Jersey Bridge League are sponsoring a Youth Bridge tournament [see flyer, next page]. This event is open to peers in New Jersey, New York, Connecticut, and other states. Although face-to-face events are far superior to virtual competitions, our coordinators Pamela Venable and Dr. Denise Harlem value both types of opportunities for our kids. The American Contract Bridge League is the

largest bridge organization in the world with approximately half a million members internationally. Our kids are members of this organization and attend the Youth North American Bridge Championships annually. We greatly appreciate our donors, the Orange Education Foundation, the New Jersey Bridge League, and the Orange Public School District for their continued commitment and support.

## ♥ RED POINT YOUTH VALENTINE PAIRS ♥



**Double points: HALF RED, HALF BLACK!**

Saturday, February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2021

10:00 am EST on BBO, VACB901405

Youth age 19 and under

Generously Sponsored by  
Orange Education Foundation and NJBL Unit 140



Come play bridge on Bridge Base online, and earn HALF RED masterpoints®!

The ACBL is having a special event weekend for Valentine's Day, and  
ALL GAMES will award DOUBLE POINTS – HALF RED and HALF BLACK!

- Pre-registration is REQUIRED for Unit 140 youth, DEADLINE is Wednesday, Feb 10.
- The registration MUST include the information for both players in the partnership.
- The game will be all set up, so Unit 140 students won't have to do anything except login to bridgebase.com at 9:45 am and wait till 10:00 when their game begins!
- NOTE: if a student has never played on BBO before, please let us know so we can help.



<i>This form for Unit 140 Youth Partnerships ONLY • Others need not pre-register • Just come PLAY! 😊</i>	
Player Name	Player Name
BBO Name	BBO Name
BBO Password	BBO Password
ACBL #	ACBL #

Unit 140 youth, please email [shrinecenterbridge@gmail.com](mailto:shrinecenterbridge@gmail.com) if you need help!



# ***BASIC BIDDING FOR INTERMEDIATE PLAYERS***

*by Brett Kunin*

**Y**ou are playing in a game with IMP scoring (commonly known as “cross-IMPS”) against another pair on BBO, where your score is compared to a datum composed of an average of all other scores achieved on that board, and the differential scored by IMPS.

You have a small lead of three IMPS after nine boards of an 18-board match when you pick up a promising hand in first chair:

♠ KQ852  
♥ K6  
♦ QJ5  
♣ AK3

You open 1♠, your LHO passes, and, to your pleasant surprise, partner bids 2NT (Jacoby), alertable, showing a game-forcing hand with at least four Spades. You bid 3♠ (also alertable, showing at least a King better than a minimum), and, to your pleasant surprise, partner bids 4♦, showing a control, despite the fact that she holds nothing in Clubs. (Since partner did not *splitter* in Clubs, she has at least two, and nevertheless likes her hand, creating an inference that she also may have more than a minimum).

Although I am one who believes that Blackwood is a much over-used convention when cue bidding yields better results, Roman Key Card Blackwood is a convention suited to powerhouse hands. You bid 4NT, and partner responds 5♦, showing zero or three key cards. Although it is conceivable that there are minimums that partner could hold that make playing above game risky, your instincts tell you that with a hand such as ♠J943=♥AJ83=♦A63=♣Q7, she would not have bid 4♦. Therefore, assuming that she holds three Aces (since one of your key cards is the trump King), you hold

*all* of the key cards, and a small slam is safe. You therefore bid 5NT, asking for Kings. (Most experienced players play that responders bid Kings “*up the line*,” rather than the *number* of Kings held.) Again, to your pleasant surprise, partner bids 5♦, showing the ♦K.

Since partner does not use a more sophisticated method, you have to decide whether to bid a grand slam. I opted to do just that, since partner liked her hand, and the IMP reward for bidding a grand slam is huge. At *worst*, the grand might depend on a finesse.

Your optimism is rewarded when partner tables a strong no-trump hand of her own:

♠ AJ73  
♥ AJ4  
♦ AK106  
♣ 76

When there is no ruff of the opening lead, you claim. (Note that even if partner had three dead Clubs, you could have “parked” your Club loser on the ♦10).

The hand illustrates an important principle: when playing a convention, such as Jacoby 2NT or Roman Key Card Blackwood, you need to discuss *all* of the permutations and follow-ups of the convention, and not assume that you and partner play the same system.

The bidding:

<u>You</u>	<u>Partner</u>
1♠	2NT
3♠	4♦
4NT	5♦
5NT	6♦
7♠	Pass

**MASTERPOINT RACES****2020 Standings by Range as of January 6, 2021**

**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 source and color 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.

**Masterpoint  
range****MINI-MCKENNEY****ACE OF CLUBS**

0 – 5	Manish Mehta	Chatham	218.09	Manish Mehta	Chatham	195.71
	John Overdeck	Short Hills	142.68	John Overdeck	Short Hills	116.35
	James Graef	Toms River	57.21	James Graef	Toms River	56.38
	Laurel Dobalo	Metuchen	48.77	Laurel Dobalo	Metuchen	47.34
	Michele Cascardi	North Caldwell	42.13	Michele Cascardi	North Caldwell	42.13
5 – 20	George Kalb	Millington	185.94	George Kalb	Millington	159.04
	Denise Luft	West Orange	76.24	Denise Luft	West Orange	76.24
	Sharon Brickman	Livingston	63.02	Sharon Brickman	Livingston	59.54
	Regina Bann	South Orange	54.17	Regina Bann	South Orange	54.17
	Margaret Cox	Manasquan	50.74	Margaret Cox	Manasquan	50.74
20 – 50	Susan Wyrsh	Barnegat	112.89	Susan Wyrsh	Barnegat	103.82
	Veena Arora	Waretown	89.18	Veena Arora	Waretown	86.71
	Stacey Supran	Summit	80.60	Stacey Supran	Summit	76.95
	Cary Silverman	Mountain Lakes	80.08	Mary Kingsbery	Rumson	75.70
	Bryan Supran	Summit	78.75	Byran Supran	Summit	74.19
50 – 100	Leslie Degeorges	Millinton	176.16	Leslie Degeorges	Millington	175.02
	Janine Beer	Livingston	101.37	Janine Beer	Livingston	98.51
	Joy Scally	Essex Fells	88.20	Maureen McGreal	Boonton	82.54
	Maureen McGreal	Boonton	83.26	Joy Scally	Essex Fells	81.17
	Margery Slonaker	Chatham	82.75	Margery Slonaker	Chatham	80.75
100 – 200	Laine Maurer	New Providence	202.56	Laine Maurer	New Providence	192.67
	Robert Ayers, Jr.	Toms River	192.68	Robert Ayers, Jr.	Tomas River	171.92
	Lauretta Ayers	Toms River	189.10	Lauretta Ayers	Toms River	171.08
	Tony Gribin	Ocean	188.12	Norman Friedman	Livingston	155.50
	Gloria Gribin	Wayside	181.24	Tony Gribin	Ocean	154.05
200 – 300	Lawrence Gordon	West Orange	629.28	Lawrence Gordon	West Orange	518.37
	Carol Keating	North Caldwell	129.14	Carol Keating	North Caldwell	128.25
	Cooki Gulkin	West Caldwell	117.28	Cooki Gulkin	West Caldwell	99.36
	Robert Derosa	Manchester	102.21	Robert Derosa	Manchester	98.48
	Harris Ruben	Berkeley Heights	96.59	Harris Ruben	Berkeley Heights	80.39
300 – 500	Steven Siegel	Mendham	525.87	Steven Siegel	Mendham	420.41
	Lenore Mohr	Springfield	307.61	Lenore Mohr	Springfield	307.07
	Ginny Mason	Princeton	258.84	Romesh Arora	Waretown	221.86
	Bobby Willig	Princeton	232.23	Ginny Mason	Princeton	218.07
	Romesh Arora	Waretown	227.19	Bobby Willig	Princeton	192.26
500 – 1000	Om Singh	Whitehouse	194.40	Om Singh	Whitehouse	190.80
	Ken Trock	Hamilton	185.81	Ken Trock	Hamilton	140.56
	Zenon Komar	Summit	142.11	Ming Li	Summit	133.91
	Muriel Klinger	Berkeley Heights	141.16	Zenon Komar	Summit	125.62
	Joseph Wright	Westfield	137.74	Joseph Wright	Westfield	119.64

*[continued next page]*



**MASTERPOINT RACES****Final 2020 Standings by Range***[concluded]***Masterpoint  
range****MINI-MCKENNEY****ACE OF CLUBS**

<b>1000 - 1500</b>	Foster Osborne	Summit	485.04	Foster Osborne	Summit	334.17
	Jacqueline Hewlett	Bridgewater	246.04	Jacqueline Hewlett	Bridgewater	242.20
	Michael Hewlett	Bridgewater	246.04	Michael Hewlett	Bridgewater	242.20
	Sid Jones	Randolph	156.62	Sid Jones	Randolph	152.54
	Chug-Zong Wan	Somerset	147.42	Rosalind Powell	Livingston	143.17
<b>1500 - 2500</b>	Piotr Olszewski	Hackettstown	1,054.39	Piotr Olszewski	Hackettstown	853.83
	Chorng-Hour Yang	Parsippany	293.26	Chorng-Hour Yang	Parsippany	287.50
	Francis Nance	Chatham	163.12	Francis Nance	Chatham	159.04
	Karen Herbstman	Boca Raton FL	160.94	Karen Herbstman	Boca Raton FL	158.25
	Jeffrey Halle	Middletown	153.43	Jeffrey Halle	Middletown	129.43
<b>2500 - 3500</b>	Wendy Lee	East Hanover	456.31	Wendy Lee	East Hanover	427.49
	Fredric Weiner	Sarasota FL	151.03	Jin-Ming Liao	Skillman	135.89
	Jin-Ming Liao	Skillman	148.88	Susan Slusky	Highland Park	130.47
	Susan Slusky	Highland Park	135.38	Ronald Kraft	East Windsor	110.81
	Ronald Kraft	East Windsor	122.11	Fredric Weiner	Sarasota FL	107.44
<b>3500 - 5000</b>	Stephen Garreffa	Randolph	998.58	Stephen Garreffa	Randolph	967.37
	Stephen Cooper	Belle Mead	845.50	Stephen Cooper	Belle Mead	710.97
	Mark Mohr	Springfield	385.29	Mark Mohr	Springfield	383.58
	Elizabeth Evans	Mountainside	250.45	Elizabeth Evans	Mountainside	248.37
	Dave DuBois	Westfield	245.82	Dave DuBois	Westfield	235.20
<b>5000 - 7500</b>	Joan Brody	Livingston	388.08	Bruce Witzel	Scotch Plains	261.73
	Peter Stein	Hillsborough	284.19	Peter Stein	Hillsborough	255.72
	Bruce Witzel	Scotch Plains	272.86	John Brody	Livingston	231.43
	Donna Dulet	Ocean	249.67	Donna Dulet	Ocean	205.83
	Arnold Kohn	Monroe Township	179.68	Arnold Kohn	Monroe Township	171.26
<b>7500 - 10,000</b>	Judy Rothstein	Livingston	829.59	Judy Rothstein	Livingston	815.10
	Dori Byrnes	Morris Plains	345.91	Jesse Reisman	Livingston	250.58
	Alex Perlin	Metuchen	308.53	Cheryl Angel	Livingston	228.44
	Jesse Reisman	Livingston	257.40	Dori Byrnes	Morris Plains	157.17
	Cheryl Angel	Livingston	238.91	Abe Pineles	Palm Desert CA	130.08
<b>10,000+</b>	Jiang Gu	Mountain Lakes	319.06	Lester Sokolower	Verona	181.03
	Lester Sokolower	Verona	181.03	Alexander Allen	Annandale	66.15
	Alexander Allen	Annandale	133.14	William Esberg	Long Branch	42.55
	William Esberg	Long Branch	50.67	Cynthia Schneider	East Brunswick	35.32
	Cynthia Schneider	East Brunswick	38.28	Jiang Gu	Mountain Lakes	25.03

## ***THE BRIDGE CONNECTION***

### *by Rosalie Slutsky*

**L**et's get back to the basics, and here is a quiz for all levels of play: Your partner has opened the bidding with 3♥. What would you respond holding the following?

♠ AK83  
♥ 7  
♦ AQ75  
♣ KQ62

Answer: **do not bid 3NT!** Bid 4♥. Partner has just told you that they have seven Hearts and about six playing tricks, provided Hearts are trump. Partner has **not** guaranteed the ♥A. You have tricks in your hand that are helpful to partner. You also have an eight-card fit in Hearts – partner's seven and your one. It is possible that in NoTrump you might never score a Heart trick!

There is so much with the game of bridge, and that is why it has been around for a century. There are new books and new systems that are introduced almost every day. Players hear about them and want to incorporate them into their own systems. I'm reminded that "It's not the system that the two of you play, it's how the two of you play the system".

#### A.V.B.A.F

This simply stands for **All Vague Bids Are Forcing**. In other words, if partner makes a bid and you have **no** idea what it means, **don't pass!** It has been my experience that most partners are much happier when they are a level or two higher in the right denomination than a level or two lower in the wrong one. So, mark on your convention card **A.V.B.A.F.** in the bottom right-hand corner and keep your partner happy. (Jerry Helms has almost the same acronym A.S.B.A.F.: **All Strange Bids Are Forcing**.)

Your RHO opens the bidding with 1♦. What is your bid holding the following?

♠ 84  
♥ AKJ97543  
♦ –  
♣ QJ9

Solution: Your overcall would be 4♥! You have an eight-card suit; bid it. Bidding at the four-level puts the pressure on the opponents. If you were the dealer you would also **open** this hand 4♥. Yes, it has the strength of a 1♥ bid, but you have **no** outside Aces or Kings and it makes bidding much more challenging for the opponents. Do not bid 3♥ and think you will come back and bid 4♥ later; make your bid right away!

You are the opening bidder holding the hand below.

♠ AQ765  
♥ AK876  
♦ AJ  
♣ 9

<u>You</u>	<u>Partner</u>
1♠	1NT
3♥	3♠
?	

What is your third bid?

Solution: As the opener you are pretty sure partner has only taken a 'preference' back to spades once you showed him you have two suits. Partner more than likely has just **two** spades. As opener your next call should be 4♥ to confirm a five-card suit. Now if partner has three-card heart support, they are comfortable passing you in your eight-card Heart fit, rather than leaving you in the seven-card spade fit.

### Happy bridging, everyone!

# ***ROUGH WATERS VS CALM SEAS***

*by Francis Gupta*

## **It's Your Call – Deriving Optimal Bids from the BBO Field**

**P**re-emptive bids are commonly employed by bridge players to make it more difficult for opponents to find their optimal contract. The objective of a pre-emptive bid at the two- or higher level is to take up enough bidding room so that opponents either don't find their game (which they would have done without the pre-emptive bid), or they end up bidding too high, thereby going down. Either way, a pre-emptive bid is based on the premise that, in most cases when opponents have a game or slam in the hand, it might be better to sacrifice and go down with the goal of earning a better score.

As with every convention in bridge, there are many different agreements between partners for pre-emptive bids, depending on seating and vulnerability, but that is not the point of this column. The point is to highlight the painful dilemmas that pre-emptive bids create not only for the opponents but many times also for partner. As an illustration, consider the following hand from an ACBL tournament played on BBO:

Dealer: East		<u>N (HCP = 12)</u>	
Vul: N-S		♠ J32	
		♥ 7	
		♦ AK10	
		♣ KJ9743	
		<u>W (HCP = 8)</u>	<u>E (HCP = 7)</u>
		♠ Q94	♠ 1087
		♥ A8632	♥ QJ10954
		♦ 83	♦ 4
		♣ Q108	♣ A65
		<u>S (HCP = 13)</u>	
		♠ AK65	
		♥ K	
		♦ QJ97652	
		♣ 2	

Source: Board #2 from ACBL Tournament #47019 played on BBO on October 14, 2020, at 3:15 EST.

Question: If you and your partner were sitting E-W like me and my partner, how would you bid this hand? If you play standard pre-emptive openings, then the bidding should go something like the following (try bidding this hand with your partner):

E	S	W	N
2♥ <sup>1</sup>	?	4♥ <sup>2</sup>	?
Pass <sup>3</sup>	?	?	?

1 Shows 5-10 HCP and a 6-card Heart suit; denies a 4-card Spade suit.

2 Heart support.

3 Pre-emptive hands don't have a second bid unless partner makes a forcing bid.

Now try this: Imagine you and your partner are sitting N-S and East opens 2♥. How would South bid? And if West then jumps to 4♥, what would North have do?

Sitting South, you could bid a negative double to show a 4-card Spade suit or else bid 3♦, with the latter bid being preferable. After West jumps to 4♥, North should raise to 5♦. At this point, the bidding should have gone as follows:

E	S	W	N
2♥ <sup>1</sup>	3♦ <sup>2</sup>	4♥ <sup>3</sup>	5♦ <sup>4</sup>
Pass <sup>5</sup>	Pass	?	?

1 Shows 5-10 HCP and a 6-card Heart suit; denies a 4-card Spade suit.

2 Shows 12-17 HCP and at least five Diamonds.

3 Heart support.

4 Shows 12-19 HCP and support for Diamonds.

5 Pre-emptive hands don't have a second bid unless partner makes a forcing bid.

However, without three passes, no bidding sequence comes to an end. So, while it was appropriate for East and South to have passed after North's 5♦ bid, if you were sitting West would you have passed or raised to 5♥, hoping to earn a better score by sacrificing and not letting opponents make a game in Diamonds? There is also the chance of pushing opponents to 6♦, which might make, or perhaps you could set that contract. And if West were to bid 5♥, would you, sitting either North or South, raise to 6♦, holding a singleton Heart? These are the painful bidding dilemmas that can arise for both sides as a consequence of pre-emptive openings.

So let's take this step by step: Sitting West, should you raise to 5♥? It depends on whether you believe that N-S can make 5♦, thereby scoring 600. If you do *not*, then it is better to defend and set the contract. If you *do*, then bid 5♥ if you think your side will not go down more than three tricks doubled for a N-S score of 500.

And if West were to bid 5♥, should you, sitting North or South, raise to 6♦? It depends on whether you believe that you can make a small slam, thereby scoring 1170. And even if you think you cannot make a small slam, you might want to bid 6♦ as a sacrifice if you think E-W can make 5♥.

Given the various outcomes for the various bidding sequences, should you Pass, Double, or raise? Before we proceed to answer this, let's take a look at the contracts that each side can make.

*[continued next page]*

***ROUGH WATERS vs CALM SEAS****by Francis Gupta***[continued]**

N-S can make 5♦, though it does require some planning on the part of the declarer. E-W are entitled to at least two tricks – the ♥A and ♠A, but that is it. However, to take the remaining tricks, South needs to use dummy's trumps as entries to play two rounds of Clubs, thereby developing Club winners in the dummy on which to discard South's Spade losers. Clearly, making the 5♦ contract is dependent on the ability of the declarer. If declarer misplays, E-W may set the contract, but not because of superior defense.

On the other hand, E-W can make 2♥, their opening preemptive bid. This means that, with proper defense by N-S, 4♥ goes down two tricks and 5♥ goes down three tricks. Keeping in mind that N-S can make 5♦, this means that the 4♥ bid by West is good because, when doubled, it earns N-S 300 instead of 600 for making 5♦. Even 5♥ doubled gives N-S only 500 on this vulnerability.

All of this theorizing is easier said than done, as in practice no one has the benefit of perfect foresight. In actual play, all you get to see is your hand, your partner's bids, and the opponents' bids. And because you should be bidding in tempo, you don't have the luxury of thinking too much about your decision.

So, getting back to the bidding question: If this were your call, should you Pass, Double, or raise? If you have studied this board with your partner and gone through the bidding together, first as if you were sitting E-W and then as if you sitting N-S, you probably got into a passionate argument about the best call to make in either direction.

To resolve this dilemma, we could reach out to the experts (as they do in the popular ACBL Bridge Bulletin column "It's Your Call"), or we could just look at what calls led to the best outcomes in the BBO online tournament. There were 444 pairs that participated in this tournament, meaning that this board was played 222 times – or at 222 virtual tables. Because from a statistical perspective this is a significant sample size for us to draw inferences about how bridge players evaluate and bid on such hands, we are going to do the latter. The idea is to use the calls that bridge players are most likely to make in tournament situations, along with the outcomes associated with those calls, to infer optimal responses in such situations.

This hand was played 75 times in a Heart contract with E-W (the pre-empting pair) as declarer, which is 33.8%, or about a third of the total instances. It was played 127 times in a Diamond contract with N-S as declarer, which is about 57.2% of the total instances. This means that the Heart and Diamond contracts together account for 91% of the instances.

It is encouraging to see that as a whole bridge players know what they are doing. The remaining contracts (Clubs and Spades) account for only 9% of the instances, reminding us that in this large a field anything is possible.

Contract	Declarer	# of Tables	% of Total
Hearts	E-W	75	33.8%
Diamonds	N-S	127	57.2%
Other	Either	20	9.0%
Total		222	100%

This brings us to the next question: How did the E-W Heart bidders do versus the N-S Diamond bidders? Exhibits 1A and 1B present the outcomes of the E-W Heart contracts and of the N-S Diamond contracts, respectively.

**Exhibit 1A. Heart Contracts Played by E-W Pairs**

E-W Heart Contracts	# of Instances	E-W Score	E-W % Score*
4H =	1	420	100%
3H - 1	2	-50	71%
4H - 1	6	-50	71%
4H - 2	14	-100	65%
4HX - 1	1	-100	65%
5H - 1	3	-100	65%
5H - 3	18	-150	50%
4H - 5	1	-250	43%
4HX - 2	1	-300	41%
5HX - 2	7	-300	41%
5HX - 3	18	-500	35%
6HX - 4	3	-800	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>		

\*Rounded to the nearest percent.

From viewing the complete board, we know that, if defended properly by N-S, E-W can make only eight tricks in Hearts. So, any E-W pair in a contract of 3♥ or higher should go down. It is good to see that, in all but one of the 75 instances when this hand was played in Hearts, E-W went down – but not all of them were defended perfectly, i.e., N-S did not set the contract by the appropriate number of tricks. There was one lucky E-W pair that was not only allowed to **play** in 4♥ but was also allowed to **make** that contract, thereby giving them 100% for the board.

**[continued next page]**

***ROUGH WATERS vs CALM SEAS****by Francis Gupta***[concluded]**

What was surprising to see was that, of the 46 E-W pairs who competed to 5♥ (presumably after N-S bid 5♦), 21 were allowed to play **undoubled**. This meant that E-W pairs who raised to 5♥ had more than a 45% chance of **not** being doubled. Unfortunately, my partner and I were among the 25 E-W pairs who raised to 5♥ and **were** doubled. On top of that, our N-S opponents defended perfectly, so we were one of the 18 (of 36) pairs that were set by three tricks. Therefore, we earned only 35% on this board. Notice that if we had **not** been doubled and had been down three tricks, we would have earned 50% for an average board. Also, notice that if we had not been doubled and N-S had not defended perfectly, setting us only two tricks for 100, we would have earned 65%. But for N-S to earn 65%, they had to double and set us by three tricks. If they doubled but set the contract by only two tricks, they would still have earned 59%, an above-average board for them. So, the key to earning an above-average board for N-S did not hinge on defending perfectly but on doubling 5♥.

**Exhibit 1B. Diamond Contracts Played by N-S Pairs**

N-S Diamond Contracts	# of Instances	N-S Score	N-S % Score*
5D - 2	2	-200	4%
5DX - 1	1	-200	4%
6D - 2	1	-200	4%
6DX - 1	1	-200	4%
5D - 1	38	-100	7%
6D - 1	1	-100	7%
3D + 1	1	130	42%
4D =	10	130	42%
3D + 2	1	150	51%
4D + 1	8	150	51%
4D + 2	2	170	57%
5D =	58	600	83%
5D + 1	1	620	98%
5D + 2	2	640	99%
<b>Total</b>	<b>127</b>		

\*Rounded to the nearest percent.

Recall that N-S can make game in Diamonds but not a small slam. Therefore, it is good to see that only three of 127 N-S pairs took the push to 6♦. Of the remaining 124, 102 played in 5♦, the sweet spot for N-S. There were 22 N-S pairs who stopped in a Diamond part-score. (If E-W pairs don't raise to 4♥, perhaps N-S pairs don't go to 5♦ on their own).

Of the 102 N-S pairs who played the hand in 5♦, 61 played the hand perfectly and made the contract, earning 83% or more on the board, while 41 pairs misplayed the hand (recall that the defense has no legitimate way to set this contract) and earned 7% or less on the board. So, if you as an E-W pair pushed N-S to game in 5♦, then there was about a 60% chance that your N-S opponents were experienced declarers and would make their contracts, meaning that the odds were slightly in favor of the N-S pairs.

Of the 22 N-S pairs that were allowed to play this board in a Diamond part-score, nine pairs made 11 tricks, earning an average board (51%); two pairs made 12 tricks, earning 57%; and eleven pairs made only 10 tricks earning a below-average board (42%).

**Optimal E-W Bidding Based on BBO Outcomes:**

E	S	W	N
2♥ <sup>1</sup>	3♦ <sup>2</sup>	Pass <sup>3</sup>	3♥ <sup>4</sup>
Pass	4♦ <sup>5</sup>	Pass <sup>6</sup>	5♦ <sup>7</sup>
Pass	Pass	5♥ <sup>8</sup>	?

1 Shows 5-10 HCP and a 6-card Heart suit; denies a 4-card Spade suit.

2 Shows 12-17 HCP and at least 5 Diamonds.

3 Wait and see; no need to raise Hearts.

4 A cue bid shows 10+ HCP and support for Diamonds.

5 Shows a minimum opening hand.

6 Wait and see; no need to raise Hearts.

7 Shows a minimum opening hand.

8 Raise showing support for pre-empt suit.

Notice that West does not raise partner's pre-emptive 2♥ after the 3♦ overcall but waits to see if N-S reach game in Diamonds. If N-S play in a Diamond part-score, all is well for E-W, who are happy to go home with a close-to-average board. However, if N-S **do** bid game in Diamonds, E-W should compete to 5♥, hoping that N-S will go on to 6♦ or that they will let E-W play at the 5-level undoubled. Even if doubled, (as my partner and I were), E-W will earn 35% or better. But if E-W let N-S play in 5♦, there is a good chance they will earn 17% or less.

**Optimal N-S Bidding Based on BBO Outcomes:**

E	S	W	N
2♥ <sup>1</sup>	3♦ <sup>2</sup>	Pass <sup>3</sup>	3♥ <sup>4</sup>
Pass	4♦ <sup>5</sup>	Pass <sup>6</sup>	5♦ <sup>7</sup>
Pass	Pass	5♥ <sup>8</sup>	Dbl <sup>9</sup>

1 Shows 5-10 HCP &amp; 6-card Heart suit; denies a 4-card Spade suit.

2 Shows 12-17 HCP and at least 5 Diamonds.

3 Wait and see; no need to raise Hearts.

4 A cue bid shows 10+ HCP and support for Diamonds.

5 Shows a minimum opening hand.

6 Wait and see; no need to raise Hearts.

7 Shows a minimum opening hand.

8 Raise showing support for pre-empt suit.

9 For penalty.

***PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE****by Arnold Kohn*

20-20 may be fine for eyesight, but it certainly was not a great year. I sincerely hope that 2021 is much better. Virtual bridge is fine, but it lacks the sociality of relating to real people. My term as President and a member of the NJBL Board of Directors is quickly coming to an end and I would like to take this opportunity to express my thanks for the entire unit for their cooperation and input on many occasions.

Your Board of Directors has done a yeoman-like job under the worst possible conditions. I thank your Tournament Committee, headed by Kelly Kiefer, for the

outstanding job of negotiating for a new tourney site and all the arrangements they had to cope with. Treasurer, David Sutton and Secretary Stephanie Miller, had to do more than their usual shares. David and his committee did an internal audit, and our funds are in good order. Stephanie had a lot of special communications to undertake. Brett Kunin had to undertake many tasks and there were four great issues of *The Declarer*, produced by Peter Wright. Everyone else did a great job. I thank you all.

***KOHN'S KORNER****by Arnold Kohn*

I often hear beginning players relate that they bid "Because I had points," justifying their actions in this manner. I always reply, "Unfortunately, the game is about tricks, and the two things do not relate to each other."

The other day, in one of my "virtual" dates, I was dealt:

♠ J7  
♥ AJ1092  
♦ KQJ85  
♣ 6

My partner started the auction with 1♣. I responded 1♥ and partner advanced with 1♠. I bid 2♦, and partner bid 2♠. I now took inventory, and realized that we had enough points for game, but what tricks were we taking? Partner has six Clubs and five Spades. I correctly ruled out bidding NoTrump, realizing that communication was an issue, and passed 2♠. Partner managed to gather in eight tricks (it was not easy with a trump lead!) for a score of +110, which scored 85%. Points are important, but where they are located is much more important.

**CONGRATULATIONS !!**

To the latest Unit 140 member to achieve **Platinum Master** standing.

**ABE PINELES**



**MILESTONES****CHANGES IN RANK: November – December 2020, January 2021****Diamond Life Master**

Stephen Cooper	Belle Mead
Dave DuBois	Westfield

**Sapphire Life Master**

Ronald Kraft	East Windsor
Ruth Zowader	Madison

**Gold Life Master**

Ottile Bello	Short Hills
Chorng-Hour Yang	Parsippany

**Ruby Life Master**

Barbara Codispoti	Mount Arlington
Sidney Friedenber	Tinton Falls

**Silver Life Master**

Paul Adler	Morganville
Asish Sengupta	North Brunswick
Renee Waas	Mountain Lakes

**Bronze Life Master**

Patricia Bates	Hillsborough
Daniel Cooperberg	Monroe Twp
Fred Douglass	Basking Ridge
Cindy Dratch	Livingston
Charles Dvorkin	Manalapan
Arnold Fox	Eatontown
Lawrence Gordon	West Orange
Patricia Amato	Whitehouse Stn
Lance Greenberg	Monroe
Francis Gupta	Princeton
Muriel Klinger	Berkeley Hts
Lewis Lefkowitz	Somerset
Eileen Rosen	Livingston
Joan Rossiter	Waretown
Barbara Scammell	Holmdel
Sam Singhvi	Princeton
Ira Tarnow	West Orange
Bobby Willig	Princeton

**Life Master**

Michael Glogoff	Princeton
Eric Greenebaum	Caldwell
Muriel Klinger	Berkeley Hts

**Life Master (cont'd)**

Sue Marcus	Springfield
Barry Salka	Monroe Township
Herbert Shulman	Colts Neck
Loretta Standing	Chatham
Patricia Thomas	Ltl Egg Hbr
Ronald Whitney	Bloomfield
Bobby Willig	Princeton
Vladimir Friedman	Scotch Plains

**NABC Master**

Joy Hochstadt	Holmdel
Sue Marcus	Springfield
Manish Mehta	Chatham
Harris Ruben	Berkeley Heights
Loretta Standing	Chatham

**Regional Master**

Adarsh Bajaj	Princeton
Norman Friedman	Livingston
Richard Goldman	Mantoloking
Anne Johnston	New Providence
Lawrence Rosenberg	Marlboro

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Regina Bann	South Orange
Ira Bennett	Somerset
James Brown	Manahawkin
Allan Duff	Califon
Roberta Elliott	South Orange
James Graef	Toms River
Doris Grzymski	Chatham
Richard Jacobs	West Windsor
Arman Tookmanian	Budd Lake
Janet Tranter	Rumson

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Janet Aragon	Whitehouse Stn
Shirley Bershad	Ringoes
Patricia Cavanaugh	East Brunswick
Cathryn Clary	Skillman
Candy Defalco	Fair Haven
Maureen Dormont	Little Silver

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Ranjan Dutta	East Windsor
Tracy Ferry	Little Silver
Ellie Goldman	Ocean
Nancy Goss	Colts Neck
George Harvey	Princeton
Barbara Hutter	Livingston
Meg Jacobs	West Orange
Lisa Johnson	Pompton Plains
Linda McBride	Ship Bottom
Wayne Naylor	Glen Ridge
Linda Palazzolo	Livingston
Susan Pastuzyn	Westfield
Paul Pellicci	Mantoloking
Susan Salek	Bernardsville
Dipti Sharma	Lawrenceville
Howard Siegel	Jersey City
Carole Waung	Hoboken
Laura Wiss	South Orange
Caroline Zhao	Westfield
Derrick Zhao	Westfield

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George Avirappattu	Basking Ridge
Susan Berry	Bay Head
Sonia Chadha	Princeton
Ellen Ehrlich	Rockaway
Laurie Garfinkel	Westfield
Ann Graham	Hoboken
Barbara Kalemkerian	Glen Ridge
Marcia Kraus	Florham Park
Patricia Lawler	Hackettstown
Shaila Manocha	Warren
Laura Oncea	Fair Haven
Joan Repetti	Spring Lake
Ajay Sawhney	Morristown
Nalin Shah	Randolph
Cindy Tilson	New Providence
Shiva Vohra	Short Hills
Roby Weinreich	Summit