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Bridge

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Those 'Upside-Down' Signals

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THE oldest and most familiar concept of defensive play in contract bridge is the signal with a high card to encourage the play of a particular suit, and its converse—the use of a low spot card to discourage a suit. This dates back to the days of whist, and its prototype was originated by Lord Henry Bentinck in 1834.

Most experts would agree, however, that this principle is slightly inferior, technically, to the opposite procedure, known as "upside-down signaling." The idea of playing low to encourage and high to discourage is credited to Karl Schneider of Austria.

A few American experts have experimented with it, but abandoned it for two nontechnical reasons. The standard method of signaling is so deeply ingrained in the consciousness of the experienced player that he finds it difficult to abandon, and upside-down signaling is frowned on by the American Contract Bridge League in tournament play.

favorably for South when West led the eight, which was covered by the jack, queen and king. With the nine marked in the East hand, South could be sure of three more spade tricks.

However, South quite failed to appreciate that he was in some danger of running out of entries to his hand. He unwisely led the club ace, followed by a second club. As the king was marked in the East hand by the bidding, the jack was permitted to win the trick.

West continued with a second spade, innocently expecting to develop his partner's suit, and South won with the seven. This happened to be a killing defense, because South found himself completely entryless. He led a club, hoping that the defenders would keep on with the spades, and West had to make a crucial discard.

The heart six was dropped to encourage a heart shift. West can be forgiven for failing to foresee that the heart six was a vital card that could not be spared for signaling purposes.

mond trick, but force the declarer to surrender two heart tricks.

East-West were left to regret that they were not using upside-down signals, which would have permitted West to suggest a heart shift by discarding the deuce of that suit, preserving the vital six.

Bids in Same Suit

The bidding in the following deal from the Open Team event in Asbury Park may constitute some kind of record. South (this writer) had a one-track mind, and all his five bids were in the same suit.

NORTH		EAST	
♠	K J 8 5 2	♠	Q 10 7 3
♥	7 4	♥	10 5 3
♦	A J	♦	K 8 5 2
♣	A Q 6 2	♣	8 5
WEST		SOUTH	
♠	9 6	♠	A 4
♥	6 2	♥	A K Q J 9 8
♦	Q 10 9 7 4	♦	6 3
♣	J 9 7 3	♦	6 3
		♣	K 10 4

Unfair Advantage

Not unreasonably, the authorities believe that the upside-down signaler gains an unfair advantage against inexperienced opponents who do not understand what is happening.

The main technical advantage of the upside-down signal is that a player who wishes to encourage the play of a particular suit may not be able to spare a high card as a come-on. This was illustrated in a most remarkable way by the following deal in the Mixed Pair Championship at Asbury Park, N. J., last weekend.

NORTH			
♠ J 2			
♥ A 7 5 4			
♦ K J 8 2			
♣ Q 8 7			
WEST		EAST	
♠ 8 4		♠ Q 9 6 5 3	
♥ Q 10 6 3 2		♥ K 9	
♦ 10 6 5 4		♦ A Q 9	
♣ J 5		♣ K 10 2	
SOUTH			
♠ A K 10 7			
♥ J 8			
♦ 7 3			
♣ A 9 6 4 3			

Neither side was vulnerable, and the bidding was:

North	East	South	West
Pass	1 ♠	Pass	Pass
Dbl.	Pass	1 N.T.	Pass
Pass	Pass		

Opposite a partner who had passed originally, South was not interested in a game. He should have passed his partner's double of one spade, leaving East to struggle in a tricky contract, but his actual contract of one no-trump seemed quite safe.

The spade suit developed

East duly shifted to the heart king, which was allowed to hold, and continued with the nine. South's jack was covered by the queen and won by dummy's ace. There were now two ways for the declarer to make his contract.

Leading a Heart

The simplest was to lead a heart, taking advantage of the disappearance of West's six, and the defense could get only two diamond tricks: if West threw dummy back into the lead with a heart, a high diamond lead would endplay East.

South chose to do it the hard way by leading the diamond jack from dummy. East won with the queen and cashed the diamond ace, leaving this position:

NORTH			
♠ —			
♥ 7 5			
♦ K 8			
♣ —			
WEST		EAST	
♠ —		♠ 9 6 3	
♥ 10 3		♥ —	
♦ 10 6		♦ 9	
♣ —		♣ —	
SOUTH			
♠ A 10			
♥ —			
♦ —			
♣ 9 6			

East led the nine of diamonds, and South had only to duck in dummy to make sure of the last three tricks and his contract. But if West had left himself with 10-6 in both red suits, he would have been in a position to foil the declarer by the unusual play of putting the diamond ten on his partner's nine. This would give dummy an extra dia-

South	West	North	East
1 ♥	Pass	1 ♠	Pass
3 ♥	Pass	4 ♣	Pass
4 ♥	Pass	4 N.T.	Pass
5 ♥	Pass	5 N.T.	Pass
7 ♥	Pass	Pass	Pass

South nearly managed six heart bids. His orthodox response to the Blackwood five no-trump bid would have been six hearts to show two kings.

North might then have tried six no-trump, giving South the chance to bid seven hearts. But, even as it went, the three other players were left in no doubt that South held hearts.

But South did not wish to take the risk that his partner would pass six hearts. He knew his heart suit was solid, and that his club king would fit North's hand. North's five no-trump implied interest in a grand slam and, therefore, a full complement of aces. So South took the decision to bid seven.

Seven hearts was an easy contract against any lead. There were 12 tricks on top, and, after drawing trumps, South developed his 13th trick by ruffing spades.

As this was tournament play, there was some temptation to try seven no-trump for the sake of the extra 10 points, but that contract would have failed against normal defense. The club jack does not fall, the spade finesse does not work and the squeeze possibilities do not materialize.

"Contract Bridge"—news about the game and how the experts play it, by Alan Truscott—appears daily.