

## Tidbits from Tom

### No absolutes in bridge

No rule or guideline or bid or play in bridge is 100%. In fact one most famous guideline in bridge is called the Law of Total Tricks. It is only right about 70% of the time and bridge players call it a LAW !!! In bridge we try to take actions that are 60% right , that also means they will be wrong 40% of the time. Do not get discouraged, stay positive and in the long run you will average 60% even if you get a 35% game every now and then.

### Estimate HCP in partners/opponents hands

One of the greatest tools a player can utilize is to simply estimate peoples HCP as it provides so much information. This simple tool can direct powerful defense or declarer play. You usually can get away with ballparking the figure like partner has roughly two kings.

### Use Patterns to Count

If you are trying to count to 13 all the time it can be very taxing on the brain. Much easier is to recognize patterns that repeat themselves on every hand. There are ten patterns which make up 90% of the hands. For example you are wondering what is the declarer's last card, it is much easier to say I know declarer has 5 Spades- 4 Hearts - 2 Diamonds , the brain will recognize the 5-4-2-2 pattern and you will know instantly they must have 2 clubs without counting. You can also utilize this when counting trump, if started with 5 trumps in hand, 3 in dummy both players followed to the first two rounds, the pattern is 5-3-3-2, and there is one trump outstanding.

4-4-3-2, 21.5%	5-4-3-1, 13 %	6-4-2-1, 5%
4-3-3-3, 10.5 %	5-4-2-2, 10.5 %	6-3-3-1, 3.5%
4-4-4-1, 3%	5-5-2-1, 3 %	
5-3-3-2, 15.5 %	6-3-2-2, 5%	

Source: Encyclopedia of Bridge 7th Edition

### 25 High Card Points = Bid Game

While the game will not make all the time, this is best practice. This concept is behind almost all bidding logic and the fundamental reason for playing 2/1.

### Majors > Notrump > Minors

This paradigm evolves from the impact of how bridge is scored coupled with the fact that in a trick taking card game suit contracts usually take at least one more trick than notrump contracts. 4 Major is the easiest game to make in bridge, 3NT is the second easiest , while taking 11 tricks in 5 of minor is one hardest thing to do at bridge. You can see the paradigm in the conventions we are taught: transfers, Stayman, new minor forcing, negative doubles, support doubles , Jacoby 2NT, Bergen etc.. all deal with finding a major suit. Notice the lack of conventions that deal with minors.

### **What you play does not matter as much as KNOWING what you are playing**

Often playing a poor system and remembering it is better than playing a better system and forgetting. Also note any change you make is going to be screwed up by each player at least 7 times before you get it right.

### **With Support - Support !!**

This is a quality of life improvement , if you always raise partner suit when you have support it relieves a lot of stress in the auction and the partnership as a whole.

### **Try to open 1nt as much as possible**

Partnership methods over 1nt are often well defined, utilize them !!

### **Don't worry about stoppers when bidding notrump, the opponents have not led the suit yet**

One of biggest concerns players have is about bidding notrump when they have two little cards in an unbid suit. In an UNCONTESTED auction bidding notrump is about conveying to partner a HCP range and a balance hand not showing stoppers. Rarely in bridge do you hold all of the good cards in your own hand you have to rely on partner to hold something. Even if partner has no stopper the opening leader might lead a different suit or they might be afraid of leading from a tenace into a notrump bidder.

### **Points in Long Suit= Offense, Points in Shorts = Defense**

### **5 card suits - add 1 points, 6 card suits - add 2 points**

Bridge is about taking tricks, long suits take tricks. When you evaluate your hand always consider long suits and entries for partner to cash your long suits.

### **More Shape - less HCP you need , Less Shape - the more HCP you need**

The one caveat to this method is make sure you find a FIT with partner before going crazy with shape despite a lack of HCP.

### **With long trump, lead your best suit don't look for ruffs**

When you hold long trumps often it is best to try and ruff declarer down to equal or shorter trump length rather than drawing your own trump by ruffing. A similar point is to not to look for ruffs when you have natural trump tricks.

### **Making the hand with long trumps ruff is usually a good path forward**

Often people make declarer happy by switching to side suits when they could threaten declarer losing control of the hand by shortening their trump length.

### **With good tricks in side suits- draw trump, with bad side suits and good trump look to ruff**

Knowing when to draw trump and when not to draw can be one of the most challenging aspects of declarer play.

### **Carding is always Attitude > Count > Suit Preference**

Carding methods do not need to be complex if you prefer you can play just attitude signals with a partner and do quite well. Having a general paradigm

### **When in doubt lead 4th best , Think about leading the unbid suit**

There is a reason that 4th best leads are popular at all levels of bridge in almost all auctions, it works. A

### **Attack Dummy Short Suits in Defense**

Dummy will rarely pitch all of their 5 card suits but it can easily pitch their 2 card suits.

### **Try to go passive in defense - let declarer make the mistakes**

When defending you often have to choose between an active and passive defense. Active defense means you are worried your defensive tricks can disappear. Signs for active defense include but are not limited to high level contracts, side long suits in dummy or declarer's hand, and hands with lots of ruffing. Most hands call for a passive defense that is making declarer guess the hand not you.