

I went to the Gopher Regional for a few days with an ~~old~~ experienced friend (who is hopefully still a good friend). We played well together! We also had some misunderstandings and mistakes. I am a card-carrying member of the ACBL so I will start with the trouble spots. These are always fun to talk about after the 48-hour grieving period. It's been a week now, so the pain is actually gone. But there was some serious pain while it lasted.

MOST PAINFUL: We bid 3NT on one hand and I made 3NT! That's good, BUT (you knew that was coming), I played too quickly and left the club Ace stranded on the board.

I am having some very destructive self-talk right now, so I attempt to move on ASAP. That doesn't work. My partner wants some clarification. You will never guess what he says:

"Why did you leave a good Ace on the board?"

What a dumb question! That question is worse than my mistake! What am I supposed to say?

"Oh, was that the Ace? I thought it was the 1 of clubs."

"Good thought. Thanks. I guess I could have done that. Maybe next time?"

He must have thought that I didn't see the Ace sitting there while I endured playing the last four tricks. REALLY! I should have shown more pain while finishing the hand. I guess that when you are in shock, you look deceptively calm. To get out of this painful moment I stayed silent and tried to look as stupid as possible. It worked surprisingly well.

OK. I'm done with the power of negative thinking. I have a few suggestions for CHAT participants. These thoughts are not rocket science. I recommend them.

1. Opening lead: Don't lead unsupported Aces in suit contracts.

There are a few exceptions but think hard before you lead that Ace. Mike Lawrence says that the lead of Ace from AK is the best lead in most situations. But unsupported Aces – NO! Here is a link to his tips on this:

<http://csbnews.org/leading-unsupported-aces-by-mike-lawrence-part-1/?lang=en>

2. Get rid of your losers early. Find the right time to give up control.

Let the opponents in at a time of your choosing. Make them break a new suit. They may have a very difficult time choosing which suit to return. Here is a general thought:

Spades are trump and you have ♣Axx and ♣Kxx. You see no way to get rid of the club loser. Find the right time (not the end of the hand) to give up this loser. It might be as simple as (1) get the trump out and (2) play the ♣A, the ♣K and then give up the losing club.

The opponents can't lead a club back without giving you a ruff and a sluff. So, the opponents have to return a red suit. Maybe you hold ♥Qxx and ♥Jxx. If you lead a heart you likely will lose 3 tricks. If the opponents lead a heart you lose only two tricks.

Plan for endplays. Even if you don't plan the endplay, you may get one. Giving up control at the right time is a good technique to use. If you do endplay the opponents (by accident), don't act surprised. A little smile (not too smug) stretches the moment.