

The Pitcher and the Catcher

By Matt Mallumphy

Around the bar at Bridge Tournaments around the world, stories abound with players showing hands to anyone with a sympathetic ear, "Look at what partner did to me on this" or "What choice did I have, my partner never bids". Bridge players tend to fall into several categories. Amongst those categories are those who bid too much and those who don't bid enough. When one of these pairings form a partnership it inevitably leads to the Pitcher/Catcher syndrome.

"The Pitcher" - a bridge player who believes their hand is worth at least one trick *more* than it deserves.

"The Catcher" - the partner of the Pitcher who believes their job is to bid less to make up for an often over exuberant partner.



Both the Pitcher and Catcher's existence is not mutually exclusive. They often start out as something different and morph into a state where both players are on a perpetually slippery slope. The Pitcher keeps bidding and the Catcher keeps passing. This is a recipe for disaster.



There is little doubt the Pitcher is a fundamentally more aggressive player and there is nothing wrong with that. Aggressive play is vital to success. However, the moment it comes at the expense of partnership trust is when you have reached the point of no return.

Does your partnership fit the Pitcher / Catcher syndrome?

It is likely that you suffer from Pitcher/Catcher syndrome if:

- one player in a partnership is consistently aggressive and the other is consistently passive
- during post mortems the conversation inevitably comes around to one player commenting how their partner never bids or vice versa bids too much
- you are reluctant to take your normal action because partner may have bid too much or not bid enough

How to combat the Pitcher / Catcher syndrome?

1. Create discipline via setting system guidelines

e.g. In the auction 1♦ P 1♠ P 4♠ what type of hand is expected from the 4♠ bid;

- A) ♠AKxx ♥x ♦KQJxxx ♣xx
- B) ♠KQJx ♥Ax ♦KQxx ♣Axx
- C) ♠KQJx ♥Axx ♦AQJxx ♣x