

CHAT is working! I can just feel it. A primary objective of CHAT is to improve skills and become a successful, competitive bridge player. It's happening! My game IS getting better. This month I had a 59% game. 3rd place! Even better, we ended up ahead of Pat.

I want to thank all the people that got me here. It is humbling to see 25+ players show up every week just to work with me and help me improve my game. Humbling. Yes, that's the right word. My humility seems to grow with every session. I'm very proud of that.

But, enough about you, there are some very good CHAT things happening.

One morning, none of the tables were asking for help. I was just standing around drinking coffee. I walked over to a table and listened to the discussion. Declarer had just gone down 1 trick at 3 NT. Looking at the results online, they found that the entire field played the hand in 4 spades. The bidding was:

<u>N</u>	<u>E</u>	<u>S</u>	<u>W</u>
1C	P	1S	P
1NT	P	3NT	passed out

The group placed all the hands face up on the table. They discussed each bid, 1 by 1, as a group. Subsequently, they still could not see anything wrong with their bidding. They missed a 5-3 spade fit, but couldn't see why. They lamented: "How could South know that North had 3 spades?"

I told them that **New Minor Forcing** is a convention that might have been used here. It's not my intention to talk about New Minor Forcing. I bring this table conversation up to talk about the method they used to analyze their bidding. It was good. No, it was GREAT! As they walked through the bidding, each person agreed on each bid before they moved on. Excellent! After this analysis, they concluded that their bidding was correct. I agreed. It was. Their convention card just wasn't strong enough to help them get to 4 spades.

On a good day, 3NT plays better than 4H and you get a good result. Your opponents get "fixed". They become quiet. They look at each other with a twisted expression of pain. This is not a good time to gloat over your success (luck). The percentage of the time, getting to the wrong contract fails.

On another topic, I have been told that I seem to like breaking the rules. My suggestions don't fit the Audrey's book and I don't seem to like Audrey Grant.

I must defend myself here. First, I have no problem with Audrey Grant. She might not like me, but I'm OK with her. I do like to break the rules and go against the grain at times. But "at times" is the key phrase here.

When a mentor is called over it often means that Audrey's notebook doesn't cover this situation. If it did, you wouldn't need a mentor. Making the best choice, in these difficult situations, is crucial. It requires bending, sometimes just outright breaking the rules. Frequently, the decision you make in these critical situations is the key to successful bidding of a hand. Experienced players have dealt with these situations before and find the better choice. My advice – Get experienced. It takes time.

I see CHAT participants breaking rules too. So there! Here are a couple examples:

Opening Leads: Don't under lead an Ace in a suit contract. This is a rule I never break. I'll bet Audrey doesn't either. I still see it happening (but rarely).

Second hand low: You should break this rule occasionally, but don't break it unless you have a good reason. I see second hand high too often and it hurts.

Finally, I have a suggestion. This already happens frequently but I want to bring it up anyway. **Police yourself a bit.** When you see an error happen, talk about it; give some constructive criticism. Take the time. If you are the one that made the error, don't take it personally. This is good advice for the Club games too, but we don't have as much freedom to take the time then. This isn't Club Bridge. This is CHAT. We need constructive criticism and we have plenty of time.

Along these lines, I think that declarer often has more chances to talk about a defensive play that helped make the contract. Something like: "Your lead of the Heart Ace made it easy for me". Declarer has a view of the hand that is usually broader than the rest of the table.

I apologize for the length of this article, I didn't have the time to make it short. A great mathematician (Pascal) said that. I find it to be true.

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