



# The Future Life Master



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## Becoming a Real Bridge Player



by Margie Butler

My first experience with bridge was in the 1960's. I worked in an office and back then many people played bridge during lunch. Some of the younger workers like me used to sit and watch the bridge game after we returned from our own lunch. It looked like fun and a couple of us decided we'd like to try it.

We found two people with some bridge experience who were willing to play with us and we started a second game in another room.

This lunchtime game is where I learned to count points, pre-empt, ask for aces, etc. There were different guidelines then: 1NT was 16-18 pts, any opening two-bid was a strong hand, and game was 23 points for NT, 26 points for a major, 29 points for a minor. Our game went on for several years with mostly novice players. It was fun, but we knew we weren't playing at the level of the "big game" in the other room. Our game was sort of the bridge equivalent of the children's table at Thanksgiving

I left that job in 1969 and there was no office bridge game at my new job. During the next few years I played sometimes with friends for fun. None of us had much experience. We knew we weren't *real* bridge players. And I wasn't sure I wanted to be. It seemed like a lot of work, having to remember which cards had been played and who had what. Eventually I got interested in other things and forgot about bridge altogether.

Fast forward about 35 years. In November 2009 my husband and I retired and moved from Los Angeles to Austin. Retirement was a new experience.

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## Cute Play I Learned from a Hall-of-Famer

by Mark McAllister

After learning bridge basics from friends in 1971, I ventured into the smoky world of duplicate at the Bridge Studio of Houston, co-owned and run by the late Paul Hodge, who was voted posthumously into the Bridge Hall of Fame last year. My first real bridge lessons were taught by Paul, and they were on play, not bidding. I recall a comment Paul made to another student: "You do have to learn bidding, but the enjoyment of bridge is in the play of the hand."

Paul was a good teacher as well as a top player. I still remember some of the lesson hands after 41 years! Here is a cute play that has stayed with me.

Assume you and your partner have reached a contract of six spades with the following hands:

♠ Q9432  
♥ A852  
♦ AQ3  
♣ 6

♠ AKJ86  
♥ K3  
♦ 742  
♣ A97

You are South, declarer, and the opening lead is the queen of hearts.

Playing matchpoints, you should feel satisfied with your bidding. The 27-point slam will make if the diamond finesse is on, and 50% slams are considered good bids at matchpoints. (In a team event you need better odds to risk losing the game bonus.)

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## Becoming a Real Bridge Player (con't)

It was amazing to wake up every day and realize I didn't have to go to work. But after a while I started to wonder what I would do with all my free time. Then one morning I was reading the Austin Statesman and saw a small ad for Beginning Bridge Lessons. I normally don't like taking classes (too much like going to work), but I like playing cards and I thought the class might be a good way to meet other card players and maybe find a game somewhere, either bridge or euchre.

The class was taught by the wonderful Jack Lacy, and to my surprise I really got into it. Soon I found myself looking forward to class day. I found I was taking it seriously. I wanted to become a *real* bridge player. I signed up for the next class and the next. When the Bridge Plus game started on Sunday I saw a way to learn while playing and I jumped at it. As soon as I could, I signed up for the mentor program. My mentor was Lucerne Bunch. What luck! Lucerne was a terrific mentor. After the mentor term ended I continued playing as much as I could. I bought books and software and played online, anything to improve. Eventually it started to come together. One day a player I had considered much beyond me in the beginning, asked if I could play with him the following week because his partner couldn't make it. That's when I decided I had become a *real* bridge player.

I'm still relatively new, still learning. I may never be as good as I want to be. But I'm having a great time playing a great game with super nice people at the best bridge center I can imagine. I'll take it.



## Cute Play (con't)

You could win the lead, pull trumps and try the diamond finesse. Or play the diamond ace first and then get to your hand and lead toward the queen. Is there anything you can do to improve your chances?

Yes. You should win the opening lead in dummy and immediately lead the 3 of diamonds.

What have you lost by making this seemingly pointless play? Nothing. You were never going to win all 13 tricks, and you can always take the diamond finesse at your leisure after pulling trumps.

Then what might you gain? As Paul Hodge put it, "You will be absolutely amazed how often the king will pop up on your right."

Yes, reader, I know that *you* would never rise with the king from Kxxx or Kxx. You would think: "Why is declarer doing this? If he had the jack, he would lead it, or lead low to the queen." *You* would play low and wait to take your king later. But players don't always think things through, and even an experienced defender can have a mental lapse. And what if your holding was Kx? You should still duck, of course, but a fear factor could come into play -- "If I don't take it, I might lose it."

Give your opponents a chance to go wrong! If they fall for it, you get a good board and they get a good lesson!

**Editor's note:** Welcome to our new columnist, Mark McAllister. In addition to serving as club manager of the BCA, Mark continues to be a key contributor at the Unit-level, having a particular interest in fostering developing players. Thanks, Mark!

## The Lone Arranger

**What:** A game to match newer players with more experienced players, typically Life Masters. Think Pro-Am game.

**Why:** To give players a chance to meet new people and to provide the less experienced players with an opportunity to partner with more experienced players. Partnerships are randomly arranged at the start of the game.

**Where:** Bridge Center of Austin

**When:** Saturday, January 12, 1:30 pm



**First overall in the November NLM Sectional:**

- Thomas Hughes - Jean Marsh (Sat. am)*
- William McIndoo - Rita Wiegenstein (Sat. pm)*
- David Lisson - Terry Lisson (Sun. pm)*

**First overall in the December 199er Sectional:**

- Don Long and Martin Ramirez (Saturday and Sunday pm)*

# Tourney Calendar

**Winter Sectional and District 16 NAP Finals, Doubletree Hotel –Thursday, January 3 –Sunday, January 6, 2013.**

**Non-Life Master Sectional, BCA--Saturday, February 16 and Sunday, February 17.**

More information on these tournaments may be found on the Unit 207 website: [www.austinbridge.org](http://www.austinbridge.org)



A **Yarborough** is a hand with no card higher than a nine. The British Earl of Yarborough, during the 19th century, would offer a wager of 1,000 pounds to 1 against picking up such a hand at whist. (The actual odds against such a hand are approximately 1,827 to 1.)

## Bidding Quiz from Eddie Kantar

*Try your hand at the following five responding hands and see how many you can get right!*

Opener                  Responder (you)

**1S                          1NT**  
**2C**

?

You hold:

- |    |       |         |         |         |
|----|-------|---------|---------|---------|
| 1. | ♠ 653 | ♥ Q83   | ♦ 8764  | ♣ KJ9   |
| 2. | ♠ K4  | ♥ 876   | ♦ A763  | ♣ Q1065 |
| 3. | ♠ J10 | ♥ AJ98  | ♦ K1076 | ♣ 1093  |
| 4. | ♠ K7  | ♥ A543  | ♦ 8743  | ♣ J108  |
| 5. | ♠ 6   | ♥ KJ983 | ♦ KJ987 | ♣ 98    |

### SOLUTIONS

1. 2S Although partner will play you for a doubleton as it is rare to withhold three card major suit support, it is better in the long run to respond 1NT with a balanced 6 count than raise to 2S which "sounds" more encouraging.
2. 3C Forward going. You promise at least four clubs with 8-10 HCP.
3. 2NT You usually have 10 HCP for this rebid, but this 9 count is worth 10 any day of the week. Looks at those intermediates.
4. 2S You have a forward going hand and by bidding 2S you give your partner another chance to bid in case partner has extras.
5. 2H As long as you are going to bid a red suit, bid the major.

**"The Future Life Master"** is a bi-monthly publication of ACBL Unit 207. Laura Delfeld, editor. Please forward information regarding local novice news to [delhan@swbell.net](mailto:delhan@swbell.net).