

BRIDGE – BEGINNER’S LESSONS III – 19

Planning the Play of the Hand - Part 3

Step VI – Preserving Entries:

1. Before Declarer sets out to either establish winners or to eliminate losers, he/she must be certain that there are enough entries, to both develop the optimum number of available tricks, and to carry out whatever plan of play that he/she intends to implement. It will do Declarer no good to establish any avenue of play, if he/she lacks the ultimate number of entries necessary to enjoy the fruits of his/her labor.

2. Save your entries for timely use, i.e., for when they provide the greatest advantage for you.

a) Given a choice of hands in which to win a trick, when the Opponents have led a suit, Declarer must avoid using up an entry which he/she might need later.

b) When critical entries are in the Trump suit, Declarer must delay drawing the Opponents’ Trump cards until he/she has established the side-suit winners for which the Trump honors are entries.

c) When Declarer must lose one or more tricks in a long suit before it is established, and that suit is needed for an entry, he/she must duck an early round or two as early as possible in order to have the entry available, when later needed.

With **AKxxx** opposite **xxx**, if you play the **AK** and a third card, you will need a side-suit entry to enjoy the long-suit winners that might result in the hand holding the **AK**. If no other entries are available, assume a **3-2** split, duck the first round of the suit, later cash the **King** and **Ace**, putting you where you want to be, when the suit is now, finally established.

Holding **Axxx** opposite **xxx**, duck the first two rounds of the suit and win the **Ace** on the third lead. If the suit divides **3-3**, the long card is a winner, and you will be in the right hand to cash it.

3. Do not squander entries unnecessarily.

a) Never cash sure winners indiscriminately. For every winner cashed, there will be one less entry later in the hand.

b) Be careful not to block the run of your own suits by cashing the honors in the wrong order; to do so is to waste an entry.

With **Kx** opposite **AQJxx**, it is wasteful to cash the **Ace** first and then the **King**, since you will need a side-suit entry to score the **QJx** later. The correct play is to cash the **King** (to unblock the suit) and then lead over to the **Ace**, putting you in the proper hand to enjoy the **QJx**.

Step VII – Figuring Out the Timing:

A. **The nature of the problem:** Timing refers to the proposed order for actually playing the cards. As such, it provides the basis for formulating a general plan for the entire hand.

1. Proper timing involves choosing not only the order of suits to be played but the order of the cards within each suit as well. In the context of winners and losers, timing boils down to selecting a precise scheme for when to release sure winners and to drive out sure losers, for when to develop possible winners and to avoid possible losers.

2. Basically, the fate of each hand can be viewed in terms of a race between the Declarer and the defense. For Declarer, the sure winners might possibly fall short of his/her contract, but the sure winners plus the possible ones will normally achieve or even exceed it.

B. Specific Elements in Timing:

1. The opening lead gives the defense a temporary advantage timewise, as it initiates the attack on your contract. Time remains on the side of the defense, however, only if the lead is effective; that is, if it disturbs or impacts your intended play of the hand.
2. Sure tricks, as entries and controls, influence the timing for both Declarer and the Defenders. Keeping the sure winners in place until they are needed, helps to keep time on Declarer's side. Failure to remove the sure losers aids the Opponents.
3. Developing winners commonly requires that Declarer sacrifice some advantage in time by losing the lead. As long as it serves your ultimate interest, however, do not be reluctant to concede a trick to the Defenders.

With **KQJ** opposite **xxx**, the **Ace** must be driven out. Effectively, you lose one trick, but you gain two in return.

With **Axxxx** opposite **xxx**, you can earn two long-suit winners, providing the missing cards divide 3-2 and you are willing to first concede two tricks to the Opponents.

4. Whenever Declarer loses the lead, the Defenders gain a tempo, permitting them to continue their initial attack or to look elsewhere for tricks. If the defense is in a position to do great damage to your contract, you should avoid giving up the lead. If, on the other hand, they can do little or no harm, you should not be afraid to lose a trick.