

99. BP or not BP. That is the question.

By Ron Klinger

WARNING: This bridge column is not suitable for any of my bridge opponents. Please stop reading now.

Which hand would you rather pick up as dealer:

(1)		(2)
♠ AK4	or	♠ KQ1062
♥ 762		♥ QJ
♦ A76		♦ 1052
♣ 9832		♣ K63

They each have 11 HCP. Hand 1 has three quick tricks. Hand (2) has 1½ quick tricks (♠K-Q = 1, ♣K-6-3 = ½).

Some ten years ago I was lucky to be approached by David Jackson, a consultant statistician to the gaming industry and a representative of Ireland in many world and European bridge championships. Would I be prepared to collaborate with him on a different approach to hand valuation? I readily agreed and the upshot was *Better Balanced Bidding – The Banzai Method*. The thrust of the book is that there is a better appreciation of the value of balanced hands by using Banzai Points or BP (A = 5, K = 4, Q = 3, J = 2, 10 = 1; add 2 points for a 5-card suit or 3 points for a 5-card suit with three or more honours) than via High Card Points.

Total number of HCP in a pack = 40. Total number of BP in a pack = 60. Therefore, to find the BP point-count requirements for your bidding system, add 50% to your current HCP requirements. So, if you need 12 HCP, you need 18 BP. If you open 11 HCP, then 17 BP is acceptable. A 12-14 HCP 1NT opening becomes 18-21 BP. A 15-17 HCP 1NT opening becomes a 22-25 BP 1NT. A 20-22 2NT opening = a 30-33 BP 2NT.

The 25+ points for a 3NT game translates into (37) 38+ points in BPs. A 6NT contract with 33 points requires (49) 50+ BPs and 7NT, 37+ points, needs (55) 56+ BPs.

My regular partners and I have adopted BPs and these are reflected in our choice of bids. Take the two hands above. Hand (1) has 11 HCP, but only 14 BPs. That would be an automatic pass for us. Hand (2) has 21 BPs (counting 3 extra for the spade suit with three honours). This is a clear-cut opening bid for us. There are plenty of top players who will pooh-pooh this and we are happy to have them set in their ways. For Hand (2) there are experts who might say, 'The hand has only 11 HCP, it is aceless and you have a Q-J doubleton.' It is true that one usually deducts a point for Q-J doubleton. That still leaves the hand as 20 BPs, still a mandatory opening.

The problem with Q-J doubleton is that we cannot tell whether it is valuable or not. Opposite 7-4-3, the Q-J will take no tricks. Opposite 10-x-x it can produce one trick. Opposite A-K-x-x it is worth two tricks.

Likewise, with that 10-5-2 in diamonds. We cannot tell in the auction whether it will be useful or useless. Opposite J-x-x, you have no tricks. Opposite A-J-9, your 10-x-x improves your chances of two tricks from 37.5% to 75%. Facing K-Q-J-x, 10-x-gives you three tricks while 7-x, say, means that only two tricks are likely. Some players add half a point for suits including tens. Failure to add for tens and not counting something extra for a 5-card suit will produce an under-valuation of your balanced hands.

This deal arose in a practice match on BBO:

Dealer South : North-South vulnerable

	North	
	♠ A54	
	♥ K952	
	♦ A8	
	♣ J972	
West		East
♠ J		♠ 9873
♥ A63		♥ 10874
♦ Q9764		♦ KJ3
♣ Q854		♣ A10
	South	
	♠ KQ1062	
	♥ QJ	
	♦ 1052	
	♣ K63	

	West	North	East	South
				1♠
	Pass	2♣	Pass	3♣
	Pass	4♠	All Pass	

The spade game is not great, but it succeeded. West led the ♦6, ace. The ♥2 went to the queen and ace. West returned the ♦4. East won and brought back a heart. South won with the ♥J and ruffed the ♦10 in dummy. South played the ♣2: ten – king – four. Then came ♠A and after drawing trumps, South had ten tricks +620.

As the play went, East can defeat 4♠ by rising with the ♣A and playing the fourth heart. That promotes a trump trick for the defence. South can prevent that by playing ♣K, ♠A and then a club.

The deal comes from the [BLASS](#) vs [ROSENTHAL](#) quarter-finals of the 2019 Spingold (USA K-O Open Teams).

	West	North	East	South
	<i>Brogeland</i>	<i>Brink</i>	<i>Linqvist</i>	<i>Drijver</i>
				Pass
	Pass	1♣	Pass	1♠
	Pass	Pass	Pass	

West led the ♣5. East took the ♣A and returned the ♣10. South won with the ♣K and played the ♥Q. West took the ♥A, cashed the ♣Q and switched to the ♦4. Declarer rose with ♦A, crossed to the ♥J and played ♠K, ♠Q, ♠A, ♥K and ♣J, ruffed by East, nine tricks, North-South +140.

	West	North	East	South
	<i>Kalita</i>	<i>Silverstein</i>	<i>Pepsi</i>	<i>Rosenthal</i>
				1♠
	Pass	2♣	Pass	2♦ – minimum opening
	Pass	2♠	Pass	3♠
	Pass	4♠	All Pass	

West led the ♦6, ace. Declarer played the ♥2 to the ♥Q, taken by the ace. West continued with the ♦4 to the ♦K and East switched to the ♣10. South needed to rise with the ♣K, cash ♥J, ruff the ♦10, cash ♠K, ♠A, ♥K to discard a club for ten tricks. Instead, South ducked the ♣10. West won with the ♣Q and returned a club to the ♣A. East shifted to a spade. South took ♠A, ♠K, ruffed the ♦10 and played a club. East ruffed, two down, -200.

There are three passes to you. The opponents are vulnerable you are not. What do you do with:

- ♠ A6
- ♥ A962
- ♦ K62
- ♣ A1065

Those who count HCP only and play a strong 1NT would open 1NT. After all, South does have 15 HCP. When the deal came up in a teams' match on BBO, Matt Mullamphy of Sydney opened 1♣. Why? Because if you use BPs, the total comes to only 20 and a 1NT opening should be 22-25 BPs.

Dealer West : East-West vulnerable

	North	
	♠ KQ74	
	♥ 874	
	♦ Q10	
	♣ J874	
West		East
♠ 852		♠ J1093
♥ KQJ5		♥ 103
♦ 9873		♦ AJ54
♣ Q9		♣ K32
	South	
	♠ A6	
	♥ A962	
	♦ K62	
	♣ A1065	

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	Pass	1♣
Pass	1♠	Pass	1NT
Pass	Pass	Pass	

West led the ♥K ducked and the ♥Q: seven – ten – ace. The ♥6 to the ♥8 won and the ♣4 to the ♣10 lost. West cashed the ♥J and switched to a spade, taken by the ace. Mullamphy (S) played ♣A and a second club and finished with eight tricks, +120. Note that if West switches to a diamond at trick 2, even 2NT is in jeopardy.

At the other table, North-South reached 2NT via this auction and declarer failed by one trick, –50 and –5 Imps.

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	Pass	1NT
Pass	2♣	Pass	2♦
Pass	2♠	Pass	2NT
Pass	Pass	Pass	

It is true that 2NT can be made after the ♥K lead, but it is much more comfortable to be playing in 1NT than in 2NT.

Problems for Tomorrow:

1. Dealer South : Nil vulnerable

West	North	East	South
1♠	?		Pass

What would you do as North with:

♠ 54
♥ K986
♦ KQ4
♣ A1084

2. Dealer East : Nil vulnerable

West	North	East	South
1NT	?	Pass	Pass

What would you do as North with:

♠ K6
♥ AKQ7
♦ 10875
♣ AQ6

Why not phone or email your bridge partners and compare your answers and your reasoning?

I ran out of toilet paper and had to start using old newspapers. The Times are rough.