**WEEK 21**

The decline in the use  of the Acol 2 Bid has created a problem for some methods. Playing 2c and 2d as   strong( Benjamin ) provides help whereas if you have only 2c as your strong bid as is played by many players you have to make some close choices between a one bid and 2c. I will provide some examples and try to glean some principles .

If you hold a hand such as

AKJTxx

AKQxx

x

x

if you open 1s you could easily miss 6h therefore the hand is a 2c opener .My test is would you be seriously worried if you opened 1s and partner were to pass and here you would be.

If you are 3 suited then the problem of describing your hand after opening 2c may be too great so you should try a one bid eg

void

AQJx

Axxxx

AKQx

Imagine the bidding goes 2c -2d -3d -3s this is a ghastly space consuming sequence which could easily miss a fit in hearts or clubs .

This was another awkward hand

A

AQxxxx

KJ

AKxx

is this a 2c bid or a one heart opener( it is definitely not a 2nt opener ) if those are your options ? A close call I would say but just 2c .

Suit quality is also a determining factor in the decision so

QTxxxx

AK

AQJx

A

is a 1s bid rather than 2c I think .

This brings me on to the question of when to open 2nt with an off centre shape .In general I am not a fan. In a league match this season I held

AQ

Axx

Ax

AQxxxx

1c 2c or 2nt what is your poison ? 2nt was selected in both rooms including your correspondent and this shows what a poor choice this proved to be with the hand opposite

xx

xx

KJxxxx

Kxx

7c was cold and we reached 3nt .So what does this prove ? A hand with a 6 card suit or shortage or very good controls tends to be undervalued by the point count.

If you open 2nt with ( superb controls and all working points )

A

Axx

KJxx

AKJxx

You will miss 6c when partner holds

xxx

Kx

Qxx

Qxxxx

For some strange and unconnected reason I am reminded of that legendary football manager Brian Clough and he would no doubt have said with regard to big hand valuation  " lad you need skill and judgment in valuing hands and some players have it, some are learning it  and some are never likely to acquire it  " and then  he would no doubt  have added " I am may not be the best football manager in the world but I am certainly in the top one !"

**WEEK 20**

Another pair of deals one from  from Ostend and another from  a  recent match .

The difference between pairs and teams is the size of the gain so in pairs an overtrick can make all the difference whereas in teams one must play the safest line to ensure the success of the contract and forget about overtricks.

K87x

Kx

J98xx

Qx

AJxx

ATx

Axx

AKT

Another hand with plenty of nominated intermediate cards to arouse suspicion!

The contract is 4s and the lead is a heart .

The trump suit is crucial here and many top class players went off in this one.

In the trump suit alone there is a safety play which is low to the ace and low to the 8 in dummy which guards against the suit dividing 4-1 with singleton nine or 10 on the right which was the actual lay out. Perhaps there is an even better line of play.

Cash 2 hearts, three clubs and the DA and SK and ruff a heart in dummy. If all this passes off ok you have 8 winners now simply exit with a diamond and if Left Hand holds QT9x in trumps  he will be forced to win trick 11 after his partner has cashed DK and DQ and lead into your AJ of trumps.

Then your correspondent revealing his typical trait for feeble bidding

Kxxxx

void

Axxx

AQx

It is game all teams and it goes pass (2h 7-10 with hearts and a minor ) on your right  you overcall 2s and hear 4h to your left passed back to you ? Do you bid or pass .In a sense 2s described  most of your hand except imagine partner holds say a long minor or 3 card spade support now 4s or 5m could still be cold and the bidding has suggested partner will probably not hold substantial heart values so double now is correct to show a take out hand of hearts offering partner 3 options pass with heart values or bid 4s or 5m .It is certainly not the best method to play double here as penalty since with that hand you are happy to pass .

He holds

JTxx

T9xx

Qx

xxx

4s is one off with 4h cold.

**Week 19**

The following is a fascinating declarer play problem.

JT8x

KTx

xxx

xxx

AKQ9xx

AQ9x

void

Kxx

You play in 5 spades after LHO has overcalled in diamonds and east has supported. The lead is DA. There is a 100% line of play provided trumps break 2-1.

Ruff the lead high play a spade to the jack and ruff a second diamond high and continue with a trump to the ten drawing the last trump and now ruff the third diamond.

So with the diamond suit eliminated and trumps drawn we have reached

8x

KTx

void

xxx

9

AQ9x

void

Kxx

We require 6 more tricks from this point. The certain line now is to cash HA unblocking the ten, play a heart to the king and a third heart inserting the 9 if RHO plays small. If the hearts are 3-3 with the jack wrong LHO  will win and is now end played and must play either a diamond allowing us to ruff with our last trump in hand discarding a club from dummy with the 4th heart providing a second club discard from dummy. If a club is returned we score the CK and have a heart to discard the other club loser. If RHO has started with Jxxx in hearts we are also ok when the CA is offside.

So we make 4 ruffs in our hand and 4 in the dummy together with 3 heart tricks. I do not think I have seen a 6-4 fit played as a dummy reversal for a total of 8 winners before which makes the hand highly unusual.