

Keeping Your Sense of Humor

One of the good things about maturing (or just plain aging) is that you more frequently see the humor in things that go awry at the bridge table. Someone once said, "Bridge is a great comfort in your old age....but it also helps you get there faster." While the misbids, misplays, and misdefenses (of your partner, of course!) tend to turn your hair gray, these are often mitigated by things that are said that make you laugh and smile.

While all of us get a warm feel-good sensation from a well-bid and/or well-played hand, we more often have to deal with mistakes.....errors in card play, errors in judgment, or just plain lack of focus. Without these mistakes at the bridge table I maintain that we all would have given up the game long ago. If we all played this game perfectly it would lose its challenge. Perhaps George Orwell said it best..."To see what is in front of one's nose requires a constant struggle."

Take this hand for example.

	West	North	East	South
North	Pass	1♣	1♦	Pass
♠ K3	1♠	4♣	Pass	5♣
♥ A2	Pass	Pass	Dbl	Pass
♦ T	5♥	Pass	5♠	Dbl
♣ KQJT8743	Pass	Pass	Pass	
West	East	Opening lead: ♦T Result: Down 7 for -1700		
♠ T98542	♠ A7			
♥ K9753	♥ J84			
♦ 5	♦ K87643			
♣ 5	♣ A6			
South				
♠ QJ6				
♥ QT6				
♦ AQJ92				
♣ 92				

Now when something this drastic happens, it's certainly best to have a sense

of humor. The perpetrator, after this disaster occurred, stated to the table, "We had a partnership misunderstanding. My partner assumed I knew what I was doing." Now it's very hard to continue to be upset when your partner can find some humor in the situation.

After a similar disaster, I once heard the following: "'I'm sorry, partner, I had a card misplaced." To which his partner innocently replied, "Only one." Again this helped to smooth over the transgression with humor in order to continue the game without bitterness and resentment.

At age 77, Oswald Jacoby supposedly said, "I favor light opening bids. When you're my age, you're never sure the auction is going to get back to you in time." Perhaps this helps to explain the tendency to BID, BID, and then BID some more these days. Some partners think that I am 20 years behind the times. They say that now days you pay your money to bid... I seem to think you still need cards.

Alfred Sheinwold must have had a very good perspective regarding playing bridge. We can learn from some of his quips. "It's not enough to win the tricks that belong to you. Try also for some that belong to the opponents." Or "A player who can't defend accurately should try to be declarer." Or, "One advantage of bad bidding is that you get practice at playing atrocious contracts." Another is, "There were only two acceptable excuses for not leading the suit your partner has opened; having no cards in the suit, and sudden death." And the one that I like best, "Since the average person's small supply of politeness must last him all his life, he can't afford to waste it on bridge partners."

While John McKay wasn't known for his bridge playing but rather as an excellent coach, he, too, had a wonderful sense of humor. A couple of his quotes could just as well apply to bridge also. For example, when you are asked about your team's execution after losing an important team event, you could say as he did when asked about his basketball's team's execution following a loss, "I'm all for it." Or, perhaps, as he said after a particularly humiliating loss, "Those who need showers take them." Try one of these on your teammates...but only if you can run fast.!

Alan Truscott maintains that, "Bridge is essentially a social game, but unfortunately it attracts a substantial number of antisocial people." Perhaps this is

true, but I have my doubts. Rather I think Frank Perkins put it better when he said, "I believe that contract bridge is particularly attractive to people with a scrappy dispositions." Bridge players enjoy a challenge, but there is also a certain amount of truth to the statement that "If you have the slightest touch of masochism you'll love this game." Victor Mollo put it better when his Rueful Rabbit character stated, "One gets use to abuse. It's waiting for it that is so trying."

Watching bridge online is often a major source of entertainment for many of us. It's not just that you see some good bridge; you also see a whole lot of suspect bridge with the resulting humorous observations and comments. These come from "specs" or those people who prefer to watch bridge rather than put themselves in the line of fire. For example, some recent comments that I saw: "It's my fault for not making the suit you were counting trump." Or, "The best part of bridge is the Post-Morons." Or, "I'd like a review of the bidding with all the original hesitations and inflections." Or, "If I did everything right, I wouldn't be playing with you." One of my favorites was an explanation of an alert: "I'm requested to further misdescribe my hand."

And while not in the humorous mode, there are a couple of instructional quotes that need sharing. Alan Sontag has said "It is not the handling of difficult hands that makes the winning player. There aren't enough of them. It is the ability to avoid messing up the easy ones." Another is from Matthew Granovetter who said: "Most bridge players prefer consistency in their partners rather than brilliance."

It's always best to remember that bridge is a game of mistakes. "Try to learn from the mistakes of others. You won't live long enough to make them all yourself" (again from Alfred Sheinwold). Therefore, by all means, **KEEP** your **SENSE** of **HUMOR** right beside you at the bridge table..... I promise you will need it. Also keep in mind that the difference between genius and stupidity is that genius has its limits.

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