

# Olney Bridge Club News

*Official newsletter of the Olney Maryland Bridge Club*

## The Bridge Guy Speaks

We continued the beginner bridge lessons this last Saturday, starting the bidding portion of the lessons. Once we finish on August 3, we'll introduce another set of novices into our regular Saturday practice sessions. I'll continue to set up a number of "learning tables" for those just learning the game.

I received another set of new bridge cards. Please 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 the beginner and other 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:**

Lesson 4: Responses – Jul 20

Lesson 5: Opening NT Bids – Jul 27

Lesson 6 (optional): Defense – Aug 3

*Each class is from 2:30 – 4:30 at the Olney library (Children's Room).*

### **Ongoing Practice Sessions:**

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

## Plan the Bidding II

As discussed last week, the opening bidder generally makes a bid at the one level. The opening bidder also categorizes their hand into one of three sub-levels: minimum, medium, strong:

- **Minimum: 12 – 15 total points**
- **Medium: 16 – 18 total points**
- **Strong: 18 – 21 total points**

Of course, you'll most often find yourself with a minimum hand. How do you plan your bidding?

First, you'll plan to rebid as low as possible, often at the one level, and offer your partner a second bidding choice. For example, after a 1C opening bid and a 1D response, you have one-level rebids of 1H, 1S, and 1NT. The 1H and 1S rebids require 4 cards in that suit. The 1NT bid shows a minimal hand (12 – 14 high card points) that is more or less balanced (only one doubleton). The 1NT bid also denies a 4-card heart or spade suit. Note: if stuck for a reasonable bid, the

1NT bid may be your only option – even with a less balanced hand.

So, when would a minimum hand bid at the two level? When you want to offer a second bidding choice and can't do so at the one level...but be careful. Your second bid must be in a suit lower in rank than your first bid suit. Why? Because you're asking your partner to choose one of your two suits. If they like your first suit better, they'll have to bid at the three level (!). Example: 1D – pass – 1S – pass – 2H; if your partner likes diamonds better than hearts, they'll need to respond 3D. For that reason, this last auction shows a **reverse** (reversing the order of the suits bid) and requires a medium hand or better.

A sequence like 1H – pass – 1S – pass – 2C (or 2D) is not a reverse. Your partner can correct to 2H (at the two level) and keep the bidding low.

Your other two-level bid with a minimum hand is to raise your suit (or partner's suit) to the two level. Examples:

- 1H – pass – 1S – pass – 2H
- 1H – pass – 1S – pass – 2S

The first bid (rebidding your own suit) shows 6+ cards in the suit and 12 – 15 points. The second bid (raising partner's suit) shows 4 of their suit (or 3 with good high cards) and 12 – 15 points.

As a responding bidder, you'll similarly categorize your hand into one of four sub-levels: minimum, medium, strong, and massive:

- **Minimum: 6 - 9 total points**
- **Medium: 10 – 12 total points**
- **Strong: 13 – 15 total points**
- **Massive: 16+ total points**

As a responder with a minimum (the most likely situation), you'll plan to keep the

bidding as low as possible. You'll plan to support partner's suit (raising to the two level), bid a new suit at the one level, or bid 1NT. Note: if stuck for a reasonable bid, the 1NT bid may be your only option – even with a less balanced hand.

When bidding a new suit at the one level, you'll usually bid your longest suit. If you happen to have two or more 4-card suits, bid "up the line". This means to bid your lowest-ranked 4-card suit first. Why? Because that allows your partner to bid a higher-ranked new suit while still at the one level. Example: after a 1D opening bid, if you have 4 hearts and 4 spades, bid 1H first. That will allow partner to bid 1S with 4 spades and keep the bidding low.

We'll discuss additional topics related to the planning of the bidding in a future newsletter.

## Plan the Play II

Last month we discussed the basics of declarer planning. In the current article we'll further refine that planning by discussing:

- Identifying multiple chances
- Transportation between hands
- The danger hand

If you have insufficient winners or too many losers, look for multiple options for winning tricks/eliminating losers. For example, on a given hand you may have the choice of a 3 – 2 split in a long suit, a 3 – 3 split in a 7-card suit, or a finesse. The respective probabilities are 68%, 36%, and 50%. Which should you plan to take?

You might think – take the single highest-probability choice. But ideally, you can try two or even three of the choices – don't bank everything on one play. Give yourself **multiple chances**.

**Board 24**  
 North Deals  
 None Vul

♠ A K 7 4  
 ♥ 8 7 6  
 ♦ A K 7 6  
 ♣ 10 2

♠ 8 6 5  
 ♥ A K  
 ♦ 10 8 5  
 ♣ K 6 5 4 3

♠ J  
 ♥ Q J 10 9 2  
 ♦ J 9 4  
 ♣ J 9 8 7

♠ Q 10 9 3 2  
 ♥ 5 4 3  
 ♦ Q 3 2  
 ♣ A Q

South arrives at a 4S contract and sees four potential losers: 3 hearts and the K of clubs. After W wins the A and K of hearts, they have no heart to lead to the Q – they have no **transportation**. Instead, they lead a spade, and N/S draws trumps in 3 rounds.

The “obvious” play is to take the finesse in clubs. In this hand, down South goes.

However, South has an alternative plan: try the diamonds first to see if there is a 3 – 3 split (36%). In this case all is well, and N/S discards the losing heart on the good 6 of diamonds – the club finesse is now a bonus.

Here South also deals with the second topic: **transportation**. They’d love to end up in the North hand after taking the 3 top diamonds, so that they can start the finesse in clubs (if needed) without leading in another suit. In this case, the transportation is in diamonds: play the Q first, then lead to the A and K in North.

This hand also identifies the **danger hand**: in this case, the East hand. If the East hand gets in before the diamonds are played, they’ll immediately lead a club, forcing South to guess on the finesse (50%) or the 3 – 3 split (36%). In this simple hand, West had no way (transportation) to get to the East hand, so South was safe.

## Try to Bid (and Play) It

This is from Frank Stewart’s July 9, 2024, bridge column (link: <https://www.baronbarclay.com/July-13-2024/>). Try to bid and play it.

♠ 8 2  
 ♥ 7 5 4 3  
 ♦ A Q 6 5 3 2  
 ♣ 3

South Deals  
 None Vul

♠ J 10 9 6 4  
 ♥ Q 10 6  
 ♦ 9  
 ♣ K J 9 8

♠ Q 7 5  
 ♥ J 9 8  
 ♦ J 10 8 7  
 ♣ Q 10 6

♠ A K 3  
 ♥ A K 2  
 ♦ K 4  
 ♣ A 7 5 4 2

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
			2 NT
Pass	3 ♣	Pass	3 ♦
Pass	3 NT	All pass	

Lead: ♠ J

After the 2NT opening bid (20 – 21 HC points), North tries Stayman (3C is artificial – it’s a try to find a 4 – 4 fit in hearts). The 3D rebid shows no 4-card suit, so North corrects to 3NT.

After the J of spades opening lead, the planning begins. South sees 8 immediate winners. If all goes well, and the diamond suit splits 3 – 2 (68% chance), there are 11 tricks available. But what if the diamond suit doesn’t split so well (as in this hand)? Down you’ll go.

Here’s where you try to give yourself multiple opportunities. It costs nothing to try out the heart suit first. Play the A, K, and small heart. If the heart suit splits 3 – 3 (36% chance), you have your nine tricks immediately (the 3 of hearts is good. Either

way, you can then try for extra tricks in diamonds.

## Famous Bridgies

Larry Cohen is a world-renowned bridge player, bridge teacher, and author of many bridge books. He writes a regular column in the ACBL Bridge Bulletin. He is a leading proponent of the Law of Total Tricks.

**Aside:** the Law of Total Tricks posits that the number of cards in each partnership's longest suit determines the total tricks that may be taken. Example: if your pair hold 8 hearts, and the opponents hold 9 diamonds, there should be 17 tricks available. If you think your hands can take 9 tricks in hearts, then opponents probably can take only 8 tricks in diamonds. A corollary to the Law says that you can generally bid to the level determined by your total trump suit length. Example: if you hold 9 spades, you may bid to the 3 level. Either you will make 9 tricks, or (if you go set) the penalty will be less than allowing your opponents to bid their suit.

Larry Cohen has won 25 North American Championships and finished runner up in 22 more. His major partners include Marty Bergen, Ron Gerard, and Michael Berkowitz. Cohen has now (mostly) retired from competitive play and makes a living teaching bridge on cruises, writing, and other miscellaneous teaching.

## Bridge Quotes

*You should play the game for fun. The instant you find yourself playing the game for any other reason, you should rack it up and go on to something else...* **Charles Goren**

## 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.

### ***Olney MD Bridge Club Contact Info***

***Editor:*** Carey Gire

***Email:***

[olneybridge@gmail.com](mailto:olneybridge@gmail.com)

***Facebook page:***

<https://www.facebook.com/olneymdbridgeclub>

***Bridge portal site:***

<https://bridge.careytutor.com>