

ul: E/W
ir: South

♠ 10532
♥ AKJ82
♦ 94
♣ 107

THURSDAY

Vul: E/W
Dir: South

8
MAY

♠ 97
♥ A62
♦ 1092
♣ AK762

HAND OF THE WEEK

52 BRIDGE STORIES

THURSDAY

15
MAY

Thursday, May 1

22
MAY

♠ 10
♥ J
♦ KJ872
♣ KQ8763

♠ K5
♥ AK109432
♦ 105
♣ 102

JOEL MARTINEAU

Foreword by Allan Graves, 2017 World Senior Teams Champion

The background features a collage of playing cards and calendar pages. Visible cards include 10532 (10 of Spades), AKJ82 (Ace of Spades, King of Hearts, Jack of Clubs), 94 (9 of Spades), 107 (10 of Spades), Q97 (Queen of Spades, 9 of Hearts, 7 of Clubs), 4 (4 of Spades), 10 (10 of Spades), J (Jack of Spades), KJ872 (King of Spades, Jack of Hearts, 8 of Clubs, 7 of Spades), KQ8763 (King of Spades, Queen of Hearts, 8 of Clubs, 7 of Spades, 6 of Spades, 3 of Spades), K5 (King of Spades, 5 of Spades), AK109432 (Ace of Spades, King of Hearts, 10 of Clubs, 9 of Spades, 4 of Spades, 3 of Spades, 2 of Spades), 105 (10 of Spades, 5 of Spades), and 102 (10 of Spades, 2 of Spades). Calendar pages show dates like THURSDAY 8 MAY, THURSDAY 15 MAY, and THURSDAY, Ma. A large number 22 MAY is also visible.

HAND OF THE WEEK

JOEL MARTINEAU

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Such a long path from the idea to write up a few deals for some students, to wondering if ‘maybe these pieces could become a book,’ to renaming the Word file ‘Manuscript’, to approaching a publisher, to appreciating that a real physical entity would be born. So many helped:

Ross Deegan asked the initial question; Mhairi Longridge, Denise Wiggins, Diane Griffiths, Edee Rumley, Bruce Partridge and Karen Tomkins challenged me to articulate my bridge beliefs; Dr. Carol Wishart returned an early draft of an early story with a spruced up title; Cindy Oishi encouraged me at every turn; Michael Dimich, Michael Yuen, Julie Smith and Ben Takemori repeatedly pushed me to rise to their levels; Allan Graves wrote a poetic Foreword days after winning the d’Orsi Seniors Trophy at the 2017 World Bridge Federation championships in France.

Tom Anderson advised me to approach Master Point Press, where Ray Lee guided me through the arduous editing process, and Sally Sparrow then worked her magic to make everything fit. Paul Endo captured the back cover photo.

John Demeulemeester, Rhoda Tafler and Marv Norden helped the fledgling take flight.

Junko Noguchi and our daughters Michelle Tamaka and Chantal Ayaha provided the nurturing home environment throughout.

And a special nod to my Mom, my first and finest teacher. She sparked my love for writing long before I played my first bridge hand.

Thank you, all.

FOREWORD

I first met Joel Martineau in 1969 in the Student Union Building of the University of British Columbia in Vancouver. We didn't go to the 'SUB' to attend lectures, seminars or labs nor to sit in a quiet place reading important texts and writing important papers. We went to the SUB to do what we really wanted to do: to play cards.

Since we were being trained to be the new leadership generation of Canada, it behooved us to play the best card game, which was and is Contract Bridge. Our group loved to play bridge. Criteria of membership included appropriate behavior and sporting the apparel, grooming and other traits of the youth of the times. Joel passed these tests without difficulty. Friendships were made there that have lasted to this day.

Tournament duplicate bridge, 'mind sport' bridge if you will, American Contract Bridge League style, was a compelling draw for some of us. Mind sport bridge is the world's best and most difficult game, with 'easy to learn, impossible to master' an accurate description. Throughout the 1970s, Joel was a valued member of the tournament crowd in Vancouver and the Pacific Northwest. He became an excellent tournament player while gaining and keeping many friends. Bridge at every level is a game of relationships and Joel mastered that aspect. I left Vancouver in the early 1980s just before Joel stepped away from bridge to pursue other activities.

I enjoy bridge books and love good ones. I prefer the genre that challenges me to solve problems in 'real time' by presenting situations that evolve to a point where a decision has to be made and that decision is analyzable from what has preceded. Such books train one's bridge mind to think efficiently and correctly towards making the winning decision. Bridge is a timed event and this mind training is invaluable in learning to play accurately and smoothly. One style in that genre includes, for example, books by Hugh Kelsey and Eddie Kantar that are succinct and

to the point. They present the situation. You give your answer and over the page they give the correct solution.

The most difficult style in the genre is the ‘over the shoulder’ presentation popularized by writers such as Terence Reese, James Kauder and Larry Cohen. In this approach, the author engages the reader in a more folksy way, establishing the ground then sharing their thoughts and rationales as the deal evolves. Ideally there is a high quality of storytelling, which is not easy to achieve. There are three pitfalls to this approach. First, the hands have to be interesting and the developing logics accurate. Second, you have to want to spend time with the writer. Third, the narrative has to remain about the hand and not about the writer. Poorly done ‘over the shoulder’ accounts can become boring or a tiresome ego trip.

Joel Martineau has written an excellent ‘over the shoulder’ style book. The hands are interesting, the rationales and logic accurate. He is an accomplished writer and storyteller and he has an engaging humility. I very much enjoyed spending my time and energy with him in this book. It conveys an appreciation of bridge that I have always treasured.

I am a better player for having read this book and I will re-read it for pleasure and as part of my ongoing mind training in keeping my skills sharp.

Allan Graves
St. Johnsbury, Vermont
October 2017

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INTRODUCTION

‘Have you ever played bridge?’

‘No.’

‘It’s a great game,’ my new university roommate enthused.

Thus began a passionate pursuit that lasted for seventeen years, often directing my life during that span. I became a promising novice in Vancouver, then a respected player at western Regionals, and eventually a rounder eking out an existence playing high-stakes rubber bridge.

During autumn 1985 I sought new challenges and quit bridge ‘cold turkey.’ One thing led to another and much to my surprise I earned a PhD and became a literature professor at the top university in western Canada. One day while I waited to enter a classroom a slightly familiar face, a ‘mature student’, approached. She said, ‘Joel?’

‘Yes.’

‘Remember me? Do you ever play bridge now?’

Twenty years after leaving the game I ventured back onto the slippery slope, and soon found myself contesting the 2005 Grand National Team district finals against Paul Soloway, a favorite foe from decades earlier. After retiring from my university position in 2011, I soon missed teaching. Naturally, bridge instruction began filling the void.

Four years later, as I wrapped a series of weekly seminars delivered in a private home, the host asked, ‘Could we arrange another series focusing on declaring and defending? That’s where I need the most help.’

In response I began writing the fifty-two pieces that comprise this collection. Most bridge instruction and writing focuses on bidding, introducing students to all sorts of tempting tidbits — ‘Do this, don’t do that’ — that typically emphasize numbers. The instructors and writers have little to say about declaring and even less advice about defending. They can declare and defend, some of them quite well, but find it difficult to impart their knowledge. The numbers-based ‘rules’ that introduce bidding practices come up short when focusing on card play.

Narrative-based teaching offers students a more effective way to grasp card play. The fifty-two stories in this collection invite readers to participate in the processes, to 'look over the shoulder' of the declarer or defender and plan the plays. Of course bidding matters — it helps build the maps we construct as we decide which turns to take. Of course we work with numbers and distributions and high-card points deal after deal. We even observe certain rules when declaring and defending. But much of our thinking relies upon *vocabulary* rather than stats.

In one of my graduate courses a great professor used an everyday metaphor to illustrate his pedagogy, his ways of sharing knowledge. He said, 'Picture a closet where you keep your clothes. If you toss your clothes in willy nilly and need to get dressed in a hurry, good luck. If instead you place certain items on certain hooks and hangers, and place specific underclothes and socks in certain drawers, and arrange shoes carefully, when you get dressed you can do so efficiently.' He continued, 'Think of your brain as a closet where you store ideas, and vocabulary as the hooks and hangers. Learn the keywords and then store related knowledge under these terms. When wrestling with a problem in a pressure situation, recall the keyword, the hanger where you have stored pertinent ideas, and review previous examples.'

His metaphor helped me tremendously. I found that when writing an exam or developing a research paper I could structure my thinking by beginning with a cogent term. I would recall my definition for the term and review illustrative examples. Soon I would have a paragraph and writing blocks would burst.

When I became the professor standing at the front of the room, I recounted John's idea and encouraged students to construct a glossary — a collection of terms specific to the topic but with definitions expressed in their own words, rather than copied verbatim from some authoritative source. I wanted them to have comfortable tools at the ready when they landed in tough spots — writing a final exam, for instance.

I teach bridge the same way. I want developing partners to learn the language of bridge rather than memorize rules. I urge them to build a Glossary, using their own words to define the concepts. Then if they spot a chance to apply the Law of Total Tricks in an auction, or try a ruffing finesse when declaring, or

tap out declarer when defending, they can recall the ideas they have stored under the appropriate term. They can reach into the closet and ideally come out with the right garment, quickly.

I wrote these fifty-two stories regularly, in most cases one per week, usually upon returning home with a deal still running around my brain. Each story strives to recreate the thought processes that I used — or should have used — as I played the dummy or defended the contract, or as I watched my partner declare and defend. I try to highlight vocabulary, believing that if readers become comfortable with the terms they will discover opportunities to apply them and gain confidence in their card play and their strategic thinking.

I have written most deals from my perspective — how I think about or should have thought about the bidding or play or defense as the deal unfolds. On some deals I have put myself into my partner's chair and imagined how she or he thought — or should have thought — as they played their hand.

These stories concern real deals, everyday bridge club and tournament challenges, and the ways I address the challenges. The deals found me and I then invented the stories. I favor narrative and tactics and principles, and remain wary of rules and conventions.

The fifty-two deals appear in the order that I encountered them. I have not arranged them into a graduated pattern in terms of complexity nor have I clustered together related themes. The chapters appear much as we encounter challenges in our everyday bridge sessions — we can seldom predict the turns and twists the next deal will bring. If a concept addressed in a particular story intrigues you, check the Glossary to search for other chapters that treat the same or related concepts. The Glossary features keywords and, as I outline above, keywords allow us to organize our knowledge. They are our hooks and hangers.

I encourage you to work through the book slowly, or hastily, or — frankly — at whatever pace suits you. Read the stories in whatever order feels right. Skip a chapter and return to it later. Just because I engaged with the deals in this order doesn't mean that you have to. But please, whatever your approach, strive to build your bridge vocabulary.

Enjoy.

A note: Throughout the text I follow the style favored by Master Point Press for writing out distributions. So 5-4-3-1 signifies any hand with that shape while 5=4=3=1 signifies a hand with five spades, four hearts, three diamonds, and one club. Similarly, 7-2-2-2 refers to a hand with any seven-card suit and three doubletons while 2=7=2=2 refers to a hand with seven hearts and three doubletons.

1. BELIEVE IN PARTNERSHIP

Sitting East and playing matchpoints with a strong partner at our local club I pick up:

♠ KJ ♥ 10 9 8 7 5 ♦ QJ 9 5 3 ♣ K

We are vulnerable, our opponents are not. RHO deals and opens **three clubs**, I **pass**, and South bids **three notrump**, all **pass**. The crisp auction has been:

West	North	East	South
all pass	3♣	pass	3NT

Partner leads the ♠5 and an impressive dummy comes down:

♠ 8 6 3
 ♥ J 4 2
 ♦ —
 ♣ A Q J 9 7 6 2

Opening lead: ♠ 5

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ KJ
 ♥ 10 9 8 7 5
 ♦ QJ 9 5 3
 ♣ K

Partner urges me to embrace defending and to work towards an active style that pressures declarer into decisions and commitments early in hands. I am training myself to take some time before playing to the first trick, to review the information available.

Declarer's three notrump bid could range from preemptive to powerful; there's no way to know yet. Partner's small spade lead will be fourth best, so I apply the Rule of 11: eleven minus five (his lead) equals six spades higher than the ♠5 in the other three hands, besides partner's. I see the ♠8 and ♠6 in dummy,

plus the king and jack in my hand, so declarer has two spades higher than the ♠5.

Holding two honors in the suit partner has led seems promising. If declarer finesses in clubs I will be ready, plus I have something in hearts and more in diamonds. One potential challenge I foresee could be finding six discards on the run of dummy's clubs. If we reach that stage I will have to guard one red suit and trust partner to guard the other.

Okay, declarer has called for a small spade from dummy and I am ready to defend. I play the ♠K and declarer follows with the ♠9. I continue with the ♠J, declarer plays the ace and partner smoothly plays the queen.

I keep my card face up and ask my table mates to leave their cards up. Partner has been coaching me that winning defenders moderate the flow of play and prevent declarer from setting a hasty pace. Despite partner's smooth play of the ♠Q, the card seems dramatic. Where are all the little spades?

Unless declarer is concealing low spades and constructing an elaborate ruse, partner has all the outstanding spades. That seems consistent with his lead of the ♠5 and with declarer's play of the ♠9 then the ace. Partner maintains that 'the more cards a defender is known to hold in a suit the more significant becomes his or her particular choice.' I have seen all six spades higher than the ♠5 in the other three hands. Partner had three higher than his lead of the ♠5. It appears that he led from a six-card suit. So why play the queen on the second round?

Tricks 1 and 2 seem consistent with this distribution of the spade suit:



Why did partner play the queen on the second round?

Aha, I believe I've got the answer. Partner knows I have no more spades and intends his queen as an 'alarm clock play' — an unnecessarily dramatic play. He has played the dramatically high spade to signal that the entry to his now-established suit is in the higher-ranking suit, which must be hearts rather than diamonds. I turn my ♠J face down.

Declarer leads a small club, partner plays low, and declarer calls for the queen from dummy. I win the king, consider my ten remaining red cards, and review the first three tricks.

I lead the ♥10. Declarer flies with the ♥K, but partner produces the ace and the queen, then cashes four spades headed by the ten. We score five spade tricks, one club, and two hearts. Down four.

The full deal:

	♠ 8 6 3					
	♥ J 4 2					
	♦ —					
	♣ A Q J 9 7 6 2					
♠ Q 10 7 5 4 2	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠ K J	
N						
W E						
S						
♥ A Q		♥ 10 9 8 7 5				
♦ 8 7 2		♦ Q J 9 5 3				
♣ 8 5		♣ K				
	♠ A 9					
	♥ K 6 3					
	♦ A K 10 6 4					
	♣ 10 4 3					

I love this game, especially defending.

2. BEGIN COUNTING AT TRICK 1

Sitting East at our local club, playing matchpoints with a sound partner, I pick up:

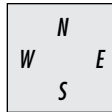
♠ Q 7 6 ♥ A J 4 2 ♦ K Q 6 ♣ 10 7 4

With only the opponents vulnerable, partner deals and **passes**, North opens **one diamond**. I have opening values, my diamond honors appear to be well situated, and I am tempted to overcall one heart. However, the 3=4=3=3 shape and my mediocre suit persuade me to **pass**. South responds **one spade**, partner **passes** again, North raises to **three spades** and South settles in **four spades**. The auction has been:

West	North	East	South
pass	1♦	pass	1♠
pass	3♠	pass	4♠
all pass			

Partner leads the ♥10 and dummy comes down:

♠ A 8 3 2
 ♥ K
 ♦ A J 8 5 4
 ♣ K 6 5



♠ Q 7 6
 ♥ A J 4 2
 ♦ K Q 6
 ♣ 10 7 4

I see us winning one heart trick and my diamond honors are indeed well-placed; my spade and club holdings seem less promising. I remind myself that we are playing matchpoints and preventing overtricks may be as rewarding as defeating the contract.

Declarer calls for the ♥K from dummy, I play the ace, and declarer follows with the queen. I keep my card face up and take

stock: Since I have the ♥J it is unlikely that declarer has false-carded; the ♥Q must have been singleton. Partner must have started with seven hearts, yet did not preempt in first seat, non-vulnerable against vulnerable opponents. Why not?

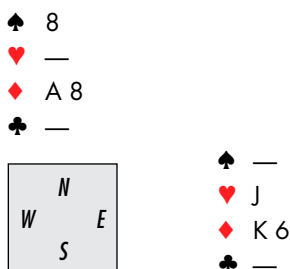
There are 15 points in dummy, I have 12, and declarer presumably has the majority of the remaining 13 for carrying on to game. Why would partner avoid preempting with a weak hand and long suit? Perhaps he has the ‘distribution of death’ — that 7-2-2-2 pattern that usually plays so poorly. Okay, I turn over the ♥A.

I lead a low club to Trick 2. Declarer wins the ace in hand, plays a spade to the ace in dummy, and a spade back to the jack in her hand, partner following to both. Declarer then plays the ♠K from hand, partner discarding the ♥7. Partner often coaches that ‘the more cards a player is known to hold in a suit, the more meaningful becomes the choice among those cards.’ So I take note of the ♥7.

At Trick 6 declarer leads a club to the king in dummy, partner following, and a club back to the queen in hand, partner discarding the ♥3. Partner has echoed in hearts, always giving ‘current count’ — consistent with originally holding seven hearts, discarding his original fourth best from six remaining, and then his lowest from five remaining. Partner’s pattern is indeed $2=7=2=2$.

Declarer plays two more winning clubs from hand, partner throwing two more hearts, the six and then the five, current remaining count. Dummy sheds two small diamonds and I discard the ♥2 and ♥4.

Declarer now leads a small diamond from hand. Partner follows with the ten, declarer plays the jack from dummy, and I win the queen. I am down to the ♥J and the ♦K6. What do I play to Trick 11?



Let's reconstruct partner's carding: I know he started with two small spades and two clubs; his heart plays are consistent with a seven-card suit headed by the ten, nine, and eight. So he started with two diamonds, and has played the $\heartsuit 10$. Surely partner would not squander the ten without holding the nine. I need his three remaining cards to be the $\heartsuit 98$ and the $\heartsuit 9$. If I lead a heart to Trick 11, declarer ruffs in hand and discards the losing diamond from dummy, making five. If I lead the $\heartsuit K$, partner follows with the nine and dummy's eight becomes high, making five. However, if I exit with the $\heartsuit 6$, partner's nine forces out dummy's ace and my $\heartsuit K$ becomes high. Making four.

Partner's passive bidding has backfired. If we had found and played in our eleven-card heart fit we would have lost two spades, one diamond and two clubs, a paying sacrifice versus their vulnerable game. I also note, whimsically, that my fleeting thought to overcall one heart would have made for a great result, and story. Mostly I take pleasure in our partnership defense. I study the results later and see that -650 scores 2.5 matchpoints on the 12 top while -620 scores 5.5.

The full deal:

	♠ A 8 3 2	
	♥ K	
	♦ A J 8 5 4	
	♣ K 6 5	
♠ 5 4	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; font-size: 0.8em;"> N E </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; font-size: 0.8em;"> W S </div>	♠ Q 7 6
♥ 10 9 8 7 6 5 3		♥ A J 4 2
♦ 10 9		♦ K Q 6
♣ 8 2		♣ 10 7 4
	♠ K J 10 9	
	♥ Q	
	♦ 7 3 2	
	♣ A Q J 9 3	

Winning players begin counting at Trick 1.

WATCH AND LEARN

Perhaps the best way to improve your bridge is to watch an expert and try to understand the reasoning behind their bids and plays. Here, readers follow the bidding and play (or defense) of fifty-two hands — one a week for a year — and listen to the author's thinking as each deal develops. Understanding why the experts do what they do is the first step towards being able to do it yourself — at least some of the time!



JOEL MARTINEAU (Canada) was a finalist in the 2017 Canadian National Teams Championships. Since retiring from teaching literature at the University of British Columbia he has focused on teaching bridge. This is his first book.

