

## DANNY ON DUPLICATE (1)

### Why We Play

Except for professionals, who play to earn money and in some instances to teach their clients, we play for love of the game, for sport, recreation, sociability and entertainment. Most professionals play not just for the money but also for the same reasons.

In a way, we are all overgrown children, still playing games as we once did in the park or the schoolyard. I admit it: When I play bridge, I'm little different from the boy I used to be when I played stickball, punchball, curball or boxball on the streets of the Bronx. The main difference is that now I play a mental game rather than a physical game, and I play with girls as well as boys. You, my partners and opponents at the local duplicate bridge club, are my playmates. Without you, I would have neither competition, stimulation nor fun.

And who are you? You are an elite. No matter how your partners and others, including self-styled "experts," may sneer at your bids and plays, just by virtue of participating in organized bridge, you are as much above "social" bridge players as well-coached high-school varsity players, even on losing teams, were above me and other sandlot ballplayers of the Bronx.

Remember Irma La Duncie? Of course you don't, for she was a *backgammon* player at a club I attended many years ago. She was everybody's pigeon in the dollar-a-point games. I laughed when she brought a neighbor to the club and gave the neighbor a lesson. Soon, however, I realized that Irma, though the weakest player at the club, knew far more than those who played only at home with family and friends.

### Before Coming to the Club

Just as you wouldn't play in a softball game with a broken arm, or run in a track meet with a sprained ankle, you shouldn't play duplicate bridge when you are ailing. Of course you shouldn't come to a bridge club when you have an illness that is still in its communicable stages, lest you infect others, but you should also stay at home when you are ailing in other ways. If you play when exhausted, or after a sleepless night, you short-change not only yourself but also your partner, as you will not play your best game. Very few bridge players have good enough instincts to play well on "automatic pilot" when sick or tired, so you should feel free to cancel any bridge dates when you are not up to playing. Your partner will appreciate it.

Unless you live within walking distance of your club, do not plan to arrive exactly on time. Plan to arrive at least ten minutes early. Trains and buses are often a few minutes behind schedule, and if you drive your automobile to the club, snarled traffic or a shortage of nearby parking spaces may delay you. When all goes well, you can use the extra ten minutes to partake of the refreshments that most clubs provide, to chat with acquaintances, or merely to acclimate yourself to your surroundings. If nothing else, you can spend a few minutes reviewing your convention card profitably.

In contrast, if you plan to arrive exactly at game time, you may be delayed through circumstances beyond your control. Your partner won't appreciate having a weak player fill in for you during the first round, nor will your opponents appreciate having a strong player fill in for you, and none of the other three players will enjoy sitting the first round out while waiting for you to arrive. Lateness is not only unpleasant but unfair to all.