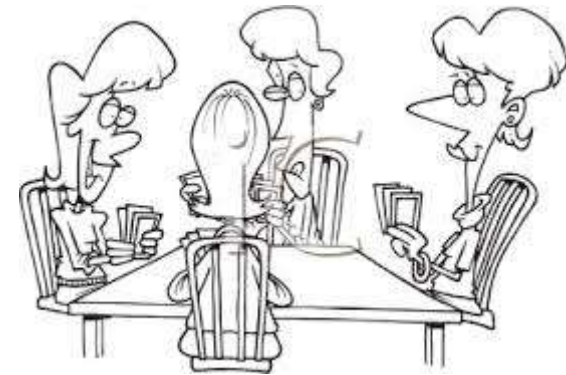


# Cambridge Bridge Club Coaching Session Jon Cooke

Part 1: Beyond your point count – Bidding with a fit



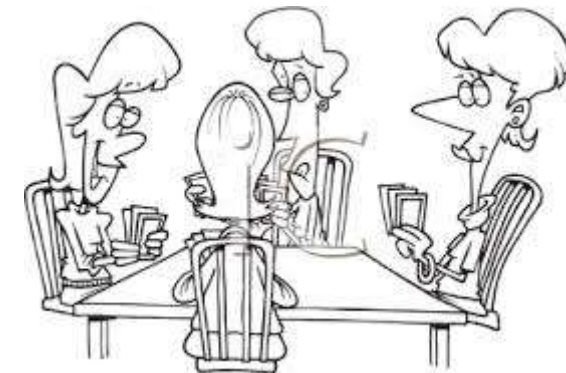
# Milton Work High Card Points

- Ace=4, King=3, Queen=2, Jack=1
- 25 HCP for game in NT or a major
- 28 HCP for game in minor
- 33 HCP for small slam
- 37 HCP for grand slam



- Milton Cooper Work became a strong advocate of the 4,3,2,1 point count system in 1915
- He only ever really intended its use to cover balanced hands

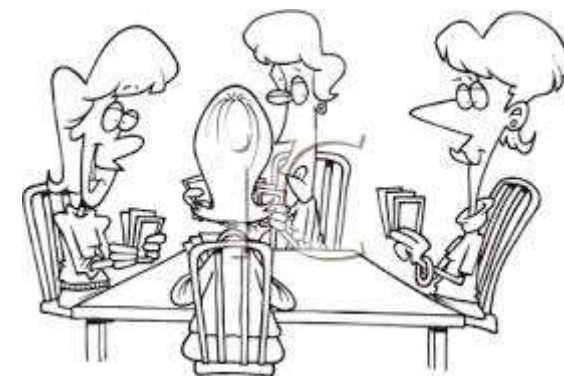
- These are the “rules” we teach beginners
- They are a reasonable guide when it comes to bidding balanced hands
- Trouble is they are not very accurate when it comes to distributional hands...



# 10 High Card Points – 13 tricks

➤ ♠AKQJT98765432 ♥void ♦void ♣void

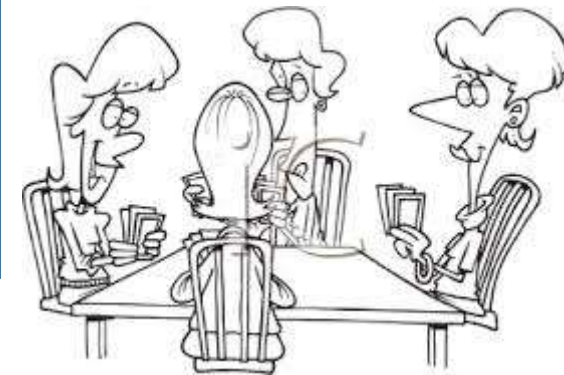
- Obviously an extreme and ridiculous example but:
- This proves the guidelines on point counts are not very much help when it comes to evaluating distributional hands.
- Even artificially adding on various numbers of points for length or singletons or voids doesn't help. I've seen advice to add five points for a void, three points for a singleton and various amounts for length cards, but it still doesn't work brilliantly.
- We can all see this hand is worth a grand slam, but no point counting method will get you to the 37 points we tell beginners they need between the hands to contract for 13 tricks.
- So what should we use instead?



# Losers and Covers

- When you have a fit
- The more distributional hand counts its losers
- The hand opposite counts its “loser-covers”
- Loser-count minus partner’s loser-covers = partnership’s losers

- In essence this is very simple idea
- For example, if I have 6 losers and partner covers 3 of them we expect to lose 3 tricks
- That means we can make 10 tricks
- It’s not always straightforward to evaluate your covers
- But it gets you thinking properly
- Lets take a particular situation to see it in action...



# Losers and Covers example: 1♠-1NT-2♥

<u>opener</u>	<u>responder</u>
♠ KJT87	♠ 65
♥ KQ85	♥ AT7432
♦ 65	♦ 94
♣ K9	♣ JT5



losers

Spades 2  
Hearts 1  
Diamonds 2  
Clubs 1



covers

Spades 1  
Hearts 1  
Diamonds 0  
Clubs 0

- 6 losers – 2covers =4 losers
- 4 hearts went 1 off

<u>opener</u>	<u>responder</u>
♠ K7653	♠ J
♥ AK43	♥ QJ962
♦ J	♦ A975
♣ J42	♣ T63



losers

Spades 2  
Hearts 1  
Diamonds 1  
Clubs 3



covers

Spades 1  
Hearts 1  
Diamonds 1  
Clubs 0

- 7losers – 3covers =4 losers
- 4 hearts went 1 off

<u>opener</u>	<u>responder</u>
♠ KJ832	♠ A6
♥ A653	♥ T8742
♦ A52	♦ KT9
♣ T	♣ 94



losers

Spades 2  
Hearts 2  
Diamonds 2  
Clubs 1



covers

Spades 2  
Hearts 1  
Diamonds 1  
Clubs 0

- 7losers – 4covers =3 losers
- 4 hearts made

# Losers and Covers: estimating covers

Now the doubleton has no additional benefit

<u>opener</u>	<u>responder</u>
♠ KJ832	♠ A6
♥ A653	♥ T8742
♦ A52	♦ KT9
♣ T	♣ 94

<u>losers</u>	<u>covers</u>
Spades 2	Spades 2
Hearts 2	Hearts 1
Diamonds 2	Diamonds 1
Clubs 1	Clubs 0

- 7losers – 4covers =3 losers
- 4 hearts made

Add the sQ to West:

<u>opener</u>	<u>responder</u>
♠ KQJ32	♠ A6
♥ A653	♥ T8742
♦ A52	♦ KT9
♣ T	♣ 94

<u>losers</u>	<u>covers</u>
Spades 1	Spades 1
Hearts 2	Hearts 1
Diamonds 2	Diamonds 1
Clubs 1	Clubs 0

- 6losers – 3covers =3 losers
- 4 hearts made

- In practice you can't always tell how many of partner's losers you are covering
- You should think of a range of covers (I have 2 or 3 covers, for example)
- Natural game tries can help partner work out how many covers they have
- 1S-2S-3D for example:
- Now partner can tell a doubleton ♦ or honour is likely a cover but the ♥Q or ♣Q are probably not

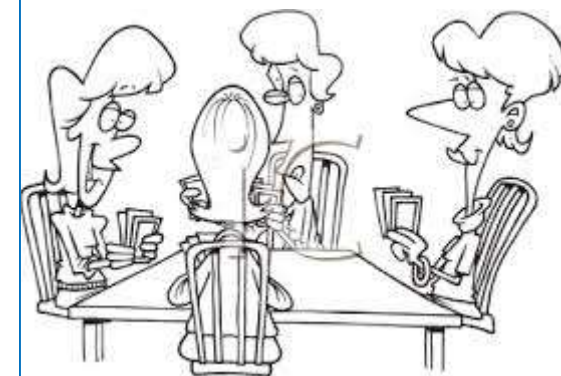
# Losers and Covers – Have a Try...

## Counting Losers

- Maximum of 3 in each suit
- Reduce by one for each A or K or supported Queen
- Reduce by half for unsupported Queens
- Queens only get counted in 3 card holdings
- If you only have an 8 card fit adjust your loser count up if you have any 4+ card suits with small cards
  - You won't be able to ruff ALL of them
- When you go through hand records think about the losers and covers and your evaluation will improve
- This is the same basic method as used by "Losing Trick Count" devotees

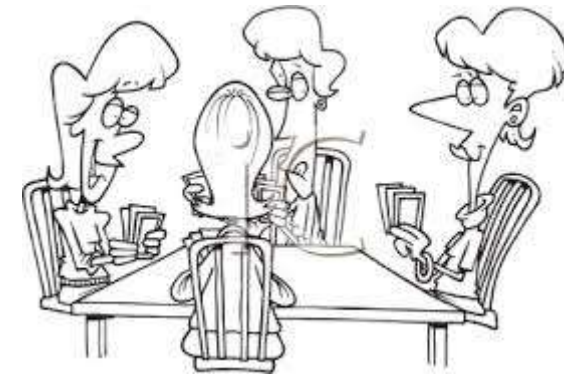
## Counting Covers

- Weak 5 card support is usually one cover - (e.g. Axxxx v xxxxx is only 1 loser in total)
- Side Aces are a cover
- Side Kings are usually a cover (they can be less if you work out partner has nothing in the suit – then they are a half – representing a trick on a finesse)
- Minor honours in partners short suits are not covers
- Side Aces/honours in partners suits are covers
- A doubleton or singleton in partners long suit is usually a cover
- Other singletons are usually 1-2 covers
- Accept you are counting a "range", e.g 2-3 covers dependent on your partner's hand.



# Losers and Covers – game zone

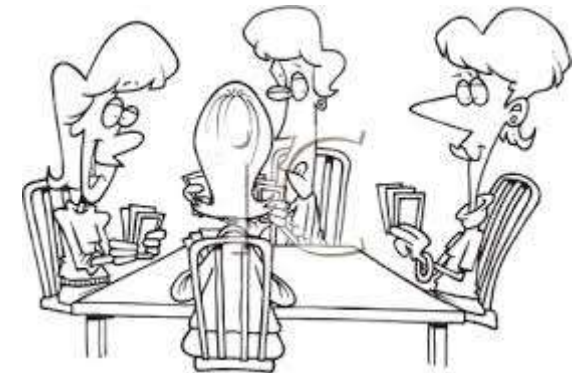
- Distributional minimum openers typically have 7 losers
- A simple raise usually shows 1.5-2.5 covers
- Opener should try for game opposite a simple raise with 5 losers
- Accept with likely two working covers
- Invite game with 3+ likely covers (1Major-3Major)
- Accept invite with 6 losers
- Responder should drive game with 4 likely covers
- Game Tries/Splinters help partner count likely covers





# Losers and Covers – Slam Zone

- Distributional minimum openers typically have 7 losers
- 6 covers is a very strong hand opposite an opener –probably making slam if fit OK and enough Aces held
- 4 loser hands are close to slam opposite invites
- If partner drives game opposite your opener and you have a fit a 5 loser hand is close to slam
- The degree of fit becomes very important as duplication can become an issue

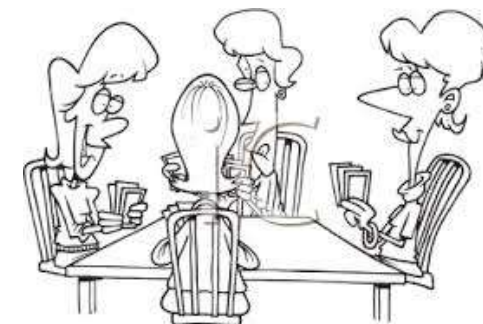


# Splinters – A good place to start using the method

- I'm going to mention Splinters because what we have just talked about will help people use them properly.
- A double-jump shift response to a 1Major opener shows 4 card support, a singleton in the bid suit and about 3 **additional** covers as a minimum.
- We talked about a singleton usually being worth 1 or 2 covers. Splintering enables partner to judge which it is.
- A minimum opener will have 7 losers, so to force game we need at least 4 covers – the three additional ones and the singleton. If the singleton is truly worthless we may go off.

# Splinters - examples

Opener's decision after partner's splinter: 1♠-4♣:



➤ ♠AK742 ♥KQ3 ♦K6 ♣654:

➤ 6 losers. Partner promised 3 covers outside clubs – their singleton club looks like it will provide 2 more. 6 losers-probably 5 covers – Blackwood will do the job – you control all the suits and expect 12 tricks even opposite a minimum.

➤ ♠AK876 ♥QJ3 ♦A3 ♣J54:

➤ 7 losers. Partner promised 3 covers plus their singleton club which looks like 2 more. You can't bid blackwood, but you can cue-bid 4♦ to encourage partner in case they actually have 4 covers outside clubs – you expect 11 tricks but if partner is non minimum slam is likely – if partner responds 4H you will bid 4S and leave it to them.

➤ ♠KQ876 ♥654 ♦A6 ♣KQJ:

➤ 6 losers but you know that partner's singleton club isn't doing anything useful. Even though this hand started out as a non minimum, it got worse: 6 losers – 3 covers means you expect to only make 10 tricks – sign off.

- Time to try what we've learned....

# Splinters - Review

	East	West	
1 Dealer East	♠A9752♥64♦A7♣AJ42	♠KJ63♥KT9872♦KT♣8	1S-4C-4D-4S – fitting 7L v minimum
2 Dealer East	♠AJ9653♥A♦A2♣K872	♠KQ42♥J873♦KQJT♣3	1S-4C-4D-4S –4N...5 losers v 4 covers
3 Dealer East	♠AJ762♥AJ3♦Q832♣K	♠KQ98♥QT5♦J♣AQ643	1S-4C-4H-4S –4N...6 losers v extras
4 Dealer East	♠AQJ86♥JT♦AQ653♣2	♠KT9754♥A852♦T♣A4	1S-4D-5C-5H-6S 4 losers outside Ds 3 should be covered – drive slam opposite a heart control
5 Dealer West	♠AT5♥Q7432♦AJT3♣7	♠3♥AK965♦K76♣KT84	1H-3S-4C-4D now close & on finesse
6 Dealer West	♠Q7♥KQ754♦KJ962♣J	♠J9♥AJT98♦T74♣AKQ	7 losers but SPL adds no more covers 1H-4C-4H