

Region 9 Newsletter for Future Life Masters

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From the Editor

Did you know that the ACBL website offers options to practice and learn on their website? Just go to the menu, and under "Popular Links, click on "Play Bridge". There you will find several options including Just Play Bridge, Just Declare, and one of my favorites, Bridge Master.

Bridge Master offers you the opportunity to improve your play of the hand via a series of increasingly difficult declarer play hands that you can play until succeeding on your own or see the solution played out. Best of all, it is accessible for free on each the ACBL website and BBO.

This month, our highlight is on Lorraine McGaughy. She is one of a large group in the Houston area who just completed a beginning bridge class. Some of those who played in the supervised game last week are pictured below. It is interesting to note that many of the 64 students who participated in these beginner bridge classes came by way of ACBL's Boost Program.

Got a story you would like to share or feel like highlighting an IN player? If so, please send them my way.

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Upcoming Intermediate/Newcomer Tournaments

IN Sectionals

Nov 16-19 BCOH 499er Tournament
Dec 1-2 Austin Winter NLM

Flyer: [Click Here](#)
Flyer: [Click Here](#)

Early 2024 Regional (with Lots of IN and Gold Rush Opportunities):

Jan 22-28 Houston Lone Star Regional Flyer: [Click Here](#)

Upcoming Tournaments In General

Upcoming Tournament Info within our region:

For District 16, [click here](#).

For District 15, [click here](#).

Especially for Our 0-50 Players

District 16 provides a 12-board game on BBO just for players having 0-50 masterpoints for \$4.50 every Monday at 4:00. A director (Ken, Consie or Kim) and assistants will be on hand to offer guidance during the game.

For more information, check out our Frequently Asked Questions [D16 0-50 Game Frequently Asked Questions](#) or email Beginner20Bridge@gmail.com.



Highlight - Lorraine McGaughy



Meet newlywed and bridge newcomer, Lorraine McGaughy!

We have been married for two months but it's not our first rodeo. We each were widowed when we met. Our first date was at Pappadeaux and we ended up staying there over 4 hours without a lack for conversation. I guess you could say we hit it off from the start!

I played games like rummy and solitaire dominoes while growing up in the Baton Rouge area but had never been introduced to bridge until meeting Dick McGaughy.

I watched my first bridge game shortly before we got married "kibbitzing" at his table. With his being

an avid bridge player and bronze life master, my new husband was very happy when I told him that I would like to learn bridge so we could spend more time together. While willing to teach me himself, I felt I needed to start with a beginner bridge class to understand the basics. As luck would have it, Joyce Ryan was starting a series of lessons at the West Houston club where Dick plays regularly.

I have just finished my first lesson series. The week after our classes concluded, I played in a special supervised duplicate game was held (made up primarily with students from two of Joyce's classes). I enjoyed playing my first game and feel I understand the game much better now. With much to learn, taking more classes and making new friends at the bridge table are now in my foreseeable future!

By the way, my husband's regular partner and wife have already invited us to their home to play bridge. And yesterday, I played in my first regular game with Dick. Although we didn't "scratch", I enjoyed myself and the people there were welcoming.

Here's to new adventures!

Better Bridge Habits

At the Bridge Table

Developing good habits at the table is an important part of learning bridge. Most new players have difficulty staying within the time for each round. This month we'll look at some best practices for staying within the allotted time to play the boards.

- When you come to the table, or when the opponents come to your table greet them and cease all conversation about the previous hands.
- Once the hands are removed from the board, all conversation should stop.
- As the bidding progresses, try to focus on what's being communicated by each bid. Before the last pass and picking up your bidding cards, try to memorize the auction.
- If you are to make the Opening Lead, ask your questions about the auction, select your lead, and place it face down on the table before writing down the contract. Everyone else should write down the contract while the lead is being selected. Then ask partner if they have any questions. Write down the contract while dummy puts their hand down.
- Do not expose your private score to the opponents.
- After the play of the hand, write down the score, and if you feel the hand needs further discussion with your partner, circle the board number and make a note on your private score.
- After the round is over, if there is still time available for discussion, you can ask partner or the opponents a question. Don't try to resolve partnership communication or play issues during the game. It's best to wait and look over the hand record first.

These tips can save you a few minutes each round. They can also lead to better partnerships by not being critical during the game and waiting until later to resolve issues.

Source: Marilyn Hemenway / omahabridge.org

Eddie Kantar's Quip

To lead an honor card against a suit contract, two adjacent honors are necessary, not three, and the higher honor is led. Lead the ace from AKx(x), the king from KQx(x), the queen from QJx(x), the J from J10x(x) and the 10 from 109x(x).

www.kantarbridge.com

Improved Declarer Play

Counting

by Larry Cohen, *Bridge with Larry Cohen*

Counting is a tough (and oft-ask about) topic. It takes years of experience to be able to do this well. This article is meant only to get you started with counting.

We will talk about counting only one suit. (Counting out an entire hand takes tons of concentration, and at least 10 years of serious play.)

Here is the main message: ***Think in terms of what is missing.***

This is the opposite of the "1-2-3-4" approach. Most new players make the mistake of counting as the cards are played. For example, as declarer, they lay down an ace and everyone follows. They mentally think "1-2-3-4." They next lay down the king and LHO shows out (but the dummy and RHO follow suit). They now think: "5-6-7." They see 3 more cards in their hand and go "8-9-10." Etc.

This is a bad way to count. Get rid of this concept!

Consider this trump suit:

S: KJ54

S: AQ32

How many trumps are held by your side? 8. How many do the opponents have? 5. When you draw trump, just watch how they break. Does everyone follow to the first round? Good. (If not, they split 5-0 -- yuk!). Does everyone follow to the second round? Great! They split 3-2--there is only one trump left. If someone were to show out on the second round, then the suit was split 4-1. This typically makes life difficult, but at least you know they were 4-1.

Not only does this help you count the trump (or key) suit, but down the road, it paves the way for you figuring out other things about the distribution. Doing this at trick one will help make sure that you don't forget about that ruff you already made.

Try again with this holding:

H: 9765

H: A8432

Let's say the opponents lead spades and you had to use a trump early. No matter. There are still 4 trump outstanding (since your side had 9). When you start to draw trump, just observe if they are 2-2 or 3-1 (rarely, they will be 4-0).

What if you have to establish a side suit? Dummy has A7654 and you have K3 in your hand. Trumps have been drawn. You have lots of dummy entries to the diamonds. You want to trump diamonds in your hand and try to set up good diamonds in dummy. Think in terms of "what is missing." There are 6 missing. You'd like a 3-3 break. If they are 4-2, you still can set up a winner in dummy (the 5th round). You lay down the king and all follow. You play to the ace and all follow again. Great--they weren't 5-1 (or 6-0). So, what is the count? They are either 3-3 or 4-2. You will soon find out. Play a diamond from dummy and trump in your hand. Did both opponents follow? If so, the suit was 3-3 and there are two established diamonds in dummy. If not, they were 4-2. You will have to go to dummy and trump the 4th round to set up the 5th card in the suit.

Say you are in notrump with this suit:

C: AQ7652

C: K4

What will you need in order to take 6 tricks in the suit? Think in terms of what is missing. There are 5 missing. If they split 3-2, the suit runs. Lay down the K. All follow. Play a club to the ace. If all follow, you are home free. They were 3-2. The suit will run. What if someone shows out on the second round? They were 4-1. You will have to give them the 4th round of the suit. Hopefully, you have an entry to the long clubs to get back to enjoy the 5th and 6th round.

What about this suit:

D: Q876

D: AK53.

You are in 3NT. You count 3 sure tricks and will have an extra trick if the 5 missing diamonds divide 3-2. If everyone follows to the first 2 rounds, you have an extra trick. If someone shows out on the second round, they were 4-1.

<https://www.larryco.com/>

Demon Defense

Leads - Visualizing Suits

by Robert Todd, *Adventures in Bridge*

GENERAL

One of the major skills needed as a defender is the ability to visualize the layout or possible layouts of a particular suit around the table. This needs to be done when partner makes an opening lead and we are 3rd hand, but it also needs to be done in other suits during the defense. That means when partner (or we) breaks a new suit in the middle of the defense then we want to try to visualize the possible layouts around the table.

MIDDLE OF THE HAND AGREEMENTS

Just as with our opening leads, we need to have agreements about how we lead new suits in the middle of the hand. Most players play attitude-oriented shifts (high from nothing, low from an honor) and we can still play 4th best from interest (like Hxxxx) if we think count matters as well. (Some players do play 3rd/5th in the middle of the hand, though this is not as common.) It is a good discussion to have with partner as to the meaning of our cards when breaking a new suit in the middle of the hand. Some useful questions are:

What do we play from xxx?

Suggested Agreement - it depends on the situation.

What do we play from xxxx?

Suggested Agreement - top or second best.

What do we play from xxxxx?

Suggested Agreement - top, second, or 4th best depending on the situation.

What do we play from Hxxx?

Suggested Agreement - 4th best.

What do we play from Hxxxx?

Suggested Agreement - 4th best.

INTERPRETING LEADS

Once we have agreements with partner about how we attack new suits (what we lead from many different holdings), then we need to make use of the information available to us. We need to think about the inferences that are available to us from what partner did and what partner did not do. We have a lot to consider:

The Contract (NT vs. Suits)

- In a suit contract, partner will not underlead an Ace or touching honors on opening lead.
- In a NT contract, partner could underlead either of these holdings on opening lead.

Opening Lead vs. Middle of the Hand (we have different agreements for each)

- In the middle of the hand, partner can (or we can) underlead Aces (if it seems right) and we can underlead touching honors (if it seems right) - though both can be dangerous.

Low Card vs. High Card (Attitude vs. Count Oriented)

- Most of our middle of the hand actions are attitude-oriented, although if shifting to partner's bid suit, we might have some special agreements.

What suit did partner *not* lead? (Why didn't partner lead the expected suit?)

- Can we infer something about partner's holding because they didn't lead the suit that seemed called for - unbid suit, our suit, etc.? This could be because they have the Ace empty in the suit or they have chosen to lead another suit because of their excellent holding.

CONCLUSION

Understanding the possible layouts of a suit around the table requires us to combine the above information and considerations with "educated guesses" about the layout of the suit and hand. Using your head as a "random generator" you should be able to guess a few possible positions of the cards around the table. (Example - partner has Qxx or Kxxx). This is a skill you need to practice and work to develop to learn to make this information useful to you when defending a hand!

<https://www.advinbridge.com/>

Even the Pros Have Misunderstandings in Bidding...

Found this little gem of a story by Eddie Kantar online recently and thought it might be fun to share. Takeaway: Even pros have bidding misunderstandings when playing bridge.

I am playing with Mike Lawrence in the Men's Pairs in Houston, and we have many kibitzers.

He has talked me into playing that a jump shift from 1S to 3H shows spade support with an unknown singleton; ditto for 1H-3S.

Partner can then ask for your singleton by bidding the next step up. Fine. But it has never come up and then this hand happens:

Mike has: **S** AKQxx **H** 9xx **D** xxx **C** QJ
I have: **S** - **H** AKQ10xxx **D** AKxx **C** xx

Mike opens 1S and I forget our agreement and jump to 3H. Mike alerts and announces that I have spade support with an unknown singleton.

He then bids 4S having no interest in my singleton is. I bid 5H. He alerts and says that I have spade support with a heart void!

He then bids 6S. I bid 7H. He alerts and says that they should cancel all previous alerts.

They lead a diamond and I make 7H. We did not have one kibitzer left after that hand.

www.kantarbridge.com

It's The Law

Defender's Lead Out of Turn

Have you ever thought you won a trick and then made a lead from your hand? I have and it is embarrassing! This is a great time to politely call the Director.

If declarer or dummy won the trick, your card becomes a major penalty card to be played at the next legal opportunity.

But what if your partner won the trick? If the declarer accepts your lead, then there is no further problem.

If the declarer refuses to accept the lead, your card becomes a major penalty card, and they may require or forbid your partner's lead of that suit.

Should declarer require the lead of the suit, they may specify that your partner play the highest or lowest card of the suit you led out of turn. In either event, you will have to play the penalty card.

Law 57 - Premature Lead or Play

When a defender leads to the next trick before his partner has played to the current trick or plays out of turn before his partner has played, the card so led or played becomes a major penalty card, and declarer selects one of the following options.

He may:

- require offender's partner to play the highest card he holds of the suit led.
- require offender's partner to play the lowest card he holds of the suit led.
- require offender's partner to play a card of another suit specified by declarer.
- forbid offender's partner to play a card of another suit specified by declarer.

Note: When offender's partner is unable to comply with the choice made by declarer, they may play any legal card.

