

## **FOR THE NEW KIDS ON THE BLOCK.....**

### ***Getting ready for the regional!***

The Houston Lone Star Regional is two months away and it's time to make some plans. Is there a Gold Rush in Texas? You betcha! This year there are TWO ways for novice players to compete for gold points in sheltered games. The **Gold Rush Pairs** are two session events Wednesday and Thursday at 7:30 and an additional event on Saturday at 10:00 and 3:00. You will be competing against players with up to 750 points. New this year is the **Gold Rush Swiss** on Sunday. If you play in the bracketed flight B and win first, second, or third, you can get gold points. Join the Gold Rush at the Lone Star Regional. There's gold in them thar events!!

### ***Defense, you play it half the time!***

How many points can partner have?

- + If the opponents' auction has died out at a low level, try to estimate your partner's strength based on the bidding. If you know partner has a good hand, it helps give you the courage to balance!
- + Before making the opening lead, try to estimate how many points the opponents have shown in the auction. Add your points to that total and subtract from 40. This gives you an estimate of the high cards your partner has.
- + Balancing occurs in the pass out chair and is designed to protect the combined values in your hand when added to your partner's hand. Your decision to reopen the bidding or let it die should be based on whether or not the opponents have found a fit. If no fit has been found, it is more risky to balance. A fit has only been found when one opponent raises the suit bid by his partner. When an auction goes 1 heart followed by a raise to 2 hearts, they have found a fit, but not enough points to move forward. Should you balance? Unless you are holding the remaining hearts in your little hand, it is time to balance. Try not to let the opponents play two hearts. It is almost always a bottom board!

### ***The Rule of 15 or Using Casino Count:***

Suppose after three passes, it is up to you. Do you pass out the hand or do you open the bidding. When playing duplicate bridge, you are looking for a plus score. Using casino count, you first add up your high card points. After that you will add in the number of SPADES. If the

total comes to 15 or more, then it is safe to open the bidding! The theory behind this is that nobody has 13 high card points and neither side has game. The hand will play in a part score.

The side that has the SPADE suit will be in the “driver seat” because spades are the highest ranking suit. The side that has the most spades will probably buy the contract in a part score.

When you open light, do not bid again because if you do rebid, you are confirming a “real” opening bid.

### ***My favorite online partner is a rocket scientist!***

If you have not yet discovered online bridge, I highly recommend giving it a try. With my days full of work and volunteer activities, there is little time for me to play “face to face” bridge. Online bridge is a great alternative and three sites have ACBL sanctioned games. They are Bridge Base Online, OK bridge, and Swan Games. Online bridge is a little faster than “face to face” and the tournaments are very large—most are several sections. There is some lingo that players use like GLP (good luck partner) and TYP (thank you partner) but with a little time you’ll pick up on the language and find some regular partners who play at your favorite time of day.

My favorite partner:

- Is present at the table focused on the bidding, the leads, and the discards.
- Is sending a message about attitude, count, or suit preference with every card he plays.
- Is watching and remembering each card that I play.
- Plays a simple convention card without lots of gadgets so bidding misunderstandings seldom occur.
- Does not try to substitute lots of conventions for great card play and good defense.
- Is able to refrain from typing ?????????????? when I make an error in bidding or play.
- Is not one to give lessons at the table but enjoys talking about hands and giving nicely worded suggestions after a game.
- Is courteous and respectful to the opponents and to me.
- Is quick to compliment good play or defense by the opponents or by me.
- Stays disciplined
- Is modest (and says all this is humbling 😊 )

My partner really is a rocket scientist, but you don't have to be one to play like one!

### ***Opening or Overcalling in a Suit***

An opening bid at the one level can range in strength from 13-21 total points. Because the range is so wide, it is preferable to open 1 no trump when you have a five card major.

An over call at the one level usually ranges in strength from 7-17 points; if you have to overcall at the two level to show your suit, the usual range is 12-17 total points. To overcall at the two level vulnerable, you should have an opening hand.

A jump overcall is preemptive and shows a good suit in a relatively weak hand.

Some players might disagree somewhat with the above ranges; it's a matter of style. Discuss these ranges with your partners to make sure you're all on the same wavelength.

### ***Director Please:***

Calling the director is not a mean or rude action. When you call the director, try saying "Director, please". It lowers the tension level and makes everyone feel more comfortable. The director is there to get things "back to normal" and must be called when an irregularity occurs.

The **dummy may not call the director** during the play and can't point out an irregularity during the play but can after the hand is finished.

A frequent (and frequently misunderstood) infraction is the **lead out of turn**. There are five options, and it is important to have the director explain them. A rule of thumb is to look at your hand and ask yourself if that is a desirable lead for you. If you forbid the lead, will there be another lead that might be even less attractive? Is this a hand where the big hand will be exposed on the table? If so, it may be a good idea to let your partner play the hand. All of this can be solved, however, by leading face down at the start of play.

A common **misconception is that the declarer can do whatever he wants**. While it is true that declarer has no penalty cards, if he calls for a card from the dummy or plays a card from his hand, that card is played. If the declarer plays from the wrong hand either defender may accept that lead or require its retraction. If neither player speaks up, the lead reverts to the proper hand.

One of the most common calls at the table is an **insufficient bid**. If you make an insufficient bid, call the director before changing your call. You do not have to make your call sufficient, but there will be other consequences. The person acting after the insufficient bidder has the right

to accept the bid. If the insufficient bid is accepted, the auction proceeds from there. If not accepted, the director can explain all the options to the player who made the insufficient bid.

### *Bridge Slang:*

**Rags:** Unimportant cards, spot cards.

**Rock crusher:** A very good hand.

**Yarborough:** A hand containing no high cards or honors, named after the second Earl of Yarborough who would bet anyone 1000-1 that they would not be dealt a hand in which all the cards were lower than a ten. (The true odds are 1827-1).

**Duck:** To refuse to take a trick a trick for whatever reason.

**Quack:** A hand which has lots of queens and jacks, or “quacks” is really not as good as its point count would indicate.

**Ugly Duckling:** A hand with 5-3-3-2 distribution

**Moose:** A huge hand, typically with lots of high cards in all the suits. “I had a real moose.”

**Dog:** A pitiful hand, the opposite of a moose. “That bidding sequence shows a real dog.”

**Walk the Dog:** Now this is very different. “To walk the dog” means to purposely underbid an excellent hand (usually with one very long suit) in the hopes of being doubled.

### *Systems, signaling and success:*

In a recent Bridge Bulletin article, Zeke Jabbour summarized what the experts think about systems, signaling, and the key to success. What system works best? The experts prefer 2/1 and forcing club systems, but they also agree that it is not what you play but how well you play it. Experts decisively, but not overwhelmingly, prefer upside-down attitude and some prefer standard count rather than upside down count. When surveyed, the experts say the keys to success are having clear bidding communication with their partners. Experts agree that having regular partnerships is vital to winning!

Please send your comments, questions, and suggestions regarding this newsletter to [jryan9620@sbcglobal.net](mailto:jryan9620@sbcglobal.net).

See you at the tables!

*Joyce Ryan*

*St. Martin's Bridge School*