

Olney Bridge Club News

Official newsletter of the Olney Maryland Bridge Club

The Bridge Guy Speaks

Welcome to 2024! There will be plenty of bridge in the new year to keep us all busy.

We opened 2024 with a bang – 28 people showed up on the first Saturday of the year, with 30 more on the second Saturday. We also received donations of three new bridge tables (thank you, Julie M., Pam K., Nancy K., and Arthur O.). I plan to pick up one more in the coming week. With six tables we'll be able to handle some of our near-term needs. The library generously allowed us to store the tables in the meeting room storage area (along with the "bridge box", with cards, pencils, and blank score sheets).

I'll continue to hold occasional "mini-lessons" on various topics (focusing more on the play of the hand early in 2024). I haven't scheduled a "next topic" yet, but my current list of topics includes:

- 1) The hold-up play (see the next article)
- 2) Unblock
- 3) Counting your winners/losers
- 4) Takeout doubles
- 5) Negative doubles
- 6) When to finesse (and when not)
- 7) Taking multiple chances
- 8) The percentage play

If you'd like me to discuss other items, please let me know.

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

Beginner Bridge Lessons

Next Class:

Next lessons start March 30, 2024.

Ongoing Practice Sessions:

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

Stick 'Em Up

In the August 2023 newsletter we discussed "ducking". Ducking is used to allow opponents to win a trick in our long suit early in order to win more tricks later. The purpose of the hold-up is to maintain communications between declarer and partner's hands to win tricks in a long suit.

This month we'll show how a **hold-up play** may be used to sever communications between the opponents' hands. This play is particularly useful in a no trump contract, where you want to prevent opponents from winning multiple tricks in their long suit.

How would you bid and play the following hand (from William Root's *How to Play a Bridge Hand*):

| | | | |
|-------------|--------------|---|-----------|
| | ♠ K 7 2 | | |
| North Deals | ♥ A 6 5 | | |
| None Vul | ♦ 9 4 | | |
| | ♣ A Q 10 8 3 | | |
| ♠ J 6 4 3 | | <div style="display: inline-block; border: 1px solid black; background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> N W E S </div> | ♠ 10 8 5 |
| ♥ 10 8 4 | | | ♥ Q J 9 2 |
| ♦ K J 7 6 2 | | | ♦ Q 8 3 |
| ♣ 5 | | | ♣ K 7 4 |
| | ♠ A Q 9 | | |
| | ♥ K 7 3 | | |
| | ♦ A 10 5 | | |
| | ♣ J 9 6 2 | | |

| | | | |
|-------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| <i>West</i> | <i>North</i> | <i>East</i> | <i>South</i> |
| | 1 ♣ | Pass | 3 NT |

All pass

Lead: ♦ 6

In this practice hand South jumps to 3NT (13 – 15 high card points). North has a minimum hand and can't go farther. How would you play the hand after a lead of the 6 of diamonds?

First, plan the hand. You see 7 immediate winners. You'll need two more tricks to make your contract, and they will have to come from the club suit. You note that you have two or more stoppers in the other suits, so the opponents can't benefit from switching to another suit from diamonds.

You also note that the 6 of diamonds is probably 4th-best (standard lead from a long suit). You apply the "rule of 11" (11 – 6 = five cards higher than the 6 in the North/East/South hands – so East has two higher than the 6). If West has 4 diamonds, no problem. You'll lose 3 diamonds and maybe one club.

But if West has five diamonds, you may be in trouble after you take your ace of diamonds. If the club finesse fails, East will lead back a diamond and down you'll go.

How you do avoid this situation? You hold up the play of the ace of diamonds. In this case, if West has five diamonds, East has three – so hold up the ace until the third round. Then take the club finesse, starting with the jack of clubs. If the finesse fails, East has no remaining diamonds to lead back to West. You'll end with ten tricks.

This is a common example of a hold-up play. We'll explore others in a future newsletter. In particular, we'll see examples where you do not hold up – e.g., when you have another weak suit that can be attacked.

The Takeout Double

In literal terms the call "Double" is used after an opponent's bid as a penalty call. It says "partner, based on what I have and what I've heard, I think we can set our opponent's contract." One typically makes a penalty double when relatively sure to set the contract by two tricks (or almost 100% sure to set the contract by one trick).

In regular play, however, there are many situations where you have a strong hand but are uncertain of setting the bid contract. In those cases where you have a) at least 3-card support in the unbid suits, b) shortness in the opponent's suit, and c) 13+ total points, you may instead make a call of double used for takeout (a **takeout double**). That double is entirely artificial. Instead of seeking a penalty, the takeout double asks partner to suggest a trump suit (generally, their longest suit). But how do you differentiate a penalty double from a takeout double?

In my beginner bridge classes I generally teach a very simple recipe in two parts:

1. Any double of a 1-level bid is for takeout.
2. Any double of a suit in which both opponents have bid at a part-score level is for takeout.

In the first case, most 1-level bids are hard to set, even if you hold a lot of their trump cards. Your penalty double often will merely give your opponents a better score.

In the second case, the opponents have probably shown a trump fit of 8 or more cards. Example: 1H – pass – 2H. Even if you hold great strength, they may succeed by cross-ruffing (see the October newsletter) or by establishing a long suit. Chances of penalizing them are low.

Now that you have some bridge experience, I'll add an additional category:

- After a preemptive bid at the 2-level or 3-level (and at the 4-level up to 4H with partner agreement).

Opponents will make a preemptive bid (2D, 2H, 2S, 3C, 3D, 3H or 3S) with a weak hand and length in the bid suit. Your partnership may have most of the remaining points.

In all three cases the partner of the doubler absolutely must bid – unless the intervening opponent bids first. In that special circumstance the responder is off the hook and can pass with less than 6 total points.

Otherwise, the responder bids as follows:

- With 0 – 9 total points the responder bids their longest suit (but not the opponents' suit!) at the lowest level possible.
- With 6 – 9 high card points, a mostly balanced hand, and a stopper in the opponents' suit, the responder bids 1NT.
- With 10 – 12 points the responder jumps in their suit.
- With 13+ points the partnership has a potential game. The responder usually bids game directly – either in a suit (unbalanced) or at 3NT (balanced).
- There are other methods (cue-bidding opponents' suit) to explore first before bidding game, but that is a more complex topic for the future.

We'll discuss more features of the takeout double in an upcoming newsletter. However, as a parting example, here's a classic takeout double scenario:

North Deals
None Vul

♠ 10 6 4
♥ J 9 5 2
♦ 9 7 3
♣ 8 7 4

♠ Q 7 5 2
♥ K 6 4
♦ 5 4
♣ A Q 6 3

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | N | |
| W | | E |
| | S | |

♠ K 8
♥ A Q 10 8 3
♦ A 10 8 2
♣ 10 9

♠ A J 9 3
♥ 7
♦ K Q J 6
♣ K J 5 2

| West | North | East | South |
|----------|-------|------|-------|
| | Pass | 1 ♥ | Dbl |
| Pass | 2 ♠ | Pass | 4 ♠ |
| All pass | | | |

After East's 1H opening, South has a) 3+ cards in the unbid suits, b) shortness in hearts, and c) 13+ points. North, with 12 points (11 high card + 1 for the doubleton) jumps to 2S (shows 10 – 12 points). South bids game.

Try to Bid It

This is a hand (slightly modified) from the January 9, 2024 Common Game (google Common Game – it's a good source of games, some annotated). First, how would you bid it?

North Deals
None Vul

♠ A 6 2
♥ K Q 3 2
♦ A 5
♣ A 10 6 2

♠ Q 8 3
♥ 8 7
♦ K Q 10 9 4 3 2
♣ J

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | N | |
| W | | E |
| | S | |

♠ K 10 4
♥ J 10 6 5 4
♦ 8 7
♣ K Q 4

♠ J 9 7 5
♥ A 9
♦ J 6
♣ 9 8 7 5 3

| | | | |
|-------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| <i>West</i> | <i>North</i> | <i>East</i> | <i>South</i> |
| | 3 ♦ | Pass | Pass |
| Dbl | Pass | 4 ♥ | All pass |

North preempts with 3D. East and South pass and West makes a double (for takeout). East has 9 high card points plus a point for the doubleton and perhaps another point for the heart length. East knows that West has 3 cards or more in each of the unbid suits. So, they have an 8-card heart fit. A cautious East would bid 3H. A bold East (the best kind!) would go directly to game at 4H. Gonzo bridge!

East/West should make 11 tricks.

Famous Bridges

Many of us may remember Omar Sharif for his acting career. He starred in *Lawrence of Arabia*, *Doctor Zhivago*, and *Funny Girl*, amidst a host of other films.

Sharif, originally a famous Egyptian actor, learned bridge on the set of a movie at the age of 21. He was bored between takes and picked up a bridge book for fun. Then the real fun began!

Sharif eventually was rated in the top 50 in the bridge world. He represented the United Arab Republic bridge team at the 1964 World Bridge Olympiad and captained the Egyptian team at the 1968 Olympiad.

In the late 1960's and early 1970's Sharif gathered a group of famous bridge players (including members of the Italian Blue Team and the Dallas Aces) to tour Europe and then North America to play in very successful exhibition matches against the best local bridge experts.

Sharif collaborated with Tanna Hirsch and Charles Goren to write a syndicated bridge column sponsored by the *Chicago Tribune*. He also authored or co-authored several

books and placed his name on the MS Windows *Omar Sharif Bridge* program.

Bridge Quotes

Acting may be my business, but bridge is my passion. **Omar Sharif**, quoted in *Card Games for Dummies* by Barry Rigal.

Bridge is like golf; you can never achieve perfection. **Omar Sharif**

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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