

Bridge is fun. I don't know why I keep repeating that. It is an obvious truth. Otherwise I wouldn't spend 3 to 4 hours 3 to 4 times a week sitting at small tables, drinking coffee, eating candy and various treats, and bantering with people that are focused on beating me. They don't appear to be looking out for my best interests.

When my partner and I "scratch", we earn more master points. I tell my exercise buddy's that I won 1.26 Masterpoints. They ask questions ad nauseum: Do you win money? What good are MPs? Can you cash them in for something useful? Can't you find something useful to do? etc. etc. My family is equally excited about my masterpoint accumulation. If only I could cash some of them in for a free pastry at Panera. Then things would be different.

OK, I am supposed to talk about CHAT. One of our CHAT players was trying to have fun at the club one Monday. She needed nine tricks to make 3NT. She had a good trick on the board, but she had no way to get to the board. This was ruining her fun.

Declarer: ♠ AJ72      Dummy: ♠ K6543

The play went 2 to King, 3 to Jack (finesse works), Ace takes opponents Queen. Cash the seven. The last club in dummy is good, but there is no outside entry to the board.

Sometimes we have entry cards in other suits and this is not a problem. But, opponents have a way of knocking out those entry cards. In this situation, no outside entry is needed. Just hang on to the deuce and lead the 7 first. The deuce is then the entry for the last 2 tricks. It isn't always clear to us if an entry will be available later in the play. But, keeping a low card in the short hand is often a good idea. You don't have to think about it, just do it. It won't hurt you even if it is not necessary on this hand. Save your thinking for something more important, like which goodie to choose out by the coffee pots.

I went with friends to the Crystal Lake regional last week. We got off to a late start. One of our team members lost her glasses and we couldn't leave until she found them. I won't name names because that might offend Ann.

The tournament was a humbling experience and I am a better person for it. I must have spent \$400-\$500, but it was worth it. I hope you will be able to see my improved demeanor. I paid for it (in many ways – not just financially).

We played against some very nice people. A few (very few) of our opponents will not be invited to any of my parties. My partner and I found their words and their tone to be annoying at best; insulting at worst. I should have called the director, but the director was very busy. Better yet, I might have spoken up and told them how I felt about their behavior. I didn't. I talk big on this subject. It's more difficult to do it - take some action.

But, despite all these complaints and playing difficulties, my partner and I are still friends. All of us had a very good time. We always do. Much laughter. Good food and drink (I drank ONLY Lutheran beverages). Great discussions of the right way to bid/play various hands. This should help my game. Be forewarned. The gloves are off.

It is good to be back in the safety of the Rochester club, where compassion and selflessness rule. May the Golden Rule continue in all our play. Amen.

*Arne Fockler*