

I saw several CHAT participants at the La Crosse Sectional tournament. Marvelous! Now that you have some master points you are definitely **hooked** on this game. That was the plan. The next step after **hooked** is **obsessed**. Be patient.

BLACKWOOD: I have had several ask questions about the **Blackwood convention**. This convention is used **after** you and your partner have agreed on the trump suit and you want to explore to see if a slam bid is possible. For instance:

1♣ – pass -- 1♥ -- Pass

3♥ - pass -- 4NT (asking for Aces; ♥ is the agreed to trump suit)

Responses: 5♣ – 0 or 4 Aces, 5♦ – 1 Ace, 5♥ – 2 Aces, 5♠ – 3 Aces

Now you can choose your bid: 5♥ or 6♥. OR...

...If you have all 4 aces and **Moderate Greed** is marked on your convention card, you can find out how many kings partner has by bidding 5NT.

Responses: 6♣ – 0 or 4 Kings, 6♦ – 1 King, 6♥ – 2 Kings, 6♠ – 3 Kings

Now you can choose your bid: 6♥ or 7♥. OR...

... if **Exceptional Greed** is marked on your convention card, you may decide if 7NT will play as well as 7♥ and choose 7NT as your bid. This is also a relief to your opponents who have run out of pass cards and had to find extra bidding boxes.

PLANNING FOR ENTRIES: Have you ever worked hard to set up a suit and then found that you have no entry to get to these winners? Some of you have. No fun.

Declarer	Board
♠KJT2	♠A9874

“8 ever, 9 never” suggests that we should not finesse for the Queen. Declarer leads deuce to the Ace and then plays 4 back to the King. Both opponents follow suit! Things look good, except that Declarer now holds ♠JT. Without another entry to dummy the 5th spade cannot be cashed. Declarer messed up on the first lead. He must save his entry card (the deuce) until the 4th lead. Saving the deuce would be a good thing to do even if you do have side entries. It costs you nothing and opponents are very good about making you spend the side entries early.

BIDDING the HAND seem to bring up more questions than the play of the hand.

“There is no bid that describes what I have in my hand. What do I bid?”

West has a balanced hand, 14 points, with a stopper in spades. Nice hand! Is West happy with this hand? No. West is grumbling.

"I have spades stopped but I can't bid 1NT with only 14 points; I don't have a five-card suit so I can't overcall; Double is an awful bid (it is). What do I do?"

"You have a nice hand. Quit bitching." (just kidding; I didn't really say that).

"You have come up with a few options. You can bid 1NT, or overcall with a four-card suit. Misrepresenting a hand slightly doesn't have to be a moral issue." You might also PASS. That is an option you have not considered.

"Pass! You must be kidding me. This is my best hand today. Would you pass?"

"I would." "OK, I'll pass."

"Probably the best choice. If your partner finds a bid, you are back in business."

Those players that consistently score 60 - 70% know when to fight for the bid and when to stay out of the auction. Don't overlook the PASS option.

PSYCHOLOGICAL ADVICE (again). I received some positive responses from club members on my strategy for playing against Ann. One said that my psychological advice was about as good as my bridge advice. Very thoughtful! Thank you.

Understanding the Psyche of your partner can help you with your **timing**. If you are going to do something highly irregular, you need to choose the right time.

Let's say that I am playing against a strong player at the club. For anonymity, let's call her Pushpa. I am on lead and I want to make an irregular lead that will fool Pushpa. But, as usual, this could deceive my partner and he will mess things up big time (and then blame me for it). I don't want that. Here is where timing and your understanding of your partner can really give you an edge.

If my partner is Grant (again an alias), no problem. He doesn't trust my leads anyway. Plus, he likely has just been in a serious discussion about pheasant hunting or something like that. Little chance that my deceptive lead will cause trouble. Great!

But if my partner is Bar (again, you know – fake name) this isn't likely to work. She probably doesn't hunt pheasants and she pays attention to her partner's leads (even believes them). Better save my deception for another time.

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