

IRISH BRIDGE Journal

Autumn 2025

Welcome

Welcome along to the
Autumn 2025 Journal.



Enda Murphy, Editor

I trust you've all been enjoying the great weather. The day cannot be far away when some smart cookie will offer outdoor bridge. You heard it here first.

You'll all be aware by now of the deliberations about amalgamating CBAI and NIBU. Beyond observing that it appears to make eminent sense, I wouldn't have anything in particular to add.

July saw the immensely successful Regent Centenary Congress in the superbly appointed O'Reilly Hall in UCD. Zia Mahmoud fetched up, surely the GOAT, and always kindness personified whenever I've sought a favour. Those other excellent friends of the Journal, Thomas Bessis of France and his wife, Italian star Irene Baroni, also showed up and they duly won everything. They're both Bidding Panel members, and are close friends of Tom Hanlon. Thomas and Irene have kindly contributed an account of their Dublin experiences

Indeed, the merits [or otherwise] of couples playing bridge is a rare old chestnut. Ever since Myrtle Bennett shot her husband John in 1929, the debate has raged. John slapped Myrtle after she made a remark about "bum bridge players" at the table. Myrtle shot him dead in response. She was acquitted at trial. Please note I am merely stating facts, not giving life advice!

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appear in the CBAI News supplement

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Extra
CBAI
News
Inside!

The Annual CBAI newsletter that circulates in September each year is now included as a supplement in the Journal - see page 44

Note:
Includes CBAI News Update and
Fixtures Calendar



At the recent US Mixed Trials for the upcoming World Championships, it was notable that a number of couples featured. Michael and Debbie Rosenberg. Kevin and Cecelia Dwyer Rimstedt. Sylvia Shi and Daniel Korbel [married, divorced but still a bridge pair]. Emma Kolesnik and fiancé Adam Grossack. Maybe it's a coming thing.

I'm delighted to announce a fresh initiative in this issue. Ever since the excellent Fearghal O'Boyle took a step back from his "How Would You Rule?" articles, I've been casting around for a successor to cover rules and ethics. My good friend and former classmate, Jim Doyle, has now stepped up to the plate. He has contributed a very timely and necessary piece called "S/he who hesitates". Hesitations and breaks in tempo are a scourge of our game, and there is a glaring need to educate players about the damage they can do, as well as the consequences of these ethical breaches.

On the international front, Luca Crone and Matthew O'Farrell notched a superb win in the European U-26 Pairs. Luca is one of our columnists and also a Bidding Panel member. I'm delighted to announce that Matthew will be joining him on the Panel going forward.

Joining the Panel right away are Diane Greenwood and Ian Hamilton. Ian as you will see, weighed in with a maximum score, thereby thoroughly vindicating Bob Pattinson's judgement in co-opting him. And speaking of judgement, be sure to check out Tom Hanlon's answer to Question 4! Some of our readers also scored very well – keep your answers coming in.

This issue also features a "bio" by Séamus Dowling, our pre-eminent bridge author and historian. It's a most entertaining read, and I freely admit I was unaware of many of the events Séamus recounts. I'm indebted to him, and Irish bridge is lucky to have him.

Enjoy the Journal

[ps please feel free to email me – see below- with comments and suggestions about Journal content. Thanks]

Enda Murphy
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Test Your Declarer Play

Tomás Roche



You are West as declarer, playing teams. What is your play strategy on each board?

Board 1 Dealer North. Vul None.

♠ A85	N	♠ K Q
♥ AKJ86	W	♥ 7
♦ KQJ102	E	♦ 753
♣ -	S	♣ AK109743

W	N	E	S
	P	1♣	P
1♥	P	2♣	P
3♦ ¹	P	3NT	P
5NT ²	P	6♣	P
6♦	All Pass		

¹ 3♦ = 5+ cards, GF

² 5NT = Pick a slam (a 4♦ bid would lead to 6♦)

The Play

North leads the ♠6 against 6♦. How do you plan the play?

Board 2 Dealer East. Vul N/S.

♠ KQ10632	N	♠ AJ94
♥ A106	W	♥ QJ
♦ 5	E	♦ AQ1096
♣ A83	S	♣ 52

W	N	E	S
		1♦	P
1♠	2♣	2♠	P
2NT ¹	P	4♠ ²	P
5♣ ³	P	5♦ ³	P
6♠	All Pass		

¹ 2NT = Enquiry, agrees spades (usually with ambitions above game)

² 4♠ = Maximum, denies a shortage

³ When partner freely raises your six-card major and you control all the side suits, one should make at least one slam try.

The Play

North leads the ♣K against 6♠. How do you plan the play?

Board 3 Dealer South. Vul E/W.

♠ 943	N	♠ AQ
♥ AKQ32	W	♥ J8
♦ J98	E	♦ A754
♣ A7	S	♣ K6542

W	N	E	S
			3♠ ¹
4♥ ²	All Pass		

¹ 3♠ = Applying the 'rule of 4' when 1st in hand at green

² 4♥ = Not without risk!

The Play

North leads the ♠6 against 4♥. How do you plan the play?

Board 4 Dealer West. Vul All.

♠ Q107	N	♠ A
♥ A862	W	♥ 75
♦ 832	E	♦ AKQ109
♣ AK10	S	♣ QJ742

W	N	E	S
1♣	P	2♦ ¹	P
2NT	P	3♣ ²	P
3♦	P	3♠	P
3NT	P	4♣	P
4♥ ³	P	4♠ ³	P
5NT ⁴	P	6♣ ⁵	All Pass

¹ 2♦ = Natural, GF

² 3♣ = Strong Jump Shift based on club support

³ Cue Bid

⁴ 5NT = Pick a Slam

⁵ 6♣ = 6NT was an alternative

The Play

North leads the ♥K. How do you plan the play?

Answers on page 34

Bidding Quiz 11

By Bob Pattinson



All eight hands are from teams events. Entries to Bobpattinson@ymail.com by 7th November 2025. Good luck!

Question 1

Dealer South. Vul N/S. Teams.

♠ QT752
♥ J3
♦ AJ94
♣ A6

W	N	E	S
			1♦
P	1♠	P	2♥
P	3♣ ¹	P	3♦
P	?		

¹ 3♣=4th suit forcing

Question 2

Dealer East. Vul E/W. Teams.

♠ AKT92
♥ AQ9
♦ AK98
♣ J

W	N	E	S
		1♣	P
1♠	P	2♣ ¹	P
?			

¹ 2♠=6+

Question 3

Dealer South. Vul All. Teams.

♠ QJ754
♥ 8
♦ AQJ
♣ QT85

W	N	E	S
			1♠
P	?		

Question 4

Dealer West. Vul N/S. Teams.

♠ KQ63
♥ AJT74
♦ J2
♣ 83

W	N	E	S
1♠ ¹	P	1♥	P
2♥	P	?	

¹ 1♠=2+

Question 5

Dealer South. Vul None. Teams.

♠ Q985
♥ AQT98
♦ -
♣ AT75

W	N	E	S
			1NT ¹
P	2♦	P	2♥ ²
P	2♠	P	3♠
P	?		

¹ 1NT=14-16: no 5 major
² 2♥=2+ (no super accepts)

Question 6

Dealer East. Vul All. Teams

♠ T52
♥ AKQJ53
♦ A5
♣ 73

W	N	E	S
		1♥	P
1♠	P	?	

Question 7

Dealer North. Vul All. Teams.

♠ T2
♥ AQT7
♦ AKT
♣ 9742

W	N	E	S
	2♠ ¹	P	P
X	P	3♣ ²	P
?			

¹ 2♠=6-10 5431 or 5-5: any 2nd suit
² 3♣=constructive (2NT = weak)

Question 8

Dealer West. Vul N/S. Teams

♠ A32
♥ KJ83
♦ -
♣ KQ9642

W	N	E	S
1♠	1NT ¹	?	

¹ 1NT=16-18: 2 stops

Entries to:

bobpattinson@ymail.com
by 7th November 2025

Please remember to state your grade in your entry

- Novice/Intermediate
- Master (below Life Master)



Bidding Quiz System

General Approach:

Five card majors, three+ minors, 2/1 GF,
1NT = 15-17,
2♣ = art GF with 2♦ waiting response

Balanced Hands

4333, 4432, 5332
(with five minor)

12-14 and 18-19 open 1♣/♦

20-22 : 2NT (may include five card major hence play puppet Stayman)

Major Suit Responses

1NT = 5-10 F1:
2♣/♦/♥ = 2/1 GF

3♣/♦/♥ over 1♠ opening and 2♠/3♣/♦ over 1♥ opening = four card+ trump support: 8-11 : first or second round control in bid suit.

3M = 4-7 and 4+ trumps

2NT = Jacoby 16+:
4+ trumps:

Opener bids a singleton at the three-level, a second five card suit at the four-level, rebids 3M with 17-19, 4M with 12-14, and 3NT with 15-16.

Responses to the forcing 1NT:

example for 1♥: 1NT: 2♣ = Gazzilli : either 11-16 with 5M and 4+ clubs or any 17+ hand

2♦ = 11-16 : 3+ diamonds

2♥ = 11-16 : 6+ hearts

2♠ = 14-16: 6 hearts and 5 spades

2NT = 14-16 : 6 hearts and a 4 card minor : now 3♣ pass/ correct; 3♦ = GF asks for minor; 3♥ - to play

3♣/♦ = 14-16: 5-5

3♥ = 14-16 : 6+ hearts and strong suit

Example of Gazzilli after 1♥:1NT:2♣

2♦ = any 8+ suit

2♥ = 5-7 : 5+ hearts

2♠ = 5-7 : 6+ spades

2NT = 5=7: 3 suiter with short hearts

3♣/♦ = 5-7 : 6+ minor

After responder bids 2♦ opener rebids 2M with 11-16 and 5M and 4+ clubs
2NT = 17-19 balanced : other bids game forcing

Responses to 1nt Opening (15-17)

2♣ = non-promissory Stayman

2♦/♥/♠/NT = transfers

3♣/♦/♥/♠ = long suits with slam interest

Two-Level Suit Opening Bids

Bid	Meaning	Responses
2♣	23 + or equivalent unbalanced	2♦ = waiting bid
2♦/♥/♠	6-10 : six card suit, using rule of two, three or four depending upon different vulnerability of the two sides	2NT = enquiry: opener signs off with three-level rebid of own suit with minimum and bids a new suit to show a feature or 3NT with a feature in the opening suit

Three/Four-Level Opening Bids

Bid	Meaning	Responses
3♣/♦/♥/♠	6-10 : six or seven card suit	New suit forcing
3NT	Eight card broken minor suit	4♣ = pass / convert 4♦ = interested in club slam but only part score in diamonds 5♣ = willing to play in game in either minor 4M = asking bid; interest in game in either major: seeks control in bid major 4NT = name suit and quality: 5♣/♦ = confirms suit but denies Ace or King : 5♥/♠ = respective suit and holds Ace or King in that minor
4♣/♦	Namyats: eight card solid major in ♥/♠ : three key cards	Bid of intermediate suits 4♦/♥ asks for shortage and 4M denies any shortage
4♥/♠	Eight card broken suit: less than three key cards	4NT = Roman key card Blackwood : 1430
3NT	Ace asking	5♣ = no ace; 5♦/♥/♠/6C = ace in bid suit; 5NT = two aces

Opening Side Action over Interference

Bid	Meaning
Negative double	Shows values in the remaining two suits
Support Double	Opener confirms three card trump support, so a raise of the suit shows four card support
4th suit	Forcing: asking for more information
Cue bid	Unassuming and forcing: asks for more information
Jump cue	Has a long running suit: seeks NT stop
2NT	Relay to 3♣: this may then be passed or converted to a new long weak suit; thus a direct new suit at the 3-level is GF
Transfers after own 1NT is overcalled	Double /new suit/2NT are all transfers to the next suit (2NT over 2♠); follow up in second suit is game forcing; transfer to intervening suit asks for NT stop, and now accepting the transfer denies a stop and 3NT confirms one

Intervening Bidding

Bid	Meaning
1NT overcall	16-18
Weak jump overcalls	6-10
Two suited overcalls	Direct cue = two highest suits 2NT = two lowest suits; 3♣ = two remaining suits
5-5 : either 6-10 or 15+	
Defence to 1NT	Double = minor two suiter or major two suiter: advancer assumes minors first 2♣ = three suiter with clubs; 2♦ = three suiter with diamonds 2♥/♠ = either six card suit or the bid suit plus a minor side suit: 2NT asks for the minor

Slam Bidding

Roman key card Blackwood (1430) and Kickback in the minors (1430)

Non serious 3NT: when a trump fit is found 3NT is artificial confirming a minimum hand still prepared to show controls if partner fails to sign off. By passing 3NT shows a strong hand, bidding 1st or 2nd controls up the line.

Thoroughly Modern Millie - now showing in Bray!

Editor



[Editor's note: Thoroughly Modern Millie was a stage musical and a 1967 movie, starring Julie Andrews and Mary Tyler Moore].

So there you are, minding your own business on a balmy June afternoon when the phone rings. It's BJ [O'Brien thereof] asking you to play that evening in Bray. Having washed your hair earlier that very day, and being unable to contrive a family emergency at such short notice, you grit your teeth and accept.

It's always an enjoyable experience to play in Bray, and this night is no exception. Early on, BJ serves notice of intent when he overcalls 1♥ on KQ63, further adorned by an outside Queen and two outside Jacks. Holding ♥972 plus ♣AK, you venture a support double [showing 3 hearts], then when opponents bid 1NT you bid 2♥. Minus 3. It's going to be one of those nights.

Later on you pick up

♠ K
♥ K97
♦ KQ62
♣ KJ972

You're playing strong NT and five-card majors. What to do? If you open 1♣ and partner responds in a red suit you can raise it, but if [as seems likely] he responds 1♠, what then? One option is to downgrade to 14 points and rebid 1NT. But as the immortal CJ [Reggie Perrin] said "I didn't get where I am today by downgrading decent 15-counts".

What remains? You are not strong enough to reverse into 2♦. Looks like you'll just have to rebid 2♣. But

wait! A memory stirs! In the most recent Journal, there was a very interesting article by leading Junior, Luca Crone, discussing modern bidding approaches to opening 1NT. Specifically, Luca made the case for opening 1NT with a singleton King.

Being a Thoroughly Modern Millie, you duly open 1NT. BJ bids 2♣ and you bid 2♦. He now jumps to 3♥ [showing five hearts and four spades], so you raise to 4♥ and get ready to table your dummy, reserving a particular flourish for that stiff ♠K. But you suddenly see that BJ is thinking. Almost 50 years playing with the guy, so you know it's trouble when he starts to think. Sure enough, he foosters in the bidding box and your heart sinks. Out comes Ole Black. 5♣ from you to show 1 or 4, and the way you slap it down leaves no room for doubt. Dear God in heaven, he's thinking again!! Twice in one hand. The Guinness Book of World Records beckons. After a lengthy squirm, he bids 6NT. LHO leads a diamond and dummy hits:

You		Dummy
♠ K		♠ J1098
♥ K97		♥ AQ842
♦ KQ62		♦ A
♣ KJ972		♣ AQ5

You can kind of see what he was fretting about. If my Ace is ♥K, 6♥ is probably the spot, but if it's ♠A we might have two heart losers yet have 12 tricks in NT. Anyway, you've evaded a spade lead, so things are looking up. If hearts break, we'll just be claiming our 13 tricks thanks very much. But what if they don't? You can't detect and handle J10xx with either opponent. But if either one has stiff J or

Ten, you can still pick up the suit. Proper technique is to cash ♥A. LHO plays ♥J! If this is a true card, you can now finesse ♥9 and claim 13 tricks [absent LHO having five clubs which is highly unlikely]. But as Al Pacino observed in Scent of a Woman "I've been around, you know?" Playing ♥J would be a standard falsecard from J10 doubleton. If LHO was really good, he'd play ♥J from J10x to give you a chance to go wrong [you're marked with three hearts on the bidding].

If you finesse a heart into LHO's ten, he may continue diamonds, and we'd survive for 12 tricks. As Zia tells us "If they don't lead it they won't switch it". Another Zia ruse would be to win ♦A and play ♠J to ♠K. Hmmm. I decided to pay off to the falsecard, and played a heart to ♥9, LHO showing out. 6NT plus 1, and a much-needed top. Result for Thoroughly Modern Millie! Who needs Zia when you've got Julie Andrews on your side? [Memo to self – remember to ask BJ if the J stands for "Julie"].

Well done to Neil English and Adrian Meagher, the only pair to reach the rock-solid 6♣. Anyone playing in 6♥ went down – a spade lead and continuation forces you to ruff, and now you cannot play trumps for no loser.

You'd think that Millie would now rest on her laurels, wouldn't you? But no – prepare yourself for "Thoroughly Modern Millie 2 – This Time It's Personal". This present-day version stars Kim Kardashian and Jason Statham. Water finds its own level.

So it transpires that at the final table, vul against not, you pick up as Dealer:



♠ 4
♥ Q6
♦ A872
♣ J106542

Modern bidding theory at expert level says that you should pre-empt at every opportunity. As one US world champion puts it "The only valid excuse for not pre-empting is that it isn't your turn to bid". I'm a card-carrying member of that school of thought. So for me, this hand is a 3♣ opening every day of the week. It puts pressure on your opponents. You have three cards in the majors, so the hand likely belongs to opponents. Why make it easy for them? Yes, you are vul and yes, you are opening in front of an unpassed partner. I would never open 3♣ with a three-card major, but otherwise it's open season as far as I'm concerned. Never ever let it be said that your mother reared a jibber.

So I opened 3♣, Thoroughly Modern Millie that I am. LHO held:

♠ AKJ6
♥ A98
♦ KJ93
♣ A3

What do you want him to do? He's got 20 points. Give me eight or so for my pre-empt. That leaves 12 points between partner and responder, therefore six on average each, and that makes overcalling 3NT an option. But it looks best to double, as partner may be able to show one or both majors, and if not you can rebid 3NT, showing pretty much what you have.

In practice, LHO doubled and RHO bid 3♥. What now? Very few pairs have agreements for this situation – another justification for the original 3♣ pre-empt. LHO bid 3♠, which doesn't look right to me, and there he played.

BJ leads ♣K. Dummy has Qx and Declarer has the Ace. Ouch, but fair enough – I did tell him to lead a Club. Declarer wins ♣A and dummy later scores ♣Q. You gain the lead late in the play. Old fuddy-duddy that you are, you "know" that BJ has two clubs and

therefore declarer has three. So a third club looks the right return – might promote a trump trick for BJ. Imagine my rapture when declarer discards, BJ follows [!!] and dummy ruffs. BJ's clubs were K87. Grrrr and brr. As it turned out, it didn't matter. RHO held.....

♠ 10982
♥ J10543
♦ Q5
♣ Q9

Both 4♥ and 4♠ make, played by LHO. If you didn't open 3♣, the bidding would go 2NT-3♣-3♠-4♠. So misdefending 3♠ did not cost. Every other table played in 4♥ or 4♠. [RHO should of course raise to 4♠ on the actual auction, though I'm still not having 3♠].

BJs hand was Qxxx Kxx 10xx Kxx. His "logic" for ♣K lead was to retain the lead at trick two, and having had a look at dummy he'd know what to do.

Action Points for Journal Readers

1. Re-read Luca's article from the last issue [cbai.ie], and gird your loins to open 1NT with singleton Kings [preferably Majors]
2. Pre-empt at every opportunity
3. Tell all your friends to read the Journal
4. Next time you see BJ, call him Julie or Millie or Kim – and tell him I sent you.

James Heneghan



♠ KQJ10
♥ 74
♦ AK63
♣ 852

♠ 5
♥ AKJ105
♦ 97
♣ J10963

♠ A632
♥ 9832
♦ 102
♣ K74

♠ 9874
♥ Q6
♦ QJ854
♣ AQ

Bric-A-Brock

Sally Brock



Migry Campanile is one of the top Israeli players and is often in the headlines because of her brilliant cardplay. She's now a US international. Here she and her partner, Sweden's Peter Fredin, defended perfectly for a near top in the European Mixed Pairs.

Dealer South. Vul All.

<p>♠ 1065 ♥ AKJ106 ♦ 75 ♣ J84</p>			
♠ AQJ3	N	♠ 987	
♥ Q7432	W	♥ 85	
♦ Q4	E	♦ J6	
♣ K10	S	♣ AQ9752	
<p>♠ K42 ♥ 9 ♦ AK109832 ♣ 63</p>			

W	N	E	S
			1♦
1♥	1NT	2♣	2♦
2♠	P	P	3♦
All Pass			

On a heart lead 3♦ would have made, but even one down would have been a good matchpoint score for North/South as East/West can make nine tricks in either black suit.

Here, however, Fredin led the ♠K. Migry overtook with the ace and returned the ♠9. There was no danger of West playing her for a doubleton spade because she had shown at least three spades when she passed West's 2♠ bid. West won his ♠J and continued with the ♠10.

Declarer ducked, but Migry won her queen anyway and played a second round of spades. West won the ♠Q, and then cashed the ace. That was five tricks to the defenders, but when West continued with a fourth round of spades and Migry ruffed in with the ♦J, a sixth defensive trick had been created for West's ♦Q. +200 was worth nearly all the matchpoints.

Two English teams won bronze medals in the Mixed Teams at San Remo in 2009 - Frances Hinden, Graham Osborne, Jeffrey Allerton and Paula Leslie, as well as Janet de Botton, Artur Malinowski, Nick Sandqvist and Nevena Senior.

Today's deal comes from the de Botton team's quarter-final encounter against a strong Dutch squad:

Dealer South. Vul N/S.

<p>♠ AK10 ♥ A103 ♦ A643 ♣ KJ2</p>			
♠ 52	N	♠ J83	
♥ Q9862	W	♥ J	
♦ Q1098	E	♦ KJ75	
♣ 84	S	♣ 109765	
<p>♠ Q9764 ♥ K754 ♦ 2 ♣ AQ3</p>			

The Dutch North/South failed to reach slam but this was the auction when Artur Malinowski and Janet de Botton were North/South:

W	N	E	S
			1♠
P	2♣	P	2♥
P	3♦	P	4♣
P	4♦	P	5♣
P	6♠	All Pass	

There are two possible lines of play on this deal; one is a dummy reversal. Declarer wins the lead, cashes the ♦A and ruffs a diamond, plays a spade to the ace and ruffs another diamond, cashes the ♠Q, plays a club to dummy and ruffs the last diamond, then a club to hand, draw the last trump and cash two more winners in hearts and clubs, simply conceding a heart at the end.

Janet de Botton found another equally successful line of play. She won the ♦A, cashed dummy's ♥A and played a heart back towards her king. It would not have done East any good to ruff thin air, so he threw a club, and Janet won her king and exited with a heart. When West won and continued the suit, declarer ruffed high in the dummy, cashed the ♠K and ran the ♠10, finessing East for the jack. When the ♠10 held she crossed to hand with a club, drew the last trump and claimed the remainder.

Making My Way

Melissa Brady



Reflecting on this past year, I feel deeply grateful for everything it's brought—the unexpected highs, the new opportunities, and the experiences that opened my eyes in ways I never saw coming.

When the season began, I found myself in a position that felt unfamiliar, even uncomfortable. I've said it before, and I still carry the feeling: I didn't believe I deserved to be an Area Master at that point. There was a sense of doubt that lingered, a voice inside me questioning whether I had truly earned it because the pace at which National points accumulate—especially in team competitions—felt overwhelming, almost surreal. I felt that I'd been thrown into something too big for me. Every mistake felt huge. Every board I played badly stuck with me for days and some still linger in the back of my mind. Imposter syndrome kicked in as I feel like I had a lot of luck getting to where I was. It was hard to reconcile recognition with readiness. Over time, I started to understand that growth doesn't always begin from a place of certainty or confidence. Sometimes, it begins in the moments where you feel out of your depth but you choose to have the courage to rock up anyway.

Sligo Congress made its highly anticipated return in June following a hiatus due to the Covid pandemic. This marked my first opportunity to participate "live" in the event, as it had been conducted online every year since I began playing bridge. In the lead-up to the weekend, everyone we spoke with expressed genuine enthusiasm about its revival—and having now experienced it firsthand, I can fully appreciate why. The atmosphere was vibrant and engaging, people were

genuinely thrilled to be there, and it is fair to say the congress was an outstanding success. The weekend proved to be a successful one us on the bridge front also. We were pleased to secure the Area Master prizes in both the Congress Pairs and the Teams event, the latter in partnership with fellow journal contributor Nicola O'Dowd and her partner Declan Byrne. We also achieved a second-place finish in the Gala Pairs, narrowly missing out to our final-round opponents—former CBAI President Gordon Lessels and his partner, Denis Sheehan. Gordon, ever the mathematician, suggested we had been in the lead until facing them in the final round, though I suspect he may have just been teasing us!

Sligo Congress - Teams

Session 2 Board 7.

Dealer South. Vul All.

			♠AK843		
			♥872		
			♦A93		
			♣K3		
♠J109		N		♠75	
♥Q1053				♥AJ6	
♦4	W	E		♦J1086	
♣97542		S		♣J1086	
			♠Q62		
			♥K94		
			♦KQ752		
			♣AQ		

Given how many things went right for us in Sligo, you might wonder why I'm choosing to focus on a board that didn't go so well. The truth is, I knew there was a slam on in this board — I just wasn't confident in how to bid it.

My partner [South] opened a strong 1NT, and the auction continued: 2♥ (transfer), 2♠, 4♣ (Gerber), 4♥, 5♣, 5♠. At that point, the only information I had about my partner's hand was that 10 of her points were

made up of one Ace and two Kings. I had no way of knowing whether she held three spades, so I went for 6NT. She got a club lead and won in hand with the queen, then ran off five spades tricks but it quickly became clear the contract wasn't going to make as on the third round of spades, East discarded the ♣6, and on the fourth spade, West dropped the ♥3 — both signaling interest in hearts.

I didn't feel I could bid 3NT on my second turn — if my partner only had two spades, she would pass. [But that would be ok, Ed]. I couldn't bid 6♠ either, since I didn't hold six spades myself (or even five strong ones). *[There is the option of bidding 5NT which means "pick a slam", but if partner has only two spades you have 29-31 combined points and no known fit, Ed].* It really is no fun sitting there knowing you have your partner playing in the wrong slam.

At the end of the board, our opponents kindly told us to come find them after the session — they said they'd show us how to bid it properly.

True to their word, after the competition ended and they wrapped up their victory speech, they told us that once my partner accepted the transfer, I could have bid 3♦ (or whichever minor I had more of) to ask if she had three spades. The reason I didn't do that was because, in our system, that bid shows five spades and at least four diamonds. Knowing I was pushing towards game, Anna—with a doubleton club—would then have bid 4♠, and we'd have ended up in 6♠ not 6NT. It always seems simple and obvious once someone else explains how to do it. It's good to learn from your mistakes so that's a small tweak we've made to our bidding going forward.



Regent Congress - Congress Pairs

Session 2 Board 8.

Dealer West. Vul None.

<p>♠ K6532 ♥ KJ105 ♦ KQ9 ♣ 3</p>		
♠ 98	N	♠ 107
♥ A86432	W	♥ Q9
♦ 103	E	♦ AJ752
♣ KJ9	S	♣ 7542
<p>♠ AQJ4 ♥ 7 ♦ 864 ♣ AQ1086</p>		

The Regent Centenary Congress was held in O'Reilly Hall, University College Dublin, over the weekend of July 11th to 13th. I extend my sincere compliments to the Congress Committee—the event was impeccably organised, and I doubt there was a single cause for complaint. It may well have been the largest congress in which we have participated. We were fortunate to face many of the visiting international players. We had our share of ups and downs, this board in particular stood out—not just because it earned us a shared top, but because it reminded me that sometimes the best call you can make at the table is... pass.

The auction began with West opening a weak 2♥. Sitting north and holding four hearts to two honours and the ten, I saw no reason to intervene and passed. West's partner raised to 3♥, which my partner doubled for takeout. I looked again at my hand and felt extremely confident that 4♠ would make. Had we been vulnerable, I would have taken the plunge. However, at that moment I recalled something Gay Keaveney said at the Donegal Congress earlier in the season: "Take the money and run."

I did a quick calculation and concluded that we were very likely to defeat the contract by at least three tricks, so I passed again. The only real danger was missing a slam—but with my holding in hearts and partner short in the suit, that seemed unlikely.

I led my singleton ♣3, which fortunately found my partner with the ace. She returned the suit, allowing me to ruff. I then switched to the ♦K, with the declarer winning on the table with the ace. He played the ♥Q next, which I won with the king. A low spade to partner's ace followed, and she returned a diamond to my queen. I cashed the ♠Ks, then led the ♥H, putting declarer back on lead as I didn't want to give the dreaded ruff and discard on the spade, and my ♥10 eventually scored us a seventh trick—down three, for a penalty of 500.

Twelve months ago, I would likely have launched into 4♠ without a second thought. Bridge has a funny way of teaching you patience—and sometimes, pass is the most powerful card in your bidding box.

Regent Congress - Congress Teams

Session 1 Board 2.

Dealer East. Vul N/S.

<p>♠ K1054 ♥ KJ2 ♦ A965 ♣ AK</p>		
♠ 832	N	♠ Q96
♥ 8653	W	♥ Q10974
♦ J7	E	♦ Q102
♣ 10986	S	♣ 74
<p>♠ AJ7 ♥ A ♦ K843 ♣ QJ532</p>		

One of the more "how-did-we-get-here?" moments of the weekend came when we found ourselves as one of only four pairs bold (or mad) enough to reach 7NT on this board.

The auction began innocently enough: partner opened 1♣, I responded 1♦, and she came back with a jump to 3♦—showing 15+ points, at least five clubs, and no more than four diamonds. I followed up with 4NT (RKC3014), and got a reply of 5♣, showing three keycards.

At this point, we can all deduce that 11 of her 15+ points were tied up in just three cards. That's all fine and dandy—unless you're trying to

bid a grand slam and your bidding system is held together with duct tape and hope. We didn't have the tools to ask about the ♦Q, so I did what any bridge optimist (lunatic) would do—I closed my eyes, muttered a small prayer to the card gods, and reached for 7NT, hoping partner had the ♦Q... or the ♠Q... or, if luck was truly on my side, both.

Dummy came down and, surprise! She had neither Queen. Not even close. The opening lead was the ♥10—about as useful as a chocolate teapot. At this point, that classic bridge wisdom came to mind: "You should never be in a grand slam if it depends on a finesse." But there I was, finessing for my bridge life.

I figured if I was going down, I might as well do it quickly and with dignity (or at least speed). So after winning the first trick with the ♥A in dummy I played to the ♣A, then the ♣K, and lined up to finesse the ♠J into West knowing that if the finesse failed no matter what they came back I'd get 12 tricks... and it held! I had to check the card twice to make sure I wasn't hallucinating as it was a 50/50 option as to which way to finesse the spade. I then ran off all the remainder of the tricks. Houdini himself would've been impressed!

[Nothing exceeds like excess! Melissa correctly highlights the problems that can arise if using 4NT Keycard when a minor suit is trumps. The solution is a convention called "Minorwood". If Clubs are trumps, then 4♦ is Keycard, if Diamonds are trumps then 4♥ is Keycard. This allows you to stop at five of the minor, or even 4NT, if you need to. Ed.]

Bridge: the only game where your best results come from blind leaps, questionable judgment, and the occasional miracle.

A lot of my friends have been saying they're dreading the jump from Intermediates knowing that they'll be promoted to Area Master in September and they find themselves staring up at the Congress Pairs like it's the Mount Everest of Bridge. I thought long

and hard about whether to include this last paragraph — because honestly, most days I feel like I'm the last person who should be giving advice. I often feel like I need both a personal coach and a therapist just to get through some sessions! I decided to include it because it's something I wish someone had told me last year.

And that is this..... It won't always be easy — there will be days when you feel like walking away. There will be days when you question everything you thought you knew. You'll make mistakes — big ones, silly ones — the kind that replay in your head while you're brushing your teeth and leave you thinking, Did I really do that? But don't let those moments drag you down a rabbit hole of self-doubt. Don't measure your progress by comparing yourself to others because comparison is the thief of joy. Instead, look for the small wins. They'll start to appear, quietly and gradually. A few months from now, you'll look back and realise how far you've come — not because you suddenly became a brilliant player overnight, but because you didn't let fear stop you from showing up and trying. Eventually, little by little, it does get easier. You start to believe in yourself and you'll notice that a lot can happen in a few months.

So if you're stepping into this next stage and feeling all those nerves and doubts — hold on. Keep going. Keep learning. Keep questioning—yourself, your partner, and even your opponents—because most people are more than willing to share their encouragement and wisdom.

Don't listen to that voice in your head that says you don't belong there. You do.



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I have been things and seen places

Séamus Dowling



Background:

Bridge has enhanced my life but I was a jack of many trades, middling good at some, great at none. In a memoir I wrote, bridge covered just one of 22 chapters or 15 of 258 pages, but for more than half my life I submitted to its addiction. A native of Co. Kildare, born in 1936, road cycle racing was my sport. I was a musician and played violin with bands from age 16, in dance halls, on stage, on radio and television. I never recorded; the only musical activity absent from my CV. There is a connection between music and bridge. At 1950s Dublin Grand Opera Society performances, a dapper little man in the audience caught my eye: Jimmy Powell, one of Ireland's leading tournament directors, whom I would later get to know. Two of my bridge partners [John Comyn and Jimmy McCormack] also were ardent opera fans.

Beginning:

I became a bridge player reluctantly. Come Autumn 1977, Maura and I had three young children and little social life. We decided to go out. Maura mentioned bridge classes. Not for me. Having played card games, I was not interested in another. Then, one evening Maura got a baby sitter; bridge classes were starting. I surrendered and was converted. Minor, encouraging successes followed: second in a novice pairs at Blackrock congress, novice prize in 'the Flitch' in Clonmel. Later we won the husband-and-wife pairs in Dun Laoghaire; behind us were some legendary names. We went close in the Spiro once.

Fellow beginner Eric Pelly and I won the national novice pairs (JJ Murphy Cup). Behind us were a North Dublin pair, Róisín Shortall and her husband. The following weekend they reversed the placings in a Dublin region competition. Róisín later abandoned bridge for politics.

National champion

Noel Brown, aiming at a place on the Irish team, decided my then partner Kevin O'Dea was the one to get him there. However, there were problems. Kevin did not have sufficient master points to play in the trials; fixable, according to optimistic Noel, by winning a few national championships. But what would Noel's regular partner, his fiancée Margaret Morgan do? The solution: I would play with Margaret. The next national tournament was the Shamrock Lodge Trophy, in Athlone. Margaret and I, who had never played a card together previously, won. It was Margaret who went close to playing for Ireland. She and Katherine Lennon from Wexford once finished fourth in the women's trials, with the first three selected. Following marriage she dropped bridge for some years. Had she not, she would doubtless have played on Irish teams.

Lucky

Win one national championship, especially pairs, and you may be deemed lucky; win a second and you are lucky surely. Win a third and perhaps there was another factor. I won five open national events: the one mentioned above, three with John Comyn as partner [the Davidson Cup and the IBU pairs twice]. I also won the inter-

county Burke Trophy with BJ O'Brien (Comyn and Joe Moran completed the team). Add an inter-provincial with Leinster, regional titles, congress pairs and teams and earlier the novice pairs and intermediate A teams. I was very lucky indeed.

Playing an opponent, up in the world

In 1985 three women invited me to join their team in quest of the national intermediate A championship (Bankers trophy). Friends had won the previous year; honour and pride were challenged. Leading from the start, near the end we met a team on the move. Led by an occasional partner of mine, a man fired up, they were now third. I made sure to play the same hands as my friend; I knew how his mind worked. My partner opened 1NT (12-14). I held Kxxxx, Kxxxx, x, xx, but I knew my opponent would bid game. I bid to four hearts. It didn't matter if both went down. We were leading comfortably, but could not afford a game swing against us. Ironically, defensive error allowed me to make the game. I believe you should play the cards, not the opponent. I had gone against my philosophy.

In 1998 Martin Keane and I finished fourth in the World simultaneous pairs. Originally placed third, a late result pushed us down. My writer's itch twitched and I penned a tongue-in-cheek piece for the Bridge Journal entitled: How to be Third in the World. The truth is that out of 24 boards only one good score resulted from our own efforts. For the remaining 23, opponents were kind.



Playing for Ireland:

Seniors bridge was initially ignored by the Irish Bridge Union, so in 1999 I was one of five players who formed a team for the European seniors in Malta. In 2002 Joe MacHale invited me to join the team in Salsomaggiore; advancing in years, he feared he might need a rest during the long tournament. World championships [Istanbul, 2004] and Europeans [Pau, 2008] followed. By this time senior trials had been introduced.

In serious competition amusing moments can occur. In Pau, a Welsh opponent and I, having made our bids and pushed the tray through to our respective partners, experienced a long delay. A muted conversation was heard from the other side. Eventually, my Welsh opponent leaned towards me and whispered, 'I think they're discussing their former wives,' to which I responded, 'In that case, we could be here a long time.' A kibitzer at our table had our remarks published in the Daily Bulletin.

I also participated in open World and European events: Lille 1998, Warsaw 1999, Bermuda 2000, Sorrento 2001, Montreal 2002, Estoril 2005, Verona 2006. Partners included Seán Ó Lubaigh, Paul Hanratty, John Godden and John Power. I became non-playing captain of the women's team at the Europeans in Malmö, 2004, when BJ O'Brien became ill. The closest to boastable achievement was when Paul Hanratty and I missed a place in the European senior pairs' final in Warsaw 1999 by 0.1 of a percentage point. However, it was in Malta in 1999 that I blew my chance of fame. Against a slam I led small from four clubs to the King. Partner won with the Ace, then switched. Slam made; declarer had another club. At the other table Omar Sharif led the King of clubs! He explained his thinking. If he led small and partner had the Ace, partner might not believe he would lead away from the King. Omar's play, described as brilliant, was written up in newspapers and magazines. It helped France to win bronze medals.

I played in a number of friendly matches - ten times against England [a record that stood for a while], five times against Northern Ireland, once against Wales, and on official's and open teams.

Celebrities

In Malta Omar Sharif posed for a photo with an Irish kibitzer. When I was 14, she told him, I fell in love with you. He responded: I hope you are not disappointed in the old man now. White-haired, he still oozed charm. Zia Mahmood is the current charismatic one. When he played in Dublin in 2005 I met him at the airport and brought him to his hotel. A long time elapsed before he emerged from arrivals. Holding a Pakistani passport he had not realized he needed a visa and was being denied entry. It says much for his personality that, visaless, he talked his way into the country. I met him recently in Dublin. He remembered the occasion but not me. I played against him at the table in Istanbul in 2004.

I also knew Albert Benjamin, creator of the weak-two openings in the major suits. He told me a woman partner once upbraided him for getting the system wrong. "I only invented the bloody thing", he said. Benjamin published what he claimed was the first and only bridge newspaper in the World, just before the outbreak of World War II. Newsprint was rationed to a percentage of the previous year's usage; he had used none the previous year, so the newspaper ceased.

A Bulgarian player told me his daughter had lived in Galway and loved Irish music. When I told him I was a fiddle player he gave me an affectionate hug. I was informed later he had previously been head of his country's secret police, seemingly not always such an affable fellow!

In Lille in 1998, opposite partner's 1NT (15-17), I forced to game with slender values. Famed Italian Benito Garozza failed to bid game at the other table. I was told he

was less than gracious about it.

Perhaps my greatest achievement was to make Boris Schapiro smile. Playing against the party to the Buenos Aires cheating scandal of 1965, I revoked early in the play. Later I tried to slip in the revoke card unseen. Schapiro's finger shot out and in thunderous tone exclaimed: You revoked. We tried to outstare each other, before I said, I didn't think you'd notice. Sensing I was having him on, he smiled. Followers at the table smiled when he smiled.

Alan Truscott had originally exposed the Buenos Aires cheating allegation against Schapiro and Terence Reese. In Maastricht in 2000 we stayed at the same hotel; he was reporting for the New York Times, I for the Irish Times. Together we walked the 40 minutes to the bridge venue every morning and discovered common interest in Gilbert and Sullivan and the songs of American satirist Tom Lehrer. As we walked, we sang from the respective repertoires, to the amusement of passing Dutch cyclists. I bought a copy of his book, *The Bidding Dictionary*, but he insisted on refunding my money and wrote a dedication on the title page.

In the run-up to the 1991 Killarney Europeans I had close dealings with Grattan Endicott, active in the English Bridge union, the executives of the European Bridge League and the World Bridge Federation and an acknowledged authority on the laws. Named after the late 18th century Irish politician Henry Grattan, he attended the South of Ireland congress in Killarney for many years.

Memorable partners

Pride of place goes to Seán Ó Lubaigh. 'A fellow of infinite jest,' as Hamlet described Yorick to Horatio. Playing against a team of South American women, Seán called the director before we even sat at the table. "I want to object", he announced; "these ladies cannot possibly be seniors!"

On another occasion he disputed an interpretation of a rule with director, Hans Hallen from Sweden, whom I knew personally. Mr. Hallen wrote the rules, I told Seán. "Oh!" my partner back-pedalled, "very good rules!"

Jimmy McCormack, a brilliant raconteur, regularly regaled companions with stories in which he himself was often the fall guy. He could quote freely in English, Irish, Latin, Greek and Italian. Following a match against Alex and Anne Montwill in which IMPs flew back and forth resulting in a net difference of just one, Jimmy, borrowing from Latin poet Horace, came out with "Parturient Montwills, nascetur ridiculus mus". Jimmy had inserted "Montwills" in place of the original "montes". The meaning: Mountains will give birth, a ridiculous mouse will be born - or as Jimmy saw it, such Montwill effort to gain an insignificant, single point.

Schools' bridge

Gay Keaveney's schools' championship became so popular in the 1980s that Galway bridge centre was unable to accommodate everybody. I organized a qualifying competition in Dublin and discovered how to attract students to bridge. Future CBAI president Tom Burke introduced the game to boys in Gormanstown College but had difficulty getting them actively involved. I was at the time teaching young girls in Inchicore. We arranged matches in our respective colleges on alternate Wednesdays. Following my girls' first visit, Tom had difficulty keeping the young Gormanstown lads away! The secret of furthering schools' bridge is to foster inter-school activity and a girls v. boys element guarantees success.

National office

When I became secretary of Ballyroan club it was the beginning of a journey that led to national office. During the late 80s, with membership soaring, CBAI leadership considered the future.

Daring minds even thought of a full-time official and a national headquarters but it was too soon. Conservative thinking still ruled. The part-time position of Public Relations-cum-Press Officer was created and I was appointed. Able to condense my work at Inchicore College of Further Education into four days, Mondays were devoted to bridge. As preparation, I attended a week-long, European-Bridge-League designed promotions seminar in Amsterdam. Bridge results appeared on RTE's Aertel on Monday mornings. Newspapers, provincial and national, were fed with bridge news. Ryan Hotels sponsored a tournament for over-55s, ending with a final and banquet at Dun Laoghaire's Royal Marine hotel. Provincial papers were pleased to receive photos of finalists and featured success stories about local readers. The sponsorship lasted only two years. Ryan hotels were too early. Older players had not yet begun to take off-season, mid-week breaks in the numbers they did later when the Celtic Tiger roared and hotels competed for the patronage of senior citizens. I did manage to negotiate a grant from Co-operation North towards the cost of the annual North-South match.

European Championships 1991

The Royal Dublin Society in Dublin was the original chosen venue for the 1991 European championships. European Bridge League president José Damiani visited the RDS in advance. Unfortunately, his visit coincided with the opening morning of the Dublin Horse Show. The perfume that wafted from the RDS stables was somewhat offensive to the sensitive nostrils of the Parisian! What he had to walk on was not a red carpet either. The RDS was out. Fortunately, the manager of the Great Southern Hotel in Killarney guaranteed that a leisure centre, then no more than an architect's drawing, would be completed in time.

Marie Gleeson was a key member of the organizing team. Ireland's delegate to the EBL, she had attended many championships. However, her husband Tom became ill and would sadly die before the championships took place. Marie was out so far as input in the preparation was concerned. My day job afforded me sufficient flexibility that I could take on Marie's workload. What a variety of tasks! Persuading Soviet Union teams to come [roubles were valueless here]. Joe Moran's parish-priest brother persuaded the Bishop to let them stay in St. Brendan's seminary; students would be on holiday. The bishop was not told that half of the Soviet party would be women! Bulgarians had visa problems. Czech players could not afford accommodation. Israelis demanded extra security. Southern Health Authorities wanted numbers, to be prepared for casualties. The legendary Rixi Marcus required extra wardrobe space. There was frequent liaison with a local committee in Killarney.

Throughout the event I had results broadcast on RTE radio every morning following the 8.00am news. Visitors were recruited to give interviews on Kerry radio but I failed to persuade RTE Television to cover the event. Joe Moran's PR company got the cameras in once and we got brief coverage on the evening news. Many members of the press had contacted me as they, like the players, had to be transported from their point of entry to the Kingdom! I retained a souvenir letter, really a piece of paper torn from a child's lined copy book with red writing. It reads: Dear Mr. Dowling, My wife and I shall be arriving at Kerry County Airport. We shall get a taxi into Killarney as my wife will be encumbered with much baggage. Signed, Terence Reese. An aloof, reserved man, I met him just once more in the few years left to him and again witnessed the sense of humour I discerned in that little note. In 1991, of course, clouds of uncertainty hung over Eastern Europe. The map was changing almost daily. Yugoslav players

learned of the breakup of their country while in Killarney. Players from former iron-curtain countries faced an uncertain future.

Defeat in ballot, president

In 1991 Marie Gleeson retired as secretary of the CBAI. I contested the election to succeed her but was up against a popular opponent, Úna Walsh from Galway, a former president who had served the game for much longer than I had. A whistle blower among the tellers leaked that she won by four votes. Some said it was a case of country v. city. Perhaps, but there was no personal rivalry between Úna and me and we continued to support each other in whatever roles each of us subsequently filled. Two years later I was elected regional secretary, a position I held for seven years, and in 2001 I finally became president of the CBAI. The AGM had been held in Athlone for years. CBAI management agreed with my suggestion that it should be held in the region of the incoming president - the practice continues to this day. In 2003 I was honoured to become president of the Irish Bridge Union.

Fás Community-Employment Scheme:

Eric Pelly was Fás Placement Officer for Dublin 14. He approached me with a proposal. Would Dublin South consider employing a person under the Fás Community-Employment Scheme? The region had to provide 19½ hours' work weekly. Great idea, I thought, but surely impractical. However, Eric had a list of tasks - pre-dealt, duplicated boards, plus curtain cards (pre computer dealing), typed correspondence (pre-email), licking envelopes, licking stamps, collecting master-point returns and affiliations from clubs (regional secretaries still did these tasks) and so on. Regional president Jimmy Powell bought the idea and convinced the regional committee. CBAI CEO Paul Porteous also lived in Dublin 14 and still worked from home. He too took on Fás employees who,

officially, were working for Dublin South Region. Efforts were made to interest the bigger regions in the scheme but without success.

Teacher training

In 1993 CBAI Executive delegates criticized the way bridge was being taught. I suggested the Executive itself was to blame, whereupon I was elected convener of a subcommittee charged with investigating the situation and making recommendations! I insisted on selecting the other members of the sub-committee. I had previously served on sub-committees; some had never met; few were productive. I remained a one-person committee for two years, during which time John O'Keeffe conducted seminars in Waterford and Malahide. I went to England to learn how things were done over there. In 1995 I put a proposal to Paul Porteous to run a week-long, full-time, training course at Inchicore College of Further Education. Those who passed practical and theory examinations would receive certificates validated jointly by the CBAI and City of Dublin VEC. Paul gave his support but would we get the numbers to justify the project? When applications reached 100 we drew a line. 98 turned up. With emphasis on how to teach, half of the instructors were from the world of education. Paddy Walsh from Galway, skilled in both teaching and bridge, was the ideal anchor-man. The only qualified bridge teachers in Ireland were a small number who held the English Bridge Union's certificate. I thought that should be acknowledged so, Alice O'Brien from Cork and Marlene O'Connor from Galway were engaged as tutors. The bidding-and-play exam revealed that, whereas most got through basic bidding, the standard of card-play was very poor, a factor in the failure of 21 candidates to reach the required standard. During the years I was involved this situation improved very little.

We ran further week-long courses the two summers following,

catering for the backlog of people who wished to qualify. Thereafter, teachers could attend weekend seminars and the practice of employing highly-qualified people from the universities, teacher-training colleges and renowned psychologists, was continued.

Inchicore also was the venue for a six-week, club tournament directors' course in 1997. A lecture hall contained 48 seats; 51 applied. They won't all attend at the same time, I thought, so I enrolled them all, but all did attend, resulting in steps between the rows of seats being occupied.

Apocalyptic vision; hurling greats:

I taught a group of military personnel and their friends at McKee Barracks, Dublin in the early 1990s, among them Tony Wall, who had he chosen to compete, would have been very good, having retained that will to win that made him one of Tipperary's great hurlers. One evening, looking at my bridge class and seeing generals and colonels before me, I had an apocalyptic vision: a foreign power invading the country on a Thursday evening when our defence chiefs were at bridge!

Through bridge I met Jimmy Smyth from Clare, by consensus the greatest hurler never to have won an all-Ireland medal. Neither bridge nor hurling was the basis of our friendship - rather it was a mutual interest in poetry. Jimmy collected verse, published two volumes and wrote some himself. We introduced one another to obscure poets.

Teaching manuals

On a bookstall at a world championships in the Netherlands I examined teaching manuals from different countries and decided I could do better. So, I put together teaching notes I had used, added to them and the result was the Teachers' Manuals now in use. The originals were hard copy with notes and hand-outs that could

be copied. I recently transferred copyright to the CBAI which is now the legal owner.

Ron Klinger

In 2000 I invited Ron Klinger, Australian player, teacher and author, who was visiting Britain, to Templeogue to conduct a seminar. It being the weekend of the all-Ireland hurling final, every hotel and guest-house within a wide radius of Dublin was booked out, so Ron and his wife Suzie stayed in our house. He orchestrated the 100+ attendees in a masterful demonstration of how to teach. Irish teachers, of course, had been using his text books prior to this, and still do. Ron also co-authored the excellent "Better Balanced Bidding" with our own David Jackson, who as NPC par excellence masterminded an unprecedented 20-year run of international success for "Team Ireland".

Eric Kokish

I knew the renowned Canadian coach Eric Kokish from press rooms at world championships. He was coaching the Netherlands national squad and I suggested that next time he was flying over he might drop in and do some work with Irish teams. Since I knew Eric I was recruited as a helper at his coaching sessions. John Comyn was another helper. The fact that John and I later won three national championships in partnership I attribute largely to what we learned from the fringes of these sessions.

Bridge breaks

In 1996, age 60, I retired from teaching. I had given 42 years service to the state. News of my retirement spread. Four hotels telephoned asking me to run bridge breaks. When I mentioned my terms, which were modest, three were no longer interested. Happily my terms did not deter the marketing manager of Hotel Westport. She had actually researched my credentials. Maura and I worked for that hotel for 21

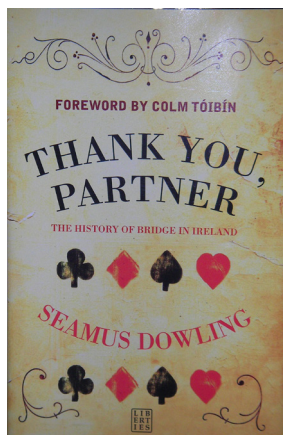
years. We were soon doing seven weeks every year. Sadly, advancing age eventually determined I should give it up as my energy levels began to wane. A side effect of the Westport commitment was that I missed several national competitions.

Cruises

Bridge Breaks led to Bridge Cruises. The marketing manager at Tour America, Cruise Holidays, exploring ways to extend the company's business, noticed that bridge was popular in Dublin. Her father had been on bridge breaks in Westport. As in Westport, my only function was to run the bridge games. We ran three bridge cruises, 2007 to 2009. When I realized I was paid to go on cruises, I reckoned I had it made, although instead of payment I accepted credit towards other cruises.

Historian

When Ireland returned to the Camrose championship in 1998, I decided to mark the occasion by writing a piece for the Irish Bridge Journal. Nobody in Ireland knew when we had last played in the tournament. Nobody knew why we had left it. I decided to find out and to inform people. Ten years of research followed and in 2009 Liberties Press published "Thank You Partner", the History of Bridge in Ireland. Writer Colm Tóibín, whose brother Niall was one of Ireland's greatest players, wrote a foreword. Fortunately for my research, the minutes of IBU meetings were intact and also most CBAI minutes.



Records of some regions had been preserved; old newspapers and magazines were valuable sources; old correspondence turned up; I interviewed old-timers. The book sold out. An interesting discovery was that everybody who has played on an Irish open team, took up the game when young, as teenagers or in their early college years. Liberties Press recently contacted me with a view to updating Thank You Partner. They wanted a certain guarantee. In 2009 I could give that guarantee, confident I would personally sell a certain number. I cannot give that guarantee now.

During research I collected hands played by Irish players. These became "Great Players, Great Plays – 80 years of Irish Bridge Deals 1932-2012", published privately in 2013 and gifted to the Junior Committee of the Irish Bridge Union to raise funds.

Dublin V Liverpool

Dublin and Liverpool were twinned by their respective City Councils in 1997. Martin Cantor from Liverpool contacted me and suggested an annual match between the two cities. The first took place in Liverpool in June 1998. They continued for 21 years. The series ended when Liverpool had difficulty getting people to travel. Covid would have decided its fate anyway. The Cantor-Dowling Shield, donated by the co-founders, was awarded to the winners. Liverpool won it 11 times, Dublin 10.

Journalist

My first efforts at journalism came in the late 1950s when I wrote reports on the multi-stage cycle race Rás Tailteann for the Leinster Leader. I did not see myself as a journalist but there must have been one within me wanting to get out because in the '80s I began to submit pieces to the Irish Bridge Journal. I wrote a column for Ireland on Sunday and pieces for Senior Times and One to One, an in-house publication of Allied Irish Bank.

I wrote for The Irish Bridge Player, a newspaper launched in 1994 by Joan O'Mara who was in the publishing business. A commercial venture, it folded after four years when advertising revenue declined. To my knowledge, it was the only bridge newspaper in the world since Albert Benjamin's original pre-war one.

I did not go unnoticed as a journalist. The British Bridge Almanac 2004, editor Peter Hasenson, includes me on a list of the top ten bridge journalists in Great Britain and Ireland. Flattering, but it was Hasenson's way of thanking me for supplying material. In his book Celestial Cardplay, David Bird, one of a few authors to successfully write humorously about bridge, used Michael O'Connor and me as props to illustrate the brilliance of his bridge-playing monks, Brothers Lucius and Paulo, in a fictional England v Ireland friendly. Michael and I played against England in Hursley, Hampshire in 2006, but not in partnership. Bird was present.

Irish Times bridge correspondent

In 1991 the Irish Times asked me to cover the European championships from Killarney. From then until Ireland next hosted the championships at CityWest in 2012, I reported from major World and European events. When George Ryan retired as bridge correspondent I was nicely placed to succeed him. Fearghal O'Boyle had advanced the technology to the extent that I could sit at home and gather material from my laptop. He and Diarmuid Reddan make the job easy. I'm now 11 years doing it but a bit short of George Ryan's 44½ years!

A former player

I did not return to the clubs when Covid ended. I am now a former player. I have won as much as my limited talent allowed, probably more than anyone who took up the game in their 40s. I met the great Irish players of my time and partnered some of them. During the 22 years I attended international championships I encountered the World's best and played against some of them. I have filled many roles: tournament director, official, teacher, journalist, author. Bridge brought me to places I would not otherwise have visited. As Hollywood icon Mae West once said "I have been things and seen places".



Bermuda 2000: Jimmy McCormack, Paul Hanratty, Seán Ó'Lubaigh, Séamus Dowling



Séamus Dowling with Ruth Giddings

30 years of developing our Juniors

Karel DeRaeymaeker

When did you first get involved with coaching Juniors?

Gosh that's a good question. My first NPC role was in Romania 2009, so a few years before that - around 2006/2007. Romania was a revelation. The gap between the other teams and ourselves was notable.

Why did you see it [and still see it] as a worthwhile investment of so much of your time [unpaid]?

When I was a junior, there was a notable bias in the then juniors largely based on whom you knew and had access to. My partners and I were the black sheep who produced a few notable upsets but were inevitably beaten largely due to inexperience and lack of advice (training). So one of my motivations is to level the "who you know" playing field by being personally accessible to any junior. It makes a huge difference to a young player to have access to "resources".

Bridge itself is an unbelievable game. The skills you learn are 100% applicable to life. I strongly believe it should be part of our education system. I am a teacher by profession, so I enjoy seeing people especially young ones develop and blossom through bridge.

Who are the best Juniors you've been involved with and what have been the best results?

That's a hard question. It depends how you define best and in what period. Wayne Sommerville, Conor Boland, Kelan O'Connor are probably our best known juniors who have been very successful. There have been many others who showed huge potential but they followed a different path in life. I'm particularly interested in our young female players as (1) top bridge is mainly male dominated [it shouldn't be] (2) I'd like to evolve a ladies team to win the lady Milne and more. I think female players in general, as in other sports are hugely under rated. I'd like to change that in Irish bridge.

In a typical year with the Juniors, what would your activities be?

This is hugely dependent on the number of active juniors at any time. With sufficient numbers, there is competition for places on teams to represent Ireland in various events. We have criteria in place such as regular play on BBO/Real Bridge, play in several live congresses especially the Holmes Wilson, attend any training sessions put on, play with mentors/coaches, attend monthly meetups, culminating in going abroad and representing Ireland. The junior committee is continuously busy all year and involved at all levels making all this happen.



Karel De Raeymaeker receiving the President's Merit Award from CBAI President, Catherine Byrne

What would it take [financial/ other resources] to take Junior bridge in Ireland "to the next level"?

As I mentioned earlier my first NPC experience in Romania was an eye opener. It seemed the other countries had a lot more financial support and in some cases dedicated full time paid personnel promoting junior bridge. The Netherlands had bridge as an option in their school curriculum. Many of the countries had top level players involved with their juniors as resources/partners/coaching. A recruitment strategy to ensure a steady stream of new juniors all the time. In summary the successful countries have huge backing. Ireland is voluntary.

So we need the afore mentioned to start. On top of that, some recognition and funding from the government [given the huge

number of bridge players country wide I can't understand why some politician/government hasn't seen the mutual benefits of backing bridge]. A push to get bridge into schools as part of the curriculum or as a serious contender for students to participate in. Targeting universities and changing the bridge brand from old to young and social is essential and where I think currently we would get most bang for buck.

But to do all this requires backing from all corners.

I must take this opportunity to mention the dedication, investment of time, commitment of so many people who have voluntarily given to junior bridge. I'm fairly well known in the bridge community and I use that to try and promote/ recruit junior bridge. But, be under no illusions there are and have been so many unseen/ unheard heroes without which junior bridge would never even have got off the ground.

I'll mention a few

- ▶ **Thomas MacCormac**, a constant presence who pushed hard for junior bridge and has given our juniors so many opportunities.
- ▶ **Margaret Murphy** our current no bullshit "Mammy" who does so much work with the juniors, encouraging and cajoling them, and frankly does a lot of the groundwork. We could use a lot more Margarets.
- ▶ **Dermot O'Brien** who I can't recall ever saying no to any junior idea or event, always doing what he can to promote bridge.
- ▶ **Paul Porteous** our current treasurer again always supporting junior bridge in any capacity he can.
- ▶ **Liz Ann Doyle** who put much needed structure to our committees and her work in the Limerick area.

- ▶ **John Phelan** who has NPC'd and mentored numerous juniors - always positive.
- ▶ **Martin Brady, Paul Delaney and Peter Pigot** in coaching/NPC roles.
- ▶ All the parents who support/ encourage their children.
- ▶ Lastly I want to mention **Mary Howley** who runs an after school club in St Vincents in Dundalk. The positive effect she has had on so many generations of girls is unbelievable. She is a legend.

I apologise to any I have forgotten but every one of you was/is brilliant.

I'd like to also mention that any general junior training sessions I run online (usually a brief presentation, play some hands, zoom discussion of hands) is free to anyone to attend, the only caveat being we need you as opposition for our juniors. Contact anyone on the junior committee if this appeals to you.



Karel (NPC) with the squad at the Junior Home International Championships 2023

A week-end in Dublin

Irene Baroni & Thomas Bessis



When our good friends Tom Hanlon and Nuala Hyland asked us, about nine months ago, whether we would like to come for a week-end at their place, it didn't take us long to accept; holidays, friends and cards, what could go wrong?

Whereas it was my third time in Dublin, Irene was discovering the city for the first time, and I must confess that she embraced the local traditions with great enthusiasm: she now wants to play "4 and weak" and more importantly her first pint of Guinness was such a success that she refused to drink anything else for the rest of our stay.

I for myself don't adapt to different cultures as easily as Irene, so it'd take more than travelling to Ireland for me to order my steak anything else than very blue!

We landed in Dublin on Thursday, and after a short tour in the city center in the early afternoon – where we were amused by some of the pubs' names like The Hairy Lemon, or the Bleeding Horse – and, as bridge players of course, Drury street (: We also drove to the magnificent Miltown golf course, where the bridge legend Zia Mahmood was entertaining a room full of entranced bridge players. "An evening with Zia" was a smash hit.

When we were asked to join Zia at the end of his conference to answer a few questions, Irene fulfilled one of her long time biggest dreams: talking with Zia, in front of a large audience, about psyching. What a thrill!

Next came the Regent Centenary Congress at O'Reilly Hall, UCD. The three-day competition started with a two-session IMP tournament.

We were both quite surprised and delighted to realise how friendly all of our opponents were with us. I guess it's because everyone believed we brought the sun to Dublin in our luggage.

We did fine with Irene in the tournament, the important thing was finishing ahead of our host for the week-end, so that first box was checked. Let's say that we may have done better had Irene realized before the last three tables that the scoring was cross-IMP and not pairs.

We didn't repeat the same mistake on the next day in the pairs tournament, and after a first very good session that gave us the lead, we managed to add another good session in the evening to win the tournament.

We were absolutely bowled over with the fantastic picnic during the dinner break organised by Tom's sister Carmel (but we all know it was Giles who did all the cooking) and Deirdre Linnane (Mark Moran's better half). What a spread of amazing food, wine and champagne. blankets, rugs, chairs appeared from nowhere. Thanks Carmel and Deirdre!

We came back to the beautiful UCD campus on Sunday for the Team event, and here we had the chance to play with Tom and his young partner Conor Boland.

Conor is not only the future star of Irish bridge but he's also a great fellow, who I believe is unanimously appreciated by his peers. I don't say that because he's lived in Paris last year, but I mean... it obviously helps!!

Tom and Conor played absolutely fantastic during the whole day, so much that Irene and I can't take too much credit for winning the

tournament. Here is a hand from the fifth round where Irene judged very well the situation to help us land in a good spot:

Regent Congress - Congress Teams

Session 2 Board 6.

Dealer East. Vul E/W.

<p>♠ 85 ♥ 62 ♦ 10954 ♣ KJ1073</p>			
♠ KJ96432	N	♠ Q	
♥ J7	W	♥ AKQ1098	
♦ 3	E	♦ AQ2	
♣ AQ8	S	♣ 962	
<p>♠ A109 ♥ 543 ♦ KJ876 ♣ 54</p>			

W Thomas	N	E Irene	S
		1♥	P
1♠	P	2♣ ¹	P
2♦ ²	P	2NT ³	P
3♠	P	4♦ ⁴	P
4NT ⁵	P	5♣ ⁶	P
6♠	All Pass		

¹ 2♣=Gazzili: (1) 5+♥, 4+♠, 10-15 or; (2) ART 15+ HCP

² 2♦ = ART 8+ HCP

³ 2NT=ART 15+, GF, no 3 cards in ♠

⁴ 4♦ = key-bid of the auction : good hand for ♠, doesn't show anything about ♦ (4♣ would show a good one-suited hand for ♥)

⁵ 4NT=RKCB

⁶ 5♣=2 KC + Queen of ♣

Despite holding a minimum hand for her 2NT bid – only 17 HCP and only one spade – Irene judged brilliantly that her hand, with the ♠Q, the two Aces, and the almost running heart suit, deserved to make a positive bid. Yes I know, I had told her I had the ♠Q, which she must have found interesting since she had it herself! But it is common to tell a little lie about the trump Queen when you have extra

length in trumps. And anyway, I always like to tell my wife what she likes to hear!

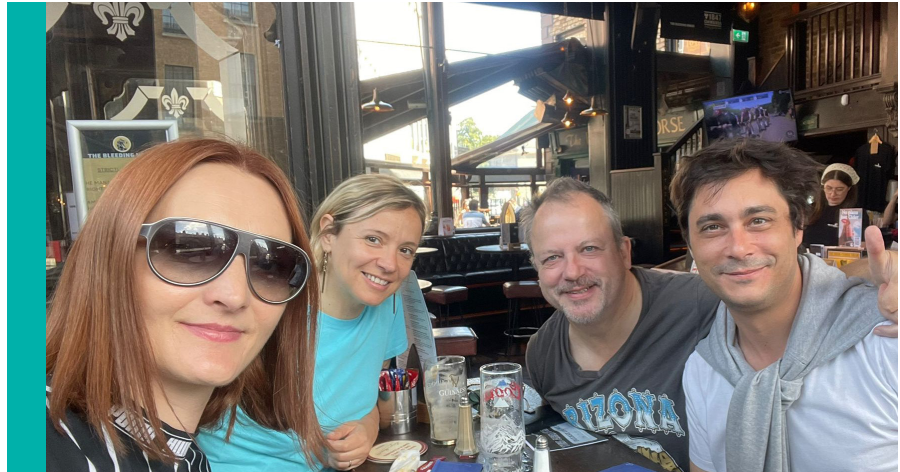
And right she was to see the chance for slam! Had she only bid 4♠, I would definitely have passed!

Here I knew that she had a good hand for me, and that I should be relatively safe at the five-level had there been missing two key-cards after 4NT.

6♠ is not laydown – we would go down if someone had 10xxx or A10xx of trump, or if the opponents could manage to get a heart ruff -, but it was overall a pretty good contract, that happened to make.

This hand helped us win the match and take the lead, and despite a small defeat in round seven, our team could secure the first place on the last match and claim the crown.

Thank you, Dublin. A bientôt!



Nuala, Irene, Tom and Thomas



Picnic time!

A win for Ireland!

Luca Crone



This summer, Salsomaggiore Terme, Italy, hosted the 18th European Youth Pairs Championships. In the U21 category, we had David Hoyne and Bence Orosz and Eve Connell and Klara Flanagan, while in the U26 category, we had Luca Crone and Matthew O'Farrell, Leah Finnegan and Denise Walsh and Isabel Burke and Tom Gorey.

The EBL used the recently popular hybrid approach of bidding with tablets and playing with the cards. There has been positive feedback in general. Matthew and I won the U26 President's Cup, the first Irish podium in over 10 years. We were asked for five words to describe our success. "Slow, steady and searching penalties" were mine, while Matthew could find "only two, double trouble". Below is the reasoning for such descriptions.

Gradually, throughout the tournament, we were getting more and more in the groove. It was the second session that won us the tournament. I'm not sure I've had a 68.5% session before, but I hope to have more. After scoring only 59% in the first session, we finished with 63.6% overall. This was enough to pip our closest competitors at 62.88%.

There is one clear theme in both, and that is "if it moves, double it". Playing against youthful bidding, it is imperative that one learns to "take the money". I must admit, I relish the opportunity to defend doubled contracts, so much so that a third of our contracts were doubled in the second session. I call it character building. Here is a hand we played against an Estonian pair. I'll set the scene. On the first hand, favourable, they doubled us in 5♦, which was one too many off against their 4♥ contract. Unfortunately, we chose the wrong minor as 5♣ is off three. Second board, they doubled me in 4♥, making.

Now comes this hand. All vulnerable it is your bid with:

♠ A109xx
♥ 10xx
♦ Jx
♣ xxx

The bidding has gone [We were EW]

W	N	E	S
	1♣	P	1♠
2♥	X ¹	P	3♣
P	P	?	

¹ X=3 card ♠ support

Bidding 3♥ could be right, but if you want to do it, you really should have done it last round. This is a good principle in general. Get in and out of the auction early. Fortunately, this junior couldn't resist temptation. By passing the first time, he had given us the time to exchange enough information to double 3♥. It helped that we knew they could be a tad frisky given the history. This drifted three off. It was enough for a joint second and 95.27% of the matchpoints.

This was the full hand:

		♠ J843		
		♥ 2		
		♦ 1043		
		♣ AKQB5		
♠ A10962	N	♠ Q		
♥ 1064		♥ AKJ83		
♦ J5	W	♦ K872		
♣ 976		♣ J32		
	S			
		♠ K75		
		♥ Q975		
		♦ AQ96		
		♣ 104		



Luca and Matthew - runners-up in the President's Cup at the European Youth Bridge Championships in Salsomaggiore, Italy

I would like to say age has made us wiser to the temptation of such bids. But that doesn't mean we can't have fun. I got the question of what my favourite hand of the tournament was. I must admit it was one that could have gone wrong. You probably know at this stage that you can have some fun third in hand, knowing the fourth hand has values. You hold this hand in your favourite seat, at your favourite colours, third in hand, NV vs V. It goes P P to you.

♠ QJ876
♥ Kxx
♦ xxx
♣ Kx

Oh my, I'm tempted. My junior instinct kicked in, and I pressed a dramatic 2♠ on the tablet. It can go wrong, but it is the perfect time if I am ever going to bid on a hand like this. Purists will hate it, but who cares? The hand couldn't have gone better. It proceeds X from LHO, 3♠ from partner, all pass?! The opponents must have gone wrong here. Notably, LHO struggled to pull his second pass. This, with some care, went off two.

Wonder what the opponents could make? Only 6♥. That sounds like a win to me. What made it more amusing [to me at least] was that my young French screen mate, who spoke no English, said to me in French, "I think we make 4♥". In broken French, I replied, "I believe 6". Needless to say, he wasn't happy.

There were some other respectable performances, with Denise and Leah coming out fourth after the first session. They missed qualification by only a few spots. All our U21 squad came out with at least one above-average session.

Hopefully, this is the start of more to come, and I wish to bring you all on the journey. I picked up the game randomly, learning in Transition Year. Now, I don't know what I would do without it. We don't know how many more young people are out there just waiting to be introduced. If you hear of any or would like a young person you know to learn, please contact irishyouthbridge@gmail.com



Bence, David, Matthew, Luca, Tom and Isabel

My Journey Continues

Nicola O'Dowd



"Bridge: the game that gives you just enough good boards to keep coming back."

- Every bridge player ever!

In my last article, I talked about how I'm somewhere in the middle not brilliant. I even wrote a song about it (and if you haven't listened to it yet, go back and have a listen! [see link in the Summer Journal, Ed]).

I'd really been looking forward to playing in the Lambert and Cooper, the CBAI's National Confined Pairs and Teams Championships, held this year in Loughrea.

The Lambert was on Saturday, April 26th, with 70 pairs competing, and the Cooper followed with 35 teams. Both events were confined to Intermediate A and Area Master players and that's exactly what made them exciting for me.

There were no higher grades in the room. No Grandmasters or National, Regional Masters. It felt more balanced, more open, like everyone had a genuine shot. That kind of field brings its own buzz not because it's easier, but because it feels fair. You know you'll be tested, but in a way that's encouraging rather than intimidating. It's nice going into an event knowing the playing field is level and anyone could have their day.

As regular readers know, since moving up to Area Master, I've felt a bit out of my depth and that I've been trying to find my footing. It's been a steep learning curve, and at times, I regularly found myself having "brain freeze" and forgetting conventions. So for this event, my partner and I made a conscious decision to strip our system right back. Keep It Simple Stupid. We took out a lot of the extra conventions and focused on the basics - simple, natural bidding. And honestly, it made a huge difference

to me. I wasn't second guessing myself or scrambling to remember what I should do when I looked at my hand. I could just focus on the cards and play with a clear head. It felt calmer, more manageable, and way more enjoyable.

When the final scores came in, we'd finished 10th overall, and honestly, we were delighted. We played well, stayed steady, and for me, the big win was that my simplified system really did help. It took the pressure off and helped me settle in and enjoy the game without overthinking everything. That, more than anything, made the whole day feel like a success. [Super advice for every improver. Spot on, Nicola. Ed]

For the Teams on Sunday, sticking to my reduced, back-to-basics system, we played steadily and won three of our four matches in the first session. Declan and I were playing with Breda Tuite and Blánaid Morris, and we worked really well together right from the start. We lost our first match in the second session, but then found our momentum and went on to win the next three. That run secured us an overall 4th place finish and a prize to top it off.

It was great fun and a fantastic weekend all around. Huge credit to the organisers and, of course, the TDs for keeping everything running so smoothly. And a special thanks to our teammates it was a pleasure to play alongside you.

Next up was the 4Fun Teams and honestly, the name says it all. It's a great format: each team has to include a Master playing with a Novice, and an Intermediate A paired with an Intermediate B. The whole idea is to give newer players a chance to try out teams in a relaxed and friendly way and in my opinion it really does exactly that.



The TDs Fearghal O'Boyle and Máiread Basquille were calm, helpful, and encouraging as always. A big part of what makes the event so special is the way more experienced players support and guide the newer ones. That's really what it's all about.

We played for Mid Leinster region this year and my team was myself as the Master, Bernadette Brereton as the Novice, my mum Ena as the Intermediate A, and Fiona Murray as the B. Even though Bernadette is still a Novice, she's played out a good bit. But just like most novices, she was still really nervous on the day which is completely understandable. It's a different format, and there's always that bit of extra pressure when you're part of a team. But she settled in really well, and it was lovely to see her confidence grow as the day went on.

What I don't understand is why more people don't want to play in it. I know a few who tried it previous years and didn't come back and I don't get it, because I think it's such a fun and welcoming day. Maybe some people feel a bit under pressure, especially if they're playing with or against more experienced players. In pairs, it's just you and your partner, but in teams, maybe some people worry they'll let the rest of the team down if a board goes badly. They might also feel a bit awkward being put into teams with people they don't know, especially if they're worried

about being judged or making a mess of things. But honestly there is no need to feel like that - everyone really is lovely, and I know myself from experience those feelings pass once you settle in. Another nice feature of the 4Fun Teams is that no conventions are allowed, everyone plays the same simple Acol system. It really puts everyone on the same page and takes the pressure off a bit, especially for the newer players. [Recently at a CBAI "Teach the Teachers" seminar in Tullamore, I extolled the virtues of Teams Bridge. Nicola has very ably restated my case! All I can add is that at Teams, compared to Pairs, you have two extra people to blame for your bad results. Ed.]

We finished 6th overall and picked up the prize for winning the first session. It was such a lovely day, and so nice to walk away with an envelope. If you've played before and weren't sure about it, or if you've never tried teams at all, maybe give it another go next year. You might end up really enjoying it.

Well done to the overall winners and runners-up, who held the top spots from start to finish.

1st – Offaly: Doreen McInerney (M), Patrick Martin (N), Pattie Ryan (A), Patricia Mahon (B)

2nd – Westmeath: Sean Galligan (M), Patricia McCormack (N), Kevin Woulfe (A), Joan Peppard (B)

The Sligo Congress was back this year for the first time since COVID, and I'd never been before so I was really looking forward to it. I'd heard good things, but honestly, it completely lived up to the hype. The atmosphere was amazing. It was just so friendly and relaxed everyone seemed genuinely delighted to be there. There was a lovely, easygoing feel at the tables. You could feel how much it meant to people that the Sligo Congress was back after such a long break and it was clear people had missed it.

The last time I played with Melissa Brady was at the Kelburne, so it was lovely to be back on a team with her again. Anna Shalvey, Melissa Brady, Declan Byrne and myself made up

our team. The four of us had great fun together. The bridge was good, the laughs were even better, and to top it all off, we won the Area Master prize!

The Regent's Centenary Congress was a very special event this year and what a weekend it was. Friday the 11th of July – Sunday the 13th. It was held in UCD's O'Reilly Hall, which is a gorgeous venue, and the sun was shining all weekend. There was a great buzz around the place. Loads of Irish players, of course, but also players from Belgium, France, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, USA, and the UK.

It all kicked off on the Thursday evening with a talk by Zia Mahmood in Milltown Golf Club. I was lucky enough to be there, and it was absolutely brilliant. He was funny and charming and full of great stories but he also spoke really well about the more serious side of the game. Zia was joined by Thomas Bessis, Tom Hanlon & Irene Baroni, for questions at the end. I even got my photo taken with Zia and was very happy with that!

The congress itself ran like clockwork. Regent President Paul Porteous and his committee did a great job pulling it all together, with help from Club Manager Declan Byrne. The TDs Fearghal O'Boyle, Diarmuid Reddan, Huey Daly and Bernard Higgins kept everything moving smoothly. It just felt like one of those weekends where everything came together great bridge, great company, and the kind of atmosphere that makes you glad you showed up. Playing against some of the stars was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. I imagine I'll never get to play against them again although it's something every bridge player dreams of doing.

I love competing, and yes, it's great when things go well. But what really drives me is the people. It's the buzz of the room, the laugh you had at the table, the bit of encouragement from someone you admire, or just the feeling that you actually belonged there. And of course, there's still the game itself.



A good bid or a tricky hand played well can stay with you just as much as the chat and the craic.

All summer, we ran Monday night bridge in Trim and the numbers were amazing, getting between 22 and 27 tables every week, and 32 on our charity night. As people came to my table. "Fair play to you," they said. "You're great at organising this." But the truth is, it's not just me. If people didn't show up, if they didn't make the effort to come out and play, to chat and laugh and have a night out then none of it would matter.

I stood up with the mic that night and said exactly that. I love organizing and running events, trying to create something fun and competitive for people but I'm not doing it for the praise or the belly rubbing. I'm doing it because it genuinely makes me happy to see others enjoying themselves. Bridge has changed my life. It's given me friendships, confidence, and joy I never expected. So if I can give a little of that back by encouraging someone to play, by running a club night, by organising a competition then I feel I've done something worthwhile.

Now all roads lead to Trim again this time for the very first Bridge Bash. Players will be coming from all over the country, and I hope when I stand in that room, I'll feel the same buzz I did on those Monday nights. Grateful it all came together, glad I had a hand in it, and happiest of all seeing others enjoying themselves. Hopefully I'll be telling you all about it in the next article!

[Nicola continues to epitomise everything that is positive and forward-looking about our game. Hers is a very important voice as we chart the future of Bridge in Ireland. Thanks Nicola, and keep it up! Ed.]

When I was a Boye!

[Editor's note: Fantoni/Nunes were exposed as cheats shortly after this article was written]

When I was a Boye

Taking on the Angelini team on their home ground

By **BOYE BROGELAND**, FLEKKEFJORD NORWAY

IT WAS Saturday 3rd of October and Espen and I had been invited to the Grotta Championships in Rome. This was quite a special tournament in that only three teams were to compete and play was to take place in the home of Francesco Angelini – the President of the powerful Angelini Group which employs over 3,300 staff and has an annual turnover of roughly 400 million dollars.

We were taken by taxi from the beautiful hotel Villa Tuscolana on the mountain slopes just outside of Rome to Angelini's residence in the village of Grottaferrata. Before the gates would open we had to identify ourselves to Angelini's head of security: "Bridge, Brogeland and Lindqvist" worked like "Open Sesame". On the other side of the gate was a 300-metre avenue leading up to the home of the 64 year old Pharma Chief.

Inside there are many familiar faces: Fulvio Fantoni, Claudio Nunes, Lorenzo Lauria and Alfredo Versace. So, Angelini hasn't invited just anybody to his team – a team that has dominated Italian bridge for the last few years, to the annoyance of the "coffee queen" Maria Teresa Lavazza.

Angelini has won nine Italian Gold Cups, eight Italian league championships, six Champions Cups, one world championship (the Rosenblum in 1998) and one European Championship (on home ground in Salsomaggiore in 2002). The polished trophies from these triumphs are one of the first sights when we enter the living room in the magnificent villa.

This wealthy Italian, who earlier in the year made an offer for half of the shares in the football club Roma.



makes a faultless first impression and gives the appearance of a jovial guy. The only warning we receive is that we are not allowed to leave until we have lost! This won't be any great failure should it happen, playing against a team of such stars, but together with the Argentine Pablo Lambardi and our Spanish sponsor Juan Carlos Ventin we hope to at least inflict a few wounds on our opponents. The third team consists mainly of some good players from Barcelona.

The tournament is arranged as eight matches of eight boards, IMPs converted to VP after each match. The team that has amassed the most VPs in the end gets to share 5,000 Euros.

The Grotta Championship kicks off at 3pm in the bridge cellar of Angelini. Guilio Denna at short notice steps in for Pablo Lambardi who lost his Argentine passport the previous day and is now frantically looking for it. Despite this setback Ventin has a great start against Barcelona. Thereafter we thrash in turn Angelini and Barcelona. My favourite hand so far:

K73
87543
942
AK

52
AQ96
AKT85
QJ

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
Lauria	Espen	Giubilo	Boye
			1NT
dbl ¹	2D ²	pass	2NT ³
pass	3D ⁴	pass	3H
pass	4H	all pass	

1. Clubs and another. 2. Transfer to hearts.
3. Maximum, four hearts. 4. Retransfer.

Lauria leads the C2 (3rd/5th). The duplication in clubs is unfortunate but you still have good chances of making. How do you plan the play?

West appears to have the black suits and his double is good grounds to place the SA with him. If you only have one spade loser you can afford to lose a trump. It might be a reasonable line to play a heart to ace to guard

against a singleton king?

West's bid has increased the chances of bad distributions, including all the trumps with East. A heart to the nine would deal with this but what do you do if it loses to the ten or jack? If you finesse the queen you risk losing two trumps. Hmm, can you see a way of combining your chances?

Without taking too long planning, I play the H8 from dummy. The Italians have been on the back foot all day so perhaps I can elicit a reaction from East if he has KJ102. With any other holding I expect him to smoothly play his lowest card. My ploy works as Valeri Giubilo contributes the 10. My queen holds and Lauria discards a club.

The double finesse in diamonds which has looked like an additional chance in the case of two trump losers or the SA with East is no longer attractive. To prepare for the possibility of East having a singleton diamond I cash the ace. Both follow low and I play a spade to the king which holds. When I lead a diamond from dummy Giubilo starts to think so he obviously has no more.

Eventually he decides to sacrifice a second heart trick by ruffing with the two, but together with the SA those are the only tricks the Italians make:

S/Nil	K73 87543 942 AK	T986 KJT2 6 8643
AQJ4 —		
QJ73 T9752		
	52 AQ96 AKT85 QJ	

At the table I thought I was in control even if East had discarded a black card on the second round of diamonds. I would have won with the king and exited with a spade. In the endgame surely East's hearts would be trapped? No, not if East discards clubs at every opportunity including when the fourth round of diamonds is ruffed in dummy. My best counter is to ruff a spade and ruff the H10 in this position:

	— 754 —	
AQ	K	T
—		KJ2
—		—
T 97		
	— A9 T Q —	

Again East must discard and not over-ruff! This secures a second trump trick to go with a high spade and a diamond. One down.

Deep Finesse (a program that works out the maximum number of tricks makeable with best play against best defence with open cards) later tells me that I could still have made the contract even if East discards clubs instead of ruffing the second round of diamonds. The reason is that Lauria erred by not unblocking the SQ or DJ! Against this best defence after winning the DK I would need to enter dummy with a club and lead a heart towards hand before exiting with a spade. Now East only makes one trump trick. (If West unblocks in spades an entry is created for East to play king and another heart leaving me with a spade loser).

Deep Finesse also tells me that the contract is makeable if Giubilo plays low on the first heart and I risk running the eight. So, it turns out that it was Lauria who let the contract through whereas Giubilo played a perfect defence – at least in the world of computer analysis!

Neither I nor Versace come anywhere close to duplicating the play of Deep

Finesse in the heat of battle so when he asks me during the break, "Would you

really have let the H8 ride?", I answer politely, "We will never know," although deep down I know that I would have played the Ace.

Before dinner is served new rules are introduced for the Grotta Championship. After five of the eight matches the standings are: Ventin 113, Angelini 68 and Barcelona 42. Perhaps you remember that one is not allowed to leave before one has lost. Therefore the round robin format is abandoned and the last three matches are replaced by a 24-board final after dinner. Espen and I are reassured by Ventin that our Euros are safe regardless but we are of course also keen to take the scalps of these Italians!

With one board left in the final our carry-over has evaporated (yes, they did give us a few imps' lead) and we're now three imps behind. On board 24 3NT is the best contract but Fantoni - Nunes end up in a second best 5C on their 5-4 fit. The distribution is not friendly and they are one off.

Espen and I are in 4S on a 5-2 fit, an inferior contract to both 3NT and 5C but it makes when I manage to get away with only two trump losers on this holding:

K7643
Q9

I start with a small spade from dummy to the queen. Angelini follows with the eight and Versace wins the ace. After entering my hand I lead the nine and Versace follows with the two. What do you do?

If the suit breaks 3-3 it makes no difference. The more likely 4-2 break is more interesting. If East started with J8 or 108 you need to play the king and later force out West's jack or ten whereas you run the nine if East has 85.

This second possibility requires Angelini to have false carded on the first round so I play the king and the jack appears which ensures we are amongst the very few who are allowed to leave Angelini's undefeated:

K7643
AT52 J8
Q9

However, this would not have been the outcome if Versace had let the queen hold. I would surely have run the nine on the next round even if in theory the chance of J8 or 108 with East is greater than A8.

Tip: Put the opponent under pressure when you have the chance. It's often at no cost and makes you a more difficult opponent. Even the best make mistakes or give away important clues about the distribution.



Valerio Giubilo, Alfredo Versace, Francesco Angelini, Ercole Bove, Fulvio Fantoni, and bottom row Lorenzo Lauria, Claudio Nunes

High level decision making

Peter Pigot



We've all been there. The worst feeling in Bridge is seeing the dummy at the five or six level and realising that we're too high and doom is imminent. With such good hands between the two of us, you feel you've wasted those lovely cards by writing a score in the 'out' column.

So what do we need if we are to bid slams with confidence? There are three key requirements - Good trumps, Source of Tricks and Controls.

The controls are discovered (or not as the case may be) using cue bidding, trump quality can be established using RKCB (and some other methods) and the source of tricks is either ruffs, extra length, a second suit or simply high cards.

With balanced hands the source of tricks are the HIGH cards, with single suited hands the source is the extra length, high cards and ruffs and with two suited hands with decent values, one suit is trumps the other is tricks when made good, if required.

Example 1

Dealer South. Vul All.

<p>♠ Q52 ♥ AKQ ♦ KQ54 ♣ QJ3</p>			
♠ 76	N	♠ 94	
♥ 10987	W	♥ 6432	
♦ J632	E	♦ 109	
♣ AK4	S	♣ 98765	
<p>♠ AKJ1083 ♥ J5 ♦ A87 ♣ 102</p>			

W	N	E	S
			1♠
P	2♦	P	2♠
P	3♠	P	4♦
P	4♠	All Pass	

In a 2/1 auction South shows a single suited hand of Spades and about 12-15HCP (some like to play 2♠ is all weak hands, 2NT has stoppers and 3♣ is natural but extras). North supported Spades

with 3♠ which you should agree as demanding a cue bid (A, K, singleton or void) from South, i.e. Slam interest. Some play 3NT as 'Serious' [ie slam interest] and others play 3NT is a trump cue! Here, when South bypasses 4♣ and bids 4♦ the problem is solved, North knows that South cannot have Ace, King, singleton or void in Clubs and therefore there are TWO Club losers off the hand. No slam. 'I held a 19 count and partner opened, surely slam was on!'

The use of 'Splinters' (shortages with support) and 'Fit Jumps' (a second suit of KJxxx or better with trump support) in your methods help enormously when assessing whether slam is on or not. There was a very nice hand from the EBL Transnationals in Poznan last June that comes to mind.

Example 2

Dealer North. Vul All.

<p>♠ A ♥ AK1087 ♦ 7643 ♣ Q65</p>			
♠ 764	N	♠ QJ982	
♥ J	W	♥ 32	
♦ KQJ82	E	♦ A95	
♣ 8432	S	♣ J107	
<p>♠ K1053 ♥ Q9654 ♦ 10 ♣ AK9</p>			

W	N	E	S
	1♥	1♠	4♦
P	6♥	All Pass	

North opened 1♥ and East overcalled 1♠. When South bid 4♦, splinter, he was showing about 9-13 HCP, a diamond shortage and heart support. With the

Spade call from East, North knew that South was favourite to have decent Club cards along with his Qxxx(x) in Hearts. North goes to work to COUNT the tricks to play, something he/she should be doing on EVERY hand. He can see five hearts in hand, one spade, at least three clubs plus three diamond ruffs, thus playing South for something like Jxxx, Qxxx, x, AK10x. Therefore North jumped to 6H. Plus 1430 was quickly claimed and a gain of 13 IMPs recorded.

When bidding in competition at a high level, the decision to play or defend is probably the hardest call you face. To help in this regard you MUST use the full suite of support bids, splinters, fit jumps, pre-emptive trump raises, courtesy raises, lead directing raises and the most important one, the constructive raise. The constructive raise shows a hand that has the values for that level, is usually reasonably balanced and has decent defence... i.e. 'its OUR hand, we are recording a plus'. When you make a constructive raise (some partnerships use 2NT to show this hand, some simply cue the opponents' suit and some use both, one for four-card raise and the other for three-card raises) to game then a forcing PASS is available when the opposition try and save or otherwise muddy the waters.

**Example 3****Dealer North. Vul E/W.**

<p>♠2 ♥AKJ98 ♦QJ87 ♣K86</p>			
♠KJ98	N	♠AQ10765	
♥7		♥1065	
♦A52	W	♦643	
♣95432	S	♣7	
<p>♠43 ♥Q432 ♦K109 ♣AQJ10</p>			

W	N	E	S
	1♥	2♠	3♠ ¹
4♠	P ²	P ²	5♥
All Pass			

¹ 3♠=Constructive raise to 4♥
² P=Forcing

South's 3♠ shows heart support, the values for game, probably a balanced hand and some defence (i.e. Not just trumps - with only trumps, we support by bidding OUR suit). Now when the bidding is back with North he is in a forcing Pass position (the bidding cannot go Pass Pass Pass). With no extra shape and if he can possibly see THREE quick losers at the five-level, North will double. With clear extra shape and if he cannot see three losers off the hand at the five-level, North will bid 5♥ or even 5♣ or 5♦ as a slam try (Passing and later Pulling partner's double is also a slam try). So when North PASSES he is somewhere between these hands - he will have a little extra shape but no certain extra value. That Pass will help South make the decision.

Over to South. Since North Passed he must be interested to bid on, i.e. he/she must have a singleton Spade. South can see that all his cards are working to play and tries to work out North's hand. North should be something x, AKxxx AQxx, xxx or x, AKxxx, Qxx, Kxxx or the hand he has so 5♥ is in with a good shout. And 5♥ is indeed the bid, collecting 450.

Go to work with your favourite partner on developing plenty of high level agreements to help you consistently make the right decisions.

Peter Pigot Bridge

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When	Time	Where	Level	Seminar Topic
August 29th	1.30 - 5.30pm	Castlebar, Co Mayo,	Intermediate	Judgement and Partnership Defence
September 5th	1.30 - 5.30pm	Cavan	Intermediate	Judgement and Partnership Defence
September 19th	1.30 - 5.30pm	Westmanstown	Intermediate	Judgement and Partnership Defence
September 20th	1.15-5.30pm	Westmanstown	Advanced	Uses of Double and Suit Preference signals
October 10th	1.30 - 5.30pm	Confey GAA Club Leixlip	Intermediate	Bidding in Competition and Declarer play in No Trump
October 24th	1.15-5.30pm	Confey GAA Club Leixlip	Advanced	Uses of Double in Competition and Top tips for Declarer

S/He Who Hesitates is lost Should be Shot

Jim Doyle



A hand in a recent club game threw up an interesting question.

No opposition bidding and I am South in 3NT

The club holding is as follows:

North	South
♠ AQ987	♠ 105

No problem with entries to either hand. When I play the ♠10, Left Hand opponent hesitates, thinks for a while, clearly having a decision to make, and then plays the ♠6. I play ♠7. East wins the ♣J.

When I regain the lead, I play the ♣5 and left hand opponent plays the ♣3. I finesse the ♣8 and it loses to the ♣K

The hesitation made no difference to the actual play of the hand or to the final result as there was no other source of tricks.

When the hand is over I ask my left hand opponent what were they thinking of by hesitating when they had nothing to hesitate about.

The player in question is playing about ten years but is a relatively good player.

"I was thinking about the play of the hand in general" was the reply.

I suggested to them that thinking at this stage of the hand was not a good idea and to at least put the card they were going to play face down and then state something like "Thinking about

hand in general" and when they are finished turn the already selected card face up.

On further investigation online (and an email to fob.ie!) if the player in question has a clear play to this trick but requires time to think about the rest of the defence they should play immediately to this trick but leave the card face up at the completion of this trick while they think about the hand in general.

An interesting example of this type of situation arose in the Spring NABC in Memphis in 2019. The bidding was as shown. (**Hands rotated to make S declarer**).

Example 2 Dealer South. Vul None

		♠ A1076	
		♥ J85	
		♦ AJ8	
		♣ 754	
♠ KJ943	N	♠ 52	
♥ 1093	W	♥ Q762	
♦ 1072	E	♦ K65	
♣ J6	S	♣ 10982	
		♠ Q8	
		♥ AK4	
		♦ Q943	
		♣ AKQ3	

West lead ♠3 (3rd and 5th). ♠6 was played from Dummy and East took about a minute before playing the ♠2. South won ♠8. South now assumes that E must have either ♠9 or ♠J to have any reason to hesitate. Accordingly S played ♠Q covered by K and A and E followed with ♠5. South then played ♠7 reasoning that even if East held three spades to the 9 the suit would be blocked and there would

still be a chance of making 10 tricks. However West had all the remaining spades and declarer ending up with only 9 tricks for a very poor score as if Declarer had played on diamonds there are 10 top tricks.

The Director was called at the end of the hand. North indicated that he believed East unintentionally deceived South with his tempo and mannerisms to his play at trick 1, causing South to err in the play of the hand. East had taken almost a minute to play to the first trick.

The Director polled three players asking them what it would mean if RHO took approximately one minute before playing to trick one. He inquired if that is indicative that RHO has a problem with the play to trick one or a problem with the hand. Two of the three players felt that RHO could be thinking about any number of things and does not indicate that they have a problem with trick one.

The Director ruled that the result was unchanged based on the fact that a player is entitled to think, specifically at trick one, for as long as he needs without it indicating that there is a problem with this trick.

N/S requested a review of the ruling. There was video of the hand in question. The video showed that after the opening lead and after Dummy was tabled, South inquired about opening leads and, after receiving the information, called small from dummy after about 3-5 seconds. East studied the dummy and, after about 10 seconds, detached the two of spades and moved it towards the end of his hand, folded up his hand and continued thinking for another 40 seconds. At this point,



East detached the same card and held it in front of him for another 2-3 seconds before playing it. South felt that the detaching of the card, coupled with taking 56 seconds prior to playing a card, indicated that East was not only thinking about the hand but also had a significant problem with his play to trick one. He felt that the most likely spade holding for East was Jxx or 9xx. He knew he was taking a chance in his choice of line of play if East held 9xx, but the suit would be blocked and he would still have ways to take 10 tricks. The Reviewer polled four experts asking what they thought was going on in East's mind after a 56 second break in tempo before playing to trick one. The Reviewer included the facts that a card was detached and moved towards the end of the hand and that the card selected was held in front of the player for 2-3 seconds prior to playing it. Three experts felt strongly that East had a problem that related specifically to trick one, the other said East could be thinking about the whole hand, however the movement of the cards makes it less clear. The Reviewer also asked about the play that Declarer took, given the play to trick one. While South's specific line was not replicated, the pollees felt that it was a reasonable line to take given the pause and actions by East.

Review Panel Findings: Law 73E addresses Deception: "If the Director determines that an innocent player has drawn a false inference from a question, remark, manner, tempo or the like, of an opponent who has no demonstrable bridge reason for the action, and who could have been aware, at the time of the action, that it could work to his benefit, the Director shall award an adjusted score."

Based on the data from the Reviewer's poll, the Panel judged that East's actions qualified as deceptive and overturned the Director's ruling. The table result was adjusted to 3NT by South, making 4, N/S +430.

[Editor's Note. This is a common enough occurrence, sadly. The perpetrators ought, in my humble opinion, to be shot at dawn. The lessons for us all are firstly to endeavour to play in tempo at all times. Second, if you need time to think, say "no problem with this trick, just thinking about the hand"]

Lemmy Was Right!!

Editor



Watching the knockout stages of the Spingold [a major annual US event], I was following the fortunes of our good friend and columnist, Boye Brogeland. Motorhead fans would have hit the jackpot on this deal.

Dealer East. Vul All.

			♠AQJ10		
			♥Jxx		
			♦Qxx		
			♣Xxx		
♠8765		N	♠9432		
♥Xxx			♥-		
♦Jxxx	W	E	♦K10xx		
♣Xx		S	♣AK109x		
Boye					
♠K					
♥AKQxxxx					
♦Ax					
♣QJx					

East opened 1♣ and Boye had a decision to make. It's easy to bid 4♥, but was he too strong for that? Should he double and then bid hearts, showing real strength? He opted for 4♥.

When this came back around to East, he elected to re-open with a double. Boye could be pre-empting, and partner might have a bid or a penalty pass. West bid 4♠ and North, Christian Bakke, expressed an opinion about it's chances.

Bakke led a heart and declarer managed two heart ruffs, two clubs and a club ruff for five down, minus 1400. A big swing for N/S.

Had Bakke been a Motorhead fan, he'd have taken lead singer Lemmy's advice. "I don't share your greed, the only card I need, is the Ace of Spades". On that lead, defenders take four spades, seven hearts and ♦Ac. Nine down for 2600!!

Rest in peace, Lemster.



Answers to Test your Declarer Play

You are West as declarer, playing teams. What is your play strategy on each board?

Board 1 Dealer North. Vul None.

♠ 9632 ♥ 1093 ♦ A986 ♣ 52			
♠ A85	N	♠ KQ	
♥ AKJ86	W	♥ 7	E
♦ KQJ102		♦ 753	
♣ -	S	♣ AK109743	
♠ J1074 ♥ Q542 ♦ 4 ♣ QJ86			

W	N	E	S
	P	1♣	P
1♥	P	2♣	P
3♦ ¹	P	3NT	P
5NT ²	P	6♣	P
6♦	All Pass		

¹ 3♦ = 5+ cards, GF
² 5NT = Pick a slam (a 4♦ bid would lead to 6♦)

Lead:

North leads the ♠6 against 6♦. How do you plan the play?

The Play

In a knock-out team match, declarer won the spade lead in dummy, played a heart to the ace, ruffed a heart and played a diamond to the queen which held. North headed the diamond king with the ace and exited with a spade won in dummy. Declarer pitched two hearts on the top clubs and ruffed a club but North's overruff was the setting trick. Had the trumps been 3-2 this line would have easily delivered 12 tricks.

As is so often the case when a contract looks easy, declarer failed to look for the danger. When the ♦Q held, declarer should have gone to dummy with a spade, pitched two hearts on the top clubs and only then played a diamond to hand.

At the other table, South led the ♠J against 6NT (by East). Declarer won and went after the diamonds. North won the third round and after some thought returned the ♥10. Winning with dummy's ♥J, declarer cashed two diamond and two heart winners, pitching clubs from hand. After crossing to hand with the ♠Q, declarer tried the top clubs but eventually had to lose a trick in the end.

Had declarer foreseen the danger posed by a heart switch against 6NT, he could return to hand with the ♠Q after the second round of diamonds. After pitching two hearts on the top clubs, he can finesse the ♥J and only then knock out the ♦A. When North is out of clubs this results in twelve tricks.

Board 2 Dealer East. Vul N/S.

♠ 8 ♥ 9852 ♦ K7 ♣ KQJ1074			
♠ KQ10632	N	♠ AJ94	
♥ A106	W	♥ QJ	E
♦ 5		♦ AQ1096	
♣ A83	S	♣ 52	
♠ 75 ♥ K743 ♦ J8432 ♣ 96			

W	N	E	S
		1♦	P
1♠	2♣	2♣	P
2NT ¹	P	4♠ ²	P
5♣ ³	P	5♦ ³	P
6♣	All Pass		

¹ 2NT = Enquiry, agrees spades (usually with ambitions above game)

² 4♠ = Maximum, denies a shortage

³ When partner freely raises your six-card major and you control all the side suits, one should make at least one slam try.

Lead:

North leads the ♠K against 6♣. How do you plan the play?

The Play

In the absence of a club lead, declarer in 6♣ would have time to take the heart finesse and eventually dispose of one of dummy's clubs. Here, having taken the club ace, play a diamond to the ace and ruff a diamond. When North drops the king on the second round, draw trumps ending in dummy and cash the ♦Q before taking the ruffing finesse against South's ♦J. Then, having disposed of two clubs on the winning diamonds, take the heart finesse for an overtrick.

Questions on page 3

Board 3 Dealer South. Vul E/W.

<p> ♠ 6 ♥ 10975 ♦ K102 ♣ QJ1083 </p>			
♠ 943 ♥ AKQ32 ♦ J98 ♣ A7	N W S	E 	♠ AQ ♥ J8 ♦ A754 ♣ K6542
<p> ♠ KJ108752 ♥ 64 ♦ Q63 ♣ 9 </p>			

W	N	E	S
			3♠ ¹
4♥ ²	All Pass		

¹ 3♠ = Applying the 'rule of 4' when 1st in hand at green
² 4♥ = Not without risk!

Lead

North leads the ♠6 against 4♥. How do you plan the play?

The Play

Declarer wins with dummy's ace and plays back the spade queen. South wins with the king and switches to the ♣9 seeing North's discard of the ♣Q. After taking the ♣A, declarer should ruff his last spade, then overtake the ♥J and continue with the top hearts. When South shows out on the third round of trumps, declarer can use the ♣K and ♦A as entries to ruff two clubs in hand, which gives ten tricks.

Board 4 Dealer West. Vul All.

<p> ♠ J86432 ♥ KQ104 ♦ 5 ♣ 93 </p>			
♠ Q107 ♥ A862 ♦ 832 ♣ AK10	N W S	E 	♠ A ♥ 75 ♦ AKQ109 ♣ QJ742
<p> ♠ K95 ♥ 983 ♦ J764 ♣ 865 </p>			

W	N	E	S
1♣	P	2♦ ¹	P
2NT	P	3♣ ²	P
3♦	P	3♠	P
3NT	P	4♣	P
4♥ ³	P	4♠ ³	P
5NT ⁴	P	6♣ ⁵	All Pass

¹ 2♦ = Natural, GF

² 3♣ = Strong Jump Shift based on club support

³ Cue Bid

⁴ 5NT = Pick a Slam

⁵ 6♣ = 6NT was an alternative

Lead

North leads the ♥K. How do you plan the play?

The Play

After the heart lead, declarer can win, cash a top club, go to dummy with a diamond, return to hand with a club and play a second diamond. If either defender discards but cannot ruff, declarer will have a blueprint for securing twelve tricks by way of the ruffing finesse in diamonds.



Bidding Quiz 10 - Results - Bob Pattinson

Question 1

Dealer North. Vul None. Teams.

♠ -
♥ AK54
♦ AQ84
♣ A8652

W	N	E	S
	3♠ ¹	P	?
¹ 3♠=7 suit: 6-10			

Votes: 4♠=11; Pass=4

Has partner a good enough suit to make game in spades opposite a void?

Sally Pass: Obviously could be right to bid but I go for the low road. It's only a non-vulnerable game.

Peter G Pass: Much depends on partner, many of whom may often be 6-4, and we could then miss a minor suit slam. Vulnerable I bid 4♠.

Karel Pass: Obviously 3NT is out-no way to get nine tricks without spades. So do we pass or bid 4♠ with our 4-5 top tricks. This a pure guess depending heavily on partnership style and what mood partner is in. In particular, the quality of the intermediates will be key. Even opposite a textbook 3♠ partner has to get to hand at least twice to start drawing trumps. My motto which has served me well is when a misfit looms get out as soon as possible. So I pass. Two side notes, if my right hand opponent observes the 10 second rule after a jump bid, and I pass smoothly, then my left hand opponent may back in with a double. Also if vulnerable I will bid 4♠. Non-vulnerable who knows.

Roy Pass: This really depends upon partner's style. Both 4♠ and pass are reasonable depending on how aggressive how partner might be. One positive for passing is that you might hear a balance from your left hand opponent, then it becomes Christmas.

Ciaran 4♠: Pass or raise. If we agreed that this is always a seven card suit as the note says, then I raise to 4♠.

Joe 4♠: Very close to passing but I'll bid 4♠

Diane 4♠: For partner's 3♠ I would hope for five tricks, and I have three sure tricks plus one finesse. Good enough game prospects even if non-vulnerable.

George 4♠: Hope this makes.

Micheál 4♠: Club suit will be an asset.

Peter P 4♠: Assuming my partner is adhering to some sense of decorum, I would expect about six tricks or at worst five with two trump losers. Since I have four or five winners, game is a decent prospect. Not that probably I need to say it, but one must play in spades on these hands.

Tom 4♠: By far the most likely game and I expect to make it. Partner will have a decent suit.

Adrian 4♠: Four definite tricks, even five with a diamond finesse, so partner needs to have only six, or possibly five, to make 4♠ a fairly clear bid at teams.

Anna 4♠: No matter how much I hate this bid, the rest is much worse.

Ian 4♠: Partner has been known to have a decent suit, and we have four or five of partner's losers covered. Hopefully the trump losses can be kept to two, and an outside card may promote a sixth side suit winner. Pass might be the winner, with opponents lured into the bidding.

Luca 4♠: At teams don't want to miss out on game. I hope for just two trump losers and ♦K onside, or good trumps and ♦K offside. One useful guide is the 5/6/7 rule denoting the number of tricks partner should have in their suit at favourable/equal/unfavourable vulnerability.

Dealer North. Vul None. Teams.

		♠ QJ97632	
		♥ T6	
		♦ KJ	
		♣ 74	
♠ T84	N	♠ AK5	
♥ J97		♥ Q832	
♦ 7632	W	♦ T95	
♣ KT9		♣ QJ3	
		S	
		♠ -	
		♥ AK54	
		♦ AQ84	
		♣ A8652	

W	N	E	S
	3♠ ¹	P	?
¹ 3♠=7 suit: 6-10			

Summary

The controls suggest that if partner has a decent spade suit then game is on. The 36% 3-3 spade break brings this contract home. As partner is at worst 7222 shape there are enough opportunities to return to hand to draw trumps.

In fairness the void in partner's suit creates some pressure, but a 4-2 trump break should hold trump losers to two.

The worry about bidding 4♠ is based on the possible quality of partner's suit, but this is subject to partnership agreement. The potential gains from making game, even non-vulnerable, edge the bidding to 4♠, and you can blame partner if the spade suit is too poor.

Marks: 4♠=10; Pass=8

Bidding Tips

- ▶ It helps to improve these tight decisions if the partnership has an agreement on the quality of the three-level openings, such as two of the top three honours or two of the top four.
- ▶ With a stronger responding hand holding some spades (plus a better trump suit from partner) a handy convention



over a three-level pre-emptive opening by partner is 4♣, (or 4♦ over a 3♣ opening), agreeing the trump suit and asking for any outside control. Opener simply bids the control, either a king or singleton, or signs off in trumps with no control.

Question 2

Dealer West. Vul N/S. Teams.

♠ AKJ2
♥ 98
♦ Q832
♣ KQ3

W	N	E	S
1♦ ¹	?		
¹ 1♦=4+			

Votes: 1NT=10; 1♠=3; Pass=2

The balanced shape and 15 points suggests 1NT, with a slight worry about hearts. Double looks wrong due to the heart shortage.

Adrian 1♠: Seems automatic, even on a four card suit.

Peter G 1♠: 3NT looks a long way off even if partner has 9-10 points. I prefer to have "softer values" to overcall 1NT with a bare 15.

Karel 1♠: Two options I see are 1NT which can't be faulted or 1♠. If partner is in the 4-7 range with spades, 1♠ works well. With 4-7 without spades it's not so great, but possibly a club fit is available if we get doubled (unlikely). I am bidding 1♠ as this offers more options if there is no fit. We can still reach an alternative contract if partner has 9/10+. I predict I will not have a lot of company on this with most bidding the obvious fairly routine 1NT.

George 1NT: Stay with the field. This way you can easily find spades.

Sally 1NT: A bit pushy perhaps. Tell me I am going for 1100.

Ian 1NT: Looks clear cut. We have 15-18 and a diamond stop, and that is what the bid shows, albeit we are minimum. Passing could miss a vulnerable game, and it may

be awkward to bid in round two otherwise. Yes we could go for 800, but we have all been there.

Ciaran 1NT: Why complicate the game.

Peter P 1NT: I'm a believer in overcalling 1NT because it might be my best game try as I've immediately shown I am in the upper echelons of value for my intervention. I mostly have the suit they've opened covered!! My partner can talk majors if need be in reply.

Micheál 1NT: If you pass it will be difficult to reach a successful contract.

Luca 1NT: Looks very normal.

Anna 1NT: I do have a stopper and 15 points.

Diane Pass: Unfavourable vulnerability- too minimum for a 1NT overcall.

Tom 1NT: Get my hand off my chest, and might be more dangerous to come in later. If I get doubled I might judge to pull to 2♠ as with all these honours the opponents will be a bit slower to double this contract.

Roy Pass: 1NT is reasonable, but it is a bare minimum, and my diamond pips are poor, so the bid is a little dangerous. I hope to get a chance later to double hearts if the opponents balance.

Dealer West. Vul N/S. Teams.

				♠AKJ2																																					
				♥98																																					
				♦Q832																																					
				♣KQ3																																					
♠8743				N	♠Q6																																				
♥AQJ7					♥642																																				
♦AJ54				W	E	♦876																																			
♣A						♣J9875																																			
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				♠T95																																					
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<table><tr><td></td><td>♠</td><td>♥</td><td>♦</td><td>♣</td><td>NT</td></tr><tr><td>N</td><td>1</td><td></td><td>2</td><td>2</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>S</td><td>1</td><td></td><td>2</td><td>2</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>E</td><td></td><td>1</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>1</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr></table>													♠	♥	♦	♣	NT	N	1		2	2		S	1		2	2		E		1				W		1			
	♠	♥	♦	♣	NT																																				
N	1		2	2																																					
S	1		2	2																																					
E		1																																							
W		1																																							
W			N			E			S																																
1♦ ¹			?																																						
¹ 1♦=4+																																									

Summary

On balance 1NT has the triple advantages of confirming a flat 15-17 hand, with diamonds stopped, and partner still has the chance of using Stayman to discover the four spades. Some players would expect five spades for the 1S overcall, or if holding four spades then denying a diamonds stopper and a balanced hand. At teams either bid works on this hand for gaining a plus score, with 1NT producing extra imps. The problem with pass on this hand is that the bidding might stop in 1H, which just makes.

Marks: 1NT=10; 1♠=9; Pass=7

Bidding Tip

Partnerships need to be agreed on the requirements of both the 1NT overcall and a major suit overcall.

Question 3

Dealer North. Vul All. Teams.

♠ Q4
♥ A87
♦ J1087
♣ Q1053

W	N	E	S
	P	1♠	2NT ¹
P	?		
¹ 2NT= 5-5; 6-10 or 14+			

Votes: 3♠=5; 5♣=4; 4♣=2; 4NT=2; 3♦=1; 3♠=1

With an upper range pass hand, a double fit in the minors, and a major suit ace, plus a pass by responder, how can you invite partner holding the strong version.

Adrian 5♣: They have a lot of major suit cards between them, so expecting four of a major to be bid, so let them guess first by bidding 5♣.

Diane 5♣: A fit for both minors. With these fits best to go as high as we can, as quickly as we can.

Tom 5♣: Seems like the value bid and we can make it. Double fit, an outside ace, plus any minor suit finesse should work through the



opening bid. We also stop them discovering their double major suits fit. As I am never defending a 4M contract let's put the pressure on now.

Sally 4♣: Seems worth an invite to me.

Roy 4♣: Maybe partner can raise or maybe it shuts the opponents out of the bidding. I don't think I would buy it with just 3♣.

George 3♦: Stay low with this assortment. Most will bid 3♣, but bidding your weaker suit is better, and should score the same as 3♣.

Peter G 3♣: If partner bids 4♣ I am well placed to raise to 5♣, but Qx in spades opposite a silent West is not great news.

Ian 3♠: Making five of a minor looks improbable unless partner has the upper range, and can bid again, since we have only one control card, plus likely wasted values in the opponent's suit. Granted, there are useful fillers in partner's suits, but I don't think they will offset the negatives.

Anna 3♠: Show good support for partner's suits.

Peter P 3♠: Not a fan of good or bad two suited overcalls as this tries to take the judgement out of partner's hand (some might say this is a positive!). I'll try a forcing 3♠, showing the values to play at the four-level opposite the lower version, or even 3NT if partner is Ax K Axxxx Kxxxx.

Karel 3♠: Why no spade raise or some heart call from West? If partner is weak, West rates to have 3♠ and 8-10 points on average, and yet passed. Inference is that my partner is 14+. Doesn't really help as we have a nine- loser hand with no way of showing a double fit. Is this hand worth a 3♠ unassuming cue bid? Probably not as the cards are all soft....but it's the call I am going to make for three reasons.

(1) If partner has a decent hand my hand is probably good enough to go to game, and slam may even be on.

(2) Far more importantly the opponents have a double major suit fit as of yet undiscovered. If I bid 3♦ this allows opener, who in my opinion is marked with a fair chunk of points, to bid 3♥ or 3♠. My 3♠ cue bid may make any such action appear to be too dangerous and thus silence opener.

(3) In the quite possible event opener finds a bid over 3♠ partner will be well placed to decide what to do.

Luca 4NT: Partner shouldn't have nothing for the vulnerability, and can choose which minor. I can ask for aces with a spade bid if stronger.

Ciaran 4NT: At game all partner should have something sensible, so 4NT now to let partner choose the preferred minor, and at the same time take away opener's 4M bid.

Dealer North. Vul All. Teams.

		♠ Q4	
		♥ A87	
		♦ JT87	
		♣ QT53	
♠ J72	N	♠ KT9853	
♥ Q98542	W	♥ JT3	
♦ 3	E	♦ AK4	
♣ 962	S	♣ 8	
		♠ A6	
		♥ K	
		♦ Q9652	
		♣ AKJ74	

W	N	E	S
	P	1♠	2NT ¹
P	?		
¹ 2NT= 5-5: 6-10 or 14+			

Summary

Several members of the panel make a strong case for making an effort in case partner has the stronger version of the 2NT bid, rather than leaping to five in a minor. Although the opponents have strong majors, with both sides vulnerable, it is less likely that a major suit sacrifice will be attempted when West has not attempted to take action over 2NT.

Whilst the jump to 5♣ works on this occasion the different lower

level bids show strength but allow for a stop at the four-level if the weaker version of 2NT is held. Is there a difference between bidding 3♥ or 3♠ when expressing interest in game if partner is at the higher points range? Will 3♠ lead to 5♣ rather than 5♦?

Interesting that 3♦ finds the better minor suit fit.

Marks: 3♠=10; 3♦=10; 3♣=10; 4♣=9; 4NT=8; 5♣=8

Bidding Tips

Partnerships need to distinguish between invitational raises and direct game raises with these 5-5 minor suit hands. There is also scope for agreeing any differences between the majors when making the invitational raise.

Question 4

Dealer North. Vul None. Teams.

♠ -
♥ AJ1064
♦ A75
♣ KQJ93

W	N	E	S
	1♥	2♠ ¹	P
P	?		
¹ 2♠=6 suit: 6-10:			

Votes: X=14; Pass=1

Both the responder and your partner have passed so does your partner hold some decent spades or a poor hand?

Sally X: I might regret it but partner should pass with pretty spades. You need to know exactly what you're playing because different people bid very differently.

Roy X: It's not always perfect even if partner has a nice penalty, but I think you have to do it.

Ciaran X: Doubling with a void works badly sometimes, but as West may raise with a fit but has passed, then double it is. I've plenty of defence if partner has good spades.



Peter P X: Bidding 3♣ would suggest a hand that could not cope with a pass with the final contract 2♠ doubled. With two aces, some intermediates, and a very robust club suit, I am happy to defend. My right hand opponent would bid with three or four trumps and moderate values, so I am nearly certain that my partner has trumps and some values.

Adrian X: Partner is waiting for me to re-open with a double so why disappoint?

George X: Tough between this and 3♣, but partner could have a stack. Usually wrong to double with a void, but 3♣ is too committal.

Anna X: Have the other suits covered. Not so happy with the spade void but I can't have everything.

Ian X: Partner looks to have a penalty pass of 2♠, evidenced by the lack of a raise by East. Second choice is 3♣, but that could get us into the wrong spot, with partner lacking a proper diamond stop, bidding hearts. We can still get to 3NT over the double, if partner elects for that.

Peter G X: Aces are good for defence and a safe lead. Never frightened to concede 470/570, as the plus side of knocking the contract is high.

Micheál X: I want to give partner the opportunity to convert to a penalty if holding good spades.

Luca X: This is the most flexible. I am happy for partner to convert to penalties.

Karel X: The only options for me are double or 3♣. West with almost any hand with three or four spades will raise 2♠ to 3♠, so partner likely marked with at least four or five spades. The book says defending with a trump void is generally poor as you can't lead a trump through declarer. Still I like defending so I will double. If partner pulls it will be ok.

Tom Pass: Time to get out of dodge, no fit and no profit in moving forward.

Dealer North. Vul None. Teams.

		♠—	
		♥AJT64	
		♦A75	
		♣KQJ83	
♠Q76	N	♠AT9543	
♥KQ32	W	♥98	
♦Q96	E	♦KT3	
♣A87	S	♣52	
		♠KJ82	
		♥75	
		♦J842	
		♣T64	

W	N	E	S
	1♥	2♠ ¹	P
P	?		
¹ 2♠=6 suit: 6-10:			

Summary

Whilst all but one of the panel doubled, there were some worries expressed that having the void in opener's suit may turn out to be problem.

Although 2♠ can be made by finessing the ♦9 (so the losers comprise two spades, one heart, one diamond, one club), it is a difficult contract to make, especially doubled. Apart from pass it is hard to find a viable alternative to double on this hand, and surely South has nothing better than a pass?

The panel offer sound reasons for the double, yet the lone wolf with the pass gets it right on this hand, so well done Tom.

Marks: X=10; Pass=9

Bidding Tip

Experts argue that if none of your penalty doubles fail to work then you are not doubling enough. Certainly the role of the void came to pass!

Question 5

Dealer East. Vul N/S. Teams.

♠ KQ
♥ AKQ6
♦ K
♣ KQJ932

W	N	E	S
		P	1♦ ¹
?			
¹ 1♦=4+			

Votes: X=15

Between South's opening bid and your huge hand there will be few points left between the remaining two players, so shape and some kind of fit will be critical. Will the panel all agree with double?

Adrian X: So heavy with points I can't see I can do anything but double, and then decide what to do.

Roy X: I don't like doubling off shape but with 23 points it's a bit of a stretch expecting partner to bid over 2♣.

Peter G X: Looks like we are going to end up in 3NT/4♥. May have to pretend I have Kx in diamonds at some stage.

Sally X: Too strong for anything else.

Ian X: Nothing else for it with 23 points. Where we will end up is anyone's guess. I raise 1♥ or 1NT to game, otherwise bid clubs.

Ciaran X: Too strong to just bid a suit, and whatever partner does, my suit is good enough to bid next.

Anna X: I have a monster hand. Hopefully partner can bid something that I like.

Peter P X: Start with a double and if partner bids hearts, all good. However, I expect a reply from my left hand opponent and a pass from partner. Next bid could be interesting with plenty of options. We'll see, but too good for a simple 2♣.



Diane X: Don't like having a doubleton spade, but you have a lot of points. If partner respond spades you simply bid clubs.

Karel X: 23 points and right hand opponent has opened, leaving very little for the remaining two players. It is likely that five of the 23 points will lie badly, but the hand is too good not to start with a double. Our best bet for game is to find partner with four+ hearts. Be amazed if there isn't a unanimous vote for double.

Luca X: This is a huge hand. Partner could easily have the magic two aces, so I will show this as a power hand.

George X: All big hands start with double. If we bid 2♣ partner may pass with xxx Jxxxx Qxx xx, when there is an easy make in 4♥.

Tom X: I also like 2♣ but I am worried it could go all pass. 2♣ might work better if they bid, but they may preempt in diamonds and I will have to follow with 3♥. I can make 4♥ if partner has zero points but five small hearts.

Dealer East. Vul N/S. Teams.

		♠ AT7432	
		♥ —	
		♦ T763	
		♣ 765	
♠ KQ	N	♠ 85	
♥ AKQ6	W	♥ J987632	
♦ K	E	♦ 954	
♣ KQJ932	S	♣ T	
		♠ J96	
		♥ T4	
		♦ AQJ82	
		♣ A84	

W	N	E	S
		P	1♦ ¹
?			
1♦ = 4+			

Summary

Full agreement on the panel with the takeout double offering the best initial description of the hand, and game in hearts should be easily bid and made [though opponents may reach 4♠/5♦]. If partner bids spades there are several follow up bids to choose from.

Marks: X=10

Bidding Tip

On the infrequent times you pick up these huge hands start with a double and your follow up bid in a new suit is forcing.

Question 6

Dealer South. Vul E/W. Teams

♠ 5
♥ J632
♦ 7
♣ AKQJ987

W	N	E	S
			1♣
P	1♥	1♠	?

Votes: 4♠=6; 3♥=6; 4♥=2; 2♣=1

A conventional jump to 4♣ shows a 6-4 hand with four-card trump support for the major. Is this the best solution or are the hearts too weak on this occasion?

Adrian 4♣: Solid clubs and four-card heart support, textbook stuff.

Peter P 4♣: I like 4♣ for these hands, showing a solid 6-7 Clubs, four-card trump support, and definitely a shortage in one of the other two suits (with just a solid club suit I would rebid 3♣ angling for 3NT). 4♣ is probably coming on my left and I want my partner to know my hand type and shape. If I simply bid 4♥ over 1♠ my partner may think I have a balanced 18-19 with four trumps, and misjudge the next call.

Ciaran 4♣: Heart fit with good clubs.

Anna 4♣: This should show four hearts and a solid club suit.

Luca 4♣: Without the 1♠ intervention this would show the hand exactly, good long clubs and hearts. It is a little less clear over 1♠. That being said I have a bunch of other ways to show clubs, so hopefully partner will be on the same page.

Karel 4♣: 4♥ is what you would like to bid as opposite a load of hands this rates to be a good spot whether you make or go down.

For me I would expect more for 4♥. 4♣ here is generally agreed as 4♥ and a very good club suit. Could bid a simple 2♥, and on the assumption the opponents will compete, and go back into clubs. If the opponents don't compete and partner jumps to 4♥ we may have missed a slam. I think 4♣ is best as it gives a good picture of our hand.

Sally 3♥: I don't usually invite with such distribution, but partner knows that aces and the trump honours are good. I might bid again if they bid 4♠. This way I can bid 5♣ and partner should know what I have more or less. If I bid 4♥ directly and they bid 4♠ I am less well prepared.

Tom 3♥: Doesn't need a lot to make game. I won't sell out to 4♣ and will bid 5♣. If partner is strong and wants slam and bids it over my key card response we will make it.

Ian 3♥: This could work poorly if partner has a poor four-card suit. Dummy could be shortened of trumps, unable to pull same, and unable to get dummy's losers away on clubs in time. But anything less is feeble.

Joe 3♥: Too much strength to raise only to 2♥.

George 3♥: Some will bid 4♥ but 3♥ is enough. Dummy may get tapped, Depriving you of the use of the clubs. With robust hearts partner may go on. 2♥ is illegal!

Roy 3♥: It might be better to just bid clubs but I think I'll do that over 4♠.

Peter G 4♥: Still only 11 points and poor hearts, but will compete if partner bids 5♦ over 4♠.

Diane 4♥: Only two places you want to play - too weak to do anything else.

Micheál 2♥: 4♥ may still be a successful contract.



Dealer South. Vul E/W. Teams

		♠ 972	
		♥ AT974	
		♦ K985	
		♣ 4	
♠ AK43	N	♠ QJT85	
♥ 6		♥ KQ8	
♦ QJ643	W	♦ A72	
♣ 632	S	♣ T5	
		♠ 6	
		♥ J632	
		♦ T	
		♣ AKQJ987	

W	N	E	S
			1♣
P	1♥	1♠	?

Summary

Although the conventional jump to 4♣ leads to minus one and a loss of 50, the opponents can make 140 in spades. The advantages of 3♥ are that over either 3♠ or 4♠ the good clubs can still be shown, and partner with an eight-loser hand will not stretch too far by themselves.

4♣ is a useful convention getting the 6-4 shape over in one bid, where as a direct 4♥ fails to do the same as 4♣.

The poor layout of the heart suit contributes to the failure of game on this hand.

Marks: 3♥=10; 4♣=9; 4♥=8; 2♣=7

Bidding Tips

4♣ gives you two bids for one and partner has a clear insight to your hand. 3♥ takes into account that partner may be minimum with weak hearts, but also keeps in reserve the opportunity to compete further depending upon further developments of the bidding.

Question 7

Dealer South. Vul None. Teams.

♠ 85
♥ A7654
♦ 3
♣ Q10732

W	N	E	S
			P
1♠	X	P	1NT
P	P	?	

Votes: Pass=7; 2♣=5; 2♥=1; 2♠=1

Six points, seven losers and two five-card suits, is this enough to take some action, or is this too risky?

Luca Pass: It is a bit too risky to come in now. I'm not afraid we are missing anything. If North had bid 1NT then I would overcall 2♥ if the bid showed hearts plus a minor.

Adrian Pass: Maybe wrongly, but I can see a misfit, so go quietly and pass. If I was going to bid I should have tried 1NT immediately.

Peter P Pass: Partner is either a weak 1NT with five spades or a minimum 5-4 in spades/diamonds. My suits are poor, so I'm going to let this go.

Diane Pass: Frightened of where this could go if I do anything else.

George Pass: Sometimes we defend with bad breaks.

Joe 2♣: Pass and 2♣ are reasonable. I wouldn't bid 2♥ as the opponents made a takeout double of spades. As I didn't bid 2♣ first time bidding, 2♣ now would be non-forcing and show a six+ suit but could be quite light. If partner has a stiff club a pull to 2♠ should be ok.

Peter G Pass: Guessing if partner has clubs and don't fancy 2♠ as partner has a weak no trump range and spades seem to be 4-2 or 5-1.

Sally 2♣: It would be nice to make a take out double, but even then partner would probably bid diamonds. Bidding 2♣ might give me the chance to bid hearts next time.

Ian 2♣: Even at teams you can't let opponents declare 1NT at nil all if at all possible. The doubler presumably has hearts so I pick my other five-card suit. If partner reverts to spades that isn't necessary bad.

Anna 2♣: Don't want to pass. Hearts are probably not great. You expect partner to have diamonds and spades, so should not be too bad.

Karel 2♣: Having passed correctly I think 2♣ is a reasonable gamble. If partner hates clubs we go back to 2♠. Downside – the opponents may find 2♦.

Roy 2♣: This should show more than one place to play since I didn't bid directly, hopefully partner will agree.

Tom 2♣: I hate selling out but I have to review if they double me. I have both 2♥ and 2♠ to escape to.

Ciaran 2♣: If partner tries 2♦ then 2♠ from me.

Dealer South. Vul None. Teams.

		♠ 97	
		♥ KQ3	
		♦ 98652	
		♣ AK6	
♠ AQJ42	N	♠ 85	
♥ J8		♥ A7654	
♦ KQ74	W	♦ 3	
♣ J5	S	♣ QT732	
		♠ KT63	
		♥ T92	
		♦ AJT	
		♣ 984	

W	N	E	S
			P
1♠	X	P	1NT
P	P	?	

Summary

As the bidding has developed it appears that the opponents have minimum values, and at nil all entering the bidding has some risk but, nothing too dangerous. If taking action then 2♣ seems the safest bid as it offers two escape hatches if this is doubled. This is a close decision between 2♣ and pass, with the non-vulnerable status shading 2♣.

Marks: 2♣=10; Pass=9; 2♥=8; 2♠=8



Bidding Tips

When balancing try to envisage the strength of the opponents based on their bids and non-bids, and most importantly the vulnerability.

Question 8

Dealer East. Vul E/W. Teams

♠ 84

♥ 105

♦ 65

♣ AKJ9632

W	N	E	S
		1♥	X
?			

Votes: 2♣=14; Pass=1

A fine seven-card suit, which raises the question of whether 2♣ is forcing or not?

Ciaran 2♣: Forcing for one round. 3♣ next.

Roy 2♣: I can't think of a reasonable alternative.

Adrian 2♣: Club suits like this are made to be bid, so why not 2♣?

Joe 2♣: This is a heavy 2♣ in my opinion.

Ian 2♣: Absent a re-double this surely shows something like this? I'll rebid 3♣ over partner's red suit rebid (if any).

Sally 2♣: I play this as non-forcing these days. The perfect hand for it. But I bid it even if forcing, and then rebid clubs the next time.

Peter P 2♣: Showing length, natural and forcing for one round I'd expect.

Tom 2♣ (or 1NT if we play transfers): Happy to bid again later. Too good a suit to jump to 3♣ (if allowed). Can keep this good suit to myself.

Anna 2♣: Show my long suit.

Karel 2♣: This is the old chestnut of what is forcing and what isn't. Years ago (and mostly still) 1's and 3's were forcing, if using that 2♣ would be non-forcing. The

Americans play 2♣ as forcing, and in my opinion this is a better way. 3NT may well make if partner holds a spade stop. So bid 2♣ forcing and hear what partner, or indeed right hand opponent, have to say, before deciding your next move. Some play 3♣ as a fit bid or as a mixed raise along Bergen lines. A really good current treatment is to play transfers over takeout doubles, so on this hand over the double of 1♠ then redouble would show clubs (1NT is always natural).

George 3♣: This should end the bidding. Opponents have spades so pre-empting is correct.

Peter G Pass: I will compete to 3♣ later, or close to 2♣, but we don't want to play in 2NT on a stiff club.

Dealer East. Vul E/W. Teams

						♠ 976						
						♥ 632						
						♦ KJ984						
						♣ T4						
♠ 84						N	♠ KQ32					
♥ T5						W	♥ KQJ874					
♦ 65						E	♦ 2					
♣ AKJ9632						S	♣ 85					
						♠ AJT6						
						♥ A9						
						♦ AQT73						
						♣ Q7						
		♠	♥	♦	♣	NT						
N		3										
S		3										
E	3		2									
W	3		2									

W	N	E	S
		1♥	X
?			

Summary

With such a fine suit nearly all the panel agree to take action with a 2♣ bid, although there seems to be no firm agreement as to whether this bid is forcing or non-forcing. Karel and Tom both mention this issue can be easily resolved by playing transfers over an opponent's takeout double, and this makes a lot of sense.

The advantage of 2♣, in the absence of playing transfers, is that it leaves plenty of bidding space for further developments. The non-vulnerable opponents may win the auction with a diamond contract but at least you have tried to reach your own contract by bidding 2♣. 3♣ has the advantage of taking up more bidding space and is bid here as non-forcing.

Marks: 2♣=10; 3♣=10; Pass=8

Summary of the Expert Panel Results

Well done to Panel debutant Ian Hamilton, who kicks off in style with a maximum!

Readers' scores: 75 Denis Callanan, 72 Fiona Garrick and Marie Lynch; 69 Eilish Dempsey. Well done all.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total
Sally Brock	8	10	9	10	10	10	10	10	77
Ciaran Coyne	10	10	8	10	10	9	10	10	77
Luca Crone	10	10	8	10	10	9	9	10	76
Karel De Raeymaeker	8	9	10	10	10	9	10	10	76
Diane Greenwood	10	7	8	10	10	8	9	10	72
Joe Grue	10	10	8	10	10	10	10	10	78
Peter Goodman	8	9	10	10	10	8	9	8	72
Ian Hamilton	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	80
Tom Hanlon	10	10	8	9	10	10	10	10	77
George Jacobs	10	10	10	10	10	10	9	10	79
Micheál Ó Briain	10	10	10	10	10	7	8	10	75
Anna Onishuk	10	10	10	10	10	9	8	10	77
Peter Pigot	10	10	10	10	10	9	9	10	78
Adrian Thomas	10	9	8	10	10	9	9	10	75
Roy Welland	8	7	9	10	10	10	10	10	76



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