



A NEWSLETTER FOR TEACHERS

THE BRIDGE TEACHER

For Your Information

ABTA Annual Convention. It's time to make your plans to attend the ABTA's annual convention this summer in Washington DC, July 21-24. We had a great time in DC in 2002 and expect to have just as much fun this year. You won't want to miss it. Check out the details and sign up today at www.ABTAtHome.com.



Updated TAP at the Washington NABCs. If you are attending the summer NABCs and you haven't earned your continuing education credit by taking the updated TAP program, now's the time. The TAP will be held on the first Saturday, Sunday and Monday of the tournament for the convenience of teachers attending the ABTA Convention. Contact Dana (dana.norton@acbl.org) to sign up.

Online Teacher Listings. Many of you have filled out an application and are listed at ACBL's Find a Teacher web site. We have sent out an e-mail to those who are listed asking that you let us know if you are not teaching. We want the teachers at this site to be only those who are ready, willing and able to offer bridge lessons when contacted. If you aren't currently listed and would like to be, fill out the form at the ACBL web site (<http://fs3.formsite.com/acbl/form142291791/index.html>), e-mail it to us and we'll do the rest. Lots of teachers are getting students from this site, so why not you?

Kitty Cooper SBLS Teacher Manual. This booklet provides 16 lesson plans for school bridge and has been updated to compliment the *Bidding in the 21st Century* text. It can be downloaded free at: <http://www.acbl.org/teachers/schoolBridge.html> (scroll down the right hand column).

Spam E-mails. Recently many of us have received e-mails from various parties in Nigeria and other countries claiming that they have a daughter coming to the US who wants to learn to play bridge. These emails are 5KB and fit the pattern of all the "spam" messages we receive from overseas. Simply delete them.

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Bridge Nerds and Bridge Lingo

by Lynn Berg

Knowing a bit of the history of the game can help you get ideas across to your students. Being aware of the off-putting and confusing effect of terminology can help you untangle its mysteries.

Have you ever wondered how bridge conventions and terminology evolved? Sometimes it's obvious, like Jacoby Transfers being developed by Oswald Jacoby, but he's not the Jacoby of the currently popular Jacoby 2NT slam try in the majors—that's his son, Jim Jacoby.

Did you know that Sam Stayman didn't invent but rather popularized the basic convention we all use? George Rapee was the actual inventor. And Lebensohl was not invented by the well-known pro of the same name; in fact, I've heard that he doesn't even like the bid! And who would think that the British system called Acol is not some interesting acronym but just the name of the street where a bridge club was located.

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Bridge Nerds and Bridge Lingo

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Let's say that you want to introduce the idea of splinters. This is one of the few conventions known to have been invented by a woman, Dorothy Hayden Truscott. She called it "an unusual jump in a short suit to show trump support and a good hand." That's a lot to put on a convention card, so the popular name developed (I don't know by whom). These little facts will help fix the idea for the students.

Then there's the teaching nightmare of the term "weak two." Needless to say, students find the idea of a weak bid daunting and scary. So don't call it that. Call it a "six card preempt." I usually introduce this concept with bridge history. Over the 49 years I have been playing bridge, two bids have changed a lot. We used to open "strong twos" in all suits, and most of us played the bids as game forcing. But we didn't get to use these bids very often, and so the requirements for making them

were lowered by most players—the good ones first, and the rest of us eventually. Then the idea of 2♣ as the only strong bid came along, allowing us to preempt at the two level in the three other suits. Which do we get more: huge hands within a trick of game, or hands with less than opening values and six card suits?

This excursion into bidding history will prepare your students for the scary act of bidding at the two level with 10 points. You can make the same point with weak jump overcalls. The name is scary, so introduce it along with six-card preempts. Tell your class that they can also make a jump overcall (leave out that word weak) to preempt the bidding and deliver a clear message to partner about their hand.

Reverse Drury is another unfortunately named convention, since few of today's new players ever heard of old-fashioned Drury.

The history of the Drury convention might help your students get it straight. Originally 2♣ was used by the partner of a third seat opening in any suit to ask if partner had opened light. This was in the days when all opening bids promised four card suits. 2♦ was the cheap

answer which said, "I opened light." That's not the style today. Point out that Drury now appears in the Major Suit box on the convention card. Today 2♣, and for some players also 2♦, shows a limit raise in partner's major. The "reverse" part (oh, don't you love bridge nerd lingo?) is that repeating the major is the weak statement, and any other bid, including 2♦, shows a better hand.

Anecdotes about the development of conventions will help your students remember what you're teaching. (Read Eric Murray's story about the Drury convention being invented primarily because he kept opening Yarboroughs when playing with Doug Drury and they kept getting bad boards at <http://www.acbl.org/play/in-their-own-words.php>.) If your students are older players, maybe a group who learned years ago and are returning to the game, you will also be validating their memories of what the game used to be like. You should recognize and acknowledge how much bridge has changed. You will also be showing your mastery of the game with your knowledge of its history. And you will reassure your students when they find the terminology difficult if you give them ways to help remember.

Note: There are more anecdotes in the "In Their Own Words" series of articles that you can access at the ACBL web site at: <http://www.acbl.org/play/in-their-own-words.php>. Use the drop down menu to see the various conventions featured here.

LEARNING CURVES

by Bill Buttle



"No, Mrs. Jenkins, in counting up your losers you do NOT include your partner!"



Full Service Lessons

by Marti Ronemus

So, you ask, why am I looking so tired these days? And why am I muttering to myself so much? It's because our club teaching program has gotten completely out of control. How this happened, I'm not sure, but we kept adding lessons and workshops. And so this is what my week looks like.

We have four types of lessons we give each week, plus monthly "specials."

Three of our games begin with an "Aerobic Warm Up" hand. This is an interesting hand we've either played at the club in the previous week, something from Eddie Kantar's collection, or stumbled across from any other source. We give each table a prepared board, have them bid it to a contract and leave their bidding cards on the table for discussion later. Sometimes we let them play in the contract they've reached; other times, after their bidding, we ask them to play in a certain contract. It depends on the point of the hand. We then discuss the bidding, the opening lead, the play and the defense. We have a copy of the hand and its analysis printed on the back of their hand records of the game. (Did I mention we have a Duplimate? We couldn't live without our Duplimate!)

We encourage players to find the same theme in hands they play that day, which enhances the learning. This, as you can imagine, gives rise to much discussion during the game. As we use this teaching technique

in limited games, we're glad to hear them discussing and learning. What they discover themselves is of course the most valuable knowledge of all.

Our next type of lesson is the "Bidding Quiz," which runs about 25 minutes to a half-hour, pregame. We have eight hands with partially completed bidding sequences on the board. We then discuss "what next" in the bidding. We try to have a central theme, like Negative Doubles, Reevaluations, Help Suit Game Try, whatever. The emphasis is on visualizing the unseen hands in the sequence to help decide "what next." Again, we encourage the players to find examples of similar sequences in the game they play after the lesson. This is primarily for our intermediate group.

And now we get into workshops. Once a week we hold a 2-hour Play of the Hand or Defense Workshop. We have an introduction of concept, and then hands to bid and play to practice the concept. This workshop is geared to the 199er crowd and focuses on basics, basics, basics.

Also weekly is the Smorgasbord Workshop. This starts out with an Aerobic Warm Up hand, is followed by a bidding quiz, and then a dissection of four hands with a single theme. This is for a more advanced group.

Finally, we have our monthly specials. Two Friday mornings a month, we have 2-hour workshops for Beginners through 99ers. The subjects can be bidding, defense or play. The goal is to give beginners a solid foundation and bring them up through the ranks.

Another monthly special is Bridge

University. This is our most advanced offering. We include a single-subject workshop, and a 12-board game using hands that illustrate the subject. We also have lunch. It runs from 9 a.m. to 1-1:30 p.m.

The only way for a small teaching staff (there are 2-1/2 of us) to handle this explosion is to have access to great material. And we do.

First, heartfelt thanks to the ACBL. The Education Department has dozens of workshops and lessons for us. I've used them all and sleep easier because of them. Next, I'm lucky enough to have many workshops from Pat Harrington. Great stuff with great hands. And of course I've thanked Eddie Kantar in print and person for his fabulous hands.

But the heart of our lessons is the "stuff" we have collected, sorted, saved, organized (by that I mean neat piles on my desk!) from anywhere and everywhere. We tear out hands from any source we find that are interesting. You know what I mean. I just found a hand in the Bulletin from a tournament that is a blindingly clear example of how choosing the right discard can pull your fat from the fire. I will ruffle through my "stuff" and find three more hands that show the same concept, and voila! A lesson. "All" I will need to do is dress up a handout and lesson plan.

There's a real advantage to having done this for 10 years now. But! To stay fresh and current isn't easy, as we all know! Perhaps other teachers know of other sources that they would be willing to share, other ways to keep our customers happy. Let's share! mronemus@comcast.net



THE BRIDGE TEACHER'S BOOKSHELF

Teaching Two-Over-One

By Pat Harrington

Are your students clamoring for a course on two-over-one? With all the material available to help you, there has never been a better time to teach 2/1. All are available from Baron Barclay catalog (1-800-274-2221; www.baronbarclay.com). Shipping is extra.

There are two recent additions to the list of 2/1 materials. The newest comes from Audrey Grant and Eric Rodwell and is part of the official Better Bridge Series. The format of the student text, *2 Over 1 Game Force*, is consistent with earlier books in the series: Four chapters, each with exercises and four lesson deals, plus an additional 16 practice deals at the end. Appendices provide a brief description of some common conventions used with 2/1.

Chapter 1, "Introduction to 2/1 Game Force," has excellent example deals that demonstrate how the system makes finding the best game easier. This lesson clearly shows why so many players are committed to using 2/1.

Chapter 2 covers 1NT Forcing, which is an integral part of 2/1. A great deal of the lesson is a review of basic bidding, which frequently applies in these auctions. I found that review to be sorely needed by some students in my recent 2/1 course — and these were players who intend to use 2/1.

The third chapter deals with rebids after a 2/1 response. A couple of points of interest in this lesson are that opener's rebid of his major suit shows a six-card suit because opener can rebid 2NT with a balanced hand regardless of stoppers. Many experts look at the 2NT rebid as more stopper oriented, which creates the unappetizing side effect of opener having to rebid his five-card major. In an article in the January/February 2008 issue of Better Bridge Magazine, Eric Rodwell suggests that "if opener can't support responder's suit, doesn't have a second suit to bid and doesn't have a six-card or longer suit to rebid, opener bids 2NT."

The last chapter is entitled "The Choice between Game and Slam" and deals primarily with control

bidding. This is a topic where students have usually had limited exposure. The principle of fast arrival is also introduced.

The cost of a single copy is \$19.95 with price breaks for quantity orders at 12 and 20 books (at \$9.98 each). As of this writing, no teacher manual or coded cards are listed to accompany the book. For more information, e-mail education@betterbridge.com. This is an excellent introduction to 2/1, but more lessons and more practice will be needed before the student is ready to use 2/1 in the heat of battle. I recommend this book to students who want to know what 2/1 is all about but aren't ready to use the system themselves.

Another recent release is Val Covalciuc's *Two-Over-One Game Force — The Practical Guide*. Material for an eight-week course is intended for use by teachers or as a self-teaching guide for students to use on their own. Each lesson has four illustrative deals and an additional 32 deals are provided at the end. A very brief analysis of the bidding and play is included with each deal. The eight lessons cover: 1NT Forcing; Jacoby 2NT; other major raises and raises in competition; 2/1 auctions and rebids; minor suit opening bids and inverted minors; slam bidding (Roman Keycard); and, finally, related conventions — Flannery, Reverses, Bergen Raises, Reverse Drury, and splinter bids — all in one lesson.

Teachers still have to do some planning on their own before presenting the course. The author used the 32 added deals in two follow-up lessons after the eight-week series. The material in each chapter covers approximately four one-sided pages and includes lists of bidding guidelines plus exercises and answers. Val usually leaves these exercises for homework instead of going over them in class.

These materials come in a loose-leaf notebook (\$24). You have more options by purchasing directly from Val (www.thebridgeplace.com). She offers quantity discounts and an extra 13 pages of Teaching Tips at an additional cost. The tips do not constitute a complete manual like teachers are accustomed to in the ACBL and Better Bridge materials. They discuss how to

present the material with suggested order for playing lesson deals (surprisingly not always in numerical order).

In addition to the new material, don't forget about Dee Berry's *Two Over One In A Nutshell*, a 70-page pocket-sized book jam-packed with information and sample bidding sequences (\$10). The material is great but the print is so small that one needs really good eyesight to use the book. An excellent teacher manual (with larger print!) is available for \$25. Teachers purchasing the manual will also need the "text", which the manual refers to on several occasions. The manual provides eight lesson deals for each of the eight lessons: 1NT Forcing, 2/1 In action, Jacoby 2NT, responses to 1♣ in 2/1, responses to a strong 2♣ opening bid with 2♥ negative, responder's jump shifts (weak and strong), inverted minors, and Roman Keycard Blackwood. Look in Baron Barclay's catalog by author listing to find Dee's books.

For the player who intends to use 2/1 in competition, my favorite book is Paul Thurston's *25 Steps to Learning 2/1*, which sells for \$18.95. Named winner of the American Bridge Teachers' Association 2003 book of the year award, this book was reviewed in the September 2002 Bridge Teacher (available at the ACBL web site at <http://www.acbl.org/teachers/index.html>). Thurston covers basic concepts, the difference between 2/1 and standard auctions and conventions that fit particularly well with 2/1 methods. Quizzes are included at the end of each chapter. A summary of the material in the book is available in a handy booklet, *The Pocket Guide to 2/1* (\$7.95.) I recommend this book to students who are serious about learning to use 2/1.

There is even 2/1 computer software! Mike Lawrence's interactive CD, *Two-Over-One Game Force*, provides excellent advice for \$34.95. Nine chapters cover oodles of examples of bidding using 2/1 and related conventions. Then come quizzes and explanations to reinforce the material. You'll find some good lesson material here.

This spring, I gave in to pressure to teach a 2/1 course. I expected to use one of the prepared courses, but – as many of you are likely to do – I ended up going to my own bookshelf to cull material from all of the available resources to create my own course. Conventions have a variety of treatments – often area-specific – and I wanted to teach the system used by the players in my locale. I agree with a comment made in Val Covalciuc's Teaching Tips for *The Practical Guide* that she didn't want to force her own bidding preferences on students, but she did offer the pros and cons of various methods. While the basic idea of 2/1 is easy, there are areas in the system where partnership

agreement is critical, and students need to be aware of that to avoid disaster.

Before committing to teach a complete course on 2/1, know your audience and decide on your goals. Do you just want to give an overview of what 2/1 is? Start with the Grant/Rodwell material. That is best if you expect students to need lots of review of basic bidding. If your students are more experienced duplicate players who are ready to use 2/1, you will probably want to build your own course. Prepare yourself for a lot of work and research. It will help to have all the available materials on your bookshelf since you are likely to end up doing as I did and choose bits and pieces from many sources.

Don't forget that you already have a lot of good background material in both of the *Commonly Used Conventions* teacher manuals as well as the teacher manual for the *Major Suit Raises Play Courses* (all available for free download at the ACBL web site at <http://www.acbl.org/teachers/materials.html>). The transition to 2/1 will go much more smoothly if your students have already taken these courses. That allows the focus of your course to be on the components of 2/1 that they have not learned before.

It's not necessary to present every convention that is compatible with 2/1 in a single course. Some conventions can be taught as stand-alone lessons or in periodic workshops either before or after your 2/1 course (Jacoby 2NT, Fourth Suit Forcing, etc.).

You can't claim that a lack of materials is stopping you from teaching 2/1, and don't let the preparatory work scare you off. Creating the course was interesting and, as a bonus, I learned a few neat tricks for my own game along the way.



Another Step Forward for Online Bridge: Skype

by Ellen Caitlin Pomer



Ellen is founder of Bridge Forum, (www.bridge-forum.com), the largest online bridge school and co-author of the acclaimed book, published by Masterpoint Press, 'Standard Bidding with SAYC' which can now be downloaded as an ebook from <http://www.ebooksbridge.com/>.

It's a lazy day and the Oprah show is on television. You sit back while expert panelists weigh in on topics from obesity, to sexuality, to finances. Throughout, pre-arranged guests from the comfort of their homes are 'skyped' in to provide details of their situations and dialogue with Oprah, the experts and the audience, as each guest exemplifies the issues at hand.

For me, Skype allows chat from Toronto with friends and clients in Portugal, New York, Brazil and throughout the world. While many may have long distance plans, as I do, that cover the United States and Canada, it would get very pricey to have a dialogue with a client in Costa Rica. But Skype is a free program which has definitely changed the way I teach, and there is no charge for the service. The important personal touch which defines the relationship between student and teacher and the ability to ask and answer questions without the delay of typing—even for someone like me who is a very fast typist—truly enhances online teaching. One can use a webcam, but if you prefer to teach in your pajamas, the chat alone changes the dynamics of online teaching! And all you need is a headset with a microphone. So how does this work?

You go to www.skype.com and click on 'Use Skype.' The download is easy and you can choose from various languages. Naturally the company offers paid services, sells microphones, webcams and such, but you are under no obligation to go that route. Once you download it, you will see seven headings: File, Account, Call, Chats, View, Tools and Help. Each has a self explanatory list, and under tools, you can add a contact, import contacts from Outlook Express or a Yahoo account, and much more. To add a contact, all you need to know is his/her user name and a box pops up where you type in a note asking that this client/friend accept your invitation to be on one another's list. Calling is easy as you click on the

name you want to dial, and a phone appears. It rings and you are then connected.

You can also arrange conference calls for up to 24 people by going to the 'Call' heading. Given I teach individuals, partnerships and groups, conference calling is a great option. The interaction amongst clients enriches the process as questions are posed and individuals are able to mentor one another, a wonderful aspect in the teaching process.

One of my many interesting clients is Drew, a novice who will no doubt become a very solid player. He and his wife spent a month in Buenos Aires and our work continued. For him, and I quote, "Skype allows a dialogue while typing alone can be very disjointed, and I feel that I know Ellen much better because of the medium. We work hard and I also enjoy the discussions about life outside of bridge. This social as well as teacher/client relationship is important to me as I need to feel a connection to my mentors in life." Indeed Drew and his wife are off to France shortly, and we will work out time differences to continue our work.

I look back ten years, when Bridge Forum (www.bridge-forum.com) was first founded. I could not upload specific hands on topics so that lessons often felt disjointed. If fourth suit forcing did not come up with random hands, a lesson note had to suffice and thus it was an abstract concept for the student. Now, whether it is defense, declarer play, SAYC or two-over-one lessons, there is an agenda, and the client gets hands-on experience at teaching tables on Bridge Base Online (BBO) with a systematic approach.

The groups I started on BBO, specifically "Introduction to SAYC," were bound to typing. Now with both a verbal and visual capability, the true comfort of taking lessons from one's home or office, from one part of the world to the other, has yet again opened opportunities for online teaching.

Alas, the one drawback with Skype is that those with dial-up connections and only one phone for the computer seem to have difficulties utilizing Skype. However I have found that over time the quality of the connection via Skype has improved dramatically, and perhaps this hurdle with dial up connections will be resolved.

However comfortable it may be to play or teach online, we need to continue to encourage our students to get out and take advantage of live bridge. For sure, balance makes the bridge experience that much more enjoyable.

The ACBL is very busy working with Patty Tucker to develop youth bridge. Patty signed on last year to be the ACBL's Youth Coordinator, and she has been doing a great job. If you have questions, ideas or concerns, you can contact Patty at: wimsey@mindspring.com.

It's a great time to be involved in teaching bridge to young people and here's why...

Youth NABC. The second Youth NABC is about to be held. The dates are July 30, July 31 and August 1 – the last weekend of the summer NABCs in Washington DC. Following the success last July of the first Youth NABC in Atlanta GA, teachers across North America are getting their students ready to participate in this wonderful event. It's not too late to plan to bring some of your students to Washington. Check for details at www.youthnabc.org.

Youth Division. During the Houston NABC, the ACBL Board of Directors agreed to develop a Youth Division for players under the age of 20. This bridge program will work in conjunction with the Junior Division which now will focus on players ages 20 up to 26. Both programs are dedicated to providing bridge activities that will nurture the interests of these special groups.

Youth & Junior Ambassadors. You have until June 1 to nominate a deserving youth or junior player to be recognized as a Youth Ambassador or a Junior Ambassador. In an effort to make Youth Bridge and Junior Bridge as good as it can be, this program, designed to reward outstanding youth members and outstanding junior members for their efforts on behalf of youth and junior bridge, has been established. Nominations can come from any ACBL member in good standing over the age of 25. Details on the criteria for this award can be found in the Unit/District section of the ACBL web site.

All nominations for the Youth Ambassadors and the Junior Ambassadors must be approved by the respective District Director and then forwarded to the Education Department (education@acbl.org) for confirmation. Appointments will be made each year at the summer NABC.

Bridge Teachers of Youth. If you are teaching young people or even thinking about it, check out this web site – www.btfy.org. This site has an almost endless supply of material to help you run successful bridge programs for young students. Patty Tucker has managed to put in one place just about everything that exists on the subject of Youth Bridge.

Youth and Junior Advocates. Another part of the new Youth Division and the updated Junior Division is the creation of a volunteer position in

each to help youth and junior members communicate their interests, ideas and concerns to the ACBL Board and ACBL management. Here's a job description:

- ◆ Solicit constructive ideas from the Youth or Junior Division members to improve the ACBL Youth or Junior Bridge Program.
- ◆ Prepare a report which presents these suggestions for the consideration of the ACBL Board's Junior Committee.
- ◆ Prepare a trimester report with any results on these suggestions and on youth or junior activities, upcoming events and youth or junior news items suitable for the Youth4Bridge web site.

Youth and Junior members interested in this position can apply to Education@acbl.org by submitting a one-page report on how they qualify and the names and contact information for two sponsors.

Activities for Bridge Teachers of Youth at the Summer NABC. Each NABC Patty Tucker and the ACBL Education Department have been hosting a workshop for people interested in youth bridge. This program will be offered again in Washington on Sunday morning July 26 at 10 a.m. We also will offer a continuing education seminar at 5 p.m. that same day called "Teaching Young People." We hope to see you there.

Youth4Bridge.org. This is the name of the new youth bridge web site. It is currently being built and is expected to be up and running by the start of the Washington DC NABCs. Please help us get our young people to this site.

Update on YOUTH BRIDGE

SEE THE TOP TEN TIPS ON PAGE 8

TOP TEN TIPS FOR RUNNING A SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL PROGRAM

Favorite Age – 5th and 6th grade Elementary students are great.

Age Matters – Teach 4th graders or younger only if their math and concentration skills are good.

Timing is Everything – Teaching one hour once a week is tough. You barely get started before the class is over. The kids will forget everything they learned by the next week.

Private School Pluses – Students are more focused; classes tend to be more disciplined, structured and pleasant.

Don't Reinvent the Wheel – The Successful Programs booklet will show you what others have discovered already. (Get a copy from education@acbl.org)

Kids just want to have fun! – Competition is the fun part of bridge. The kids are ready to play, so make it happen!

Year Round Classes – If you stop teaching and playing after three months, the kids will find a 'new' hobby.

Get the Parents Involved – Parents make sure their kids don't miss a class or a game. Help them understand the great things bridge can offer.

Expand and Conquer – The more kids involved in your program, the more chances to find partners, make friends, play and compete.

Don't Walk Alone – Your chances for success decrease if you don't start your program with a group of interested teachers and supporters.



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