

## **Team spirit**

Team mates will play better if you applaud rather than criticise their performance. Much of the desirable behaviour is obvious but most teams will suffer from the destructive behaviour pattern of one or more individuals. It will cost them IMPs.

There are two different types of team spirit or team cohesion – social and task.

**Social Cohesion** refers to the extent to which players get on with each other on a social basis.

**Task Cohesion** refers to the extent to which team members agree on the goals of the team and the strategies employed to achieve those goals.

Performance is increased when team members are socially integrated as well as being united in their efforts at the bridge table.

## **Understanding Individual Differences**

All members of a team should have an appreciation of the different personalities of their team mates. This can be achieved by open discussion, especially of personal preferences and attitudes e.g. each member of the team could explain to the rest of the team how they wish to be treated when they are under-performing or have made a mistake. Some bridge players prefer to be left alone in this situation, most prefer reassurance and encouragement and a very few respond to “a kick up the backside”. It is important that every member of the team is aware of these preferences in order to avoid inappropriate, albeit well meaning, attempts to help a team mate.

Players will have different pre-match routines. Some will want to talk to the captain but others know how best to prepare and prefer to be left alone. The intrusion of others, even the captain, is disruptive.

? Please email team captains both a) what behaviour you expect from team mates and b) what behaviour upsets or annoys you. If a particular action upsets any member of the team, we all need to know so that we avoid it. Your captain will combine all the lists into one (? anonymously) to distribute to the team.

**Never criticise a team-mate**

**Be positive & encourage everyone**

## **INDIVIDUAL ROLES IN BRIDGE PARTNERSHIPS AND TEAMS**

Role behaviors are important in the effectiveness of a bridge partnership or team. Players have both formal roles e.g. captain, coach, and informal roles e.g. motivator, cheerleader, organizer and social secretary. There are also expectations that partnerships with a more successful track record will gain more points. Three conditions must exist in order for there to be a link between individual roles and team effectiveness.

### **ROLE CLARITY**

This refers to the extent to which players are clear about their role in the partnership or team.

Partnership: Who updates the system?

Team: What is the role of your partnership in the team? Are you the steady pair, the anchor pair, the pair to thrash the weaker teams and/or the pair to “operate” when the team is down 70 IMPs with 8 boards to play.

### **ROLE ACCEPTANCE**

This refers to the extent that players are satisfied with role which has been allocated to them. Players may demonstrate a high degree of role clarity ie. they are fully aware of what is expected of them – but not be happy with the role. Lack of role acceptance can have serious affects on team spirit.

### **PERCEIVED ROLE PERFORMANCE**

This refers to the extent to which players are perceived to be actually carrying out their roles with success. If role clarity and role acceptance are present but perceived role performance is not occurring, then team cohesion will be affected. It is important to appreciate the roles of teammates. It is not uncommon for bridge players to be unaware of the specific problems created by teammates` roles and style, and hence be quick to criticize when mistakes are made. Teams who have a full appreciation of the various demands of different roles, styles (and systems) invariably demonstrate higher levels of cohesion and team spirit when under stress.

If the three conditions of role clarity, role acceptance and perceived role performance are achieved then team spirit will be enhanced and it is likely that team performance will improve. Also, individuals within the team will feel happier and more committed to their training and performance preparations.

### **DEVELOP YOUR SELF CONFIDENCE**

Self confidence is crucial to successful performance. Utilise appropriate positive self talk. Feel good about your specific contribution in previous competitions.

## RECOGNISE THE FACTORS WHICH YOU CAN AND CAN'T CONTROL

Accept the things over which you have no control. Don't fight decisions which cannot be changed in your favour. Don't waste energy and effort feeling unnecessarily sorry for yourself or angry. Accept the selection committee's decisions and avoid taking things personally. Remind yourself that you play bridge because you enjoy it!

## KEEP LINES OF COMMUNICATION OPEN

This may be difficult because you are disappointed over not playing for a higher ranked team or frustrated at not being selected. Nevertheless, feedback would be helpful, provided you can take it as constructive advice. Remind yourself that you are a valuable member of this team in other ways than just playing.

## BE READY TO PLAY AT ANY TIME

Maintain a positive image at all times and give the impression that you are ready to perform at any time. Spend time with positive people who support you. Resist the temptation to hang around with others who are not playing but complaining about selection issues.

## **PARTNERSHIP AND TEAM MOTIVATION**

As with individual performance, motivation is a vital element of partnership and team functioning. If a partnership or team is not motivated as a group, as well as at the individual level, performance will suffer. Several factors require attention to ensure that team motivation is at its highest.

### TEAM GOAL SETTING

Agree and formalise team competitive and training goals for the year. The absence of agreed, written goals, often leads to a range of problems such as reduced commitment, lack of adherence to training standards, conflict between team members and a general lack of direction during both preparation and competition.

### TEAM PROFILING

Performance profiling lets the team develop its own goals.

### JOINT RESPONSIBILITY

Teams need to have open communication channels whereby players can discuss issues amongst themselves and provide feedback to the coach and captain. Problems must be discussed rather than bottled up. Issues need to be confronted and solutions considered in a democratic way. Cliques are very damaging to team cohesion and team spirit. The period immediately preceding a competition is not the time for open discussion but for team bonding with positive reiteration of agreed aims and goals.

## Commitment to Positive Thinking

Mutual encouragement and support through thick and thin is vital if team cohesion is to remain high. Team mates can help to contribute to this reminding each other

- a) of their team mates positive comments about the individual
- b) to use positive self talk
- c) to stay focused using concentration cues and pre-performance routines during pressure periods.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TEAM BUILDING

### TEAM IDENTITY

- Recognise the importance of pride in the team and develop its sources.
- Emphasise any unique history.

### TEAM STRUCTURE

- Develop a team structure in which there is a clear differentiation in team roles.
- Clarify role expectations and allow time for group discussions relating to role differentiation.
- Establish consensus and agreement on status differences within the team eg captain

### TEAM GOALS

- Ensure that the team sets clear and realistic goals. Explain how adherence to team standards facilitates team effectiveness.
- Provide appropriate feedback on the achievement of goals.
- Promote co-operation and discourage individual rivalry.

Mutual encouragement and support through thick and thin is vital if team cohesion is to remain high.

Adopting winning behaviours has dramatic effects on team spirit, results & enjoyment.

**The importance of considering why we had underperformed rather than how (going through the card).**

- We **act like a team** and psychologically we are well prepared
- We are **positive at all times** and there is no attempt to attribute blame for points lost/failed to gain.
- We remain **focused** and **arrive in good time for each match**
- **Everyone keeps a score card** and checks scores with opponents

- We will know exactly who we are playing and the state of each match.
- We will eat sensibly
- All pairs in the team are good enough to win by playing a steady game, eliminating mistakes and not taking unnecessary risks.

## **SYNERGY**

- In order for a team or partnership to demonstrate high team spirit, all individuals must be comfortable in their role and be totally committed to the team effort. When this happens, it is possible that a group of players can produce a team performance which exceeds the sum of each individual's ability.
- Focus on your job as team member. Do everything you can not only to ensure that you play to the best of your ability but also be a good team player.
- Avoid worrying about other members of the team.

**R. J. A. BUTLAND**  
**August, 2018**