

Sleeping on the Couch

The continuing misadventures of Dave playing bridge with his wife, Anne



By Dave Caprera
Denver, Colorado

Opening Light

PG - Parental Guidance Suggested. This material may not be suitable for bridge players under the age of 25, who need no additional encouragement to bid every time it is their turn.

This month I would like to talk about the concept of "opening light." I am not addressing psychic bids or tactical third chair openings; rather, my focus is on partnership agreements. For purposes of this discussion, assume that no one is vulnerable, the form of scoring is IMPs, all the players are equally skilled, this is board one of a long match, and your side is first to bid.

Annie picked up ♠AK8x ♥K9xxx ♦x♣xxx. She passed. I opened a strong notrump, she bid Stayman, I showed four spades, and she bid game. A nothing board. After the deal was over we had the following conversation:

Dave: "I wouldn't mind if you opened that hand." (Note how diplomatic I am. I have come to understand that if I say instead, "Hey idiot, you forgot to open your hand," I am going to end up sleeping on the couch.)

Anne: "I was worried about my rebid if you had responded 1NT."

Dave: "Fair point" (just call me "Mr. Diplomacy").

To understand our conversation fully you need to know a bit about our methods. We play Meckwell Lite, a type of Precision strong club credited to Meckstroth and Rodwell, based on ideas of Paul Soloway, but not as complex as the methods that they use when playing with

each other. Our strong, artificial, and forcing bid, which shows 16+ HCP, is 1♣, and our other opening one level bids are in the range of 11-15 HCP. Our opening 1NT opposite an unpassed hand is 14-16 HCP. However, we are allowed to use our judgment and will often upgrade distributional hands.

One guideline we use in that regard is the "Rule of 19." That Rule of 19 is determined by adding your high card points to the length of your two longest suits. By this rule, the subject hand is an opening bid, equal to 19: 10 (HCP) plus five (hearts) and four (spades).

Other generally accepted means of hand evaluation can also be employed, including promoting aces and kings and discounting queens and jacks, giving more weight to honors which are married and in our longer suits, having length in major suits rather than minor suits, and counting spot cards (tens and nines, for example). I like Kaplan-Rubens hand evaluations, Annie not so much.

Why does it matter that we play a form of Precision? It goes to the limited nature of our opening one bids. It is all about the range and the size of the box into which you can put your hand. If you open an 11 HCP hand playing standard, your initial range is something like 11-22 HCP. That is a very large range and makes judgment as to strain and level more difficult. And if you play a 15-17 HCP 1NT opening (or even worse, 16-18 HCP), your rebid of 1NT in the auction 1X - 1Y - 1NT is in a box of 11-14 (15) HCP, again making it difficult to judge whether to pass, invite, or force to game. With our limited opening bid system, we start out in the much smaller 11-15 HCP box, and the auction 1X (not 1♣) - 1Y - 1NT shows 11-13 HCP, a more precise description and one which enables partner to continue more accurately. (I don't intend to argue all of

the merits of the system. Yes, it comes with a cost, and when the auction starts 1♣ - (3♠), you may wish that you were not playing a strong club system.)

Why open light? There are several reasons. You want to strike first; if the deal belongs to your side, you likely have many more tools at your disposal if you open than if you overcall. By opening you also make it more difficult for the opponents to enter the auction, and if it is their hand you want to take away their bidding room and make it more difficult for them to bid accurately. You may also be indicating the right lead to partner should you end up on defense. Getting

your suit(s) in play may also enable your side to find a "profitable sacrifice" (a truly great oxymoron).

Opening light is not a panacea. It widens your range and makes further bidding less accurate. For example, in the finals of the 2016 U.S. teams trials, Joe Grue, playing methods similar to those that Annie and I play, held ♠AQJ9 ♥J2 ♦K72 ♣J1063 and heard his partner, Brad Moss, open 1♦ at all white. Joe bid 1♣ and Brad rebid 1NT, nominally showing 11-13 HCP, although this partnership has a reputation for liberally upgrading and

(See Couch on page 13)

Becky Rogers Day - Tuesday, March 14

Reprinted from the Tuesday, March 14, Kansas City Spring NABC Daily Bulletin

If you reference Becky Rogers in the *Official Encyclopedia of Bridge*, this is what you will find:

- Former WBF general manager
- Former NABC national tournament director
- Former ACBL Director of Operations
- WBF World Life Master
- Coordinated the World Junior Championship in 1991
- NPC of the U.S. Women's Olympiad Team in 1992
- Won World Mixed Pairs in 2002
- Won the Keohane North American Swiss Teams in 2005

Becky has served on presidential advisory committees to develop new convention cards, an active ethics program and the ACBL standard card. An ACBL member from the age of 11, Becky grew up playing bridge in District



15 (in Topeka, Kansas) and now resides in Las Vegas. She achieved the rank of Grand Life Master in 2006.

What you won't see in the *Encyclopedia of Bridge*: "The best sis ever!"

-Brother John

What was not mentioned is that Becky continues to be active in bridge governance while playing in every D17 Regional and most Western Conference Regionals and all three annual NABCs.

Becky Rogers is a valuable member of the D17 Board as the Las Vegas representative. She serves as the chairman of the District 17 Regional Tournament Committee and is the District 17 Recorder.

Becky was reappointed to the ACBL Laws Commission for another three year term by ACBL President Bob Heller. She also manages to find time to be Grandma Becca!

Becky, District 17 is very proud of you and happy you are a D17 member.



JOIN US IN THE VAIL VALLEY, COLORADO, JULY 9-12, 2017

BRIDGE SEMINARS

BY JERRY HELMS

Escape the summer heat and avoid the humidity with a trip to the Vail Valley! Jerry Helms, noted bridge teacher, Platinum Life Master, author and ACBL monthly columnist will lead this four-day retreat.

"All new materials!"

SEMINAR: TAKE MORE TRICKS!!! YOURS AND THEIRS!!!

All seminars are 9am-12pm at Battle Mountain High School in Edwards, CO

- July 9: Techniques for better play: Suit Contracts
- July 10: Techniques for better play: No Trump Contracts
- July 11: Strategies for Defending Suit Contracts
- July 12: Strategies for Defending No Trump Contracts

The morning seminars are followed by tournaments in the afternoons, allowing you to apply what you've learned in the sessions! Lunch is provided every day between the seminars and the tournaments.

To make a reservation, learn more about lodging options and for directions to Battle Mountain High School contact Pam Elsner at pamhodg@aol.com or 970.393.3155.

ADDED BENEFIT! The Philadelphia Orchestra will be in residence in Vail during July performing concerts in the evening at the beautiful, open-air Gerald R. Ford Amphitheater.

All proceeds from the event will benefit local non-profit organizations.



Christmas
in July

Ruidoso Sectional

July 14 - 16, 2017

RUIDOSO HIGH SCHOOL

Enjoy Bridge in the Mountains of New Mexico

Friday, July 14

- 10 AM Dasher Stratified Open Pairs
Dancer 299er Pairs
- 3 PM Rudolf KO's (round 1)
Prancer Open Pairs
Vixen 299er Pairs

Saturday, July 15

- 10 AM Rudolf KO's (round 2)
Cupid Stratified Open Pairs
Donder 299er Pairs
- 3 PM Rudolf KO's (round 3)
Blitzen Stratified Open Pairs
Frosty 299er Pairs

Sunday, July 16

- 10 AM & TBD Santa Stratified Swiss Teams
Santa 299er Swiss Teams

Stratified: (A) 2000+ (B) 750-2000 (C) 0-750

Pairs and Teams stratified by average MPs of pair or team
Top KO bracket may be handicapped

Fees: Pairs and KO's: \$12/ person / session
Swiss Team: \$100 / team Sunday Lunch Included
Non-ACBL or Unpaid Member add \$3.00 each session
Host: Unit 388 District 17

Tournament Chairperson: Johnny Glover
(575) 491-4552 johnny7521eg9@gmail.com

Partnerships: Louise Estep
(575) 258-1928 louiseestep42@gmail.com

Chamber of Commerce: 1 877 784-3676

www.ruidosonow.com