



The Passivity Proscription

The Prescription to Better Bridge

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Preface

Passivity is often a problem. First, a player must actively seek to improve his game. He should, first of all, find a mentor. Secondly, every time he plays a game of bridge, he must look at his boards with a low score. Was it the bidding? Was it interference? Was it the lead? Was it the defense? Was it the declarer play? He should find out what the good players in the club did. If a player is passive in this regard, his skill level will stagnate.

Active opponents also help the player's game in the long run. A player must know his convention card thoroughly. What if there is interference? What if partner is a passed hand? What if the player himself is a passed hand?

It does not take a beginner player long to realize that bridge is a bidder's game. A bid helps with the lead and the defense. It creates a competitive auction which may push the opponents too high. It also may buy the contract and provide a better result than defending.

This book, like the rest of the Watson bridge series, is for all bridge players who actively seek improvement. They keep the game thriving and are the advanced and the expert players of the future. This book has examples which are relevant to most systems, but the most competitive system with the least memorization is Two over One. A player must have a simple card with every convention on it known thoroughly. I recommend a Two over One system with minisplinters, inverted minors and strong Notrump.

If the reader has any questions or wishes to be sent updates or wishes lessons at \$25 CAD an hour, he can contact the author at KootenayJewelBridgeClub@gmail.com.





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1. Active Improvement

The steps to active improvement are:

- Getting a mentor
- Knowing the convention card well
- Becoming a smart active bidder
- Learning to recognize the three classes of players.

A player should rate himself and probationary partners as follows.

Lower Class:

- He bids Notrump without a stopper in the opponent's suit.
- He regularly makes long-hand ruffs and does not realize the importance of short-hand ruffs.
- He regularly plays as if his partner is not on his team.
- He often bids his partner's hand gambling that his partner has what he needs. If his partner does not, he hopes the opponents will make the wrong decision.
- He jumps past useful bidding room as if slam and preemptive bidding were similar.
- He jumps to game in his partner's major without using Jacoby or a cuebid when he has more than 8 points just because he has five-card support.

Middle Class:

- He thinks his partner is silent because he is timid and did not choose to be silent.
- He always returns partner's suit and leads.
- He cooperates with partner in the bidding and the defense and avoids a flip-flop.
- He plays Bergen raises because he recognizes the importance of a nine-card fit.
- He would not make a sacrifice, unless at favourable vulnerability with a nine-card fit or better.
- He counts all the high cards around the table and recognizes a player with a shorter holding in a suit.





Upper Class:

- He realizes the importance of splinters and minisplinters.
- He does not play Bergen major suit raises.
- He makes sacrifices mostly at favourable vulnerability and on rare occasions with a double fit at equal vulnerability.
- All high-level decisions are a team effort with no unilateral action.
- He makes use of the bidding space.
- He always rules out seven when bidding the best small slam. He usually asks for specific Kings when all the keycards, including the Queen of trump, are held.
- He doubles the opponents based on what he has in his hand (trump tricks), not just because his partner bid strongly. Partner may bid strongly because of either high-card strength or distributional strength.
- He recognizes when he should lead a high spot card in a suit to take his partner off of endplay. The lead of a high spot card tells his partner he does not want the suit back. A low spot is from something, and the suit should be returned.
- He keeps track of spot cards and counts the points and the distributions around the table.

It is a shame to see a good player stagnate in skill because he thinks he needs no improvement. Active improvement can make an upper class player out of almost anybody.





2. Notrump Bidding

2.1 Uncontested Strong Notrump Bidding

Problem 2.1: The Uncontested System

People spend a lot of effort fine tuning a system over a Notrump opening. The system should be able to handle weak hands and single-suited or two-suited strong hands. There are two systems over 1NT I like. The reader should pick one.

Four-Suited Transfers:

- 1NT 2♠ Transfer to clubs (gap superaccepts with Hxx or xxxx)
- 2NT Transfer to diamonds (gap superaccepts with Hxx or xxxx)
- 3♣ Five-five in the minors, weak
- 3♦ Five-five in the minors, game forcing
- 3♥ 3-1-5-4 or 3-1-4-5, game forcing
- 3♠ 1-3-5-4 or 1-3-4-5, game forcing

The Relay System:

- 1NT 2♠ Relay to 2NT
- 2NT Bust minor-Transfer to 3♣ which is passed or corrected to 3♦
- 3♣ Invitational, 6 clubs, 6 to 8 HCP
- 3♦ Invitational, 6 diamonds, 6 to 8 HCP
- 3♥ 3-1-5-4 or 3-1-4-5, game forcing
- 3♠ 1-3-5-4 or 1-3-4-5, game forcing

After the 2♠ relay to 2NT, 3m shows interest in a slam in that minor. Partner cuebids if interested in a slam, or bids 3NT to play. After the relay, 3M shows shortness in that major and five-five in the minors with slam interest.





Problem 2.2: Not a 1NT Opener

N-S vul.

| | | | | | | | | | |
|--------|-------|------|------|--|---------|--------|--------|---------|--|
| | | | | | ♠A4 | ♥A987 | ♦106 | ♣AQ1052 | |
| ♠K1092 | ♥1065 | ♦K85 | ♣J97 | | ♠7 | ♥KQJ42 | ♦A9732 | ♣K3 | |
| | | | | | ♠QJ8653 | ♥3 | ♦QJ4 | ♣864 | |

Problematic Bidding

| W | N | E | S |
|---|-----|----------|----|
| P | 1NT | 2♦ | 3♠ |
| P | 4♠ | all pass | |

Sound Bidding

| W | N | E | S |
|-----|----------|----|----|
| P | 1♣ | 1♥ | 1♠ |
| 2♥ | P | 3♦ | P |
| 3♥ | P | P | 3♠ |
| dbl | all pass | | |

Bridge Solver Online: 3♣-N, 2♠-NS, 2♣-S, 1NT-W, 2♦-EW, 2♥-EW

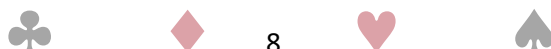
The Bridge Solver Online is Bo Haglund's double dummy solver module, retrieved August 1, 2023 from <https://mirgo2.co.uk/bridgesolver/>. See [Appendix F](#) for the .lin files of all the examples.

Passivity Proscription

South is not passive enough. In the bidding on the left he does not have a hand to force game opposite a 1NT opener. His bid is 2♠ to play. Misplaced optimism leads to bad boards.

The Bidding

Although 1NT makes it harder to overcall, and this hand has 14 HCP with a good five-card suit (which is 15 points), this is a 1♣ opening. If North and South have 3NT, it is very likely South will need opening lead protection. North has nothing to protect in a short suit.





Furthermore, North has six controls. That is trump suit oriented. A quacky hand with good intermediates and a flat distribution is Notrump oriented.

If partner replies 1 ♠, this is not a 1NT rebid. 1 ♠ is treated like 1NT forcing because a 1NT rebid shows a balanced 12 to 14. Over 1 ♠, North rebids 2 ♣. It is better to lie about length than strength, and it is better to lie about a minor not a major.

If partner responds 1 ♥, North has a 2 ♥ rebid. Giving a point for each doubleton to bid 3 ♥ is a stretch because wasted points in diamonds and spades are quite likely.

What does East bid over 2 ♥? If he passes, does he bid over 2 ♠? He will definitely want to. However, it is important he makes a 3 ♦ game try. That way West knows his strength. East really only needs the ♦ King and the ♦ Queen from partner to make game. That is 5 points which is the minimum of the range shown. His two suited hand and the ♣ King favourably placed make an immediate 3 ♦ call, asking for help in diamonds, imperative. Furthermore, partner can now double 3 ♠ or 4 ♠.

If East delays his 3 ♦ call, he allows communication between North and South. Furthermore, West may be unsure of East's strength. South has a 2 ♠ rebid and has a problem bidding over 3 ♦. If he bids 3 ♠ over 3 ♦, North bids 4 ♠ and West doubles. South chooses to pass 3 ♦ and bid over 3 ♥. He gets what he deserves. He gets doubled. Delayed bidding by the weaker side is quite poor.

The Defense

West should lead a heart or a diamond. He leads a small heart. Should he lead a top of nothing heart, the ♥10? He could because from the bidding, West showed three hearts. However, denying a doubleton is often more important than denying an honour. When West leads the ♥10, East says, "Tell me something I did not know." He knows where the important heart honours are without the lead of the ♥10. A small diamond may be a better lead, because that tells East something he does not know.

The rule of thumb when partner has shown two suits is to lead the shorter at a suit contract and the longer against Notrump. Since they are the same length, West leads the ♦5 and tells his partner he has something in diamonds.





West can exit a heart when he wins his diamond. The defense can wait for their black suit tricks. There is no endplay or squeeze possible, but it would not hurt West to lead a club when he wins a spade with the knowledge they have no heart or diamond tricks not taken.

The Declarer Play

The declarer draws trump and confirms the bad split shown by the double. He has three clubs, so he should finesse to the ♣10 then the ♣Queen. There could be a problem if East has a ♣KJ doubleton, but that was not the case.

The Results

In hearts, East loses a card in each suit for at most +140. In 3♠x, East and West get two spades, no hearts, two diamonds and one club for +200¹.

¹ Bridge Solver Online, Bo Haglund's double dummy solver module, Retrieved August 1, 2023 from <https://mirgo2.co.uk/bridgesolver/> See [Appendix F](#) for the .lin files of all the examples.





Problem 2.3: Splintering over Notrump

Both vul.

| | | | |
|------------------------------|--|-----------------------------|--|
| ♠A1062 ♥6 ♦KJ1062 ♣AJ2 | | | |
| ♠QJ ♥J109432 ♦3 ♣9843 | | ♠85 ♥KQ87 ♦Q975 ♣1065 | |
| ♠K9743 ♥A5 ♦A84 ♣KQ7 | | | |

Problematic Bidding

| W | N | E | S |
|---|----|----------|-----|
| | | | 1NT |
| P | 2♣ | P | 2♠ |
| P | 4♠ | all pass | |

Sound Bidding

| W | N | E | S |
|---|----|----------|-----|
| | | | 1NT |
| P | 2♣ | P | 2♠ |
| P | 4♥ | P | 5♦ |
| P | 6♠ | all pass | |

Bridge Solver Online: 7♠-NS, 6NT-NS, 6♦-NS, 5♣-NS, 1♥-NS

Passivity Proscription

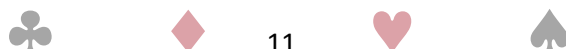
With a ten to a fourteen count, North bids 4♠ over 2♠. However, he is too strong. He has 15 and a good five card suit.

The Bidding

North uses Stayman, and over 2♠, he makes a 4♥ splinter. If South has nothing wasted in hearts such as Axx or xxx, slam is likely. In addition, South has five spades. Therefore, he cuebids his ♦ Ace, and North bids slam.

The Defense

Does West lead his stiff diamond after an auction in which South shows the ♦ Ace? A spade is certainly out, and the defense can get at most one heart trick, so the





splinter suit is also out. The ♣9 seems to be the best lead. The defense waits for their diamond trick, and West does not cover the ♦Jack if the declarer tries fishing. If the declarer plays a third trump, West holds on to his diamond and discards a heart. West can discard a low diamond on the third trump. Somebody with ♦Qxx would never discard a diamond. Somebody with ♦Qxxx will make a discard to fool the declarer. Somebody with ♦xxx or ♦xx may discard two diamonds and his partner gets finessed for the ♦Queen. The defenders must recognize diamonds as an unresolved suit and hold on to diamonds with ♦x, ♦xx or ♦xxx.

The Declarer Play

The declarer wins the club lead and draws spades in two rounds. He plays three rounds of clubs and ruffs a heart. He plays a third and fourth round of trump to watch the discards. He discovers West likely has long hearts because he discards hearts so he finesses East out of the ♦Queen. He has one trump left in case his guess is wrong.

The Results

South makes +1460 for a top board.





Problem 2.4: A Mild Slam Try

Both vul.

| | | | |
|------------------------------|--|----------------------------|--|
| ♠AQ10832 ♥K64 ♦KQ ♣62 | | | |
| ♠J ♥QJ1098 ♦10976 ♣AJ7 | | ♠654 ♥732 ♦J532 ♣543 | |
| ♠K97 ♥A5 ♦A84 ♣KQ1098 | | | |

Problematic Bidding

| W | N | E | S |
|----------|----|---|-----|
| | | | 1NT |
| P | 4♥ | P | 4♠ |
| all pass | | | |

Sound Bidding

| W | N | E | S |
|----------|----|---|-----|
| | | | 1NT |
| P | 2♥ | P | 2♠ |
| P | 4♠ | P | 4NT |
| P | 5♣ | P | 5♦ |
| P | 6♦ | P | 6♠ |
| all pass | | | |

Bridge Solver Online: 6NT-NS, 6♠-NS, 5♣-NS, 2♥-NS, 2♦-NS

Passivity Proscription

North is too passive not to make a sniff for slam even if it is the minimum sniff he can do.

The Bidding

The above bidding shows two ways to get to game. The direct way using a Texas transfer shows a weaker hand but still enough for game. Using a Jacoby transfer and then jumping to game is a mild slam try. If partner is a nonminimum hand with good controls, slam is likely there.





After a mild slam try is the only time the 1NT opener can ask for keycards. North shows one keycard, and South asks for the ♠Queen. It is a close slam which cannot be bid missing a keycard and the trump Queen. South plays 6♠.

The Defense

West has a natural heart lead and several touching honours. He leads the ♥Queen.

The Declarer Play

Should the declarer ruff a heart to make the slam? No, the heart loser goes away on the ♦Ace. Besides that, playing a suit the opponents led could be dangerous.

The declarer wins the opening lead with the ♥King and draws three rounds of trump. The ♥Ace is kept to cash the ♦Ace if necessary. He cashes the ♦King and the ♦Queen and plays a club. West wins the ♣Ace and returns a heart. The ♥6 goes on the ♦Ace, and the declarer claims.

The Results

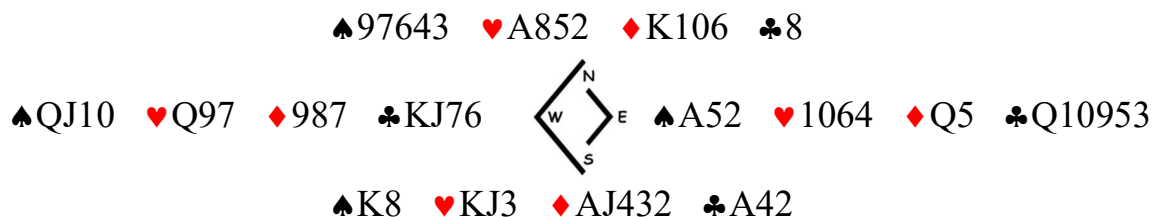
6♠ makes +1430, and 6NT makes +1440.





Problem 2.5: No Drop Dead Stayman

Neither vul.



Problematic Bidding

| W | N | E | S |
|----------|----|---|-----|
| P | P | P | 1NT |
| P | 2♥ | P | 2♠ |
| all pass | | | |

Sound Bidding

| W | N | E | S |
|----------|----|---|-----|
| P | P | P | 1NT |
| P | 2♣ | P | 2♦ |
| P | 2♠ | P | 2NT |
| all pass | | | |

Bridge Solver Online: 6♦-S, 5♠-S, 4♠-N, 4♥-NS, 5♦-N, 2NT-NS

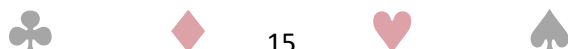
Passivity Proscription

North should treat his hand with three controls as invitational not weak. South with a doubleton spade, must choose to play 2NT. With three spades, South passes or bids 4♠ with a maximum.

The Bidding

North and South do not play drop dead Stayman. Bidding 2M over a 2♦ response shows 8 to 9 HCP and a five-four hand. Some play 2M as drop dead with 0 to 7 HCP.

It is better to have more bids for constructive hands than for weak hands, so drop dead Stayman is not used. Trash or Garbage Stayman is used with 0-4 HCP when short in clubs with no five-card major because any response to Stayman is passed.





A partnership must be sure if the above bidding on the right is 0 to 7 (drop dead Stayman) or 8 to 9 invitational.

The Defense

West leads a club. The declarer ducks twice, so East and West continue clubs. West unblocks for East.

The Declarer Play

The declarer ducks clubs twice and then wins his ♣Ace. He plays diamonds from the short holding to the long holding. He wins the ♦King and then plays back to his hand. He gets two hearts, five diamonds and one club for +120. He must not lose a slow loser in hearts in addition to four clubs and the ♠Ace.

2♠ does not fare that well if clubs are led and continued. The declarer must play three rounds of trump. When trump fall three-three, the forces in clubs do not matter.

The Results

Out of 112 tables on BBO, 2♠ makes +200 for 85.59%. 2NT making +120 got a measly 23.42%. Treating the hand as 0 to 7 not 8 to 9 means North transfers to 2♠ and passes.





Problem 2.6: Stayman with Four Triple Three

E-W vul.

| | | | | | | | |
|-----|--------|---------|-----|---|------|------|------------|
| | | | | ♠KJ98 ♥A76 ♦984 ♣Q105 | | | |
| ♠43 | ♥KJ103 | ♦KQJ107 | ♣43 | <div><div>N</div><div>W</div><div>E</div><div>S</div></div> | ♠765 | ♥952 | ♦65 ♣K9876 |
| | | | | ♠AQ102 ♥Q84 ♦A32 ♣AJ2 | | | |

Problematic Bidding

| W | N | E | S |
|---|-----|----------|-----|
| | | P | 1NT |
| P | 3NT | all pass | |

Sound Bidding

| W | N | E | S |
|---|----|----------|-----|
| | | P | 1NT |
| P | 2♣ | P | 2♠ |
| P | 4♠ | all pass | |

Bridge Solver Online: 4NT-NS, 4♠-NS, 2♥-NS, 2♦-NS, 2♣-NS

Passivity Proscription

North should actively seek a major fit. If both hands are four triple three and all suits are sufficiently stopped, 3NT is the best contract. However, he does not know if South is flat, and if all suits are sufficiently stopped. He does not gamble that they are. Gambling is for poker, not bridge.

The Bidding

North has a four card major. Therefore, he uses Stayman. The four-four major fit is always worth the look, so much so, that Sam Stayman published the convention. North has enough for game and bids 4♠.

West could bid 2♦ showing diamonds and a higher suit, but he needs at least two entries from the possibly bankrupt dummy. At unfavourable vulnerability, it is not worth the risk. West has a very good chance at beating 3NT if East is bust, and North bids game. West is on lead.





The Defense

West's lead against 3NT or 4♠ is the ♦King. His main task against 4♠ is not to get endplayed. If the declarer knows what he is doing, West may have no choice.

The Declarer Play

In 3NT, South ducks a diamond once. South cashes four spade tricks. He could cash the ♣Ace because he does not want the danger hand winning a stiff ♣King. However, if the ♣King is onside, he makes his contract. Therefore, he takes the club finesse. After three rounds of clubs, South exits a diamond. If West bares his ♥King, South must cash the ♥Ace and not exit a diamond.

In 4♠, South wins the ♦Ace and draws trump. He takes the club finesse and eliminates clubs. He then throws West in with a diamond. West cashes two diamonds and must play a heart or give a sluff and a ruff. 4♠ makes.

The throw-in: "If you are a good declarer, you will do your duty well. If you are very good, others will do the entire job for you²."

The Results

4♠ makes +420. 3NT makes +430.

In auctions which go 1NT then 3NT or 2NT then 3NT, there is a major suit bias over a minor for the opening lead. David Bird and Taf Anthias write that this bias is not so strong if the opponents refuse to use Stayman when four triple three³. However, in the long run, this practice of refusal to use Stayman is unwise.

² Martens, Krzysztof, Virtual European Championship Part 2, Dynamic Declarer Play, Vilnius: Garsu Pasaulis, 2007, page 159.

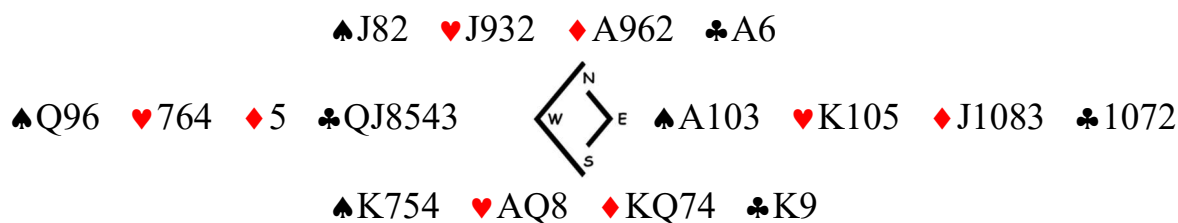
³ Bird, David and Taf Anthias, Winning Notrump Leads, Toronto, Canada: Master Point Press, 2011.





Problem 2.7: Shading a Ten Count

EW vul.



Problematic Bidding

| W | N | E | S |
|----------|-----|---|-----|
| | | | 1NT |
| P | 2NT | P | 3NT |
| all pass | | | |

Sound Bidding

| W | N | E | S |
|---|-----|----------|-----|
| | | | 1NT |
| P | 2♣ | P | 2♠ |
| P | 3NT | all pass | |

Bridge Solver Online: 5♥-NS, 4♠-NS, 4♦-NS, 2NT-NS, 1♣-NS

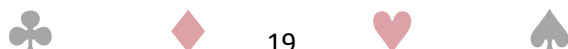
Passivity Proscription

North is too passive to invite and is wrong not to use Stayman, invented by Jack Marx and by Stayman's regular partner George Rapée⁴. The battle cry of bridge should not be “Remember the Alamo!” like the Mexican-American War of 1846 to 1848. It should be, “Remember Sam Stayman.”

The Bidding

South has a perfect 1NT opening. North uses Stayman, and when South shows four spades, North can hardly discount the ♠Jack.

⁴ The Stayman Convention, Wikipedia, Retrieved May 20, 2023 from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stayman_convention





Stayman is to be used whenever there is a four-card major, even when four-triple-three. If South has no four-card major, North may discredit a ten count that is four-triple with a wasted Jack in a major. He may call it a nine-count and invite.

The Defense

West has an outside spade entry, so he can lead his fourth best club. Without the outside entry, it would be wrong to lead a club. A short major would be best especially in a Notrump auction without Stayman.

The declarer wins the ♣Ace, and East plays the ♣2 showing an odd number of clubs. If the declarer plays a small club from the dummy, East must play the ♣10. When he gets on lead, his next club will be the ♣7 which is high-low from the remaining doubleton ♣72.

If East plays the ♣10 then the ♣2, West will know East started with two clubs and he must keep a spade entry. However, East shows three clubs and makes a first discard of the ♠10. Therefore, West can discard spades and keep his clubs.

The Declarer Play

The declarer can leave diamonds as an entry ladder. He takes the heart finesse to the ♥Queen. If the ♥King is onside doubleton, he can make four hearts. It is not. He loses the ♥King, and East exits a club.

The declarer tries diamonds and sees the bad break. He leads a spade towards his ♠King. East rises with the ♠Ace and exits his last club.





The Results

South gets no spades, three hearts, three diamonds and two clubs for down one in 3NT. The major Moysian is a better contract. It makes 5♥ and 4♠⁵.

⁵ Bridge Solver Online, Bo Haglund's double dummy solver module, Retrieved August 1, 2023 from <https://mirgo2.co.uk/bridgesolver/> See [Appendix F](#) for the .lin files of all the examples.





two touching honours. Leading the ♣King works the best. West cashes six clubs and then plays his spades. They win two spades and six clubs.

Against 3 ♦ by North, the choice of a lead is simpler. East leads the ♣King. However, South plays 3 ♦, and West leads his stiff heart.

The Declarer Play

In 1NT, the declarer must find pitches on the clubs. From his hand he can pitch three hearts and one spade. From the dummy he must pitch two hearts and three diamonds. When the defense finish taking their tricks, he can claim.

The Results

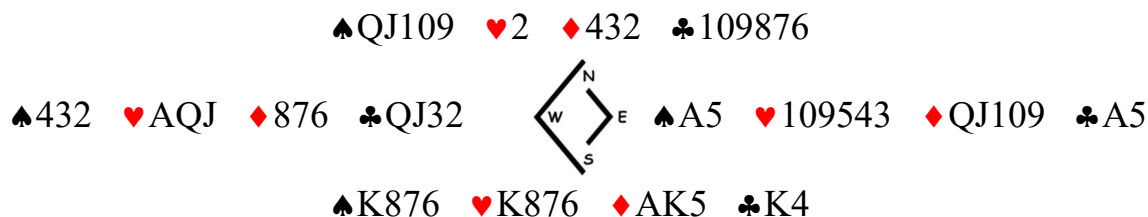
1NT may be down three for -300, and 3 ♦ makes for +110. With a six card minor, a player should not be afraid of the three-level. In this case, it gets the only positive score. 2 ♥ is down one only if East gets the ♥King and two diamond ruffs, otherwise it makes +110.





Problem 2.9: Weak Hand but Five-Four

Neither vul.



Problematic Bidding

| W | N | E | S |
|---|---|---|-----|
| | | | 1NT |

all pass

Sound Bidding

| W | N | E | S |
|---|---|---|-----|
| | | | 1NT |

| | | | |
|----------|----|---|----|
| P | 2♥ | P | 2♠ |
| all pass | | | |

Bridge Solver Online: 2♠-NS, 1♣-NS, 1♦-EW, 1NT-EW, 2♥-EW

Passivity Proscription

North is too passive. Both 2♠ and 3♣ rate to be better contracts than 1NT. 1NT is unlikely to get a positive score because North and South do not have a combined 22 HCP. Even then, the results depend on the lead and the distribution of cards around the table.

The Bidding

With 5 to 7, North passes 1NT. It might make, and there is no need to risk the two or three-level in a bad fit. However, North is in the dead zone where a positive is virtually impossible, and the negative score must be minimized.

With normal distributions around the table, North can expect South's shortest suit to be clubs. Therefore, odds are in favour of a spade fit or Moysian. North transfers to spades and passes.





The Defense

Against 1NT, West leads a fourth best club. Against 2♠, West's best lead is a trump. It certainly is not a heart. Against 3♣, West leads his middle spade. A heart or club lead clearly can compromise a defensive trick.

When East gains the lead against 2♠ with the ♠Ace, he leads a trump. When in doubt, he cooperates with his partner, but he can see from the stiff heart in dummy, that trump is correct. The opponents are short on HCPs and need ruffs to get a good score. The dead suit in dummy (DSID) which is not a singleton is also a possibility of a switch. East could lead the ♦Queen when he gains the lead with the ♣Ace.

The Declarer Play

In 2♠, South wins the second spade and leads a club. He wins the ♣King and plays a small heart. West wins and leads a third trump. South loses a second small heart and pitches a diamond.

The Results

Using the online bridge solver, the hands make 2♠ and 1♣ by South and 1NT by East or West⁶.

⁶ Bridge Solver Online, Bo Haglund's double dummy solver module, Retrieved August 1, 2023 from <https://mirgo2.co.uk/bridgesolver/> See [Appendix F](#) for the .lin files of all the examples.





diamond. West leads the ♠5. Leading a club is not even a consideration. When the declarer has access to a long suit, the side suit winners must be taken, and the long suit left alone.

The Declarer Play

On a heart lead, the declarer has nine tricks, two spades, one heart and six clubs. On a diamond lead, nine tricks are harder if East switches to a heart, but will eventually be won. On a spade lead, the declarer has eight tricks and developing a ninth trick cannot be done before spades are ready to run for the defense.

The Results

3♣ makes +110. 3NT is -50 on a spade lead, and +400 on any other lead.





The Defense

In an auction which goes 1NT then 3NT, a major lead is the best. A small heart is not good because the ♥Queen is just sufficiently guarded. A spade is probably the best lead. Interior sequence leads start at the 10, therefore, the fourth best spade is led.

The defense must grab their tricks when the declarer has a long source of tricks. If East gains the lead with a diamond, he will play the ♣King. West will play low, and East exits the ♠6 which is high-low from the remaining doubleton. West would normally duck so that he can cash the ♠Ace and the fourth spade when East plays his third spade. However, because of the diamond situation, he plays the ♠Ace right away and exits a club.

The Declarer Play

The proper way to play the diamond suit with an outside entry is to cash a top diamond. When the ♦Jack falls, the declarer uses the Principle of Restricted Choice and goes back to his hand to finesse to the ♦10. However, there are no outside entries, so the first diamond is ducked. Playing to the ♦10 is fine because a four-zero split with West cannot be picked up missing more than one honour.

The Results

In 3♦, the declarer uses Restricted Choice and makes +150. In 3NT, the declarer makes +400 if the opponents grab their winners and more if the opponents are passive with a large source of tricks right in front of their faces.





Problem 2.12: Not Invitational

Neither vul.

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------|----------|-----|-----|--|-------|------|---------|----------|--|--|--|--|
| | | | | | ♠K32 | ♥42 | ♦42 | ♣KQJ1087 | | | | |
| ♠A108 | ♥J109875 | ♦65 | ♣32 | | ♠Q654 | ♥A6 | ♦J987 | ♣A94 | | | | |
| | | | | | ♠J97 | ♥KQ3 | ♦AKQ103 | ♣65 | | | | |

Problematic Bidding

| W | N | E | S |
|---|-----|----------|-----|
| | | | 1NT |
| P | 2♣ | P | 2♦ |
| P | 2NT | all pass | |

Sound Bidding

| W | N | E | S |
|---|-----|----------|-----|
| | | | 1NT |
| P | 3NT | all pass | |

Bridge Solver Online: 2NT-NS, 3♦-NS, 3♣-NS, 1♠-NS, 1♥-EW

Passivity Proscription

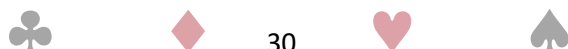
North is too passive to invite.

The Bidding

South opens 1NT, and North has a game forcing hand. He simply bids 3NT. Some players sitting North transfer to clubs and bid 3NT. That is pointless bidding. Game can make even if South cannot superaccept.

The Defense

East wins the ♥Ace and puts the ♠Queen on the table. He must attack the entry to the long clubs in the dummy. West must duck with the ♠Ace. The ♠King gets knocked out, and he has ♠A10 surrounding the ♠Jack.





The Declarer Play

South wins the ♠King and plays the ♣King. When the defender with the ♣Ace ducks, he takes the diamond hook to protect the ♠Jack. He cannot have East winning a diamond and leading a small spade.

The proper way to play the diamonds is to cash the top three honours. This picks up a doubleton ♦Jack.

The Results


The online bridge solver has 3NT down if West leads the ♠8⁷. The ♥Jack is the normal lead from West's hand and East wins the ♥Ace and attacks the spade entry in the dummy. This leaves the declarer with the diamond hook to make 3NT.

⁷ Bridge Solver Online, Bo Haglund's double dummy solver module, Retrieved August 1, 2023 from <https://mirgo2.co.uk/bridgesolver/> See [Appendix F](#) for the .lin files of all the examples.



Problem 2.13: Slamish with a Minor

E-W vul.

| | | | | | | | |
|--------|--------|------|-----|---|------|------|----------|
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | ♠2 | ♥K3 | ♦K54 | ♣AKJ9876 |
| ♠10987 | ♥QJ109 | ♦876 | ♣32 |  | | | |
| | | | | ♠KQJ3 | ♥A54 | ♦A32 | ♣Q54 |

Problematic Bidding

| W | N | E | S |
|---|-----|----------|-----|
| | | P | 1NT |
| P | 3NT | all pass | |

Sound Bidding

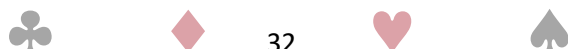
| W | N | E | S |
|---|-----|----------|-----|
| | | P | 1NT |
| P | 2♠ | P | 2NT |
| P | 3♦ | P | 3♥ |
| P | 3♠ | P | 4♦ |
| P | 4♥ | P | 4♠ |
| P | 4NT | P | 5♠ |
| P | 6NT | all pass | |

Bridge Solver Online: 6NT-NS, 6♣-NS, 4♠-NS, 3♦-NS, 2♥-NS

Passivity Proscription

North is far too passive opposite a 1NT opener to just bid 3NT. My suggestion, even for kitchen bridge players, is to play the hands with the played cards placed, not in the center, but in front of each player.

The card won the opponents is sideways, and the card won by your own side is vertical. That way the hands can be looked at after the contract is played. Each 3NT contract should be examined to see if a slam in a minor was missed.





The Bidding

North bids 2♠ as a transfer to clubs, and South supperaccepts with Hxx or xxxx. North and South cuebid Italian style. A cuebid shows first or second round control. From cuebidding, North knows South has the ♥Ace, the ♦Ace, and a spade control.

He also knows they have a ten or eleven-card club fit, so the ♣Queen is not necessary. Keycard is necessary to rule out a grand and shows one keycard is missing. Therefore, South's spade cuebid must be the ♠King. Missing the ♠Ace, North settles on 6NT. 6♣ is safer but is a poorer matchpoint score.

The Defense

West has a natural lead of four touching cards in both majors. The heart suit is strong, so West leads the ♥Queen. East can take his ♠Ace or duck no more than once. Looking at the seven-card suit in the dummy, it is hard to duck, but the declarer could have the ♠King and ♠Jack.

The Declarer Play

The declarer plays a spade and then runs his clubs. Even if East ducks a spade once, there are only twelve tricks, and no squeeze is possible.

The Results

6NT makes +990, and 6♣ makes +920.





2.2 Interfering with Notrump

Problem 2.14: The Interference System

People open 1NT as often as they can because it simplifies the bidding. Therefore, it is incumbent on the opposition to compete as much as it is safe to do so. This competition makes bidding more difficult and defense easier.

A system of competition is needed which shows single-suited and two-suited hands. A player is more likely to compete with a two-suited hand that is five-four or better. Students often ask how many points are needed. Points are less a consideration than playability and a lack of wasted points. A hand which needs no dummy entries is ideal.

The best systems over a strong Notrump are DONT and modified DONT (Meckwell). They allow all single-suited and two-suited hands to be played at the two-level. The best system over a weak Notrump has a penalty double to show 15+. Cappelletti (Hamilton) is one such system.





Problem 2.15: Game, not Slam, is Possible

E-W vul.

| | | | | | | | |
|------|--------|----------|---------|------|------|--------|--------|
| | | ♠98 | ♥AQJ873 | ♦104 | ♣K97 | | |
| ♠106 | ♥K1052 | ♦AQJ2 | ♣AJ3 | ♠J2 | ♥9 | ♦98763 | ♣86542 |
| | | ♠AKQ7543 | ♥64 | ♦K5 | ♣Q10 | | |

Problematic Bidding

| W | N | E | S |
|----------|----|---|----|
| 1NT | 2♥ | P | 4♠ |
| P | 5♣ | P | 5♠ |
| all pass | | | |

Sound Bidding

| W | N | E | S |
|----------|----|---|----|
| 1NT | 2♥ | P | 4♠ |
| all pass | | | |

Bridge Solver Online: 5NT-S, 5♠-S, 4♠-N, 4♥-S, 3♥-N, 1NT-N, 2♣-EW, 2♦-EW

Passivity Proscription

When an opponent opens 1NT, it is best to interfere as much as it is safe to do so. An unfettered Notrump auction often leads to the best result for the Notrump side. How many points are needed to compete? Points are not the consideration. Tricks are. Playable suits opposite a worthless doubleton, requiring few dummy entries with no wasted points are good.

An interference system which shows one and two-suited (five-four or better) hands and allows play at the two-level for all contracts is a must. A hand is more likely to compete when two-suited and a two-level contract can be played. This means that DONT or modified DONT (Meckwell) can be played. It is often true that a pair should never be doubled at the two level in their eight-card fit if their points are sufficient. Two-suited bids can often find that fit.





The Bidding

Here, North and South are playing modified DONT, so 2♥ is natural. North is correct by not passing.

The first rule is that if South has three hearts, he must show support immediately. **In competition, like by a passed hand, support is never delayed.** He either bids 3♥ to invite and 4♥ to play.

The second rule is that new suits are constructive and natural but nonforcing. Partner is welcome to re-evaluate his hand and try for a higher contract like game in the new suit. Flip-flopping back to his original suit to save partner from his own bidding is terrible. Constructive bidding is preferred.

Thirdly, jumps are highly invitational and natural.

Finally, slam tools are not available in an auction where the opponent opens 1NT. Should a partnership introduce splinters and other slam tools? Of course not. The convention card should not be geared to low percentage bidding situations. Slam when one opponent opens a 15-17 1NT is a very low percentage occurrence. Game is only marginally more frequent.

What is 1NT 2♥ P 4♠?

It is to play. Should North think that 4♠ is exclusion Blackwood? Of course not. If South has a spade void, the opponents have eleven spades. Even if West has four or five spades, East has seven or six respectively and bids 2♠ over 2♥ and possibly 4♥ as a Texas transfer. If one opponent has 15 HCP, not only is slam very unlikely for North and South, but game could be tenuous. One advantage for South is the location of the adverse points is known.

By the way, P 1♥ P 4♠ is exclusion Blackwood. It guarantees a spade void and good heart support.

What is 1NT 2♥ P 4NT?





4NT is unusual and constructive asking partner to pick a minor. It is not Blackwood of some strain. If slam is miraculously possible, 5♥ and 6♥ are possible bids.

What is 1NT 2♥ P 3NT? 3NT is to play as it is in most competitive bidding situations. Without a club stopper, South cannot even entertain 3NT.

When South hears North does not have East's hand, he is certain 4♠ is the final contract.

Is 2♠ forcing? No? It certainly is not forcing if North has a spade void.

What about 3♠? It should be highly invitational but may be taken incorrectly as weak. **Preempts are off when partner has entered the auction.** Preemptive raises are the acceptable exceptions such as the inverted minor double raise. South just wants to play 4♠, so he must simply bid it.

Is 4♠ a better contract than 4♥? Spades is an excellent suit, and 4♠ puts the strong hand on opening lead which protects South's minor holdings. East will likely never get the lead.

The Defense: The Opening Lead

What does West lead? A heart may get a ruff but it also is a source of tricks for the declarer. A heart should be avoided. West's best lead may be a trump, but cashing the two Aces when partner cannot ever get the lead works out best.

The Defense: East's Discards

East's discards are almost irrelevant since he has a singleton heart. If East had a doubleton heart, he does not discard a heart because hearts is obviously a suit of interest to the declarer. Clubs is the next possible suit of interest so East discards mostly diamonds. There cannot possibly be a two-way finesse in diamonds.

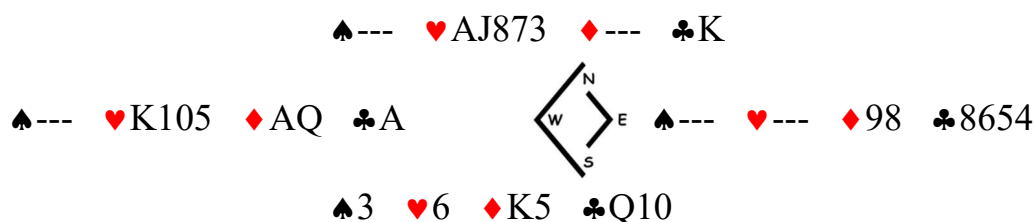




East's first discards are a low club and a low diamond to give partner count. West can calculate that East has nothing so East telling West that he has nothing is pointless. Count could be very important.

The Declarer Play

Declarer's tasks are short-hand ruffs, drawing trump and setting up a secondary suit in that order. He has no interest in short-hand ruffs because he has hearts, and the ♥King is in the pocket. When the dummy comes down, South calculates East to have at most one point if West has only 15. If West leads a trump, the declarer takes the marked heart finesse once and executes a pseudo squeeze by running all but one of his trump.

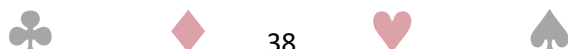


South cashes his seventh trump and West cannot let go of a heart or the hearts will run allowing South to make all thirteen tricks.

The hand should be obvious to the declarer because West opened 1NT, but many declarers do not count points or even do a point calculation. It is sure easy for the declarer to count East's points. Once East shows the ♠Jack, West must have everything else.

The pseudo squeeze is the only possibility, but there is a real squeeze. If South tries to rectify the count by losing one trick, West would be silly looking at the hearts in the dummy to not cash the diamond Ace when he wins the ♣Ace.

Furthermore, South would be silly to lose a club when hearts could be 3-2 all along. Therefore, he gives the contract the best shot by cashing his trump in a pseudo squeeze hoping West makes a mistake and discards a heart or hearts are three-two.





The Results

4♠ makes for +450 and 4♥ is down one on a diamond lead by East for -50. If East does not lead a diamond, 4♥ makes +420 for a poor matchpoint score.


The best matchpoint score is 3NT making five. Without a club stopper, 3NT would be silly by South and constructive bidding is not possible. 4♠ makes on a bad spade break, and 3NT is likely not so robust.





Problem 2.16: Cooperating with Partner

Neither vul.

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------|------|----|--------|---|--------|-------|--------|-------|--|--|--|
| | | | | ♠QJ | ♥AQ543 | ♦1052 | ♣1063 | | | | |
| ♠9754 | ♥K72 | ♦7 | ♣AKJ74 |  | ♠K1062 | ♥1098 | ♦Q9843 | ♣8 | | | |
| | | | | | ♠A83 | ♥J6 | ♦AKJ6 | ♣Q952 | | | |

Problematic Bidding

| W | N | E | S |
|----|-----|----------|-----|
| | P | P | 1NT |
| 2♣ | 2♦ | P | 2♥ |
| P | 2NT | all pass | |

Sound Bidding

| W | N | E | S |
|----|-----|----------|-----|
| | P | P | 1NT |
| 2♣ | 2♦ | 2♥ | P |
| 2♠ | 2NT | all pass | |

Bridge Solver Online: 3NT-NS, 3♥-S, 3♦-S, 2♥-N, 2♦-N, 2♣-S, 1♣-N, 1♠-EW

Passivity Proscription

East knows West's second suit is spades, so he must compete.

The Bidding

West shows clubs and a higher suit. He is five-four or better. North bids 2♦, a transfer to hearts, and then 2NT. That shows 8-9 HCP with five hearts. If South corrects to 3♥, North passes. However, South passes 2NT.

A rule for interference over 1NT is that West's two suits take priority over East's suits because West chose to enter the auction. However, East knows there is a fit because ten hearts are known. Therefore, West cannot have four hearts. Therefore, East must compete over the transfer to hearts.

2♠ and 3♦ by East are natural showing that East is going on his own. However, 2♥ is a cuebid asking for West's second suit. North has a hard time bidding 2NT if East





competes because he really does not have a spade stopper. It is also hard to double. North guesses to bid 2NT, and it passes out.

The Defense

Against Notrump, West leads the ♠7. This means he wants a club led by East. If West leads a club, East will never be able to. East ducks the ♠Queen with the intention of covering the ♠Jack. West must cover the ♥Jack. It is criminal to let the ♥Jack go uncovered.

Against spades, North leads a small diamond. South wins and plays the ♥Jack. He gets a heart ruff.

The Declarer Play

In Notrump, the declarer wins the ♠Queen and plays a small heart towards his ♥Jack. West wins the ♥King and leads another spade. East covers the ♠Jack. The declarer wins the ♠Ace.

South cashes the ♦Ace and plays four rounds of hearts. West has clubs and spades and three hearts. Therefore, he has diamond shortness. Odds are with East holding the ♦Queen. South pitches a spade and clubs on the hearts. The declarer plays the ♦10, and it gets covered. The ♦10 is a lost card, but East can make a mistake and not cover.

In spades, West loses the first four tricks. He ruffs two diamonds to play spades. West can count points and knows to take the club finesse, but he cannot get to the dummy. He ruffs a club and plays diamonds.

The Results

In Notrump, the declarer gets two spades, four hearts, and three diamonds for +150 (or +400)





In 2♠, West loses two spades, two hearts, a heart ruff and one diamond for down one for -50.





Trail, BC, Pencil on Paper, 24.5cm x 17.5cm, 2016

Warren Watson is a former Aerospace Engineer and is currently an artist, with a diploma in Fine Arts from Okanagan University College in Kelowna, BC, and an avid bridge player. He is an ACBL Diamond Life Master, an ACBL accredited bridge teacher, a writer of 347 columns in the Trail Times, a published author, an ACBL director, an accredited ACBL tournament assistant and the Kootenay Jewel Bridge Club manager (10+ years). He currently resides in Trail, BC, and in winter, likes to ski Grey Mountain of Red Mountain Resort.



Self Portrait, Pencil on Paper
25cm x 20cm, 2015

