



The Kibitzer

October 2020

Editors: Judith and Nicholas Gartaganis

President's Message

I hope everyone is well and keeping safe.

Thanks again to our Club Owners and Managers for making it possible to play in virtual games.

Please stay tuned to the Unit 390 website for ACBL and Unit notices:

- Virtual Club game schedules
- FAQs re: online play including how to fill out your convention card
- ACBL's Guest Membership Options – a **free** way for players and students to try the benefits of ACBL membership. If you know of anyone who may be interested in this 120-day free guest membership, please refer them to one of our Club Owners/Managers.

Lastly, here is an excerpt from a message from the President of the ACBL sent to the Districts and Units on September 9, 2020:

"Of significance was the Online Bridge Task Force recommendation to reduce the number of face-to-face



You'll Be Back - Bridge and the Coronavirus

This is a wonderful little promotional piece created by the ACBL. You won't be disappointed! Click on the image below to watch the YouTube video.



regionals held nationwide. Although I believe a percentage of ACBL Regionally-Rated Tournaments will continue online, ACBL Management and your ACBL Board of Directors are committed to the return of face-to-face tournament play.

However, we cannot ignore our reality. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, membership and tournament attendance has been on the decline, and it is becoming increasingly difficult for units and/or districts to compete for and secure affordable venues.

Therefore, until we make any determinations surrounding the Task Force recommendation to reduce face-to-face tournaments, I ask that you do not sign new contracts for any future regionals."

Lyman Warner
President, Unit 390

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The Kibitzer - October 2020

The BBO Shuffle

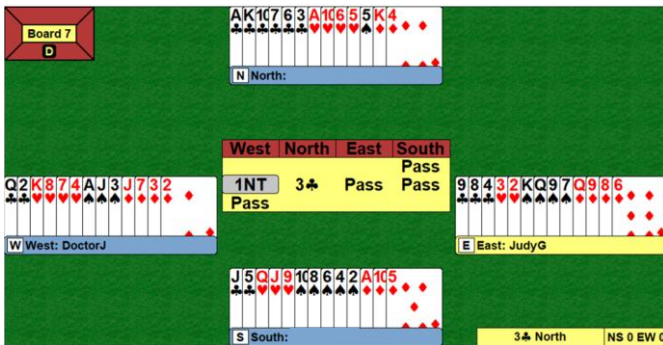
By Judith and Nicholas Gartaganis

"BBO shuffled the cards around and then I clicked the wrong one!" "The computer took over and played a card I didn't click!" We've heard lots of stories like these. Frankly, the first time, we were skeptical. Sure, BBO made you do it! 😊

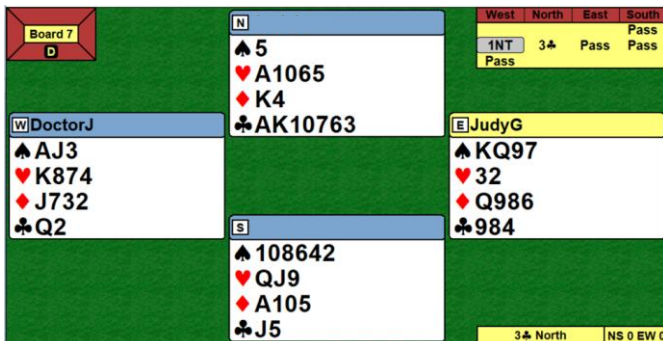
But it is a fact that when you use pictures of cards, BBO does shuffle the cards around at the end of the auction (trumps on the left, after all) and your mouse can be hovering ready to click on your opening lead when all of a sudden a different card is in that spot.

If you, too, have fallen victim, here is the solution. Switch from "Pictures of Cards" to "Hand Diagram". It makes a big difference, and BBO never shuffles the hand diagram. Check it out:

Display Setting: Pictures of Cards

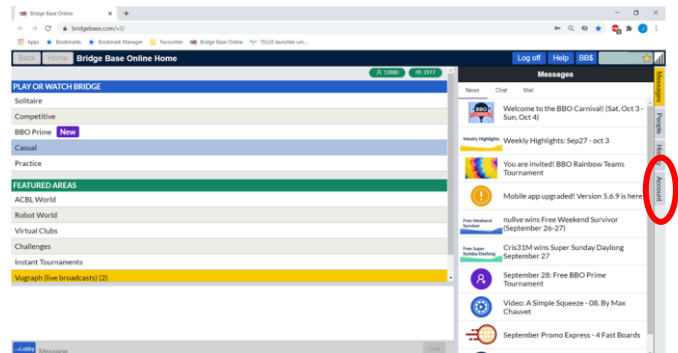


Display Setting: Hand Diagram

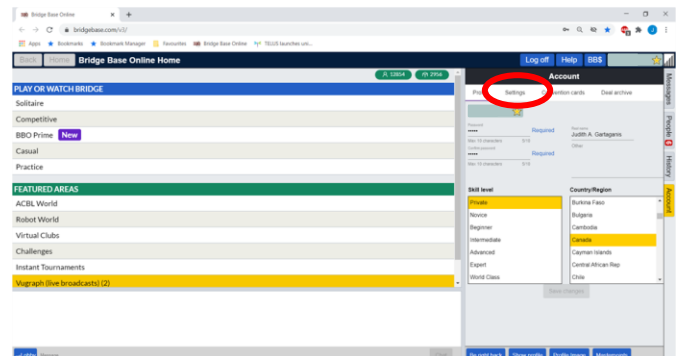


To make the change, follow these three steps:

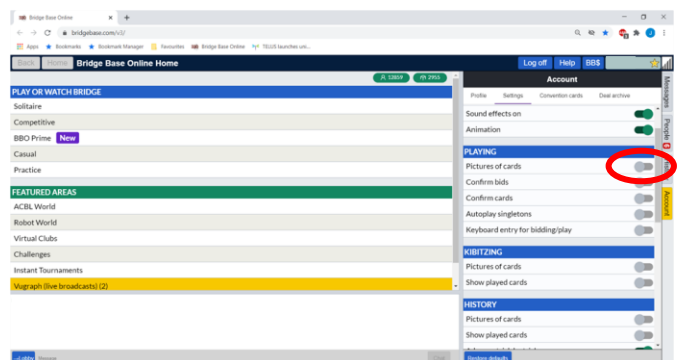
Log in to BBO and click "Account" on the right hand side of the screen.



Click "Settings" from the top menu bar.



Turn "Pictures of cards" off by toggling to the left.



The Scoop on Doubles

By Nancy Klym

Double is one of the oldest bids in bridge. Its history dates back to Whist where gentlemen gathered to bet on the outcome of the deal. Originally, it was the only call the non-dealing side could make as the dealing side determined the trump suit. As gambling increased, redouble was added to the repertoire. In its initial usage in bridge, double was used as penalty and redouble was used to up the ante.

As the game of bridge moved to North America in the early 20th century, double was still used for penalty, but competitive players decided that doubling could also direct partner to the proper lead. It first appeared as lead-directing when the opponents were playing in notrump. Double of a notrump contract asked partner to lead his/her highest heart as hearts were considered the most valuable suit in the early evolution of bridge and playing in notrump meant that the opponents' heart holding was weak.

Today, double is used to convey a multitude of meanings. As well, its meaning can change during the course of the auction. It is perhaps the most useful bid in the bidding box. However, it is important to make certain that all parties at the table understand the context in which double is being used.

The takeout double is the most commonly used double in present-day bidding. After the opponents have opened the auction, the takeout double tells partner that you have opening values yourself, shortness in the suit the opener has bid and tolerance for any suit partner may wish to bid. During an afternoon of bridge, this call makes an appearance on a regular basis.

The next most common double is the negative double. It is used by the responder and, depending on what the opponents have overcalled, it is used to show four hearts or four spades or the two unbid suits.

The lead-directing double is still very much in use. However, it is now used whenever the opponents have made an artificial call. A double of an artificial bid asks partner to lead that suit. At higher levels, the lead-directing double becomes the Lightner double which asks partner to lead dummy's first bid suit.

As conventions have evolved, doubles have become very specialized. There is the maximal double which shows strength and the support double which shows three-card support. There are also the DOPI and ROPI doubles and redoubles where partner doubles or redoubles with no values and passes with positive values. However one of the most interesting and often confusing doubles is the DSIP double. As the initials suggest, it says "Do Something Intelligent Partner". Talk about passing the buck!

Bridge players love guidelines. One of the most common adages in bridge is that three and five-level contracts are for the opponents. That implies that contracts at these levels should be doubled for penalty. There is also the saying that you aren't doubling enough if the opponents don't occasionally make the doubled contract. Judging when to double for penalty is challenging. Even without a plethora of high-card values, declarer's shape and length can bring home a contract. Judging when to double is an art, not a science.

With the advent of so many interesting and varied usages of the same bid, it is important to have a conversation with partner about what each double will mean. Today, the penalty double, lead-directing double and takeout double are considered to be part of standard methods. Always ask the opponents their understanding of the double before making a bid or a lead. Different doubles mean different things and the meaning changes with the flow of the auction.

There is great truth to the term "Double Trouble"



Thank you to everyone who contributed material for this edition of the Kibitzer.

The Editors welcome submissions for future issues of The Kibitzer. Email your articles and news items to 390kibitzer@acblunit390.org

The next edition is scheduled to be out in April 2021.

Human Opponents ... Not Those Robots

By Ian Findlay

In the chess world, computers have taken over. In order to succeed at the top level, you must have the best computer software and have PCs running 24/7 to find the best moves to support your opening strategy. Computers come up with brilliant ideas, which are often very counterintuitive. When a chess grandmaster makes such a move, all the analysts are quick to say "computer move".

In bridge we try our best to be "computer-like" by counting, but unlike chess, concrete variations are often changed during the course of play. We can also make inferences using our table feel, but most of the time we are only going by our best guess. Bridge players can also be deceptive. That is the reason computers have not mastered the game yet. The following hand, played in an IMP Pairs game, illustrates my point.

IMP Pairs
N/S Vulnerable
Contract: 3NT
Lead: ♥5

♠ AQ1085
♥ 4
♦ AQJ98
♣ J7



♠ 3
♥ J873
♦ K74
♣ AK982

<u>South</u>	<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>
--	Pass	1♠	Pass
1NT	Pass	2♦	Pass
2NT	Pass	3NT	All Pass

My partner was not sure if 3♦ over my 2NT would be forcing (a good agreement to clarify with your partners) and decided to bid 3NT instead. The lead was the ♥5, and as I viewed dummy, counting up to eight tricks, I liked my chances, given that hearts could be 4-4 or might be blocked. East played the ♥Q, ♥K and ♥10 as I followed, while West played the ♥2 on the ♥K and then the ♥9. I pitched two spades from dummy. East switched to the ♦2. West's play of the heart spots would tend to indicate he did not like clubs, but the only thing I

could tell for near certainty, was that the hearts were 5-3. Surely if they were 4-4 East, he would have continued hearts ... unless East was a robot 😊.

When East switched to diamonds I breathed a sigh of relief (the human thing to do). I continued with two more rounds of diamonds on which West pitched the ♠7 and ♠6. It was curious that he was holding on to the ♥6.

I had not rectified the count, but I did have the possibility of an endplay if East held both the ♠K and four clubs to the Queen or the Ten. The endplay would work whenever West was 5-5 in the majors, but if West had 4-5-1-3 with either the ♣Q or ♣10 then the endplay would fail.

On the fourth diamond, I had to decide what to discard. It seemed that my heart was not doing anything, but perhaps keeping it as a threat was a good idea. In order to induce the humans to pitch clubs, I pitched a club and sure enough West finally threw the ♣4. He was still holding on to his two hearts. Did he really expect to get in again?

On the last diamond, East pitched the ♣3, and I had a choice between discarding a club or a heart. As you will see, the club was very important to keep. This was the end position after cashing the fifth diamond.

♠ AQ10
♥ --
♦ --
♣ J7



♠ 3
♥ --
♦ --
♣ AK98

I now played the ♣J from dummy and East covered with the ♣Q, again a very human thing to do. If he had ducked smoothly, I was going to try to end play him by playing three rounds of clubs, assuming West followed to the first club trick.

[continued next page]

Show Me the Money ... er, Numbers

Here we are into the seventh month of COVID-19 with no end in sight. Nevertheless, bridge is alive, if not exactly well, in Calgary. Amazingly, Unit 390 can boast 28 new members since April 1, 2020!

Members have been very creative in their quest to play bridge. Over the summer, some members played in their garages. Get-togethers were "Bring Your Own" affairs - BYO chair, table, computer, snacks and refreshments. Guests sat in the appropriately-socially-distanced four corners of the garage playing casual bridge online. Other groups have been playing a BBO casual game online while using Zoom or Facetime and some couples have weekly bridge evenings where they phone each other and play online.

There is even teaching occurring online. So – like the old saying – "where there's a will there's a way".

So many of us miss the face-to-face club games but a good number in our community have successfully migrated to bridge online with the majority playing in Virtual Club games. We are fortunate to have eight of the Calgary Clubs hosting a total of 19 games per week. Currently BBO has 500 clubs running online (some clubs have pooled together, so this

number actually represents over 1500 formerly face-to-face clubs)

Here are the results of a little informal survey of our Calgary Clubs based on a randomly-chosen average week:

Total Games	19
Total Tables	196
Total Masterpoints awarded	182.29
Total Players with 300+ masterpoints	271
Total Players with 0-299 masterpoints	112

It is great to see almost 400 of the Unit's members enjoying the Virtual Club games. Of concern is what are the other 600 members doing? If you are nervous about playing online or not familiar with how to use BBO, please give any Unit Board member a call or use the "Contact Us" link on the Unit 390 website to send an email. We have an excellent tutorial on how to play bridge online and will gladly help you through the process.

Across ACBL-land, management has been tracking the data associated with online bridge. The following information was extracted from the ACBL Management Reports presented at the May and June 2020 BOD Special Meetings.

Online Play 2020 vs Face-to-Face Play 2020 Analysis

	Points Won By Pigment			Players Winning Points			Points Per Player		% Change- May 2020	
	2019 Mo. Avg	April 2020	May 2020	2019 Mo. Avg	April 2020	May 2020	2019 Mo. Avg	May 2020	Points	Players
Black	207,081	150,465	172,211	88,098	31,152	38,091	2.4	4.5	-16.8%	-56.8%
Silver	40,263	0	72,547	21,398	0	31,759	1.9	2.3	80.2%	48.4%
Gold	12,222	427	1,554	7,124	363	1,35	1.7	1.1	-87.3%	-81.0%
Online	10,111	25,347	28,526	10,009	25,067	28,263	1.0	1.0	182.1%	182.4%
Red	37,698	887	5,979	18,662	800	4,382	2.0	1.4	-84.1%	-76.5%
Platinum	854	0	0	473	0	0	1.8	0.0	-100%	-100%
Total	308,230	177,126	280,817	145,764	57,382	103,847	10.8	10.3	-8.9%	-28.8%

Comparison of Online Play to Face-to-Face Play Patterns

2020	Total Members	# Playing (Live for Clubs)	% Playing (Live for Clubs)	Non-LMs Playing	LMs Playing	% Playing Non-LM	% Playing LM
January	162,650	101,210	62.23%	64,253	36,774	63%	36%
February	162,439	106,397	65.50%	67,919	38,285	64%	36%
March	162,347	93,319	57.48%	58,076	35,093	62%	38%
April	162,328	36,397	22.42%	21,265	15,125	58%	42%
May	162,063	48,487	29.92%	29,605	18,881	61%	39%
June	161,275	48,806	30.88%	20,740	19,066	62%	38%

Show Me the Money ... er, Numbers (continued)

Online club play for May more than doubled the table count from April. May produced 113,827.5 tables, up 100.4% over April. This table count included not only Silver Linings Week but also three of the four days of the "Stay at Home, Play at Home" Regional held online April 30 - May 3.

For the month of May, the ACBL collected \$302,025 in sanction fees from the clubs, \$225,837 of that from Silver Linings Week.

Silver Linings Week, the first ACBL-sponsored online sectional at Virtual Clubs, was a huge success, far surpassing the original estimate of 30,000 tables for the week. The final total was 37,639.5 tables, an increase of 51.5% over the previous non-sectional week.

The ACBL's first online "Stay at Home, Play at Home" Regional awarded Red and Gold points, with no travel expenses! Attendance proved the demand for events such as this, where players have a chance to earn the pigmented points needed for rank advancement. The regional averaged 1,000 tables in the afternoon session and 700 at night. It netted the ACBL \$230K in revenue.

Aside: According to the ACBL Management Report for the BOD "Montreal" Meeting, the second online regional, held June 25 -28, generated 13,007 tables and netted \$565K in revenue.

Fees Collected for Online Games

"Support Your Club" games:

Of the \$6 fee, \$4 is distributed to the clubs.

Virtual Club games:

Clubs set their own fees for these games. 3.5% is taken off the top for credit card fees. The ACBL charges a \$1 sanction fee and, of the remainder, 25% goes to BBO and 75% goes to the club.

SYC Funds Going Back to Clubs		
March	\$159,474	8.5% of that (\$13,573) to the "top 10" clubs
April	\$339,784	7.1% (\$24,076) to the "top 10" clubs

Virtual Club Funds Going Back to Clubs		
March	\$26,572	\$20,284 to the "top 10" clubs *
April	\$916,590	24.4% (\$223,380) to the "top 10" clubs

* The "top 10" clubs aren't really just the top 10 individual clubs. Many of these big virtual clubs represent alliances with other big clubs. The top clubs tend to charge higher entry fees, thus generating a larger share of the funds collected. In March, only a few clubs had launched Virtual Club games and the biggest clubs were given priority.

So, all in all, the bottom line for the ACBL remains strong, despite the effects of COVID-19.

But the future for face-to-face bridge looks uncertain. The ACBL has said they will not sanction any tournaments until March 2021 at the earliest. The Long Term Bridge subcommittee of the Online Bridge Task Force, commissioned by the ACBL, has said its vision is "online bridge complemented by face-to-face club and tournament play".

Editors' Note: A big "thank you" to Delores Hedley for gathering the stories and data about bridge in Calgary.



It was so much more fun to be 20 in the seventies than 70 in the twenties.

Anonymous

What Would You Lead?

By Allan Simon

You are playing IMP Pairs at the Edmonton Regional. Your opponents are one of Alberta's strongest pairs: Edmonton's Lee Barton on your left, his wife and regular partner Lucille on your right. As dealer, with both sides vulnerable you pick up:

♠KQ1097 ♥7 ♦J ♣AJ10973

After two passes, you open 1♠ in third seat. The auction then proceeds as follows:

Lucille South	You West	Lee North	Partner East
--	--	--	Pass
Pass	1♠	2♠*	DBL**
3♦	4♣	6♦	6♠
Pass	Pass	7♦	DBL
All Pass			

* hearts plus diamonds (usually 5-5+)

** willing to penalize the opponents in at least one suit

Lee's 2♠ overcall showed hearts and diamonds. What would you lead against this vulnerable grand slam – a huge number of IMPs is at stake!

Lee obviously has a massive red two-suiter. Your partner's bidding suggests he has the ♠A and he should have some defense in hearts for his double. If Lee is 7-6, your lead is likely inconsequential; you can only hope partner has a red-suit trick. But if Lee is 7-5 or 6-6 with a black loser, 30 IMPs swing on your lead.

Think about it, pick your lead, and go to page 12 for the rest of the story.

How To Make A Small Slam Off Three Aces

By Marlene Lenstra

Distribution can be more powerful than points. I was playing on BBO and the following deal arose:

IMPs

Contract: 6♥x

Lead: ♦A

♠ Q97542	♠ A10	♠ 63
♥ A	♥ KQ1086	♥ 7
♦ AJ	♦ KQ9532	♦ 108764
♣ AJ64	♣ --	♣ 109852
	♠ KJ8	
	♥ J95432	
	♦ --	
	♣ KQ73	

Rolf S.

West

1♠
Pass
DBL

Lamya A.

North

DBL
6♥
All Pass

Abdul F.

East

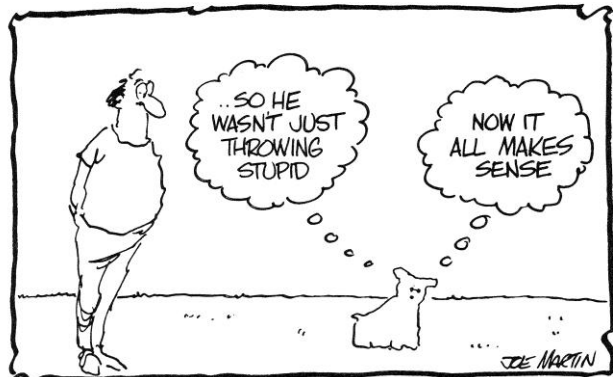
Pass
Pass

Me

South

4♥
Pass

You can hardly blame Rolf for doubling holding three Aces after our less-than-scientific auction to reach slam. He led the ♦A and could then only score the ♥A. Two of his Aces were useless on defense. As it turns out there is no lead that beats the contract because the ♦A can be easily ruffed out.



Joe Martin
Mr. Boffo - Unclear On the Concept

Show and Tell

By Judith and Nicholas Gartaganis

Sometimes declarer can force his opponents to reveal their distribution to their detriment. On the following deal, Gordon Campbell was declarer in 3NT on the lead of the ♣4.

IMPs

Contract: 3NT

Lead: ♣4

♠	A75
♥	AJ8
♦	6532
♣	K63
<div><div></div><div>N</div><div>W<div></div>E</div><div>S</div></div>	
♠	KJ43
♥	Q95
♦	AQJ8
♣	82

South opened 1NT (11-13) and after an invitational sequence where South responded 2♠ to Stayman, the final contract was 3NT. The expert opponents play upside down signals and lead 3rd or 5th best against both suits and NT. Although the combined point count is 25 there is a lot of work to be done to win nine tricks.

Gordon's play was the ♣3 since he didn't want to risk his sole club stopper on the initial lead. East played the ♣Q and returned the ♣10. West covered with the ♣J and Gordon won the trick with the King. His next play was the ♦2 from dummy and he received good news (and potentially bad ... he needed those four diamond tricks) when East played the ♦K. Gordon cashed the ♦Q and was relieved to see East follow with the ♦7. Declarer's trick count was up to eight (four diamonds, two spades, one heart and one club). When Gordon cashed the ♦J and ♦8 East pitched the ♥3 and then the ♥4. On the last diamond West pitched the ♥6.

In the absence of any information declarer's best option is to combine chances by cashing two top spades hoping the Queen comes down and fall back on the finesse for the ♥K. This assumes clubs are 5-3 and that the opponents will be able to defeat your contract if they get in. Another possibility is to hope clubs are 4-4 and finesse for the ♥K immediately.

Gordon reasoned that clubs were 5-3 based on the opening lead and the opponents' discards and it looked as though East had the ♥K. That seemed to leave declarer with only one viable option – finesse East for the ♠Q for his ninth trick.

However, Gordon pondered and came up with a better solution. Can you see what Gordon spotted?

He travelled to dummy's ♠A (West played the ♠9 and East the ♠2) and led the ♣6, pitching the ♥9! West won the trick and proceeded to cash two more clubs. East let go of the ♠6 and ♠8 while Gordon threw the ♠4 and ♥Q. This was the end position when West led the ♥10.

♠	7
♥	AJ
♦	--
♣	--
<div><div></div><div>N</div><div>W<div></div>E</div><div>S</div></div>	
♠	KJ
♥	5
♦	--
♣	--

Backing his judgement about the location of the ♥K Gordon rose with the ♥A and played the ♠7 from dummy. East followed with the ♠10. Since Gordon assumed East had the ♥K, he rose with the ♠K dropping West's Queen.

The full deal was:

♠	A75		♠	10862
♥	AJ8		♥	K743
♦	6532		♦	K7
♣	K63		♣	Q107
♠	Q9	<div><div></div><div>N</div><div>W<div></div>E</div><div>S</div></div>		
♥	1062			
♦	1094			
♣	AJ954			
		♠	KJ43	
		♥	Q95	
		♦	AQJ8	
		♣	82	

Declarer's play of the club suit forcing West to take his tricks allowed him to get a complete picture of the opponents' distribution. What could poor West do? If he didn't take his club tricks then declarer would have had an easy play for his ninth trick. West could only hope that Gordon would misread the end position – but not today!

A Fun Deal (from my point of view)

By Daniel Bertrand

I am playing a team game on BBO. I pick up the following hand with everyone non-vulnerable:

♠-- ♥Q92 ♦9876 ♣AQJ643

My RHO passes. I could open 3♣, but we might belong in 4♥. I decide to pass. Also, one of my opponents has already passed, so I am just as likely to pre-empt partner as my LHO. This is what I tell myself as LHO opens 2♣! Partner passes and RHO bids 2♦ (promising at least one King). My opponents should have a game (at least); they probably have a good spade fit. I have good distribution and strongly prefer a club lead so I bid 3♣. LHO bids 3NT and my partner puts me in 4♣. RHO doubles.

LHO leads the ♦A and I get my first view of dummy.

IMPs

Contract: 4♣x

Lead: ♦A

♠ Q10986
♥ K54
♦ 2
♣ 10872

N
W ■ E
S

♠ --
♥ Q92
♦ 9876
♣ AQJ643

South	West	North	East
--	--	--	Pass
Pass	2♣	Pass	2♦
3♣	3NT	4♣	DBL
All Pass			

My opponents missed their 8-card spade fit ☹. Dummy and I have 14 points. LHO should have most of the missing 26 points. Partner has a great hand for me: four trumps and diamond shortness. RHO follows with the ♦3 (standard signal). LHO thinks and continues with the ♦K. I ruff with the ♣7. A crossruff seems obvious. I play a small spade from dummy (RHO pauses and produces a small spade) and ruff with the ♣3. I ruff another diamond with the ♣8, another spade with the ♣4, another diamond with the ♣10. Diamonds were 4-4, LHO

started with AKQJ. I ruff another spade with the ♣6 to reach this end position:

♠ Q10
♥ K54
♦ --
♣ 2

N
W ■ E
S

♠ --
♥ Q92
♦ --
♣ AQJ

It seems that my RHO had a spade honour. This means that LHO has the ♥A and ♣K. I cash the ♣A as both opponents follow low. LHO has only one trump left. I play a small heart, LHO must play small or I will have two heart tricks. I win the ♥K and ruff another spade. RHO had the Ace and LHO, the King. It is a three-card ending. I know that LHO has one club and two hearts. I exit with my last trump. LHO wins the ♣K, cashes the ♥A and plays a heart to my Queen. I end up losing one heart, one diamond and one club to make my contract for +510. My teammates have no interference and reach 4♠ going down two. We still win 9imps. (Note: I improved my opponents' defense to make the hand more challenging.)

The full deal was:

♠ Q10986	♠ A743
♥ K54	♥ 8763
♦ 2	♦ 10543
♣ 10872	♣ 9
♠ KJ52	♠ --
♥ AJ10	♥ Q92
♦ AKQJ	♦ 9876
♣ K5	♣ AQJ643

East-West have 26 points, but they cannot make any game. They have only eight tricks in no-trump after a club lead. North-South can always take 10 tricks in clubs. Check it out!

Do You Have the Queen? Go Fish!

By Janet Galbraith

You hold this nice 17-point hand and "see" your partner open 1♥:

♠AQxx ♥Kxx ♦KQx ♣Kxx

Unopposed, your side generates this auction:

Partner	You
1♥	1♠
3♥	4♣
4♦	4NT
5♦	??

As soon as your partner jumps in hearts, you are sure there is a slam, and cue-bidding ensues. You reject 3♠ as a potential cue-bid just to make sure that partner doesn't place you with more spades than you have and knows that hearts is the trump suit.

Playing Roman Key-Card Blackwood (RKCB) 1430, partner's 5♦ response shows zero or three key cards. Given his jump in his suit, you are 100% sure he has three. Now you have visions of a grand slam! Three Aces only adds up to 12 HCP and partner's jump promises something closer to 18 HCP. Does he have the trump Queen? If so, does he have the ♠K?

So many questions to ask. You confidently bid 5♥ and ... partner passes!!! How can that be? What has gone wrong? Undo undo!

Partner declares 5♥ and makes all the tricks. You pour yourself some more wine and glare at the BBO screen.

Between rounds you get a chance to discuss the outcome with partner, who is an expert player. What comes out of that conversation is a realization that each of you ask for the ♥Q very differently.

Many of you play 1430 RKCB and know about the Queen-ask as part of the convention. The basics are that after partner responds either 5♣ or 5♦ to 4NT, your next cheapest bid asks for the Queen of trumps. If partner does not have it, he signs off in the lowest available level of trumps. If he does have it, he bids his cheapest side King. If he has the Queen but no side King, he bids 5NT.

Clear enough right? The one murky spot is when hearts is the trump suit and partner responds 5♦, as in the above example. How do you ask for the Queen?

Eddie Kantar's book on RKCB espouses the style that I play, which I learned somewhere back in the 90's in Toronto. Over a 5♦ response, (assuming, as here, you are virtually certain

partner has three key cards) if you want to know about the ♥Q, you bid 5♥, and if partner has three key cards, he carries on with the responses to the Queen ask. If he has zero key cards, he passes. I naturally assumed that everyone plays that way. Shockingly, I am wrong! 😞 (See Editors' Note below)

Turns out my partner plays that 5♠, as the next available non-trump step, asks about the Queen. He expected 5♥ to be a bailout bid - that 5♥ was as far as we could go.

I found a detailed RKCB article by Fred Gitelman, a Canadian World Champion who is the reason you are playing bridge this year, since he founded BBO. He advocates partner's approach. There are many articles out there supporting my approach, but just as many supporting my partner's.

Part of the debate hinges on whether a person would bid 4NT if he didn't already have at least one key card in his own hand. If you could have no key cards and bid 4NT, you might need to get out in 5♥ even if partner has three, as you still don't have enough key cards to play in slam. If you would always have at least one, and partner has three, you can still be safe at the six level. I belong to that camp, but others do not.

What all of this boils down to is that old adage -- Partnership Agreement!! Be aware that there is more than one solution to this specific problem and if you do play the Queen-ask, come to an understanding with your partner before the first hand is dealt.

Editors' note:

We prefer Janet's approach. Bidding Blackwood should never be frivolous.

*After 4NT and an "either/or" response, the responder must always continue over a "sign-off" bid with the higher number of promised key cards. For example, partner bids 4NT, you respond 5♣ (1 or 4) and partner signs off. You **must** continue holding four key cards. Similarly, if you respond 5♦ (0 or 3) and partner signs off, you **must** continue holding three key cards.*

How you continue is a matter of agreement, but it makes sense to give additional information with your continuation bid (such as confirming or denying the trump Queen, showing side kings, etc.).

It makes little sense to allow responder to pass with the higher number of key cards. If slam is still out of reach when partner has that many key cards, you shouldn't be bidding RKCB!

What Would You Lead - the Rest of the Story

By Allan Simon

(Please see page 8 for the lead-up to this piece.)

It's your lead holding:

♠ KQ1097 ♥ 7 ♦ J ♣ AJ10973

Your hand was in fact held by my partner Steve Lawrence. Steve reasoned as follows:

"If I lead the ♣A and it gets ruffed, Lucille might hold the ♠K for a spade pitch. Whereas if a spade lead gets ruffed, Lucille might still have a club loser."

So Steve led the ♠K. Right! Here is the full deal:

IMPs (All vulnerable)

Contract: 7♦x

Lead: ♠K

♠ 8	♠ 8	♠ 8
♥ AKQ43	♥ AKQ43	♥ AKQ43
♦ KQ98762	♦ KQ98762	♦ KQ98762
♣ --	♣ --	♣ --
♠ KQ1097	♠ KQ1097	♠ KQ1097
♥ 7	♥ 7	♥ 7
♦ J	♦ J	♦ J
♣ AJ10973	♣ AJ10973	♣ AJ10973
♠ 543	♠ 543	♠ 543
♥ 52	♥ 52	♥ 52
♦ A43	♦ A43	♦ A43
♣ KQ864	♣ KQ864	♣ KQ864

As you can see, on the ♣A lead, it is easy for Lucille to ruff, draw trumps ending in her hand, and pitch dummy's spade and a heart on the ♠KQ to make the grand slam. It is trickier if you lead one of your red suits, but the hand can still be made with the help of a ruffing finesse in clubs, and two heart ruffs in hand (declarer must play West to be 1-1 in the red suits and only draw one round of trumps). Steve's lead resulted in an 11-IMP gain instead of a 19-IMP loss.

A Little Bit of Unit 390 History

During the 2014 flood at ACBL headquarters in Horn Lake the entire building had to be evacuated. A massive cleanup was conducted during the evacuation and a number of long-lost files emerged from the deepest and darkest corners of the building. In the 1960's (pre-computer, for sure) records were maintained on a file card system. In many cases these records were anecdotal and hand written. The card below is a scanned record for Calgary Unit 390 circa 1960's.

Unit Membership	Sectional Dates & Title	No. of Tables	National Director
1960-130	Calgary Sec., Beacon Htl. Calgary 3/10-12/61	126-1/2	
1961-151	Calgary Sec., Calgary 3/9-11/62	167-1/2	
1962-194	Calgary Sec., Calgary 3/8-10/63	163	
1963-274	Calgary Sec., " 2/28-3/1/64	207	
1964-265	Calgary Labor Day Sec., Calgary 8/4-6/64	232, mostly	Phil Wood
1965-281	Calgary Sec., Calgary 3/5-7/65	210	
	Calgary Sec., Trade Winds Htl. Calgary-9/17-19/65	292	
1966-306	Calgary Sec. Trade Winds - Mar. 4-6/66	256	Phil Wood
	" " " " " " " "	298	
1967-330	Calgary Fall Sectional, Trade Winds - Sept. 16-18/66	280	Phil Wood
	Calgary Spr. Sec., Trade Winds Mtr. Htl. - Apr. 7-9/67	270	
	Calgary Sec., Trade Winds Mtr. Htl. - Sept. 15-17, 1967	231	
1968	Calgary Sec., Palliser Htl., - Mar. 8-10/68	300	Phil Wood
	Calgary Sec., Calgary Inn, Calgary-Sept. 27-29/68	278	Luise E.
1969	Calgary Sec., Calgary Inn, Calgary-Mar. 14-16/69		Phil Wood
	Calgary Fall Sec., Calgary Inn, Calgary Oct. 17-19/69		

Check out those membership numbers! And yikes! Look at the sectional table counts ... in March 1968 we hit 300 tables!

Interested in learning more about the history of bridge in Calgary? Ken Scott has penned a series of articles documenting some of the early days in Unit 390. You can read his articles on the Unit 390 website at <http://www.acblunit390.org/bridge-cafe>

"The optimist proclaims that we live in the best of all possible worlds; and the pessimist fears this is true."

James Branch Cabell (*The Silver Stallion*)

There's No Rush

By Gordon Campbell

Here is a recent declarer problem from a late round of this year's Canadian Seniors Teams Championship (CSTC).

Playing weak notrump, my partner opens 1♣ and raises my 1♥ response to 2♥. This shows a better hand than might appear. I know partner cannot hold a balanced 11-13 HCP hand, so he either holds 11-14 HCP with shortness somewhere or a balanced 14-16 HCP. I fleetingly consider raising to 3♥ because Aces are worth more than 4 HCP and we are playing IMPs, but my terrible 4-3-3-3 shape brings me back to reality.

<u>Partner</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>Me</u>	<u>West</u>
1♣	Pass	1♥	Pass
2♥	Pass	Pass	Pass
Pass	Pass		

West leads the ♦3 and we all get to see dummy.

♠ AK107
♥ KQ93
♦ K4
♣ 743

	N	
W	■	E
	S	

♠ 432
♥ A852
♦ A72
♣ 1098

This looks pretty easy – one spade loser and three club losers – maybe I will make an overtrick. At teams, one should always try to work out what might go wrong. The heart suit could divide 4-1 which would probably mean one more loser. OK, that's fine, but what if the spade suit is 5-1? Even on the simplest of hands, things can go wrong.

I decide to assume the lead is honest and that diamonds are not 7-1. So, I play ♦K then ♦A and ruff the ♦7. Now what? There is no rush to play on trumps and I will always have those club losers, so I play a club. The opponents switch to spades. I win and play another club.

If nothing else I am reducing their communications in case spades are 5-1. They win, cash the third club and exit a spade, dummy's King holding the trick and leaving this 5-card ending.

♠ 107
♥ KQ9
♦ --
♣

	N	
W	■	E
	S	

♠ 4
♥ A852
♦ --
♣ --

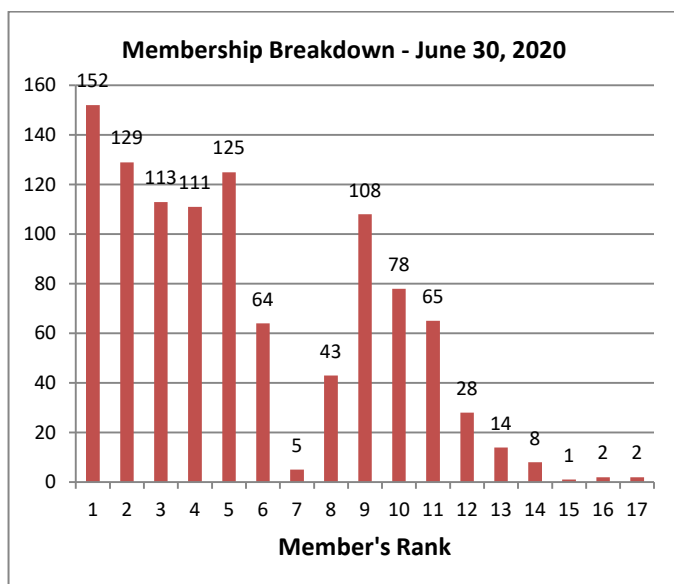
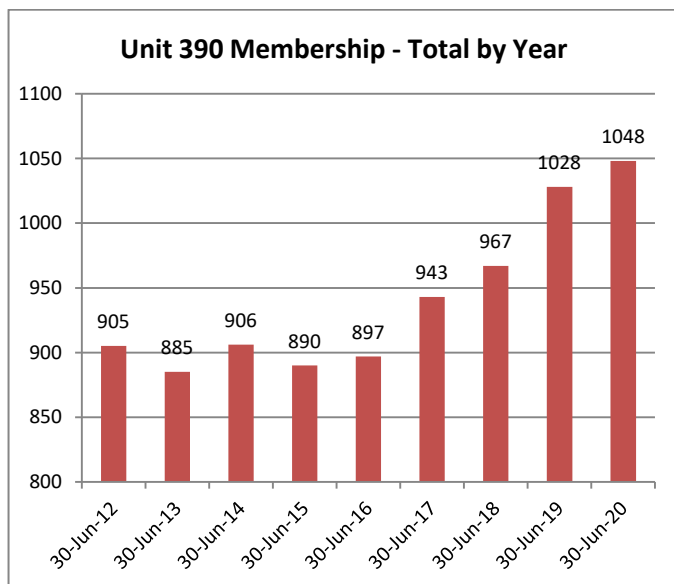
At least spades were not 5-1. It still isn't necessary to play trumps, so I lead a losing spade. Much to my surprise RHO ruffs and exits a trump. I win cheaply in dummy and claim making 3♥. What happened? RHO was 2-5-3-3 and with five tricks to go, he was trump-tight!

An amusing hand in that trumps were 5-0 but arguably I never lost a trump trick (despite RHO holding J10764) because the trump-trick he won was my losing spade trick.



Do me a favour. Take a few minutes off from playing online bridge. Your eyes will appreciate it.

Unit 390 Membership Stats 2012 - 2020



Legend

- | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------|
| 1 - Rookie (0-5) | 9 - Bronze LM |
| 2 - Junior Master (5-20) | 10 - Silver LM |
| 3 - Club Master (20-50) | 11 - Ruby LM |
| 4 - Sectional Master (50-100) | 12 - Gold LM |
| 5 - Regional Master (100-200) | 13 - Sapphire LM |
| 6 - NABC Master (200+) | 14 - Diamond LM |
| 7 - Advanced NABC Master | 15 - Emerald LM |
| 8 - Life Master | 16 - Platinum LM |
| | 17 - Grand LM |

699 non-Life Masters
349 Life Masters

Master Puzzle Solver

By Judith and Nicholas Gartaganis

Bridge players are puzzle solvers. They use clues from the actions of partner and the opponents to optimize their results. As a bridge player's experience grows she becomes more adept at finding the best solution. See how you do on the following puzzle.

IMPs

Contract: 4♥

Lead: ♠K

♠ 9643
♥ AQ95
♦ 643
♣ 42



♠ A2
♥ K108743
♦ AKJ
♣ K5

South

--

DBL³

3♥

West

1NT¹

Pass⁴

Pass

North

Pass

Pass

4♥

East

2♥²

2♠

All Pass

- 13-15 HCP
- transfer to spades
- any good hand
- denies three spades

Playing IMPs, 4♥ is the final contract after West opens 1NT. Even if West is a minimum he must hold the ♣A so leading towards the King is guaranteed to lose. You have the additional information that West holds only two spades. Is there a line of play that guarantees the contract?

Think about the puzzle, then turn to page 18 to read more.

Many thanks to our keen-eyed proof-readers: Janet and John Sharpe, Janet Galbraith, Delores Hedley and Lyman Warner.

The Online Game

By Stephen Paul

Online games offer a great learning opportunity if you take the time to go back and look at the hands closely. Thanks to the electronic record of the play, each deal can be completely reviewed including the bidding, trick-by-trick play, and how the opponents bid and declared the same deal.

The following deal comes from the Bidwell-Bridgejoy game on Monday, May 11th. With both sides vulnerable, East passes and South opens 1♣ with the following hand:

♠ QJ52 ♥ 5 ♦ Q92 ♣ AK842

The bidding proceeds as follows:

South	West	North	East
--	--	--	Pass
1♣	Pass	1♥	Pass
1♠ ¹	Pass	2♦ ²	Pass
2NT	Pass	4♠	All Pass

1. Two Souths bid 1NT
2. 4th suit forcing and artificial

At my table the lead was the ♠4 and I got my first view of dummy.

All Vulnerable
Contract: 4♠
Lead: ♠4

♠ K1073
♥ AQ97
♦ A105
♣ 97

N
W ■ E
S

♠ QJ52
♥ 5
♦ Q92
♣ AK842

It turned out that West made an unusual lead and was holding four spades to the Ace. When I reviewed the hand, the double dummy line of play is to lead a low diamond to dummy's 10. East can win the ♦K, but with the clubs breaking 3-3, declarer has time to ruff a club, concede the ♠A and use the ♦Q as a late entry to pull the last trump and run the clubs. If West knocks out the ♦Q while the spades are still blocked, declarer can play clubs, overruffing when West trumps in. Then a heart ruff is the hand entry to extract West's last trump.

The other four tables in spade contracts got a diamond lead which made life simpler. Willa Dumka was the only one who negotiated the play correctly to make 11 tricks and achieve a solo top board. The full deal was:

♠ K1073		♠ 6
♥ AQ97		♥ K10863
♦ A105		♦ K843
♣ 97		♣ Q65

♠ A984	N	
♥ J42	W ■ E	
♦ J76		
♣ J103	S	

♠ QJ52
♥ 5
♦ Q92
♣ AK842

The results for the field were:

Result	Declarer	NS Score	EW Score	NS MPs	EW MPs
4♠+1	S	650		100%	0.0%
3NT+1	S	630		78.6%	21.4%
3NT+1	N	630		78.6%	21.4%
3NT	N	600		57.1%	42.9%
2♠+1	S	140		42.9%	57.1%
4♠-2	S		200	14.3%	85.7%
4♠-2	S		200	14.3%	85.7%
4♠-2	S		200	14.3%	85.7%

Editors' note:

Astute readers may notice that there are several successful lines that yield 11 tricks after the spade lead, including this one:

Win the spade in hand and lead the ♦Q. Declarer can ruff three hearts in hand, using diamonds (finesse for the ♦J) and a club ruff to get to dummy. In the end position the fourth heart is led from dummy and declarer ruffs with the ♠Q.

Thought processes are:

- There are seven winners off the top -- three spades, one heart, one diamond and two clubs.
- The spade lead is a question mark.
- If clubs split 3-3 there will be five tricks available in that suit, (including the ruff).
- The diamonds can be finessed twice with a probability of success of about 75%.

The Kibitzer - October 2020

2020 Ace of Clubs Awards

Unit 390 Year-to-Date Standings - October 6th

0 to 5	1	Allan Tough	Calgary AB	50
	2	Matt Bootle	Calgary AB	26
	3	Margriet Huisman	Calgary AB	24
5 to 20	1	Barry Crozier	Cochrane AB	56
	2	Marie Nogier	Calgary AB	31
	3	Margerie Kaytor	Calgary AB	30
20 to 50	1	Doreen Lewis	Okotoks AB	43
	2	Carmel Robbins	Calgary AB	37
	3	Robert Hemmingway	Okotoks AB	33
50 to 100	1	Maurice Ormon	Calgary AB	90
	2	Terry Kaufman	Calgary AB	69
	3	Maira Misselbrook	Calgary AB	62
100 to 200	1	Richard Wolfe	Calgary AB	135
	2	Beverley Erickson	Calgary AB	133
	3	Martine Parent	Calgary AB	130
200 to 300	1	Hailong Yu	Calgary AB	174
	2	Richard Weinberger	Calgary AB	65
	3	Marguerite Paulsen	Calgary AB	36
300 to 500	1	Sandra Evans	Calgary AB	61
	2	Stephen Paul	Calgary AB	59
	3	Lois Matton	Calgary AB	55
500 to 1000	1	Andy McKaig	Calgary AB	104
	2	Brent Muir	Calgary AB	100
	3	Bob Gagnon	Calgary AB	84
1000 to 1500	1	Brigitte Tetzner	Calgary AB	105
	2	Dorothy Mersereau	Calgary AB	104
	3	Rick Boyd	Calgary AB	70
1500 to 2500	1	Michael Covey	Calgary AB	124
	2	Jim Murphy	Calgary AB	111
	3	Terri Bedard	Calgary AB	95
2500 to 3500	1	Dave Adelman	Calgary AB	130
	2	Jean Ward	Calgary AB	109
	3	Rod Hilderman	Calgary AB	88
3500 to 5000	1	Martin McDonald	Calgary AB	129
	2	Elaine Stewart	Calgary AB	121
	3	Jadwiga Polujan	Calgary AB	118
5000 to 7500	1	Daniel Bertrand	Calgary AB	148
	2	Pierre Beauregard	Calgary AB	75
	3	Nicole Beauregard	Calgary AB	71
7500 to 10,000	1	Francesca Walton	Calgary AB	1
	2/3	Steven Lawrence	Calgary AB	55
	2/3	Judith Gartaganis	Calgary AB	5
Over 10,000	1	Nicholas Gartaganis	Calgary AB	5

2020 Mini-McKenney Awards

Unit 390 Year-to-Date Standings - October 6th

0 to 5	1	Allan Tough	Calgary AB	50
	2	Matt Bootle	Calgary AB	26
	3	Margriet Huisman	Calgary AB	25
5 to 20	1	Barry Crozier	Cochrane AB	57
	2	Marie Nogier	Calgary AB	31
	3	Margerie Kaytor	Calgary AB	30
20 to 50	1	Doreen Lewis	Okotoks AB	44
	2	Carmel Robbins	Calgary AB	39
	3	Robert Hemmingway	Okotoks AB	33
50 to 100	1	Maurice Ormon	Calgary AB	95
	2	Maira Misselbrook	Calgary AB	92
	3	Terry Kaufman	Calgary AB	83
100 to 200	1	Martine Parent	Calgary AB	163
	2	Richard Wolfe	Calgary AB	158
	3	Beverley Erickson	Calgary AB	139
200 to 300	1	Hailong Yu	Calgary AB	189
	2	Richard Weinberger	Calgary AB	73
	3	Jane Lamont	Calgary AB	44
300 to 500	1	John Prance	Calgary AB	78
	2	Stephen Paul	Calgary AB	73
	3	Sandra Evans	Calgary AB	71
500 to 1000	1	Andy McKaig	Calgary AB	113
	2	Brent Muir	Calgary AB	105
	3	Bob Gagnon	Calgary AB	92
1000 to 1500	1	Dorothy Mersereau	Calgary AB	127
	2	Brigitte Tetzner	Calgary AB	105
	3	Rick Boyd	Calgary AB	88
1500 to 2500	1	Helen Dillen	Calgary AB	137
	2	Michael Covey	Calgary AB	129
	3	Jim Murphy	Calgary AB	116
2500 to 3500	1	Dave Adelman	Calgary AB	151
	2	Jean Ward	Calgary AB	116
	3	Gamil Tadros	Calgary AB	107
3500 to 5000	1	Martin McDonald	Calgary AB	152
	2	Elaine Stewart	Calgary AB	121
	3	Jadwiga Polujan	Calgary AB	121
5000 to 7500	1	Daniel Bertrand	Calgary AB	209
	2	Allan Simon	Calgary AB	118
	3	Pierre Beauregard	Calgary AB	104
7500 to 10,000	1	Francesca Walton	Calgary AB	11
	2/3	Steven Lawrence	Calgary AB	86
	2/3	Judith Gartaganis	Calgary AB	35
Over 10,000	1	Nicholas Gartaganis	Calgary AB	35

Member Milestones

The following members have reached new masterpoint milestones from the beginning of April 2020 to the end of September 2020. Congratulations to all on their achievements.



New Junior Masters (5+ MPs):

Trudy Allan	Donna Michael
John Abra	Eric Olsen
Audrey Chastko	Adelle Palmer
Florence Fam	Kathy Pinder
Sandra Fiell	Jay Peers
Harold Jacques	Adiel Rautenbach
Julie Jacques	Donna Romanchuk
Laurie Jones	David Stephure
Sherry Krause	Melvin Teghtmeyer
Ginny Macdonald	Babett Valachi
Harihara Mahadevan	Gordon Wells
Sheila McAlpine	Mary Ellen Wells
Dianne McCubbin	Bill Westwood

New Club Masters (20+ MPs with at least 5 black)

Matt Bootle	Margerie Kaytor
Andrew Bout	Marika Kohut
Wendy Bower	Jan Langley
Shirley Drew	Ted Lobley
Elizabeth Eng	Lynn Marshall
Carol Graham	Marie Nogier
Theone Gutstein	Jan Olthof
Len Hagel	Judy Peacock
Margriet Huisman	Dave Ross
Michele Hyndman	Allan Tough

New Sectional Masters (50+ MPs with at least 10 black and 5 silver)

Vincenzo Botha	Barbara Litchinsky
Clement Chan	Suzan Olsen
Marie Collins	Linda Pavey
Barry Crozier	Orville Pyrcz
Sabrina Fayerman	Carmel Robbins
Doreen Lewis	Bill Trafford

New Regional Masters (100+ MPs with at least 15 black, 15 silver and 5 red, gold or platinum)

Keith Barry	Brian Kinder
Ron Caulfield	Beth Little
John Collins	Michael McDonough
Philip Coppard	Andrew Melton
Donna Dahl	Norman Miller
Carolanne DeBiasio	George Ongyerth
Barbara Feick	Susan Ongyerth
Terry Kaufman	Maurice Ormon

New NABC Masters (200+ MPs with at least 20 black, 25 silver, 5 gold or platinum and 15 additional red, gold or platinum)

Zan Aycok	Moira Misselbrook
Cheryl Bourne	Catharine Moore
Nan Douglas	Lisa O'Hara
Stewart Brightman	Martine Parent
Beverley Erickson	Cindy Watt
Antara Keelor	Richard Wolfe
Kathleen Malo	

New Life Masters (500+ MPs with at least 75 black, 75 silver, 50 gold or platinum and 50 additional red, gold or platinum)

Ryan Clark	Bruce Petrie
Jane Lamont	

New Bronze Life Masters (a Life Master with 750+ MPs; 500+ for members prior to Jan. 1, 2010)

Heather Bourne	Brent Muir
Lily Lister	Andrew Serafini

New Silver Life Masters (1000+ MPs; a Life Master with at least 200 pigmented points)

Ronald Carswell	Andy McKaig
Camille Collver	Rolf Saetre
Avril Karr	Lorraine Somerville

New Ruby Life Masters (1500+ MPs; a Life Master with at least 300 pigmented points)

Gail Godwin	Elizabeth Sprague
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New Gold Life Masters (2500+ MPs; a Life Master with at least 500 pigmented points)

Ian Findlay	Yvette Tapuska
Faiz Nadir	

New Sapphire Life Masters (3500+ MPs; a Life Master with at least 350 gold or platinum and 350 additional pigmented points)

Marlene Lenstra

New Diamond Life Masters (5000+ MPs; a Life Master with at least 500 gold or platinum and 500 additional pigmented points)

Janet Galbraith



Master Puzzle Solver - How Did You Fare?

By Judith and Nicholas Gartaganis

This story continues from page 12. Here is a reminder of the layout:

IMPs

Contract: 4♥

Lead: ♠K

♠ 9643
♥ AQ95
♦ 643
♣ 42



♠ A2
♥ K108743
♦ AKJ
♣ K5

An inexperienced declarer will win the first trick, pull trumps (they are 2-1), and then proceed to take a finesse in diamonds. There is just enough room for East to hold the ♠J and the ♦Q. The probability that this line of play will succeed is minimal.

The more experienced player knows that he may be able to engineer an endplay against West. He allows the ♠K to hold the first trick (to avoid letting East win the second round of spades), takes the ♠A on the second trick, pulls trumps and then plays ♦A, ♦K and ♦J. Whenever West holds the ♦Q (highly probable) he is endplayed into giving declarer the ♣K.

Note that there is no need to eliminate spades ... declarer knows West has only a doubleton.

The expert puzzle solver initially follows the same line of play as the experienced player i.e. he allows the ♠K to hold the first trick, and pulls trumps. At this juncture the expert makes a simple, but easily overlooked play. He leads a low club away from his King! This play works no matter who holds the ♦Q.

Let's see what happens. Suppose West wins the trick cheaply. He can cash the ♣A, but then has to lead diamonds giving declarer his 10th trick. If East is allowed to win the club trick what can he do? A diamond play allows declarer to win the ♦A and play the ♣K endplaying West.

Note that if declarer had won the first trick and tried to follow this line of play East could win the first club and play a diamond. Now when declarer plays the ♣K West wins with the Ace and exits with his spade to escape the endplay. Alternatively, East can even play a second club to West's ♣A while East still has his safe spade exit. What East must absolutely not do is play spades ... West desperately needs to be able to hang on to his second spade as an out-card.

The full deal was:

♠ 9643		♠ Q10875
♥ AQ95		♥ 2
♦ 643		♦ 952
♣ 42		♣ J1087
♠ KJ		
♥ J6		
♦ Q1087		
♣ AQ963		
	♠ A2	
	♥ K108743	
	♦ AKJ	
	♣ K5	

The line of play an expert sees (missed by the rest of us) is often simple and elegant, but by no means obvious – worthy of a master puzzle solver designation.



No Imagination!

By Judith Gartaganis

Have you ever thought during a bridge auction "How can I possibly find out if partner has the right cards for me?" It can happen all the time in complex auctions that are usually at a high level. Perhaps you are looking for that elusive twelfth trick for slam (or maybe even the thirteenth!)

Several years ago, I started playing a Modified Precision system where a 1♣ opening bid substitutes for the more typical 2♣ strong opening. One club is strong, artificial and forcing but not necessarily as strong as a standard 2♣ opening. It generally shows 17 or more HCP if balanced, 16 or more HCP if unbalanced.

The upside of this type of system is that the bidding starts lower on strong hands, giving more room for investigation. The downside (there always is one!) is that the remainder of your entire bidding system is influenced by the "strong club". All other bids, including jump shifts, reverses and jump raises, are limited.

I have come to understand that another big plus is that one must learn the Greek alphabet ... at least the first few letters. Why? Because there are a variety of asking bids that are incorporated into the system and they are named Alpha, Beta, Gamma, and so on. These bids can be used by the player with the strong hand after partner makes a positive response (showing 8+ HCP, game forcing) and they ask partner questions ... partner is a puppet! How good is that?

Here is a very basic chart:

Alpha bid	After partner responds with a positive bid, a new suit bid asks partner about his fit in that suit and the number of controls he holds - responses are in steps
Beta bid	After partner responds with a positive 1♥ or 1♠, 1NT asks partner about the number of controls he holds (Ace = 2 controls, King = 1 control)
Gamma bid	After partner responds with a positive in a suit, raising partner's suit asks about the quality of his suit
Delta bid	Later in auctions, a bid in a side suit asks about controls in that suit
Epsilon bid	After partner responds with a positive 1♥ or 1♠ and then responds to a Beta 1NT control-ask bid, a bid in a new suit asks partner for his specific holding in that suit (again in steps: 0 or 1 small, 2 or 3 small, 4+ small, 1 honour, 2 honours, etc.)

It seems, you would think, that there are plenty of ways to ask whatever one needs to know. Well, check out this hand ...

You open an artificial strong club holding:

♠KQ984 ♥A ♦K53 ♣AQJ7

Partner surprises you by responding 2♣, showing five or more clubs with 8+ HCP, game forcing.

You have a couple of options, and one is clearly better than the other. You could bid 3♣ (Gamma) asking "how good is your club holding?". That will tell you immediately whether or not partner has the ♣K. But what a waste!

Instead, you should try 2♠ (Alpha) which asks two questions at once: "what is your spade holding and how many controls do you have?" Partner responds 3♣ (denying as much as Hxx in spades, but showing four or more controls).

OK, spades don't appear to be the best option for trump, so you can ask about club quality now. 4♣ asks "what is your club suit like?" Partner responds 4NT (showing 6+ clubs with one of the top three honours).

Time to take stock. Partner has at least 2 Aces or 1 Ace and 2 Kings. You have found out he has one King in clubs. He must have an Ace, but does he have two Aces? (which would make the club grand slam cold).

Here is the auction so far:

Me	Partner
1♣	2♣
2♠	3♣
4♣	4NT
???	

Hmmm. Now what? You can ask what partner's diamond holding is (5♦ is a Delta ask about controls in the diamond suit). If he doesn't have first round control of diamonds, then you can comfortably bid 6♣ (he has ♣K and so must have the ♠A and ♥K and your ♦K will be protected).

But, if he does have first round control of diamonds (5NT), then what? He might still have the ♠A too.

It seems there is no way to find out everything you need to know to be certain the grand slam is a laydown.

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No Imagination! (continued)

But wait! There is exactly one bid you can make that might help. You can make a Delta-ask in hearts (about which you care nothing, really!). If partner shows second round control of hearts, you know he has ♣K, ♥K and at least one ace. You still won't know whether he has the two Aces you need for the grand slam.

However ... if partner denies second round control of hearts (no ♥K) then presto! You know that to get up to four (or more) controls, he must have the two Aces to go along with his ♣K. You can bid 7♣ with confidence.

As for me? I reached the "how can I find out everything I need to know" stage and settled for the namby-pamby 6♣ contract. No imagination!

Here is the complete layout:

♠ A5		♠ J76
♥ 97		♥ QJ6532
♦ A86		♦ Q94
♣ K109652		♣ 3
♠ 1032		♠ KQ984
♥ K1084		♥ A
♦ J1072		♦ K53
♣ 84		♣ AQJ7

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Let's All Drink to Lockdown ...

A Lockdown Poem by Jan Beaumont, New Zealand

I'm normally a social girl
I love to meet my mates
But lately with the virus here
We can't go out the gates.

You see, we are the 'oldies' now
We need to stay inside
If they haven't seen us for a while
They'll think we've upped and died.

They'll never know the things we did
Before we got this old
There wasn't any Facebook
So not everything was told.

We may seem, sweet old ladies,
Who would never be uncouth
But we grew up in the 60s -
If you only knew the truth!

There was sex and drugs and rock 'n roll
The pill and miniskirts
We smoked, we drank, we partied
And were quite outrageous flirts.

Then we settled down, got married
And turned into someone's mum,
Somebody's wife, then nana,
Who on earth did we become?

We didn't mind the change of pace
Because our lives were full
But to bury us before we're dead
Is like a red rag to a bull!

So here you find me stuck inside
For four weeks, maybe more
I finally found myself again
Then I had to close the door!

It didn't really bother me
I'd while away the hour
I'd bake for all the family
But I've got no bloody flour!

Now Netflix is just wonderful
I like a gutsy thriller
I'm swooning over Idris
Or some random sexy killer.

At least I've got a stash of booze
For when I'm being idle
There's wine and whiskey, even gin
If I'm feeling suicidal!

So let's all drink to lockdown
To recovery and health
And hope this bloody virus
Doesn't decimate our wealth.

We'll all get through the crisis
And be back to join our mates
Just hoping I'm not far too wide
To fit through the flaming gates!

Bridge in the COVID-19 Era

By Crystal and Doug Mann

Bridge has definitely taken on a new format since COVID-19 hit earlier this year. With face-to-face bridge shut down for the foreseeable future, players have switched to online bridge sites to get their fix. To give you a flavour for how much online bridge has changed, consider the player counts on Bridge Base Online ("BBO"). Before COVID-19 hit, 8,000 players online at the same time was a huge number. Now, having 55,000 people playing online at any given time is the norm. BBO has had its growing pains to accommodate this surge in numbers. Not only did they have to massively increase their system capacity, they had to ramp up staff requirements for directing staff and programming staff.

BBO, in conjunction with the ACBL, also had to develop entirely new concepts in bridge play to accommodate ACBL games. The first of these concepts was the "Support Your Club" (SYC) game where players signed up for a SYC game that awarded masterpoints. After BBO and the ACBL were paid, the remainder of the proceeds were allocated on a pro rata basis to the clubs in which each individual player had played in the past year – a bit of an accounting nightmare as you can imagine!

The next innovation was the "Virtual ACBL Club" game in which many of you now play. Clubs could set up online games, establish their own fees, and collect the proceeds after BBO is paid. The ACBL has now embraced this new format with online regionals and a whole series of other online events.

For players, online bridge has had its good and bad points. Part of the enjoyment of bridge is the ability to see friends on a regular or semi-regular basis. That is no longer an option while COVID-19 affects us. Another issue is that some players are physically unable to play online or are uncomfortable with the concept of online bridge. On the other side, players can make dates for a bridge game with someone across the continent where in the face-to-face bridge days they might only see each other at an occasional tournament.

What has it meant for life as a director? Well, some things have remained the same and a number of things that have changed.

The administrative tasks – arranging partners, registering players, setting up games and the like – are effectively the same or similar to what a director needed to do in the face-to-face days. As well, the Laws that we use to adjudicate the games haven't changed at all.

What is different? Well, the types of calls we get are very different. In the world of face-to-face bridge, the usual calls (in approximate order of frequency) are:

- "Director, can you correct the score – I entered the wrong score and East accepted it"
- "Director, we have a bid/lead out of turn"
- "Director we have an insufficient bid"
- "Director, I have 14 cards (or 15 or 16) and Joe has 12 (or 11 or 10)"
- "Director we have a revoke (or think we have a revoke)"

BBO doesn't allow any of these things to happen (despite what some players will try to say!) so directors don't have to deal with those calls.

Instead, we get calls along these lines:

- Opponent / partner isn't playing – have they been disconnected?
- Opponents don't have a convention card
- Opponents won't tell me what their agreement is about a particular call
- Opponents won't talk to me at all!
- Opponents are SLLOOOOWWWW (even if they aren't!)
- I want an Average+ on the last board because the opponents were slow on the first board (even if they have played 10 tricks on the last board of the round)

And the winner for most common director call is (drum roll please...): adjudicating boards that were incomplete when time ran out on a round.

Unlike face-to-face bridge, there is very little latitude for adding time to a round, even if the majority of players aren't finished playing. As directors we then have the responsibility to, as equitably as possible, come up with an expected result. We get help from GIB (the double dummy simulator) which shows the double dummy result of the play of each possible card at the time play stops. We must assess whether the double dummy line makes sense (how did you know that the king was singleton offside?). Some hands are easy – you can count the tricks in top cards or one line of play is logical. Other deals do not lend themselves to such clear answers – two-way finesses for a queen or choices in the defense (things like partner leads a suit to a winner on dummy and if you ruff, they will make the contract whereas if you discard they will go down – plays a high level player might find but a player of lesser caliber might well not). In those cases we have no choice but to assign an artificial score such as Average.

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Bridge in the COVID-19 Era (continued)

There are some unfortunate things and some hugely funny things that come up. Some of the funny calls we have encountered:

- Player: "My computer is playing my hand"
Director: "No that's your partner – you are the dummy!"

And the corollary:

- Player: "My partner is stuck, they can't/won't play"
Director: "That's because they are the dummy and you are declarer. It is your play from dummy."
- Player: "If I had known that my partner's 2♦ overcall was natural I would have bid/played differently."
Director: "You should probably talk to your partner about that."

We do see some unfortunate activity on BBO though. These include:

- Zero tolerance violations – We have seen more rude behaviour toward partners and opponents in the last six months than in the previous ten years combined. For some reason, players seem to think that they can say things online that they would never dream of saying in person. The good news is that BBO is serious about cracking down on zero tolerance violations and players will be removed for such violations where that might not happen in face-to-face bridge.
- Accusations of ethical violations – There are more accusations that an opposing pair is cheating, even if there is no indication. For example: "LHO passed partner's opening bid holding 2-4-5-2 with 8 HCP, and missed playing in 3♥ with a 5-0 trump break – they must have been looking at the hands". Unfortunately, there are also more actual cases of cheating (including a relatively well-known pro who was self-kibitzing). Directors end up reporting suspicious activity more often on BBO than in face-to-face (partly because, with all the play going through a single site, it is easier to collect the data). BBO has a dedicated person reviewing incident reports for patterns of behaviour.
- There are more instances of players gaming the system by deliberately (or apparently deliberately) slow-playing a difficult hand to run the clock out on a round so that the late play will have to be adjudicated double dummy.

We have some suggestions from a director's point of view for players:

1. If you play with someone on a relatively regular basis, please build and post a convention card. If you're not sure how to do that, the ABTA (American Bridge Teachers Association) has created a very good YouTube

video that has all you need to know about creating, editing and posting a convention card. The video is at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oKdraqR2bSA>

2. If you want to work out the kinks with a partner, consider using the Casual Bridge room on BBO rather than the regular games. Pick-up games in the Casual room are designed to be a lot more free-form and allow more time for discussion about hands. It will be a lot less frustrating for you and your opponents.
3. If you are self-alerting a bid, fill in an explanation rather than just hitting the Alert button. There are two reasons for this. First, there are no concerns about partner getting unauthorized information from your description since partner cannot see the explanation. In our experience, virtually every alert without explanation draws a request from the opponents for information so it saves time in the long run to just fill in the explanation at the time of the alert. Second, and probably more importantly, when you just hit the Alert button it puts a fine red line around the bid. For people with vision issues (think Crystal!) this is very hard to see. If you fill the explanation in, it colours the box yellow which is much easier to see.
4. As in face-to-face bridge, be sure to describe your bid rather than just use a convention name. Particularly with conventions like Bergen and Drury, there are variations in how players apply the convention. So a description like "4+ trumps, 6-8 HCP" is a much better thing to type than "Bergen".
5. When you are playing BBO tournaments, all the regular Laws of Duplicate Bridge apply. This means that things like potential Unauthorized Information from breaks in tempo still apply (even if it is due to a slow connection rather than a pause for thought). Also, things like contested claims are adjudicated in exactly the same way as they would be in face-to-face bridge. If no line of play is stated (e.g. "drawing the last trump" or "ruffing a diamond then drawing trump" or the like) and an opponent disputes the claim, the Director will review the remaining play and determine if there is a line of play that is "careless or inferior for the class of player involved" in the words of the Laws but is not illogical (such as playing the lowest card of a suit rather than the highest). Any doubtful points will be adjudicated in favour of the non-claiming side.

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Bridge in the COVID-19 Era (continued)

6. Miscocks (hitting the wrong bid or wrong card) occur a lot more frequently than true mechanical errors do in face-to-face bridge. To minimize this, you can go into the Settings area (under Account on the right hand side of the screen) and turn the "Confirm Bids" and "Confirm Plays" switches on. This means it takes an extra mouse click to make a bid or play, taking a little extra time, but potentially preventing some very embarrassing situations. Imagine an auction where you click 1♥ when you meant to click 1♠ and your partner drags you kicking and screaming to 4♥ on your 4-0 fit when you could have played 4♠ on your 6-3 fit!
 7. What if you do misclick? There is currently no provision on BBO to fix a misclick so be careful. Do not blab to the table that you made a misclick – that gives Unauthorized Information to your partner. You are under no obligation to tell the opponents that you misclicked (any more than you are required to tell opponents in face-to-face bridge that you made a mechanical error). If asked the meaning of a bid that is a misclick, you should give them the meaning of the bid you made rather than the bid you intended. Think of it in terms of face-to-face bridge: how would your partner describe your agreement of the bid he sees?
 8. When you play in a tournament, remember to be as kind and gentle as you would be in face-to-face bridge. As a suggestion, when you reach a new pair, click on their names to see how many logins they have had. If they have had fewer than about 700 logins, treat them like you would novices – they really are novices when it comes to online bridge even if they are Grand Life Masters. That means giving them a little leeway in terms of late alerts and pace of play as they will still be getting used to the differences that online play bring.
 9. Get used to Private Chat in bridge, particularly with the director. For the most part, BBO defaults to chatting to the table but this can have Unauthorized Information implications as well as being a distraction to players at the table, especially if you are talking to the Director about a previous hand. If you click on a person's name (e.g. ACBL_28 or dcmann) you can chat privately with that person without displaying messages to the table.
 10. In our opinion, online bridge will be the main form of play for a significant period of time. With that in mind, get back to doing the things that you would have done in face-to-face bridge. This could include things like mentoring a newer player for example 😊.
- Online bridge is a whole new world. It certainly has its challenges and limitations, but it has some distinct advantages. If you haven't played online bridge yet, consider giving it a try. If you have, remember to have fun and be nice at the table!

