



## BridgeHands eMag Newsletter

**Forcing Pass, or Thy Opponents Shall Not Steal**      **January 2006**

**Dear Friends,**

Last month we featured forcing bids and promised to delve into the Forcing Pass. If you haven't discussed various scenarios or guidelines with your partner, hopefully this article will enlighten you.

Next, we will check out the Grosvenor Gambit, an unusual play that seemingly forfeits a trick, but... sometimes even an expert pulls one off!

The Michaels Cuebid is not a big deal, but even the professionals can get confused when the opener "could be short". We'll look at both the bid and what happens when the Director is called to handle mis-information.

This month's hand comes from the Denver NABC Barometer game where Jim Krekorian both jumped into 3 Notrump (Bob Hamman style), then managed a nice double squeeze.

Lastly, we'll take a look at Multiple Compression - every bit as painful as it sounds!

Note: Viewing the hands below requires your EMAIL reader to use "fixed fonts" (not proportional). If you have problems reading this document, please view our [online web-based copy](#) or [Adobe Acrobat PDF file suitable for printing](#) at the BridgeHands website



### **Forcing Pass, or Thy Opponents Shall Not Steal**

In last month's newsletter we discussed forcing bids. Yet we have all been in situations where we believe our call of pass should be forcing, and hope our partner sees it the same way. Let's discuss this in more depth. By definition, a Forcing Pass occurs in a competitive auction and allows our partner to choose the most profitable option. The options typically include a choice between rebidding in the agreed suit, doubling opponents' bid, allowing partner to redouble, jumping with a strong hand, making a conventional response and the like.

Partnership mis-understandings on the Forcing Pass seem to occur at all levels, stressing the need for us all to develop sound agreements. Fundamentally, we find partnership agreements fall in two camps: Scientists and the Naturalist (some of you will recall the famous grudge match with this [namesake](#))

Before we jump in, be aware either approach may employ one of two distinct methods.

METHOD 1

Bid shows a good offensive hand  
Double shows good defensive hand  
Pass implies neither of these hands

METHOD 2

Bid shows good offensive hand  
Pass shows a fairly good offensive hand  
Double implies neither of the above

While many players embrace METHOD 1, some partnerships (notably Mechkstroth-Rodwell) prefer METHOD 2.

At an rate, while Naturalist methods vary, a typical agreement might include:

After we open, responder bids at the 2 level and opponents bid 3 Notrump or above, either partner's pass is forcing. Additionally, the Forcing Pass is the strongest action showing slam interest and at least a second round control.

Grand Life Master Gene Simpson frequents the NABC playing circuit with his "for hire" clients, always placing in the Top 50 annual Masterpoint ranking. Gene enjoys successes as a Naturalist, generously sharing his Forcing Pass approach with us here (contact Gene at 415-250-2488, [gsimpsongene@yahoo.com](mailto:gsimpsongene@yahoo.com)):

A. Forcing passes apply when your side bids a game or higher and the other side sacrifices:

1. You bid a vulnerable game
2. You bid a non vulnerable game voluntarily
3. The opponents have preempted

B. There are five options at the 5 level:

1. Cuebid is a slam try - strongest action
2. Pass and pull partners double - also a slam try
3. Bid 5 level - extra values but no slam interest
4. Pass - offers partner to bid five with extra values
5. Double - worst hand based on auction

C. Cuebid with an outstanding hand, showing first round control and interest in slam.

D. "Pass and pull" is uncommon. Be aware when you pass, partner doubles, you need to pass unless you have slam interest

On the side of the Scientists, in the [Okbridge "Spectator"](#) Marc Smith featured a series of Forcing Pass articles (6/01, 12/01, 1/02). Another Scientist, Eddie Kantar authored the definitive [Forcing Pass](#) book and wrote a series of articles for [Bridge Today](#) (2/05, 3/05, 5/05). Augie Boehm's [Private Sessions](#) book also has useful theory on conventional uses of the pass.

Naturally, Scientists methods for Forcing Pass bids vary considerably, possibly including:

1. Opponents have made an obvious sacrifice bid
2. Your side has voluntarily bid game based on strength, not merely distributional values. This is particularly true when partner's pass allows you to evaluate the tradeoffs of doubling for penalty, especially when opponents are vulnerable, as opposed to bidding at a higher level - perhaps exploring slam
3. After 3 or 4 level opening preempt by Left Hand Opponent in first or second seat, double by partner, game raise by Right Hand Opponent, our pass is forcing except when opponents are vulnerable (assuming a sane RHO has values)
4. Your side has established a baseline contract level exploring game or slam, but not yet reached that threshold and opponents have interceded in the auction
5. A pass over opponents' high level obstructive bid typically shows a first round control (Ace or void). The threshold for "high level" may be the 5 or 6 level, depending on agreements
6. Opponents have doubled a cuebid on your side
7. Opponents are retreating by bidding multiple suits (usually up the line), where your partnership has repeatedly doubled
8. Pulling partner's penalty double shows strong interest in slam

Scientists have more scenarios (and memory work) with less catch-all guidelines such as a universal "whenever opponents bid above our 3 Spade call and our bids are constructive, our subsequent pass is forcing." Regardless of your approach, consider [Environmental Factors](#) – particularly vulnerability, freak distribution, and offensive/defensive tricks.

Here are several common situations:

2C - (any) - P - (any);  
P

When opener has near-game values such as a strong 2 Club opener showing 22+ points, many play a subsequent pass is a Forcing Bid;

lacking a better bid, responder can double to keep the auction alive. However, when opener begins with a 2 Notrump bid showing 20-21 point, subsequent passes are not forcing.

1S - (P) - 2N - (3D)  
P

Responder's 2 Notrump bid is game-forcing so opener's pass is forcing. Note – see [Jacoby 2 Notrump](#) to review alternative methods after interference

1D - (1H) - 1S - (P);  
3D - (3H) - 3S - (4H);  
P

Assuming you recognize responder's 3S rebid as establishing a game force (opener jumps, responder rebids own suit), opener is making a Forcing Pass inviting responder to double or bid 4S with great Spades.

1D - (1S) - 2D - (2S);

1H - (2D) - 2H - (3D);

Here, opener can make a forcing bid by cuebidding opponents' suit or calling a new suit. When opener (the stronger hand) bids a new suit at the 3 level, the call is invitational. Jumping in a new suit at the 4 level subsequently establishes a Forcing Pass if necessary. Opener's jump to game has the same effect. Note: some play this treatment only with adverse vulnerability based on the risk-reward differential. At any rate, if opener takes another path, as rebidding at the 3 level, belated opener passes are not forcing. Note: many also play [Maximal Doubles](#) at the 3 level.

Yet rules like this one should not be thought of as iron-clad. Contrast these bids:

W	N	E	S	W	N	E	S
1H	-(1S)	- 2H	-(2S);	1H	-(2C)	- 2H	-(3C);
4H	-(P)	- P	-(4S);	4H	-(P)	- P	-(5C);
P				P			

It is unlikely South is "[walking the dog](#)" with extra values on the above auctions. Apparently South is making a sacrifice bid so opener's pass is definitely a Forcing Bid in these auctions. However, South may indeed be walking the dog on this auction:

W            N            E            S  
1H - (P) - 2H - (2S);  
3D - (P) - 4H - (4S);  
P

The responder may be bidding game based on an anticipated

double fit in the red suits after opener's [Help Suit Game Try](#). Realizing this, opponent South may upgrade a two-suited black hand and solely bid game. Thus, the meaning of opener's pass will vary by partnership agreement (again, some play forcing only with adverse vulnerability). As an aside, when your side bids a lower suit rank as Hearts over their Spades, it may not be wise to "advertise" a possible double fit – smart opponents certainly enjoy such useful information.

In some situations, the Scientists liberalize their conventional gadgets to replace the meaning of the Forcing Pass or even the double. Consider this auction:

W	N	E	S
--	--	(P)	- P
(1D)	- 1H	- (2H)	- P
(3C)	- 4H	- (P)	- P
(5D)	- ?		

Should a double be purely for penalty here, or is it a cooperative (optional) double asking partner to consider a **5H** sacrifice with an offensive hand? Scientists point out the **1H** overcall shows defensive values, not immediately making a preemptive jump to **4H**. So a common treatment is "DSI", asking partner to Do Something Intelligent! That is, "Partner, with defensive values of your own, let the double ride, otherwise think strongly about supporting my suit."

So we've seen the Forcing Pass agreements can have many subtleties, particularly for the Scientists. Regardless of your approach, be sure your partnerships have clear agreements.

Finally, here's what the [Bridge World Standard](#) says about the Forcing Pass:

- 1) If a two-club opening is overcalled, responder's pass is forcing at every level - responder's double shows double-negative strength
- 2) When a forcing bid is doubled and there is no contrary explicit system agreement or logic from the auction, a pass is forcing and a redouble is to play (suggests a contract)
- 3) After a negative response to two clubs and an overcall, opener's pass is forcing
- 4) After 1any - (X) - XX - (bid); opener's (or responder's) pass is forcing everywhere

[You're always welcome to come back to BridgeHands Encyclopedia to review the Forcing Pass](#)



## Grosvenor Gambit: Would you like to check in, Sir?

No, we are not talking about lodging. The Grosvenor Gambit describes an illogical play which catches the opponent "off-guard" to generate an extra trick or tricks through deliberate misplay. In the June 1973 "Bridge World", Frederick Turner created the fictitious character Grosvenor who had an uncanny way of making an illogical defender play that would trip up his opponents. As the story goes, the hapless declarer naturally refuses to take the gift, assuming any sane defender would make a rational play. Here's the classic example:

	K 8 7 6 5 4	
Q 10 2		9
	A J 3	

Assume the declarer does not have outside entries to run dummy's Spade suit. Declarer leads the **SA** and West falsecards playing the **S10**. When the declarer follows with the **SJ**, West refuses the trick by playing the **S2**. The declarer logically assumes both opponents have two Spades, winning the trick with the **SK** in the dummy. But when East surprisingly shows out, West's **SQ** wins the third Spade trick and declarer is blocked from running the dummy's long Spade suit. In real life, an unintentional Grosvenor Gambit is probably a more common situation. Here's one that professional Kit Woolsey avoided, detailed in the July, 1978 "Bridge World". First the hands:

	J 10 6	
9 8 4 2		K
	A Q 7 5 3	

The play went **Jack, King, Ace, 2**. Next the play went **3** and West made a slight flicker playing the **4**. Kit judged a strong West player would split their intermediate **9 8** holding. Yet playing against this mediocre player who displayed a noticeable tremor, playing the **6** seemed correct. Sure enough, the finesse worked running 5 tricks.

Still, occasionally a top player can pull off a true Grosvenor against a formidable opponent, such as this 4 Heart contract by South:

	6 4	
	Q J 10 8 3	
	A Q 6 5	
	8 2	
Q J 10 5 2		K 9 7
5		7 6 4 2
K 10 9 8		3 2
Q 8 7		A J 10 4
	A 8 3	
	A K 9	
	J 7 4	
	K 9 6 5	

Declarer Steve Parker ducked the first Spade, winning the second round. South then plays a low Diamond and a successful finesse to the Queen. At this point, Steve thought things looked safe, cashing the Diamond Ace, losing a Diamond, ruffing a Diamond with a top Heart in dummy, drawing trump, and hopefully finessing the Club to make game.

Ah, but Jeff Meckstroth was sitting West and could see what was coming. So on trick 4 when Steve (South) cashed the Diamond Ace, Jeff smoothly threw in his King! Ah, thought Steve, now there's no reason to bother trying the Club finesse to make game; since West is out of Diamonds, it seemed clear the Diamond Jack would now score a trick after all. So the declarer drew 2 rounds of trump, noting Jeff's (West) singleton. Steve then confidently played the Diamond Jack, assuming Jeff could no longer trump it. Oops, East ruffed it – so much for that Diamond winner! Worse yet, East returned the fourth Heart, causing declarer Steve to still lose a Club and a Diamond – down one. And so the Grosvenor lives on. When we take a closer look at Jeff's hand, we can appreciate the imaginative genius at work. Apparently Jeff reasoned that both minor suit finesses were onside so the IMP contract looked safe with normal play. Yet holding a singleton trump meant partner held 3 or more Hearts that could help deplete declarer's ability to ruff Diamonds. Sure enough, Jeff's "Grosvenor" netted 2 Diamond tricks – touché!

[See more on the Grosvenor Gambit](#)



## Conventions and the Law - Appeals at 2005 Denver NABC

When you believe the opponents treat opening **1C** as non-standard, what does this mean?

(1c) - 2c

How do you play partner's **2C**, natural or Michaels showing the majors? This question tested the professionals in the Summer 2005 prestigious Spingold Teams Semi-final, ultimately leading to a Director call followed by an Appeal.

	<b>Brad Moss</b>		
<b>Brd: 2</b>	10 6 4		
<b>Dlr: South</b>	A 6		
<b>Vul: Both</b>	K J 7 6 5		
	10 6 3		
	\		
	\		
<b>Alfredo</b>			<b>Lorenzo</b>
<b>Versace</b>			<b>Lauria</b>
5 3			K J 8
K J			7 4 3 2
10 9 8 3 2			A Q
A Q 9 2			K J 8 7
	<b>Fred Gitelman</b>		
	A Q 9 7 2		
	Q 10 9 8 5		
	4		
	5 4		
<b>West</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>South</b>
			Pass
Pass	Pass	1C	2C
X	2D	Pass	Pass
X	3C	X	Pass
Pass	3S	X	Pass
Pass	Pass		

At the screened table, South informed West the **2C** call was Michaels for the majors while North told East the bid was natural showing Clubs. After the interesting auction, the Director was called when South's dummy hand hit the table. Clearly, the defenders were given mis-information (Law 75). The correct explanation would have been, "no partnership agreement". After the play of the hand, the Director ruled the only different outcome deemed possible per Law 12C2 was **2D** down two. Therefore, a score of NS -200 was assigned. Incidentally, both defenders forgot to announce **1C** "could be short", but the Director did not find this relevant. One wonders if North thought West forgot to Alert **1C** as conventional in which case South's **2C** would indeed be natural.

At the Appeal, additional discussion of Unauthorized Information was presented (not included here), which the committee ultimately deemed without merit. Ultimately, the committee ruled that passing out 2D was a possibility for defenders if they had correct



information. After analyzing various lines of play, they decided that down three was the likely outcome, ruling North played in **2D** down 3, awarding 300 to the defenders.

[Read more about this interesting Appeal \(Case N-22\)](#)



### Stopper or not, 3 Notrump, here I come...

This one comes from the Denver 2005 NABC Daily Bulletin #10, page 4:

Board-A-Match: East-West Non-vulnerable (hands rotated)

**(3S) – P – (P) – ?**

Your bid holding:

```
-- 9 3   A K J 10 6 5 4 2   7 4 2

      A 10 8
      A J 2
      Q 3
      K 10 9 8 6

Q J 7 6 5 3 2           K 9 4
Q 10 6                 K 8 7 5 4
8                       9 7
Q 5                     A J 3

      --
      9 3
      A K J 10 6 5 4 2
      7 4 2
```

Jim Krekorian balanced with **3 Notrump**, noting East could have safely bid **4S** non-vulnerable holding Spade support. Apparently Jim is a believer in the "rule" loosely attributable to Bob Hamman – bid **3 Notrump** when it's the correct action. Thus, Jim deduced that North likely had a stopper.

East led the **D8** hoping to hit partner, unaware it was declarer's long suit. Interestingly, South next plays to dummy's **C10**, won by East's **CJ**. Naturally, the **SK** follows, ducked once then won with the **SA**. As **declarer runs the Diamonds**, West has problems protecting the majors, East facing a similar problem in Clubs and Hearts.

After 10 tricks, a likely situation is:

	--	
	A J	
	--	
	K	
Q		--
Q 10		K 8
--		--
--		A
	--	
	9	
	2	
	7	

South completes the double squeeze playing the **D2**. West must play a **Heart**, dummy can pitch the **CK**, but like West, East cannot protect the **Heart** suit. So it turns out Ken's early **Club** play began the squeeze initiation with dummy's nice **S10** and **CK**. Incidentally, in the actual auction after South's **3N** bid, North bid **4N** to test for slam. A nice gadget some play after opponents' 3 level preempt followed by partner's **3N** instead uses **4C** as an asking query bid, where responses are:

4D = 1 suiter  
4H = moderate strength  
4S = big hand

In this situation, after **3N** and advancer's **4C** ask, the balancer would bid **4D** and partner could rest well signing off in **4N**

[Denver 2005 NABC Daily Bulletin #10](#)



### Multiple Compression - A painful way to go!

No, we're not finishing off with a lesson on First Aid – it's "jargon time". We define compression as, "To reduce or compress one's possible tricks won by making careless errors". So multiple compression belongs in the "Ever have one of those day?" category. Eddie shares this pearl in "Kantar on Kontract":

	J 10 4	
	6 3	
	8 6 2	
	A 10 9 8 7	
7 6 3		K 8
K Q 9 7 4		A 10 8 2
10 5		A Q 9 7 3
6 5 3		J 4
	A Q 9 5 2	
	J 5	
	K J 4	
	K Q 2	

West	North	East	South
--	--	1D	1S
P	2S	P	4S
X			

Declarer South was Harvey Cohen, a Los Angeles Bridge expert. Harvey mused, "What could West have for the **double**?" West dutifully led the **D10** to East's **DA**, returning the **D9** to Harvey's Jack. After some deep thought (read compression), poor Harvey figured West must have the **SK** from three so the hand will go down when the **finesse fails** and West gets a **Diamond ruff**. But wait, Harvey has a plan (read double compression). "I'll try sneaking a Spade past West, thus leading low towards dummy's Jack. What, East wins with the Spade King?" Naturally, East returned a **Diamond**, ruffed by West. After **two Heart losers**, poor Harvey was down two vulnerable for **500**. As only Eddie can tell the story, as the cards lie, declarer can actually take 12 tricks, concluding, "Harvey (a stock broker) swears that his advice on stocks and bonds does not match his play of this hand".

[Check out BridgeHands index of Bridge Jargon terms](#)

We hope you have been enjoying the BridgeHands eMag Newsletter. Feel free to forward interesting topics to your friends. We look forward to hearing from you with your suggestions for future Bridge topics as well as your feedback.

Sincerely,

**BridgeHands**



---

email: [support@bridgehands.com](mailto:support@bridgehands.com)  
phone: 707-769-4499  
web: <http://www.bridgehands.com>

[Forward email](#)