



**Ellen Caitlin Pomer**

## **BIL SESSION 1: 'INTRODUCTION TO COUNTING'**

**From Thursday September 18<sup>th</sup>, 16:15 ET, BILLIES Retreat**

*Ellen Caitlin Pomer has been teaching online for nearly 17 years. She is co-author of the acclaimed 'Standard Bidding with SAYC' and founder of Bridge Forum ([www.bridge-forum.com](http://www.bridge-forum.com)). She returns to bridge teaching in the BIL, where she has taught many topics, and is delighted to be back teaching 'Introduction to Counting'. She is also available for private sessions. She can be reached at [epomer@outlook.com](mailto:epomer@outlook.com). Please advise others that if they wish to receive these notes, that they should email me with their full name and BBO I.D. Enjoy!*

**Please note that due to the holy Jewish holidays, there will be no session on Thursday, September 25<sup>th</sup> and will resume Thursday, October 2<sup>nd</sup> at 4:15pm Eastern. To all Jewish members who celebrate these holidays, I wish you and yours a Happy, Healthy Jewish New Year.**

**We will look at a variety of issues which are involved with counting.**

Bridge is a game of counting so let's break it down as to when you count.

- a) When declarer does not have what we call a 'cold' contract (i.e. more losers than s/he can afford to make the contract), counting *may* help. We will see examples where this is true.
- b) Defenders count declarer's hand. If, for example West opens 1NT and the contract becomes 3NT, and declarer has shown 17 HCPs (High Card Points) and declarer must have the missing ♥ A, as partner has signalled s/he doesn't like hearts, (to be discussed below) South now knows that partner must have the ♣K (as declarer can't have the ♥ A and the missing ♣K). When in, North should feel free to lay down his ♣A from AQJ as partner should have the Club King, and in doing so, you can defeat the contract if you get your tricks in time.
- c) Defenders give count to one another, but when? When on defense, and your partner leads, you give attitude. Thus partner leads the ♥2 and you hold the JT63, play the Ten (lower of two equally ranking cards) to say you like the suit. But when declarer plays a suit, give count, thus traditionally high-low with an even number of cards (8652) and low-high with an odd number of cards (J32).

What if the suit has been played one round? Now we are giving **remainder count**. Thus with 852 remaining in the above example, we now play low-high, thus the 2; and with J3 left from the above J32, we play the **Jack** if it makes sense to do so.

Remember it is very important to give your partner count on defense but you must be the judge. If giving count or attitude in a specific situation only helps declarer, LIE!

### More Tips for Counting

- a) The **bidding** at the table gives enormous help. For example, if an opponent, say East, opens a weak two 2♠, and North-South land up in 4♥, declarer already starts with a good count on the opponents cards, knowing one opponent has six in a suit.
- b) The **lead** is also a key for declarer. Say you are in 4♠, and your opponent, who passed in first seat, leads the ♥AK. Later s/he shows up with the Club King. There is no way s/he can have the missing ♣K or s/he would have opened the bidding.

*Mike Lawrence, a member of BBO, wrote: 'How to Read Your Opponents'Cards' many years ago and has two CDs on counting: 'Counting at Bridge' and 'Counting at Bridge 2'. I highly recommend you consider purchasing Lawrence's first CD, with software by BBO's founder, Fred Gitelman, from the BBO 'Online Store'.*

Below you will find the four hands we counted for your review, while hand 4 is 'homework; which we will discuss at our next session.

### Reading the Opponents' Cards: Counting Shape

1.)

1	NORTH
	♠ 42
	♥ AQ975
	♦ AJ
	♣ KT75
	SOUTH
	♠ AKQ73
	♥ K3
	♦ KQ2
	♣ AQ4

West	North	East	South
	1♥	Pass	4NT
Pass	5♠	Pass	7NT
Pass	Pass	Pass	

The bidding could be better! The 5♠ bid, as we will see, with 4NT as RKC Blackwood shows 2 controls — the two Aces and the Queen of hearts.. Even though South is heading toward notrump, you respond to 4NT based on the last suit bid unless, thus 5♠ showing two Aces and the ♥Q.

West leads the  $\heartsuit T$ . What is your plan?

Here is the full deal:

	NORTH	
	$\spadesuit$ 42	
	$\heartsuit$ AQ975	
	$\diamondsuit$ AJ	
	$\clubsuit$ KT75	
WEST		EAST
$\spadesuit$ 6		$\spadesuit$ JT975
$\heartsuit$ J4		$\heartsuit$ T862
$\diamondsuit$ T98653		$\diamondsuit$ 74
$\clubsuit$ J962		$\clubsuit$ 83
	SOUTH	
	$\spadesuit$ AKQ73	
	$\heartsuit$ K3	
	$\diamondsuit$ KQ2	
	$\clubsuit$ AQ4	

You cash your winners outside of clubs — 3 spades, 3 hearts, 3 diamonds — so you need to win 4 clubs. As you cash your winners, we count one opponent's hand, say West, here. We find out that West follows to one spade, two hearts, and East follows to only two diamonds: We know that West's shape is 1-2-6-4. While West has four clubs and East only two, it is twice as likely that West has the  $\clubsuit J$  and he does. It is not a done deal that West has the club Jack, but this is an informed decision. With a club finesse to the Ten, declarer has 13 tricks.

2.)

2 NORTH

$\spadesuit$  KQJT

$\heartsuit$  832

$\diamondsuit$  KQJ

$\clubsuit$  J53

SOUTH

$\spadesuit$  A8754

$\heartsuit$  Q6

$\diamondsuit$  952

$\clubsuit$  AQ9

West	North	East	South
		1 $\heartsuit$	1 $\spadesuit$
Pass	4 $\spadesuit$	Pass	Pass
Pass			

West leads the  $\heartsuit T$ .

Here is the full deal:

NORTH		
♠ KQJT		
♥ 832		
♦ KQJ		
♣ J53		
WEST		EAST
♠ 93		♠ 62
♥ T7		♥ AKJ954
♦ A853		♦ T74
♣ T8762		♣ K4
SOUTH		
♠ A8754		
♥ Q6		
♦ 952		
♣ AQ9		

Thus far East has shown 6 hearts and 2 spades and by playing on diamonds, declarer knows West's shape: 2-6-3-2. (How does declarer know that East has only 3 diamonds? Note that on the run of extra spades to get more information (a common technique), East played a diamond. Counting the hand we know East has two clubs and one must be the ♣K as East needs the king for his opening bid given East has the ♦A. So the issue is not which hand holds the ♣K — that we have come to know -- but how many clubs does East hold? Now we know to lead a club to the Queen, cashing the ♣A, dropping the ♣K.

3.)

NORTH
♠ QT43
♥ QJ9
♦ KT3
♣ 872
SOUTH
♠ AK72
♥ 652
♦ AJ4
♣ AKQ

West	North	East	South
	Pass	Pass	2NT
Pass	3♣	Pass	3♠
Pass	4♠	Pass	Pass
Pass			

West cashes ♥AK and follows with the ♥3. East ruffs and exits with a club.

Here is the full deal:

		NORTH	
		♠ QT43	
		♥ QJ9	
		♦ KT3	
		♣ 872	
WEST			EAST
♠ 65			♠ J98
♥ AKT73			♥ 84
♦ 2			♦ Q98765
♣ J9654			♣ JT
		SOUTH	
		♠ AK72	
		♥ 652	
		♦ AJ4	
		♣ AKQ	

You win, cash trump and two more clubs. When East discards on the third round, you know that West started with 2-5-1-5 shape, so you can lead to dummy's ♦K and finesse the ♦J with certainty

4.)

NORTH	
♠ 84	
♥ AKJ	
♦ AJ873	
♣ Q74	
SOUTH	
♠ T	
♥ 93	
♦ KT65	
♣ KJT952	

West	North	East	South
2♠	Dbl	4♠	5♣
Pass	Pass	Pass	

West cashes ♠AK. You ruff and....

Here is the full deal:

		NORTH	
		♠ 84	
		♥ AKJ	
		♦ AJ873	
		♣ Q74	
WEST		EAST	
♠ AK9652		♠ QJ73	
♥ 74		♥ QT8652	
♦ Q42		♦ 9	
♣ 83		♣ A6	
		SOUTH	
		♠ T	
		♥ 93	
		♦ KT65	
		♣ KJT952	

... knocks out the ♣A. East does best to return a club. To count the hand, play ♥AK and ruff the ♥J. Now you know West started with two hearts and two clubs. Presumably he had six spades for his opening bid so he must have three diamonds. This means that West has only one diamond. Play the ♦K in case the singleton is the ♦Q and when it is not finesse the ♦J.

### 5.) HOMEWORK

NORTH	
♠ A873	
♥ QT	
♦ AJ82	
♣ A76	
SOUTH	
♠ QJT96	
♥ 963	
♦ KT7	
♣ K8	

West	North	East	South
Pass	1NT	2♥	3♠
Pass	4♠	Pass	Pass
Pass			

West leads ♥8 and East cashes ♥AK. West plays ♥2 on East's second heart. East leads a third heart and South trumps with the ♠Q while West discards a small club. Declarer now leads trump with West holding one trump and East, the remainder. What line of play do you now take to give yourself the best chance of making this contract given you already have 3 losers?