

**WHAT ANNOYS BRIDGE PLAYERS - REVISITED**

In my last column, I presented a list of things that annoy me at the bridge table. I was prepared to face some flak from members telling me to stop being a grumpy old man, but I have been overwhelmed by the number of people agreeing with me. Many players have also shared their own pet hates and I'm going to devote this column to listing some of these. Many of these are actually infractions under the laws.

Rearranging dummy to close up a void: This gets my goat as well. When dummy becomes void in a suit during the play of the hand, some dummies move the remaining three columns of cards together to fill the space. Defenders keep a mental picture of the shape of dummy which helps them plan their defence, and when the hearts column is suddenly the diamonds column it is off-putting and disruptive.

Dummy perfection: Some dummies are overly fussy about neatness. When laying out dummy, they first place the four suits in four neat piles, so you can only see the top one of each, then they neatly move each card down, repositioning any cards on the way that are more than a micron out of line. Once done, they will fuss and move any column that is not completely square or equidistant from the others. During all this, the opponents are unable to make their assessment of dummy and have to wait for the show to finish.

On the other hand, I guess I'm at the other extreme when it comes to laying out dummy. I'm sure my partners despair when my 13 cards hit the deck in a very "casual" layout. Maybe this infuriates opponents who fall into the "fussy dummy" category.

Hogging the Bridgmate: In my opinion, the correct way for the EW player to accept a result is to leave the Bridgmate on the table as they press the Accept button. That way, all four players can see the following screen showing the other results. Some EW players hold the Bridgmate up in such a way that no-one else can see the screen as they press Accept, and leave it there as they look at the other results before placing it back on the table.

People have also mentioned to me that they don't like it when that player reads all the results out. As well as creating problems when it's overheard at the next table, there are times when the opponents know they got a bad result and don't

want to know the gory details. My advice – look at the result if you want, but say nothing – if the others want to know, they can look too.

General rudeness and impoliteness: This is something close to the hearts of many players, but I must admit it isn't a biggie in my book. People have complained how rude it is when pairs continue their post mortem of the previous hand and completely disregard the incoming players as they take their seats. People have also complained about general impoliteness they've encountered at the table – general discourtesies, not helping to pass boards, not clearing rubbish from the table at the end of the session etc.

Opponents arguing with their partner is also something people hate and I agree this can be unpleasant for others at the table. However I look at this philosophically - partnership disharmony can only worsen their results and improve your score, so my advice is to disregard it and look forward to some good boards coming your way.

Congratulating partner: The bridge etiquette books tell us it's polite to say "Well played, partner" after your partner makes a contract as declarer. I don't agree - silence is a wonderful thing. There've been times when I know my partner or I have mis-defended and it's only because of this that the contract makes. It's twisting the knife somewhat when an opponent congratulates their partner for their brilliant declarer play when it was not their good play but our bad play that let the contract make. I admit it can be difficult for newer players to notice when mis-defence has occurred – that's why I maintain that the best thing is to stay silent.

Matters of impropriety: Things like hesitating before playing a singleton; hesitating when playing in second seat to make declarer think you've got a missing honour; asking questions or making comments to mislead the opponents; making comments or doing other things to suggest something to partner; prolonging play unnecessarily (e.g. failing to claim when the outcome is obvious); asking questions for your partner's benefit – these all fall under Laws 73 and 74, and infractions can be subject to procedural penalties. These laws also deal with etiquette, so the Director has the power to penalise general rudeness and impoliteness by a score adjustment if they feel it is appropriate.

The following are more to do with points of law, but are still listed as player gripes.

General handling of cards: The Laws state that at least one opponent must be present before cards are removed from the board. The laws also forbid the

touching of another player's cards (except that Declarer can touch the cards in dummy). Both these laws are regularly flouted.

Detaching a card before it's your turn to play: This is a specific item mentioned in Law 74 and seems to irk a lot of people. It's poor form because you are telling your partner that whatever they or the next hand does, this is the card they are playing. It is specifically listed as an infraction in Law 74B3, and also constitutes Unauthorised Information under Law 16. It also falls under the category of Deception if your aim is to suggest to the opponent that you only have one card that can be played at that turn and in fact you don't.

Dummy playing without instructions from declarer: Dummy is just that – dummy. They cannot take any part in the play of the hand and can only do what declarer tells them to do. This means they shouldn't pick up a card and play it until declarer calls for it, and this even applies if there's only a singleton on the table, or if Dummy thinks declarer's play is obvious e.g. ruffing or playing low under the Ace. If the Director finds that Dummy suggested a play that wasn't what Declarer was going to do, they can award an adjusted score. I've seen occasions where dummy reaches for a trump expecting this to be Declarer's plan when Declarer may have thought the card they led was a winner, or worse, Dummy hovers over a discard when they know that Declarer has led a winner but Declarer may not have realised their lead was a winner and was planning to trump.

Quitting a trick then re-facing it in order to ask others to re-face their cards played: The laws allow a player to ask to see all cards played to the last trick until they have turned their card over. However once they've turned their card over, they can't turn it back and ask others to show their cards. If this happens to you, you are within your rights to politely refuse.

Semi-forcing 1C opening: Some players play a short club as part of an otherwise natural system, but partner may respond to 1C no matter what their point count is, admitting when challenged "I couldn't leave opener in 1C – they might only have 2 clubs". If this is your agreement then you need to alert the response.