

# Olney Bridge Club News

*Official newsletter of the Olney Maryland Bridge Club*

## The Bridge Guy Speaks

Next week (June 22) we'll start the last beginner bridge class in this cycle. We'll put subsequent beginner classes on hiatus while we assess the number of people attending our practice sessions each week. Note that 39 players participated at the June 8 meeting (!). Our goal is about 50.

I had a nice chat with Marilyn Smith, our library sponsor. She signed us up for another year of bridge, so our present Meeting Room space is reserved. Marilyn has also reserved the Children's Room for our beginner class. In addition, she said we may reserve the Children's Room in the fall/winter/spring for mini-lessons on various bridge topics as needed.

Marilyn has also ordered four more card tables. Once in place, we'll have 13 tables available for the practice sessions. I just ordered another set of bridge cards (from Baron Barclay) to replace some of our worn-out cards. I'll use the worn-out cards for the beginner and other classes, so please let me know when you notice that a deck has reached its age limit.

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 1: Intro to Bridge – Jun 22

Lesson 2: Declarer Play – Jun 29

Lesson 3: Opening Bids – Jul 13

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

I'm returning to basics in this and upcoming articles. In this issue I'll discuss some tips about "planning the bidding."

As an opening bidder, you are generally promising 12 – 21 total points (high card points plus length points). That is a wide range. So, first, categorize your 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**

Don't stress out about the specific point ranges. Instead, think "Close to 12? → Minimum", "Close to 21? → Strong", and in the middle somewhere between 12 and 21? →Medium".

And also think red for “stop soon unless waved ahead”, yellow for “proceed with caution”, and green for “go for it!”.

When you have a minimum hand, plan to rebid to keep the bidding as low as possible – at the one-level or two-level. When you have a medium hand, plan to jump in an already-bid suit, raise in No Trump, or reverse (bid a higher-ranked suit than your initial bid). When you have a strong hand, plan to raise an existing suit to game level, jump shift into a new suit, or jump in No Trump.

As a responding bidder, you’ll similarly categorize your hand into one of three 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**

Don’t stress out about the specific point ranges. Instead, think “6 or a little better? → Minimum”, “Average (10 points) or a little better? → Medium”, “An opening minimum hand? → Strong”, and “A stronger opening hand? → Massive”.

And, again, think red for “stop soon unless waved ahead”, yellow for “proceed with caution”, green for “go for it!”, and blue for “Blue sky! Head for the heavens!”.

When you have a minimum responding hand, plan to bid at the one level (suit or No Trump) or make a single raise of partner’s suit. After that single bid, you’ll place the contract: by choosing one of partner’s suits, by rebidding your own suit at the lowest level, or by finding a home in 1 No Trump. So, you’ll make only **one constructive bid** (a bid providing new information to partner), unless partner shows a big hand.

When you have a medium hand, plan to jump in partner’s suit, bid a new suit at the one- or two-level (forcing for one round), or bid 2 No Trump. If you don’t limit the strength of your hand on the first bid, plan to bid constructively once more to show 10+ points (i.e., **two constructive bids**).

When you have a strong or massive hand, you expect to try for a game bid (3NT, 4H/S, or possibly 5C/5D) or perhaps a slam (6- or 7-level). You may limit your hand with a jump raise of partner’s suit to the 4-level or a bid of 3NT. Alternatively, you can bid in a new suit (forcing for one round) or make a jump shift (16+ points) such as 1C – pass – 2S.

Remember – bridge is a **partnership** game. The bidding process is a means to communicate the **strength** of your hand and the **length** of certain suits in the hand.

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

## Plan the Play

Many new players manage to work their way through the bidding process, receive the opening lead from opponents...and then totally blank out when the dummy is faced. If you’re the Declarer, what to do now?

**Before** playing to the first trick, go through the following checklist.

- Determine potential winners/losers.
- Get a feel for the structure of the hand – long suits, short suits, weak suits, strong suits.
- Consider the opponents’ bidding (if any).

You’ll perform the first two steps based on the combined hands of you and your partner.

Then, ask yourself a number of questions:

- If you have too many losers or too few winners, how will you fix that?
- If you have long suits, how can you best set up the extra cards to be winners?
- If you have short suits (in a suit contract), can you use that suit to ruff some potential losers?
- Based on the bidding, is there a particular suit or opponent (“the danger hand”) that is most dangerous to your contract?

You know that if you’re in a **no trump contract**, you’ll focus on identifying immediate **winners**. If you have too few winners, you’ll need to either a) set up potential winners in a long suit; or b) promote high cards in a suit by driving out the opponents’ high cards first (example: with KQJ in a suit, lead the suit until the A is played – you’ll win two tricks).


To paraphrase an article on bridgewebs.com, a no trump contract is a race: Declarer’s goal is to score sufficient tricks to fulfill the contract before the opponents score enough tricks to set the contract. However, that does not mean “play all your aces and kings first and then lose everything else.” Instead, you must time your trick-taking to take the optimal number of tricks. A beginner playing 3NT takes 8 tricks early and then loses the last 5. An expert loses the first 4 tricks but wins the remaining 9 tricks.

In **suit contracts** you’ll focus on identifying **losers** and then eliminating any excess losers. Losers can be eliminated by a) setting up additional winners in a long suit and discarding the losers on those extra winners; b) promoting high cards on which to discard the losers; or c) ruffing losing cards in a long suit by ruffing in the other hand. So, look for short suits in the hands.

We’ll discuss additional topics to the planning of the playing in a future newsletter.

## Try to Bid (and Play) It

This is from Frank Stewart’s June 8, 2024, bridge column (link: <https://www.baronbarclay.com/June-8-2024/>). Try to bid and play it.

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

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
			1 ♠
Pass	2 ♦	Pass	3 ♣
Pass	3 ♠	Pass	4 ♠
All pass			
Lead: ♥ Q			

With two 5-card suits, South bids the higher-ranking (1S) first. With 10+, North may bid at the two-level (2D). Given South’s strength (about 16 total points) and distribution (two 5-card suits), the 3C rebid is perfect. With a weaker hand (say, replace the K of clubs with the 9 of clubs), they would instead rebid 2S (usually showing 6 cards) with only a 5-card suit (to keep the bidding lower – keep the bidding low with minimum hands).

The planning of the play is most critical. South sees 2 sure losers (the two aces) plus a probable club loser. But here’s the key

point: with only 8 trump cards, South is in danger of losing control of the hand if E/W force repeated ruffs in hearts. Another clue: South has a very unbalanced hand. Because South would love to set up the clubs to win 4 tricks, they must time the hand to win the tricks only after the opponents can't take multiple heart tricks.

After West leads hearts twice, South ruffs the second trick. If South starts by taking 3 trump tricks (leaving South with only 1) and then plays the A, K, and a small club, control is lost. E/W win the third club and lead a heart to force out South's last trump. South can cash the two club tricks, but will then lose to the A of diamonds. East will cash their heart winners. Down they go.

Instead, follow Frank Stewart's principle: **"When trump control may be an issue, set up your side suit early."** In this case, play the A, K, and a small club before drawing trumps. When South ruffs a subsequent heart trick, they may now lead a diamond toward the K/Q. Winning any return, ten tricks are available: 5 spades, 4 clubs, and one top diamond.

## Famous Bridgies

Fred Gitelman is a Canadian (now dual American) bridge expert. He has won a world championship and several North American championships. He is married to Sherri Weinstock, another bridge expert.

Gitelman and Weinstock owned Bridge Base Inc., a software company targeted toward expanding bridge education. Despite being a University of Toronto dropout, Gitelman learned software programming on his own and formed the company in 1990. A major product of the company is Bridge Base Online, the world's largest online bridge-playing platform. The company also developed the Bridge Master

educational tool (with Warren Buffett as an adviser) and a number of software tools for bridge professionals.

Gitelman is Bill Gate's personal coach and has played with Mr. Gates and Mr. Buffett often.

## Bridge Quotes

*[Bridge is] deliciously simple in the rules but deliciously complex in doing well. **Bill Gates**, CBS News Sunday Morning, 2008.*

## 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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