The Complete Book of

Bridge Tips

edited by Sally Brock

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Contents

Part One – TIPS ON BIDDING

Part Two – TIPS ON DEFENCE

Part Three – TIPS ON PLAY

Part Four – GENERAL BRIDGE TIPS

Not obliged to say anything

David Bird *(England)*

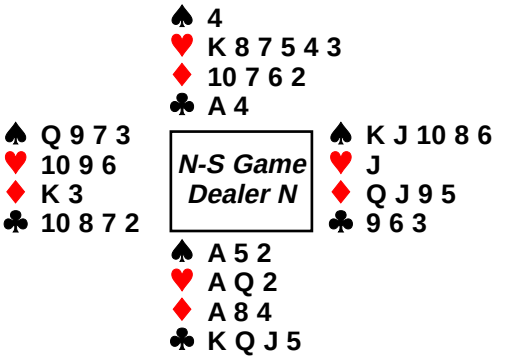
DAVID BIRD is one of England's most popular bridge authors. He has written over thirty books on the game, some twenty of them in collaboration with the late Terence Reese. Best known for his humorous bridge fiction, his stories of the cantankerous Abbot and the bridge-playing monks of St Titus appear regularly in magazines around the world. David is bridge correspondent of the Mail on Sunday *and the* London Evening Standard.

TOURNAMENT play is a macho business, with most players regarding it as an affront if they give the opponents a free run. Suppose a vulnerable opponent opens a weak Two Hearts in front of you and, non-vulnerable, you hold:

♠ K J 10 8 6
♥ J
♦ Q J 9 5
♣ 9 6 3

You should leap in there with Two Spades, of course.

Or should you? When the deal arose, the player to your left was the famous 'Rabbi' created by Australian maestro, Ron Klinger. The occasion was the 24th Israeli Congress in Tel Aviv.



SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
		2♥	2♠
4♥	4♠	Pass	Pass
4NT	Pass	5♥	Pass
7♣	All Pass		

The Rabbi, sitting South, had no reason initially to think that any contract beyond game would be possible. When West bid Four Spades, though, it became a near certainty that North held at most one spade. The Rabbi came to life again with Roman Key-Card Blackwood, hearing a response that showed two 'aces', here the ace of clubs and the king of the agreed trump suit. He was about to bid Six Hearts when a strange thought occurred to him. If clubs were trumps, surely he could score four clubs, six hearts, two aces and a spade ruff!

He bid the grand slam in clubs, received a trump lead, and the play went without a hitch.

SUPPOSE now that you are competing in the final of the 1994 London Trophy. Again at favourable vulnerability, partner passes and your right-hand opponent opens a weak no-trump. You look down at:

♠ A 9 4
♥ K Q 8 7
♦ 5
♣ Q J 7 4 2

Playing Astro, it is clearcut for any red-blooded bridge player to compete with Two Clubs, showing hearts and a minor, isn't it?

Keep it simple

Rixi Markus *(England)*

RIXI MARKUS, who died in 1992 aged 82, was one of the greatest woman players of all time and the first to become a WBF Grand Master. Born in a remote part of the Austro-Hungarian empire, she spent much of her childhood in Vienna. Having helped Austria win three European Championships before the war, she fled to England in 1938 and subsequently helped that country to win seven Europeans, the last of which was in 1975. She won five World titles in total; her World Pairs win with Fritzi Gordon in 1974 was by a margin of more than seven boards, a feat unparalleled in the history of the game. In 1975 she was awarded an MBE for her services to the game, among which was the organisation, for charity, of the annual match between the British Houses of Parliament. She was the author of several books and bridge columnist of The Guardian *from 1955 until her death.*

Impetuous, imperious, passionate are some of the adjectives one might apply to Rixi who was a tigress at the table. Opponents, shaking with fear, have been known to drop their cards when playing against Rixi. She was loyal, too, and always proud of her adopted home. At one European when the British women rallied from an unlikely position to win the event, she was asked to what she attributed the team's success. She said in her heavy accent, 'Ve British are at our best vith our backs to ve wall.'

I HAVE been a member of the bridge community for a great number of years and have played very many different bidding systems, some by choice and some that were forced upon me. I eventually opted for the Acol system, which I still enjoy playing. I have added one or two simple gadgets or agreements to the basic system, but I find that Acol leaves enough freedom to the players while being at the same time based on a number of clearly defined principles. I maintain that if your bidding system is simple but effective, it leaves you enough brain power to cope with the more important aspects of bridge: dummy play and, above all, defence.

As you will have gathered, my BOLS bridge tip relates to bidding and it is:

Keep it simple.

HERE are my specific recommendations:

1 When you are the dealer you have an advantage which you should not waste. Try to open the bidding as often as you can, particularly if you have a good suit which you can rebid and which you want your partner to lead. Thus with:

♠ A 10 6	or	♠ Q J 10
♥ 8		♥ K J 9 5 4
♦ K 9 3		♦ A 8 7 6
♣ K J 9 8 6 2		♣ 10

do not hesitate. You should open as dealer on both hands.

2 Consider playing a strong no-trump at all vulnerabilities. My 1NT opening promises 16-18 points, but I count AJ10 as six points, QJ doubleton as two points and the doubleton Qx as one.

3 Do not hesitate to open a four-card major suit, which can sometimes be a good pre-emptive weapon. For example:

♠ K Q J 9
♥ 10 9
♦ K J 10 6
♣ Q J 10

I would open One Spade on this hand. As I play strong no-trump, I can rebid 2NT over Two Hearts, and I am well prepared for any other response from partner.

4 Use your two bids to show strong but not game-forcing hands. My Acol two bid shows a hand either with one long, strong suit or with two good suits, and I can assure you that my various partners and I have bid very many games and slams that were missed by our opponents.

5 Use Herbert responses to Acol two bids, whereby a bid of the next higher-ranking suit is the negative. This is an idea which I helped to popularise, and it has two advantages over traditional methods. First, it

means that any eventual no-trump contract is almost always played by the strong hand, which makes the opening lead and subsequent defence more difficult. And second, it can save valuable bidding space. If, for example, the opener has a strong hand with diamonds and spades, the auction will start 2♦–2♥–2♠ and not 2♦–2NT–3♠ as before.

6 Play Stayman and transfer bids in response to 1NT. I find transfer bids most useful, because they allow the final contract to be played by the strong hand and because they allow the responder to describe his hand more accurately.

7 If your partner's opening bid of 1NT is doubled for penalties, redouble if you have a strong hand but ignore the double if you are weak. This is my own special idea, and I find that it works very well. It means that transfer bids will permit all two-level contracts to be played by the stronger hand, and it also means that responder will be able to try to wriggle out of trouble by bidding Two Clubs (Stayman) even after a double, say with:

♠ J 9 4
♥ 10 7 5 2
♦ J 8 6 4
♣ 9 3

After 1NT–Dble, you can bid Two Clubs, intending to pass whatever partner replies.

8 Agree some way of showing both major suits over the opponents' weak no-trump. I personally like to use a conventional bid of Two Diamonds for this purpose, for it deprives the opponents of two bids (Two Clubs and Two Diamonds) which would otherwise be available to them.

9 Only make a game-forcing jump shift in response to partner's One of a suit if you have either a very good suit of your own or a very good fit for partner. On all other strong responding hands, you will need as much bidding space as possible and it will work out better to take things slowly.

10 Unless the opponents are obviously sacrificing, only double a high-level contract if you have a good holding in trumps: aces and kings do not always take tricks.

11 Retain a penalty double for low-level contracts. I find that to play negative doubles gives up the chance of obtaining too many profitable penalties, and I have never come to much harm through bidding my suits instead of showing them by way of a double.

12 Never make 'trap' passes. If my right-hand opponent opens One Spade and I hold:

♠ A Q 10 4
♥ K 9 3
♦ A Q
♣ J 10 9 5

I am happy to overcall 1NT. Any other course of action is likely to put pressure on partner at a later stage, and this is contrary to my advice that you should keep it simple.

13 At rubber bridge, keep it simple for partner. If you want him to bid again, for example, do not make a bid which he might pass. For example, with:

♠ A 10
♥ A K Q 6 4
♦ K 7
♣ K Q 7 5

If you are game and 40 below and your partner opens One Diamond and rebids Two Diamonds over your response of One Heart, bid either 4NT or 6NT. Do not bid Three Clubs, which he might pass in an effort to settle for the rubber.

14 If your partner makes a take-out double and your right-hand opponent redoubles, do not speak unless you have something useful to say. Do not bid for the sake of it, for you may choose the wrong suit and go badly astray. Use the opportunity to pass and tell partner that you have nothing worthwhile to say.

To round up this section on tips on bidding, we have two suggestions that seek to improve on the way that a couple of everyday conventions are treated.

Roll over, Houdini

Zia Mahmood *(Pakistan)*

IT'S rare that bridge players receive compliments, but when they do come the one that strokes my ego the most is the word 'magician'. You can keep your praises for error-free bridge or the accolades given to the so-called purity of computer-like relay bids – they don't do anything for me. No, I suppose it's something in my character that has always made me thrilled by the razzle dazzle of the spectacular and excited by the flamboyant and extraordinary. Yet the world of bridge magic, like stage magic, is often no more than illusion, much simpler to perform than it appears to the watcher. Allow me to take you into that world…

Assume you are East, sitting over the dummy, North, after the bidding has gone 1NT by South on your left, 3NT on your right. Isolating one suit (let's say diamonds), you see:

Dummy
♦ J 2
or ♦ J 3 2

You
♦ Q 4
or ♦ Q 5 4
or ♦ Q 6 5 4

Declarer plays the jack from dummy. What would you do? Cover, you say? Correct. With Q4 and Q54 you would cover all of the time. With Q654 you would cover somewhere between usually to always. Good!

What if the bidding was One Heart on your left, Four Hearts on your right, and this was the lay-out:

Dummy
♦ Q 2
or ♦ Q 3 2

You
♦ K 4
or ♦ K 5 4
or ♦ K 6 5 4

Declarer played the queen from dummy. Again, what would you do? Again, the answer is easy. With K4 and K54 you would cover all of the time. With K654 you would cover somewhere between usually and always.

In both examples, you would have defended correctly, following one of bridge's oldest rules: cover an honour with an honour. Bear with me a moment longer and change seats. As declarer, needing as many tricks as possible (don't we always?), how would you play these suits?

Dummy
♦ J 2

Declarer
♦ A K 10 9 8

Dummy
♦ Q 3 2

Declarer
♦ A J 10 9 8

Run the jack, run the queen? That's normal; you would be following the simple, basic rule taught to every beginner about the finesse. But, hold it a moment. Something's wrong. How can both these plays be right? If, as in the first example, the defender over the dummy would nearly always (correctly) cover the honour played when he had it, how can it be right to finesse that honour when we know that East (RHO) almost never has it? The queen in the first example, and the king in the second are almost surely in the West hand (*mal placé* as the French say) and sometimes unprotected.

My BOLS bridge tip, therefore (and I certainly have taken my time to get there), is as simple and easy as this:

**When they don't cover,
they don't have it.**

Declarer should place or drop the relevant card offside, even when this is hugely anti-percentage. Before the critics jump, I must add a few obvious provisos:

(1) The length must be in the concealed hand.

(2) The declarer should not be known to have special length or strength in the suit.

(3) The honour in dummy should not be touching, i.e. J10, QJ, etc.

(4) The pips in the suit should be solid enough to afford overtaking your honour without costing a trick when the suit breaks badly.

I know this tip is going to revolutionise the simple fundamentals of the everyday finesse, but although it comes with no guarantees, I can assure you that it is nearly always effective and deadly. Here are two examples, both from actual play:

♠ K Q 3 2
♥ A 4 3
♦ J 2
♣ K J 6 5

Game All
Dealer S

♠ A 4
♥ 6 5 2
♦ A K 10 9 8 6
♣ 10 7

You declare 3NT after opening a slightly offbeat weak no-trump (if you weren't offbeat you wouldn't still be reading this). West leads a heart and you win the third with the ace and lead the jack of diamonds. East plays low. He didn't cover! He doesn't have it! Drop the queen offside! Magic – you might have thought so before you read this article.

♠ Q 2
♥ 5 3
♦ 10 9 4
♣ A K 10 9 7 2

Love All
Dealer S

♠ A J 10
♥ K 2
♦ A K Q 3
♣ Q 6 5 3

Finally you reach Six Clubs from the right side (well bid!) and receive a trump lead. How would you play? The scientists would carefully look at this hand and see that the percentage line would be to draw trumps and play out the top diamonds. If the diamonds were 3-3 or the jack came down they would discard a heart from dummy. Now they could play up to the king of hearts and, if that lost, finally try the finesse in spades. Not bad, you say? True, but the greatest illusionist of all time, Harry Houdini, would have rejected this line. Instead, he would have played the queen of spades at the second trick. No East living in the twentieth century would fail to cover the king if he had it (declarer might have AJ2, for example). If East played low, Houdini would 'know' the king was in the West hand and win with the ace. He would now draw trumps and play on diamonds. If they weren't good, he would go down just like the scientists, but if they were good he would discard a spade, not a heart from dummy and take a ruffing finesse against West's king of spades, setting up the ten for a heart discard to make his contract with both finesses wrong.

If at that time the kibitzers burst into applause and the deep-throated voice of Ella Fitzgerald singing that 'Old Black Magic' could be heard in the distance, don't be surprised.

ROLL over, Houdini, the bridge magicians are coming.

After a lot of advice of a very general nature, we move on to a few tips that occur only in a few specific situations, not that that reduces their usefulness.

Play a pre-emptor who leads his suit for a singleton trump

Andrew Robson *(England)*

Born in 1964, ANDY ROBSON is now a professional bridge player, teacher and writer. He won the World Junior Teams in 1989 and the European Open Teams in 1991. He plays on professional teams both in England and the USA. In 1996 he played on the first professional team to represent Great Britain in a World event. He is the bridge columnist for Country Life *and* The Lady.

SAY you open the bidding with a three-level pre-empt. Soon you find yourself on lead to an enemy trump contract. What do you lead?

Well, of course, you need to know your hand, but generally? 'A priori'?

Perhaps your first thought is that you will lead a side-suit singleton, if you have one. How likely is that going to be? We shall assume a fairly aggressive, though sane, style of pre-empting: that, as well as seven-card suits, you will open a fair number of 6-3-3-1 or 6-4-2-1 hand patterns at the three level, but very few 6-3-2-2 or 6-4-3-0 shapes. In this event your hand will contain a singleton over three-quarters of the time, and, if that singleton is in a side suit, you will generally lead it.

The enemy have an unfortunate habit, however, of playing in their longest trump fit. Thus, sadly, your singleton is more likely to be in trumps than elsewhere. In fact, about half the time you are on lead to a trump contract, having pre-empted, you will hold a singleton trump. Now, what do you tend to lead holding a 7-3-2-1, 6-3-3-1 or 6-4-2-1 shape with a singleton trump? Most of the time you lead your own suit, do you not?

What of the other 20-25% of hands, when you don't hold a singleton at all? On a little under half such deals you will hold a void (7-3-3-0, 7-4-2-0, very occasionally 6-4-3-0) and unsurprisingly it will nearly always be in trumps, particularly if partner has doubled! On the rest you will be 7-2-2-2 (or occasionally 6-3-2-2). Again, on all these hands you are likely to lead your own suit.

Our final conclusion: if a pre-emptor leads his own suit, he will have a singleton trump about two-thirds of the time; but he will have two or more trumps less than one-fifth of the time, basically the dreaded 7-2-2-2 pattern, though actually nearly four times less frequent than the 7-3-2-1. More simply explained: the large majority of pre-empts contain a singleton; if it's in a side suit it will be led; if it isn't led it's in trumps!

WITH the above in mind, you can improve on my line of play on this hand from the Cap Gemini 1991:

♠ K J 10 4
♥ 6 4
♦ J 8 4 3
♣ K 4 3

Love All
Dealer W

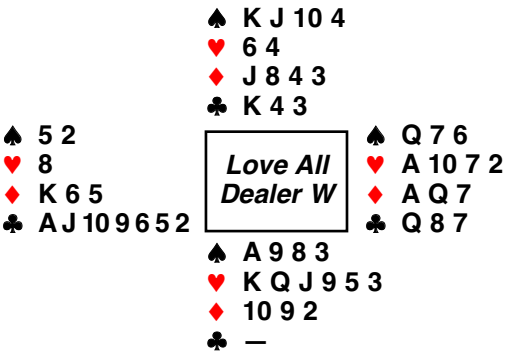
♠ A 9 8 3
♥ K Q J 9 5 3
♦ 10 9 2
♣ —

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
Robson	*Kreijns*	*Forrester*	*Tammens*
	3♣	Pass	3NT
4♥	All Pass		

West leads the ace of clubs. When dummy hits the table, you realise that you would have done better to pass or double East's 3NT. But West's lead of the ace of clubs gives you a chance.

At the table I ruffed, crossed to the king of spades, took my diamond pitch on the king of clubs and played a heart to the king. I was essentially playing for both majors to break, with the queen of spades doubleton. Unlikely. Virtually impossible after the pre-empt and the 3NT bid. I ended up two down. Let's analyse the clues available. West has found an unattractive ace lead in his pre-empt suit; so where is his singleton? Surely not in diamonds or spades or he would have led it. Thus it is in trumps. And East, no joker, has bid 3NT, thus he has the guarded queen of spades. These clues, none of them certain, but all probable through intelligent inference, lead to the following line:

After crossing to the king of spades and taking your diamond pitch on the king of clubs, run the jack of spades. Assuming it is not covered, play a heart to the nine(!). If the spade is covered, play a top heart from hand to draw West's singleton and subsequently cross to dummy's ten of spades and play a heart to the nine. Neat! Let's hope West's singleton trump is not the ten, as it may well be if East doesn't cover the jack of spades! Note that playing East for Qxx in spades forces us to play West for a singleton trump (or the ace – impossible on the bidding); otherwise East can rise with the ace of hearts to give his partner a spade ruff. The full hand is as expected:



My BOLS bridge tip is:

Play a pre-emptor who leads his suit for a singleton trump.

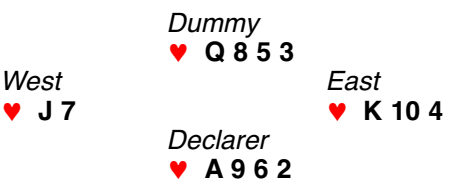
The next offering, like this one, also considers the subject of playing suits in a fashion that is against the 'a priori' odds because of information that has been gleaned from the bidding. It had a great impact on the game at the time, opening people's eyes to possibilities that had not previously been recognised.

The intra-finesse

Gabriel Chagas *(Brazil)*

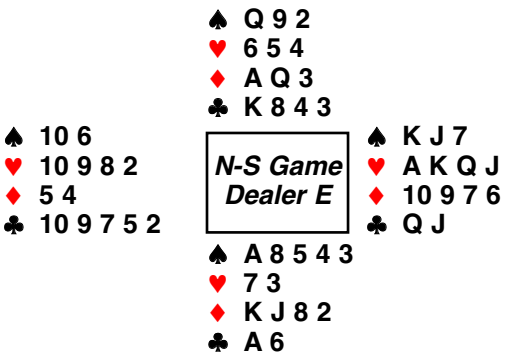
GABRIEL CHAGAS is the diminutive super-star of Brazilian bridge. Now in his fifties, he is a financier and investment consultant in Rio. He is one of just eight players in the world to have won the triple crown of World Olympiad Teams (1976), World Pairs (1990) and Bermuda Bowl (1989). He is the top-ranked South American player, having won the South American teams twenty times in twenty-four attempts in the period 1967–93. He has also won the Sunday Times *twice, in 1979 and 1992, and the Cap Gemini Pairs in 1993.*

THE finesse is usually regarded as one of the humbler forms of play, but it sometimes requires quite a lot of imagination. This is especially true of the intra-finesse, a play of which I am very fond. This diagram shows one common type of intra-finesse.



The bidding has given you a good idea of the lay-out of this suit. To hold yourself to one loser you play small towards dummy and finesse the eight! East will score the ten but later you'll enter dummy and lead the queen, smothering West's jack. Well, this is an intra-finesse.

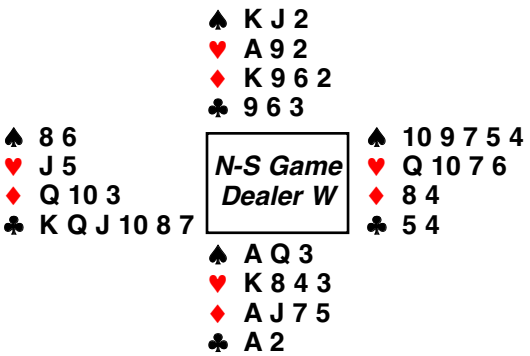
Here's how an intra-finesse can arise in practical play:



East opens a strong no-trump but South reaches Four Spades anyway. West leads the ten of hearts and South ruffs the third round. Knowing that East has the king of spades, South leads low to the nine, which loses to the jack.

South wins the club return with the ace and, in order to test the distribution, plays a club to the king and ruffs a club. With East showing out South decides to play him for three trumps, so he crosses to dummy with a diamond and leads the queen of spades.

A VETERAN intra-finesser now, you find yourself in Four Hearts on the next deal after a club overcall by West:



You duck the first club and West continues the suit. As a 3-3 trump break is unlikely, you lead a low heart towards the dummy and when West follows with the five you finesse the nine!

East wins with the ten and switches to a spade, confirming that the clubs are 6-2. You cash the trump ace and when this collects the jack from West you pick up East's remaining trumps by finessing the eight.

On the fourth trump you throw not a club but a diamond from dummy. The successful intra-finesse has brought you to nine tricks but now you must establish a diamond for game.

As you are wide open in clubs you lead a low diamond, intending to finesse the nine of this suit also, into East's hand. West, however, inserts the ten. You win with dummy's king and cash the remaining spades. When West shows out on the third spade you have a perfect count. West began with six clubs, two hearts and two spades – and therefore three diamonds.

You need no more finesses. On the third spade West is forced down to two diamonds and the jack of clubs. You therefore lead dummy's losing club, throwing West in and forcing him to lead into your diamond tenace.

This ending was very satisfying, but you would never have got there without the aid of the intra-finesse in the trump suit.

My BOLS bridge tip is:

Whenever you have to develop a shaky suit, and especially when this suit is trumps, you should consider whether you can prepare for an intra-finesse by ducking with an eight or nine on the first round.

Happy finessing.

Talking about finessing, it can often be a good idea to look as if you're doing it when in fact you are not, as the next tip suggests.

Beware bridge players bearing gifts

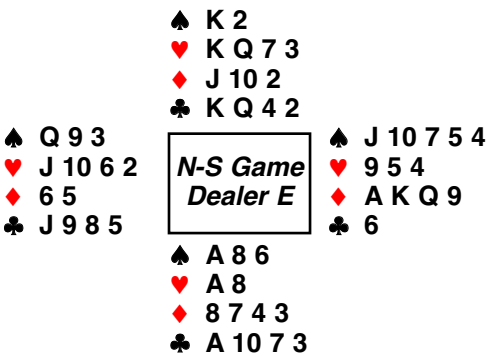
Jim Jacoby *(USA)*

YOU bridge players do a lot of humdrum and routine work. Consequently it's very easy for you to be lulled into that well-known false sense of security. Of course, in theory you should play your heart out on every deal, but as a practical matter you just don't.

It helps to get the adrenaline going, but how do you do it? This is a problem you must solve individually. But perhaps I can help with a tale from an old legend.

In Virgil's *Aeneid*, the soothsayer Cassandra warned the Trojan warriors: *'Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes.'* (I fear the Greeks, even bearing gifts.) Nevertheless, the soldiers of Troy took the gift of the wooden horse into their city. Virgil little knew that his story could assist bridge players thousands of years later. Yet, with due acknowledgement to that ancient poet, my tip to you is 'Beware bridge players bearing gifts'.

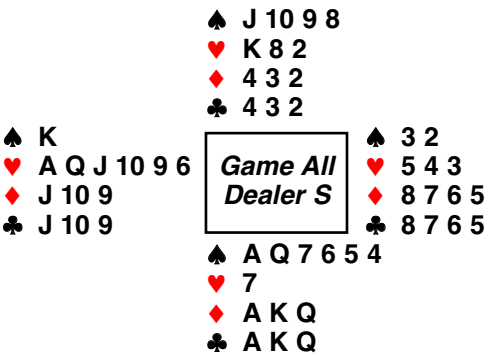
THERE is a wealth of deals with Trojan horse themes. Here is one from a recent knock-out teams final at a US regional tournament:



SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
			Pass
1♣	Pass	1♥	Double
Pass	1♠	2♠	Pass
2NT	Pass	3NT	All Pass

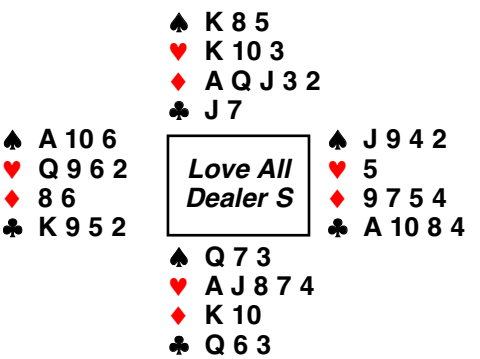
Declarer won the three of spades lead with dummy's king and cashed the king and queen of clubs. When East showed out on the second club there were only eight tricks. But declarer sent his wooden horse to the gates of Troy. He led the jack of diamonds from dummy. East, a good intermediate player, surprised VuGraph onlookers by cashing out all four diamonds, so that the subsequent play of the ace of spades squeezed West in hearts and clubs.

NEXT we have a familiar theme:



South plays in Six Spades after West has overcalled in hearts. West leads the ace of hearts and continues with a second heart, putting the lead in the North hand so that declarer can (hopefully) take a losing trump finesse. But now that you are aware of the clever traps these bridge players set, you of course simply play the spade ace – and sneer as the king comes clatttering down.

AN exciting demonstration of the wooden horse play occurred in a world championship. Bobby Wolff was the star, while the victims were Svarc-Boulenger of France.



SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1♥	Pass	2♦	Pass
2♥	Pass	4♥	All Pass

Boulenger, East, won the two of clubs lead with his ace and, after brief reflection, returned the four of clubs. Svarc, West, won with the king, played the ace of spades and continued spades.

From South's angle there was no certainty that a bridge gift had in fact been offered – and yet…! Svarc would surely be unlikely to cash the ace of spades unless he felt he had some good chance of taking the setting trick later. (Without such expectation, he might, for example, have played a low spade, hoping to find East with the queen.)

Accordingly, Wolff won with the queen of spades and played the jack of hearts, which was covered by Svarc with the queen and taken by the king in dummy. Declarer returned to his hand with the ten of diamonds and led the eight of hearts. When Svarc played low, Wolff called for the heart three…! How did it all happen?

Simple enough. Declarer decided the prompt play of the third trick for the defence suggested the queen of hearts was in the West hand. Then, when West readily covered the jack, there was a further deduction that a player of Svarc's calibre would not play the queen from Qx or Qxxx. (With such a holding, West would have to allow for the possibility that declarer originally had AJ98x(x) in hearts.)

So the play of the queen of hearts was a gift: a gift that tested our declarer. Fortunately for the Aces' world championship aspirations that year, Wolff passed the test.

Let this be my BOLS bridge tip to you:

When a good opponent seemingly gives you a present, stay alert!
Watch for a trap!
Beware bridge players bearing gifts!

The next tip is all about riding your luck – every dog has its day but can he recognise it?

Imagine … and capitalise!

The Apple, the Law and the Principle

Bernard Marcoux *(Canada)*

THE apple tree has always attracted human kind: Adam and Eve, Newton and ... Eric Kokish? (What? Yes, Eric once wrote that if you shake an apple tree [well, a bridge tree??!], ten good dummy players will fall out but maybe only one good bidder.)

Is the one-good-bidder principle the same apple that Newton received on his nose (OK, maybe it fell at his feet)? The pain Newton felt prompted him to invent the Law of Gravity. The pain of going down one has also prompted Matthew Granovetter to formulate the Law of Granovetter, or should we say the Law of Gravitynovetter: 'Never bid a grand slam if you cannot count thirteen tricks'.

Well, after Newton came Albert Einstein who said that: 'Imagination is more important than knowledge' and that the fast ball Newton saw falling from the tree is actually a curved ball.

And, in 1990, after winning the World Championship in Geneva, Gabriel Chagas, who always throws curved balls, invented the Chagas Principle. 'If you're lucky or good on the first board, things are probably going your way.'

So, all this gibberish means that if you think in straight lines you are applying the Law of Gravitynovetter.

And if you think in curves, if you let your imagination sometimes supersede your knowledge, you are following the Chagas Principle.

IN the second session of a Calcutta*, you pick up your first hand:

♠ A Q 8 7
♥ K 10 9 8 7 5 3
♦ A 6
♣ —

Partner opens One Club, you bid One Heart. Partner jumps to 3NT showing long solid clubs. This is the time to imagine: if partner has queen or jack doubleton in hearts, you have a chance in Six Hearts. You have no means of knowing, you just imagine. You were average in the afternoon session; tonight you must make it happen.

The longer you think, the less you know and the more you find that you have to take the plunge. You bid Six Hearts.

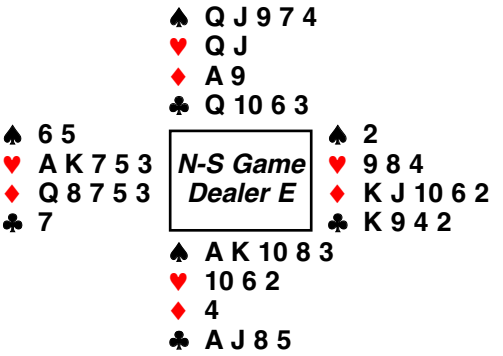
Partner has:

♠ K 5
♥ Q
♦ 7 5 2
♣ A K J 7 5 3 2

Dummy is one card short of what your imagination dreamt up but, then again, dummy always lacks imagination. You take the king of diamonds opening lead with your ace, go to dummy with a spade, play the ace and king of clubs to pitch a diamond and a spade. The moment of truth has come: queen of trumps … holds. You ruff a diamond and, imagining jack doubleton somewhere, you play the king of trumps … for the jack and ace. +1430 (12 IMPs).

IN the third round, the opponents, after preempts from your side, play Six Spades and Four Spades, go down in both contracts and you gain 17 IMPs. You feel you can't lose now. IN the fifth round, you and your partner throw a rising fast ball (one can't always throw curved balls, can one?):

*A duplicate tournament where before the event an auction is held and all the competing pairs are 'sold', thus money is raised, some of which goes to the winners, some to the 'purchaser' and often some to a charity.



SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
			2♦
2♠	5♦	5♠	All Pass

Partner leads three rounds of hearts. Declarer draws trumps and plays the queen of clubs. You cover. She takes the ace and plays … the jack from her hand!?! One down, +13 IMPs. Is it possible?

IN the sixth round the opponents climb to Five Clubs, vulnerable, doubled. Declarer can escape for –200, but also makes a mistake and you reap +500, 6 IMPs.

AFTER seven rounds, you are +61 IMPs. Halfway to go.

IN the eighth round, you play against good players experiencing a bad round, and they hurt you on the first board. They bid a real curved ball (the standard ball being 3NT): Six Diamonds, making seven, your first negative score of the round.

On the next board, you pick up the following as South:

♠ A 6
♥ A K Q 7 5 3 2
♦ K 6
♣ Q 4

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
		1♣	2♠
3♥	Pass	4♥	Pass
4♠	Pass	5♦	Pass
5♠	Pass	5NT	Pass
6♣	Pass	6♥	Pass
?			

Four Spades is Key Card Blackwood and Five Spades asks for specific king(s); 5NT showed

the king of spades and does not deny another king; Six Clubs asks specifically for the king of clubs and Six Hearts denies it. What do you do? Do you know if partner has the queen of spades or the queen of diamonds?
No.

You are at the crossroads: do you follow the Law of Gravitynovetter? With this hand, you know you can only count twelve tricks. Or should you apply the Chagas Principle? Should you bid 7NT, even if partner has denied the king of clubs? Should you imagine thirteen tricks even if you cannot count thirteen tricks? Should you go against the Law of Gravitynovetter?

Yes, and you cannot miss; from board one, luck was with you. Everything you have done turned out right; opponents have given you tons of IMPs; you're riding a high wave of success; in these special conditions, the Chagas Principle overrules the Law of Gravitynovetter. Don't go against the good vibrations, remember the first board, you cannot fail. Think in curves, not in straight lines. Imagination is more important than knowledge. Bid 7NT!!

Dummy has:

♠ K Q 5 3
♥ J 6 4
♦ A 8 5
♣ A 7 3

You win 10 IMPs and finish second overcall, +84 IMPs. In ordinary conditions, follow the Law of Gravitynovetter: 'Do not bid a grand slam if you cannot count thirteen tricks.' A fast ball on the nose is a lot or pain.

IN exceptional situations, forget Newton and follow the Chagas Principle, think in curves. So my BOLS bridge tip is:

Imagine … and capitalise!

One of the reasons that attracts us to bridge, rather than chess or poker, for example, is that it is a partnership game. We should always remember that we are on the same side…

When in Rome

Robert Hamman *(USA)*

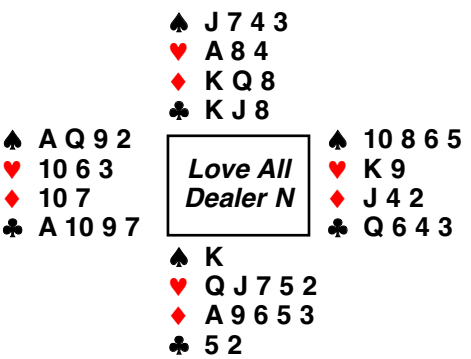
YOU'VE been there before. The contract is Four Spades. You lead your singleton club, which declarer wins in hand. At trick two declarer takes a losing trump finesse through you. Excellent! You've got two other tricks, so while you silently congratulate yourself on your fine opening lead, you contemplate your matchpoint score – or your IMPs – for one down.

But wait! Partner has started thinking! Where is that club return? Is he kidding? In your mind your lead was so obviously a singleton, partner must have been in a coma if he didn't recognise it! How could he consider anything else!?!

If partner fails to return that club, chances are the defence will go up in smoke. There may be a way to defeat Four Spades even if you don't get that ruff, but you'll never find it in your emotional state. You're too busy with recriminations and frustration. Your mind is clouded with thoughts that have no place at the bridge table.

I WAS involved in a crucial deal at the United States bridge championship in Memphis a few years ago that was the perfect illustration of this kind of trap.

It was the last deal of the whole event and our team was behind by 7 IMPs. We didn't know it, but the contract had been Four Hearts in the other room – making.



SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
		1♦	Pass
1♥	Pass	1NT	Pass
2♦[1]	Pass	3♥	Pass
4♥	All Pass		

[1] checkback for 3-card heart support

Against the game I chose to lead the ten of diamonds. Declarer won with the king in dummy. Obviously, at this point he can play ace and another heart, hoping to guess right in clubs if it comes to that. However, declarer decided that his chances of stealing the king of spades – in addition to the possibility that I had a singleton diamond and three hearts to the king plus at least one black ace – justified winning the lead in dummy and playing the three of spades at trick two. Declarer was doomed at this point. I took the king of spades with my ace and returned the seven of diamonds. Declarer ducked in dummy and took my partner's jack with his ace.

The jack of hearts came next and my partner, Bobby Wolff, won with the king. Being the careful, thoughtful player that he is, Wolff began to think about his return.

It was at this point that my energy became misdirected. I was rooting so hard for Wolff to return a diamond that I'm afraid that I might have failed to find the defence to defeat the hand even without the diamond ruff.

Say Wolff had chosen to return a spade, the only logical alternative to a diamond. Declarer would ruff and, knowing I had started with a doubleton diamond, would have been forced to play me for the ace of clubs. Pulling two more rounds of trumps and then unblocking diamonds would be a certain one down. He would have to use his last trump to return to his hand to run diamonds, and the defence would be waiting with the ace of clubs and queen of spades.

Therefore, declarer would have to play a club immediately after ruffing the second round of spades. He would reason that if East had the ace of clubs, a diamond would surely be returned and he would be one down as before. Therefore, if I ducked the club, declarer would go up with the king, pull trumps, unblock the diamond suit and return to his hand with a spade ruff. Making ten tricks – and his team would have gone to Salsomaggiore instead of mine.

I could still have defeated Four Hearts without the diamond ruff, however. On the spade return, declarer would have ruffed and been forced to lead clubs at the next trick. The winning defence is for me to rise with the ace of clubs and play the queen of spades! Look what happens to declarer on that defence. Forced to ruff, he would be down to two trumps in each hand – with the diamond suit still blocked. If he draws trumps he has no chance. If he draws one more round of trumps before playing diamonds again, hoping I started with only two trumps, I still get my ruff. If he plays a club to the king and ruffs a club, I will get my ten of hearts.

Admittedly defence of this type – deliberately establishing dummy's jack of spades – is tough to find. You will surely never find it if you sit there pining for partner to return a diamond. I was wasting my time rooting for partner to defeat the contract on routine defence instead of thinking about how to beat it if he didn't make the right play.

The reality of bridge is that your partners will vary from great to bad – and even the great ones will not always see the defence that is obvious to you.

The same thing applies in other settings. When your opening lead turns out to be a bad one, don't sit there saying 'Gee! I wish I had made a different lead.' Spend your energy searching for ways to recover. There may still be time – and ways – for your side to prevail.

My BOLS bridge tip is:

When in Rome, do as the Romans do, i.e. when you are playing bridge think about bridge.

Concentrate on what cards you should play or bids you should make rather than expend your energy worrying about what your partner should or should not do.

More psychological advice follows from one of the best bridge writers of this generation.

Ecstasy

Mike Lawrence *(USA)*

MIKE LAWRENCE of California, WBF Grand Master, was a founder member of the Dallas Aces and won Bermuda Bowls in 1970, 1971 and 1987. Although he has achieved much in the playing of the game, he is perhaps even better known as a bridge author. Two of his books, How to Read Your Opponents' Cards *and* The Complete Book on Overcalls *were named 'Book of the Year' and are classics, considered by the* The Official Encyclopædia of Bridge *to be 'mandatory requirements for a modern technical bridge library'. More recently Mike has diversified into bridge software with* Counting at Bridge, *an interactive tuition program that has been particularly well received.*

ALMOST everyone I know will admit to the following mishap. You are declaring, say, 3NT, and due to unfortunate circumstances, the defenders are running their five-card suit so you are going down at least one. Being depressed about the bidding, you discard poorly, thus messing up your entries. Suddenly, your eight remaining tricks become only six when the opponents take advantage of your sloppy carding. Three down. It's bad enough you're getting a zero, but even with your head hung halfway to the floor, you catch a glimpse of partner whispering to his kibitzer.

Sound familiar?

Bad news is infectious. It brings with it emotions ranging from disappointment to sadness to depression, any one of which can distract and cause muddled thinking.

Most players know that it is important to keep your wits when things go sour. The trick is to recognise when your concentration is failing and to get your thoughts back together.

The tough player does this automatically. The good player struggles, but usually succeeds and the rest of the world does it occasionally but not routinely.

You say, 'I know that.' I agree that you probably do know that, but do you really know it on a usable conscious level?

Strong negative emotions. They do obstruct our thoughts.

Is there anything worse for our emotions than bad news? Try this.

The bidding goes 1NT–Pass–3NT. You lead fourth best from KJ8642 of spades. Dummy has two small spades and 12 HCP.

Have you led into the ace-queen of spades? No. Partner plays the ace and starts to think. Does he have another spade? Is he thinking of switching?

Partner leads … a spade! Please! Partner leads … the spade ten. You are now in charge with six running spades which you proceed to take. Each one a little firmer than the one before, you pound out your remaining spades, the last one being especially satisfying because it is getting you +200. You're feeling a little ecstasy mixed with a little power as you turn the final spade. Feels good, doesn't it?

Now what? Cutting through a euphoric glow, you reconstruct the last four tricks. Let's see now. Partner discarded the – what did he discard? I know his last card was the seven of diamonds. But the one before that, and the one before that … Come to think of it, what did dummy discard, or for that matter declarer?

Do you think you're going to get it right? What if partner has another ace and you don't get it. Can you stand to see partner talking to that kibitzer again?

ECSTASY plays no favourites. It muddles your bidding judgement, your declarer play, and your defensive awareness with equal facility.

♠ 9 5
♥ K Q 6 2
♦ A 10
♣ A J 9 6 3

Game All
Dealer E

♠ Q J 8
♥ J 9 5
♦ K Q 7 3
♣ K Q 4

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
			Pass
1♦	Pass	2♣	Pass
2NT	Pass	3♥	Pass
3NT	All Pass		

West leads the six of spades to East's ace. This is your basic dull contract which looks like a routine nine tricks. Perhaps you have been unlucky to get a spade lead. For instance, if North hadn't bid Three Hearts, you might have gotten a heart lead allowing you ten tricks. Therefore, when East returns a spade ducked by West, you have to consider whether to finesse the ten of diamonds in order to try for ten tricks.

First, just to put your mind at ease, you cash the king of clubs. West pitches the three of hearts.

Eight fast tricks. Not nine. So, where is the ninth coming from? You have two possible plays:

(1) Play on hearts and hope spades are 4-4

(2) Finesse the ten of diamonds

Which play is right?

The answer depends on your opinion of the spades. If East returned the two, the suit rates to be 4-4 in which case you should play on hearts. If East returned a higher spade, then spades are likely to be 5-3 in which case you have to hope for the diamond finesse.

The issue here is very simple. Either you paid attention to the spade spots and made an educated decision or you didn't pay attention to the spade spots and therefore had to make an uneducated guess. If you allowed the comfort of nine apparent tricks to cloud your vision, you're in trouble. Conversely, if you ignored emotional intrusions and paid attention to the cards, then you were able to determine rather than to guess the correct play.

My BOLS tip is:

Any time you feel yourself succumbing to an emotion, whether sadness, depression, irritation, COMFORT, ELATION, or ECSTASY, you should fight it off. STOP AND PAY ATTENTION.

I have heard it said that if you believe that bridge is 'only a game' you will never become a good player. I guess there is some truth in that but not everyone is destined for greatness. Many players all over the world enjoy the game at club level and the next tip is addressed to them.

The **Complete** Book of **BOLS** Bridge Tips

Not sure what to lead?
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Worried about your defence?
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Sally Brock's distinguished playing career includes World, European, and EC Championships. She is the Assistant Editor of *BRIDGE Magazine*.

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