

Last Monday at 10:00 A.M. I counted 29 cars in the parking lot. I walked into the clubhouse and saw 8 tables. It was very loud. It stayed that way until the game started. Then it died down a bit. I commented to one table that it was a bit noisy. "We are having fun" was the response. Good!

We use the previous Friday hands. We can compare our results against the "field". If we had problems, we can replay/rebid/discuss the hand to see what we might have done differently. Very helpful! This Friday's hands were very distributional. The CHAT participants were asking for answers rather than suggestions. At one table I hear:

"I can't bid 2D. I don't have 10 points. Supporting Spades is a lie, Passing is bad, NT is out of the question. Help!"

"Choose the bid that will help partner the most."

"Nothing will help, just tell me what to do!"

"OK, Bid 2S, it's a much better lie. Partner will be deceived less."

The table thought that was very funny. "Now, he's teaching us to lie." Much Laughter! Maybe, "choosing the best of bad alternatives" would have been a better way to word it.

Another table asks for help. The hands were all face up on the table. Declarer had just made 3 Hearts. Even so, declarer was being challenged on her bidding.

"You can't support hearts, you only have 3."

"I couldn't find another bid."

"Why not 1 NT?"

"I didn't have diamonds stopped."

"You don't have to stop every suit."

"I know. (Pause) I think God made me do it."

Good conversation. I did suggest to the bidder that blaming God was not good form. She agreed, thanked me for the advice and said she would do better in the future.

Later I am at another table where another group was challenging a bid. The bidder was a bit defensive and finally said "the Devil made me do it." YES, this is much better terminology than blaming God!

I went back to the previous table, and relayed this information to the person I had just counseled. Again, she was very appreciative, I think. She did have a somewhat quizzical look on her face.

Good start! I have been here 10 minutes and I have given advice on Lying, Deception and Blasphemy. This is more than just mentoring. My mother was right. I should have gone into the ministry.

Back to earth. Another table was arguing over whose trick it was. RHO had trumped the trick with a diamond but the table would not let her have it. She was informed that the contract was NT, not diamonds! "Oops, sorry". Followed by red face and embarrassment. I really do hate it when that happens! The bidding had shown agreement on diamonds but the final contract was NoTrump. She was still thinking diamonds. I made a suggestion. When dummy lays the cards down at a NT contract, don't place the diamonds (the side suit that was bid) on the left side where trump is normally placed. Sounds unnecessary, but if you are playing with me, please do it!

I recently purchased one of Mike Lawrence's computer programs on counting at the table. I need to work on my counting. I am a math guy. Counting is simple arithmetic. I should be able to do this, but miscounting is still a part of my game. I have learned some new technique. I found a table that needed counting advice. Declarer was deciding how long to hold up in a risky suit.

"How many hearts does LHO have? She has followed to two leads. RHO has at least 5 because of his overcall. You and dummy had 6. So, LHO had exactly 2. She is out of hearts."

"Oh Arne, That's too much. Maybe next year. My head hurts thinking about it."

"Well, you are trying to do a holdup play. That's great! You can handle this."

"Please go find another table. Help someone else. You make me nervous."

I took that positively. She wasn't yelling at me. She was just pleading for mercy. Mercy is something we in the ministry understand.

Arne Fockler

How many Bridge players do you need to change a light bulb?

Four. One to change the bulb and 3 to explain how it could have been done better.