

From the Editor

Thanks to all of you who attended the Lone Star Regional in Houston. I hope you had a great time.

I continue to see newer players who have their scores face up on the table. They try to cover them in early rounds but inevitably they will pass information to their opponents. You will **never** see top players doing this. Not only is it a way to get lower scores, but it shows a lack of respect for the game and your partner.

I'm interested in your feedback on this newsletter, so please send your comments to paulcuneo@sbcglobal.net.

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In this Issue

Better Bridge Habits:

Tips from Eddie Wold

Eddie Kantar's Tip:

Responding to a Takeout Double

Improved Declarer Play: Card Combinations

Demon Defense:

Rule of 11

Better Bidding:

Negative Doubles

It's the Law:

Penalty Cards



Better Bridge Habits

Tips from Eddie Wold


Developing good habits at the table is an important part of learning bridge. **On Feb. 13, 2020, I attended a party for Eddie Wold to celebrate his achievement of 75,000 masterpoints. Eddie offered some tips two of which are highlighted below.**

1. Your partner is your best friend. Be supportive of their actions at the table and discuss any differences of opinion after the game is over.

I can't tell you how many times I've seen this violated. Too many of us can't wait when a hand is over to criticize our partner for something they've done. Do you think a partner who's been embarrassed will play the next board better? Take it from Eddie and support your partner by treating them well.

2. You can't become a better player until you learn to evaluate your hand after an initial HCP count. You must learn to re-evaluate after the opponents and partner have made bids.

Take it from Eddie that this is a critical skill and it takes time to learn. Your hand may increase in value dramatically with a fit and well placed honors or the reverse.



When responding to a takeout double with 12+HCP, cuebid the opponent's suit to show a strong hand and then bid your suit(s) later. After the cuebid, any new suit bid by you is forcing. Your cuebid is forcing to suit agreement or to game whichever comes first.

You hold: S. KQxx H. AJxx D. Qxx C. xx

West North East South (you)

1C Dbl. Pass ?

Respond 2C to show a big hand (12+ HCP). You and partner can now bid four-card suits up the line hoping to connect in a 4-4 major suit fit. If partner bids 2D, bid 2H. If partner bids 2H or 2S, raise to game. The one who knows goes! www.kantarbridge.com



Improved Declarer Play

Card Combinations

As declarer, many times the ability to make our contract depends on playing one of the suits in a way that maximizes our chance to take tricks. The Official Encyclopedia of Bridge by ACBL has a section on playing card combinations. Here is a combination from the Encyclopedia that seems to occur frequently:

A Q x x x

J x

We can maximize our chances of 3 tricks by leading a small card towards the J. If your right hand opponent rises with the King, you have your 3 tricks. If it loses to the K on your left, play the Q and then the A. Overall there is a 93% chance of 3 tricks

If the J wins, play the small card to the Ace. If your right hand opponent has a doubleton K, it will fall. If not, hope for a 3-3 split. Overall chance of 3 tricks when the Jack wins is 56%.

Demon Defense

The Rule of 11 – Eddie Kantar writes in his book “Modern Bridge Defense” about the “rule of 11”. The rule requires that your side leads 4th best; Let’s say partner leads the Spade 5 against 3NT. Subtract the size of the card your partner leads from 11 ($11-5=6$). 6 is the key number. It tells you there are 6 cards higher than the 5 in the other 3 hands. You count the number of cards higher than the 5 in the dummy and your own hand to know how many cards declarer has that are higher than the 5. Here is an example with partner leading the 5 against 3NT:

N – 976


W - AQ854

E – J103 (you)

S- K2

At trick 1, you play the 10 which loses to the King. The rule of 11 tells you that declarer has only one card higher than the 5 and you’ve seen it. If you can gain the lead, you will lead the suit and partner will take all of the rest in the suit. Remember that declarer can also use the rule of 11, but that story is for another book. www.kantarbridge.com

Better Bidding



In his book “Double! New Meaning for an Old Bid” Mike Lawrence talks about negative doubles. This is one of the conventions that are an important part of all the major bidding systems. You can find lots of books and articles about negative doubles. Mike Lawrence writes:

W	N	E	S
1C	1D	?	

How many hearts does East need to bid 1H? How about Spades?

East needs just 4 Hearts to bid 1H and similarly 4 Spades to bid 1S. East cannot double 1D without at least 4 cards in each major suit. This means that East must bid with some poor hands if he holds 4 cards in a major suit and has 6 HCP (High Card Points).

Rule: 4 cards in both majors are needed to make a negative double of a 1D overcall. www.michaelslawrence.com



Its the Law

Laws 48 thru 52 are about Penalty Cards. The following is from Duplicate Decisions published by ACBL:

“48 - Exposure of Declarer’s Cards: Declarer is not subject to penalty for exposing a card, and no card of declarer’s hand or dummy’s hand ever becomes a penalty card. Declarer is not required to play any card dropped accidentally.

When declarer faces his cards:

- a. After an opening lead out of turn has been faced, he has accepted the lead and there is no penalty. Play continues with dummy as declarer.
- b. After a lead out of turn but before it has been faced; declarer’s cards are treated as exposed during the auction because the auction is not completed until the lead is faced. (See Law 22B.)

C. Intentionally at any time other than immediately after an opening lead out of turn, he may be deemed to have made a claim or concession of tricks and Law 68 applies. NOTE: When declarer intentionally plays a card, it cannot be changed (even if the wrong card was pulled) unless provided for in Law 47. Changes of mind are not permitted.

49 - Exposure of a Defender’s Cards: A card prematurely exposed, but not led, becomes a penalty card:

1. When a defender holds it so that it is possible for the defender’s partner to see it;
2. Or when it is named as being in the defender’s hand;
3. Or when it is played by the defender before he is legally entitled do so. However, per the footnote to Law 68, when a defender makes a statement about the trick currently in progress (such as saying “it does not matter what you play” to a declarer who is pondering), cards exposed or revealed by a defender do not become penalty cards. Law 16, Unauthorized Information, however, may apply.

50 - Disposition of a Penalty Card:

Definition of a Penalty Card: A card prematurely exposed (but not led — if prematurely led, see Law 57) by a defender is a penalty card unless the Director designates otherwise. (The Director should be called whenever this happens.)

A minor penalty card is a single card 9 or lower and exposed by accident (as in playing two cards to a trick or dropping one accidentally). It is not an “accident,”

however, if a player accidentally plays a club instead of a spade. The following facts are true about a minor penalty card:

1. It must be left face up on the table.
2. It does not have to be played at its first legal opportunity.
3. It must be played before any other card, 9 or lower, of the same suit is played.
4. It is permissible to lead or play a card, 10 or above, in the same suit before playing the minor penalty card.
5. It is permissible to play another suit.
6. The offender's partner is not subject to lead penalties, but Law 16 A., Unauthorized Information, may apply.

A major penalty card is a single card, 10 or above, exposed accidentally, or any card exposed through deliberate play (as in leading out of turn or correcting a revoke), or two or more penalty cards (note that the same defender cannot have two minor penalty cards) belonging to one defender. The following facts are true about a major penalty card:

1. It must be left face up on the table immediately in front of the player to whom it belongs until it is played or until an alternative option has been exercised.
2. It must be played at the first legal opportunity (leading, following suit, discarding, ruffing). Declarer has no options when the player with the major penalty card is on lead, it must be led.
3. The obligation to follow suit or to comply with a lead or play penalty takes precedence over the obligation to play a penalty card.
4. When a player has a major penalty card, his partner may not lead to a new trick until declarer states which, if any, of his three options he is selecting.
 - a. He may require the lead of the suit of the penalty card, just once, and all penalty cards in the suit are returned to the player's hand.
 - b. He may prohibit the lead of the suit of the penalty card for as long as the partner retains the lead, and all penalty cards in the suit are returned to the player's hand.

c. Declarer may choose to allow the offender's partner to lead any suit, in which case the penalty card(s) stays on the table and the partner leads anything.

5. Except for the fact that the offender must play the penalty card, other information arising from exposing the card is unauthorized to the offender's partner. An example is that the partner may not use the knowledge to help place other cards unless he has that knowledge from the auction or the play up to that point. NOTE: When cards are returned to a defender's hand after being major penalty cards, there are no further restrictions on the offender unless he still has penalty cards in another suit. However, information arising from seeing the card(s) is unauthorized information to the offender's partner until such information becomes available from legal sources, such as the play of the cards.

51 - Two or More Penalty Cards

1. If a defender has two or more penalty cards that can legally be played to the current trick, the declarer may designate which card shall be played.

2. If a defender has two or more penalty cards in one suit when it is his partner's turn to lead, declarer may:

a. Require the lead of that suit. Defender's cards are no longer penalty cards. He may pick them up and make any legal play.

b. Prohibit the lead of that suit. Defender's cards are no longer penalty cards. He may pick them up and make any legal play.

c. Allow the lead of any suit, in which case the cards remain penalty cards.

3. If a defender has penalty cards in more than one suit when it is his partner's turn to lead, declarer may:

a. Require the lead of one of the suits in which there is a penalty card. Defender's cards in that suit are no longer penalty cards. He may pick them up and make any legal play subject to the restrictions on any remaining cards.

b. Prohibit the lead of one or more of the suits. Defender's cards in that suit (those suits) are no longer penalty cards. He may pick them up and make any legal play, subject to the restrictions on any remaining cards.

52 Failure to Lead or Play a Penalty Card: When a defender fails to lead or play a penalty card as directed by Laws 50 or 51, he may not, on his own initiative, withdraw

any other card he played. When a defender plays a card from his hand rather than his major penalty card:

1. Declarer may accept the play. (The un-played penalty card remains a penalty card)
2. Declarer must accept the play if he has subsequently played from his own hand or dummy. (The un-played penalty card remains a penalty card)
3. Declarer may require the defender to substitute the penalty card for the card illegally played or led. Every card illegally led or played by the defender in the course of committing the irregularity becomes a major penalty card.

Additional information is available in the updated version of Duplicate Decisions: DD2020.pdf (acbl.org)