

SWEEPING OUT THE CORNERS OF THE BRIDGE MIND

Well it's almost time to go and hopefully a few of the synapses are still firing. Most people don't think of bridge as a physical activity, but several days of intense concentration is grueling. Many matches are won or lost at the very end of the session. Keep focus, stay in the present and as the Grateful Dead said, "Keep on truckin."

Most bridge expressions are totally meaningless. Eight ever, nine never is one of the pops to mind. Whether you finesse for a queen, depends on whether there a dangerous opponent (no, not your partner). If you have a nine card suit, but you can avoid losing the lead to the dangerous opponent by taking a finesse, take the finesse. How can you tell the dangerous opponents? The player behind the unprotected honor is the dangerous opponent.

Dummy
S: K65

LHO

RHO

Declarer
S: 75

In this scenario, your left hand opponent is the dangerous opponent. If the right hand opponent leads spades, you are guaranteed a spade trick. However, if your left opponent gets in, the next thing you know a spade comes flying through, gobbling up your king.

Another meaningless expression: when in doubt lead trump. I will tell you when to lead trump. If the opponents end up in a secondary suit, lead trump. For example, the opponents bid without competition, 1S-1NT-2C all pass. This screams for a trump lead. Dummy probably has 1 spade and declarer is going to cross ruff the hand. Lead trump early and often. Other times its good to lead trump is if you are strong in declarer's secondary suit and you think he's going to try to ruff in dummy.

One expression I believe in is "6-5 come alive." If I had a choice between a 18 point flat hand or a minimum opening hand with a 6 and a 5 card suit, give me the latter every time. Long suits provide tricks.

A couple of defensive tips: When you break open a new suit in the middle of a hand, use attitude leads. The lower the card, the more you like the suit. A high card says if you win trick, do something else.

Make the defense easy for partner. Inexperienced players rarely overtake a trick partner is going to win and hope that partner will do the right thing. I often tell my partner "There is no hope in bridge." If you know what to do, overtake the trick.

Two last notes. I see so many players that turn into Dr. Jekyll as soon as they enter the bridge room. We play the greatest game ever invented and yet so many try to suck the joy out of it. I know I'm an atypical bridge player, but one time playing in a club game against a lovely lol, her partner bid Blackwood and she responded. Now, her partner bid 5nt and she blurted out, "I don't know what that means." I said that she's asking you how many kings you have. She asked me how to answer and I told her that it was just same as aces. At first, my partner squinted at me, but later she smiled and thought it was a great thing to do.

Finally, the Eastern Massachusetts Bridge Association recently lost one its best and brightest players. Tom Belle was an excellent player, but an even better person. No matter how badly he got fixed or how terrible a mistake his partner made, Tom would always have a smile and quip. You could not have a better partner and we will all miss him. I hereby resolve to be more like Tom.

See you at the table.