

Olney Bridge Club News

Official newsletter of the Olney Maryland Bridge Club

The Bridge Guy Speaks

Happy anniversary of the 1939 Hollywood premiere of *The Wizard of Oz*. In that film, Dorothy was always looking for answers to problems that she alone had to solve. The same is true for us bridge players.

Bridge can be played at many levels. Many bridge players play intuitively, with little (or no) formal study. They are happy – who can complain?

But other students of the game can gain great benefit from a bit of study. This can involve reading a bridge column, or checking out my bridge website (bridge.careytutor.com), or reading this newsletter, or reading a book or articles online. You can pursue this as deeply as you wish – bridge is a game with many layers, and peeling back the layers is a lifetime pursuit.

In coming weeks, please be cautious anytime you feel even somewhat ill. We are coming up on flu/covid season in a few months. We are an older group – don't come if you are sick at all. We'll have plenty of Saturdays to play this year.

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!

Next Mini-Lessons:

- Stay tuned – more coming

2:00 – 2:30 – Olney library (main Meeting Room).

Ongoing Practice Sessions:

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

Stayman Convention II

Last month we discussed the Stayman convention (1NT – pass – 2C), which is used in an attempt to find an 8-card major suit fit. I'm sure the write-up seemed complex, but it really is fairly straightforward once you notice the patterns. I'm waiting to hear back from the library about upcoming mini-lessons, but once scheduled, Stayman will be at the front of the queue. We'll review the basic Stayman approach in that mini-lesson.

This article will elaborate upon some of the special cases that occur in Stayman bidding:

- After a 2NT opening bid
- After the sequence 2C – 2D – 2NT
- After 1NT – 2C (overcall by the opponents)
- After 1NT – double (by the opponents)

Your partner opens 2 NT (20 - 21 high card points and a balanced hand). You have 5+ high card points, a 4-card major suit, and at least one short suit (no 4 – 3 – 3 – 3 distribution). You may use 3C as Stayman. Note: the point count is 5, because 20 + 5 is close enough to the magic number 26.

Note: with fewer than 5 points, pass. Playing at 2NT is perfectly fine.

The rebids by the opening 2NT bidder are similar to those used in the 1NT case:

- 3D (artificial) with no 4-card major suit
- 3H with a 4-card heart suit
- 3S with a 4-card spade suit

Notice that if the 2 NT bidder bids 3H (indicating that they have four hearts), they may have four spades as well. However, if the 2 NT bidder bids 3S, they are denying four hearts.

After the 2 NT bidder bids 3D, their partner may bid:

- With no 5-card major suit, bid 3NT. The team has 25+ points.
- With five hearts and four spades, bid 3H. The 2 NT bidder will bid 4H with a 3-card heart suit, or bid 3NT.
- With five spades and four hearts, bid 3s. The 2 NT bidder will bid 4S with a 3-card spade suit, or bid 3NT.

Example hands after 2NT – pass – 3C – pass – 3D:

- ♠ 9874 ♥ 94 ♦ KT84 ♣ AJ7
Bid 3NT.
- ♠ K754 ♥ QJ542 ♦ JT ♣ Q2
Bid 3H, showing 4/5 in spades/hearts.
- ♠ K7654 ♥ QJ42 ♦ JT ♣ A2
Bid 3S, showing 5/4 in spades/hearts.

After the 2 NT bidder bids 3H, their partner bids as follows:

- With four hearts, bid 4H (game).
- Bid 3NT. Opening bidder can correct to 4S if they also have four spades.

Example hands after 2NT – pass – 3C – pass – 3H:

- ♠ 9874 ♥ 94 ♦ KT84 ♣ AJ7
Bid 3NT.
- ♠ K76 ♥ QJ42 ♦ JT52 ♣ Q2
Bid 4H.

After the 2 NT bidder bids 3S, their partner bids as follows:

- With four spades, bid 4S.
- Bid 3NT.

Example hands after 2NT – pass – 3C – pass – 3S:

- ♠ 98 ♥ 9874 ♦ KT84 ♣ A87
Bid 3NT.
- ♠ K742 ♥ J32 ♦ JT84 ♣ Q875
Bid 4S.

If the opening bidder bids 2C and rebids 2NT (22 – 24 high card points and balanced), you may bid 3C to use Stayman to check for an 8-card major suit fit. After 2C (strong and artificial) – pass – 2D – pass – 2NT – pass – 3C, the subsequent bidding is identical to the 2NT opening bid case above.

If the left-hand opponent overcalls 2C after the 1NT opening bid, the responder can double to start the regular Stayman sequence. The double is the equivalent of bidding 2C after the 1NT opening bid with no intervening bid. The subsequent bidding is the same.

If the left-hand opponent doubles after the 1NT opening bid, that is generally played for penalty (16+ high card points). There are many options, but many players simply bid 2C to start the Stayman sequence. Subsequent bids are the same. Note: some players treat that 2C bid as natural (showing long clubs), but I think beginners should keep it simple: the 2C bid is Stayman, as if the intervening double hadn't occurred.

In line with the Wizard of Oz theme, there are many other approaches involving Stayman, but they are more advanced or handle more rare situations, so we'll ignore them for now.

BosTon

Yes, that could be a city in Massachusetts. Yes, they play bridge in Boston. And, no, this article is about the acronym BosTon: **B**ottom of **S**omething, **T**op of **N**othing.

BosTon is a mechanism for selecting an opening lead when no obvious lead is available. BosTon may also be used on subsequent leads (early in the play). BosTon is effective when partner has not bid a suit (if they bid, your best lead is their suit!).

Bottom of Something conveys that the lead of a small spot card (2 through 9) indicates that you hold a high honor. Top of Nothing conveys that the lead of a high spot card indicates that you have no high honor. BosTon can be employed with any length suit but is used most frequently with 3-card suits. Note: with a 4-card or longer suit, as beginners, you will generally lead 4th best.

Examples:

- Opponents bid spades and hearts, while partner did not bid. Lead the 4 of diamonds (you don't want to lead your ace of clubs or a low club – those choices may give up a trick). Partner will assume you have a high card in diamonds:

♠ 9874 ♥ 94 ♦ K64 ♣ AJ87

- Opponents bid hearts, diamonds and clubs, while partner did not bid. Lead the 4 of spades. Partner will assume you have a high card in the suit:

♠ Q74 ♥ Q64 ♦ K64 ♣ Q73


- Opponents bid hearts, diamonds and clubs, while partner did not bid. Lead the 8 of spades. Partner will assume you have no high card in the suit:

♠ 874 ♥ 964 ♦ T64 ♣ AJ87

Note: with three low cards headed by the nine or ten, more advanced players will lead the next highest card in a 3-card suit. The nine or ten may prove to be useful in the play.

Bid and Play It

This hand is from Eddie Kantar's "Test Your Play" column (August 2025 *Bridge Bulletin*, pg. 61). How would you bid it? More importantly, how would you play it to pick up one needed extra trick?

	♠ Q 9 8 7		
South Deals	♥ 6 5 4		
None Vul	♦ A 10 9 8		
	♣ Q 9		
♠ 6 5 4			♠ 3 2
♥ Q J 10 9			♥ A K 8 7
♦ J 5			♦ Q 4 3 2
♣ A 10 7 4			♣ 8 6 5
	♠ A K J 10		
	♥ 3 2		
	♦ K 7 6		
	♣ K J 3 2		

West	North	East	South
			1 NT
Pass	2 ♣	Pass	2 ♠
Pass	3 ♠	Pass	4 ♠
All pass			
Lead: ♥ Q			

The bidding shows a typical Stayman sequence. South opens 1 NT with 15 high card points and a balanced hand. With 8 high card points, North checks for a spade fit with 2C (Stayman). When South confirms a 4-card spade suit, North invites with 3S (showing 8 – 9 points). South (very)aggressively bids the game (4S). Note: I would have passed.

The play is tricky – but you need to count your winners as well as your losers. East/West win the first two hearts and South ruffs the third heart. Counting their

losers, they see 2 heart losers, 1 diamond loser and 1 club loser. One too many.

But if South can set up a third club winner, they can discard two diamond losers from the North hand. That will allow North to ruff the third diamond trick. But how to set that up? After taking the AK of spades, what card to lead next?

The only possible way to get three club tricks is to assume that the ten is in the West hand. The nine in North's hand can then be used to a) win an extra trick or b) drive out the ace of clubs. So, lead a small club toward the North hand. If West plays the ace, your KQJ will win three tricks. If West plays anything else, finesse with the nine. In this case, that wins. Then the KQJ will be played, losing only to the ace. Tricky!

Famous Bridgies

Bob Hamman (still living) is one of the best bridge players ever. Playing for almost three decades with Bobby Wolff, he won eight world championships, the 1988 World Team Olympiad and seven Bermuda Bowls. With various partners he has won 50 North American championships and the 1988 World Team Olympiad.

Hamman played professionally on the original Dallas Aces and the Nick Nickell's professional team. He often played with Paul Soloway and Zia Mahmood. He has also actively promoted young players coming up in the world tournament and professional ranks.

Hamman has co-written (with Brent Manley) an autobiography (*At the Table: My Life and Times*). He is the founder of the SCA Promotions business, which provides insurance for various sports that provide prize money or special prizes.

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 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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