

Olney Bridge Club News

Official newsletter of the Olney Maryland Bridge Club

The Bridge Guy Speaks

Welcome to the month of September, just prior to the start of the fall sessions. The weather has been lovely – but not lovely enough to skip a Saturday bridge session!

Fall is a time for collecting one's thoughts and reviewing the earlier months of the year. In my case, this has been a time of change.

As many of you know, I am withdrawing from attendance at the weekly Saturday bridge sessions. I have a back condition that requires my focus in coming months. But I will remain with you in spirit and will continue the monthly newsletter as long as my laptop works!

In the meantime, Glen McLeod will honcho the weekly sessions. He is ably supported by Chris McIntyre, Trish Keener, Mark Stanley, and whomever else Glen chooses to help out. Please assist Glen and co. to set up and replace bridge tables, chairs, materials, etc. I thank the group for keeping the bridge club rolling.

On an additional note, I have been trying to set up new monthly mini-lessons, but I have failed. The library has not responded to repeated requests, so I will stop for now. If my back condition improves, I may try again in future months. For now, you'll have to read the newsletter to get new tips!

In coming weeks, please be cautious anytime you feel even somewhat ill. We are not yet to the next intense flu/covid seasons, but 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!

Ongoing Practice Sessions:

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

Third Hand Opening

Here's a common scenario: you are sitting in the third seat (i.e., opposite the dealer). You hear "pass" and "pass". It's your turn to bid. What do you do?

Well, if you have 12+ points (or 13+ for beginners), you'll open as usual. No big deal there.

Yet, because the first two players passed, you have some additional level of information. Could you use that information to improve your bidding options? You bet!

Because the two previous players passed, you know they have fewer than 12/13 points (otherwise, they would have opened). So, they hold a maximum of about 22 points between them. Add in your points, and you can get an estimate of the minimum points the fourth player holds. And the fourth player could hold much more, if the first two hands are weaker.

You want to make that fourth player work for their bid. So, what can you do?

You can open in third position with a “lighter” hand. Specifically, you can consider bidding with 10 or 11 points, rather than the usual 12/13. This is aggressive bidding – but it’s aggressive bidding that often pays a dividend.

Why is opening with a light hand in third position good bridge strategy? By bidding, you insert three factors into the bidding equation:

- 1) If your partner actually has around 10 points, you might be able to make a part score.
- 2) You may make it tougher for the fourth player to make a good bid.
- 3) In any case, knowing your good suit may give partner a good opening lead.

If you don’t bid in third position with 10+ points, your partner may have no natural way of communicating their strength, and you may never reach that part-score contract. You and partner may have the better hands, but your opponents will steal the contract without a fight.

Depending on your bid, you may make it quite tough for the fourth player to enter the bidding. Here’s a sample hand for the fourth player:

♠ 987 ♥ KJ654 ♦ KQ4 ♣ AJ

After three passes, the fourth player will open an easy 1H. However, if the third hand opens 1S first, the fourth hand has to start at 2H (as an overcall). That is a pretty weak heart suit for an overcall. Likewise, making a takeout double is probably no good – no support in clubs (which, with typical bridge luck, partner would undoubtedly bid).

In addition, what if the third hand’s partner actually has a few points and some spade support (3+ cards)? Well, they’ll bid at least 2S, forcing the other team to compete

in hearts at the 3 level. Not a pleasant prospect (for them!).

And, finally, by showing your long suit, you’re giving partner some info about what to lead if the other team wins the contract. Partner, with a good card in the suit, knows they can safely lead the suit.

Otherwise, the bidding requirements for a light third-hand opening bid are mostly the same as always. You (generally) need 5+ cards to bid 1H/1S. If you bid 1C/1D, the suit should be strong (KQxx or better), because it’s quite possible that partner will lead that suit against opponents’ contract (see item 3 above).

A couple of additional points: first, your partner must be clued in on the light third-hand approach. They must recognize that a third-hand opening may be 10+, rather than 12+. Partner will bid normally but will not be surprised if the third hand bidder passes. So, check with your partner before the start of play.

Second, we know that partner has fewer than 12 points. Their hand is limited. So, if you open in third seat, and partner rebids in a new suit – you are not forced to bid again! You can pass! Here’s an example hand:

♠ 97 ♥ KQ654 ♦ K94 ♣ QT4

You open 1H in third position and your partner bids 2C or 2D. You’ll pass – either of those contracts are playable for a part score.

You were always told that a new suit response forced opener to bid again. But that is true only for a responder’s hand unlimited in strength. For a third-hand opening, responder’s hand is limited by definition. So, if you respond at the 2 level to your partner’s third-hand 1S, you better have a good 5-card suit. You may be playing that bid as the final contract!

Finally, when will you **not** open the bidding in third position? Generally, you will skip

bidding if you can't support any bid partner makes. Here's an example:

♠ A87 ♥ K8654 ♦ K654 ♣ 2

This hand seemingly has the requirements for a third-hand opening bid: 10 high card points plus one length point in hearts and good support in either diamonds or spades. But look at the weaknesses: a weak heart suit and no support in clubs. If you open 1H and partner bids 2C – you are stuck. They promise 5+ clubs, but you have only one. You can't bail out by rebidding a strong or long heart suit. If you bid 2D, partner will think you have a better hand and bid too high. In any event, partner will not be happy with the result. Moral: if you don't have at least 2-card support in the other suits or a stronger/longer suit of your own, skip the third hand opening.

But now that you've heard all the warnings, go bid! The benefits outweigh the risks.

Deceptive Play/False Card

Oh, oh – the title of this article is a bit disturbing. Didn't we discuss bridge ethics in the August 2023 newsletter? Wasn't "deceptive play" totally outlawed? And what's this "false card" – sounds fishy.

Well, no, not quite. The key is that the deceptive play must be deceptive for everyone (especially your partner). You cannot agree with partner beforehand about situations where you plan to be deceptive (e.g., "I plan to always play a false card at the first round of trumps").

Why would you make a legal deceptive lead? You do so to add an element of confusion to the opponents' thought process. You want them to be unsure of the actual card situation.

So, what is as legal deceptive play? The major legal deceptive play is false-carding.

And what is a "false card"? A false card is any card that would not ordinarily be the "natural play". Example: With the AK of a suit, you would ordinarily take the king (lowest equivalent card). If your opponent leads the suit, you play the king, and the other opponent doesn't take with the ace – the opponents now know that you have the ace as well. But if you play the ace, they do not know where the king is – you have placed an element of doubt in their minds.

There are two scenarios:

- 1) False-carding by declarer
- 2) False-carding by defenders

False-Carding by Declarer

Declarer plays a false card to encourage the opponents to play a suit where you're strong or to discourage the opponents from playing a suit where you're weak.

The above scenario (with the AK of a suit) shows a situation where you are strong. Play the king if you'd like to discourage them from leading the suit again (because they know you have the ace). Play the ace if you want them to lead the suit.

When you are weak in a suit, you usually want to discourage the opponents from continuing the suit. An example:

N (dummy): ♥ KJ842

W: ♥ 3 led

E: ♥ A played

S (declarer): ♥ QT6

West probably has a singleton 3. After East takes the ace, you want to discourage them from leading again for a ruff (until after you have drawn trumps). Play your ten under the ace. East may believe you had the singleton (ten), and West led from Q63

(from last month's newsletter, Boston – bottom of something).

False-Carding by Defenders

The purpose for false-carding as a defender is to confuse the declarer about a) the distribution of the cards in a suit or b) the location of high cards in a suit. A defender has multiple methods to meet those goals. Here are two major methods:

- 1) **Play the card they are known to have as soon as possible** (so long as that play does no harm).
- 2) **Play a card to encourage declarer to think of a particular distribution.**

An example for item 1) in a 3D contract:

N (dummy): ♦ AJ5

W: ♦ QT 3 E: ♦ 862

S (declarer): ♦ K974

South leads a small diamond and finesses with the jack, winning. Declarer now knows that West holds the queen. But declarer doesn't know who holds the ten. North plays the ace of diamonds. West should discard the **queen**. Once the jack is played, the queen and ten are equivalent. By playing the queen, declarer must think about where the ten might be. They may reasonably think that East holds it (with a 4-card suit). They will then lead the last diamond and finesse with the nine. Oops! Now West's ten will win a trick! Sneaky!

An example for item 2) in a 3D contract:

N (dummy): ♣ AJ83

W: ♣ K2 E: ♣ T96

S (declarer): ♣ Q754

South leads a small club and finesses the jack, winning. They now know that West has the king. But what does East play on that trick? They play the nine. They want South to think that West holds KT2. The correct play is then to return to the South hand (via another suit) and lead the queen through the KT. That would win all four tricks. Oops! Once North covers with the ace, East's ten is now good. Only three tricks are available.

Bid and Play It

This practice hand shows a classic third-hand opening. How would you bid it? What will be the final contract? Can you play to make that contract?

			♠ A 10 9 8 2									
South Deals			♥ Q 8 3									
None Vul			♦ K J									
			♣ 5 3 2									
♠ Q J 7		<table style="border: 1px solid black; background-color: #008000; color: white; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: 0 auto;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 6 5 4
	N											
W		E										
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♥ 10 7			♥ K 9 5									
♦ 9 8 6			♦ A 10 5 4									
♣ Q J 9 7 4			♣ A K 10									
			♠ K 3									
			♥ A J 6 4 2									
			♦ Q 7 3 2									
			♣ 8 6									

West	North	East	South
			Pass
Pass	1 ♠	Pass	2 ♥
All pass			
Lead: ♣ Q			

The bidding shows a typical third-hand opening bid. South and West have too few points to open in 1st or 2nd position. With 10 high card points and one length point in spades, North bids 1S to discourage E/W from bidding. East is stuck – their 14 high card points are insufficient to overcall 1NT

(15 – 17) and their diamond suit is too short and weak to overcall 2D. They have to pass.

South, with 10 high card points bids their 5-card heart suit. North passes. They know that N/S have only a part score available (South must have fewer than 12/13 points). A heart contract is fine.

Note that if North passed, East will open 1D and West will bid 1NT. East will pass. They will take five club tricks, one or more diamond tricks, a spade trick, and perhaps a heart trick. The 1S opening preempted that.

The play is straightforward. Counting losers (suit contract), you see two club losers, one diamond loser, a possible heart loser, and maybe one eventual spade loser. So, how best to play it?

E/W will play three rounds of clubs, with South ruffing the 3rd round. Once South is on play, they can play two rounds of diamonds and ruff a diamond in the North hand. They'll win at least two spades, four hearts plus a diamond ruff, and two diamonds for nine tricks.

Famous Bridges

George Rapée is the greatest bridge player you haven't heard of. During the 1950's, he was one of the best player in the world, winning three world championships (Bermuda Bowl). Over his career, he also won 24 North American championships. He continued to play in all the major tournaments into his 80's.

But Rapée is better known as the U.S. inventor of the Stayman convention (see previous two newsletters). So, how come it's not the Rapée convention? Because Sam Stayman, Rapée's partner, expanded and popularized the idea and wrote an article in *The Bridge World* magazine.

Indeed, Jack Marx (UK co-developer of the Acol bidding system) independently developed the convention shortly before Rapée, but didn't publish until much later.

While not playing bridge, Rapée was an attorney and a real estate developer. His family was originally from Hungary, where his father was a concert pianist.

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>