

Region 9 Newsletter for Future Life Masters

Volume 10 Issue 3 - March 2024



From the Editor

Springing forward, here's to March.

Highlighted this month is Rebecca Evans. This intermediate/newcomer (I/N) is quite the go-getter. Her ideas and initiatives will certainly benefit not only their I/N players but also help with retention and growth within our district.

Ever hear that "a card laid is a card played" but not quite sure as to exactly when it is considered "laid"? This month's "It's the Law" section covers that topic.

If any of you "non-life masters" are heading to Louisville for the upcoming NABC this month, please let us know about your experience.

We appreciate receiving your feedback, stories, and suggestions for content.

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Upcoming Intermediate/Newcomer (IN) Tournaments

IN Sectionals

Apr 18 - Apr 21 Bridge Club of Houston 499er Sectional

Apr 20 - Apr 21 Austin Spring 0-200 Sectional

May 10 - May 11 Austin Spring 0-50 Sectional

Flyer: [Click Here](#)

Flyer: [Click Here](#)

Flyer: [Click Here](#)

Regionals

May 13 - May 19 Fort Western Regional

Flyer: [Click Here](#)

(Gold Rush Pairs Tues-Sat, Bracketed Team Games Daily)

Upcoming Tournaments in General

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

♠ ♥ ♦ ♣

Weekly Online Game for 0-50 Players

District 16 provides a 12-board game on BBO just for players having 0-50 masterpoints for \$4.50 on Monday afternoons at 4:00. A director 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.



Highlighted Player - Rebecca Evans (Unit 172)



Rebecca Evans has recently joined the Unit 172 Board of Directors and is doing a great job working the Intermediate/Newcomer (I/N) program in San Antonio.

Born in Texas, she spent many years working in Rochester, MN, as an IT Project Manager. While living in Minnesota (10 years ago) she served on the unit board, chaired tournaments, and created and grew an intermediate club. After a group of bridge players approached her to help start a 0-299 game, she asked one of the stronger players to teach the group in her home. Two tables quickly grew to 6, so they officially started a sanctioned 299er game which grew into 9 tables and was later re-sanctioned for up to 499 points. That game is still going today.

Rebecca has shown the same energy in San Antonio that she displayed in Minnesota, diving into the I/N program with enthusiasm. Chairing the unit I/N committee, she devised a list of goals to focus committee efforts to reach out easing communicating with new and existing I/N players while growing the new membership. Here is her list of committee goals:

1. Work with current bridge teachers on how best to get their students to play at local games and make the effort to accommodate and help acclimate newcomers.
2. Work with club owners and the unit board to have four I/N tournaments (special games limited to < 499 points).
3. Look into starting a < 50-point newcomer game.
4. Engage others to join this committee to help in the growth of the I/N community.
5. Communicate with all the games in Unit 172 (official ACBL or not) concerning upcoming I/N events.
6. Brainstorm with others to examine ideas that will help further these goals.
7. Grow the C-level games in local sectional and regional tournaments.
8. Reach out to others in our District who have successfully grown the I/N group in their games on ideas and opportunities to grow our beginner community.

Rebecca has quickly filled an I/N leadership role and is an outstanding example of the hard-working

teammate units need to grow the future of the ACBL.

Better Bridge Habits

Pre-game Preparation

Developing good habits at the table is an important part of learning bridge. This month's tip is to spend 5-10 minutes before each game discussing your conventions and agreements with your partner.

Several good things will happen when you do this. Among them are that you'll get both of your minds focused on bridge, you can refresh one another's memories on the conventions you play, and you'll have clarity on which conventions are "on" over interference.

Eddie Kantar's Tip

Defensive Tips

Five "cannot" tips from the book, *Defensive Tips For Bad Card Holders*:

You cannot defend properly unless you remember the bidding.

You cannot defend properly unless you know what system the opponents are playing.

You cannot defend properly unless you watch the cards, particularly the little fellows.

You cannot defend properly unless you count.

You cannot expect your partner to defend properly if you make faces or show other signs of disapproval.

www.kantarbridge.com

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.

This month:

A K 10 9

x x x x

We can maximize our chances of 3 tricks by leading a small card towards the 10. If that wins or our left hand opponent rises with the Queen or Jack, we have our 3 tricks. If it loses to the Queen or Jack, then cash the A. The probability of taking 3 tricks is 90%..

Source: The Official Encyclopedia of Bridge

Demon Defense

Passive or Defensive

This article comes from Larry Cohen.

As a defender, the most important concept you can grasp is: Should we be "safe" or "attack?" Should we be "Passive or Aggressive?"

Passive is leading from three low cards or a safe sequence like 1098.

Aggressive is leading away from an honor or laying down an unsupported ace.

What if dummy is on your left and you consider shifting to a diamond in this situation:

Dummy
♦ 7 6 4

You
♦ K J 2

If you shift to the 2, you are making an aggressive, attacking play. If your partner has the ace, you will collect diamond tricks. Even if partner has the queen, you will be okay.

But, if declarer has the AQ, your play will have cost a trick.

Why make such a play? If the auction, dummy and early play indicate you need to cash out and quickly take (or establish) tricks, your best hope could be a diamond shift.

However, on most deals, you will want to go passive in this situation (and play anything but a diamond).

Say declarer is in 4♠. If he has diamond losers, (for examples, ♦Q105 or ♦1093 or even ♦A103), he will lose those diamonds *whether or not you shift to the suit*. Unless--and it should be a **bold unless**, he can discard them. If the rest of dummy is "useless"--such as no good long suit or trick-source, declarer will sit there with those diamond losers until he eventually must lose them. If dummy happens to have ♣AKQJ109, then you had better shift to diamonds--or declarer will throw them on dummy's clubs.

Sometimes you will be able to anticipate whether to be passive or aggressive before the dummy even comes down. Listen carefully to the auction. Say the auction (with no interference by our side) goes: 1♥--1♠--2♥--4♠ and your hand is:
♠765 ♥Q82 ♦KJ72 ♣832

Is it time to be passive or aggressive?

Can't you picture dummy coming down with something like ♥AKJxxx? If so, you better get to work quickly before declarer pitches all of his minor-suit losers on hearts. The best chance to get tricks is a diamond lead.

What about 1♥--2♥--3♥--4♥? This is a deal where it feels like declarer is going to fight for tricks and you would like to lead passively.

Summary: On defense, usually try to be passive. Don't make attacking/dangerous plays. But, if all the evidence is there that declarer will be able to dispose of his losers if you don't get active, then get active.

For more from Larry Cohen, the tabs to the left of the article include quizzes and practice hands and can be found by clicking [here](#).

www.larryco.com

Better Bidding

Balancing with Distributional Hands

Continuing on the topic of "balancing", Robert Todd discusses how to deal with distributional hands in his *This Week in Bridge (TWiB) Lesson #152* by Robert Todd at advinbridge.com.

General

Balancing with a distributional hand is more straightforward than balancing with a balanced hand, although we still "borrow" 3 points from partner. Let's look at options for balancing with one or more suits or a takeout double.

Defense

When we have a shapely hand, we should consider if the opener might have a shapely hand as well before we balance. We should consider our own defensive values when debating whether to balance in or pass the hand out - particularly we should consider if we have enough defense to beat a game in the opponent's suit. One of the most sinking feelings in bridge comes from this auction:

1♥ P P 1♠
4♥

We should be careful about balancing if we fear this type of rebid by LHO, or really any rebid that lets LHO improve the contract.

Single-Suited Hands

With one long suit, we balance by bidding that suit naturally and as cheaply as possible. We do borrow 3 points from partner to balance. So if we have a genuine 16 or more HCP, we start with a takeout double and then bid our suit on the next round – the same principles as a “double and bid” direct overcall, just with the extra points borrowed from partner to treat it more like a 19+ point hand. On the other end of that spectrum, we could also balance with a good 5-card suit and as little as 8 pts if we think it is right and want to compete.

Examples

1♥ P P 1♠ 8+ HCP, 5+♠

1♥ P P X
P 2♣ P 2♠ 16+ HCP, 5+♠

We also have a special jump overcall available in the balancing seat. Because it doesn't make sense to make a preemptive bid in the pass-out seat (just pass it out with that hand!), this jump overcall is used to show an intermediate hand. An intermediate jump overcall (IJO) shows 13-16 HCP and a good 6+card suit. This type of hand is almost good enough to double and bid, but the IJO shows the quality suit, values, and playing strength of balancer's hand in one call.

Example

1♥ P P 2♠ 13-16 HCP, 6+ good ♠

2-Suited Hands

Since a balancing 2NT bid is natural, showing 19-21 points, we have no Unusual 2NT bid available in the balancing seat. (Unusual 2NT is also most commonly a weak bid, and we don't need that in the balancing seat.)

A Michaels cuebid can normally be either weak (5-11 points) or strong (16+) points. But again, since we don't need a weak bid in the balancing seat, a balancing Michaels cuebid is strong once we include the 3 points borrowed from partner's hand (meaning about 13+ HCP.)

Example

♠ KQ873
♥ AJT92
♦ 6
♣ K5

1♦ P P 2♦ Michaels with both Majors, 13+ HCP points

3-Suited Hands

With a 3-suited hand that is short in the opponent's suit we can balance with a takeout double with fewer HCP than we need to make a takeout double in the direct seat. This is often done with as little as 9-10 HCP, so that when we borrow 3 points from partner, we have a full opening hand.

We should be careful to consider that we have enough defense that we could beat the contract if the opponent jumps to game (as considered previously). We should also consider if we have enough defense so that if partner passes our takeout double, having made a trap pass, we will feel confident in beating the contract.

Example

♠ AT63
♥ 8
♦ A9843
♣ Q75

1♥ P P X

Conclusion

Balancing into the bidding after an opening bid by LHO and two passes takes a good amount of judgment. This is especially true with a distributional hand. We weigh wanting to compete in the bidding (not letting the opponents buy the contract too low) against not letting the opponents improve the contract by reaching a better fit or getting to a game that they may have missed. Considering the amount of defense we have to go along with the offensive nature of our hands will help us make good decisions in using our balancing bidding tools.

It's The Law

A Card Laid is a Card Played...

While we do give some thought to which card is played, most of us do not really think about *how* a card is played. The ACBL, however, has given a great deal of thought to how a card is played. These thoughts are expressed in **Law 45, CARD PLAYED**.

This discussion covers sections of Law 45 that relate to frequent actions at the table. The *Laws* can be found in their entirety here:

<https://web2.acbl.org/documentlibrary/play/laws-of-duplicate-bridge.pdf>

Law 45A Play of Card from a Hand

Each player except dummy plays a card by detaching it from his hand and facing it on the table immediately before him.

This description is consistent with how most of us think about playing a card from our hand: we select it and put it on the table, face up. There is a footnote in this section about the opening lead being placed face down.

Law 45B Play of Card from Dummy

Declarer plays a card from dummy by naming the card, after which dummy picks up the card and faces it on the table...

This too seems fairly straightforward: declarer calls for a card and it is played from the dummy. It is also mentioned that declarer is allowed to select the card himself.

Law 45C Card Deemed to be Played

This section is divided into subsections. We are looking at the first two.

Law 45C1

A defender's card held so that it is possible for his partner to see its face is deemed played to the current trick.

Notice here that the criterion is whether the partner, not the declarer, could have seen it. If we, as declarer, see a defender's card, we cannot force the defender to play that card unless the defender's partner could have seen it also.

Law 45C2

*Declarer is deemed to have played a card from his hand if it is
(a) held face up, touching or nearly touching the table; or
(b) maintained in such a position as to indicate that it has been played*

For declarer, there is no criterion relate to whether his partner could have seen it; it does not matter. The criterion is how close it was to actually being played. Simply detaching the card from the hand and holding it in the other hand does not constitute playing the card.

Law 45D Dummy Picks up a Non-designated Card

Law 45D1

If dummy places in the played position a card that declarer did not name, the card must be withdrawn if attention is drawn to it before each side has played to the next trick, and a defender may withdraw and return to his hand a card played after the error but before attention was drawn to it; if declarer's RHO changes his play, declarer may withdraw a card he had subsequently played to that trick.

Note the following:

- If the error has been discovered before both sides have played to the trick, the error must be corrected.
- If the error is corrected, then the next defender (declarer's RHO) may change the card played to the trick.
- If declarer's RHO changes the card played, declarer may change his card played. However, if declarer's RHO does not change his card, then declarer's card must stay as played.

Law 45G Turning the Trick

No player shall turn his card face down until all four players have played to the trick.
We might think of this as common courtesy at the table, but it is actually a law!

So, how do we avoid running afoul of Law 45? We might want to consider these habits:

- We will not touch a card in our hand until we are sure it is the one we want to play.
- Having selected a card from our hand, we will look at it before placing it on the table.
- When playing from dummy, we will confirm declarer's call if we did not hear it clearly.

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