

District 16 Newsletter for Future Life Masters

Volume 10 Issue 2 - February 2024



From the Editor

Hello February and thank you Mr. Groundhog for claiming an earlier spring for all of us this year. I hope you enjoy this month's newsletter.

Our highlighted player, Nat Hallmark, was just awarded a District 16 Star Award for Unit 201 during the recent Lone Star Regional in Houston.

Feedback, suggestions for content and stories are always welcome.

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Upcoming Intermediate/Newcomer (IN) Tournaments

IN Sectionals

Feb 29-Mar 2 Bridge Academy West Houston 499er

Flyer: [Click Here](#)

Regionals

Feb 27-Mar 3 San Miquel de Allende Regional
(Gold Rush Games on Saturday)

Flyer: [Click Here](#)

Upcoming Tournaments in General

For District 16, [click here](#).

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Weekly Online Game for 0-50 Players

District 16 provides a 12-board game on BBO just for players having 0-50 masterpoints for \$4.50 on Monday afternoons at 4:00. A director and assistants will be on hand to offer guidance during the game.

For more information, check out our Frequently Asked Questions [D16 0-50 Game Frequently Asked Questions](#) or email Beginner20Bridge@gmail.com.



Highlighted Player - Nat Hallmark (Unit 201)



Nat Hallmark's volunteer work at Unit 201 exactly fits the description of a District Star. She works behind the scenes, never expecting recognition, and welcoming and encouraging newcomers to become part of District 16's family.

Nat's first encounter with bridge happened in 1966 while attending lessons her aunt taught, although she never pursued the game. But 20 years ago Nat and a longtime friend saw an ad in the newspaper for bridge lessons to be given at the Beaumont Bridge Studio. They took the lessons together and have been playing as partners ever since.

Nat plays weekly and admits that being a Life Master is not one of her goals, however she loves to win and enjoys the competition. Part of her positive experience at the studio is playing with all the bridge friends she has made over the years, as well as meeting new ones. She has even organized a casual game at home. All the players at the studio, old timers or newcomers, enjoy being with Nat, as well. Although she is quiet and reserved most of the time, she will surprise everyone with her quick wit and funny quips.

Editor's note: Information on the District 16 Star Awards and recipients from each unit can be found on our District 16 website or by clicking [here](#).

Better Bridge Habits

We have some extraordinary teachers who impart valuable information for you to soak up. This month's tip is to take time to "meet" and "learn" from some of our best educators via the monthly lecture series offered by our district via Zoom. Busy that morning and cannot attend via Zoom? No problem.

As they are all recorded, you can enjoy any of the over 36 video presentations after the fact.

Scott Nason's recent presentation on "Doubles, Doubles and More Doubles" as well as many other lessons can be found by clicking [here](#).

Note that in many cases, both the mp4 (video) and pdf (handouts and/or presentation) are accessible.

Eddie Kantar's Tip

As declarer, assuming the opponents are playing standard leads and standard signaling, concealing cards lower than the one that has been led or lower than the one played by your RHO confuses the count plus the meaning of the signal.

www.kantarbridge.com

Declarer Play

Card Combinations

As declarer, many times the ability to make our contract depends on playing one of the suits in a way that maximizes our chance to take tricks.

This month:

With 8 trump and missing the AJ:

K x x x x
Q 10 9

Finesse the 10. Doing this will secure a 48% chance to win 4 tricks, 98% to win 3, and 100% to win 2 tricks.

Source: The Official Encyclopedia of Bridge

Demon Defense

Three More Eddie Kantar Tips:

1. When partner doubles a slam contract after having bid a suit, do NOT lead partner's suit or a trump. Partner usually has a void (or an outside AK), it's your job to figure out which and make the killing lead!
2. Be on the qui vive (alert) to double artificial bids (Stayman, Jacoby Transfers, cuebids and Blackwood responses) if you want the lead in that suit. These are all Lead Directing Doubles. Very important not to fall asleep at the switches if you can make a lead directing double.
3. To make a Lead Directing Double at a low level, particularly the two level, you need five or six cards in the suit headed by at least three honor cards. To double an artificial bid made at the four level or higher, all you need is strength in the suit, not length (KQx), even QJx if the bid to your right shows the ace.

www.kantarbridge.com

Better Bidding

Balancing Notrump Bids

The following comes from This Week in Bridge (TWiB) Lesson #151 by Robert Todd at advinbridge.com.

General

When LHO opens the bidding and the auction passes around to us, we are the last line of defense against the opponents buying the contract at a low level. Traditionally, when we stretch to bid in this seat it is called balancing. When we balance we “borrow” some of partner’s values and add those points to our hand – usually about 3 points. Let’s see how this works for balancing Notrump auctions.

Balancing 1NT

An overcall of 1NT in the direct seat shows a balanced hand, 15-18 points, and a stopper in the opponent’s suit. In the balancing seat, a 1NT overcall is about 3 points lighter because we “borrow” 3 points from partner, so actually about 12-15 points.

This balancing 1NT is also a little variable based on the opponent's opening bid:

Examples

1♣ P P 1NT 11-14 points with a ♣ stopper

1♠ P P 1NT 12-15 points with a ♠ stopper

We want to have a slightly better hand to balance with 1NT over a Major suit opening because we know LHO has a 5-card Major to lead against us. When LHO opens a minor, though, it may only be 3-4 cards long, so balancing more aggressively with a point or so less is appropriate.

Advancer's Bid - Responding to Balancing 1NT, 11-14 Points (Systems On)

Just as we play Systems On when partner overcalls 1NT in the direct seat, we also use our NT bidding systems (Stayman, transfers, etc.) when partner balances with 1NT. But since partner's 1NT is about 3 points weaker than a direct overcall, we compensate when we do things like force to game or invite to game by subtracting 3 points from our own hand (the points partner "borrowed.")

- 0-10 pts Weak
- 11-12 pts Invite
- 13-14 pts Game Force

Other NT Hands in the Balancing Seat

With a full-valued 1NT in the balancing seat, 15-18 points, we need to start by making a takeout double and then bidding 1NT so partner understands we did not need to borrow the 3 points to get to 1NT values - that we have more values than a balancing 1NT bid.

1♣ P P X

P 1♠ P 1NT 15-18 pts, ♣ stopper, no 4-card ♠ fit with partner

With 19-21 points, we can just overcall 2NT immediately in the balancing seat.

1♣ P P 2NT 19-21 pts, ♣ stopper

This is not an Unusual 2NT bid because with a weak hand, we would just pass the auction out in the balancing seat.

When Not to Balance

With a weaker hand in the balancing seat, we should be careful not to bid and then let the opponents improve their contract:

- Improve from 1m to 1NT
- Get to game in a Major - 1M to 4M

With a balanced hand but less than 11 points, we don't balance for this reason.

Conclusion

A balancing 1NT overcall is like a direct 1NT overcall, but just a bit weaker, by about 3 points or so.

We treat it like a 1NT opening bid or direct overcall in terms of the systems we play - Stayman, Transfers, etc. We vary the strength of the balancing 1NT based on whether LHO opened 1m or 1M (11-14 vs. 12-15). Use the balancing 1NT to effectively describe a minimum opening strength balanced hand with a stopper in LHO's suit!

<https://www.advinbridge.com>

It's The Law

Claims and Concessions (Part 2)

Last month we considered when, why, and how we might make a claim or concession. This month we consider what happens when a claim has been made. Claims and concessions are governed by Laws 68-71. Laws 69-71 govern the activities following a claim or concession. This discussion is **not** exhaustive. The full text of each law can be found by clicking [here](#).

Law 69: Agreed Claim or Concession

Law 69 A. Establishment of Agreement

Agreement is established when a side assents to an opponent's claim or concession and raises no objection to it before making a call on a subsequent board or before the round ends, whichever occurs first. ...

This Law is straightforward. If both sides agree, then the board is scored as if all the tricks were won

or lost as described in the claim statement.

Sometimes the opponents do not agree with our claim statement. At that point, the director is called, and Law 70 is considered. Law 70 contains guidelines for the director.

Law 70: Contested Claim or Concession

Law 70 A. General Objective

In ruling on a contested claim or concession, the Director adjudicates the result of the board as equitably as possible to both sides, but any doubtful point as to a claim shall be resolved against the claimer. The Director proceeds as follows.

Law 70 B. Clarification Statement Repeated

- 1. The Director requires claimer to repeat the clarification statement he made at the time of his claim.*
- 2. Next, the Director hears the opponents' objections to the claim (but the Director's considerations are not limited only to the opponents' objections).*
- 3. The Director may require players to put their remaining cards face up on the table.*

Law 70 C. There Is an Outstanding Trump

When a trump remains in one of the opponents' hands, the Director shall award a trick or tricks to the opponents if:

- 1. claimer made no statement about that trump, and*
- 2. it is at all likely that claimer at the time of his claim was unaware that a trump remained in an opponent's hand, and*
- 3. a trick could be lost to that trump by any normal play.*

Law 70 D. Director's Considerations

- 1. The Director shall not accept from claimer any successful line of play not embraced in the original clarification statement if there is an alternative normal line of play that would be less successful.*
- 2. The Director does not accept any part of a defender's claim that depends on his partner selecting a particular play from among alternative normal plays.*

Law 70 E. Unstated Line of Play

- 1. The Director shall not accept from claimer any unstated line of play the success of which depends upon finding one opponent rather than the other with a particular card, unless an opponent failed to follow to the suit of that card before the claim was made, or would subsequently fail to follow to that suit on any normal line of play. ...*

How does a contested claim work in practice? A contested claim is complex because the decisions are based on what a player says he would or would not have done and not based on anything that actually did happen.

Consider this claim:

The contract is 4♠ and the lead is in dummy. In our hand, we hold the ♠T94 and the ♥A. The dummy has two small clubs and two small diamonds. The opponents still hold the ♠8. Our claim statement would be something like, "I am claiming four more tricks. I am going to lead a club from the board and ruff it high. Then I will play the other high trump, pitching a club from the board. This will draw the last trump. Next, I will play the ♥A and the last trump, pitching the two diamonds."

Points to keep in mind:

- 1. The original claim statement is the one that is being evaluated by the director. We may not add anything to the statement. In the statement above, had we said only that we were going to ruff a club, we cannot tell the director that we had said we were going to ruff the club high.*
- 2. Doubts about the success of the claimer's line of play are resolved in favor of the opponents. There is a footnote to Law 70 and Law 71 that says, "For the purposes of Laws 70 and 71, 'normal' includes play that would be careless or inferior for the class of player involved." If we do not clearly state our line of play, all an opponent has to show is that there is the possibility of us making a careless play (like ruffing low when our LHO holds the ♠8 and is out of clubs) to invalidate the claim.*

Even though the doubtful points are resolved against the claimer, the director is not going to force the claimer to take an action that is not normal from a bridge perspective. Continuing with the statement above, assume that we said "ruffing a club and then draw trump" instead of "ruffing a club high and then draw trump". This time, however, our RHO has the ♠8. The director will award us all four tricks because: (1) if RHO plays the ♠8, the normal thing to do is to overruff and (2) if RHO does not ruff, our ♠6 will win the trick and we can then draw trump.

Law 71 discusses the conditions under which a concession is cancelled.

