



PSYCHES CAN BE FUN



by David Stevenson

Psyches are legal. They can be fun, and it is sad that some people get upset by them. It is much better to remember the saying: "Don't get mad, get even!" So, if someone psyches against you, don't get annoyed, it is just part of bridge: perhaps you might try a psyche yourself sometime!

Many of the psyches reported are not real psyches at all, but differences in approach. If an opponent opens a pre-empt against you on a five card suit, you may think he is mad, but if that is what it says on his convention card, it is not a psyche but a difference in style! Similarly, if someone opens 1NT on 11 points playing 12-14, it is not a psyche but a *deviation*. This is perfectly legal unless he is doing it regularly, in which case it is part of his system and he should redefine his 1NT opening to 11-14 (or a good 11-14, perhaps).

Psyches are deliberate: if someone makes the wrong bid by accident (perhaps because he forgot the system) then it is a *misbid*. There are some problems with psyches, which is why if you have any doubt you should report it to the Director. Psyches should be as much a surprise to the psycher's partner as to the opponents. If partner's actions *appear* to have allowed for a psyche, then partner has 'fielded' it and that is illegal – even if he did not mean it! Always call the Director if you have any doubt about the psycher's partner's actions.

The Director will ask the partner why he bid as he did, and will then call it a *red* psyche if the partner has fielded it. An example would be a player with 11 points whose partner opens in third seat and hears a 1NT overcall on his right. Now a double is automatic: anyone who passes *appears* to have allowed for partner's psyche and if partner has psyched, it is *red*. If there are other possible explanations, but some doubt, the Director will decide it is *amber*. If, in

the above example, partner bid 3♣ instead of passing or doubling, his action is strange, and the Director will call it an *amber* psyche. In most cases where partner's actions are above reproach, it will be classified as a *green* psyche. If you are sure this is the case, there is no need even to call the Director.

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Following the 1997 changes to the Laws of Duplicate Bridge and the 1998 changes to the *Orange Book* published by the English Bridge Union, David Stevenson revised ***Duplicate Bridge Rules Simplified***, written by John Rumbelow and published by **Mr Bridge**.

If a psyche is *red*, then the Director will cancel the result (unless the psycher got less than a 40% score) and will give the psycher 30% and his opponents 60%. If it is *amber*, then he will merely take a note unless this pair has another *amber* or *red* psyche, in which case he will treat all future *amber* psyches as *red*. There is no adjustment for *green* psyches.

Should you psyche against weaker players? There is nothing wrong with

psyching in general against players who may be weaker than yourself, *but* it is considered inappropriate to psyche against novices or beginners. There is no specific penalty for doing so, but if you do so continuously the club may correctly ask you to leave. But if your opponents are not inexperienced, then it is perfectly acceptable to psyche against them.

Psyching is meant to be a method of trying to win. If a pair has lost interest in the competition and is merely psyching for the fun of it, this is unacceptable. In this sort of extreme case every psyche after the first two becomes *amber*, and the club might tell the pair they will not be accepted in the club if there is a repetition. Frequent psyching is not a very good idea anyway because it becomes nearly impossible for partner not to allow for it, and the Director will make such psyches *amber* if he has the least whiff of suspicion. Any pair that regularly psyches twice or more *every* evening might reasonably be asked to leave.

If your club follows EBU or WBU rules, then players are not allowed to psyche a near game-forcing conventional opening, such as an Acol 2♣ or a Benjamin 2♣ or 2♦. Also, at Level 3 only, you may not psyche the Multi.

If you do not psyche frequently, nor field psyches, nor psyche against novices or beginners, and do not psyche near game-forcing conventional openings, then psyching is legal – and can be fun. Try it and see!

However, if your opponent psyches, don't worry or get upset: it is just part of the great game of bridge!

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