

A Director writes

South bids 1♠. West passes, North says 2♣, East calls 1NT.

"Ah", says North, "that is insufficient and you have to make it good." So East bids 2♥.

This leaves all in a quandary, and the Director is called.

What was just a common error, has now multiplied.

1. North made a direction so the director may waiver any penalties made without his instructions.
2. East has changed the denomination of his bid so the director may rule that his partner may not bid again

Everything is up to the director.

Moral: For *any* infraction call the director (even if you know the ruling). The director is there to restore equity. He or she is not an ogre there to punish. This is probably more important if the transgression is made by a beginner who is still learning the protocol.

Lead problem solution

After an auction like this in which there has been no Stayman inquiry, a major suit lead is strongly indicated. I would favour 10♠ but it is quite possible that Q♥ may help set up some heart tricks for partner; on the other hand it could be the case that your Q♥ will make a trick on a failing finesse so the Q♥ lead might be disastrous.

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Queenstown Congress

The second Queenstown Bridge Congress took place over the Labour Day weekend. It was a far better event than last year because the organisers had solved the problems of the hotel by changing venues: to the Millenium Hotal and Copthorne's Hotel. The numbers were about the same as last year (around 150) but the standard of bridge was a little down since many North Island players from 2004 didn't turn up this year - most likely because the Hamilton Congress was just a few weeks before. Kaye Wilson won (again!) both the Intermediate Teams and Intermediate Pairs. Donna Ruwhiu and Adrien Dever had an excellent result in the Open Pairs competition, coming second. Tamsin and I made very late arrangements to play with Maieri and Brian Fitzsimons from Hastings in the Open Teams. We had never met them and found ourselves very fortunate to have very pleasant and capable team-mates who won us 5th place.

Two level overcalls

Last month I wrote about overcalls at the one level (they bid one of a suit, and then you bid one of a suit). This month I shall give you my opinions on two level overcalls (they bid one of a suit, you bid two of a suit without jumping; e.g. 1♠ - 2♥).

There are two extremal styles. In one style the general thinking is to disturb the opponents' auction as much as possible; in this style a player might overcall 2♥ over 1♠ on a hand such as

♠ 6 5; ♥ K T 6 5 4 3; ♦ Q J T 9; ♣ Q 9

The advantage of this style is that your opponents are in the dark about what you hold, and you frequently take up bidding room they could have used; in this example they cannot bid diamonds or clubs at the two level.

The other extremal style is to reserve your two level overcalls for very sound hands: a good quality suit, and some extra defence, equivalent to an opening hand at least. The most obvious advantage of this style is that you will rarely suffer a punishing penalty double.

Without being too categoric I would like to recommend the latter style but not for the reason given already. Consider the following two hands you might hold as East

1. ♠ Q J T 8; ♥ 2; ♦ A 3 2; ♣ 7 6 5 4 3, and

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

What Retired People Do!

(from a member)

Working people frequently ask retired people what they do to make their days interesting. Well for example, the other day I went into town and went to a shop in George Street. I was only in there for about 5 minutes. When I came out there was a cop writing out a parking ticket. I went up to him and said, "Come on mate, how about giving a senior a break?"

He ignored me and continued writing the ticket. I called him a Nazi.

He glared at me and started writing another ticket for having worn tyres. I called him a dog t-rd.

He finished the second ticket and put it on the windshield with the first. Then he started writing a third ticket.

This went on for about 20 minutes. The more I abused him, the more tickets he wrote. Personally, I didn't give a damn. I came into town by bus. I try to have a little fun each day now that I'm retired. It's important at my age.

Lead Problem

The opponents' auction has been short:

1NT - 3NT

What do you lead from

♠ 10 9 8 7; ♥ Q J; ♦ J 8 7 5 4; ♣ A 6?

The Geriatric Garden (from a club member)

Come wander with me in my garden
which gives me great comfort each day.
This pathway leads past the nostalgia
to beds of dementia gay.

I'll pick you some scarlet alzheimers
with maybe forget-ful-ness blue
as well as a few little asthmas
to add an alternative hue.

And now to complete your own posy
I'll add some sciatica sprigs
with trimmings of climbing fibrosis
and fragrant incontinence twigs.

My favourite bloom is arthritis
which grows in profusion just here,
while this hypertension's so pungent
it keeps all your sinuses clear.

And don't you just love that angina
beside the glaucoma bright!
The flatulence perfume's exquisite
and often much stronger at night.

There's nothing to equal a garden
for bringing one pleasure and peace;
where one can grow dark offensive
while slowly on's marbles decrease.

Mona Randall

Suppose the auction has gone

South	West	North	East (you)
1♠	2♥	4♠	??

What should you do? My point is that you have absolutely no idea what to do unless you can be sure your partner's overcall is sound.

Consider the first hand. If partner's overcall is known to be sound you can unhesitatingly double; you are almost certain to take two trump tricks on the bad break in trumps, and a diamond trick; and partner has advertised a good hand; you should crucify this contract. But, if your partner could have the hand opposite, you wouldn't want to double.

What about the second hand? If you are playing sound overcalls you may want to compete to 5♥. If this is doubled it will not be too costly; and it could easily be that, despite your values and partner's values, 4♠ will make (you may have no cashing hearts); on a good day 5♥ will actually make.

So, sound two level overcalls let you judge what to do when the auction reaches a high level. Getting those decisions right is one of the hardest parts of bidding. Of course, this is one aspect of something more general: be disciplined in your bidding so that partner knows what to do; and sometimes the hardest bid to make is PASS!

The new member makes a friend

Mr Sinclair Whitlands had been a member for several weeks. His air of formal reserve and archaic speech had endeared him to many of the other members of the club, but it also prevented anyone getting to know him properly. The first chink in this personal armour appeared one night when he was playing with Randy Hardwick who in age, social skills, and manners was as remote from Sinclair as any other in the club.

Mr Whitlands had observed that Randy was in thrall to Voluptua and had been perturbed about the dastardly Weasel's insolence towards her before play began (the Weasel was insolent to everyone but he particularly upset Voluptua, and Randy had been too far away to intervene).

Halfway through the evening Sinclair and Randy were NS against the Weasel and Ferret.

"Sir", said Sinclair, addressing himself to the Weasel "you are a cad and a bounder". The words were so dated that the Weasel was unsure whether this was a compliment. Sinclair's indignation so affected him that he rather overbid. He was East and the West-East hands were

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

The spirited auction conducted by Randy and Sinclair was this:

West (Randy)	East (Sinclair)
1♠	2♦
2♠	3♥
4♠	6♠

The Weasel led a low club, and Randy contemplated the dummy with a sinking heart. The only chance appeared to be to find diamonds 3-3 but, even so, there did not appear to be sufficient entries to set them up.

Seeing his partner's discomfort Sinclair murmured: "Play this contract for God, Glory, and Voluptua, my boy". This grandiose encouragement proved effective, for Randy suddenly realised that he could acquire a much needed dummy entry by ruffing his second club honour. So the play went: A♣, A♦, diamond ruff, ruff the Q♣, another diamond ruff (hooray, diamonds fell 3-3); two rounds of trumps (they split 3-2) and another trump which the defenders took. However, diamonds were now established and all Randy's heart losers thereby disappeared.

Sinclair fixed the Weasel with an unwavering stare: "Sir, a higher power has safeguarded my partner's endeavours; see to it that you renounce your allegiance to the lower powers". For once, the Weasel was speechless.