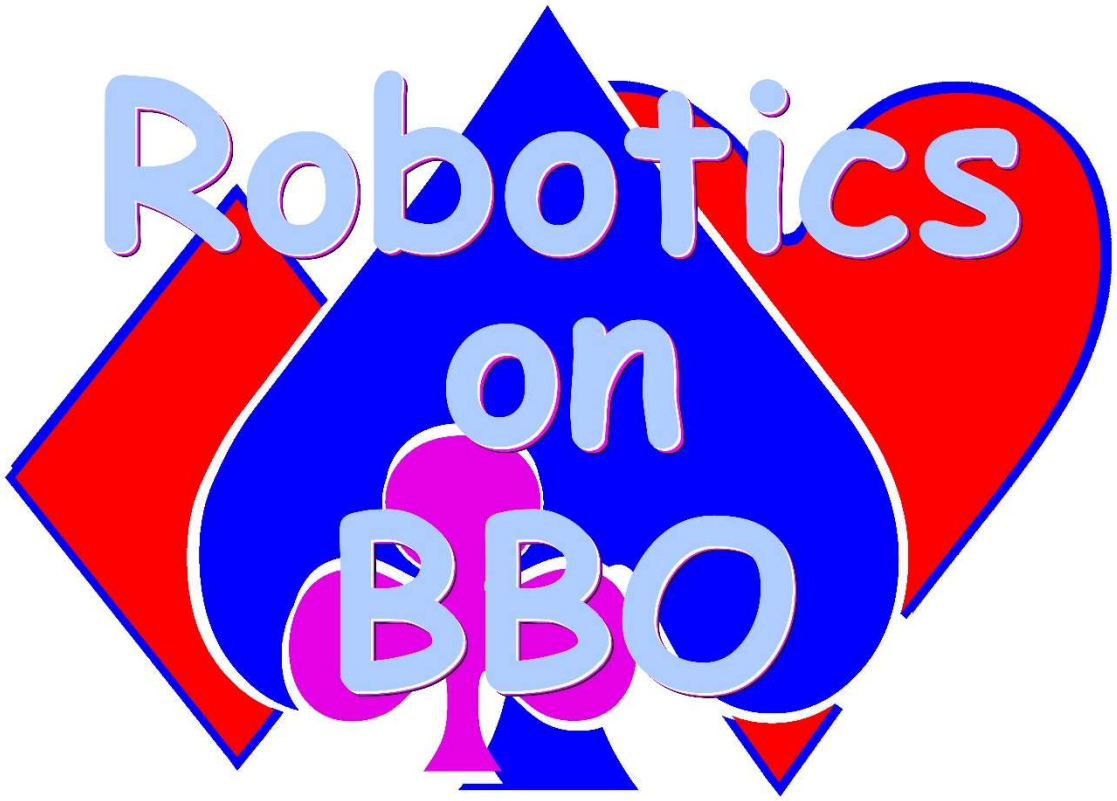


How to Play with the Robots on BBO

For the Exciting Game of Bridge

Warren Watson

Last Revised October 12, 2025

Preface

Robotics sounds like an engineering manual, but this is a guide on how to play with the robots on Bridge Base Online[1]. This is essentially a manual for the exciting game of bridge. The examples here have interesting and difficult bidding. The subjects have been discussed in the other Watson bridge books, but not only are they a test for the robots, they also serve as a good review for the reader.

If the reader has any questions, wishes to be sent updates or desires lessons at $25 CAD an hour on BBO and over FaceTime, he can contact the author at KootenayJewelBridgeClub@gmail.com. Until, the second edition is published, purchasers of the first edition are entitled to be kept current with the most recent revision of the first edition.

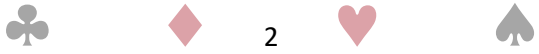
If the reader plays often and reads all twenty-two Watson bridge books, he will be a good player before long. It would be even better if he had a partner interested in learning who also reads the Watson bridge books.

Simply playing duplicate is not enough to improve. Not only are lessons likely needed, but also are after-the-game analyses. An advancing player must try to figure out what went wrong on the boards with low scores.

Did the opponents find the best lead, and was that lead just wrong, but lucky, or was the lead obvious? Did the opponents defend well or was there a mistake? Talking to a bridge teacher about any puzzling hand also helps.

However, it is important not to be a result merchant. Sometimes the best play does poorly once in a while, and a player must realize that. The best bridge does well in the long run, but will still have a bad result once in a while. There is an inherent randomness to any card game, even bridge.

[1] BBO or Bridge Base Online at https://www.bridgebase.com/



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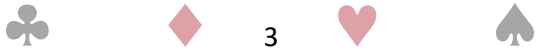


Appendices

1. Behind the Robots

BBO has three levels of Robots, Ben, the Advanced GIB Robot ($2.29 USD per day) and the basic GIB Robot ($3.99 USD per week). To use the robots regularly, it is cheaper to become a BBO+ member[2] ($7.99 USD per 30 days). Most bridge players on BBO will encounter the GIB robots. GIB stands for Ginsberg's Intelligent Bridgeplayer[3]. The GIB Robots are capable of good and bad moves, and they average around 55% in a tourney simulation.

Ben is the AI bridge robot on BBO developed by Lorand Dali. Ben has been trained by hands played in pair games on BBO and does not use double dummy analysis. Ben uses human leads but uses GIB's claim and bidding engines. A player can play against Ben by playing in the Ben & Friends free tourney and also by trying the AI bridge engine in Robot World on BBO[4].

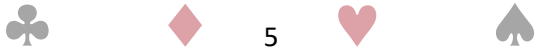
The advanced robots play Two Over One, but for BBO+ members, they have three bidding options, Two Over One, Five-Card Majors (Standard American) and Precision. The best way to play with the robots is to hover the mouse over a bid to get the explanation. The bidding of the robots have good and bad points.

Splinters after minor transfers over 1NT are nice. Using Cappelletti is too restrictive for 1NT interference. The robots use the 4321 HCP system with 3,2,1 points for a void, singleton and doubleton respectively. A point is subtracted for an honour in shortness. A singleton King being 4 points may be a poor estimate of its value.

The robots defend by double dummy analysis of hands reconstructed from the bidding. They use standard signals, primarily attitude, and lead King from Ace-King. The robots tend to lead passively, and if they lead a suit bid by an opponent, it is usually shortness.

For robots, like humans, their weakest aspect of the game is defense. They declare fairly well and bid not too badly. The system over 1NT with splinters is nice. Two Over One is a good system played fairly well by the robots.

[2] About BBO+, Retrieved February 1, 2025 from https://news.bridgebase.com/about-bbo-plus/
[3] About GIB Robots, Retrieved February 1, 2025 from https://www.bridgewebs.com/monday2/BBO%20Robots.pdf
[4] About Ben on BBO, March 15, 2024, BBO, Retrieved September 19, 2024 from https://news.bridgebase.com/about-ben-on-bbo/



2. Robot Bidding

2.1 Notrump without Interference

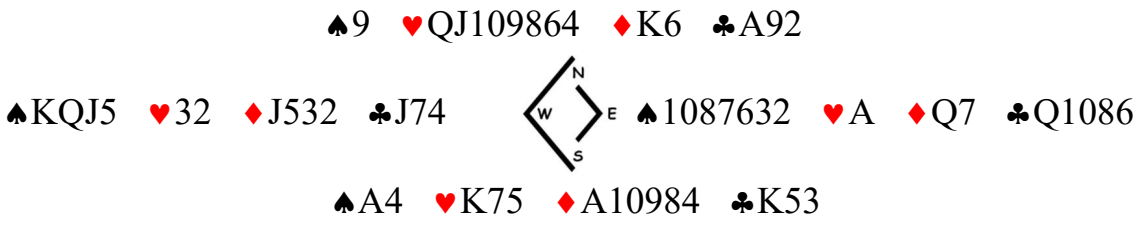
The following is the system over 1NT used by the advanced 2/1 robots on BBO.

1NT	2♣	Stayman
	2♦	Transfer to 2♥
	2♥	Transfer to 2♠
	2♠	MSS 4+ ♣ 4+ ♦, 10+ total points
	2NT	transfer to 3♣, 6+ ♣
	3♣	Transfer to 3♦, 6+ ♦
	3♦	4-5 ♣, 1- ♦, 4 ♥, 4 ♠, 12+ total points
	3♥	4-5 ♣, 4-5 ♦, 1- ♥, 4 ♠, 12+ total points
	3♠	4-5 ♣, 4-5 ♦, 4 ♥, 1- ♠, 12+ total points
	3NT	2-5 ♣. 2-5 ♦, 2-4 ♥, 2-4 ♠, 10-15 HCP
	4♣	Gerber
	4♦	Texas Transfer, 6+ ♥, 10+ total points
	4♥	Texas Transfer, 6+ ♠, 10+ total points
	4♠	No explanation
	4NT	Quantitative 2-5 ♣. 2-5 ♦, 2-4 ♥, 2-4 ♠, 16-17 HCP
	5♣	Biddable ♣
	5♦	Biddable ♦
	5♥	No explanation
	5♠	No explanation
	5NT	No explanation-seems to be a relay to 6NT
	6♣,6♦,6♥,6♠	no explanation
	6NT	18+ HCP
	7♣,7♦,7♥,7♠	no explanation
	7NT	21+ HCP

Bidding errors:
5NT should be a grand slam force of 20 to 21 HCP. This asks partner to bid 6NT with a minimum and 7NT with a maximum. 6NT should be 18 to 19 HCP.

Example 2.1: A Fifteen Count

Neither vul.



Incorrect

W	N	E	S
			1♦
P	1♥	P	1NT
P	4♥	all pass	

Correct

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

Bridge Solver Online: 6♥-NS, 4♦-NS, 1NT-NS, 1♣-NS, 2♠-EW

See Appendix F for the link and supporting file necessary to use Bo Hagland's double dummy solver.

South opens 1NT with 14 HCP. Is he pulling a fast one? Should the director be called? When his partner announced 15 to 17, why did everyone assume that meant HCP? They must be glorified point counters (GPC's) who do not use length points.

South is not pulling a fast one. He is supplementing the 1234 HCP system with length points. The 1234 system is an approximation which becomes slightly better with length points and judgment. South's hand is equivalent to 15 because of the length point for the fifth diamond. Furthermore, a 10 in a long suit accompanied by good intermediates and another honour certainly has a nonzero value.

North also uses length points to realize the power of his seven-card suit. He counts a point for his fifth and sixth heart and three points for the seventh. This also gives him 15 points. If nothing is wasted opposite his spade splinter, slam should be there.

15 + 15 is better than 27. South cuebids his ♦Ace to convey that he has nothing wasted in spades. A cuebid auction gets them to slam.

With four advanced 2/1 GIB Robots, the bidding was:

W	N	E	S
			1♦
P	4♥	all pass	

The Opening Lead: ♥Ace then ♣Queen

The Result: 4♥N+2 for +480

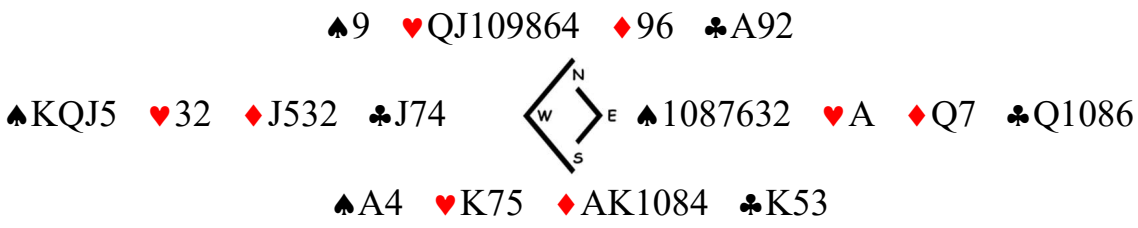
4♥ was alerted as a preemptive jump, showing a long suit, 6-10 HCP, and strong rebiddable ♥. What a horrendous auction. It completely discounts length points.

Furthermore, a hand which preempts in first or second seat is no longer a preempt once partner opens. In addition, North is not 5 to 9, so he is not a preempt. Is it a 1♥ opening or a pass? It is 1♥ in first or second seat.

North does not need to worry about being outbid. It makes 6♥ if partner has nothing wasted in spades, and a spade contract by East or West gets hammered if South has stuff in spades. South, with stuff in spades, would tell East and West, “Come on in, the water is warm.” Shutting the door, when the opponents would be in trouble if they entered, is not good bridge.

Example 2.2: An Eighteen Count

NS vul.



Incorrect

W	N	E	S
		P	1NT
P	4♦	P	4♥
all pass			

Correct

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

Bridge Solver Online: 6♥-NS, 4♦-NS, 1NT-NS, 1♣-NS, 2♠-EW

Example 2.2 is the same as Example 2.1 except the ♦King has been moved from the North hand to the South hand. The slam range is 16+ opposite 15 to 17 and 13+ opposite 18 to 19. North has 12 points without shortness points.

This is a harder slam to bid, but not once North used NMF to discover a ten-card fit. Massive fits (10+) and/or double fits help marginal contracts be successful. North cuebid twice and then let South take the last step to slam. South passes 5♥ if he is quacky, but a quacky hand is probably not making two cuebids along the way.

With four advanced 2/1 GIB Robots, the bidding was:

W	N	E	S
		P	1NT
P	4♦	P	4♥
all pass			

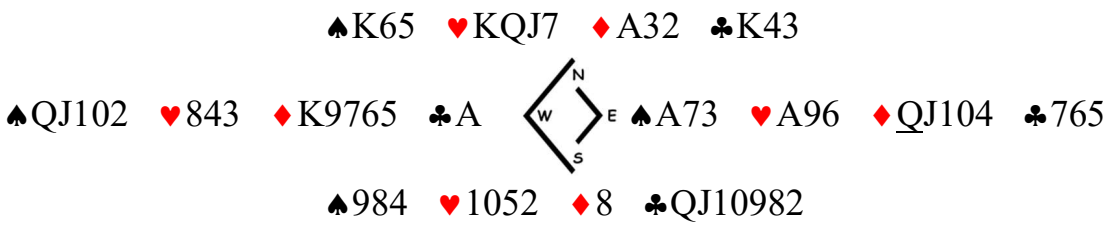
The Opening Lead: ♠King

The Result: 4♥S+2 for +680

The first two examples show how the robots do not supplement the 4321 system with length points. In addition, Robots are also quite capable (wrongly so) of self preempts.

Example 2.3: The Dead Zone

NS vul.



Incorrect				Correct			
W	**N**	**E**	**S**	**W**	**N**	**E**	**S**
	1NT	all pass			1NT	P	2NT
				P	3♣	all pass	

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

When partner opens 1NT, showing 15 to 17, the dead zone, where a negative score is expected, is 0 to 4 HCP. 3♣ is down one with proper defense, but that is better than 1NT down four.

With four advanced 2/1 GIB robots, the bidding was as follows:

W	**N**	**E**	**S**
		P	1NT
P	2NT	P	3♣
all pass			

The Opening Lead: ♦Queen

The Result: 3♣= for +110

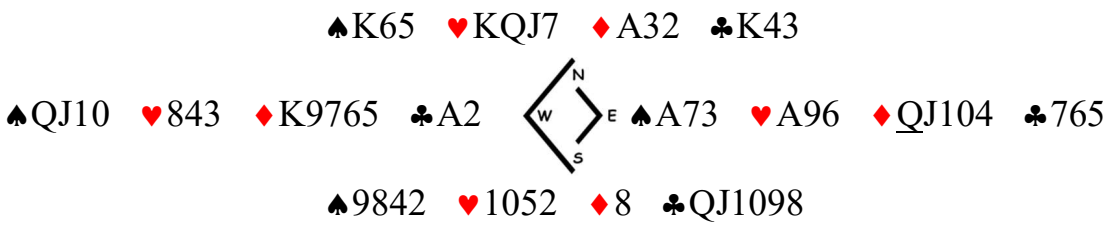
It makes 3♣ because of a robot defensive mistake. West wins the ♣Ace and switches to the ♠Queen. East plays the ♠3, and West switches to a heart. East wins and cashes the ♠Ace. If a human sits Easts and plays the ♠7 under the ♠Queen, West continues a spade. North plays the ♠King second. He should duck in case the ♠Ace is

doubleton. How can one robot forget to signal he likes the spade lead, and the other robot pay attention to the signal?

It also makes +110 if South wins the ♦Ace and ruffs a diamond to play a heart to the ♥King. West wins the ♥Ace and plays a heart. South plays a small club to the dummy, and East wins the ♣Ace and plays the ♠Queen which South covers. West wins the ♠Ace and plays his last heart. Trump are drawn ending with the ♣King, and a spade is pitched on a heart.

Example 2.4: The Dead Zone Revisited

NS vul.



Incorrect

W	N	E	S
	1NT	all pass	

Correct

W	N	E	S
	1NT	P	2NT
P	3♣	all pass	

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

With 0 to 7 opposite a 1NT opener, a player transfers to a five-card major (and longer) or a six-card minor (and longer) and passes. When is it correct to transfer to a five-card minor? The answer is this example and any hand in the dead zone of 0 to 4 HCP. With 5 to 7, 1NT has a good chance of making and is two levels lower.

Chances are good that North's longest suit is diamonds and shortest suit is clubs. This would suggest North has three or four spades. South could make the unorthodox bid of transferring to 2♠ and passing. Such a bid may undermine partner's expectation of a stable bidding platform, so a transfer to 3♣ may be the best.

With four advanced 2/1 GIB robots, the bidding was as follows:

W	N	E	S
	1NT	all pass	

The Opening Lead: ♦Queen

The Result: 1NTN-3 for -300.

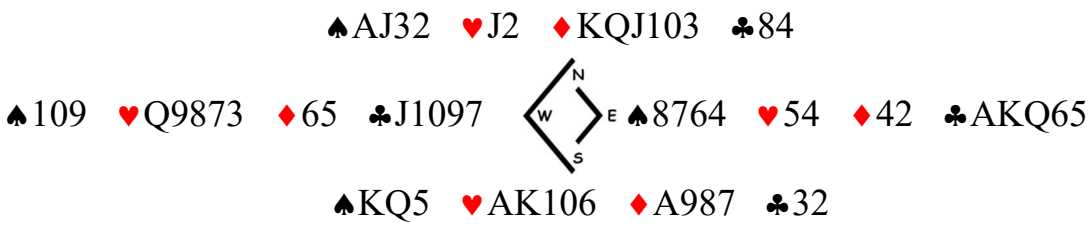
The robots beat 1NT by three for -300. The robot only seems to transfer to a six-card minor. That is wrong when in the dead zone of 0 to 4.

On another day, an advanced robot was rented, and East discarded a small spade on the fifth diamond. Therefore, West made a heart switch, not a spade switch. 1NT is down one for -100, but it makes for +90 if East does not cash his ♠Ace when he wins the ♥Ace.

On another day, North ducks the diamond lead twice, and East cashes the ♠Ace before playing the third diamond. This defensive mistake results in 1NT only down one for -100.

Example 2.5: Wide Open Suit

Neither vul.



Incorrect

W	N	E	S
			1NT
P	2♣	dbl	2♥
P	3NT	all pass	

Correct

W	N	E	S
			1NT
P	2♣	dbl	2♥
P	3♦	P	3♠
P	4♠	all pass	

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

After 2♣ is doubled for a lead, Pass is no four-card major and rdbl is biddable ♣, 15-17 HCP, 18- total points, 5- ♣, 2-5 ♦, 2-3 ♥, 2-3 ♠, double stopper in clubs.

3♦ is game forcing. It is either showing a lack of a stopper or interest in slam. A player should use the motto, "Tell partner what he needs to know." If North has the ♣Ace, ♣KQ, or maybe ♣K10x, his bid would be 3NT. With ♣Kx or no club stopper, he would not bid 3NT.

South has a nonquacky maximum and good diamond support. He cannot bid 3NT without a club stopper. He could bid 4♦ because he is interested in a diamond slam if North has a stiff club, or he could try the spade Moysian which leads to the best score.

With four advanced 2/1 GIB robots, the bidding was as follows:

W	N	E	S
		P	1NT
P	2♣	dbl	2♥
P	3NT	all pass	

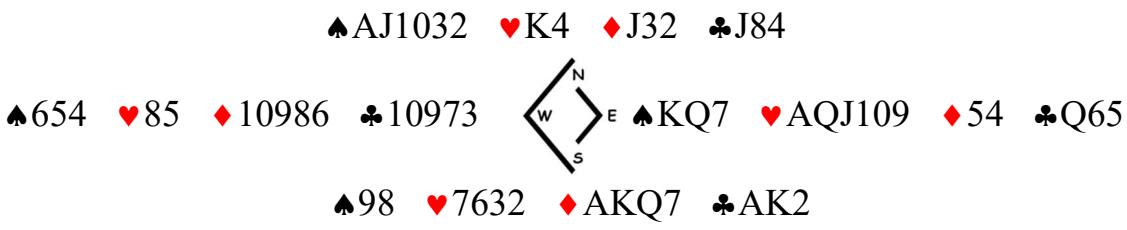
The Opening Lead: ♣Jack

The Result: 3NTS-1 for -50.

This example should be compared to Example 2.88. East doubled for a club lead, and with ♣Ace doubleton, West did not lead a club. 3NT only goes down because West eventually gets to a club lead on his third opportunity.

Example 2.6: The Transfer Should be Doubled for the Lead

Neither vul.



Incorrect

W	N	E	S
			1NT
P	2♥	dbl	P
P	3NT	all pass	

Correct

W	N	E	S
			1NT
P	2♥	dbl	P
P	3♠	P	4♠
all pass			

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

The robot sitting East does not double 2♥ for a lead. But if the human sits East and doubles 2♥, South passes because he has two spades, and North places the contract in 3NT. West, the robot leads the ♥8, and 3NT is down two.

With four advanced 2/1 GIB robots, the bidding was as follows:

W	N	E	S
			1NT
P	2♥	P	2♠
P	3NT	all pass	

The Opening Lead: ♣10

The Result: 3NTS+1 for +430

With three advanced 2/1 GIB robots and a human playing East, the bidding was as follows:

W	N	E	S
			1NT
P	2♥	dbl	P
P	3NT	P	4♠
all pass			

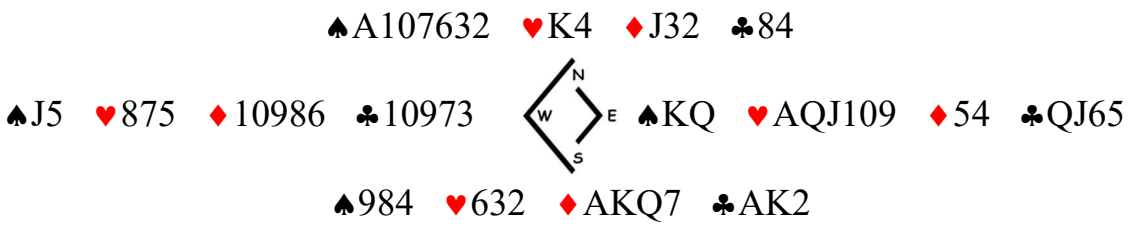
The Opening Lead: ♥8

The Result: 4♠S-2 for -100.

The rule of thumb once the transfer bid has been doubled for the lead is that South passes with two spades and accepts the transfer with three or more. However, a better rule is that South always passes with nothing in hearts, and North can declare a spade contract with opening lead protection.

Example 2.7: Transfer Doubled for the Lead Revisited

Neither vul.



Incorrect

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

Correct

W	N	E	S
			1NT
P	2♥	dbl	2♠
P	3♠	P	4♠
all pass			

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

The robot sitting East doubles 2♥ for a lead in this example but not in the previous example. If South passes showing two spades, North bids 2♠ to play (0 to 8 HCP). 3♠ (9+ HCP) would be game forcing with five-plus spades. However, if South shows three spades, North counts distribution and invites with a raise of 2♠ to 3♠.

With four advanced 2/1 GIB robots, the bidding was as follows:

W	N	E	S
		P	1NT
P	2♥	dbl	2♠
P	3♠	P	4♠
all pass			

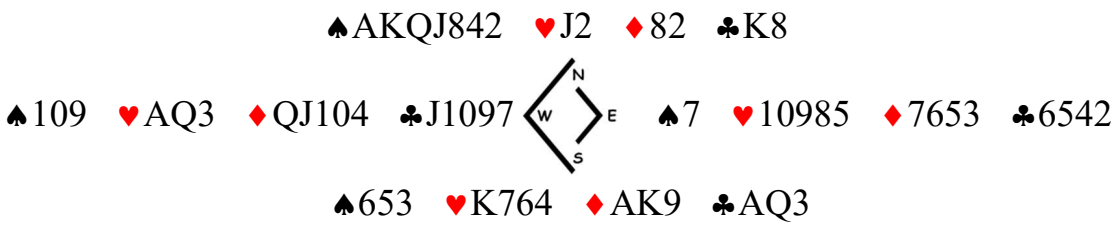
The Opening Lead: ♥5

The Result: 4♠S= for +420.

Like the previous example, North should play the contract and get a better score. In practice, lead directive doubles are not used properly. They are made with length and not always strength. A proper lead directive double demands that the suit must be led even if partner has a good lead of his own. Therefore, it must have strength. It never says, “I have enough hearts to defeat a 2♥ contract,” because defeating a contract which would never exist is useless information. It says, “I want a heart lead.”

Example 2.8: A Mild Slam Try

Neither vul.



Incorrect

W	N	E	S
		P	1NT
P	4♥	P	4♠
all pass			

Correct

W	N	E	S
		P	1NT
P	2♥	P	2♠
P	4♠	P	4NT
P	5♠	P	6NT
all pass			

Bridge Solver Online: 6NT-S, 6♠-S, 5NT-N, 5♠-N, 3♥-NS, 2♣-NS, 1♦-NS

Jumping to 4♠ after the Jacoby transfer is a mild slam try showing 14-15 total points, 2+ ♣, 2+ ♦, 2+ ♥, 6+ ♠. The 1NT opener will make a move to slam with a non-minimum and good controls. Good support and a side five-card suit may make the decision easier but, as seen in this example, they are not necessary. This is one of the rare times, the 1NT opener can take over the captaincy.

If West does not cash the ♥Ace on the opening lead, South makes thirteen tricks on a squeeze. He cashes the clubs and pitches a small heart. He cashed the top diamond only and then runs his spades keeping ♦K9 in his hand and pitching all four hearts. The squeeze works because West has ♦QJ10 and ♥AQ.

With four advanced 2/1 GIB robots, the bidding was as follows:

W	N	E	S
		P	1NT
P	2♥	P	2♠
P	4♠	P	4NT
P	5♠	P	6♠
all pass			

The Opening Lead: ♦Queen

The Result: 6♠S+1 for +1010.

The robot found the squeeze and made all thirteen tricks. The best defense turns out to be just cashing the ♥Ace, but with ♥AQ and no jump to slam, this is a very poor lead in the long run. With 10 HCP, West knows his partner is void of points because the opponents are in slam. This usually requires a passive lead.

On this board, the robot and student's declarer play can be tested in 2♣ and 3♥.

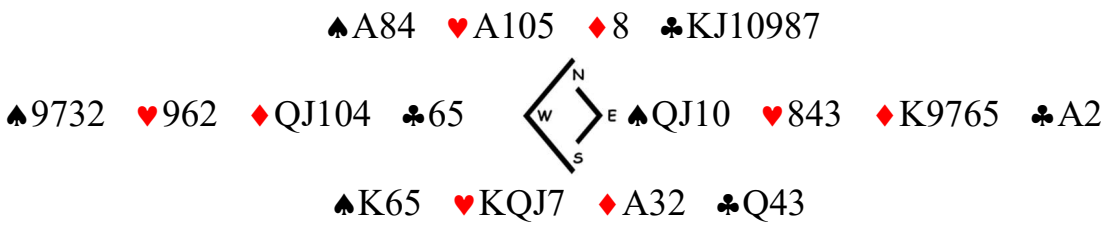
At a teaching table with the teacher in all four seats, the contract was placed in 3♥ by South and 2♣ by South. The teacher was then replaced by four advanced 2/1 robots for the opening lead and the play. With the ♠10 opening lead against 3♥, the result with four robots playing was +140.

With the ♦Queen opening lead against 2♣, the result with four robots playing was +90.

In both contracts, the robot gets a diamond ruff and then tries to take as many rounds of trump which can be taken so that two trumps of the defenders can be taken for one of the declarer's.

Example 2.9: The Slam Zone

E-W vul.



Incorrect

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

Correct

W	N	E	S
		P	1NT
P	2NT	P	3♣
P	3♦	P	4♦
P	6♣	all pass	

Bridge Solver Online: 6♥-NS, 6♣-NS, 3♠-NS, 2NT-NS, 1♦-NS

In the bidding above right, 3♦ is a splinter and 4♦ is a cuebid showing 2-5 ♣, 2-5 ♦, 2-5 ♥, 2-5 ♠, 17 HCP, 18 total points, no ♥Ace. no ♠Ace and the ♦Ace.

With four advanced 2/1 GIB robots, the bidding was as follows:

W	N	E	S
		P	1NT
P	2NT	P	3♣
P	3♦	P	3NT
all pass			

The Opening Lead: ♦Queen

The Result: 3NTS-1 for -100.

3♦ shows a singleton diamond with long clubs. The rule of 27 says that when there is nothing wasted opposite a singleton, slam is likely. Why would the robots not find

slam here? The robots are good to use a splinter, but they do not differentiate between the situations with no wasted honours and with wasted honours.

On another day, the ♦Queen was led, and East signaled with the ♦9. The declarer ducked, and West switched to a spade. South made 3NT+2 for +460.

With four advanced GIB robots playing 5CM, the bidding was as follows:

W	**N**	**E**	**S**
		P	1NT
P	3NT	all pass	

The Opening Lead: ♦Queen

The Result: 3NTS-1 for -100.

With four advanced GIB robots playing Precision, the bidding was as follows:

W	**N**	**E**	**S**
		P	1NT
P	2♦	P	2♥
P	3♣	P	3NT
all pass			

The Opening Lead: ♦Queen

The Result: 3NTS-1 for -100.

With three advanced 2/1 GIB robots and a human playing South, the bidding was as follows:

W	N	E	S
		P	1NT
P	2NT	P	3♣
P	3♦	P	4♦
P	6♣	all pass	

The Opening Lead: ♦Queen

The Result: 6♣S= for +920.

Many Precision systems find this minor slam especially if there is a 1♣ opening followed by the number of controls in an uncontested auction. It is disappointing the robots playing any system could not recognize that Axxx or xxxx opposite a singleton means slam can be made on 27 points.

The student can be tested in 1♦ by South. Four advanced robots playing 1♦ by South (West's lead of the ♠2) result in 1♦ making for +70.

Example 2.10: Five of a Minor is Not Nowhere Land

Both vul.

♠4 ♥A10 ♦KQJ109 ♣KJ1098

♠A732 ♥962 ♦8762 ♣76  ♠QJ1098 ♥8543 ♦54 ♣A5

♠K65 ♥KQJ7 ♦A3 ♣Q432

Incorrect

W	N	E	S
		P	1NT
P	2♠	P	3♣
P	3♠	P	3NT
P	4NT	P	5♦
all pass			

Correct

W	N	E	S
		P	1NT
P	2♠	P	3♣
P	3♠	P	5♣
all pass			

Bridge Solver Online: 5♥-S, 4♥-N, 5♦-S, 5♣-NS, 4♦-N, 1NT-NS

With four advanced 2/1 GIB robots, the bidding was as follows:

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

3♠ is a splinter, 9+ HCP, 10+ total points, 1- ♠, 4+ ♣, 4+ ♦

The Opening Lead: ♠Ace then ♦2

The Result: 6♣S-1 for -100.

If South lies and says he has zero not one keycard, the robot will assume three and ask for the ♣Queen by bidding 5♦. With a singleton spade, it is best to play 5♣, but that is not allowed by the robots. 3♣ sets the path to slam.

The robots bidding does not allow one to put on the brakes with wasted values in spades. It is clear 3NT or 4NT are bad contracts. The best contract is 5♣, but the robots could not get there.

Against 3NT by South, West leads the ♥2. The ♥Ace is won and a small club is played, and it wins. South has four hearts, five diamonds and one club for 4NT making. If a second club is played, East wins the ♣Ace and plays a heart. The declarer gets twelve tricks.

If the ♥10 is won at trick one (illuminating the heart situation), East switches to the ♠Queen when he wins the second club, and the defense gets six tricks. A human sitting East will think a spade switch is obvious without noticing it is his dead (and short) suit to the right. He wins the first club with the ♣Ace and puts the ♠Queen on the table. 3NT is down two.

In October 2025, the bidding was the same, and West led the ♠Ace followed by the ♥6. 6♣-1 for -100. It is pretty hard to abort a slam attempt. With one spade stopper, South would rather be in 5♣ not 3NT. With wasted 3 HCP in spades, slam is very unlikely. The robots should be wary of wasted points and the Rule of 27.

With three advanced 2/1 GIB robots and a human sitting South, the bidding was as follows:

W	**N**	**E**	**S**
		P	1NT
P	2♠	P	3♣
P	3♠	P	3NT
P	4NT	all pass	

W	**N**	**E**	**S**
		P	1NT
P	2♠	P	3♥
P	3NT	all pass	

4NT was Keycard Blackwood in clubs. A 5♦ response forces an impossible 6♣ bid. Blackwood should not be used if the asker cannot handle all possible responses. If South lies and says 5♣, the robot rightfully concludes zero keycards is impossible for a 1NT opener. Therefore, he assumes three keycards and asks for the ♣Queen

with a 5♦ bid which makes for +600 if passed. 5♦ by North is down one with a spade lead and spade forces, but East cashed the ♣Ace before leading the ♠Queen. Could a BBO programmer please fix this Ace-cashing disease?

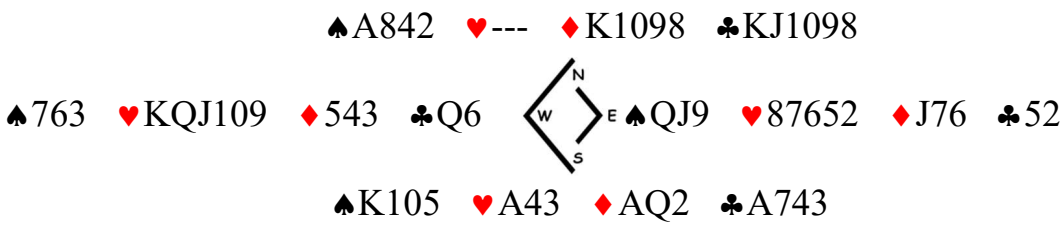
Against 4NT, a heart was led by West, and East ducked a small club off dummy after the run of the hearts and the diamonds. It made 4NT for +630.

Against 3NT, the ♠2 was led, and East also ducked a small club off of the dummy after the run of the hearts and the diamonds for 3NT+2. The robots are so quick to fly with an Ace except here when it is correct to do so.

The splinter bidding system with the robots is broken if five of the minor cannot be played with wasted spade values and only one stopper. South only gets to play a very precarious Notrump game when he lies about club support or passes Keycard Blackwood. 3NT and 4NT never make on a club lead.

Example 2.11: Splinter Bid over 1NT

Neither vul.



Incorrect

W	N	E	S
			1NT
P	2♣	P	2♦
P	3♣	P	3NT
all pass			

Correct

W	N	E	S
			1NT
P	3♥	P	4♣
P	4♥	P	4NT
P	5NT	P	6♣
all pass			

Bridge Solver Online: 7♦-NS, 7♣-NS, 6NT-NS, 6♠-NS, 2♥-NS

3♥ shows a splinter with 4-5 ♣, 4-5 ♦, 1- ♥, 4 ♠ and 12+ total points. The 4♥ cuebid shows first round control which must be a void since South has the ♥Ace. North does not realize, 5NT showing an even number of keycards with a heart void is not needed, and not only that, it also makes asking for the ♣Queen impossible.

With four advanced 2/1 GIB robots, the bidding was as follows:

W	N	E	S
			1NT
P	3♥	P	3NT
all pass			

The Opening Lead: ♥King

The Result: 3NTS+3 for +490

With three advanced 2/1 GIB robots and South as human, the bidding was as follows:

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

The Opening Lead: ♥King

The Result: 6♣S+1 for +940

5♦ asks for the ♣Queen, and 6♣ says no. Without the ♣Queen, 6♣ is the highest that can be bid.

With four advanced GIB robots playing Precision, the bidding was as follows:

W	N	E	S
			1♣
P	2♣	P	3♣
P	5♣	all pass	

The Opening Lead: ♥King

The Result: 5♣S+1 for +420.

2♣ shows 5+ clubs with 8+ HCP (game forcing). Playing 5♣, the robot took the second round club finesse which failed and a first round diamond finesse, through East, which worked. He kept himself to +420.

With three advanced GIB robots playing Precision and a human sitting North, the bidding was as follows:

W	N	E	S
			1♣
P	2♣	P	3♣
P	4♥	P	5♦
P	5♥	P	6♣
all pass			

The Opening Lead: ♥King

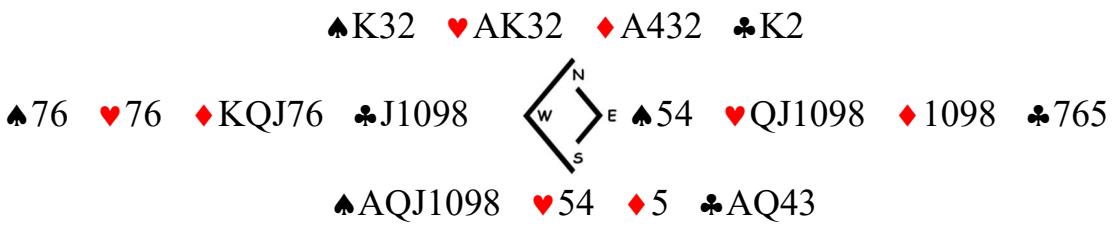
The Result: 6♣S+1 for +940.

The robot recognized 4♥ as a splinter. 5♦ and 5♥ were cuebids (standard). The robot declared correctly with no diamond finesse. He cashed the ♣Ace first, so no club finesse was necessary. He made all thirteen tricks.

In October 2025, the bidding with four robots was the same with 3NT as the final contract after a 3♥ splinter. The ♥King is also the opening lead. However 3NT goes down one because the robot declarer cashes his diamonds and then takes the losing club finesse. It makes twelve tricks if he finds (drops) the ♣Queen.

Example 2.12: Another Splinter

Neither vul.



Incorrect

W	N	E	S
	1NT	P	4♥
P	4♠	all pass	

Correct

W	N	E	S
	1NT	P	2♥
P	2♠	P	4♦
P	4♥	P	4NT
P	5♦	P	5NT
P	6♣	P	6♥
P	7♠	all pass	

Bridge Solver Online: 7♠-NS, 6NT-NS, 6♣-NS, 3♥-NS, 2♦-NS

The key to a splinter is not to have a minimum game-forcing hand. It would be a shame to make defense easier when there is no shot at a slam. The defense should take the hint when shortness has been shown and avoid leading that suit in case it sets up a discard.

With four advanced 2/1 GIB Robots, the bidding was:

W	N	E	S
	1NT	P	4♥
P	4♠	P	5♣
P	6♠	all pass	

The Opening Lead: ♥Queen

The Result: 6♠N+1 for +1010

With three advanced 2/1 GIB Robots and a human sitting South, the bidding was:

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

The Opening Lead: ♦10

The Result: 6♠N+1 for +1010

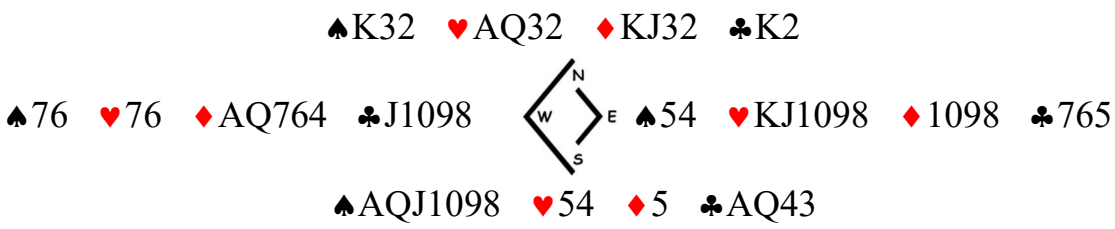
The robots recognized 4♦ as a splinter, but would not bid this way if four robots were playing. Splinters and minisplinters are almost always a very effective way of bidding. 4♥ is a cuebid saying nothing is wasted.

4NT is 3014 keycard, and 5NT is specific Kings promising all six keycards (five major keycards and the ♠Queen). The robots played 6♥ as a cuebid which might not even been a try for seven. However, 6♥ is asking for the ♥King (second round control in hearts). 7♠ says, "Yes." The robot did not understand the question.

In October 2025, the four advanced 2/1 robots played the hand with the same bidding, the same opening lead and the same result.

Example 2.13: Another Splinter Modified

Neither vul.



Bridge Solver Online: 6♠-N, 5NT-NS, 5♠-S, 5♣-N, 3♥-NS, 4♣-S, 2♦-NS

With three advanced 2/1 GIB Robots and a human sitting South, the bidding was:

W	N	E	S
	1NT	P	2♥
P	2♠	P	4♦
dbl	4♠	all pass	

The Opening Lead: ♦10

The Result: 4♠N+2 for +480

This example is similar to the previous example, except North was given a hand that does not like a diamond splinter. He bids 4♠ and does not show his ♥Ace because of the wasted diamonds.

The robots play that a double of a splinter shows a rebiddable diamond suit and is lead directive, not a sacrifice suggestion. East leads the ♦10 which just sets up a discard for the declarer.

A double was a poor bid by the robot. There is at most one defensive trick ever possible in diamonds. A diamond lead is not even a safe lead because a discard is set up. Without the double (a human sits West), the East robot leads the ♣5. It makes +480 on any lead by East because North has the timing to set up a diamond for a discard himself. It only makes +450 if West is on lead and leads a heart.

In October 2025, the bidding with four advanced 2/1 robots was as follows.

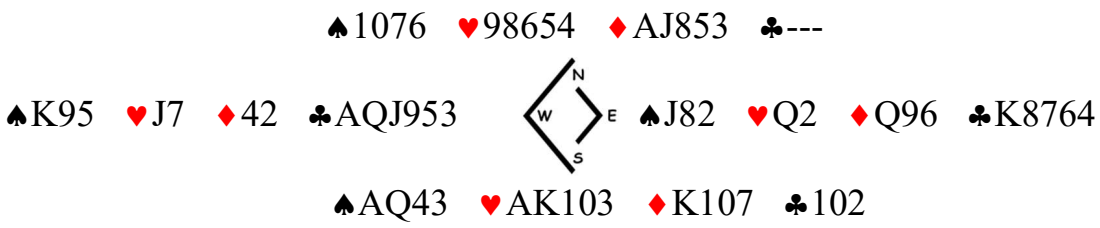
W	N	E	S
	1NT	P	4♥
P	4♠	P	5♣
P	5♥	P	5♠
P	6♠	all pass	

The Opening Lead: ♦10

The Result: 6♠N= for +980

Example 2.14: Superacceptance

NS vul.



Incorrect

W	N	E	S
		P	1NT
P	2♦	P	2♥
all pass			

Correct

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

Bridge Solver Online: 6♥-NS, 6♦-NS, 4♠-NS, 1NT-NS, 1♣-EW

This hand was played by a student from Calgary, AB on BBO. The inclination is to say that 2♥ was played because the opponents did not compete with clubs. However, South has a clear superacceptance of the transfer to 2♥. He has 16 HCP, a doubleton, three 10's, no wasted points (besides the ♣10) and six controls. Bidding 3♥ shows four-card support and a nonminimum hand which South certainly has.

Over 3♥, North could simply bid 4♥, and the auction is over, but why not show first round club control (denying first round spade control) with standard cuebidding on the way there? When East doubles for a lead, South passes to hear more. North could redouble to confirm first round club control (had 4♣ shown first or second round club control), but instead he shows first round diamond control.

Can North expect to reach the correct contract if he hides his hand. Would he not feel better about South's decision after showing his first and second round club control and his first round diamond control? North passes over 4♥, but over 4♠, he can show his second round club control on the way to 5♥. North's bidding was key

to finding slam because he realized fit, shape and controls are more important than HCP.

With wasted points, the brakes are applied. If South had the ♣Ace, he would signoff in 4♥ after the 4♣ cuebid (and East's double). If South had the ♣King, he would signoff after the 5♣ cuebid. Furthermore, if South ever made a club cuebid, North would also sign off.

North is the captain, and South is the information provider, as the 1NT opener often is. North knows South's hand far better than South knows North's hand. In addition, South's willingness and ability to cuebid shows his hand is not quacky. His only Queen is accompanied by an Ace in a four-card suit. It could be even better with the 10, but it is still good.

With four advanced 2/1 GIB Robots, the bidding was:

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

The Opening Lead: ♦4

The Result: 2♥S+4 for +230

With three advanced 2/1 GIB Robots and a human sitting South, the bidding was:

W	**N**	**E**	**S**
		P	1NT
2♣	2♦	P	3♣
dbl	4♥	all pass	

The Opening Lead: ♣6

The Result: 4♥N+2 for +680

North ruffs the club opening lead, draws trump and ruffs the last club. He then cashes the ♦Ace and takes the diamond finesse into West. It wins, and he makes +680. If West wins with a doubleton ♦Queen, he is endplayed into playing a spade.

The Robot Superaccepts

3♥, 2NT, 2♠, 3♣ and 3♦ are all superaccepts by South showing 17 HCP and 18-total points. 3♥ was alerted as superaccept, 2-4 ♣, 2-4 ♦, 4-5 ♥, 2-4 ♠, 17 HCP, 18-total points. 2NT is four-triple-three superaccept, and 2♠, 3♣ and 3♦ are doubleton superaccepts with 4-5 ♥, doubleton in the suit bid, and 2-5 in the other suits.

17 HCP is too restrictive. It should be modified to a nonminimum. 3♥ is the best superaccept here so South's spades are protected on the opening lead.

In October 2025, the bidding, the opening lead and the result with four advanced 2/1 robots was unchanged from previous runs. 2♥S+4 for +230.

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
20cm x 24.9cm, 2015