



Bulletin

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April 2003
Editor: Neil Ewart
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Thanks Keith!

Keith Ogborn, the Editor of the Bulletin since mid-1998 has unfortunately had to resign from his post due to work commitments. Keith has done a fantastic job during his time as Editor and the Bulletin has become a great publication during that time. I have stepped into the role on a temporary basis and I apologise if my first attempt does not reach the same standards as recent bulletins. Thanks Keith!

Club Refurbishment

After a long gestation period the top kitchen has been refurbished. So many people have contributed in so many ways – raising funds, design and planning, managing the project and settling in now it is all complete. These facilities should make that important facet of club life, eating and drinking, so much easier to deliver particularly when the numbers involved are substantial.

In parallel with this has been the refurbishment of the Olive Lott Room. As the plans for the kitchen took shape it soon became clear that any additional income stream that the kitchen might generate would not be possible without considerable improvement to the room used for outside lettings. At last year's Annual General Meeting it was agreed that both projects should proceed. In association with this, which the observant will have noticed, the railing outside the kitchen entrance has also been refurbished. Two of the new cupboards in the Olive Lott Room have been let to two of our regular tenants and the remainder will be of great value in the running of the Club. We will now be actively seeking additional lettings.

With the appropriate level of care from all members these improvements should enhance club life for many years.

There were many people involved in the project but special thanks should go to Anne Baldwin who initiated the project, organised fund raisers to assist finance it and put in the real groundwork of getting quotes and design specs. Anne then had to get the agreement on the final design from a committee whose members had all become budding Utzons overnight. Thanks Anne.

Julia Hoffman
President

Southern Tableland Teams

Get your entries in!

When? May 26th 2003

Time? 10:00am.

How much? \$30.00 (includes lunch)

Cash prizes in Open and Restricted Sections.

Entry forms can be collected at the club or email your entries to:

canberrabridgeclub@mail.bigpond.com



At the CBC

ANC Women's Teams Selection
April 25th, 26th 27th

ANC Youth Pairs Selection
May 3rd, 10th

Barry Turner Teams

Monday evenings: May 1st, 8th, 15th, 22nd

Sean's Teams

Monday daytime: May 5th, 12th, 19th

State Open Pairs (and selection for ANC Pairs)

Monday Evening: May 5th, 12th, 19th

Soup & Seminar and BFACT Simultaneous Pairs

Friday evening May 2nd

ANC Seniors Pairs Selection

Friday evening May 16th and 23rd

Knockout Teams

Monday evenings June 2nd, 9th, 16th, 23rd

Congresses and National Events

Bathurst Congress

May 3rd & 4th

Autumn National Teams (Adelaide)

May 16th-19th

Mollymook Congress

May 17th-18th

Leeton Congress

May 31st-June 1st

Victor Champion Cup (Melbourne)

June 7th-9th

Illawarra Congress

June 15th

Cootamundra Congress

June 28th-29th

Should I Lead an Ace Against a Slam?

There has been a lot of discussion recently between some players about what they would have led against a slam. If you hold an Ace, and are on lead against a slam, should you lead it or should you not? Well, there's no clear answer. Some experts shy away from such leads unless it is fairly obvious to do so, others will always do so, unless there is good reason not to.

Here are some hands (West to lead on all hands). What would you lead?

Board 1 (EW Vulnerable)

♠ 10 9 8 6 2
♥ 9 8 7 6 2
♦ -
♣ A Q J

West	North	East	South
-	-	Pass	1NT ¹
Pass	2NT ²	Pass	3♣
Pass	3♠ ³	Pass	4♦
Pass	4♥ ⁴	Pass	4♠ ⁴
Pass	4NT	Pass	5♥
Pass	6♦	All Pass	

1. 12-14
2. Transfer to either minor
3. Artificial, slam try in diamonds
4. Cue bidding sequence

Board 2 (Nil Vulnerable)

♠ 7 6
♥ K J 2
♦ 8 4
♣ A 8 5 4 3 2

West	North	East	South
-	-	Pass	Pass
3♣	Dbl	Pass	4♠
Pass	6♠	All Pass	

Board 3 (Nil Vulnerable)

♠ 10 4
♥ 10
♦ A Q 10 6 4 2
♣ 10 7 5 3

West	North	East	South
-	1♠	Pass	2♥
Pass	4♦ ¹	Pass	4♠ ²
Pass	5♠ ²	Pass	6♥
All Pass			

1. Splinter
2. Cue bidding sequence

Board 4 (All vulnerable)

♠ 6 4 3
♥ A 10 7 4 3
♦ 6
♣ Q 8 6 3

West	North	East	South
-	1♣	5♦	5♠
Pass	6♠	All Pass	

Answers and analysis on page 7

Entertainment Books

Some of you may be familiar with the "Entertainment" books which are sold for member benefits or fund raising through many organizations such as Rotary. They contain discounts, two-for-one offers and vouchers for restaurants (all levels such as fine dining, casual restaurants and cafes, even Brumby's, Darrell Lea and McDonalds)

- Arts, leisure, including Greater Union, National Gallery, National Museum, Australian Chamber Orchestra, Musica Viva, sailing, golf and biking
- Holiday items such as resorts and car hire
- Other offers, including dry cleaning, video rental etc.

The books are valid for 12 months, from June 2003 to June 2004.

There are books which cover Canberra, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Perth, Brisbane, Central Coast – Newcastle and the Hunter. There are even international editions.

The books are sold for \$50, and the club would retain \$10 for each book sold.

They are excellent value, and even if you only use a few of the offers, you will easily get your \$50 back. The books also make excellent gifts.

The Committee would like to find out if members are interested in the club obtaining these books for sale. Please let Ann Pettigrew (6262 6929) know if you are interested, or would like further information, or just leave your name on the list on the noticeboard. We do not require a commitment to buy, just an expression of interest. A sample of the current book is available in the office for you to look at.



Recent Results

Bill Hunt Pairs:

Adrienne Stephens/John Daly 1st
Wendy Freeman/Maurice Shroot 2nd

Bill Gray Memorial Pairs:

Stephen Carter/Klavs Kalejs 1st
Niclass Jonsson/Arian Lasocki 2nd

State Mixed Pairs:

Nola Church/David Hoffman 1st
Sue Coleman/Richard Hills 2nd

Recent results continued from Page 2

Point-a-Board Teams

Arjuna Delivera/Margaret Bourke	
Ian Thomson/Richard Brightling	1 st
David Vaughan/Peter Kahler	
Tim Davis/Tony Marinos	2nd

Swiss Matchpoint Pairs

Christopher Quail/David Wawn	1st
Richard Hills/Brian Thorp	2nd

ACT Open Team Playoff

Nola Church/Julia Hoffman	1st
Steve Hurley/Roy Nixon	2nd
Hashmat Ali/Richard Hills	3rd

ACT Women's Team Playoff

Dorothy Jesner/Sue Coleman	1st
Elizabeth Havas/Anna Quach	2nd
Nola Church/Julia Hoffman	3rd

ACT Seniors Team Playoff

Peter Grant/Ross Crichton	1st
Margaret Bourke/Anne Powell	2nd
Tony Marinos/Peter Kahler	3rd

ACT Youth Team playoff

Mark Abraham/James McGowan	1st
Daniel Geromboux/Griff Ware	2nd
Nye Griffiths/Christy Bridgland	3rd

ANC Butler Qualifying

Open

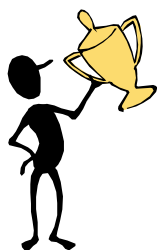
Arjuna Delivera/Ian Robinson	1st
Peter Kahler/Tony Marinos	2nd

Women

Sheila Bird/Karen Creet	1st
Rhyll Scales/Jill Tonkin	2nd

ANC Seniors Pairs Qualifying

Phyllis Palmer/Val Mitchell	1st
Peter Grant/Ross Crichton	2nd



the Americans frequently switched partners, which reduced the effect of their individual skill. The Aces always put out six good players and, even more importantly, three strong partnerships.”

Systems

“The distribution is the most important thing, and you should gear your bidding to concentrate on that first.”

Matchpoint pairs

“In pairs competitions, you can effectively forget all about slam bidding. You need to concentrate on declarer play and defence – that is where most of the points are lost.”

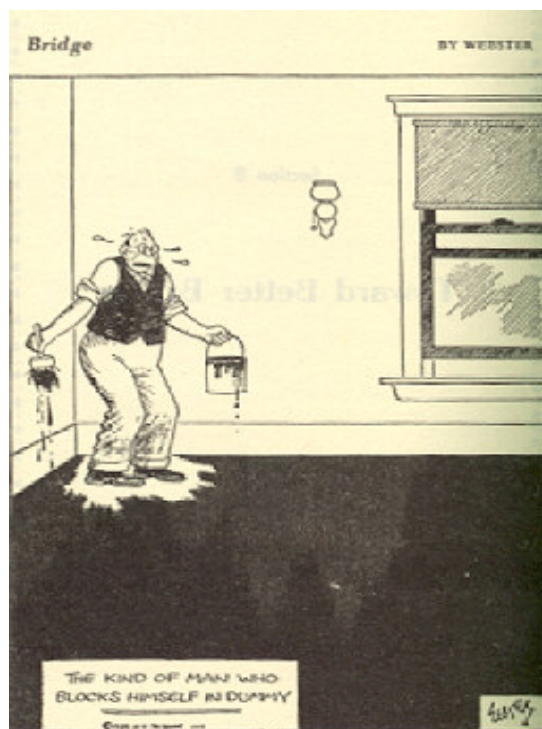
Teams

“At teams, you need to have more system, particularly for competitive bidding. More than 70% of auctions nowadays are competitive, and you have to know what you are doing.”

Homework

“I have done some coaching since my retirement from serious bridge, particularly with the Italian Juniors. I remember that the first thing I told them was to make a list of all the possible sequences, starting with 1♣-1♦-1♥-1♠, etc., and to define what each one meant. That way, you can see what the differences are and you can work out a lot about partner's hand from what he has not bid.”

The Kind of Man who Blocks Himself in Dummy



Something Old, Something New, Something Borrowed, Something Blue by Richard Hills

Old Benito Garozzo appears in a new book I borrowed from the club library. (Garozzo won many world championships as the star of the Italian Blue Team.)

World Class: Conversations with the Bridge Masters
by Marc Smith

There are many famous deals and personalities profiled. But I particularly appreciated the simple but powerful tips Garozzo provided.

Partnerships

“The Aces were the toughest opponents I ever played against. In the early days, the Americans often had six good players but they were never able to field three strong pairs. Partnerships should be long-standing and

The Losing Trick Count

an introduction

The Losing Trick Count is a method of hand evaluation first put forward in 1934 by F. Dudley Courtenay in his book *The System the Experts Play*. The general idea is that when a suit fit comes to light you add the number of losers in your hand to the number of losers in your partners hand and this number is then subtracted from 24. This tells you the number of tricks the combined hands are likely to take.

You will often hear players talking about this generally accepted theory at the table and many experts use it religiously to assess the right level to play a contract.

What would you do holding

♠ K 10 8 6 4 3 ♥ 7 ♦ 4 3 ♣ A 8 4 2

Partner opens 1 Diamond, you respond 1 spade and partners bids 4 spades? Read the article and see the conclusion at end.

Basic Count of Losers. With a void or singleton Ace count no losers in the suit, with a singleton or Ax, or Kx count one loser, with any other doubleton count two losers. In each suit of three or more cards, including the trump suit, count one loser for each missing high honour (A, K, or Q). Do not count more than three losers in any one suit. Count only one loser in a suit headed by A-J-10. Some distinction must obviously be made by between A-x-x, K-x-x, and Q-x-x. The first is a better two-loser holding than K-x-x; and three losers must be counted in suit headed by Q-x-x unless: (a) it is the proposed trump suit; (b) the suit has been bid by partner; (c) the Q is supported by the jack; (d) the Q is “balanced” by an ace in another suit. There is some debate about how to count Qxx with some players counting it has 2 1/2 losers.

The initial count. An opening bid is made with: (a) not more than 7 losers; (b) adequate high-card values, including two defensive tricks; (c) a sound rebid. A response in a new suit is made with (a) at the one level not more than 9 losers (sometimes 10 with compensating values); (b) at the two level not more than 8 losers (sometimes 9 with compensating values). For example

♠ A K 6 4 = 1 loser
♥ K Q 9 3 = 1 loser
♦ J 3 = 2 losers
♣ 4 3 2 = 3 losers
13 points : 7 losers

The count on the second round. Simple rebids by opener show no fewer than 7 losers, a jump rebid generally shows 5 or 6 losers, while reverses generally promise 5-6 losers at the two level and 5 if the reverse is at the 3 level (eg 1♥- 1♠- 3♣).

It soon becomes second nature to adjust the LTC in the light of the bidding eg Q-x-x may have been counted as 3 losers but if partner bids the suit it should now be counted as only two losers. Trump control is an important factor, and a loser should be deducted whenever the quota of aces and other key features, such as a king or a singleton in the right spot, is better than it might be

on the bidding.

This is a very simple summary of the system and you would need to read a lot more to fully understand the system. The bookshop at the club generally has copies of *The Modern Losing Trick Count* by Ron Klinger available and I commend this book to you.

My view on the method is that it is an extremely valuable tool that is not fully understood by many players. Many users of the method do not fully understand how the system should be used and employ a very simplistic approach—maybe just using the basics of the theory as outlined above. Below I give details on some more advanced parts of the theory that make it a very accurate system to use:

Opening bids. Often I hear people say when they open some dreadful hand “I only had seven losers”. Well unless they looked at partners hand they wouldn’t really know as the theory only works when a trump fit has been established. **Points** determine an opening bid, **losers** become relevant when a trump fit is known. Klinger says that if you open sub minimum hands the LTC should be no more than 6 e.g.

♠A109842♥3♦KQJ5♣52 is a 6 loser 10 count and is a sound 1♠ opening bid whereas ♠A98542♥J3♦KQ♣J54 is an 8 loser 11 count and should therefore be opened as a weak two. A opening bid at the one level should be made on hands that meet the following criteria:

- Not more than 7 losers
- Adequate high card values, including two defensive tricks
- A sound rebid

Note: You and your partner may have agreements about light opening or opening all 11 counts. If you do the LTC may not work for you as even when you find a fit you can not be sure that the opener has only 7 losers as flat 11 counts will seldom be seven losers.

Trump fits. Players using a five card major system should be aware that 5-3 trump fits do NOT work well with the theory unless the three card suit has a plus value (say J-10-x or K-J-x). 4/4 fits work better in the LTC but only if the responder has a ruffing value. So unless your hand meets one of these criteria you should add a loser. This is an area often overlooked by users of the system and is why Bergen raises (where hands with four card support can be shown) are effective with the losing trick count. LTC works most effectively with 9 card fits. With a known 10 card fit you may deduct a loser.

Adjustments to the LTC. In the paragraph *Opening Bids* above I outlined the basic requirements for an opening bid, however hands with 8 losers but good controls (three quick tricks or better) or hands with 13 or more points should be opened. It must be re-iterated however that *there is little point in having any loser requirement when judging whether to open the bidding* (Klinger) (because losers only become relevant when a fit is found).

Continued on page 5

Losing trick count—continued from page 4

Trump support is particularly relevant for assessing losers. As mentioned before 5/3 trumps fits are very bad for the LTC and unless you have singleton or void when you have xxx in trumps you should add a loser, similarly with 4 card support and 4333 opposite only 4 card support you should also add a loser. With a 10 card fit or better you should deduct a loser. Control rich hands (those with Aces and Kings) are much more valuable than those without. They are cover cards which promote the value of Q's J's and T's in partners hands.

So the original question was what would you do when partner rebids 4 spade after opening 1 Diamond and you hold:

♠ K 10 8 6 4 3 ♥ 7 ♦ 4 3 ♣ A 8 4 2

You have only 7 losers and partner should have only 5 losers for his/her jump to 4 spades. 7 losers + 5 losers = 12 total losers. 24-12 = 12 which is the number of tricks you should expect to make. You should therefore move over 4 spades.

The hand:

You
♠ K 10 8 6 4 3
♥ 7
♦ 4 3
♣ A 8 4 2

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

Double Dummy Problems

Double Dummy problems are problems in the play of the hand in which the solver knows the holding in all four hands. The contract and the opening lead are specified. Like chess problems they are for the solitary analyst, and require great skill in construction.

Double dummy problems have a long history, and were constructed in the 19th century before bridge had challenged the popularity of Whist. They were often appended to bridge columns, usually in a setting in which each player has played most of his cards.

The most common double dummy problem has a full 52-card layout. There is usually an unusual twist involving a squeeze or endplay and the solver has to explore several variations. The opponents are assumed to play perfectly.

The World's Smallest Double Dummy Problem

by Mike Lawrence

Thirty years ago, I was reading an old bridge book by Sidney Lenz. Half way through the book, I came upon the following bridge problem.

♠ J 2	♠ Q 8	
♥ A	♥ -	
♦ -	♦ -	
♣ -	♣ 7	
		♠ K 10
		♥ -
		♦ A
		♣ -
	♠ A 3	
	♥ -	
	♦ -	
	♣ A	

As you can see, it has just three tricks remaining. With so few possible variations, you should solve it in seconds. Right? Let's see.

South is in a spade contract and he is on lead. He needs two tricks. How can South get them?

This oldie but goodie has caused some eyes to blink.

With only three cards to consider, it is easy to find the solution. Here is the analysis for each of South's three cards.

The ace of clubs — You can't lead that. West will ruff and East will be left with another defensive spade trick.

The ace of spades — You can't lead that either.

If you lead the ace of spades and then the ace of clubs, West ruffs and East takes the last trick with the king of spades. If you lead the ace of spades and another spade, East gets the last two tricks with his spade and his diamond.

That leaves you with the small spade.

The key is that if West plays low, so does dummy. East wins but is endplayed. A trump lead lets South take the last two tricks and if East leads his diamond instead, South discards his club and ruffs in dummy with the queen.

If West plays his jack, you must cover with dummy's queen. East wins the king but has no safe retreat.

IF WEST PLAYS THE JACK, WHY MUST YOU COVER WITH THE QUEEN?

If West plays his jack, you better not duck in dummy. If you do, West wins and leads his ace of hearts. This will promote a trump trick for East-West. I leave you to see why this is so. West's two of spades may end up taking the setting trick.

Hats off to Mr. Lenz for his wonderful creation.

Try this other double dummy problem

♠ J 9 4 3 2	
♥ -	
♦ A 4 3 2	
♣ 5 4 3 2	
♠ T 8	♠ K 7
♥ KQJ10987654	♥ 2
♦ -	♦ KQJ1098
♣ Q	♣ KJT9
♠ A Q 6 5	
♥ A 3	
♦ 7 6 5	
♣ A 8 7 6	

South to make 4S on K♥ lead.

Answer in next edition

Send solutions to neile@webone.com.au.

First correct entry in gets a game with me, second one gets a whole event with me—Editor

Liz' Ditties

What would you (West) lead here:

♠ 7 6 2
♥ A K Q 2
♦ Q 10 8 4 3
♣ 5

After the auction

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♥
Pass	2♣	Pass	3♣
Pass	4♥		

Answer later.

Elizabeth Havas is one of the most successful women's bridge players in Australia. She has represented Australia on many occasions. She played the Venice Cup in 1978, 1989, and 2001 and has been in the Australian Women's Team in the Far East Championship 8 times (winning in 1977) and is one of the few women to have played in the Australian Open Team (in 1974 and 1998). In 1998 she made the Australian Open Team with her cousin Barbara Travis and this was the first time a women's pair had made the Australian Open Team. She has been in the winning team in the National Women's Team 6 times and has been in the ACT ANC team numerous times (with at least 7 different partners). Playing with Liz and watching her teach bridge over the years I have heard her drilling both me and other pupils with what I, and others, have come to call Liz's ditties. They may be well known concepts but it is quite amazing how often the ditty comes into your mind at the table.

So what did you lead on the hand? You should have followed one of Liz's ditties

If you've got long trumps lead your long suit.

Any other lead on this hand let's the contract make. So file it away in the brain and use it to your advantage in the future. The full hand comes from *Guide to Better Card Play*

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

Notice that on any other lead declarer can make. On a spade or club lead declarer has the timing to lead trumps at every opportunity, knocking out AKQ hearts and drawing West's two. If a spade is led the declarer can ruff a third spade continuation in dummy without reducing the trump length in hand. If a diamond is led the defence will prevail even though declarer has ♦AK.

Another Liz ditty in the next edition. Let me know if you get any hands where you successfully use this principle.

Book Review

The Trick Ratio Principle

Willie Jago, 246 pages

self-published 19 Curnola Ave, Doncaster, VIC 3108;

email williej@primus.com.au

Many books on bidding list esoteric conventions for marginally improving bidding accuracy, claiming that your results will be MUCH better. In practice, moreimps are lost than gained, due to you or your partner forgetting a nuance, or the opponents gaining extra chances to make lead-directing doubles during artificial sequences.

Books on improving the technique of evaluating your hand, however, are system-independent. Three useful hand-evaluation methods are:

The Law of Total Tricks (described by Larry Cohen in his book *To Bid Or Not To Bid*),

The Losing Trick Count (described by Ron Klinger in his book *The Modern Losing Trick Count*), and

In-and-Out Evaluation (described by Jeff Rubens in his book *The Secrets of Winning Bridge*).

But why buy three books when one will do? Willie Jago's book clearly describes the interaction of the above three techniques with plenty of illustrative deals taken from actual play. As a bonus, he also provides his own rule-of-thumb as to which side "owns" (and by how much) a competitive deal.

Furthermore, he describes simple, but useful, conventional tools which assist hand evaluation, such as:

- fit-showing jumps (which assist in evaluation of game potential);
- splinter bids (which assist in the evaluation of slam potential); and
- disciplined weak-twos (which assist in the evaluation of competitive potential).

Recommended for intermediate players.

Richard Hills

Selection and Appointment of Club Manager/Director

On June 30th Sean's contract with the club will expire. It is normal commercial practice in a contractual arrangement, such as Sean has with the CBC, to test what alternatives may be available and the committee has agreed therefore to follow past practice and advertise the position. An advertisement will appear in the next editions of both *Australian Bridge* and the *ABF Newsletter*.

The club is advertising the position to ensure that the selection process is as transparent as possible, and to ensure that the interest of the club and its members are best served.

The decision made does not reflect the views of any committee members about the performance of Sean and he has already expressed his intention to re-apply for the position.

Slam Leads—Answers and Analysis from Page 6

Board 1

Principle: When the opposition have a cue-bidding sequence, consider not only what they have shown but the ones that have not been shown.

(This deal was written up by Ron Klinger in *Australian Bridge* June 2002)

It's not easy to justify leading from an A-Q-J suit but here there might be just enough evidence. North is likely to have club control for his 4NT bid. If K♣ is in dummy the lead of the ace is unlikely to cost and if you set up declarer's King it is unlikely to provide a useful discard and also partner may well have a trump trick so you had better take that Ace before declarer discards club losers from one hand or the other.

Scores: A♠: 100; ♠10: 80; heart 70

The full hand (from the final of the 2002 Gold Coast Pairs):

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

Board 2

Principle: be reluctant to lead an unsupported ace against a trump contract unless you have a powerful reason.

North didn't ask for club control or check for aces, there is no evidence of a long suit in dummy to give declarer discards so there is no need to "grab" tricks. It would appear that a trump lead here is unlikely to do any damage. Interestingly this hand is an exception to another principle—that generally a trump lead against a small slam is not a good lead.

Scores: Spade: 100; diamond 80; heart 60; A♣ 30

The hand comes from the 2000 Australian Playoffs.

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

The slam will only make if you can reach this end position

♠ -	♠ -
♥ A 7 3	♥ 10 9 6
♦ A J	♦ K 10
-	♣ -
♠ -	
♥ K J	
♦ 8 4	
♣ x	

♠ 10 2
♥ 8
♦ Q 9
♣ -

Cash the Spade 10 and pitch the diamond jack. If East pitches a Diamond you cross to the Diamond Ace and bingo! If East pitches a heart you play a heart to the Ace and ruff a heart, setting up the long heart, with the Diamond Ace as an entry. A spade lead beats the hand because it removes an entry to reach the above end game. A heart lead beats the contract because when you get in with the Ace of clubs another heart removes the possibility of the above end game. A diamond lead beats the hand because it establishes a Diamond before the Ace of clubs is played. Ace and another club allows the contract to make while Ace of clubs and a diamond switch will beat the contract.

Board 3

Principle: Lead an Ace if it looks like the enemy may have a side suit that will provide discards for the suit in which you hold the Ace.

Do you think the A♦ lead will hurt? Declarer knows his/her partner has singleton or void ♦ and has had no qualms about bidding slam. Declarer is unlikely to have K to length in ♦ so any diamonds he does have may easily disappear on the spades. Partner may even have a trump trick. If you didn't lead A♦ write down minus 980.

Scores: A♦: 100; any ♣: 90; ♠ 30; ♥ 20

Board 4

This hand caused some heated debate during a recent club event. The opponents seem quite prepared for a Diamond lead so the A♥ seems the obvious lead. It is highly unlikely to get ruffed. If you didn't lead A♥ write down minus 1430. Declarer has singleton K♦ and dummy has Ax. The A♦ provides a discard for declarer's singleton ♣ (declarer was a 6511 shape)

Scores: A♥ 100; diamond 60, spade 10 club 10;

I sought answers from a number of players. Let's see what the experts (and Thommo) say

Board	1	2	3	4	Score
Margaret Bourke	10♠	8♦	3♣	A♥	350
Khokan Bagchi	10♠	A♣	A♦	A♥	310
Richard Brightling	10♠	A♣	A♦	A♥	310
Arjuna Delivera	A♣	A♣	A♦	A♥	330
Elizabeth Havas	A♣	2♥	A♦	6♦	310
David Hoffman	10♠	2♥	3♣	A♥	320
Richard Hills	A♣	A♣	3♣	A♥	310
Ian Robinson	9♥	8♦	3♣	6♦	300
Ian Thomson	A♣	2♥	A♦	A♥	360
Stephen Lester	A♣	♠7	3♣	A♥	380

Thanks go to *Australian Bridge* and Ron Klinger for allowing me to use the first two hands and to Ron Klinger and Stephen Lester for helping me set the scores for the last two boards. Thanks to Thommo (Ian Thomson) for his analysis of board three (which concurs with Ron Klinger's).

Larry Who? by David Burns

[David Burns has been a member of the English Bridge Team, is the current Chairman of the English Selection committee. He wrote this satirical piece on Larry Cohen's Law of Total Tricks]

It appears that the most significant bridge book to emerge in recent years is something called *The Law of Total Tricks*. This work is said to have revolutionised competitive bidding among experts and average players alike, and it even has a sequel called *Following the Law*. The third volume in the series, *Lesser Breeds Without the Law*, ought to be out in time for Christmas.

The principle on which the Law is based was originally developed by Jules Verne in his novel *Nord Contre Sud*, or "North Doubles South". It should be apparent from the title that the novel is a bridge fantasy, not meant to be taken seriously, but this has not prevented scholars from following its precepts religiously. In particular, the pithily expressed notion that "the sum of the number of tricks available to North-South in their best trump fit and the number of tricks available to East-West in theirs equals the sum of the number of trumps held by North-South in their best fit and the number of trumps held by East-West in theirs" has caused innumerable learned writers, including the present author, to forget what they were going to say at the end of a sentence because the beginning of it has gone on for so long.

The Law itself is more or less worthless, since the total number of tricks taken by anyone almost never equals the total number available to them, regardless of how many trumps they might have. That is why, in his second book, Larry Cohen was at pains to develop the theme of "adjustments". The current version of the Law of Total Tricks, assuming that I have fully understood the great man's words, is:

"The total number of tricks that North-South and East-West can take in their respective best trump fits is equal to: the total number of trumps they hold, minus one for the number of holdings such as Qx and Jxx in any of the hands, plus one for each card over eight in a side suit held by the partnership, minus a half for every honour held in a short suit, plus a half for having most of your honours in your long suits, with a tendency towards a negative assessment if the opponents bid one of your long suits, but a tendency towards a positive assessment if your hand does not contain impurities."

No wonder it doesn't work. And even if it did, no one would have a hope of understanding it. What I am going to present in this article is a far simpler rule, with the following absolute guarantee: If you never again violate Burn's Law of Total Trumps, your results will improve enormously.

That may sound a grandiose and wholly unjustifiable claim, but it is not. I have conducted the most comprehensive and painstaking research in order to verify

my theory. At the 1996 Olympiad in Rhodes, any one of forty teams would have won but for the fact that at some point they violated Burn's Law. Chinese Taipei, for example, would have been in the final instead of France had they not done this.

Dealer North NS Vul

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

West	North	East	South
	2 ♣ ¹	Pass	2 ♦ ²
Pass	2 ♠ ³	Pass	3 ♥ ⁴
Pass	3 ♠ ⁵	Pass	4 ♦ ⁶
Pass	4 ♥ ⁷	Pass	4 ♠ ⁸
Pass	5 ♣ ⁹	Pass	5 ♦ ⁹
Pass	5 ♠ ¹⁰	Pass	6 ♣ ¹¹
Pass	6 ♦ ¹²	Pass	6 ♥ ¹³
Pass	Pass ¹⁴	Pass	

(a) = Meaning according to North

(b) = Meaning according to South

1(a) I have 5+ clubs, perhaps a major, and 11-16 points.

1(b) North has 5+ clubs, perhaps a major, and 11-16 points.

2(a) A relay 2(b) A relay.

3(a) I have 4+ spades

(3b) North has 4+ spades.

4(b) 5+ hearts. Well, I ought really to have hearts, but I am a bit fixed because 3♠ is not forcing, 4♦ is a splinter and 4♠ is feeble.

5(a) No diamond guard. 5(b) No diamond guard.

6(b) Fourth suit, presumably looking for somewhere to play. A cue bid, which I hope partner will soon realise agrees spades even though there is no reason why he should.

7(a) Heart support. 7(b) Heart support.

8(a) Cue bid with hearts agreed.

9(b) Cue bid with spades agreed.

10(a) A cue bid with hearts agreed.

10(b) A sign-off in spades.

11(a) A cue bid with hearts agreed.

11(b) Club support. (It might be argued that taking six rounds of the auction to support your partner's first bid suit is a little excessive, but in view of the number of rounds that South took to support spades, not especially surprising)

12(a) A grand slam try in hearts, asking for good trumps.

12(b) A cue bid with spades agreed.

13(a) A sign-off in hearts.

13(b) A grand slam try in spades, asking for good trumps.

14(a) Oh, well!

14(b) What the *@&!

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Larry Who? continued from previous page

In the Open Room, the bidding was no less risible but rather more effective:

West	North	East	South
Lin	Mari	Shen	Bompis
			1NT ¹
Pass	2♣	Pass	2NT ²
Pass	4♦ ³	Pass	4♠
Pass	6♠ ⁴	All Pass	

1. Out of turn, but nobody noticed.
 2. Both majors.
 3. A transfer to spades.
 4. A punt, hoping that the slam would either be a good one or would make on a blind opening lead.
- Six spades made, six hearts went five down, and France took the lead in the match for the first time in the final set of sixteen boards.

Shattered by this blow, the Chinese Taipei men could not recover, and all because they had failed to obey Burn's Law of Total Trumps:

When you are declarer, the total number of trumps held by your side should be greater than the total number of trumps held by your opponents.

West	East
♠10974	♠A865
♥865	♥AKQ3
♦J97	♦AKQ64
♣A93	♣None

West	North	East	South
			1♣
Pass	Pass	Double	Pass
1♠	Pass	4♠	Pass
Pass	Pass		

Slovenia did well to stop in a making contract for South had ♠KQJ3.

In the closed room one of the more serious violations of the Law occurred:

West	North	East	South
			1♣
Pass	3♣	4♣	Pass
Pass	Pass		

This contract went five down (it is an interesting corollary to Burn's Law that almost all violations of it end up going five down) and Slovenia gained 12 IMPs.

In true Larry Cohen style, I have already written the sequel to the Law of Total Trumps.

... It is called *The Rule of Eight*, and it is for those of you whose bidding methods are already geared to the avoidance of 3-0 fits but whose judgment at the higher levels of the auction may be a little suspect.

This deal from the Olympiad final between France and Indonesia is a good example.

Dealer South Nil Vul

♠ Q J 10 9 7 6 5		
♥ A Q 7 2		
♦ none		
♣ 9 4 2		
♠ 8 3		♠ 2
♥ K 8 6		♥ 3
♦ A 8 7 5		♦ K Q 9 6 4 3 2
♣ Q 8 6 5		♣ A K 7 3
	♠ A K 9	
	♥ J 10 9 5 4	
	♦ J 10	
	♣ J 10	

This was the bidding in the Open Room:

West	North	East	South
Szwarc	Panelewen	Multon	Watulingas
			Pass
Pass	1♠	2♦	3♦
4♦	4♥	4NT	5♥
Pass	5♠	6♦ ¹	Pass
Pass	6♠ ¹		

1. A violation of the Rule of Eight

In the Closed Room:

West	North	East	South
Karwur	Mouiel	Sakul	Levy
			Pass
Pass	1♠	2♦	3♦
4♦	4♥	5♣	5♠
6♦ ¹	6♥ ¹	Pass	6♣
Pass	Pass	Double	All Pass

1. Further violations

I make the same guarantee for the Rule of Eight as I made for the Law of Total Trumps. If you never again violate it, your results will improve immeasurably.

The rule is similar to the well-known Rule of Eleven, and is applied in three stages:

1. During the auction, ascertain how many aces are held by your opponents.
2. Subtract this number from eight.
3. Do not bid at the level given by the answer.

The third book in the series will cover advanced topics in card play such as putting down the dummy. To whet your appetite, here is an important principle:

If your side has bid and supported a major suit during the auction, but finished up in no trumps, you should put the major you were bidding on the extreme right of dummy as it appears from declarer's point of view.

Otherwise, as one poor soul discovered in Rhodes, your partner may fall foul of Burn's Third Law:

You cannot make 3NT on a cross-ruff.

All you ever wanted to know about... The Hoffman Ratings System

.....but were afraid to ask

Most members will have noticed over the years a noticeboard on the southern wall of the club near the honour boards where screeds of paper are put up by David Hoffman. The statistics that go up there evoke strong emotions from some members, these emotions running from sarcasm to bewilderment and in some cases anger. What does it all mean? Well yours truly doesn't understand it and I know I'm not alone, so the Bulletin sought out David for an interview to discuss the ratings system. Hopefully this will help explain the system.

Bulletin: David, what is the ratings system?

DH: Well, Masterpoints are not necessarily a measure of ability and may in some instances reflect the length of time you have played for, and how much you have played rather than your actual ability. They are not a good indication for new players because of the time taken to achieve a high masterpoint level. This prompted me to develop a ratings scheme in the 1980's. It is now the 21st year in which it has been run.

Bulletin: What does the scheme try and do?

DH: It is an attempt to order people within the ACT based on their partnership or team performance. One of the constraints is that it only uses events run in the ACT. Players' performances in National/International and other events held outside the ACT do not get measured in the ratings system.

Bulletin: How does it work?

DH: Every multi-session event (excluding congresses) of which there are 50-55 per year (*this is because in a lot of events the qualifying fields are treated as separate events—Ed*) is weighted according to its importance (initially in line with its ABF Masterpoint ranking) and the quality of the field is based on the ranking of everyone playing the event (which is something not done in assessing masterpoint awards). Based on the quality of the field we can order where people are likely to finish based on ranking. Once the event is completed the results reflect the actual performance of participants. If your performance is significantly better than expected then your ranking will go up and vice versa. If you play close to your expectation then your rating will not change.

Bulletin: Ok then one of the problems I see with the ratings system is that while it may, to some extent, measure an individual's ability, the rankings are largely based on the players expected performance with their partner or team in an event, not where they actually finish.

DH: Correct, but it is very difficult (if not impossible) to extract an individual's performance from a pairs/teams performance. However, the team expected to finish first can improve their rating if their margin was significantly better than expected. There is also a bonus for the winner of a major event or for being in the top five in a qualifying section of a major event.

Bulletin: Do you see this as a flaw in the system that may be cause some of the negative comments that are sometimes heard about the system.

DH: If there is a need to rewrite the software, then this aspect could easily be accommodated in a database such as Access. As to criticism, most of the top players play in (semi) regular partnerships, so I do not believe that this improvement would significantly change the current ordering. (In the last 2 months I have played with 6 different partners, so it may help me!!)

Bulletin: Are there any subjective decisions made in assessing the ratings or is it based purely on actual ratings, the events, and the actual results?

The "level" of the event, which varies from 1 (for a basic event, say where the result is based on the best two from three scores) to 5 (for state championships). However the initial levels corresponded to the ABF MP "level", and each year I refer back to last year's level to attempt to maintain consistency. The level is used in determining the adjustment for a change in a person's rating (5 being 5 times as much as 1!!). Also if a person is new to the system I have to make an assessment on what rating they should be given when they enter the system.

Bulletin: Often a highly ranked player will have a semi-regular partnership(s) with a player(s) who may rank significantly differently to them, but with whom they will have considerable partnership understandings and experience. Will this mean the combined ranking of that pair for an event will not fairly reflect the combination of their individual rankings?

DH: Yes that is possible. Partnership understanding is significant. However to keep track of how often a pair played together requires a significant increase in data storage (currently 300 records (persons) held - to keep partnerships requires 90,000 records, of which most would be blank).

Bulletin: Would I be right in saying there is also and inherent flaw in the system in that the player's performance from the beginning of their bridge career remains to some extent in their ratings forever?

DH: No - I believe that a new addition to the scheme needs only about 20 events to reach their norm. The acceleration factor process helps especially where a player is significantly underrated initially.

Bulletin: What is this mysterious acceleration factor I hear mentioned?

DH: To assist new additions to the system (who generally are given a start rating below their actual level), and improving players, an acceleration factor (a speed up in the ratings) has been included. In each year the number of times a player improves their rating is tracked. For the fourth and subsequent time that a player performs significantly above expected, resulting in an increase in their rating, there is an additional 50 points included.

Bulletin: Would it be true to say that a top player who constantly plays with other top players (ie other who have a high ranking) will have to do constantly well to maintain a high rating.

The Hoffman ratings system—continued from Page 10

If a partnership is the highest ranked unit in the event, then the system expects them to win. They can still improve by winning by a significant margin (difficult), but they expose themselves to losing points by not performing well (say top third) in the event.

Bulletin: What improvements could be made in the system?

DH: Rather than adjust on a yearly basis, I think that date-stamping each event (Access database again) and modifying inactive players (to keep the system stable) may improve the system.

Bulletin: How would you then best describe what the ratings system measures.

DH: Ratings measure a players long term ability (*in ACT events*), allowing new players to climb, and aging players to slide, in a fashion that the masterpoint scheme doesn't.

Bulletin: One of the comments I hear made regularly is that the ratings don't seem to reflect actual (rather than expected performance). How can we judge who is really the best performed player, say, during the current year, from the ratings system.

DH: One way of dealing with this is to compare a players current rating with their rating at the start of the year. However this most probably could be called the "most improving" measure. Unfortunately the rating system is not geared to determining the "best performed" person in a year. It would not be too difficult to assign an equivalent point score to each event (and each place in an event). Then the person with the highest points at the end of the year would be the best performed person in the year. Note that each persons points would have to be adjusted by the number of events played. Let me suggest a scheme (for a later bulletin article).

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Tony Kershaw has compiled this list of statistics from the ABF Masterpoint scheme.

Did you know that the Canberra Bridge Club has:

612 members listed on the ABF Master Point Scheme (as at Dec 2002) of which:

114 are **Nil** masters (18.6%)

051 are **Graduate** masters (8.3%)

069 are **Club** masters (11.3%)

095 are **Local** masters (15.5%)

35 Local (0 stars)

27 Local (1 star)

33 Local (2 stars)

093 are **State/Regional** masters (15.2%)

60 State/Regional (0 stars)

33 State/Regional (1 star)

064 are **National** masters (10.5%)

30 National (0 stars)

32 National (1 star)

02 National (2 stars)

075 are **Life** masters (12.3%)

23 Life

13 Life - Bronze

22 Life - Silver

17 Life - Gold

051 are **Grand** masters (8.3%)

39 Grand

10 Grand - Silver

02 Grand - Gold

There is only 1 name that features in ALL the lists below - Guess who?

(very ubiquitous!)

10 Top Green Point earners (as at Dec 2002)

CARTER Steve	292.95
HILLS Richard	270.24
NAUGHTON Neil	261.09
BROCKWELL John	256.85
ANDERSON Patsy	235.07
JESNER George	233.92
HOFFMAN David	231.90
BACK Pat	230.18
SWAN Pat	225.30
GRAY Flo	224.33

10 Top Red Point earners (as at Dec 2002)

BOURKE Margaret	3699.79
HAVAS Elizabeth	3181.79
BOURKE Tim	2872.06
DE LIVERA Arjuna	2825.40
HOFFMAN David	2372.26
BROCKWELL John	2140.16
HILLS Richard	2122.86
ALI Hashma	2032.74
HOFFMAN Julia	2012.44
JESNER George	1898.85

10 Top Gold Point earners (as at Dec 2002)

BOURKE Margaret	2913.53
HAVAS Elizabeth	2482.29
DE LIVERA Arjuna	1583.97
HOFFMAN Julia	1332.64
BRIGHTLING Richard	1297.49
ROBINSON Ian	1252.99
HILLS Richard	1209.91
ALI Hashmat	1180.12
POWELL Ann	1143.07
THOMSON Ian	1129.67

10 Top Total Point earners (as at Dec 2002)

BOURKE Margaret	6780.48
HAVAS Elizabeth	5838.68
DE LIVERA Arjuna	4625.68
BOURKE Tim	4108.24
HILLS Richard	3603.01
HOFFMAN Julia	3495.89
BROCKWELL John	3448.49
HOFFMAN David	3447.50
ALI Hashmat	3413.10
JESNER George	2933.90

