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Cuebidding At Bridge

Empathetic Splinters -- Strange?

Tuesday, March 4, 2008

I find it humorous to hear back from people who are afraid of new things. Sometimes, "new things" are not all that new.

A case in point. One of the concepts that I have employed and developed is what I call the "empathetic splinter." Anyone reading this probably already knows that an "empathetic splinter" is a call, in simple form, that essentially shows interest in a slam if partner has this stiff. In other words, a jump to 4 Hearts might show slam interest if partner happens to have a stiff heart. You would use this typically when some constraint of the auction prohibited partner from splintering himself. So, you empathize a possible problem and answer it.

Some people have thought that this is a completely new and strange concept. Something extremely esoteric. However, I would suggest reading the definition of a conventional call known as a "Bluhmer." It seems that the "Bluhmer" and the "Empathetic Splinter" are essentially the same bid. What is different about an empathetic splinter, if there is a difference, is merely that I have noted certain sequences where a "Bluhmer" seems to make sense even though the existence of a short suit is not yet known.

In other words, a "Bluhmer 4 Hearts" might be made opposite a known stiff heart or opposite a known stiff in either hearts or spades, for example. An "empathetic splinter" is a Bluhmer made when partner might have a stiff heart, might have a stiff spade, or might not even have a stiff. It is a call made in case Opener has a stiff.

Not much difference. It seems that all Bluhmers are empathetic splinters, but some empathetic splinters are used when a Bluhmer might not be available without assuming the existence of a stiff that might not be there. All of this is also explained with more theory, of course, than you will find in a mere definitions section of the Encyclopedia of Bridge or a bridge glossary.

Source