

## Playing with Robots

### Part XLII

By pluckycat

Last week, we looked at three boards that leftfoot, a King on BBO, played. leftfoot, as we saw, very aggressively upgrades his hands to bid 1NT or 2NT. These bids would often be in violation of ACBL rules if he were playing with humans and not robots because he opens NT with a singleton. leftfoot does exceedingly well with these tactics. Last month on BBO, he amassed 691 points to come in second to Leo La Sota, the Ace on BBO, who had 744 points. leftfoot thus averaged about 33 points a day. Curious as to how he did that, I sent him a chat on BBO earlier this week. You have to love BBO for that reason. I doubt that I could get a message to Tom Brady or LeBron James, let alone that they would instantaneously respond. In the BBO arena, leftfoot ranks up with them.

Anyway, leftfoot did immediately respond to my inquiry. He said that he primarily plays the seven 8-board BBO daylongs, which can award significant points, e.g., in double digits, for high finishes, particularly in the most popular of the daylongs. The seven daylongs are four MP tournaments, two IMP tournaments and one Just Declare tournament. Any day you want to see how well leftfoot did and how he accomplished it, just go to the BBO homepage, then **Competitive**, then **Daylong Tournaments**. Then click **Complete** above the list of tournaments to see the previous day's results for the Daylong Tournaments.

I said last week we would look at four more boards in a 12-board ACBL tournament that leftfoot played in and played particularly well in. Last week, we focused on the bidding and play. This week, we concentrate on the bidding.

On board 8, everyone nonvulnerable, the bidding went 1♦-2♣-P to leftfoot, in fourth seat. He had ♠KQJ1032 ♥5 ♦KJ1098 ♣K.

What did he bid?

leftfoot bid what he thought he could make—4♠. No pussyfooting around here. Would you have bid it? Nearly 90% of leftfoot's cohort bid only 2♠, passed by the North robot. If one bids only 2♠, there's the risk it will be passed, which happened at the vast majority of the tables. leftfoot earned 92.62% for bidding 4♠ and making five. There wasn't much to the play; you need to lose two Aces. One noteworthy observation about playing with robots; robots are often not particularly good at evaluating hands. When you can take the evaluation out of their hands, it's often wise to do so. That doesn't mean being overly aggressive and bidding something they think shows much more than you have. You'll be punished for that.

Here, in a best-hand tournament, you know opener has 12 or so HCPs at most; for its two-level vulnerable overcall, your robot partner has 11+ HCP and your spade suit is so good that, even opposite very little in spades, you should have a very good chance of making game.

The full deal: Board 8

D 8	N North	W N E S
	♠ A76	1♠ 2♣ P 4♠
	♥ AJ3	P P P
	♦ 3	
	♣ QJ8542	
W West	E East	
♠ 85	♠ 94	
♥ Q76	♥ K109842	
♦ AQ72	♦ 654	
♣ A1096	♣ 73	
	S South	
	♠ KQJ1032	
	♥ 5	
	♦ KJ1098	
	♣ K	
	4♠ S NS: 0 EW: 0	

In first seat on Board 9, nonvulnerable versus vulnerable, leftfoot held ♠AQJ1083 ♥A5 ♦A6 ♣QJ9. Two passes to him in third seat.

What did he open?

Well, if you paid attention last week, the answer leaps out at you. If you're leftfoot, you bid 2NT. Again, an upgrade and the disregard of a six-card suit—a major suit even. Partner bid 4♦—a transfer—and leftfoot dutifully bid 4♥.

The logic behind the bid seems to be to bid NT whenever leftfoot is in range of the bid—with an upgrade of 1 or 2 or sometimes even 3 HCPs, as was true here. By hiding the nature of his hand, leftfoot is also betting that the robots will provide helpful defense. And as so often seems to happen when these odd shaped NTs are bid, leftfoot's dummy makes a bid that places the pair in the best contract. And it's right-sided, moreover. Here, a very helpful ♥K was led, leftfoot took the ruffing finesse in spades and managed to make 12 tricks, losing only the ♥J. Why the lead of the singleton king by the robot defender? Remember, robots defend by reviewing simulations and typically the singleton king falls under the ace, hence its lead, ignoring the possibility, if not the probability, of a finesse into it.

The full deal: Board 9

D 9	N North	W N E S
	♠ 5	P P P 2NT
	♥ Q109873	P 4♠ P 4♥
	♦ J432	P P P
	♣ A7	
W West	E East	
♠ K7642	♠ 9	
♥ K	♥ J642	
♦ Q1075	♦ K98	
♣ K52	♣ 108643	
	S South	
	♠ AQJ1083	
	♥ A5	
	♦ A6	
	♣ QJ9	
	4♥ S NS: 0 EW: 0	

leftfoot tied for top and scored 97.33%. The vast majority didn't reach game after an opening bid of 1♠.

On Board 10, in second seat, both vulnerable, after an initial pass, leftfoot held ♠AK52 ♥AJ1065 ♦A83 ♣2.

What did he open?

By now there should be no doubt—1NT. Again, this off-shape 1NT opener didn't hurt and actually helped. Dummy transferred to spades and then leftfoot super-super accepted, by showing a maximum and four spades with a 4♠ bid, thereby inviting his robot partner to consider slam. The robot partner obliged and cue-bid 5♣s. I've made this point before: When bots cue-bid, there's usually a good play for slam. leftfoot ended up bidding six and making seven because spades were 2-2 and he pitched diamonds on the hearts after ruffing out the ♥Q. He cross-ruffed at the end and garnered 87.01% as most didn't reach slam.

The full deal: Board 10

10	N North	W N E S
	♠ QJ1076 ♥ K8 ♦ 42 ♣ A1084	P 2♥ P 1NT P 5♣ P 4♠ P 5♠ P 5♦ P 6♠
W West	S South	E East
♠ 94 ♥ Q72 ♦ KJ965 ♣ Q73	♠ AK52 ♥ AJ1065 ♦ A83 ♣ 2	♠ 83 ♥ 943 ♦ Q107 ♣ KJ965
		6♠ S NS: 0 EW: 0

On board 11, in first seat, both nonvulnerable, leftfoot held ♠AJ10 ♥AQ97 ♦A6 ♣K854.

What did he bid?

If there was doubt before, there should be none now. leftfoot upgraded and bid 2NT. Passed out.

The full deal: Board 11

11	N North	W N E S
	♠ K2 ♥ 102 ♦ 9854 ♣ 107632	P P P 2NT
W West	S South	E East
♠ 843 ♥ K864 ♦ K10732 ♣ A	♠ AJ10 ♥ AQ97 ♦ A6 ♣ K854	♠ Q9765 ♥ J53 ♦ QJ ♣ QJ9
		2NT S NS: 0 EW: 0

Not surprisingly, leftfoot received a helpful low spade lead. Remember, robots like to lead passively. He won the ♠Q with the ♠A. Then he ducked a club to the singleton ♣A. West played another spade, won by the ♠K in dummy. The ♥10 was led off the board and covered with the ♥J, ♥Q and ♥K and now another heart was led back. leftfoot now had three spade tricks, three heart

tricks, three club tricks and one diamond trick—10 tricks overall for 95%. Two persons bid 3NT and made four for 99.17%. Two persons bid and made three for 96.67.

Some bid 1NT with the 18 HCPs and languished there, for a below average score. Some ended up in 3♣s, passed out, after an overcall of 1♦ by West. Upgrading again clearly worked.

The takeaways remain the same as last week. I need to find the courage to at least try to upgrade and bid like leftfoot against robots. If nothing else, it should be fun. I haven't found the time or courage, but as soon as I do, I'll report the results to you. In the meantime, stay safe and healthy and see you next week.