

Since my last memo received a favourable reception from almost everybody, I intend to write a regular weekly bulletin. If you have a topic that you wish to bring up, or if there was an interesting hand, then please tell me and I will try to include it in the following week's issue.

Psychic Bidding

In the previous issue, I stated that players may bid as they like. It appears that I have to clarify some aspects; especially for one particular member who continually wishes to argue with me (and everybody else). Basically, the published Laws of Bridge apply.

If your partner opens, say, 1♥ and you respond 1♠ with a singleton ♠, then this is a psyche and the opponents should report it to the director. If a similar psychic bid occurs later (even months later), then this is a partnership understanding and is illegal – Law 40B. 'If the Director decides that a side has been damaged then he may (in this case certainly will) award an adjusted score' – Law 40C.

And from the ACBL Bulletin, an article on psyching: -

'A player's first psychic bid with a new partner is judged to be legal. A second psychic call is judged to establish a pattern of psychic bidding that may well establish a partnership understanding. Such subsequent psychic bidding would be penalized by the director.'

'People who employ psychic bids against less experienced players may be guilty of unsportsmanlike behaviour.' – In plain English, it simply is not cricket.

- ♠ J943 Just as an aside, a word about NT bids. Take this example. If your partner
- ♥ KJ75 opens (say 1♦) then a NT response is allowed (although not a good bid).
- ♦ K If you are opener and if you open 1♣, then a rebid of NT is allowed
- ♣ AK62 (although also not a good bid unless you play Walsh over a 1♦ response).

However, it is not allowed to open this hand 1NT. A 1NT opening must have at least 2 cards in each suit. To open 1NT with a singleton is a psyche, a 1NT opening promises a balanced hand in addition to the requisite number of points. Do not open 1NT with an unbalanced hand simply to show points. Regulations for a 2NT opening are less strict and a singleton is allowed.

Controlled Psyches.

These have nothing to do with controls (aces and kings). A controlled Psyche is one in which the auction is under control; often when the psycher has a fit for partner or partner has shown a long suit. For clarification, I shall define a number of cases.

As opposed to an ordinary psyche, controlled psyches are *illegal* (in this club): -

- (a) - A situation which you have discussed with partner, where a psychic bid would be very effective.
- (b) - A situation, as with weak jump shifts or weak opening 2 or 3's, where partner may pretend to have values (or a suit) that he does not have as there is no danger for his side because of the sanctuary of playing in partner's long suit (or fit). For example, in the sequence 3♥ - pass - 3♠, 3♠ is normally considered to be strong with ♠'s. If responder then settles for 4♥ and turns up with minimal values and/or no ♠ suit, then this is a controlled psyche and is illegal.
- (c) - All situations such as (b) where there is little danger for the offending party, having a safe spot.
- (d) - Where a player or partnership frequently (more than once) psyches in a given situation.

There are numerous other examples. As stated, controlled psyches are not allowed. Offenders will most certainly receive an adjusted (unfavourable) score. A repeat offender will simply be asked to leave.

There are a couple of classic psyche situations which are hardly worth mentioning, namely a psychic major suit opening in 3rd seat (as opposed to a light 3rd seat opening, which is perfectly OK) and a 1♠ bid after partner's opening 1♥ has been doubled. While these bid are legal, they are not if repeated or if they have been discussed. Psyches can, of course, be effective.

Time for a history lesson:

Lets go back into the last century, the Final of the Bermuda bowl 1966, between Italy and North America. The example is simply too trivial, but it may well have been one of the most (in)famous controlled psyches in Bridge history?

			West	North	East	South
Dealer:	♠ J10					
North	♥ AQ54		-	1♥	dbl	1♠
Love all	♦ A82		1NT	pass	2♣	pass
	♣ 9842		2♦	pass	2NT	pass
			pass	pass	pass	
♠ KQ865	N	♠ A42	This is a perfect example of how bidding has changed over the years. Very few people would open the North hand these days (especially with 1♥ in 1 st seat) and even fewer would find a double with the East hand. I consider South's bid to be a controlled psyche for two reasons: -			
♥ J10	W E	♥ K98				
♦ 10643	S	♦ Q9				
♣ AQ		♣ KJ1075				
	♠ 973					
	♥ 7632					
	♦ KJ75					
	♣ 63					

Firstly, it may well have been discussed before; but secondly, South has the sanctuary of the known ♥ fit. What do you think?

Now a bid of 1♠ after partner's opening of 1♥ has been doubled is a fairly routine psychic situation, and most partnerships know how to deal with this effectively (and call the Director at the end of play). However, on this particular occasion, the psychic 1♠ bid had found a flaw in the Italian's system. A double by West would have shown short ♠'s. The Italians were unable to recover and missed a game made in the other room.

So, no big deal. But just think about it a little. These guys were the best in the world; they had studied each other's system for months before the match. Did the Americans know beforehand that a psyche would probably work in this situation? Had they discussed it? If so, were they under any obligation to tell the Italians that their system did not work? Or did the Italians simply get what they deserved for having such an artificial system? Should the 1♠ bid have been alerted as possibly psychic? Is a psyche when you have a known sanctuary acceptable? After months of study, perhaps this was, after all, simply a spur-of-the-moment psyche? Who knows? It is all water under last century's bridge. Remember Simon and Garfunkel? We, of course, would have no problem. A decent natural system has a double of 1♥ promising ♠'s or a very good hand, the East hand above would certainly not qualify on either count in most systems these days.

I guess I have made my own personal views on psyching fairly plain. But (unfortunately) psyches are part of the game. I like to play bridge for enjoyment. When there is a psyche, then there is usually somebody at the table who feels a bit bitter. If the psyche works, then the opponents are unhappy. If you go for a number, then partner is not too pleased. Do people really get pleasure out of this? If you get your kicks out of psyching and bluffing, then take up poker. Be aware that controlled psyches are illegal; and if playing poker, beware of aces and eights.

Since our club has a very mixed standard with many unfamiliar partnerships, I would certainly appreciate it if people would refrain from psyching. Please report all psyches. If I consider a psyche to be a controlled psyche, offenders will most certainly be penalised. If this upsets Thorlief, I have absolutely no problem with that.