



Bulletin

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January 1999

Do You Play Relativity?

In the coming year, we will be doing our best to bring to you the best of the new thinking about bidding systems. As we are very close to the end of the millennium it seemed appropriate to look at how bridge systems have been influenced by developments in science. One of the pioneers in this field was Dr Jason Goren (no relation to Charles) who specialised in applying new theories about time and multiple universes to bridge. He was also one of the first bridge thinkers to realise that the really critical part of bridge was the end-game, particularly the post-mortem.

Dr Goren first applied the concept that time is relative and distinctions between past and future are artificial. The notion is that if you were able to stand on the edge of the expanding universe with your back to whatever it is expanding into, and had very big eyeballs, you would be able to see other people's past and future simultaneously. Similarly, if you drive over the speed limit to the club, sit-outs will last longer than if you had driven slowly. Dr Goren saw that the essential truth behind this was that it was quite legitimate to decide the meaning and success of different bids or actions after the results of the actions were known. People who had been derided in the past as "result merchants" were in fact operating in line with the advances of science.

Under Goren's system, therefore, a double is obviously for take-out if the contract makes when it is left in. If it wasn't left in and the contract would have gone 5 down doubled and vulnerable, the double was, equally obviously, for penalties. Similarly, bids are clearly forcing if another bid by partner would have found a making game. If partner did bid again to go one down, the bid was clearly a sign-off.

Dr Goren realised, however, that there still remained some bids or actions that defied rational explanation even after the event. This is where he

made use of the concept that there may be an infinite number of universes where all scenarios are possible. In some universes, the current world champions are still struggling in supervised play – too hung up on the probabilities of this world. Under this scenario, all justifications are correct. It is totally reasonable, for example, to say that a particular lead would have worked if an opponent (who had not bid) had only been void in three suits at trick two.

There are a number of advantages to Dr Goren's approach. First, it can be applied to any existing system. You can play "relativity standard", "relativity Acol", "relativity forcing pass" etc. Second, only one person in the partnership need play it. There is no need to develop a partnership understanding – in fact well-developed partnership understandings are a barrier to playing good relativity. Dr Goren understood this clearly. One of his most famous books is entitled "Partner Abuse is Good!".

Under current ABF regulations, players using relativity are not required to mark this on their system card. Nevertheless, they can usually be identified by sound as they explain the finer concepts to their partner. In many ways they are an example to us all. How many of us make a new year's resolution that we really must do more to help partner improve their game? How many of us end up doing nothing about it and continue to make light of the atrocities that are visited upon us? How many of us, knowing that unencumbered we would be playing in the highest company, would continue to persevere with a nearly brain-dead partner? Let us give these selfless people, the recognition that they deserve in the year ahead.

Phantoms and Sacrifices

by Julia Hoffman

How do you pre-empt effectively? How do you cope when your opponents pre-empt? How do you know when to bid on at the five level rather than pass or double? At her seminar in the club last month, Julia Hoffman listed some key principles for high level bidding.

Discipline

Do not pre-empt every time that you have a six or seven card suit in your hand. Think about how many tricks you could lose. There are exceptions to all rules. Nevertheless, the old rule of 2 and 3 – you should be two tricks short of your contract if vulnerable and 3 short if you are not – is still a good guide.

Make sure that you have a partnership understanding about the meaning of bids you make after your partner has pre-empted. If your partner bids 3C and you respond 3H or 4C, what are you showing? Is it forcing? What should partner show in the next bid?

Don't pre-empt twice in the one auction. If you have pre-empted and partner has not responded, leave it alone. He or she already knows what you have and would have bid if there was any point. For all you know, partner may be long in the opponents' suit.

Shape

In deciding to bid, the shape of your hand is often more important than points. Hands with singletons and particularly voids are also much better prospects than hands with nothing shorter than a doubleton – be cautious about pre-empting with semi-balanced hands.

The law of total tricks has been taken up with enthusiasm by many players. Sometimes it helps find the right pre-empt but it has also filled a lot of ambulances. Even with a big trump fit, you need to be careful about high level bids with semi-balanced hands.

Aggression

Don't be too scared to bid if you have the right sort of hand – even over a strong 1NT or 1C. There are a number of conventions and gadgets designed for bidding weak hands over these bids. One of them should be a basic part of your system. Over a strong 1C or relay systems, you will often want to get your suit mentioned as soon as possible to disrupt their bidding and prepare for a sacrifice. Over a strong 1NT you should always think about bidding if you have a long suit and no defensive values.

Also be aggressive in dealing with pre-empts from the opponents. Make sure that you know what your doubles mean in different situations. Make sure that your system contains standard gadgets for dealing with both natural and artificial bids at the 2 and 3 level. For example, over a multi-2, a bid of the suit shown could be for takeout, a double of the suit bid shows that suit. Alternatively, a bid of the suit shown could be a distribution-based takeout. A double could show better than minimum values.

Texture

The quality of your suit can be more important than total points. Having 6 points in just one suit is usually a lot better than 9 points in 3 suits. KQJ10 and 3 small is a lot better than AQ and 4 small. It is dangerous to overcall poor quality suits (missing a number of honours) at any level – even at the one level. The higher the level of the overcall, the more dangerous it gets.

Trust

Pre-emptive auctions can be pretty hair-raising. You might have made only one bid and the next time the bidding comes to you the opponents are at the five level. When both sides have bid to game level, sometimes you are not sure whether they are pre-empting or your partner is. Partnership trust and confidence becomes very important here.

Some gadgets at the 5 and 6 level are useful. For example, you should have an understanding that after you have freely bid game and opponents pre-empt, some action must be taken. If the sacrifice bid was made on your right you can double or bid on if the right action is clear but a pass must be forcing partner to take one of those options. Similarly, you should “break the auction” to show that you are bidding to make rather than sacrifice. So after opponents have bid 4S over your 4H, 5C would say “we are making 5H and lead a club if we are defending”. 5H would show a sacrifice.

The modern trend when both sides are bidding is to try and let partner know which side has the balance of points as early as possible. A good approach is to cue bid the opponents' suit to show support for partner's suit and a good hand with defensive values. For example, if the opponents open 1C and partner overcalls 1H, a bid of 2C by you shows hearts and a good hand. 2H is weaker. Similarly if your partner opens 1S and opponents overcall 2H, a bid of 3H by you says you have a good raise to 3S. Bidding 3S

The Difficulties of Competitive Auctions

By Ian Thomson

Starting the hard way

The **good** news is that you (North) pick up, with your side vulnerable:

♠ K Q 10 8 7 4 3 2
♥ A 5 4
♦ -
♣ 10 3

The **bad** news is that you are fourth to speak and the bidding has gone 1D by E, double by South and 2D by W. You now have a problem. If you bid spades, even with a jump, partner may pass and you are looking for slam. If you double, this may imply a balanced hand with no clear bid – and it will make life more difficult if the next hand bids 4 or 5D.

You decide to bid **3D** as a general forcing bid. But now the situation becomes even murkier. East interferes once more and bids 4D, your partner, South, doubles again and West passes. **What do you bid now?**

Hobson's Choice

If you bid:

You can see many options, but none are perfect

- | | |
|------------|--|
| 4S | This will finish the auction |
| 4NT | With a void this will not necessarily help |
| 5D | Probably now shows 2 suits |
| 5S | Probably asks partner to bid 6S with a diamond control – but you don't need help in diamonds |
| 5NT | Would show clubs and a major and first round diamond control? |
| 6D | Would show both majors and first round diamond control? |
| 6S | But maybe they can cash two tricks? |

and can you be sure that partner will have the same understanding of any bid you make? **What do you do?**

Answer on page 6.

A Really Simple Auction?

The International Bridge Press Association award for the best auction was won by Sylvie Willard and Gerard Tissot of France for the bidding on the E-W hands (without interference) on the following hand.

North	
♠ 3 2	
♥ 10 9 3	
♦ K Q T 9 3	
♣ T 6 3	
West	East
♠ T 8 7 4	♠ A K Q J 9 6
♥ A K J 5 4 2	♥ Q 8 7
♦ A 8 2	♦ -
♣ -	♣ A 9 8 7
South	
♠ 5	
♥ 6	
♦ J 7 6 5 4	
♣ K Q J 5 4 2	

Can you duplicate the auction?

Editor's note and clue:** As this bulletin has a family readership, we do not publish anything which could be seen to encourage or endorse the use of bidding systems involving extended relays. The words "brilliantly concise" appeared in the judges commendation. The bidding is natural but jumps are not weak. **Answer on page 7.

Xmas is coming!!

And you might as well go into debt at the club as anywhere else. We have lots of great new bridge books in stock to address most of those annoying deficiencies in your partner's game. We have Larry Cohen and Marty Bergen on bidding including the new "Follow the Law" and "Points Schmoints". Mike Lawrence on "Opening Leads" and Pam and Matt Granovetter's "A Switch in Time" guide to defence. There is the classic work on "Card Play Technique" by Victor Mollo and Nico Gardener and "Dormer on Deduction" by Albert Dormer. Plus many many other titles – the books are on display just inside the office – come and browse. You can also order bridge calendars or get a range of playing cards, tally cards and rubber bridge accessories and *Bridge Baron* – the best computer game available.

Can you always remember your name? Even if you can, others might not and wearing a club name badge is a really friendly thing to do. Next orders close on 5 December. You can get an order form from the Director of your session.

Director! “What does that bid mean?”

by Sean

Ask More Questions!

It is absolutely central to the rules of bridge that you have as much information about the meaning of your opponents’ bidding as they do. The right to ask questions is fundamental to achieving this. **When it is your turn to bid** (but not before), **and it is possible that you might bid**, you should always ask questions about the auction if you are not absolutely sure. Don’t be afraid about asking “silly” questions. **Most people do not ask enough questions about the bidding.**

Don’t Assume You Know

We often assume incorrectly that we know what some alerted bids mean. Beware!!! The meaning of many so-called “standard” conventions varies a lot as pairs try to “improve” them a little.

Also remember that some bids are “self-alerting” meaning that the opponents are not allowed to alert them even if they are artificial bids. Bids above 3NT, doubles, redoubles and bids of your suit are all self-alerting.

Help Your Defence

To help your defence, ask for a review of the bidding before you make your first lead. This can sometimes show that there has been a bidding misunderstanding. Remember, that when you find that an opponent has made a bid that was not systemically correct, you can ask them what they meant to show when they made their bid, even if it is not in their system.

Be Fair To Your Opponents

My general advice then is to ask more – but you also need to know about the times when you should not ask questions. There are some rules to protect your opponents – to make sure that when you ask a question you do not give your partner some clues about what is in your hand. The main rule is not to ask before it is your turn to bid but there are a few others to keep in mind.

Check the Basics Beforehand

Find out about your opponents’ basic system before you start playing. How big is their no-trump? What does 1 club mean? You cannot ask the meaning of non-alerted bids at the one level. So if you have a lot

of clubs you cannot ask what your opponent’s opening 1 club bid means unless it has been alerted.

Don’t Ask If You Don’t Need To

Don’t ask what a bid means, even if it has been alerted, unless you there is some chance that you will bid after you have got the answer. You don’t have to bid after you have asked but don’t ask if you were never going to bid. Apart from anything else, such questions can alert your opponents to the fact that they have had a bidding misunderstanding.

Don’t ask about bids that have not been alerted if the meaning should be very clear. For example, after an auction has gone 1H P 2D, asking what 2D could be seen as a way of telling your partner that you have diamonds.

Protect Your Partner

Sometimes the opponents have made several bids but you are only really interested in the meaning of the last one. You *can* ask just about that bid but it is *much better to ask for a review of the whole auction*. This way, you cannot be seen to be giving partner clues about your hand. If you only ask about the one suit, partner may feel they have been given an illegal clue and will find it difficult to lead that suit even if they might have wanted to.

For the same reason, when the bidding has finished don’t ask questions about the bidding unless you are on lead. If you are not on lead, you can ask the questions once partner has placed the lead card face down on the table. Partner cannot of course change his mind after you have asked the question. If you are in the pass-out seat and there is no chance that you will bid, let the auction finish before asking your questions – particularly if you would not be on lead.

Offer Explanations If You Can

When the auction has finished, **and you are declarer**, you should offer to explain the auction to the opponents if you believe that there is something they may not have understood about the bidding – even if you alerted the bid and they did not ask the meaning at the time.

“Fourth Suit Force”

by Inspector Gadget

What is fourth suit forcing?

After you and your partner have bid three suits, a bid of the last remaining unbid suit is *artificial*. It says nothing about the holding in that suit. For example :

East	South	West	North
1S	Pass	2C	Pass
2D	Pass	2H	

Because Hearts is the only remaining unbid suit, the bid of 2H is artificial. You may not have Hearts. You are *forcing* partner to describe their hand more. Do they have a heart stopper? Do they have an extra diamond? And so on. The benefit of finding out partner’s exact shape can mean the difference between finding the best game contract rather than guessing where to play the hand, or perhaps a slam based on the fit of the two hands rather than simply on point values.

Describing your hand

After your partner has bid the fourth suit, your job is now to describe your hand further at the cheapest possible level. For example, in the auction above after your partner’s bid

- 2S** Rebid of opening suit would show either *extra length* in this case six spades, or one with *no other bid* – for example, holding 5S, 3H, 4D and a singleton club, without a stopper in hearts.
- 2NT** A NT bid at the lowest available level shows *a stopper in the fourth suit* (in this case Hearts)
- 3C** Supporting partner’s suit would show *delayed support* in that suit, in this case clubs (at least 3), and *deny a stopper in hearts*
- 3D** Rebidding opener’s second suit shows a hand that has *two five card suits* – in this case, 5 diamonds as well as 5 spades
- 3H** A raise of fourth suit is *natural*. In the example above, this would define the hand as 5 spades, 4 diamonds and 4 hearts
- 3S** A jump to the three level shows *a good hand with extra length* – in this case, at least 6 solid spades

of 2H, you can bid:

Your partner now has a lot more information and the auction now proceeds naturally.

Finding the best contract

Suppose you hold as North:

	S T _x	H A J _{xx}	D A _x	C K J _{xx}
Partner holds;	S A K _{xx}	H Q _x	D K _{xx}	C Q _{xx} .

Using normal methods, you might get to 3NT but you will both feel that you are taking a gamble on the Diamonds. With fourth suit force, however, there will be no doubt. You will open 1H, South will respond 1S, you bid 2C and now South will bid 2D (fourth suit force). You bid 2NT and South now knows you have a double stopper in Diamonds and bids the 3NT with confidence.

Now consider these holdings:

North:	S J T _x	H A Q _{xxx}	D x	C K Q J _x
South:	A K Q _{xx}	K _x	xxx	A _{xx}

This hand shows how the introduction of fourth suit forcing to game enables the partnership to describe the entire shape of the hand at a low level and maybe assist in find-

North South

1H	1S	
2C	2D ¹	(1) Fourth suit force
2S ²	4C ³	(2) Showing three card spade support and, by inference, a singleton diamond (because has already shown 5/4 in hearts and clubs)
		(3) Cue bid showing first round control of clubs
4H ⁴	4NT ⁵	(4) Cue bid showing first round heart control
		(5) Waiting bid, still interested
5C ⁶	6S!	(6) Cue bid showing second round club control

ing slam. The bidding goes:

Once partner shows a singleton diamond the working value of South’s hand increases, as North is marked with points in hearts and clubs. Without fourth suit forcing to game the hand would be very difficult to bid accurately.

We can also use the gadget to enable us to distinguish between hands where partner simply jumps to game and declines to use fourth suit forcing and those where there is some further interest. For example, in the auction above, if West simply bid 4S over 2D, in lieu of the “Fourth Suit”, it would show a hand with game values but no further interest. A slower auction which firstly went through

(Continued on page 7)

Competitive Auctions

continued from page 3

What has partner shown?

Partner doubled twice. In considering the best option, you need to consider the type of hand that partner must have for these bids. You can assume that partner does not hold:

- 1 15-18 balanced with a diamond stopper as they would have bid 1NT at the first opportunity.
- 2 A minimum hand as the second double should show extra values.
- 3 A single suited take out as they would most likely have bid their suit at the second opportunity.

That leaves partner with a balanced/semi-balanced 15-18 with no diamond stoppers or 19+ balanced or semi-balanced. It seems likely that 6S will make and 7S is a chance but how do we find out?

Confusion Continues

None of the options really appeal but 5D seems to be the least confusing forcing option. Hopefully, partner's next bid will make everything clear although we are not really sure how. Partner bids 6C. We have learnt something. Clubs are partner's longest suit and he probably does not have a 4 card major. He is also probably showing some interest in a grand opposite a good hand or he would have just bid his best major to stay at the 5 level. (But we are still not completely sure. Would he have bid 5NT with a strong hand? What would a bid of 6D by partner shown?)

We still don't know what to do. There is a real risk that we are missing a lay down grand slam. Our hand, remember, is SKQ1087432, HA54, C103. To

make 7S we need partner to have the AS, KH and AK of clubs and either QH, QC or AD or 5 clubs (with clubs breaking no worse than 4-2).

Woosing It

It's all too hard and too big a risk. We bid 6S. It's not very often that we first bid our suit at the 6 level. However, partner knows to pass as we took control of the auction when we first cue bid the opponents' suit. Partner's role from then on was simply to provide information about his hand as best he could.

The Moral of the Story Is...

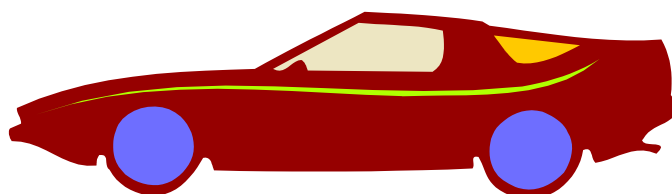
Needless to say, when dummy comes down, we see that partner has exactly the sort of hand we didn't dare hope for - S Ax H KQx D QJx C AKxxx. We make 13 tricks in 6S. You have to give credit to the opponents. The interference to 4D was just enough to make it extremely difficult to get to the best spot.

Still, even without bidding the grand, we picked up 11 imps on the board. The opposing pair holding our cards, jumped to 4S over 2D and, and the auction ended there. This points to how cautious you have to be about bidding grand slams in teams. Experience suggests that bidding 6S in this auction will get you a flat board about 70% of the time, you will lose about 20% of the time and win about 10%. You are relying on your teammates to make it difficult for their opponents to find the right contract. Do unto others what you know they will do to you.

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“Reverse-Blackout”

By Susie Coleman

In the last Bulletin, “*Inspector Gadget*” discussed the virtues of a convention called “*Blackout*”, which is used to clarify *responder’s* hand after opener has “reversed” on the second bid (ie bid a suit higher than his first suit, showing at least 5/4 shape, and at least 16 hcps).

I would like to recommend a variation which I call “**Reverse Blackout**”, because it is (1) easier to remember; and (2) (I think!) more effective! Using this method, the only game-forcing bids are a **jump bid**, or a **bid of the fourth suit**.

This leaves *all other bids as sign-offs, showing 6 to a bad 8 hcps*, thus allowing you to stop at the lowest level possible when opener has reversed with the minimum values of 16 hcps for his/her reverse.

To give a negative response to Opener’s Reverse, you simply bid the **lowest** option out of:

1. Giving simple 3-card support (or better) for opener’s first bid suit; eg 1C – 1S – 2H (reverse) - **3C** (showing 3 or 4 card club support).

2. OR Showing 4-card support for opener’s second-bid suit (both these options will be guaranteeing at least an 8-card fit) eg: 1D – 1S – 2H (reverse) - **3H** (showing 4 card Heart support).

3. OR Rebidding your own 5-card suit (denying either of the above scenarios) – declarer may pass this with 2 or 3-card support; eg; 1D – 1S – 2H (reverse) - **2S** (5+spades, not 4 hearts, may possibly still have 3 card club support)

4. OR if all the above fail, bid 2NT. Opener now has all the inferences at hand to place the final contract. Eg. 1D – 1S – 2H (reverse) - **2NT** (not 5 spades, not 4 hearts, not 3 diamonds and not 9

Inspector Gadget (from page 5)

2H (fourth suit forcing) and then, after opener’s response, showed spade support would show some further interest in slam.

Forcing to game or not to game?

Fourth suit force is usually played as forcing to game. Once the fourth suit has been bid the bidding cannot stop below game.

You can, however, play it as a forcing for one round only. If you play it this way, the opener responds in the same way to show the features of the hand but must now **jump** with better than a

North	South (1)	South (2)
S x	S Kxxx	S KQ xzx
H AQJxxx	H xx	H xx
D K Jx	D xxx	D xxx
C KQ xx	C Axxx	C AJxx

minimum hand. One example of where this method can be useful is shown below.

Using normal methods the bidding on both exam-

Hand 1		Hand 2	
North	South	North	South
1H	1S	1H	1S
2C	3C	2C	3C

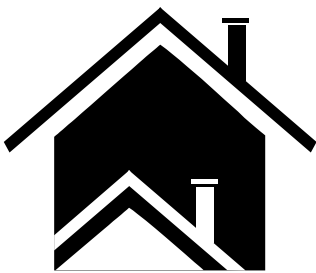
ples would proceed as follows:

North is left in a position of guessing whether game is possible. By introducing our gadget as a one round force, responder is able to bid fourth suit to show an invitational type of hand. On Hand two after the bidding has gone 1H, 1S, 2C South can bid two diamonds and North with the requested diamond stopper and better than minimum hand jumps to 3NT.

The club is seeking expressions of interest from experienced teachers able to conduct day time and evening beginners’ lessons. For further details, contact Keith Ogborn on 6281 4587.

Best Auction (from page 3)

The auction was 1H – 2S – 5NT – 7NT. The immediate jump to 7NT by Sylvie Wallard was what won the award for the auction. As 5NT was a grand slam try asking for the top trumps she knew her partner must have the Ace of diamonds and a void in clubs. So surely he would have at least six hearts headed by the Ace-King. In that case she could count 13 top tricks in no-trumps.



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