Autobridge problem solution

Suppose we draw two rounds of trumps, play A and K of spades and concede a spade. No good: the opponents will play the third round of trumps removing our trump from dummy.
Suppose we draw one (or none) rounds of trumps, play A and K of spades and concede a spade. Again no good: the opponents play a fourth spade and score a spade ruff.
The solution is to play just one round of trumps (or none at all) then duck a spade. Then win the return, draw a second round of trumps, cash the top two spades and ruff the fourth round.
This solution is (for me) counterintuitive because of the possibility of the second top spade being ruffed. But, in that case, the hand with three trumps has a doubleton spade and you can never make the contract anyway.
Note that the solution still works when spades are 3-3. Note also that, when the contract is destined to go down, this line is still down one only.
Although the South hand is a very rare beast the idea behind this problem is quite common. If, like me, you find it difficult to think out at the table it will be very useful to make yourself familiar with why the solution works.

Newsletter 2005

Taieri Bridge Club

Issue Number 97 January 2005

♣♦♥♠♣♦♥♠♣♦♥♠♣♦♥♠♣♦♥♠♣♦♥♠♣♦♥♠♣♦♥♠

The Christmas Party

The club had a very enjoyable Christmas party to which we were invited to come dressed as television personalities. This was taken to heart by many who appeared as such characters as Morticia Addams, Ozzy Osborne, the Crocodile Hunter, Grandmother Kumar, Wonder Woman, Ena Sharples, and several other household names. If you would like to recall this memorable event, visit the club's web site where many photographs have been posted; real names have been omitted to protect the guilty.
We played bridge for about two hours, had our annual presentation of prizes for the competitions held during the year (the many prize-winners are immortalised on our web site) and finished off with a magnificent feast.
It was a wonderful climax to the year, and a harbinger of a successful 2005 to come.

Hardware of yesteryear

Recently, I came across a piece of bridge memorabilia that some members might recall with fondness. In an Auckland flea market I spotted a box labelled "Autobridge" dating from the 1960s. Autobridge is a little gadget containing a sheet on which are printed the four hands of a bridge deal, the bidding, and the sequence of play; the gadget has sliding windows which you open to reveal, one by one, the phases of the bidding and play. The fun comes from trying to predict the correct bid or card to play at each stage and then seeing whether you are right by sliding open one of the windows. The deal is discussed in an accompanying booklet that explains the logic of each one. A complete Autobridge set comes with numerous sheets each one containing a different deal, and one used to be able to purchase additional sheets catering for different levels of skill.

Of course, nowadays the same effects (and much more) are offered by bridge computer programs but, if you would like to see this piece of ancient bridge technology, let me know.

Here's one of the deals that caught my fancy. The contract is 6♥ by South and West leads J♦. The booklet charmingly says "Don't worry too much about the bidding of this hand. The chances are

suit (clubs). Why is that not a reverse? Of course, the reason why we don't consider this to be a reverse (and showing extra values) is that the responder can show preference *at the two level*.

What about the sequence 1♥ - 2♦ - 3♣? Here the second suit (clubs) is lower ranking than the first (hearts); yet, because responder cannot show preference at the two level, the sequence again shows that opener has extra values.

Apart from showing extra values, reverses also give information about the shape of the hand simply because we bid our longest suit first. Consider the sequence 1♦ - 1♠ - 2♥. Almost certainly opener's diamonds are longer than his hearts; the lengths generally will be different otherwise the opening bid would have been 1♥.

Going a little further, what's the difference between

a) 1♦ - 1♠ - 2♥ - 2♠ - 3♥ and

b) 1♦ - 1♠ - 2♥ - 2♠ - 3♦?

In a) opener has rebid hearts, showing 5; therefore he has at least 6 diamonds. In b) opener's most likely shape is 6 diamonds and 4 hearts. In both cases the responders 2♠ rebid probably shows 6 spades (responder knows opener has at least 9 red cards, so is unlikely to have 3 spades).

One final word: after a reverse it is rare to stop before game is reached so be aware of this when you make a reverse bid. 7

Reversing

When you open 1NT you describe your hand pretty well entirely. However (in Acol) other opening bids are very much less precise and the opener's rebid must be used to clarify the strength and shape of the hand. Consider the following two hands

1. ♠ A 4; ♥ K J 9 2; ♦ A Q T 8 3; ♣ 7 6

2. ♠ A; ♥ K J 9 2; ♦ A Q T 8 3; ♣ A 9 6

In Acol you will open both of these hands 1♦. Suppose your partner bids 1♠. For hand 1 you must rebid 2♦; your partner will pass with a poor hand or bid on otherwise. But, with hand 2, you can afford to bid 2♥. Bidding a second suit that is higher ranking than the first is called a "reverse". Because it forces your partner to show preference at the three level it shows a hand with extra values (a good 16 HCP or more).

Here are some more examples of a reverse:

1♣ - 1♥ - 2♦

1♦ - 2♣ - 2♠

1♥ - 2♣ - 2♠

The following are *not* reverses:

1♦ - 1♠ - 2♣

1♠ - 2♣ - 2♦

1♣ - 1♦ - 1♥

In the last sequence the rebid was in a suit (hearts) that was higher ranking than the original

that you'll get a hand of this strength about once in a lifetime."

♠ 5 4 2
♥ 6 5 2
♦ 8 5 4 2
♣ 7 5 3

♠ T 6
♥ 7 3
♦ J T 9 6
♣ T 8 6 4 2

♠ Q J 9 8
♥ 9 8 4
♦ Q 7 3
♣ Q J 9

♠ A K 7 3
♥ A K Q J T
♦ A K
♣ A K

Cover the East-West hands and consider your plan. The problem is to avoid two spade losers. All will be well if the outstanding spades divide 3-3 for then your fourth spade will be a winner. What can be done if they divide 4-2? Then your hope will be that the hand with two spades has only two trumps and you can ruff a spade in dummy. But how do you accomplish this?

The solution is not at all obvious. If you haven't seen this type of problem before and manage to solve it you are a talented player. See page 8 for the solution and for a discussion of why some plays will fail.

Christmas Day Lessons

Frieda, Gordon, Randy, and Voluptua were consuming brandy and mince pies, the final stage of a large and alcoholic Christmas lunch. All but Gordon were looking forward to an afternoon snooze but Gordon was waxing lyrical about bridge avoidance plays. Realising there was no way to shut him up Randy tried a little joke: "Play second hand high, as you always say, Gordon" he mumbled. "No, Randy" replied Gordon, "you've got it wrong; second hand should play low". "High" countered Randy but Gordon wouldn't rise to the bait. Instead he insisted on showing them this example of an avoidance play in which he had starred as South.

	♠ A K T 9 2 ♥ T 3 2 ♦ K 7 6 ♣ 9 7	
♠ Q 6 3 ♥ K Q 4 ♦ 3 2 ♣ T 8 6 5 4		♠ J 8 7 ♥ J 8 6 ♦ A J T 9 8 ♣ 3 2
	♠ 5 4 ♥ A 9 7 5 ♦ Q 5 4 ♣ A K Q J	

The contract had been 3NT and West had led 3♦

(the lunatic sitting East had overcalled in diamonds). Gordon preened himself. "I played low in dummy, East played the 8♦ and I won my queen. Now all I had to do was make a skilful avoidance play: I played a spade and put in the ten from dummy. East took his J♠ but I had protected dummy's K♦ and now had 4 spade tricks, 4 clubs, the A♥ and my initial diamond trick. I made an overtrick for a top board."

Randy had not been paying much attention and continued his rather silly jest: "Second hand high, Gordon, as you always say". Gordon was exasperated but Frieda had noticed something rather interesting.

"Gordon, what if West plays Q♠ at trick 2 - second hand high, as Randy says".

Gordon was silent, an awful realisation dawning. If the Q♠ is allowed to hold, the diamond continuation is devastating. On the other hand, if the A♠ or K♠ is played, the spade suit cannot be established. In either case, Gordon would be held to 8 tricks.

The final comment was left to Voluptua. Pulling down a rather dishevelled and disgracefully short skirt she murmured to Randy: "Second hand high, second hand low, restrain yourself and wait until later".