

Victorian Bridge Association Bulletin

July 2007

Editor: Bill Jacobs

There were some splendid results for Victorians in June.

The 45th Pacific-Asia Bridge Championships were held in Bandung Indonesia, and Australia figured highly in all divisions. The Open team lost the event to China on the very last board, would you believe. The Women's team, featuring evergreen Victorians Felicity Beale and Diana Smart also finished second to China, 10 VPs behind, and 24 VPs ahead of third.

The standout performance was in the Youth – our team of Adam and Nabil Edgtton (NSW), Nye Griffiths and Griff Ware (ACT) and Victorians Peter Hollands and Andy Hung comfortably won the event, 8 VPs clear of China Hong Kong.

Australian Youth bridge is on a high currently. Our players are still young – Peter and Andy are just 19 and 20. Much of this progress can be traced back to the Mills, Cathy and Andrew, who are instrumental in developing youth bridge in Victoria.

Of course the challenge of Youth bridge is that the players don't remain youthful for long – once they're 25, they are out (whereas our Seniors are there to stay!). So it's an on-going process to develop healthy youth bridge. But we can enjoy success whilst it's there.



PABF Youth Winners Peter Hollands (left) and Andy Hung

Concurrent with the Far East was the Victor Champion Cup in Melbourne. This was the breakthrough event for Neil Ewart and Blaine Howe, who went all the way after a pair of second places in recent National events. Their teammates were Alida Clark and Peter Rogers from WA.



VCC winners: Neil Ewart, Blaine Howe, Alida Clark and Peter Rogers

Neil and Blaine are Victoria's top pair at the moment. Some of Blaine's contributions to this newsletter (including this month's article, "Practice, Practice, Practice") might give you an insight to why this is the case.

The other notable result from the VCC was the close second place in the McCance Seniors Pairs of Franci Halmos and VCC convenor Diana Jacobs. This was the reserve pair, in case of an odd number of entries. Apparently the combination of having never played together before, playing a system (Standard) neither of them was familiar with, and Diana with one eye constantly on the event organization, was a productive one. Well done to them!



Good luck to all our Victorian representatives in the Fremantle ANC! May all your finesses win (or lose if you stay low!).

FOR STARTERS
Bill Jacobs

IMPs and Matchpoints

There are two types of scoring in competition bridge.

IMPs (International Match Points) involves a comparison between your score and the score at the other table of a teams match (or against a calculated average in a Pairs event), and makes a translation between from the difference in the two scores to an IMP result. So a difference of 20 is worth 1 imp, 90 is worth 3 imps, 600 is worth 12 imps, etc.

Matchpoints is simple: is your score better, equal or worse than at another table. If your score is better, you get 1 matchpoint, if equal you get ½ a matchpoint, if worse, nothing. It doesn't matter how the big difference. So your +630 will get a full matchpoint against another table that scores +620, or -100, or anything less than 630.

How should this affect your bridge strategy? In truth, the answer is: not much. But here are a few tips:

1. At IMPs, concentrate on bidding games, in particular vulnerable games. 620 for 4♠ making is worth 10 imps against 170 for 3♠ with an overtrick. And if 4♠ goes one down, you lose only 6 imps (-100, when you could have had +140). So the IMP odds favour bidding iffy vulnerable games. In the partscore zone, concentrate on getting a plus. At matchpoints, just try to do the right thing.
2. At matchpoints, downgrade the minor suit contracts, in preference to the majors and notrumps. 20 points a trick for minors is a matchpoint problem. 3♣ making 10 tricks for +130 loses to 2♥ making 9 tricks for +140, loses to 1NT making 9 tricks for +150.
3. In the play: at IMPs just concentrate on making (or breaking) the contract. Don't worry about overtricks or undertricks, at least until the contract is doubled. At

matchpoints, every trick counts: you have to look after your overtricks.

Enough talk – time for a hand. You hold, vulnerable versus not:

♠ A5
♥ A94
♦ Q87
♣ KJ842

LHO is the dealer, and the bidding is:

LHO	Partner	RHO	You
2♥	3♦	3♥	?

2♥ is a normal weak two. What do you at IMPs? At Matchpoints?

It's a nice hand. The bidding suggests partner might have a singleton heart. 5♦ should be secure, 6♦ a possibility.

Playing IMPs, I would recommend a 4♥ cue-bid, which must show a strong hand with diamond support. If partner Blackwoods, he will not be disappointed. Otherwise, he can sign off in 5♦.

Playing matchpoints, I think most matchpoint veterans would shoot 3NT here and ask questions later. 5♦ making 600 or 620 is not going to beat 3NT making 630 or 660. Sure, 6♦ could be there, but if it isn't, you will wish you had ended up in 3NT.

I'm not claiming that this problem is black-and-white, but let's say you do bid 3NT at matchpoints. West leads the heart king, and you see this:

Dealer: W	♠ K82
Vul: N/S	♥ 5
	♦ AKJ1065
	♣ 1053
	♠ A5
	♥ A94
	♦ Q87
	♣ KJ842

LHO	Partner	RHO	You
2♥	3♦	3♥	3NT
Pass	Pass	Pass	

Plan the play.

Playing IMPs, you could switch off and relax. There are nine top tricks, and when you get in, you should waste no time taking them.

At matchpoints, there is an overtrick to play for. Start by holding up the hearts until the third round – if West has 6 hearts to East's 3, this will isolate West's hearts. West continues with the queen and jack, and you win with the ace.

Now cash your six diamond tricks. The suit divides 2-2. West then discards a heart, a club and two little spades. East discards two clubs and two spades. You pitch three clubs.

You now have a choice: cash the 8th and 9th tricks in spades and probably lose the rest, or play a club up. Which is it to be?

If East has the club ace, you can make an overtrick. This seems likely: West is unlikely to have opened a non-vulnerable weak two with 6 strong hearts and the club ace.

But if your calculations are out, and West has the club ace and a couple of hearts left, then down you go in a cold 3NT – embarrassing!

But that's matchpoints: you cannot afford to play safe. You should go all out for the overtrick and play a club up. This was the full deal:

	♠ K82	
	♥ 5	
	♦ AKJ1065	
	♣ 1053	
♠ 1076		♠ QJ943
♥ KQJ1032		♥ 876
♦ 43		♦ 92
♣ Q6		♣ A97
	♠ A5	
	♥ A94	
	♦ Q87	
	♣ KJ842	

630 in 3NT. 600 in 5♦. Matchpoint heaven and hell.

Points to remember.

- At IMPs:
 - Bid your game, any game
 - In partscore and competitive bidding, concentrate on going plus
 - Play safe
- At Matchpoints:
 - NT beats majors beats minors
 - Fight for the overtricks and undertricks
 - Take risks

THE TWELFTH TRICK

Dealer: E ♠ 752
 Vul: nil ♥ AKQJ843
 ♦ -
 ♣ AKJ
 ♠ KQJ9863
 ♥ 92
 ♦ 94
 ♣ 43

West	North	East	South
		Pass	3♠
4♦	6♠	All pass	

West leads the diamond ace. You ruff, and lead a spade to the king which holds, West discarding a diamond.

What now? Solution on page 7.



Are you interested in playing tournaments online?



We are planning to provide an online tournament service for Victorians. Initially it will be a pairs tournament held on the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month and will commence following the ANC.

The tournament will be limited to players who register their BBO names with us. There is no commitment to play. Simply register your name and your BBO username with the VBA webmaster (webmaster@vba.asn.au). Eventually we hope to provide support for matches between teams for both practice and competition. Announcement of starting times and dates will be advertised on the website (www.vba.asn.au).

PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE ...
Blaine Howe

Many bridge players want to win but don't practise enough to improve their game to a standard where their chances to win on their favourite battleground become realistic.

Let's see if we can do something about this. I have suggestions in two areas that can help you a lot.

The first is bidding practice. I can hear the groans but there is no substitute for this – trust me. You have to practice regularly to improve. Even just two sessions ($\frac{3}{4}$ hour if you can manage it but at least $\frac{1}{2}$ an hour to be effective) a month plus discussions via email or phone will make a big difference.

The source for practice can be books or magazines (buy one copy each) but is preferably a set of hands generated according to some constraints for opener and responder.

Either use a hand generator or ask the VBA about the Partnership Bidding feature on BridgeBase Online. You can use this when you are both at home. Description of the feature and sets of configuration files are available on the VBA Website.

I guarantee that if you try this, you will discover your agreements are not nearly as good as you think they are. Just going through the hand records for the sessions you play is nothing like as useful as some players imagine – come and ask me if you do not believe it. In fact, bring a contentious hand and I will generate a bunch of hands with similar constraints for you to do a test practice run or set you up with BBO Partnership Bidding.

The second suggestion is about concentration and memory. One of the most important abilities you need in order to be successful is to concentrate for periods of time (e.g. for the duration of a 14 board match) without exerting too much effort in the process. Also, you want to remember which cards have been played as a hand progresses. This is a learned skill so do not despair if you are not too good at it.

One way to improve is to develop your physical ability to get your body rhythms right. This might sound a little flaky, but doing yoga or playing a wind instrument, both of which teach you breath control, are examples of activities that can help a lot in this regard.

Another way is to simply practice intellectual tasks which require concentration and memory for a period of time. Sudoku puzzles are a particularly good example of this. Try spending the occasional quiet $\frac{1}{2}$ hour doing puzzles and you will, over time, find your ability to concentrate and remember the cards that have gone improves.

One word of warning though – to be most effective don't write down hints. They don't let you write down stuff at the bridge table as a reminder of what is gone so you will get much more benefit if you do the same in practice sessions to improve your concentration.

As an aside, the concentration skills required in computer programming are very similar to those required in bridge – it is no accident that a lot of strong bridge players work in this field.

If this all sounds boring go and watch any team sport where the players are at practice. What they have to do is a lot more boring than what is being suggested here ...



If Pliny the Younger had played Bridge or read Blaine's article, he'd advise:

**Difficile est tenere
 quae acceperis nisi
 exerceas**



Suit combination of the month

♣ 32 ♣ AKJ94

This is a side-suit in a trump contract. You need to set up the suit for 4 tricks, maybe with the help of a ruff. What way is best?

ETHICAL DILEMMAS - VI
Bill Jacobs

On Having a Ridiculous Auction

Last month we established that, for the purposes of your bidding, you must ignore your partner's explanations – they are Unauthorized Information to you.

Now we delve into the tangled web that can develop when *you* are then asked about the auction, and the answers that you are ethically required to give.

Vul versus not, you deal and open 2♥ on:

- ♥ 64
- ♠ KQJ1083
- ♦ 32
- ♣ 962

"Alert!" says partner – what the? – and on being asked, explains: "it shows hearts and a minor". Uh oh.

LHO passes, and partner bids 2NT with:

- ♥ AJ83
- ♠ 76
- ♦ AJ84
- ♣ AQ5

RHO turns to you and asks: "what's that?". What is your ethical reply?

The Laws state that you must explain all your system agreements, as best you know them at the time of the question.

Scenario 1

Yes, yes, of course. You switched your methods a few weeks ago from weak twos to two-suited openings, and this is the first time it has come up. You plain forgot.

Correct response is: "strong, asking me to show my minor". This is presumably consistent with what your opponent would learn had he looked at your system card.

Scenario 2

What substance is partner on? He must be confused with one of his other partnerships.

You definitely play weak twos, with an Ogust 2NT.

Correct response is: "Ogust, asking for the strength of my suit and hand".

Scenario 3

You're tired – you cannot remember what you play. Give the honest answer: "I can't remember" or "I'm not sure".

RHO passes, and now you must give the Ogust response of 3♦ (good suit, minimum hand), irrespective of your explanation. Partner's words can affect your subsequent *explanations* – they cannot affect your subsequent *bidding*.

You no doubt sense the flapping wings of approaching doom as you are now, from partner's perspective, showing a diamond suit. But them's the rules.

And now, how should partner react to 3♦? And what if he is asked about 3♦? You should know the answer by now: he should *explain* according to his understanding of the system: "diamonds" if he still thinks your partnership plays 2-suited openings; "strong suit, weak hand" if he now thinks your partnership plays weak twos – reminded by your explanation of "Ogust" in Scenario 2. He should *bid* according to his original understanding, and that means a 5♦ bid here.

The next bid is probably double – grin and bear the -1,400. The hand will end in either tears or laughter. I recommend laughter. Such a debacle might only happen once in your lifetime – now you know how to lose with style and ethical purity.

Here's the "correct" auction in total:

You	Partner
2♥	2NT
3♦	5♦
Pass	

If you pull it off – hat's off to you. Not many people can, and the director, committee and high court may have to intervene. And a gold star if you do it whilst you and your partner explain your system as you currently understand it!

And one more point. Suppose the opponents hadn't asked any questions – what would your auction have been? Why, the one given of course. You would have had your disastrous bidding misunderstanding totally unaware of the problem until dummy was tabled. And that's the way it should be: your opponents must not suffer damage just because they asked about your bidding.



Pliny the Younger's advice: *It is difficult to retain what you have learned unless you should practise it.*

THE TWELFTH TRICK Bill Jacobs

	♠ 752	
	♥ AKQJ843	
	♦ -	
	♣ AKJ	
♠ -		♠ A104
♥ 1075		♥ 6
♦ AKQ9853		♦ J1072
♣ Q75		♣ 109862
	♠ KQJ9863	
	♥ 92	
	♦ 94	
	♣ 43	

In 6♠ you have ruffed the diamond lead and led a spade to the king, West showing out.

The 3-0 break doesn't look too threatening: just ruff your last diamond, get back to hand and draw trumps.

The danger is that you get locked in dummy at the wrong time. Suppose you ruff your last diamond: dummy is now out of trumps so you play ace-king-jack of clubs, ruffing, and play a trump. East can win ♥A and return a heart. Dummy is forced to win and is down to all hearts. East ruffs a heart.

You can circumvent this unpleasant outcome by cashing *one* high heart before playing the clubs from dummy. This is called the Dentist Coup: it extracts the card with which a defender can end-play dummy.

This deal is from the recent Board-a-match event at the VBA. Speaking of which ...

The Board-a-Match Experience

This year the VBA promoted the Board-a-Match event to stand on its own on three Wednesday nights – in the past it has been run in conjunction with the Fred Hapgood Pairs.

This was an excellent move – instead of drawing its usual 8-10 teams, the BaM had 21 teams and an exciting event that went down to the wire. The Fred Hapgood Pairs was moved to a Monday night.

Board-a-Match is a much underrated format. Did people enjoy it? It's actually a very relaxing way to play, because no board stands out as crucial. Playing IMPs, whole matches can be determined by that slam on a finesse. And a bottom at matchpoints, whilst not terminal, is damaging. But losing a board at BaM is something you budget for, and you can simply move on to the next deal.

Our partners announced -1,000 (4♥ redoubled down 2) – that was a loss combined with our -100. Next board: +120, -100, a win. Way to go.

And Board-a-Match is regarded as an excellent test of skill: the format with the lowest luck factor of all.

If you didn't play this year – try it next year!



In a first for bridge in Australia, the above postmarker will be used at the Fremantle post-office for the duration of the 2007 ANC.

SETTING TRICK – SOLUTIONS Ian McCance

Problem 1:

Dealer: N	♠ Q107	
Vul: E/W	♥ 8432	
	♦ QJ	
	♣ Q952	
♠ K8		♠ J9543
♥ J10		♥ Q65
♦ A107542		♦ 83
♣ J86		♣ A74
	♠ A62	
	♥ AK97	
	♦ K96	
	♣ K103	

Declarer has shown up with 10 HCP and is likely to hold ♠A since with ♣AK she would have started on clubs. Moreover it is likely that partner has ♥Q, because the 1NT rebid denied a major-5 and declarer hasn't taken a third round. If declarer has ♣K10x (the hand-shape is now almost certain) there are necessary losers in clubs and hearts and she has a guess to find ♣J.

If you return a passive spade the guess can be eliminated by playing ♠Q, ♠A, then ♦K then a heart. Partner will be endplayed. To avert this, exit with your diamond, allowing partner to ruff and exit safely in spades.

Problem 2:

Dealer: W	♠ A872	
Vul: Both	♥ K7	
	♦ 1098	
	♣ Q762	
♠ J93		♠ 64
♥ J109864		♥ AQ52
♦ 54		♦ AKJ632
♣ 93		♣ K
	♠ KQ105	
	♥ 3	
	♦ Q7	
	♣ AJ10854	

Before you commit to ♦J consider declarer's hand-shape. Spades almost certainly 4 and clubs at least 5 and probably 6. Even if South has 2 small hearts you will never get West on lead to play through ♥K. Consequently your ♥Q is something of a mirage. Cash ♥A before going for the promotion.

Note that if you don't cash ♥A first, declarer can make 4♠ by discarding his heart on the third diamond.

UPCOMING STATE EVENT AT THE VICTORIAN BRIDGE ASSOCIATION

The VBA invites all Victorian players to enter the following State event commencing soon.



Victorian Mixed Teams

A 3 week event commencing on Wednesday 1st August 2007.

All teams must have at least one male and one female member playing in each match.

It is not necessary to be a member of the VBA to play in State events - members of other clubs are most welcome. If you like arrive early and have a hot meal in our cafeteria.

A partnership service is available for these events - please email suggestions@vba.asn.au

if you would like a partner or another pair to form a team.

Enter: via the website: www.vba.asn.au or phone 9530 9006

Suit combination of the month

♣ AKJ94

♣ 32

There is a good rule-of-thumb for 7-card fits like these, when you have a ruffing option. It is to play the suit from the top, hoping to set it up with a ruff. This is usually superior to taking a finesse or ruffing finesse.

If the 10 is played by West on the second round, still play to divide the suit, ruffing a third round. Unless you have reason to believe West is short in clubs, Q10x is a more likely holding for West than 10x.

The identical strategy applies to:

♣ AKJ943

♣ 2