

WESTERN CAPE BRIDGE UNION NEWSLETTER



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Editor: Shirley Kaminer
newsletter@wcbridge.co.za

Message from the Editor

How wonderful it is to have so many of our overseas friends here for the summer season in Cape Town. We have the opportunity to re-connect with them again over the bridge table and also to see some of them socially.

The Western Cape Bridge Union had an AGM in February and we are sorry to have to say farewell to Steve Bunker who has been the President of the Union for two years and who has been very productive with many aspects of its administration, including the introduction of this quarterly newsletter which occurred under his stewardship. He has stepped down from the Committee for personal reasons and we are very pleased that, once again, Tim Cope has assumed the mantle of WCBU President. You will read his introductory message on the following page.

The Festival of Bridge in December 2019 was, as always, very successful and we are looking forward to the SABF National Congress that will be taking place in Cape Town in March at the Italian Club in Milnerton. We are delighted with the very large entry that we have received for both the Teams event and the Pairs event – at the time of going to press 44 teams had entered and 112 pairs. For the first time at a national congress, there will be a one day “No Fear” Pairs section where players who do not have red master points can compete against each other and enjoy the atmosphere of a national event, yet do not feel pressurised by playing against national or international players.

Speaking of which, our South African national congress has attracted a number of high level bridge players from other countries who are coming to Cape Town specifically to participate in this event and will, hopefully, also have time to be tourists in the Mother City.

We are grateful to our regular contributors who continue to share their expertise with us in this newsletter, as well as others who have sent me light-hearted items related to bridge. I continue to welcome amusing or interesting stories and anecdotes about bridge related matters - so please don't be shy!

And, of course, we greatly appreciate the ongoing support of Warwick Wealth.

Happy reading!

Shirley Kaminer

President's Message

Vale atque Ave

Dear Bridge Players

First my sincere thanks to Steve Bunker for his Trojan effort in the chair over the last two years. He has effected some great improvements for the benefit of all bridge players across the Cape, and I applaud him for his selfless work, backed up by his hard-working committee who have all voluntarily given of their time to make the game a more enjoyable place. I thought I had retired from bridge administration, but unfortunately you are stuck with me again - for a short while at least. Fortunately, the rest of the committee continue with their tireless work, and we welcome Michelle Alexander as a new member whose portfolio will be Marketing and Funding, as well as Mark Kenyon, with the portfolio of Property and Innovation. We look forward to working with both of them.

My thanks, as always, goes to all the Club committees and owners who provide us with our daily fix of being able to play the game at all levels. Though this newsletter goes out to many unaffiliated clubs as well, whom I also thank for their efforts, what I do believe is vital is that, at the official level, we maintain our presence across the Peninsula to give everyone an opportunity to play close to home. With often early starting times and the morning traffic congestion, being able to say you can play close to home is important. Thus if we can maintain our presence in Sea Point at the Bridge Centre where many clubs operate from, in the Southern Suburbs via Keurboom and Impala, in the Northern Suburbs via the Bidding Box, and also in Pinelands, no-one can say they do not have the opportunity to play at a club near them.

The great news is that I have signed the new formal lease on the Bridge Centre – at this stage a three year lease, but we may be able to use that time to see if we can increase the length of the lease, which may have to go through different government departments. At least we are safe for the foreseeable future and it means that we can consider spending money on the infrastructure of the premises given our security of tenure. My thanks to my predecessors, especially Steve Bunker, who went the extra mile to make this happen.

So, what are our challenges for the year or years ahead? There is one thing that is top of the agenda and that is keeping bridge alive for many years to come. It's a bit like the debate about climate change – it might not affect all of us as sadly many of us are of a generation where the effects may not impact us in our lifetime, but we have a responsibility to future generations. It is the same with bridge – and the fact that you are reading this possibly means you think it is a great game that stimulates the mind and challenges the intellect. And, I agree with you – perhaps because I am biased, I would say it is the greatest game on Earth!!! So whilst we will do everything in our power to help promote the game, I ask you to think about what you can do – teach it to your children and grandkids, encourage your friends to play and spread the gospel wherever you can. And if you need help, our Bridge Union will do whatever it can to assist. As with climate change where you may be doing your bit in a small way by recycling or avoiding the use of plastic (every small act will help), ask yourself at the end of the year what efforts you have made, however small, to ensure that this wonderful game survives.

I also want this to be the year of inclusivity. I strongly value any constructive suggestions you may have – so let's hear from you – your thinking caps may be better than ours and we might need a nudge in the right direction – but let us be positive rather than negative. What we do not need is what in today's world is called Fake News. There are a couple of areas of gossip that I have heard doing the rounds already, neither of which are true. The first was that the WCBU was using its funds to assist local players who compete internationally. Not true, but we are very fortunate that the WC Department of Culture and Sport does give a grant to elite players on occasion, and this grant is paid to the WCBU which, when received, is paid directly to the applicable players. It is money that would NOT be received unless we had players competing at international level and no local income received by the WCBU is used for this purpose. The second piece of gossip I hear on the grapevine is that we are underpaying our valued staff at the Bridge Centre – not true again. All have formal employment contracts, well in excess of the minimum wage. On top of this, they receive 13th cheques, a present on their birthday and - probably most importantly - free accommodation on site (so no travel costs). We value our staff and treat them with respect, both personally and financially. So, the rule for this year is, the more constructive suggestions the better, but gossip or talking behind others' backs will not be tolerated.

If you are reading this, you may already have started playing in the National Congress being held at the Italian Club in Milnerton. My thanks to all those locally who are making it happen – to Kitty, Andre, Malcolm, Steve, Ann, Neil and Jocelyn especially, I hope all the hard work you have put in reaps the rewards that are deserved. And break a leg, all Capetonians who are playing – may you be victorious in a very strong International and National field. I told you earlier I was biased! Then we move on to our Premier Pairs event of the year to be held over four sessions (two sessions on Sunday 5 April and two sessions on Sunday 19 April). Let's have a bumper entry this year.

Yours in bridge

Tim Cope

(President WCBU)



Festival of Bridge – December 2019

The annual Festival of Bridge, the premier red point WCBU event in Cape Town, was once again highly successful. The participants were not only from Cape Town, but also from Johannesburg and other regions in South Africa, and there were also a number of overseas bridge players – mainly from England, Germany and Sweden.

There was a one day Swiss Teams event, followed by a one and a half day Pairs event, which was primarily graded according to the number of master points held by the bridge players. This grading allowed for numerous prizes to be awarded to players across the different sections.

Maureen Narunsky, Imtiaz Kaprey, Malcolm Sigel and Rob Sulcas succeeded as the winning team; while Sven Bjerregaard, Alon Apteker, Martin Lofgren and Carl Ragnarsson were second; and Diniair and Nancy Minwalla, Paul Mestern and Julian Gruft took third place.



The Pairs tournament in the A section was won by Martin Lofgren and Carl Ragnarsson, who come to Cape Town from Sweden each year to participate. Malcolm Siegel and Rob Sulcas were second; and Noah Apteker and Hennie Fick came third. There were also prize winners in the other sections – full results can be found on the WCBU website. Congratulations to all the prize winners!

Besides the prizes for the those who achieved well in the tournament, there were also two awards. The Andy Gray Award for Courtesy was presented to Joyce Hessen, while the Tim Cope Service Award was presented to Ann Sturrock for her innovative spirit in introducing technology into the bridge world in Cape Town about 15 years' ago.



While the Festival of bridge has been an event on the WCBU calendar for many years, the 2019 event was unique. **For the first time there was an 80 year gap between the oldest and the youngest bridge players.** The oldest bridge players, Faye Salomon and Sylvia Schiff (the latter regrettably recently deceased) in their 90s and the youngest bridge player, 12 year old Aras Apteker, the son of Alon Apteker. What a wonderful game that can be enjoyed – literally – by all ages!

Defending Pre-empts

by Tim Cope

The most common pre-empt to defend against is the weak two opening and its close neighbour the Multi. So, let us start on that road, but before we go there we need to discuss the loci behind what we are doing.

Back to basics . . .

Let us suppose the opposition have opened 1♦ and partner makes a take-out double. What would you respond with?

- a) ♠ K54 ♥ AJ107 ♦ 8732 ♣ J5
- b) ♠ K54 ♥ J763 ♦ 8732 ♣ J5

The answer to b) is easy – partner has made a take-out double and is asking us to bid our longest suit – so we would automatically bid 1♥. But if we compare that to the first hand which has 9HCP, we cannot just respond 1♥ on this hand as well, otherwise partner will not know whether we have some real values or nothing at all. The general rule, therefore, when we respond in a suit to a take-out X by partner is that we will bid our longest suit but with 0-7pts we will respond as cheaply as we can, whilst with 8-11pts we will jump in our suit – so the correct answer to a) would be to bid 2♥ rather than 1♥. I guess we are all on the same page so far.

Now let us suppose the opposition have opened a weak two bid. The most common start to the defence is that partner makes a take-out double. Let us suppose the opening has been 2♠ and partner doubles. We no longer have the luxury of making a cheap bid when we hold next to nothing, and jumping when we have 8-11pts – for instance, 2♠ Dbl P 4♥ is taking the level of the auction into the stratosphere and this may be too high if your partners are like mine and always have the weakest and most unsuitable hand for their take-out double. So, we need to find a solution to this.

LEBENSOHL

Many of you may play Lebensohl (LEB) when they interfere over your NT, and many may also use it against weak 2's, but there may be a few features that need discussion.

Remember, we do not have to use LEB if we have room to bid our suit at the 2 level (e.g. 2♥ Dbl P you can bid 2♠ to show a weak hand 0-7pts)

The main rule is that when partner doubles a weak 2 for take-out as responder we can:

- a) Bid 2NT as LEB – this requests partner usually to bid 3♣ which, if you have 0-7 and a club suit, you can pass; or bid another suit as natural with the same point count
- b) Bid a suit at the three level which will show 8-11pts and your best suit – now partner will know you have genuine values

- c) With stronger hands than this you can bid game in your own suit if you are confident that you know where you want to play; or use the cue-bid of their suit to show a strong hand (possibly asking for a stopper) and put the ball back in partner's court.

RESPONDING TO LEB

Now let us put ourselves back in the position of being the person who made the take-out double. Let us assume that the auction has started 2♠ Dbl P 2NT.

In principle this asks you to bid 3♣ but sometimes you may have an ultra strong t/o double and, if partner is towards the top of their range for using LEB, you may still have a game on. In such cases, and only in such cases, you can break LEB by bidding a new suit to show this extra strong hand. So, on the auction mentioned, if you held ♠ 5 ♥ AK63 ♦ AKQ76 ♣ K54, rather than just bidding 3♣ as LEB requests, you would bid 3♦ to show your own suit and the extra strength in one bid.

OTHER ASPECTS OF LEB THAT SHOULD BE USED

The auction starts 2♥ Dbl P ?

You might have

- a) ♠ KJ42 ♥ 987 ♦ AJ43 ♣ 87 or
 b) ♠ KJ942 ♥ 98 ♦ AJ43 ♣ 87

Which hand would you rather have? I assume you all said b) as it has that gorgeous 5th trump which enhances the hand – partner may well have 4 (not promised but highly possible) but having 9 trumps is better than 8 and definitely better than 7.

Both hands fall into the range 8-11pts so, if we bid 3♠ on both of them, how will partner know if we have 4 trumps or 5? The way we do this is to use the following rule:

If we jump in a new suit to the 3 level that will show 5 trumps.

If we use LEB and partner bids 3♣ and we then bid a suit that could have been bid at the 2 level which would show weakness, then we cannot be weak, so we would be showing 9-11pts and a four card suit.

So, on hand a) above the bidding would be 2♥ Dbl P 2NT (LEB) P 3♣ P 3♠.

Whilst on hand b) the auction would be a simple 2♥ Dbl P 3♠ to show the five card suit immediately.

BIDS OTHER THAN DOUBLE OVER A WEAK 2

- a) Overcalls are natural
- b) 2NT shows 16-18 balanced or semi-balanced with a stopper in the opened suit. Note that if we bid 2NT your partnership should play the same system over such a bid as if you had opened 2NT
- c) Jump Overcalls in a major are STRONG – the general rule is that we do not pre-empt against a pre-empt
- d) A cue bid in the suit opened shows a solid long minor suit with maybe a couple of cards on the side – e.g. over a 2♥ opening we would bid 3♥ on ♠K6 ♥87 ♦AKQ10765 ♣KJ. Basically, the bid asks partner whether they have a stopper in the opened suit. If they do, they can bid 3NT. If not, they bid 4♣ which is pass or correct to 4♦ (or if they also have a very strong hand they can bid 4♦ which asks if we have a singleton which, if we have, we bid the singleton with 4NT showing no singleton).
- e) We can jump in a minor suit – e.g. 2♥ 4♣. This is called Leaping Michaels and shows both a very strong hand and at least 5 cards in the minor bid and 5 cards in the unbid major.
 - i) A typical hand for say 2♥ → 4♣ might be ♠AKJ87 ♥4 ♦K3 ♣AQJ108
 - ii) If we have a 5/5 hand with lesser values, we would just over overcall – so with a hand like ♠AJ1065 ♥7 ♦K3 ♣A8765 we would just bid 2♠ as we are not strong enough for Leaping Michaels
 - iii) If the opening has been 2♦, then a bid of 4♦ shows a strong hand 5/5 in the majors. If the opening has been 2♦, then 4♣ shows 5♣ and 5 of a major. If responder wants to ask which major, then they can bid 4♦ to find out which it is.

So, let's see if you have the system under control with three quick quiz questions . . .

Questions:

- a) The opposition open a weak 2♦ and partner doubles. What do you respond with ♠Q7 ♥K1094 ♦873 ♣A1064 ?
- b) The opposition open 2♠ and you double and partner bids 2NT which is Lebensohl. What do you now bid with ♠7 ♥KQJ97 ♦AKQ9 ♣A42 ?
- c) The opposition open 2♦ and partner bids 4♣ - what do you bid with this hand ♠A76 ♥AK6 ♦8765 ♣J76 and have you any continuation thoughts?

Answers will be found at the end of this newsletter.



Tim is available for lessons – individuals, groups or online.

He can be contacted on 084-4474944.

Playing bridge in unusual circumstances – the show must go on!



From Jeanne Mcleod:

I found this pic of Sue Botha, Graham and Theresa Noble and Grace Verster playing on a suitcase. Our car had got stuck in a sanddrif whilst on a bridge / flower sighting weekend near Niemandsdorp. Jane Underwood and I had taken the other vehicle to get help and the others filled their time sensibly!



From Eila Steyl:

Playing bridge in the dark with headlights during load shedding in CT – Dec 2019

NOTE:

Bridge players are most welcome to send me snippets of information about interesting experiences / aspects of playing bridge, with or without pictures – please don't be shy!

Defending against a suit contract - a fine art

by Diniar Minwalla

Imagine that you are defending against a suit contract. How should you be thinking? The answer lies in trying to visualize what declarer will be trying to do. If you can get into declarer's mind and figure out what he or she is thinking, your job as a defender is already half done.

Let's see how this works . . .

First of all, we need to know the fundamental thought process that a declarer considers on every single deal. Declarer play in a suit contract always revolves around identifying losers in the hand with the longer trumps. Here are the steps to go through by declarer:

1. Look at the trump suit in both hands (dummy and declarer) and identify the losers. There are only two factors that affect losers in trumps:

- (i) the high cards that are missing; and
- (ii) how the missing cards divide.

As a defender, there will not be much work for you to do in this area, other than protecting your own trump holding and also your partner's trump holding.

2. Look at the other suits one by one, but only in the hand with the longer trumps. Identify the losers in each suit. Then look at dummy's holding in the suit and see if dummy has a picture card which reduces the losers to zero. If the losers are now reduced to zero, then declarer has no further work to do to take care of losers in that suit. If, however, the picture card in dummy does not reduce the losers in declarer's hand to zero, then declarer has some work to do to try and dispose of these remaining losers. This can be done in three ways:
 - a) Trumping the losers in the opposite hand (the hand with the shorter trumps); or
 - b) Discarding the losers on winning cards in the opposite hand; or
 - c) Finessing (taking advantage of the position of a missing honor).

Having outlined the basic thought process of declarer play, we now focus on how we should be thinking as a defender. Here are the guidelines:

1. If you think that declarer is going to be taking care of some of his losers by trumping in the hand with the shorter trumps, then you might consider playing a trump to cut down the ruffing power in the hand with the shorter trumps. If you do go this route, then you should also be considering whether you are jeopardizing your own trump holding (or, for that matter, your partner's trump holding) as a result of leading trumps.
2. If you think that declarer is planning to take care of losers by discarding them on winning cards in the opposite hand, then you may have to take aggressive action by taking your tricks (or moving towards generating tricks) before declarer has time to dispose of his losers on winning cards in the opposite hand. A word of warning here and a very important concept of good defence - DO NOT TAKE YOUR WINNERS PREMATURELY IF YOU CAN SEE

THAT THEY CANNOT DISAPPEAR. The only case where your winners can disappear if you don't take them quickly is where dummy has a strong side suit with visible immediate winners, or the suit has significant potential to produce eventual winners.

Enough of theory. Let us now look at a live deal where these defensive strategies can be put into practice. (This hand comes from the Outeniqua Open Bridge Tournament played in George in 2019.)

Sitting East, they are vulnerable and you are not. You are the dealer and pick up the following hand:

532
A54
AT865
KJ

You open 1D and the bidding continues as follows:

<u>E</u>	<u>S</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>N</u>
1D	X	P	1H
P	4S	P	P
P			

Your partner leads the queen of diamonds and dummy comes down as follows:

J
QJT3
K974
T842

532
A54
AT865
KJ

Declarer plays the king of diamonds from dummy and you win with ace. How should you be thinking and based on your thoughts, how should you continue?

A good idea as defender is always to try and paint a picture of declarer's hand. Declarer has started with a double and then jumped to game, showing a strong hand and a very good spade suit (possibly solid - headed by AKQ).

If we go through the thought process outlined earlier, we can work out that

- declarer cannot take care of losers by trumping in dummy;
- declarer may hold the ace and queen of clubs, in which case he will make the contract via 7 spade tricks and 3 or 4 club tricks.

In situations like this, if you want partner to hold a card that gives you a chance to defeat the contract, then you assume that this is the case. So, if declarer does not have the queen of clubs, he may have club losers. How can he take care of club losers? Only by discarding them on hearts. Declarer will probably need to have the king of hearts to avail himself of any heart winners being produced in dummy, but since we have the ace ourselves, we can hold up a sufficient number of times to deny declarer an entry to enjoy winners in hearts - partner will assist with this process by giving us the count in the heart suit .

Having done all this analysis, have you worked out what you need to play at trick 2?

The full deal:

<p>J QJT3 K974 T842</p>	<p>532 A54 AT865 KJ</p>
<p>74 9865 QJ3 Q973</p>	<p>AKQT986 K2 2 A65</p>

The only card to play at trick 2 to defeat the contract is a trump. It removes the entry in dummy and allows declarer only one trick in the heart suit. Concluding the analysis:

1. There was no hurry to continue diamonds because tricks in that suit cannot disappear.
2. If declarer has club losers, there is no urgency to take our club winners now.
3. What we need to achieve is to prevent declarer from discarding club losers on winning hearts which can be produced in dummy.

FINAL ACTION: Remove the trump entry in dummy to prevent declarer from enjoying heart winners in dummy.

If you train your mind to think this way, you can make great strides in your defence.
Good luck!



Diniar is available for lessons in the Southern Suburbs for groups of four – intermediate and advanced.

He can be contacted on 072 709 5180 or 021 782 0167

SABF Trials

Trials were held in Johannesburg in February for teams to represent South Africa internationally this year. We are delighted that Tim Cope and Andrew Cruise from Cape Town came second in the Open Trials and will be joining team-mates, Neville Eber and Hennie Fick (Jhb) who came first, and Alon Apteker and Craig Gower (Jhb) who came third.

Full results for all teams are available on the SABF website.

The South African Teams will be playing in the World Teams Olympiad in Salsomaggiore in Northern Italy towards the end of August.



Two great players, both good friends of mine from England, Robert Sheehan and Jonathan Cansino, have a terrible game. Of course, each thinks it is the other's fault. Finally, Sheehan hands Jonathan a tiny piece of blank paper and says: "Here Jonathan, write down everything you know about bridge." Jonathan replies: "Well, it's a bigger piece of paper than I would have given you." (Eddie Kantar)

Reminder - SABF Subscriptions for 2020

An SABF subscription entitles a member to play at any affiliated Bridge Club in South Africa and earn Masterpoints.

If you have not already paid, please pay by EFT, using your **SURNAME** and **SABF#** as reference. The amount is R200 which is the same as the last two years.

The subscription of R100 for the Bridge Centre may be added to this payment.

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A case of mis-boarding

by Diniar Minwalla

“DIRECTOR!”

The dreaded call came from table 9 on a Friday afternoon bridge session at the Fish Hoek Bridge Club.

“Yes, what's the problem?” I asked.

“I have 12 cards and my partner has 14.”

At any other club this would easily be resolved, but since we don't play pre-dealt boards I could not refer to any print-out of the hands.



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My first option to correct the mis-boarding in these situations is always to check if we have played the board, as I can usually remember the cards. Unfortunately, we had not played the board so I had to try option B, which is to ask the pair that had just played the board a few minutes ago to correct the mis-boarding. I was expecting the usual answer in these situations which is “please don't ask me, love, I haven't a clue”.

However, on this occasion, I was pleasantly surprised when the pair in question confidently sorted out the mis-boarding and promptly returned the board to table 9 where it was now to be played.

“DIRECTOR!” This time the voice was twice as loud.

“Now I have 11 cards and my partner has 15!”

Forthcoming Events

Monday 9 – Monday 16 March	SABF Congress – Italian Club, Milnerton
Friday 27 – Saturday 28 March	Hermanus Easter Pairs
Sunday 5 April and Sunday 19 April	Western Cape Pairs Championships – Bridge Centre
Saturday 2 May	Bidding Box Open Pairs
Thursday 14 – Friday 22 May	SAWBA Congress - Johannesburg

Summary of monthly rules from the SABF

by Heidi Atkinson and James Grant

September Rule

So, your right hand opponent has led FACE UP **out of turn**. The Tournament Director will give you (the declarer) five options:

1. Let your 'dummy' play the hand.
2. You play the hand with that particular lead, therefore you have accepted the lead; however BEFORE you play from your hand you will see your dummy. This allows you to make an informed decision and then you will play as second.
3. You decide that the lead must come from the correct opponent on your left. He/she can lead **any suit** and the exposed card from his/her partner will remain a 'major' penalty card which has to be played at the first legal opportunity.
4. You **FORBID** the lead of the suit that has been played out of turn. *
5. You **DEMAND** the lead of the suit that has been played out of turn. *

** When you have demanded or forbidden the out-of-turn lead card that player may retract the card into his hand. HOWEVER: His/her partner has had the advantage of seeing the particular card and this now becomes 'unauthorised information'. He/she is not allowed to take advantage of this fact during the play of the rest of the hand.

October Rule

NEVER argue with the TD over a ruling – this is akin to arguing with the judge in a court case. If you feel for whatever reason that the decision made by the TD is incorrect you have the right to appeal in writing to an Appeals committee. If in doubt as to the local procedure to follow, then ask the TD or club administrator.

Bridge Over Troubled Water



Betty: 'I guess a bottom's a bottom?'
Fred: 'Yes, but two bottoms in a row really is too much.'

Strategy at Matchpointed Pairs Tournaments

Part 4: Competitive Bidding – High-Level Decisions

By Kathryn Herz & Eckhard Böhlke

Make or Break Decisions at the 5-Level

Part 3 of our series of articles on matchpoints strategy dealt with the crucial importance of decisions at the 3-level when competing for the optimal part-score. We demonstrated why it is often a good strategy “to bid one more”, not least because defence against low-level contracts tends to be difficult. However, competitive bidding decisions at high levels are a different matter. Let’s analyse the situation when we bid game (to make, not pre-emptively) and the opponents find a sacrifice bid at the 5-level. We need to figure out whether to double or to bid one more.

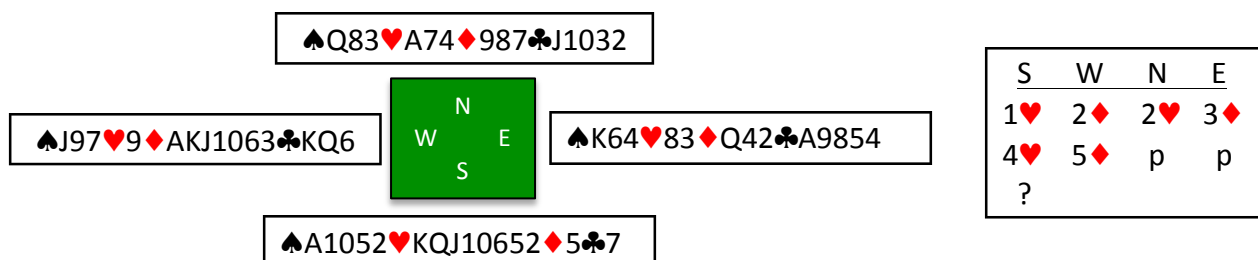
Ed Manfield's famous “BOLS Bridge Tip” serves as a good introduction to this difficult subject matter: **“The 5-level belongs to the opponents!”** From 1974 to 1994 many of the world's top bridge players submitted expert tips to BOLS, the Dutch Distillers, who sponsored a writing competition on bridge advice. Each year a panel of eminent members of the International Bridge Press Association voted on the very best of these tips. In 1987, the late US expert Manfield wrote his famous recommendation to voiding "5 over 5" bids, e.g. bidding 5♠ over an opposing 5♥. (Reference: Brock, Sally (Ed.), (1998); The Complete Book of BOLS Bridge Tips.)

Some quotes from Ed Manfield's bridge tip:

“Many factors combine to make it usually unwise to bid five over five”:

- *“Even though your hand might be quite distributional, the opponents' hands are often much more balanced. Therefore, you will frequently have more winners against their contract than you might suspect.”*
- *“Partner might have minor honors in the opponents' suits. It is difficult to envisage the defensive power of stray Queens, Jacks and Tens. However, such cards can often help defeat the opponents' 5-level contract. Other times your 5-level bid will not fare well because the opponents have minor honors in your suits.”*
- *“In defending high-level contracts there are relatively few combinations of cards that need to be considered. Therefore, defenders are much less likely to err against 5-level contracts than they are to err against lower contracts.”*
- *“Unless the deal is a distributional freak, the combined trick taking potential of the hands (i.e. - the number of tricks you can take in your best trump suit added to the number that the opponents can take in theirs) seldom exceeds 20. Therefore, even if your five over five bid works out well, your profit will tend to be small...”*
- *“The combined trick taking potential of the hands is often 19 or less. In these cases five over five bids are often disastrous.”*

Manfield used the following deal to demonstrate his point. Dealer South, both vulnerable:



What should South bid in the pass-out position: pass, double or 5♥? Because of his exciting distribution South actually bid 5♥. However, the 5 over 5 bid met its usual fate. It cost NS doubled

-500, whilst 5♦ would have gone down one. A phantom sacrifice and a heavy loss! As it happens, it is often wrong to “bid one more” at the 5-level.

Quizzes

Let’s look at two deals demonstrating how this basic principle of bidding strategy can be applied at matchpoints. After you have completed the quizzes, look at the solutions below.

- Deal 1) Dealer North, EW vuln.: what should West bid after

N	E	S	W	
p	1♣	3♦	p	holding ♠Q109542♥J109♦3♣K83?
5♦	X	p	?	

- Deal 2) Dealer West, EW vuln.: what should West bid after

W	N	E	S	
1♥	3♣	3♥	5♣	holding ♠A75♥KQ8732♦A6♣KQ?
?				

Answers to the Quizzes:

Deal 1) Topic: 5 over 5?

Dealer North, EW vuln.: what should West bid after (p)-1♣-(3♦)-p, (5♦)-X-(p)-? with ♠Q109542♥J109♦3♣K83?

At teams, if in doubt we better adhere to Ed Manfield’s advice: “Think twice before you bid five over five: the 5-level belongs to the opponents.” Since we neither hold a “distributional freak” nor enough HCP to make a 5-level contract a safe bet we pass to collect a sure plus score.

At matchpoints, however, the same action is far from straightforward, albeit well worth contemplating. We expect partner East to hold something like:

♠Q109542 ♥J109 ♦3 ♣K83	N W E S	♠AKJ6 ♥AQ2 ♦54 ♣AJ96
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If ♥K and/or ♣Q are favourably placed for us (i.e. with North), we make 11 or 12 tricks in a ♠-contract. Sure thing: we bid 5♠!(?) The contract stands a good chance to make and we believe the opponents have found a good sacrifice...But hold on a second: we forgot to ask ourselves by how many tricks the opponents are going down in 5♦ doubled.

	N	
	♠3 ♥K7643 ♦KQ87 ♣1072	
W	S	E
♠Q109542 ♥J109 ♦3 ♣K83	♠87 ♥85 ♦AJ10962 ♣Q54	♠AKJ6 ♥AQ2 ♦54 ♣AJ96

Deal 1.a.

Score sheet (6 tables)

Contract	NS MP*	NS	EW	EW MP*
S 5♦X-3	10		500	0
W 4♠+1	7		650	3
W 5♠=	7		650	3
W 4♠+2	4		680	6
S 5♦X-4	1		800	9
S 5♦X-4	1		800	9

* MP = matchpoints

The number of undertricks depends on whether or not the finesses are working for E/W. If ♥K is with North, the opponents may go down for more than our game score. As demonstrated in the score sheet above (deal 1.a.), +650 turns out below average for EW if the finesse is on (only 3 matchpoints from a top of 10), whereas at best defence 5♦ doubled go down 4 tricks (+800) for a shared top (EW making 3 ♣-tricks in defence leading ♣J and later finessing ♣10.)

On the other hand, if the finesse of the ♥K loses (see below deal 1.b. with ♥K with South), 5♠ will go down for an absolute bottom, whilst passing 5♦X will still give you an average score as shown in the following score sheet.

	N	
	♠3 ♥87643 ♦KQ87 ♣1072	
W		E
♠Q109542 ♥J109 ♦3 ♣K83		♠AKJ6 ♥AQ2 ♦54 ♣AJ96
	S	
	♠87 ♥K5 ♦AJ10962 ♣Q54	

Deal 1.b.
Score sheet (6 tables)

Contract	NS MP*	NS	EW	EW MP*
W 5♠-1	10	100		0
S 5♦X-2	8		300	2
S 5♦X-3	5		500	5
S 5♦X-3	5		500	5
W 4♠=	2		620	8
W 4♠+1	0		650	10

* MP = matchpoints

Thus, after (p)-1♣-(3♦)-p, (5♦)-X-(p)-?, pass is the correct bid for West, also at matchpoints!

Key Learnings:

Holding mainly defensive values such as small honours outside our own suit(s), we should normally content ourselves with doubling and beating the opponents' 5-level contract, whilst with offensive values, e.g. long trumps and shortness in the opponents' suit, it is often right to bid one level higher. Alternatively, we may opt to bid a forcing pass, leaving it up to partner to decide.

Thus, you should double the opponents' sacrifice bid at the 5-level if...

- Your game is not certainly bid by the field or not sure to be made or
- Your contract may go down at the 5-level or
- The opponents' sacrifice may go down for more than your game score.

As quite a number of conditions need to be fulfilled to make bidding 5 over 5 a likely success, when in doubt adhere to the advice "the 5-level belongs to the opponents!" also at matchpoints.

Deal 2) Topic: 5 over 5?

Dealer West, EW vuln.: what should West rebid after 1♥-(3♣)-3♥-(5♣), ? holding ♠A85♥KQ8732♦A6♣KQ?

At teams, it is a clear-cut decision: you simply double. Depending on the distribution of the opponents' cards you will score most probably +500 or perhaps even +800. Should we score only +300, the opponents' cards are placed unfavourably for us, thus making 11 tricks in our own denomination becomes unlikely.

So by doubling 5♣ you might lose 4 to 5 IMP (+500 in 5♣X v. -650 or 680 in 5♥ at the other table). However, should you bid 5♥ and the contract goes down you score 0 IMP but could have scored +11 IMP by doubling 5♣ (+500 in 5♣X v. +100 in 5♥ at the other table).

At matchpoints, the considerations are again more complex. First and foremost, we need to envisage partner's East hand. We expect about 8 to 10 points and a hand such as ♠KJ962♥AJ6♦10853♣4. The following scenario is likely:

	N	
	♠Q74	
	♥4	
	♦Q7	
	♣AJ98653	
W		E
♠A85		♠KJ962
♥KQ8732		♥AJ6
♦A6		♦10853
♣KQ		♣4
	S	
	♠103	
	♥1095	
	♦KJ942	
	♣1072	

Contract	NS MP*	NS	EW	EW MP*
N 5♣X-3	10		500	0
W 4♥+1	8		650	2
W 4♥+2	3		680	7
W 4♥+2	3		680	7
W 5♥+1	3		680	7
W 5♥+1	3		680	7

* MP = matchpoints

This deal shows that at matchpoints, the case for competing to the 5-level is somewhat stronger than at teams; this is particularly so if...

- You are sure your game (here 4♥) will be bid and made at most other tables and
- You are certain your contract stands a good chance of making at the 5-level and
- You have good reasons to assume that the opponents' sacrifice won't be found at all tables or is likely to go down for less than your game score

In the above example, all three conditions for bidding 5 over 5 at matchpoints are met, more than three undertricks in fact being unlikely.

But yes, the ♠Q could be wrong, i.e. with South. However, in order to get three tricks North has to switch to ♦ in trick two...not so easy from Q7.

There is a high likelihood that you will score at least 11 tricks. And on a good day partner East would hold ♠KQ962♥AJ6♦10853♣4. Therefore, having little to lose, but a lot to gain, South should bid 5♥.

Points to remember

- "The 5-level belongs to the opponents!" is a guideline of general relevance, also at matchpoints.
- You should not try to declare every hand. The bidding has to stop at some point.
- Do not follow your instinct to bid one more, simply because you do not hold an obvious penalty double.
- Playing a contract at the 5-level comes pretty near to playing a slam, which is not all that easy. If you did not contemplate inviting slam in the first place, think twice before committing your side to the 5-level!
- If it is relatively clear we have reached the limit of what we can make at the 4-level, we must not bid on but content ourselves with doubling and beating the opponents' contract.
- As a rule, it does not make sense to head for a minus score if it is unclear who can make which contract.
- **At matchpoints**, there is a stronger case than at teams for bidding 5 over 5 if the above mentioned three clearly defined conditions are met. However, as it is not always easy to judge whether these apply, **it is mostly safe to stick to Ed Mansfield's rule "The 5-level belongs to the opponents!"**

Finally, we'd like to point out that the principles outlined above serve as *guidelines* only. As usual, there are exceptions to the rule. However, it takes a lot of experience and good judgement to know when such exceptions apply. If you kept a track record of every hand on which you compete over the opponents' 5-level bid, you may be surprised by how much the points you gain are outweighed by the points you lose.

Answers to Tim's quizzes

Questions:

- The opposition open a weak 2 ♦ and partner doubles. What do you respond with ♠ Q7 ♥ K1094 ♦ 873 ♣ A1064 ?
- The opposition open 2 ♠ and you double and partner bids 2NT which is Lebensohl. What do you now bid with ♠ 7 ♥ KQJ97 ♦ AKQ9 ♣ A42 ?
- The opposition open 2 ♦ and partner bids 4 ♣ - what do you bid with this hand ♠ A76 ♥ AK6 ♦ 8765 ♣ J76 and have you any continuation thoughts?

Answers:

- 2NT – ostensibly Lebensohl showing a weak hand. You have the values to bid 3 ♥ but not the 5th trump – so going via Leb, and then bidding a suit that you could have bid to show weakness by bidding at the 2 level, shows 8-11pts but only a 4 card suit.
- 3 ♥ - partner has used Leb asking you to bid 3 ♣. But by failing to do so you show a good hand with a five card suit that still has game interest opposite a weak hand. Let partner now make the final decision – or the last mistake!
- The most complicated question. The first part is easy – we bid 4 ♦ to find out which is partner's major. So, the correct start is 4 ♦. Now, when they bid their major since they have shown a very strong hand, they certainly have slam interest and the correct bid now would be to raise to 5 of the major they bid – that asks for partner to go to slam with a ♦ control. If it is a singleton, they can bid 6 of the major. If they have first round control they can bid 6 ♦ and if they have Kx in ♦ they can bid 5NT to protect their K ♦ - if that was the case we could play 6M to avoid the ♦ ruff. If they have a small doubleton in ♦, we can play safely in 5 of our major.

*** Next issue we shall look at a defence to the dreaded Multi. Personally, I love defending against the Multi 2 ♦ - it gives you so many more bidding options than defending against weak 2's. I hope to convince you next time!



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