

LESSON 8

Putting It All Together



General Concepts



General Introduction

Group Activities

Sample Deals

GENERAL CONCEPTS

Play of the Hand

Combining techniques

- Promotion, length and finesses
- Using the trump suit in combination with promotion, length and the finesse

Choosing among techniques

- Eight ever, nine never: choosing the best way to capture the queen
- Counting tricks: basing decisions on the number of tricks needed
- Safety plays

Combining alternatives

- Which suit first: deciding on the order of play
- Combining chances
- Help from another suit

Choosing among alternatives

- Go for the sure thing
- Go for the right number of tricks
- Go with your only chance
- Go with the odds

Guidelines for Defense

The defenders' plan

- How many tricks do we need to defeat the contract?
- How many tricks do we have?
- How can we establish additional tricks?
- How do we put it all together into an overall plan?

Bidding

Preemptive bids

- The theory behind preemptive bids
- Requirements for a preemptive opening bid
- Responding to a preempt
- Competing against a preempt

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

This is the most delicate lesson to handle in the *Play of the Hand in the 21st Century* course. We want to give our students an idea of how to put the PLAN and the techniques we've discussed for the past seven lessons into perspective and allow them to go out and play with confidence. That's a tall order. We're walking a fine line in this lesson. We want to help them become independent players without providing them with too much information. If the students leave our class confused and afraid to play, they'll be reluctant to come back for the next lesson series.

Keep everything as simple as possible and watch the class carefully for any signs that they're lost. The material could lure us into thinking that we're talking to experienced bridge players. Remember this is only their sixteenth lesson. If the students don't play at home, which they may not, they have been declarer on no more than 16 deals in their entire bridge playing career.

“When it comes to the last step in the PLAN and you are considering how to put it all together, you often find that you can combine some of the techniques we've been looking at. You have a toolkit of techniques. You can develop the tricks you need through promotion, length, the finesse, ruffing losers or discarding losers on extra winners.

“In this lesson, we'll see how these techniques can work together. You might find that a suit can be developed through a combination of promotion and length. In addition, you'll often be presented with a number of alternatives and have to select one. There may be more than one way to play a particular suit. You may have a choice of suits which you could develop for the tricks you need. We're going to look at putting everything you know all together, in order to give yourself the best chance of making your contract.”

GROUP ACTIVITIES

EXERCISE ONE: Combining Techniques

Introduction

“Let’s see how two techniques can be used together when developing a suit. Take the heart suit and lay out the following cards:

N — K Q J 3 2

S — 6 5 4

“This suit can be developed with a combination of promotion and length. The king can be used to drive out the ace — now your queen and jack are promoted into winners. But there’s more. The opponents have five cards, and you can hope they are divided 3–2. By the time the king, queen and jack have been played, your remaining small cards will be winners, giving you a total of four winners in the suit.

“To see for yourself how this works, divide the rest of the hearts between the opponents’ hands and see what happens. If you divide the missing cards 4–1, you’ll have to give up two tricks to the opponents, but you’ll end up with three tricks through a combination of promotion and length.”

Note that you don’t want to make the discussion too complicated. There’s also an advantage in making the initial lead toward the dummy (in case there is a singleton ace on the left). However, this is the type of detail that will tend to confuse the majority of the students. Keep it simple!

“Sometimes you can combine the finesse with length to take the tricks you need. Give the ♥3 to declarer and replace the ♥K with the ♥A:

N — A Q J 2

S — 6 5 4 3

“You would lead a small card toward the dummy and take a finesse. If it succeeds, and you have an entry back to your hand, you can repeat the finesse. The next step is to count on the length. Randomly divide the rest of the hearts between the opponents’ hands as you would expect them to be divided, 3–2. You’ll see how an extra trick can be developed through length. By combining techniques, you can take all four tricks if the king is on your left, three if the king is on your right.”

Instructions

“How would you play the suit layouts in Exercise One if you have sufficient entries between the two hands? How many tricks would you expect if the missing high cards lie favorably and the suit divides as you might expect?”

DUMMY: 1) Q J 10 5 2 2) 7 6 2 3) K Q 8 6 2 4) A Q 9 3 2 5) Q 10 3 2

DECLARER: 8 4 3 A Q J 8 3 7 5 6 K 6 5 4

Method:	<u>Promotion & length</u>	<u>Finesse & length</u>	<u>Finesse & length</u>	<u>Finesse & length</u>	<u>Promotion, Finesse & length</u>
# Tricks:	<u>3</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>3 (4)</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>

Follow-up

Discuss the exercise. You might say something like this:

“In the first layout, three tricks can be developed by combining promotion and length. Once the opponents’ ace and king are driven out by your queen and jack, the 10 is promoted into a winner. Now, if the missing cards are divided 3–2, by the time you win a trick with the 10, dummy’s remaining two cards will be winners.

“In the second layout, a combination of the finesse and length will get you five tricks, if everything goes well. You need the king placed favorably on your right, plus a 3–2 division of the missing cards. Even if the finesse loses, you’ll end up with four tricks if the suit breaks 3–2.

“The third layout is interesting, because you could use either a combination of promotion and length or the finesse and length. You could lead dummy’s king to drive out the ace and promote the queen. If the missing cards are divided 3–3, you can take the queen and then give up a trick to the opponents, ending up with three tricks in the suit. However, you give yourself a better chance by leading toward the dummy twice. If the ace is on your left, you’ll get tricks with both the king and queen. If the suit also divides 3–3, you’ll end up with the maximum of four tricks from this suit. If the ace is on your right or the suit breaks 4–2, you’ll be back to three tricks. (You’ll be down to two tricks if the ace is on your right and the suit breaks 4–2.)

“In the fourth layout, the opponents have seven cards, and you expect them to be divided 4–3. If the finesse wins, you then could play the ace and give up two tricks in the suit to establish your remaining small card as a winner. You would end up with three tricks in the suit.

“In the final layout, you have a combination of promotion, the finesse and length. You can use the king to drive out the ace and promote your queen into a winner. Then you can lead a small card toward dummy and finesse the 10, hoping the jack is on your left. If this works, you can play the queen, and if the suit divides 3–2, your remaining card will be a winner. Three tricks in all.”

Notice that there is no need to get into a discussion of first leading from dummy toward the king (guarding against a singleton ace or doubleton ace-jack on your right). Keep it straightforward.

Conclusion

“Often a suit requires that you use a combination of the techniques you have learned in order to develop the maximum number of extra tricks.”

EXERCISE TWO: Choosing a Technique

Introduction

“Sometimes we will have a choice of techniques within the same suit. We can use one or the other, but not both. Lay out the following cards in the diamond suit:

N — K J 10 3

S — A 6 5 4

“You have all of the high cards except the \spadesuit Q. You could play the ace and king and, if the queen did not fall (appear), use the jack to drive the queen out and promote the 10 as a third trick. Alternatively, you could try a finesse. Take the ace and lead toward the dummy, playing the 10 (or jack) if a small card appears.

“Which method should you choose? If you need only three tricks, it doesn’t much matter. But if you need all four tricks, or can’t afford to lose a trick to the opponents, there is a guideline that will help you: *eight ever, nine never*. This means that when you are missing the queen and have a choice of finessing or playing the ace and king first, take the finesse with eight or fewer cards and play the ace and king with nine or more.

“Add the \spadesuit 2 to dummy.

N — K J 10 3 2

S — A 6 5 4

“Now what do you do when you play the ace and a small card toward dummy and the queen still hasn’t appeared? (Play the king.)

“The guideline *eight ever, nine never* is useful when you don’t have any other information to go on. On any particular deal, there may be reasons why you don’t want to choose the best ‘theoretical’ play. You might not have enough entries, you might want to keep a dangerous opponent off lead and so on.

“Lay out this familiar combination:

N — K Q 3

S — 6 5 4

“The best play to take two tricks is to try a finesse by leading twice toward the king and queen. If you needed only one trick from the suit, however, or didn’t have enough entries, you could lead the king and promote one trick with the queen.”

Instructions

“How would you play the suit layouts in Exercise Two in order to get the *maximum* number of tricks? What’s the maximum number of tricks you could take?”

DUMMY:	1) A J 6 3	2) A 8 4 2	3) A K J 3	4) 8 4 2	5) K 9 5 3 2
DECLARER:	K 9 4 2	K J 7 5 3	8 6 2	K Q 6	8 7 4
Method:	<u>Finesse</u>	<u>A and K</u>	<u>Finesse</u>	<u>Finesse</u>	<u>Finesse</u>
Maximum # Tricks:	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>

Follow-up

Have the students try the exercise and then discuss it with them if there are any problems. You might end up saying something like this:

“In the first layout, you can use the guideline *eight ever, nine never*. Play the king and then finesse the jack. If the finesse works and the suit breaks 3–2, you’ll end up with all four tricks.

“On the second layout, you can apply the *nine never* guideline and play the ace and king, hoping the queen falls. If it does, you end up with five tricks in the suit.

“The *eight ever* includes suits with fewer than eight cards, so on the third layout you would finesse dummy’s jack. If the suit divides 3–3, you could take four tricks. If you have lots of entries, it wouldn’t do any harm to take dummy’s ace (or king) first, in case there was a singleton queen on your right. (Of course, if there is a singleton queen, declarer could take only three tricks in the suit.)

“On the fourth layout, your best chance for the maximum number of tricks is to lead twice toward the king and queen. If the ace is on your right, you’ll end up with two tricks.

“In the final layout, you start off by leading toward the king. If this is successful, you can give up two tricks to the opponents and end up with three tricks in total, if the suit divides 3–2.”

Conclusion

“The best way to play a particular suit may depend on such things as how many tricks you need from it. Usually you want to try and get the maximum number possible. A useful guideline when you are missing the queen is *eight ever, nine never*. It reminds you of the best theoretical play when you have nothing else to go by.”

EXERCISE THREE: Combining Alternatives

Introduction

“Sometimes you’ll need to develop more than one suit in order to get the extra tricks you need. The third step of the PLAN, *Analyze your alternatives*, may present you with a number of choices. When you come to the fourth step, *Now put it all together*, you need to combine those alternatives in the right way to give you the maximum chance of success.

“When playing two or more suits, you must be careful to play them in the right order, making the best use of your entries. If you have to develop two suits for the extra tricks you need in a notrump contract, you should usually attack the longest suit first. If you attack a short suit, the opponents may attack it back! If possible, you want to play the suits in an order which allows you to try more than one alternative. If the first suit doesn’t work out, you may be able to switch to another suit, if you plan carefully.

“In all of these cases, the key is your PLAN. Once you know how many tricks you need and how close you are to reaching your goal, you’re able to put your energy into figuring out how to get there. Let’s see how the PLAN maps out the best play on the following hands.”

Instructions

“You’re in a contract of 3NT, and the opponent leads the ♥J. Should you play the club suit or the diamond suit first when you get the lead in each of the hands in Exercise Three?”

1) DUMMY

♠ 7 4 2
♥ 7 6 4 2
♦ K Q
♣ K J 7 2

DECLARER

♠ A 8 6 3
♥ A 8 3
♦ A 9 8 5
♣ A Q

Clubs

2) DUMMY

♠ K 4
♥ 7 5 2
♦ K Q 4
♣ J 10 8 3 2

DECLARER

♠ A 8 6 2
♥ A K 8
♦ 8 6 2
♣ K Q 5

Clubs

3) DUMMY

♠ K Q 8
♥ 7 3
♦ 9 6 2
♣ A Q 8 4 2

DECLARER

♠ A 4 2
♥ A 2
♦ A K Q 5
♣ 7 6 5 3

Diamonds

Follow-up

Discuss the exercise with the class as a whole, going through the steps with them.

“On the first hand, you need nine tricks and there are nine available — all you have to do is take them. There are some entry problems, however. Since

both the club and diamond suits are blocked, you can't take all of your winners without playing carefully. Playing the high card from the short side will help take care of the blockage problems in the diamond and the club suits, but there's more to it than that. The club suit needs help from the diamond suit, because the diamonds are the only source of an entry.

"When declarer wins the first trick with the ♥A, the next step is to play the clubs, the ace and queen — high cards from the short side. Now declarer can play a low diamond — again planning on taking the ♦K and ♦Q first, since they are the high cards from the short side. Declarer is in the dummy for the last time and should take the ♣K and ♣J. The ♠A in declarer's hand provides an entry to the ♦A — nine tricks.

"In the second hand, nine tricks are needed and the declarer has four for sure — five have to be developed. There's a good chance to promote both the clubs and the diamonds. The clubs will produce four extra tricks and the diamonds at least one and maybe two if the ace is on your left. When you have to develop tricks in two suits, it may make a difference which one you play first.

"If you try to play the diamonds first, your right hand opponent (RHO) may win the ♦A and decide to play them again, setting up three more tricks if RHO started with five or more of them. When you now drive out the ♣A, the opponents may have enough tricks to defeat the contract.

"It's safer to play the longer suit first, clubs. Once the ♣A has been driven out, you have eight of the nine tricks you need and can go after the diamonds for your ninth trick.

"In the last hand, you need nine tricks and you have eight — only one more trick to develop. This seems easy enough, since the club finesse is available and may look attractive.

"However, you have to watch the opponents. Your ♥A will be driven out, and even if the missing hearts are divided 5–4, the opponents will have four heart tricks to take if you lose the lead. By trying the club finesse first, you are staking everything on it. If it loses, the opponents will end up with five tricks, and you won't get a second chance.

"There's a second possible source for your ninth trick, the diamond suit. If the missing diamonds are divided 3–3, your ♦5 will be the ninth trick you need. Although the diamonds are more likely to break 4–2 than 3–3, you can give yourself the best of all possible worlds by combining your chances and playing the diamond suit first. If the diamonds break 3–3, you don't need to risk the club finesse. If they don't break 3–3, you can try the club finesse."

Conclusion

"When putting your plan together, try to combine the possibilities in the various suits in an order which will give you the best chance of making the contract. Always keep your eye on the objective of fulfilling your contract. The best suit to play first may not always be the one that looks most attractive."

EXERCISE FOUR: Choosing an Alternative

Introduction

“When there’s more than one suit which can provide the tricks you need, you won’t always be able to try everything. The opponents are hard at work, too! Often you will have to choose the suit which gives you the best chance and go with it.

“When you have to pick a suit, keep your PLAN in mind. Select the suit that needs the least amount of luck. You don’t want to rely on a finesse or a favorable division of the missing cards unless you have to. Make certain you pick the suit that will provide all of the tricks you need. Don’t go after one that looks easy to develop if it isn’t going to get you where you want to go.

“If you need a favorable lie of the cards, try and pick the suit that offers the best odds. A finesse for a missing card is essentially a 50–50 proposition. If you need a suit to divide, remember that an odd number of cards tend to divide as evenly as possible and an even number of cards tend to divide slightly unevenly. If you choose between a finesse in one suit and a 3–3 division in another, choose the finesse. At least it gives you a 50% chance of success. A 4–2 division is more likely than a 3–3 division, and so a 3–3 break is less than a 50% chance.

“Finally, the opponents may force you into a position where there is only one suit which will eventually give you the tricks you need. Even though it doesn’t look very hopeful, go for it. There’s no point in choosing another suit if you know it offers no chance for developing the tricks necessary to make your contract.”

Instructions

“You’re in a contract of 3NT and the opponent leads the ♠Q. Should you play the club suit or the diamond suit when you get the lead in each of the hands in Exercise Four?”

1) DUMMY

♠ K 8 2
♥ 9 6 3
♦ A Q J 7
♣ Q J 4

DECLARER

♠ A 9 3
♥ A K Q
♦ 9 8 5
♣ K 10 9 5

Clubs

2) DUMMY

♠ 6 4 2
♥ Q J 3
♦ K Q J
♣ Q 10 5 3

DECLARER

♠ A K 3
♥ A K 8 2
♦ 8 6 2
♣ K J 8

Clubs

3) DUMMY

♠ 7 3
♥ Q 10 3
♦ A K Q 3
♣ J 10 4 3

DECLARER

♠ A 2
♥ A K J 7
♦ 6 4 2
♣ K Q 8 2

Diamonds

Follow-up

Discuss the exercise with the class as a whole. In order to come up with the best approach, they'll need a lot of help sorting through the various alternatives.

“On the first hand, you need nine tricks and have six. Three more need to be developed, and you have a choice of diamonds or clubs. You have to select one, because the opponents are starting to drive out your high spades. You may not be able to go back to your second choice.

“To get three extra tricks from the diamond suit, you're going to need a successful finesse for the king and a 3-3 break — a good deal of luck. In the club suit, however, all you need to do is drive out the ♣A. You don't need any luck whatsoever. Go for the sure thing and play clubs first.

“On the second hand, you again have six of the nine tricks you need. The diamond suit looks attractive. By driving out the ♦A, you can promote two winners. Keep your eye on your objective. You need three extra tricks. By driving out the ♣A, three tricks can be promoted in the club suit. Go for the suit that will provide all of the tricks you need and play the clubs first.

“On the last hand, you only need one more trick to make 3NT. It seems as if it easily could be developed in the club suit, since you don't care who has the ♣A or how the suit is divided. You would end up with three tricks in the suit. There's another consideration, however. Once you have played your ♠A, the opponents will be in a position to take all of their spade tricks, if you give up the lead to the ♣A. Even if the spades divide 5-4, the opponents will end up with enough tricks to defeat the contract.

“The diamond suit looks a lot less attractive. You need the diamonds to divide exactly 3-3, against the odds. They are more likely to divide 4-2. However, if you have only one chance, take it! The opponents haven't given you the luxury of developing the club suit. If they had led a heart, you would have had plenty of time. Now there is no point in playing the club suit — you'll lose the race. Go with your only alternative.”

Conclusion

“There seems to be so much to consider, but knowing what you are trying to accomplish solves most of the problems. Even if you find you didn't make the right decision after having made a PLAN, you are always in a position to learn something for next time. Otherwise, if you never plan out the play but merely play the first card that looks attractive, you can play for years and never get any better.”

EXERCISE FIVE: Defenders' Plan

Introduction

“We have seen that there are guidelines for the defenders as well as for the declarer, such as *return your partner's lead* and *second hand low*. Such advice is useful, but a defender, like the declarer, has to think about the overall picture and make a PLAN.

“The task is a little different, since the defender can see only one hand and the dummy and can't be certain where the strengths and weaknesses of the other two hands lie. However, a defender still goes through the same steps as declarer, replacing the ‘I’ with a ‘we,’ since the defender is working with a partner. For example: How many tricks do we need to defeat the contract? How many tricks do we have? Where can we get the extra tricks we need? How do we put it all together?”

Instructions

“Look at Exercise Five. You're defending a contract of 4♥, and your partner leads the ♠Q. Declarer wins the ♠A, draws trumps with the ♥A and ♥K, plays a diamond and finesses dummy's ♦Q. How many tricks do you need to defeat the contract? (4.) How many tricks do you have? (1.) Where are you going to get the extra tricks you need? (The club suit.) What card do you need partner to have in order to defeat the contract? (♣A.) What do you plan to do after winning the ♦K? (Lead a low club, ♣2.)”

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

Follow-up

Discuss the exercise with the class as whole.

“The defenders have one trick with the ♦K and need three more to defeat the contract. You aren't going to get any more tricks from the diamond suit, and it doesn't look as though you are going to get any tricks from the spade suit or heart suit. The only hope is the club suit. You're going to have to hope that your partner has the ♣A.

“After winning the ♦K, lead back a club. If partner wins the ♣A, partner can cooperate by leading another club (you hope your partner has been working on a plan, too). Your king and jack will trap dummy’s queen. If declarer started with three clubs, you’ll defeat the contract. Notice that you can’t wait around after winning the ♦K and lead back another diamond. If declarer started with three clubs, declarer will be able to discard some of them on dummy’s established diamond winners.”

Conclusion

“By looking at the overall picture, you often can see how to defeat the contract. Make a plan and try to imagine what your partner needs to have for your partnership to defeat the contract.”

EXERCISE SIX: Opening Preempts**Introduction**

“Lay out the following hand:

♠ 8 3
 ♥ K Q J 10 9 7 3
 ♦ 8 5 3
 ♣ 2

“Do you have enough points to open the bidding? (No.) You need 13 or more points to open the bidding at the one level. Strong hands with 22 or more points are opened with 2♣. Sometimes you have a hand with a very long suit, a good trump suit for your side, but you don’t have enough points to open the bidding at the one level. With such hands, you can open the bidding at the two level or higher. This is called a preemptive opening bid or a preempt. With this hand, you could open 3♥.

“The requirements for a preemptive opening bid are simple to remember:

- 2♦, 2♥, 2♠ openings promise a strong, six-card suit and fewer than 13 points. These bids also are called weak two-bids.
- 3♣, 3♦, 3♥, 3♠ openings promise a strong seven-card suit and less than an opening hand.
- 4♣, 4♦, 4♥, 4♠ openings promise a strong eight-card suit and less than an opening hand.

A strong suit contains at least two of the top three honor cards. As you can see, the longer your suit is, the more you can bid.

“Why would you want to start the auction off at the two or three level with such a hand, when you don’t even have the strength to open the bidding at the one level? There are two reasons. First, the bid is very descriptive. It tells your partner you have a weak hand with a good long suit. More importantly, it makes the auction very difficult for the opponents. If the opponent on your left was planning to open the bidding 1♦, what’s that player going to do when you start the auction with 3♥, eating up a lot of room on the Bidding Scale?

“A preempt is a very effective defensive bidding weapon. It adds a whole new level of excitement to the auction. You hope the length and strength of your suit will make it difficult for the opponents to double you for penalties. Even if they do double, they may not defeat you enough to compensate for the contract they could make.”

Instructions

“Assuming your side is not vulnerable, what’s your opening bid with each of the hands in Exercise Six?”

1) ♠ A K J 8 7 3 2 ♥ 6 3 ♦ 8 5 ♣ 10 9 <div style="text-align: center; border-top: 1px solid black; width: 50px; margin: 0 auto;">3♠</div>	2) ♠ 8 4 ♥ 8 2 ♦ 3 ♣ A J 10 7 6 5 3 2 <div style="text-align: center; border-top: 1px solid black; width: 100px; margin: 0 auto;">4♣ (3♣)</div>	3) ♠ K 4 ♥ A K Q 8 4 3 2 ♦ 6 4 2 ♣ J <div style="text-align: center; border-top: 1px solid black; width: 50px; margin: 0 auto;">1♥</div>
---	---	--

Follow-up

Discuss the exercise.

“The first hand is a good one to start the bidding with 3♠. You don’t have enough to open the bidding 1♠, and this preempt makes the opponents guess what to do at a very high level.

“On the second hand, with an eight-card suit, you could start the bidding with 4♣. You don’t have to — you could pass or open 3♣ — but 4♣ gets things off to an interesting start.

“In the final hand, you have long hearts, but look again. This isn’t the time to start the bidding at the three level, since you have enough to open the bidding at the one level. Bid 1♥ instead.”

Conclusion

“The preemptive bid is used to get in the way of the opponents, not your side. If you have enough strength for an opening bid at the one level, you’re better off describing your hand in the normal fashion and having a constructive auction with your partner.”

EXERCISE SEVEN: Responding to a Preempt

Introduction

“When your partner starts the bidding at the three level, usually you’ll pass. Partner is showing a weak hand that is essentially useful only if it’s played with partner’s suit as trumps. You can assume that partner’s hand is worth about 10 points, including distribution.

“Responding to a preempt is more about COUNTING TRICKS than counting points. Visualize how your hand works with partner’s hand when deciding if you should bid.”

Instructions

“Your partner opens the bidding 3♥. What do you respond with each of the hands in Exercise Seven?”

1) ♠ K J 8
♥ 8 5
♦ K Q J 6
♣ Q 9 7 3

Pass

2) ♠ A 8 4
♥ K 2
♦ Q 7 6 3
♣ A K 7 5

4♥

3) ♠ A Q J 10 7 4 2
♥ 2
♦ A 4 2
♣ K 3

3♠

Follow-up

“On the first hand, with only 12 HCP and knowing partner doesn’t have enough to open the bidding, pass.

“On the second hand, you have 16 HCPs and you have support, since partner is showing at least seven cards in hearts. This should be enough to raise to game. Bid 4♥.

“On the last hand, you want to carry on to a game. You’d like to show your spade suit, since it’s at least as long as partner’s heart suit and may be a better trump suit. Bid 3♠. This is forcing and partner will have to bid again. Then you’ll be in a better position to determine the best contract.”

Conclusion

“When your partner opens the bidding at the two or three level, visualize how your hand along with partner’s hand work together.”

EXERCISE EIGHT: Competing against a Preempt

Introduction

“Your opponents’ preempts make it very difficult for your side to compete, but you shouldn’t give up. You can still make use of the overcall and the takout double to compete. Since you’re entering the auction at the three level or higher, you should have a hand stronger than just a bare opening bid, preferably 15 or 16 points or more.”

Instructions

“The opponent on your right opens the bidding 3♥. What do you call with each of the hands in Exercise Eight?”

1) ♠ A K Q 8 7 3
♥ 7 4
♦ A J 4
♣ 5 2

3♠

2) ♠ J 10 7 3
♥ 3
♦ A J 9 2
♣ A K J 4

Double

3) ♠ Q 8
♥ K 9 2
♦ K Q 10 4
♣ K 8 4 2

Pass

Follow-up

Discuss the exercise.

“On the first hand, you have 16 points counting length for the spade suit. Overcall 3♠. You want to compete in this auction and don’t want the opponent’s preempt to shut you out.

“The second hand is a wonderful opportunity to make use of the takeout double. You have 14 HCPs and 3 points for the singleton (the takeout doubler counts dummy points) — that’s enough to double.

“On the last hand, you have only 13 points. Although you would open the bidding with this hand, it’s not suited to making an overcall or a takeout double. Instead, you should pass. You don’t want to come in at the three level. Don’t forget that partner still may be able to take some action.”

Conclusion

“The opponents can make it difficult for you by bidding at the three level, but don’t be discouraged. If your hand is better than a minimum opening bid, you still can make use of the overcall or takeout double to compete.”

“How many dummy points does North have in support of South’s suit? (11.) Knowing that South must have more than a minimum hand to overcall at the three level, what does North bid? (4♠.)

“How does the auction proceed? (Pass, pass, pass.) What is the contract? (4♠.) Who is the declarer? (South.)”

The Play

“Which player makes the opening lead? (West.) What would the opening lead be? (♥4, partner’s suit.) What is East’s plan for defeating the contract? (The defenders need four tricks. Two can come from the heart suit. The spades and diamonds don’t look hopeful, therefore the best prospects for two more tricks looks like the club suit.) After winning the first two tricks, what does East lead next? (♣Q.)

“Declarer starts by making a PLAN:

1. *Pause to consider your objective*
2. *Look at your winners and losers*
3. *Analyze your alternatives*
4. *Now put it all together*

“How many losers does declarer have? (Five — two hearts, a diamond and two clubs.) How can declarer eliminate a diamond loser? (Take the finesse.) How can declarer eliminate a club loser? (Discard it on an extra diamond winner in dummy.)

“What will declarer have to do with the diamond suit? (Establish an extra winner by ruffing it.) Is there a potential entry to dummy’s established winner? (♠J.) How will the missing diamonds have to divide? (3–3. Declarer has only one entry to the dummy.) Why must declarer be careful with the trump suit? (The ♠J must be left in dummy as an entry. Declarer can afford to play only two rounds of trumps before establishing the diamond suit.)”

Follow-up

Have the students bid and play the deal.

Conclusion

“You might be able to follow all of the individual examples of playing a suit while we are talking and yet not be able to make it work when you are playing. That will come. Remember that the game promises to fascinate you for a lifetime — more than for just a few hours. Part of your enjoyment will come from learning something new with each and every deal.”

EXERCISE TEN: Eight Ever, Nine Never**Introduction**

“In this deal, declarer will have to find a missing queen in order to make the contract. Let’s see how the guideline *eight ever, nine never* can help declarer make the best decision.”

Instructions

“Turn up all of the cards on the second pre-dealt hand. Put each hand dummy style at the edge of the table in front of each player.”

(E–Z Deal Cards: #8, Deal 2)

Dealer: East	♠ 8 4 2		
	♥ A Q 8 7		
	♦ 9 6 3		
	♣ Q 9 7		
♠ K Q J 3	N	♠ A 10 9 7 5	
♥ K 6 5 3	W E	♥ 4 2	
♦ 10	S	♦ Q 4	
♣ A 8 5 4		♣ K J 6 3	
	♠ 6		
	♥ J 10 9		
	♦ A K J 8 7 5 2		
	♣ 10 2		

The Bidding

“East passes. With a hand that isn’t strong enough to open at the one level and a good seven-card suit, what does South bid? (3♦.)

“How many dummy points does West have? (16.) How can West compete? (Takeout double.)

“Does North have enough to bid? (No.) How many points does East have? (11.) Knowing that West must have a good hand to be willing to compete at the three level, how can East show strength? (Jump to 4♠.)”

It will probably be difficult to get the students to freely jump to 4♠. You can point out that if partner made a takeout double at the one level, they would jump with 9 to 11 points. You also can point out that East could hold a hand that didn’t have any points and still have to bid at the three level — that’s why West needs more than a minimum takeout double. Finally, you can use this as an illustration of the difficulties caused by a preemptive opening bid. Notice that East can’t afford to pass the takeout double. South will make 3♦ with an overtrick!

“What would the contract be? (4♠.) Who would be the declarer? (East.)”

The Play

In the first exercise, the four steps of the PLAN were reviewed more formally. This time, questions can be asked that lead students to a decision about how to play.

“Which player makes the opening lead? (South.) What’s the opening lead? (♦ A.) After seeing the dummy, what would South do next? (It’s pointless to continue diamonds, so South would shift to the ♥ J, hoping partner has the ace and queen or some other valuable holding.)

“Declarer starts by making a PLAN. How many losers does declarer have? (Five, possibly six, if the clubs don’t break 3–2.) How does declarer plan to eliminate a diamond loser? (Ruff it in dummy.) How does declarer plan to handle the club suit? (Take a finesse.) What guideline is useful when considering how to play the club suit? (*Eight ever, nine never.*)”

Follow-up

Have the students bid and play the deal.

Conclusion

“By combining two tools — ruffing a loser in the dummy and the finesse — declarer was able to make the contract.”

The Play

“Which player makes the opening lead? (North.) What would the opening lead be? (♣8, partner’s suit.)

“Declarer starts by making a PLAN. How many losers can declarer afford? (Three.) How many losers does declarer have? (Four — two clubs and two diamonds.) What are declarer’s alternatives? (The diamond finesse is one possibility. A second possibility is that the missing hearts divide 3–3 and declarer can discard a diamond loser.) Must declarer choose one of the alternatives? (No.) Declarer can combine the possibilities, seeing if the hearts divide 3–3 and, if not, taking the diamond finesse.)”

Follow-up

Have the students bid and play the deal.

Conclusion

“On many deals, you don’t have to put all of your eggs in one basket. If one alternative doesn’t work, you can switch to another, giving yourself two chances instead of one.”

EXERCISE TWELVE: The Best Alternative**Introduction**

“On some deals, you have a couple of alternatives, but you have to choose one of them. You won’t be able to try them all. In such cases, look for the one that gives you the best chance to make the contract.”

Instructions

“Turn up all of the cards on the fourth pre-dealt hand. Put each hand dummy style at the edge of the table in front of each player.”

(E–Z Deal Cards: #8, Deal 4)

Dealer: West	♠ K Q 10 8 7 5 3 ♥ 8 6 ♦ J 5 ♣ 10 6				
♠ A 6 ♥ K 4 3 ♦ K 10 6 ♣ 9 8 4 3 2	<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠ 9 4 ♥ J 10 9 5 ♦ A Q 8 7 ♣ J 7 5
N					
W E					
S					
	♠ J 2 ♥ A Q 7 2 ♦ 9 4 3 2 ♣ A K Q				

The Bidding

“West passes. What is North’s opening bid? (3♠.)

“East passes. How many points does South have? (16.) Is game possible? (Yes, with the sure tricks in clubs and hearts.) What does South bid? (4♠.)

“How does the auction proceed from there? (Pass, pass, pass.) What would the contract be? (4♠.) Who would be the declarer? (North.)”

The Play

“Which player makes the opening lead? (East.) What would the opening lead be? (♥J.) If West gets to win the first trick, how would West plan to defeat the contract?

“Declarer starts by making a PLAN. How many losers can declarer afford? (Three.) How many losers does declarer have? (Four — a spade, a heart and two diamonds.) What are declarer’s alternatives for eliminating a loser? (The heart finesse and discarding a loser on the extra club winner in dummy.)

“Can declarer try both alternatives? (No. If the heart finesse loses, the opponents can take two diamond tricks immediately.) Does declarer take the heart finesse? (No.) If not, why not? (The finesse is only a 50–50 proposition. Discarding a loser is closer to 100% — what’s needed is for the clubs to break 5–3 or 4–4.)”

Follow-up

Have the students bid and play the deal.

Conclusion

“When you have to choose an alternative, pick the one that is most likely to succeed. As you gain experience, you’ll start finding more and more possibilities and learn how to select the one that gives you the best chance.”

