



The Future Life Master



Volume 6 Issue 4

Austin, Texas ACBL Unit 207, Laura Delfeld, editor

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How to Succeed at the Sport of Bridge



by Loren Nyer

My first real exposure to the psychological aspects of coping with the modern world came through reading: [Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance](#). For those interested in the mind's influence, I highly recommend it. But what do Zen and motorcycles have to do with bridge?

Well for those who haven't figured it out, duplicate bridge is a sport in the modern world. Success requires stamina, concentration, awareness of your opponents and a great drive to win (or *not to lose* according to my wife). A good athlete must master the technical skills of his sport. But to truly excel, an athlete must also master the psychological stress of competition and inevitable losses.

So, how does one become comfortable with competition? It takes time and tenacity for eventual triumph. I'm not yet a Life Master but the first time I played in a duplicate game and I realized I had discarded a good trick or I had bid the wrong suit when responding to Blackwood and we went down at slam I found myself going into a tailspin -- a spin from which it was difficult to recover. This psychological downdraft can happen to any athlete, but the winner learns to deal with it.

(con't on page 2)

Second Hand Low...Usually!

by Mark McAllister

The initial stages of learning to play bridge are exercises in memorization. We are taught certain rules and we apply them, without worrying too much about the reasoning behind the rules. The real fun begins when we gain enough experience to see through the rules and find the exceptions. We are told early on to play second-hand low. It is almost always the right play, but let's look at some alternate cases. In this write-up we will consider only plays behind declarer, where dummy is on your left.

Let's start with an easy one:

Dummy A J 5 3
You K Q 4

Declarer leads the six from hand. You should play the king or queen, "splitting honors," to keep declarer from winning a trick with the jack.

Changing things just a bit:

Dummy A J 9 3
You K 10 4

Declarer leads low from hand. Since he is missing the ten, if you play low he will play the nine, hoping to knock out a high honor (assuming he doesn't have the queen).

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How to Succeed at the Sport of Bridge (con't)

She hears her inner voice (“you’re an idiot” or “my bedpost has more brains”) and after a few moments of letting herself have it, she begins to quiet the voice.

We must not let our own negative thoughts sabotage our game. With good breathing (three deep breaths wouldn’t hurt) and some positive messages, she can return to a state of calm and well-being. It takes some practice to do this but it’s essential if you want to win.

Here are my recommendations for psychological success:

1. First and foremost, *become aware of your state of mind.*
2. If you are beating yourself up, begin appropriate breathing techniques.
3. Initiate positive self-messaging:
 - a. “Don’t panic, you can still win.”
 - b. “It’s only one bad board.”
 - c. “Even the pros make mistakes.”
 - d. “My opponent is such an officious bully – I’m not going to let him get to me!”
 - e. “Oh well, I’m still a good cook, lover, golfer ……!”

Remember that making mistakes is part of learning, and ***we need to pride ourselves for undertaking new challenges that take us out of our comfort zones.*** It takes lots of practice to master the art of competition in any sport and duplicate bridge is no exception.



Second Hand Low...Usually (con't)

You should play the king, as if you were splitting honors. Declarer will win and subsequently lead toward the jack, expecting it to win if you play low. The jack will lose to partner and now your 10 is high!

Declarer opened 1NT and has been transferred to a major:

Dummy A Q 7 4 3
You K 10

Declarer leads low from hand. If you play the ten, he will finesse and then play the ace. Play the king! If declarer started with J 9 x in hand, he now has a losing option of low to the nine after winning the ace, to avoid losing a trick to your partner’s presumed initial holding of 10 x x x. Exactly the same logic would apply if you held Q 10 and dummy was A K x x x. Play the queen if declarer leads low from hand!

Try this one:

Dummy K Q 10 3
You J 9 6 4

This is the trump suit after a Stayman auction. If you play low on declarer’s low lead from hand, a high honor will be played from dummy. When your partner follows low, declarer will lead back to ace in hand, revealing the 4-1 split and trapping your jack. But if you play the nine initially, it will look enough like a singleton (or J9 doubleton) that your jack might live to win a trick!

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First overall in the June NLM Sectional:

Gary Marquart - Bruce Mansbridge (Sat.)

Jean Marsh - Larry Johnson (Sun.)

First overall in the Fourth of July Regional, 299er games

Jean Durocher - Earnestine Broyles (Tues aft.)

Ronald Pare - Ann Pare (Tues. eve.)

Marti McLain - Alan Wakefield (Weds. aft.)

Pravina Jani - Patricia Moore (Weds. eve.)

Sheila Milner - Anu Chhabra (Thurs. morn.)

Michael Windham - Linda Windham (Thurs.aft)

Larry Johnson - Paul Johnston (Fri. morn.)

Lysa Nguyen - Lazaro Brener (Fri. aft)

Shirley Davenport - Debra Jones (Fri. eve.)

Maretta Toler - Nona Quinn (Sat. morn.)

Marilyn Vallario - Sarah Loffredo (Sat. aft.)

Mickey Goldwater - Claire Smith (Sat. eve.)



Second Hand Low...Usually (con't)

Finally, you should not play low when it allows declarer to set up a long suit.

Dummy	
♠ A 3 2	
♣ A K 10 9 3 2	
You	
♠ K Q J 10 4	
♣ Q 7	

Against 3NT, you lead spade king. (You and dummy have no high cards in hearts or diamonds.) Declarer ducks twice then wins ace (pitching diamond from hand) and comes back to hand and leads a low club. If you play low, the 10 will lose to partner's jack and declarer now almost certainly has nine or ten tricks. You should play the queen. If declarer ducks, you defeat the contract with spades. If he wins and your partner started with J x x of clubs, that suit cannot be set up.

Tourney Schedule

199er Sectional, BCA--Saturday, August 16 and Sunday, August 17-- 1:30 pm

Fall Sectional, BCA-- Thursday, September 25 through Sunday, September 28

NLM Sectional, BCA--Saturday, November 8 and Sunday, November 9 --1:30 pm

Free lunch and bridge!

Unit 207 Member Appreciation Team Game

Stratified Swiss teams, two single sessions, 10:00 am and 2:00 pm. Held at the BCA. More information may be found at : www.austinbridge.org