

Keep Your Eye On The Prize

Good morning Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to this - our 45th session of Shark's Pointers Online.

We all just got some fantastic news from the ACBL. Even though our much-awaited Summer NABC in Providence has been canceled - it has been rescheduled for the summer of 2022! What could be better! Good news on the vaccine front with the new J&J vaccine expected to get emergency approval - and this requires only one shot! We've enjoyed a couple of Spring-like days this week and I am very much looking forward to our face to face competitions roaring back in - along with everything else in our society!

It's hard to believe we have had 45 of these online sessions. It's getting tough to not repeating ourselves, but many of our pointers warrant repetition. Today is no exception. We have frequently talked about maintaining focus and concentration and keeping an even temperament at the table. We've used the song "What's It All About, Alfie" to illustrate the importance of figuring out what is going on in a given hand. Sometimes, the bidding, play, and defense are very, very difficult to figure out. Bridge can be a very tough game - and extremely frustrating!

Today, we are going to highlight some tough bidding, defensive, and play problems. None of us are perfect - and none of us are going to get these all right. In fact, we sometimes may get them all wrong. But today's Shark's Pointer is "Keep Your Eye On The Prize"! So before we continue, I think it is worthwhile to stop and ask ourselves what it is that we are striving to attain through the game of bridge. Are we trying to achieve some milestone - like becoming a Life Master or winning a Regional or even a National Championship? Are we trying to improve a relationship with a partner. To fill a void during our retirement? Whatever our goals, today's pointer is telling us - no matter how many times we may stumble along the way, we should never give up, we need to keep getting back on your horse. Whether your prize is to learn more about this game, to improve your skills, or to just have fun - Keep Your Eye On The Prize!

Today's first hand illustrates a very common difficult bidding situation...

Keep Your Eye On The Prize

North Deals
Both Vul

♠ 6 5 3
♥ 8 7 4 2
♦ A Q 4
♣ A 10 7



<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
?	Pass	1 ♣	1 ♥

So here's your hand, sitting West. North passes, your partner bids 1 ♣, South overcalls 1 ♥ and it is your turn to bid.

What are your thoughts?

- 1) Partner opened the bidding vul and you have 10 HCP. It is our hand, we may or may not have game.
- 2) Your anemic hearts certainly don't qualify as a stopper, so bidding 1 NT would be looking for a disaster.
- 3) You don't want to make a negative double, because if partner bids spades, she's apt to get tapped and the result will be a disaster.

So, what's your goal? What is our Prize - so to speak?

Seems to me we would want to elicit a no trump bid from partner and play 2 or 3 NT from partner's side. But how do you do that?

There are 2 possible solutions.

#1) Show a limit raise by bidding 2H.

#2) Simply raise to 2C.

I prefer the 2nd option as you don't have as many clubs as partner would be expecting - nor do you have any ruffing values whatsoever. You have so many flaws, your possessing 10 HCP shouldn't deter you in any way.

So, let's continue. Pard now bids 2S! What is your call?

Keep Your Eye On The Prize

North Deals
Both Vul

♠ 6 5 3
♥ 8 7 4 2
♦ A Q 4
♣ A 10 7



<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	Pass	1 ♣	1 ♥
2 ♣	Pass	2 ♠	Pass
?			

So, now, we should be looking for game. 3C doesn't do this hand justice and your 8 of hearts didn't become any more of a stopper than it was previously, so you decide to bid 3D. Now partner bids 3N and you are delighted to pass.

Here's the full hand...

Keep Your Eye On The Prize

North Deals
Both Vul

♠ 6 5 3	♠ J 10 9 8 7	♠ A K Q
♥ 8 7 4 2	♥ —	♥ A Q 5 3
♦ A Q 4	♦ 10 8 7 3 2	♦ 5
♣ A 10 7	♣ J 5 4	♣ Q 9 6 3 2
	<div style="display: inline-block; background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center; margin: 5px;"> W N E S </div>	
	♠ 4 2	
	♥ K J 10 9 6	
	♦ K J 9 6	
	♣ K 8	

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	Pass	1 ♣	1 ♥
2 ♣	Pass	2 ♠	Pass
3 ♦	Pass	3 NT	All pass

3 NT by East

So, now, we should be looking for game. 3C doesn't do this hand justice and your 8 of hearts didn't become any more of a stopper than it was previously, so you decide to bid 3D. Now partner bids 3 NT and you are delighted to pass.

Here's the full hand...

At the other table, believe it or not, the actual auction was

1C-1H-1 NT-P
2S-P 2 NT-P
3H- P -3S- P
3 NT-P-4S all pass

I held the North hand, and was delighted to allow my opponents to play unmolested in my best 5 card suit! Our team won 13 IMPs on this one. What happened was that after bidding 1 NT without a heart stopper, he thought his partner was short in hearts and playing 3 NT from his side would have been disastrous.

You have to think ahead and avoid silly, unnecessary, and misdescriptive bids!

Oftentimes, your partner - or you yourself - will do something just totally irrational. Rather than get all bent out of shape, keep your eye on the prize. More often than not, things have a way of falling back into shape. Check out this next hand....

Keep Your Eye On The Prize

IMPs

West Deals

E-W Vul

♠ A 10	♠ J 9 7 6 3	♠ Q 4
♥ A K 9 2	♥ 8 7	♥ 6 5 4
♦ 9 7 6 3	♦ A 10 8 5	♦ K Q 2
♣ 10 4 3	♣ K 9	♣ A J 8 7 6
	<div style="display: inline-block; border: 1px solid black; background-color: #008000; padding: 5px; text-align: center; margin: 5px;"> N W E S </div>	
	♠ K 8 5 2	
	♥ Q J 10 3	
	♦ J 4	
	♣ Q 5 2	

Opening Lead 6 of ♠

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
1 ♦	1 ♠	2 ♣	3 ♠
Pass	Pass	Dbl	Pass
3 NT	All pass		

3 NT by West

I held the North hand and at favorable vulnerability made a very aggressive overcall with a moth-eaten suit, headed by the J. My partner's 3 ♠ bid was preemptive suggestive 4 card support with less than 10 HCP. With more than 10 HCP, partner would have cue bid 2 ♦. This would keep the bidding low, and our side might even get to play it at 2 ♠. As it was the auction was very helpful for our side's defense against 3 NT, because after the lead of the 6 of ♠, our declarer, not unreasonably, misguessed and played the Q from the dummy. Partner covered with the K and declarer ducked, playing the 10. Now, I'm licking my chops because I can see at least 4 spade tricks and the Ace of diamonds - assuming partner returns a spade. But guess, what? Back came the Q of ♥ at trick 2!

But there would be no story if that was the end of this hand. Declarer won the heart shift and played a diamond toward dummy, which I ducked. Now declarer fell from grace, by leading a low club off dummy, to his 10 and my K. Now I continued spades, and after winning the A in hand, declarer played a club toward dummy in this position...

Keep Your Eye On The Prize

IMPs

♠ —	♠ 9 7 3	♠ —
♥ K 9 2	♥ 7	♥ 6 5
♦ 9 7 6	♦ A 10 8	♦ Q 2
♣ 4 3	♣ 9	♣ A J 8 7
	<div style="display: inline-block; background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center; margin: 5px;"> N W E S </div>	
	♠ 8 5	
	♥ J 10 3	
	♦ J	
	♣ Q 5	

Opening Lead 6 of ♠

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
1 ♦	1 ♠	2 ♣	3 ♠
Pass	Pass	Dbl	Pass
3 NT	All pass		

3 NT by West

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I followed with the 9 and out of desperation, declarer put in the J from dummy, losing the partner's Q. We ran the spades, and dummy started feeling some pressure. Declarer made another huge mistake by pitching a diamond from dummy so, when I "cashed out" my Ace of diamonds - I was able to cash 2 more diamonds - resulting in DOWN 5!

So, by just continuing to stay focussed after partner shifted to the Q of hearts at trick 2, we actually went on to win this battle by setting this contract 5 tricks! We scored 4 ♠, 2 ♣, and 3 ♦!

Keep Your Eye On the Prize

IMPs
 East Deals
 E-W Vul

♠ J 10 7 4	♠ Q 6 2	♠ K 3
♥ K 10 5	♥ J 2	♥ A 8 7 3
♦ Q 7 3	♦ A K 10 9 8 4 2	♦ J 6 5
♣ Q J 5	♣ 9	♣ 8 6 4 2

♠ A 9 8 5	<table border="1" style="background-color: #008000; color: white; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 0 auto; text-align: center; font-size: 10px;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ K 3
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ Q 9 6 4		♥ A 8 7 3									
♦ —		♦ J 6 5									
♣ A K 10 7 3		♣ 8 6 4 2									

Opening Lead 4 of ♠

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
		Pass	1 ♣
Pass	1 ♦	Pass	1 ♥
Pass	3 ♦	Pass	3 NT
All pass			

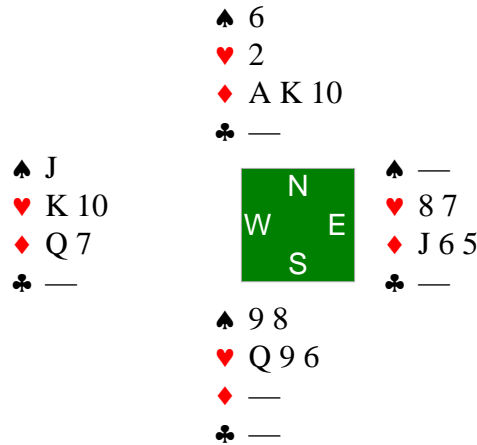
3 NT by South

I was declarer in 3 NT with the lead of the 4 of ♠. By rights, I should have passed 3 ♦. I knew it, and when I saw dummy, I really regretted not making the correct bid. But here I was and my mission, my prize, was to score 9 tricks. First thing I needed to do was decide what to play at trick 1 from dummy. I decided I had time to play the spade Q later, so I decided to insert the 6 from dummy and was rewarded when the K appeared. Now, I won the A and played a small heart to dummy's J and East's Ace. East now shifted to a low club, which I ducked to West's J, and when he returned the Q of clubs I was now up to 8 tricks! 2S 2D and 4C. Just needed 1 more. So, I ran my clubs and crossed to dummy with a spade. West's goose was cooked.

Here was the end position....

Keep Your Eye On the Prize

IMPs



Opening Lead 4 of ♠

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
		Pass	1 ♣
Pass	1 ♦	Pass	1 ♥
Pass	3 ♦	Pass	3 NT
All pass			

3 NT by South

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Here was the end position....

I cashed 2 diamonds from dummy, and merely exited with a spade to endplay West in hearts to score my 9th trick with the Q of hearts.

On this last hand, after a similar situation, I took my eye off the prize and ended up with a disastrous result....

Keep Your Eye On The Prize

IMPs

South Deals

E-W Vul

♠ Q 7 4 2		♠ K J						
♥ 9 5 3		♥ K 6 2						
♦ A J 9		♦ K Q 8 5						
♣ J 8 4		♣ K 7 6 2						
♠ 10 9 8 6 3	<div style="display: inline-block; background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 5px; border: 1px solid black;"> <table style="border-collapse: collapse; margin: 0;"> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">W</td><td style="padding: 2px;">N</td><td style="padding: 2px;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;"></td><td style="padding: 2px;">S</td><td style="padding: 2px;"></td></tr> </table> </div>	W	N	E		S		♠ A 5
W	N	E						
	S							
♥ J 10 4		♥ A Q 8 7						
♦ 10 7 4		♦ 6 3 2						
♣ 10 5		♣ A Q 9 3						

Opening Lead 10 of ♠

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
			1 NT
Pass	2 ♣	Pass	2 ♥
Pass	2 NT	Pass	3 NT
All pass			

3 NT by South

At every other table, the auction went 1 NT all pass. But my partner is extremely aggressive, and bid stayman and invited with this 4-3-3-3 8 count. Whether I was thinking about what kind of a nutty bid my partner made, I'm not sure, but as you can see, I can actually make 10 tricks on this lie of the cards. I was on my way to doing so, but I took my eye off my prize.

Here's what happened. I ducked the opening lead to the J and won my Ace and returned the suit, ducking to East's K. Now the 6 of hearts was returned, which I ducked to West's 10 and the 9 of spades came back which I won in dummy, pitching a diamond. Now I ran the J of clubs, and when it held, I returned a low club to my Q and West's 10 appeared. I cashed the Ace of hearts, and had I just returned a heart, which East did not unblock, so all I had to do was play another round of hearts and I was going to make an overtrick. Well, not only did I not clear hearts, but I decided to settle for down 1 - completely taking my eye off the prize as everyone else would surely be in 1N, so going down 1 was a disaster anyway. On top of everything else, instead of playing a club to my Q, I inadvertently had actually played a club to my Ace- so instead of going down 1, I actually lost the rest of the tricks!

So, today's Shark's Pointer is not only to Keep Your Eye on The Prize - but it helps to keep your Eyes Open as well!

See you next week! Hope you enjoyed today's hands.