

THINGS I HAVE LEARNED – SORT OF

Over the 40 or so years that I have been playing bridge I have come across a lot of ‘characters’ of the game. One of those whom I vividly remember was Israeli International **Maurie Stampf** who sadly is no longer with us. One incident I remember was when he was playing in the NOT in Canberra and had a cold. He was sitting on the balcony of the hotel with a blanket wrapped firmly around him – in the 38° heat.

But my meeting with Maurie very much changed my bridge outlook. He spent an evening explaining his theories of being a good team player. In summary here was his advice – all well known but rarely practiced or enunciated:

- don’t mark your score sheet with circles, question marks or other indicators of your feelings about a particular board - you know circling the board number for a bad board. All this does is empower your opponents, some of whom may not even realise that they have had a good board before seeing you circling it and then thinking about it to come to the same conclusion.
- in terms of empowering your opponents, discussing hands at the table, which are invariably your bad hands, is an absolute no no. Imagine how pleasing it is for the opponents when you discuss how you should have played a hand to make it rather than going one down as you just did.
- when you leave the playing area to score up with your team mates, proceed immediately to find them and score up. It is very frustrating for your team mates who have already finished and no doubt have been thinking how slow you are to see you dawdling over to them while discussing the hands.
- prior to scoring up do not proffer an opinion as to how you think you went – no “we did poorly” or we had a good set. Why speculate when the answer will be in front of everybody within a moment or two.
- during the score up don’t comment or ask what happened on that board. You have seen it “+620” say your team mates “-1100” say you “what happened there” say your team mates. That makes players feel like they are letting the side down. Asking after the score up makes so much more sense on every front.
- do not look for referees. You know how it works when you think you are right and partner is wrong you go around asking enough people till you can prove that either you are a genius or that you shouldn’t discuss the hand or people’s opinions with partner.
- try to discuss hands at the end of the day in the bar not between sessions. It is a poor use of your energy to discuss hands when what you should be doing is relaxing and recharging your battery for the next session.
- respect respect respect. You are playing with your partner presumably because you respect his bridge ability and maybe even his company. Same for team mates. It is important to maintain the mutual part of this respect.
- don’t prejudge any matches or any boards. You have team mates and the respect discussed above should carry through to their ability to help your scores when you need it.

- Focus focus focus. We all know that bridge is a game of mistakes then why do some people make more and some less. Simple – focus. Top players are able to focus much better than those who are there simply for a social outing

OK so you are now asking do I practice these team etiquette rules. In all honesty I can confidently say.....no but (apart from table discussions of course) probably 95% plus. Your team will certainly be more harmonious if you stick with these rules and harmony translates into better results – trust me!

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