



Talking Bridge

Christmas 2023

Issue 10

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Andrew Robson charity day Master Class

PLENTY OF ANDREW ROBSON'S recent teaching time has been devoted to a system based on a strong no-trump and five-card majors, in particular his variation on two/one or 2/1.

What this means is that if you open a diamond, heart or spade and partner bids two of another suit, he or she is forcing you to game. Not only does it reduce the chances of you missing out on game, but it also creates more space to investigate slams, writes **Douglas Bence**.

Although it's been played for ten years or more, notably in the United States, it's become particularly popular in the UK since, and because of, lockdown when we found ourselves playing with Robots. In Andrew's own words, strong and fives is currently 'the direction of world travel'.

Andrew, pictured, has been playing different versions of it for years, notably in international competitions and world championships.



Payment by bank transfer only. For details contact Neil Tracy on bridgefanatic@gmail.com or book through the Norfolk Contract Bridge Association website (<https://www.bridgewebs.com/norfolk/>). Numbers are limited, so book early.

Andrew's programme will be varied and designed appeal to everyone. He says he plans to include Four Key Rules, Four Key Shapes and Four Key Acronyms.

Encouraged

One of his club's teaching channels has been devoted to it for a year or more and this has encouraged many club players either to switch to his version of the system or at least try it out.

Andrew will not desert Acol. On the contrary, he remains a fan and will continue to teach it, particularly to beginners.

Last year, he gave a master class in Lavenham and on **Sunday, February 18, 2024** he'll be back for a charity day hosted by the Norfolk Contract Bridge Association.

It will be in aid of the **Matthew Project** which is involved in drug and alcohol recovery, supporting both children and adults in Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex with training and support.

It will be held at the Costessey Centre in Longwater Lane, NR8 5AH. The cost of £30 a head includes a hot lunch and refreshments through the day. Arrive at 10 am for a 10.15 start. It will finish at 3.15 pm.

Eight Gold Cups

Andrew has represented England for over 30 years. His successes include winning the World Youth Team Championships, the European Championships, and the Gold Cup eight times. For details of his partners see Last Word on Page 10.

He is widely recognised as being among, if not the world's best teacher. Many local players follow his column in the Times where he has built up a huge following since he started writing it in the year 2000.

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Getting a bottom for a Grand Slam

THE CAROLEAN CUP, a team event between Swaffham and Hunstanton, celebrates the coronation of King Charles. Played over two legs in October and November this year it should become a regular fixture. Well done to Les Baker and his Hunstanton team for winning the inaugural event.

If you were playing in a pairs event and bid and made a Grand Slam in either hearts or spades you would be miffed to score a bottom because all thirteen tricks could also be made in no-trumps. Unusual, certainly, but that's what happened on **Board 19** at Hunstanton, writes **Robert Smith**.

Playing Precision, North opened a club and was surprised when South replied one spade. North rebid two hearts and received a second surprise when South supported with three hearts. Asking for aces might provide one and, depending which one, could make the diamond king vulnerable.

Would cue-bidding help? Blackwood would show two aces, so the Grand in no-trumps was virtually a certainty. But as this was a teams event, it was deemed safer to go in a suit in case a ruff was necessary. Other Pairs opened with strong two bids and those that bid spades were raised to game. Unaware of the Heart fit, the bidding stopped. Again, cue-bidding would have found the Slam as would Blackwood.

Dealer South: E/W Vulnerable

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

Board 6 was fun for those who open one no-trump with a five-card major, which is what happened here. South doubled; West and North passed. Two spades came from East which South passed, but North doubled.

Dealer East: E/W Vulnerable

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

South led a club to the ace and North returned a heart to the queen and king. South cashed the club king and gave North a club ruff. A diamond return allowed South to give North another club ruff.

With the first six tricks gone and two top trumps to be lost it was three down for 800.

If East opens a spade and South doubles, North would probably bid a red suit.

Would they get to five diamonds or four hearts both of which make despite the 4-3 fit?

Vulnerability was crucial so North opted for the penalty rather than bid game. Either way, a big swing to N/S.

Even if one no-trump was doubled and left in, a club lead and a switch to a diamond would probably make it just as bad for E/W.

Three no-trumps is another possibility for N/S.

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Technology Challenge

From the diaries of Wendy Wensum

'I'LL NEVER GET TO understand these things,' said Millie as she called the director for the umpteenth time.

'What's wrong now?' the Tournament Director asked rather impatiently as she took the handset from Millie.

'Look, it's easy to correct a score. Just press the cancel button, enter the result and pass the unit to either opponent to confirm your entry,' she instructed rather abruptly.

Her impatience was understandable as Millie had refused to let either me or East-West control the device.

'I'm North and I'll get the hang of this technology if it kills me,' Millie said defiantly, loudly and over-optimistically.

As the director returned to her table, I heard her muttering: 'That could happen at any moment. If her opponents don't do it, I swear I will.'

Millie and I, together with Jo and Kate, were guests at a neighbouring club where all the boards were computer-dealt and instant scoring was in operation via wi-fi handsets linked to a laptop. Fortunately, the next round was an arrow switch and the magic box was in the competent hands of our opponents.

Dealer East; Love all

♠ J 3
♥ J 10
♦ 9 8 6 4
♣ 10 9 8 7 5

♠ K Q 5 2
♥ A 9 8 4 3
♦ 10 2
♣ J 4

♠ 10 9 8 4
♥ Q 7 5 2
♦ K J 3 2
♣ 6

♠ A 7 6
♥ K 6
♦ A Q 5
♣ A K Q 3 2

Millie was dealer and passed; South bid two no-trumps. I passed and North thought for a long time before raising her partner to game. The opposition hadn't shown any interest in the majors, so I led the fourth highest of my longest suit, the heart four.

As dummy hit the deck, declarer looked a bit puzzled as he noted: 'Only two jacks, partner?'

North defended his action with a shrug and said: 'Two jacks, two tens and a five-card suit.'

South won the first trick with the king beating Millie's queen. He took his five club tricks, finishing in dummy, and finessed the diamond queen, claimed his two aces and conceded the rest. Contract made. Millie suggested that three no-trumps would go off on a spade lead.

'I think not,' said South, 'I'm pretty sure I can make it on any lead.'

The traveller showed that at all bar one table the contract was two no-trumps by South making nine tricks. East led a low heart. The exception was a contract of five clubs by South.

Later, back in our local pub, Kate recalled that she and Jo had taken no part in the auction of that board which they defended against five clubs. South opened with an artificial two clubs, her partner responding a negative two diamonds. South showed her clubs, North agreed and the minor-suit game was bid.

Kate led the king of spades and the defence took a spade, a heart and a diamond giving her and Jo a top. Millie had another moan about our opposing North's optimistic view of the his hand, which gave us a bottom. She then gave her poor opinion on computer-generated boards in particular and IT in general. When Jo bought another round, Millie thankfully moved on to the medical benefits of imbibing brandy.

4

Dates for the Diary

THE HIGHLY-POPULAR **Bah Humbug Pairs**, while obviously not the most serious event of the year, fills a gap in the bridge calendar at a time when seasonal goodwill turns most of the regular events upside down.

It takes place this year on Friday 29 December at Blackbourne community centre, Blackbourne Road, Elmswell (IP30 9UH) starting at 11am. The entry fee is £10 a person.

Although it depends on the number of entries, about 26 boards will be played.

You can register on the Suffolk Contract Bridge Association website (<https://www.bridgewebs.com/suffolkbridge/>). Bring your own lunch.

Norfolk Championship Teams

The Norfolk Championship Teams event will be played on Real Bridge on Sunday, January 7.

There will be a minimum of 36 boards. Start 11 am; finish 4 pm. Entry £5 a player. Only three teams have entered so far.

European Championships

Next year's European Championships will be in Denmark at Herning. Mixed trials will be held by the EBU between February 2-5.

There are two dates for the women's trial, February 9-11 and March 1-3. And for the seniors, March 8-10 and April 5-7.

The venues are yet to be confirmed. Meanwhile, entry applications to louise@ebu.co.uk

Bury Swiss Pairs

The Bury St Edmunds face-to-face Swiss Pairs is one of the most popular club events in the Suffolk Contract Bridge Association calendar.

This is a blue-pointed event with, if there's sufficient entries, cash prizes. Entry fee: £10 a person.

It will be held on Sunday 4 February at the Blackbourne community centre in Elmswell (IP30 9GY) starting at 10.30am.

There will be two sessions separated by a half-hour break. Bring your own lunch.

Norfolk Congress

The Norfolk Contract Bridge Association annual congress will be held at the Wensum Valley Country Club on the weekend of March 2-3.

Two events will be played on Saturday: the Green Pointed Swiss pairs, and the Really Easy Pairs, both starting at 1.30 pm.

It's an 11 am start for the Green Pointed Swiss Teams on Sunday.

The venue is just off the A1067 Fakenham Road at Beech Road, Taverham.

When further details are available they will be posted on the Norfolk Contract Bridge Association website.

This is the first time *Talking Bridge* has put together a diary for forthcoming events as most of the information can be found on other websites. If you want an event publicised, please send the relevant information to db0110665@gmail.com

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To double or not to double that is the question

DOUBLE or not to double? That may be what Shakespeare would ask, but here it's **Graham Hardman** with another of his unusual hands.

Do you double artificial bids as an instruction to partner for a lead?

Whatever your answer, consider the following hand, with both sides vulnerable. West deals and with 13 high card points opens one no-trump.

<p>♠ 8 5 ♥ 7 4 ♦ Q 10 7 4 ♣ QJ 9 6 5</p>	<p>♠ K 9 ♠ A Q 10 6 2 ♥ Q 10 6 3 ♥ 9 5 2 ♦ J 6 3 ♦ K 9 8 ♣ A K 8 4 ♣ 7 3</p>
<p>♠ J 9 4 3 ♥ A K J 8 ♦ A 5 2 ♣ 10 2</p>	

With nine points and five spades East bids two hearts asking partner to bid two spades.

North leads the club queen and West makes the necessary eight tricks: four spades, a heart, diamond and two clubs

Take the same hand, but with a more proactive South. After East's two hearts, South doubles asking for a Heart lead. Out comes the heart seven and things are very different.

North/South take the first three tricks: the ace-king of hearts and a ruffed heart. After a short wait they get a spade and two diamond tricks. 100 to North/South.

But once in a blue moon, or even in a super blue moon, doubling for the lead can

backfire. Note that the cards are slightly different.

<p>♠ J 7 4 3 ♥ ♦ QJ 9 7 6 2 ♣ J 9 5</p>	<p>♠ K 9 ♠ A Q 10 6 2 ♥ J 10 7 6 3 ♥ 9 5 2 ♦ A 3 ♦ K 10 8 ♣ A Q 8 4 ♣ 7 3</p>
<p>♠ 8 5 ♥ A K Q 8 4 ♦ 5 4 ♣ K 10 6 2</p>	

With two doubletons this isn't a classic no-trump opener, but we all break the rules occasionally, don't we? So one no-trump.

North passes and East, looking for a transfer to spades, bids two hearts. Expecting to play in Spades and, knowing he has to make his hearts quickly, South doubles for the lead.

West isn't sure what's going on and, thinking two hearts is a weak take-out, passes. So does North, and East, but not until after pondering on whether or not he can trust his partner.

The cards could hardly sit more kindly - even the 5-0 trump split isn't unhelpful. South dutifully leads the heart ace and, seeing his partner's void, switches to the diamond five. East only loses the three top hearts, finishing with ten tricks and E/W an undeserved 1070. Bizarre certainly, but don't let it stop you doubling for the lead.

A bizarre hand and one that would certainly have irritated North/South. Bizarre or not it shouldn't stop us doubling artificial bids for a lead from partner.

6

Aunt Augusta in the middle of a row for all seasons

Some of the other players at my local club say I am far too hard on my Great Aunt Augusta.

'You're very unforgiving. I agree that her mind wanders so she's often away with the fairies but, all things being equal, she's a very good player with, if you don't mind me saying so, rather more master points than you.'

'The way you get master points is not just by being a very good player, but by sitting on your backside for longer than anybody else,' I said.

Prejudice

With Aunt Augusta, it's not just the bridge I find irritating but her Victorian attitudes and class prejudice. She came from the working classes and married into money, though I've never ascertained precisely what Great Uncle Albert saw in her. It surely couldn't have been her outstanding beauty.

Be that as it may, I was far from happy about the following hand. Augusta was sitting East, dealt and passed after barely looking at her cards. She glowered at North clearly irritated that, given his hesitation, the chances were that the balance of high card points was in N/S's favour.

North sorted his cards meticulously, stared at the ceiling and passed. With 13 points I opened one no-trump, which was passed out.

Dir: West Vul: None	♠ K 6 5 4 ♥ 7 6 2 ♦ K 5 ♣ A 10 6 5	Optimum NS 3N 400																																
♠ A 9 3 ♥ 8 5 4 ♦ 10 7 6 4 ♣ J 7 4	NORTH W E S T 8 SOUTH	♠ Q J 7 ♥ A Q 10 3 ♦ Q 8 2 ♣ K 9 2																																
<table style="width: 100%; text-align: center;"> <tr><td>10</td></tr> <tr><td>5 14</td></tr> <tr><td>11</td></tr> </table>	10	5 14	11	♠ 10 8 2 ♥ K J 9 ♦ A J 9 3 ♣ Q 8 3	<table style="width: 100%; text-align: center;"> <tr><td>♣</td><td>♦</td><td>♥</td><td>♠</td><td>N</td></tr> <tr><td>N</td><td>3</td><td>2</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>3</td></tr> <tr><td>E</td><td>3</td><td>2</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>3</td></tr> <tr><td>S</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td></tr> </table>	♣	♦	♥	♠	N	N	3	2	2	3	3	E	3	2	2	3	3	S	-	-	-	-	-	W	-	-	-	-	-
10																																		
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E	3	2	2	3	3																													
S	-	-	-	-	-																													
W	-	-	-	-	-																													

It was a horrible contract. I made two spades, two hearts and one each in the minor suits for one off.

'You should have taken me out,' I said to Augusta.

'Why? You weren't doubled.'

'I can only have 14 points, so with your five they've obviously got more honours than we have.'

'But they didn't bid.'

At this point South joined the discussion, saying that I'd taken his bid of one no-trump, which I had. When North put his ten points on the table I realised that my one off was a good score.

'You've got three no-trumps on,' I said to South.

'What on 21 points? Ridiculous.'

'With Augusta's diamond lead you can make three diamonds, three clubs if you lead from your hand to the ten, at least one heart and possibly two spades if they split three-three which they do.'

'If you can land three no-trumps and a possible overtrick on these cards and only 21 points you must fancy yourself. I reckon you'd be two off.'

Benign Smile

North joined the battle, voices were raised and the director was forced to intervene. Augusta sat silently through what could be called a heated discussion, a benign smile on her face.

'That board where you went one off,' she said later. 'If I'd agreed with your suggestion and played a strong no-trump and five-card majors, I suppose you'd open a club.'

'Absolutely.'

'I don't know whether you remember the cards but I think that would be two off.'

'But with five points you'd respond one no-trump, wouldn't you.'

'Yes, and we'd be back where we started.' She was right, so I kept quiet.

7

Quizzes highlight correct play in normal situations

DURING A RECENT CLEAR OUT I stumbled over a falling-to-pieces miniature paperback, *Bridge Quiz*. The quiz masters, Ewart Kempson and J.H. Ritch, had put together 300 problems.

Their book is undated but an advertisement on the inside front cover mentions the Vienna System that won the World Championship in 1936. In his introduction Ewart Kempson refers to a hand he played in 1948. So it looks as though the 215-page book dates from around 1950.

The problems are all about correct play, he says. There are no double situations, tricks or stunts. The East/West cards in Kempson's 1948 hand were as follows:

West	East
♠ 9 5	♠ Q 10 8 6 3
♥ K J 8 6 3	♥ A Q 9
♦ K 6	♦
♣ Q 10 9 6	♣ A K 5 4 3

'The contract is four hearts and North leads the ace of diamonds,' he says. 'Dummy ruffs and leads the ace of hearts, both opponents following. The rest is easy.'

Low Club

'Dummy makes the queen of hearts and leads a low club to West's queen. South has shown up with four hearts so his last two trumps are drawn and the ten of clubs is led to dummy's ace.'

'The knave does not fall until the third round so West blocks the suit and has to take the fourth club. Eventually two spades are lost.'

'What a sad and bad way of playing the hand, and how richly deserved is West's defeat if he plays in the above manner.'

'West doesn't know that the adverse hearts are divided four and one, but he must cater for this by overtaking dummy's queen of hearts. He now loses a trump trick to South in addition to two spades, but his contract is absolutely safe whereas the play as described above results in defeat if South is void of clubs.'

Another Ruff

'At trick four South ruffs the club led from dummy and leads a spade. North wins, gives South another ruff and South makes the king of spades.'

'In saying that the contract is absolutely safe if dummy's queen of hearts is overtaken at the third trick I am assuming that the reader knows how to play the club suit so as to be sure of not losing a trick in it.'

West	East
♣ Q 10 9 6	♣ A K 5 4 3

'The proper play is to lead the six of clubs to dummy's ace. If South shows void, West leads a low club to his queen and then plays the ten through North's knave and another club.'

'If North shows void of clubs, dummy takes the ace and now finesses through South.'

Kempson says that the idea running a series of bridge quizzes occurred to him in 1939. He mentioned the matter to a friend, William Veitch, the managing director of *Aberdeen Journals*, who decided to publish one or two articles a week. Veitch was the man who in 1933 organised the first international match in Scotland: North-East Scotland versus England.

In there's a spare corner in future issues, we'll drop in the odd quiz

8

Avoiding the truly dreadful with a five-card major

IN THE LAST ISSUE we considered what to do with one no-trump hands containing 12-14 high card points and a poor-quality five-card major, J6432, for example.

Although players sit firmly in one school or another, it has become increasingly popular for Acol players to open one no-trump.

The week the summer edition of *Talking Bridge* appeared on my computer screen, my partner coincidentally picked up the following hand, which began to convince me that dealing machines have a sense of humour, writes **Rob Richardson**.

I was sitting West and opened one no-trump. Partner bid two hearts asking me to transfer to spades. He raised my second bid to three no-trumps which I converted to four spades, a good contract.

In addition to losing a heart you will also lose a spade; if you successfully finesse the spade king you will still lose a trick to the 7, 8, 9 or 10.

Freak distribution

To make the contract you still have to limit the minor-suit losers to one, feasible barring freakish distribution of the defence's cards.

The clubs hold the best chance. Our hand was as follows: I was sitting West.

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

I would attempt to establish a fourth club in order to throw away a diamond. There is a 75% chance that either the spade

or club finesse will work. There is the additional chance that when North wins a trick he will hand you the contract by leading a diamond or a club so you don't have to take the finesse.

Obviously, a friendly defence can't be taken for granted.

Unfortunately, my partner dealt and there was a risk that he would open one no-trump.

Had he done so, I can see nothing other than three no-trumps, a truly dreadful contract, doomed on the inevitable heart lead.

Fortunately, my partner had been listening and knew how grumpy I get when they open a no-trump with a five-card major, so we reached the best contract.

Isolation

Now look at East's hand in isolation. Some might argue that they cannot open one spade as they have no rebid.

But you do have a rebid. Look at what could happen after East opens one spade.

West could pass which means East doesn't get another bid. Or West could bid one no-trump which East would pass.

Or West might raise the Spades which East can either pass or raise to game.

Alternatively, partner could bid a new suit at the two level, provided opener realises that it shows 10+ points (as in Old English Acol). East can now bid an invitational two no-trumps.

A brief explanation. Note that the two no-trump rebid does not show 15-16 points. With those values East would go straight to game.

If you play Modern Acol, partner's two of a suit response may only be nine points, which makes the decision either to bid or to invite game more difficult.

9

Last Word

Talking Bridge's this and that diary

CLUB DUPLICATE BRIDGE SESSIONS are sometimes anything but straightforward. From the Howell movement that nobody thinks will work, but always does, to things that go missing.

This can be anything from cards on the floor under chairs, pens, pencils, travellers and curtain cards. But not to my knowledge, until now, whole hands.

On this occasion the move had not only been called, but everybody was already sitting in their new places, when one table called for the director.

'I've got no cards,' East said.

After a startled silence the nearby tables caught on and started to laugh.

There were various suggestions as to where people should look for the cards: in someone's pocket, in a handbag, or more graphically in Oscar Wilde's handbag, more correctly in Lady Bracknell's.

When at last the director was able to make herself heard, she said, in a rather plaintive voice:

'Who's just played boards 13-15?'

No volunteers but, still laughing, people politely looked in the more obvious places, without success. It was beginning to look like a spectacular card trick, not that there was a magician present. I even got to thinking that perhaps the cards would turn up in a new packet of tea bags with the contract and score marked with a felt-tipped pen.

If everything else failed perhaps the director would need to hunt out the curtain cards and set the hand up again.

But then: Eureka!

They were hiding in a bidding box.

Bizarre misunderstandings

Andrew Robson, who will head for Norfolk in February next year, is always worth listening to, so make sure you don't miss out on his February 18 Master Class at

the Costessey Centre. Some of his fans tell me that they get even more educational value from his card play than his bidding.

Like all top players Andrew is not infallible and has found himself in some bizarre situations and suffered just as much from misunderstandings as any keen club player.

Tony Forrester

He is particularly known for the successful partnerships he has developed over the years.

When he no longer qualified for junior tournaments, Tony Forrester proposed that they form a partnership.

It lasted seven years and was highly successful. In addition to winning as a pair they were in the team which won the European Open Championship in 1991.

Having won the Cap Gemini with Tony, Andrew won it twice more with Zia Mahmood. With David Bakhshi, he won the Gold Cup in 2002 and two years later he won it again. Since then he won it in 2007, 2009 and the three years between 2012-14.

Toughest of all

In the United States, he partnered Rita Shugart and, in 1998, was the first Briton, with Tony Forrester, to win a US Major, the Reisinger, said to be the toughest of them all. They also won the following year.

The Robson-Forrester partnership was revived in 2014 and they played together as part of the England team in that year's European Open Championship coming third. Victory qualified the team for the 2015 World Championships finals.

Kibitzer