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BETTER BRIDGE

THE MAGAZINE FOR SOCIAL AND
DUPLICATE BRIDGE PLAYERS

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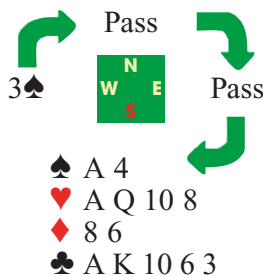
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Editorial

Victor Mollo, a famous British bridge writer and journalist, created a menagerie of animal characters to represent the players at his local bridge club. The Hideous Hog is a favorite. Why, we might wonder, would a revolting, controlling hog be so popular? His comments are so outrageous that he actually becomes endearing.

For example, HH wants his finesses to work 8 or 9 times out of 10; while most players consider themselves lucky if their finesses work half the time. A closer look at the Hog's ideas, however, reveals that he was onto something good! **David Lindop**, in *Play of the Hand*, shows several ways we can improve our odds when taking finesses. HH would be pleased.

Preemptive opening bids are very popular. Suppose the opponent on our left opens 3♠. This is followed by two passes and we have to make a decision with this hand:



Are we going to bid 3NT without a diamond stopper? Double without diamond support? Pass with such a good hand? If we do decide to double, what will we do if partner bid 4♦? In *Point of View*, the experts share their opinions.

If we're defending against a trump contract, it's common for declarer to draw our low trumps and leave us with a high trump. Should we take this winner at our first opportunity? Little is written about this topic for several reasons: it's a challenge that is usually embedded in the middle

of the play, and it seems like an unimportant decision. We're winning a trick with the high trump, whenever we choose to take it. *Defender's Corner* shows the importance of timing in situations like this. It offers a guideline to follow, and we can observe the results.

2/1 Game Force might be the next bidding wave to sweep over the game of bridge. In this issue we show how the auction proceeds after the first two bids. Now the spotlight is on finding **WHERE** to play the contract. Even if our partnership doesn't intend to play this

system, it's helpful to know about it. The previous articles co-written with **Eric Rodwell** are available from:

www.audreygrant.com

As West, we have to lead against a small slam after this auction:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			INT
Pass	6NT	All Pass	

♠ J 10 9 5 *The Inner Game of*
♥ 9 8 3 *Bridge* outlines how
♦ A 10 3 we can be comfortable
♣ 9 5 3 with whatever choice
 we make.

This issue offers practice with suit combinations through *At a Glance*, *Quizzical Pursuits*, and a separate article on *Suit Combinations*.

Jerry Helms gives advice on the action to take after partner opens and right-hand opponent doubles.

We wish you the very best for the holiday season and thank you for being part of BETTER BRIDGE.

All the best,

— **Audrey Grant, Editor**

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The Inner Game of Bridge

by
**Audrey Grant &
Maria Gonzalez**

It's now generally accepted that games have a psychological component. To achieve our goals, whatever they might be, requires that we develop a good mental attitude. "If you want to achieve...you have to do it through meditation and self improvement through the mind. That is something my mother passed on to me: to be able to calm myself down and use my mind as my main asset." Useful advice from Tiger Woods.

How do we do this? Mindfulness is about being in the present moment, and doing one thing at a time, one moment at a time. Suppose, for example, we're playing against a pair we would especially like to beat. We're not concentrating on what we were doing before the game, or what we will do later in the day. We're in the present, we have a goal, and we're focused. Frankly, we think these players are arrogant, and we'd like to put them in their place.

The player on our right opens 1NT and the player on our left jumps to 6NT. We almost expected a dramatic auction like ♠ J 10 9 5 this! This pair is so ♥ 9 8 3 lucky against us. We're ♦ A 10 3 on lead with these cards: ♣ 9 5 3

We don't want to commit a fatal error! We start to think about what we perceive as the magnitude of our decision. If only the lead was against 1NT or 3NT, we would be able to calm ourselves. Here are tips to implement mindfulness.

Identify the task at hand.

Our objective is simple: make an opening lead. We review the bidding, look at the thirteen cards in our hand, and pick what we think is the best card under the circumstances.

Avoid thinking about the outcome of a particular deal.

Gavin Wolpert and Jenny Ryman, won the Blue Ribbon Pairs in 2005. 19-year old Jenny was the youngest player to achieve this honor. Gavin, at 21, was close behind. After two days of play, they were in the finals. They knew they had a chance to win and to break a record. Before going into the last round, they both agreed that they would put the possibility of victory out of their minds. They would play as if this was a regular session of duplicate bridge. As Gavin said, "If we thought about winning, we'd start making mistakes. We'd put too much pressure on ourselves in one particular deal."

Accept that we can only control our choice; in this case, the opening lead. We can't control the outcome.

Even duplicate bridge is a combination of luck and skill. We could choose the best card from a technical standpoint, and it might lead to a poor result while a seemingly inferior choice could produce the winning score. It's irritating to imagine that we cannot control the outcome of the deal through the 'skill' of our opening lead — but it's not possible.

Suppose we lead the ♠J, a logical choice. This could be the full deal:

♠ J 10 9 5	♠ K 8	♠ 7 3 2
♥ 9 8 3	♥ K Q 5	♥ 7 6 4
♦ A 10 3	♦ J 7	♦ K 9 6 5 4
♣ 9 5 3	♣ A Q J 10 6 4	♣ 8 2
	♠ A Q 6 4	
	♥ A J 10 2	
	♦ Q 8 2	
	♣ K 7	

Disaster! After our opening lead, declarer takes all thirteen tricks: three spades, four hearts, and six clubs. We don't even get our ♦A. Worse than that, if we'd led the ♦A, partner would encourage with the ♦9, and we'd actually defeat the contract.

We might admonish ourselves for not finding the winning lead, but if we had led the ♦A, this might be the layout:

♠ K 8 4		♠ 7 3 2
♥ K Q 5		♥ 7 6 4 2
♦ K 7 6		♦ J 9 5 4
♣ A Q J 10		♣ 8 2
♠ J 10 9 5	♠ 7 3 2	
♥ 9 8 3	♥ 7 6 4 2	
♦ A 10 3	♦ J 9 5 4	
♣ 9 5 3	♣ 8 2	
	♠ A Q 6	
	♥ A J 10	
	♦ Q 8 2	
	♣ K 7 6 4	

The lead of the ♦A gives declarer twelve tricks: three spades, three hearts, two diamonds, and four clubs. If we don't lead the ♦A, declarer gets only one diamond and goes down. We'd be asking ourselves why we didn't make the 'normal' lead of the ♠J.

Much is outside a player's, or athlete's control. The irony is that as we remain calm — and relinquish the control which we never had — win or lose, we play a better game.

Don Miguel Ruiz, in THE FOUR AGREEMENTS, suggests that we agree to always do our best, under any circumstances; no more and no less. He advises that our best is never going to be the same from one moment to next. If, for example, we were not playing against a pair which, in our mind, was always lucky against us, our mindset might be different.

So after the game, when all 52 cards have been viewed and opinions given about the best lead, we can be comfortable knowing that regardless of the outcome, we played well, in all aspects of the game. 