

Bridge News

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Jordan Chodorow



As your President, I am here to serve you. If I can do anything to enhance your enjoyment of our great game, please let me know at President@D23ACBL.org.

At the time of this writing, ACBL is down to two candidates for the Spring 2029 NABC: San Francisco or...us! Specifically, downtown Los Angeles. Site visits have been conducted (our prospective hotel is the Westin Bonaventure) and more may be known after the BoD's Zoom meeting on April 15. I will report to you as soon as I learn of any decision.

Spring 2029 will be the second of ACBL's new "Championships for All" NABCs (Fall 2028 being the first), in which all events at every level culminate in national championships. San Francisco is a great city to visit and has been awarded NABCs many times in recent years, but what a statement we could make that bridge is back in Los Angeles! So much of the story of bridge has been written here.

On behalf of our District, I have expressed strong enthusiasm for the possibility of our hosting an upcoming NABC, and supreme confidence in our great members and volunteers to come together to do the hard work (and it will be a ton of work) of putting on a spectacular NABC. Whether we get it this time or not, I am heartened by our being a finalist and hopeful that it will happen sooner than later.

Getting back to D23 matters, the Board met in March to discuss a number of items. One is the possibility of securing tourism credits for our tournaments that bring visitors to our District. At a meeting of district presidents, several of my peers

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Regional Director's Report

by Cornelia Gould



I have now returned from our Board meetings in St. Louis, and an ACBL National Board Report, as well as draft Minutes, have been prepared. Here are some of the highlights, other than the topics that I covered in the March 2026 newsletter.

ACBL Finances: ACBL net assets increased during the 2025 fiscal year, with a year-end total of \$12.58 million. Revenue came in slightly below budget; however, this was offset by expenses also coming in under budget, resulting in a positive bottom line for the year.

Membership: There was a 5% decline in membership year over year, dropping from 124,076 to 117,813. The ACBL is focusing on membership retention and promoting new memberships in order to hopefully slow the decline, which is mainly caused by our membership aging out. We need to bring more young people into the game!

Online Ethical Oversight: The ACBL continues to use EDGAR (Everyone Deserves a Game Above _____)
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reported securing thousands of dollars in such government grants (often from hotel tax revenues). Our Tournament Coordinator, Carolyn Hannas, is beginning to look into tourism credits. If you have any experience with them, I'd love to hear from you.

As you are aware, D23 will not be holding its traditional midsummer "Bridge Week" regional in 2026 or, almost certainly, 2028. But we are looking into the possibility of a regional earlier in the year in 2028, and perhaps in 2027 as well - in addition to Bridge Week 2027. We know that our members want lots of opportunities to go for the gold, and we're hard at work on it.

Don't miss the Unit 557 (Long Beach) STaC at the Long Beach Bridge Center at 12:30pm each day from April 20 through April 25. The LBBC is also hosting a Unit Game at the same time the day before the STaC, April 19. Whether it's there or elsewhere, I look forward to seeing you at the table soon.

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Reproach) to detect online cheating. So far, 50,795 layers have been screened. (It is expected that the remainder of our members who played online since 2020 will all be screened by May of this year.). Of those screened, 1,812 players (a current rate of about 3.5%) have been identified by EDGAR, and have been charged or issued Official Warnings. It should be emphasized that this process benefits bridge. We all deserve to play in games that do not involve cheating.

Bridge Committee: there is an ACBL Bridge Committee that is working on the refinement of the Masterpoint system to rationalize the awarding of Masterpoints across all events. It is hoped that this will motivate players to increase their participation at clubs and tournaments and online.

Regional Tournament Planning Guide: finally, as mentioned in my article last month, we now have a detailed Regional Tournament Planning Guide which has been prepared by the ACBL. It can be accessed on the ACBL website, using this link:

<https://web2.acbl.org/documentLibrary/units/RegionalPlanningGuide2026.pdf>

Feel free to contact me if you have questions, or issues or concerns that you would like to have directed to the ACBL Board.

Bridge Jeopardy by John Jones

Category: Celebrities Who Played Bridge In LA

And the answer is ...

\$100 – This man scored 100 points in an NBA game, lead the Lakers to an NBA Championship, and also excelled in volleyball and track. In bridge he partnered the great Bill Sides.

\$200 – This actor and comedian was best known for his lead role in Get Smart in which he played Maxwell Smart. He played a lot of bridge in the LA area, but sometimes his contracts "Missed it by *that* much".

\$300 – This switch hitting first baseman/outfielder played for the LA Dodgers between 1964 and 1972 after attending USC and Claremont McKenna College. A good bridge player, he would frequently show up at LA bridge clubs without a partner, and the club would find him a partner.

\$400 – He was the only person to have been the head football coach for the UCLA Bruins, the LA Rams and the LA Chargers. He coached two Heisman winners, Terry Baker and Gary Beban. In bridge, he partnered actor Omar Sharif in a celebrity partnership and played locally with the great Gerry Bare. In football, he was known for his trick plays. In bridge, he was solid and took his tricks.

\$500 – This great concert pianist and music composer (*Midnight on the Cliffs, March of the Lunatics*) frequently played piano a in trio with violinist Jascha Heifetz and the cellist Gregor Piatigorsky. In bridge he was a Life Master and played in a celebrity bridge game with Don Adams, Les Brown and Joan Benny (Jack's daughter). He won an Open Pairs in China in 1991. He frequently played at the Wild Whist Bridge Club with LA Times Bridge Columnist Alfred Sheinwold.

(Solutions to Bridge Jeopardy are on
page 9. No peeking!)

The Teacher's Corner

Bidding – Art or Science?

by Dan F. Oakes

Some people who have known me a while know that before I was a bridge bum, I was a chess bum. A question that is often asked of chess is, “Is it an art or a science?” My answer to that question is the same for bridge as it is for chess – Yes.

There are many situations in which the scientific aspect of bridge shows up – e.g. probability theory, specific detailed bidding sequences, an inevitable squeeze after the distribution has been ascertained, just to name a few. The art shows up in multiple contexts as well, but the one I want to focus this article on is hand evaluation, specifically with respect to the decision of whether or not to open the bidding when light on high card values.

The 4-3-2-1 HCP (High Card Points) system was popularized by Milton Work in the 1920s and 1930s, and re-popularized by Charles Goren a couple of decades later, but it was actually first published by Bryant McCampbell in a book called *Auction Tactics* (How many of you knew that?) in 1915. It's pretty good, but it's not perfect. Alternate, somewhat more complicated systems have been developed to address its problems, but that's beyond my scope. My point here is that relying on it exclusively (as newer players often do) is too much science and not enough art.

One reason for that is that distribution matters. 5-5 hands are better than 4333 hands. So along came Marty Bergen and the “Rule of 20” (You add your HCP to the length of your two longest suits, and if the result is 20 or more, open the bidding. So if you have 11 HCP and your distribution is 5-4-2-2, you open ($11+5+4 = 20$), but if it's 4-4-3-2, you pass ($11+4+4 = 19$). That's an improvement (I'm not sure about a lot of things in bridge, but I'm pretty sure that considering distribution is better than ignoring distribution), but it's still all science, no art.

What I'm here to do this month is walk you through a few things I look at with a hand that's close to the open/pass border. There's no formula, no easy answer; just factors to use to weigh pros and cons. But I will say this: The ability to accurately evaluate hands – to realize when your 12-point hand is better than most 14-point hands – even though it's more complicated than adding 4s and 3s and 2s and 1s and being purely

formulaic, is a hallmark of more advanced players, and the effort you put in to avoid being a slave to HCP bridge will pay dividends. So here are a few factors to consider:

1) “Quick Tricks.” Once upon a time, it was expected that an opening bid would contain $2\frac{1}{2}$ quick tricks. Quick trick are sort of what they sound like – tricks you can take, if not immediately, then soon. $A = 1$. $AK = 2$. $KQ = 1$. $AQ = 1.5$. $K = 0.5$ (if not singleton). There are two reasons for this. The first is that the 4321 HCP system overvalues aces and kings and undervalues queens and jacks. You may notice from the example combinations above that they're really heavy in aces and kings, and jacks aren't mentioned at all. So thinking about quick tricks partially mitigates the weighting of the 4321 system. The second issue is that when you open the bidding, partner has a picture of what can be expected on defense at a rough minimum, and may decide, for instance, to double the opponents based on that. If I open an 11-count with a king, three queens, and two jacks, by the time my queens come into power, the opponents may be ruffing. But if I have AK in one suit and another ace, even though I “only” have 11 points, I'll probably be doing the sort of damage to the enemy that my partner is counting on.

2) Rebid. If I'm going to fudge on the HCP a little, I want my rebid to be as “pure” as possible. Am I ready to handle the subsequence auction, and will my partner have a clear view of my hand (other than I may owe him a jack or queen)? For instance, if I have the typical 5332 sort of hand that has to rebid a short minor after a forcing 1NT response, I don't love it so much. On the other hand, if I have a 6-card major, or a 4-card side suit, I'm making up in descriptiveness what I'm lacking in high cards – partner will know that I have a 6th card in my major. Partner won't “know” that my second suit is real if I bid 2 of a minor (I could have that 5332), but partner allows for that anyway, playing 1NT forcing, and sometimes has to bid as if I actually have that second suit – and I will.

3) Tens? The best card not accounted for in the 4321 HCP system (I know that's getting repetitive, and I know that some of you know it's commonly called the “Work” system after ol' Milton, but given that he wasn't the first to get there, I refuse to go along with naming it for him). Anyway, where was I? Oh yeah. Not all spot cards are created equal. Tens are better than twos, even

though neither is worth a HCP. Some people add fractional points, but that's veering into science and away from art. It's fine, but it's not my choice. Rather, I take note of the presence (or absence!) of tens in my hand. On average, you'll get one (four players; four tens); if you don't have any, that's a negative factor, and if you have two or more, that's a positive factor.

4) Distribution. 4333 is ugly; other distributions are prettier. My favorite fairly common distribution is 5431. It makes for good play in three different suits (If partner bids my 3-card suit, I have a ruffing value, 3-card support, and a 5-card side suit; what's not to like?)

So if I'm near the automatic opening threshold (for me, it's 13 HCP. Passing a 13 is too anti-field. There are some – not many but some – 12-point hands I'd pass), those are the four things I look at. I don't plug them into a formula; I consider them. Let's see how that might play out, from a hand at a recent sectional.

My RHO picked up the following: ♠854 ♥8 ♦AKT74 ♣AT65. She passed in second seat. I assume she is a fairly newer player, and still relying exclusively on HCP, of which she has 11. I submit that 99 of 100 experts would open this hand. The 100th is Al Roth, and the only reason he would not open isn't that he was a notorious advocate of sound opening bids, but rather that he died in 2007. Let's look at the factors I've enumerated:

Three quick tricks. That's more than most 14-point hands contain. If partner doubles the opponents at the 3-level (for instance), this hand will not disappoint on defense.

Easy rebids. I can open 1♦ and rebid 2♣, showing partner where 9 of my cards (and all of my HCP) are. Personally, I would raise 1♠ to 2♠ – 3-card support and a singleton is a fine raise. We love to nail down that 8-card major suit fit, but you can give me three trump, a singleton, and a 5-card side suit headed by the AK (with an outside entry, no less!) any day of the week. If your style is never to raise a major-suit response without four-card support, I urge you to take this hand to the three best players you know and ask what they'd rebid after 1♦ – 1♠.

Tens. I have two of them; that's more than my share. Plus, they're in my longest suits and accompanying higher honors. This is a good thing. AKTxx of diamonds and 8xx of spades is better than AK8xx of diamonds and Txx of spades. That ten is very

unlikely to be helpful in a Txx suit; it's got a good chance of being helpful as part of AKTxx.

Distribution. Did I mention that 5431 is my favorite? With a favorable trump layout, this hand actually makes six clubs opposite partner's actual hand (♠KJT ♥AQ53 ♦J ♣K9843). Our opponents got to 4♣ for a score of 150 (made 5; could have made 6) and ½ of a matchpoint. They didn't manage to get to game, undoubtedly because partner was thinking, "She's a passed hand." If the hand had been opened, the auction would have (presumably) started 1♦ – 1♥; 2♣, and now responder can bid 3NT with KJT in the unbid suit, or even raise club. Getting to any game, let alone the club slam, would have guaranteed close to an average board, with chances for a near-top in the play.

So today's lesson is...the 4321 HCP framework is a really nice tool for hand evaluation, but it's not the be-all, end-all. Don't be a slave to it.

District 23 Unit Presidents

The Presidents of our nine Units in District 23 do a lot to make *your* bridge experience better. They seldom get any thanks or even recognition. To help redress that imbalance, here is a list of the current incumbent Unit Presidents:

Unit	President
551 – Pomona – Covina	Eileen Finlay
553 – Glendale-Verdugo	Adam Barron
556 – Santa Clarita-Antelope Valley	Paula Olivares
557 – Long Beach	Leo Dittimore
559 – Pasadena – San Gabriel	Lisa Walker
561 – San Fernando	Joan Rubin
562 – West Los Angeles	Jordan Chodorow
564 – Downey-Whittier	Kent Burrell
568 – Torrance-South Bay	Carol Decordova

* Kent has resigned, but the election to replace him has not yet been held

Hey, Unit Presidents, Secretaries, Reporters: help us keep our "Unit President" listing up to date! When you hold a new election, please report the results to us!



Long Beach Unit 557



Non-Life Master Spring Sectional



Saturday, May 16, 2026

Long Beach Bridge Club

4782 E. Pacific Coast Highway

(above Big 5 - enter in rear)

Card Fees

- Entry Fee \$14 / Session or \$25/Both Sessions
- Additional \$4 Per Session for Unpaid Member

Stratifications for 500+ Pairs

Stratified by pair average

- 0 - 100
- 101 - 300
- 301 - 500

Players must be non-Life Masters and have 500 masterpoints or fewer.

10:00 a.m.

0-50 Pairs*

0-500 Pairs

2:30 p.m.

0-50 Pairs*

0-500 Pairs

Mini-Lesson 9:00 - 9:45 a.m.

Rob Preece

TOURNAMENT CHAIR

Lillian Slater

714-287-3184

lillians@gmail.com

DIRECTOR

Sean Lui

Silver Points!
Free Parking
Free Snacks
Free Coffee

ACBL Sanction# 2605377

*Stratification may be altered based on attendance



Around the Units in District 23



Pomona – Covina
by Tom Lill
www.acblunit551.org

- La Fetra Games:** Tuesdays and Fridays, 8:45
- Claremont Bridge Club:** Thursdays 9:30
- Individual:** May 2, 10:00 a.m., Ontario
- Unit Pairs Game:** May 16, 11:00 a.m., Ontario
- Unit Board Meeting:** 10:15 a.m. before the game

In the April Individual, Art Weinstein turned in a 68.2% game to top the field. Steve Andersen took second, Sofi Kasubhai third, and we had a rare three-way tie for the final spot on the honors list: Judy Mogharbel, Kiran Kumar, and Yours Truly.

Two promotions this month. Horng Yee Chou has become a Sectional Master, and Amr Elghamry has reached the exalted heights of Emerald Life Master. Congratulations to both of you.

Thanks again to Patrick Finley, for collating the masterpoint statistics for March.

At La Fetra:

1	12.68	Patrick Finley
2	12.34	Vic Sartor
3	11.06	Caryn Mason
4	9.12	Fredy Minter
5	8.76	Mary Ann Wotring
6	8.54	Lulu Minter
7	6.71	Duane Woodman
7	6.71	Kurt Trieselmann
7	7.09	Peter Kavounas
9	5.71	Steve Mancini
10	4.70	Tom Lill

And at the Claremont Bridge Club:

1	1.18	Patrick Finley
2	1.01	Wendy Wanderman
2	1.01	Barbara McLeod
4	0.93	Patrick Rogers
5	0.72	Gary Atwell
5	0.72	Duane Woodman

At La Fetra, three pairs topped the magic 65% benchmark. Lulu and Fredy Minter had the best game, 76.04%. Caryn Mason – Patrick Finley turned in a 69.31% game, and Vic Sartor – Mary Ann Wotring scored 68.75%. Other game winners were Duane “Woody” Woodman – Kurt Trieselmann, and Judy Mogharbel – Yours Truly.

Over in Claremont, only one pair made the honors list: Gary Atwell – Woody Woodman scored 66.67%. The only other winners – remember, there were only three games held in March – were Steve Andersen – Marjorie Preston.

Seven of our Unit members scored nicely at the San Diego Regional. Top honors go to Amr Elghamry, with 11.04 points. He placed 12th overall in an Open Pairs game. Next up we find Richard Parker and Peter Kavounas, who managed both a 2nd and a 3rd place finish in a bracketed teams, to bring home 8.56 points. Next up were Yours Truly and Judy Mogharbel, both of whom struggled at times, but managed one 3rd place in a bracketed teams, for 7.48 points. (Considering what those cost us they really should be platinum points or maybe even iridium points.) Finally, our rising star Cici Mougharbel placed 3rd overall in a gold rush game, along with a 5th in B in another gold rush, to bring home 7.14 points. Not a bad haul, really. That’s 50.23 points, mostly gold. (But who’s keeping track? Besides us, I mean.)

Save the dates: we are resuming our team games for the summer, this time it will be one session games followed by a BBQ lunch. We’ll start at 9:30 instead of 11:00, so that we finish right around ... duh ... lunch time. The dates will be June 13, July 11, and August 22.

For our Hand of the Month, we return to the Laurel and Hardy School of Bridge for a real laugh. This time it is not the deal that is hilarious, it’s the auction. It’s IMPs, only we are vulnerable.

I’ll give you only my hand to start with:

♠ J ♥ 10 ♦ K Q 10 x x ♣ A Q J 10 x x

Yes, another of those semi-balanced hands I’m so fond of.

Despite being a 4-loser hand, I decided it was not quite worth a reverse, and opened 1♦. Partner bid

1♥. I rebid 2♣ of course, and partner now called 3♠, showing a good hand and a real spade suit. Oh, boy!. A nice misfit. I rebid 4♣, and partner replied 4NT. Well now! Partner must have a real moose over there. We were playing 1430 so 5♣ showed one key card for clubs. After some thought, partner said 5♦ – apparently looking for the trump Queen. Well, I had it, but 6♦ goes past our presumed trump suit, so 6♣ it is. Partner corrected to 6♦, I passed (having no alternative!), and I saw the following layout:

♠ A K x x
♥ A x x x
♦ A x x
♣ x

♠ J
♥ 10
♦ K Q 10 x x
♣ A Q J 10 x x

Well, I hear you thinking, that auction doesn't seem TOO outlandish. Wait! Here is the full auction, annotated:

Me	Partner
1♦ (1)	1♥
2♣	3♠ (2)
4♣ (3)	4NT (4)
5♣ (5)	5♦ (6)
6♣ (7)	6♦ (8)
pass	

The explanations:

- (1) Not quite good enough to reverse; I might be wrong! Haven't been right yet this tourney.
- (2) Good hand, a real spade suit.
- (3) Bidding my shape, more or less. But partner had a TIA and thought it was Gerber!
- (4) Showing her 3 aces, but interpreted by her hapless partner as Blackwood for clubs!
- (5) One key card for clubs, but interpreted as a King-ask!
- (6) No idea. After the auction closed, partner said she wasn't sure how to show Kings. I replied, "uhhh, I never asked about Kings," whereupon the bidding comedy of errors came to light. Of course, the correct bid to show one King is 5♥.
- (7) Signing off.
- (8) Also signing off!

Truly, an auction that the Rueful Rabbit and Timothy the Toucan would be proud of.

6♦ made; the ♣K was offside but everything broke tolerably well. +1370. The other table, on a somewhat more sensible auction, played 3NT, making 4. Bridge: *such* a simple game!

And here is a late-arriving addition to our comedy act. This is one of the most awesome hands I've ever held:

♠ 8 7 6 2 ♥ 8 7 ♦ 8 7 6 ♣ 6 5 4 2

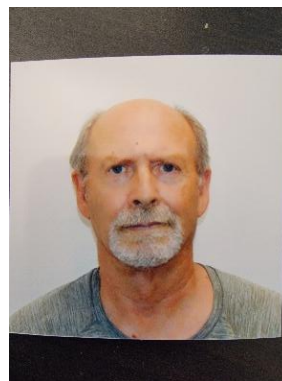
Not only a true Yarborough, but not so much as a nine in sight! If my calculations are correct, the odds of picking up an 8-high hand are roughly 1 in 50,880.

Just for the record, the opponents on this deal were cold for 13 tricks in every denomination except hearts. Alas, played in their 5-0 heart fit, they would only take 10 tricks due to the 8-2 trump split. Poor babies!

Believe it or not: I once held an even worse hand! It was back in my college days, (i.e., more than a few weeks ago), so the exact hand is lost in the mists of time. But I recall that it had ONE eight-spot and NO sevens!

Given that our publishing date is April 15, this seems like an appropriate ...

Quote for the month: The best way to teach your children about taxes is to eat 30% of their ice cream." (attributed to Bill Murray)



Santa Clarita- Antelope Valley by Don Dachner

The Santa Clarita Bridge Club has games at the Newhall Community Center on Fridays and Wednesdays at 10 AM.

The Friday game is an open game with around 12 tables.

Our Wednesday game features about six tables and is primarily for those in the learning stage, though everyone is welcome. At the Wednesday game, you can take back a bid or ask questions as things happen. There are also mentors at every table to assist.

Both games are free to attend.

On both days at 9:30, there is a half-hour lesson covering various subjects such as 1430 or defense topics usually attended by 10 - 20 people and is usually taught by Ruth Baker but there have been other teacher volunteers such as Beth Morrin who talked about revokes and how the law works.

March results for Friday's game

March 6th

NS	Bill Langlois and Donna Davidson	73%
EW	Carol Provost and George MacDonald	64%

March 13th

NS	John Langer and David Khalieque	68%
EW	Ted Maki and Beth Morrin	61%

March 20

NS	Hani Abraham and May Abagi	66%
EW	Gary and Carol Trendera	62%

March 29

NS	Bill Langlois and Donna Davidson	61%
EW	Hani Abraham and May Abagi	69%

Getting to know Don Dachner

Growing up in Davis, CA, I was immersed in the world of bridge from a very young age; my father owned and directed two local clubs and wrote a weekly bridge column for the newspaper.

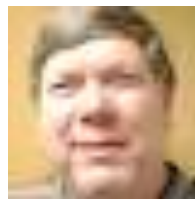
My mother began teaching me to play in 2000. We practiced against Microsoft robots, and she would frequently call me on the landline to ask, "Do you know what you just did wrong?"

I eventually enrolled in an "Easy Bridge" course with 20 other students, where I learned the fundamentals. This led to playing with experienced players four nights a week. Over time, I achieved the rank of Life Master and passed the director exam.

However, after meeting my girlfriend—who did not play—I drifted away from the game for ten plus years.

When I returned to face-to-face bridge at the Newhall Community Center, I realized how much time had passed. I remember picking up a hand with over 22 points and saying aloud, "I'm supposed to do something here, but I have no idea what #(%*^Q!!!"

It is wonderful to be back in the game and directing as well. Outside of bridge, I graduated from UC Davis. I spent 35 years in the technology industry as an applications developer and database administrator.



Long Beach by Leo Dittmore

www.acblunit557.org

www.LongBeachBridge.com

Sorry, nothing from Long Beach this month.

San Fernando Valley by Alan Curtis

Congratulations to our new Rankers:

Gold Life Master - Nancy Zeller

Regional Master - Carol Goldman

Club Master - Chuan Wang

Exciting news!!! The 750 club in Woodland Hills will be starting a 99er game on Saturday, May 9th! The game will start at 10:30am and run concurrent with the Open game. Fee for this game will be \$10 per person.....hope to see all of you new players there!

Downey-Whittier by Daniel F. Oakes

There was once a chess tournament that Gary Kasparov dominated so thoroughly that everyone else in the event had a score below 50% (Linares 2001; Kasparov was 7.5/10, and the other five players were all tied with 4.5/10). Jack Rainsberry & Bill Skupen pulled a Kasparov on March 4th. Their score of 72% pushed the rest of the field under 50%. Tied for 2nd with 47% were Gabby Sill & Jon Yinger, Mike Ventri & Steve Hough, and Larry Lee & Carol Stone. Lee and Stone also got 2nd B to themselves (Rainsberry & Skupen still qualifying for Strat B).

Slightly less dominant but still good enough for 1st overall was their performance a week later, with a mere 60%. 2nd E/W were Raj Ramchandani & John Dobson. 1st N/S half a matchpoint behind Skupen & Rainsberry were Dan Oakes & Mike Ventri. 2nd N/S and 1st B overall were Bob and Linda Krause.

On the 18th, Sill & Yinger turned in the month's second 70+% game, with 70.83 out distancing the rest

of the field by a country mile. Ventri & Hough were 2nd. John Jones & Ivan Claman tied with Kiran Kumar & Avice Osmundson for 3rd. The Krauses took 1st B, and Ramchandani & Dobson were 1st C and 2nd B.

Ramchandani & Dobson got into the winner's circle a week later, half a matchpoint ahead of Oakes & Ventri. Yinger and Osmundson were a close 3rd, and Anita Frost and Toni Hoffman were 4th A, 2nd B, and 1st C.

West L.A. by Elisa Leonelli

Interview with Alan Curtis

Where are you from originally?

I'm from Santa Monica, I'm a Los Angeles native.

How old were you when you learned about bridge, and who taught you?

I was about 35. We went for a friend's wedding to St. Louis County, Missouri, to a town called Florissant. The first night we got there, we were playing cards, rummy and fun-type games. And the bride's mother -her name was Annabelle, she's no longer with us- asked, "Does anyone here play bridge?"

And I come from a family that had a few people who played bridge, my aunt and uncle, my grandmother and grandfather, and my dad dabbled a little bit. I also used to read the bridge column. I had no idea what I was reading, but it was fascinating. So I raised my hand, and I said, "I want to learn." And my friends, who were playing rummy, got up and walked away. They wanted no part of it. It was about 10 o'clock at night, I was there with Annabelle until 4 o'clock in the morning. I was absolutely fascinated for six hours.

That's great.

Then I went and watched her at a national tournament in Las Vegas. I sat behind her for four straight days, two sessions a day. That's how I learned. I never took any formal lessons.

What do you find so exciting, intriguing, even addictive, about the game of bridge?

For me, it satisfies my competitive edge. I was an athlete growing up.

What sport did you play?

I mainly played basketball and baseball, but I really played all sports. I was a very competitive

athlete, so playing bridge satisfies my competitive side. It also takes advantage of the things I do well. I know numbers, I'm an accountant by trade. And I love card games.

What other card games do you play?

I play Hearts. I play Pinochle. I play rummy games. I play Euchre.

Poker?

I do play poker. I love poker.

Now you are the owner of a bridge club in Woodland Hills. When did that start?

Thirteen years ago, in 2013. I bought the Bridge Academy II in Thousand Oaks. I shut that down when COVID hit. I bought the 750 Club six months before the pandemic, which was bad timing for me. That club used to average 22, 23 tables. Now we average seven.

How is the experience you gained running your club in the Valley going to help the Beverly Hills Bridge Club, since you accepted our Board's offer to take over as manager?

I've done a lot of things at the other club that I hope to bring here. One is to run more charity games and upgraded master point games to get people excited about earning 3 or 4 points rather than 1 or 2. I've also created a family environment. There's so many players that know what's going on in the lives of the other players. And I think that's really cool. I mean, we spend 3 and a half to 4 hours together, 4, 5, 6 days a week. So it's a shame not to get to know our players a little bit. We've created a nice camaraderie at the 750 Club and I'd love to do the same thing here at the Beverly Hills Bridge Club, in good time.

Bridge Jeopardy Questions

\$100 – Who is Wilt Chamberlain?

\$200 – Who is Don Adams?

\$300 – Who is Wes Parker?

\$400 – Who is Tommy Prothro?

\$500 – Who is Leonard Pennario?

Problem Solvers' Panel

John Jones is moderator. Mark Bartusek, Jordan Chodorow, David Grainger, Daniel Korbel, Mister Mealy-mouth, Rick Roeder, and Jon Wittes are panelists.

As always, panelists are playing 5-card majors, 15 - 17 NT, and 2/1 GF. Beyond that, except where indicated, panelists may use any reasonable methods.

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Matchpoints
E-W Vul

South	West	North	East
1♠	pass	4♦*	pass
???			

* Splinter, GF spade raise with 4+ spades, and diamond shortness

You, South, hold: ♠Q108642 ♥AJ ♦AQJ106 ♣void

What call do you make?

We are clearly in the slam range, possibly in the grand slam range. How do we best make progress?

One panelist directly bids Blackwood.

Korbel: 4NT. I'm definitely planning on getting us to slam. The question is how to investigate intelligently. I think the best I can realistically do is to bid Blackwood and only get to 7 when we have all the keycards.

Other panelists start with a 4♥ cuebid.

Mealy-mouth: 4♥. Worth trying for slam. Time to start cue-bidding (always an ace, not just a "control").

Bartusek: 4♥. I believe that I can scientifically reach 5♠, 6♠, or 7♠.

- 1) 4♥-5♣-5♦-5♥-5♠ only since partner can pass without a high spade honor.
- 2) 4♥-5♣-5♦-5♠-6♠.
- 3) 4♥-4♠-6♠.
- 4) 4♥H-5♦/5♥-5NT.

It seems as though you are playing a partner who won't go past game to cuebid (auction 3) to have a more acceptable slam hand than a hand that did go past game to cuebid (auction 1).

Wittes: 4♥. I certainly visualize a slam, and this looks like the best starter.

Finally, some panelists choose my auction, asking for two of the top three spades and hoping it is right.

Chodorow: 5NT. Grand Slam Force. I play that 4♦ denies two fast losers in clubs or hearts. Without that agreement, I bid 4♥.

Grainger: 5NT (Clearly GSF no matter how little you play it). Just go for it.

Roeder: 5NT. While 5NT has become much more popular as "pick a slam" in the 21st Century, Grand Slam Force still applies when one suit has unambiguously been agreed upon.

<h1 style="font-size: 48px; margin: 0;">2</h1> <p style="margin: 5px 0;">Matchpoints N-S Vul</p>	North	East	South	West
	1♠	2♥	3♦	3♥
	3♠	pass	???	
	You, South, hold: ♠void ♥K8 ♦AQ108642 ♣QJ95			
What call do you make?				

The opponents' actions have helped crowd the auction. Do we try 3NT?

Chodorow: 3NT. "It's now or never."

Do we introduce clubs?

Bartusek: 4♣. It seems low percentage that 3NT is our best contract. I'd like to have five clubs for this bid, but this might be the only way to find 5♣. Partner can always make a courtesy preference to diamonds, if he desires. *It may be hard for him to envision that the discrepancy in your suit length is seven to four.*

Most of the panel agrees with me and tries rebidding the diamonds.

Korbel: 4♦. 3NT would be sick. If partner bids 4♠ I will have to pass. He won't be expecting more than a small singleton.

Mealymouth: 4♦. Bidding 'em where they are. Anything else is just looking for trouble.

Roeder: 4♦. Bidding 3NT is reasonable only when partner has the ♦K. In that case, a diamond contract should be reasonable if that is where we land.

Wittes: 4♦. 3NT could be right, but I only have one heart stopper, and a broken diamond suit, so I'll rebid my 7-bagger.

Grainger: 4♦. 3♠ should absolutely be a game force, and bidding 3NT seems like a bad idea.

District 23 Rank Changes April 2026

<p>Junior Master Eileen Baires Gary George Marie Hammond Steven Lison Luella Lloyd Michael Markley Jill O'Brien Mark Pecheck Victor M. Riehl Barbara Voron Rick Weisman</p>	<p>Sectional Master Brian M. Burdiak Horng Yee Chou Mariann Lord Judy Mathias Colette Paul Teri Unsworth</p> <p>Regional Master Nayana L. Vora</p> <p>NABC Master Hsing C. Fang Margit Hillebrand Heather S. Ho Leslie Klein</p>	<p>Bronze Life Master Fay A. Hsu</p> <p>Silver Life Master Leo D. Dittmore</p> <p>Ruby Life Master Jerry Smith William P. Taylor</p> <p>Gold Life Master Richard Jeng</p> <p>Sapphire Life Master Nancy A. Heck</p> <p>Emerald Life Master Amr O. Elhgamry</p>
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<h1 style="font-size: 48px; margin: 0;">3</h1> <p style="margin: 0;">IMPs N-S Vul</p>	North	East	South	West
	1♠	pass	2♦	5♣
	pass	pass	???	
<p>You, South, hold: ♠A108 ♥KQJ ♦Q1086 ♣A104</p> <p>What call do you make?</p>				

Several panelists made the point that the 2♦ start is out of step with the more modern theory of starting 2/1 GF auctions by bidding 2♣ if the hand is balanced. That style will require us to bid 2♣ GF on a doubleton, but has the advantage that 2♦ guarantees five. However, I was given this hand, and left the auction alone.

Mostly this comes down to competing to the 5-level, or taking what we can get by hammering 5♣. I'll start with those that make the point that partner's pass must be encouraging.

Mealy-mouth: 5♠. Showing a three-card forcing raise with a trick extra. The ace of clubs won't always be facing a void. Alas, the vulnerability precludes doubling.

Bartusek: 5♠. Partner made a forcing pass, so the 5-level should be safe. Trying to get to slam with a 5♥ cuebid (assuming partner treats it as such) seems dangerous and probably an overbid; so, it seems safest to just compete to the 5-level. I doubt that we'll collect enough of a penalty at these colors!

Chodorow: 5♠. Partner's pass suggests at least mild offensive orientation – enough for me to admit to spade support. 2♦ over 1♠ should be reserved for 5+ diamonds.

Now for the chickens who agree with me!

Wittes: Double. I actually prefer 2NT or 3NT on my first bid. 2NT should show 4 trumps, but I have extra values, so bidding Jacoby 2NT is not unreasonable. 3NT should show an opening no trump, though probably no 3-card support for partner, but at least it describes my hand fairly well. These bids would give partner more options over a 5♣ bid.

Grainger: Double. Why did I bid 2♦ on a 4-card suit?

Korbel: Double. Good problem. We might have a spade slam but play 5♣X opposite ♠KQxxxx ♥xxx ♦AKx ♣x. On the other hand, partner might have ♠Kxxxx ♥Axxx ♦Axx ♣x and feel they have to pass 5♣ around to us. I'm going with double as they are definitely going down and I can't underwrite 5♠. I strongly prefer the modern style of responding a "could be short" 2♣ on this hand type.

I'll finish with a panelist who makes a true statement.

Roeder: Double. You are getting soft, JJ! *Amen Brother Rick!* This would be tougher in matchpoints. As the criminally underrated Easybeats sang in 1969's "St. Louis," take the cash. *Rick oddly quotes St. Louis, and that is exactly where I got this problem. Partner held KQxxxx Axxx KJx void and 6♠ was easy with no diamond ruff available.*

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 1800 Avenue of the Stars, 12th Floor,
 Los Angeles, CA 90067
 Phone: 310-440-4100
 email thomasmlill8@gmail.com
 Editor/Designer. Tom Lill
 Managing Editor. Jordon Chodorow
 Contributing Editor. John Jones

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<h1 style="font-size: 4em;">4</h1> <p>Matchpoints Both Vul</p>	South	West	North	East
	1♥	3♦	4♣	pass
	???			
<p>You, South, hold: ♠J64 ♥AK964 ♦A876 ♣6</p> <p>What call do you make?</p>				

This is one of the ugliest hands I have ever given my poor panel. Is 4NT natural, and do we consider it if it is (I think 4NT isn't natural)? Do we try 4♦D, knowing partner may think it is encouraging? Raise on a singleton? Rebid a heart suit that doesn't have an extra card or suit solidity? Pass a forcing bid? (Thankfully no panelist seriously considered that!)

I'll start with those who hoped to survive a 4♦D call.

Mealy-mouth: 4♦. The only bid that lets partner bid 4♥ to show a "three-card forcing raise". But playing with a partner who might think otherwise, I'd bid 4NT, trusting him not to read it as a "two keys sans queen" reply to Roman Keycard Gerber for clubs. *Surely no expert would ever play that 4♣ is Gerber in this auction!* But hey, if he does read it that way, I have an appropriate hand for him anyway.

Grainger: 4♦. I don't see what else to do.

The best argument for 4♦ is:

Bartusek: 4♦. I don't see any other reasonable call. This is just a "punt" since the general principle "game before slam" applies. It's very likely that we'll end up in a 5-2 heart fit unless partner has very long clubs.

The best argument for 5♣ is:

Chodorow: 5♣. 4♦ would show strength, not directionlessness. *I didn't know directionlessness was a word, but I'm not about to argue with a four-time California Crossword champion!* If partner bids slam over 5♣ (not far-fetched at MP), the primes should make up for the stiff club.

Korbel: 5♣. Just the right amount of encouragement; everything else is much worse.

The best argument for 4♥ (my call) is:

Wittes: 4♥. Toughest problem of a tough set. I can't really pass 4♣. If partner has a doubleton heart, maybe even Qx, this might be our best shot at game. If partner has a semi-solid 8 card-club suit 5♣ could be right, but that's asking for a lot. *If partner has that hand, it may not matter what we bid since partner can take control.*

And finally, a panelist who takes the awful problem in stride and becomes a comedian.

Roeder: 4♥. End plays do not only occur at trick 11 in the play of the hand. *Yep, we get endplayed in the auction, too!*

<h1 style="font-size: 4em; margin: 0;">5</h1> <p style="margin: 0;">IMPS Both Vul.</p>	South	West	North	East
	1♣	X	1♠	pass
	???			
	<p>You, South, hold: ♠void ♥J1097 ♦KQ97 ♣AKQJ6</p> <p>What call do you make?</p>			

We finish with a decent hand that has a choice of reverses available, or declining to reverse at all.

I'll start with a panelist who doesn't like reversing on this hand.

Mealy-mouth: 2♣. Any plans I may have had to “reverse” go out the window at the first hint of a misfit. Come to think of it, how could I have wanted to reverse in the first place? I can't wait for the Master Solvers' Club to reconvene (*That is great news that Bridge World will return!*) so I can face tougher problems. Sing along with Papa John, “I can't wait ...”

The rest of the panel discuss which reverse is their preference.

Chodorow: 2♦. A reverse. A 1♦ opening with 2♣ rebid would have left me better placed, especially with only 16 (albeit comely) HCP.

Roeder: 2♦. Reverse in your stronger 4-carder as LHO's double indicates a likelihood of four hearts.

Wittes: 2♦. I have extra values and no fit for partner, so this probably looks like the best bid at this point in the auction.

Grainger: 2♦. You committed to this when you chose 1♣ versus 1♦; the choice was then, not now, (*a very good point*) but your hand is ok for this.

Korbel: 2♥. I have got to show the major or I simply don't have it. How do I figure I have enough information to suppress hearts?

Bartusek: 2♥. Scary after LHO showed strength; but we might have a vulnerable IMP game with my strong trick-taking hand. A pessimistic 2♣ might be the winning action. Ending in 3♣ probably won't be a disaster.

I'm with the 2♥ reversers on this one. We can only play hearts if I bid them now.