



Welcome

Welcome to the first newsletter of 2019, and a warm welcome even though the weather has gone a bit cooler over this last weekend. I hope that you have enjoyed settling back into the Palmerston North Contract Bridge Club's monthly playing schedule. The Committee is trying to give everyone (we hope!) the chance to play a varied programme each month. Your feedback is always welcome, especially any ideas about how we can "mix it up" even more to keep you enjoying your bridge.

Our focus over the summer months has been to work with a member of the New Zealand Bridge Association who has been tasked with supporting Clubs to engage with, and build up, their membership. This is a challenge for us in Palmerston North as it is in other Clubs throughout New Zealand. A start has been made to freshen up the Club Rooms and enormous thanks are due to Anne Gordon who has led this from the Committee with a team of dedicated volunteers.

If you feel that you have the drive and energy to support the Committee to do more of this in 2019, then your chance will come at the AGM on Friday March 29 at 5.30 pm in the Club Rooms. Please let your room rep know if you feel you could give to the Club through helping out on the Committee. At the very least, it would be great to see you at the meeting when we will give our annual report to Club members and look for your support for the way we are moving forward.

Meanwhile, happy bridging!

Denise Servante
Vice-president

Club and Tournament Results

In this section, we will report the winners for each month and anyone who has done well at a tournament. Be warned there maybe photography involved! I can't possibly know who has done well in every tournament so please email me any results to e.burrows@massey.ac.nz.

This year we are giving a prize for the highest score achieved in our Club sessions. Already there have been some very high scores. Frontrunners are:

Malcolm Loudon	81.25%	Novice Plus
Maxine Keay		
Grant Elliott	73.61%	Novice Plus
Tony Fayerman		
Jenny Wilson	70.54%	Monday
Alan Doddridge		Afternoon

Liz Burrows
Secretary

News from/for the rooms

I would like to encourage members to contact their room reps or myself with any news that they consider worth sharing: special birthdays, celebratory events in members' lives, illness and bereavements in order that the club can celebrate and support our members better.

In this issue, we celebrate the 99th birthday of one of our daytime members, Joan McIntosh. Happy birthday, Joan!

Also, a massive achievement from another of our daytime players, Clare Veltman who has, as many of you know, just walked the Te Aroha trail. An amazing effort, Clare. Congratulations!

Tony Clear
Committee Member

From Clare's Blog



I set off on 23 September 2018 so the walk took 130 days. I wore out 3 pairs of boots, 2 pairs of gaiters, 4 pairs of Coolmax socks (merino socks all still in good repair), 2 pairs of polyprops, 2 woollen base layers and 1 pair of drill shorts. I never even considered filtering water. I solicited 4 car rides and accepted 8 more. I spent 20 nights in my tent, 30 nights in huts, and 80 nights in cabins, backpackers, or homes. I've taken 2679 photos and reached page 370 in Marcel's slow burner of a masterpiece.

NOH, my friend Georgina and my brother Martin kept tabs on me for the locator beacon which, Allah be praised, is still mint. Thank you three, from my heart.

If I learned anything worth sharing it would be, stop and offer a lift when you see someone walking with a load. The kindness can change an entire day, I now know.

Finally, thanks for all the texts and emails of encouragement. They worked.

Clare Veltman
Star Trekker

Birthday Girl

Congratulations to Joan McIntosh, 99 years young on 27th February. Happy birthday, Joan, and here's wishing you many more bridging years to come!



Joan

Sprucing up the Club Rooms

Most people have noticed a change of colour to the Club Room walls. Thank you for all of your positive comments it makes the job more rewarding and a huge thank you to everyone who helped. This included people providing drop sheets, clearing the walls, as well as many hours of assistance with painting, a bit of a clean up and then restoring the equipment again. Also a big thank you to our friendly interior designer Robyn who chose the wall colour to suit some of our existing decor.

It's still a work in progress as we are working on changing the notice boards colour to tone in better with new colour scheme and purchasing new tablecloths. We are also looking at replacing our set of drawers and cabinet, so I'm going to be getting some quotes to take to the committee. We will be applying for funding to help with the costs of all of these, progress is a little slower than I would like! Watch this space...

Now a test of your powers of observation, where have I put pictures of Kings and Queens?

Anne Gordon
Rejuvenation Sub Committee Convenor

Double Trouble

Do you play a weak no trump? If you have only ever heard of the 12-14 variety you may believe this is the norm. Even if you have come across the strong no trump (anywhere between 15 and 18 points) perhaps you think that such an arrangement is unusual. In fact, although it is common in New Zealand, much of the rest of the world has either never adopted the weak no trump or has moved to the strong version.

As with many bidding systems and conventions, there is no right or wrong, just advantages and disadvantages. The main advantage of the weak no trump to my mind is that about a quarter of hands that you open will be in the range 12-14 points balanced. When you open 1NT, your partner will have a good idea where your side is heading whether it be part score, potential game, or potential slam. Secondly, it takes bidding space away from opponents. They will have to start competing at the two level. On the downside, it may be your partner who has to start looking for a fit at the two level which is not necessarily easy to do. Also, your opponents will have the same information as your partner and may be able to take effective counter-measures. A not uncommon counter-measure is the simple one of doubling for penalties. With a sparse 12-14 points and a partner with only a few points, such a contract may be painful for declarer.

At the Palmerston North Christmas Cheer my partner and I were involved in three hands where the bidding started 1NT – double. In each case, we lost out. Judge for yourself whether our poor results were due to bad luck or bad management.

	♠Q842	
Dealer: S	♥QJ95	
Vul: All	♦AQ4	
	♣53	
♠KT7		♠J6
♥876432		♥AK
♦J6		♦K2
♣92		♣AKQJ876
	♠A953	
	♥T	
	♦T98753	
	♣T4	

North	East	South	West
		Pass	Pass
1NT	Dble	Pass	2D*
Pass	5C	All Pass	

We are sitting EW and after two passes North opens 1NT. We are told that this shows 12-14 points balanced. Either North can't count or decides it is OK to open with 11 points third in hand. Such a strategy when vulnerable could easily lead to disaster, but, as fate would have it, produces a good result for NS and a bad one for us. It is tempting for me, sitting East, to bid five clubs straight away. After all, if you believe the bidding, my partner is going to have very few points if any. It may come to that eventually but since I would be on lead, I fancy defending the NT contract, so I double. South passes which is good news but my partner bids 2D which we play as a transfer to hearts. North breathes a sigh of relief and quickly passes.

I am now in a quandary. Partner probably has very few points with five or six hearts. With a likely spade lead from South, 3NT doesn't seem the right spot but stopping in a part score looks wimpy with my hand. I can either take a chance with a bid of 5C or hope my partner has a six card suit and bid straight to 4H. Either could be right. I plump for five clubs which is makeable and could give us a reasonable board, but that pesky North opener is my downfall.

South leads the ten of diamonds, to which North contributes the ace. He unhelpfully returns the queen of hearts which I win in hand and take stock. I can count ten tricks and can get the eleventh from the spade suit if I guess the position of the honours. From the bidding I think North has the ace of spades (who wouldn't?) so my only chance, as I see it, is to find South with the queen. After taking out trumps I finesse the ten of spades, losing to the queen and North leads back a spade to South's ace. Aargh! One down. Without the 1NT opener by North, most pairs got to 3NT which makes at least ten tricks.

In the next hand we were on the receiving end of a double which also led to tears. Again, the bidding was unusual, but this time it was against experts who knew exactly what they were doing.

	♠Q96		
Dealer: W	♥QT73		
Vul: All	♦872		
	♣AJ9		
	♠AT72		♠J83
	♥9865		♥AJ2
	♦4		♦AQ6
	♣K432		♣T865
	♠K54		
	♥K4		
	♦KJT953		
	♣Q7		
North	East	South	West
-	-	-	Pass
Pass	1NT	Dble	2C*
Pass	Pass	2D	Dble
Pass	3C	All Pass	

My partner and I employ a 12-15 no trump opener so sitting East again I have an obvious first bid. South's double is certainly unusual, and, I suspect ours was the only table that started with this sequence. In fact, it was potentially a smart move by South. If the double is left in then he can lead the jack of diamonds and has a good chance of setting up the suit before I can scramble to seven tricks. If we interfere then he can bid his suit next time around. My partner's 2C bid shows four clubs and at least one other four card suit and is basically trying to escape from a potentially bad doubled contract. I am happy to leave the 2C in since we have a four-four fit. South duly bids his diamond suit.

At this point, West takes stock. She enquires about the double and finds out that it could contain as few as 11 points, so suspects we may be being done out of a part score since my one no trump opener could be up to fifteen points. She decides to compete at the two level, so doubles for take-out. I now must decide to go for a 4-3 fit in a major or bid three clubs. I opt for the latter and that ends the bidding. The contract goes away by two tricks, for -200, giving us a poor score. Note North's wise decision not to bid three diamonds which probably doesn't make.

So far, so bad. Each of the first two opponents at least left us a few match points. The next couple took the lot.

		♠AJ93	
Dealer: N		♥96	
Vul: Nil		♦JT4	
		♣J974	
		♠KT	♠865
		♥AK32	♥QJT5
		♦K9872	♦63
		♣A2	♣QT63
		♠Q742	
		♥874	
		♦AQ5	
		♣K85	
North	East	South	West
Pass	Pass	1NT	Dble
Pass	Pass	Rdble*	Pass
Pass*	Pass		

South's 1NT opener, third in hand, is light. Just as an observation, this happened against us on the first hand. Maybe there should be some penalty for folks who regularly open a light no trump third in hand without specifying it on their system card. This is probably unworkable, which the perpetrators know perfectly well.

Things get curiouser and curiouser as North passes and South redoubles. We are told that the redouble is mandatory which means that North's pass should have been alerted. Worse is to come. North's second pass is alerted and we are told that this is a convention called *Swine* and that her pass means she is happy to play in 1NT redoubled. When North's hand goes down this is clearly not the case. This is a very experienced couple but it looks as if their bidding has gone off the rails. NS have 18 points and no long suit so 95% of the time they should go down. However, a defence that prevents South making seven tricks is quite hard to find even double dummy (if you think it is obvious, try it for yourself). The contract is duly made and NS clock up a top score of 760.

A bad day for us at the office party!

Ray Kemp

Improvers Corner

In these articles I'll look at hands from Monday evening bridge and suggest ways in which players in that room might improve their results. I won't be talking about squeezes, end-plays or fancy bidding conventions, just working on the basics and keeping it simple.

On the first evening of the Monday evening February pairs, Malcolm Louden and Maxine Keay achieved a result that most of us have never come close to in a lifetime of bridge – a score of over 80%! Looking at their results, they didn't do anything spectacular but were very accurate in getting to good contracts. So, let's bid three of those hands together.

Dealer: E ♠AQ9542
Vul: NS ♥T
 ♦A
 ♣KT542

♠7	♠T83
♥Q976	♥AJ832
♦J752	♦QT83
♣QJ96	♣3
	♠KJ6
	♥K54
	♦K964
	♣A87

After East's pass, South opens 1NT. West passes so now over to North. Before you decide what to do, count the partnership points. Your partner has 12-14 and you have 13. This gives you a total of 25-27 points. The magic number for game is 25 and you have at least that. For a slam you usually need about 33 so you can discount that possibility.

What about suits? You would really like to play in spades since you have six of them, but you get a better score for no trumps. Forget about no trumps when you have two singletons. Singletons can be useful when you play in a suit contract but are a liability in no trumps. Have you got a spade fit, though? Well, since South opened with a no trump they will have at least two spades and you must have a 6-2 fit or better so no problem there. OK, so you want to be in game, and you want to be in spades. How do you convey this information to partner? Easy, just do it¹.

North	East	South	West
	Pass	1NT	Pass
4S	All pass		

Dealer: S ♠ -
Vul: EW ♥KT864
 ♦AK965
 ♣K86

♠J96	♠KT532
♥QJ5	♥92
♦8432	♦J7
♣T52	♣QJ73
	♠AQ874
	♥A73
	♦QT
	♣A94

On this board, South has a pretty strong hand but can only open 1S. Unless partner can come up with the goods you are not going to make game. As it happens, however, North does have a good hand. It is a pity there is no spade fit but North can comfortably respond at the two level (remember you need 10+ points to reply at the two level). North has five cards in each of two suits so which should she bid? No problems: hearts are worth more than diamonds so bid two of that suit. If partner doesn't like hearts, you can always mention the diamonds later.

Now back to South. Should she repeat the spade suit to show at least five cards? The answer is no. In Acol, the sequence 1S-2H is forcing and indicates that responder has at least five hearts. Forget the spades, you have a minimum of eight hearts between you. So, you want to play in that suit, but at what level? Again, the magic numbers come to your rescue. You need 25 points for game, you have sixteen and partner has at least ten, so bid 4H. If partner has more than they have initially promised they can go looking for a slam but then they can take the blame if it goes down. You have shown your hand.

So over to North, who may be tempted to look for a slam since she has three more points than promised and a void. Having a void in partner's suit is not necessarily so exciting so I would expect North to think about going on and then decide to pass. So here is a reasonable bidding sequence:

North	East	South	West
		1S	Pass
2H	Pass	4H	All pass

¹ If you happen to use transfers North may transfer to South's hand first but either way North should ensure the final contract is 4S.

Dealer: N ♠9843

Vul: NS ♥T

♦T7653

♣KQJ

♠A

♥AQ95

♦AQJ98

♣AT3

♠KQ62

♥K872

♦4

♣9862

♠JT75

♥J643

♦K2

♣754

It's West's turn to get some decent cards. After three passes what would you bid? With 21 points there is a good case for opening the conventional Acol 2C which doesn't mean clubs at all but just says "Partner I have a monster hand, so don't you dare pass my bid." I would argue, however, that the hand isn't quite good enough to force partner to respond. What if partner has no points? You are unlikely to make game. Conversely, if you open at the one level and partner passes, is there a danger that you may have missed game? If partner has at least six points they must find a response, and if they have less than EW probably cannot make game anyway.

So, you decide to open at the one level. Once you have worked that one out the suit is easy. Always start with your longest suit, so open 1D. After North's pass East has an obvious response. She has eight points so must bid, and normally with two four card suits, would bid them upwards, and so responds with a modest 1H bid. West gets very excited at this point. The partnership has at least eight hearts between them so that is the suit they want to be in, but what about the level? Again, look to the magic numbers. You need 25 points for game, you have 21 and partner has at least six so just bid game straight away.

North	East	South	West
Pass	Pass	Pass	1D
Pass	1H	Pass	4H
All pass			

A couple of final points about these hands. Some of you may have realized that you can make a slam on two of them. Agreed, but no one did on the night and the slams themselves are not simple to play. If you had bid and made these three game contracts you would have been up there with Maxine and Malcolm.

Secondly, I have concentrated on the bidding this time round, and you may well ask how you should play each hand. We will look at that aspect of the game another time – but unless you get to a reasonable contract in the first place, even the best declarer in the world is going to struggle to achieve a good score, so focus first and foremost on tightening up your bidding and remember those magic numbers.

Three tips for getting to game in a major suit:

- Check whether you have 25+ points between you
- Check whether you have 8+ cards between you in a major
- Once you have satisfied yourself that both the above conditions are satisfied, don't mess around, bid game in that major

Ray Kemp

You Must Be Joking

This may be what you occasionally think when thanking your partner profusely for the less than exciting dummy they have laid down before you. As one of our long-time members, Ken Bateman, has been known to exclaim in such circumstances: "Now show me the hand you bid."

Here are a couple of bridge bons mots collected by Tony Fayerman. He promises that there are more where they came from so be warned!

What is the difference between a mad psycho serial-killer and a bridge partner? You may be able to reason with the serial killer.

We had a partnership misunderstanding. My partner assumed I knew what I was doing.

Ray Kemp

Epilogue

Some of you may remember that I produced a regular newsletter for the club many years ago. It's good to be back in action. If you have any ideas for improvement (unlikely, but you never know) then contact me at R.Kemp@xtra.co.nz with the proviso that anyone to come up with an idea will be the first person to be asked to implement it. This is just to act as a deterrent for those who like to say "Wouldn't it be nice if...?" 😊

Ray Kemp
Editor