



THE PSYCHOLOGY OF WINNING TEAM GAMES

Choosing a partner and teammates

- Partner is committed to working hard to make the partnership successful.
- Partner has sufficient experience to know basic bids and plays and can build on his knowledge.
- Partner is passionate about success.
- Whenever a disaster occurs, partner's first reaction is to assume it is his fault, or, if you make the mistake, he assumes he contributed to causing you to go wrong.



The perfect partner

- Partner has the resources of money and time to pursue the same bridge goals as you.
- Partner has a pleasant and calm temperament; he avoids fighting with the opponents.
- Partner accepts suggestions from you or more experienced players readily and graciously.

Finding Teammates

The sociological self-configuration of bridge-playing groups is fascinating to the student of psychology .

- If the perfect partner is not always available, you need AUXILIARY PARTNERS and teammates.
- They should be pleasant and enjoy playing a similar system.
- They tend to be of the same ability level, the same frequency of tournament attendance, live near each other and have the same “will to win”.

Finding Teammates

REMEMBER

Every time you enter an event, whether it is a team game or a pairs game, you are auditioning for possible future teammates.

- People want to win!
- They see their chances of winning increase when their teammates are successful tournament players.
- Most serious players pour over the results of local tournaments and note which pairs or teams were successful.

They believe they can win

Most knockout matches are won or lost before the match begins.

- If I am on a team of experts that is playing a group of novices, everyone at the table assumes my team will prevail.
- Therefore the players on my team play with confidence and high expectations.
- The other players play with the expectations of losing.

Believe you can win

- Winning players realize that they are on the identical playing field as their more experienced opponents.
- They have the same opportunities to make good plays and bids.
- Everyone will make mistakes; the idea is to make fewer mistakes than your opponents.
- Believe your partnership is more practiced and less likely to have misunderstandings.

Believe you can win

W	N	E	S
	2c		2♥
	2♠		3♠
	4♣		4♠
	5♦		5♠

♠ Qxx
 ♥ Qxxx
 ♦ Qx
 ♣ Jxxx

North

♠ AKJ9xxx
 ♥ Ax
 ♦ AK
 ♣ Ax

South

- You pick up a great hand. You are playing with a partner that you have a good partnership with.
 - You open with a bid of 2 clubs; partner bids 2 hearts, (super negative).
 - You bid 2 spades, and partner raises to 3 spades.
 - You start your investigation with 4♣, partner bids 4♠, you bid 5♦, hoping for a positive move from partner, but he bids 5 spades.
 - You give up and pass.
 - Good decision.

Believe you can win

W	N	E	S
	2c		2♦
	2♠		3♠
	4NT		5c
	5NT		6♠

♠ Qxx
♥ Qxxx
♦ Qx
♣ Jxxx

North

♠ AKJ9xxx
♥ Ax
♦ AK
♣ Ax

South

- At the other table, one of the experts in an unfamiliar (another expert) partnership also opened 2 clubs.
 - They completed their card with little discussion of the exact meaning of 2♥.
- The expert thought his hand was too good for 2♥ so he bid 2♦. The expert holding the south hand pushed on to 6♠ which cannot be made.
 - Your team wins 13 imps. In a Swiss this may be the match.
 - It is an easy game!

Dealer: South

♠ Q xx

♥ Qxxx

♦ Q x

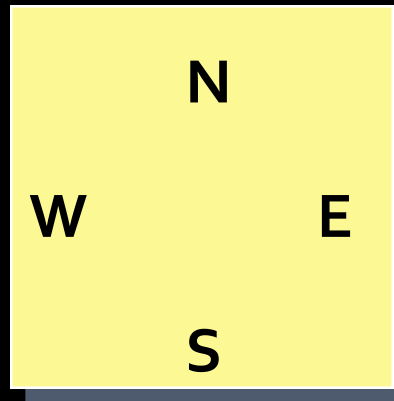
♣ Jxxx

♠ xx

♥ Jxx

♦ Txxxx

♣ Qxx



♠ x

♥ KTxx

♦ Jxxx

♣ KJxx

♠ AKJgxxx

♥ A x

♦ AK

♣ Ax

Full hand - cannot make 6 spades

They are good declarers

Example Hand
Contract 3♥
Lead is ♠ Queen

♠ AKx

♥ Txxx

♦ T98x

♣ xx

North

♠ xx

♥ AKQ9xx

♦ Jxx

♣ Qx

South

- Declarer play is a learned skill. Watching really good players play hands and reading good books on declarer play are effective.
- Some possible plays include squeezes, strip-and-end plays, throw-in plays, avoidance plays and deceptive plays just to mention a few .
- This a very typical hand.
- You are in 3♥ . Plan the play.

Dealer - South

Contract 3 hearts

Lead ♠Q

♠ AKx

♥ Txxx

♦ T987

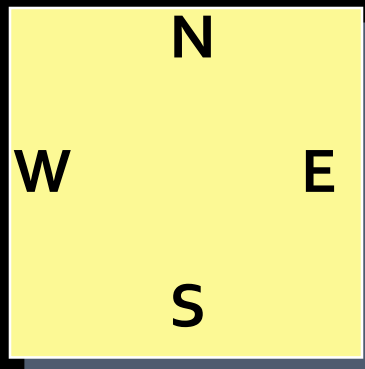
♣ xx

♠ QJT_x

♥ xx

♦ A543

♣ AKJ



♠ xxx_x

♥ J

♦ KQ

♣ T9xxxx

Declarer wins ♠ lead in the North hand and pulls trumps. Leads a spade to dummy and plays 3rd ♠ and discards ♣. West wins, cashes a ♣ and continues ♣.

♠ xx

♥ A KQ9xx

♦ Jxx

♣ Qx

South ruffs the second ♣ and leads low ♦. East wins, cashes another ♦ but now has to give a ruff/sluff. Basic throw-in play. West cannot over take.

Refrain from discussing results

In top-level competition, no one ever says one word regarding a bad bid or play or a good bid or play. There is no discussion of the results.

The types of hands that cause the biggest loss might include games or slams. Particularly key-card Blackwood (3014-1430).

- Discussing the results at the table, during the play, or at the comparison can only lead to misery.
- My suggestion is that the results are read aloud by one pair and a representative from the other pair states +140 win 3.
- After the score is determined, very brief discussion is allowed.

Refrain from discussing results

Remember: you're not playing just one match. You are playing a series of matches during your lifetime.

You'd be surprised how often you can forgive a teammate's mistake after you've examined your own performance.

- You have hopes of attaining and keeping good teammates and partners.
- Speaking negatively of them or to them is no way to win.
- If you lose respect for one of them, either get a new team member or look inwardly.

They care about their teammates

As you get familiar with the stars of the bridge world, you will realize some are nice and some are not.

- Great teammates follow the rules of not talking about the results at the table or afterwards.
 - It makes sense.
 - They care about the feelings of their teammates.

They willingly obey their captain

The players must have enough respect for the captain and his/her judgment so they don't complain once a decision has been made.

- This is a rule that applies in a multi-session event, especially when there is a non-playing captain.
 - Ins and outs, seeding choices, and the seating around the table
- These are things the captain will decide.

The opponents or the situation doesn't intimidate them

Each person at your table and the other table has the same rights and must follow the same rules.

The probabilities of correct plays being successful for you are exactly the same for the opponents . If they are good opponents, they will go with the percentages.

- If your left hand opponent hesitates before passing and your right hand opponent makes a call that is questionable, call the director.
- Don't be thrown off the correct play by the fact your opponents are very experienced and may be doing something tricky.

They won't fatigue

Sitting at the table for 7 to 16 hours a day in a combative environment is grueling and exhausting.

- Stamina is very important to winning team games, physical and mental.
- In order to win, choose teammates who don't think that a bridge tournament is an excuse to drink, overeat and socialize.

They won't fatigue

Sitting at the table for 7 to 16 hours a day in a combative environment is grueling and exhausting.

Do not go over the hands mentally or discuss with partner or teammates. Conserve your mental and physical energy.

- Stamina is very important to winning team games, physical and mental.
- In order to win, choose teammates who don't think that a bridge tournament is an excuse to drink, overeat and socialize.

They use a simple or well-practiced bidding system

Winning isn't a matter of doing brilliant things, but it a matter of not doing stupid things.

Use a system that allows partner to recognize the value of a fit and stay at a low level or move on with a better hand.

- One advantage less experienced players may have is to have well established agreements.
- Many partnerships have trouble evaluating hands that fit. They make a limit raise when it should be simple raise or vice versa.

They are good declarers

♠ Qxx
♥ Jxx
♦ xxx
♣ Kxxx

North1

♠ Qxxx
♥ Ax
♦ 98x
♣ Kxxx

North2

- Partner opens 1♠.
- Hand 1 is an example of a traditional raise. With this hand you could bid 1NT forcing and then raise to 2♠.
- Hand 2 is an example of a constructive raise: bid 2♠. It is a way to tell the difference between a good raise and a poor raise.

They are good declarers

♠ Qxx

♥ Jxx

♦ xxx

♣ Kxxx

North₁

♠ Qxxx

♥ Ax

♦ 98x

♣ Kxxx

North₂

♠ KJxxx

♥ Kxx

♦ KJxx

♣ A

South

- If you raised to 2♠ with hand 1 you could easily go set in 3♠ if partner makes a game try. Bid 1NT first and then bid 2♠.
- With hand 2, you would be safe at 3♠ if partner made a game try and you did not accept. Depending on partnership style, you may accept the invitation to 4♠.

Seeding and seating

- In regional tournaments seeding exists, but it is rarely acknowledged.
- The only reason for seeding is that sometimes one pair of players doesn't want to play another pair of players.
- The seeded team gets to choose usually the first and last quarter. The unseeded team chooses the 2nd and 3rd quarters.

Seeding and seating

- Some teams with 3 pairs like to see who is playing well.
- Another approach is for pair A to sit N/S and pair B always sit E/W. Pair C would fill in which ever is vacant. One advantage is to minimize the chance of both pairs sitting the same direction. (Both teams get 0 for the match)
- I like to have the 2 stronger pairs playing at the last part of the match.
- Or if it is a long grueling event, the pairs with the most stamina play the last quarter.



Evaluating your team

Some might say “just play the best you can and if your team is the best it will win the match”.

Not true! There is no reason to forego adopting a winning strategy in the hopes class will tell.

Why leave it to chance when there is a superior strategy.

- One of the most important strategies is to evaluate the ability of your team relative to the ability of your opponent.
- Once you have made this evaluation, you may employ an appropriate strategy.

Basic Strategy-Aggressiveness

Choosing the aggressiveness that is appropriate for the strengths of the teams and the state of the match

♠ X

♥ QTxx

♦ KJxx

♣ Qxxx

Conservative

Aggressive


- 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
- Assuming 5 is the average, moderate but accurate bidding, then we can place our three possible bids.
- Partner opens 1♥
 - 2♥ is about a 4 in aggressiveness
 - 3♥ is about a 7 in aggressiveness
 - 4♥ is about a 9+ in aggressiveness
- Many times hands are either a slight underbid or overbid.
- Aggressiveness is rewarded in team games; therefore most teams play about a level 6. Let's look at possible scenarios.



The second half

In large Knockouts, the fields are stratified by masterpoints and usually the teams are evenly matched.

Even though the strategy may change if there is a difference in ability level, I am going to assume they are evenly matched.



Knockout team matches are played in 2 halves, with a comparison of scores at half.

After you have compared, and you discover you are up or down significantly, (15 IMPs) an adjustment in strategy may be appropriate.

The second half

If you are ahead, take the percentage play and finesse spades. If you are behind, you may want to consider going up with the ♠ King. This may generate 10-12 IMPs.

♠ KJTxx

♥ Qx

♦ ATx

♣ xxx

♠ 987x

♥ KJx

♦ KQx


♣ KQJ

There will be a number of hands left in the match. Don't panic! Continue to play about a level 6. If both teams are good, opportunities to gain IMPs will be few. Toward the end of the match and you see no IMP gains, you may want to get very aggressive. (1997 GNT)



Second half

Know your teammates .
Know your opponents.
If you do not you can
not estimate correctly.

- If the teams are equal but not experienced, you can count on several errors being made at both tables.
 - Be careful. At the other table your partners may have gotten their opponents to play badly. Do not throw away the match by bidding crazily.
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To-Do list for knockout team events


- Make a list of local players who may be suitable partners for you. Use the same criteria discussed in the perfect partner.
- Make a list of local players you may want to include on your teams. Use the Qualities for Members of a Winning Team.
- Improve your declarer's play by taking lessons or reading a good book on declarer's play .
- Talk to your partner and teammates about the importance of refraining from discussing results at the table after matches,



To-Do list for knockout team events

Discuss with your teammates the plan for eating, resting, and socializing at the next tournament.


Make sure your partner and teammates know how to play at different aggressiveness levels.



Come to an understanding within your team about the relative ability of your team compared to the ability of other local teams you are likely to play.



Winning is more fun!

- More points are won in knockout events.
 - Knockout events typically feature the best play and players at the highest bracket.
 - More points are also won by inexperienced or even poor players at the lower brackets.
 - Good players and good teammates are hard to find. Be careful not to lose them.
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What have you learned today?

- What have you learned today?
- How are you going to use what you have learned?
- What are you going to do first?
- This was a lot of material and it will take a little time to internalize everything.