

KRZYSZTOF MARTENS

**PROFESSIONAL SLAM BIDDING
PART I**

RZESZÓW 2014

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PREFACE

Bidding in the slam zone is an art. It requires good hand evaluation, a well-prepared set of bidding tools, and a large number of additional agreements with particular emphasis on competitive auctions.

It helps to have the ability to make decisions under pressure and camouflage information on those hands where the final contract depends on the opening lead.

A good imagination is crucial, and accurate assessment of a situation often depends on being able to draw the right conclusions from the opponents' bidding.

I have studied many books covering the world championships in the past two decades. What I have found is shocking.

Top professional pairs made a lot of mistakes due to bad hand evaluation and the wrong interpretation of particular calls.

Practically in every element of slam zone bidding professional pairs leave room for improvement.

The difficulty lies in the fact that slam zone bidding consists of several stages, each of which requires considerable expertise. Both players in the partnership have to have sufficient knowledge on this topic.

Slam zone bidding demands precision and a great deal of intellectual effort. However, precision in bidding contradicts the idea of camouflage.

Professional Slam Bidding is a look at the slam auctions bid at the table by professional players. There are over 150 deals in the slam zone bid by championship pairs with my comments and proposed solutions, concepts, conventions, and agreements.

Contents

Preface	2
The foundation	6
Hand evaluation in the slam zone	70
Partnership	132
Bidding like music	146
Imagination	154
When everything depends on the lead.....	160
Judging the situation	170

THE FOUNDATION

The foundation I call the stages of bidding that try to exchange the maximum amount of information without going past 3NT. Further stages are cue bidding, Blackwood, etc.

We need to create bidding tools that allow us to camouflage the bidding when our goal is to bid game and exchange all information and intentions when we're driving to slam.

For example:

1♠ — 2♣
2♠ — 2NT
3♥ — “I have 6+♠”

Responder can bid 3♠ — “I need more information.”

1♠ — 2♣
2♠ — 2NT
3♥ — 3♠
3NT — no shortness
4♣, ♦, ♥ — shortness
4♠ — super minimum — or “I'm only trying to get to the best contract.”

Obtaining complete information about partner's hand allows us to effectively transition to cue bidding.

Cue bids serve not only to check controls, but also to communicate our intentions.

How did a world class pair handle the basics?

BEIJING 2008
OPEN TEAM CHAMPIONSHIPS, THE FINAL

♠ A J 9	N	♠ 8 7
♥ 7 5	W	♥ 8 4
♦ K Q 9 8 6	E	♦ J 7 4 3
♣ 8 6 5	S	♣ A Q J 7 3

♠ —
♥ Q J 10 9 6 3 2
♦ A 2
♣ K 10 4 2
♠ K Q 10 6 5 4 3 2
♥ A K
♦ 10 5
♣ 9

Both vulnerable

W	N	E	S
Versace	Sandqvist	Lauria	Malinowski
	1♥	Pass	1♠
Pass	2♣	Pass	2♦
Pass	2♥	Pass	4♠
Pass	...		

Sandqvist didn't give even an approximate picture of his hand.

Better would have been an opening 4♥ bid (recommended because of the spade void).

If in this pair's style the hand is too strong for a 4♥ opening, then I could settle for this sequence:

1♥ — 1♠
4♥

W	N	E	S	
Townsend		Sementa	Gold	Duboin
	1♥	Pass	1♠	
Pass	3♥	Pass	3♠	
Pass	4♥	Pass	5♣	
Pass	5♦	Pass	5♥	
Pass	6♥	Pass	...	

Regardless of the bidding agreements held by the Italian pair, Sementa falsely expressed his intentions (as evidenced by Duboin bidding on).

Accepting the slam invitation shows a lack of self-preservation.

SHANGHAI 2007

WORLD TRANSNATIONAL OPEN TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP, THE FINAL

♠ 4	N	♠ K Q 7 6 5
♥ Q 8 4 2	W E	♥ A K J
♦ K Q 9 7 3	S	♦ A 8 4
♣ A K 5		♣ Q 8
		♠ 9 8
		♥ 10 7 6 5
		♦ 6 2
		♣ J 9 6 4 3

W	N	E	S	
Zmudzinski		Fantoni	Balicki	Nunes
	Pass	1♣	Pass	
2♦	Pass	2♠	Pass	
3NT	Pass	4♦	Pass	
5♣	Pass	5♦	Pass	....

By bidding 3NT Żmudziński lost an entire level of bidding for no reason.

After the 5♣ bid should Balicki have risked the slam?

There wasn't enough space to precisely convey all the necessary information.

W	N	E	S	
Zimmerman		Gromov	Multon	Dubin
	Pass	1♠	Pass	
2♦	Pass	2NT	Pass	
3♣	Pass	3♦	Pass	
3NT	Pass	4♥	Pass	
6♦	Pass	....	

The pair from Monaco tried to describe their hands as best as possible using all available bidding space.

The optimal contract without a doubt is 6NT.

SHANGHAI 2007
 BERMUDA BOWL, THE SEMI-FINALS

♠ K 8 3	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> N W E S </div>	♠ A Q 9 6 5 2
♥ A K Q 4 3 2		♥ 10 6
♦ 10 6		♦ A Q
♣ Q 10		♣ A 8 3
	♠ 10 7 4	
	♥ J	
	♦ J 8 5 3 2	
	♣ 7 6 4 3	

W	N	E	S
Weinstein		Garner	
1♥	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♥	Pass	2NT	Pass
3NT	Pass	4♣	Pass
4♠	Pass	4NT	Pass
5♠	Pass	7♥	Pass
2NT	— forcing		
4♣, ♠	— cue bid		
5♠	— 2 keycards + the Q♥		

W	N	E	S
Bakkeren		Bertens	
1♥	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♥	Pass	3♣	Pass
4♥	Pass	4NT	Pass
5♠	Pass	6♣	Pass ...

Both pairs ran into big trouble in the beginning stage of the bidding, despite having specific agreements.

Weinstein – Garner — 2NT forcing

Bakkeren – Bertens — 3♣ forcing

I agree with the concept of 2NT as forcing. A mechanism is needed for – “I need more information.”

My suggestion?

Sequence 1.

W	E
1♥	— 1♠
2♥	— 2NT (waiting)
?	
3♣	— 3 spades
3♦	— singleton diamond (2614 with bad clubs or 2713)
3♥	— singleton or void in spades
3♠	— singleton club (2731 or 2641 with bad diamonds)
3NT	— 2623 or 2632 distribution

Sequence 2a.

W	E
1♥	— 1♠
2♥	— 2NT
3♣	— 3♦ — waiting. I need more information.
3♥	— singleton club
3♠	— singleton diamond
3NT	— no shortness
	♠ A Q J 2
	♥ Q
	♦ K Q J 9
	♣ 10 9 4 3

After 3♥ (singleton ♣) E should bid 4♣ partner your choice (4♥ or 4♠). After 3♠ (singleton ♦) E like play 3NT. After 3NT — no shortness, he may pass.

Sequence 2b.

W	E
1♥	— 1♠
2♥	— 2NT
3♣	— 3♥ — “What about slam in hearts?”
3♠	— “I have a void (in a minor).”
3NT	— no shortness, positive
4♣	— singleton club
4♦	— singleton diamond
4♥	— no shortness, negative

Sequence 2c.

1♥	— 1♠
2♥	— 2NT
3♣	— 3♥
3♠	— 3NT — “Do you have a void? Where?”
4♣	— void in clubs
4♦	— void in diamonds

Sequence 3.

- 1♥ — 1♠
- 2♥ — 2NT
- 3♣ — 3♠ — “What about slam in spades?”
- 3NT — “I have a void”
- 4♣ — singleton club
- 4♦ — singleton diamond
- 4♥ — no shortness, positive
- 4♠ — no shortness, negative

Sequence 3a.

- 1♥ — 1♠
- 2♥ — 2NT
- 3♣ — 3♠ — “What about slam in spades?”
- 3NT — 4♣ — “Do you have a void? Where?”
- 4♦ — void in diamonds
- 4♥ — void in clubs

How can we invite partner to a game contract? Occasionally, we feel the need for a 2NT invitational bid. However, nobody can deny that a waiting scheme provides considerable bidding comfort.

Why does 3♣ mean “I have 3 spades”?

The right kind of bidding foundation must have the possibility of getting to the slam zone with the right trump suit agreed.

In the old version of this sequence

- 1♥ — 1♠
- 2♥ — 2NT
- 3♠ — 3622 — a cue bid by responder would agree hearts or spades.

This approach leaves something to be desired. Why?

♠ 9 8 3
 ♥ A K Q 4 3 2
 ♦ 10 6
 ♣ Q 10

If partner is interested in a heart slam, then my reaction is one of enthusiasm.

A slam in spades doesn't interest me.

This leads to the next obstacle:

1♥ — 1♠
 2♥ — 2NT
 3♠ — 4♣
 4♥ — is this a signoff or a cue bid?

Let's see how the bidding would look with the authentic deal.

♠ K 8 3	N W E S	♠ A Q 9 6 5 2
♥ A K Q 4 3 2		♥ 10 6
♦ 10 6		♦ A Q
♣ Q 10		♣ A 8 3

W	N	E	S
1♥	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♥	Pass	2NT	Pass
3♣	Pass	3♠	Pass
5♥	Pass	?	

- 3♣ — “I have 3 spades.”
- 3♠ — “What do you think about a spade slam?”
- 5♥ — “I'm excited, but...I don't have cue bids in the minor suits, an opening (+12PC) with concentrated points in the majors.”

Based on the information gained from the auction East can count up the tricks to get to the contracts of 7♥, 7♠ and 7NT.

Of course, it makes sense to play 7NT only in a fairly high level pair game.

PARIS 2001. BERMUDA BOWL, THE SEMI-FINALS

		♠ A J 8 4	
		♥ A J 9 7 5	
		♦ K 3	
		♣ K 5	
♠ Q 10	N	♠ K 9 7 3 2	
♥ 8 3	W E	♥ —	
♦ J 6 5 2	S	♦ Q 10 9 8	
♣ Q J 10 9 7		♣ 6 4 3 2	
		♠ 6 5	
		♥ K Q 10 6 4 2	
		♦ A 7 4	
		♣ A 8	

W	N	E	S
Sontag	Balicki	Weichsel	Żmudziński
			1♥
Pass	1♠	Pass	2♥
Pass	3♣	Pass	3♦
Pass	3♥	Pass	4♣
Pass	4♦	Pass	4NT
Pass	5♠	Pass	5NT
Pass	6♥	Pass	7♥
Pass	...		

This is an example of the consequences of not having a bidding device that says “I need more information.”

Balicki's semi-natural 3♣ bid only led to confusion, and after a rather unclear bidding sequence the Polish pair got to a hopeless slam.

Here is what the bidding would be with the agreements I proposed earlier.

W	N	E	S	
			1♥	
Pass	1♠	Pass	2♥	
Pass	2NT	Pass	3NT	— 2632 or 2623
Pass	4♣	Pass	4♦	
Pass	4♥	Pass	5♣	
Pass	6♥	Pass		
4♣	— a cue bid agreeing hearts			
5♣	— cue bid, nice hand			

With this sequence responder knows about the lack of spade shortness and the spade king, and thus, we know partner has no place to put his spade loser.

PHILADELPHIA 2010
 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROSENBLUM CUP, THE FINAL

♠ 8	N	♠ J 7 6 5
♥ 6 4	W	♥ K Q J 8
♦ 9 7 6 2	E	♦ A 5
♣ K J 9 6 5 3	S	♣ 8 7 2

♠ A K Q 10 9 4 2
♥ —
♦ K 10 3
♣ Q 10 4

EW vulnerable

W	N	E	S	
Rodwell	Moss	Meckstroth	Gitelman	
	1♥	Pass	1♠	
Pass	2♥	Pass	2♠	
Pass	3♣	Pass	3♠	
Pass	4♥	Pass	4♠	
Pass	5♣	Pass	6♠	
Pass	...			
2♠	— forcing bid			
3♣	— artificial			
3♠	— natural forcing			
5♣	— cue bid			

This is a good slam, which essentially depends on a favorable break in spades.

This slow and precise bidding sequence allowed Gitelman and Moss to exchange all their intentions.

I'd like to call attention to one interesting agreement — using the space-saving 2♠ as artificial and forcing. This is one of the principles of modern bidding. Having two waiting bids – 2♠ and 2NT can be very useful.

- 2♠ — GF, “but I don’t want to play no trump from my hand.”
- 2NT — GF, “I can play no trump from my hand (or I need precise information and the final contract will never be played in no trump).”

We rarely need to be able to correct 2♥ to a non forcing 2♠ contract.

W	N	E	S
Hampson	Hamman	Greco	Zia
	1♥	Pass	1♠
Pass	2♥	Pass	3♣
Pass	3♦	Pass	4♠
Pass	...		

Zia’s semi-natural 3♣ bid didn’t add anything to the auction.

HAMMAMET 1997
 BERMUDA BOWL, THE QUARTER-FINALS

♠ 7	N	♠ Q J 9 5 4 2
♥ A K J 7 4	W E	♥ —
♦ K Q 6 2	S	♦ A 9 8 5 4
♣ A J 6		♣ K 5

♠ A 10 8
♥ 10 6 3
♦ J 3
♣ Q 9 7 4 3

W	N	E	S
Martel		Stansby	
		1♠	Pass
2♥	Pass	2♠	Pass
3NT	Pass	4♠	Pass ...

Neither player really bid what they had.

It was suicidal to jump to 3NT with Martel's strong slammish hand, taking up bidding space that was needed to get more information about opener's hand.

Stansby could have had:

♠ A 9 5 4 2
♥ Q
♦ A 9 8 5 4
♣ K 5

or even:

♠ A 9 5 4 2
♥ Q
♦ A J 8 5
♣ K 5 3

The recommended final contract is seven diamonds, but the bidding got off track at 3NT.

OK, it got off track at 3NT, but East's 4S is very poor. In any method where his hand is already limited by the 2S rebid he can bid 4D, not 4S, and now at least some slam can be reached. Was this a 2-over-1 problem such that to bid 4D now would be a strong 6-4?

Brian Senior

HAMMAMET 1997
 BERMUDA BOWL, THE QUARTER-FINALS

♠ Q 10 4 2	N	♠ 9 8 7
♥ 9 4 3 2	W	♥ K 10 6 5
♦ A 6 3	E	♦ 4
♣ 4 3	S	♣ J 9 7 5 2

♠ J 3
 ♥ A J 8
 ♦ J 9 7
 ♣ A K Q 10 6

♠ A K 6 5
 ♥ Q 7
 ♦ K Q 10 8 5 2
 ♣ 8

W	N Helness	E	S Helgemo
			1♦
Pass	2♣	Pass	2♠
Pass	2NT	Pass	3♦
Pass	3♥	Pass	3NT
Pass	4NT	Pass	5♠
Pass	6♦	Pass	...

Thanks to the 2♠ bid, Helgemo correctly evaluated the potential of his hand.

The 3♦ bid showed 6-4 shape. The 3NT bid warned that the reverse was a bit stretched. It's interesting to note that Helgemo – Helness is one of the few top pairs in the world with the agreement that 4NT is almost always ace asking. Without this agreement you have to work a bit harder to ask for aces.

W	N	E	S
			1♦
Pass	2♣	Pass	2♠
Pass	2NT	Pass	3♦
Pass	3♥	Pass	3NT
Pass	4♦	Pass	4♠
Pass	4NT	Pass	5♠
Pass	6♦	Pass	...

4♦ — strong agreement of diamonds

4♠ — cue bid

After at least one cue bid 4NT is ace asking.

Of course, there are a few exceptions.

W	N	E	S
	Lauria		Versace
			1♦
Pass	2♣	Pass	2♦
Pass	2NT	Pass	3♠
Pass	3NT	Pass	...

This is an example of anemic bidding that was a result either of bad hand evaluation or the wrong system agreements.

BERMUDA 2000
 BERMUDA BOWL, THE ROUND ROBINS.

	♠ Q J 9 7 3 2										
	♥ J 10 3										
	♦ 6 4										
	♣ 8 4										
♠ A 10 8 4	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 100px;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center; width: 50px;">N</td> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center; width: 50px;">W</td> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center; width: 50px;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 6
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ A 9 4		♥ K Q 6									
♦ K J 10 5		♦ A Q 9 7									
♣ 10 2		♣ A 9 7 5 3									
	♠ K 5										
	♥ 8 7 5 2										
	♦ 8 3 2										
	♣ K Q J 6										

W	N	E	S
Romański		Nilslund	Kowalski Fallenius
	Pass	1♦	Pass
1♠	Pass	2♣	Pass
2♥	Pass	3NT	Pass
Pass	...		

Here again a whole level of bidding was lost during a sequence when there might have been a chance for slam.

Most likely the fourth suit forcing call of 2♥ was only one round forcing.

Kowalski couldn't bid 2NT, because that would have shown more minimum strength opener.

Is there a solution that provides for precise bidding in the slam zone as well as effectively solves invitational hands?

Supposing that 2H was not GF, hence the jump to 3NT was necessary to show the extra values, West knows he is facing extras with (a large proportion of the time) a singleton spade. East will often have five diamonds (in my style he would almost have guaranteed five). West can see no spade wastage in his own hand, an 8- or 9-card fit, and a good high-card fit. He should go on with 4D over 3NT and slam is reached.

Brian Senior

My suggestion:

W	E
1♦	— 1♠
2♣	— ?
	2♦ — natural
	2♥ — transfer to 2♠, “I want to play two spades,” or any strength-based invitational hand
	2♠ — any GF
	2NT — GF, “but I want to play a no-trump contract”
	3♣ — invitational, good support
	3♦ — invitational good support.
	3♥ — 6-5 shape, distributional invitation
	3♠ — 6+ spades, distributional invitational

How would opener respond to the 2♥ transfer bid?

W	E
1♦	— 1♠
2♣	— 2♥
	?
2♠	— “I would have passed after the natural bidding sequence: 1♦ – 1♠ – 2♣ – 2♠”
2NT	— misfit, good hand for playing a no-trump contract
3♣	— misfit, 5+ clubs and 5 diamonds
3♦	— misfit, 6 diamonds and 4 clubs
3♥	— transfer, a hand with 3 spades
3♠	— an invitational hand with a doubleton spade

After accepting a transfer, responder passes or continues to describe his hand.

W	E
1♦	— 1♠
2♣	— 2♥
2♠	— ?

- 2NT — invitational with a balanced hand (may be only 4 cards in spades)
- 3♣ — strong invitation with +4♣
- 3♦ — strong invitation with diamond support
- 3♥ — strength-based invitation, 5 spades and 5 hearts
- 3♠ — strength-based invitation, 6+ spades

What next after a game forcing 2♠ bid?

There are two game forcing bids that can be used:

2♠ — “I do not want to play a no-trump contract from my hand”

W	E
1♦	— 1♠
2♣	— 2♠
?	

- 2NT — natural, may be 1354 without heart stopper.
- 3♣ — 5 clubs
- 3♦ — 5+ diamonds and 4 clubs, without a heart stopper
- 3♥ — transfer to spades, 3-1-5-4 distribution
- 3♠ — transfer to a no-trump contract, 2-2-5-4 shape, good hand without a heart stopper
- 3NT — low honors

SEQUENCE 1♦ – 1♠ – 2♦ – ?

Sequence 1.

W	E
1♦	— 1♠
2♦	— ?

- 2♥ — transfer to 2♠, I want to play 2♠ or I have an invitational hand
- 2♠ — GF with all sorts of hands
- 2NT — GF, but I want to play a no-trump contract from my hand
- 3♣ — natural, GF
- 3♦ — invitational
- 3♥ — 6-5 distribution-based invitation
- 3♠ — 6+ spades, distribution-based invitation

How should the opener respond to a 2♥ transfer bid?

Sequence 2.

W	E
1♦	— 1♠
2♦	— 2♥
?	

- 2♠ — I shall pass in the natural bidding 1♦ – 1♠ – 2♦ – 2♠
- 2NT — good hand for a no-trump contract
- 3♣ — good hand with 6+ diamonds, and misfit in spades
- 3♦ — misfit – weak hand
- 3♥ — transfer, with three spades
- 3♠ — maximum with 2 spades.

Further sequence:

After accepting a transfer, the responder passes or describes invitational hand.

Sequence 3.

W	E
1♦	— 1♠
2♦	— 2♥
2♠	— ?

2NT — invitational, like 1♦ – 1♠ – 2♦ – 2NT in the natural bidding

3♣ — invitation — 4 spades and 6 clubs

3♦ — 5 spades and 4 hearts, invitational

3♥ — 5 – 5, strength-based invitation

3♠ — 6+ spades, strength-based invitation

A difficult to remember agreement requires some clarification:

3♦ — 5 spades – 4 hearts, invitation

An artificial 2♥ bid eliminates the possibility to inform partner about spade and heart distribution with the opener. With a minimum opening hand, a partial score will do. With 5 spades and 4 hearts, in most cases it will be a 3♦ contract, even if a suit is 6-1. Note that accepting a 2♠ transfer means that we would pass in the natural 1♦ – 1♠ – 2♦ – 2♠ sequence. It will often be a spade singleton.

After a 2♠ game-forcing bid, the opener should describe the character of his hand and show his intentions.

Sequence 4.

W	E
1♦	— 1♠
2♦	— 2♠
?	

2NT — natural, I want to play a no-trump from my hand

3♣ — 5+ diamonds – 4 hearts, it is necessary to differentiate 5-4 distribution from +6 ♦

3♦ — 6+ diamonds, I do not want to play a no-trump from my hand, minimum.

3♥ — transfer with three spades

3♠ — good hand, 6+ diamonds
 3NT — low honours

BERMUDA 2000
 BERMUDA BOWL, THE ROUND ROBINS

♠ K J 9 6 3	N	♠ A Q 5 4
♥ K 10 9 7	W	♥ A 8
♦ A K	E	♦ J 9 3
♣ Q 7	S	♣ K 5 4 3

♠ 10
 ♥ 6 4 3
 ♦ 10 8 6 5 4 2
 ♣ J 10 9

W Freeman	N Bompis	E Nickell	S St. Marie
	Pass	1♣	Pass
1♠	Pass	2♠	Pass
3♥	Pass	4♠	Pass
4NT	Pass	5♠	Pass
6♠	Pass	...	

W Multon	N Meckstroth	E Mari	S Rodwell
	Pass	1♣	Pass
1♠	Pass	2♠	Pass
2NT	Pass	4♠	Pass ...

We see here a common example of a standard agreement in uncontested auctions that doesn't make any sense.

The opener with a good hand accepts the invitation by jumping to 4♠, which completely blocks the possibility of checking on chances for slam. Frank Multon was criticized for his final pass, but if his partner's hand had looked a bit different:

♠ A Q 5 4
♥ A 8 2
♦ J 9
♣ K 5 4 3

the criticism would have fallen on Freeman's bidding.

In my opinion, inviting game should be done with the maximum amount of camouflage, and there should only be one bid for this – 3♠ – which means we have to give up using this as a preemptive bid.

At the professional level of bridge, 9 times out of 10 raising the agreed trump suit to the three level is a tactical psych and not a natural game invitation.

With my approach there is luckily only one invitational bid.

A 2NT waiting bid serves two purposes. In the American style it is a check back to see how many spades opener has, since the tendency there is to raise more often with only three-card support.

The traditional European style is to raise with four-card support.

In this case 2NT should be asking for shortness, or just as well asking for a doubleton.

W	N	E	S	
	Pass	1♣	Pass	
1♠	Pass	2♠	Pass	
2NT	Pass	3♣, ♦, ♥		— “I have a doubleton in this suit and a good hand.”
		3♠		— minimum
		3NT		— “How about playing notrump?”
		4♦, ♥		— singleton

This is why asking for a doubleton is essential. The secret to slam bidding when both hands are balanced is find fitting shape and not mirror distribution.

Variation A)

♠ K J 9 6	N	♠ A Q 10 4
♥ A K	W E	♥ 9 8 3
♦ K 10 9 7		♦ A 3
♣ Q J 7	S	♣ K 5 4 3

Variation B)

♠ K J 9 6	N	♠ A Q 5 4
♥ A K	W E	♥ 8 2
♦ K 10 9 7		♦ A 8 3
♣ Q J 7	S	♣ K 5 4 3

Variation C)

♠ K J 9 6	N	♠ A Q 10 4
♥ A K	W E	♥ 3 2
♦ K 10 9 7		♦ A 8 4 3
♣ Q J 7	S	♣ K 5 4

This is why asking for a doubleton is essential. The secret to slam bidding when both hands are balanced is find fitting shape and not mirror distribution.

1♣ opening = 12-14PC balanced or strong.

In Variation A slam is excellent.

In Variations B and C slam is practically hopeless.

W	N	E	S
	Pass	1♣	Pass
1♠	Pass	2♠	Pass
3♣, ♦, ♥			

— natural, slammish

Why is this approach so important? I don't need to convince anyone that the bidding should go slowly when there is a realistic chance for a slam.

W	N	E	S
	Pass	1♣	Pass
1♠	Pass	2♠	Pass
3♥	Pass	?	

West is showing a two-suited hand.

With a bad hand, opener jumps to 4♠.

With a good hand opener bids 3♠ to wait for further information.

Or a cue bid – showing enthusiasm and a hand full of controls.

Another sequence:

W	N	E	S
	Pass	1♣	Pass
1♠	Pass	2♠	Pass
3♣	Pass	3♠	Pass

3NT — no shortness

4♣ — two singletons

4♦ — singleton or void ♦

4♥ — singleton or void ♥

The bidding is the same after showing a two-suited hand with diamonds or hearts.

Let's look at how this works on the authentic deal.

♠ K J 9 6 3	N W E S	♠ A Q 10 4
♥ K 10 9 7		♥ A 8
♦ A K		♦ J 9 3
♣ Q 7		♣ K 5 4 3

W	N	E	S
	Pass	1♣	Pass
1♠	Pass	2♠	Pass
3♥	Pass	3♠	Pass
3NT	Pass	4♣	Pass
4♦	Pass	4♥	Pass
4♠	Pass	?	

3♠ — good hand

3NT — no shortness

Undoubtedly, with this hand:

♠ A Q 10 4
♥ A 8 2
♦ J 9
♣ K 5 4 3

we would pass, since we need a queen of hearts more to make slam than with the hand.

♠ A Q 10 4
♥ A 8
♦ J 9 3
♣ K 5 4 3

This is the smart road to slam bidding, and it places great weight on hand evaluation. We would all agree that the doubleton ace of hearts greatly improves the value of this hand after we find out about partner's secondary heart suit.

Is there a different version of this system to cater to the three-card raise style – which is English as well as American? Or do we assume that the three-card raise will only happen with a singleton (which would be my style), so by definition if you show a doubleton you must have four-card support? Maybe make that point to help the three-card raisers? But still need a way to differentiate between a singleton with three-card and four-card support.

Brian Senior

Other version of 2NT bid.

My suggestion:

Sequence A

W	N	E	S	
	Pass	1♣	Pass	
1♠	Pass	2♠	Pass	
2NT	Pass	3♣		— only 3 cards support
		3♦		— 4 cards support with shortness, minimum
		3♥		— 4 cards support without shortness, maximum
		3♠		— 4 cards support without shortness, minimum
		3NT		— 3 cards support, without shortness, maximum
		4♦, ♥		— shortness, maximum

Sequence B.

W	N	E	S	
	Pass	1♣	Pass	
1♠	Pass	2♠	Pass	
2NT	Pass	3♣	Pass	
3♦	Pass	3♥		— short in ♥
		3♠		— short in ♦
		3NT		— without shortness, minimum
		3♦		— I need more information.

BERMUDA 2000
 BERMUDA BOWL, THE QUARTER-FINALS

♠ 10 6 2	N W E S	♠ 3
♥ 3		♥ A K Q 4
♦ K 10 8 6		♦ A 9 4
♣ A K 6 5 3		♣ Q J 9 4 2
		♠ A K Q 8
	♥ J 9 8 7 6	
	♦ J 3	
	♣ 10 7	

W	N	E	S	
Romański		Rosenberg		Kowalski Zia
	Pass	1♣	1♥	
2♣	Pass	3♠	Pass	
4♥	Pass	6♣	Pass	...

- 2♣ — +5♣ non-forcing
- 3♠ — Splinter

Denying a diamond cue bid suggests a hand like:

♠ 10 6 2
♥ 3
♦ Q 10 8 6
♣ A K 6 5 3

which has very little chance to make a slam.

Kowalski must have been counting on six clubs (3136) – which makes the slam a laydown.

In light of Romański's non-forcing 2♣ bid, after the Splinter he was practically forced to slam.

So why did Romański deny the diamond control? He thought the control in the opposition's suit was the key to slam and didn't care about denying the diamond? Clearly, given the example you give with DQ instead of DK, that would be an error on his part.

Brian Senior

VERONA 2006

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROSENBLUM CUP, THE EARLY STAGES

	♠ Q J 10 9 7 2										
	♥ A 9 2										
	♦ 9 2										
	♣ 6 3										
♠ 4	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100%; height: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 33%;"></td> <td style="width: 33%; text-align: center;">N</td> <td style="width: 33%;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">W</td> <td style="width: 33%;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ A 6
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ K J		♥ Q 10 7									
♦ A 7 6 4		♦ K Q 10 5									
♣ K Q J 8 7 4		♣ A 10 9 2									
	♠ K 8 5 3										
	♥ 8 6 5 4 3										
	♦ J 8 3										
	♣ 5										

W	N	E	S	
Sadek	Lauria	El Ahmadi	Versace	
1♣	1♠	2♠	2NT	
3♠	Pass	3NT	Pass	...

A horrible bidding foundation – too much cue bidding and not enough information.

Instead of bidding 3♠, Sadek should have bid 3♦ showing a distributional hand.

I'm somewhat critical of Versace's 2NT bid.

It left too much bidding room for the opponents and made their lives easier rather than putting them up against a wall.

W	N	E	S
Nunes	Schwartz	Fantoni	Willenken
1♣	2♠	Dbl	4♠
Pass	Pass	4NT	Pass
5♣	Pass	6♣	Pass ...
1♣	— +14PC (good 13) +4♣ +15PC balanced		

Despite the opponents' active bidding Fantoni – Nunes were able to cope with the difficult situation.

Because Fantoni trusted his opponents' bidding to show a 6-4 spade fit, hence Nunes had the singleton. Pre-empting can sometimes help your opponents.

Brian Senior

VERONA 2006

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROSENBLUM CUP, THE SEMI-FINALS

	♠ 7 2										
	♥ K 4										
	♦ A K 6 2										
	♣ A K Q 3 2										
♠ K 8 6 4	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; margin: 0 auto;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ Q J 9 5 3
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ 8 7 3		♥ J 10 9 6 5									
♦ J 7		♦ 10 8 4									
♣ J 9 8 5		♣ -									
	♠ A 10										
	♥ A Q 2										
	♦ Q 9 5 3										
	♣ 10 7 6 4										

W	N	E	S
Ozdil	Lindkvist	Ginossar	Fredin
	1♣	Pass	3NT
Pass	4♣	Pass	4♥
Pass	5♦	Pass	5♠
Pass	5NT	Pass	6♣
Pass	...		

I understand the camouflage tactic of bidding 3NT.

On this deal we can perfectly see the contradiction between the idea of camouflage and smart slam bidding.

W	N	E	S
Bertheau	Doron	Nystrom	Israel
	2NT	Pass	3♣
Pass	3NT	Pass	4NT
Pass	...		

3NT — no four- or five-card major

This was a slam killing opening.

The wrong opening completely camouflaged the potential of this hand and led to a poor contract.

W	N	E	S
Levin	Sontag	Weinstein	Bates
	1♣	1♦	1NT
2♠	3♣	Pass	3♥
Pass	3♠	Pass	4♣
Pass	4♦	Pass	4♠
Pass	5♣	Pass	6♣
Pass	...		
1♣	— strong		
1♦	— majors or minors		
2♠	— pass or correct		

Sontag and Bates stirred up the bidding.

After 3♣ the bidding went on naturally. I don't know the exact agreements this pair uses, however, I get the feeling that Sontag didn't appreciate the potential of his hand.

W	N	E	S
Helgemo	Fallenius	Helness	Welland
	1♣	Pass	2NT
Pass	3♥	Pass	3NT
Pass	4♦	Pass	4♠
Pass	5NT	Pass	6♦
Pass	...		
1♣	— natural or 11-13 or 17-19 balanced		
3♥	— artificial, 17-19 balanced		
4♠	— agrees diamonds as trump		

Fallenius – Welland took up a lot of bidding space to exchange information about the strengths of their hands. There wasn't enough room to get to a grand slam in diamonds or clubs.

The fact that the grand slam goes down because of a 4-0 club break doesn't change the way we should think about slam bidding.

This hand can be bid with a completely natural system.

N	S
♠ 7 2	♠ A 10
♥ K 4	♥ A Q 2
♦ A K 6 2	♦ Q 9 5 3
♣ A K Q 3 2	♣ 10 7 6 4

The beginning natural 1♣ – 1♦ bids makes it fairly easy to get to slam.

W	N	E	S
	1♣	Pass	1♦
Pass	3♦	Pass	4♦
Pass	4♥	Pass	4♠
Pass	4NT	Pass	5♠
Pass	5NT	Pass	7♣
Pass	...		

The 3♦ needs to be explained.

With 11-15PC and 4♦ – 5♣, I recommend opening 1♦.

As a result in the sequences:

- 1♣ — 1♦
- 2♦ — shows 15-17PC
- 3♦ — is game forcing with 18-21PC
 In addition, the 3♦ bid shows 2245 shape. With
 shortness in a major suit a Splinter bid is required (3♥,
 ♠).
- 4♦ — sets diamonds as trump
- 4♥, ♠ — cue bids
- 5♠ — 2A+Q♦, no kings
- 5NT — grand slam try

On the basis of the information gained during the auction we can risk bidding the grand slam.

Note, that the grand slam would have been odds on even without the queen of hearts.

As you can see, the crucial information is the number of spades and clubs in responder's hand.

(3♠ and 3♣ or 2♠ and 4♣ — the worst holding is 3♠ and 4♣)

7♣ — the ♥Q is the thirteenth trick

VERONA 2006

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROSENBLUM CUP, THE FINAL

♠ 10 8 7 5 4					
♥ 9 4					
♦ 10 6 3 2					
♣ Q 3					
♠ A K J 2	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100%; height: 100%;"> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠ 9 3
N					
W E					
S					
♥ A 5		♥ 10 6 3			
♦ 8		♦ A K 7 4			
♣ K 10 8 7 6 2		♣ A J 9 5			
	♠ Q 6				
	♥ K Q J 8 7 2				
	♦ Q J 9 5				
	♣ 4				

W	N	E	S
Helgemo	Lindkvist	Helness	Fredin
3♣	Pass	3♥	Pass
3♠	Pass	5♣	Pass
6♣	Pass	...	

This is one of the hardest hands in this book. An intellectual and conscious raise to slam after the 2♥ opening requires quite a bit of tight-rope walking.

W	N	E	S
Nystrom	Sontag	Bertheau	Bates
			1♥
2♣	Pass	2♥	Pass
2♠	Pass	3♥	Pass
4NT	Pass	5♥	Dbl
6♣	Pass	...	

4NT — RKCB for clubs

5♥ — two key cards, no trump queen

The Swedes had a better chance of getting to the grand. In my opinion, the key to bidding seven clubs would be a 3♠ bid (instead of 2♠) showing the 6-4 shape and the great potential of the hand.

My suggestion?

W	N	E	S
			1♥
2♣	Pass	2♥	Pass
3♠	Pass	4♣	Pass
4♦	Pass	?	

You can also see in the above sequence that cue bidding slows down the auction. If partner has:

♠ A K J 2
 ♥ A
 ♦ 8 2
 ♣ K 10 8 7 6 2

the auction is a no-brainer.

	...	4♣	Pass
4♥	Pass	4NT	Pass
5♣	Pass	5♥	Pass
5♠	Pass	7♣	Pass ..

5♣ — 0-3 aces

5♥ — asking for kings

5♠ — ♠ king

The real hand was much more difficult.

♠ A K J 2	N W E S	♠ 9 3
♥ A 5		♥ 10 6 3
♦ 8		♦ A K 7 4
♣ K 10 8 7 6 2		♣ A J 9 5

W	N	E	S
			1♥
2♣	Pass	2♥	Pass
3♠	Pass	4♣	Pass
4♦	Pass	4♠	Pass
4NT	Pass	5♠	Pass
5NT	Pass	6♦	Pass
7♣	Pass	...	

To bid the grand you have to risk the “last train” bid of 4♠.

ISTANBUL 2004
 WORLD TEAM OLYMPIAD, THE ROUND OF 16

♠ 7 2		♠ K 10
♥ A Q J 9 8 5 3		♥ 10 4
♦ —		♦ J 10 7 4
♣ A K J 2		♣ 10 6 5 4 3
♠ Q J 9 8	N W E S	♠ A 6 5 4 3
♥ K 6		♥ 7 2
♦ K Q 9 8 5 2		♦ A 6 3
♣ 7		♣ Q 9 8

W	N	E	S
Szilagyi	Multon	Honti	Quantin
	1♥	Pass	1♠
2♦	4♥	Pass	...

A weak bidding foundation and a good slam was missed.

Jumping the gun with a 4♥ bid doesn't show opener's real intentions on this hand.

Perhaps a 3♦ bid followed by 3♠ – 4♥ would better represent the potential of the hand.

W	N	E	S
Rombaut	Szalay	Palau	Macskasy
	1♣	Pass	1♠
2♦	2♥	3♦	Pass
Pass	3♥	Pass	4♥
Pass	6♥	Pass	

This kind of deal works out better with a strong club opening. The slower bidding tempo gave the Hungarian pair a chance, but still this was not the right bidding sequence. Macskasy should

have made a 4♦ cue bid. Macskasy's pessimistic 4♥ bid didn't stop Szalay.

Why should he make the 4D cuebid? Because he has two key cards, no diamond wastage, it is a convenient cuebid that takes no space...

Brian Senior

ISTANBUL 2004
 WORLD TEAM OLYMPIAD, THE SEMI-FINALS

♠ 9	N	♠ J 10 5
♥ Q 7	W E	♥ A J 10 3 2
♦ A K J 4 3	S	♦ 5
♣ K 7 6 3 2		♣ A 10 5 4
		♠ K Q 7 3
		♥ K 5 4
		♦ 9 8 7 6 2
		♣ Q

W	N	E	S
Matushkov	Prooijen		Khven Brink
		1♥	Pass
2♦	Pass	2♥	Pass
3♣	Pass	4♣	Pass
4♦	Pass	4♥	Pass
4NT	Pass	5♥	Pass
6♣	Pass	...	

By opening the bidding Khven, in fact, forced the bidding into the slam zone.

He also, with a sub-minimum opening and small singleton in partner's first-bid suit, cooperated with an 'automatic' cuebid. Comment about whether convenient cuebids should be made automatically or whether East should use judgment in such a situation? Maybe the automatic cuebid is a necessary evil so West can trust that the lack of a cuebid denies the control, but I don't think it should be assumed without discussion.

Brian Senior

W	N	E	S
Jansma	Gromov	Verhees	Dubinín
		Pass	Pass
1♦	Pass	1♥	Pass
2♣	Pass	2♠	Dbl
3♣	Pass	5♣	Pass ...

The rather sensible bidding by the Dutch led to a good game contract.

W	N	E	S
Duboin	Xin	Bocchi	Sun
		Pass	Pass
1♦	Pass	1♥	Pass
2♣	Pass	2♠	Pass
3♣	Pass	...	

The bidding foundation was theoretically the same, but the conclusions drawn by Bocchi were somewhat different.

Since the 1♦ bid was a third-seat opening, Norberto was cautious.

W	N	E	S
Dai	Fantoni	Yang	Nunes
		1♥	Pass
2♦	Pass	2♥	Pass
3♣	Pass	3♠	Pass
4♥	Pass	...	

The Chinese demonstrated how it was possible to stop in a game even after Yang opened his hand.

ISTANBUL 2004
 WORLD TEAM OLYMPIAD, THE FINALS

♠ J 5	N	♠ 9 4
♥ K J 10 9 7	W E	♥ 8 4
♦ K 4	S	♦ Q J 8 5 2
♣ 7 6 5 2		♣ K Q 4 3

♠ A K 10 8 3 2
♥ A Q 5 3
♦ 9
♣ 10 9
♠ Q 7 6
♥ 6 2
♦ A 10 7 6 3
♣ A J 8

W	N	E	S	
Schollaardt		Fantoni	Drijver	Nunes
			1NT	
Pass	2♣	Pass	2♦	
Pass	4♠	Pass	...	

The Italian's bidding was somewhat random, but who was to know the king of hearts was favorably placed?

W	N	E	S	
Duboin	v Prooijen		Bocchi	Brink
			1♦	
1♥	2♥	Pass	2♠	
Pass	3NT	Pass	4♠	
Pass	...			

2♥ — 6+♠, weak or game-forcing

The Dutch pair started out great. Responder's first bid of 2♥ showed a good hand, and the hand went up in value after the 1♥ overcall. Brink was in the driver's seat on this hand. In my opinion he should have risked a 3♠ bid.

Knowing that there is a real fit and opener has a good hand for his minimum leads the way to bidding a small slam.

The concept of transfers in contested auctions applies to only four bidding sequences:

- 1♣ — 1♦ — ?
- 1♣ — 1♥ — ?
- 1♦ — 1♥ — ?
- 1♥ — 1♠ — ?

How to introduce the whole concept of further bidding after a 1♦ opening and the opponent's 1♥ overall?

My suggestion:

W	N	E	S
1♦	1♥	?	
		Dbl	— transfer to spades (4-5 cards)
		1♠	— transfer to no-trump or clubs.
		1NT	— natural
		2♣	— transfer to diamonds(with support), weak 6-9 HCPs or a strong hand, 12+ HCPs
		2♦	— invitational 9-12 HCPs (nine good points, bad twelve)
		2♥	— transfer to spades (+6♠), weak or strong
		2♠	— transfer to clubs (+6♣), weak or strong
		2NT	— natural, invitational
		3♣	— invitational, 6+ clubs
		3♦	— pre-emptive
		3♥	— transfer, 6+ spades, invitational
		3♠	— splinter in hearts

The advantage of using transfers is based on:

Declaring from the better hand – in case opener has heart honors that can be led through at trick one.

The practical gain from transfers – “weak or strong 6+ cards in the suit” using one bid for different strength hands makes it

easier for opener to make decisions in case the opponents preempt.

The transfer of a NT works out well in practice.

LILLE 2012

14TH WORLD BRIDGE GAMES, THE QUARTER-FINALS

	♠ K 8 7 2										
	♥ J 5 2										
	♦ J 8 7 6										
	♣ 10 5										
♠ J 6 5 3	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 100px;"> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">N</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">W</td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ A 4
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ 7		♥ A 10 8 6 3									
♦ 10 2		♦ A K Q 4									
♣ A K 9 7 6 4		♣ Q 8									
	♠ Q 10 9										
	♥ K Q 9 4										
	♦ 9 5 3										
	♣ J 3 2										

EW vulnerable

W	N	E	S
de Wijs	Multon	Muller	Zimmerman
		1♣	Pass
1♥	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♣	Pass	2♦	Pass
2♥	Pass	2♠	Pass
2NT	Pass	3♣	Pass
3♥	Pass	3♠	Pass
4♣	Pass	6♣	Pass ...

- 1♣ — strong
- 1♥ — 4♠ GF
- 1♠ — relay
- 2♣ — +4♣
- 2♥ — +5♣
- 2NT — short ♥
- 3♥ — 4126
- 4♣ — 3 controls

An excellent bidding foundation based on a relay system. It was correct to bid the slam (♥ 4-3 and ♣ 3-2, without a trump lead it might be possible to ruff a spade) and it had the advantage of being a slam that made.

W	N	E	S	
Nunes	Drijver	Fantoni	Brink	
		1♥	Pass	
1♠	Pass	2♣	Pass	
2♦	Pass	2NT	Pass	
3♣	Pass	3NT	Pass	...
2♣	— Gazzilli			
2♦	— +8PC			

The Italian pair use the Gazzilli convention which is more difficult and usually effective, but here they didn't have precise information at their disposal.

The question of how to build a good foundation for a bidding system has no easy answer.

A solution is needed that covers the concerns expressed by players:

What degree of difficulty can be managed by a bridge partnership that wants to use the bidding foundation?

What are the gains by the proposed bidding structure and what are losses?

Is the foundation consistent?

Is the foundation in agreement with the principle of symmetry?

A good system for players is one that has identical solutions in similar situations, even when it is at the cost of precision. The point is, that a player at the table who knows the structure of proposed solutions can reach the assumed agreements quickly and effortlessly. This avoids costly bidding disasters. A big mistake often made by unqualified theoreticians is to happily invent a separate bidding structure for each sequence, which undoubtedly increases bidding precision but is impossible to remember in the long run.

In this chapter I often criticized the bidding foundation of leading professional pairs in the bridge world. This obligates me to present my own concept for building a bidding foundation related to an important part of uncontested auctions.

Parameters:

- 1) Opening 1♥, ♠.
- 2) 2 over one – game forcing.
- 3) Concept – extra length transfer bid.

Characteristic features:

- a) Consistency
- b) Symmetry
- c) Effectiveness – thanks to the concept of “extra length transfer bids” – an extra level of bidding space is gained.

OPENING 1♥

Sequence I.

- 1♥ — 2♣
- 2♦ — 2♥ — +15PC (slam try)
 - 2♠ — 4th suit – denies support in ♥.
 - 2NT — I like play NT from my hand, denies support in ♥.
 - 3♣ — +6♣ good suit
 - 3♦ — +5♠ – 4♦
 - 3♥ — 12-14PC with ♥ support (model 9 cards)
 - 3♠ — Splinter with ♦ support
 - 3NT — to play
- 2♠ — transfer NT for better hand
- 3♦ — just natural bidding
- 3♥ — idea of camouflage

Sequence 1a.

- 1♥ — 2♣
- 2♦ — 2♥ — 3+ ♥, +15PC
- 2♠ — minimum (11 to bad 13PC)
- 2NT — 2542 — good hand (+15PC)
- 3♣ — +5♥ +5; — good hand
- 3♦ — +6♥ 4♦ — good hand
- 3♥ — 1543 — club fragment (maybe weak)
- 3♠ — 3♠ 5♥ 4♦ — good hand (maybe 4540, after 3NT waiting — 4♣ void)
- 3NT — 2542 – 13-15 PC (good 13PC bad 15PC)
- 4♣ — void ♠ — 0544 — good hand
- 4♦ — 1♠ 5♥ 6♦ 1♣ (13-14PC)
- 4♥ — extremely poor hand.
- 2♠ — important bid, idea of camouflage.
- 3♠ — 3541 or 4540 bad fragment , higher position
- 4♦ — with 5♥ 6♦ — I recommend to open 1♥ up to 15PC (of course depend on quality of both suits). With ♠Ax ♥Jxxxx ♦AKQxxx, ♣x — open 1♦.

Sequence 1b.

- 1♥ — 2♣
- 2♦ — 2♥
- 2♠ — 2NT — asking
- 3♣ — +5♥ +5♦ ; minimum
- 3♦ — +6♥ 4♦ — minimum
- 3♥ — 1543 — minimum
- 3♠ — 3♠5♥ 4♦ — minimum (maybe 4540, after 3NT waiting — 4♣ void)
- 3NT — 2542 — minimum (11 to bad 13PC)
- 4♣ — void ♠ (0544) — minimum, natural way
- 4♦ — 1561 — minimum (11-13PC)

Sequence II.

- 1♥ — 2♣
- 2♦ — 2♠ — 4th suit, idea of transfer NT, denies ♥ support.
- 2NT — 3♠ 5♥ 4♦ — without stopper or normal bid with stopper in ♠.
- 3♣ — 5♥ +5♦ — transfer for ♦.
- 3♦ — 6♥ - 4♦ — transfer for ♥
- 3♥ — club fragment 5♥ 4♦ 3♣
- 3♠ — 2♠ 5♥ 4♦ 2♣!!! — without stopper
- 3NT — 2542 — with stopper (minimum)
- 4♣ — 0544 good hand
- 4♦ — 1561 good hand (13-14PC)
- 2NT — 3♠ 5♥ 4♦ without stopper = we have chance to stop 3NT having 3-3 spades without stopper.

Sequence III.

- 1♥ — 2♣
- 2♦ — 2NT
- 3♣ — 5♥ +5♦ — transfer for ♦.
- 3♦ — 6♥ 4♦ — transfer for ♥.
- 3♥ — club fragment 1543
- 3♠ — 3♠ 5♥ 4♦ (maybe 4540)
- 3NT — 2542
- 4♣ — void ♠ — 0544
- 4♦ — 1561 — good hand (I prefer to open 1♥ with 5♥ 6♦ up to 14-15PC especially with good ♥ and weak ♦)

3♠ = bad fragment, higher position

Sequence IV.

- 1♥ — 2♦
- 2♥ — 2NT
- 3♣ — support in ♦, no extras.
- 3♦ — +6♥
- 3♥ — 6♥ + support in ♦
- 3♠ — 5♥ — +4♣
- 3NT — nothing special

After 3♣ (♦ supp.) and 3♦ (+6♥) we have comfortable entry to the slam zone. 3♠ — 5♥ +4♣ it is a cost of comfortable 3♣, ♦.

For example:

1)

- 1♥ — 2♦
- 2♥ — 2NT
- 3♣ — 3♦ — I need more information
- 3♥ — short ♣
- 3♠ — short ♠
- 3NT — no shortness
- 3♣ — support in ♦

2)

- 1♥ — 2♦
- 2♥ — 2NT
- 3♦ — 3♥ — what about slam in ♥
- 3♠, 4♠, ♦ — shortness
- 3NT — no shortness
- 4♥ — no shortness, super minimum

OPENING 1♠

Sequence A.

Sequence I.

- 1♠ — 2♣
- 2♦ — 2♥ — 4th suit – denies ♠ support. Idea of transfer NT for partner hand.
- 2♠ — +15PC with support in ♠. (slam try)
- 2NT — denies support in ♠ and 6 good clubs. He may have ♦ support.
- 3♣ — +6 good clubs
- 3♦ — natural +5♣ 4♦ GF.
- 3♥ — Splinter with ♦ support
- 3♠ — 12-14PC with support in ♠. Nothing special. Idea of camouflage.

(After 3♠ — Opener with good hand can invite slam by model of 9 cards.)

Sequence II.

a)

1♠ — 2♣

2♦ — 2♥

2♠ — I have no other bid.

2NT — natural, stopper in ♥.

3♣ — +5♠ +5♦; (maybe weak)

3♦ — 5♠ 4♦ 3♣ (maybe weak)

3♥ — 6♠ 4♦; — good hand

3♠ — 5341 — good hand, no stopper in ♥.

3NT — 5-2-4-2 minimum with stopper in ♥.

4♣ — 5044 — (good hand) for players who like natural way.

4♦ — 5161 — good hand (13-14PC)

Structure of bidding is different (1♥ – 2♣ – 2♦ – 2♠) because we have one more place (2♠) to show no extras or no other bid.

(for example: 5242 without ♥ stopper)

b)

1♠ — 2♣

2♦ — 2♥

2♠ — 2NT — I need more information

3♣ — 5242 — good hand, values in ♣

3♦ — 5242 — good hand, values in ♦

3♥ — 6♠ 4♦ — no extras

3♠ — 5341 — no extras, no stopper in ♥.

Sequence III.

a)

1♠ — 2♣

2♦ — 2♠

2NT — minimum

3♣ — +5♠ +5♦; (even minimum)

3♦ — 5143 — good hand

3♥ — 6♠ 4♦ — good hand

3♠ — 5341 — good hand

3NT — 5-2-4-2 — good hand

4♣ — 5044 — good hand

4♦ — 5161 — good hand

4♠ — extremely poor hand

3♣ — +5♠ +5♦ — only one bid without limit (maybe weak)

b)

1♠ — 2♣

2♦ — 2♠

2NT — 3♣ — asking.

3♦ — 5♠ 4♦ 3♣ — minimum

3♥ — 6♠ 4♦ — minimum

3♠ — 5♠ 4♦ 3♥ — minimum

3NT — 5-2-4-2 minimum (not terrible)

4♣ — void (5044) — minimum

4♦ — 5♠ 1♥ 6♦ 1♣ — minimum

Sequence IV.

- 1♠ — 2♣
- 2♦ — 2NT
- 3♣ — 5♠ +5♦ — transfer for ♦.
- 3♦ — club fragment 5♠ 4♦ 3♣
- 3♥ — 6♠ 4♦ — transfer for ♥
- 3♠ — 5♠ 3♥ 4♦
- 3NT — 5242
- 4♣ — void ♥ — 5♠ 4♦ 4♣
- 4♦ — 5161 — good hand (I prefer to open 1♠ with 5♠ — 6♦ up to 14-15PC especially with good ♠ and weak ♦).

Sequence B.

Sequence I.

- 1♠ — 2♣
- 2♥ — ?
 - 2♠ — spade-agreeing slam try (15+ HCPs);
 - 2NT — waiting, I want to play a no-trump contract from my hand;
 - 3♣ — 6+ clubs GF.
 - 3♦ — fourth suit, asking for stopper
 - 3♥ — agreeing hearts, no slam aspirations, following the rule of camouflage;
 - 3♠ — agreeing spades, no slam aspirations, following the rule of camouflage;
 - 4♦ — Splinter, ♥ agree

The waiting 2NT bid may be made on strong hands with a fit in hearts.

It practically precludes a spade fit (2♠ then). This is important when you enter the slam zone (cue bids will agree hearts).

The fourth-suit 3♦ is a typical mechanism, which allows you to play a no-trump contract from the better hand.

a)

- 1♠ — 2♣
 - 2♥ — 2♠
 - 2NT — minimum
 - 3♣ — +5♠ 4♥ 3♣; (even minimum)
 - 3♦ — +5♠ 5♥ — good hand
 - 3♥ — 6♠ 4♥ — good hand
 - 3♠ — 5♠ 4♥ 3♦ — good hand
 - 3NT — 5-4-2-2 — good hand
 - 4♣ — 5♠ 4♥ 4♣ — (good hand) for players who like natural way.
 - 4♦ — void (5♠ 4♥ 0♦ 4♣) good hand — for players who like Splinter bid.
 - 4♥ — 5♠ 6♥ 1♦ 1♣ — good hand
 - 4♠ — extremely poor hand.
-
- 3♣ — only one bid without limit (maybe weak)
 - 3♠ — bad fragment, higher position

b)

- 1♠ — 2♣
 - 2♥ — 2♠
 - 2NT — 3♣ — asking.
 - 3♦ — +5♠ 5♥ — minimum
 - 3♥ — 6♠ 4♥ — minimum
 - 3♠ — 5♠ 4♥ 3♦ — minimum
 - 3NT — 5-4-2-2 minimum (not terrible).
 - 4♥ — 5611 — minimum
 - 4♣, ♦ — void (5♠ 4♥ 4♣) — minimum, natural or Splinter way.
-
- 3♠ — bad fragment, higher position

c)

1♠ — 2♣

2♥ — 2NT

?

3♣ — club fragment, showing 5♠ 4♥ 3♣;

3♦ — +5♠ +5♥, transfer bid showing extra length in hearts;

3♥ — 6♠ 4♥, transfer bid showing extra length in spades;

3♠ — diamond fragment, showing 5♠ 4♥ 3♦;

3NT — 5-4-2-2

Showing a diamond fragment in the above sequence was placed high (3♠) because 5-4-3-1 shape allows you to agree hearts? only. Transfers to hearts and spades are easily shown, then a 3♣ continuation shows the club fragment economically, this time in a natural way.

Sequence C

1♠ — 2♣

2♠ — 2NT

?

3♣ — 5 spades and 4+ clubs, no extra values in HCPs;

3♦ — 5(3-2) 3♣ with three-card fit in clubs, positive values for a potential discussion about a club slam. Very useful information;

3♥ — extra spade length, 6+ spades;

3♠ — 6 spades and 4+ clubs;

3NT — not a very attractive hand.

AFTER 2♦ RESPONSE

Sequence I

- 1♠ — 2♦
- 2♥ — 2♠ — +15PC with ♠ support
- 2NT — denies ♠ support. He may have ♥ support with +15PC
- 3♣ — 4th suit – asking for ♣ stopper
- 3♦ — +6 good ♦. GF
- 3♥ — 12-14PC with support in ♥ (model 9 cards)
- 3♠ — 12-14PC with support in ♠ (model 9 cards)
- 4♣ — Splinter with ♥ support

Let's look at the further auction.

Important notice – we don't have mechanism to show spade shortness. From the other hand, natural bid 3NT is very rare, because better to give partner a chance to show his shape and after conclude 3NT. For him will be easier to pass 3NT with 6♠ – 4♥ or 5♠ – 5♥.

a)

- 1♠ — 2♦
- 2♥ — 2♠
- 2NT — minimum
- 3♣ — +5♠ 4♥ 3♦; (even minimum)
- 3♦ — +5♠ 5♥ — good hand
- 3♥ — 6♠ 4♥ — good hand
- 3♠ — 5♠ 4♥ 3♣ — good hand
- 3NT — 5-4-2-2 — good hand
- 4♦ — 5♠ 4♥ 4♦ — (good hand) for players who like natural way.
- 4♣ — void (5♠ 4♥ 4♦) — good hand for players who like Splinter bid.
- 4♥ — 5♠ 6♥ 1♦ 1♣ — good hand
- 4♠ — extremely poor hand
- 3♣ — only one bid without limit (maybe weak)

b)

- 1♠ — 2♦
- 2♥ — 2♠
- 2NT — 3♣ — asking.
- 3♦ — +5♠ 5♥ — minimum
- 3♥ — 6♠ 4♥ — minimum
- 3♠ — 5♠ 4♥ 3♣ — minimum (maybe 5404, after 3NT waiting
— 4♦ void)
- 3NT — 5-4-2-2 minimum (not terrible).
- 4♦ — void ♣ (5♠ 4♥ 4♦) — minimum.
- 4♥ — 5611 — minimum

c)

- 1♠ — 2♦
- 2♥ — 2NT
- ?
- 3♣ — diamond fragment, 5-4-3-1 shape;
- 3♦ — transfer, 5-5 shape with spades and hearts;
- 3♥ — transfer, 6 spades and 4 hearts;
- 3♠ — club fragment, 5-4-1-3 shape;
- 3NT — 5-4-2-2.

A club fragment in the above sequence is not too encouraging. That is the reason why it is placed on top.

d)

- 1♠ — 2♦
- 2♠ — 2NT
- ?
- 3♣ — 5♠ + ♦ support;
- 3♦ — 5♠ + 4♣
- 3♥ — transfer, 6+♠;
- 3♠ — 6+♠, good fit in diamonds;
- 3NT — 5-3-3-2, nothing special.

e)

- 1♠ — 2♦
- 2♠ — 2NT
- 3♠ — 3NT(waiting)
- ?
- 4♣ — club shortage;
- 4♦ — no shortage;
- 4♥ — heart shortage;
- 4♠ — no shortage, fair spade suit.

3NT is waiting because we have two positive pieces of information about the opening hand (we know about a six-card spade suit and a fit in our own suit) so 3NT cannot be a final contract (if this was our intention, then after 2♠ we should jump to 3NT).

AFTER 2♥ RESPONSE

Sequence I

- 1♠ — 2♥
- 2♠ — 2NT
- 3♣ — natural, no extras
- 3♦ — natural, no extras
- 3♥ — +6♠
- 3♠ — 6♠ + 3♥ weak heart support
- 3NT — nothing special.

How to continue bidding after extra length transfer bid?

Example

1)

- 1♠ — 2♣
- 2♠ — 2NT
- 3♣ — 5♠ +4♣ without extras
- 3♦ — positive hand with 3 cards support in ♣ (5332)
- 3♥ — I have +6♠
- 3♠ — I have 6♠ – 4♣
- 3NT — nothing special (5332)

Model of 6 cards

- 1♠ — 2♣
- 2♠ — 2NT
- 3♥ — 3♠ — what about slam in ♠?
- 3NT — no shortness
- 4♣, ♦, ♥ — shortness
- 4♠ — no shortness, minimum

3♥ = +6♠

Example

2)

- 1♥ — 2♣
- 2♦ — +5♥ +4♦
- 2♥ — +5♥ — I have no other bid.
- 2♠ — +5♥ +4♣
- 2NT — good hand – I like play NT from my hand
- 3♣ — +5♥ +5♦ — good hand
- 3♦ — +6♥ — good hand
- 3♥ — +7♥ old style sequence 1♥ – 2♣ – 4♥.

Model of 7 cards

1♥ — 2♣

3♥ — 3♠ — I need more information.

3NT — no shortness (2722)

4♣, ♦, ♥ — shortness

3♥ = +7♥

Example

3)

1♥ — 1♠

2♠ — 2NT

3♣ — I have only 3 cards in ♣.

3♦ — I have 4 cards in ♦ and some shortness

3♥ — maximum with 4522

3♠ — minimum with 4522

3NT — maximum with 5332

4♣, ♦ — void with 4 cards support

Model of 8 cards

1♥ — 1♠

2♠ — 2NT

3♣ — 3♦ — I need more information

3♥ — short in ♣

3♠ — short in ♦

3NT — 5332 minimum

3♣ = 5♥ - 3♠

Example

4)

1♠ — 2♣

2♦ — 2♠ — +15PC with support

3♠ — 12-14PC with support (idea of camouflage).

Model of 9 cards

- 1♠ — 2♣
- 2♦ — 3♠
- 3NT — no shortness (5242)
- 4♣, ♥ — shortness
- 4♦ — both shortness
- 4♠ — no shortness, minimum

Example

5)

- 1♠ — 2♣
- 2♦ — 2NT
- 3♣ — +5♠ +5♦
- 3♦ — 5♠ 4♦ 3♣
- 3♥ — 6♠ 4♦
- 3♠ — 5♠ 3♥ 4♦
- 3NT — 5242

Model of 10 cards minor agree

- 1♠ — 2♣
- 2♦ — 2NT
- 3♣ — 3♦ — what about slam in ♦?
- 3♥ — shortness
- 3♠ — shortness in ♣
- 3NT — minimum (without void)
- 4♦ — both shortness.

We must check where is shortness before 3NT.

We must have mechanism to show really minimum (3NT).

If we have void (♠ or ♥) we can repeat our shortness in 4(5) level.

Example

6)

1♠ — 2♣
2♥ — 2NT
3♣ — 5♠ 4♥ 3♣
3♦ — +5♠ +5♥
3♥ — 6♠ 4♥
3♠ — 5♠ 4♥ 3♦
3NT — 5422

Model of 10 cards — major agree

1♠ — 2♣
2♥ — 2NT
3♦ — 3♥ — what about slam in ♥? (3♦ = +5♠ +5♥)
3♠ — both shortness (6511, 5611)
3NT — I have void (♣ or ♦). (4♣ asking — 4♦, ♥ (♠) void)
4♣ — 5521
4♦ — 5512
4♥ — super minimum

Example

7)

1♥ — 2♣
2♠ — 2NT (if 2♠ = +5♥ + 4♠ — good hand)
3♣ — 4♠ 5♥ 3♣
3♦ — 4♠ 6♥
3♥ — 5♠ 6♥
3♠ — 4♠ 5♥ 3♦

3NT = 4♠ 5♥ 22

Model of 11 cards — major agree

- 1♥ — 2♣
- 2♠ — 2NT
- 3♥ — 3♠ — what about slam in ♠? (3♥ = 5♠ 6♥)
- 3NT — 5♠ 6♥ 11
- 4♣ — void in ♣
- 4♦ — void in ♦

Example

8)

- 1♠ — 2♦
- 2♥ — 2NT
- 3♣ — 5♠ 4♠ 3♦
- 3♦ — +5♠ +5♥
- 3♥ — +6♠ - 4♥
- 3♠ — 5♠ 4♥ 3♣
- 3NT — 5♠ 4♥ 22

Model of 12 cards

Conditional Blackwood

- 1♠ — 2♦
- 2♥ — 2NT
- 3♣ — 3♦ — what about slam in ♦? (Conditional Blackwood)
(3♣ = 5♠ 4♥ 3♦)
- 3♥ — 0-3 aces
- 3♠ — 1-4 aces
- 3NT — 5♠ 4♥ 3♦ 1♣ — minimum
- 4♣ — void (repeat shortness).
- 4♦ — 2 aces without ♦Q.
- 4♥ — 2 aces with ♦Q.

HAND EVALUATION IN THE SLAM ZONE

The ability to evaluate one's hand accurately is the key to winning bridge. It can be learned, but it requires plenty of work and discussion within your partnership. Interestingly, it is not so important to assess one's hand in exactly the same way that your partner does, or even in a similar manner. You just need to know partner's way of doing it.

Hand evaluation reflects what is happening both inside and around us. It mirrors our sensibility – this complex, ever-changing feature of our souls. Our sensibility results not only from our bridge past – both distant and near – but also from the present, the reality that surrounds us.

Factors in hand evaluation include:

Strength in HCP (A=4, K=3, Q=2, J=1);

Shape – from 4333 to 7600;

Possession of tens and high spot cards (9, 8);

The quality of honors: in suit contracts aces and kings are more desirable, in notrump – usually lower honors.

The distribution of honors: the value of honors can change as more information from the bidding becomes available.

Suit quality: the trump suit in suit contracts, the main source of tricks in notrump.

The Ranking Method of Hand Evaluation in the Slam Zone

There are two areas where hand evaluation is of critical importance: slam bidding and competitive bidding. To clarify the analysis of slam bidding I propose ranking hands on a *0–10 scale*. Let's say partner invites us to bid slam. **How should we react?** It will obviously depend on our hand evaluation.

There are four cases:

1) If I rank my hand at the bottom of the scale, **from 0 to 2**, I decline the invitation immediately. For instance, using standard bidding:

1♠ — 2♣

2♦ — 2♥

3♣ — 3♠

4♠

3♥ — 4th suit

3♠ — what about slam in ♠.

I'm not interested in any discussion about slam. Example hands:

A)	B)	C)	D)
♠ J 7 5 3 2	♠ Q 5 4 3 2	♠ K 8 7 4 2	♠ A 10 9 5 4
♥ A	♥ 6	♥ K	♥ J
♦ K Q J 7	♦ A K Q 5	♦ Q 6 5 3	♦ K Q 9 5
♣ J 5 3	♣ 8 6 4	♣ A 9 8	♣ J 5 2

Extremely bad location of honors, weak trump suit – this gets a **zero**. This means that even if partner continues to the five level, we will refuse again.

Our hand is undervalue in strength, weak trumps, reasonable honor location – this gets a **two**. If partner repeats the invitation, we'll accept.

Bad honor location, lack of high cards. An optimist would give it a **one**, a pessimist a **zero**.

The trump suit is acceptable and so is the location of honors, but it is a weak hand in terms of HCP – a **one**. One second try from partner would persuade us to cue bid.

2) If I rank my hand from **three** to **five**, I can exchange cue-bids below the game level.

1♠ — 2♣
2♦ — 2♥
3♣ — 3♠
4♦ — 4♥
4♠

The message is: “*I want to talk, but I’m a bit nervous about slam prospects.*”

A)	B)	C)	D)
♠ A J 6 5 4	♠ A K 10 5 3	♠ Q 10 6 4 3	♠ Q J 9 4 2
♥ 6	♥ 5	♥ 10	♥ J
♦ K Q J 7	♦ K J 10 5	♦ A K J 7	♦ A K 10 3
♣ 6 5 3	♣ 8 7 2	♣ Q 10 4	♣ Q J 10

In spite of its minimum strength the excellent location of honors allows us to give the hand a **three**. One cue-bid is all we can afford. If partner goes to the five level, we will discourage him.

The assets of this hand are similar to those of the previous one, except for the two nicely placed tens. Our ranking of **four** means we will respond positively to another invitation from partner.

Four again, the two black tens are useful.

The club sequence, decent trumps, good diamonds – it gets a **five**.

If partner makes a move, we will drive to slam (perhaps even a grand slam).

3) I rank my hand from **six** to **eight**. I will surely not stop at the four level.

1♠ — 2♣
2♦ — 2♥
3♣ — 3♠
4♣ — 4♦
5♣

Here are four hands opener could have corresponding to the above auction. **How would you evaluate them?**

A)	B)	C)	D)
♠ K 7 6 5 4	♠ K J 10 4 3	♠ A Q 10 9 7	♠ K Q 10 4 2
♥ 9	♥ 5	♥ 3	♥ 8
♦ K J 9 6	♦ Q J 8 7	♦ J 10 3 2	♦ Q 10 6 3
♣ A K 5	♣ A K 6	♣ A K J	♣ A K 10

The poor trump suit should make us cautious – it rates a *six*. We will continue cue-bidding at the five level. A long sequence of cue-bids indicates problems in the trump suit.

♠ K 7 6 5 4	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠ Q 9 3
N					
W E					
S					
♥ 9		♥ A K 5 4			
♦ K J 9 6		♦ A Q 10			
♣ A K 5		♣ Q J 9			

Even such strong a hand as East's in the diagram above does not make slam a good contract. How can you avoid it? There are two ways: either by bidding 5♠ instead of 5♣ (bidding the slam depends on the quality of partner's trumps), though, this doesn't do full justice to West's actual cards;

or by:

(...) — 5♦
 5♥ — 5♠

We have all the necessary controls and lots of good intentions, but the trumps are far from solid.

Decent trumps, good honor distribution, but we need to find partner with plenty of key cards – it rates a *six*.

The main problem is our diamond holding. If partner shows a concentration of values by bidding 5♦, we will risk a slam. After 5♥, we will discourage him. This ranks a *seven*.

All the honors seem to be working, plenty of tens, especially the $\spadesuit 10$ may be a golden card – this gets an *eight*. Only a negative $5\spadesuit$ from partner may stop us from bidding slam.

4) I rank my hand at the top of the scale, *9 to 10*, and partner will have to find serious arguments to dissuade me from a slam. I aim to explore grand slam opportunities.

Most hands from this range qualify for Blackwood.

A)	B)	C)
\spadesuit K Q J 9 4	\spadesuit A K 10 8 6	\spadesuit A Q 9 7 5
\heartsuit 6	\heartsuit 5	\heartsuit 9
\diamondsuit K Q 10 5	\diamondsuit A Q 7 6	\diamondsuit A 10 8 6
\clubsuit A Q 6	\clubsuit K J 7	\clubsuit K Q J

1 \spadesuit — 2 \clubsuit

2 \diamondsuit — 2 \heartsuit

3 \clubsuit — 3 \spadesuit

4 \clubsuit — 4 \diamondsuit

4NT — Blackwood

A) If partner shows three key cards, we will continue with $6\clubsuit$, asking for a club honor.

B) After the $5\heartsuit$ response (two key cards without the trump queen) we should give up on a grand slam. After $5\spadesuit$ (two key cards with the queen) we will ask for an extra club honor. We would, of course, be equally content with a $6\heartsuit$ response (showing the $\heartsuit K$).

C) A similar concept. Three key cards out of five (four aces and the trump king) make a grand slam a good prospect. We will continue with $6\diamondsuit$, expressing our uncertainty about this suit and passing the final decision to partner.

Many do not ask for honours at the five level – at least not Ks. Hand A might bid 5NT, inviting 7 and asking partner to show a specific king if unable to bid 7 himself. Here, 6C would now show the king required, anything else would deny it.

In your asking scheme, either K or Q counts as a positive response. Any way to use this if the k would be what is required but the q not good enough?

Traditionally, these 6-level asks are for third-round control. That fits with your suggestion for hand C, where second-round control has already been shown.

Brian Senior

MONTREAL 2002
 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROSENBLUM CUP, THE FINAL

♠ 9 3		
♥ 8 4 3 2		
♦ K 8		
♣ J 8 7 6 4		
♠ Q J	N	♠ A K 10 8 6 5 4
♥ K Q J 5	W	♥ 6
♦ Q 7 3 2	E	♦ A 4
♣ Q 10 9	S	♣ A 5 3
		♠ 7 2
		♥ A 10 9 7
		♦ J 10 9 6 5
		♣ K 2

W	N	E	S
Karwar	Bocchi	Sacul	Duboin
1♦	Pass	1♠	Pass
1NT	Pass	2♦	Pass
2♥	Pass	2♠	Pass
2NT	Pass	3♠	Pass
4♠	Pass	6♠	Pass ...

2♦ — game forcing

W	N	E	S
Versace	Manoppo	Lauria	Lasut
1♦	Pass	1♠	Pass
1NT	Pass	2♣	Pass
2♦	Pass	3♠	Pass
4♠	Pass	6♠	Pass ...

2♣ — check back

Both pairs bid similarly. Neither Sacul nor Lauria were able to stop themselves from jumping directly to a bad slam.

That reminds me of a funny story from about 20 years ago.

A very nice gentleman held an interesting hand:

♠ A K Q J 10 7 6 4
♥ K Q
♦ K J
♣ 10

His partner opened the bidding with 1♦.

The nice gentleman jumped straight to Blackwood and after a 5♦ response – one ace – he bid a spade slam.

The opponent on lead proceeded to cash two aces. When his partner questioned him about why he had bid the slam, he muttered, “Maybe we were missing two aces, but look at the beautiful hand I had – I couldn’t refuse to bid the slam for such a silly reason.”

Sacul and Lauria went down one in slam, but each thought he had a beautiful hand.

My suggestion?

1♦ — 1♠
1NT — 4♥ — autosplinter (4♣, ♦ — the same)
4♠ — 5♣
5♠ — Pass

Not easy to stop in 5♠.

ESTORIL 2005
BERMUDA BOWL, THE ROUND ROBINS

	♠ Q 9 8 7 3										
	♥ K Q 5										
	♦ Q 9										
	♣ Q 9 2										
♠ K J 10 6	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 100px;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">N</td> <td style="width: 50px;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">W</td> <td style="width: 50px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 50px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> <td style="width: 50px;"></td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 4
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ 9 7 6 3		♥ A 10 8 4 2									
♦ 8 5		♦ 10 4 3 2									
♣ 7 4 3		♣ 10 8 6									
	♠ A 5 2										
	♥ J										
	♦ A K J 7 6										
	♣ A K J 5										

Both vulnerable

W	N	E	S
Mandala	Greco	Lambardi	Hampson
	1♠	Pass	2♦
Pass	2NT	Pass	3♠
Pass	4♠	Pass	5NT
Pass	6♥	Pass	6♠
Pass	...		

Six spades was a nightmare of a contract, but Hampson really had a nice hand.

Because the hand had other advantages, six no trump was makeable.

Look at the inconsistency of this pair's bidding.

If Greco can open 1♠ with such a bad hand, then Hampson should bid a bit more carefully. The combination of an aggressive opener and uncompromising bidding by responder led to a bad contract.

Blackwood would have solved the problem – 5♣ – no aces, would lead to a six no trump contract. Partner must have: ♠QJ, ♥KQ, ♦Q, ♣Q. Then, as it happens, even the jack of spades is not needed.

I don't understand the 5NT bid? If asking for good trumps, what about the HA?

Brian Senior

BEIJING 2008
 OPEN TEAM CHAMPIONSHIPS, THE SEMI-FINALS

♠ A 7 3		
♥ Q 2		
♦ A K Q 10 8 5		
♣ J 10		
♠ 6 2	N	♠ J 9 8 5 4
♥ K 10 7 6 4	W E	♥ J 9 5 3
♦ 4 3 2	S	♦ J
♣ Q 9 8		♣ A 7 4
		♠ K Q 10
		♥ A 8
		♦ 9 7 6
		♣ K 6 5 3 2

W	N	E	S
Versace	Helness	Lauria	Helgemo
			1♣
Pass	2♦	Pass	3♦
Pass	3♠	Pass	4♣
Pass	4NT	Pass	5♦
Pass	6♦	Pass	...
2♦	— natural +16PC		

It wasn't a good slam. Helgemo with a minimum hand and a so-so fit he decided to cue bid 4♣. Helness's reaction (4NT) shows that he was expecting a lot more.

A man with a minimum strong jump shift and no heart control used RKCB? Maybe Helgemo thought that to by pass 4C would deny any club control? Do we know the partnership agreement? And maybe, if 3S denied a heart control, Helgemo felt that to not cuebid on his own hand might also deny a heart control, ending any slam prospects even facing a better hand?

Brian Senior

Yes — 3♠ denied heart control.

BEIJING 2008
 OPEN AND WOMEN'S TEAM CHAMPIONSHIPS, THE FINAL

♠ 9 8 7	♠ A K 10
♥ 10 7	♥ A Q J 8 5 3
♦ Q 10 9 4	♦ 7 5
♣ J 9 8 5	♣ A K

♠ 6 4 2	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; margin: 0 auto;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 6 4 2
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ 6 4 2		♥ 6 4 2									
♦ A 8 3		♦ A 8 3									
♣ Q 7 4 2		♣ Q 7 4 2									

♠ Q J 5 3
♥ K 9
♦ K J 6 2
♣ 10 6 3

W	N	E	S
Versace	Gold	Lauria	Townsend
		Pass	Pass
Pass	2♣	Pass	2♦
Pass	2♥	Pass	2NT
Pass	3NT	Pass	6NT
Pass	...		

2♣ — game forcing

2♦ — waiting

After the most basic bidding, the English pair got to the optimal contract of 6NT from the right hand.

W	N	E	S
Malinowski		Sementa	SandqvistDuboin
		Pass	Pass
Pass	1♥	Pass	1♠
Pass	2♣	Pass	2♦
Pass	2♠	Pass	2NT
Pass	3♥	Pass	4♥
Pass	...		
2♣	— natural or +17PC		
2♦	— waiting, GF if North has +17PC		
2♠	— support and +17PC		

With some artificial bidding the Italians stopped in game.

Who made the critical error in hand evaluation? Since I don't have the inside information on this pair's agreements, I can't say who was to blame. It seems to me that the hand is too heavy in high cards for a 1♥ opener. I would probably have decided to bid this as a game forcing opener. Very little is needed from partner's hand to make a game.

Most likely both players were reluctant to commit to bidding a slam.

SAO PAULO 2009
BERMUDA BOWL, THE SEMI-FINALS

♠ 10 7 5 3	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 100px;"> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;"> </td><td style="padding: 5px;">N</td><td style="padding: 5px;"> </td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">W</td><td style="padding: 5px;"> </td><td style="padding: 5px;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;"> </td><td style="padding: 5px;">S</td><td style="padding: 5px;"> </td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 4
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ Q 4		♥ AK10876532									
♦ A K 10 8		♦ Q 5									
♣ A 9 2		♣ 3									

♠ K J 8
♥ J 9
♦ 7 4 2
♣ Q J 8 6 5

W	N	E	S
Wang	Rodwell	Zuang	Meckstroth
1NT	2♦	4♦	Pass
4♥	Pass	4NT	Pass
5♠	Pass	6♥	Pass ...
2♦	— ♦ + major		
4♦	— transfer ♥		

The Chinese bashed their way into slam, which luckily was cold.

W	N	E	S
Katz	Dai	Nickell	Yang
1♦	1♠	2♥	2♠
Pass	Pass	3♠	Pass
4♥	Pass	...	

Katz showed poor hand evaluation.

Most of the players I gave this hand to as a test, said they would have bid 4♠ instead of 4♥.

I support this approach. Partner's 3♠ bid could have been based only on a big hand with hearts, or it could have been based on a hand with a diamond fit. The 4♣ bid, on the other hand, says that all of opener's values are outside of spades and he would gladly accept any slam aspirations from partner's side.

Note, that Katz passed over the 2♠ bid, and even more so he should have responded to partner with more enthusiasm.

SAO PAULO 2009
BERMUDA BOWL, THE SEMI-FINALS

♠ 6 4 3	♠ 9 8 7	♠ J 5			
♥ 10 9 8	♥ 7	♥ K J 6			
♦ K J 10 8 7 2	♦ 6 3	♦ A Q 9 6			
♣ 10	♣ A K 9 7 4 3 2	♣ Q J 6 5			
	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	
N					
W E					
S					
	♠ A K Q 10 2				
	♥ A Q 5 4 3 2				
	♦ 6				
	♣ 8				

W	N	E	S	
Versace	Karakolev		Lauria	Danailov
	3♣	Pass	3♠	
Pass	5♠	Pass	6♠	
Pass	...			

I have a great deal of sympathy for Karakolev's approach. Enthusiasm + camouflage and Versace, who was left in the dark, led the ♥10 for +1460.

W	N	E	S	
Karaivanov		Fantoni	Trendafilov	Nunes
	3♣	Pass	3♠	
Pass	4♥	Pass	4♠	
Pass	...			

The classic bidding style used by the Italian pair. Nunes showed good hand evaluation.

The disadvantage of this bidding is that it would have led to a disadvantageous diamond lead if Nunes had held a slightly better hand and had decided to bid on to slam.

W	N	E	S
Wang	Rodwell	Zuang	Meckstroth
	3♣	Pass	3♠
Pass	4♠	Pass	...

On many other hands I have been highly impressed with Meckstroth and Rodwell's hand evaluation.

This time I can't understand what Rodwell was thinking. He couldn't have had a better hand.

W	N	E	S
Katz	Dai	Nickell	Yang
	3♣	Pass	3♥
Pass	3♠	Pass	4♥
Pass	...		

Yang decided to show his longest suit. Uncertainty about the meaning of the 3♠ bid led to a worse game contract.

Whether 3S should have the standard English meaning of spade control and good heart raise is a matter of opinion. Perhaps in today's looser pre-empting world it should be (semi-)natural, to cater to hands like this one. But surely a regular international partnership should know what it means for them?

Brian Senior

ISTANBUL 2004
 WORLD TEAM OLYMPIAD, THE FINALS

	♠ K 9 5										
	♥ 5 2										
	♦ 10 8 6										
	♣ K 7 5 4 2										
♠ A 10 6 3 2	<table style="width: 100%; height: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">N</td> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">W</td> <td style="width: 10%;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ Q 7
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ K Q 7		♥ A J 8 6 3									
♦ 4		♦ A 9 7									
♣ Q J 10 6		♣ A 9 8									
	♠ J 8 4										
	♥ 10 9 4										
	♦ K Q J 5 3 2										
	♣ 3										

W	N	E	S	
Duboin	v Prooijen		Bocchi	Brink
		1♥	1NT	
Dbl	Pass	Pass	2♦	
3♦	Dbl	Rdbl	Pass	
4♥	Pass	...		
Dbl	— “I’d prefer a non-diamond lead”			
Rdbl	— ♦A			

The comic 1NT bid, which leaves the opponents with plenty of bidding room, I hope died out a long time ago. The Italians took effective advantage of the extra bidding space.

W	N	E	S	
Schollaardt		Fantoni	Drijver	Nunes
		1NT	Pass	
2♥	Pass	2♠	Pass	
3♣	Pass	3NT	Pass	...

Nobody interfered in the Dutch pair's bidding, however, the final contract was very bad.

Of course, Drijver should have shown his heart suit instead of bidding 3NT, but camouflage tendencies prevailed.

W	N	E	S	
Ponomareva		Molson	Gromova	Sokolow
		1♥	3♦	
4♦	Pass	4NT	Pass	
5♠	Pass	6♥	Pass	...

W	N	E	S	
Meyers	Lebedeva	Montin	Galaktionova	
		1♥	3♦	
4♦	Pass	4♠	Pass	
5♥	Pass	5♠	Pass	
6♥	Pass	...		

The prosaic 3♦ bid took up a lot of bidding space for both pairs in the women's game and led to a bad slam. In my opinion, neither pair made a serious mistake. It's hard to criticize any of the particular bids.

In theory, the 4♦ bid should show a heart fit and +13PC. It doesn't necessarily say anything about shortness or even a diamond stopper. Bid 4♦ — seems to be a sensible choice. And you also can't expect abstinence from opener's side.

SHANGHAI 2007
BERMUDA BOWL, THE FINAL

	♠ 5		
	♥ K 9 6		
	♦ K Q 10 9 8 7		
	♣ 8 7 2		
♠ A Q 9 8 6 2	N	E	♠ K J 10
♥ 2	W	S	♥ A Q 8 5
♦ A 6 4 2			♦ 5
♣ K 5			♣ A Q 10 9 3
			♠ 7 4 3
			♥ J 10 7 4 3
			♦ J 3
			♣ J 6 4

W	N	E	S	
Żmudziński		Piekarek	Balicki	Smirnov
				Pass
1♠	3♦	Dbl	Pass	
3♠	Pass	4♦	Pass	
4♥	Pass	4♠	Pass	
4NT	Pass	5♦	Pass	
6♠	Pass	....	

Should Żmudziński have bid 4♠ opposite the double? – here public opinion is mixed.

...but when it comes to judging Balicki's hand evaluation as being overly pessimistic – there seems to be widespread agreement.

W	N	E	S	
Gotard	Gromov	Lesniczak		Dubinin
				Pass
1♠	3♦	4♦		Pass
4NT	Pass	5♣		Pass
7♠	Pass	....	

Gotard took the 4♦ bid as a Splinter and that was all he needed to know besides asking for aces.

In theory, the 4♦ bid should show a spade fit and +13PC. It doesn't necessarily say anything about shortness or even a diamond stopper.

How should we resolve these two approaches? I have a proposal. The whole idea is based on certain agreements in contested auctions.

One thing that you can say about contested auctions, is that there are no hard and fast rules.

For almost every sequence you have to have a separate agreement. Of course, there are some analogical sequences which can be handled with a similar treatment. When trying to come up with a bidding approach for such sequences, you don't want to patch over your system in one place and have a leak spring up somewhere else. What I mean by this is, it's important to remember that the treatment should gain much more than it gives up. The method should be good and logical, and if it's also not too complicated that would be ideal.

Not placing too much of a burden on one's memory is a very important aspect of building a bidding system.

It's worth it to give up maximum precision in exchange for simplicity and identical agreements in analogical bidding situations. Identical or similar situations should follow the same logic, so that a player who doesn't remember every available bid can easily recreate the bidding structure in his mind.

As I said, having the right concept is important. What usually happens with me is that a solution appears along the lines of,

“Necessity is the mother of invention.” When I came across hands that I couldn’t cope with, I started to look for sensible solutions. I added them to the system and if they came up at least a few times a year and they paid dividends then they become a permanent part of the system.

For example, when I was holding this hand:

♠ J 8
♥ 7 5
♦ A K Q 9 8 6
♣ Q 6 5

Partner opened 1♣ and my right hand opponent jumped to 3♥.

At the table I helplessly bid 4♦ and partner raised to game.

Dummy came down with:

♠ K Q 9
♥ A K
♦ 5 4 3
♣ J 9 4 3 2

There’s no need to mention, that I wasn’t too happy with this contract.

One month later I held:

♠ A 4 3 2
♥ 7 5 3
♦ A 10 7
♣ A 10 5

Partner opened 1♣ and my right hand opponent jumped to 3♥. I doubled and partner bid 4♠. I wasn’t sure what to do next? I passed.

Partner's hand:

♠ K Q 10 8
 ♥ 8
 ♦ K 3 2
 ♣ K Q 8 6 4

Slam was lay down.

I asked myself a question – why do we have to play 3NT in this sequence whenever partner doesn't have four spades but has a heart stopper, whereas when we have a 4-4 spade fit we can stop in three spades. At first glance it seems silly.

My idea was based on this, that after a negative double of 3♥ – the bid of 3♠ is forcing. The downside of this agreement can be seen at once.

The double has to be a bit stronger than it had been before. From time to time we'll have to play a really thin game. What are the arguments in favor of this approach?

We can investigate the possibility of slam without going past 4♠.

A)

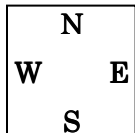
♠ K Q 10 8	N	♠ A 4 3 2
♥ 8		♥ 7 5 3
♦ K 3 2		♦ A 10 7
♣ K Q 8 6 4	W E S	♣ A 10 5

W	N	E	S
1♣	3♥	Dbl	Pass
3♠	Pass	4♣	Pass
4♦	Pass	4♠	Pass
5♥	Pass	6♠	Pass ...

4♣ — cue bid with a spade fit – “What do you think about a spade slam?”

B)

♠ K Q J 6
♥ 7 5 3
♦ J 6
♣ A K 9 7



♠ A 7 5 4
♥ 2
♦ A K Q 10 7
♣ 5 4 2

W	N	E	S
1♣	3♥	Dbl	Pass
3♠	Pass	4♥	Pass
5♣	Pass	5♦	Pass
6♠	Pass	...	

In classic bidding theory, opener would have to jump to 4♠, and East would have to risk raising the bidding to the five level.

Cue bidding style. Clearly, for you, East has not denied a diamond control when he bids 4H, as otherwise West signs off. The cue bidding style/rules could do with a fuller discussion.

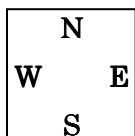
Brian Senior

PS. 4♥ cue bid in my opinion shows shortness. KM. (Splinter idea)

2)

This also solves our problem of what to do on this hand.

♠ K Q 9 7
♥ A K
♦ 5 4 3
♣ J 9 4 3



♠ J 8
♥ 7 5
♦ A K Q 9 8 6
♣ Q 6 5

W	N	E	S
1♣	3♥	Dbl	Pass
3♠	Pass	3NT	

— Pass if you have a heart stopper that can't be led through

You say that it's not a perfect solution? That's true, but it's better than nothing.

If partner bids 3NT after the negative double – oh, how nice.
 Let's look for analogical sequences.

Sequence 2.

W	N	E	S	
1♦	3♥	Dbl	Pass	
3♠	Pass	3NT		— Pass if you have a stopper that can't be led through
		4♣, ♦		— cue bid with a spade fit – “What do you think about slam?”

Sequence 3.

W	N	E	S	
1♥	3♦	Dbl	Pass	
3♠	Pass	3NT		— Pass if you have a stopper that can't be led through
		4♣, ♦		— cue bid with a spade fit

For example,

♠ J 9 4
 ♥ 7
 ♦ 9 8 6
 ♣ A K Q J 6 5

3NT — Pass if you have a stopper that can't be led through

Sequence 4.

W	N	E	S
1♠	3♦	Dbl	Pass
3♥	Pass	3♠ (artificial)	— bid 3NT if you have a diamond stopper
		4♣, ♦	— cue bid with a heart fit

Note, that this time we play 3NT from the right side.

The benefits from this concept go further than you might think.

Sequence 1a.

W	N	E	S
1♣	3♥	4♣, ♦	— non-forcing
a)	♠ 876, ♥ 5, ♦ K75, ♣ KQ10532		
b)	♠ 876, ♥ 5, ♦ KQ109543, ♣ Q9		

At favorable vulnerability this is an invitation to sacrifice at the five level if the opponents bid 4♥.

At other vulnerabilities it's an attempt to win the battle for a part-score.

With a stronger hand we double – maybe partner can bid 3NT.

II option

W	N	E	S
1♣	3♥	4♣	— natural non forcing
		4♦	— natural slam invitation

Sequence 2.

W	N	E	S	
1♦	3♥	4♣, ♦		— non-forcing

II option

W	N	E	S	
1♦	3♥	4♣		— natural slam invitation
		4♦		— natural non forcing

Sequence 3.

W	N	E	S	
1♥	3♦	4♣ (artificial)		— +13PC with a heart fit
		4♦		— Splinter

Note, that 4♣ (which is not a cue bid) allows us to check for a diamond control in opener's hand.

I don't need to explain the advantages of playing Splinters.

Of course, with a strong hand with clubs, we can still get to 3NT by doubling 3♦. If we have a hand with eight, not very solid clubs, we'd be better off to jump to 5♣.

Sequence 4.

W	N	E	S	
1♠	3♦	4♣ (artificial)		— +13PC with a spade fit
		4♦		— Splinter

Is there similar logic that can be applied in other bidding situations?

Sequence 5.

W	N	E	S
1♥	3♣	4♣	— Splinter
		4♦ (artificial)	— +13PC with a heart fit

Sequence 6.

W	N	E	S
1♠	3♣	4♣	— Splinter
		4♦ (artificial)	— +13PC with a spade fit
		4♥	— to play

Sequence 7.

W	N	E	S
1♥	3♠	4♣ (artificial)	— +13PC with a heart fit.
		4♦	— Splinter in spades!!!!
		4♠	— void with ♥ support + extras.

In my opinion, this is a neat solution.

Sequence 6.

W	N	E	S
1♠	3♥	4♣ (artificial)	— +15PC with a spade fit
		4♦ (artificial)	— +12 – 14PC with a spade fit
		4♥	— Splinter

We have two available bids, 4♣ and 4♦.

We can use them in two ways:

4♣ — cue bid, 4♦ — cue bid and denying a club cue

You might wonder – what do we do this this kind of hand?

♠ A K J 4
 ♥ A 9 7
 ♦ Q J 6
 ♣ J 6 5

4♦ is a mild slam try, 4♣ — is a strong invitation to slam.
 With the actual hand we would bid 4♦.

♠ A J 9 4
 ♥ A 9 7
 ♦ Q J 10
 ♣ J 6 5

with this hand – 4♣.

Sequence 7.

W	N	E	S	
1♥	2♠	2NT		— invitational with ♥ support
		3♠		— Splinter
		4♣		— strong raise to 4♥ (+15PC)
		4♦		— good raise to 4♥ (12-14PC)

Sequence 7.

1♥ — 2♠ — 4♣ — Pass

4♦ — last train (I like but I afraid)

Sequence 8.

W	N	E	S	
1♠	2♥	2NT		— invitational with ♠ support
		3♥		— Splinter
		4♣		— strong raise to 4♠ (+15PC)
		4♦		— good raise to 4♠ (12-14PC)
		4♥		— void 9-11PC

HAMMAMET 1997
BERMUDA BOWL, THE ROUND ROBINS

	♠ —										
	♥ 7 3										
	♦ A Q 8 7 4 3 2										
	♣ A Q 6 5										
♠ A K 8 7 5 4 ♥ K J 8 ♦ 10 ♣ J 4 3	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 100px; margin: auto;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center; width: 50px;">N</td> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">W</td> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 9 6 3 2 ♥ 9 6 ♦ J 9 6 ♣ 10 8 7 2
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ Q J 10										
	♥ A Q 10 5 4 2										
	♦ K 5										
	♣ K 9										

Both vulnerable

W	N	E	S
Duboin	Li	Bocchi	Wang
	1♦	Pass	1♥
1♠	2♦	3♠	3NT
Pass	...		

Wang had to make a decision. He chose 3NT. Li didn't quite grasp the situation (that his partner had been under pressure to bid), and so he passed.

Li showed bad hand evaluation by not appreciating the shape of his hand.

W	N	E	S
Multon	Stansby	Mouiel	Martel
	1♦	Pass	1♥
1♠	2♦	Pass	2♠
Pass	3♣	Pass	3NT
Pass	4♣	Pass	4♦
Pass	4♠	Pass	6♦
Pass	7♦	Pass	....

I can definitely sympathize with Stansby's bidding.

The optimistic grand slam was better than bidding 3NT, and it was makeable thanks to information gained from the opponents' bidding.

The double ruffing finesse in spades is right even without an opening spade lead.

If Mouiel has one of the top spade honors then he can't have the king of hearts.

Note that Mouiel's conservative bidding (all vulnerable) left a lot of bidding space for the American pair.

W	N	E	S	
Rosenberg		Perron	Zia	Chemla
	1♦	Pass	1♥	
1♠	2♦	Pass	2♠	
Pass	3♣	Pass	3NT	
Pass	...			

Chemla had more bidding room than Wang. I don't really understand his 3NT bid, when he had a better available bid of 3♥, which wouldn't at all have precluded a final contract of 3NT. Perron also could have bid on. His partner didn't jump to 3NT, but first went through a cue bid of the opponent's suit and then bid 3NT, thereby expressing doubt about the final contract, which Perron should surely have shared.

HAMMAMET 1997
BERMUDA BOWL, THE FINAL

		♠ Q									
		♥ J 2									
		♦ A K 10 9 4									
		♣ J 10 8 7 3									
♠ A 10 8 4	<table style="margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ K J 6
		N									
W			E								
		S									
♥ 10 9 6 5 4 3	♥ A K Q 7										
♦ —	♦ 7 6 5 2										
♣ A Q 2	♣ K 4										
		♠ 9 7 5 3 2									
		♥ 8									
		♦ Q J 8 3									
		♣ 9 6 5									

EW vulnerable

W	N	E	S
Hamman	Perron	Wolf	Chemla
		1NT	Pass
2♦	Dbl	2♥	4♦
5♦	6♣	6♥	7♦
Dbl	Pass	...	

Wolf took a very passive approach. Why 2♥ and not 3♥?

Why 6♥ and not 7♥, or at least 6♦?

W	N	E	S
Levy	Nickell	Mari	Freeman
		1NT	Pass
2♣	Pass	2♥	Pass
3♣	Pass	3♠	Pass
6♥	Pass		

3♣ — fragment with both majors

3♠ — values

Levy was apparently late for the airport. His bidding shows not only bad hand evaluation, but also lack of confidence in his own partnership's bidding.

HAMMAMET 1997.
BERMUDA BOWL, THE FINAL.

♠ Q J 10 8 3	N	♠ 5 4
♥ J 6 4 2	W	♥ A Q 8 7 5
♦ 7 3 2	E	♦ Q 10 8
♣ 5	S	♣ Q J 10
	♠ K 9	
	♥ K 10 9	
	♦ J 9 6 5 4	
	♣ 8 7 4	

W	N	E	S
Meckstroth		Mouiel	Rodwell Multon
			Pass
Pass	1♣	1♥	1NT
2♥	2♠	Pass	3♣
Pass	3♦	Pass	4♣
Pass	4♦	Pass	4♠
Pass	6♣	Pass	...

It's good that Multon avoided the trap of 3NT. If he had bid 5♣ instead of 4♣ – because of the wasted heart values and weak fit – he would have been a hero on this board.

W	N	E	S
Chemla	Hamman	Perron	Wolf
			Pass
Pass	1♣	Pass	1♦
Pass	2♣	Pass	2NT
Pass	3♠	Pass	3NT
Pass	...		

Hamman and Wolf did not get any help from their opponents and it was hard for them to avoid the normal contract of 3NT.

Chemla found a good lead – a heart – and the result was -2.

Notice that the club slam needed a 2-2 break in trumps and either the ace of hearts onside or something good happening in the diamond suit. 3NT needed only a break in clubs.

PARIS 2001
BERMUDA BOWL, THE SEMI-FINALS

	♠ Q 8 7										
	♥ A 6 2										
	♦ 9 5 3										
	♣ 7 6 3 2										
♠ 10 4 2	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 100px;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">N</td> <td style="width: 50px;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">W</td> <td style="width: 50px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 50px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> <td style="width: 50px;"></td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ A K J
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ K 9		♥ Q J 10 8 7 5 4									
♦ A 10 4		♦ K Q J									
♣ A 9 8 5 4		♣ —									
	♠ 9 6 5 3										
	♥ 3										
	♦ 8 7 6 2										
	♣ K Q J 10										

W	N	E	S
Sontag	Balicki	Weichsel	Żmudziński
		1♣	Pass
2♣	Pass	2♥	Pass
2NT	Pass	3♥	Pass
4♣	Pass	4♥	Pass ...

Strange bidding by Weichsel (no 4♦ cue bid) led to the unwillingness for a two-way exchange of bidding information, which is a common symptom among some bridge players. They should have found out what they needed to know on this hand and decided on the final contract. They needed only to show each other what they had.

Weichsel allowed himself to be turned off by the fact that his partner's positive and cuebid were both in his void, suggesting wasted values. Poor judgment, true.

Brian Senior

W	N	E	S
Kwiecień	Martel	Pszczola	Stansby
		1♥	Pass
1♠	Pass	2NT	Pass
3♣	Pass	4♥	Pass
5♣	Pass	5♦	Pass
6♥	Pass	...	
2NT	— any game forcing		
3♣	— waiting bid		
4♥	— +6♥ minimum		
5♣, ♦	— cue bids		

The Polish pair decided to cooperate with each other during the bidding, and they came out well on this hand.

W	N	E	S
Versace	Helness	Lauria	Helgemo
		2♣	Pass
2♦	Pass	2♥	Pass
2♠	Pass	3♦	Pass
3♥	Pass	4♣	Pass
4♦	Pass	4♠	Pass
7♥	Dbl	Pass	Pass
Rdbl	Pass	7NT	Pass
Pass	Dbl	Pass	...

The Italians tried to cooperate with each other, but something broke down along the way.

What broke down? Surely you need to suggest an answer, not just show a failed auction. My opinion, Versace had three key cards facing a 2C opener and when his partner was the one to cuebid above game could not believe there could be a top loser. Lauria needed to slow down after opening 2C. Unfortunately, I have no idea what the auction meant.

Brian Senior

The other semi-final pairs were also unsuccessful.

Aa – Groetheim – 4♥, Willard – Cronier – 7♥, Jackson – Klar – 5♥
v.Arnim – Auken – 4♥, Weigkricht – Fischer – 4♥

BERMUDA 2000
 BERMUDA BOWL, THE FINAL

	♠ Q 8 7 5 4 2	
	♥ 7 2	
	♦ 5	
	♣ J 8 7 3	
♠ A 10 6	N W E S	♠ K J 9
♥ A 9 8 5		♥ Q J 10
♦ 7 6 4 3		♦ A K 10 9 8 2
♣ A 6		♣ K
	♠ 3	
	♥ K 6 4 3	
	♦ Q J	
	♣ Q 10 9 5 4 2	

W	N	E	S
Freeman	Chagas	Nickell	Branco
1♦	Pass	3♣	Pass
3NT	Pass	...	

3♣ — artificial strong raise

The mistakes on this auction are obvious. Losing a whole level of bidding.

Freeman bidding no trump from, potentially, the wrong hand, but that was probably systemic. Nickell's pass – he should have risked an invitational 4NT, or maybe 4♦ to allow for cue bidding.

VERONA 2006
 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROSENBLUM CUP, THE FINAL

	♠ K 8 3													
	♥ 8													
	♦ K Q 10 7 5 4 2													
	♣ K 2													
♠ 9 7 5 2	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100%; height: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 25%;"></td> <td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">N</td> <td style="width: 25%;"></td> <td style="width: 25%;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">W</td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">E</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>		N			W		E			S			♠ Q J 10 6
	N													
W		E												
	S													
♥ K 5 4		♥ Q J 10 7 6 3 2												
♦ A J 3		♦ —												
♣ J 10 7		♣ 8 5												
	♠ A 4													
	♥ A 9													
	♦ 9 8 6													
	♣ A Q 9 6 4 3													

NS vulnerable

W	N	E	S
Nystrom	Helness	Bertheau	Helgemo
			1NT
Pass	3♥	4♥	5♣
5♥	Pass	Pass	6♣
Pass	6♦	Pass	...

3♥ — shortness with 4441 and no slam interest or one suit with slam interest.

Helness and Helgemo correctly applied the forcing pass situation. I'd like to point out that Helness showed good hand evaluation.

W	N	E	S
Melzer	Jacobus	Larsen	Henner
			1♣
Pass	1♦	4♥	Pass
Pass	5♦	Pass	Pass
5♥	Dbl	Pass	....

Jacobus – Henner faced a harder problem.

This situation is a combination of good hand evaluation and making a decision under pressure with a lot at stake.

5♦ could have been bid as a sacrifice.

The key to correctly judging the situation is the answer to the question – is Jacobus’s pass at the five level forcing? If yes, then he made a mistake in hand evaluation. If not, then the double shows that 5♦ was bid to make and that Henner made a mistake in hand evaluation.

In my opinion at this vulnerability (NS vul) pass should be forcing.

VERONA 2006

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROSENBLUM CUP, THE FINAL

♠ 8 7 2	N	♠ A J 9 4 3
♥ Q 10 6 3	W	♥ 9 8
♦ 10 4	E	♦ 5 2
♣ J 6 5 3	S	♣ K 10 9 2

♠ K 5
♥ K J 7 5 2
♦ K Q 9 7
♣ 8 7
♠ Q 10 6
♥ A 4
♦ A J 8 6 3
♣ A Q 4

W	N	E	S
Helgemo	Lindkvist	Helness	Fredin
			1♦
Pass	1♥	1♠	2NT
Pass	3♦	Pass	3♠
Pass	4♦	Pass	4♥
Pass	4♠	Pass	4NT
Pass	5♣	Dbl	6♦
Pass	...		

5♣ — one or four key cards for diamonds

The Swedish pair cooperated nicely. Both of them appreciated what they had.

W	N	E	S
Nystrom	Sontag	Bertheau	Bates
			1NT
Pass	2♦	Pass	2♥
Pass	3NT	Pass	...

The hand is a bit strong for a 1NT opener using a 15-17PC range (bad hand evaluation by Bates) and practical bidding by Sontag, which I fully understand, and the Americans didn't even think for a moment about slam.

ISTANBUL 2004
 WORLD TEAMS OLYMPIAD, THE ROUND OF 16

		♠ A J 10 8		
		♥ K Q 7 5		
		♦ Q 6		
		♣ Q 10 4		
♠ Q 9 3	N		E	♠ 6 5 2
♥ J 10 6	W		S	♥ 9 8 3
♦ 9 4 3 2				♦ A 8 7 5
♣ 8 3 2				♣ J 9 6
		♠ K 7 4		
		♥ A 4 2		
		♦ K J 10		
		♣ A K 7 5		

W	N	E	S
Welland	Lauria	Fallenius	Versace
	1♣	Pass	2♣
Pass	2♦	Pass	2NT
Pass	3NT	Pass	...

Holding two out of three 10's (the 10♠ and the 10♣) the slam is reasonable.

The Italians didn't even think for a moment about slam – no appreciation for 10's!

W	N	E	S
Duboin	Rosenberg	Bocchi	Zia
	1♣	Pass	2♣
Pass	2NT	Pass	4NT
Pass	6NT	Pass	...

Rosenberg and Zia showed the proper respect for 10's.

ISTANBUL 2004
 WORLD TEAM OLYMPIAD, THE FINAL

	♠ A K J 10 8 7 5										
	♥ J 6										
	♦ A 5										
	♣ Q 7										
♠ 6	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 100px;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center; vertical-align: middle;">N</td> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center; vertical-align: middle;">W</td> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center; vertical-align: middle;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center; vertical-align: middle;">S</td> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 9 4
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ 7 4 2		♥ Q 9 8 3									
♦ Q J 9 3		♦ K 8 7 2									
♣ A 8 6 3 2		♣ 10 5 4									
	♠ Q 3 2										
	♥ A K 10 5										
	♦ 10 6 4										
	♣ K J 9										

W	N	E	S	
Versace	v Prooijen		Lauria	Brink
Pass	1♠	Pass	2♣	
Pass	3♠	Pass	4♥	
Pass	4♠	Pass	Pass	...

4♥ — heart control with spades agreed

Both of the Dutch players thought that they had done their jobs. However, they should have had a guilty conscience from the first round of bidding, which caused them to miss a good slam. Only after a diamond lead does the contract depend on a heart finesse.

W	N	E	S	
Schollaardt		Bocchi	Drijver	Duboin
Pass	1♠	Pass	2♣	
Pass	2NT	Pass	3♣	
Pass	3♥	Pass	3♠	
Pass	3NT	Pass	4♣	
Pass	4♦	Pass	4♥	
Pass	4NT	Pass	5♣	
Pass	5♦	Pass	5♥	
Pass	6♠	Pass		

- 2♣ — F1; natural, 11+; balanced, 12+; 3-card limit raise; strong hand with fit (perhaps 5 modest ♦'s + ♥'s)
- 2NT — 15+, no second suit
- 3♣ — GF relay, 2+ spades
- 3♥ — 16+, 6+♠, no singleton

And so on...

The Italian bidding machine worked flawlessly this time.

W	N	E	S
Sokolow	Gromova	Molson	Ponomareva
Pass	1♠	Pass	3NT
Pass	4♦	Pass	4♠
Pass	...		

3NT — 13-15 HCP, any 4-3-3-3 shape

It's hard to explain why Ponomareva didn't make a heart cue bid.

She was giving preference on the basis that her partner was two-suited, and her diamond holding was very bad facing natural 4D bid?

Brian Senior

W	N	E	S
Galaktionova		Letizia	LebedevaSteiner
Pass	1♠	Pass	2♣
Pass	3♠	Pass	4♠
Pass	...		

Steiner's bidding shows bad hand evaluation.

Facing a strong six-card suit and extra values she has a clear 4H cuebid.

Brian Senior

ISTANBUL 2004
WORLD TEAM OLYMPIAD, THE FINAL

		♠ J 10 9 6 5 3 2									
		♥ 8 6									
		♦ J 2									
		♣ 9 4									
♠ A K	<table style="margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 7
		N									
W			E								
		S									
♥ J 10 7	♥ A 9 5										
♦ A 5 4	♦ K Q 9 8 7										
♣ A K 10 7 5	♣ J 8 6 2										
		♠ Q 8 4									
		♥ K Q 4 3 2									
		♦ 10 6 3									
		♣ Q 3									

W	N	E	S	
Versace	v Prooijen		Lauria	Brink

			Pass	
2NT	Pass	3♠	Pass	
4♣	Pass	4♦	Pass	
4♠	Pass	5♥	Pass	
5♠	Pass	6♣	Pass	...

3♠ — short spades, at least five-four in the minors
 4♦, ♠, 5♥, ♠ — control-showing

The Italians made a try for seven, and well they should have. After a very informative auction the heart lead was automatic and a grand slam would have had similar chances as a small slam (slightly less chance, but a much bigger score).

I want to play in SIX. 7C needs 5 diamond tricks. Any four diamonds with S or J10xx with North is bad news. High enough percentage difference not to want to risk it when some pairs don't get to any slam. Maybe I will want to play SEVEN after the first 1000 copies of your book have been sold.

Brian Senior

W	N	E	S
Jansma	Fantoni	Verhees	Nunes

			Pass
1♣	2♠	Dbl	3♠
3NT	Pass	4♠	Pass
4NT	Pass	...	

3NT — if balanced, then 18-20PC
 4♠ — shortness, support for the minors

Jansma didn't appreciate the club suit.

W	N	E	S
Steiner	Galaktionova		Letizia Lebedeva
			Pass
1♣	Pass	2♦	Pass
3NT	Pass	...	

The bidding in the women's event — this auction doesn't make any sense at all.

W	N	E	S
Ponomareva		Meyers	Gromova Montin
			Pass
1♣	2♠	3♣	3♠
4♣	Pass	5♣	Pass ...
1♣	— Polish club		
3♣	— transfer to diamonds		
4♣	— natural, strong		

The Russian player sitting East wasn't sure of the meaning of the 3♣ bid (it was a new agreement) and it affected her bidding

PHILADELPHIA 2010
 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROSENBLUM CUP, THE ROUND ROBINS

♠ J 4		
♥ 9 7 6 5		
♦ K		
♣ Q J 9 7 3 2		
♠ 9 8 5	N	♠ A Q 6 2
♥ —	W	♥ K Q 10 3
♦ 9 8 5 4 2	E	♦ Q J 10 7 6
♣ A K 8 5 4	S	♣ —
		♠ K 10 7 3
		♥ A J 8 4 2
		♦ A 3
		♣ 10 6

NS vulnerable

W	N	E	S
Brogeland		Fantoni	Saelensminde Nunes
			1♥
Pass	2NT	3♦	Pass
4♥	Pass	4♠	Pass
6♦	Pass	...	

2NT — invitational with ♥ support

W	N	E	S
Helgemo	Garner	Helness	Weinstein
			1♥
Pass	2♥	3♦	Dbl
4♥	Pass	4♠	Pass
6♦	Pass	...	

Optimistic hand evaluation (by Saelensminde and Helness) had a huge impact on the outcome of this hand. After the splinter bid, both of them should have slowed down with a negative 5♦.

I suspect that they were both hoping that 4♠ would get passed out.

ESTORIL 2005
BERMUDA BOWL, THE SEMI-FINALS

	♠ K 7 2													
	♥ A Q 10 3													
	♦ A K 5													
	♣ A 10 8													
♠ J 9 6 4	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100%; height: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 25%;"></td> <td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">N</td> <td style="width: 25%;"></td> <td style="width: 25%;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">W</td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">E</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>		N			W		E			S			♠ A 5 3
	N													
W		E												
	S													
♥ J 9 8 5		♥ 4												
♦ 9 4		♦ Q 8 6 3 2												
♣ 9 6 5		♣ J 7 3 2												
	♠ Q 10 8													
	♥ K 7 6 2													
	♦ J 10 7													
	♣ K Q 4													

W	N	E	S
Hampson	Hamman	Greco	Soloway
		Pass	Pass
Pass	2NT	Pass	4NT
Pass	...		

Soloway's sensible bid at the table kept his pair from getting to a very bad slam.

W	N	E	S	
Rodwell	Moss	Meckstroth		Gitelman
		Pass	Pass	
Pass	2NT	Pass	3♣	
Pass	3♥	Pass	3♠	
Pass	4♣	Pass	4♦	
Pass	6♥	Pass	...	

Gitelman decided to Stayman. The mirror distribution meant, that the slam had only about a 20% chance.

I definitely favor Soloway's bid.

In my opinion he showed better hand evaluation.

ESTORIL 2005
BERMUDA BOWL, THE FINAL

		♠ 5 2		
		♥ A 5		
		♦ 9 3 2		
		♣ A Q J 9 8 2		
♠ K 10		N		♠ Q 9 8 4 3
♥ Q 10 4		W	E	♥ J 7 6 2
♦ K J 10 8 7 6		S		♦ Q 5
♣ 5 4				♣ 7 3
		♠ A J 7 6		
		♥ K 9 8 3		
		♦ A 4		
		♣ K 10 6		

W	N	E	S
Versace	Rodwell	Lauria	Meckstroth
	2♣	Pass	2♦
3♦	Pass	Pass	3NT
Pass	...		

A very practical decision on Meckstroth's part. Even though he had only one diamond stopper, and that the ace, he didn't consider any other contract.

If Rodwell had held a slightly different hand:

1)	2)
♠ 5 2	♠ K Q
♥ A Q	♥ A 5
♦ 9 3 2	♦ 9 3 2
♣ A Q 9 8 7 2	♣ Q J 9 8 7 2

then 1) 6♣ and 2) 5♣ would have been better contracts.

W	N	E	S
Soloway	Bocchi	Hamman	Duboin
	1♣	Pass	2♣
2♦	3♣	Pass	3♦
Pass	4♣	Pass	4♦
Pass	4♥	Pass	4NT
Pass	6♣	Pass	...

2♣ — forcing with or without clubs

3♣ — +6 clubs

4NT — spade cue bid (4♠ would have been RKCB with clubs agreed)

I agree with the 3♣ bid even though it's a minimum hand. The 4♥ cue bid was mandatory given the auction, but after 4NT there was time to say – “I have a minimum” and sign off in 5♣.

I'd also like to point out that I think it's a very well-designed agreement to interchange the meaning of 4♠ as a cue bid and 4NT as Blackwood.

My suggestion?

Sequence 1♣ – 1♥ – 2♣ – ?

Sequence 1.

W	E
1♣	— 1♥
2♣	— ?
2♦	— waiting
2♥	— not forcing
2♠	— honours in spades, game forcing, transfer a no-trump contract to a better hand
2NT	— invitational
3♣	— invitational
3♦	— 7-9 HCPs, 6+ diamonds and 4 hearts, not forcing
3♥	— 6+ hearts, invitational
3♠	— singleton or void in spades, with a club fit (Splinter)
3♦	— If you bid with weak hand 6♦ – 4♥ after 1♣ – 1♦ then bid 3♦ may shows game forcing with 5♥ +5♦

How will the opener respond to a 2♦ waiting bid?

A 2♦ diamond waiting bid is not game-forcing therefore it is more difficult than other waiting bids. It may include invitational hands. Therefore, the opener's responses must indicate distribution and power.

Sequence 1a.

W	E
1♣	— 1♥
2♣	— 2♦(waiting)
2♥	— three hearts, minimum
2♠	— waiting, good hands without three hearts
2NT	— natural, minimum
3♣	— 6+ clubs without three hearts — minimum.
3♦	— transfer, 6+ clubs with three hearts — good hand.
3♥	— 6+clubs, 4 diamonds, short in ♥ — good hand.
3♠	— 6+clubs, 4 diamond, short in ♠ — good hand.
3NT	— no-trump oriented hand, maximum

With 6♣ – 4♦ I bid in Splinter way (3♥, ♠)

With 6♣ – 3♥ I bid in transfer way (3♦) which give me comfortable entry to slam zone (3♥ agree in ♥, 4♣ agree in ♣).

Following the classical convention in a sequence:

W	E
1♣	— 1♥
2♣	— 2♦
?	
3♥	— shows maximum power with three hearts.

Bidding will proceed more smoothly if this meaning is assigned to a 3♦ bid.

Sequence 2.

W	E
1♣	— 1♥
2♣	— 2♦
3♦	— 3♥ — how about a heart slam?
3♠	— singleton or void in spades
3NT	— no singleton
4♣	— solid suit, no singleton
4♦	— singleton or void in diamond

Sequence 1♣ – 1♠ – 2♣ – ?

After a 1♠ response, the situation is slightly different.

Sequence 1.

W	E
1♣	— 1♠
2♣	— ?
2♦	— waiting
2♥	— natural, forcing for one round
2♠	— not forcing
2NT	— invitational
3♣	— invitational
3♦	— 7-9 HCPs, 6+ diamonds and 4 spades, not forcing
3♥	— 5+ spades and 5+ hearts, invitational
3♠	— invitational
3♦	— If you bid with weak hand 6♦ – 4♠ after 1♣ – 1♦ then bid 3♦ may show game forcing with 5♠ +5♦

An important observation – a two-diamond waiting-bid precludes four hearts, which releases the opener from a duty to show four hearts. This provides a tool for including all hands with extra values in a two-heart bid.

How will the opener respond to a 2♦ waiting call?

Sequence 2.

W	E
1♣	— 1♠
2♣	— 2♦
?	

2♥ — waiting, good hand. Denying 3♠.

2♠ — 3 spades, minimum hand

2NT — natural, minimum

3♣ — 6+ clubs without 3 spades — minimum

3♦ — 6+ clubs and 4 diamonds, good hand, short in ♥.

3♥ — transfer — 3 spades, good hand

3♠ — 6+clubs, 4 diamonds, good hand, short in ♠.

3NT — low honours, good hand

Waiting 2♥ means. Now we are in game forcing situation. Show me what you have?

If you like symmetric agreement — 3♦ should be support in ♠.
With 6♣ 4♦ — 3♥, ♠ like a Splinters

Below follows another bidding sequence:

Sequence 2a.

W	E
1♣	— 1♠
2♣	— 2♦
3♥	— 3♠ — how about slam in spades?

3NT — no singleton

4♣ — solid club suit, no singleton

4♦ — singleton or void in diamonds

4♥ — singleton or void in hearts

4♠ — solid trumps, no singleton

What next in the following bidding sequence $1\clubsuit - 1\spadesuit - 2\clubsuit - 2\heartsuit$?

Below follows a classical construction, slightly outdated and imperfect.

Sequence 3.

W	E
$1\clubsuit$	$- 1\spadesuit$
$2\clubsuit$	$- 2\heartsuit$
?	

$2\spadesuit$ — not forcing (may be two spades)

$2NT$ — not forcing

$3\clubsuit$ — not forcing

$3\diamond$ — good hand — fourth suit, transfer to no-trump

$3\heartsuit$ — 4 hearts, game invitational

$3\spadesuit$ — maximum, with 3 spades

$3NT$ — to play

$4\diamond$ — singleton or void in diamonds, heart support

$4\heartsuit$ — good hand

$3\spadesuit$ and $4\heartsuit$ — in my opinion a jump with good hand, pre-empting the exchange of information, is not a perfect solution.

I have a pleasure to present a solution that is better and more up-to-date.

Extra length transfer bid may be used in many sequences.

Sequence 3a.

W	E
1♣	— 1♠
2♣	— 2♥
?	

- 3♦ — transfer to hearts — four hearts
- 3♥ — transfer to spades — good hand with three spades
prejudges the game contract
- 3♠ — transfer to a no-trump contract, very good hand
without four hearts, three spades and a diamond
stopper.

Further bidding after transfers:

Sequence 3b.

W	E
1♣	— 1♠
2♣	— 2♥
3♦	— ?

- 3♥ — weak, you may pass
- 3♠ — how about slam in hearts?
- 4♣, ♦ — shortness
- 4♥ — to play

Sequence 3c.

W	E
1♣	— 1♠
2♣	— 2♥
3♥	— ?

- 3♠ — asking for shortness (3NT — no shortness, 4♣
— no shortness, good clubs, 4♦, ♥ — shortness)
- 3NT — 5422 slam try
- 4♣, ♦ — shortness

3♥ and 4♥ after 3♠ like a shortness is dangerous agreement, but important.

For example ♠AQJxx ♥Jxxx ♦Kx ♣Kx – information about heart singleton is like a music.

Sequence 3d.

W	E
1♣	— 1♠
2♣	— 2♦
3♠	— ?

4♣ — to play, must be a possibility to stop in 4♣.

VELDHOVEN 2011
 BERMUDA BOWL, THE SEMI-FINALS

♠ A Q 9 6 4	N	♠ K J 10 5
♥ 9	W	♥ K J 10 6 2
♦ Q J 8 4 2	E	♦ 9 3
♣ 4 2	S	♣ 10 5
		♠ 8 7 2
		♥ A Q 8 5
		♦ 5
		♣ K J 9 8 3

None vulnerable

W	N	E	S
Verhees	Sementa	Prooijen	Duboin
			Pass
Pass	1♦	1♥	2♣
2♠	3♠	4♠	4NT
Pass	6♣	Pass	...

4NT — even number of key cards

Sementa showed bad hand evaluation. Partner as a passed hand would have to have perfect points for the slam to be good. With the king of clubs, the ace of hearts, and the queen of diamonds, Duboin was rather forced on to slam after partner's active bidding (3♠).

From Duboin's point of view, his values were enough for a slam try. The opponents' bidding was a clue that the king of hearts was well-placed.

PARTNERSHIP

A good bridge partnership must have a consistent bidding style.

This is related to hand evaluation and it doesn't matter if both players think in the same way, but they both have to know and respect their partner's way of evaluating hands.

Just as a player has to know his partner's style about being active in the bidding, aggressive opening bids and overcalls, the tendency to take risks, the frequency of converting doubles for penalty, or doubling the opponents directly for penalty, etc.

How this consistency looks in practice I'll try to illustrate with a few examples.

PHILADELPHIA 2010

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROSENBLUM CUP, THE ROUND ROBINS

		♠ A K 9 7 6										
		♥ A K J 6 5										
		♦ A 10										
		♣ 3										
♠ Q		<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 80px;"> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">N</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">W</td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 5 4 3
	N											
W		E										
	S											
♥ Q 8 3			♥ 9 7 4									
♦ K Q J 9 8 4 3			♦ 6 5 2									
♣ J 9			♣ K 8 5 4									
		♠ J 10 8 2										
		♥ 10 2										
		♦ 7										
		♣ A Q 10 7 6 2										

None vulnerable

W	N	E	S
Gitelman	Sementa	Moss	Duboin
3♦	4♦	Pass	4♠
Pass	5♣	Pass	5♦
Pass	5♥	Pass	6♠
Pass	...		

This is partnership consistency. Look at how careful Duboin was during the auction.

What I mean by this is that, other than +5♥ +5♠, 4♦ doesn't promise a strong hand.

The risk of bidding further was up to the player with the distributional hand.

Even so, I think that Duboin's 6♠ bid was a bit hasty. In my opinion, his hand was worth a grand slam try with a bid of 6♣.

W	N	E	S	
Sadek	Hampson	El Ahmady		Greco
1♦	2♦	Pass	4♠	
Pass	4NT	Pass	5♦	
Pass	5♥	Pass	6♠	
Pass	7♠	Pass	...	

Hampson was facing a completely different situation. Here, Greco was able to show a powerful hand by jumping to 4♠.

However, as the auction unfolded, there was a lack of cohesiveness in the bidding. Greco jumped to 6♠ without answering the question of whether or not he had the trump queen. Bidding the grand was a conscious decision to take a gamble, but from the sidelines it looks as if Hampson was a bit uncertain about how to interpret his partner's bidding.

On the contrary, surely 6S showed the trump Q – that is 'standard' – and denied a side king.

Brian Senior

PHILADELPHIA 2010
 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROSENBLUM CUP, THE SEMI-FINALS

	♠ A 10										
	♥ Q 8										
	♦ A 9 6 4 3										
	♣ A 9 7 5										
♠ 7 6	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 100px;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">N</td> <td style="width: 50px;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">W</td> <td style="width: 50px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 50px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> <td style="width: 50px;"></td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 9 8 5 4 2
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ K 7 5 4		♥ J 6 2									
♦ K Q J 10 2		♦ 8 5									
♣ 6 2		♣ Q 10 3									
	♠ K Q J 3										
	♥ A 10 9 3										
	♦ 7										
	♣ K J 8 4										

NS vulnerable

W	N	E	S
Helgemo	Gitelman	Helness	Moss
	1NT	Pass	3♦
Dbl	Rdbl	Pass	3♠
Pass	4♣	Pass	4♦
Pass	4♠	Pass	4NT
Pass	5♣	Pass	6♣
Pass	....	
1NT	— 15-17PC		
3♦	— 4414		
Rdbl	— ♦A		

Gitelman not only opened his 14-count with 1NT showing 15-17PC, but he also bid as if he had a positive hand. His somewhat overly optimistic approach led to an inferior club slam.

Does this mean that Moss should have downgraded his hand and bid more pessimistically?

In some of the other hands in the slam zone that have been presented in this book, Gitelman bid more conservatively.

W	N	E	S
Hampson	Fantoni	Greco	Nunes
	1NT	Pass	2♣
Pass	2♦	Pass	2♠
Pass	3♠	Pass	3NT
Pass	...		
1NT	— 12-14PC		
2♠	— asking		
3♠	— 3244 maximum (no way to show 2254).		

Fantoni opened this hand with a weak no trump and it's no wonder that Nunes didn't even think about slam.

PHILADELPHIA 2010
 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROSENBLUM CUP, THE SEMI-FINALS

	♠ Q 10 6 4 3 2	
	♥ Q	
	♦ 7 2	
	♣ A K Q 10	
♠ K	N W E S	♠ 5
♥ J 7 6 3		♥ 10 9 8 4
♦ A Q 8 6 4 3		♦ J 10 9 5
♣ 7 5		♣ 6 4 3 2
	♠ A J 9 8 7	
	♥ A K 5 2	
	♦ K	
	♣ J 9 8	

NS vulnerable

W	N	E	S
Helgemo	Gitelman	Helness	Moss
			1♠
2♦	3♦	5♦	Dbl
Pass	5♠	Pass	...

- 3♦ — limit raise or better
- Dbl — Moss doubled, happy to take a penalty if partner had only invitational strength

W	N	E	S
Hampson	Fantoni	Greco	Nunes
			1♠
2♦	3♦	4♦	4♠
5♦	5♥	Pass	5♠
Pass	...		

- 3♦ — limit raise or better
- 4♠ — accepting a game invitation
- 5♥ — slam try

W	N	E	S
Cohen	Hamman	Wolfson	Zia
			1♠
2♦	4♣	5♦	5♥
Pass	6♣	Pass	6♠
Pass	...		
4♣	— fit showing jump		
5♥	— a slam try		
6♣	— a grand slam try		

W	N	E	S
Rodwell	Rosenberg		Meckstroth Willenken
			1♠
2♦	2NT	5♦	Dbl
Pass	5♥	Pass	5♠
Pass	...		
2NT	— game forcing raise		
5♥	— a slam try		

This deal is a good illustration of the temperament of various players. Gitelman bid conservatively (5♠). Fantoni and Rosenberg in a similar position decided on a 5♥ cue bid. Zia and Hamman were aiming for a grand.

The curse of contested auctions are bids with multiple meanings that are susceptible to preemptive bidding by the opponents.

Limit raise or better – this is an agreement that should be removed from the bidding arsenal of a professional pair. Why?

It doesn't set up a forcing pass – look at how Moss doubled 5♦ with a hand that was really unsuitable for a double (with 6-4 and no diamond values) out of fear that partner had only an invitational hand. Needless to say, a forcing pass helps in making a joint partnership decision at high bidding levels .

Opener has to adjust to partner's bidding in a completely different way.

When responder has an invitational hand – opener with a good hand should jump to game as quickly as possible – in keeping with the principle of camouflage.

When responder had a game forcing hand, jumping to game with a good hand blocks the exchange of information needed to assess the chances for slam.

When opener makes a slam try it's unclear if responder is expected to accept with a maximum invitational hand or a maximum game forcing hand.

It dangerously broadens rather than narrows the scope of hand evaluation as the bidding unfolds.

I recommend making two different bids for hands with a fit and either invitational or game forcing strength.

W	N	E	S
			1♠
2♦	2NT		— limit raise
	3♦		— game forcing raise

This agreement solves the problems presented above.

What should be done with the hands that wanted to bid a natural 2NT?

Either risk bidding 3NT or make a negative double.

Interesting that you recommend leaving less bidding space in a Gf auction than in an invitational auction. Why not 2NT GF and 3D invitational? Very popular in the UK, so tell us why we are wrong to do it that way around.

Brian Senior

I play 1♥, ♠ — 2NT invitation to game with support.

I like symmetric agreement even if exist better.

With game forcing values I start 1♥, ♠ — 2♣ (waiting bid).

In this situation:

W	N	E	S
----------	----------	----------	----------

2♦	Dbl	Pass	1♠ 3♥	— should be forcing
----	-----	------	----------	---------------------

It can lead to overbidding on some deals, but on the other hand it makes it more comfortable to investigate the possibility of slam when the negative doubler has extra values.

ESTORIL 2005
BERMUDA BOWL, THE SEMI-FINALS

	♠ Q J 5 3 ♥ 8 5 2 ♦ A 6 ♣ A 9 8 3													
♠ A 8 ♥ Q J 7 ♦ K Q 10 4 3 2 ♣ 7 6	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 25%;"></td> <td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">N</td> <td style="width: 25%;"></td> <td style="width: 25%;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">W</td> <td style="width: 25%;"></td> <td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">E</td> <td style="width: 25%;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 25%;"></td> <td style="width: 25%;"></td> <td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">S</td> <td style="width: 25%;"></td> </tr> </table>		N			W		E				S		♠ 10 6 4 ♥ 3 ♦ J 8 7 5 ♣ K J 10 4 2
	N													
W		E												
		S												
	♠ K 9 7 2 ♥ A K 10 9 6 4 ♦ 9 ♣ Q 5													

NS vulnerable

W	N	E	S
Versace	Lindkvist	Lauria	Fredin

1♦	Dbl	3♦	4♦
Pass	4♠	Pass	4NT
Pass	5♠	Pass	6♠
Pass	...		

Bidding consistently is tremendously important. If partnership bidding style allows for making light takeout doubles then it doesn't make sense for Fredin to blast into slam.

W	N	E	S
Fredin	Helness	Lindkvist	Helgemo

Pass

4♥ Pass ...

The approach to further stages of bidding concerns not only typical standard agreements but also a pair's bidding style. Look here at Fredin's bidding. He must be accustomed to making opening bids at the four level with weaker hands than even on this deal. Notice how Lindkvist decided not to invite slam.

W	N	E	S
Sontag	Nystrom	Bates	Bertheau

Pass

4♥ Pass 4NT Pass

5♣ Pass 6♥ Pass ...

Bates showed no doubt about bidding on. This must mean that Sontag usually opens 4♥ with a slightly stronger hand.

W	N	E	S
Sontag	Nystrom	Bates	Bertheau

		2NT	3 ♠
Pass	3NT	Pass	4♣
Pass	4♥	Pass	5♣
Pass	...		

2NT — 5+♠/5+ in either red suit, less than opening strength

3♠ — clubs, a strong hand

4♣ — forcing

4♥ — a heart control

You can obviously see that the Swedish pair must have spent a lot of time on their agreements in such situations.

Against such an unusual opening bid they had an entire structure that allowed them to precisely bid their hands.

LILLE 2012
 14TH WORLD BRIDGE GAMES, THE QUARTER-FINALS

♠ A Q 7 4	N	♠ 10 8 6 3
♥ A 7 2	W	♥ K 6 3
♦ Q 7	E	♦ A K 9 6 5
♣ A 9 7 5	S	♣ Q

♠ K 9
♥ Q J 9 5
♦ 10 4 3 2
♣ 10 8 3

♠ J 5 2
♥ 10 8 4
♦ J 8
♣ K J 6 4 2

None vulnerable

W	N	E	S
Zia	Cullin	Hamman	Bertheau
	Pass	1♦	Pass
1♠	Pass	2♠	Pass
2NT	Pass	4♠	Pass ...

Did Hamman and Zia probe for slam? More or less, they did. Hamman showed his intentions by evaluating his hand as having good values for game, but without chances for slam.

If you exchanged the queen of clubs for two jacks – diamond and spade – the bidding would have looked similar and the slam would have been excellent.

W	N	E	S
Nystrom	Rodwell	Upmark	Meckstroth
	Pass	1♦	Pass
1♠	Pass	3♠	Pass
4NT	Pass	5♣	Pass
6♠	Pass	...	

A classic example of a lack of consistency in the partnership. If the pair's bidding style allows for a jump to 3♠, then Nystrom's bidding is inexcusable, although it does have an element of camouflage.

Nystrom expected to see shortness in either hearts or clubs. A more informative auction could have directed the opponents to a fatal lead. In this way, the Swedish pair went down in a slightly overly optimistic slam.

BIDDING LIKE MUSIC

Whenever I come across a beautiful natural bidding sequence I have the impression that I'm listening to good music. There are chords in harmony with each other, and I feel the rhythm of the auction and understand the actions of both players.

ESTORIL 2005

BERMUDA BOWL, THE ROUND ROBINS

	♠ A 2							
	♥ K Q J 10 3 2							
	♦ Q 4							
	♣ 8 7 2							
♠ 3 ♥ 7 6 ♦ J 10 9 6 5 2 ♣ J 10 5 3	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100%; height: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">N</td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">W</td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> </tr> </table>	N		E	W		S	♠ Q 9 8 6 ♥ 9 8 4 ♦ A 7 3 ♣ Q 9 6
N		E						
W		S						
	♠ K J 10 7 5 4							
	♥ A 5							
	♦ K 8							
	♣ A K 4							

Both vulnerable

W Auken	N	E von Arnim	S
	1♥	Pass	1♠
Pass	2♥	Pass	2NT
Pass	3NT	Pass	4♣
Pass	4♠	Pass	5♠
Pass	6♥	Pass	...

Step by step each player's intentions were perfectly conveyed.

- 2NT — forcing
- 3NT — 2632 or 2623
- 4♣ — cue bid, a slam try
- 4♠ — cue bid, a positive hand (4♥ would have been negative)
- 5♠ — invitational
- 6♥ — “I like slam in ♥’s”

MONTREAL 2002
 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROSENBLUM CUP, THE FINAL

♠ A Q 7 5											
♥ 9 8											
♦ A K Q 8 2											
♣ 3 2											
♠ 8 4 3 2	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100%; height: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: center;">N</td> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: center;">W</td> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: center;">S</td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E			S	♠ J 10
	N										
W		E									
		S									
♥ A K Q J 4 3		♥ 7 6 5 2									
♦ 10		♦ 4 3									
♣ J 4		♣ 9 8 7 6 5									
	♠ K 9 6										
	♥ 10										
	♦ J 9 7 6 5										
	♣ A K Q 10										

W	N	E	S
Karwar	Bocchi	Sacul	Duboin
1♥	Dbl	3♥	1♦
Pass	Dbl	Pass	Pass
Pass	4♦	Pass	4♣
Pass	4♠	Pass	4♥
Pass	6♦	Pass	5♣
Pass	6♦	Pass	...

The key to this beautiful bidding was Bocchi’s second double. It allowed for a two-way exchange of information.

There was a series of cue bids and then 5♣, which said “We have all the cue bids, what about trumps?”

A quick jump to 6♦, “Don’t worry about trumps.”

W	N	E	S
Versace	Manoppo	Lauria	Lasut
			1♦
1♥	1♠	2♥	Dbl
3♥	5♦	Pass	....

Manoppo must have been afraid to double 3♥ with such a big diamond fit.

This must mean that Lasut often converts such doubles to penalty in this kind of situation.

Or, it just says that Manoppo was afraid that Lasut would never believe he had such good diamonds if he didn't explicitly show them.

Brian Senior

The 5♦ bid is safe from his point of view, but it definitely hampers the partnership's bidding.

ISTANBUL 2004
 WORLD TEAM OLYMPIAD, THE FINAL

	♠ 10 4		
	♥ J 4 3		
	♦ K Q J 8 7 3 2		
	♣ 2		
♠ K Q 5 3	N	♠ A J 9 7 2	
♥ Q 9 6 5	W	♥ K 10 8 2	
♦ —	E	♦ 10 5	
♣ A K J 8 5	S	♣ Q 9	
		♠ 8 6	
		♥ A 7	
		♦ A 9 6 4	
		♣ 10 7 6 4 3	

W	N	E	S
Versace	Verhees	Lauria	Jansma
		Pass	Pass
1♣	1♦	1♥	2♣
4♦	Pass	4♥	Pass
4♠	Pass	5♣	Pass
6♠	Pass	...	

- 1♥ — at least five spades
- 4♦ — a raise to game with a diamond void
- 4♥ — control-showing
- 5♣ — normally a control

The Dutch pair's bidding was rather anemic with an 11-card fit. The Italians took advantage of the extra bidding room and showed good hand evaluation.

Lauria made a very interesting bid of 5♣ — a cue bid with the doubleton queen was a great value to describe.

W	N	E	S
Brink	Fantoni	v Prooijen	Nunes
		2♥	Pass
4♠	Pass	...	
2♥	— 4+♥/4+♠, 3-10 HCP		

Here, the Dutch pair's bidding was completely random.

This is a result of the wide range of strength of the opening bid. It means that such an opening bid comes up more often, but it can lead to chaos.

Obviously, West could have inquired on the way to game but that would give away information unnecessarily when East was weak.

Brian Senior

BERMUDA 2000
 BERMUDA BOWL, THE SEMI-FINALS

♠ K Q 5	N	♠ A J 10
♥ K Q 7	W	♥ A 9 6 4 2
♦ J 4 3 2	E	♦ —
♣ 10 7 6	S	♣ A K 4 3 2

♠ 9 6 3 2
♥ 10 5 3
♦ K 10 8 5
♣ J 8
♠ 8 7 4
♥ J 8
♦ A Q 9 7 6
♣ Q 9 5

W	N	E	S
Rodwell	Rosenberg		Meckstroth Zia
	Pass	1♣	1♦
2♦	3♦	3♥	Pass
4♦	Pass	6♣	Pass ...
1♣	— strong		

6♣ is a better contract than 6♥. A 4-1 break in hearts doesn't matter.

This was highly intelligent bidding by Meckwell. The key bid was 4♦ conveying this message, "All of my points are working and I have a heart fit."

Look at how Rodwell skipped two cue bids (♠ and ♣). It's not a good idea to use 4♦ as the ace of diamonds and slam interest without any other cue bids. The agreement that the cue bid shows no wasted diamond values is very sophisticated bidding.

SAO PAULO 2009
BERMUDA BOWL, THE SEMI-FINALS

	♠ 7 5										
	♥ A K 9 5										
	♦ A 7										
	♣ Q J 4 3 2										
♠ 10 6 3	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 100px;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">N</td> <td style="width: 50px;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">W</td> <td style="width: 50px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 50px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> <td style="width: 50px;"></td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ J 9 8 4 2
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ 10 7 3 2		♥ Q J 6 4									
♦ 6 5		♦ 10 9 2									
♣ A K 7 5		♣ 6									
	♠ A K Q										
	♥ 8										
	♦ K Q J 8 4 3										
	♣ 10 9 8										

W	N	E	S
Wang	Hamman	Zuang	Zia
	1♣	Pass	1♦
Pass	1♥	Pass	1♠
Pass	2♦	Pass	2♠
Pass	2NT	Pass	3♦
Pass	3♥	Pass	3♠
Pass	3NT	Pass	...

- 1♠ — fourth suit forcing
- 2♦ — Hamman's bid of 1♥ showed both hearts and clubs
- 2♠, 3♥, 3♠ — values

This smart natural bidding led the American pair to figure out that their weakness was in the club suit.

W	N	E	S
Sun	D'Ovidio	Wang	Gaviard
	1♣	Pass	1♦
Pass	1♥	Pass	1♠
Pass	2♣	Pass	3♦
Pass	4♦	Pass	4NT
Pass	5♥	Pass	6♦
Pass	...		
1♠	— fourth suit forcing		

One of the best women's pairs in the world used a sequence based on simplicity and it led to disaster.

There is an interesting interpretation of two possible bids after 3♦: 3♥ and 3♠.

I'm a fan of using such opportunities to show one's intentions.

3♥ — "I'm interested in slam, but I'm afraid of going past 3NT."

3♠ — "I have a bad hand for you and I want you to bid 3NT if you have a spade stopper."

After 4♦ Gaviard should have bid 4♥ and opener's 5♦ would have ended the auction. But as it turns out only 3NT makes on this hand.

IMAGINATION

Imagination is a beautiful thing. But imagination can be elusive. If not adequately taken care of, it can vanish. Imagination is full of color, fragrances, and soft lines. Imagination is like a woman. Conquered by force, she is initially submissive and obedient but, sooner or later, her charm and ability to develop vanish if she is not taken care of. I would rather define imagination as an active ability to project different types of bridge problems. Without this true and creative ability we cannot become outstanding players. It is imagination which allows us to construct or shape the likely or unlikely solutions in our minds in an abstract way.

Of course, first we have to know a lot and memorize certain things. Imagination that has been developed by solving hundreds and hundreds of bridge problems has a chance to function in other domains utilizing a tool called vision. Imagination leads a player down various muddled paths of analysis when there are uncertain, difficult or atypical hands. Imagination is crucial to intellectual perseverance.

PARIS 2001. BERMUDA BOWL, THE FINAL

		♠ A Q J 5 4											
		♥ A J 7 6 4											
		♦ —											
		♣ A K 6											
♠ K 7 6		<table style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S			♠ 3 2
	N												
W		E											
	S												
♥ K 3				♥ 10 9									
♦ K J 10 9 8 5				♦ Q 4 3 2									
♣ Q J				♣ 10 9 8 5 3									
		♠ 10 9 8											
		♥ Q 8 5 2											
		♦ A 7 6											
		♣ 7 4 2											

W	N	E	S
Helgemo	Martel	Helness	Stansby
Sontag	Aa	Weichsel	Groetheim

		Pass	Pass
1NT	2♣	Pass	2♥
Pass	4♥	Pass	...

2♣ — majors

Aa and Martel showed a complete lack of imagination. After the opponent's opening 1NT it is reasonable to expect that any possible finesses are onside and slam can be made with as little as ♥Kxxx in partner's hand. What do I propose? Either bidding 4♦ as an Splinter or 3♣ as a fragment.

ISTANBUL 2004
 WORLD TEAM OLYMPIAD, THE ROUND OF 16

	♠ 4										
	♥ A 9 8										
	♦ K 7 5										
	♣ K J 9 8 6 3										
♠ K J 10	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 100px;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center; width: 50px;">N</td> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center; width: 50px;">W</td> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center; width: 50px;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ A Q 7
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ 6 3 2		♥ K Q J 10 7 5 4									
♦ 10 9 8 4 3		♦ Q J									
♣ 5 4		♣ Q									
	♠ 9 8 6 5 3 2										
	♥ —										
	♦ A 6 2										
	♣ A 10 7 2										

W	N	E	S
Duboin	Rosenberg		Bocchi Zia
		1♥	1♠
Pass	2♣	3♥	5♣
Pass	...		

Zia's colorless bidding didn't impress any of the kibitzers of this match.

Usually Zia delights bridge audiences with the use of his imagination during the bidding.

W	N	E	S
Weinstein	Lauria	Levin	Versace
		1♥	1♠
Pass	2♣	2♥	4♥
Dbl	Pass	Pass	4NT
Pass	6♣	Pass	...

Versace imagined that partner might have spade shortness and more optimistically evaluated his hand. Lauria's 2♣ bid denied a spade fit.

VELDHOVEN 2011
BERMUDA BOWL, THE FINAL

♠ 9	N	♠ 7
♥ 9 7 5	W E	♥ K 10 8 4 3 2
♦ K J 9 7 6	S	♦ 5
♣ Q 10 6 3		♣ A K 8 5 2

♠ A K 10 4 2
♥ A Q J 6
♦ Q 8 4 2
♣ —

Both vulnerable

W	N	E	S
Verhees	Grue	Prooijen	Lall
	2♠	3♠	6♠
Pass	...		

Lall's practical bid turned out to be a success.

Camouflage can lead to a slam even when partner doesn't have a diamond control.

W	N	E	S	
Wooldbridge	De Wijs	Hurd	Muller	
	2♠	3♠	4♠	
4NT	5♠	Dbl	Pass	...

Muller lacked the imagination to direct the bidding more energetically.

Imagination helps to solve a difficult problem.

BERMUDA BOWL, BALI 2013. RR4 MATCH: MONACO — POLAND

	♠ 4 3										
	♥ Q 10 8 3										
	♦ K 2										
	♣ J 10 8 5 4										
♠ K 10 9 7 6	<table style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ A Q J 8 5 2
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ 7 5		♥ J 9									
♦ Q 8 7 4		♦ 10 9 6 5									
♣ 7 6		♣ A									
	♠ —										
	♥ A K 6 4 2										
	♦ A J 3										
	♣ K Q 9 3 2										

W	N	E	S
Zimmermann		Jassem	Multon Mazurkiewicz
			1♥
Pass	3♣	3♠	4♣
4♠	5♣	Pass	6♥
Pass	...		

3♣ — 6-9PC with 4-card support

Most of us would suspect that a heart slam could be easily set by a likely club ruff. Then, you could also say that a club slam could be defeated by a heart ruff. True, but it's much less likely.

Both Polish players did a good job of showing clubs. Mazurkiewicz just needed a bit more imagination to draw the right conclusion.

W	N	E	S	
Balicki	Helgemo	Żmudziński		Helness
			1♥	
Pass	2♥	2♠	3♠	
4♠	5♥	5♠	6♥	
Pass	...			

The Norwegian pair used camouflage and had no reason to look for a better suit.

WHEN EVERYTHING DEPENDS ON THE LEAD

Looking through the deals from world or European championships that were played in the slam zone I pulled out a group where the contract depended on the opponents – in particular on the opening lead.

Informative bidding often allows the opponents to find the killing attack. Giving away information is impossible to avoid, and this should be taken into account when making bidding decisions.

I found some deals where after the opening bid it was already apparent to the responder that a lot would depend on the lead. In this kind of situation fast bidding is effective, although it can lead to random results.

On the other hand, it's possible to take a different route, that is to deliberately steer the auction so the opponents will make a favorable lead.

The best examples of this are fake cue bids, and in particular, fake Splinter bids.

BEIJING 2008
 OPEN TEAM CHAMPIONSHIPS, THE SEMI-FINALS

♠ 9 8 4	N	♠ 6
♥ J 6	W E	♥ 8 2
♦ 10 9 8 6	S	♦ A J 7 5 3 2
♣ K 9 5 3		♣ Q 10 4 2

♠ A J 7 5 3
♥ K Q 5 4 3
♦ Q
♣ A J

W	N	E	S	
Groetheim		Lauria	Tundal	Versace
			1♠	
Pass	2♣	2♦	2♥	
Pass	3♥	Pass	3♠	
Pass	3NT	Pass	4♣	
Pass	4♦	Pass	4♠	
Pass	5♣	Pass	5♦	
Pass	6♥	Pass	...	

The Italians systematically showed every cue bid they had. You have to admire Lauria for cue bidding diamonds holding the king after East's 2♦ bid.

W	N	E	S
Duboin	Helness	Sementa	Helgemo
			1♠
Pass	2NT	Pass	3♥
Pass	3♠	Pass	4NT
Pass	5♠	Pass	6♠
Pass	...		
2NT	— game forcing raise		

Helgemo knew after partner's 2NT bid that the one dangerous lead for him was a club, whereas a heart lead would be the most favorable.

Since he was heading to slam anyway (by bidding Blackwood on the next round) instead of showing hearts he could have shown clubs.

Both Groetheim and Duboin led a diamond.

SHANGHAI 2007
BERMUDA BOWL, THE SEMI-FINALS

	♠ Q J 6 ♥ A J 9 7 5 4 2 ♦ J ♣ A 5										
♠ K 10 8 3 ♥ 10 ♦ A 7 6 3 ♣ 10 8 4 3	<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;"> </td> <td style="padding: 5px; text-align: center;">N</td> <td style="padding: 5px;"> </td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px; text-align: center;">W</td> <td style="padding: 5px;"> </td> <td style="padding: 5px; text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;"> </td> <td style="padding: 5px; text-align: center;">S</td> <td style="padding: 5px;"> </td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 7 5 4 ♥ 8 6 ♦ 10 8 4 ♣ K Q 9 6 2
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ A 9 2 ♥ K Q 3 ♦ K Q 9 5 2 ♣ J 7										

W	N	E	S	
Holman	Rosenberg		Cope	Zia
			1NT	
Pass	2♦	Pass	2♥	
Pass	3♠	Pass	3NT	
Pass	4♦	Pass	4♥	
Pass	...			

3♠ — any Splinter

Rosenberg revealed his diamond shortness and correctly passed 4♥.

W	N	E	S	
Groetheim		Bertens	Tundal	Bakkeren
			1NT	
Pass	2♦	Pass	2♥	
Pass	4♦	Pass	4♥	
Pass	4NT	Pass	5♠	
Pass	6♠	Pass	...	

Bertens un camouflaged his hand. He revealed his shortness, and after a negative reaction from partner he drove to slam.

He was lucky – Groetheim led the ♥10.

ISTANBUL 2004
 WORLD TEAM OLYMPIAD, THE SEMI-FINALS

♠ A 10 8 7	N	♠ K Q J 5
♥ 10 6 5	W E	♥ A J
♦ A K J 4 2	S	♦ Q 7 5 3
♣ 4		♣ 10 8 6

♠ 9 3
♥ Q 9 8 7 3
♦ 10
♣ K Q 9 7 3
♠ 6 4 2
♥ K 4 2
♦ 9 8 6
♣ A J 5 2

W	N	E	S
Dai	Bocchi	Yang	Duboin
1♦	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♠	2NT	Dbl	3♣
4♠	Pass	...	

The Chinese didn't even consider slam.

W	N	E	S
Versace	Xin	Lauria	Sun
			Pass
1♦	Pass	1♠	Pass
3♠	Pass	4♥	Pass
5♦	Pass	6♣	Pass ...

Sun, by leading a heart, perfectly understood that the Italians had uncamouflaged their hands.

PARIS 2001. BERMUDA BOWL, THE FINAL

	♠ 6 3 2										
	♥ K J 6 4										
	♦ A 8										
	♣ Q 9 6 5										
♠ J 9 8 4	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 100px;"> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">N</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">W</td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ A K Q 10 5
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ 7		♥ A 9 8 5									
♦ Q 10 4 3		♦ K J 7 5									
♣ K 10 7 3		♣ —									
	♠ 7										
	♥ Q 10 3 2										
	♦ 9 6 2										
	♣ A J 8 4 2										

W	N	E	S
Stansby	Helness	Martel	Helgemo
		1♠	Pass
3♠	Pass	4♦	Pass
4♠	Pass	6♠	Pass ...
3♠	— limit raise		
4♦	— shortness		

Martel's psych provoked the ace of clubs lead from Helness. Needless to say, after a trump lead the slam is unmakeable.

ISTANBUL 2004
 WORLD TEAMS OLYMPIAD, THE FINAL

♠ A 10 8 4			
♥ 9 7 6 4			
♦ 2			
♣ K Q 8 5			
♠ Q J 9 7 2	N		♠ K
♥ A K 8	W	E	♥ 10 2
♦ J	S		♦ A K Q 9 7 6 5 3
♣ 9 4 3 2			♣ A 7
			♠ 6 5 3
			♥ Q J 5 3
			♦ 10 8 4
			♣ J 10 6

W	N	E	S	
Schollaardt		Bocchi	Drijver	Duboin
	Pass	2♦	Pass	
2♥	Pass	3♦	Pass	
3♠	Pass	5♦	Pass	
5♥	Pass	6♣	Pass	
6♦	Pass	...		

- 2♦ — Multi, a preempt in a major, 23-24 balanced, or game forcing in diamonds
- 2♥ — Pass with a preempt in a hearts, or describe further
- 3♦ — natural, game-forcing
- 5♥ — control-showing

Schollaardt uncamouflaged his hand unnecessarily with his grand slam try of 5♥, which helped Duboin find the club lead.

W	N	E	S
Nunes	Verhees	Fantoni	Jansma
	Pass	1♦	Pass
2♠	Pass	3♦	Pass
3NT	Pass	4♣	Pass
4♥	Pass	4♠	Pass
5♦	Pass	...	

1♦ — 4+ diamonds, 14+ HCP, usually unbalanced

2♠ — 5+ spades, game-forcing

The Italians opted for precision and correctly stopped in game.

Verhees didn't double the 4♥ cue bid, so a club lead would have been likely.

ISTANBUL 2004
 WORLD TEAM OLYMPIAD, THE ROUND OF 16

		♠ K J 10 4		
		♥ 8 7 2		
		♦ 5 4 2		
		♣ K J 3		
♠ A Q 7 6	N		E	♠ 9
♥ J	W			♥ A Q 10 9 6 5 4
♦ K Q J 10	S			♦ A 8
♣ 8 6 5 4				♣ A 10 7
		♠ 8 5 3 2		
		♥ K 3		
		♦ 9 7 6 3		
		♣ Q 9 2		

None vulnerable

W	N	E	S
Duboin	Rosenberg		Bocchi Zia
		1♥	Pass
2♣	Pass	2NT	Pass
3♣	Pass	3♦	Pass
3♥	Pass	4♣	Pass
4♥	Pass	...	

The Italian bidding machine stopped in game.

In addition to skillful camouflage, good hand evaluation is also needed (for example, to appreciate the value of the jack of hearts).

W	N	E	S
Weinstein	Fantoni	Levin	Nunes
		4♣	Pass
4♦	Pass	4NT	Pass
5♣	Pass	6♥	Pass ...

Weinstein and Levin had an effective way of getting to slam – opening 4♣. Here, system played the biggest role.

Nunes led a spade.

JUDGING THE SITUATION

Accurately judging a bidding situation requires an enormous amount of experience, cleverness at the table, and the abilities of a professional poker player.

Also, a great deal of table presence is needed – being able to pick up on subliminal signals as well as knowing the opponents' system and their bridge style.

A world-class player, because of his experience, ability to concentrate, and the use of his imagination, can combine:

- perception (including subliminal)
- cognition
- attention.

The ability to apply all of these mental processes simultaneously is the sign of a genuine master.

Perception is the process of receiving visual, auditory or sensual stimuli, processed and synthesized in the relevant segments of brain. It is the first stage of dealing with information obtained by the sensory organs. Perception is the first stage of cognition.

Subliminal perception – the theoretical and unintended possibility of recording information directly in the subconscious without any awareness of the process.

Subliminal messages are visual or auditory stimuli either concealed by other information or lasting too short to be consciously perceived. Phenomena shorter than 0.04 seconds are recorded only in the subconscious. This part of the human mind is extremely efficient, since it can deal with more than one thing at a time. The conscious mind, on the contrary, can process only one issue at a time; as a result, its activity is much slower.

Cognition is the process of arranging and interpreting sensual impressions, with the purpose of understanding the environment.

Attention – the general term for multiple cognitive processes that are responsible for:

- maintaining the body in the state of readiness and anticipation for the perception of some stimuli or other activity; recognizing significant elements from the field of perception (visual, auditory etc.), while rejecting insignificant ones; engaging in the analysis of a stimulus and the ability to leave one stimulus and focus on another.

During the auction players very often show their emotions, dilemmas and doubts.

All of these signals – some of them very subtle – ought to help us correctly judge situations at the table.

A hesitation before opening the bidding gives away the fact that we have an unusual hand. An opponent who hesitates before bidding game can hold us back from taking a phantom sacrifice.

Having a bidding dilemma is completely natural, but they give away information about our hand. The ability to interpret the opponents' dilemmas can help us to make an accurate assessment of a situation.

Let's look at how some of the best players in the world are capable of judging a situation at the table.

ISTANBUL 2004
 WORLD TEAM OLYMPIAD, THE SEMI-FINALS

♠ 7 6 2	N	♠ A J 8
♥ A 3	W	♥ K 10 9 6
♦ A 6 5	E	♦ K Q J 3 2
♣ K Q J 6 2	S	♣ A

♠ K Q 9 5 3
♥ Q J 7 5 4 2
♦ 10
♣ 3

♠ 10 4
♥ 8
♦ 9 8 7 4
♣ 10 9 8 7 5 4

NS vulnerable

W	N	E	S
Jansma	Matushko	Verhees	Khven
	Pass	1♦	Pass
2♦	Dbl	2NT	Pass
3NT	Pass	4NT	Pass
6♦	Pass	...	

2♦ — not very standard inverted raise.

It's hard to agree with Verhees's assessment of the situation. His opponent decided to come into the auction at unfavorable vulnerability on a misfit deal.

Being active in the bidding pays big benefits, but it is risky.

Misguided actions should be punished. Verhees definitely had a strong position in the majors. In order to bring partner into the picture, he should have started with a redouble. When South has to make a negative choice by bidding 2♠, Jansma has a double.

After a trump lead the result would have been down five, -1400 for the Dutch pair.

W	N	E	S
Khokhov	Drijver	Rekunov	Schollaardt
	Pass	1♣	Pass
2♣	2♥	Pass	Pass
3NT	Pass	4♦	Pass
4♥	Pass	4♠	Pass
4NT	Pass	7♦	Pass

2♣ — game forcing with +5♣

The Russian pair also didn't collect the gift offered to them. They were compensated when they bid the grand slam and it made on a spade-heart squeeze.

W	N	E	S
Versace	Xin	Lauria	Sun
	Pass	1♦	Pass
2♣	2♦	Dbl	Pass
Pass	2♥	Dbl	2♠
Dbl	Pass	...	

W	N	E	S
Shi	Fantoni	Zhuang	Nunes
	Pass	1♦	Pass
2♣	2♦	Pass	2♠
Pass	Pass	Dbl	Pass ...

The Italians and the Chinese knew where to find the pot of gold and penalized their opponents for being overly active.

SAO PAULO 2009
 BERMUDA BOWL, THE QUARTER-FINALS

♠ K Q 7 6 3	N	♠ J 8 5
♥ Q J 8 5	W	♥ A K 10 9 4
♦ Q 9 6 2	E	♦ K J 7 4
♣ —	S	♣ A

♠ 10 4 2
♥ 3
♦ A 10 5 3
♣ K 9 8 5 3

♠ A 9
♥ 7 6 2
♦ 8
♣ Q J 10 7 6 4 2

W	N	E	S
Brogeland		Fu	Lindkvist Zhao
	Pass	1♥	3♣
4♣	4♦	4NT	Pass
5♦	Pass	5♥	Pass
6♥	Pass	...	

If 4♣ showed only a hand +13PC with a fit, then Brogeland should have realized that his partner bid Blackwood with clubs under control – most likely with the ace. It would have been hard to suspect opener of club shortness, and therefore, the club void is not an additional unknown value.

If 4♣ was a Splinter, then Blackwood without the ace of ♣ would have been a mistake, because it is impossible to bid a slam when responder has a club void. Without the ace of clubs the correct action by opener would have been a cue bid (5♦ or 4♠).

I recommend that 4♣ be used as a Splinter – in contested auctions it's key information that makes it much easier to make decisions.

In this situation 4♦ should be used to show +13PC with a fit.

SHANGHAI 2007
BERMUDA BOWL, THE SEMI-FINALS

♠ A 10	♠ 9 8	♠ K Q 7 6 5 3			
♥ J 9	♥ A 10 7 3	♥ K Q 8 4			
♦ A Q 7	♦ J 8 2	♦ 9			
♣ A K Q J 8 6	♣ 9 5 4 3	♣ 10 7			
	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	
N					
W E					
S					
	♠ J 4 2				
	♥ 6 5 2				
	♦ K 10 6 5 4 3				
	♣ 2				

W	N	E	S
Eber	Rosenberg		Bosenberg Zia
			3♦
Dbl	4♦	5♦	Pass
6♦	Pass	6♣	Pass
7NT	Dbl	Pass	...

Cuebidding the opponents' suit only shows intentions. Information is needed on this auction. Instead of bidding 5♦ Bosenberg could have opted to show his spade suit. Instead of bidding 6♦ should have shown his club suit. This was bad tactical bidding by both players.

Meanwhile, what was the point of west's 6D bid given that he jumped to 7Nt at his next turn and would presumably have done so whatever east responded? Presumably, 6d followed by 6Nt would invite 7, if West didn't want to risk 6C being passed?

Brian Senior

W	N	E	S
Weinstein	Cope	Garner	Holman
			2♦
Dbl	3♦	4♦	Pass
4NT	Pass	5♠	Pass
7♣	Pass	7♥	Pass ...

One of the American players badly judged the situation and bid a grand slam missing an ace. The key to the auction was the interpretation of the 4NT bid.

And why 4D from East rather than a responsive double, which might have saved a level of bidding on some deals?

Brian Senior

The rest of the pairs managed this hand much better.

W	N	E	S
Brogeland		Drijver	Saelensminde Brink
			2♣
Dbl	3♦	4♦	Pass
6♣	Pass	...	

2♣ — weak in ♦ or strong

By jumping to 6♣ Brogeland resolved a difficult situation.

W	N	E	S
De Wijs	Helness	Muller	Helgemo
			Pass
1♣	Pass	1♥	2♦
3♣	Pass	3♠	Pass
4♦	Pass	4♥	Pass
4NT	Pass	5♣	Pass
6NT	Pass	....

1♣ — strong

1♥ — +4♠

The Norwegian pair left their opponents with a lot of bidding space for a two-way exchange of information.

SHANGHAI 2007
BERMUDA BOWL, THE FINAL

♠ 2	N	♠ A K J 6 4
♥ Q 10 2	W	♥ J 9 7 6 3
♦ A Q 7 6	E	♦ —
♣ A K 7 6 2	S	♣ Q J 5

♠ Q 10 9 8 7 3
♥ A 8 4
♦ 8 3 2
♣ 10

W	N	E	S		
Brogeland		Rosenberg		Saelensminde	Zia
		1♠	Pass		
2♣	Pass	2♥	Pass		
2NT	Pass	3♣	Pass		
3♦	Pass	3♥	Pass		
3♠	Pass	4♥	Pass		
6♣	Pass	....		

Saelensminde just had to show his fifth heart.

Brogeland took his partner's bid to mean that he had good hearts, something like:

♠ J 9 8 6 4
♥ A K J 9 7
♦ —
♣ Q J 5

It would seem that showing 12 cards is more beneficial than 10 (3♥).

The problem comes in the interpretation of opener's further bids. Is 3♥ showing heart length, heart values, or a mild slam acceptance in clubs (with 3NT as a lack of slam interest in clubs)?

W	N	E	S
Katz	Tundal	Jacobs	Groetheim
		1♠	Pass
2♣	Pass	2♥	Pass
2NT	Pass	3♣	Pass
3♦	Dbl	Rdbl	Pass
3♥	Pass	4♥	Pass
4NT	Pass	6♣	Pass ...

Katz also didn't correctly judge the situation. By bidding 4♥ Jacobs chose the best contract because of the fifth heart.

But did the redouble sound strong to West? Could they have avoided slam had East passed instead, or was this the golden opportunity to show 5-5-0-3?

Brian Senior

PARIS 2001
 BERMUDA BOWL, THE QUARTER-FINALS

♠ A K Q	N	♠ 6
♥ K J 9 5	W	♥ A Q 7
♦ K J 6 5	E	♦ A Q 9 2
♣ 7 5	S	♣ Q J 9 6 3

♠ J 10 8 2
 ♥ 8 2
 ♦ 8 7 4
 ♣ A 10 8 4

♠ 9 7 5 4 3
 ♥ 10 6 4 3
 ♦ 10 3
 ♣ K 2

W	N	E	S	Rodwell
Duboin	Meckstroth	Bocchi	Rodwell	
2♣	Pass	2NT	Pass	
3♣	Pass	3♦	Pass	
3♠	Pass	4♦	Pass	
4♥	Pass	4♠	Pass	
4NT	Pass	6♦	Pass	...

- 2♣ — 17-19
- 2NT — game forcing
- 3♣ — no 5-card suit
- 3♦ — “What about minors?”
- 3♠ — “I have diamonds”
- 4♠ — RKCB
- 4NT — 2 aces (out of 5)

This time the lower 4♠ ace-asking bid made it more difficult for the Italian pair to stay out of a hopeless slam.

After agreeing diamonds (4♦) it would have been better to cue bid:

		4♦	Pass
4♥	Pass	4NT	Pass
5♦	Pass	...	
4♥	— cue bid		
4NT	— ♠ cue bid		
5♦	— denying a club cue bid		

W	N	E	S
Hamman	Lauria	Soloway	Versace
1♣	Pass	1♠	Pass
1NT	Pass	3♠	Pass
3NT	Pass	5NT	Pass
6♦	Pass	...	
1♣	— strong		
1♠	— 4 controls		
3♠	— shortness 5-4 minors		
5NT	— pick a slam		

I think 5NT was a bit hasty. Soloway made two bids with a jump that took up a lot of bidding space. On the other hand, it wasn't easy in their system to come up with a logical bidding sequence that would have kept them out of the hopeless slam.

PARIS 2001
BERMUDA BOWL, THE FINAL

♠ A Q J 4			
♥ J 9 5 3			
♦ A K Q 9			
♣ 5			
♠ 10 7 5	N	♠ K 9 3 2	
♥ A 6	W	♥ K	
♦ 8 7 6 5 3	E	♦ J 10 4	
♣ J 4 3	S	♣ K 10 9 8 7	
		♠ 8 6	
		♥ Q 10 8 7 4 2	
		♦ 2	
		♣ A Q 6 2	

W	N	E	S
Melzer	Helness	Larsen	Helgemo
	1♦	Pass	1♥
Pass	4♥	Pass	5♣
Pass	6♥	Pass	...

This shows a lack of bidding consistency by the Norwegian pair. If Helgemo can make a slam try with those cards, then Helness should have only made a conditional acceptance of the slam try (and bid 5♦) because of the weak trump holding.

Other pairs in Final bid:

Weichsel – Sontag — 6♥

Cronier – Willard — 6♥

The fourth pair's bidding sequence was like music.

W	N	E	S
Bessis	Auken	d'Ovidio	v.Arnim
	1♣	Pass	1♥
Pass	2♥	Pass	3♣
Pass	3♦	Pass	3♥
Pass	3♠	Pass	4♣
Pass	4♦	Pass	4♥
Pass	...		
1♣	— strong		
3♣, ♦	— cue bid		
3♥	— extra length		
4♣	— more values in ♣		
4♦	— cue bid		

The repetitive exchange of cue bids uncovered the weakness in the trump suit.

PARIS 2001
BERMUDA BOWL, THE FINAL

	♠ 7 6 4										
	♥ —										
	♦ A K 10 9 6 4 3										
	♣ A K J										
♠ Q 10 8 3 2	<table style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ A K 5
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ 10 9 8 5		♥ J 6 3 2									
♦ 8 7 2		♦ Q J 5									
♣ 7		♣ 10 5 3									
	♠ J 9										
	♥ A K Q 7 4										
	♦ —										
	♣ Q 9 8 6 4 2										

W	N	E	S	
Groetheim		Weichsel Aa		Sontag
	1♣	Pass	2♣	
Pass	2NT	Pass	3♥	
Pass	4♣	Pass	4♥	
Pass	5♣	Pass	6♣	
Pass	...			
1♣	— strong			

Bidding 2♣, 3♥, 4♥ — showed 6♣ and 5♥. Sontag didn't care about the lack of spade cue bid?

Regardless of system agreements bidding notrump with a heart void and three little spades is very ill-advised.

W	N	E	S
Stansby	Helness	Martel	Helgemo
	1♦	Pass	1♥
Pass	3♦	Pass	3♥
Pass	3NT	Pass	...

Maybe Helness thought that even without a spade stopper he could still make it?

This time his practical approach to bidding didn't work out.

And Helgemo was OK with playing 3NT without mentioning his 6-card suit?

Brian Senior

LILLE 1998
 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROSENBLUM CUP

♠ A J 10 4 2	N	♠ K Q
♥ K 9 8 3	W	♥ A Q
♦ 10 8 3 2	E	♦ A K Q 6 4
♣ —	S	♣ K Q J 7

♠ 8 7 6 5
 ♥ 10 6 5 4 2
 ♦ 9 5
 ♣ 6 2

♠ 9 3
 ♥ J 7
 ♦ J 7
 ♣ A 10 9 8 5 4 3

EW vulnerable

W	N	E	S	
Campos	Sylvan	Villas-Boas		Sundelin
	Pass	2♣	Dbl	
2♠	Pass	3♦	Pass	
4♦	Pass	4NT	Pass	
5NT	Pass	7♠	Pass	...

2♣ — game forcing
 3♦, 4♦ — natural

The reluctant double of two clubs was all that Sundelin could do to try to slow them down.

The Brazilians found themselves in the grand slam. But why in spades?

That will have to remain Villas – Boas's secret.

W	N	E	S
Lindkvist	Chagas	Larsson	Branco
	Pass	2♣	4♣
4♦	Pass	6NT	Pass ...

4♦ — one ace?

The loss of bidding space made it harder for the Swedish pair to get to the grand slam.

W	N	E	S
Fallenius	Forrester	Nisland	Hacket
	Pass	1♣	2♠
3♥	Pass	4NT	Pass
5♦	Pass	7NT	Dbl
Pass	...		

1♣ — strong

2♠ — clubs, preemptive.

Here, not even Blackwood helped.

Lauria – Versace got to 6NT but the Dutch pair Bertens – Naab stopped in game:

2♣ — 2♦

3NT — Pass

Naab believed that Bertens's 3NT was based on a solid club suit.

BERMUDA 2000
 BERMUDA BOWL, THE SEMI-FINALS

♠ 9 4		
♥ K Q 10 5 3		
♦ J 8 2		
♣ J 6 4		
♠ Q 6 3	N	♠ A K 10 8 7 5
♥ A J 8	W	♥ 9 2
♦ K 9 4	E	♦ A Q 3
♣ A K 7 5	S	♣ 10 8
		♠ J 2
		♥ 7 6 4
		♦ 10 7 6 5
		♣ Q 9 3 2

W	N	E	S
Stansby	Hamman	Martel	Soloway
1♣	1♥	1♠	Pass
1NT	Pass	2♦	Pass
2♠	Pass	3♠	Pass
4NT	Pass	5♣	Pass
5♥	Dbl	Pass	Pass
Rdbl	Pass	5NT	Pass
7♠	Pass	...	
1♣	— strong		
2♦	— game forcing		

It rarely happens that opener precisely limits his hand and then takes control and decides on the final contract. It almost always ends badly.

But is that what happened here? What was 5H and 5NT? Did the latter invite 7, so actually West was not in control at the end, he was accepting an invitation, or was it a response to a 5H asking bid of some kind.

Brian Senior

W	N	E	S
Rodwell	Rosenberg		Meckstroth Zia
1♣	1♥	1♠	Pass
1NT	Pass	2♣	Pass
2♠	Pass	4♠	Pass ...
1♣	— strong club		

Meckstroth didn't want to bid on, although it's possible to imagine a hand for partner where there are 13 tricks off the top.

♠ Q 6 3
 ♥ A 9 8
 ♦ K J 9 4
 ♣ A K 7

ESTORIL 2005
 BERMUDA BOWL, THE ROUND ROBINS

		♠ A Q 9 5									
		♥ A 7									
		♦ A K 4									
		♣ A K 9 6									
♠ 8 2		<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 100px;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px; text-align: center;">N</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px; text-align: center;">W</td> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px; text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px; text-align: center;">S</td> </tr> </table>		N	W			E		S	♠ 7 3
	N										
W											
	E										
	S										
♥ K J 9 8 6 2			♥ Q 5 4 3								
♦ 10 8 5			♦ 9 7 3 2								
♣ Q 7			♣ 10 5 2								
		♠ K J 10 6 4									
		♥ 10									
		♦ Q J 6									
		♣ J 8 4 3									

NS vulnerable

W	N	E	S
Versace	Lindkvist	Lauria	Fredin
		Pass	Pass
2♥	Dbl	4♥	4♠
Pass	6♣	Pass	

Lindkvist's practical bid of 6♣ is justifiable. I don't see any other smart way to check on chances for a grand.

W	N	E	S
Nystrom	Fantoni	Bertheau	Nunes
		Pass	Pass
3♥	Dbl	6♥	Pass
Pass	7NT	Pass	...

The pass after 6♥ was forcing and promised a decent hand.

With his monster hand Fantoni had to guess. The grand was bad, but luck was on the side of the fortune hunter.

But, in particular, South's pass would show willingness to hear partner bid 6S, I think. 7Nt was a guess, but North was facing a passed hand and should have suspected that there was a spade fit.

Brian Senior

ESTORIL 2005
 BERMUDA BOWL, THE ROUND ROBINS

♠ —	N	♠ Q 7 5 4
♥ A 6 4 3	W	♥ Q 8 5 2
♦ A K 9 8 3 2	E	♦ 6 4
♣ Q J 2	S	♣ K 10 8
♠ A K J 10 9 8 6 3 2		
♥ —		
♦ Q 7 5		
♣ A		

Both vulnerable

W	N	E	S	
Rodwell	Chagas	Meckstroth		Villas-Boas
		Pass	1 ♠	
3♣	3♦	4♥	5NT	
Pass	7♦	Pass	7♠	
Pass	...			
3♣	— ♣ + ♥			

W	N	E	S	
M. Branco		Hamman	P. Branco	Soloway
		Pass	1 ♣	
Dbl	2♦	3♦	5NT	
Pass	7♦	Pass	7♠	
Pass	...			
1♣	— strong			
Dbl	— ♣ + a major			

At both tables the 5NT bid was used to ask for the number of honors in the diamond suit. Both players decided, however, to believe in the power of the 9-card trump suit.

SHANGHAI 2007
BERMUDA BOWL, THE FINAL

♠ K Q 8 5	N	♠ J
♥ 9	W	♥ A K Q 10 2
♦ Q J 5	E	♦ A K 10 7 6
♣ A J 4 3 2	S	♣ Q 10
	♠ A 10 4 3	
	♥ 7 6 3	
	♦ 9 4 2	
	♣ 9 7 6	

W	N	E	S	
Helgemo	Rosenberg		Helness	Zia
1♣	Pass	1♥	Pass	
1♠	Pass	2♦	Pass	
2NT	Pass	3♦	Pass	
4♣	Dbl	Pass	Pass	
Rdbl	Pass	4♥	Pass	
4♠	Pass	4NT	Pass	
5♦	Pass	6NT	Pass	....

Here is an example of intellectual natural bidding and excellent judgment of the situation by Helness, who was helped by Rosenberg's double.

Rosenberg led a spade and Zia switched to a club.

Helgemo finessed the 10♥ for +990.

W	N	E	S	
Weinstein	Saelensminde		Garner	Brogeland
1♣	Pass	1♦	Pass	
1♠	Pass	2♦	Pass	
2NT	Pass	3♦	Pass	
3♠	Pass	4♦	Pass	
4♥	Pass	4♠	Pass	
5♠	Pass	6♦	Pass	...
1♦	— hearts			
2♦	— waiting			

Brogeland led a club with the result -50.

The American pair didn't get the same chance that Helness did.