

Tales of Akarana

Bidding with and without support

Welcome back to another year of stories which emanate from the regular sessions at the Akarana Bridge Club in Auckland. There's usually, well always, something of interest in the play or defence or the bidding.

It's in the bidding on which we focus this week and fairly routine but nevertheless important low-level bidding, focussing on the subject of whether you should support your partner with support and how you bid with a good hand when you do not.

No support...initially

Let's begin with the second of these situations. Getting to the 4♠ game on the following board should prove easy enough though how would **you** get there?

Board 8	♠ J 10 8 7 6	
West Deals	♥ K J 10 8 5	
None Vul	♦ Q	
	♣ J 3	
♠ 9		♠ 5 4 3
♥ A 6 4 3		♥ Q 9 2
♦ K 9 7 4 2		♦ J 8 5 3
♣ A 8 4		♣ K 6 5
		♠ A K Q 2
		♥ 7
		♦ A 10 6
		♣ Q 10 9 7 2

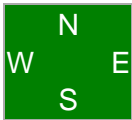
West opens 1♦. It is an absolute certainty South will bid to 4♠ IF North uses a Michaels Cue-Bid to show both majors. I like my Michaels to be at least 9+hcp with most of my hcps in my long suits. As you can see, take away relatively useless minor honours and you are left with 5 and some reasonable middle cards. Not for me and not for Malcolm Mayer either who chose to overcall his better-looking heart suit.

That bid did nothing for Malcolm's partner, Jonathan Westoby with a decent hand but not after a heart overcall. It is common to use a cue of the opposition's suit as a game try with trump support. So, that was not an option here. A change of suit, therefore, from a non-passed hand has to be a 1 round force. Usually, but not always, you are able to bid a 5+ card suit. What is important is that the bid is forcing. So, after East's pass, Jonathan bid 2♣ which enabled Malcolm to introduce his second suit and Jonathan to raise safely to

game. That ♣J, initially of questionable value, pulled full weight this time in giving the declarers an easy road to 10 tricks.

What to do with support?

What, though, of this next board? I am going to show you two of the hands and part of the bidding:

Board 6	♠ K 10 4			
East Deals	♥ J 3 2			
E-W Vul	♦ 10 9 8			
	♣ 10 9 6 4			
				
				♠ J 8 5
				♥ Q 10 9 7 4
				♦ Q J 4
				♣ Q 7
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>	
			Pass 1 ♣	
1 ♠	Pass	Pass	2 ♦	
2 ♥	3 ♣			

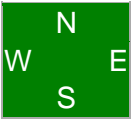
What do you think of East's pass of 1♠ and North's voluntary raise to 3♣? East's "pass" supporters would argue that their hand is "full of quacks", not the kind of honours you would put down with relish when your partner raises you to game. Yet, there do seem to be rather a lot of them!

In contrast, North has but one honour but did have 4 card trump support. 1♣ did promise 4+ clubs but everyone knew that South had a decent length in clubs by the time the 2♦ bid was made...or did they?

It seems whether or not East was theoretically correct to pass 1♠ (were this not polite company, one could even throw in 1NT as an option), the pass enabled South to describe their hand well. Then, after North's free bid, look what happened:

Board 6	♠ K 10 4
East Deals	♥ J 3 2

E-W Vul ♦ 10 9 8
 ♣ 10 9 6 4

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

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
		Pass	1 ♣
1 ♠	Pass	Pass	2 ♦
2 ♥	3 ♣	3 ♥	5 ♣
All pass			

West was never going to bid game this time and arguably should never have bid again over 2♦. However, North's free bid enabled South to jump to what proved a cold club game (who cares about clubs?), indeed with an overtrick thanks to the favourable lie of the diamond honours.

Most struggled and never made it to game either because of more aggressive opposition bidding or the lack of certainty which short club opening bids create.

So, the moral may be: know your methods when you do not have support for your partner's long suit and support partner if you can. No guarantees of success but there's a good chance.

Richard Solomon