

Playing with Robots

Part XXV

By pluckycat

This week, I'll continue to indulge my fascination (obsession?) with BBO's top robot players, in particular Leo LaSota, the Ace. In September, LaSota acquired 921.94 BBO points for the month. That's not a misprint. He had to have played an astonishing number of boards and played them well. The next highest total for the month was 454.04. My old friend Usla was fifth at 424.06. So, this week, we'll look at LaSota's bidding in three of this Monday's 12-board daylong ACBL robot sessions. La Sota didn't do particularly well by his standards in those three sessions, but, nonetheless, an analysis of the boards reveals some distinct patterns that are noteworthy and may well warrant incorporation into my—and your—toolbox for playing with robots.

In the three daylong sessions, La Sota scored 65.06%, 67.02% and 59.78%, not particularly good for him. I'm going to focus only on the boards on which LaSota is first to bid and made what might be considered an unconventional bid. Perhaps not surprisingly, when his partner or the opponents bid first, LaSota generally made the bids you and I would make. It's his opening bids in which he most strays from conventional bridge. Some of his bidding appears clearly based on his experience playing thousands of boards a month. He, unlike me, also appears particularly attuned to the notion of how "best hand" in robot play can be utilized, namely that others at the table may have a hand that matches yours in high-card points, but never one that exceeds it.

Now to the examples and a quiz. What would you open with each of the hands below to see how in tune you are with the mind of the Ace? Do yourself a favor and don't look at any of the answers until you've answered all eleven.

1. ♠AJ83 ♥KJ5 ♦K ♣A6432: 3rd seat, vul v. nv
2. ♠K4 ♥Q3 ♦AQJ1074 ♣KQ9: 2nd seat, vul v. nv
3. ♠KJ9 ♥63 ♦AQ1032 ♣QJ6: 2nd seat, both vul
4. ♠5 ♥AKJ6 ♦AKQ4 ♣10932: 3rd seat, both nv
5. ♠AKJ10 ♥AKJ3 ♦1075 ♣Q8: 3rd seat, vul v. nv
6. ♠873 ♥AK983 ♦J8 ♣AQ10: 1st seat, both vul
7. ♠K5 ♥J8 ♦AKQ10743 ♣Q3: 3rd seat, nv v. vul
8. ♠K3 ♥A96 ♦K5 ♣AKQ432: 1st seat, both nv

9. ♠AQ76 ♥K ♦AJ1096 ♣Q82: 2nd seat, nv v. vul
10. ♠K32 ♥AK64 ♦9763 ♣A2: 4th seat, vul v. nv
11. ♠Q65 ♥J62 ♦AQ102 ♣A54: 3rd seat, both vul

The answers are on the next page. Don't peek yet.

LaSota did well on these hands, averaging well over 70%. For the most part, in all three sessions, and I suspect in all games, he was and is an aggressive bidder. He opened all 11-point hands (in "best hand" games, if you don't, you're almost certain to have the hand passed out, usually to your detriment). He overcalled aggressively; for example, overcalling 2NT after a weak 2♠ bid with a double stopper, but only 13 HCP. That didn't work out so well when his partner showed up with only 5 HCP.

One of the great things about BBO is that you can look at the previous day's individual games and see how anyone fared in those games. All you need to do is go to the schedule for the games and then click on the complete tab and explore to your heart's content. You can click on a particular player and see all of his or her boards for that session along with the accompanying travelers and movies. It's all available so one can make an extensive study of anyone's bidding and play.

La Sota opened 2NT on hands 2, 5, and 8. On all other hands, he opened 1NT. His methods clearly work for him. They've convinced me to be more aggressive about bidding NT initially and then seeking to end up in 3NT. Remember, the robots' defense is based on simulations that are grounded in the opponent's bidding. Clearly, both LaSota and Usla rely on that to deceive the robots. I haven't discerned a pattern to LaSota's opening 1NT or 2NT. There are some 13- and 14-point hands that he doesn't open 1NT, but opens a minor instead. It would take much more extensive analysis to find out what principles guide him and whether vulnerability and seat position matter. As intrigued as I am by LaSota's and Usla's success and the methods behind them, I leave that analysis to others. Playing is just much more fun.

Below are the screenshots of ten of the eleven hands that show how LaSota's bids worked out. The robots are usually punctilious about trying to describe their bids accurately and LaSota is very good at interpreting how he can use those bids to get to an optimal contract in robot play—which, it must be continually emphasized, is different from playing against humans. Robots trust your bidding and you can use that to your advantage to deceive them and hide weaknesses. You don't have to worry about deceiving a partner. Knowing that robots most frequently engage in passive leads also really helps you take chances you wouldn't ordinarily take. They don't always work out, but they seem to work out far more often for the LaSotas and Uslas of the BBO world.

1.

	N Robot	W	N	E	S
	♠ K5	P	P	P	1NT
	♥ 43	P	2♣	P	3NT
	♦ A1072	P	P	P	
	♣ KJ1095				
W Robot		E Robot			
♠ Q42		♠ 10976			
♥ 109876		♥ AQ2			
♦ Q84		♦ J9653			
♣ Q7		♣ 8			
	S Leo LaSota				
	♠ AJ83				
	♥ KJ5				
	♦ K				
	♣ A6432				
		3NT S		NS: 0 EW: 0	

2.

	N Robot	W	N	E	S
	♠ J87	P	3♣	P	2NT
	♥ K962	P	3NT	P	3♦
	♦ 62	P	P	P	
	♣ A842				
W Robot		E Robot			
♠ AQ962		♠ 1053			
♥ AJ7		♥ 10854			
♦ 93		♦ K85			
♣ J75		♣ 1063			
	S Leo LaSota				
	♠ K4				
	♥ Q3				
	♦ AQJ1074				
	♣ KQ9				
		3NT S		NS: 0 EW: 0	

3.

	N Robot	W	N	E	S
	♠ A1086	P	3♦	P	1NT
	♥ KQ87	P	P	P	3NT
	♦ 7	P	P	P	
	♣ A954				
W Robot		E Robot			
♠ Q732		♠ 54			
♥ 54		♥ AJ1092			
♦ KJ8		♦ 9654			
♣ 10732		♣ K8			
	S Leo LaSota				
	♠ KJ9				
	♥ 63				
	♦ AQ1032				
	♣ QJ6				
		3NT S		NS: 0 EW: 0	

4.

	N Robot	W	N	E	S
	♠ 10642	P	P	P	1NT
	♥ 1087543	P	2♦	P	4♥
	♦ 3	P	P	P	
	♣ 87				
W Robot		E Robot			
♠ AKJ93		♠ Q87			
♥ Q2		♥ 9			
♦ J876		♦ 10952			
♣ K6		♣ AQJ54			
	S Leo LaSota				
	♠ 5				
	♥ AKJ6				
	♦ AKQ4				
	♣ 10932				
		4♥ S		NS: 0 EW: 0	

5.

	N Robot ♠ 62 ♥ Q1054 ♦ KQ9632 ♣ 9	W N E S P P 2NT P 3♣ P 3♥ P 4♥ P P P
W Robot ♠ 54 ♥ 92 ♦ AJ8 ♣ AKJ543		E Robot ♠ Q9873 ♥ 876 ♦ 4 ♣ 10762
	S Leo LaSota ♠ AKJ10 ♥ AKJ3 ♦ 1075 ♣ Q8	4♥ S NS: 0 EW: 0

6.

	N Robot ♠ QJ2 ♥ 106 ♦ K104 ♣ J7632	W N E S P P P 1NT
W Robot ♠ AK105 ♥ QJ42 ♦ 9732 ♣ 8		E Robot ♠ 964 ♥ 75 ♦ AQ65 ♣ K954
	S Leo LaSota ♠ 873 ♥ AK983 ♦ J8 ♣ AQ10	1NT S NS: 0 EW: 0

7.

	N Robot ♠ A872 ♥ AK76 ♦ 852 ♣ 83	W N E S P P 1NT P 2♣ X 2♦ P 3NT P P P
W Robot ♠ J64 ♥ Q1043 ♦ J9 ♣ J972		E Robot ♠ Q1093 ♥ 952 ♦ 6 ♣ AK1064
	S Leo LaSota ♠ K5 ♥ J8 ♦ AKQ10743 ♣ Q5	3NT S NS: 0 EW: 0

8.

	N Robot ♠ 108764 ♥ 2 ♦ AQ9432 ♣ 7	W N E S P 3♥ P 2NT P 3NT P 3♣ P P P
W Robot ♠ QJ ♥ J84 ♦ 1076 ♣ 109865		E Robot ♠ A952 ♥ KQ10753 ♦ J8 ♣ J
	S Leo LaSota ♠ K3 ♥ A96 ♦ K5 ♣ AKQ4 32	

9.

		N Robot	W	N	E	S
		♠ 109832			P	1NT
		♥ A2	P	2♥	P	3♠
		♦ K8	P	4♠	P	P
		♣ AK107	P			
W Robot			E Robot			
♠ K5			♠ J4			
♥ J943			♥ Q108765			
♦ Q74			♦ 532			
♣ 9543			♣ J6			
		S Leo LaSota				
		♠ AQ76	4♠ S			
		♥ K	NS: 0 EW: 0			
		♦ AJ1096				
		♣ Q82				

10.

		N Robot	W	N	E	S
		♠ QJ1065	P	P	P	1NT
		♥ 102	2♥	3♠	X	4♠
		♦ KQ84	X	P	P	P
		♣ 93				
W Robot			E Robot			
♠			♠ A9874			
♥ J9753			♥ Q8			
♦ J10			♦ A52			
♣ KQJ874			♣ 1065			
		S Leo LaSota				
		♠ K32	4♠ N			
		♥ AK64	NS: 0 EW: 0			
		♦ 9763				
		♣ A2				

Stay and safe and healthy.