

**District 16 Newsletter for Future Life Masters**

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## **From the Editor**

Great Bridge Players:

Charles Goren and Harry Fishbein traveled to a tournament in upstate New York. Each was playing with a different partner. Goren won five events with his partner. Fishbein was 2nd in each of the contests won by Goren. On the way home, Fishbein commented to Goren, “I bet I beat you in one thing this trip.”

Said Goren, “What would that be?”

Fishbein: “I made off with five bars of soap from the hotel.”

Goren’s rejoinder: “Second again.”

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Carol Jewett, Editor

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## Upcoming Tournaments and Events

### Sectionals:

- Spring - Nov. 14-17 [Info](#)
- Austin - Nov. 30-Dec. 1 [Info](#)
- STac Unit 174 - Dec 2-8 [Info](#)
- STac Units 173, 176, 183, 285 - Dec 2-8 [Info](#)

### Events:

- District 16 Zoom Spanish Lecture - Nov 16 at 12:30 PM
- District 16 Zoom I/N Lecture:
- "Perfectly Powerful Preempts"  
By Thomas Rush - Nov 23 at noon [Lecture](#)
- 0-50 masterpoint games every Monday at 4:00 p.m.
- 0-100 masterpoint games every day at 6:00 p.m.
- 0-200 masterpoint games every day at 6:05 p.m.

For Information on Other Tournaments in General for District 16, [click here](#).



## Bridge Math

In September's newsletter, the Bridge Math article ended showing two suit combinations holding the ace and king of a suit, but missing the queen or the jack and pointed out that in both combinations, the mathematically preferable approach in terms of play was to play the finesse rather than just lead the ace and king of the suit in hopes that the missing honor would fall. In a recent presentation in Dallas, Scott Nason explained when you should "play for the drop." Here is an abridged and abbreviated version of his presentation.

## “8 Ever/9 Never”

In bridge, 8 Ever/9 Never is a “rule” for when to finesse and when to play for the drop. It states that if you are missing five cards in a suit, including the queen (i.e., your two hands contain eight, including the AKJ), then you should finesse, while if you have nine, that you should play off the ace and king, hoping the queen falls.

With 8, the odds clearly favor finessing, so it is almost always the right strategy – unless, for example, you “know” the queen must be off-side, or you can afford to lose the trick to the onside hand, but not to the other hand.

With 9, the odds very slightly favor playing for the drop, so even small hints at the actual lay of the cards might well suggest “breaking the rule.”

### Restricted Choice

We learned to play for the drop when missing four to the queen, but if we are missing the queen and the jack there is no finesse, so obviously we play for the drop, hoping that the suit breaks 2/2 and both honors will fall.

But what if we play one high honor and the jack or the queen falls? Now we may have a choice that we didn’t expect. Should we continue to play for the drop or – if available – finesse against the remaining honor?

Restricted choice teaches us that it is much more likely that the honor that fell is a singleton, rather than from QJ doubleton. So we should assume that the other hand started with honor-third and finesse if we can.

Material from “Bridge Odds: 8 Ever/9 Never and Other Card Combination Best Chances,” presented by Scott Nason at the District 16 Dallas Regional August 27, 2024.

## When Not To Lead a Suit

There are few hard and fast rules in bridge, but one that is pretty close is: as defender, avoid breaking a new suit for the declarer. The less recognized corollary to this rule is: as declarer and as soon as the dummy comes down, check to see if there

is a suit you need to try a force the defense to lead to you and play towards that outcome if possible. In 2018, Geoffe Booth gave a presentation at the Houston Regional on when not to lead a suit if you can avoid it. Here is an abridged and edited version of his presentation.

## When Not to Lead a Suit

By Geoffe Booth

Generally, bridge is not a game for wimps, but sometimes you need to be passive. The major theme of this presentation is to recognize a dummy where a passive defense is called for. If dummy has no long suits and no ruffing potential, then defenders do best if declarer is forced to be the first to lead each suit. It is never advantageous to lead a suit first. If a suit is solid, it may not matter who leads it first, but often the side that leads a suit first loses a trick.

A suit is said to be frozen if it costs a trick to whichever side leads it first. Some suits are immediately frozen; others are frozen after the first trick. Consider the following two hands and “play” them mentally leading first from one hand and then from another.

	J42	
K105		A986
	Q73	
	K65	
Q83		A1097
	J42	

It costs a trick to whichever side leads the suit first. These two hands were immediately frozen. The next hand becomes frozen as the hand is played:

1065

AK97      J82

Q43

After the ace or king is cashed, the suit is frozen. Whichever side leads the suit next loses a trick. Here are other examples of frozen suit combinations. In each case, the side that breaks the suit loses a trick.

J106

K73      Q954

A82

1032

Q98      K764

AJ5

This last one is tricky.

1097

A84      KJ32

Q65

If declarer leads the 10 from dummy, what does the defense have to do to prevent declarer from scoring a trick in this suit? If East plays small, South plays small and West must win the ace. Now South can lead from dummy toward the queen and set up a trick. It doesn't do East any good to play the jack either. South will cover with the queen, West will win the ace, but now the suit looks like this:

97

84            K32

65

South now gets a trick by leading toward dummy and finessing the 7 if West plays low. It turns out the only defense is for East to play a very counter-intuitive second-hand-high and rise with the king. This stops North/South from getting a trick in the suit, but now the suit looks like this:

97

A8            J32

Q6

And the suit is still frozen. Whichever side leads this suit first forfeits a trick. As I told you, this is not a game for wimps.

### Frank Stewart Tip

#### Help from an Opponent

It's usually better if you get to play last to a trick. To execute an endplay, you present an opponent with the lead so that you get to play last and anything he leads will benefit you.

♠ 765

♥ J43

♦ J3

♣ AQ962

♠ Q10843

♥ K62

♦ K62

♣ 53

♠ A92

♥ AQ5

♦ AQ5

♣ K1084

♠ KJ

♥ 10987

♦ 109874

♣ J7

My colleague Alfred Sheinwold (1912-1997) used this deal to illustrate an endplay with his inimitable style: "Once upon a time," Sheinwold wrote, "There was a poor but honest bridge player who was terrible at finessing. When he had a crucial choice of finesses, he always tried the wrong one. His Fairy Godmother took pity on him and gave him a magic coin. 'When you have a choice of finesses,' the FG said, 'decide that heads means one finesse and tails means the other. The coin will tell you what to do.' That worked well for a year and a day, Sheinwold went on, until this deal came along. West led a spade against 3NT. Declarer let East's king win but took the return of the ♠ J. He counted eight tricks saw that a winning finesse in a red suit would give him nine, so he pulled out the magic coin.

"Meanwhile," Sheinwold wrote, "West sat there with a cynical look; he didn't believe in magic coins and he knew neither finesse would work. South decided that heads meant to finesse in hearts, tails in diamonds. But when he flipped the coin, it landed on its edge and bounced out the window and down a drain.

Luckily, South wasn't a complete klutz. He figured that meant he shouldn't take a finesse. Instead, he cashed two clubs, then exited with his last spade. West took three spades, but then he had to lead a red card, and South won his ninth trick without risking a finesse."

## Puzzle Hand

Make the Most of Dummy

Dummy

♠ 987  
♥ 32  
♦ K654  
♣ 5432

Declarer (You)

♠ AKQJ10  
♥ 9654  
♦ A32  
♣ AK

In a 4♠ contract, what is your plan for 10 tricks after the lead of the ♣Q?

Answer: In a trump contract, you start by counting losers in the long hand (the hand with the most trumps). Here, you have three heart losers and two diamond losers.

Fortunately, dummy's ♦K covers one of your diamond losers, but you still have four losers total – one too many. What to do about this? You have two options: the diamond suit could split 3-3, allowing you to discard a heart from your hand, or you can ruff a heart in dummy. Only one option is foolproof.



You guessed it – ruff that heart! Win the ♣A and lead a low heart at trick two. Either defender can win and see what you’re up to; they will lead a trump. No bother: win the spade and lead another heart. Win the next spade return and trump your third heart in dummy.

The full deal:

♠ 987  
♥ 32  
♦ K654  
♣ 5432

♠ 654	♠ 32
♥ AQJ10.	♥ K987
♦ 87	♦ QJ109
♣ QJ109	♣ 876

♠ AKQJ10  
♥ 654  
♦ A32  
♣ AK

Note than an initial trump lead by the West hand would put the defenders one step ahead in the race to exhaust North’s trumps.

Reprinted from ACBL *Bridge Bulletin* Deal Me In (October 2023).

## LAW 90\*

“...The director...may also assess procedural penalties for any offense that unduly delays or obstructs the game.”

Slow play, especially habitual slow play, is a violation of law and subject to penalty. When a pair has fallen behind, it is incumbent on them to make up the time lost as quickly as possible whether at fault or not. All players are expected to make a concerted effort to catch up when they have fallen behind, regardless of the reason for their lateness.

In the absence of compelling evidence to the contrary, the director should presume that a pair finishing a round late by more than two or three minutes on more than one occasion during a session is responsible for the lateness. There is a strong expectation that the director will penalize such a pair. The size of a penalty will tend to increase for subsequent instances of slow play and chronic or egregious slow play. While warnings typically will be given before a penalty is assessed, failure to do so in no way limits the director's authority to issue a penalty.

Reprinted from Daily Bulletin, Austin 2021 Regional Dec. 5, 2021 @ p.4

To a very large extent, avoiding slow play is not so much a matter of playing "fast" as it is a matter of avoiding unnecessary delays. Here are some common sense things you can do to avoid unnecessary delays:

- If you are on lead, lead first and write things down on your convention card after you have led.
- If you are the declarer, claim when you are able to do so rather than continue to play the hand when the outcome is clear.
- Do not engage in postmortems regarding a hand when there are still hands that need to be played in a round.
- Even if you and your partner are not engaged in bidding on a given hand, pay attention to all of the bidding so that you do not need to ask for reviews of the bidding before the play begins.
- As you are pulling your cards out of the slot on a board, check to see if you are the opening bidder.

\*Law 90, American Contract Bridge League Laws of Duplicate Bridge, (2017).

