

Olney Bridge Club News

Official newsletter of the Olney Maryland Bridge Club

The Bridge Guy Speaks

I have more status to report this month. First, we will offer a reprise of the same six beginner bridge classes (previously held during June/July of 2023) starting on September 30. If you missed a lesson during the summer of 2023, please feel free to join us. The schedule block to the right gives details.

Even more importantly – please pass the word of the new beginner classes to any of your friends and neighbors who might be interested. All existing Olney bridge club members are hereby appointed as emissaries to the community! Our message: bridge is fun and intellectually stimulating – come join us!

The Olney library has also agreed to allow us the use of the main meeting room for weekly bridge practice sessions. We will meet each Saturday, 2:30 – 4:30, to practice bidding, playing, and scoring. Anyone with a smidgen of bridge experience is invited – bring friends and neighbors!

Note that the practice sessions will run concurrently with any other activities – specifically, beginner bridge lessons. We will hold lessons on one side of the room, while others play at tables on the other side of the room.

Also note that I will be out of town on August 26, September 9, and September 16. I will check with club members to see if someone will play my role as “library contact person” for those

Saturdays. I will send email to existing club members once I have that status settled. Have a great month of bridge!

Beginner Bridge Lessons

New 2023 Class:

Lesson 1: Intro to Bridge – Sept 30

Lesson 2: Declarer Play – Oct 7

Lesson 3: Opening Bids – Oct 14

Lesson 4: Responses – Oct 21

Lesson 5: Opening NT Bids – Oct 28

Lesson 6 (optional): Defense – Nov 4

Each class is from 2:30 – 4:30 at the Olney library.

Ongoing Practice Sessions:

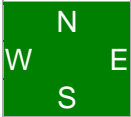
Every Saturday from 2:30 – 4:30 at the Olney library.

Lose ‘Em Early, Duckie

If you have all the immediate winners you need to make your contract, take them. But that almost never happens. Instead, you’ll need to engineer a few extra tricks, often from bare ground.

And the first question – when to take them? In this article we’ll take the simple case first. First, you pick one suit in which to win the extra tricks you need. Second, you may need to lose a trick early (!). Yep, that might not make intuitive sense – but so much for intuition.

In this practice hand you get to a tricky 3 no trump game. You see only six immediate winners. You get a favorable lead of the 8 of hearts (4th best in a long suit). You play the queen on the first trick and win. You need two more tricks. Now what?

	♠ A Q 7 3		
North Deals	♥ A 4 3		
None Vul	♦ A K 8 3		
	♣ 6 4		
♠ J 10 5 4 ♥ 10 5 ♦ J 10 9 2 ♣ Q J 10		♠ K 9 ♥ K J 9 8 7 2 ♦ Q 7 5 ♣ 8 7	
	♠ 8 6 2		
	♥ Q 6		
	♦ 6 4		
	♣ A K 9 5 3 2		
West	North	East	South
	1 N	Pass	2 N
Pass	3 N	All pass	

Choice #1: try to score three tricks in spades, where you have a combined 7 cards in the suit headed by the AQ. But this will only work if spades split 3 – 3 and the finesse with the queen works. Unlikely (about a 20% chance).

Choice #2: try to score four (or more) tricks in clubs, where you have a combined 8 cards in the suit headed by the AK. *You will usually pick the longer suit to attack first.*

Problem: now that the queen of hearts has been played, you have no other entries into the South hand. If you play the AK of clubs plus another, you have no way to get back to the South hand to score the remaining clubs.

Solution: lose a trick early. This is called “**ducking**.” Because you still have a stopper (the ace) in hearts, you have time to lose the first trick in clubs

(lead a small club from North and play a low club from South). Then, if the clubs split 3 -2 (68% chance), you’ll win ten tricks. Huzzah!

Bridge Ethics

Bridge is a game of honor. Each player is responsible for maintaining the highest level of integrity when playing bridge. But what does that actually mean?

There are two factors: personal ethics and specific statements in the Laws of Bridge. The Laws of Bridge clearly state that it cannot list all possible infractions and remedies. The guiding principle is that any side that commits an irregularity is duty-bound to not gain directly from the infraction.

In particular, no pair can provide information about their hand, their play, or their opponents’ hand or play except through accepted bids and card signals. No “secret information” known only to one pair may be used to communicate. That means that one cannot purposefully hesitate before bidding or passing (to give an indication of lesser or greater strength) – all bids and plays must be made at roughly the same tempo and with the same intonation. It is likewise improper to “fool” an opponent by changing your intonation, speed, or gestures for specific bids/plays.

Indeed, if your partner makes information available to you that could not be discerned from that actual bid or play, it is your responsibility to ignore that additional information and play on using only the knowledge you would expect to have. For example, if you believe your partner has made a legal

but incorrect bid, you must proceed as if the bid is indeed a legitimate bid.

On the other hand, it is perfectly proper to deceive one's opponents by lawful techniques – e.g., by playing a low card instead of winning a trick with a high card. This is called “**false-carding**.” A future newsletter article will provide more details of false-carding opportunities.

I'll discuss the other aspect of virtuous bridge-playing – bridge etiquette – in the next issue of the newsletter.

Try to Bid It

Here's a hand played on April 22, 2023 (played nationwide, but specifically at the Rockville Duplicate Bridge Club).

Board 20	♠ 9 8 7 5 4 3
West Deals	♥ A Q
Both Vul	♦ K 10 6
	♣ A 2
♠ 10 6	♠ Q J
♥ K 10 5	♥ 4 2
♦ A 8 4	♦ J 9 3 2
♣ Q 9 7 6 3	♣ K J 10 8 5
13	♠ A K 2
9 8	♥ J 9 8 7 6 3
10	♦ Q 7 5
	♣ 4

NS 6♠; NS 5♥; NS 3N; NS 2♦; NS 1♣;
Par +1430: NS 6♠=

Try bidding this yourself (for both North/South and East/West) before reading the detailed discussion.

After West passes, North opens 1 spade. East passes and South bids 2 hearts (10+ points and 5+ hearts). North could bid 2 no trump, but the 6-card spade suit still beckons, so bids 2 spades. Length in the trump suit is more important than

strength. With strong spades and a singleton club, South bids 4 spades.

East has a tough lead but chooses the J of clubs (top of a JT sequence below a gap – the missing Q). North sees a potential spade loser, a potential heart loser, one or two potential diamond losers, and a potential club loser. So, North wins with the ace of clubs.

North leads to the A of spades and then plays the K, drawing out all trumps (lucky – about a 52% chance). North leads a small heart from Dummy and finesses with the Q, winning. North plays the ace of hearts, ruffs a club in Dummy, and concedes two diamonds, making five. Note: if North took a chance and finessed the Q of hearts after playing only the A of spades, the hearts can be set up, and all 13 tricks may be taken.

In the diagram you'll see the optimal bids: 6 spades, 5 hearts by North/South, etc. The par score (the 6 spades slam) is very difficult to bid and play. Most players at the Rockville club bid and made either 3 or 4 spades.

Famous Bridges

Helen Sobel (Smith), a long-term bridge partner of Charles Goren, was one of the greatest bridge card players of all time. She worked as a chorus girl when young (including with the Marx Brothers), and learned bridge from a co-worker. She subsequently won 35 North American Bridge Championships.

Sobel sounds like quite a character. While a female bridge sycophant practically sat in Charles Goren's lap, she asked Sobel how it felt to play with an expert. She replied “I don't know. Why don't you ask him.”

She later played with another bridge great, Oswald Jacoby.

After her early death in 1969, Goren praised her in a 1969 *Sports Illustrated* article:

“With the death of Helen Sobel...I have lost my favorite partner, and the world has lost the greatest woman bridge player who ever lived. But Helen was far more than that; she was a great wit and an indomitable debater on any subject other than religion or politics—although we never had a real bridge argument, not because she followed my precepts but because she usually turned out to be right. She was the contradiction of the statement that at the top level of competition no woman can be a match for the best of the men. Helen won more national titles than I did, and at the time of her virtual retirement from tournament competition she had won more major open championships than any other players except Howard Schenken and John Crawford.

We were often and inaccurately linked romantically, with the result that when her divorce from Al Sobel became public, she was besieged by reporters who wanted to know if she and Charles Goren would marry. Even though we were in the midst of a tournament, Helen cracked, "We would in a moment—if anybody would have us."

Olney Bridge Club

We have formed an Olney Maryland Bridge Club. The primary purpose of the Olney Maryland Bridge Club is to teach and encourage social bridge in the areas including and surrounding Olney, Maryland.

The club will meet weekly on Saturdays from 2:30 – 4:30 at the Olney library. Anyone may join us to take part – as a

player (with even minimal bridge background) or as a kibitzer.

Also, please feel free to use that the bridgeinfo@bridge.careytutor.com email address to send any questions, comments, recommendations, or other correspondence to the editor. In particular, if you have a bridge article to include in a future newsletter or a suggestion of a possible topic, any such submission would be much appreciated.

Bridge Quotes

When all else fails – sport, love, ambition – bridge remains a solace and an entertainment. **Somerset Maugham**

Bridge is such a sensational game that I wouldn't mind being in jail if I had three cellmates who were decent players and who were willing to keep the game going 24 hours a day.
Warren Buffett

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