

FOCUS

Hi Maestro,

Lately, I have been thinking about the dumb errors I seem to make with annoying frequency. For example, the other night I made a really bad play and went down in a contract I should have made easily. On the very next hand, I passed out of turn!

They say that disasters come in threes, but some nights at the table, they seem to come in fives and sixes. Obviously, concentration is an issue, and some nights I seem to be able to concentrate better than others. Equally obvious, is that this is not a problem everyone has. So, is it just me, or is there some clever fix that might help?

Lost as Always.

Dear Lost,

Have a think about what happens when bridge players turn up to a club game. They may have worked all day, they may have had problems with the traffic on the way to the club, or they may have spent time mulling over that new bidding agreement they discussed last week with their partner.

All of a sudden, it's cards out of the slot, and play! Whatever baggage you have brought with you is still thrashing around in your head, and you are about to make your first expensive mistake of the night.

Your observations are accurate. At all levels of bridge, players make mistakes that are not in any way connected to their level of technical expertise. They frequently make these errors because their brain has been engaged on some other matter.

Think about when you are most likely to make a serious error at bridge. Best candidates are:

- 1). The first board of the session.
- 2). The last board of the session.
- 3). The next board after a blunder or altercation with an opponent.
- 4). The first board after a protracted break, such as a supper break or a long wait between moves.

Some of the reasons for these are obvious, if you think

about it. My partners are forbidden from making observations about "last board". I recall one partner breaking the rule, when he announced "last board", at the conclusion of a 20-board teams match. The lack of concentration which resulted, cost us double digits in IMPs. What happened was that he withdrew from the game prematurely, and lost focus.

So, what is to be done? I recommend to any player whose concentration is a little fragile, that they adopt a focussing routine. For me, I count the cards multiple times or leave my hand face down on the table and don't look at them until I have cleared my brain of all extraneous thoughts. I am sure anyone can develop a routine which achieves this. The routine should be activated at the start of play (be ready to play), after disasters (because you will not be immunised against them), and after protracted breaks in play.

Having adopted this principle over more than a decade, it is interesting to note that my least memorable moments at the table have occurred when I should have activated the focussing routine, and didn't.

This may be a way to improve your results without making gains in technique.

David Lusk

Marketing tips for clubs

It is always helpful to know what makes other clubs successful in growing their membership. The ABF has started to compile a list of tips and tricks for you.

Visit <http://www.abf.com.au/marketing/tips.htm> for tips on how to attract members, how to retain members and how to gain free promotion within your local community.

If you would like to share your campaign/marketing ideas that have been successful please send them to marketing@abf.com.au with the subject 'Marketing Tips'.

It would be great if we could work together to create a fabulous resource library for the benefit of all our clubs.

We would love to hear from you!



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