

## The mental game

by Kim Frazer

### Mental Rehearsal (Visualisation)

Athletes, business people, fighter pilots, doctors and people in all types of professions use mental rehearsal and visualisation to help them with their performances in a variety of ways.



For example, a professional basketball player may mentally picture themselves shooting the ball through the basket from the free throw line before making the throw in a match. They will think about how the shot feels based on a shot they have executed previously in practise or a match. Similarly, a guest speaker who gets nervous when presenting may use mental rehearsal to picture themselves in the auditorium giving their speech.

Athletes in Olympic and other events obtain photos of the competition arena prior to their event so that they can familiarise themselves with the field of play prior to their match. Being mentally comfortable helps the athlete relax prior to the event and contributes to a better performance. There are many ways in which mental rehearsal and visualisation can be used to assist with improving performance.

Studies have shown that the mind cannot tell the difference between a real performance and an imagined performance. It has also been shown that people will improve a skill more quickly using a combination of rehearsal and practise than simply using practise alone.

Certainly in many sports, the athlete uses a rehearsal of the shot sequence in their mind before executing the play, as a routine process. For example, a high jumper will prepare for their jump by standing at the start of their run up, and mentally rehearsing the run up and leap over the jump in their mind before they execute it. In shooting, I used mental rehearsal all the time to practice my shot sequence, and visualise shooting a perfect match. In a match I had a set routine I used before every shot.

#### How could mental rehearsal help a bridge player?

In my view, there are several areas where mental rehearsal could be useful:

**1. Environment:** Every player experiences aspects of bridge for the first time. It might be your first club competition, congress, major tournament, state trial, your first time behind screens or first time on Vugraph, or the first time you have a kibitzer. Some players will

be unaffected by the experience, whilst others might perform below their best due to the unfamiliar environment. Using visualisation prior to the event can help you be more comfortable in the environment with which you are faced.

**2. Specific bridge skills:** Players often have difficulty remembering a convention they have agreed to play. Using visualisation to rehearse the bidding sequence will assist in ensuring the convention will be remembered in the match environment.

**3. Practise** the play of *specific card combinations*.

**4. Play Skills:** Picturing the layout of the hands and then the mechanics of the skill you are trying to consolidate - e.g. throw-in; finesse, counting the hand, etc.

**5. Common occurrences:** Rehearsal can also be useful in dealing with certain environmental occurrences that inhibit performance. Different things affect different people, but if the competitor is aware of their personal negative influences (e.g. chatty opponents, noisy room, director calls, etc.), then mental rehearsal can help prepare a stronger structured response to it.

You can use visualisation to help with any aspect of your game that you struggle with and want to improve.

#### How to rehearse effectively

The first step is to achieve a state of relaxation in which to do the rehearsal (*see ABF Newsletter, November 2014 article on Relaxation*). Next, rehearse the aspect of your performance you want to work on. It may be picturing yourself playing on Vugraph. It might be the start of the match where you see yourself and partner at the table bidding and playing the first few hands. It might be picturing a hand and utilising a particular convention.

## Bridge Software

JACK 6	\$93.50
Jack 6 upgrade (from Version 5)	\$45.10
Bridge Baron 25	\$77.00
Bridge Baron 25 Upgrade	\$44.00
The Terence Reese Classics	\$33.00
Counting at Bridge (Lawrence) 1 or 2 (each)	\$39.60
My Favourite 52 (Cohen)	\$26.40
Points Schmöints interactive CD	\$22.00

Clearance sale of all bridge books - nothing over \$10.

Includes many classics (while stocks last, postage extra). Email request for latest price list

John Hardy (ABN 63 813 139 759)  
63 Tristan St., Carindale QLD 4152  
Ph: 07-3398 8898 or 0417 509 662  
Email [sales@johnhardy.com.au](mailto:sales@johnhardy.com.au)

Whichever aspect you choose to rehearse, try to make the rehearsal as real as possible. For example if you decide to rehearse playing the first few hands, make the rehearsal as real as possible.

- Picture yourself at the table with your partner and opponents
- Picture yourself picking your hand up, counting the cards and sorting them;
- Imagine the hand you have been dealt, count your points;
- Imagine partner opening the bidding;
- Imagine your response;
- Imagine you are declarer in the final contract;
- Imagine partner's hand coming down and the cards being exactly what you expected;
- Imagine playing the hand;
- Imagine making your contract and the feeling of satisfaction that you have got off to a good start in the tournament
- Repeat for the next hand

Rehearse one skill or aspect per rehearsal session. You can repeat a skill in several rehearsal sessions until you feel comfortable you have mastered it. Thousands of athletes have found that spending 20 minutes a day on relaxation and mental rehearsal is worth the effort. Mental rehearsal cannot replace practical training. I believe, however, that used in conjunction, it can enhance your ability as a player.

*Once again, my thanks to Sartaj Hans and David Morgan for their thoughtful insights on this article.*

### Special Projects Grant program news

The ABF Management Committee completed its deliberations in regard to the Marketing 'Special Projects' Grant program for 2015 at its November meeting.

Funding will be made available for the following initiatives:

- Trumps Bridge Club, NSW – introduce beginners and/or encourage novice players to the game by showing them bridge can be an enjoyable social occasion;
- Ballina Bridge Club, NSW – offer a 'Friendship Day' of bridge for restricted players in their area; and
- Canberra Bridge Club, ACT – retain more novice and restricted players through an integrated and strategic approach to teaching, mentoring and transitioning new players between levels.

The ABF National Marketing Officer will highlight 'learnings' from these initiatives in issues of the Marketing Update for Club Administrators during 2015. Hopefully, all clubs can benefit from the success of these programs.



## More for less...

BridgeTabs is a top of the range scoring method with **more options** at **low cost**:

- a modern, **intuitive scoring interface**.
- a **screen 6 times bigger than Bridgемate II's**
- a clear, paper saving, **BIDDING interface** (optional)
- with **awesome feedback**

Contr.	Ld.	Made	NS+	EW+	NS%
W 4 ♠	♦ 3	-2	200		96
W 4 ♠	♦ 3	-2	200		96
W 4 ♠	♦ 6	-1	100		71
W 4 ♠	♦ 3	-1	100		71
W 4 ♠	♠ 7	-1	100		71
W 4 ♠	♦ 3	-1	100		71
W 3 ♠	♣ T	=		140	42
W 2 ♠	♥ T	+3		200	29
W 2 ♥	♣ T	+3		200	29
W 3NT	♦ 3	=		600	17
W 4 ♠	♠ 7	+1		650	4
W 4 ♠	♠ 7	+1		650	4

Card display: A9432, A5, J5, JT96

You will have a smooth transition to modern technology as BridgeTabs can be used together with Bridgемates, BridgePads and/or BridgeScorers.

You can buy ready to use BridgeTabs for **\$120/table**, or save money by installing the application yourself to a standard tablet — and to test the BridgeTab system costs nothing.

See [www.bridgetab.com](http://www.bridgetab.com) for details and/or [contact Ian Lisle](#) 0425 255 980 for advice and quotes.

**BridgeTab®**