

Read Rodwell, take more tricks

by Barry Rigal

If you heard that Eric Rodwell, known for his cerebral approach to bidding, had written a book, you might assume that it was all about how to reach the best contract on every deal.

You would be wrong.

The Rodwell Files, published by *Master Point Press*, focuses almost exclusively on card play. Rodwell is in Poznan to play in the Open Teams, and he took some time out to talk about the book.

The project, Rodwell says, had its genesis in the Eighties, when he started making notes on the computer. "I felt things should have names," he says, "so I used to put names to lots of plays." Doing so, Rodwell says, makes the concepts easier to remember – and recall at the table.

In the days when he was first collecting notes, Rodwell was a semi-regular visitor to Toronto – his son and daughter were living there with his ex-wife. On one visit, Rodwell showed his notes to Canadian star Fred Gitelman, who showed them to Ray Lee, owner of Master Point Press.

Rodwell declined Lee's invitation to make the notes into a book. "I didn't think there was enough there," he says.

In 2009, Lee suggested to Rodwell that the project could get off the ground by involving Mark Horton, editor of *Bridge* magazine in England. In fact, the book is listed as by Eric Rodwell with Mark Horton.

Horton approached the project with enthusiasm. "Forty years ago," Horton says, "I read Reese on Play, a book that changed the way I thought about bridge forever. Having just finished working on *The Rodwell Files*, I believe we have another book in the same mold that will revolutionize the way we think about play and defence and influence generations of players for years to come."

With Horton supplying some of the illustrative deals and Rodwell having added to his collection over the years, the book grew from the original 40 pages of notes to more than 400 pages.

Rodwell estimates that deals from actual play make up about 40% of the contents. There are nearly 300 deals in the book. He and Horton worked hard on categorizing

various situations, such as when to lead an unsupported honor or when to duck a winner.

The goal, he adds, is to make advanced card play concepts understandable to average players. "Most books target bidding because it's easy," Rodwell says, "but if you learn bidding and not card play, you're not going to get very far."

Here's an example of a play named by Rodwell. It's the "Knockout or Entry Fly."



Say you are in a notrump contract with your right-hand opponent having overcalled 1♠. Dummy has ♠J 5 4 and you have ♠A 10 6. LHO leads the ♠8. You have some work to do on your contract, and you know your RHO is good enough to play the 9 if you play low from dummy. His plan is to make you win cheaply at trick one, then let his partner get in

and play another spade, on which he will play the queen, forcing your ace then or at the next trick. His suit will then be set up.

Rodwell's view of this play is that putting up the jack from dummy will force the queen from RHO, allowing you to duck and thereby cut communication between your opponents in the spade suit or – if RHO plays low on the ♠J – provide a potentially useful dummy entry at trick one.

There are many others – "Cash and Thrash," involving the trump suit, is another – and Rodwell feels that the book hits its target in illustrating important concepts and "helping the average player by explaining things in a way they can understand."

Here is an excerpt from the book:

THE SPEED OF LIGHTNING PLAY

Now let's move on to some general tactical ideas – some of them are legitimate, in the sense that the opposition can do nothing to counter them, while others depend on inducing an (often slight) error. The speed of lightning play is one of my favorites. As any fan of the band Queen will anticipate, it can be very, very frighten-

ing.

If RHO is the dangerous opponent, you can often lead away from a holding like AJx in dummy toward holdings in the closed hand headed by the ten, on the theory that RHO won't go up with Q x (x). A common variation is where you lead low from K J x toward 10 9 x x x in hand. Of course, you must be able to afford to lose a trick to RHO later on. This play is most valuable when you have something like Qx opposite AJx in hand in the suit they led (dummy's queen having won Trick 1), where East can't hurt you later, only now.

This play is so named because East will play low at the speed of lightning, as a matter of habit. In fact, if he knows that he is the dangerous opponent, there is every reason for him to play the queen (danger hand high!) since if he ducks, declarer will doubtless try some coverage ducking play.

Here's a full deal showing the play in its purest form:

♠ Q 3
♥ A 9 4 2
♦ K J 3
♣ 8 7 5 4



♠ A J 5
♥ K 3
♦ 10 9 6 5 4
♣ A K 3

West	North	East	South
			INT
Pass	2♣	Pass	2♦
Pass	3NT	All Pass	

West leads the ♠6 to dummy's queen, East playing low. With only six top tricks you need to develop the diamonds. As long as East doesn't get in on the first diamond lead, with the queen, you are safe. So your best shot is to lead the ♦3 from dummy at Trick 2, hoping East, dealt ♦Q x, plays low at the speed of lightning. The whole deal is:

♠ Q 3
♥ A 9 4 2
♦ K J 3
♣ 8 7 5 4



♠ K 10 8 6 4
♥ Q 8 5
♦ A 8 2
♣ 10 6

♠ A J 5
♥ K 3
♦ 10 9 6 5 4
♣ A K 3

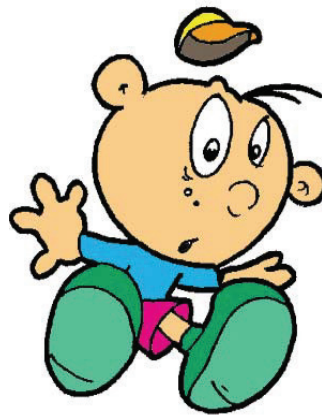
♠ 9 7 2
♥ J 10 7 6
♦ Q 7
♣ Q J 9 2

Rodwell's newest book is not his first. He and Audrey Grant collaborated on four books, one of them on the 2/1 game force bidding system. He has consistently resisted suggestions to put RM Precision – the bidding system he and partner Jeff Meckstroth use – into book form.

As for The Rodwell Files, the author says it's a matter of sharing what he has learned over the years. "If I have discovered some things," he says, "at some point I should put them out there."

If the book helps his opponents play better, Rodwell adds, at least he will know that "my opponents' opponents will play better, too."

Championship Diary



Yesterday morning Tacchi decided to abstain from the 20 minute walk to the office and took the tram, where he was accompanied by Patrick Jourdain. Two remarkable things happened. First Patrick gave him a ticket. Second a young lady offered Patrick her seat.

Everyone is talking about the brilliant scoring system. Moments after the session has finished you put the bar code on your badge into the reader and your results are printed out. If you are a journalist and not a player it prints out the Daily Bulletin.

After our dauntless copy-editor had added 'schedule' to his list of typographical errors the opinions of the journalists were divided. Was it a case of 'monkeys and typewriters'?

It was decided that it was more a case of 'Invent an idiot-proof system and they will breed a better idiot'.

We get a lot of email about the Bulletin. The latest one reads: I hope you got a lot of credit and good comments regarding Thursday's bulletin. It was really good. (To slightly misquote, as is frequently stated during Prime Ministers Question Time, I refer the honourable gentleman to the observation made in the paragraph above.)

If (like us) you are a fan of Waldemar Malicki, you can enjoy a lot of his work on YouTube. One cute piece is Emmanuelle - Waldemar Malicki & Filharmonia Dowcipu : Muza