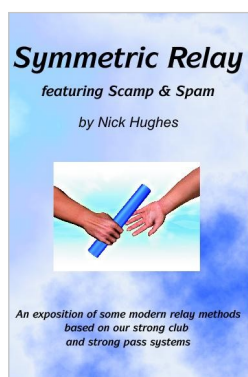


Book Reviews by Paul Lavings

Symmetric Relay

Featuring Scamp and Scam



Symmetric Relay

By Nick Hughes
(Inscope Books,
Sydney 2020, soft
cover, 217 pages)

\$29.95 post-free from
paul@bridgegear.com
or 0408-888-085

OR

\$27.00 from the book
stall at NSWBA

As a devotee of strong club and relay for many years the author has at last put pen to paper. He starts off with examples of why these type of systems are a big improvement on standard. Let's say your partner opens 1♥ and you hold:

♠87 ♥AJ542 ♦K742 ♣A8

In standard systems you must go via 2NT which risks the opponents coming in whereas when your 1♥ opening is less than 15 HCP slam is unlikely and it is pretty safe to bid 4♥ and block out the opposition.

Nick also points out that if you combine a strong 1♣ opening with 5 card majors you will be loading a lot of hands into the 1♦ opening – a third of all hands contain a four card major. He favours opening 4-card majors to guarantee finding the fit and to pre-empt the opponents. In SCAMP (Strong Club Accenting Majors) 1♦ shows 11-15 with 4+ spades, 1♥ is 4+ ♥s and 1♠ is both majors.

Very useful that when you open showing a major you deny the other major.

A further favored method is canape, shorter suit first. Holding ♠6 ♥AQ75 ♦AQJ754 ♣76 you open 1♥ and when you bid your diamonds next they are longer. Their Relays are Symmetrical, the same in all situations and after 1♣ responder's shape is always out by 3♦. Here is an example of Relays in action:

♠ KJ	♠ AQ63
♥ AKQ986	♥ J74
♦ A965	♦ 4
♣ 10	♣ A7652
1♣ 16+	1♥ spades 8+ HCP
1♠ Relay (R)	2♥ longer clubs
2♠ R	3♦ 4-3-1-5
3♥ Slam Pts?	4♣ 7 SP A=3, K=2, Q=1
4♦ R for DCB	4♠ C yes, S 0 or 2 Denial Cue Bidding
4NT R for DCB	5♣ H no
5♦ R for DCB	5♠ D no, C no second
7♥	

5♦ was needed to confirm partner did not have ♣KQxxx (would have skipped 5♠ with that).

There is much in the book about the history of relay and its personalities as well as two chapters of a more general nature called Bright Ideas and They Open. In Bright Ideas Nick suggests that after your 1NT opening 2♠ is a range probe, invitational to 3NT or could be a long minor invitational. With any minimum opener bids 2NT over which responder can pass or sign off in their 6-card minor. With a maximum opener bids 3 of their worse minor:

(Continued on page 2)

♠ AK4	♠ 1083
♥ K105	♥ 72
♦ A643	♦ KJ8752
♣ 954	♣ A6
1NT (12-15)	2♠
3♣ (Max, worse minor)	3NT

If responder had clubs and not diamonds the bidding would stop in 3♣. There are many such ideas in constructive and competitive bidding not related to Relay.

Nick comments "Strong pass systems are such fun". With so much information the book is a must for strong club players and a good read for standard players. Many years ago Nick said to me, "Learning a new system makes players work at their game". Indeed and you can always have a go at Honeymoon Moscito in chapter 2 first wherein you simply respond naturally to relays.