

Watson's Tips

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<http://watsongallery.ca/bridge/aaGeneral/WatsonTips.pdf>

Short Hand Ruffs A declarer must take all the short hand ruffs he or she can at the same time as avoiding ruffs in the long trump hand. An advancing player knows that a long hand ruff does not gain a trick but every short hand ruff does. The only thing that a long hand ruff may do is to risk loss of control if trump break badly. AS always in bridge there are exceptions to not ruffing in the long trump hand: cross-ruff, dummy reversal, trump coup and trump squeeze.

Plan Ahead^d

Do not burn an entry just to cash a winner. When dummy comes down assign a task to every entry in dummy. If the defense makes you win an entry in dummy that was slated to do a certain finesse, you now need to take that finesse. Trump can be an entry ladder unless you draw trump and realize too late each round of trump could have been an entry.

New Suit at the Two-Level shows 10 Points and promises a rebid.

New suit at the three-level is Game Forcing.

Cover an Honour With an Honour

Except:

- When declarer has a two-way finesse and is fishing for the queen.
- When declarer has a huge fit
- When you can outlast the finesse

- When you cannot possibly promote a lower card because if partner has it, it is falling.
- When declarer might not take the finesse in a big-enough fit or risk the finesse when there is a ruff imminent.

Defenders Cooperate With Each Other but not with Declarer

I remember watching Saturday morning cartoons while I was pondering Math 400 problems. The sheep dog and Wile E. Coyote were buddies but when they punched their time cards and started working, they were mortal enemies. Although the Wile E. Coyote taught me about gravity's time delay, he was severely beaten up by the sheep dog while trying to steal a sheep. When the work whistle blew ending the work day, the inconceivable happened. They were back to being friends.

This is identical to bridge. The declarer and defenders may be the best of friends, but at the table when the "bridge whistle" blows and the game starts, the declarer and defender are mortal enemies. The defenders may have their differences, but at the table, they must be the best cooperative friends possible.

The defenders cooperate with each other but not with the declarer. In turn, the declarer does not cooperate with the defenders. However, when the bridge match is done for the day, they can go back to being friends.

Sounds obvious, but yet so many players cooperate with an opponent and not their partner.

Some Examples:

1. Declarer wins trick one and at trick two, he does not draw trump. Defender will try to do it for him.
2. You, as a defender, win trick one and see the ability of dummy to get short hand ruffs. You lead trump.
3. Your partner makes a bid. You lead his suit and continue leading his suit as long as you have it, as long as it does not give a sluff-and-a-ruff and as long it does not set up a winner for declarer.

4. Your partner makes a lead against 3NT, you realize if you switch to your own suit even when not out of partner's suit, you may give the tempo to declarer to make the contract. Defenders must cooperate and attacking two different suits may work to declarer's advantage.
5. Your partner attacks trump or an unbid suit and you do not see why but you also do not see that it is wrong, then cooperate with partner and attack the same suit.

Fits drive auctions and misfits halt them

When you have a fit, you should investigate a second fit if you can before setting trump. Once trump is set, new suits are game tries or cuebids. When you and partner have a double fit, the hand will likely play very well. A tip: one should probably play two-suited keycard Blackwood in double fit situations.

Just as when you have a double fit, the hands play very well when you have a strong two-suiter. Six Five come alive. Even when you are five-five, your hand is stronger than the high card points would indicate. An eleven point 5-5 hand will usually make game opposite a four-card limit raise. This is less often the case for a three-card limit raise. Furthermore, hands with a suit with seven or more trump play stronger than point counters would think. A seven -card suit that is a one- or zero-loser suit will often make game with 22 total HCP's.

Mexico is a destination not No Trump

Misfits bail and do not run to 3NT. When you bid 3NT, you should want to play 3NT and not have a singleton or void in partner's suit. Choose the long suit at a cheap level. If both players have a long suit, choose the suit in the weaker hand so at least it gets entries.

It is Tricks not points that make a contract

"But partner, I had fifteen points and had to bid," said a player after he had gone down 800 not vulnerable in a part-score board after he overcalled RHO's 1NT with

a two-trick five card suit (Axxxx). I had four good hearts and 7 points and doubled for penalty.

"But partner, I had to overcall, I had an opening hand," said a player also making a long-distance toll-free phone call. 1-800 are free calls in real life, but not in bridge. Going for 800 or more is called going for a number which is certainly not toll free.

Here is an extreme example:

♠KQJ10xx ♥x ♦KQJ10x ♣x

This hand is only twelve points but is 9 winners, 9 tricks or 4 losers. Even if this hand is a little stronger, it is not a two-club opener. Missing two suits, facing a high pre-empt is a huge possibility. It is best to get in one suit right away.

Say the auction goes:

W	N	E	S
2♣	5♣	??	

Would you not rather it have gone:

W	N	E	S
1♠	5♣	P	P
5♦	P	6♦	All Pass

A Cow may Fly By

Matchpoints is harder than teams because you have to concentrate on every board and on every card. Sometimes you have a break in concentration because something startling happens. A cow flies by in the bridge room. That is completely distracting. Some would say that any farm animal flying by would be distracting, however a pig flying by would be nothing unusual to anybody who listened to Pink Floyd's album "Animals." And of course chickens have wings.

Having a cow fly by, one must realize that a break in concentration happens and the key is not to let a lapse cause a loss of an additional board worrying about the loss of the previous board. So any time you see a cow with a Pratt & Whitney J57

strapped to its back, dismiss it as quickly as you can and regain your concentration for the next board.

Only Jesus Saves

Bid constructively and not because of a misfit with partner. One never chances to be at the three-level with a double misfit. When one is short in partner's suit, one bails on the auction or chooses to defend and one does not try to save partner. Not only does one not try to save partner by running to 3NT or by scrambling to find a fit when one is weak, one does not run when partner gets doubled. It may just make the situation worse unless it is obvious your suit cannot be doubled. When the fourth suit is bid, the partnership should be headed to game not scrambling to find a cheap resting place.

Teams is real Bridge-Matchpoints are not. One will risk the contract for overtricks at matchpoints. At matchpoints, the opening lead makes or breaks the contact a lot of times. Therefore, one hides one's hand in the bidding, makes lead directing bids and interferes with the bidding.

Do not tell the same story twice

(Do not bid ahead of partner with a minimum)

When RHO has bid, partner will get a bid no matter what you do. If you still choose to bid, you are bidding ahead of partner. If you have already shown your hand, pass and let partner do something. One does not tell the same story twice.

W	N	E	S
1♦	P	1♥	1♠
P			

minimum hand no four Hearts, no six Diamonds, no Spade Stopper, no five Diamonds and four plus Clubs.

W	N	E	S
1♦	P	1♥	1♠
2♦			

six Diamonds otherwise pass

W	N	E	S
1♦	P	1♥	1♠
2♣			

five diamonds and four+ Clubs, otherwise pass

If West has the awkward minimum hand of four Diamonds and five Clubs, the opponent has given you the opportunity to pass.

Do not be a Frustrating partner

- A mildly frustrating partner I played with, would actually say aloud to the table that she has no idea what to do and would do something anyways not realizing a **partner** was sitting across from her waiting to do the right thing if partner just passed.
- I play a ton of bridge, I have the patience to realize that a lead often makes or breaks a contract and I will try to let the correct hand declare the contract, whether it be to keep the strong hand hidden or to protect unsupported kings or tenaces on the opening lead. It is frustrating when partner seems to say "I paid my bridge fee and I am going to play as much as possible." I rather people

count tricks not points and certainly not times one gets the contract. The amount somebody plays will average out and it is most important to **right-side the contract** so the lead might not be so devastating.

- Bridge is a **partnership game**, tell your story once and let partner make the correct decision. Unilateral actions may work once in a while but are often bad bridge.

Nice Guy Finishes where he Finishes

In "Play a Team of Four With Mike Lawrence (Louisville, Kentucky, USA: Devyn Press Inc,1982)" Lawrence writes "They turn out to be very friendly. My RHO pleasantly introduces herself and her partner and tells us she has been looking forward to this event for some time. This is a good omen. Friendly people are seldom good players." P 5

This may be a sad commentary on bridge. Lawrence was referring to being nice to the opponents but what about a player being nice to his partner?

I have been thrown off my game because of a partner getting on my case for a mistake. First of all, a cow may fly by and I make a mistake. It happens. I was trying for a top board, and it just did not work out. Now I just say, "Sorry partner, a cow flew by." Partner says, "No problem, partner." We laugh and move on.

My regular partners also know that I see what happens at the table. The fact that I chose to say nothing does not mean I did not see the mistake. I just wish they would do the same. My parents always told me to treat others as you would have them treat you.

Of course, this does not happen when I play with a client. I am paid to see and point out things to improve upon and to give constructive tips.

Another mildly frustrating partner I had was one that never said "good squeeze partner" or "nice end play partner." He never complemented for any good bid or good play as declarer or defender but as soon as I made a mistake he lost his composure and was quick to criticize. Did he really think, I did not know I made a mistake and was upset enough without his adding to the situation which would not have been a situation at all if he had just said "No problem pard, you do lots of good things." It blows my mind when a partner is good enough to know what good things I am doing at the table and really has no clue.