

Olney Bridge Club News

Official newsletter of the Olney Maryland Bridge Club

The Bridge Guy Speaks

Happy Pi Day. I'm again putting the newsletter out a day early this month. No, my procrastination gene has not suddenly switched off. I just wanted to remind everyone of the 3/15 mini-lesson.

This month's mini-lesson is scheduled for this coming Saturday (March 15). We'll meet at 2:00 – either in the Children's Room or the main meeting room. The topic for the mini-lesson is “**No Trump Opening Leads**”. I'll have some pre-dealt hands to analyze and discuss. The materials are on the web site at <https://bridge.careytutor.com/classmaterials.html> (at the bottom of the page).

In addition, as an advanced heads up, the April 26 practice session will run from 3:00 – 5:00. The library has an event until 2:45.

In coming weeks, please be cautious anytime you feel even somewhat ill. Reports of flu and covid infections are still high (although starting to trend downward). 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:

- *NT Leads/Rule of 11 – 3/15*
- *Basic doubles – 4/19*
- *Play signals – 5/17*
- *Negative doubles – 6/21*

2:00 – 2:30 – *Olney library (Children's Room or main Meeting Room).*

Ongoing Practice Sessions:

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

Moving in Reverse

Actually, the heading for this article is misleading: a “reverse” bid is actually forward-going and strong. So, what the heck is considered a reverse bid?

First, many players scoff at so-called “reverse bids” and claim “I never play reverses”. *Au contraire, mes amis.* Everyone plays reverses – yet many players do not realize they are playing reverses.

In Standard American bidding, a reverse bid occurs anytime a bidder bids a lower-ranked suit first and a higher-ranked suit second at the **2 level without jumping**. In addition, the responder must have skipped over the second suit when they bid.

Example: 1D – pass – 1S – pass – 2H. The heart suit is higher-ranking than the original diamond suit. There was not a jump in the bidding (2H was the lowest heart bid that could be made). The responder skipped over a 1H bid to bid 1S. Together, this shows a reverse.

A reverse bid always indicates that **the first bid suit is longer than the second bid suit** (typically, 5 – 4). Why? Because if the higher-ranked suit were longer, one should make the opening bid in that suit instead of the lower-ranked suit.

Most importantly, a reverse bid indicates **16+ points**. Why? Because the opener has offered two suits, the responder is allowed to show preference for either suit. In order for the responder to show preference for the first suit in the reverse situation, the responder is forced to **bid at the 3 level**. In the example above, if the responder preferred diamonds (instead of hearts), they would have to bid 3D. To provide security for potentially forcing partner to the 3 level, opener must have more than a minimum hand: i.e., 16+ points.

Because the number of points is wide (could be 16; could be as many as 21), the reverse bid is **forcing** for one round. That means the responder cannot pass – they must bid again. A weak responder will either raise one of the opener's two suits, rebid their own 5+-card suit, or bid 2NT. Stronger responders (10+ points) will typically pick the final game contract or jump in one of the suits or no trump.

To summarize, here are the requirements for a reverse:

- 16+ points
- A 5+ card lower-ranked suit
- A 4+ card higher-ranked suit
- A response by partner in a suit higher-ranked than the 2nd suit
- The responder must bid at the 3 level to prefer the first suit bid

So, what does one do with a minimum opening hand like ♠T4 ♥KQ52 ♦QJT94 ♣A86, when you open 1D and your partner bids 1S? First, you **absolutely do not** bid 2H! That is a reverse and shows 16+ points.

You thus have two options: a) bid 1NT, showing 12 – 14 high card points and a balanced hand (a perfect bid for this hand); or 2D, showing a minimum hand and 6+ diamonds (a bit of a lie). You must make a minimum bid with a minimum hand.

There are other instances involving reverses: e.g., responder reverses (e.g., 1C – pass – 1D – pass – 1NT – pass – 2H). But such topics will have to wait for a future article.

Suit Opening Leads

We've covered the basics of no trump opening leads in the February 2025 newsletter as well as the March 15 mini-lesson. In this article, we'll expand that storyline to include opening leads in a suit contract.

Although trick-taking concepts are similar between no trump and suit contracts, there is one overarching difference – the ability to ruff a trick. Ruffing occurs when you have no cards in a suit that is led. One option is to play a trump card to that trick, which will often win the trick.

Consequently, another key difference between defense against suit contracts and against no trump contracts is the purpose of long suits. In a no trump contract, long suits are to be set up as a source of eventual defensive tricks. In a suit contract, on the other hand, long suits are more useful (in some cases) in either allowing your partner to ruff or to force declarer to ruff (and lessen their available trumps). Long suits are also occasionally useful to take extra tricks (as in no trump contracts), but only after the trumps in one opponent's hand are removed.

In addition, when defending a suit contract, only the first couple of tricks in a suit are

valid sources of tricks. After that, one of the teams will often be able to ruff. For that reason, two-card honor combinations (KQ, QJ, etc.) are useful. By leading the highest card of the sequence, you potentially set up a subsequent winner before declarer has a chance to ruff.

In summary, here is a list of lead options, in rough priority order:

- A singleton (single card in a suit)
- A suit that partner has bid
- The top card of a 2-card or longer honor sequence (KQ, QJ, etc.)
- 4th best from a long suit with no ace
- An unbid suit (the longer the better)
- A suit bid by dummy
- A trump lead

Most of these are self-explanatory. The singleton lead is in hopes of getting a future ruff. Note that a singleton lead is higher priority than leading partner's suit. Why? Because after the singleton lead, you can later return partner's suit (that may have only one entry in that suit) to get a ruffing lead in the singleton suit.

When leading partner's suit, lead low from 3+ cards and high from two cards.

Leading from a long, unbid suit may be good if partner is short in the suit. Partner may ruff at some stage.

Of equal importance, one must consider what **not** to lead. Unless you have no other reasonable lead, do not lead an ace in an unbid suit. You will often set up the opponents' KQ. Exception: it may be useful to lead A from Ax. You'll lead the low card next and hope partner can lead again later while you still have a trump.

Do not lead a low card from a suit containing the ace. You may give up your

only trick in the suit. Opponents may win their king and discard any other losers in the suit on their own long suit.

Do not lead from a suit with "broken honors" (containing a gap, like KJxx, QTxx, etc.). You may give up a free trick. Instead, lead another suit and wait to win your high cards when declarer plays the suit.

Do not (generally) lead a suit that the opponents have bid, unless that suit is the trump suit.

The last item – leading a trump – is quite effective in certain circumstances. In particular, if the opponents' bidding indicates that they have a lot of trumps but no overall strength, a trump lead may reduce their trumps and stop them from cross-ruffing more tricks. Example: 1NT – pass – 2H (weak, with 5+ hearts) – pass – 3H – pass. Here, opener has 17 points, but responder has only the hearts and little else. Lead trumps to remove some of the trumps and the opponents will have to win most of their tricks from the NT hand.

And, generally, do not lead a doubleton (two cards in a suit) except for the Ax exception discussed above. A doubleton lead will often solve declarer's problem in the suit and will rarely end with a ruff in your hand.

As a final note, it is still useful to evaluate you and your partner's hands. Assume the following total points for each level of the final contract:

- 2 level contract: about 20 points
- 3 level contract: about 23 points
- 4 level contract: about 26 points

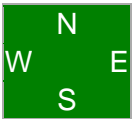
Note that these are total points: high card points plus length/shortness points. But you can approximate your partner's

strength by adding your high card points to the total points of opponents and subtract from 40.

The purpose for the evaluation is different from that used in no trump leads. In suit contracts, you are primarily determining if partner has room in their hand for an ace or a king or perhaps more. That will tell you whether they have an entry to their hand.

Try to Bid (and Play) It

This is a practice hand. How should N/S bid the hand?

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

West	North	East	South
	1 ♣	Pass	1 ♠
Pass	2 ♥	Pass	4 ♥
All pass			

North opens the 5-card club suit. South bids their 5-card spade suit. North bids 2H, which is a **reverse bid**. Hearts are higher in rank than clubs. North has 5+ clubs and 4+ hearts. South skipped over hearts to bid 1S. If South were weak, they would have to show a preference for clubs by bidding 3C – so, North should have a better than minimum hand. All of these show the features of a reverse.

South could show a minimum hand (6 – 9 points) by bidding 2S (showing a 5+ card spade suit) or 3H (showing 4-card heart

support) or 3C (showing 3-card club support) or 2NT (showing a stopper in the unbid suit, diamonds).

But in this case, South is strong (13 points in support of hearts) and bids the heart game (4H). If North were stronger, they could explore a slam bid. In this case, 4H is plenty.

The play is easy. After losing two diamonds, North will draw trumps and set up the spades. 11 tricks are a good possibility.

Famous Bridgies

Zia Mahmood is a famous Pakistani-American bridge expert. Born in Pakistan, he spent his school years in England before working several years as an accountant/businessman in Pakistan and Abu Dhabi. He gained notice in the 1980's when he led Pakistani teams to 2nd place in both the prestigious Bermuda Bowl and the 1986 Rosenblum Cup. At that time, when the U.S. and Europe were the centers of top-level bridge play, the Pakistani wins were unique – no other Asian teams had such success with the exception of Taiwan.

Mahmood later migrated to the U.S. He played for years (until 2012) as part of the Nick Nickell professional bridge team. He has won a number of North American championships (including a 2009 win in the Bermuda Bowl, this time for the U.S.).

Mahmood regularly supplied the bridge column for the *Guardian* (London paper). He is also the author of several bridge books, including two memoirs, *Bridge My Way* and *Bridge, a Love Story*. Mahmood is an entertaining character in all respects.

Mahmood is married to Lady Emma Primrose, daughter of the 7th Earl of Roseberry. Of course he is.

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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