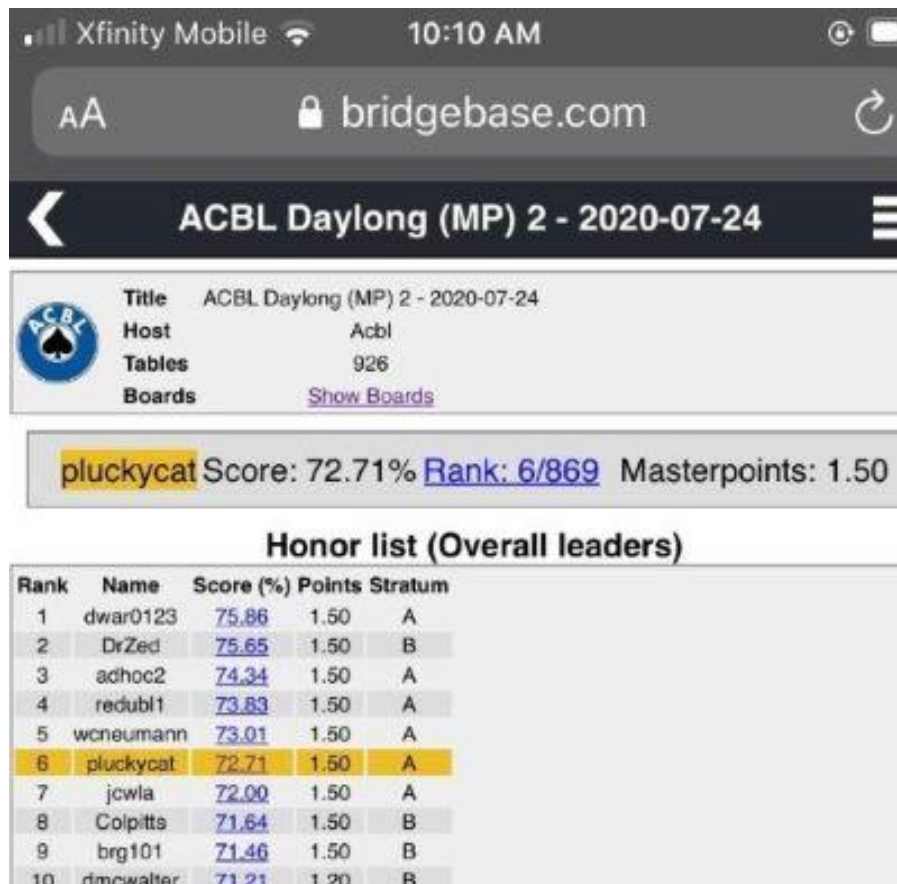


Playing with Robots

Part XVI

By pluckycat

Last week, I said I'd talk more about some interesting hands in the second and third session of the Individual Robot ACBL Summer National Championships. That will be postponed. Last week, an extraordinary event occurred—at least for me. I beat jcwla in the only ACBL daylong I played in. You may remember jcwla—the BBO name of Jordan Chodorow, who won the Robot National Championship and whose interview appeared last week. I scored 72.71% and he scored 72% in the event.



The screenshot shows a mobile browser interface. At the top, the status bar displays 'Xfinity Mobile', signal strength, Wi-Fi, and the time '10:10 AM'. The address bar shows 'AA' and 'bridgebase.com'. Below the address bar is a navigation bar with a back arrow, the title 'ACBL Daylong (MP) 2 - 2020-07-24', and a menu icon. The main content area features the ACBL logo and event details: Title 'ACBL Daylong (MP) 2 - 2020-07-24', Host 'Acbl', Tables '926', and Boards with a 'Show Boards' link. A highlighted box shows 'pluckycat Score: 72.71% Rank: 6/869 Masterpoints: 1.50'. Below this is a section titled 'Honor list (Overall leaders)' containing a table of results.

Rank	Name	Score (%)	Points	Stratum
1	dwar0123	75.86	1.50	A
2	DrZed	75.65	1.50	B
3	adhoc2	74.34	1.50	A
4	redubl1	73.83	1.50	A
5	wcneumann	73.01	1.50	A
6	pluckycat	72.71	1.50	A
7	jcwla	72.00	1.50	A
8	Colpitts	71.64	1.50	B
9	brg101	71.46	1.50	B
10	dmcwalter	71.21	1.20	B

So, come along with me for four hands that made the difference and see how you would have done. For ease of analysis, screenshots of the boards and results are provided.

Board 2

On the second hand in the event, as South, vulnerable against non-vulnerable, you're dealt ♠K ♥K97432 ♦3 ♣AK642. Seems like an easy 1♥ bid after East passes. The bidding progresses...

W	N	E	S
		P	1♥
1♠	2♦	2♠	?

...back to you. So, what now? Okay, again this seems easy. I bid 3♣, even though vulnerable. Robot bridge is not for the fainthearted. (Nor, I suppose, is bridge among humans.) Nonetheless, at this point, more than a third of the field persisted with hearts and bid 3♥, ending up in 4♥—a contract that did not do well.) So, now the bidding progressed...

W	N	E	S
		P	1♥
1♠	2♦	2♠	3♣
3♠	X	P	?

Well, you definitely click your robot partner's bid and it shows 5+diamonds, 12+ HCPs, 13+ total points, forcing. Now, you need to make your first real decision, in my mind. Obviously, others thought differently. I bid clubs again to give my robot a choice. (Here, a quarter of the field passed 3♠ doubled. Again, for a terrible result. Good advice remains not to double robot's contracts generally. The cards will lie badly and your robot partner will misdefend or—believe it or not—you may). After I bid 4♣, my robot partner bid 4♦. So, what now? Well, first you pay attention to what its bid means: 12+ HCPs, twice-rebiddable diamonds, 13+ total points. What now?

If you passed as I did, it was worth 95.54% as 4♦ went down one. Seemed like the clear choice to me. But only 6 of 56 players had my auction. Fifteen of the 56 who had my auction up to the double of 3♠, bid 4♥ over the double and ended up in 5♦ down two.

The key here to passing 4♦ was assessing your robot partner's hand. Twice-rebiddable diamonds showed at least six diamonds, and most likely, at least two of the top three honors—better than any suit I had. And I trusted the robot to know I most likely had six hearts and five clubs, as my 4♣ bid showed the robot 5+ hearts and 5+ clubs. Robots aren't dumb. They make mistakes, but by and large, you can and should trust them. The full deal and result:

ACBL Daylong (MP) 2 - 2020-07-24

Date: 2020-07-24 00:05 Host: acbl
 Rank: 1 Score: 72.71%
 Prize: 0.00 Masterpoints: 1.50

Board	Result	We	They	We	They
1	3NTN+2	460		70%	30%
2	4♦N-1		100	95.5%	4.5%
				72.7%	27.3%

Hand Details:

Robot (North):
 ♠94
 ♥J
 ♦AKJ109752
 ♣73

West Robot:
 ♠A107653
 ♥A5
 ♦8
 ♣QJ105

East Robot:
 ♠QJ82
 ♥Q1086
 ♦Q64
 ♣98

South (pluckycat):
 ♠K
 ♥K97432
 ♦3
 ♣AK642

Tricks: 1♠ 2♦ 2♠ 3♣
 3♠ Dbl Pass 4♣
 Pass 4♦ Pass Pass
 Pass

Score: 4♦ North 0-0

Board 9

I am now at board 9 of 12 and have little sense of how I'm doing (I failed to bid a game and that can't be good), when this hand comes along, non-vulnerable v.

vulnerable: South ♠1093 ♥A932 ♦A1052 ♣K2. The bidding has gone 1♣-1♥ to you. What do you bid?

2NT seemed clear to me. 1NT is a significant underbid. You have primes and you have very possibly helpful 10s and 9s. Nonetheless, only one third of the players bid 2NT. Most bid 1NT and then passed the 2♣ rebid or were left to play in 2NT when they bid that over 2♣.

Over 2NT, my robot bid 3♣. That showed 6+ clubs, 11-12 HCP, 12+ total points. What do you do?

You know this is a best-hand tournament, so your robot only has 11 HCPs. Nonetheless, I envision five club tricks, my two aces and dummy providing two more tricks. My 10s and 9s may well come into play. Also, if I am going to make 3♣, I think it likely I will make 3NT, so I bid it. Surprisingly, to me, half the people who bid 2NT, passed 3♣—by no means optimal (37.25%). So, 11 of 56 ended up in 3NT. But only six made it. Would you have?

Dummy comes down: ♠AK42 ♥106 ♦J ♣QJ9876. You get the ♥K lead? What do you do?

If you ducked, you were in trouble. The East West hands: West ♠QJ86 ♥KJ ♦Q9742 ♣54; East ♠75 ♥Q8754 ♦K86 ♣A103

If you duck the first heart, you get a diamond switch and East continues diamonds. If you duck diamonds twice, East switches to a heart (robots are certainly good enough to find that switch) and you lose two hearts, two diamonds and the ♣A. If you capture the ♦K after the diamond switch, when in with the ♣A, East will play diamonds through you for four diamond tricks.

There is good reason to take the ♥K lead with your Ace. You are protected in hearts. You still have the 10 in dummy and the 9 in your hand (remember I valued those 9s) and West has at most two hearts based on the bidding. The danger is a diamond switch. If you take the opening lead, you only need clubs to be 3-2 (68%) and they are. Bidding and making 3NT was worth 95.10%. Bidding and failing to make 3NT was worth less than 5%.

ACBL Daylong (MP) 2 - 2020-07-24

Date: 2020-07-24 00:05 Host: acbl
 Rank: 1 Score: 72.71%
 Prize: 0.00 Masterpoints: 1.50 [Results](#)

Board	Result	We	They	We	They
8	3NT=	400		95.1%	4.9%
9	3NTS=	400		95.1%	4.9%
10	3NTN-1		100	65.8%	34.2%
				72.7%	27.3%

D 		N Robot ♠AK42 ♥106 ♦J ♣QJ9876	
W Robot ♠QJ86 ♥KJ ♦Q9742 ♣54	W N E S 1♠ 1♥ 2NT Pass 3♣ Pass 3NT Pass Pass Pass	E Robot ♠75 ♥Q8754 ♦K86 ♣A103	
		S pluckycat 7+ ♠1093 ♥A932 ♦A1053 ♣K2	3NT South 0 0

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Board 11

Another bidding and play problem. As dealer, you find yourself with ♠AJ9752
♥AQ72 ♦2 ♣83.

I opened 1♠. The opponents were silent throughout. Partner bid 3♦, showing 6+ diamonds, 3 hearts, 2 spades, 9-11 HCP. What now?

I chose 3♠. My spades are likely to be as good as robot's diamonds based on what I know now and let's see what it bids. It could have the right high-card points so that game is a decent possibility. I rejected 3♥ at this point because the bot at most will have only three hearts and there's a good possibility it will have two spades in which case I certainly want to be in spades. The bot, bless it, bids 4♠.

Dummy comes down with ♠104 ♥K96 ♦A86543 ♣A9. As good a dummy as I could hope for. ♥J is led. What's your plan?

I win the lead in hand with the ♥Q. Things look promising. I see a path to 12 tricks. Do you?

I need to keep my spade losers to one and hope some suits break well, but the lead has given me an entry I will need to get to dummy to avoid a club loser. I go to the ♦A in dummy and lead the ♠10, hoping for a cover and a 3-2 spade break, or at least one honor with East, but not a singleton. I don't want to lead a low spade because I don't want to use an entry to dummy to lead another spade if I can avoid it. There's some risk if there's a singleton honor with East, but the vision of 12 tricks is too enticing. Sure enough, East covers with the ♠Q. I cover with the A♠ and return the J♠, West follows and East takes its K♠. Then returns a ♣.

I'm practically home free now. All I need is for diamonds to break 3-3. I take the ♣A and ruff a diamond back to hand, draw the last trump, take the marked finesse in hearts against West's 10 to gain the dummy entry I need, and ruff another diamond. Lo and behold, the diamonds do break 3-3. Now back to the ♥K to pitch my remaining club on my good diamonds. Making six for 99.09%!! Only 2 of 56 bid 4♠ and made six. Half the field bid 4♠, but seven made 5♠, and 12 made only 4♠. 10 players passed the 3♦ bid for a really bad result. Others bid 3♥ over 3♦ and ended up in 4♥, for what was usually a worse result than even 3♦. And four players opened 2♠ and got the below average result they deserved.

ACBL Daylong (MP) 2 - 2020-07-24

Date: 2020-07-24 00:05 Host: acbl
 Rank: 1 Score: 72.71%
 Prize: 0.00 Masterpoints: 1.50 [Results](#)

Board	Result	We	They	We	They
11	4♠S+2	480		99.1%	0.9%
12	6♦N=	1370		89.1%	10.9%
				72.7%	27.3%

11

N Robot			
♠104			
♥K96			
♦A86543			
♣A9			
W Robot	W N E S	E Robot	
♠863		♠KQ	
♥J1054	Pass 3♦ Pass 3♠	♥83	
♦KQ10	Pass 4♠ Pass Pass	♦J97	
♣K52	Pass	♣QJ10764	
	S pluckycat 7*		
	♠AJ9752		
	♥AQ72		
	♦2		
	♣83		

4♠ South

0 0

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Board 12

Vulnerable v. non, in second seat, your partner opens 2♦. Pass to you. You have ♠AQJ63 ♥AQ7 ♦KJ109 ♣Q What do you bid?

I would have thought this was straightforward. I bid 2NT. Less than a quarter of the field did that. The field was divided (about a quarter) between those who bid 2♠, ending in NT, most often disastrously, and those who bid 5♦ directly (about half the field). Why not explore? If your robot partner shows a feature in spades, 6♦ should be a lay down. If it shows the ♥K, at worst a slam is on a finesse, and if your robot has a singleton spade, it should be close to a laydown given the strength of your diamonds. Sure enough, my robot bids 3♥, showing a feature, which has to be the ♥K. I could have bid 6♦ right then, but I first confirmed that my partner had an Ace, and then bid six. Vulnerable in second seat, it was almost certain that the bot wouldn't open 2♦ without the ♦A. Anyway, the robot dummy comes down, revealing ♠4 ♥K82 ♦AQ7632 ♣J76.

Perfect. I don't need to rely on a finesse in spades. I can ruff two clubs in my hand and I proceed to do so, despite a 3-0 diamond break, using a spade ruff twice for transportation to dummy once I discover the 3-0 trump split. I take the spade lead with the Ace, of course, eschewing the finesse. Surprisingly, only half the people who bid 5♦ made six. They typically drew trump and then had to rely on the spade finesse. 15 of 65 bid and made 6♦ for 89.06%. Those bidding five and making six were barely above average, and those bidding five and making only five were at 27%. The NT bidders typically were down three and four, for single-digit percentages.

ACBL Daylong (MP) 2 - 2020-07-24

Date: 2020-07-24 00:05 Host: acbl
 Rank: 1 Score: 72.71%
 Prize: 0.00 Masterpoints: 1.50 [Results](#)

Board	Result	We	They	We	They
11	4♠S+2	480		99.1%	0.9%
12	6♦N=	1370		89.1%	10.9%
				72.7%	27.3%

12

N Robot

♠4
♥K82
♦AQ7632
♣J76

W Robot

♠K972
♥9543
♦854
♣A4

E Robot

♠1085
♥J106
♦
♣K1098532

S pluckycat 7*

♠AQJ63
♥AQ7
♦KJ109
♣Q

6♦ North

0 0

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So, how did you do? I hope you had fun with these hands. I can say now, nearly four months into playing on line, that playing with robots has definitely improved my declarer play, sometimes only in hindsight, but often now in real time at the table. I hope you've noticed an improvement in your declarer play as well. In any event, keep at it, that improvement is sure to come as your robot friends present ever changing challenges for you. Below are the full results of the 12 boards. An astute observer will note that in the 12 boards, I missed a game I could and should have bid, which cost me first place. Oh well, perhaps some other day. The results for the twelve boards are below.

ACBL Daylong (MP) 2 - 2020-07-24

Player	Board	Time	Result	Points	Score	Movie	Traveller
pluckycat 1		19:13	3NN+2	460	70.00%	Movie	Traveller
pluckycat 2		19:17	4DN-1	-100	95.54%	Movie	Traveller
pluckycat 3		19:20	3CW=	-110	36.57%	Movie	Traveller
pluckycat 4		19:25	4HS=	620	72.22%	Movie	Traveller
pluckycat 5		19:27	4SE+1	-450	55.47%	Movie	Traveller
pluckycat 6		19:30	4SS=	420	78.45%	Movie	Traveller
pluckycat 7		19:32	2HW+1	-140	68.42%	Movie	Traveller
pluckycat 8		19:36	3HS+1	170	46.74%	Movie	Traveller
pluckycat 9		19:39	3NS=	400	95.10%	Movie	Traveller
pluckycat 10		19:44	3NN-1	-100	65.83%	Movie	Traveller
pluckycat 11		19:47	4SS+2	480	99.09%	Movie	Traveller
pluckycat 12		19:51	6DN=	1370	89.06%	Movie	Traveller