



### What's a psychic bid?

Very occasionally a player will, for tactical reasons, make a bid that gives a very wrong description of his hand. An extreme case would be to open 1♠ with

♠ 7 6 4; ♥ Q J 4 2; ♦ 8 7 6; ♣ T 9 2

Such a *psychic bid* is intended to deceive the opponents about the strength out against them. But it is a dangerous strategem because it deceives your partner also.

Associated with psychic bids is an array of bridge law, ethics, and simple good manners most of which is too extensive to cover here. On the legal side, since you must disclose your bidding agreements to your opponents, you must not make a psychic bid if your partner knows that you may be doing so. That means that you must not psych often, otherwise your partner will have some inkling that you are doing it; that would be unauthorised information and so is illegal. For that reason, most clubs ask that any psychic bid must be recorded afterwards so that clubs can prevent the building up of such unauthorised understandings.

OK. Suppose you have examined your conscience and decided that it is legal for you to psych on this occasion. Should you do so? There are obvious dangers: partner may bid into the stratosphere thinking you have a good hand. A less obvious danger is that you erode partnership trust; it

is poorly placed. It is imperative that you set up tricks for your side before declarer can establish the clubs. You have to choose between 2♥ and 2♦. My own selection would be 2♦ because that will succeed if partner holds either A♦ or K♦ while 2♥ requires partner to hold at least K♥ and possibly Q♥ also.

Sometimes a defence might begin passively but then, seeing a long establishable suit in dummy, switches to active.

As we all know, bridge is not an exact science and you will often go active at the wrong time or go passive when it is right to be active. But, being conscious of the two modes (voices?), will at least set you thinking along the right lines and your defence will improve.

Suppose you hold this modest collection:

♠ 7 6; ♥ Q 5 4 2; ♦ 9 8 7 6; ♣ A 9 2

and are on lead after the following auctions

(i) 3♣ - P - 6NT - P

(ii) 2♣ - P - 2NT - P

4NT - P - P - P

Should the defence be active or passive, and what do you lead (in each case)?

*Answers on page 8.*

### Passive versus active defence

To be a good defender you must know the distinction between *active* and *passive* defence. An active defence is one where you are trying to establish tricks for your side; a passive one is where you are trying not to give tricks to the declarer. So, in an active defence, you would lead low from K 3 2 hoping to find your partner with the ace or queen thereby establishing a trick for your king. But, in a passive defence, you would not do this as you might be presenting declarer with a cheap trick. Some defences are passive throughout while some begin passively but switch to active later. Learning whether to be active or passive is a skill that takes a long time to master. There are, however, some useful pointers revealed by the bidding. Suppose you are on lead and the opponents have bid

1NT - 2NT - 3NT

Obviously they have only just enough points for game. Make them work for their tricks by not making dangerous leads. For example, holding ♠ 9 8 7; ♥ A T 9 2; ♦ Q J 4 2; ♣ K 7 lead the 9♠. On the other hand if the bidding has gone

1NT - 3♣ - 3NT

the situation is entirely different. Here there is going to be a good club suit in dummy and your K♣

could be very foolish to cast aside all the trust you have built up over months of disciplined bidding. So you also have to consider if you are showing good manners to your partner.

OK. Suppose your legal obligations are met, and you have decided to risk offending your partner. Are there any reasons now to prevent your psychic bid? Absolutely! If your opponents are beginners or markedly weaker than you then I advise you to forebear. If you get a reputation for psyching only against weaker players then your ethical reputation will be in shreds.

Am I saying never psyche? Well, almost. I've psyched three times in the last fifteen years. That's probably rare but if I had a partner who psyched twice a year with me I would regard it as frequent (and I would not be keen on playing with them much longer).

However, psyches do come in gradations and the NZCBA have made a raft of rules to try to define the line between "tactical bidding" and outright psyches. It isn't easy. What if you open 1♠ on

♠ A 9 7 6 4; ♥ Q J 4; ♦ 8 7 6; ♣ Q 9 2?

You might legitimately do this (say in 3rd position non-vulnerable). But if it becomes a habit you must declare it on your convention card so that your opponents know what your partner will have learnt by playing with you over the months.

### Educating Randy

In a desperate attempt to recapture the physical affections of his girl-friend Voluptua, Randy Hardwick was taking bridge lessons from Gordon Rhode. Gordon had postponed bidding tuition until Randy was more competent as a declarer: the only convention that he had taught his aspiring pupil was the 4♣/5♣ ace/king asks. This too little knowledge proved dangerous the first time they played at the club, for the last hand of the night (Randy West and Gordon East) was this one:

♠ A 9 3	♠ T 6 5	♠ K J 8 7
♥ A T 9 3	♥ K Q 8 6 5 2	♥ 7
♦ A T	♦ J	♦ K 7 6 2
♣ Q J T 3	♣ 9 6 4	♣ A K 7 2
	♠ Q 4 2	
	♥ J 4	
	♦ Q 9 8 5 4 3	
	♣ 8 5	

North opened the bidding with a weak 2♥. Gordon (East) made the obvious take-out double. Then came trouble as Randy first bid 4♣ for aces and then 5♣ for kings. Receiving good news on both

occasions he then bid 6♣ asking (so he thought) for queens! But Gordon took the bid to show long clubs and feeling he had a little extra went on to 7♣. Just then Voluptua came to watch and when North led the K♥ Randy felt under a double pressure. He won the lead, ruffed a heart small, returned to his hand with the Q♣, ruffed another heart with the K♣, came back to his hand with the A♦ and ruffed his last heart. The position now was

♠ A 9 3	♠ T 6 5	♠ K J 8 7
♥ void	♥ Q 8	♥ void
♦ T	♦	♦ K 7 6
♣ J T 3	♣ 9 6	♣
	♠ Q 4 2	
	♥ void	
	♦ Q 9 8	
	♣ 8	

with the lead in dummy. Randy played the J♠, covered by Q♠, and won by the A♠. He drew the remaining trumps and, heart in mouth, ran the 9♠. Success! Rampant with excitement he awaited Voluptua's plaudits. To his chagrin she was adjusting her earrings and had missed his triumph.