

The Simplified Club System

Chapter I

Overview of the Simplified Club System

Standard American bidding has a number of problems. For example, under Standard American, an opening bid of one of a major promises at least a five card suit. There is nothing wrong with this approach by itself. It facilitates finding major suit fits, and because of the way bridge scoring works, those are the most important fits to find. However, Standard American makes a one no trump bid artificial, indicating extra strength, and thus has no natural bid to indicate a balanced distribution with a normal opening hand. As a result, there are some hands with opening points but no suit to bid. To address this, Standard American has adopted the better minor rule, making bids of both one club and one diamond artificial, indicating either a biddable minor or a balanced distribution with as few as three cards in the suit bid. This can create rebidding problems and generally complicates the resulting bidding sequences.

A second problem is that an opening bid can have a wide range of points, from 13 to 21. Because a partnership can usually make game with 26 points between them, the responder feels compelled to bid with as few as 6 points for fear of missing a game. On the other hand, responder cannot make a jump bid (we are assuming a new suit, raises being complicated by whether one is using limit raises and/or Jacoby no trumps) unless he has a very strong hand. Thus, after a one heart – one spade – two diamond sequence, for example, the partnership knows very little about its strength. It could have a combined 19 points and already be too high, or it could have a slam going hand with 32 or more combined points.

Moreover, an artificially strong one no trump and “short minors” are not the end of the conventions. New conventions are developed to address the problems with “natural” bidding and to fill holes in the system until the system becomes more conventional than natural: limit raises, new minor forcing, Jacoby no trumps, fourth suit forcing and Jacoby transfers, to name a few. A well-known bridge columnist publishes a bidding quiz almost every Friday, each one with three or four bidding situations and a “what do you bid now” question. Think what it says about the complexity and ambiguity of Standard American that this columnist can think up nearly 200 bidding situations a year, year-in and year-out, where the right bid is not obvious. And he doesn’t even use many of the modern conventions adopted in the name of Standard American bidding.

The Simplified Club System tries to address the basic problems of Standard American by replacing three artificial bids – one club, one diamond, and one no trump – with one: a one club bid used to open all hands that are at least an ace better than a minimum opening hand. This allows the one no trump bid to be used naturally, indicating opening points and a balanced distribution. Using no trump for balanced hands means that

opening bids of a suit indicate at least five cards in the suit in most cases. The one exception is hands with 4-4-4-1 distribution, the only unbalanced hand with no five card suit, and these are opened with the lowest ranking four card suit, always a minor.

As the name implies, the Simplified Club System does not try for highly sophisticated, complex bidding sequences which can describe any hand accurately. Rather, it is intended for the player who is no longer a beginner but is finding it difficult to understand the nuances of those 200 hands the columnist comes up with every year. For that player, the Simplified Club System should be fairly easy to learn and should improve bidding accuracy significantly. The experienced tournament player already comfortable with the modern array of conventions is not as likely to find the Simplified Club System as useful.

Before we start covering the details, let's spend a little time on the theory. The Simplified Club system is based on the assumption that it takes 20 combined partnership points for declarer to make a one level contract, 22 combined points to make a two level contract, 24 points for a three level contract, 26 points for a four level contract, 28 points for a five level contract, 32 points for a small slam and 36 points for a grand slam. Experience indicates it is a pretty good assumption given the inaccuracies in the point count as a measure of the playing strength of the hand. Looking at just the combined partnership points also ignores the fact that, particularly for no trump hands, the playing strength declines as the strength between the hands becomes unbalanced. A 12 point balanced hand opposite a 12 point balanced hand is likely to make three no trump, but a 24 point hand opposite a zero point hand is likely to struggle to make one no trump. This is because developing the maximum tricks in a suit frequently depends on being able to lead from the right hand, and as the point count becomes more unbalanced, the ability to lead from the weaker hand when you want to is reduced, particularly in no trump where you cannot use ruffing to get to the weaker hand.

When we talk about points, we mean high card points for a no trump bid and high card points plus distribution for a suit bid. High cards are counted the usual way: four for an ace, three for a king, two for a queen and one for a jack. Distribution points can be calculated in a number of different ways, all of which are essentially equivalent. The way we like is to add a point for each card in a suit above four when you are bidding your suits. When supporting partner's suit, count one for a doubleton, two for a singleton and three for a void with three card (or less) support. With four or more cards in support of partner's suit, count one for a doubleton, three for a singleton and five for a void. Thus, the following hand:

♠ A Q 10 9 4 ♥ 8 ♦ K J 7 3 ♣ K 10 6

would have 13 points bidding no trump (presumably after partner bid hearts) 14 points when first bidding spades or diamonds, 15 points bidding clubs in support of partner's club bid, and 16 points bidding diamonds in support of partner's diamond bid.

A fundamental rule of the Simplified Club System is that a hand should make an opening bid whenever it has at least half the points needed to make game in the chosen suit or no trump. Without this rule, there is the possibility that a hand that could make game would be passed out by the partnership. Thus, a hand with balanced distribution, that is, a no trump hand, should be opened with 12 points, a major suited hand with 13 points, and a minor suited hand with 14 points.

A basic goal of the Simplified Club system is to have most opening bids define the opening bidder's strength within a four point range. Thus we make an opening no trump bid show 12 to 15 points and an opening major suit bid show 13 to 16 points. We fudge the rule a bit for minor suited hands in order to simplify the bidding of strong hands and say the a minor suit opening bid shows 14 to 16 points, just a three point range. All stronger hands are opened with the one club bid, that is, no trump hands with 16 or more (high card) points and major or minor suited hands with 17 or more points (including distribution).

In general, responses to opening bids are constructed so that the partnership knows within two points whether it has strength for game and, in most cases, at least one of the partners knows whether it is a game going hand. For example, if a player opens one heart and the partner bids two clubs (a two over one bid) the response promises eleven points so the partnership must have at least 24 points, within two of game in a major. If either opener or responder has a couple of extra points, that player knows there are points for game.

After an opening suit bid and response, the bidding for the most part follows the standard rules: a bid of a new suit promises at least four cards and is a one round force (with a few exceptions); rebids of a suit promise at least one more card than previously shown; a bid of the cheapest no trump shows weakness, specifically no more than one point above the previously shown minimum, again with a few exceptions. (After a no trump opening, as in Standard American, most bidding sequences have conventional meanings.) There are no artificial bids, no fourth suit forcing or special meanings for a reverse. Jump bids, which are also one round forcing, and unforced raises of partner's suit are the only bids that promise extra strength, at least two points above the previously shown minimum. If one of the partners knows there are enough points for game, it is that partner's job to keep the bidding open through a series of one round forcing bids until game is reached (or until the partner realizes there is such a misfit that game is unlikely).

Once a suit has been decided upon, that is, bid by one partner and raised, either directly or with an intervening bid, by the other partner, the partners use cue bids to further define their point count and show controls. The bid of any suit other than the agreed trump suit indicates both strength, at least two points above the minimum number of points the partner could have for the previous bidding, and control of the suit, either an

ace or a void. When a partner wants to show strength but does not have any controls that have not already been cue bid, he bids the cheapest no trump, a “suitless cue bid.” It is clear that the no trump bid is not natural because it has already been decided that the hand should be played in a suit, not no trump. This suitless cue bid is a unique feature of the Simplified Club system.

When the partnership has already shown enough points for game, a further cue bid indicates slam interest. That will usually mean the cue bidder has more than just a couple of points over the previously shown minimum. On the other hand, when a partner has already shown a maximum hand, a further cue bid only indicates a control and says nothing about overall strength. For example, say the bidding has gone one heart, two hearts, two spades, three clubs, three diamonds. The one heart opening promises 13 to 16 points, and the raise to two promises at least 11 points. The two spade bid is a cue bid showing a maximum opening, 15 to 16 points, with the ace of spades (or a void) establishing that the partnership has enough points for game. The three club bid is thus a cue bid showing an interest in slam and would generally only be made with at least 15 points, four more than the previously shown minimum. The three diamond bid is another cue bid but does not change the point count previously shown, 15 to 16 points, because that is the maximum for the opening bid. It does, however, suggest that the hand has features, such as extra trump length or a semi-solid side suit, that give it good playing strength.

Another aspect of the Simplified Club system that may seem strange to someone used to Standard American bidding is the emphasis placed on suit length rather than suit quality in deciding which bid to make. Indeed, the bidding sequences are controlled virtually entirely by distribution and not by the number of high cards within a suit. A five card major suit is considered adequate for an opening bid even if the highest card in the suit is a six. And in no trump bidding, we tend to consider whether the partnership has adequate length in each suit instead of focusing on whether there are stoppers.

In general, we keep the bidding in the Simplified Club System as natural as possible reflecting what is known about the partnership distribution and points. However, a number of useful conventions are used which the Standard American bidder will be familiar with. The conventions include:

Blackwood: This is the standard Blackwood convention in which a bid of four no trump after a suit has been settled on is a request for partner to show how many aces he has, bidding four clubs with all four or none of the aces, four diamonds with one ace, four hearts with two, and four spades with three. Roman Keycard Blackwood could also be used by partnership agreement.

Stayman: There are many versions of the Stayman Convention. The one used in the Simplified Club System is as follows: When a player bids two clubs over a one no trump bid by partner, the partner must rebid (a) two diamonds with no four card major, (b)

two of his four card major with one four card major, or (c) two no trump with both four card majors. The no trump bidder has no discretion in replying to the two club bid. Note that Stayman does not apply after a one no trump response to a natural opening bid.

Gerber: The form of the Gerber bidding is like Standard American, a bid of four clubs asking for aces. A response of four diamonds means none or four, four hearts means one, four spades means two, and four no trump means three. Under Standard American, Gerber can only be used when no trump has been selected as the “suit” for the partnership. The Simplified Club System expands the use of Gerber slightly. A bid of 4 clubs is Gerber whenever it could not be a natural bid. Examples of where a four clubs bid is Gerber are highlighted in the discussion of specific bidding sequences below. One fairly obvious example is a jump to four clubs over an opening bid of one of a major, although the occasions where that would be appropriate are rare.

When we say that the bidding sequences are natural in light of what is known about point count and distribution, that means that a number of the practices in Standard American, which one might think of as being natural, are not used. For example, jump raises of an opening bid are preemptive in nature and show weakness rather than strength. Similarly, jump shifts are not needed for showing strength and therefore are also preemptive, used to show a very long suit and a poor defensive hand (unless you are using one of the optional conventions that give jump shifts special meaning). And because an opening suit bid has limited points, a reverse does not show extra strength. These are some of the Standard American practices that you will have to learn to forget.

That is basically all there is to the Simplified Club system, other than a few special rules for no trump bidding. The rest is just applying these principles to specific situations. The following sections describe the usual bidding sequences resulting from these principles following each type of opening bid: one of a major, one diamond, two clubs, one no trump, and one club. The descriptions are at a summary level. Limited examples of hands are given, and it may be useful for the reader to think of examples and how the sequences would work with them.

One other thing to mention, and this has nothing to do with the Simplified Club system: The scoring of bridge contracts is structured to give a preference to the major suits, and if the partnership has the right distribution, namely an eight card or better major suit fit, they should almost always be playing in the major. No trump contracts are a close second in bang for the buck. You typically need more high card strength in no trump to collect a given number of tricks because distribution doesn't count, but the scoring system gives a little kicker to no trump tricks that almost makes up the difference. Last place, and last place by a mile, are the minor suited contracts. A trick in a minor suit contract gets one half to two thirds the points a trick gets in a no trump or major suit contract. Typically, you will settle for a minor suit only when there is no way to make a major suit or no trump contract. Although that order of preference – major suit, no

trump, minor suit – is not unique to the Simplified Club system, you will see its impact in many of the bidding sequences described below.

Chapter II Major Suit Hands with a Fit

With 13 – 16 points and a five or more card major, one should open with one of the major. That is about as much of an absolute rule as you can have in a bidding system. You should open one of the major even if you have a seven card minor suit with five honors. You should open one of the major even if it has no honor cards at all. Any other opening bid would affirmatively deny having a five card major. As noted above, all the Simplified Club bidding sequences are driven by distribution, and hiding a five card major would throw off all of the sequences.

Let's look at some hands you would open one of a major:

♠ K Q 10 5 3 ♥ K 3 ♦ K 8 7 ♣ Q 10 4

Open one spade. A wonderfully balanced hand, but show your five card major before considering no trump.

♠ A K Q 4 ♥ 10 9 8 6 5 ♦ K 6 ♣ 9 2

Open one heart, illustrating the principle that you always bid length over strength.

♠ Q 10 8 5 3 ♥ A K 9 8 3 ♦ K 7 ♣ 4

Open one heart. Where you have major suits of equal length, bid the strongest first. A reverse does not mean extra points in the Simplified Club system, so you are free to bid spades on the next round. If the majors were of equal length and similar strength, you would bid spades first to make later bidding easier.

Now a couple of hands you would **not** open one of a major:

♠ A K Q J ♥ K 6 3 ♦ 10 8 7 ♣ J 10 4

No matter how strong the major, you need five cards to open with it. This hand would be opened one no trump.

♠ A Q J 10 5 3 ♥ K 3 ♦ 8 7 ♣ 10 6 4

No matter how good your suit, you need thirteen points to open one of a major. This hand would be opened two spades, a preemptive bid. Having said that, we must admit that, with a semi-solid seven card major, we would tend to shade the opening point count requirement a bit. The point count method undervalues the playing strength of very unbalanced distributions.

The responsive bidding to one of a major is very much like standard American except that responder knows opener has no more than 16 points. In standard American, a hand opening with a one level bid can have 21 points and responder feels compelled to

bid with as few as 6 points for fear of missing a game. In the Simplified Club System, responder can be comfortable passing with ten points or less.

How does the partner of the one of a major opening bidder respond? Let's start with the easy case: if responder has three or more card support, the major will be the trump suit. Yes, it is possible that there will be a better fit in another suit, but the chances are so small, it is not worth the effort. With three card support, responder should accept partner's suit, either raising it or passing. Consistent with the Simplified Club principle of controlling bidding by distribution and not suit quality, any three card support will do. If responder had a seven card spade suit with four honors in addition to three hearts, he should still raise opener's hearts instead of bidding spades even if his heart suit were headed by the four. In practice, the partnership would lose whatever heart losers they had regardless of what were trumps, and the spade suit would likely be runnable, providing lots of discards when hearts are trump. Thus, sticking with hearts as the trump suit would almost always give you the best result.

When there is a major suit fit, the only real question is whether the partnership has enough points for game or slam. The nice thing about the Simplified Club System is that the responder to a one of a major opening already has a good idea of the total strength of the partnership. He can, and should, immediately classify his hand as part score, game invitational, game going, slam invitational or slam going. With ten points or less, the total partnership points will almost always be below 26, and game is unlikely. Responder will classify this as a part score hand. If responder has eleven or twelve points, perhaps even a good ten¹, game is likely *if opener has a maximum (15-16 point) hand*. Thus an eleven or twelve point hand is game invitational. With 13 to 16 points, the partnership should be in game, but slam is unlikely, so this is classified as a game going hand. With 17 to 18 points, slam is likely, again, *if opener has a maximum (15-16 point) hand*, so this is classified as a slam invitational hand. With 19 or more points, responder knows that the hand is slam going even opposite a minimum opening.

Let's look at a few hands and see how we classify them. Assume partner has opened one spade.

♠ Q 5 3

♥ Q J 3

♦ K Q 8 7

♣ Q 10 4

Three card support and 12 high card points make this a game invitational hand. True the distribution is disappointing, and the intermediate cards (tens and nines and eights) are a little weak, but the high card points make game a solid prospect opposite a maximum opening.

¹ A good ten points might be, for example, a hand with four card support and two or three tens. If you do not feel comfortable evaluating the playing strength of a hand beyond its bare point count, stick with having 11 or more points for an invitational hand.

♠ K 10 9 3 ♥ K Q 10 3 ♦ A Q J 7 4 ♣ --

Congratulations! You are headed towards slam, maybe even grand slam opposite a maximum. Remember, with four card support, that club void is worth five points, so this hand has 20 points, well within the slam going category.

♠ K Q 6 3 ♥ K 3 ♦ K 10 6 ♣ Q J 10 7

Fourteen high card points and a doubleton heart make this a solid game going hand.

With a part score hand, responder should pass unless making a preemptive jump raise with really good support. Yes, it is true that the partnership may be able to make two or three of the major, but the scoring system puts such a premium on making game or slam that we do not want to take up bidding space on a hand that is not going at least to game. Indeed, under Chicago or duplicate scoring, there is no benefit at all to bidding a part score above the one level.

With a game going hand, responder should bid game directly. Slam is not in the cards, and responder knows all he needs to know to bid game. There is no point in pussy-footing around making other bids that will only give your opponents more information about your hands.

With the invitational hands, game invitational or slam invitational, responder needs to know more about partner's strength to decide where the hand is going and will raise opener to two of the major. In the Simplified Club System, this is a one round forcing bid. It tells opener "There is a fit in your major, but I need more information about your hand." When opener has a minimum, he will simply raise the major suit to three. Responder will pass with a game invitational hand and bid game in the major with a slam invitational hand. Opener will show a maximum (15-16 points) by making a cue bid, or bidding two no trump, the suitless cue bid, if no cue bid is available. With a game invitational hand, responder can then bid game in the major, knowing there is enough partnership strength for game. With a slam invitational hand, responder now knows there is enough strength for slam and can treat his hand like a slam going hand.

With a slam going hand, responder has to decide whether to use cue bids or Blackwood to check for controls. Cue bids are almost always the better choice, and responder would raise opener's major to the two level to initiate cue bidding. Cue bids are, of course, a one round force, so responder does not have to worry that the hand will be passed out prematurely. Note that, in the sequence one Heart, two Hearts, three Hearts, four Clubs, responder would not make the four Club cue bid without a slam going hand. Opener should realize this and cue bid if he has a control even though he has a minimum hand. This is an example of the principle that, once a partner has defined the strength of his hand within a two point range, cue bids only indicate controls, not strength.

Let's see how all this works with a couple of hands:

NORTH ♠ K 5 ♥ 10 3 2 ♦ K Q 7 ♣ K J 10 6 4 SOUTH ♠ J 5 4 ♥ A Q J 9 4 ♦ A 4 ♣ Q 9 8	HAND	BID	COMMENT
	South	1H	13 – 16 points, 5+ card Heart suit
	North	4H	Game going hand with support
	South	Pass	Game is good

NORTH ♠ Q 10 5 ♥ K 9 3 ♦ Q 8 3 ♣ K J 10 4 SOUTH ♠ A K J 8 6 ♥ 8 4 ♦ 7 6 4 ♣ A 7 5	HAND	BID	COMMENT
	South	1S	13 – 16 points, 5+ card Spade suit
	North	2S	Invitational hand with support
	South	3S	Minimum hand, 13 – 14 points
	North	Pass	Only a game invitational hand – stop below game opposite a minimum hand

NORTH ♠ A K 5 3 ♥ K 7 4 2 ♦ K 8 3 ♣ K J SOUTH ♠ 8 4 ♥ A Q 10 8 6 ♦ A 6 4 ♣ A 7 5	HAND	BID	COMMENT
	South	1H	13 – 16 points, 5+ card Spade suit
	North	2H	Invitational hand (slam invitational) with support
	South	3C	Maximum hand, 15 –16 points, ace of Clubs
	North	3S	Ace of Spades. Shows interest in slam. (Would have just bid 4 Hearts with a game invitational hand)
	South	4D	Ace of diamonds
	North	4NT	Using Blackwood to find out about the ace of Hearts.
	South	5S	Showing all three of the missing aces
	North	6H	All suits controlled and strength for slam
	South	Pass	

Chapter III

Major Suit Hands without a Fit

If responder does not have at least three card support for partner's major, things get more complicated. Responder can still classify his hand as part score, game invitational and so on, but the partnership has to locate a trump suit, and try to do so without getting to too high a level. And to make things more complicated, it is possible, with a bad misfit, that a hand that appeared to be game going has to be reclassified as part score later in the bidding. Let's see how the Simplified Club System handles these issues.

A. The Two Over One Response

Let's start with familiar territory for those who know Standard American bidding. If you have a five card suit of lower rank than opener's suit and at least a game invitational hand, 11 or more points, you bid two of your suit, just as in Standard American. The differences between a two-over-one bid in the Simplified Club system and in Standard American are, first, that the bid of a new suit promises five cards, not just four, and, second, that the two-over-one bid is unlimited in strength. If you have 25 points and a five card diamond suit, you would still bid just two diamonds over a one heart opening bid. You know you are heading to slam, probably grand slam, but the two-over-one bid is a one round force, so there is no need to rush things. You will have plenty of opportunity to show your strength later in the bidding.

How can a two-over-one bid promise a five card suit? As we will cover in detail later, any hand without a five card suit can use a no trump bid. The most unbalanced hand without a five card suit has 4-4-4-1 distribution, and if there is no fit, the singleton must be in partner's five card major. That means the singleton suit is well covered, and a no trump bid is permissible. We call such hands, that is, hands that would qualify as no trump distribution except for shortness in partner's suit, "semi-balanced."

B. Opener's Response to Two Over One with a Maximum

The two-over-one bid promises at least a game invitational hand. With a maximum, opener knows there are points for game and should make a forcing bid. Do you remember what the forcing bids are? Let's review them: A jump rebid of your suit (e.g. 1 heart – 2 diamonds – 3 hearts) which, of course, requires at least a six card suit; a jump raise of partner's suit (1 heart – two diamonds – 4 diamonds) which can be made with just three card support; and the bid of a new suit (1 heart – 2 diamonds – 2 spades) requiring four cards. The jump bids promise a maximum hand, 15 to 16 points. The new suit bid is ambiguous as to strength. Note that you can bid your second suit even if, in Standard American, it would be a reverse. As mentioned above, you do not need

extra points for a reverse in the Simplified Club system. Note also that the two no trump bid, even though it kind of looks like a new suit bid, is a weak bid, showing 13 to 14 points, and is not forcing. If you think the hand should be played in no trump, you need to jump right to three no trump with a maximum. When you have more than one forcing bid available, choose between them keeping in mind the preference for a major suit contract, followed by a no trump contract. Thus, if you have a six card major *and* three card support of partner's suit, you would raise his suit if it was a major and rebid your major if his suit was a minor.

Let's look at a few hands. Assume you opened with one spade and your partner bid two clubs. What would you bid with each of these hands?

♠ K Q 10 7 6 3 ♥ -- ♦ K Q 10 6 ♣ Q J 5

Bids of two diamonds, three spades and four clubs would each show your maximum point count and be consistent with your distribution. Given the preference for major suit contracts, you should choose the three spade bid. If your partner has even a worthless doubleton in the suit, game in spades is odds on.

♠ K Q 10 7 6 ♥ 3 ♦ K Q 10 6 ♣ Q J 5

This is the same hand with one of the spades made a heart. Now the three spade bid is not available since you have already shown five cards in the suit. As between raising clubs to four and bidding two diamonds, two diamonds is the best bid. A bid of four clubs virtually guarantees you will wind up in a minor suit contract, whereas the diamond bid opens up the possibility of playing in no trump if partner has the heart suit stopped.

♠ A J 9 6 3 ♥ K Q 3 ♦ K J 6 ♣ J 10

This one is a no brainer. The only bids you have are in no trump, and you have to bid three with a maximum.

C. Opener's Response to Two Over One with a Minimum

With a minimum, opener will make a non-forcing bid after the two-over-one response if possible, rebidding his major at the two level with six cards, making a single raise of responder's suit with at least three card support and bidding two no trump with a semi-balanced hand. Responder will usually pass these bids unless he has extra strength, 13 points or more, and the intent to get to game. In that case, he will often bid game directly. Some common patterns are: 1H – 2D – 2H – 4H or 1H – 2D – 2NT – 3NT.

Note that in this sequence: 1H – 2D – 2H – 3H the three heart bid is an unforced raise and promises extra points and support, namely a doubleton heart and at least 13 points. Responder's failure to jump right to game strongly suggests an interest in slam. Thus, if opener has a control, he should show it with a cue bid. Because opener has already

shown a minimum opening hand, a cue bid would not indicate extra strength. Here is an example of how this would work.

NORTH ♠ 8 3 ♥ K Q J 8 7 4 ♦ J 6 4 ♣ A Q SOUTH ♠ K Q 4 ♥ A 3 ♦ A Q 10 8 4 ♣ K 5 4	HAND	BID	COMMENT
	North	1H	13 – 16 points, 5+ card Heart suit
	South	2D	Five card Diamond suit, 11 or more points
	North	2H	6+ cards in Hearts, 13 – 14 points
	South	3H	Two card support of Hearts, at least a 13 point hand, and interest in slam
	North	4C	Cue bid showing Ace of Clubs
	South	6H	The Ace of Clubs fills out the hand nicely. If playing Roman Keycard Blackwood, may have used that to explore the quality of the trump suit.

If no non-forcing bid is available to opener, he will have a second biddable suit and will have to bid it, responder's two-over-one bid being unlimited and a one round force. The new suit bid will force responder to bid again, but he will be aware that opener may have a minimum and, if he also has a minimum (11 to 12 points) will make a non-forcing bid to allow opener to pass. After the following sequence: one spade – two diamonds – two hearts, responder with a minimum could bid two spades (showing exactly two card support) three diamonds (showing a six card suit) three hearts (showing three card or better support) or two no trump (all other hands). The choice between raising opener's major and bidding the cheapest no trump often depends on the quality of the unbid suit in responder's hand.

D. Responder's Other Bids with a Game Going Hand

What happens if responder's five card suit is higher ranking than opener's, that is, opener bid one heart and responder has spades? Then a bid at the two level really crowds the auction, so under the Simplified Club system, that bid requires a game going hand, 13 or more points. The usual bidding rules are used to locate a fit, but because the partners know they have enough points to reach at least the four level, jump bids are generally not necessary. The exception is obvious: where there is a minor suit fit, you need about 28 points for game; so if the partner first showing support has an extra point or two and would like to ensure game is reached, he would jump directly to game. A single raise is only invitational to game and opener can pass with a minimum (13 point) hand.

Here is an example of how that works:

NORTH ♠ 10 3 ♥ A Q 9 8 4 ♦ Q J 8 7 ♣ A 10 4 SOUTH ♠ A J 8 6 5 ♥ 10 3 ♦ A 10 9 4 ♣ K 9	HAND	BID	COMMENT
	North	1H	13 – 16 points, 5+ card Heart suit
	South	2S	Five card Spade suit, 13 or more points
	North	3D	5-4 in Hearts and Diamonds. (would have rebid Hearts with a six card suit)
	South	4D	At least four diamonds and a minimum 13-14 point hand.
	North	Pass	A minimum opening. Insufficient strength to go to the five level.

If we make the king of clubs in the South hand the king of diamonds:

♠ A J 8 6 5 ♥ 10 3 ♦ A K 10 9 4 ♣ 9

South now has 16 points in support of diamonds (counting three points for the singleton club) as well as a 5-4 fit (5-4 fits are often worth a point or two in playing strength). South would bid five diamonds over North's three diamond bid.

If responder does not have a five card suit and does not have three card support of opener's major, he must have a balanced or semi-balanced hand and should be bidding no trump. A bid of one no trump limits responder's hand to 12 points and will be covered in more detail below. So if responder has no five card suit and a game going hand, he should bid two no trump. The bid, like the two spade bid, is virtually forcing to game. If opener is balanced, he should bid three no trump. He can also rebid a six card suit or bid a new suit if does not think the hand will play in no trump. As with the two spade bid, jump bids are generally not necessary except in the minor suit game case.

Let's look at some examples:

NORTH ♠ K Q 10 5 3 ♥ 9 3 ♦ K Q 7 ♣ K 10 4 SOUTH ♠ J 8 6 ♥ A K 10 8 4 ♦ A 4 ♣ Q 9 8	HAND	BID	COMMENT
	South	1H	13 – 16 points, 5+ card Heart suit
	North	2S	Five card Spade suit, 13 or more points
	South	3S	At least three card support of spades, forcing to game
	North	4S	Game going hand (13 to 16 points). With a slam invitational hand, 17+ points, would have cue bid to show slam interest.

What would happen if South's six of spades was a diamond instead? Let's see:

NORTH ♠ K Q 10 5 3 ♥ 9 3 ♦ K Q 7 ♣ K 10 4 SOUTH ♠ J 8 ♥ A K 10 8 4 ♦ A 4 6 ♣ Q 9 8			
	HAND	BID	COMMENT
	South	1H	13 – 16 points, 5+ card Heart suit
	North	2S	Five card Spade suit, 13 or more points
	South	2NT	Balanced hand
North	3NT	Game going balanced hand (13 to 16 points). With a slam invitational hand, 17+ points, would have used Gerber to explore the quality of controls. (See also the Four Diamonds Asking optional convention.)	

Let's consider another "misfit."

NORTH ♠ K 3 ♥ K Q 10 3 ♦ K 7 ♣ Q J 10 4 3 SOUTH ♠ A J 10 8 6 ♥ 8 6 ♦ A Q 10 4 ♣ K 8			
	HAND	BID	COMMENT
	South	1S	13 – 16 points, 5+ card Spade suit
	North	2C	Five card Club suit, at least 11 points
	South	2D	5-4 in Spades and Diamonds (denies 4 card Heart suit – majors are bid first)
North	3NT	Game going hand, 13+ points. Shows one or two Spades (would have bid a suit with a void), at most three Diamonds (would have raised with four). Promises length or a stopper in Hearts	

E. The One Over One Responses

Those of you who have been thinking about all the hands you might have when partner opens with one of a major will realize that we have said nothing about part score hands or described how to handle game invitational hands that do not have a five card or better suit lower ranking than partner's major. You might also realize that we have not described one-over-one bids. Not surprisingly, we use one-over-one bids to describe part score hands and game invitational hands with no biddable lower ranking suit.

Part Score Hands

What do you bid over a major suit opening with part score hands? With support of partner's major, they were easy: you pass. But without support, you have to consider the possibility that you need to rescue partner from an unmakeable contract. If you have fewer than eight points, you shouldn't try a rescue and should just pass. The partnership may already be at too high a level, and if the opponents do not take you out with their own bid, they have probably missed an opportunity for at least a part score.

If you have 8 – 10 points and a doubleton in your partner's major, you do not need to rescue and still should pass. The partnership will have more than half the trumps, and finding a better fit below the three level is unlikely. With a singleton or void in opener's suit and 8 – 10 points, a rescue is worth trying. Responder should bid, but must do so at the one level, either one spade over one heart with a five plus card spade suit or one no trump.

Consider the following hands responding to a one heart opening bid:

♠ 10 9 6 3 ♥ 3 ♦ K J 6 5 ♣ J 10 8 7

You only have seven points, even counting two for the singleton. Your rescue bid would be one no trump, but you do not have the points for it. Pass and hope for the best.

♠ A J 9 6 3 ♥ 6 ♦ Q 9 6 ♣ 10 7 4

Now you have nine points and a reasonable alternative suit. Bid one spade.

♠ A Q J 5 2 ♥ 6 3 ♦ 9 7 6 ♣ J 10 6

Again you have nine points and a more than reasonable alternative suit, but with a doubleton heart, there is no need to rescue. Pass.

The one-over-one bids warn partner that responder may have a poor hand with no fit that could well be overbid at the two level. Thus, with a minimum, opener would pass a one spade bid with two card or better support and pass a one no trump bid with even a marginally balanced hand. If neither of those options is attractive, opener could rebid his 6+ card major or bid a new five card suit at the two level. Responder will pass or retreat to a previously bid suit at the two level. Those may not be great choices, but they are the only ones responder has. Any other bid would show a game invitational hand.

Let's look at some typical situations. Assume the bidding has gone one heart – one spade – two diamonds and you are deciding how to respond to partner's two diamond rebid.

A Q 8 6 5 3 ♥ 3 ♦ 9 6 ♣ J 10 8 7

It looks to you that a contract in either diamonds or hearts is likely to be a disaster, and you have a suit re-biddable at the two level. Bid two spades. In making this bid, you should be aware that partner is going to pass with even a singleton in support and is likely to bid two no trump with a void in spades. None of these options are particularly attractive. In this hand, you are trying to choose the lesser of evils.

♠ K 10 9 6 3 ♥ 7 ♦ K 8 6 ♣ J 10 8 7

This time, you can tolerate a diamond contract and can also be sure the hand is not going anywhere. Pass.

Note that the last example illustrates one of the exceptions to the rule that a new suit bid is forcing. Responder can pass after one heart – one spade – two diamonds. This exception has the characteristics of all of the exceptions to that rule: first that the responding bidder knows there is insufficient strength for game; second, that the new suit is a satisfactory trump suit; and third, that bidding up a level risks getting to an unmakeable contract. The partnership has at most 26 points and very likely less, so game is highly unlikely. The partnership has at least seven diamonds, so that is a passable trump suit. And the partnership could have as few as 21 points, in which case even bidding at the two level is risky. Passing is clearly the best choice.

Game Invitational One Over One Bids

What do you do with a game invitational hand, 11-12 point, with no five card lower ranking suit to bid? You cannot bid two spades or two no trump because that would be a jump shift promising a game going hand, so you have to make a one-over-one bid. This creates a problem: the same bid could be a rescue bid or an invitation to game. As a result, when opener has a maximum (15 to 16 point) hand, he will generally want to keep the bidding open after a one-over-one response because, as far as he knows, game is still a possibility. Thus, with a maximum, opener would raise a one spade response to two with three card or better support, raise a one no trump bid to two with balanced distribution, bid a new five card suit at the two level or rebid a six card major. Note that the first two of those bids follow the rule that an unforced raise promises extra points. The latter two bids are ambiguous as to points. If responder had made the one-over-one bid as a rescue, he will either pass these bids or retreat to a previously bid suit. However, if responder made the one-over-one bid with an invitational hand, he will bid on, re-raising a raise to game (i.e. two spades to four, two no trump to three) and, if opener did not raise, bidding something other than a retreat to a previously bid suit, since that would signal an 8 – 10 point hand and most likely be passed even with a maximum. Any other bid shows at least 11 points, and opener should be driving to game with 15-16 points.

Some examples:

NORTH ♠ K Q 10 5 3 ♥ 9 3 ♦ K 8 7 ♣ K 10 4 SOUTH ♠ 8 6 ♥ A K 10 8 6 4 ♦ A 4 ♣ Q 9 8	HAND	BID	COMMENT
	South	1H	13 – 16 points, 5+ card Heart suit
	North	1S	Five card Spade suit, 8 to 12 points
	South	2H	6+ Hearts – non-forcing bid
	North	3H	Two card support of Hearts, 11 to 12 points. (with fewer points, would have passed – a raise after a non-forcing bid shows strength in the upper end of the previously shown range.) Invites game.
	South	4H	15 points (counting distribution) is in the maximum range. Accepts game invitation.

Let's vary the hands a little:

NORTH ♠ K Q 10 5 3 ♥ 9 3 ♦ K 7 ♣ Q 10 4 3 SOUTH ♠ 8 6 ♥ A K 10 8 6 ♦ A Q 10 4 ♣ 9 8	HAND	BID	COMMENT
	South	1H	13 – 16 points, 5+ card Heart suit
	North	1S	Five card Spade suit, 8 to 12 points
	South	2D	5-4 in Hearts and Diamonds
	North	2NT	Not a pass or retreat to previously bid suit, so 2NT shows 11-12 points, at most two Hearts, three Diamonds. Suggests length in Clubs.
	South	Pass	13 points (not counting distribution in no trump) is a minimum hand.

NORTH ♠ J 4 ♥ K Q 6 2 ♦ 9 8 5 ♣ K Q 7 4 SOUTH ♠ A Q 10 8 7 ♥ A 9 ♦ A 10 7 4 ♣ 9 8	HAND	BID	COMMENT
	South	1S	13 – 16 points, 5+ card Spade suit
	North	1NT	8 to 12 points, could be a rescue bid
	South	2D	5-4 in Spades and Diamonds
	North	3NT	With partner covering Spades and Diamonds and having at least 13 points, game in no trump is a reasonable proposition. A 2NT bid would be a retreat to no trump, only promising 8 points and would likely be passed, so bid game directly.
	South	Pass	13 points (not counting distribution in no trump) is a minimum hand.

F. Slam Invitational Hands

With 17-18 points, responder has a slam invitational hand. The bidding starts out the same as with 13 points, but the responder looks for a sign that opener has a maximum hand – a cue bid, an unforced raise or a jump bid. If opener shows a maximum, it is up to responder to drive to slam. If opener does not show a maximum, responder will usually stop at game. However, responder should be alert to the occasions when opener does not have the opportunity to show a maximum, so that a game level bid is reached with ambiguity about opener's strength. In that case, if opener already knows enough about controls and the trump suit is a major, he can invite slam by bidding five of the major. Opener will bid six with a maximum and pass with a minimum.

Some examples:

NORTH ♠ A K Q ♥ 9 3 ♦ K Q J 7 5 ♣ Q 10 4 SOUTH ♠ 8 6 ♥ A K 10 8 6 ♦ A 10 4 ♣ K J 8	HAND	BID	COMMENT
	South	1 H	5+ card heart suit, 13 – 16 points
	North	2 D	5+ card diamond suit, at most 2 hearts, 11+ points
	South	3 D	3+ card support, still 13-16 points
	North	3 S	First round control of spades, 13+ points. Game forcing.
	South	4 H	Ace of hearts, 15-16 points, denying control of clubs
	North	6 D	17-20 points (with 21+ points, would have tried for grand slam) taking a bit of a chance on the club suit.

North could have, and probably should have, used Blackwood to verify sufficient controls, although a South hand with the indicated points that did not have two aces is unlikely.

NORTH ♠ Q 4 3 ♥ K Q 10 5 3 ♦ K J 7 ♣ K Q SOUTH ♠ A K 10 8 6 5 ♥ A 4 ♦ A 8 6 5 ♣ 9	HAND	BID	COMMENT
	North	1H	13 – 16 points, 5+ card Heart suit
	South	2S	Five card Spade suit, 13+ points
	North	3S	3+ card support for Spades, still 13-16 points
	South	4D	A Diamond control and interest in slam
	North	4S	Failure to cue bid indicates either a minimum hand or a maximum hand without the Ace of Hearts (unwilling to cue bid at a level above game)
	South	5S	Slam invitation.
	North	6S	Accepts invitation with maximum points

North has no cue bid (and can't make a suitless cue bid without invoking Blackwood) so he can only bid game, leaving his point count ambiguous. Because South has the ace of hearts, he knows North could not cue bid it even with a maximum hand, and making a cue bid over game is something many players would not do without a better fit and playing strength. So South is unsure of North's strength and knows that there are sufficient controls (three aces and four key cards), a perfect situation for a slam invitation. Change South's hand to the following:

♠ A K 10 8 6 4
♥ K 4
♦ J 8 6 5
♣ A

Now, after a four club cue bid, if North just bids four spades, South knows either North has a minimum or the partnership is missing the ace of diamonds and the ace of hearts. Either way, South passes the four spade bid.

If responder has a slam going hand, 19 or more points, he also starts out bidding that the same as a 13 point hand.

NORTH ♠ A 10 6 5 3 ♥ 9 ♦ K 7 3 ♣ K Q 10 4 SOUTH ♠ 8 ♥ A K 10 6 5 ♦ A 10 ♣ A J 9 8 3	HAND	BID	COMMENT
	North	1S	13 – 16 points, 5+ card Spade suit
	South	2H	Five card heart suit, at most two spades, promises 11+ points
	North	2NT	5 spades, at most 2 hearts, 13-14 points. Could have bid 3C but (a) nobody likes minor suits, (b) the 2NT bid describes the point count better and (c) if North starts the no trump bid, he has all unbid suits stopped.
	South	3C	4+ card club suit, one round force
	North	5C	4 card club support, 15+ points in support of clubs. (4C bid as a forced response would show a minimum hand, 13-14 points)
	South	5D	Ace of diamonds, forcing small slam (3 aces & at least 34 combined points) and showing interest in grand slam
	North	5S	Ace of spades, interest in grand slam (because points were previously limited, cue bid does not promise extra points, but suggests nice features, in this case, an outside singleton and very good club support. Note: denies control of Hearts.)
	South	7C	Accepts the suggestion – partner’s ace of spades and at most doubleton heart suggest excellent fit and playing strength.

Note that this is virtually a lay down grand slam: take the side suit winners and cross ruff hearts and spades (first spade ruff with the three, all other ruffs high) until you are left with high clubs in the South hand. You do not even need the king of hearts unless your opponents are clever enough to lead a trump.

Chapter IV Bidding Minor Suited Hands

In the Simplified Club System, you either have a major suited hand, which we have defined as any hand with five or more cards in a major suit, or you have balanced distribution, defined as 4-3-3-3, 4-4-3-2, or 5-3-3-2 distribution without a five card major, and if you don't have either of those, you have a minor suited hand. Minor suited hands are usually two suiters with 5-4-x-x distribution or better. However, minor suited hands also include any hand with 4-4-4-1 distribution regardless of the quality of the suits. You cannot open a major suit without five cards, and you cannot open a no trump with a singleton, so you are stuck with treating 4-4-4-1 distribution as a minor suited hand.

Here are some examples of hands you open with a minor:

♠ K 5 3 ♥ 3 ♦ A K 10 6 5 ♣ K 9 7 3

Open one diamond. With no major, fifteen points and too unbalanced for no trump, it is your only choice.

♠ 5 ♥ K 8 ♦ J 8 7 5 4 ♣ A Q J 4 2

Open one diamond. When diamonds and clubs are of equal length, bid the diamonds first, regardless of strength.

♠ A Q 8 7 ♥ K Q 7 3 ♦ 7 ♣ Q 10 4 3

Open two clubs. This is the kind of hand you hate to get, too many points to pass and a four card club suit as your only biddable suit. Any other bid would lie about your distribution, and in the Simplified Club system, that is a cardinal sin.

And here are a couple of hands you would not open with a minor:

♠ A Q 10 ♥ 9 3 ♦ Q 8 7 ♣ K Q J 10 5

Balanced distribution, so open one no trump. The bid does not promise stoppers in every suit, so the worthless doubleton in hearts does not stop the no trump bid. And don't be seduced by that good looking club suit. In the Simplified Club system, distribution rules.

♠ 10 5 ♥ K 3 ♦ A Q 8 7 4 ♣ Q 10 4 3

The right shape, but you need fourteen points to open with a minor. You should pass.

Minor suited hands are opened with a bid in the better minor, either one diamond or two clubs. When deciding which is the better suit, the emphasis is almost exclusively on length. And because a two club bid crowds the auction much more than a one diamond bid, there is a preference for bidding diamonds. Therefore, with very few exceptions,

the rule for minor suited hands is: bid your longer minor, and when the lengths are equal, bid diamonds.

Because of the difficulties of starting an auction with a two club bid, the bidding sequences after a two club opening differ in a number of ways from the bidding sequences after a one diamond opening. The two sequences will be described separately below.

A. The One Diamond Sequences

The bidding sequences beginning with one diamond are essentially the same as the one of a major sequences with two big differences. All of the usual rules apply: a one-over-one bid shows 8 to 12 points; a two level bid of a minor, either clubs or a raise of diamonds, shows at least an invitational hand with 11 to 12 points, and a two level bid of a major or no trump shows 13 or more points. With one exception, a responder with three or more card support of diamonds will raise. Any other suit bid response shows a five card suit. After the first round of bidding, a new suit bid promises four cards and is a one round force (except after a one-over-one sequence), cue bids, unforced raises and jump bids show extra strength, and so on. Most of the sequences will look just like the sequences after a major suit opening.

The two big differences from the major suit sequences arise from the strong preference for a major suit contract. As described above, when the opening bid is a major suit and responder has support, even a very weak three cards, there is a requirement for responder to support partner rather than bidding his own suit, even if it is a strong major. The bias is reversed when the opening is one diamond. **With support for diamonds and a five card major, responder should always delay showing the diamond support and bid the major first.** Consistent with the general rule, the bid of the major would be made at the one level with eleven or twelve points and at the two level with thirteen or more points. (With diamond support and fewer than eleven points, responder would pass even with a five card major.) Opener would assume a bid of one of a major was a rescue bid or a normal game invitational hand without support of his diamonds, but if opener cannot support the major (passing with a minimum or making a single raise with a maximum) responder will bid diamonds on the next round, revealing his game invitational hand with diamond support. At that point, opener will usually be able to pick the best contract. Let's see how this works:

NORTH ♠ 3 ♥ K J 10 5 ♦ K Q 7 3 ♣ K Q 8 4 SOUTH ♠ A 10 8 6 5 ♥ Q 7 4 ♦ A 8 6 ♣ J 9	HAND	BID	COMMENT
	North	1D	14 – 16 points, 5+ card Diamond suit or 4-4-4-1
	South	1S	Five card Spade suit, either a rescue bid (singleton diamond) with 8-10 points or 11-12 points.
	North	1NT	A singleton Spade
	South	2D	11-12 points with 3+ Diamonds
	North	3NT	With Spades covered by partner and just four Diamonds, NT looks like the best place to be. With 15-16 points, enough strength for game.

NORTH ♠ 6 5 ♥ Q 8 ♦ K Q 10 5 3 ♣ K Q J 3 SOUTH ♠ A J 10 ♥ A J 10 6 4 ♦ J 7 6 ♣ 9 4	HAND	BID	COMMENT
	North	1D	14 – 16 points, 5+ card Diamond suit or 4-4-4-1
	South	1H	Five card Heart suit, either a rescue bid (singleton diamond) with 8-10 points or 11-12 points.
	North	2C	5-4 in Diamonds and Clubs
	South	2D	11-12 points with 3+ Diamonds and fewer than four Clubs
	North	Pass	Minimum hand, game unlikely

NORTH ♠ Q 3 ♥ K 8 3 ♦ K J 7 5 3 ♣ K Q 6 SOUTH ♠ K J 10 9 6 ♥ A Q 4 ♦ 8 4 2 ♣ 9 5	HAND	BID	COMMENT
	North	1D	14 – 16 points, 5+ card Diamond suit or 4-4-4-1
	South	1S	Five card Spade suit, either a rescue bid (singleton diamond) with 8-10 points or 11-12 points.
	North	Pass	2+ card support for Spades, minimum hand

You could certainly argue with this hand that diamonds are a better trump suit than spades. However, you are likely to make the same number of tricks in spades as in diamonds – nine or, if you are lucky, maybe ten – and in spades you will get 50% more points.

NORTH ♠ Q 7 4 3 ♥ K 6 ♦ A Q 8 6 5 ♣ K 6 SOUTH ♠ K J 8 5 2 ♥ A J 5 4 ♦ J 10 4 ♣ 9	HAND	BID	COMMENT
	North	1D	14 – 16 points, 5+ card Diamond suit or 4-4-4-1
	South	1S	Five card Spade suit, either a rescue bid (singleton diamond) with 8-10 points or 11-12 points.
	North	2S	3+ card support for Spades, unforced raise shows 15-16 points
	South	4S	Enough points for game opposite a maximum

If responder bids his major at the two level, that is virtually forcing to game, just as with a one heart – two spade sequence, and the usual bidding guidelines are followed to find the best fit, with one difference. With the one heart – two spades sequence, responder is denying three card support of hearts, and a subsequent bid of hearts (prior to a suit being chosen) is a move made with a misfit hand unsuitable for no trump suggesting trying to play with a 5-2 fit. With a one diamond – two spades sequence, responder can have support of diamonds, and a delayed raise of diamonds shows a real fit, at least three card support. The delayed raise does not necessarily settle the trump suit. Responder would not make the delayed raise unless it had been determined that there was no major suit fit, but there is still the preference for no trump over a minor suit contract, and the partnership should still consider that possibility. Consider the following:

HAND	BID	COMMENT
South	1D	14 – 16 points, 5+ card Diamond suit or 4-4-4-1
North	2H	Five card Heart suit, 13+ points
South	2S	No heart support, but a 4 card Spade suit
North	3D	At most three Spades and at least three Diamonds. Note that the failure to bid NT shows that North does not have a Club stopper or has a hand with 4+ card diamond support and significant distributional strength, that is, not suitable for no trump.
South	3NT	“I have the club stopper for you and a semi-balanced hand.” Otherwise, South would have bid 4D with a minimum and 5D with a maximum

South has a hand something like this:

♠ K 10 5 4

♥ 9

♦ K Q 10 8 7

♣ A Q 10

If North was looking for the club stopper, he would pass three no trump. If he had good diamond support with a hand not suitable for no trump, he would rebid diamonds over three no trump, four diamonds with a minimum hand and five with an extra point or two. This is the hand where he would pass three no trump:

♠ Q 9 8

♥ A Q 6 5 4

♦ A 9 4

♣ 7 2

And this is the hand where he would bid diamonds again:

♠ Q 9 8

♥ A Q 6 5 4

♦ A J 9 4

♣ 9

The second big difference between the one diamond sequences and the one of a major sequences arises not only from the preference for a major suit contract but also from the possibility that a player opening one diamond has a 4-4-4-1 distribution. If responder has three card or better support of partner's diamonds and no five card major, he should raise with 11 or more points, making the working assumption that opener has a five card diamond suit – that will be the case 85% of the time. However, unlike the case of a raise of a major suit, this does not finally decide the trump suit. If opener has a four card major, he will bid it at the two level in an attempt to find a major suit fit. Thus, **after a raise of one diamond to two, the bid of a major suit by opener is not a cue bid.** Responder will support opener's major suit with four card support, raising to three with a minimum 11 to 12 points and raising to game with 13 or more.

If responder cannot support the major, he should be mindful that opener may well have 4-4-4-1 distribution and he should return to diamonds only with four or more cards in that suit (making a jump bid with 13 or more points to force game). With neither support for the major nor four card support of diamonds, responder will bid his own suit. Opener's response and subsequent bidding is natural, keeping in mind the preference for a major suit or no trump contract over a minor suit contract. Thus, if responder bid a major and opener has four card support, opener will raise the major, having found an eight card major suit fit. If responder bid clubs (which is really a no trump try) or opener did not have support for responder's major, there is no hope of a major suit contract, and opener should be thinking about no trump. With the unbid suit stopped (and we count any four card suit as a stopper) a no trump bid is the clear choice. If opener does not have the unbid suit stopped, he must have at least a five card diamond suit and can rebid it, at the three level if possible to give responder the opportunity to bid three no trump if he has the unbid suit stopped.

With a legitimate 5+ card diamond suit and no four card major, opener would, after a one diamond-two diamond sequence, raise to three diamonds with a minimum. With a maximum, opener would like to cue bid to show strength. However, a bid of two of a major will be taken as an attempt to find a major suit fit. Thus, he bids two no trump,

the “suitless cue bid,” to show his strength. Subsequent bidding follows the same principles as with the major suit sequences, recognizing the need for an extra point or two to bid game at the five level.

Finally, because of the probability that the hand will be played in a minor suit and the extra high card points needed for a minor suit game, opener should generally have 14 points to open one diamond. Of course, if opener has, for example, two four card majors, he may decide that the hand is not likely to play in a minor and no extra points are needed. This is one of those areas of judgment.

Let’s see how this works in practice:

NORTH ♠ K Q 10 5 3 ♥ 9 3 ♦ K 8 7 ♣ K 10 4 SOUTH ♠ 8 6 4 ♥ A ♦ A K 10 6 4 ♣ Q 9 8 5	HAND	BID	COMMENT
	South	1D	14 – 16 points, 5+ card Diamond suit or 4-4-4-1
	North	1S	Five card Spade suit, 8 to 12 points
	South	2S	3+ card support, at least 15 points (unforced raise)
	North	4S	11 to 12 points. Accept game invitation

NORTH ♠ K 3 ♥ Q 9 3 ♦ K 7 6 ♣ A Q 10 4 3 SOUTH ♠ Q 10 8 6 ♥ A K 9 8 ♦ A J 10 4 ♣ 9	HAND	BID	COMMENT
	South	1D	14 – 16 points, 5+ card Diamond suit or 4-4-4-1
	North	2D	Three plus card Diamond support, 11+ points, no 5 card major
	South	2H	Four cards in Hearts
	North	3C	Five card club suit. Forcing bid at the 3 level strongly suggests extra points. (Would have bid 2 NT without the Queen of Clubs.)
	South	3NT	Becomes semi-balanced with clubs covered by North

Why does North’s three club bid show a five card club suit? Not simply from that bid alone, which only promises four cards. He didn't bid spades or raise hearts or diamonds, which means no more than three cards in each of those suits. If he had 4-3-3-3 distribution with a four card club suit, he would have bid no trump, much preferred over a minor suit contract. So he must have at least five clubs to bid three clubs at that point

in the auction. Even so, the three club bid is as much a three no trump try, indicating concern about the unbid suit, as an attempt to find a club fit.

NORTH ♠ A Q 9 ♥ Q 9 3 ♦ Q J 7 5 ♣ Q 10 4 SOUTH ♠ K 10 6 ♥ K J 8 6 ♦ A K 8 6 5 ♣ 7	HAND	BID	COMMENT
	South	1 D	14 – 16 points, 5+ card Diamond suit or 4-4-4-1
	North	2 D	Three plus card Diamond support, 11+ points, no 5 card major
	South	2 H	Four cards in Hearts
	North	4 D	Four card support of Diamonds, 13 – 14 points, invites game with a max.
	South	5D	15-16 points (nothing to cue bid)

The Two Club Sequences

The two club sequences are driven by the strong preference for major suit and no trump contracts complicated by the fact that the bidding starts at the two level. Because of that, if you have 5-3-3-2 distribution with a five card club suit, you should open one no trump rather than two clubs, even with a worthless doubleton and a strong club suit. A two club opening bid virtually promises 5-4-x-x or more unbalanced distribution or 4-4-4-1 distribution with a singleton diamond.

Because the bidding starts at the two level and there is a substantial chance of winding up in a minor suit contract, opener should have 14 to 16 points. Responder should classify his hand in the usual way: part score, game invitational and so on. However, because opener has defined his hand within a three point range and there is often not enough time to learn more about his strength, responder will often find himself making the working assumption that opener has 15 points and, if a major suit fit is found, be willing to bid game with an invitational hand.

The problem with the two club opening is that every bid by responder (except pass, of course) gets you to where a two over one bid would be after a one level opening. We would like those bids to mean the same thing as a two over one bid, that is, at least a game invitational hand, but that would foreclose any rescue bids. Responder would not be able to bid with even ten points, a strong seven card spade suit and a void in clubs. That is not an attractive possibility. The compromise we adopt in the Simplified Club System is to severely restrict the use of rescue bids over the two club opening. We make responder's bid a one round force, like the two over one bid, and opener makes the working assumption that responder has a game invitational hand. If responder's bid was a rescue bid, responder will either pass or make a non-forcing bid in response to opener's rebid. Opener, in turn, will be alert to the possibility of a rescue bid situation

and will usually pass responder's non-forcing rebid. There are a few cases where opener may feel the need to bid again, but would only bid a non-forcing bid, and responder would pass.

Let's look at some specifics. If responder has a part score hand with fewer than nine points, he should pass, even with little or no club support. Because any bid by responder is a one round force, it virtually guarantees that the partnership will wind up at the three level, and a three level contract is very likely to be set. If responder does not have club support, he should hope the opponents bid or, if they don't, that they got shut out of a good contract. Some examples:

♠ Q 9 8 ♥ J 6 5 4 ♦ A 9 4 2 ♣ 6 2

This one is clear. Yes, it is possible that partner has 4-4-4-1 distribution and passing would leave him in a 4-2 fit when a 4-4 fit in hearts is available, but bridge is a game of probabilities. Most likely, partner has a five card club suit, and that is the best place to play the hand. You should pass.

♠ 9 8 7 4 ♥ A J 7 5 2 ♦ 10 9 7 3 ♣ --

This is where it gets tough. There very likely is a suit better than clubs, but you will get to the three level to find it. The chance that making a bid with this hand will improve the situation is about the same as the chance of making it worse. Pass and pray that your opponents bid.

If responder has a part score hand with nine or ten points, bidding to the three level is probably safe, and responder has to decide whether to pass or try a rescue. The choice is not always easy. Let's look at some cases:

♠ Q 5 4 ♥ Q J 9 8 ♦ A 9 ♣ 8 7 2

With three clubs, there is no need to rescue. You can comfortably pass with this hand.

♠ 10 9 8 ♥ A Q 9 6 4 ♦ Q 9 4 ♣ 7 2

With only a doubleton club and nine or ten points, you have a much closer question. You have to balance the probability of quickly finding a better fit against the possibility that a club contract will be a disaster. Certainly you should pass without a five card suit. But when you have a hand like this one with a five card major that has a nice honor or two, your chances of finding a better fit than clubs increase significantly. We would bid two hearts with this hand, planning to pass any bid made by partner. If one of those diamonds was a spade, we would be inclined to pass, concerned that, if partner's next bid was three diamonds, we would be in real hot water.

♠ J 8 5 4 ♥ K 10 8 7 ♦ A 8 6 5 ♣ 6

This is a difficult hand. With a singleton or void in clubs, nine or ten points and a five card suit, you definitely make the rescue bid. However, with 4-4-4-1 distribution, your only available rescue bid is two no trump, and that is not very attractive. It is possible

you will wind up in three no trump with less than half the high card points in the deck. Nevertheless, we would bid two no trump, passing any bid made by partner. This is the only distribution that justifies a two no trump bid with fewer than eleven points.

If responder has an invitational hand or better, he should always make a bid over a two club opening. When deciding what to bid, keep in mind once again the preference for a major suit contract followed by a no trump contract. The next choice would be to raise clubs, but responder should have at least four clubs to do so. Responder could also bid two diamonds with a five plus card diamond suit, but there is obviously not a preference for diamonds over clubs, so this is your last choice. Some examples:

♠ K 10 ♥ A 10 9 6 4 ♦ Q 9 ♣ J 8 7 2

With a five plus card major, you should bid two of the major even with club support, exploring the possibility of a major suit fit. So with this hand, bid two hearts. Partner will raise to three hearts with at least three card support, and you can go on to game because you know he has at least 14 points to have opened two clubs. If partner bids something else, you can always retreat to clubs.

♠ Q J 8 ♥ K J 5 4 ♦ A 9 6 5 4 ♣ 10

When your five card suit is diamonds, your first choice is to consider no trump. With partner covering clubs, you are semi-balanced. With 11 high card points, two no trump is your bid. Your partner will bid a four card major if he has one, and if it is hearts, you would bid game in the suit. You would probably respond to any other bid with three no trump, although a three diamond bid by partner, revealing a 5-4 fit and raising your point count to 14 in support of diamonds, indicates that five diamonds is a makeable contract.

Make the hand a little weaker, just 11 or 12 points counting distribution, say like this:

♠ Q 9 8 ♥ K 8 5 4 ♦ A 9 6 5 4 ♣ 10

and you should bid two diamonds. This gives your partner the chance to show a four card major at the two level, and if it is hearts, you raise to three to show your support and an invitational hand. If he bids spades, you bid two no trump, and if he raises your diamonds, you re-raise to four, both bids showing an invitational hand. If he rebids clubs, showing a six card suit, you should pass. By the way, exchange the spades and hearts in that hand so that you have four spades and three hearts, and if partner then bids two hearts over your two diamond bid, there is a good chance that he is 4-4-4-1 with a singleton diamond². Bid two spades to see if you have a 4-4 fit.

² Of all the hands that a person would open two clubs and then bid two hearts over a two diamond bid by partner, about 22% of them will be 4-4-4-1 distribution with a singleton diamond.

♠ K Q 8 3

♥ 8

♦ K J 9 4

♣ Q 10 7 2

If you do not have a five card suit in diamonds or a major and are not semi-balanced, your only choice is to raise clubs. Luckily, in those situations, you will always have at least four card support for clubs, and clubs will be a satisfactory trump suit even if partner is 4-4-4-1.

Let's shift gears and look at these sequences from opener's point of view. When your partner makes a bid over two clubs, it is a one round force, and you must respond. If your partner bid his suit, you know he has at least five cards in it. As a general rule, you should raise it if you have at least three card support, jumping with a maximum hand. If you cannot support partner's suit, how you respond depends on which of the three types of hands you have: (1) a very long club suit, at least six cards, (2) a two suiter, at least 5-4, or (3) 4-4-4-1 distribution with a singleton diamond. With the first type, all you can do is rebid your clubs, and you should do so at the three level. With the latter two types, if your second suit is a major, you should show it, even if partner raised your clubs.

As with the one diamond-two diamond sequence, the bid of the major in that case is not a cue bid. If your second suit is diamonds, you should show it unless partner raised your clubs. The idea here is that you are defining your hand in some detail so that your partner can decide the best contract. In most cases you will pass your partner's next bid, unless it is an invitational raise and you have a maximum.

If partner raised your two club bid to three (and you do not have a four card major) you should bid four clubs with a minimum 14 points, inviting partner to bid game with 13 or more points. (Game with 27 combined points and a nine card fit is a good bet.) Also like the diamond sequence, you will bid three no trump, a "suitless cue bid," to show a maximum hand with a five plus card club suit. This will give his partner with a slam invitational hand room to do some cue bidding to explore slam.

Let's look at some examples:

NORTH ♠ 5 3 ♥ Q 10 9 5 3 ♦ K 10 8 7 ♣ K 7 SOUTH ♠ K Q 10 8 ♥ 8 ♦ A Q 4 ♣ Q 10 9 8 5			
	HAND	BID	COMMENT
	South	2C	14 – 16 points, 5+ card Club suit, unbalanced hand
	North	2H	Five card Heart suit, 9(+) points
	South	2S	Four card Spade suit
	North	2NT	Minimum hand, fewer than three spades (with three, would have passed) Non-forcing bid signals a rescue bid situation
South	Pass	With partner signaling a rescue bid, there is no point in continuing	

NORTH ♠ K 10 8 7 ♥ A K 10 3 ♦ 7 ♣ Q J 7 3 SOUTH ♠ A 8 6 ♥ 8 7 ♦ A Q 10 9 6 ♣ K 9 8	HAND	BID	COMMENT
	North	2C	Five card Club suit or 4-4-4-1, 14+ points
	South	2D	5+ card Diamond suit (9+ points)
	North	2H	Showing four card Heart suit.
	South	3NT	11+ points (with less, would have bid 2NT) no four card spade suit, but promises a spade stopper.
	North	Pass	Semi-balanced after South's Diamond bid. (With unbalanced hand short in Spades, would rebid Clubs or show delayed Diamond support.)

South could have responded 2NT to North's 2C bid, and presumably did not because of concern about the worthless heart doubleton. If he had chosen the no trump response, the bidding would have gone:

NORTH ♠ K 10 8 7 ♥ A K 10 3 ♦ 7 ♣ Q J 7 3 SOUTH ♠ A 8 6 ♥ 8 7 ♦ A Q 10 9 6 ♣ K 9 8	HAND	BID	COMMENT
	North	2C	Five card Club suit or 4-4-4-1, 14+ points
	South	2NT	9+ points, semi-balanced
	North	3H	Showing four card Heart suit.
	South	3NT	No Heart fit, no Spade suit, 11+ points
	North	Pass	Trust partner to know he is responsible for having Diamonds well stopped in case North has 4-4-4-1 distribution.

Which sequence is better? We tend to prefer the two diamond bid because of the strength of the diamond suit (three honor cards) and the worthless doubleton in hearts, but it is a close call.

Those of you who are thinking of possibilities might be noting that, if the two no trump bid were a rescue bid, the three heart bid puts the partnership at a very high level without a decision on the trump suit. But it is not as risky as it might seem. The two no trump rescue bid is only made with 4-4-4-1 distribution, so North knows that, if two no trump was a rescue bid, there is a four-four heart fit. And if South does have a part score hand, he can pass the three heart bid, this being another exception to the "new suit bid is a one round force" rule. It meets all the criteria: (a) the responding bidder knows there is a good fit in the suit, (b) he knows there is not enough strength for game and (c) he knows that bidding up a level is dangerous.

Let's try one where responder has club support:

NORTH ♠ 10 3 ♥ A K 10 3 ♦ 8 7 ♣ A Q J 7 3 SOUTH ♠ A Q 9 8 6 ♥ 8 ♦ A 9 6 ♣ 10 9 8 5			
	HAND	BID	COMMENT
	North	2C	Five card Club suit or 4-4-4-1, 14+ points
	South	2S	9+ points, five card Spade suit
	North	3H	Showing four card Heart suit.
	South	4C	No Heart fit, 11 to 12 points, invitational
	North	5C	Maximum points (15 to 16), accept invitation

South could have bid three no trump instead of four clubs, and if he had, that is probably where the bidding would have ended. A diamond lead, quite probable on the bidding, would have made a three no trump contract difficult. Thus, we think the four club bid, with a five-four fit, is the better choice. How does South know it is a five-four fit? Because North would have bid a four card club suit only if he had 4-4-4-1 distribution with a singleton diamond, and in that case, he would have supported South's spades.

Chapter V

The One No Trump Sequences

As noted above, a hand with balanced, or no trump, distribution with about half the points needed for a no trump game is opened one no trump in the Simplified Club System. A balanced hand with 12 points opposite another balanced hand with 12 points will have a good shot at making three no trump. Thus, a balanced hand with 12 points should be opened so as not to risk passing out a hand that could make game. To meet the goal of having most opening bids define the opener's strength within four points, hands with 16 or more high card points are opened one club, and the one no trump bid is used for balanced hands with up to 15 high card points (remember, distribution points, if any, should not be counted when bidding no trump.)

A balanced distribution is defined in the Simplified Club System as one of three "shapes": 4-3-3-3, 4-4-3-2, and 5-3-3-2 where the five card suit is a minor. When you open one no trump, you must have balanced distribution. You are absolutely promising your partner that you have at most one doubleton (and no singletons or voids) and also that you do not have a five card major. You are **not** promising a stopper in every suit.

Because balanced distributions are so common (the probability of being dealt a hand with no trump distribution is about 35%) one no trump is the most common natural opening bid in the Simplified Club System.³ It is also the opening bid which, other than the big club bid itself, is the most different from Standard American. As a result, a fairly detailed look at the bidding sequences starting with one no trump is called for, even though, compared with Standard American Yellow Card, the bidding is quite natural.

When your partner opens one no trump, he has quite narrowly defined his hand, so you are the one to take charge of the bidding. The first thing you do, as always, is classify your hand as part score, game invitational, game going, slam invitational or slam going. A part score hand is any hand with ten points or less. You know partner has at most 15 points, so game is highly unlikely. With a part score hand, you have just two choices: make a rescue bid or pass. You make a rescue bid when you have a part score hand with a weak six card or better suit that will, because of the difficulty of establishing the suit and your lack of entries, likely be worthless in no trump. The rescue bids are two diamonds, two hearts, two spades and three clubs. Opener will always pass these bids. If you as responder do not have a rescue bid, you just pass. This puts your opponents in a quandary. They do not know if you passed with a very weak hand, in which case they probably should be bidding a game, or a ten point hand, in which case they would risk being set at the two level. This is a nice side benefit of a natural no trump opening.

³ Actually, the most common opening bid is the artificial one club. The distribution of opening bids, not counting preempts, is: one club, 28.2%; one no trump, 25.2%; one of a major, 23.8%; one diamond, 12.3%; and two clubs, 10.5%.

If you have at least an invitational hand, the next thing you do is decide whether there is any chance of playing in a major, remembering that, as always, we prefer playing in a major if there is an eight card fit or better. We know that, at best, partner has a four card major, so we can be hoping for a major suit contract only if we have a major with at least four cards in it.

Let's first consider the case where you have one major (or two) with exactly four cards. If you have 13 or more points, we can be confident of game if partner has four card support of your suit, so we call that at least a game going hand. (True, partner might have four card support with a minimum 12 high card points and no distributional points in support of your major, that is, 4-3-3-3 distribution, and you would wind up in a light game, but if we insisted on 14 points for a game going hand, there would be a lot of games we would miss.)

If we have 13 or more points, how can we determine if partner has four card support of our major? That is exactly what the Stayman convention is designed to find out. So with a four card major and a game going hand, bid two clubs as Stayman. Opener must respond two diamonds with no four card major, two of his major if he just has one, and two no trump if he has four cards in both majors.⁴ If opener's response to Stayman reveals a four-four major suit fit, you should go right to game. 1NT – 2C – 2H – 4H is a very common auction. If Stayman shows there is no four-four fit and you have a balanced hand, you should jump directly to three no trump. 1NT – 2C – 2D – 3NT is also a very common auction. If you have an unbalanced hand, you must have at least a five card minor, and you should treat the hand as a minor suited hand, as described below. (If your five card suit was a major, you should have been using the five card major sequences, also described below, instead of Stayman.)

What if you only have an invitational hand, 11 to 12 points? With one exception, we reserve the use of Stayman for game going hands, so you can't use Stayman to find out if your partner has four card support of your four card major. And you not only want to find out if partner has support for your suit; you also want to know if he has a maximum hand that can support a game level bid. The answer is to bid two no trump. If partner has a minimum hand, he will pass. If he has a maximum, 14 to 15 high card points, and a four card major, he will bid his major. If his major matches yours, you bid game in the major. If not, you retreat to three no trump. (If partner has both majors, he will bid three hearts, giving you the opportunity to show a four card spade suit by bidding three spades if you do not have four hearts.) If partner has a maximum but no four card major, he will either bid three no trump or three of a five card minor, if he has one. The bid of a minor suit does not mean that partner is really interested in a minor suit contract. One is almost never really interested in a minor suit contract. Rather it is

⁴ In Standard American, you would bid two hearts with both majors with the understanding that your partner will bid two spades if that is the major he has four cards in. In the Simplified Club System, that sequence (1NT – 2C – 2H – 2S) is used to show a game invitational hand with a five card spade suit, so we use the two no trump bid, which has no other use, to show both majors.

merely giving you complete information about his hand so you can decide where the best contract is. Although there will be times when you decide the hand will play better in a minor suit, most of the time you will bid three no trump over partner's bid of three of a minor.

Here is your classic hand for bidding two no trump with a four card major, nice no trump distribution and eleven high card points:

♠ K 3 ♥ K Q 5 3 ♦ Q 9 4 3 ♣ J 6 2

Unless opener bids three hearts, this is a hand that will play well in no trump.

Things get a little more difficult as the hands become more unbalanced:

♠ Q J 6 5 ♥ 8 ♦ K 7 4 ♣ A Q 10 7 2

With a hand like this, you have to decide whether to bid two no trump or pass. This is a case of balancing the risk of missing a game against the risk of winding up in a hopeless no trump contract, and it can be a difficult decision. In this case, with 12 high card points and a four card major, you should take the risk and bid two no trump. If partner bids three hearts, you will be comfortable bidding three no trump. If he bids any other suit, you would raise to four, perhaps even five with clubs. If he stays in no trump, you will just have to hope he has a stopper or two in hearts.

With a hand like this one:

♠ A 10 8 3 ♥ 10 6 ♦ A Q J 9 8 4 ♣ 7

you have to decide whether to bid two diamonds as a rescue, treat it like a minor suited hand, discussed below, or bid two no trump. With a semi-solid suit and a side entry in spades, we would tend to go with two no trump. It is kind of like a gambling three no trump but with fewer points.

Let's next consider the hands with a five card major. If it is a game going hand, you need to find out whether partner has at least three card support of your suit. To do that, you bid three of your major. That bid promises a game going hand with a five card major. Partner will bid three no trump with two card support and game in your major with three or more card support. You will always pass this bid unless you have a true two suiter (5-5-x-x or 6-5-x-x where the 6 card suit is a minor) in which case you will bid game in your second suit over a three no trump bid. The three no trump bid showed a doubleton in your first suit, and because a no trump bidder has at most one doubleton, you know that partner has at least three card support of your second suit. That is the only situation (other than exploring slam) where you would bid over partner's three no trump bid. If your second suit only has four cards, you should pass. You might miss a

four-four fit. You might even miss a four-four fit that would play better than three no trump, but bridge is a game of probabilities, and the probabilities are that three no trump is where the hand will play the best.

What if you have a five card major but only have an invitational hand, 11 or 12 points? For those hands, we use the Stayman Invitational convention, the only exception to the rule that Stayman is reserved for game going hands. You bid two clubs Stayman over the one no trump opening. If partner responds with a suit lower ranked than yours (2 diamonds, or 2 hearts when your suit is spades) you bid your suit at the two level. Partner can tell exactly what this means – you have a five card suit because you bid it even though four card support was denied and you have fewer than 13 points because you did not jump directly to three of your major. And you must have more than ten points because you didn't make a shutout bid. He will therefore (a) pass with 3 card support and a minimum, (b) bid 2NT with two card support and a minimum, (c) bid game in your major with three card support and a maximum or (d) bid 3NT with two card support and a maximum. If opener bids your major, either in reality or virtually, by bidding two no trump, you raise to three, for example: 1NT – 2C – 2S – 3S. This is just what it sounds like, an invitational bid, and partner will raise to game with a maximum.

The case we haven't covered is where partner responds two spades to Stayman and your suit is hearts. This presents a problem. You do not want to bid three hearts because the hand probably should be played in two no trump if opener has a doubleton heart and a minimum hand. To solve this problem, we have a truly artificial bid. Over the two spade bid, you bid two no trump. With a minimum hand, partner will pass with a doubleton heart and bid three hearts with three card support. With a maximum, opener will bid game in no trump with a doubleton heart or game in hearts with three card support. Bidding no trump to show a heart suit is certainly unnatural, and this is a difficult sequence to remember at the table. However, it is a logical way to address the problem, and there is no natural reason to bid two no trump over Stayman, so it should be clear that it is an artificial bid. And by the way, people who play Jacoby Transfers should find this approach familiar.

This is an example of bidding using the Stayman invitational convention showing the use of the two no trump bid to show a five card heart suit.

NORTH ♠ A Q J 3 ♥ 9 3 6 ♦ K Q 7 6 ♣ K 10 SOUTH ♠ 8 5 2 ♥ A Q J 7 4 ♦ A 4 ♣ 7 4 3	HAND	BID	COMENT
	North	1 NT	12 – 15 points, balanced
	South	2C	Stayman, asking for majors. 13+ points or 11-12 and a five card major.
	North	2 S	Four Spades, denying four Hearts.
	South	2 NT	Five card Heart suit, 11-12 points. (With a 6 card heart suit, would have bid 3H.)
	North	4H	Maximum hand and three card support of Hearts.

Because the Stayman Invitational convention has some significant artificial elements, we make it an elective convention rather than a mandatory part of the Simplified Club system. If you and your partner are not playing the convention, the best way to handle an invitational hand with a five card major is to pretend that the major is only four cards and follow the bidding described above for four card major hands.

If you have six or more cards in your major suit, you know that is a good trump suit – partner has at least two. If you also have a game going hand, you should bid game directly: 1NT – 4S, just like that. No sense in wasting time. If you only have an invitational hand, 11 to 12 points, you start out using the Stayman Invitational convention, and whenever partner makes a no trump bid, you retreat to your six card major. For example:

Bid	Comment
1NT	Balanced distribution, 12 to 15 high card points
2C	Stayman, invitational or game going hand
2D	No four card major
2S	Promising a 5 card Spade suit and 11 to 12 points
2NT	A doubleton Spade and a minimum (12-13 points) hand
3S	A six card Spade suit
Pass	Partner's bid is a shutout.

You have a problem if your suit is hearts and partner bids two spades in response to Stayman. With an invitational five card suit, you would bid two no trump to allow your partner to pass with a minimum two card support. With a six card major, you do not want to be in no trump, so you would bid three hearts over partner's two spade bid. Partner would understand that you have a six card suit and would either pass with a minimum hand or bid four hearts with a maximum.

If you have a hand with no four card or better major, it is either balanced or a minor suited hand. If it is balanced, you should go right to three no trump with a game going

hand. Since you know the hand is going to be played in no trump and you know partner has at least twelve high card points, a hand with as few as twelve high card points is game going. With an invitational hand, you would bid two no trump. As described above, partner will pass with a minimum hand and will bid three no trump or three of a suit with a maximum. If he bids a suit, you will almost always finish the bidding by returning to no trump. It is possible that your partner will bid a five card minor and you will decide that the hand will play better in the minor. Perhaps you have five card support of your partner and a worthless doubleton and tripleton in the majors, but it would take an unusual distribution to overcome the distaste for a minor suit contract.

With a minor suited, unbalanced game going hand, you start out with two clubs Stayman and then reevaluate your hand based on what the Stayman response tells you. If you have become semi-balanced – say you are 4-4-4-1 or 5-4-3-1 with a singleton heart and opener shows a four card heart suit – you should now bid three no trump. You would generally bid three no trump if you are 5-4-2-2, you have a stopper in one of the doubletons and opener shows a four card suit opposite the other doubleton.

If you still are unbalanced, you bid three of your minor over opener's response to Stayman. Opener will respond three no trump with two card support. With four card or better support, opener will bid four of the minor with 12-13 points and five of the minor with 14-15 points. With three card support, opener has some work to do. There is, of course, a clear preference for bidding no trump, and opener will do so if he has the unbid suits stopped. If there is an unstopped suit, opener can bid a stopped suit in a no trump try. This bid is not trying to find a trump suit and does not necessarily promise four cards. However, if it is only a three card suit, it should be well stopped. Responder could then bid three no trump with the unbid suits stopped.

As with the five card major sequences, responder will almost always pass a three no trump bid. However, if responder is 5-5 in the minors, he should usually bid game in the other minor. Note that, if you have 5-5 in the minors, any game you are headed for would be in a minor suit, which needs a point or two more than a no trump or major suit game. Thus you would generally start the Stayman sequence with 14 or more points instead of 13 or more. With 13 points or less, you should bid a two diamonds or three clubs shutout. This is the only time that bidding a suit shutout over one no trump is appropriate without a six card suit. 5-5 in the minors is a difficult distribution to bid, but luckily, it only occurs in fewer than one in a hundred hands.

With 17 or more points, responder should be thinking about slam possibilities. He should start out with the same sequences to locate a fit. Over a three no trump bid by opener, or after Stayman has found a four-four major suit fit, responder can use Gerber to help with the decision. After opener's response to the four club bid, a bid of four no trump is a sign-off. A bid of five no trump after asking for aces is invitational to slam. Opener will bid six with 14-15 points and will otherwise pass. Typically, responder will use the sign off when two aces are missing and will use the invitation with 17-18 or a

poor 19 points. With a good 19 points or better, responder should bid six no trump on his own. After asking for kings, five no trump is a sign-off. Thus, responder has a choice of asking for kings or making an invitational bid but not both, and will have to decide whether knowing about point count or knowing about kings is more important in the slam decision. If Stayman reveals a 4 - 4 major suit fit, responder goes right to Gerber. After asking for aces, a bid of five of a major is also invitational, and opener will pass with 12-13 points. Where opener has supported responder's minor, Gerber will be unavailable and, as in Standard American, Blackwood will be of little use. However, responder will have quite specific information about opener's point count and a good idea of opener's distribution and should be able to decide fairly accurately whether slam is in the cards.

If you have enough points for slam, 19 or more, you can go directly to Gerber to find out about aces. With a marginal hand, 17 or 18 points, you may also want to use some of the bidding techniques above to find out the quality of your fit. In other words, you pretend your six card suit is a five card suit to find out if opener has three or four card support. You would be much more willing to go to slam with 17 points and three or four card support of your six card suit than with only two card support. Note that if opener has raised your three of a major bid to four, you can bid four no trump as Blackwood, raise to five as a slam invitation, or cue bid, also showing slam interest

Let us look at how this bidding would work with a few hands.

NORTH ♠ A Q 10 9 ♥ 8 7 3 ♦ K J 7 3 ♣ K 6 SOUTH ♠ K 8 6 5 ♥ A K 9 4 ♦ 10 4 ♣ A 7 4	HAND	BID	COMMENT
	North	1 NT	12 – 15 points, balanced
	South	2 C	Stayman, asking for majors. 13+ points
	North	2 S	Four card spade suit, denies four hearts
	South	4 S	Eight card fit, points for game. Not enough to consider slam
	North	Pass	

This is a fairly difficult hand to bid under Standard American. The bidding would start one diamond – one heart – one spade, but then what does South bid? Any spade raise would risk being passed, and a four spade bid would risk missing a slam if North had a maximum. Anyone for the fourth suit forcing convention?

Let's try another:

NORTH ♠ K 10 7 5 ♥ K 6 ♦ Q 10 6 ♣ A 8 7 4 SOUTH ♠ 9 ♥ A Q 10 8 7 3 ♦ A K J 7 ♣ K 5	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>HAND</th> <th>BID</th> <th>COMMENT</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>North</td> <td>1 NT</td> <td>12 – 15 points, balanced</td> </tr> <tr> <td>South</td> <td>4 C</td> <td>Gerber, asking for aces. Implies 19 or more points. Responder knows there is at least an eight card fit in Hearts</td> </tr> <tr> <td>North</td> <td>4 D</td> <td>One ace</td> </tr> <tr> <td>South</td> <td>6 H</td> <td>Eight card fit, points for slam. Three suits have first round control.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>North</td> <td>Pass</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>			HAND	BID	COMMENT	North	1 NT	12 – 15 points, balanced	South	4 C	Gerber, asking for aces. Implies 19 or more points. Responder knows there is at least an eight card fit in Hearts	North	4 D	One ace	South	6 H	Eight card fit, points for slam. Three suits have first round control.	North	Pass	
	HAND	BID	COMMENT																		
	North	1 NT	12 – 15 points, balanced																		
	South	4 C	Gerber, asking for aces. Implies 19 or more points. Responder knows there is at least an eight card fit in Hearts																		
	North	4 D	One ace																		
	South	6 H	Eight card fit, points for slam. Three suits have first round control.																		
	North	Pass																			

See how making the one no trump bid available for balanced hands with opening points simplifies things?

NORTH ♠ K Q 10 ♥ K Q 7 3 ♦ 9 3 ♣ K J 10 6 SOUTH ♠ 8 6 ♥ A 4 ♦ A K 10 7 4 ♣ Q 9 8 2	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>HAND</th> <th>BID</th> <th>COMMENT</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>North</td> <td>1 NT</td> <td>12 – 15 points, balanced</td> </tr> <tr> <td>South</td> <td>2 C</td> <td>Stayman, asking for majors. 13+ points (or 11-12 and five card major)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>North</td> <td>2 H</td> <td>Four card Heart suit, denies four Spades</td> </tr> <tr> <td>South</td> <td>3 D</td> <td>Five card suit, asking for three card support</td> </tr> <tr> <td>North</td> <td>3 NT</td> <td>Only doubleton support, all other suits stopped</td> </tr> <tr> <td>South</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>Points for game but not enough for slam.</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>			HAND	BID	COMMENT	North	1 NT	12 – 15 points, balanced	South	2 C	Stayman, asking for majors. 13+ points (or 11-12 and five card major)	North	2 H	Four card Heart suit, denies four Spades	South	3 D	Five card suit, asking for three card support	North	3 NT	Only doubleton support, all other suits stopped	South	Pass	Points for game but not enough for slam.
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This is the same hand as the last one with hearts and diamonds switched and one of the spades made a fifth club. Now South knows that North has a doubleton heart and therefore has at least three cards in each of the other suits. This is the approach with a 5-5 hand: bid three of the highest ranked suit and, if partner doesn't show support, bid game in the lower ranked suit. If you are 5-5 in the minors, you cannot be sure that partner has a doubleton when he fails to show support of your first suit, and therefore cannot be sure that he has at least three of your second suit, but in the rare case that he has a doubleton in your second suit, he can correct to your first.

Chapter VI The One Club Sequences

In the Simplified Club System, all balanced hands with 16 or more high card points⁵ and unbalanced hands with 17 or more points (counting distribution) are opened one club. Responder classifies his hand in the usual way, but the point count for the categories is adjusted to reflect the strength of opener's hand. Any hand with fewer than seven points is classified as a part score hand. A hand with seven or eight points is game invitational, and hands with nine to twelve points are game going. Hands with thirteen or fourteen points are slam invitational, and those with more than fourteen are slam going. Most of the bidding sequences will be familiar to you, since many of the bidding techniques used after a normal opening bid are also used after a one club opening. One difference is that opener's hand is unlimited as to its strength. Thus, a hand that responder classified as game invitational may turn out to be slam going. And the one club opening bid is absolutely forcing. Responder must bid even with a zero point hand.

The partnership job is, first, to find an eight card or better fit, preferably in a major, or settle on no trump if there isn't one and, second, to find out if the partnership has the points so as to be able to make game. To find a fit, the partnership uses the standard bidding practices that we are familiar with from the sequences after normal opening bids, namely:

1. If a partner realizes there is an eight card or better fit in the other partner's suit, raise it.
2. If you re-bid your suit without support, you are promising one more card in the suit than you promised before.
3. With balanced or semi-balanced (i.e. balanced except for shortness in partner's suit) distribution and no un-bid five plus card suit, bid no trump.
4. A new suit bid promises at least four cards and is a one round force.

As usual, there is a strong preference for a major suit contract, followed by a no trump contract and a minor suit contract as a last resort. Also, as usual, a jump bid, an unforced raise and a cue bid show extra strength, at least two points above the previously established minimum.

⁵ If you ever get a hand with balanced distribution and 25 or more points, forget one club and bid two no trump directly. If you play bridge three or four hours a week, you should get a hand like that about once every ten years. The two no trump opening is forcing to game. With 0-5 points, responder will bid game directly. With 5-8, responder will bid a five card major at the three level or three clubs as Stayman. These bids are slam tries. Opener's responses to Stayman are the same as at the two level except that, with both majors, opener will bid three hearts. Opener's response to three of a major will be three no trump with two card support and four of the major with three plus card support.

Bidding Sequences with a Part Score Hand

All part score hands respond to the one club opening with a bid of one diamond. Any other bid promises at least a game invitational hand. After a one diamond response, opener bids according to his distribution and point count. If he doesn't have the 21 plus point powerhouse, his goal is to find a reasonable fit at as low a level as possible, and then shut down the bidding.

With balanced distribution, opener bids one no trump with 16-19 points. Responder will generally pass this bid. However, with a six card suit that is not likely to be useful in no trump, that is, one with a lot of holes or no side entries, responder could bid two of his suit. This is a shutout bid that will be passed by opener. This is very much like the rescue bids made over a one no trump opening except that, because we do not use Stayman after a one club – one diamond – one no trump sequence, you can bid two clubs as a shutout.

With 20-23 points and balanced distribution, opener would bid two no trump over one diamond. With 0-3 points, responder will pass. With 4-6 points, responder will bid (a) three no trump with balanced distribution; (b) three of a five card major, opener bidding 3NT with two card support and game in the major with three plus card support; (c) game in a six plus card suit; or (d) bid three of the better minor, which may be a four card suit with the old problematical 4-4-4-1 distribution. After a 3NT response to a five card major bid, responder will usually pass, but can bid a five card minor at the four level if he has one with a hand unsuitable for no trump. After a minor suit response to 2NT, opener will bid a four card major, raise the minor with four card support or, if neither of those bids are available, 3NT. None of those bids are forcing, and responder will generally pass with a minimum hand.

If opener has unbalanced distribution, he will bid his best suit over the one diamond response. As usual, a bid of a major promises a five card suit, and a bid of a minor promises a five card suit or 4-4-4-1 distribution. If opener has 17-20 points, he bids his suit at the cheapest level. The partnership then knows that the chances of making game are about zero, and the goal is to find a reasonable suit, i.e. at least seven cards between the two hands, and pass. Thus, responder will pass one of a major with two card support and two of a minor with three card support. Without even that support, responder will bid a five card suit or, if he has none, the cheapest no trump. Opener will (a) pass with two card support, but if not, (b) rebid his suit with six plus cards, but if not, (c) bid his second suit with a true two suiter (5-5-x-x or better) but if not, (d) bid (or pass) a no trump bid.

If opener has 21 points or more, he jump bids in his suit. This is a one round force. Responder will make a weak bid – a single raise with three plus card support or the cheapest no trump without that support – with 0-3 points. With 4-6 points, responder will bid a new suit or jump to game in opener's suit. Over a major suit bid, responder

could also jump to three no trump and would likely do so with a doubleton or less in opener's suit and no good five card suit of his own. Over a minor suit bid, three no trump is a weak bid (not a jump), and responder will usually temporize with a suit bid at the three level, which could be of a weak four card suit. A new suit bid is a game force, and opener will (a) raise responder's suit with four card support; (b) re-bid his suit with six plus cards; (c) bid his second suit with unbalanced distribution, 5-4-x-x or better; or (d) bid three no trump with semi-balanced distribution, e.g. balanced except for shortness in responder's suit.

Bidding Sequences over One of a Major

When responder bids one of a major, he is promising (a) a five plus card suit and (b) at least seven points. Thus, the partnership has at least 24 combined points and can bid safely to the three level. With a couple of extra points above the minimum, the partnership should be thinking of game. Responder's bid is unlimited as to strength and is absolutely forcing for one round. Some examples:

♠ Q 10 9 8 4 ♥ 8 5 4 ♦ A 9 6 ♣ 10 3

A bare minimum seven points, but worth bidding with a five card major. Bid one spade.

♠ K 7 ♥ K J 6 5 2 ♦ A 5 4 ♣ 9 7 6

You know you have the strength for game, but there is no point rushing it. Bid one heart, and see what develops.

♠ A K Q 8 7 ♥ J 2 ♦ K J 8 ♣ A 7 6

With this hand, you are headed for slam, but again, no point in rushing it. Bid one spade.

The simplest case is where opener has three card or better support for responder's major. As with responding to a major suit opening bid, opener should raise partner's major even if he has a very good suit of his own, accepting partner's suit as the trump suit. Unlike responding to a major suit opening, this will always be a simple raise to the two level. Responder's bid of one of a major is unlimited, so opener must leave open the possibility that there is a slam in the works. The simple raise is a one round force. Assume partner bid one spade in response to your one club opening. With each of the following hands, you would raise to two spades.

♠ A J 8 ♥ K 5 ♦ A K J 6 5 4 ♣ J 4

There may also be a good diamond fit, but you have at least eight spades and the diamonds look good for sluffs. And you get more points for spades.

♠ A K 6 5 ♥ A Q 3 ♦ 10 ♣ A K J 8 5

It looks like you are going to slam, but once again, don't rush it. Give your partner time to show his strength. After all, you may have a grand slam.

Responder will define the strength of his hand in the subsequent bidding, showing at least two extra points by each cue bid and limiting the strength of his hand by making the cheapest bid of his major. Thus, with only a game invitational hand (7 – 8 points), responder will just re-raise to three of the major to show a minimum, and opener will decide whether to go on to game (or try for slam with a 24 point powerhouse). With a game going hand or better, responder should make a cue bid, or the suitless cue bid of two no trump if he has no ace or void to show. This signals to partner that they have the strength to bid game. At that point, neither hand has limited its point count – opener shown 17 or more and responder 9 or more – and it is opener’s turn to further define the strength of his hand by cue bidding. It is important that the partners keep cue bidding as long as they have extra points to show so that they can tell if slam or grand slam is a possibility. Thus, in the following sequence:

North	South
1C (17+ points)	1H (7+points)
2H (a fit)	3C (cue bid, 9+ points)
3D (cue bid, 19+ points)	3NT (cue bid, 11+ points)

responder has shown 11 or more points and control of clubs (and denied control of spades) and opener should be thinking about slam with 20 points or more. On the other hand, opener has shown 19 or more points in support of the major and control of diamonds, so responder should be thinking of slam with 12 or more points. As soon as one of the partners returns to the trump suit, the other partner knows the total strength of the hands and makes the decision of how high to go.

There are a couple of exceptions to the rule that a cue bid shows at least two points more than the previously disclosed minimum point count and that a bid of the trump suit limits your point count to no more than one more than the previously disclosed minimum. The first is when one of the partners has limited their hand. In that case, a further cue bid by the partner with the limited hand merely show a control, and a cue bid by the other partner indicates an interest in slam and the points that interest implies. Consider, for example, the following bidding sequence:

Bidder	Bid	Comment
North	1C	17+ playing points or 16 high card points
South	1S	5+ Spades, at least 7 points
North	2S	At least three card support of spades, establishing spades as trumps
South	3S	Just 7-8 points
North	4C	Club control and interest in slam. Suggests 24 or more playing points in spades
South	4H	Heart control, denies a diamond control, and still just 7-8 points

The other exception is where the only available cue bid would take the partnership over game. Then a game bid in the trump suit indicates only that the bidder is not sure slam is in the cards and does not limit the hand to no more than one point above the previously shown minimum. Consider the following:

Bidder	Bid	Comment
North	1C	17+ playing points or 16 high card points
South	1H	5+ Hearts, at least 7 points
North	2H	At least three card support of Hearts, establishing Hearts as trumps
South	3D	At least 9 points and a Diamond control
North	4C	Club control, at least 19 points. Denies a Spade control
South	4H	Could be made with 11 points because the available cue bids (Spades and no trump) would take the partnership over game (and the no trump cue bid would be taken as Blackwood)

If opener does not have at least three card support of responder's major, he will make the cheapest bid of another suit or no trump. He will make the cheapest bid regardless of his strength. Any bid he makes is forcing for one round, and if he has a real blockbuster hand heading towards slam, he will be able to tell that story later. The bidding sequences following a one no trump bid are covered below. If opener bids a suit over one of a major, he is promising at least five cards in that suit, because, without a five card suit and without support, he would be balanced or semi-balanced and would bid no trump. If opener's suit is a major and responder has at least three card support, he will raise. Because opener's bid was forcing, a single raise (e.g. 1 club, 1 spade, 2 hearts, 3 hearts) would show a minimum, game invitational hand and could be passed if opener also has a minimum. Thus, if responder has a game going hand (9 or more points) he should jump raise to show the points and ensure the hand is not passed out below game.

If opener's suit is a minor, responder should raise with four card support, knowing there is at least a 5-4 fit, jumping with a game going or better hand to show extra strength. The jump bid is unlimited and forcing and therefore forces to game, having been made at the four level (1 Club – 1 Heart or Spade – 2 Clubs or Diamonds – 4 Clubs or Diamonds). You may be concerned that, if opener has a minimum 17 points, game in a minor will be bid with only 26 points instead of 28. That is true, but a 5-4 fit is worth a at least one extra point of playing strength, so game in the minor should be a good bet.

If responder only has three card support of opener's minor, he will delay showing that support if there is a reasonable chance of finding a major suit fit or playing in no trump. Assume the bidding has gone 1 Club – 1 Heart – 2 Diamonds. Here are some hands you might have:

♠ Q 9 ♥ K 10 9 8 5 4 ♦ A 9 6 ♣ 10 8

With a six card major suit, rebid it. With nine high card points and at least one distribution point (we would count a doubleton queen as just two points) your bid here is a jump to three hearts. With only seven or eight points, you would bid two hearts.

♠ Q J 8 7 ♥ A 10 8 7 5 ♦ K 5 4 ♣ A

Your partner could well have a four card spade suit, so show him yours by bidding two spades. Bidding a new suit is forcing, so you do not need to jump even though you likely have points for slam.

♠ K 9 ♥ K 9 8 5 4 ♦ Q 6 5 ♣ J 10 8

With a balanced hand, you bid no trump. With nine high card points, you have the strength for game, so bid three no trump. Take away the queen of diamonds, and you would just bid two.

♠ 9 ♥ Q 8 7 5 4 ♦ K 8 6 ♣ K 9 4

With this hand, there is no chance of a major suit fit, and no trump looks dicey. Your only choice is to raise diamonds. Because the partnership is headed for a minor suit contract with only a 5-3 fit, you should have a point or two more than usual to make the jump bid. With the hand shown, with just ten points, you should only raise to three diamonds.

(If these sequences sound familiar, it is because they are essentially the same as the sequences we saw when responder bid a minor over an opening major suit bid with the roles of opener and responder reversed.)

With less than three card support of opener's minor, you would make the same bids as above – a rebid, a new major or no trump – if those bids were available. If not, your other minor must be biddable, and you will bid it, at the three level if necessary. To illustrate, take each of the four hands we just looked at and make one of the diamonds a club. The bidding would be the same except for the last hand, where you would bid three clubs instead of three diamonds. If your partner's response to your bid does not decide the contract, you will have to pick the best bid, and often the best contract, but will usually have enough information to do so. For example, consider the following:

Bidder	Bid	Comment
North	1C	17+ playing points or 16 high card points
South	1H	5+ Hearts, at least 7 points
North	2C	At least five Clubs, at most two Hearts
South	2H	6+ Hearts, just 7-8 points (did not jump)
North	2NT	5 Clubs (would have rebid with 6) 4 Diamonds (would have bid them with 5) 3 Spades (would have bid them with 4) 1 Heart (that's what's left) and probably 17-18 points

Your partner's hand is nearly an open book.

Note that we are requiring about 26 partnership points to bid three no trump. It is true that three no trump is usually a good contract with 24 points when the points are evenly distributed between the hands, but here we have one hand much stronger than the other and something of a misfit, so there will likely be communication problems necessitating extra strength. Note also that we said opener's two no trump rebid probably showed 17 to 18 points. Ordinarily the cheapest no trump bid promises a minimum hand, but that is not the case when the no trump bidder opened the bidding with one club. There are too many cases where requiring opener to bid three no trump over a two level bid with a nineteen point hand would excessively crowd the bidding, so we make an exception to give the one club bidder more flexibility. The two no trump bid is still not forcing and still suggests a minimum. And a two no trump bid by responder over a two level bid still shows a minimum game invitational hand.

Bidding Sequences Over a One No Trump Response

Other than in response to a one diamond bid, there are three ways that a bid of one no trump can be made after a one club opening. The first is when responder has balanced distribution and a game invitational or better hand. He will bid one no trump over a one club opening. The second is when responder has bid one of a major and opener is balanced or semi-balanced (with 4-4-4-1 distribution and a singleton in responder's major, opener is semi-balanced) without support of the major. Opener will bid one no trump over responder's major. The third, quite rare, is where responder bids one heart, opener bids one spade, and responder, being semi-balanced, bids one no trump. Note that, in the latter two cases, the no trump bid denies three card support of partner's major.

After each of these no trump bids, the tools described in the No Trump Sequences section above are used to determine the best contract: Stayman, three of a major asking for support, Gerber, and a variation of the rescue bids. However, the way these tools are applied is different in a couple of respects reflecting the fact that, at the time the no

trump bid is made, neither partner has limited the strength of his hand but, at the same time, the partnership knows it has at least game invitational points.

In describing the application, we will use the term “no trump bidder” to refer to the player who bid one no trump and “no trump responder” for his partner. We will describe the bidding conditions based on the no trump bidder’s and the no trump responder’s minimum hands rather than on absolute points because the absolute points depend on whether the weak hand or the strong hand is the no trump bidder. The bidding sequences, however, are the same regardless of whether opener or responder is the no trump bidder. Point count references are further complicated because the no trump responder (and, rarely, the no trump bidder) may have initially counted distribution points in valuing his hand and therefore have a sub-minimum hand for a no trump contract. Thus, if the opener is the no trump bidder, a minimum hand has 16 to 17 high card points, but if the opener is the no trump responder, a minimum hand is just the minimum for a one club opening bid, which may have fewer than 16 high card points. Similarly, when the responder is the no trump bidder, he is expected to have at least 7 high card points but as no trump responder, he can only be expected to have at least seven playing points.

With balanced distribution and a minimum hand, the no trump responder will bid two no trump, invitational to game. Note that this bid could be made when the no trump responder knows the partnership has 24 high card points. When the high card strength is evenly divided between the hands, 24 points would be enough to bid game in no trump, but when the points are concentrated in one hand as they are after a one club opening, communication will be difficult, and 24 points is only good enough for an invitation. If the no trump bidder has a couple of points above a minimum hand, he will accept the invitation, exploring the possibility of a major suit game in the same way a player opening with one no trump does after a two no trump response, namely bidding his (lowest) four card major at the three level.

If the no trump responder has a five or more card major and a minimum hand, he bids the suit at the two level. (We should not have to point out that, if this is a rebid of the major, as in 1 Club, 1 Heart, 1 No Trump, 2 Hearts, that promises a six card suit.) With minimum points, the no trump bidder will pass with an eight card fit and bid two no trump with a doubleton in the major (or with a singleton if the no trump responder was rebidding his major). With a couple of extra points, the no trump bidder will bid game in the major with an eight card fit and bid three no trump otherwise. With a powerhouse with slam possibilities, the no trump bidder can bid three of the major which, in effect, asks partner to show a control if he has one.

If the no trump responder has a six card minor suit and a minimum hand, he will bid the minor at the two level for diamonds and at the three level for clubs. This is the analogue of the rescue bid over a one no trump opening, except that it is known that the hands have combined points of at least twenty-three, so the bid is invitational. The

no trump bidder will pass with a minimum hand and raise with enough points for game. Consistent with the general theme that one goes slowly with a stronger hand, the no trump bidder will bid game directly where the total partnership points are less than 31. With more points, the no trump bidder will raise the two bid to three, giving the no trump responder the chance to cue bid to show controls in order to explore slam.

If the no trump responder has a couple of extra points over the minimum, he classifies his hand as (a) having a five card major; (b) being balanced, (c) having a 6 plus card suit or (d) all other, just as he would over a one no trump opening. The bidding is also just like over a one no trump opener. With a five card major, the no trump responder bids three of the major, asking the no trump bidder to raise with three card support and otherwise bid three no trump. With a balanced hand, the no trump responder would either bid three no trump directly or, with a four card major, use Stayman to explore a major suit fit. With a six card major, the no trump responder would bid the suit at the four level. (Note that, if the no trump responder has already bid the suit, he would need seven cards to bid game directly because the no trump bidder is allowed to bid no trump with a singleton in responder's major. With just six cards, the no trump responder would bid the suit at the three level, showing six cards through the rebid, and the no trump bidder would raise with a doubleton or bid three no trump with a singleton.) In all other cases, the no trump responder would bid two clubs Stayman, followed by a bid of his minor suit if a major suit fit was not found.

Bidding Sequences Over Two of a Minor

If responder has an unbalanced hand without a five card major, he will either have 4-4-4-1 distribution or a five plus card minor. With 5-3-3-2 distribution, responder will almost always bid one no trump. But with 4-4-4-1 distribution, a six plus card minor, or a two suited hand (at least 5-4-x-x) with a five card minor, responder will bid two of his (better) minor. However, because of the strong possibility of playing the hand in a minor suit, responder should have at least eight points to make the bid. As a result of that extra strength, it is generally safe to bid to the four level after a one club – two of a minor sequence.

Consistent with the preference for major suit contracts, if opener has a five card or better major suit, he will bid it regardless of his support for responder's minor. Responder will raise the major to three with three or four card support. If opener has the playing strength to be thinking about slam, in the range of 21 points, he will make a cue bid. Otherwise, he will just bid game in his major.

If he doesn't have a five card major, opener will raise responder's minor with five card support, to three with a minimum and to four with a couple of extra points. Responder will then decide whether to go to game, pass the three bid with a minimum, or cue bid to show slam interest.

With less than four card support of responder's minor and no five card major, opener will bid his own six or more card minor if he has one and otherwise will bid two no trump. The two no trump bid is basically a waiting bid asking responder to further describe his hand. Responder will oblige by bidding a four card major if he has one, rebidding his minor with six cards in the suit, or bidding his other minor with four or more cards in it. If he can't make any of those bids, he must be balanced and should bid three no trump. On the basis of responder's bid, opener should be able to decide the best contract, making an invitational bid for a minor suit game with a minimum hand. For example, with three card support of responder's clubs, no five card major and a five card diamond suit, the bidding might go:

Bid	Comment
1C	17 or more points (or 16 high card points)
2C	8 or more points, 5 clubs or 4-4-4-1
2NT	Waiting bid, no major, no 6 card minor
3D	At least 5-4 in clubs and diamonds
4D	A diamond fit, a minimum 17-18 points, invite game
Pass	Reject the invitation, a minimum 8-9 points

Let's look at how this all works with a few hands:

NORTH ♠ K Q 6 ♥ 9 3 ♦ A K Q 7 3 ♣ K 10 6 SOUTH ♠ 9 7 4 ♥ A J 8 7 4 ♦ 10 4 ♣ Q 8 7	HAND	BID	COMMENT
	North	1 C	17+ points or 16 high card points
	South	1 H	7 + points, five plus card Heart suit
	North	2D	Five plus card Diamond suit, 17+ points, at most two Hearts.
	South	2 NT	Minimum hand (7-8 points), exactly five Hearts, denies a four card Spade suit.
	North	Pass	Minimum hand. No fit in Spades, Hearts or Diamonds, fit in Clubs possible but unlikely. Insufficient points for 3NT.

This next hand has some interesting issues:

NORTH ♠ A Q 10 ♥ A K J 7 3 ♦ 8 7 3 ♣ A 6 SOUTH ♠ K 8 ♥ 10 9 6 ♦ K 10 6 4 2 ♣ K 7 4	HAND	BID	COMMENT
	North	1 C	17+ points or 16 high card points
	South	2 D	8+ points, five card Diamond suit (or 4-4-4-1 with a singleton Club)
	North	2 H	17+ points, five card Heart suit
	South	3 H	Eight card fit
	North	3 S	Cue bid: 19+ points, control of Spades
	South	3 NT	Extra points (9+) but no controls to show
	North	4 H	No additional points to show (shows 19-20).
	South	Pass	No more than 30 combined points, stop at game.

In the alternative, South could respond with one no trump. North would bid three hearts showing a five card suit, and South would bid four with three card support. With the South hand shown, we would tend to recommend bidding one no trump, but give South the queen and jack of diamonds instead of the four and two, and the two diamond bid would be recommended because, as shown by the bidding above, it would facilitate exploring slam possibilities. One of the difficulties with the no trump sequences is that it is often hard to find out if partner has the extra couple of points that makes the difference between a game and a slam hand. It is for this reason that we developed the four diamonds asking convention described in the Optional Conventions section below.

NORTH ♠ K 10 ♥ A Q 10 7 3 ♦ K 9 ♣ K J 10 6 SOUTH ♠ Q 9 7 4 ♥ J 8 ♦ A 10 5 4 ♣ 8 7 4	HAND	BID	COMMENT
	North	1 C	17+ points or 16 high card points
	South	1 NT	7 + points, balanced hand, no five card major
	North	2 H	Five plus card Heart suit, 17 - 18 points.
	South	2 S	Four card Spade suit, ambiguous as to strength, one round force. A pass would also be acceptable for a minimum hand with a seven card fit.
	North	2 NT	Denies 4 card Spade support. Unwilling to bid 3 Clubs with a minimum, semi-balanced hand.
	South	Pass	Minimum hand (7-8 points) opposite minimum hand, unwilling to go to the three level (e.g. 3 Diamonds)

Now let's look at a hand that illustrates the reclassification of a hand during the bidding. In this hand, responder first classifies his hand as a part score hand, but when a fit is found, the playing strength increases, making the hand game invitational.

NORTH ♠ A K 10 8 7 ♥ A J 8 3 ♦ - ♣ A J 10 6 SOUTH ♠ 9 ♥ 10 9 6 4 ♦ Q 10 6 4 2 ♣ K 7 4	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>HAND</th> <th>BID</th> <th>COMMENT</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>North</td> <td>1 C</td> <td>17+ points or 16 high card points</td> </tr> <tr> <td>South</td> <td>1 D</td> <td>0 - 6 points</td> </tr> <tr> <td>North</td> <td>1 S</td> <td>17+ points, five card Spade suit</td> </tr> <tr> <td>South</td> <td>2D</td> <td>4 – 6 points, at most one spade, 5+ card Diamond suit</td> </tr> <tr> <td>North</td> <td>2 H</td> <td>No support for diamonds, 4+ cards in hearts</td> </tr> <tr> <td>South</td> <td>3H</td> <td>Point count is 8 in support of hearts, invite game</td> </tr> <tr> <td>North</td> <td>4H</td> <td>Maximum hand (19-20 points)</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>			HAND	BID	COMMENT	North	1 C	17+ points or 16 high card points	South	1 D	0 - 6 points	North	1 S	17+ points, five card Spade suit	South	2D	4 – 6 points, at most one spade, 5+ card Diamond suit	North	2 H	No support for diamonds, 4+ cards in hearts	South	3H	Point count is 8 in support of hearts, invite game	North	4H	Maximum hand (19-20 points)
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Four hearts is odds on to make. Indeed, when this hand was actually played, the queen of clubs was on side, the heart honors split, and North was able to ruff two spades in the South hand, making six. In Standard American, North would open one spade, and South would pass.

Chapter VII

Optional Conventions

There are a number of situations where the basic Simplified Club system is inadequate to give the bidders enough information to select the best contract. A number of conventions have been developed to help address these situations. Because they are not natural bids, it is recommended that they not be adopted when first using the Simplified Club system. However, as you become more comfortable with Simplified Club bidding, you may find some of these conventions useful.

A. Stayman Invitational

The Stayman Invitational sequences are described in detail in the no trump bidding section above. We list it as an optional convention because it is a little more difficult than the mostly natural bidding of the rest of the system, and you might want to start out without using it. However, it is by far the most useful of the optional conventions, and we strongly recommend adopting it sooner rather than later.

B. Four Diamonds Asking

There are a few occasions where, in deciding whether to push for slam, you want to know whether your partner has a maximum or a minimum hand. The Four Diamonds Asking convention addresses this situation. Whenever Gerber is available, that is, whenever a four club bid has no natural meaning, a four diamond bid also has no natural meaning, and the Four Diamonds Asking convention uses the four diamond bid as an asking bid in those situations. The other partner responds to the four diamonds bid with four hearts with a minimum hand and four spades with at least two points above the minimum number of points indicated by the prior bidding. Over a four heart bid, a bid of four no trump is a sign-off. Over a four spade bid, a bid of four no trump is Blackwood. With a few exceptions, the four diamond bidder takes control of the bidding and decides the final contract.

The occasions when the Four Diamonds Asking convention is useful are limited, but it can be a valuable tool in those situations. Specifically, to find the convention useful, you have to have a slam invitational hand and cue bidding should be unavailable. If cue bidding is available, it is the better way to find out about the strength of your partner's hand, and unless you have a slam invitational hand, knowing your partner has a couple of extra points will not help you decide the right contract.

There are really only four types of bidding sequences where those conditions can be met. The first is after a Stayman sequence. For example, if your partner opens one no trump and you have 17 points with a four card heart suit, you would use Stayman to

explore a heart fit. If your partner responded two hearts, you would know you had a fit, but you wouldn't know if partner had a maximum, in which case slam is likely, or a minimum, in which case it is not. Cue bidding is not available in that sequence, so the four diamonds asking bid is a good way to explore slam. If partner responds four hearts, you would pass. If he responds four spades, you would either bid slam directly or, if you needed to find out about aces, use Blackwood on the way to slam.

The second case is after a one no trump – three of a major sequence. For example:

NORTH ♠ A Q 10 ♥ A K J 7 3 ♦ 8 7 3 ♣ A 6 SOUTH ♠ K 8 ♥ 10 9 6 ♦ K Q J 10 6 ♣ K 7 4	HAND	BID	COMMENT
	North	1 C	17+ points or 16 high card points
	South	1NT	7+ points, balanced distribution
	North	3H	17+ points, five card Heart suit
	South	4D	Because the “natural” responses are 3NT or 4H, 4D must be Four Diamonds Asking. Implies at least 12 points, i.e. a slam invitational hand
	North	4S	19+ points
	South	4 NT	Points for slam, check for controls
	North	5S	Three controls
	South	6H	Just barely enough for slam

The other sequence in this category is one no trump, three hearts or spades, three no trump, four diamonds. This would typically be used when responder has 5-3-3-2 distribution with a five card major and slam invitational points.

The third type is where your partner opens one no trump and you know the right strain, either because you have a six card or better major suit or you have no trump distribution without a four card major, but you have 17 or 18 points and want to know if your partner has at least 14 points to decide if slam is likely. You can bid four diamonds directly over the one no trump opening to find out.

The fourth type is where the hand should be played in a suit and is slam invitational but you have found your fit too late to be able to use cue bids. A typical case is where the bidding has gone one heart, two clubs, two spades. If responder has about 17 points and a four card spade suit, he has a problem. A single raise to three spades would show the fit and leave room for cue bidding but would only be invitational to game and could be passed. A bid of four spades would almost certainly be passed, even if opener had a maximum hand. The Four Diamonds Asking convention gives responder the option of bidding four diamonds. He would bid four spades over a four heart bid, and would bid Blackwood, or go directly to slam, over a four spade bid.

C. Splinter Bids

Because there is never a reason to jump shift in response to an opening bid of one in a major (except for two spades over one heart to show a five card suit with 13 or more points) that sequence can be reserved for a splinter bid, very similar to the splinter bid convention used in connection with standard American bidding. Specifically, the bid of a new suit at the three level over a one level opening shows four card support and a short suit, either a worthless singleton or a void. It is made with 13 to 16 points in support of the opening suit. Opener responds with the cheapest return to his major if the splinter bid shows there are substantial wasted points and he has a minimum hand. Partner will raise a bid of three in the major to four with a maximum and will usually pass with a minimum. If opener has an interest in exploring slam, he will cue bid. When will he have an interest in exploring slam? Certainly with a maximum hand and minimal wasted points, and probably any hand with no wasted points is worth a cue bid. With no interest in exploring slam and something better than a minimum hand with substantial wasted points, opener will bid four of the major. That bid will always be passed. If opener cue bid, responder will bid four of the major himself with a minimum hand and will cue bid with a maximum (or go directly to Blackwood if a cue bid is not available) to cooperate in exploring slam. Note that, if the opening bid is one heart and the short suit is spades, the splinter bid is three spades and is, of course, forcing to game. In that case, the splinter bid is only useful in deciding whether to explore slam and would ordinarily only be made with 15 or 16 points. With four card support of hearts, a short spade suit and only 13 or 14 points, slam is not very likely, and you might as well bid four hearts directly.

The theory of the splinter bid is that the average hand has a couple of wasted points, so when we say that you need 26 combined point to make game in a major, we really meaning you only need about 24 points if they are all working points. Similarly, a slam needs only about 30 points if they are all working. The most common source of wasted points involve a short suit, a void or singleton, opposite a short suit in the other hand or opposite intermediate cards – kings, queens, jacks – which have little additional value if partner has ruffing ability in that suit. The splinter bid provides the ability to identify this sort of wasted points. Normally a hand with 13 to 16 points opposite a hand with 13 to 16 points and a five-four fit in a major should be in game. However, if both hands have 15 to 16 points and there are minimal wasted points, the combined hands will likely have 30 or more working points and should be in slam. On the other hand, if both hands have 13 to 14 points and there are substantial wasted points, even a game contract could be too risky.

What do we mean by minimal and substantial wasted points? Here are some examples:

HOLDING IN THE SPLINTER SUIT

Minimal Wasted Points

A x x x
x x x x
x x x

Average Wasted Points

A Q x x
Q x x x
x x

Substantial Wasted Points

K J x x
K x
x

As these examples suggest, honors in the splinter suit (except the ace) have dubious value. So does shortness in the splinter suit. If you want a mechanical rule, use the following: add up the high card points in the splinter suit, not counting an ace, and add to that any distribution points counting them as if in support of partner, that is one for a doubleton, three for a singleton and five for a void. If the sum is four or more, that is substantial wasted points. If it is two, that is average wasted points, and if it is none, that is minimal wasted points. Obviously one and three wasted points are borderline that require judgment, and the mechanical rule should always be tempered by an evaluation of how the hand might play. Consider the following:

<p>NORTH ♠ K Q J 9 2 ♥ A 3 ♦ K 7 3 ♣ 9 8 5</p> <p>SOUTH ♠ A 8 6 4 3 ♥ K Q 6 ♦ A 9 8 5 ♣ 7</p>	HAND	BID	COMMENT
	North	1 S	13 – 16 points and five or more Spades
	South	3 C	Splinter: 4+ spades, 13-16 points and a singleton or void in Clubs
	North	3 H	Cue bid: only 14 points, but a nice high card structure and no wasted points. It is worth at least a preliminary investigation of slam.
	South	4 D	Cue bid showing the Ace of Diamonds and a maximum hand, denying a void in Clubs.
	North	4 NT	The Ace of Diamonds fits nicely with your King. If partner has the Ace of Spades, it would not take much in the way of filler cards to limit the loss to one Club. Use Blackwood to find out about the Ace of Spades.
	South	5 H	Showing one additional Ace, and it must be in Spades because South has already denied having the Ace of Clubs by bidding the splinter
	North	6 S	A pretty good bet.

After Blackwood, South has shown at least 12 high card points (15 for the cue bid less three for the singleton club). Eight of them are accounted for by the ace of spades and the ace of diamonds, leaving four or five points for other high cards in hearts and diamonds. It is hard to construct a hand with that many high cards in those suits that would not give you at least a 50-50 shot at slam. Indeed, slam is a virtual laydown with

the hands shown (five spade tricks, three hearts, two diamonds and two club ruffs) even though there are only 26 high card points and 30 points counting distribution.

Note that it is important that the hand making the splinter bid not have wasted points either. Specifically, we require a void or a worthless singleton. When the partner of the splinter bidder is evaluating the playing strength of the hand, he assumes that all of the splinter bidder's high card points are outside the splinter suit. Some Standard American players would say that a splinter bid could be made with a singleton ace, but most would not. We adopt the majority opinion in the Simplified Club system: if you are basing a splinter bid on a singleton, it cannot have any high card points.

The standard splinter bid can only be made over a one of a major opening, but the partnership can by agreement extend splinter bids to other bidding sequences. The requirements are that (1) the splinter bidder is responding to his partner's first bid of the suit and that bid shows a five card suit; and (2) the splinter bidder has a point count range just below a slam invitational hand. Specifically, splinter bidding could be extended to the following sequences:

1. One club – one spade (or heart): a jump shift response would be a splinter showing four card support and 18 to 21 points. As with the standard splinter, partner would rebid his suit below game to show a minimum hand with substantial wasted points.
2. A two-over-one jump bid, e.g. one diamond – two spades: a jump shift response would be a splinter showing a maximum opening hand, 15 to 16 points. Because game is forced, the splinter is only useful for exploring slam and, as with the one heart – three spade standard splinter sequence, would almost always only be used with a maximum hand.
3. One club – one heart (or spade) – two clubs or diamonds (or hearts over spades): a jump shift response would be a splinter showing 11 to 13 points.

Note that you would not have a splinter bid after a one heart – two diamonds sequence (or other such two-over-one sequence) because the points required to be just below a slam invitational hand when partner has only promised 11 points would be over the maximum 16 points for the opening bid.

D. Other Conventions

The conventions described above have been developed specifically for the Simplified Club system. (Note that the Simplified Club splinter bids are similar to, but not the same as, splinter bids as used with Standard American.) There are, in addition, a number of conventions used in other bidding systems that could profitably be used with the Simplified Club. For example, Bergan raises fit very nicely into the Simplified Club format and have a number of good advantages, although if used, splinter bids would have to revert to the Standard American style. Roman Key Card Blackwood is another

obvious addition to enhance the Simplified Club system. And Jacoby Transfers and Texas Transfers make sense in those cases where a one no trump bid shows a strong no trump hand, that is, where an opening one club bidder bids one no trump on the next round. The transfers make less sense over a weak no trump, when the transfer bidder is likely to be stronger than the no trump bidder, but they still could be used.

It is not that we recommend adding a slew of additional conventions to the Simplified Club system. However, if there is a convention you feel comfortable with, you should figure out if it fits in with the Simplified Club structure.

Chapter VIII

Bidding with Opponents

All of the above discussion assumes that your opponents will remain silent during the bidding. In practice, that is not the case in many auctions. Although it is not the focus of the Simplified Club system, consideration should be given to thinking about the implications of bidding, or potential bidding, by your opponents.

A. Defensive Bidding

The Simplified Club system does not have any special rules for defensive bidding, and the Standard American practices are generally adopted. This makes sense because any opening bid by the opponents takes away the one club opening that is the essential cornerstone of the Simplified Club system.

In particular, overcalls can be made with a good suit with as few as 8 points and are limited to no more than 16. With 17 or more points, a take out double followed by the long suit bid is used, effectively a substitute for the one club opening. Take out doubles require 13+ points counting distribution as a supporting hand and imply shortness in opponent's suit and no biddable. i.e. 5+ card, suit (except for the 17+ point hand). Given that the opponents have indicated a suit to attack in no trump, a one no trump overcall should be stronger than a one no trump opening, 15 to 16 points, and promises a solid stopper in the suit bid by the opponents. Preemptive bids are unchanged: a jump overcall to the two level is a standard weak two bid, and a jump overcall to the three level is a standard seven card suit preempt. The partnership can use Michaels cue bids and unusual no trumps by agreement. Those bids are now included in Standard American bidding.

B. Competitive Bidding

In general, interference bids by the opponents are ignored. There are, of course, times when they cannot be. For example, any bid by opponents over a one club opening eliminates the possibility of a one diamond response but also makes available another bid, the double. When the opponents bid over one club, responder (a) passes with six or fewer points, (b) bids a suit or no trump with 7-8 points and (c) doubles (or redoubles) with 9+ points.

Similarly, a suit bid by opponents over a one no trump opening takes away Stayman. A double of such a bid shows game going points and asks opener to bid a four card or better suit, and two no trump if his only long suit is the one the opponents bid.

Cue bidding the opponent's suit and negative doubles can be adopted from Standard American but are not a necessary part of the Simplified Club system. That is, if the partners agree, a cue bid of opponent's suit shows support for opener's suit and a game going hand, and a negative double (i.e. a double of an intervening opponent bid at the one or two level) shows at least four cards in each un-bid major.

C. Preemptive Bidding

The Simplified Club system does not address preemptive bidding. However, with all strong hands being opened one club, using weak twos is a natural addition to the bidding arsenal. The guidelines for opening bids or weak jump overcalls at the three or four level can be adopted from Standard American. In addition, any jump raise of an opening bid (except one club, of course) is preemptive and should be made with a part score hand with good support of partner's suit and poor defensive values.

Chapter IX

Conclusion

We have been using the Simplified Club system in its current form for over six years now. The beauty of the system is, as its name implies, that it is easy to learn and easy to apply at the table. Even when first starting to use it, there was rarely a time that we wondered what the right next bid should be. With limited exceptions (mostly in the no trump sequences) you only have to learn a few basic principles and apply them to the situation at hand.

The ideal, of course, would be to find a system that was easy to learn and apply and also yielded clearly superior results over any other system. We wish we could say unequivocally that the Simplified Club system satisfies that criteria, but that would be an overstatement. It is easy to construct hands where using the Simplified Club system reaches the right contract and Standard American Yellow Card or one of the two over one systems does not. However, it is also easy to construct hands where the reverse is true. We programmed a computer to play hands against itself using first the Simplified Club system and then one of the other popular systems. After hundreds of thousands of hands, the Simplified Club system scored a little better than the others. That is not definitive (the system could be systematically under bidding but getting better results because the computer was systematically playing badly) but it indicates that the Simplified Club system is pretty darn good.

And there is an advantage to being simple. Playing bridge well requires sustained focus. Tournament play, in particular, is something of a marathon. Even the best players can get tired and make mistakes. An easy to remember, easy to use system like the Simplified Club should reduce the opportunity for mistakes and misunderstandings. Certainly that has been our experience at the table. Even if the Simplified Club system is not as accurate in theory as some of the more complex systems, we believe that, in practice, it will be at least as good as any of them.

So try it out. Grab yourself a partner, have him or her at least read Chapter One, and find a game to play in. We think you will be pleased with the results.

APPENDIX A

Essential Elements of the Simplified Club System

A. Point Count Basics

1. When counting points bidding your own suit, aces count four, kings count three, queens count two and jacks count one. You give yourself one point for each card above four in a quality suit. Thus, a hand with 5-3-3-2 distribution would get one distribution point, as would a hand with 5-4-3-1 distribution. If you want a "quality standard," use the four point rule. A quality suit has four or more high card points, or three points with extra spot cards, say a ten and nine or 9-8-7.
2. When counting points bidding in support of your partner's suit, high cards count the same as when bidding your own suit, but with four plus card support you count one point for a doubleton, three for a singleton and five for a void. With three card support or less, count one point for a doubleton, two for a singleton and three for a void.
3. Subtract one point for unguarded honors: a doubleton queen or jack, a singleton king.
4. In general, the partnership needs 24 points to bid to the three level (as long as the points are reasonably balanced between the hands) 26 points to bid to the four level, 28 points to bid to the five level, 32 points to bid a small slam and 36 points to bid a grand slam.
5. Keep in mind that point counts at best give an imperfect valuation of the strength of a hand. For example, it is well known that a hand with four card support of a five card suit will play much better than a hand with four card support of a four card suit, and that a hand with a double fit plays better than one with a single fit. However, the point count method described here does not give those hands extra value. We could try to refine the point count method by adding some more rules, but the additional complexity would probably not be worth the incremental accuracy.

B. Opening Bid Sequences

1. All strong hands (16+ high card points or 17+ counting distribution) are opened one club.
 - a. A one diamond response shows 0-6 points. Opener will make a jump bid with 21+ points. All other bids by opener can be passed, and the hand

should be passed as soon as a 7+ card fit is found unless the fit adds enough distribution points to make game likely.

- b. All other bids by responder show 7+ points. The partnership first finds a suit or picks no trump, and then a cue bid by either bidder shows 2+ points above a minimum bid and forces to game. If responder bids 1NT, opener uses the NT conventions of Paragraph 2 to explore a fit and game, with the “rescue” bids showing a minimum hand with a five plus card suit and 2NT also showing a minimum hand. All other bids over a 1NT response show a strong interest in game, i.e. 18+ high card points or 19+ points counting distribution.
 - c. If opener bids 1NT over a one diamond response, responder usually passes but can make a shut out bid at the two level with a six card suit. If opener bids 1NT over a major suit response, the Paragraph 2 sequences are used with the “rescue” bids showing 7-8 points and a five plus card suit (or six plus if a rebid of the major).
2. One no trump promises balanced distribution (4-3-3-3, 4-4-3-2, or 5-3-3-2 with a 5 card minor) and 12-15 high card points.
- a. A response of two diamonds, two hearts, two spades or three clubs is a shut out “rescue” bid almost always made with a 6+ card suit. Opener will always pass these bids.
 - b. With 13+ points and a 5 card major, responder bids three of the major. Opener bids 3 NT with two card support and four of the major with 3+ card support.
 - c. With 13+ points and a 6+ card major suit, responder bids game directly (unless strong enough to explore slam). If the 6 card suit is a minor, responder should use Stayman to explore the possibility of a 3NT game.
 - d. With 13+ points and balanced distribution, responder bids 3 NT, except that, with a 4 card major, responder can first use Stayman to try for a major suit fit.
 - e. With all other 13+ point hands, responder bids 2 clubs Stayman. Opener’s re-bids are standard Stayman with 2 NT showing both majors.
 - f. With 11-12 points and balanced distribution, responder bids 2NT. Opener raises to game or bids a four card major with a maximum.

3. One of a major promises a 5+ card suit and 13-16 points; a one diamond bid promises 14-16 points and a 5+ card suit or 4-4-4-1 distribution.
 - a. With 3+ card support, responder raises with 11+ points (but over one diamond, should bid a 5+ card major if he has one) and passes with 10 or less. If either partner cue bids after a raise, game is forced. Note that over 1 diamond-2 diamonds, a new suit bid is natural, not a cue bid, and strongly suggests 4-4-4-1 distribution. Opener shows a 5+ diamond suit and extra strength with the suitless cue bid of 2NT.
 - b. Without support and 0-7 points, responder passes.
 - c. With 8-10 points and two card support, responder passes. With a singleton or void in opener's suit, responder bids a five card suit or no trump at the one level. [Opener may pass with a minimum, will raise with support and a maximum to cover (d).]
 - d. With 11-12 points and less than three card support, responder bids a 5+ card suit, at the two level if necessary, or 1NT with a semi-balanced hand. If opener raises responder's one level bid, showing a maximum and support, responder should bid game. Responder's two level bid is a one round force. With a maximum, opener will make a forcing bid (a new suit or a jump) over responder's two level bid to drive to game.
 - e. With 13+ points and less than three card support, responder bids a 5+ card suit at the two level or 2NT. If that is a jump bid, game is forced, and the only issue is the best suit (see Section C below). If it is not, responder is responsible for keeping the bidding open with forcing bids (new suits, jumps, cue bids) until game is reached.

4. Two clubs opening promises 14-16 points and a 5+ card club suit or 4-4-4-1 with a singleton diamond.
 - a. Responder will bid a 5+ card suit at the two level with 11+ points, which can be shaved to 10 or even 9 points with a good suit and 2 or fewer clubs. Opener will raise with 3+ card support, bid a second (4 card) suit at the two level, bid 2NT with a semi-balanced hand, re-bid clubs with a 6+ card suit or bid a second (4 card) suit at the three level, in that order of preference.
 - b. Responder will bid 2NT with a semi-balanced hand and 11+ points. Opener will bid his lowest 4 card suit, rebid clubs with 6+ cards, or bid 3NT.

- c. With 4+ clubs and no other 5+ card suit, responder will raise with 11+ points, pass with 10 or fewer. Opener will bid a four card major if he has one. If not, he will bid 4 clubs with a minimum (14 or a poor 15 points) and five clubs with a maximum.

C. Finding a Fit

1. General rules

- a. The bid of a new suit (prior to a fit being found) promises 4+ cards and is a one round force (i.e. partner must bid at least one more time).

- b. A rebid of a previously bid suit shows one more card than previously shown.

- c. With balanced or semi-balanced (that is, balanced except for shortness in partner's suit) distribution and no unbid 5+ card minor or 4+ card major or rebiddable suit, bid NT. (Also bid NT if balanced or semi-balanced at the three level and bidding an unbid suit or rebidding a long suit would take you to the four level.)

2. If you know there is an 8+ card fit, your first duty is to show it by:

- a. Passing if you know there are insufficient points for game and partner's bid was not forcing.

- b. Making a single raise if (i) partner's bid was forcing and you have a minimum hand for your prior bids or (ii) partner's bid was not forcing and you know there are enough points for game or you have 2+ more points than previously shown.

- c. Jump raise if partner's bid was forcing and you have 2+ more points than previously shown.

- d. BUT never bid over game unless you are making a slam try (usually by using Blackwood or Gerber)

3. If you are still searching for a fit and you know the partnership has enough points for game:

- a. In general, it is your obligation to make a forcing bid, namely a bid of a previously unbid suit or a jump bid in a previously bid suit, as required to keep partner from passing below game.

- b. First Exception: If you have already shown enough points so that partner knows there are enough points for game, you no longer need to make forcing bids. For example, after a one heart – two spade sequence, forcing bids need not be made.

c. Second Exception: If a jump bid would take you over 3NT and you have a semi-balanced hand, make it a single raise instead.

d. Third exception: If a new suit bid would take you over 3NT and you are semi-balanced, bid 3NT instead. (In the alternative, if you have available a less preferred new suit bid available at the 3 level, bid that suit.)

4. If you are still searching for a fit and you do not know there are enough points for game:

a. If you know there are not enough points for game or if you think the partnership is already at too high a level, make a weak bid:

i. First Choice, pass if not forced and a 7+ card fit

ii. Second Choice, rebid your rebiddable suit at the current level

iii. Third Choice, if forced, rebid your rebiddable suit up one level (not a jump)

iv. Fourth Choice, support one of partner's suits at the current level with a 7+ card fit.

v. Fifth choice, if none of the above are available, bid the cheapest available NT

vi. If partner bid NT and you are not forced, pass. If forced, first choice is to rebid rebiddable suit, second choice is to raise NT.

vii. BUT never bid over game.

b. If you think game is possible:

i. If you are at the minimum end of your previously disclosed point range, make a weak bid as in 4.a. above (except pass).

ii. If you have 2+ undisclosed points, make your best bid according to the general rules in C.1. above. Note: if your best bid would be 2NT and would be the cheapest NT (always weak) bid 3NT instead. Bids of the cheapest available no trump and pass are the two unambiguously weak bids.

D. Optional Conventions

1. Stayman Invitational: When playing Stayman invitational, with 11-12 points and a five card major, responder can bid Stayman over a one no trump opening bid and

then bid his major. Responder's 2NT bid over NT bidder's 2 spade response to Stayman shows a 5 card heart suit. NT bidder picks the final contract. Examples: 1NT - 2C - 2H - 3H (NT bidder raises to game with a max). 1NT - 2C - 2D - 2S (with 2 spades, NT bidder bids 2NT with a minimum, 3NT with a max; with 3 spades, pass with a minimum, raise to game with a max).

2. Four Diamonds Asking: Whenever 4C would be Gerber, a bid of 4D asks partner to show points. A response of 4H shows a minimum hand, and a response of 4S shows a maximum. Over a 4H response, a bid of 4NT is a shut out. Over a 4S response, a bid of 4NT is Blackwood.

3. Splinter Bids: Over one of a major opening, a jump shift to the three level shows a void or worthless singleton in the bid suit, four card support of the major and 13-16 points. Opener will cue bid with an interest in slam, bid three of the major with significant wasted points and a minimum, and otherwise will bid game in the major. Responder will usually pass the game bid, raise three of the major to four with a maximum and pass with a minimum, and respond to a cue bid in the usual way, returning to the major with a minimum and cue bidding to show a maximum.