



The Future Life Master



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Austin, Texas ACBL Unit 207

June - July 2010

From Solo to Duet



by Darrell Ingram

This is the sixth in a series of articles written by newer duplicate players, kindly detailing some of their learning experiences.

All of my life I have participated in games requiring no partner. I was a scratch golfer for many years and a low single-figure handicap

golfer for approximately 60 years. I was a good weekend tennis player for many years and continue to play three times per week. During my computer career I played gin rummy or poker. No partners.

My wife, Sandra, chose to play golf and tennis, and also duplicate bridge. She is avid. I gave up golf about four years ago (too time consuming) and, in order to join Sandra, began trying to learn duplicate bridge about a year ago.

I have been fortunate to have as teachers Jewel Dahl and now Laura Delfeld. I have also been extremely fortunate that Dean Truair agreed to be my Mentor while playing in the "big" game.

I have been introduced to trying to communicate with a partner (on a non-verbal basis) through the bidding process. I am learning to describe my hand to my partner in order for us to mesh, we hope, two unknowns into one known.

I am finding this mentally challenging, as I do not learn well by simply reading a book or hearing something only once. I must apply a little knowledge and suffer the problems that occur. My partners have been very patient in helping me understand my mistakes.

While trying to master the bidding and trying to remember all the nuances of my partner's calls, I have been trying to improve at playing and defending bridge hands. Examples of tips I am trying to remember:

Laura—You rarely want to bid a weak two with an outside four-card major or void

Dean—You rarely want to give a ruff and a sluff.

Laura—You rarely want to "rescue" your partner. Just stop bidding.

(con't on p. 2)

The Skinner Box Rat

Duplicate bridge is an intriguing game. Rules and guidelines, bolstered by the teeter-totter effects of common sense versus competitive daring, steer the way for every player through a maze of possibilities. By its very nature duplicate is a game with social overtones, but it is hardly party bridge. Juices do flow when directors announce...Good Luck and Good Bridge.

The bridge world is diversified...not only by the composition of those that play the game, but also by level of skill. Eventually most players will bid their cards properly enough to get to the right contract most of the time. To a large degree these same players will develop the declaring ability necessary to bring home contracts that are makeable. All this is well and good. However, there is almost always a marked difference separating the novice from the higher-skilled player. The best players are identified by their DEFENSE...not simply their ability to bid and declare.



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DEFENSE IS AN ATTITUDE!!! As a matter of bridge-fact, defense is where you spend the largest portion of your bridge playing time. Bidding takes about 1/3 of the time; play takes 2/3. You are on defense 1/2 of playing time...declarer or dummy the other 1/2. In competitive bridge...defense is the most difficult aspect and to top-notch players the most interesting. Unlike the declarer who can see his partner's hand, defenders must communicate through visualization, instinct, counting and so forth on **EVERY HAND DEFENDED.**

Defensive play has a similar approach to each hand played. A few guidelines are listed below, but these are definitely not all of them. Each situation requires different judgment and an entirely different assessment.

(con't on p. 2)

From Solo to Duet (con't)

Dean—You rarely want to lead into a tenace.

I have found a truism. “Never” is not a good word at the bridge table, but “rarely” is one you need to remember!

Laura asked me to consider writing this article to describe the similarities between golf and bridge. I find both mentally stimulating. Hitting a good golf shot or bidding or playing a bridge hand properly provides a rush of adrenaline. Golf was always fun for me because I was pretty good at it. Bridge? Well, just say I am assured it will become more fun as I get more natural with it.

Being competitive, I will continue trying to absorb all information from whatever source to get to that natural (fun) level. In the interim, I hope my partners (Pat, Paul, Laurene, Vivian, Lisa, Mike, and all others - especially, Sandra) will bear with me. At least we can continue to laugh at our disasters.

Good bidding and good playing!

Novice Game Schedule

Novice games are limited to players holding less than a specified number of masterpoints. Novices are invited to play in *all* games throughout the Unit, however these games cater specifically to the newer player:

Sunday, 1:30 p.m. * *New Game--starts June 13!*
BCA 0-50 points (Bridge Plus) (You may come without a partner.)

Monday, 7:00 p.m. * BCA 0-200 points

Tuesday, 10:30 a.m.* BCA 0-50 points (Bridge Plus) and 0-200 points (You may come without a partner.)

Wednesday, 11:30 a.m. BCA 0-300 points

Thursday, 11:30 a.m. BCA 0-750 points

Saturday, 1:00 p.m. * BCA 0-500 points, NLM

*Free lesson before these games

A complete schedule of games in Unit 207 may be found at: <http://www.austinbridge.org>

Skinner Box (con't)

The better bridge player will assess the situation correctly and play accordingly. After obtaining additional information during the play, he may change strategy. This feature requires study and practice over the years, remembering a similar situation, and remembering how to solve it...the Skinner-Box Rat approach to defense so-to-speak.

- Have a defensive plan and follow it, but be flexible if change is required...
- Concentrate on everything: bids, cards, points, distribution...
- Take your tricks...
- Be dependable. Do not be a mastermind.

Of these guidelines the one least discussed by mentors and teachers is the last one. To mastermind is to take things into your own hands without letting partner in on your plan. This is a bad tactic. You cannot always play the best defense as it is definitely harder than declaring. But you can always be a reliable partner. In this way, win or lose, it will be a partnership effort and you will be ready to do it again. But, if you take control and "do your own thing" on defense, you are asking to play defense like declarer plays offense...alone. In the long run you will end up without partners.

Concentration is a major component of defense. Learn to focus...to concentrate long enough and hard enough to take the 5th or 6th defensive trick at a two level contract.... The player who keeps the right card and holds declarer to two rather than three is the real winner in duplicate. Because you play defense more than you declare, an effort to learn good defense will increase your enjoyment of the game. In short...Be a Skinner Rat Winding Through a Defensive Maze.

Article by Tom Clark, BCA Club Manager

Bridge Slang

Hippopotamus--Everyone's favorite contract-5NT.

Rattlesnake--A problem 4-4-4-1 hand.

Striped-tail ape double--Whereby you double the opponents in a contract below slam in the hopes of preventing them from bidding slam.

Fourth of July Regional Tournament

This year, UNIT 207 will be hosting its most exciting Regional Tournament...ever...featuring special events for our novice and intermediate players.

The tournament will be held at the Doubletree Hotel, **June 28 through July 4**. Each day at 1:45 we will be featuring a lecture from Unit 207's finest instructors..... i.e., Mildred Breed, Pam LaShelle, Laura Delfeld, Rosemary Kelley and Mary Anne Laier. The classes will revolve around subjects that the instructors feel most pertinent to novice and intermediate players, and each lecture will be followed by a question and answer period, time permitting.



The N/S and E/W winners of each session will win a prize. They'll be able to choose from an amazing array of books from authors such as Mike Lawrence, Marty Bergen and Audrey Grant. These authors have a worldwide reputation in the field of bridge education and we expect these books will be very helpful and useful for the novice and intermediate player.

At the end of the morning session, we'll hold a drawing for a gift certificate donated by one of the nearby restaurants such as Carrabba's and Pappadeaux.....these can be used during the tournament or later....winners choice.

Finally, on Friday night, the Unit will be hosting a dinner just for our 0/299er's (Yes, there will be wine!!)

We're all looking forward to an amazing Regional with lots of goodies, lots of points, and lots of fun!!

Article by Nancy Dean, Unit 207



Congratulations to these First Overall Winners in **May Unit 207 Sectional**, 199er games:

Paul Tallent and Donna Williams (Thursday morning)

Geneva Berg and Gwyn Petersen (Friday morning)

Adrienne Watt and Sandra Ingram (Saturday morning)

Harold Tweeden (Saturday afternoon)

Tourney Calendar

Austin Regional, Doubletree Hotel
Monday, June 28 - Sunday, July 4. 299er
games at 10:00, 2:30, and 7:00

Partnership Chairs: Diana Rogers, 512.328.4710,
dianarogers@austin.rr.com and Sandy Potts,
512.258.1882, sandy.potts@sbcglobal.net

Unit 207 Non-Life Master Sectional, BCA
Saturday, July 17, 1:30 and 5:30 Sunday, July
18, 1:30

Partnership Chair, Mark McAllister 512. 257.2320
markmc888@gmail.com

Check the Unit website for more tournament information: <http://www.austinbridge.org> (Click on "Tournament Calendar" under the blue District 16 bar.)

"The Future Life Master" is a bi-monthly publication of ACBL Unit 207. Laura Delfeld, editor. Please forward information regarding Novice games or lessons to: delhan@swbell.net