

Pomona-Covina Unit
by Tom Lill

“Unit” Game – Saturday, January 21, 11:00 a.m.

Individual – Saturday, January 7, 9:30 a.m., San Dimas

First, some explanations of the column’s headers: our Individual game this month is being held at one of our alternate sites – the home of Penny and Gino Barbieri. Penny is justifiably proud of her Christmas village and wants to show it off. (Sound familiar from last year ... different show-offer, though ...)

And our “Unit” game this month ... well ... there’s been a lot of rumbling ACBL-wide about the 80% increase in the Unit game sanction fee. (When was the last time YOU got an 80% raise?) Units getting table counts in the 20s and 30s have no problem. Small Units, such as ours, just can’t justify jacking up the entry fee that much. In spite of the protests, the League has dug in. So Units are being encourage to NOT hold unit games until after the Spring NABC. We are in the fortunate position of having an unused (mostly) club sanction coincident with our normal Unit game, which we plan to use for January, February, and March. January’s game will be a Club Championship, which pays out master points roughly equal to those of a Unit game. So We Shall See ...

In the December Unit game, Bill Papa and Vic Sartor ran away from the field, winning by more than three boards. In second came Chuck Lohr - David Ochroch, followed by Margie Hall - Steve Mancini, Rosalie Roberts - Barbara Papa, and Linda Stuart - Linda Tessier.

In the December Individual, Sandy Jones took for the top spot. Not too far behind were Sofi Kasubhai, Al Lax, Lois Snowden, and Steve Mancini.

The top score this month was a huge 74.3% posted by Fredy Minter – in an Individual game. In pairs, the top spot was claimed by Richard Patterson - Roger Ginsburg, with a 70.2% effort. Other winners: Lulu Minter, Sandy Jones, Joe Unis, Genise Hasan, John Barrow, Margie Hall, Herb Stampfl, Al Lax, Norma Appley, and Amr Elghamry.

Four promotions to report this month: Barbara Andryjowicz to Junior Master, Esther Johnson to Club Master, Mary Miller to Bronze Life Master, and Genise Hasan has reached the rarified atmosphere of Ruby Life Master. Congratulations, all.

This month’s Hand-of-the-Month ... well, it’s more of a fun hand than anything else. It’s a real freak, but Halloween is past. And it’s too early for April Fools, so you will have to believe us when we swear that this hand was actually dealt. Hold your breath and hang on for the ride. You are the dealer, and find yourself trying to maintain your composure as you stare at this collection:

♠ AKQJT87532 ♥ none ♦ 8 ♣ AT.

Yes, a 10 card suit in a 2-loser hand. Whatcha gonna do, Chief? You can open 1♠, and then fight off what’s sure to be a lot of interference. You can open 4♠ ... and risk missing slam. Or open 6♠, and risk missing the grand. Not easy to bid this hand. For laughs, let’s say you open 2♣, strong and artificial. The opponents are silent. Partner further muddies the waters with a jump to 3♥ – an undiscussed bid. Now, your agreement is that 2♥ shows a worthless hand, and

2NT shows at least a trick and a half, and a good heart suit. What could 3♥ possibly mean? And whaddaya gonna do now?

You finally reason that partner must have a pretty good hand, not only a good heart suit but some stuff on the side. No good way to find out, is there? So what the heck, let's just cut the comedy and bid 6♠. And hope! The opening lead is the ♣K, and dummy comes down with

♠ 6 ♥ AKJT9763 ♦KT94 ♣ none.

Well! You got lucky. Ruff the lead, pitch your low diamond on the ♥A, ruff a red card high, and claim 13 tricks.

You were even luckier than you hoped. RHO had both missing trumps, so LHO could not lead a trump, which would have held you to the same 11 tricks you started with. And at EVERY other table, the opening lead was the ♦A, holding declarer to 12 tricks. All but two pairs bid 6♠. One pair somehow stopped at 4♠, and one (good) pair had a disaster. Playing a strong 1♣ system, the auction went 1♣ – (3♣) – 7♥ – (pass); %\$#@% by opener. Opener finally called 7NT, which was not a great success after the ♦A was led.

Isn't this game fun ... and also maddening?

By the way, according to our calculations, a 10 card suit occurs once in about 60,738 deals (your mileage may vary). That means if you play 5 sessions a week, 24 boards a session, you can expect to pick up one of these beasts about every 9 ¾ years. If you play less often ... well, don't hold your breath!

Quote for the Month: “I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand.” (Confucius)

Until next month ...