

I just got back from a Friday afternoon session - 45%. I couldn't get out of the club fast enough. My partner (who we will keep anonymous) was 10 steps ahead of me. He seemed to be in a hurry to leave too. We could have sat down and discussed our failings and talked about how we can avoid those problems in the future. But it was Friday afternoon and I needed a beer (and I don't particularly like beer). I am not sure what Dick needed but I don't think he needed me anymore.

I looked over the scores on Saturday and I found some solace. Some of the low scores could not have been avoided. Our opponents defended too well, or they bid games that no one else got to, or they got lucky, on and on. A little "beer time" would probably have been therapeutic. We were not as dumb as we thought.

But we did spend a little time in the "dumb play" zone. Early in the afternoon I was in a 4 spade contract. I had a good plan. It looked like 4S was in the bag – maybe an overtrick.

Just get the trump out and then strip the hand of clubs, exiting with my last club (which I had to lose anyway). The opponents are in and they will have to lead a red card. Either suit and I get an extra trick.

Good thinking Arne! It ain't gonna be 45% today! Great plan! I get the trump out and start the clubs. The opponents ruff my 3rd club lead. It is rare, but this has happened to me before. Fourteen cards in the trump suit – there is nothing you can do about that! Bad luck!

I assigned it to the aging process. I'm 73. If only I was 10 again (back in the days when I could count). It was about 1:30pm. I didn't fall asleep. (I generally do not fall asleep until around 2:30pm.) My partner is very sympathetic. Everyone at the table feels sorry for me – very comforting! I still have 2 ½ hours yet to play. I will regret this error for most of that time.

I need to just "put it behind me". Yeah, Right.

Baring my soul about my failures, might be a good lead-in to a bridge principle that I created myself: **The Principle of Restricted Choice**. It goes something like this:

When you start playing bridge you find a partner and get going on it. Over time you find other partners for different days, for tournaments and for special events. You build a cadre of partners that you can call on to play with you. After you have played together for a while and have made a few of the gaffes like I described a moment ago, this base of partners shrinks.

Now you are hearing: "Fridays don't work for me anymore" or "I need exposure to other players to broaden my game", etc. You get the picture, right? You now have a smaller number of people to play with. This is known as **The Principle of Restricted Choice**.

Now, whenever someone asks you to play with them, you take it! Your choices are limited (restricted). You are now at a new plateau in your bridge career. You hear yourself repeatedly telling other people that "Master points mean nothing to me, I just play to have fun." That word just keeps popping up. FUN! And it only cost me \$6. What more could you want?

There is another version of **The Principle of Restricted Choice**. It is not as valuable as my version, but it is worth discussing. It may add to your FUN sometime down the road

The Principle of Restricted Choice (definition I found on the net):

" **The principle of restricted choice is an application of Bayes Law. Increases and decreases in the probabilities of original lies of the opposing cards, as the play of the hand proceeds, are examples of Bayesian updating (as evidence accumulates). The play of a card which may have been selected as a choice of equal plays increases the chance that the player started with a holding in which his choice was restricted." Note that restricted choice is always introduced in terms of two touching cards – consecutive ranks in the same suit, such as QJ or KQ – where equivalence is manifest."**

I hope you caught that part about "**Manifest Equivalence**". For the geeks at the club (you know who you are) this is the kind of phrase that brings a smile to their faces. Your kind of language. Bring it on! We are getting to "adults only" conventions. Next, we can talk about Kokish Relays, Ghestem, Double-Barreled Stayman or (my favorite) The Yellow Rose of Texas.

For the "lesser geeks" at the club that found the above definition to be a bit intimidating, let's use one example to give you a basic understanding of the **Principle of Restricted Choice**.

North (dummy)

♠ K T 3 2

South (you)

♠ A 8 7 5 4

Your plan is to play ♠AK and hope for a 2-2 split.

You lead ♠A, LHO plays small, 2♠ from dummy, RHO drops the ♠Q.

Now, did RHO play the ♠Q because it was singleton or does RHO have the ♠QJ and he is trying to fool you? Should you play the ♠K and hope East started with ♠QJ doubleton? Or, should you finesse dummy's 10, playing for West to have started with Jack 3rd. The **Principle of restricted choice** says you should finesse. Don't play for the drop. Assume that RHO was "restricted" and had to play the Queen.

Two times out of three, the honor that dropped from East will be a singleton. Only one time in three will it be from queen-jack doubleton (per Larry Cohen).

Cheers.

Arne Fockler

Geek ...solving problems you didn't know you had, in ways you can't understand.