

Olney Bridge Club News

Official newsletter of the Olney Maryland Bridge Club

The Bridge Guy Speaks

Ah...to start off the season right by catching a dose of bronchitis! Well, actually, not the right way to start at all. But, alas, that was my fate.

Apologies for subsequently canceling the first mini-lesson on October 5. But those of you without my bronchitis will surely thank me. I'm negotiating with the library for a new mini-lesson date in November. For those of you who expressed interest in the mini-lesson, please retain the materials I sent you – we will explore that hand in detail once rescheduled.

For any of you who might be interested in trying “duplicate bridge” in a low-key environment, there is a weekly game on Wednesdays (starting at noon) at the Holiday Park Senior Center. Contact Allen Shaw (301-704-2684) for more details. “Duplicate bridge” is the form of bridge use in tournaments. This game is a bit more informal, so this would be a great way to try out competitive bridge. If anyone is interested, I'd be glad to brief you on the basics of duplicate play. Just let me know.

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-Lesson:

- *Playing techniques I – Nov (date TBD)*
- *2:00 – 2:30 at the Olney library (Children's Room).*

Ongoing Practice Sessions:

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

Reevaluation

In the last newsletter, we briefly mentioned “reevaluating” our hands as the bidding progresses. As Barbara Seagram noted: “The value of your hand is in a constant state of flux. Once partner starts bidding, your hand is like a flower: it either blossoms or grows or it wilts and dies.”

Here is an example hand:

	♠ 6 5		
North Deals	♥ A J 10 8 7 6		
None Vul	♦ A K 3		
	♣ K 6		
♠ 8 7	♥ Q	♦ 10 9 8 5 2	♣ A Q 10 8 2
♥ Q	♦ 10 9 8 5 2	♣ A Q 10 8 2	
♦ 10 9 8 5 2	♣ A Q 10 8 2		
♣ A Q 10 8 2			
	♠ K 4 3 2		
	♥ 5 4 3 2		
	♦ Q 7 6 4		
	♣ 4		
West	North	East	South
	1 ♥	1 ♠	2 ♥
Pass	4 ♥	All pass	

There are many factors in reevaluation, but in this article, we'll discuss:

- Dummy points
- Extra trumps
- High card location

In this sample hand, North sees 15 high card points plus two length points in hearts (for the 5th and 6th heart cards). 17 points is a "medium" hand. The 1H bid is normal.

Note: we count no points for shortness up front, because the short spade and club suits may or may not be useful. If partner's strong suits are spades and/or clubs, our shortness is a weakness, not a strength.

When South first views their hand, they see only 5 high card points – not too impressive. However, once North bids hearts, South's hand improves. First, they have 4 cards in the bid suit – extra trumps! They also know the trump suit – hearts! As soon as the trump suit is agreed, one may now consider the South hand to be the expected "dummy", and reevaluate the hand using "dummy points". That means that the South hand can add points for distribution (in this case, shortness in the club suit).

With 3-card trump support, the standard point bonus for short suits is:

- Doubleton (2 cards in a suit) – 1 extra
- Singleton (1 card in a suit) – 2 extra
- Void (no cards in a suit) – 3 extra

However, when you have 4-card trump support, plan to add an extra point (or 2 for a void). In the sample hand that gives 3 extra points for the club singleton, so 8 total points.

Moreover, South also benefits from "high card location". After East bid 1S, South's king of spades became more valuable. If, instead, West bid spades, then South's king would be less valuable. Why? Because the

probability that the suit bidder has the ace (and probably queen) is high. If West bid spades, a spade lead by East would skewer the South king – two tricks would be lost. With the current East bid of spades, South expects to score their king of spades whenever North gets around to leading a spade – only one spade loser.

Given all of these factors, the 2H bid by South is natural.

Back to North for their rebid. Remember the magic number eight: you are striving to find a trump suit where there are at least 8 cards in the combined hands. But what if you find that you have more than 8 cards in the suit? Well, that can't be a bad thing! First, the more trumps you have the fewer your opponents have. Second, those extra trumps may be used to ruff some of your losers. Accordingly, we will add additional points to our hand strength.


After your partner has supported your bid suit (as in this sample hand), the standard approach (originating with Charles Goren) proposes to add 1 additional point for the fifth trump card in your hand plus 2 additional points for each card in addition to the first five. These additions are made in excess of the original high card and length points you calculated before opening the bidding (yes, that means you'll initially count length points plus additional length points once you find a trump fit). For this sample hand, that adds 3 additional points to the original 17, now giving 20 total points.

Because South has at least 6 points, your total is 26+. North accordingly bids the 4H game. The contract looks sound – there is a spade loser, a heart loser, and a club loser. Note: that N/S and E/W each have only 20 high-card points. But N/S have extra trump length and dummy shortness in clubs – that makes all the difference.

Player's Block

Communications between a team's hands is critical. I discussed a couple of communications issues in the August 2023 (Ducking) and January 2024 (Hold-up Play) newsletters. Today we'll discussing **blocking** of a suit (and how to avoid it).

A suit is blocked when you a) have length in the suit; but b) you have no **entries** (high cards) to your hand except in that long suit; and c) your partner or your opponent hold high cards that will stop you from running the long suit. Here is a simple example:

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

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	Pass	Pass	1 NT
Pass	2 NT	Pass	3 NT
All pass			
Lead: ♣ 10			


North is a bit aggressive in bidding 2NT (with 9 high card points, but one of which is a singleton queen – possible worthless), but they like their long, strong diamond suit as a source of tricks. South raises to the 3NT game with 17 high card points. On the opening lead, let's assume East takes the ace and returns a club to South's king. South now counts 8 immediate winners (AK of spades, A of hearts, AKQJ of diamonds, and the K of clubs). Assuming the 5th diamond wins a trick, nine tricks look easy!

So, South plays a small diamond to the ace and small diamond back to the queen. Oops. The diamond suit is now blocked. If South takes the jack, they have no entry (high card) to get back to the North hand. If, instead, South leads the jack and **overtakes** with the ace (a classic unblocking action) – the suit is still blocked by East. Only three diamond tricks are available – North's small diamonds are all lower than the remaining diamonds in the East and South hands. And North has no **entries** outside of the diamond suit.

So, what does South do to fix this blockage? South must win the high cards in the hand with the shorter diamond suit (South) first. South plays the queen and the jack and then leads the five to the ace of diamonds. Unless the diamond suit splits 5 – 0, South will win five diamond tricks and a total of nine tricks.

Try to Bid (and Play) It

This is from the 7/1/24 Frank Stewart column. Try to bid and play it. Think about where **blocking** may occur. Also, consider which hands have sufficient **entries**.

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

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	Pass	Pass	1 NT
Pass	3 NT	All pass	
Lead: ♠ Q			

Review the hand before playing. You see that you have ten tricks off the top (AK of spades, AKQJ of hearts, and AKQJ of diamonds). But you also see that the hearts and diamonds present a problem: after playing the AK in either suit, you have to return via an **entry** in another suit to cash the QJ in each suit. After winning the opening lead with the ace (or king), which suit do you unblock first?

The problem situation occurs if you lead a small heart to the ace and king of hearts (unblocking the hearts). You'll find that you have no **entry** (high card) to return to the North hand and cash the queen and jack of diamonds (even after unblocking the ace and king of diamonds).

The solution is straightforward: unblock the diamonds first by playing the ace and king. Then return to the North hand with the ace and king of hearts. Cash your good queen and jack of diamonds and return to the South hand with a high spade. You may now cash your queen and jack of hearts. The key factor: South had an **extra entry** (the high spade), while North did not. And the critical message is: when you see that one or more of your suits is blocked, consider the order in which you unblock them.

Famous Bridgies

Dorothy Hayden (originally, Dorothy Johnson, and later, Dorothy Hayden Truscott) was one of the best women bridge players ever. She studied mathematics at Smith College (and briefly taught mathematics in Michigan), but her life was focused on bridge.

She learned at her parents' knees and got her first bridge exposure at age 7, when a guest was an hour late, and her parents allowed Dorothy to sit in. She was hooked.

Over the following years, Hayden won a number of Mixed Pairs and Women's Pairs national championships with several partners. She became the second woman (after Helen Sobel) to participate in the Bermuda Bowl world Open Pairs championship (silver medal) and the only woman to win a medal (bronze) in the World Open Pairs Championship. She also won medals at the Women's Team Olympiads and the World Women Pairs Championships.

She published two well-regarded and best-selling bridge books: *Bid Better, Play Better* and *Winning Declarer Play*. The former is available from the Montgomery County Library online collection (via Hoopla).

Hayden devised two widely-used bridge techniques: splinter bids and the DOPI responses over interference during a Blackwood transaction. You can look up these approaches on the bridge portal site referenced at the end of this newsletter.

Dorothy married Alan Truscott, the renowned New York Times bridge columnist, and lived with him for the last 30+ years of her life. She co-wrote two books with him and contributed to his work on the *Encyclopedia of Bridge*.

Bridge Rules

Penalty card: This occurs when an opponent of the declarer exposes a card improperly (either by playing out of turn or by not following suit to a trick or by exposing any card without playing or by stating the possession of a given card).

Note: An exposed card by the declarer results in no penalty and is merely replaced into declarer's hand.

Honor cards: The ten, jack, queen, king, and ace of each suit.

General statement: If a player exposes a card, the player's partner may make no use of that information in subsequent play.

Minor penalty card: An inadvertently exposed non-honor (2 through 9) card. Examples of inadvertent play include playing two cards to a trick or accidentally exposing a dropped card.

Major penalty card: A single exposed honor card (ten, jack, queen, king, or ace) or a set of any two or more exposed cards or a card deliberately played (e.g., by playing out of turn).

Adjustment: All penalty cards are placed face up in front of the player.

For a minor penalty card, when a card of the same suit as the penalty card is led to a trick, the player may a) play the minor penalty card or b) play an honor card of the same suit from the player's hand.

A major penalty card must be played at the first legal opportunity (as the next lead by the player or when following suit, discarding, or ruffing). If a player has two or more penalty cards able to be legally played, declarer may designate the card to be played.

When the partner of the player with the penalty card is on lead, declarer may choose to require that the partner lead the penalty card suit or to lead any other suit. If so chosen, the penalty card is replaced in the original hand and play continues. Otherwise, the penalty card remains exposed until obliged to be legally played.

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.

Olney MD Bridge Club Contact Info

Editor: Carey Gire

Email:

olneybridge@gmail.com

Facebook page:

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

Bridge portal site:

<https://bridge.careytutor.com>