

The Real Deal

by Larry Cohen

Larry Cohen, a many-time National champion, recently won the Silodor Open Pairs for a third time at the ACBL Spring North American Championships held in Houston.

One of Larry's favorite teaching methods is to analyze random deals. He feels that any time you deal out a deck of cards, there are numerous lessons that can be learned.

The first "Real Deal" in this series was dealt by **Chantal Whitney** of Shaker Heights, Ohio, during a Caribbean cruise aboard Holland America's Eurodam.

In this deal, we get to see one of my favorite themes: A Competitive Auction. By "competitive" I mean that both sides are in the bidding, fighting for the contract. In "Constructive Bidding," one side has most of the high cards and they get to bid unimpeded — with the opponents passing throughout.

Here's how the auction should begin:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		Pass	Pass
1♣	1♥	1♠	?

East and South don't have enough to open the bidding, and West opens 1♣ with his aceless 14-count. North should overcall 1♥. A one-level overcall has a range of approximately 8–17 high-card points. I wouldn't overcall with 8 points unless I had a very good suit. Here, with 11 high-card points and a decent suit, North has an easy 1♥ overcall.

When a minor-suit opening is overcalled with 1♥, East, the responder, has two ways of showing spades. East can make a negative double to show exactly four cards in spades. When instead responder bids 1♠, it promises at least five cards.

I like it when my opponent overcalls 1♥—it gives me a way to clarify whether I have four spades, or five+ spades. This method (negative double of 1♥ to show a four-card spade suit and bidding spades with five or more) is a standard treatment.

What should South do with 5–5 in the minor suits? Before we discuss South's bid, I want to introduce you to a new term in bridge. We already have words to describe the opener, the overcaller, and the responder. What should South be called in this auction? South is the partner of the overcaller. The new term for this position is 'advancer.' If this term is

the overcall? This is something that partnerships need to agree on. In this case, since South is a passed hand, the 2♦ bid should probably not be forcing.

West will raise to 2♠, and now North should probably support partner and bid 3♦. Let's take a look at how our competitive auction is developing:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		Pass	Pass
1♣	1♥	1♠	2♦
2♠	3♦	?	

Everyone is bidding—in fact there were six consecutive suit bids.

East should break that streak by passing. The 1♠ bid has already shown five spades, and there is surely nothing else to say. South will also pass, having no interest in getting to game. Should West now push on to 3♠? Having already shown an opening bid and support for partner's suit, West has nothing further to add, and will probably pass.

Law-of-Total-Trick followers (see inset on the next page) will note that West knows the partnership has nine spades, since 1♠ promised five. That usually means your side should compete to the three level.

While I can live with a 3♠ bid, the West hand looks so aceless and defensive-oriented (note the king-queen in the opponents' suit), I think most Wests would Pass.

If West does bid 3♠, that contract will fare poorly. South can lead the singleton heart, and North can win the ♥A to return the suit for South to ruff. Then South can take the ♦A and ♣A, and lead a club to North's ♣K. North can then lead another heart for South to ruff. The defense takes six easy tricks for down two and 100 points (50 + 50) to North-South.

THE REAL DEAL

DEAL: 1	NORTH		
DLR: E	♠ K 3		
VUL: NONE	♥ A J 9 8 2		
	♦ 6 5 2		
	♣ K 7 6		
	WEST	EAST	
	♠ J 10 8 2	♠ A Q 9 7 4	
	♥ K Q 6 4	♥ 7 5 3	
	♦ K Q	♦ 10 9 7	
	♣ Q J 9	♣ 10 5	
			SOUTH
			♠ 6 5
			♥ 10
			♦ A J 8 4 3
			♣ A 8 4 3 2

confusing, don't worry. Not many people use it yet. You have to admit, though, that it is easier to say 'advancer' than to say 'the partner of the overcaller.' Okay, so what should South, advancer, do?

Bidding after partner overcalls is not well-covered in bridge literature. On this particular auction, South can't show clubs (because the opponents opened 1♣), but can show the diamonds and should probably bid 2♦. Is this bid forcing? Can the overcaller pass the 2♦ response to



In the March ACBL BULLETIN, Larry was asked to give a tip on how to achieve better results at bridge. This was his advice:

"On any level, players should cut back on the methods, conventions and 'science,' and concentrate on basic bridge logic and not making mistakes."

"Many new players clog their brains with so much memorization that they don't have any brain power left for the beauty of the game."

However, if 3♠ is undoubled down two, that score of 100 will be less than the score for 3♦ making. If 3♦ makes (60 + 50 = 110) and North-South get only 100 when other North-Souths are getting 110, they will not do well in the matchpointing. Even though the difference is only 10 points, if North-South are +100 against 3♠, and every other table plays in 3♦ making for 110 for North-South, the pair that is +100 will get a bottom board!

So, does 3♦ make? Declarer has to lose two fast spade tricks, and eventually a slow club trick. How about the trump suit? From our catbird seat, we can see that if South plays the ♦A and then a low diamond, the ♦K-Q will fall from West. Now the ♦J can draw the last trump and only one trump trick is lost. That adds up to two spade losers,

one club loser, one diamond loser—so nine tricks made for +110.

Would declarer guess to play diamonds that way? I'd say there is an excellent chance—it is kind of declarer's only realistic hope. The opening lead against 3♦ would be the ♠J. East shows up with the ♠A and ♠Q, and South opened the bidding. Declarer knows the ♦K-Q can't be in front of the ♦A-J (East can't have all those points), so the only hope is that the diamonds lay as shown in the diagram. If North-South had the ♦10 and ♦9, there would be lots of potential finesses to take; but without those cards, South's only chance is that the ♦K-Q fall—and that miracle layout means North-South indeed make 110 in diamonds.

North-South can also make 3♣, but it isn't practical to reach that contract after the opponents have opened the bidding 1♣.

Summary

If this deal were played out in a duplicate game, I would expect a competitive auction at every table. East-West would be bidding spades, and North-South would be competing in a minor suit (surely diamonds when West opens 1♣). Neither side is likely to bid to a game contract, so it will be a partscore battle. The lie of the cards is such that the maximum number of tricks each side can take is:



This issue's real deal was dealt by **Chantal Whitney**

- East-West can make seven tricks in spades
- North-South can make nine tricks in a minor.

Most of the matchpoints will go to any North-South pair that manages as much as +110. Any score of more than 100 in either direction is a great result. Maybe next issue we'll have more high-level action! ♠

THE LAW OF TOTAL TRICKS

by Jean-Rene Vernes

Even though it is not possible, in the course of a competitive auction, to determine how many tricks the opponents will make, can it be possible to predict, on average, the number of total tricks? If so, this average figure cannot help but be of lively interest in making competitive decisions.

In fact, this average exists, and can be expressed in an extremely simple law:

The number of total tricks in a hand is approximately equal to the total number of trumps held by both sides, each in its respective suit.

A PRACTICAL RULE

As we examine one after another of the competitive problems at various levels, we find that the practical rule appropriate to each case can be expressed as a quite simple general rule:

You are protected by "security of distribution" in bidding for as many tricks as your side holds trumps.

Thus, with eight trumps, you can bid practically without danger to the two level, with nine trumps to the three level, with ten to the four level, etc., because you will have either a good chance to make your contract or a good save against the enemy contract.