

play bridge

A section designed with the newer player in mind.

Reading the signs

There's a sign on the door to our club that reads: "If you are not here to have fun, turn around and go home." I don't think the sign has deterred more than one or two people from entering.

There are, however, different meanings for fun at the bridge table. For some, it is winning and nothing else. For many, it is getting a chance to meet and socialize with new and old friends. For others, it is holding one good hand, one that will generate a story for months to come. And for still others, it is the joy of playing the game — getting the play right, fooling an opponent or making partner smile.

For me, much of the fun is getting a hand right. Here is one a friend gave me with the cryptic warning: "The opponents are dangerous." You hold:

♠ 7 6 5 ♥ 9 8 5 3 2 ♦ A 7 ♣ K Q 4.

Partner opens 1♣, you bid 1♥ and he responds 2NT. You might be wondering if partner could have three hearts with you — producing an eight-card trump fit — but with a suit that poor, you just raise to 3NT.

Now you have the rare and wonderful opportunity to go around

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to the other side of the table and play the contract. Here are the two hands:

♠ 7 6 5
♥ 9 8 5 3 2
♦ A 7
♣ K Q 4

♠ K Q 3
♥ A K 10
♦ J 8 4
♣ A J 9 3

You might be wondering why you are in 3NT instead of 4♥, but that is not the problem at hand. Your left-hand opponent leads the ♠4, you play the dummy's 5 and your right-hand opponent plays the jack. Hmmm — we have one spade, two heart, one diamond and four club tricks.

The first decision is whether to win or hold up. Since you might be able to score another spade trick with the ♠Q, you should win the first trick. Before reading further, decide what you are going to do to develop nine (or more) tricks. (P.S. The ♥QJ is not doubleton.)

Since RHO played the ♠J on the first trick, it is highly unlikely he has the ace. That means that if you let him in the lead, he will return partner's suit and trouble is brewing. They might take four spade tricks to go with their heart trick, and down you go. This identifies RHO as the dangerous opponent — you don't want him on lead.

The way to avoid the danger hand is to cross to the dummy and lead a heart to the 10. You have four winners and one loser any time the suit divides 3-2.

It doesn't matter if you give up



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your loser early or late, as long as you lose the trick to LHO, the safe opponent. Then you can win any return and cash your ♥AK. When they split 3-2, all of a sudden you are taking 10 tricks, which will beat anyone playing 4♥ making four.

Here is the full deal:

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

This was a contract successfully bid and brilliantly played. Now that's what I call fun. □

Play Bridge columnist Harry Lampert died in November. His column appears on page 42 and his obituary appears on page 68.

Notes from ACBL Accredited Teachers