

Rubens Pearls on Hand Evaluation:

Like palmistry, the game of bridge involves evaluation of an individual hand, often in isolation, in order to predict the future role the hand and its holder will have in a more complex environment.

In palmistry, hands are always studied in isolation, and predictions are based on the characteristics of the palm compared with known histories of what are believed to be similar palm topographies. The resulting, sometimes, contradictory predictions have caused palmistry to be viewed as a pseudoscience by academics. (*source Wikipedia*).

Prediction on the future of a bridge hand when there has been no other external information can also only be based on known histories and is also fraught with uncertainty. Even with external information, seeing only 25% of the bigger picture, can lead to widely varying predictions (bids).

As it happens, the number of possible bridge deals is stated (*source Basic Bridge Math* <https://jlmartin.ku.edu>) to be 52.36 octillion or 5.236×10^{28}

Thankfully, as we know from experience, a large number of the cards in any deal are inconsequential but that still leaves a ginormous number of combinations of key cards on which to base guidelines based on historical deals. Fortunately, our expert bridge foreparents have, over the years, developed such guidelines and these have proven themselves to be useful predictors of “how things will turn out”. Notwithstanding that this whole uncertainty makes bridge the intriguing game that it is, having the optimum tools for prediction (bidding) will allow a higher success rate and probably more enjoyment in playing the game.

From time to time, it is intended to publish an article on hand evaluation on our web site demonstrating the value of the use of some of the more advanced guidelines using hands from actual play. The theory behind these more advanced guidelines will be drawn from the book, “The Secrets of Winning Bridge” by Jeff Rubens, where the first five chapters are deservedly devoted to this topic. My thanks to one of our leading players for pointing me to this valuable reference.

The Alchemist, December 2021

Christmas Poser 

 9853
 Q986
 T972
 2

You are South with E-W vulnerable. West opens 1C, partner overcalls 1NT and East passes. Do you bid and, if so, what?

Clue: “One man’s trash is another man’s treasure”