

The Rochester Sectional tournament is over. It was a big success. Many participants gave us rave reviews for "Rochester Nice". "Rochester Nice" is a step up from "Minnesota Nice". Many of us heard participants say that they love the Rochester tournament and the friendly atmosphere they enjoy here. This a great statement for our club. The Board of Directors ordered a celebration – Good idea!!

OK, enough about "Rochester Nice". I want to talk about "Rochester Serious". I am suggesting that you work on making your opponent's life a "living hell". Interfering in the bidding as much as possible, more penalty doubles, pushing the opponents bidding to higher levels, getting back at experienced players that consistently reduce your position on the leader board and finally, ~~learning to smile in a manner that looks friendly but has an "in your face" aspect to it~~ (better leave this one out).

Have you ever noticed that some of our "Rochester Nice" members seem to be downright pushy? They do most of the things listed above. Their names are frequently at the top of the leader board. When you sit down at their table you get: "Welcome to Table 7. We hope you enjoy your time here". Why wouldn't they welcome you? Fresh meat!

It may sound like I am picking on these good players. No! I like pushy players. They make you think. They "push" you into really difficult decisions. Research is showing that the mental and social aspects of playing bridge have many health benefits. Be thankful for the health benefits that these caring people provide.

But, to compete with these nice people, you might have to jack up your own "pushiness". I have a couple of small suggestions that might help:

1. Suppose RHO opens 1♦. If you don't have a biddable major and 2♣ is a possibility, s-t-r-e-t-c-h to make that bid. This doesn't induce the "living hell" state, but it is a little pushy. The opponents don't get to bid a major at the one level. This can complicate their bidding. It's a start.
2. In this bidding sequence,
 1♥ pass 2 pass
 pass **you?**

You need to think carefully before you lay the pass card down. The opponents have found an 8-card major fit and likely own at least half the points in the deck. If you have good defensive possibilities, pass. If not, letting them have it at the 2-level doesn't sound like the percentage play to me. Look hard for a bid to "push" the opponents higher. Down one could very well be a good board for you. **Note:** Pass is still an option. Don't do something crazy.

To bid, you should have a good suit - the likelihood of being doubled is less. Don't overlook a takeout double as the bid you need. Your partner may leave it in. Partner may be lying in the weeds and thinking along the "living hell" possibility for the opponents. Give him a chance to demonize them. This could be much more than creating a minor annoyance.

PUSH!

Arne Fockler

Be Nice! – don't overwhelm.

We had a Pro Am game on April 30 where less experienced players were assigned a more experienced partner. It looked like we had a good time. I did. Prior to starting the play, the experienced players were cautioned to "be nice". That wasn't the exact phrase used but I took it that way. I think we were asked to "speak only when spoken to". The fear is that the "Pros" will overwhelm the Ams with more advice than they want.

Where did this fear come from? Overwhelm! Who? Us? You must be kidding! Our "Pros" don't overwhelm. They are just happy that they can do some small service for those that are not quite as skilled. The needy. Some see it as community service; kind of a skills development for the wealthy. We are breaking new ground here. Commendable! True heartfelt concern for others!

The Pros have taught many lessons to many players (free of charge) and they always give you a friendly smile after the lesson is over. They can't help it if they continually dominate the top of the leaderboard. Some don't have a choice. They just naturally put their pants on both legs at one time. The thought that these thoughtful, giving people would overwhelm? Absurd!

I saw a lot of CHAT players at the Gopher regional tournament this week. GREAT! They did very well. Being an "Am" is a temporary thing. The Gopher results show that your game is growing. It follows that your confidence is growing as well. Soon, you will be cautioned to "be nice". Then, you know that you have arrived. Overwhelm away! Do some of that thoughtful community service yourself. I suggest that you continue to put your pants on one leg at a time, but you can now show some of the newbies how much you know! Have fun! That's why we play this game, right?

Now I have overwhelmed you with my "how not to overwhelm" article. (AND, you didn't ask for it!) But, it is too late, I don't want to rewrite it.

Be Quick! Be Slow! (At the right times)

I've said this before: "Bridge players are smart people". That's my view, but I think it is true. We are "**quick studies**". We pick up difficult bridge concepts quickly. People sometimes treat us a bit like "nerds". I take that as a compliment.

CHAT players are often a little too quick. We take our Aces too quickly. Is there a good reason to "cash out"? We are too quick to switch suits. Opening a new suit often helps the opponents. Let the opponents be the first to lead a suit that each of you have tricks in. During the play, I frequently try to work on one suit. On a good day, I can take my tricks in that suit and then give up a loser on the last play of that suit. Then the opponents get to open the next suit.

This is very general advice. It's your job to use it in the right situations. Make sure this is a good strategy for your current hand. It's fun when it works.

Sometimes you need to be QUICK!

1♥ -Pass - 4♥: The 4H bidder is warning partner not to get too excited. The hand is distributional (it typically promises 5 hearts with limited values). "Fast Arrival" gives us a good chance for a makeable game while also making it difficult for the opponents to compete. Yes!

Sometimes, you need to go slowly.

1♣ - Pass - 1♦. You hold the 1 hand and have a strong opening hand yourself. No need to be quick here. You have time to explore for the right contract. **Slow Shows** is a simple phrase that has deep meaning. We may be "quick" people, but slow is often the key to success, especially with strong hands.

You **do** need to find forcing bids, so partner does not pass before game is reached. The **4th suit forcing** convention can pave the way for slower bidding. It might be a convention you want to add to your card; if you haven't already.

Note: When you are working on this slow bidding thing, the opponents have very limited point count. If they interfere you might find doubling to be the right choice, especially at favorable vulnerability. Look for it.

Finally, The **Two over One** bidding system is a system that allows you to bid in a deliberate manner. For instance, **1♥ - pass- 2** is forcing to game. After these opening bids, you can bid slowly and find the optimum contract. Effective! Many in the club use this convention.

Slow Play – NEVER play too S L O W !

Quick and Slow discussion wouldn't be complete without talking about slow play. I don't view this as an issue in CHAT. Playing slow is what we do. Backup and discuss the play. Take our time. That's the plan.

But this is an issue with Pro's and Am's playing in the club (or tournament) games. We all need to consciously work on avoiding slow play.

Be quick (at least don't be slow) with your play at the table. This isn't something that Directors fix. **Players need to fix this.** We need to police ourselves. Whoever is playing slow, likely does NOT realize it. If play is excessively slow at your table, politely speak up. **Speak up even if you are not spoken to!** Joke about it. Do something. If the joking is directed your way, take it as more than a joke. A little introspection from everyone will help.

Enough. I feel like I have been using my "teacher voice". Sorry.

Arne Fackler