

# Olney Bridge Club News

*Official newsletter of the Olney Maryland Bridge Club*

## The Bridge Guy Speaks

Now that the beginner bridge lessons are completed, we'll focus on the club practice sessions on Saturdays. Please welcome the latest dozen new members who have just finished the class. I'll continue to set up a number of "learning tables" for those just learning the game.

Please continue to let me know when you notice that a deck has reached its age limit (bent edges, torn cards, etc.). I'll use the worn-out cards for practice deals/classes, while feeding in newer cards as needed.

I'll be out of action during the middle portion of September, but when I return, I plan to offer some mini-lessons (in the Children's Room) as requested. If you have specific topics, let me know. My current list includes:

- Preemptive bids (2, 3, 4-level)
- Stayman convention (after 1NT)
- More advanced card play
- The strong 2C opening bid

As our club continues to grow, please be supportive of all our club members. Our club is very new and many of the current players have only a few months of experience. Help them when you can; be patient otherwise. We'll all get better together.

As always, practice, practice, practice! Our message to the community: bridge is fun and intellectually stimulating – come join us! All ages are welcome!

## Beginner Bridge Lessons

### **Next Class:**

*There are no plans for additional beginner classes at this time. However, starting in October we will hold mini-lessons on various bridge topics. The mini-lessons will be held on a roughly monthly basis and will last about 15 – 30 minutes for each mini-lesson.*

### **Ongoing Practice Sessions:**

*Every Saturday from 2:30 – 4:30 at the Olney library (main Meeting Room).*

## Magic Numbers

In the last newsletter, we discussed the point ranges for the opening bidder and responder (minimum, medium, strong, massive). But bridge bidding is a collaborative effort – how do bidders jointly determine in which **strain** (suit or no trump) and at what **level** the contract belongs? They continually check for the magic numbers.

There are multiple magic numbers, but the first key number is **8**. That is the ideal minimum number of trumps one would like in an agreed trump suit. With 8 or more trumps in the hands of the contract winners, the opponents are limited to 5 or fewer trumps. And how does a pair know when their hands contain 8 or more trumps collectively? They find out from the bidding. An opening bid of 1 heart or 1 spade shows 5 or more cards in the bid suit. A response in a new suit shows 4 or more cards in the bid suit. Partner adds the number of their cards and looks for 8 total.

The second magic number is **26**. If the two bidders evaluate their hands and find that they collectively hold 26 points, they have a reasonable probability of winning 10 tricks (suit contract) or 9 tricks (no trump). In a suit contract the points are “total points” (high card, length, and shortness). In a no trump contract the points are high card points only.

But how do these “magic” processes work? “Bridge arithmetic” does the trick. As the bidding progresses, bidders continually reevaluate their hands and bid accordingly.

**Example:** you have an 18-point hand and bid 1 spade (showing 5 cards in your spade suit). Your partner bids 2 spades (showing 3+ spades and 6 – 9 points). So, you know that your team has 8 or more spades – the “strain” is chosen. Now your mental computer clicks away: aha, if partner has 8 or 9 points, you have 18 more to give a total of 26 – 27 points. Woo hoo! Enough for game in spades (a 4 spade bid will score 30 points for each of 4 tricks = 120, which exceeds the 100 points needed for a game).

Whoops – but what if partner is at the low end of their range (6 or 7 points)? That gives a total of 24 – 25 total points – game is possible but less likely. How can you bid so that partner can tell you whether they are in the lower or upper range for their 2 spade bid? By making an invitational bid that is short of game: 3 spades.

Partner will realize that a) opening bidder with a minimum hand would have passed 2 spades; and b) opening bidder with a strong hand (19+) might have bid 4 spades directly. Instead, opening bidder bid “in between” – they must have a medium hand and are asking responder to continue to 4 spades only if their hand is at the high end of the range (8 – 9 points). The 3 spade bid is an “invitational” bid: it asks responder to decide the final level based on their hand.

## Rein in Your Trumps

In past newsletters we’ve discussed some of the basics of declarer play. In this article we’ll begin to focus on the playing of the trump suit in a suit contract.

For beginners, the lesson is clear: play your trumps early to prevent the opponents from ruffing your good tricks. Once you’ve agreed on a trump suit with your partner, your team will generally have more trumps than the opponents (hopefully with an 8-card “fit” or better). Drawing the trumps early by playing multiple rounds is often desirable.

Too often, beginners play all of their non-trump high cards and long suits early – and find out that playing a high card or long suit isn’t safe if the opponents have shortness in the suit – and trumps with which to ruff.

Instead, base your decision on whether to draw trumps early based on data:

- 1) Do you have a large majority of trumps? 8 is preferable, and more is better.
- 2) Do you have ways to eliminate losers after you have drawn trumps?

If the answer to both questions is “yes”, then proceed to play trumps until the opponents have none. Note that you may need to change plans if the distribution of trumps is unusual – if, for example, you have 9 trumps collectively, but one of the opponents has the remaining 4 trumps.

And that issue leads to the next trump-related task: counting the trump suit. For most beginners, keeping track of the cards as they are played is a tough task. But the first new skill to develop is to count one suit – in the case of a suit contract, that is the trump suit.

How does one keep track? First, determine how many trumps you and your partner hold. Then as each trick is played, determine how many opponent trump cards are included in the trick. You have two choices: either add any played trumps to the number held by your partnership until you reach 13, or determine how many trumps are missing and subtract any played trumps from that number.

**Example:** your team hold 8 trump tricks; that means the opponents hold 5. If a trump trick is played with 4 trumps, that means the opponents contributed 2. Add to your original 8 to get 10, or subtract from the missing 5 to get 3. Continue until the card total is 13 or the missing total is 0.

Learning to count the trump suit might take a number of months. You'll get better every month until suddenly...it's second nature.

## Try to Bid (and Play) It

This is a practice hand. Try to bid and play it. Think about the “danger hand” and decide whether to draw trumps early.

North Deals None Vul	♠ A K 4 3 2 ♥ A 3 ♦ 5 4 3 ♣ K 4 2	♠ J ♥ Q J 10 8 5 4 2 ♦ 2 ♣ J 10 9 8	<table style="margin: auto; border: 1px solid black; background-color: #006400; color: white; padding: 5px;"> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">S</td></tr> </table> ♠ Q 10 8 ♥ K 9 7 ♦ 10 9 8 7 ♣ A Q 3	N	W E	S
N						
W E						
S						
	♠ 9 7 6 5 ♥ 6 ♦ A K Q J 6 ♣ 7 6 5					

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	1 ♠	Pass	4 ♠
All pass			
Lead: ♦ 10			

After the 1S opening bid, South reevaluates their hand – there were previously only 10 high card points in the great diamond suit, but now add 2 points for the heart singleton, plus another point for the fourth spade. With 13 total points, South bids 4S directly using our simplified Standard American system.

After the 10 of diamonds opening lead, the planning begins. Using the North as the master hand, North sees a potential spade loser (the Q), 1 low heart loser, no diamond losers, and possibly 3 club losers. Hmm...5 potential losers, where only 3 losers are desired.

North also sees that West is the danger hand. If West gets the lead, they'll lead through the club K (potentially losing to the A in East). But there is hope – the diamond loser can be ruffed in dummy, and some club losers may be discarded on the long diamonds. Plus, N/S hold 9 trumps.

After winning the A of diamonds, some would immediately play out the remaining diamond winners to discard clubs. That is a very dangerous approach, given that East or West may be short in diamonds – as in this case, where West will ruff the 2<sup>nd</sup> diamond and lead the nasty J of clubs.

Instead, most beginners should instead play the A of spades immediately (noting that West plays the J). When both East and West follow suit, lead the K of spades as well. If the trumps split 2 – 2, the diamonds will allow discarding of several losers immediately.

In this case, the split is 3 – 1. Not a problem, given that East has the extra trump. Lead a third spade to East's Q. Because East is not the danger hand, they must lead a heart (ruffed in dummy) or a diamond (where now North plays the

remaining diamonds) or a club (where North will then eventually win the K of clubs). The contract is safe.

## Famous Bridgies

Alfred Sheinwold was a bridge expert as well as a popular teacher, writer, and syndicated columnist for 30 years. Originally born in London, he moved to the U.S. at age 9. He graduated from the City College of New York with a degree in economics and was hired by Ely Culbertson (a founder of American contract bridge) as an editor of *The Bridge World* magazine. Except for a stint as lead cyber expert in the Office of Strategic Services (OSS, the predecessor to the CIA) during WWII, Sheinwold continued his editorial role in some form for almost 30 years.

Sheinwold won two North American Championships and hundreds of other tournaments, primarily partnering with Edgar Kaplan. The two devised the Kaplan-Sheinwold (K-S) bidding system.

Sheinwold also wrote a widely-read syndicated bridge column for thirty years (Frank Stewart took over that role following Sheinwold's death). His most popular book was *Five Weeks to Winning Bridge*, which is still a useful volume (though a bit outdated) for current players.

## Bridge Rules

**Revoke (aka "Renege"):** To fail to follow the suit lead when able to do so. Example: clubs are lead, and a player throws a diamond. At that time or later, the player finds (or is notified) that they have a club still in their hand.

**Adjustment:** First, the general theme is that the pair that did not revoke should not be harmed by the revoke. Bridge is an honorable game – adjudicate any revoke to

make sure the non-offending party is not harmed.

Apart from that general theme, there are a number of detailed situations that are covered in the rules of bridge. Two main scenarios are summarized in the following.

First, if no card has been played to a subsequent trick:

- 1) If declarer/dummy revokes, the card may be replaced in hand and a correct card played with no penalty.
- 2) If a defender revokes, the played card becomes a penalty card (to be discussed in a future newsletter), but the player substitutes a correct card and play continues.

If, on the other hand, a card has been played to a subsequent trick:

- 1) If the revoking player won the trick on which the revoke occurred, that trick is transferred to the opponents along with one penalty trick (if the offending team won any subsequent tricks).
- 2) If the partner of the revoking player won the trick on which the revoke occurred, that trick is transferred to the opponents.
- 3) If the opponents won the trick on which the revoke occurred, the first subsequent trick won by the offending team is transferred to the opponents (if the offending team won any subsequent tricks).

## Olney Bridge Club

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

We meet regularly (Saturdays from 2:30 – 4:30) at the Olney library for practice playing sessions.

Please feel free to send email to [bridgeinfo@bridge.careytutor.com](mailto:bridgeinfo@bridge.careytutor.com) with any questions, comments, recommendations, or other correspondence for 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.

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