



Bloomington-Normal Bridge Newsletter

Volume 25 Number 12 – December, 2023



December events



Bloomington-Normal Duplicate games at the First Christian Church located at Jefferson and Lee streets near downtown Bloomington starting at 11:00AM on Mondays:

all games – social meets duplicate pairs and open pairs - SPECIAL GAMES ANNOUNCED

NOTE: The 12/11 open game will be part of Royal StaC week.

Contact Lori Moore at 309-838-8085 for more information.

Mike's Bridge Club schedule – ALL games at Centennial Christian Church, 1219 E. Grove St, Bloomington, unless otherwise noted:

Wednesdays, 12:30pm – open pairs

Wednesdays, 12:30pm – 299ers only pairs(if attendance warrants)

Wednesdays, 12:30pm – social plus

NOTE: The 12/13 open game will be part of Royal StaC week.

Contact Mike Tomlianovich at 309-825-5823 for more information.

Online(BBO) bridge available at:

Tuesdays, 6:50pm – 749ers only pairs

Thursdays, 6:30pm – 499ers only pairs

Thursdays, 6:50pm – open pairs

Saturdays, 6:50pm – open pairs

Sundays, 6:50pm – mentee-mentor 2nd & 4th – open 1st-3rd-5th pairs

for more information contact one of:

Lori Moore at 309-838-8085

Mike Tomlianovich at 309-825-5823

Eunice Patton at 309-660-2380

All game results are posted online: <http://live.acbl.org/>

All games sanctioned by the American Contract Bridge League.



The Bloomington-Normal "Top 25" Masterpoint holders

As of 10/7/2023 – residents of Bloomington-Normal
only paid up ACBL members only



1	5,024.58	Steve Babin
2	3,725.67	Zach Freehill
3	3,545.38	Eunice Patton
4	3,367.55	Cindy Moore
5	2,672.63	Mike Tomlianovich
6	2,503.81	Ann Schuyler
7	2,486.42	Lori Moore
8	1,995.50	Joyce Clay
9	1,984.73	Ron Emmett
10	1,692.44	Jeff Furler
11	1,393.51	Steve Wulfers
12	900.41	Barb Neuges
13	885.42	Dave Freehill
14	854.17	Sallie Boge
15	776.92	Fred Spitzzeri
16	719.31	Larry Ziegler
17	604.82	Mary Cralley
18	563.40	Chris Zogg
19	548.81	Rick Dalton
20	509.93	John Cralley
21	481.70	Gene Byers
22	462.24	Pat Lebeck
23	410.70	Marilyn Byers
24	389.45	Kay Marvin
25	365.28	Joyce Werner

more players:

13,909.16	Chris Benson-LeRoy
6,315.40	Larry Matheny-Ft Collins CO
6,032.06	Ron Sholes-Springfield
5,753.36	John Seng-Champaign
4,958.44	Leonard Kaufman-Peoria
4,728.55	Paul Lindauer-Chicago
4,031.69	JoAnn Schroeder-Appleton,WI
3,985.16	Mary Allen-Peoria
3,947.48	Terry Goodykoontz
3,884.72	Carole Sholes-Springfield
2,790.81	Georgia Heth-Morton
2,763.58	Hank Hoffman-East Peoria
2,668.11	Chuck Young-Peoria
2,654.93	Margaret Hansell-Champaign
2,506.19	John Maloney-Champaign
2,121.95	Marilyn Stickel-Laon
2,068.96	Bill Bulfer-East Peoria
1,536.11	Wes Seitz-Champaign
1,233.68	Bill Strauss-Urbana
1,087.75	Darryl Bremner-Clinton
1,058.45	Bill Thompson-Estero,FL
803.78	Carole Miller-Champaign
801.83	Connie Tucker-Champaign
772.70	Melda Richardson-California
651.91	John Ford-Harvard,MA
628.55	Kirk Kimmel-Peoria
625.63	Lane O'Connor-Naperville
555.37	Barry Mayworm-Princeton
501.86	Rich Hagenhauer-Peoria
476.05	Lynn Steffen-El Paso





IMPROVE YOUR PLAY

with Larry Matheny



The next 4 columns appear on the next 4 pages:

IMPROVE YOUR PLAY with Larry Matheny

When declaring a hand it is important to develop your plan before playing to the first trick. If you don't, you might fail as this declarer did when she failed to make the percentage play.

Scoring: Matchpoints (Pairs)

Hand #32 Dir N Vul N/S	♠ AKQ72 ♥ 9 ♦ J73 ♣ J642				
		West	North	East	South
♠ 8543 ♥ Q1075 ♦ K92 ♣ 85	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 0 auto;"></div>		♠ 106 ♥ J8632 ♦ 1086 ♣ Q97	1♠ Pass 5♦ Pass 6♦ Pass	4NT 5NT 6NT
	♠ J9 ♥ AK4 ♦ AQ54 ♣ AK103	All Pass			

BIDDING: As soon as North opened, South was determined to bid a slam. She used Blackwood to find one ace and one king in her partner's hand and then bid 6NT.

PLAY: West led a low heart and declarer counted ten tricks with potential for two more tricks in the minors. She won the heart and started on the spade suit. However, she hadn't stopped to develop a plan, including what to discard from her hand on the last three spades. Discarding a heart was easy but then she decided to discard a diamond and a club. Next she led the jack of diamonds from dummy and that was her downfall. West won the diamond king and returned a heart so declarer had to lose a club trick.

A careful look at the problem at trick one would show that the diamond suit does present the best play but only if you lead from your hand toward dummy's jack. This play wins anytime the king is in the West hand and also if the suit divides 3-3. If this play fails, you still have time to try the club finesse. Note that if the jack of diamonds wins the trick, rather than rely on a 3-3 break, you will develop your twelfth trick in clubs.

Many hands offer so many options it's difficult to know which is best. But, it is always right to stop and think before you play to trick

IMPROVE YOUR PLAY
with Larry Matheny

Bridge is such a fascinating game. Sometimes everyone at the table makes bids that fall under the umbrella of acceptance but in the end, someone must pay. Take a look at this hand.

Scoring: Matchpoints (Pairs)

<p>Hand #33 Dir S Vul E/W</p>	<p>♠ K98 ♥ Q104 ♦ KQ87653 ♣</p>	<p>♠ 10643 ♥ AJ ♦ A1042 ♣ A73</p>	<p>West North East South</p> <p>1♠ 2♦ 3♠ 1♥</p> <p>Pass 4♥ DBL All Pass</p>
<p>♠ AQJ75 ♥ 52 ♦ J9 ♣ 8654</p>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 0 auto;"></div>	<p>♠ 2 ♥ K98763 ♦ ♣ KQJ1092</p>	

BIDDING: I was sitting South and although my hand had only nine high card points, it begged to be opened. West made a "lead directing" overcall that might be considered light when vulnerable. North made a normal bid and East couldn't believe all of the bidding but contented herself with an invitational raise. Although I had opened with few honor cards, my distribution demanded another bid so I showed the club suit. Partner took a preference to hearts and East could not contain herself and doubled.

PLAY: Since leading an ace is usually a bad lead, West led the jack of diamonds. The rest was easy; I played the king and ruffed East's ace. Next, I ruffed a club to dummy and discarded my spade on the queen of diamonds. I then led hearts and made five when that suit behaved. Poor East said to her partner: "You overcalled and I had three aces". It's difficult to attach blame to anyone on this hand. I opened light, West overcalled light, North's bid was reasonable, and poor East had "three aces". Isn't this a great game?

IMPROVE YOUR PLAY with Larry Matheny

When the game is scored at matchpoints (pairs), players will take many risks to play 3NT rather than five of a minor. Here is a good example.

Scoring: Matchpoints (Pairs)

<p>Hand #34 Dir E Vul E/W</p> <p>♠ 7 ♥ Q95 ♦ AQJ8752 ♣ 83</p>	<p>♠ A102 ♥ 108763 ♦ K ♣ AJ96</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 10px auto;"></div> <p>♠ Q985 ♥ AKJ4 ♦ 10964 ♣ K</p>	<p>♠ KJ643 ♥ 2 ♦ 3 ♣ Q107542</p>	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: left;">West</th> <th style="text-align: left;">North</th> <th style="text-align: left;">East</th> <th style="text-align: left;">South</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td>Pass</td> <td>1♦</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pass</td> <td>2♦*</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>2NT</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pass</td> <td>3NT</td> <td>All Pass</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	West	North	East	South			Pass	1♦	Pass	2♦*	Pass	2NT	Pass	3NT	All Pass	
West	North	East	South																
		Pass	1♦																
Pass	2♦*	Pass	2NT																
Pass	3NT	All Pass																	

*Natural with 10+ support points

BIDDING: Playing a five-card major system, South opened the bidding with 1♦. Sitting North and looking at my own long diamond suit, I had a couple of options. I could jump to 3♠ to show a game going hand with diamond support and shortness in the spade suit. But, I finally decided to not give the opponents too much information and instead made a forcing raise in diamonds. Next, South bid 2NT showing 12-13 points and stoppers in the other suits. Hoping to provide at least seven tricks, I raised to game.

PLAY: West led a low heart and declarer quickly wrapped up eleven tricks for +460. Those N/S pairs who bid to a pedestrian 5♦, scored only +400. It's true if West had found the ace of clubs lead (or a spade lead with a club shift), the defenders could take the first nine tricks. In a team event where overtricks are less important, it would make sense to reach the minor suit game. But, as you can see, taking chances at matchpoint scoring can pay off.

However, that +460 only earned us ten of twelve matchpoints. One N/S pair was doubled in 5♦ for +550 and another pair was doubled in 4♦ and made two overtricks for +710. Matchpoints is a tough game!

IMPROVE YOUR PLAY
with Larry Matheny

Some contracts offer few chances for success but this declarer saw a slim possibility and played accordingly. It's a good example of not giving up even when the prospects are dim.

Scoring: Matchpoints (Pairs)

Hand #35 Dir N Vul E/W	♠ Q972 ♥ A2 ♦ 932 ♣ J743	♠ J8 ♥ Q8543 ♦ J10876 ♣ 6		♠ 105 ♥ KJ107 ♦ KQ ♣ Q10982	West Pass All Pass	North Pass 2♠	East Pass Pass	South 1♠ 4♣
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BIDDING: South's hand was top heavy with aces and kings so he leaped to game after his partner's raise.

PLAY: West led his singleton club and declarer played the jack covered by the queen and ace. South saw four potential losers: one heart, two diamonds, and one club. He hoped to eliminate a loser with a 3-3 club division or some sort of end play. He drew trumps in two rounds and then played the king of clubs. He was disappointed when West showed out but he continued with a third round. East won and played the king of diamonds. Declarer won this trick and followed with a heart to dummy's ace. South then ruffed dummy's last club and played his last heart. The defender who won the heart would have to lead a diamond or allow declarer to ruff in one hand and discard a diamond from the other. East won the diamond queen, but it was over for the defense. East's forced return of a club or heart allowed declarer to sluff his diamond and make his contract.

An opening diamond lead would probably defeat the contract. Declarer could still succeed by end playing East for a club return away from the queen but it would be a difficult play to find. As for declarer, he saw the possibility of a blocked diamond suit and took advantage of it.



Bloomington-Normal 70% club Year 2023 only

2023/11/19	73.41%	Darryl Bremner & Kirk Kimmell
2023/9/30	73.01%	Sallie Boge & Barry Kurz
2023/9/30	70.00%	Dick Dubroff & Mike Gross(social meets duplicate)
2023/9/25	72.33%	Chris Benson & John Seng
2023/9/18	70.33%	Cindy Moore & Terry Goodykoontz
2023/8/28	77.70%	Dick Dubroff & Mike Gross()
2023/8/21	70.51%	Steve Babin & Paul Lindauer
2023/8/6	70.63%	Cindy Moore & Steve Babin
2023/7/31	70.37%	Dawn Laffey & Joni Newberg(social meets duplicate)
2023/6/26	70.35%	Kay Ann Criswell & Becky O'Donnell(social meets duplicate)
2023/6/5	71.25%	Dick Dubroff & Mike Gross(social meets duplicate)
2023/5/11	76.07%	Lori Moore & Cindy Moore(BBO speedball)
2023/5/1	72.62%	Eunice Patton & Steve Babin
2023/4/13	72.22%	Ron Calabrese & Bob Bye(499ers online)



BRIDGE BITES

from: The American Contract Bridge League

By: Brian Gunnell



#145 – EAST TO THE RESCUE

♠ 54
♥ A7
♦ 43
♣ AJT8765

♠ K863	North	♠ QT9
♥ QT52	West	♥ K943
♦ Q862	East	♦ JT9
♣ 4	Declarer	♣ Q32

♠ AJ72
♥ J86
♦ AK75
♣ K9

N-S Vulnerable

South	West	North	East
1NT	Pass	3NT	Pass
Pass	Pass		

North saw no good reason to show his Clubs and went straight to 3NT, giving West the minimum amount of information for his opening lead. But West guessed well, leading her fourth-highest Heart, not only attacking the defense's best suit, but also knocking out Dummy's entry to the Clubs.

The opening low Heart lead was ducked, in the hope that West had led from the King-Queen. But East took his King and continued the suit, after which

Declarer had to bring home the Clubs if he was to make his contract. The obvious play was to cash the ♣K, and lead towards Dummy, either playing for the drop, or finessing against the Queen. Playing for the drop is the slight favorite, but that became a moot point when West showed out on the second round of Clubs. Now things were hopeless, and Declarer could score no more than six tricks.

North had obviously forgotten that Dummy's main role in life is to be supportive and soothing when Declarer fails in his contract. Instead, he conducted an unhelpful post mortem. "You knew, from the opening lead of the Heart Two, that the suit was 4-4, so you could afford a safety play in Clubs, protecting against East holding Qxx. Just run the Club Nine on the first round of the suit. East wins the Queen, but the defense has only four tricks. When you get in again you overtake your ♣K with the Ace and run the suit. Nine easy tricks!"

But North had been guilty of faulty analysis as well as poor behavior, and it was East who came to the rescue of Declarer. "That line won't work", she explained, "I simply duck the first round of Clubs!" Yes, indeed, that would be a fine play.



#146 – VARIATION ON A THEME

♠ 54
♥ 5
♦ 763
♣ AJT8765

♠ JT9	<i>North</i>	♠ Q87632
♥ T876432	<i>West</i>	♥ 9
♦ Q4	<i>East</i>	♦ K52
♣ 4	<i>Declarer</i>	♣ Q32

♠ AK
♥ AKQJ
♦ AJT98
♣ K9

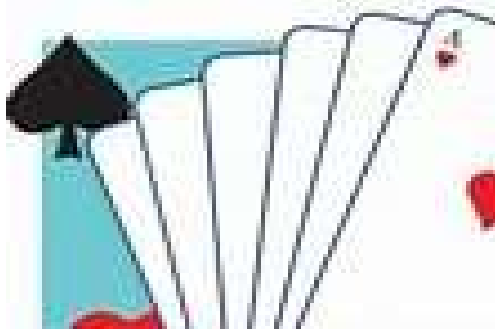
North opened 3♣, after which every South player in the room charged into slam. Some got to 6♣ or 7♣, but could manage only 11 tricks after East's opening Diamond lead.

Other South players tried 6NT on the grounds that, if both slams made, 6NT was the better-scoring contract. If you read last week's Bite, "East to the Rescue", then the Club suit may look eerily familiar, and our question to you is "How do you play 6NT?"

An opening Diamond lead holds no terrors for 6NT, that merely hands Declarer 12 tricks without needing the long Clubs. Instead, West led the less helpful ♠J, won by Declarer. At this point most Declarers took the simple approach, laying down the ♣K, then leading another Club. When West

showed out, and when there was no good fortune in the Diamonds (such as doubleton or singleton honor with East), Declarer was down.

Declarer has a better line of play. At Trick 2, he leads the Club Nine and overtakes with Dummy's Jack. East, perhaps a regular reader of Bridge Bites, knows that it would be fatal to take her ♣Q, that would give Declarer access to all those Club winners in Dummy. So she cleverly plays low on this trick. The good news for East is that she has deprived Declarer of a bunch of Club winners, the bad news is that now Declarer has *two* entries to Dummy. Those entries will be used to finesse twice in Diamonds, allowing Declarer to bring home 12 tricks in a different way (two Spades, four Hearts, four Diamonds and just two Clubs).



#147 – THE NINE OF HEARTS

	♠ J94 ♥ AKQT8 ♦ J64 ♣ J3	
♠ T753 ♥ 762 ♦ K973 ♣ T2	<i>North</i> <i>West</i> <i>East</i> <i>Declarer</i>	♠ AQ82 ♥ J93 ♦ T2 ♣ K954
	♠ K6 ♥ 54 ♦ AQ85 ♣ AQ876	

When this deal was played in a duplicate club game, all but one of the 12 N-S pairs played in 3NT, scoring 9 or 10 tricks. But at one table Declarer managed to go down. How was such a thing possible? As you might have guessed from our title, the Heart Nine played a surprisingly important role in the proceedings.

Against 3NT, West found a Diamond opening lead, not the best for the defense as it happened. Declarer won that trick with the Queen, and now had to decide how to tackle the Heart suit. The odds favor playing for the drop of the ♥J, rather than finessing Dummy's Ten, and the plan was (hopefully) to cash the Hearts and to play on Clubs for an overtrick or two. But the plan changed when East casually dropped the Jack under Dummy's Ace on the first round of Hearts. Quite a play, don't you think?

This seemed like good news for Declarer, as surely there were five Heart tricks available by taking the "marked" finesse of the Heart Eight. So, Declarer led the ♣J, covered by the King and Ace, and confidently finessed the Heart Eight. Oops! That lost to East's Nine, after which Declarer could not avoid going down one! Congratulations to Dan Jacobs of Jacksonville, FL, who sat East and found that lovely Heart play.

Post Script: After Dan had won the Heart Nine he shifted to the ♠A. Could Declarer have salvaged her contract by dumping the King under the ♠A in an attempt to force an entry to Dummy? A clever play, for sure, but not quite good enough. Dan would shift to a Club and, one way or another, the defense would get their five tricks.



#148 – A PROFITABLE SACRIFICE

♠ Q43
♥ A9754
♦
♣ QJ985

♠ K95	<i>North</i>	♠ AJ2
♥ Q86	<i>West</i> <i>East</i>	♥
♦ AJ85		♦ KQ6432
♣ AK7	<i>Declarer</i>	♣ T432

♠ T876
♥ KJT32
♦ T97
♣ 6

None Vulnerable

When this was dealt at a duplicate game, most E-W pairs missed their slam and played in 5♦, making 12 tricks and scoring +420. At three tables, South played in 5♥ doubled. The object of the exercise here was to make 9 tricks, which would be down two and -300. Could South escape for down two, or would it be down three and the dreaded -500?

At Table 1, West led the ♦A, ruffed on the board. Now a Heart to Declarer's King, East showing out. The bad trump break meant that Declarer could not ruff three Diamonds in Dummy and also pick up West's trump holding. That being so, the only way to avoid -500 was to set up some Club tricks. So,

after winning the ♥K, Declarer led a Club which West won with the King. The defense cashed three Spades, and then a Diamond was ruffed on the board. A Club was ruffed (low), followed by a Heart to the Nine, another Club ruff (setting up the suit), then back to Dummy's ♥A to enjoy the Club winners. Down only two, for -300.

But West could have done better. After Declarer has taken the first Club ruff, the trump situation is:

♥ A9		♥ --
♥ Q8		
♥ JT3		

At Table 2, when Declarer led the Heart Three, West was a star, majestically rising with the Queen! That blocks the Heart suit and means that it's no longer possible later to win the third round of trumps in Dummy. Very nice defense, indeed, and -500 for N-S.

At Table 3, Declarer anticipated that blocking problem and cleverly ruffed the first Club with her Jack. Now the trumps were:

♥ A9		♥ --
♥ Q8		
♥ T32		

No blockage in this layout, so N-S escaped with -300 for a profitable sacrifice.





Please see schedules on page 1



**AMERICAN CONTRACT
BRIDGE LEAGUE**

— DEALING INFINITE POSSIBILITIES —