

Olney Bridge Club News

Official newsletter of the Olney Maryland Bridge Club

The Bridge Guy Speaks

I am on the road this month, so the newsletter will be a few days late. I'm currently gazing across the Strait of Georgia from our domicile on Vancouver Island. Hummingbirds are flitting, great blue herons are swooping, and the sun is shining. We're on the lookout for a bald eagle or two. All that is missing is a good bridge game... 😊

For the past month we've maintained a steady group of about ten people playing at our weekly Saturday bridge practice sessions. Several new people have also joined us. In particular, Glen mentioned a weekly bridge meeting at Longwood Rec Center from 10:00 – 12:00 on Tuesday mornings. Jan Wessling, who is part of that bridge group, showed up at our meeting on September 9. We'll plan to chat with him again and discuss a joint venture to make bridge popular in Olney!

Please continue to notify your friends and neighbors of the upcoming Beginner Bridge lessons starting September 30. Our message to the community: bridge is fun and intellectually stimulating – come join us! All ages are welcome!

Take Your Chances

Last week we talked about losing a trick early (ducking) to ensure a better chance at making the contract. This week we'll discuss identifying multiple chances for the contract and then taking the chances in the proper order.

Beginner Bridge Lessons

New 2023 Class:

Lesson 1: Intro to Bridge – Sept 30

Lesson 2: Declarer Play – Oct 7

Lesson 3: Opening Bids – Oct 14

Lesson 4: Responses – Oct 21

Lesson 5: Opening NT Bids – Oct 28

Lesson 6: Defense – Nov 4 (optional)

Each class is from 2:30 – 4:30 at the Olney library.


Ongoing Practice Sessions:

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

In this hand (misplayed by me in a tournament several years ago), we have arrived at a good 6S contract. I've simplified the bidding to focus on the card play. North opens 2C (22+ points), and South bids 2S (8+ points and a strong 5-card spade suit, Kjxxx or better). North gambles that they have enough for slam (in the real game, we used some slam-bidding techniques).

West leads the K of diamonds (K from KQ) and South takes the Ace. They found our weakest suit. So now we have a potential diamond loser. Planning out the hand, it looks like there is a potential club loser as well. I drew trumps in two rounds and then immediately proceeded to finesse the Q of clubs (50% chance). I had hopes of winning

the finesse twice (first the Q, then the J) and then throwing my losing diamond on the A of clubs. Of course, the finesse failed and they cashed the Q of diamonds for down 1. What did I do wrong?

	♠ A Q 7 5		
North Deals	♥ A K Q 4		
None Vul	♦ 3 2		
	♣ A Q J		
♠ 3		♠ T 9	
♥ 10 9 7		♥ J 5 3	
♦ K Q 9 5		♦ J T 8 7 6	
♣ T 9 6 5 4		♣ K 8 7	
	♠ K J 8 6 4 2		
	♥ 8 6 2		
	♦ A 4		
	♣ 3 2		
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	2 C	Pass	2 S
Pass	6 S	All pass	

I gave myself only one chance to succeed (and only a 50% chance at that). Instead, I should have taken an extra 5 seconds and really evaluated the hand. Where else can I establish an extra winner (that I can use to eliminate one of the remaining losers)? The spades are handled and the diamonds are hopeless, so that leaves – the hearts. I should definitely have given myself an extra chance by cashing the A, K, and Q of hearts (after drawing trumps). 36% of the time the hearts will split 3 – 3. In this case they do split, and suddenly the 4 of hearts is a winner. Discard the diamond and only then try the finesse in clubs for a possible over-trick. If you finesse first, the 36% chance is no longer available if the finesse fails. Order matters. Gee, I sure wish my brain was better back then...

Bridge Etiquette

Bridge is a game of courtesy and civility. Each player is responsible for assisting the group in maximizing fun and enjoyment.

Many bridge clubs publish rules of etiquette, but a majority of the rules are obvious:

- Greet your opponents when arriving at the table, making introductions where necessary.
- Provide your opponents with a list of special bids that you and your partner use (in tournament bridge, a “convention card” is provided).
- Pick up your cards only after all cards are dealt and everyone is at the table.
- Do not disparage your partner or their bidding. Indeed, support your partner to the maximum extent possible – they are the closest friend you have at the table. Moreover, compliment your opponents for their good play/bidding.

Other aspects of bridge etiquette mirror the more placid times in which the game was developed. For example, it is bad form to gloat after a winning play or to “high five” your partner when you set a contract. Similarly, you will make no friends at the table if your every bid and play is interminably long in duration (especially if you’re a bridge beginner – excessive contemplation generally won’t help). It is also considered impolite to “snap” the cards on the table (as if you’re saying “take that, you scoundrels”).

As Dummy, you may notify Declarer only if they are actively attempting to lead from the wrong hand. You may question Declarer when they discard a card to

determine whether they are indeed out of the suit. You may play a card from Dummy only if Declarer specifically asks for a card to be played (note: some social bridge Declarers select their own cards from Dummy).

As a defender, select the card you wish to play and then play it. If is considered very bad form to touch a card, put it back, pull out another card, put it back, etc. You are giving improper information to your partner and possibly Declarer.

Psyche bids are bids that don't comport with partner agreements – for example, if a player opens 1S with only 8 total points. There can be absolutely no partnership agreement (e.g., “any time I bid 1S I might have fewer than 10 points if I think they have game in hearts”). Although legal, they should be played rarely, if at all.

Finally, a number of items discussed in the ethics article last month also apply from an etiquette perspective. Do not change your speed of play or bidding based on the quality of your hand – you may give inadvertent or incorrect information to your partner or opponents. Do not provide information other than by making a normal bid (i.e., 1 Heart, not “I really really like 1 Heart today”) or play.

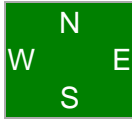
And to reemphasize: make every effort to provide an enjoyable bridge environment to everyone participating.

Try to Bid It

Here's a hand played on August 5, 2023 (played nationwide). Try bidding this yourself (for both North/South and East/West) before reading the detailed discussion.

Board 2

West Deals ♠ 10 6 5
 None Vul ♥ A 10 4 3 2
 ♦ Q 6 5 3
 ♣ 3

♠ J 9 2 ♥ K Q J ♦ A K 10 9 ♣ Q 9 7		♠ A K Q 7 4 3 ♥ — ♦ 2 ♣ A K 10 8 4 2
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♠ 8
 ♥ 9 8 7 6 5
 ♦ J 8 7 4
 ♣ J 6 5

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
1 N	Pass	3 ♠	Pass
4 ♠	Pass	6 ♠	All pass

Using the simplified bidding system taught in the beginning class, you show a game-going hand in spades with the 3S bid. West shows 3-card support by raising to 4S. East either passes (timid) or takes a chance with 6S (with 16 high card points and 5 suit shortness points, E/W have at least 36 total points). 13 tricks are easy (try it!).

How to find the 7S grand slam bid? Over 4S, what would a 5C bid mean? We've already agreed on trumps (spades), so it implies one of two things – either a very strong side suit (clubs) or a 1st-round control (ace or void) in clubs. West can contribute by bidding 5D – showing a 1st-round control in diamonds, which is exactly what East needs to hear before bidding 7S.

Famous Bridgies

Michael Berkowitz writes a humorous monthly article for the Bridge Bulletin, the American Contract Bridge League (ACBL) publication. He usually leads off each article with an anecdote from his early days – he is the son of two bridge champions. Indeed, he and his sister funded part of their college educations by fining their

parents each time the parents discussed bridge at the dinner table.

Michael, from New Jersey, ran two successful bridge clubs in New York (Aces and Cavendish clubs) before transitioning to teaching and playing bridge for a living. He is a member of Larry Cohen's bridge teaching community and is often found on bridge cruises and at bridge seminars. He also is a director for in-person tournaments and bridge lecturer. He recently (2019) married a data analyst, Emily, who can occasionally force him to play hard to win at bridge!

Olney Bridge Club

We have formed an Olney MD 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.

Bridge Quotes

The real test of a bridge player isn't in keeping out of trouble, but in escaping once he's in it. Alfred Sheinwold

During an exciting day of bridge, with many difficult hands and frequent masterful play, a man ran in and notified one of the players that their house was

burning down. After hurriedly finishing the hand, the player apologized. "Folks, looks like I'll have to cut our session short. Three more rubbers and I'm off."

Anonymous

If you can't say something nice, don't say anything at all. Thumper

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