

What Bobby Wolff and Peter Pender taught me as a junior
30 years ago at the 1990 summer NABC in Boston:

When to play your good major fits in NT, and
how to get the most out of your partner,
especially how to avoid a string of disasters

January 16, 2021, 12:30 PM CST

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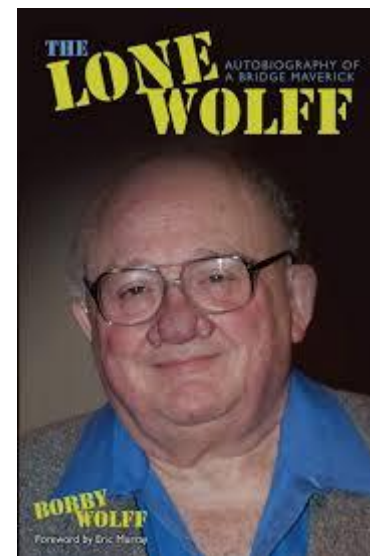
Your presenter

- Sam Dinkin first represented the US in international play qualifying as USA I for the 1993 Juniors with Michael Shuster, but moving to USA II when a second team was added. His team beat Helgemo in the round robin. He gave up a trick to throw his partner in to generate two tricks. (Helgemo claims not to remember this.) He has captained USA I women's bringing back a silver medal from Brazil in 2009. Dinkin has finished in the top 20 in the European Open Teams a couple of times, going into the final round of the Swiss 17th and 13th. He finished 20th in the IMP Pairs in Montecatini-Terre and 7th out of 300 pairs in the Open Teams Butler scores. He has made the round of 32 several times in the Vanderbilt and Spingold, knocking out the best seeded upset on the first day one year. In USBF play, the Dinkin team has come second in the round robin and has made the round of 8. He has top ten finishes in the National Swiss, in Providence and Reno. In 2019, he captained USA I women in Wuhan losing to Sweden, the ultimate winner, in the round of 8. He played on the USA I women consolation team with five of his teammates to make the round of 32 of the Transnational, and then joined three of them for Team Dinkin to win the Wuhan Grand Prix 2 BAM.
- Dinkin is the creator of the Infernal Machine, a 31-page strong diamond system with weak 1M/2m that has game-forcing relay sequences after the first 11 opening bids 1st/2nd. He is also known (primarily to himself) as the GIB whisperer. One top finisher said he followed every word of his GIB style to make a top 10 finish in the online NABC.
- By day, Dr. Dinkin designs high-stakes auction rules and figures out ways to game auctions on behalf of high-stakes bidders. He prefers being a jailer to an inmate, "it's too easy to be an inmate." He designed and implemented electricity capacity and energy auctions in Colombia, Illinois, New England, New Jersey and Texas and the first spectrum auctions in 8 countries including Australia, Canada and Mexico. Dr. Dinkin is responsible for conceiving at least three textbook decisive wins including advising KPN in the 1998 2G auction in the Netherlands, Aircel in the 2010 3G auction in India, and Hutchison 3G UK in the UK multi-band 4G auction in 2013.
- Other hobbies include jogging, shooting, space journalism and advocacy, and is founder and Secretary of the Board of 501(c)(3) non-profit Stopgap Mask Makers.



Bobby Wolff

- Robert S. (Bobby) Wolff (born October 14, 1932) is an American bridge player, writer, and administrator. He is the only person to win world championships in five different categories.
- Wolff was an original member of the Dallas Aces team, which was formed in 1968 to compete against the Italian Blue Team which was dominant at the time. The Aces were successful and won their first world championship in 1970. Wolff has won 11 world championships, over 30 North American championships, and was the president of World Bridge Federation (WBF) 1992–1994, and served as president of American Contract Bridge League (ACBL) 1987. He is the author of a tell-all on bridge chronicling 60 years on the scene, entitled *The Lone Wolff*, published by Master Point Press. His column, *The Aces on Bridge* has been appearing daily for over 32 years, is syndicated by United Feature Syndicate in more than 130 newspapers worldwide and is available online two weeks in arrears.
- Wolff lived in Dallas at the time of his induction into the ACBL Hall of Fame in 1995.
- Honors & Awards
 - ACBL Hall of Fame, 1995
 - ACBL Honorary Member of the Year, 1995
 - Mott-Smith Trophy 1973
 - Fishbein Trophy 1979
- Wins
 - Bermuda Bowl (7) 1970, 1971, 1977, 1983, 1985, 1987, 1995
 - World Open Team Olympiad (1) 1988
 - World Open Pairs (1) 1974
 - Olympiad Mixed Teams (1) 1972
 - Senior International Cup (1) 2000
 - North American Bridge Championships (31)
 - Vanderbilt (2) 1971, 1973
 - Spingold (10) 1969, 1979, 1982, 1983, 1989, 1990, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996
 - Reisinger (8) 1970, 1978, 1979, 1988, 1993, 1994, 1995, 2002
 - Grand National Teams (3) 1975, 1977, 1986
 - Men's Board-a-Match Teams (4) 1968, 1972, 1973, 1988
 - Senior Knockout Teams (3) 2002, 2003, 2005
 - Blue Ribbon Pairs (1) 1984
 - United States Bridge Championships (16)
 - Open Team Trials (12) 1969, 1971, 1973, 1977, 1979 (Dec), 1982, 1984, 1985, 1987, 1988, 1992, 2003
 - Senior Team Trials (4) 2000, 2001, 2007, 2009
 - Pan American Invitational Open Teams (3) 1974, 1976, 1977



When to play your good major
fits in NT

10^D

W shdinkin 58

♠ KQ542

♥ A54

♦ A62

♣ A4

N vmassey 2

♠ J96

♥ J63

♦ K97

♣ K1072

E ibidalot 5+

♠ 73

♥ KQ872

♦ J4

♣ QJ96

S charsa5 6+

♠ A108

♥ 109

♦ Q10853

♣ 853

W N E S

1♥ Pass

2♣ Pass 2♥ Pass

2♠ Pass 3♣ Pass

3NT Pass Pass Pass

3NT West

0 0

From Tuesday's Steve Wood Teams

1H: 8-11 4+H could be canapé

2C: Artificial game force

2H: No singletons, more suit oriented, min

2S: 5+S

3C: Natural

How did we do?

- Other table also played 3NT and went down declared from the other side
- 4M better, why?
- Suit cards: Aces and good trump
- Only 26 HCP
- Short hand ruffing
- Unstopped suit

E ibidalot **5+**

♠ Q107
♥ K9
♦ A1087
♣ AKJ6

♣ 5 ♣ 10

W shdinkin **58**

♠ KJ943
♥ AQ8
♦ J52
♣ 2

Auction:

(2H)-2N by E, 3N by W

Why did I bid 3NT?

- Partner did not make a takeout double
- I had a strong H stopper
- We were in the 26-29 range
- I had a source of tricks and transportation
- My transportation was useful because of partner's heart stopper
- We get a tempo because the opponents would get off to the wrong lead

Result: lose one IMP, 4S made 480

What did Bobby say

- The Dallas Aces used science:
 - Grease pencils and overhead projectors
- They did a "hot wash" of their bridge hands
 - Now with hand records, play records, matchpoints, it's routine—back then it was revolutionary like NASA
- You can play your 4-4 major suit fits in 3N
- A corollary to Bob Hamman's (also an Ace):
 - "If you have a bidding decision to make, bid 3NT if it's a plausible choice."



Or to quote *I Love Lucy*

- "3NT" said Lucy when she wakes up at a bridge table in the middle of the bidding



Why 3NT and not 4M

- At IMPs, the safety of the contract is more important than matchpoints
 - 3NT is one fewer trick
 - 3NT is less behold to lucky breaks
 - 420 vs. 400 is worth giving up if it makes the contract safe enough
- If there are enough HCP (28-30),
 - 3NT and 4M may make the same # of tricks
 - or 4M can fail to a ruff when 3NT is cold
- Bobby Wolff: if we had a Qx, that holding made NT more likely to be better

What did we do with this information

- 1990 NABC: Michael Shuster and I bid 3NT in the National IMP pairs and won a game swing on our 9 card major suit fit
- Helped us make the final
- (We made the daily bulletin—only because our opponents won partly as a result of a grand slam they bid against us and I found the only lead to make it a bulletin hand)

30 years later same partner?

From December Reynolds KO round 2
Jan 10-11

<div>D</div> <div>13</div>	<div>N shdinkin</div> <div>♠ KQ109</div> <div>♥ QJ54</div> <div>♦ KQ5</div> <div>♣ J8</div>	<table><tr><th>W</th><th>N</th><th>E</th><th>S</th></tr><tr><td></td><td>1♥</td><td>X</td><td>3NT</td></tr><tr><td>P</td><td>P</td><td>P</td><td></td></tr></table>	W	N	E	S		1♥	X	3NT	P	P	P	
W	N	E	S											
	1♥	X	3NT											
P	P	P												
<div>W tomgrue</div> <div>♠ 8753</div> <div>♥ A9</div> <div>♦ 10876</div> <div>♣ 732</div>		<div>E john_j</div> <div>♠ J62</div> <div>♥ 10</div> <div>♦ AJ93</div> <div>♣ KQ964</div>												
	<div>S shuster</div> <div>♠ A4</div> <div>♥ K87632</div> <div>♦ 42</div> <div>♣ A105</div>	<div>3NT S</div> <div>NS: 0 EW: 0</div>												

Auction:

1H 8-11 4+H could be canapé

We are playing a 10 card major fit in NT

Why?

- Right-side to protect the C tenace
- Source of tricks
- Stoppers
- A way to preempt the opponent's likely spade game
- Sam miscounted his hand and downgraded what he thought was 12 HCP
- Result 660 vs 650 at other table

It does not necessarily come up every session

- Our Wuhan Grand Prix 2 win at the World Teams Championship had only one hand where one table was in a major and the other 3NT out of 44 boards
- My table was 3NT, but it was the opponents who bid it and made the same number of tricks as my teammates in 3S

Summary of 3N vs. 4M with 8+ card major fit

Why 3NT?

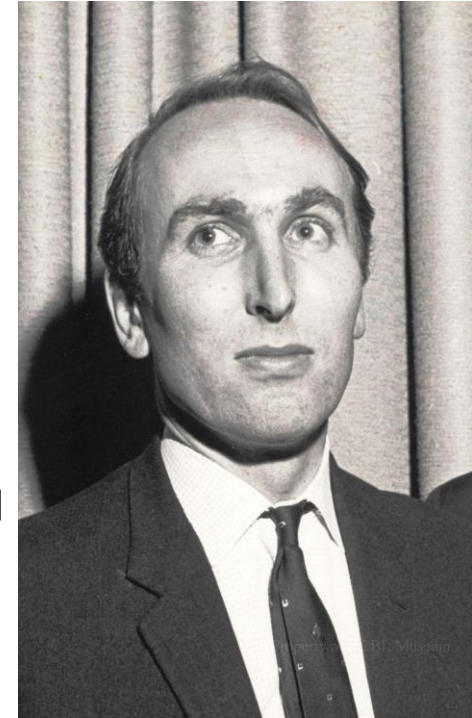
- Qx
- IMPs
- 28-30
- NT oriented: slow tricks, stoppers
- No ruff in short hand
- Strong doubleton e.g., AQ
- Protect a holding on opening lead
- Solid suit
- The other side can't ruff anything
- Duplication: partner shortness vs. your semi-solid suit
- Mirror: same distribution both hands so no ruffs
- Hamman's law

Why not?

- No Qx
- Matchpoints/BAM
- 23-27 or 31+
- Suit oriented: Controls (A/K), shape
- Ruff in short hand
- Unstopped suit
- Protect a holding on opening lead
- Solid trump suit
- You can't ruff anything, no ruffing finesses, cannot ruff suits good, can't claim on a cross ruff
- Not necessarily transportation to run proposed trump suit in 3NT, E.g., 2N-3H; 3S-3N, bid 4S if you have AK/AQ tight because partner might not have an entry
- If 3NT is an offer to play, you can't play 3NT as artificial after agreeing an 8-card trump fit as serious/frivolous slam tries

Peter Pender

- Peter Alexander Pender (August 10, 1936 – November 18, 1990)[1][2][3] was an American bridge player and figure skater from Forestville, California. He died of AIDS in San Francisco, California. Donated \$2.6 million to AIDS research.
- Pender, who was born in Pennsylvania, an elite figure skater who won gold medals from both the U.S. and Canadian Figure Skating Associations. In the late 1950s he traveled frequently to Montreal for skating competition, and met his 1980s bridge partner Hugh Ross there. He moved to San Francisco in 1960.
- In 1966 Pender and Jeremy Flint, who had played for Great Britain in the 1965 Bermuda Bowl world championship, were regular partners in American Contract Bridge League (ACBL) competition after Flint arrived to tour the US in mid-February. "Flint created a sensation" by achieving the rank of ACBL Life Master in 11 weeks. They finished first and second in total masterpoints earned during the calendar year, recognized by the annual McKenney Trophy.
- Honors
 - ACBL Hall of Fame, 1998
 - McKenney Trophy, 1966
- Wins
 - North American Bridge Championships (14)
 - Nail Life Master Open Pairs (2) 1967, 1984 [7]
 - Grand National Teams (4) 1982, 1983, 1985, 1987 [8]
 - Vanderbilt (2) 1984, 1987 [9]
 - Marcus Cup (1) 1958
 - Reisinger (5) 1968, 1970, 1981, 1985, 1986 [10]
- Runners-up North American Bridge Championships
 - Rockwell Mixed Pairs (1) 1964 [11]
 - North American Pairs (1) 1985 [12]
 - Mitchell Board-a-Match Teams (2) 1966, 1972 [13]
 - Reisinger (2) 1971, 1983 [10]
 - Spingold (1) 1974 [14]



How to get the most out of your partner,
especially how to avoid a string of disasters

- One of the hardest things for new players is
 - They go on "tilt" like a pinball machine
 - It leads to "string disasters"
 - Get stuck thing about a hand with a bad result for several hands
- How to break the chain?
 - Have an "unloaded" phrase that you agree in advance with your partner
 - E.g., "Partner, let's take a break"
 - Can learn the same sort of thing from a sports psychologist or similar
- Why?
 - A Zen-like state can help with bridge
 - "Just be in the flow of what you are doing at that particular moment. Be totally focused on the activity and the inherent nothingness of that activity." –Quora 2014



Advanced version

- The retro convention with a 20th century outdated name:
 - Keller
 - Named after Helen Keller, blind, deaf and mute (the last two she managed to overcome somewhat)
- Don't talk, don't listen
- Like the 3 monkeys:
- (So let's call it "3 monkeys")



When Helen Keller "Heard" Caruso

As related in *MUSICAL AMERICA*, Helen Keller, deaf and sightless, "listened" to Enrico Caruso's singing of the Lament from "Samson," during the Metropolitan Company's visit to Atlanta. As shown above, Miss Keller "heard" with fingers pressed against the singer's lips. After the song she collapsed from her emotion.

We were hotheads

- Pender's advice helped us become a stable and successful pair
- I played against Peter Pender and his partner in a pair game later in the tournament. I asked his partner to tell me a story during a break round before playing them. He declined. We cleaned their clocks I was so mad. Meckstroth also plays in a fugue when he is mad. If you are not Meckstroth, better to play 3 Monkeys

Appendix: more 3NT with 8+ major fits

D

16

W

tomgrue

♠

Q

♥

J10985

♦

1098

♣

QJ86

N

shdinkin

♠

A65

♥

K32

♦

AQJ2

♣

732

E

john_j

♠

9843

♥

764

♦

753

♣

K95

S

shuster

♠

KJ1072

♥

AQ

♦

K64

♣

A104

3NT N

NS: 0 EW: 0

From December Reynolds KO round 2
Jan 10-11

Auction:
1NT (12-14)

We are playing a 8 card major fit in NT

Why?

- 29-31 HCP
- Useful ruff in short hand iffy
- Keep the opps in the dark and they might lead a S
- Result lose 13: 6S at other table
(Needs finding SQ or both H&D breaking on C lead, otherwise easy)

Appendix: more 3NT with 8+ major fits

<div>10D</div>	<div>Nshdinkin</div> <div><div>♠1074</div><div>♥J7</div><div>♦K109864</div><div>♣AQ</div></div>	<table><tr><th>W</th><th>N</th><th>E</th><th>S</th></tr><tr><td></td><td></td><td>P</td><td>1♣</td></tr><tr><td>P</td><td>1NT</td><td>P</td><td>2♠</td></tr><tr><td>P</td><td>3♠</td><td>P</td><td>3NT</td></tr><tr><td>P</td><td>P</td><td>P</td><td></td></tr></table>	W	N	E	S			P	1♣	P	1NT	P	2♠	P	3♠	P	3NT	P	P	P	
W	N	E	S																			
		P	1♣																			
P	1NT	P	2♠																			
P	3♠	P	3NT																			
P	P	P																				
<div>Wtomgrue</div> <div><div>♠J2</div><div>♥KQ542</div><div>♦J2</div><div>♣9862</div></div>		<div>Ejohn_j</div> <div><div>♠953</div><div>♥A1063</div><div>♦A53</div><div>♣J74</div></div>																				
	<div>Sshuster</div> <div><div>♠AKQ86</div><div>♥98</div><div>♦Q7</div><div>♣K1053</div></div>	<div>3NT N</div> <div>NS: 0 EW: 0</div>																				

From December Reynolds KO round 2
Jan 10-11

Auction:

1C (could be as short as 0, 10-14)

1NT non-forcing, non invitational

2S 5+S

3S max, 3 card support

We are playing a 8 card major fit in NT

Why?

- Qx
- Running suit
- No one bid H so more likely 4-4
- Result -2 lose 13 on a heart lead

Why not

24-25 HCP

No H stopper—most likely lead

Appendix: more 3NT with 8+ major fits

<div><div>7</div><div>D</div></div>	<div>N North</div> <div><div>♠ Q63</div><div>♥ J9654</div><div>♦ J86</div><div>♣ J9</div></div>	<table><tr><th>W</th><th>N</th><th>E</th><th>S</th></tr><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>2♣</td></tr><tr><td>P</td><td>2♦</td><td>P</td><td>2NT</td></tr><tr><td>P</td><td>3♦</td><td>P</td><td>3♥</td></tr><tr><td>P</td><td>3NT</td><td>P</td><td>P</td></tr><tr><td>D</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr></table>	W	N	E	S				2♣	P	2♦	P	2NT	P	3♦	P	3♥	P	3NT	P	P	D			
W	N	E	S																							
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P	3♦	P	3♥																							
P	3NT	P	P																							
D																										
<div>W West</div> <div><div>♠ J87</div><div>♥ 1082</div><div>♦ 972</div><div>♣ 7653</div></div>		<div>E East</div> <div><div>♠ A10942</div><div>♥ 73</div><div>♦ A5</div><div>♣ A1082</div></div>																								
	<div>S South</div> <div><div>♠ K5</div><div>♥ AKQ</div><div>♦ KQ1043</div><div>♣ KQ4</div></div>	<div>3NT S</div> <div>NS: 0 EW: 0</div>																								

GIB daily day-long IMP individual 1/9/21
Sam is South

Auction:

2C strong art-2D waiting

2NT 22-24-3D transfer

3H (min or <4H)-3NT

Result +1.54 imps vs field

Why?

- No aces
- Source of tricks
- Two running suits if there's an entry
- Stoppers
- 25-30 HCP with 28 most likely
- Unlikely to be useful ruff in short hand
- Ruff in short hand may be with trump trick

Why not?

- Blocked H
- Likely S lead and no Stayman from partner

Appendix: more 3NT with 8+ major fits

<div>10D</div>	<div>Nvagabond3</div> <div>♠ Q6</div> <div>♥ QJ7643</div> <div>♦ A84</div> <div>♣ 76</div>	<table><tr><th>W</th><th>N</th><th>E</th><th>S</th></tr><tr><td></td><td></td><td>P</td><td>1NT</td></tr><tr><td>P</td><td>2♦</td><td>P</td><td>2♥</td></tr><tr><td>P</td><td>2♠</td><td>P</td><td>2NT</td></tr><tr><td>P</td><td>3NT</td><td>P</td><td>P</td></tr><tr><td>D</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr></table>	W	N	E	S			P	1NT	P	2♦	P	2♥	P	2♠	P	2NT	P	3NT	P	P	D			
W	N	E	S																							
		P	1NT																							
P	2♦	P	2♥																							
P	2♠	P	2NT																							
P	3NT	P	P																							
D																										
<div>WRAF52</div> <div>♠ A10</div> <div>♥ 1095</div> <div>♦ 9762</div> <div>♣ A852</div>		<div>Evenetianer</div> <div>♠ J8752</div> <div>♥ K</div> <div>♦ Q105</div> <div>♣ K1043</div>																								
	<div>Slynnb</div> <div>♠ K943</div> <div>♥ A82</div> <div>♦ KJ3</div> <div>♣ QJ9</div>	<div>3NTS</div> <div>NS: 0EW: 0</div>																								

Reynolds Dec KO Round 1 12/13/20
Sam is East at other table

1NT (14-16)-2D (transfer)
 2S (transfer to 2N to invite usually)-2N
 3N (choice of games with 6H usually)

Why?

- Qx
- 4333 so no ruffs
- No aces
- S has likely S lead well stopped

Why not

- Min
- 9 card fit

Other table Claude Vogel (yes that one) played 4H and failed when we cached the first 3 tricks and the normal play in H resulted in a 4th, win 12 imps

Appendix: tiny island where 3NT is better than 4M red at imps in the 23-25 range

- The 28-30 range is safety against ruffs
- The 23-25 range is 9 tricks is easier than 10 and who cares about ruffs and safety, we are red at imps and profit at games that make less in the 33% range double dummy so we are gambling on good things instead of insuring against bad
- Usually for 5-3/6-2 fits not 4-4
- Perhaps with a running side suit and stoppers, e.g. Axxxx, AKQJx, xx, x
- E.g., AKQJxx, Axx, Axx, Ax vs nothing
- E.g. AKQJxx, Axx, Axx, xx vs a 5th round club stopper and a red king
- E.g., any mirror, e.g. 4M333 vs. 4M333 (the range there is 23-32 vul at imps)