

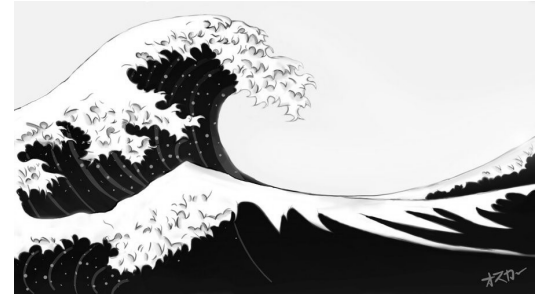
# Momentum in Bridge

**By Matt Mallumphy**

## Waves

Have you ever wondered why many scorecards run in waves? i.e. a succession of imps in and a run of imps out? Take a look back through some scorecards from matches you have played or between some top teams in major events.

How does a team stage a remarkable comeback in the final session? Have they suddenly played that much better against an opponent who has been comfortably beating them for 3/4 of the match?



The reason is momentum. It exists in all forms of sport but is particularly present in mind games. At bridge negative momentum usually begins when a player fails in a contract they should make or somebody forgets the system. It can happen when a player has been genuinely unlucky choosing a reasonable line of play but the card gods look unfavourably upon them.

## The Cloud

A cloud suddenly descends upon the table and one of the most important attributes, focus, gets gnawed away by doubt. Nerves kick in as well. It even affects partner as often as the player who has made the mistake. After all, your good/bad results also belong to partner. Your opponents sniff uncertainty and your doubt turns into their adrenalin.



We all get bad results. The idea is to deal with them. Here are some steps to stopping negative momentum in its tracks following a poor result.

## Helping your partner

If you make partner feel bad when they have erred they will inevitably play worse. They will lose face and it will be a battle to get them back on track. Nobody deliberately make mistakes. When partner makes a mistake support them. Try not to make a big deal out of the situation - this will stop your opponents feeling they have gotten under your skin.



## Helping yourself

- Leave the table and get a glass of water (make sure you get partner a drink as well). This cuts the tension.
- Relax & think of your good results on the previous boards/sets/matches. This will allow your mind to clear before the next board
- Apologize to partner if you have made a mistake. This is not a sign of weakness but shows good partnership rapport. Leave your ego at the door.

## Both of you

- Don't lose hope as the results at the other table are unknown.
- Don't count the number of boards left. Keep playing until no boards are on the table. If you are a player that counts how many boards to go, you will probably find that your worst results are in the last quarter of a match.

This is also relevant in a team sense. If your teammates have a poor set it is important to support them and remind them of their previous good sets. Its just one match.

## Confidence and self-belief

Bridge is often said to be a game of mistakes. I like to think that it is the perfect combination of skill and luck. Luck in the sense that we often benefit from our opponents gifts. Remember, even the best players make mistakes and anyone can be beaten if the wind is blowing your way. The key is to turn the wind in your direction.

When the winds of change  
blow, some people  
build walls and  
others build windmills.  
-Chinese proverb



Super Novice Team: Dorothy Holt (ACT), Ruth Henderson (Batemans Bay), Kate Cush (ACT), Denise Ironfield (Batemans Bay)



Novice Team: Jenny Iliescu, Susan Sharp, Leanne Nugent, Andrew Sharp (Brisbane)