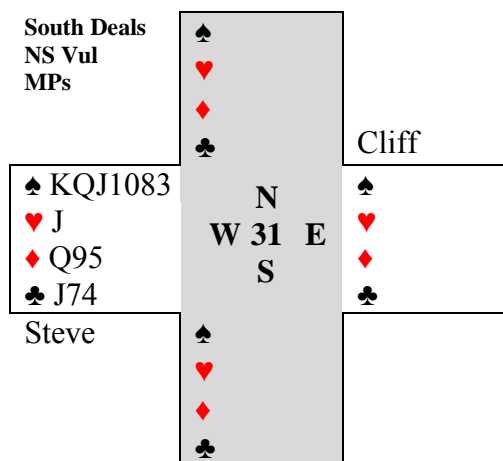


Learning Points – Bid What Your Partner Wants to Hear

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Bidding LEVEL: Intermediate



Tuesday Evening November 10, 2009 Open Pairs, Cincinnati Bridge Association Bridge Center, 2860 Cooper Road, Cincinnati, OH 45241 (513) 631-8070 . Tonight my partner is Cliff Pleatman. This is the 1st time we've played together.

You are in your 5th round playing with a very sound partner for the very 1st time. You've spent only 20 minutes agreeing to a 2/1 convention card. Luckily you have both played with a common partner so there's much shared understanding. Still there's always some differences that creep into first-time partnerships. So far we have not only avoided them, but we have profited from sound bidding and play. We have already navigated several defensive tests in the past 12 boards. Our game is progressing well.

South	West	North	East
Pass	2♠	Pass	2N ¹
Pass	3♠ ²	Pass	4♠
All Pass			

You come upon 2 good friends (and sound opponents) who also happen to be your partner's knock-out teammates. You want to keep the success going, even if it means taking points from friends at this table.

North leads ♥A

1 = Ogust Inquiry; 2 = Good Suit; Good hand

The Bidding

You look down to see a classic weak-2 bid. Since the vulnerability favors disturbing opponents you happily bid 2♠. North passes with little emotion. Your partner bids 2N. By agreement you are playing Ogust responses. Since you have a good suit in a good hand you know that when South passes (and he does) your response is 3♠. This shows a hand holding 9-11 HCP and a 6 card suit with at least 2 of the top 3 honors. While you do not count your singleton ♥J as a HCP so far, if partner fits any of your 3 suits you will have support points to add. Methods differ, but you can generally add 2 for a singleton or 3 if you are sure the singleton is working (no wasted high card points in partner's hand opposite the singleton).

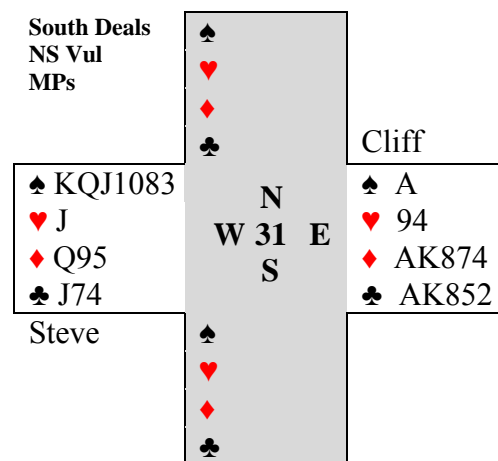
Ogust Responses after a Weak-2 Opener:

- 3♣ – Weak Hand / Weak Suit (w/w)
- 3♦ – Weak Hand / Strong Suit (w/s)
- 3♥ – Strong Hand Weak Suit (s/w)
- 3♠ – Strong Hand / Strong Suit (s/s)
- 3N – 6 running tricks in a max hand.
- Playing 5-11 HCP, weak = 5-8, strong = 9-11.
- With discipline a good suit is 2 of top 3 honors.
- Weak suit is anything less. Be sure to discuss suits like KJ109xx. Other response schemes exist. Ask!!!

Partner smiles and easily bids 4♠. Since partner can be any range above a sound opening hand and your weak-2 (and subsequent bidding) has limited your hand to a precise range, you have only to pass. After all you are about to declare with a hand you value at 7+ Losers (Modern Losing Trick Count).

The Play

North leads the ♥A and continues the ♥K (A from AK is common). You ruff and count tricks to only realize you can claim if ♦ are 3-2 or if the ♣Q is doubleton when ♦ are 4-1. ♠A then a low ♦ to the ♦Q allows you to draw trump. The minor suits behave nicely. 4♠ making 6 for +480 was worth 5 of 8 Match Points for EW.



Partner smiles at the result and asks a thoughtful question. Can you guess what he said?

Only 1 pair had bid the nonvulnerable slam. 5 of 9 bid game and made 6. One bid a NT game making 3 (1 trick above double dummy possibility) and 2 pairs failed to reach game.

Pair	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
MPs	5		5		1	2	5	5	0	8	5	
Score	480		480		230	400	480	480	170	980	480	

Post Mortem

Partner asked if I had considered bidding 4♥ as a splinter in response to 2N with my singleton ♥!!

South Deals	♠ 962		
NS Vul	♥ AKQ102		
MPs	♦ J2		
	♣ 1093		
		Cliff	
♠ KQJ1083	N	♠ A	
♥ J	W 31 E	♥ 94	
♦ Q95	S	♦ AK874	
♣ J74		♣ AK852	
Steve		EW: 5♣, 6♦, 6♠,	
	♠ 754	2N	
	♥ 87653		
	♦ 1063		
	♣ Q6		

This treatment is certainly worthy of examination. Some aggressive weak-2 bidders choose to show a 2nd suit (at least 5 cards) by jumping to the 4-level. Common conventions over weak-2s are Ogust (suit and hand quality in steps), feature (typically an outside A or K), or shortness showing (less common but valuable). Check out Chapter 2 in *Granovetter's For Experts* Only where Alan Truscott advocates creating your own relay bids (the example: over partner's weak-2, how to determine suit quality, hand strength and side suit shortness!).

There is much to partner's thoughtful suggestion. As with every treatment, we'll be sure to talk with our partners so that we are on the same page. So for now, when you have a maximum hand and a good suit, consider showing your singleton with a splinter bid by jumping to the 4-level over partner's inquiry. (If your suit is ♥ and you are short in ♠, you'll jump to 4♥ to show a singleton ♠). You might just like the rewards.

Partner wants to avoid 2♥ losers. From his viewpoint we might still have 1 loser in ♠. My response only promised 2 of the top 3, so the ♠J is unaccounted for. Holding 7♠ between us, the most frequent split is 4-2 (49%) and if the opponents hold the ♠J with 4-card length (about 33% of the time) we lose a trump trick too. If partner knows we have only 1♥ loser he can choose to bid the slam, or ask if I have any extra in our trump suit. How? Check it out!

South	West	North	East
Pass	2♠	Pass	2N ¹
Pass	4♥ ²	Pass	5♠ ³
	6♠ ⁴	All Pass	

- 1 = Ogust Inquiry
- 2 = Singleton ♥, Good Suit; Good hand
- 3 = Anything extra in trumps?
- 4 = I have the J10 too...

Partner's pass of 4♠ while conservative is based on sound valuation. Partner knows he can't use Losing Trick Count here because the 6-1 ♠ fit is insufficient (for the reason just presented). See Klinger's book or Wikipedia for more details on how to use Modern Losing Trick Count.

Showing Shortness

Mike Lawrence and Anders Wirgren's "I Fought the Law" (of Total Tricks) is a useful description of Working Points – how shape, power, and location of opponent's HCP combine to take tricks. When you've found a useful trump fit, then shortness adds playing strength. Typically shortness is more valuable in the hand with short trumps. Typically a trump fit is 8 or more cards. The reasons why this 6♠ comes home are: West's ♥ singleton limits losers there to 1; there are no losers in trumps; and there are extra chances in the minor suits assuming reasonable breaks.

Bids that disclose useful singletons (Splinter bids, fragment bids, asking bids, relays) offer great advantage finding results many others do not see.

Learning Points

1. Note to self: with an experienced creative partner, a creative response might help get a top board (or could land you in the wrong contract – unless you've talked it over. Here the loss was only 2.5 MPs. I'd rather retain partner's good will). However partner let me know he is creatively flexible – something I will remember the next time we play.
2. Putting myself in partner's shoes, I now see a heart splinter from me was *what my partner wanted to hear*. Sometimes the best descriptive bid is creative and safe (i.e. below game level in a forcing auction), and might not be the text book bid. Take advantage when you can.
3. Consider using splinter jumps to the 4-level to show a singleton when responding to partner's 2N inquiry after your opening major suit weak-2 bid.
 - a. Be sure you have a maximum strength hand with a good suit.
 - b. Recognize you might land in a 4 level suit contract when your partner wanted to explore 4 of the other major (holding 5 cards there), or 3NT (needing only to know if you're strong enough).
 - c. You need to settle on whether Responder's return to 4N is RKB or Natural after your splinter showing bid.
 - i. Natural seems appropriate since opener has already shown 2 of the top 3 honors, and any ace should likely be in the announced suit.
 - ii. If you have a 6 card major headed by the KQ and an outside Ace with a singleton in a different side suit, consider opening a 1-bid and rebidding weakly.
 - iii. However when responder needs to know if you have AK, AQ, or KQ, then RKB can be more useful – choices, choices, choices).
4. If you adopt a new treatment, be sure to explore all its implications with your partner(s) before using.

Key Words: Weak Two, Ogust, Singleton, Splinter, Modern Losing Trick Count.