

## English Bridge December 2001

My students are lovely, great fun to be with, but at times they do drive me to despair. I cannot recall how many times over the years, I have covered responding to an opening bid of 1NT but my students still make mistakes. I bet all teachers the world over are saying the same thing about their students.

Last week we played some hands that were meant to raise interesting points about the no trump card play. In fact the card play was fine, it was the bidding that went wrong. The first hand was quite easy to bid, I thought. How wrong could I be?

♠ 10 5	♠ A J 8 7 3	<b>West</b>	<b>East</b>
♥ A K 4	♥ 6 3	1NT	3♠
♦ O J 10 3	♦ K 7	3NT	pass
♣ O J 10 7	♣ A 9 8 5		

Two pairs bid to the best contract with this simple auction, but at table three I watched Janice as she was pulling out the green pass card over her partner's 3♠. I coughed discreetly and she looked up and innocently asked if 3♠ was forcing. Marion said 'Of course it is. You must choose between 4♠ and 3NT'. Janice bid 3NT and redeemed herself by playing the hand well. She ducked the ♥Q lead, won the next heart and played a diamond, knocking out North's entry before her hearts were set up. She did not take the losing club finesse until South was out of hearts.

At the fourth table they reached the right contract by the wrong route.

<b>West</b>	<b>East</b>
1NT	2♣
2♦	3NT

East's 2♣ Stayman bid gives no help in locating a 5-3 spade fit. It only helps in finding the 4-4 fits. West could have had ♠K Q 10 and just ♥J 4, instead of the hand he held. With 4♠ laydown, watching the opponents cash five or more heart tricks would not have been fun.

The second hand was interesting because East had 21 points and had to respond to a 1NT opening. Even if partner has only a minimum 12 point opener, the combined count is at least 33 – enough to go for a slam. But how should the slam be bid to the best contract?

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

<b>West</b>	<b>East</b>
1NT	6NT

Trixie just bid 6NT since she clearly had an awful lot of points. What's wrong with that? Her partner took the losing spade finesse and they scored up 990. Remember there is a 500 point bonus for bidding a making slam.

<b>West</b>	<b>East</b>
1NT	2♥
	pass

Clearly one of our married couples lost their way here. Margaret wanted to check if her husband had four hearts – a good idea but not done by bidding 2♥, which is a weak takeout not a slam try. 2♥ made twelve tricks for the unlikely score of +230. Another married couple found the bid of 2♣. Using Stayman to check on the possible 4-4 heart fit is fine. When partner replied 2♠ Pat was stuck so she too jumped to 6NT.

<b>West</b>	<b>East</b>
1NT	2♣
2♠	6NT

At the final table, Gill and Jean produced the best auction of the evening.

<b>West</b>	<b>East</b>
1NT	3♣
3♦	3♥

3NT 6NT

3♣ over 1NT is a strong bid. With only enough for game and long clubs, East would not bid them but instead go straight to 3NT. East actually managed to show both her suits, only going to 6NT when no fit was found. And their reward was a spade lead (the unbid suit) so Jean took the winning diamond finesse to make all 13 tricks.

**Here is a reminder of the simple responses to a 1NT opening.**

Pass	I have no long suit and less than 11 points.
2♦ 2♥ 2♠	Weak takeout. Tells partner to pass.
3♦ 3♣	Strong hand, 17+ points, with a good 5-card or longer suit. Looking for slam.
3♥ 3♠	Shows a 5-card suit. Asks for 3NT with only two of the suit or game in the major with three or four cards. May be the first bid on very strong hand.
4♥ 4♠	6-card or longer suit. Tells partner to pass.
2NT	Asks partner to bid 3NT with a maximum.
3NT or 6NT	Tells partner to pass, as this is the final contract.
2♣	Not all students have met this bid, but you will soon. Called Stayman, it asks partner to bid a 4-card major if they have one, or 2♦ otherwise. 2♣ then 3♣ is a weak takeout to clubs.