



# Talking Bridge

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Issue 12

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# Double instead of looking a gift horse in the mouth

COMPETITION bridge is at times a hostile experience and one invariably welcomes a bit of assistance along with an above average slice of luck.

You can't do anything about luck but here's where you might find a little assistance.

One of the downsides of using artificial bids is the opportunity they present to your opponents to pass information to their partner by doubling.

It amazes me how few players use what amounts to a gift from their opposition, writes **Rob Richardson**.

Don't look it in the mouth. Playing match points in a very strong field (NGS over 60%), I was sitting South non-vulnerable against vulnerable with the following hand:

## South

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

East dealt and passed, as did I. West opened two no-trumps (20-22) and North passed. East continued with three diamonds which was a transfer to hearts.

Here are the other three hands:

## North

♠ 9 8 7 6  
♥ 10 7  
♦ A 8 7 6 4  
♣ K 8

## West

♠ A K 10 3  
♥ A K 6  
♦ 9 5 2  
♣ A Q 10

## East

♠ Q J 5  
♥ Q 9 8 4 3 2  
♦ Q  
♣ J 5 2

I'd considered bidding a diamond the first time. My partner was on lead and even if the ace-queen sat over my king-jack we might well be able to develop a trick in the suit. My partner may well have had a missing honour.

## Suggesting a diamond

To suggest a diamond lead, I doubled. When West completed the transfer with three hearts, East raised to four.

Partner duly led the ace of diamonds; I encouraged with the jack, which they ruffed. Her diamond continuation was far better than switching to another suit which would get nowhere; a rare good card merely running into the strong hand.

We later won a second trick with the king of clubs, which gave us 60 of the 72 match points for the board.

Most Norths led a safe spade which, after drawing trumps, allowed declarer to ditch his losing diamond on the fourth spade and make twelve tricks.

In spite of having only one of the top five honours, some Easts opened a weak two hearts on this board. I would have, would you?

Interestingly, on the fifteen occasions when the contract was four hearts it was played by East. This which strongly suggests a weak-two opening rather than arriving by the transfer route.

## Flagging for a lead

A clear case of the double of a conventional bid allowing me to flag up a lead that made for a good score.

Similar opportunities could arise in other situations, particularly in long auctions when the opposition are looking to explore the possibilities of a slam.

But be careful. Don't get too clever so that you end up doubling them into game which with overtricks could be disastrous.

# Making the most of slam opportunities

YOU CAN wait a long time for a slam opportunity. When it comes, as it inevitably will, you might have mixed feelings about seeing three different slam possibilities.

This hand, for example, turned up at Bawburgh last month and a quick glance shows that six no-trumps, six spades and six clubs are all playable.

## Dealer East: N/S Vulnerable

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

The board was played twelve times. Only three East/West pairs found the slam, two were in six spades, the other in six no-trumps. No one found six clubs.

Although the missing spade honours drop in two rounds, all three slammers went off, six no-trumps by West, one off on a diamond lead, and six spades minus one, played by West, and two, played by East, with either North's singleton two of hearts or South's ten of hearts led.

## Safest Option

With a five-four fit and a certain trump loser, six clubs is the safest option. Why didn't anyone find it?

Some Acrol players would open a spade; pairs playing five-card majors and a strong no-trump might open a club.

Good Acrol players should pass the East hand; there's only eleven points and a weak

five-card minor. Best to pass and let West open two no-trumps.

The slam is a poor one requiring declarer to get both black suits right in order to land twelve tricks. Which West will only manage 25% of the time.

Either way the four-four spade split would be found as soon as East bid two spades. West now has options: four spades, two or three no-trumps or three clubs which would reveal the five-four fit.

We were one trick short after finishing in six spades, despite North's attempt to muddy the waters with five diamonds after my partner's four no-trumps (RKCB).

When declarer tackled trumps there were three options:

1. Hope for a three-two split with the queen part of the doubleton;
2. Lead towards the jack hoping that North had the queen, or
3. Lead the jack from dummy, assuming that South had the queen.

A two-to one-chance of success but no one found it, possibly rejecting a play for the drop with a four-four fit.

## Wrong Assumption

Some declarers might have tried the clubs first and, having found that the two outstanding honours were with North, incorrectly assumed that the spade queen must be with South.

Wrong.

My partner was one of those who hoped South had the queen and led the spade jack from dummy.

He cursed himself afterwards on the drive home and was still muttering about it the following week.

The bidding plaudits should go to those who found three no-trumps, although one pair somehow managed to go one off. The best East/West score was three no-trumps plus three; North/South got 100 when East's six spades went two off.

# Reformed Augusta changes her habits

My Great Aunt Augusta goes through life strictly according to rules, her rules. She never deviates and, unfortunately, plays her bridge in much the same way.

Over the years her rules have never changed. Until now, General Election year, when her traditional demand to vote Tory, always to vote Tory and to vote for nothing else but Tory, was surprisingly amended.

Instead, my Great Aunt demands that I vote Reform and be proud of it. Hopefully, one of my sweetest smiles will at least give her the impression that I'll acquiesce.

She insists that I vote for an obnoxious character who used to run a scrapyard and now calls himself a waste management consultant. He looks a rascally fellow and I wouldn't go near him yet alone give him my vote. No way.

The election was creeping up on us when sitting West I dealt this hand. We were playing a 15-17 point no-trump and five-card majors and with eighteen points I opened one club expecting to rebid two no-trumps when my partner replied.

## Dealer West: No Vulnerability

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

With four high-card points and two doubletons I felt Augusta should have mentioned her five-card heart suit, but she passed. So I was left in one club and a pathetic score of 70.

'Why did you pass my opening bid, Aunt?'

'I only had four points and you've always insisted that I shouldn't open my mouth with less than six points, five if the vulnerability is favourable.'

Of course I threw this pathetic excuse back in no uncertain terms and she played well for the next three rounds. Late in the evening, sitting West, she dealt the following hand and passed. Her left hand opponent bid a heart which I overcalled with a spade.

Augusta raised this to three, inviting game which, with 17 points, I accepted and was doubled.

## Dealer East: E/W Vulnerable

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

I looked at Augusta's dummy with its two miserable points and flat distribution. The contract was doomed. Why had she bid? I looked her in the eye, took a deep breath and recalled what I'd said earlier.

It was difficult, but I remained silent. Augusta, however, had plenty to say.

'You told me quite rudely not to worry about having under five points before I bid. So in this case I surely have to show my three-card support for your suit. My bid was supportive not invitational. You should have passed three spades.'

Serves me right. I set a trap and then walked straight into it. But I'm not going to apologise or vote Reform.

# Declarer quiz: what gives you the best chance?

FOUR more examples from the little book called 'Bridge Quiz' mentioned in the last edition. All four problems are about declarer play.

As West you're in four spades and North fires off three rounds of hearts, the last of which you ruff. What next?

West	East
♠ A Q 9 5 2	♠ K 7 6 4
♥ J 7	♥ 5 4 2
♦ A K 5	♦ 6 4 2
♣ A Q 2	♣ K 7 3

This is a simple safety play, so lead a low trump to the king. If North is void you can catch all four of South's trumps. If North has all the missing four, no play will land ten tricks.

With the next problem you're in three no-trumps and North leads the six of diamonds.

You've only got five top tricks: two spades, a heart and two diamonds. The other four could come from the clubs and a diamond finesse which North has set up.

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

Be careful. Take the ace of diamonds and lead the club queen, if the defence ducks, continue with the ten.

You will now make two spades, a heart, two diamonds and four clubs.

If you're tempted to make or establish a cheap trick with the jack of diamonds and leave the ace for later, you won't be able to get back to your hand to make the fifth club.

The stakes have been raised for the third problem. You've bid your way to the

excellent contract of six hearts. North leads the king of spades. How are you going to play the hand?

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

Take your ace of spades, draw trumps and take your three club tricks, finishing in dummy.

The opening lead of the spade king marks North with the queen, so lead dummy's remaining spade, discard a diamond and let North's queen win.

All the remaining tricks are yours. If North leads a diamond it will be towards your ace-queen; if he persists with a black suit, ruff in dummy and discard the diamond queen. A classic end play throwing the opposition in so that all they can do is help you secure the contract.

Lastly, another small slam: six diamonds. North leads a small club, you follow, and South plays the queen.

How would you play this one? It looks as if you've got two losers, a club and a heart, so this might be tricky.

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

Win the first trick with your ace and lead the jack of spades towards dummy's ace. Follow with the spade queen and - unless South plays the king - discard your singleton heart.

While this doesn't guarantee the contract it offers you the best chance.

# Dates for the Diary

**THESE WERE CORRECT AT THE TIME OF PUBLICATION. CHECK THE NCBA WEBSITE FOR POSSIBLE CHANGES**

THIS YEAR'S Allwood Wharton Teams of Eight event will be played on Sunday, September 1 at Costessey Village Hall.

## **Bridgathon**

SWAFFHAM Bridge Club is planning an event for the Festival of Bridge week.

It will take the form of a Bridgathon on Saturday, September 14 and run from 9am to 7pm at the Dobies/Tesco site at Kings Lynn.

Watch Swaffham's website for further details.

## **Welcome back Swaffham**

Norfolk Contract Bridge Association is hosting a two-session event at the Gallow in Fakenham on Friday, September 27 to welcome the Swaffham club back to the affiliate fold.

Around 15 tables are expected for the event which will run from 11am until 5pm. Entry is free. Lunch £15.

## **Great Yarmouth**

The Great Yarmouth Bridge School is holding another Sunday to Friday bridge holiday at the family-run Palm Court Hotel, October 20-25.

Breakfast and dinner included and, for those who want it, bridge twice a day. From £430 with no single supplements.

## **Cleland & Buxton Trophies**

The Barbara Dick-Cleland and Buxton trophies are pairs events aimed at less experienced players.

Players entering the former need a maximum NGS ranking of six; the rating for the Buxton is eight.

Both events will be played at Bawburgh Bridge Club on October 27. 2pm start.

Thanks to Graham Hardman who will organise the play at different NGS levels.

## **NCBA annual meeting**

The Norfolk Contract Bridge Association annual general meeting will be on November 17.

A free-to enter inter club teams of four competition will follow. This is for all clubs, affiliated or non-affiliated.

## **Barclays Bank Trophy**

The Barclays Bank Trophy will be played at the Costessey Centre at 11am on December 1.

This is a two-session, Qualified Pairs event played over a minimum of 36 boards.

Please note: Pairs qualify through heats held in clubs, but each club may hold only one heat for which double master points are issued.

A tandem event will be held with Real Bridge for clubs which either play exclusively online or hold regular online sessions.

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## **OUTSIDE NORFOLK**

THE SUMMER meeting at Eastbourne, described as a 'festival of bridge for all', is at the Winter Gardens, August 8-11.

This year the Swiss Pairs Lite event will be integrated into the main Swiss Pairs. Each pair will play four eight-board matches on each of the days they enter.

They will start by being assigned against each other, but then drawn against pairs in the main field with a similar score.

## **Festival of Bridge**

The EBU's Festival of Bridge, September 5-13, is designed not just to raise the game's profile, notably in Worcestershire, but also to raise money for Cancer Research.



# Bouncing barrel of blame

From the diaries of Wendy Wensum

As boys my big brother and his friend Peter used to play on the flat roof of the shed at the bottom of the garden, a dangerous venture, one banned by both sets of parents.

Access was by ladder, which I was too young to climb, but I threatened to spill the beans - unless I was allowed on the roof. The boys fitted large springs to the bottom of a wooden barrel and with ropes attached attempted to haul the barrel with me as passenger up to the roof. But the weight of me and the barrel was too great, control was lost and it all came back to earth precisely as Isaac Newton predicted. The barrel briefly bounced round before unceremoniously spilling me uninjured on to the grass.

I blamed my brother for the incident. Of course I was being unfair; I'd willingly joined the escapade knowing full well that it was banned.

My sense of shame over the incident returned to haunt me at a teams event when Jo and Kate joined Millie and me to make up a four. Our opponents on this board were Jon and Jane.

## Dealer South: E/W Vulnerable

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

Although we weren't vulnerable and despite the void in diamonds, I as dealer was wary of opening with only ten high-card points and a poor five-card suit.

East/West were vulnerable but that didn't stop Jon overcalling me with three diamonds. Millie only had nine points, but

her spades filled in my gaps and she raised to three. Holding the best hand with eighteen points, Jane raised her partner's weak three to four. My void encouraged me to go for game: four spades.

I was expecting a diamond lead, but Jon opted for the nine of spades. After winning the first trick, I eliminated the last trump, finishing in dummy, and led a small heart.

## Dump losing clubs

Jane took her ace and continued with the king. With the club ace and king to lose I expected to be one off. Jane took an ace before continuing with the ace of diamonds. I ruffed and continued with with the established queen and jack of hearts unloading dummy's two losing clubs.

An apparently hopeless contract came home with an overtrick for a score of 450.

Our opponents left, bickering about their defence. Jon understandably blamed Jane for not allowing him to make his two club tricks. Jane argued that Jon could have made things easier by leading a diamond.

When we scored up, Kate and Jo said they were lucky to get a good result on the board as the auction finished in an undistinguished two clubs.

After three passes, Kate, sitting East, opened one club. With no specific bid available to show a two five-card majors, South overcalled one heart. After two passes Kate finished the auction with two clubs.

South led the ace of spades, north encouraged and the spade continuation was trumped by Kate. She now played the ace and king of hearts, followed with a small heart ruffing high with the jack. The club lead from table lost to South's queen, but the contract made nine tricks for two clubs plus one and a score of 110 for our team.

Rather unnecessarily, Millie pointed out that a diamond contract would have produced ten tricks. Similar to the childhood incident of the bouncing barrel, bridge produces conflicting choices. Like life it does not always apportion blame fairly.

# Assessing the jump from a small to grand slam

LAST month Great Yarmouth Bridge School ran a blue-point bridge weekend which on Saturday had ten tables of pairs and prizes across three player stratifications.

On Sunday, for the teams side of the weekend, there were six tables with prizes across two stratifications.

The winners are detailed on the next page.

Our thanks to **Andrew Kambites** who writes below on the ramifications of one of the boards.

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Bridge players count points, but often a large number of tricks can be made without the normal number of points. What are the ingredients for this?

In Hand Seventeen from the Sunday Swiss teams East/West are cold for a grand slam in clubs.

Note, they are missing the spade king, queen and jack, the red suit jacks and the club queen. Here's the full deal:

## Dealer North: No Vulnerability

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

The spade ace is redundant. So with all the gaps what makes the grand slam so good? East's hand is good from the start, but it becomes far better when the club fit is found. As well as the six-five club fit, East has first and second round control in the

other three suits. The bidding might start: pass, one club, three spades. What does West do? He or she might be tempted to bid three no-trumps, but unless there are nine top tricks the ace-rag in spades might be an unsatisfactory stopper.

## Putting on the Pressure

I prefer four clubs. North should put the pressure on with four spades. What now for East? If I were East the issue would be six or seven clubs. East needs to know about the red-suit queens and the trump honours, but the opponents have bid vigorously and there is no room to explore.

An expert pair might try a cue bid of five spades, clearly a grand slam try as the auction cannot stop below six clubs. But such a bid involves some element of guesswork.

A club pair would probably be content with six clubs. Note that 7cx makes easily but six clubs was enough for a big swing.

Well done William Rouse and Roger Timmins, the only pair to reach six clubs.

All but one of the others stopped in five clubs. The other pair stopped in three no-trumps. All the pairs made thirteen tricks. A couple of points:

1. Blackwood is irrelevant as East has no spades. The spade ace might enable a diamond discard if West hasn't got the diamond queen but is otherwise useless.
2. It's a good principle to bid small slams on the basis of what a hand is worth, but you bid grand slams only if you can count thirteen tricks - fifteen if partner is playing it.

How good is East's hand? Suppose the bidding started: pass, one club, pass, two clubs, pass? Where would you want to play opposite this?

♠ 9 6 2 ♥ 9 5 3 ♦ Q 2 ♣ K 9 8 7 3

Only five points, so a grand slam is out of the question. A response of six clubs from East would not be unreasonable.



# Great Yarmouth's blue point winners

## Talking Bridge

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To promote the game  
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ONE KEY TO the success of this annual blue-point event was the matching of all entrants so that they played with other pairs of a similar standard.



*Hostess Sarah Barker, above, flanked by Saturday's winners Rod & Sue Oakford*



*Host John Barker, centre, with Sunday's winners, left to right, Bill Simpson, Anna McDonald, Beryl Simpson and James Short, and below six and under category winners: Lynette & John Clegg, Pat Johnston and Susan Charsley*



# Last Word

## Talking Bridge's this and that diary

WORD has leaked out that now lockdown is a thing of the past, the Norfolk Contract Bridge Association, a charity, thinks it can increase its contribution to local clubs.

It is, my informant assures me, determined to devote more time to local clubs, affiliated or not, and is prepared to push out a financial boat or two.

There will be no pressure on non-affiliated clubs to become affiliated to the country's regulating body, the English Bridge Union. In the words of the once popular song, the NCBA initiative is all about: 'Getting to know you, getting to know all about you.'

Some of the non-affiliated clubs may not realise what the NCBA can arrange. One member a year, for example, can be trained as a tournament director completely free of charge.

Towards the end of summer NCBA representatives will be out and about visiting some of the non-affiliated clubs.

The NCBA has often been criticised for concentrating too many of its resources on Norwich. This, too, will become a thing of the past.

The association is well aware that Norfolk is a big county so that clubs in the west and south might feel closer to associations in Essex, Suffolk or Lincolnshire.

Once the visits have been planned, clubs will be informed of the schedule and dates confirmed.

### Covid-19 Hangover

NOW THAT bridge clubs everywhere are accepting that there are fewer people playing face-to-face now than there were before Covid-19, increased efforts are being made to get more casual players playing duplicate.

There are so many different things to get used to that nobody does well when they begin duplicate. Bidding boxes, curtain cards, travellers, BridgeMates, moving to the next table and working out who you're

following. But once you've got used to all that there's a bigger problem: meeting a stream of stronger players, declarers who appear to know where all the cards are and defences who defeat contracts with signals that demand a lead of the one suit you want to avoid. Very demoralising for beginners.

### No Fear

Clubs are doing what they can to encourage them with 'no fear' sessions and supervised practice.

The Monday morning session at Bawburgh Bridge Club, for example, is described as 'relaxed pairs' which, as well as being ideal for beginners, is also popular with players who've reached the age where full-on, competitive duplicate is too much.

Great Yarmouth Bridge School host John Barker did what he could at last month's blue-point weekend, carefully grading players so that pairs only met others of a similar standard.

Some tournament directors are experimenting with different movements so that beginners play the same hands as everybody else, but move only with other beginners so they avoid high-ranked players.

So not all the news is negative. If you've had or seen an idea that works, please tell Talking Bridge. Note, too, the bridge club at Swaffham that has been so successful at recruiting new duplicate players that it is about to become affiliated once more to the EBU. Well done to all those involved.

### Stop Press

YORKSHIRE bridge enthusiast Jack Stocken is kindly offering nine of his online beginner lessons totally free.

Just go to the [LearnBridgeOnline.com](https://learnbridgeonline.com) website on this link <https://learnbridgeonline.com/jack-stocken-bridge-clubs/> and click on the lesson.

*Kibitzer*