

# ENTERPRISING BRIDGE TALES

THE ORIGINAL STORIES

Marc Smith



*To boldly go where no bridge players have  
gone before...*

An Honors eBook from Master Point Press

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## FOREWORD

Ever since the early days of bridge, many bridge texts have been written to instruct players at all levels of the game. Many authors have attempted to combine bridge problems with literature to make learning easier, and they have done so with varying degrees of success. This book is a first -- Marc Smith has very successfully blended bridge hands and science fiction in an unusually clever publication. He has incorporated many real-life bridge personalities, both American and European, as Star Trek type characters to illustrate his hands. Amidst the science fiction setting, many of the characters are easily recognizable as well-known bridge players with slightly disguised names, but possessing distinctive character traits of their real-life models. The hands are creatively played and defended by the comical personalities on the starship *USS Competitor*.

The hands are not only amusing, cute and inventive, but highly instructive and interesting from a bridge point of view. The illustrative hands can improve your bridge knowledge as well as provide humorous, enjoyable reading material. The examples are well presented and clearly analyzed to emphasize various play and defensive problems.

This work is a bridge novel of the highest quality. As the story line unfolds, the main characters develop into people to whom the reader can easily relate. Many of them you will recognize from your local bridge club. Every club has a player who fits the description of Captain Quirk, for example.

Many of the opponents that the *Competitor* crew members play against are vividly described. You are unlikely to encounter any of these aliens at your next ACBL tournament, but look out for Steven Spielberg's next science fiction extravaganza -- Marc Smith might easily appear as the screenwriter in the credits.

I highly recommend *Enterprising Tales* for all levels of bridge players, both for its entertainment value as well as its bridge instruction.

For science fiction and Star Trek buffs, this book is a must!

JIM BECKER 1990

## **AUTHOR'S NOTE**

Written back in 1990, “Enterprising Tales” was my very first book. The reviewers were kind to it and stories featuring the characters appeared monthly in both ‘International Popular Bridge Monthly’ and the ‘ACBL Bulletin’. Readers who enjoyed the first book have been asking for a sequel and, a mere 28 years later, I can tell you that its arrival is imminent.

In the new book, we will follow the adventures of those who came after our intrepid bridge-playing pioneers. “Enterprising Tales: The Next Generation” will be published by Masterpoint Press in the summer of 2018, and will be available in both print and digital formats.

To mark the occasion, it was decided to offer those readers who were either not old enough, or had not yet found our great game, a chance to discover ‘The Original Series’ installment of bridge in the 23<sup>rd</sup> century. Out of print for some years, it is reproduced now both in traditional print form and in the electronic formats that were still science fiction the first time around. The hands, the characters and excellent custom-drawn cartoons remain the same, but I hope that the extensive rewrite has significantly improved the quality of the text. My thanks in that respect go to my great friend David Bird, for his knowledge, guidance and insight over the course of more than a quarter of a century.

Thank you too, to all my friends in the bridge world, without whom life would have been immeasurably poorer. Enjoy!

M.S. (Spring 2018)

## CHAPTER ONE

# APPROACHING EARTH

The Federation starship *U.S.S. Competitor* slipped through space at warp speed seven. Numerous crew members were relaxing on the observation deck as they headed for their first shore leave in six months. The 2,936<sup>th</sup> Summer Universal Tournament was to be played on Earth for the first time in over 2.3 stardates, and excitement had been building steadily amongst the crew's bridge players since it was announced that their schedule would allow them to participate. For some, this would be the first time they had attended a major tournament. Indeed, many of them had played only social bridge before coming aboard. Around the starship, players could be heard arguing over misplayed hands, discussing bidding systems or modifying their defensive signaling methods in anticipation of the forthcoming competition.

Over 100 crew members were planning to play in one or more of the many events, but probably only Captain Quirk's team would dare to enter the Spingold, the major teams event which was restricted to Galactic Masters and above. The Captain and his team were spending as much time as possible fine-tuning their game in an attempt to be at their best when the competition began in earnest. Quirk had arranged a private practice for his team with less than 48 hours before the big tournament got under way.

Whilst awaiting the arrival of Doctor DeKoy, First Officer Sprock was pedantically explaining sequences following Roman Key Card Gerber in Stayman auctions. The Captain could not understand the necessity for special bids to ask for jacks and key tens, but Sprock insisted that they were an integral part of the Vulcan Variable Pass system.

As Captain, Quirk had his choice of partners. Before Sprock joined the crew, he had been heralded as one of the finest young players ever to come from his native Vulcan. They had formed a steady partnership and Quirk had improved his game tremendously under Sprock's subtle guidance. Of course, Sprock never actually taught, at least not so that the Captain noticed.

Being partially human, Sprock understood the emotional problems involved in developing a partnership with the Captain. For a start, Quirk considered himself the best player on board. Indeed, he often wondered whether he would have been an automatic inductee to the Bridge Hall of Fame if he had not devoted so much time to becoming a starship captain. Even one of his best friends, Doctor DeKoy, had once described him as 'a

legend in his own mind' on an occasion when Quirk was being particularly obstinate over some hand that he had (mis)played. Quirk, of course, had simply thanked the Doctor for his kind words.

By comparison, Mr. Sprock was an accomplished player with a computer-like mind. An expert declarer, he could analyze a hand almost instantaneously. He had been accused of hustling opponents as he was able to think and play so quickly, but he failed to understand the complaint, let alone acknowledge it. The flaw in Sprock's game was in the area of 'deceptive play'. Mr. Sprock seldom even thought of skullduggery as an option, since he would view the problem from the defender's viewpoint and conclude that no self-respecting Vulcan could fall for such a trap. As a result, he would mentally construct the defensive hands in such a way that a legitimate line of play could succeed, no matter how unlikely the lie of the cards.

Sprock had been a member of the committee which developed the Vulcan Variable Pass system, now used almost exclusively on his home world and nearby planets with intelligent lifeforms. When Sprock had first played with Quirk, he could not follow the logic behind the Captain's insistence that they play the Green Heart. After all, the greatest minds on Vulcan (and hence the Universe) had developed the ultimate system. Sprock failed to see why anyone would consider playing something less efficient. Eventually, Quirk had agreed to try out the 'new-fangled idea' and they had been playing it ever since.

The other half of the ship's senior team comprised Doctor Leonard DeKoy and Chief Engineer Montgomery Splot, fair players but never likely to win 'the big event'. They had played a basic, natural system which relied more on good judgment than sophisticated bidding machinery. However, Quirk had recently persuaded them to try out the Vulcan Variable Pass and, much against DeKoy's better judgment, they had agreed to try it. Still unconvinced, however, they now tended to vacillate between their two systems, often switching from one to the other during a session.

Doctor DeKoy was an unimaginative player who rarely erred as a result of a lapse in concentration. However, he almost never tried to pressure the opponents into mistakes. Chief Engineer Splot, on the other hand, would rather hoodwink his opponents than defeat them legitimately. Splot's bidding bordered on the unsound, and when considering lines of play he was always on the lookout for subtle false cards or blatant deceptions.

"It always annoys the opposition so much," he once explained to Sprock, who could not understand why that was an advantage.

DeKoy and Splot were a sociable pair who seldom argued about a hand, except perhaps after one of Splot's random five-card preempts went wrong.

The Doctor never ceased to amaze Quirk, concentrating more of his time on medical matters than on making sure that he understood his system or keeping up with the latest card-play theories. Although Splot and DeKoy had

been Quirk's closest friends for many years, they were not exactly the most harmonious of teammates. Most of the disputes, of course, stemmed from the Captain, although he certainly did not see it that way. Quirk had often considered playing with other pairs in various events, but had never actually gotten around to it.

"I was under the impression that the game was at eight o'clock," observed Quirk, obviously agitated at having been left to discuss system with Sprock for longer than he had intended. "It's already nearly ten after."

"An ensign arrived with a ruptured spleen," explained DeKoy apologetically.

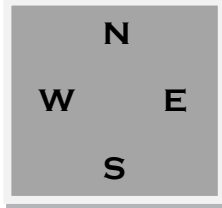
"That's why you have two highly-trained nurses," said Quirk, dealing the first hand. "They're supposed to take care of medical emergencies that arise when you are unavoidably detained on important matters."

This was the first deal of the evening:

Love All  
Dealer South

♠ Q 10  
♥ J 10 8 3  
♦ 10 9 4 3  
♣ A K 4

♠ A 5  
♥ 9 6 4 2  
♦ K J 7 2  
♣ Q 6 3



♠ 8 6 4  
♥ K Q 7 5  
♦ 6 5  
♣ 10 8 7 2

♠ K J 9 7 3 2  
♥ A  
♦ A Q 8  
♣ J 9 5

<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
<i>DeKoy</i>	<i>Sprock</i>	<i>Splot</i>	<i>Quirk</i>
--	--	--	1♣ (1)
Pass	1NT (2)	Pass	3♠ (3)
Pass	4♠	All Pass	

- (1) 12-16 Unbalanced, any distribution.
- (2) 8-11 Balanced.
- (3) 15-16 and six spades.



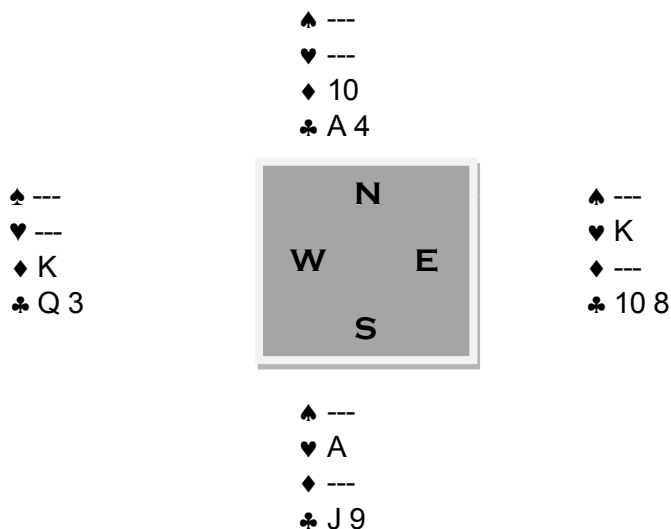
Sprock understood the Vulcan Variable Pass system perfectly. Quirk, although a convert, often had trouble with the subtle ramifications. Even the Captain, though, had no trouble on the first round of the auction. An opening Pass shows either 17+ points or 0-7 (any distribution in either case), one of a major is 8-11 and natural, One Diamond 8-13 balanced or 8-11 with a long minor, One Club 12-16 unbalanced and an opening One No-trump 14-16.

Sprock might have bid Three No-trumps, which would have made easily. Four Spades, though, was the logical bid, with the known eight card fit and a questionable diamond stopper.

DeKoy had endured numerous discussions with Splot about their lead methods and he had reluctantly agreed to lead second and fourth highest from all holdings except honor sequences. The Doctor whistled tunelessly as he pondered his opening lead, and finally opted for the ♣6.

Quirk won dummy's club king and played a diamond to the eight and jack. DeKoy began to regret not leading a falsecard ♣3. If he continued with the three now, declarer would know he did not hold a doubleton and play him for the queen. If he had led the three at trick one, declarer might have won the second club in dummy and taken another losing diamond finesse.

The Doctor eventually concluded that it was safe to exit with a diamond: either Splot had the queen or he would be able to ruff the third round. Quirk won with the diamond queen and played a trump, but DeKoy hopped up with the ace and gave Splot his diamond ruff. The lack of the club nine meant that Splot now had to exit with a major suit, and he chose a trump. The Captain reeled off his spades (discarding dummy's hearts) to leave this end position:



When Quirk cashed the ♥A, DeKoy nonchalantly parted with his low club. However, at this early stage in the evening declarer was wide awake, and he had been following the play sufficiently to discard dummy's diamond. A club to the ace brought down DeKoy's queen and the Captain claimed the ♣J as his tenth trick.

West would have fared no better on an initial heart lead: the defenders cannot attack clubs and declarer can eventually establish the ten of diamonds for a club discard.

"Three No-trumps had an easy nine tricks", observed Quirk, pointedly as Mr. Sprock entered the result onto his impeccably neat scorecard.

"Yes," agreed Sprock. "But Four Spades had an easy ten tricks and it scores twenty points more!"

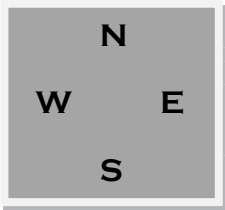
The hours passed, the cards fairly evenly distributed between the two pairs. The clock had just ticked past four o'clock. "Another four hands and then I must go to sleep," announced Quirk, much to everyone's relief.

The scores were close as Engineer Splot dealt this collection:

Love All  
Dealer West

♠ A K J 10 2  
♥ A 2  
♦ 9 6 2  
♣ J 10 3

♠ 4 3  
♥ Q 10 9 6  
♦ Q 8 4  
♣ 9 8 7 6



♠ Q 9 8 6 5  
♥ 8 4  
♦ K 10 7 3  
♣ A 4

♠ 7  
♥ K J 7 5 3  
♦ A J 5  
♣ K Q 5 2

<b>West</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>South</b>
<i>Splot</i>	<i>Quirk</i>	<i>DeKoy</i>	<i>Sprock</i>
Pass	1♣ (1)	Pass	1♥ (2)
Pass	1♠	Pass	2♣ (3)
Pass	2♦ (4)	Pass	3NT
All Pass			

- (1) 12-16 Unbalanced, any distribution.
- (2) 10+ Natural
- (3) Natural and forcing
- (4) Fourth-suit forcing

In view of the suit quality, Quirk elected to treat his hand as unbalanced with spades. Neither of his alternatives, One Diamond (a balanced 8-13) nor a 14-16 One No-trump opening, felt quite right.

Splot knew his partner must hold at least four spades and some values, and his failure to double the final contract enabled the Engineer to eliminate a spade lead from consideration. Not that anything looked particularly promising, and it was thus more in hope than expectation that Splot eventually produced the ♣6.

The protracted pause was not lost on declarer. Having surveyed dummy for all of three seconds, Sprock called for the club jack. DeKoy's thought processes were somewhat slower and, from declarer's point of view, it took an eternity for him to win with the club ace and return the ♦10. On any other return, declarer has nine easy tricks via three spades, two hearts, one diamond and three clubs. The rather unfriendly diamond switch, however, provided Sprock with a number of alternatives to consider.

A finesse in one of the majors was one possibility. If he won the third diamond, cashed the ace of hearts and took a losing heart finesse, though, Splot could return a spade. Declarer would then have to guess between taking the spade finesse and playing for hearts to break. Sprock decided that there must be a better line. Assuming that DeKoy held either K10xx or Q10xx in diamonds, Sprock saw endplay possibilities.

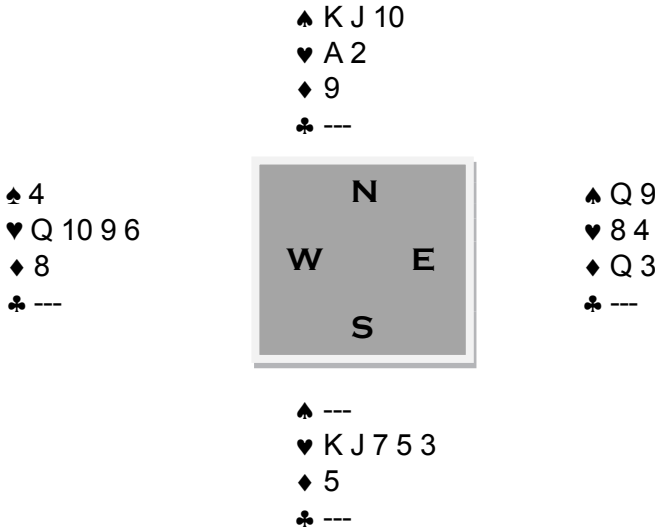
If West's held the diamond king, then ducking the first round of the suit and playing the ace on the second would leave Splot with a choice of losing options. If he kept the king then he could be endplayed to concede a third heart trick to go with three clubs, one diamond and two spades. Alternatively, he could unblock, thus endplaying his partner to lead into dummy's spade tenace.

For the endplay to work, though, the defender to be endplayed would first have to be stripped of his doubleton in the other major. If the Engineer

had begun with the queen of diamonds, the defenders will be able to choose which of them wins the third round of diamonds.

Suppose declarer cashed the ♥A-K, eliminated the clubs, and played a third diamond for the endplay. If West can win that trick, though, he will be able to cash the queen of hearts. Declarer's heart jack will be set up but a spade exit would leave him unable to reach it, and dummy would be forced to concede a trick to the queen of spades at trick thirteen.

After what, for him, was an inordinately long pause, Sprock covered the ten of diamonds with his jack. Spolt won his queen and immediately returned the four of diamonds, on which dummy played small and the Doctor's seven was captured by the ace. Sprock was now in command and returned to his normal lightning-quick tempo. He cashed the ace of spades and followed with three rounds of clubs to leave the following ending:



Sprock now cashed the top hearts and exited with his third diamond. DeKoy peered disgustedly at the nine of diamonds in dummy and calmly followed with the three. The Doctor claimed the king of diamonds and the queen of spades at the end.

"I'm not prepared to be endplayed by a damned Vulcan," snorted Doctor DeKoy, much to his partner's amusement.

"I hope you'll pay closer attention once the tournament gets started," reprimanded Quirk, gruffly. The Captain had not been following the play, and was under the impression that Doctor DeKoy had pulled the wrong card at the end, thus allowing the diamond nine to score declarer's game-going trick.

"A gallant effort; the ten of diamonds," added Splot, nodding.

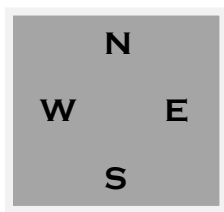
Much to everyone's relief, the last hand of the session had arrived. The clock was fast edging towards five a.m., and the Doctor was not looking forward to his seven o'clock surgery. Having sorted his hand, though, he was sufficiently aroused by his collection of high cards to make one final effort to concentrate. This was the full deal :

N/S Vul

Dealer West

♠ A 8 4  
♥ A K  
♦ K J 6 3  
♣ A K 6 4

♠ J 5 3 2  
♥ Q J 10 3  
♦ 8 7 2  
♣ J 9



♠ K 10 9 7  
♥ 9 5 4 2  
♦ 9 4  
♣ Q 8 5

♠ Q 6  
♥ 8 7 6  
♦ A Q 10 5  
♣ 10 7 3 2

<b>West</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>South</b>
<i>Quirk</i>	<i>DeKoy</i>	<i>Sprock</i>	<i>Splot</i>
Pass	2♣	Pass	2♦
Pass	2♥	Pass	2♠
Pass	2NT	Pass	3♣
Pass	3♦	Pass	3NT
Pass	4NT	Pass	5♦
Pass	5NT	Pass	6♦
All Pass			

"Seven rounds of bidding!" snorted Quirk. "You're always telling us how natural your system is. It's far too late for long, tedious explanations, so tell me quickly so we can all go to bed. Don't you have a surgery in the morning?"

"Two Clubs was strong" began DeKoy calmly.

"That much I worked out," interrupted Quirk, facetiously.

"My other bids were all relays," continued the Doctor, patiently. "Splot's Two Diamonds was 7-11 points and any distribution, Two Spades showed a

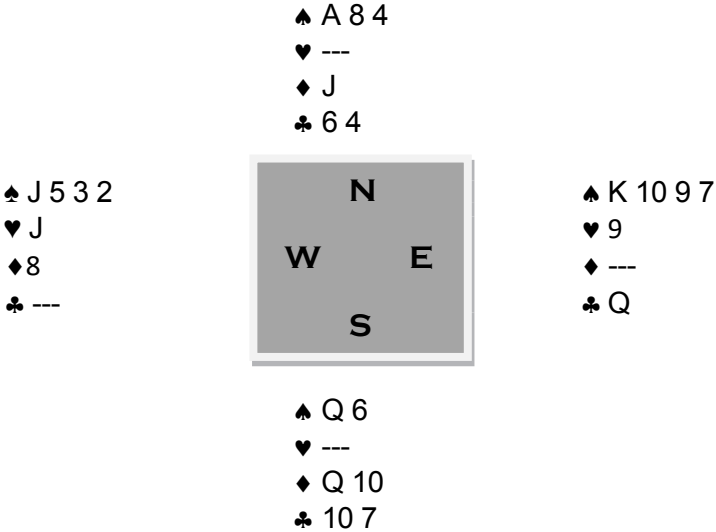
balanced hand and Three Clubs denied a four-card major. Three No-trumps showed two four-card minors. Five Diamonds promised one of the six key cards (four aces and the two minor-suit kings). The Six Diamond response admitted to one major suit king or one minor suit queen."

"Is it my lead?" asked Quirk, making little attempt to stifle a yawn.

There was only a momentary pause before the ♥Q hit the table, and DeKoy proudly tabled his picture gallery. Splot quickly realized that there were insufficient trumps for an elimination and endplay. His chances were remote barring an unlikely doubleton Q-J of clubs.

"Perhaps a partial elimination and a misdefense," thought Splot, glancing at Quirk, who appeared to be dozing off. "If I 'think' for another five minutes, that should do wonders for the Captain's concentration."

Declarer eventually cashed dummy's second top heart, led a trump to his hand, ruffed his third heart in dummy, and played a second trump. Next came the two top clubs to leave this position with dummy on lead:



Splot led a third round of clubs to Sprock's queen, Quirk discarding a spade with no apparent thought. Sprock considered his options. A heart would allow declarer to discard his second spade as dummy ruffed. It was possible that declarer had begun with the ace-queen of diamonds plus the spade jack to make up his 7-11 HCP, in which case the Captain had the queen of spades. Indeed, that seemed the only chance left for the defense, so Sprock exited with a low spade. The Engineer rose hopefully with the queen and, when it held, he turned in Quirk's direction and laid down the queen of

trumps, beaming from ear to ear.

"What's so funny?" demanded Quirk, tallying the scores. "There was nothing we could do to beat it."

"*We* is a collective term," observed Sprock, wryly, "although it is indeed true that there was nothing *I* could do to beat the contract."

"I could have led a spade, but a heart from Q-J-10 seemed normal from my hand," submitted Quirk, convinced that even Sprock would not be able to find a good reason for a spade lead from J-5-3-2.

"Quite so," explained Sprock, patiently, "but if you had ruffed the third round of clubs, I would not have been endplayed. Instead of getting a club trick, we would have made one diamond and one spade. I believe that two tricks would have been sufficient for us to have recorded a plus score on the deal."

"How can I possibly tell that I should ruff your winner?" spluttered Quirk, rising defensively from the table.

"What were you saving the trump for," enquired Sprock, much to the amusement of DeKoy and Splot, "Breakfast?"

## BRIDGE IN THE 23RD CENTURY

They certainly play chess aboard Federation starships, so why should it come as a surprise to discover that bridge is also a popular pursuit? In these pages you can watch members of the crew playing as they warp through the galaxies. Follow the adventures of Captain Quirk and First Officer Sprock as their team competes against some of the best players in the universe in a major championship.

First published in 1990, this is an updated edition of internationally-acclaimed, award-winning author Marc Smith's debut novel.



**MARC SMITH** is a Grand Master and former European junior champion who has represented England and Great Britain at numerous World and European championships. The author of over twenty books, he co-wrote the bestselling *25 Bridge Conventions You Should Know* with Barbara Seagram and the *Bridge Technique Series* with David Bird. He is a two-time winner of the American Bridge Teachers' Association Book of the Year award.