

MASTER OF BRIDGE PSYCHOLOGY

Inside the remarkable mind of Peter Fredin



JEPPE JUHL WITH PETER FREDIN



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FOREWORD

I might as well admit it right from the get-go: this is a biased book written by a biased author. Peter Fredin and I are close friends, and I confess to be in love with the way this man plays bridge. In my opinion, Fredin is one of the most entertaining and exciting bridge players on planet Earth.

I also have to inform you that I am in eternal debt to Mr. Fredin. I have selfishly exploited the Swede's biggest mistake ever (it even outranks the infamous 'Fredin double'), and now live with his ex-girlfriend, the beautiful and vivacious Lone 'Mama' Kiær. The idea to write this book was actually Mama's.

I play rubber bridge on a regular basis with Peter on his balcony in Malmö. Apart from being a lucrative endeavor, playing bridge with Fredin is always extremely funny. The Swede cracks me and everybody else up with his hilarious stories about bridge. One early morning, after a long session on the Balcony, I returned home to Copenhagen and Mama. I put my considerable winnings in her outstretched hands, and started to tell her about an epic misunderstanding from that night's session where Fredin, through no fault of his own, and after excellent declarer play, ended up going five down in a vulnerable 6♥ contract on a 4-1 fit.

Mama became uncharacteristically silent as I was speaking. I could tell the woman wasn't listening at all. She was clearly thinking hard about something, since what used to be Fredin's money was still visible in her hands. All of a sudden she snapped out of her trance, pocketed the cash, and gave me a hard look: 'Be quiet now, and listen. You have taken his woman and his money. Isn't it about time you gave something back to the poor guy? Why don't you write a book about Peter? He is one of the most spectacular bridge players in the world.'

I looked at Mama, stunned. She had presented her idea in a tone of voice that almost made me feel as if I had a moral obligation to write this book.

'What a great idea,' I replied with a smile. And meant it!

‘Yes, isn’t it, my love? Just don’t offend him — we can’t afford to have you banned from his money game!’ And with these words she and my hard-earned money disappeared from the room. But the idea of writing a book did not.

‘Peter, I want to write a book about you,’ I said on the phone, a few days later. Ten seconds of total silence was followed by the distinct sound of a man laughing out loud. ‘You don’t know the difference between a finesse and an Italian sausage, and now you want to write a bridge book?’ he managed to reply between laughs.

‘Well,’ I replied, rather offended, ‘a sausage you can eat; a finesse you cannot. But maybe we should write the book together. You tell the stories, and I’ll write them down. I will be to you what Boswell was to Dr. Johnson.’

‘Never heard of them. They can’t be any good at playing bridge.’

‘All right’, I sighed, ‘you will be the Sherlock Holmes of bridge, and I will be Dr. Watson.’

‘Aaaah. The Sherlock thing is absolutely true, so let’s find out about the Watson thing.’

Taking this answer as a ‘yes’, I proceeded to write this book as an anecdotal compilation of some of Fredin’s best, worst and funniest plays. Some, if not most, of the deals are very advanced, and will be challenging even for strong and experienced tournament players, but regardless of your skill level, I guarantee that you will feel inspired to improve your own game. The bridge you are about to encounter is truly unique, as is the brilliant mind of Peter Fredin (when it comes to bridge, that is).

I hope you enjoy reading it as much as I did writing it.

Jeppe Juhl
Denmark, 2018

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Special thanks also go to Mads Grove, a true and loyal friend, and to my Canadian friend Mrs. Lise Ewald, whose support in so many ways has made this book possible.



Peter Fredin and Jeppe Juhl

INTRODUCTION

There are many great players and partnerships at the highest level of international bridge. If you take the top 100+ players in the world, the difference in skill when it comes to declaring a contract or defending is close to zero. When the best pairs and teams square off, current form and luck more often than not decides the outcome. Having a great system and table presence are vital elements to any successful bridge campaign, but at the end of the day it is making fewer mistakes and playing sound bridge that will decide the outcome, rather than the rare entry-shifting crisscross squeeze.

There are — however — a few players who stand out even among the stars, players who time and again do the extraordinary, players who have an almost indefinable X-factor. Zia Mahmood and Geir Helgemo are among those, as is the player that this book is all about: Swedish bad-boy Peter Fredin. Fredin's world-class peers universally recognize the Swede to be an outstanding player. He has had great international results, although not as many as his prodigious talent merits. Partly this is due to the systematic and outrageous cheating that unfortunately has been going on in top-level bridge for an extended period of time, a situation exposed by Norwegian star Boye Brogeland and others in 2015. Fredin's relative underachievement when compared to his talent is also due to the fact that at times he can be a difficult partner. There has been much controversy with Fredin. He is, some would argue, often too outspoken, and he hasn't played for the Swedish national team for the last five years after having clashed with coaches and captains on more than one occasion.

What makes Fredin's approach to bridge unique and often downright spectacular is his ability to identify and forcefully exploit the much-underrated psychological aspects of bridge, in situations that occur with a much higher frequency than most bridge players realize. When you combine this ability with great card reading, pure

guts and an impressive understanding of tactical bidding, you have a player who stands out.

Peter Fredin's way of thinking and playing bridge leads to spectacular successes as well as mind-blowing, almost unreal, failures. That being said, he still plays 98% or more of his hands the same way as the other pros do. This book, however, is primarily dedicated to the small percentage of deals where Peter Fredin does the really unexpected. Something often involving a line of play where he, for reasons that will be explained, is certain that a psychological play will give him better chances than the straightforward line that gives the best mathematical chance of success.



Peter Fredin

The many spectacular deals you are about to see have one thing in common: in all of them Fredin exhibits mastery of a certain specific set of skills that you must have, if you are to be successful in deviating from textbook bridge:

1. *Excellent card reading*

Fredin extracts a lot of vital information out of everything that goes on at the table, and then decides how the suits are most likely distributed and how the key cards are (must be) placed. Having completed this analysis — and never before — you can decide if a psychological plan is best.

2. *Superb technique*

You will have to know how to play all the many different suit combinations the correct way.

3. *Acute table presence and the ability to ‘play the player’*

To ‘play the player’ is a generic aspect of the game of bridge (and all other mind games) that you will be forced to think harder about than you probably are used to, if you want to try to copy Fredin’s way of playing. In other words, you have to be very aware of *who* your opponents are, and what their skill-level might be, because many — if not most — of the psychological game plans in this book will often succeed against expert opponents, while they will almost always utterly fail against the average club player.

4. *Guts*

This is in my opinion the hardest challenge. Most readers who would like to emulate Fredin after having read this book will have to radically change their mind-set. This is not easy. Having the guts to play like Fredin is not for those with a conservative or dogmatic approach to bridge, nor is it for the faint-hearted. So please make sure that your partner reads this book as well, before you start playing the ‘Fredin way’.

It is not only in the play of the cards that Fredin uses psychology: far from it. He is feared by the other pros for his unconventional bidding style. Here is an example: playing in a pairs event, Fredin was looking at:

♠ A Q ♥ K J 10 8 5 4 2 ♦ Q ♣ 7 4 3

The bidding:

West	North	East	South
1♦	1♥	1♠	Fredin ?

Fredin bid 3NT! In Chapter 5, I'll reveal the rationale for his choice — with Peter there is always a logical explanation, however bizarre the call appears to be at first.

No doubt about it, a book about playing bridge the 'Fredin way' is long overdue. And now it is here. It will take you on a journey into one of the most brilliant and unorthodox minds of international bridge. That journey will lead you through uncharted territories of the game you love — as I surmise you do, since you bought this book. I feel confident that you will laugh and shake your head in disbelief; some of the deals are downright hilarious, and I hope you will come to love and admire Peter Fredin's intuitive and fearless style of play.

You are of course more than welcome to read this book as an anecdotal compilation of the best, the worst and the funniest stories of an unorthodox bridge expert without spending too much of your energy on the 'hows' and 'whys'. But there is more to get out of this book than a good laugh or the aesthetic joy of watching a master demonstrating his craft. Listening to Itzhak Perlman playing the violin doesn't make the listener a virtuoso; bridge, however, is not like music when it comes to execution.

I guarantee that you will improve your game if you make an effort to embrace and understand the logic behind Fredin's way of playing.

To help you do this, you will throughout the book find 'clock' signs that prompt you to stop and think before you read on:



Take your time when you see the clock sign. Don't be too curious or too impatient. Improve your game! Respect the signs that prompt you to stop and think.

The deals in this book are all 100% authentic, and — apart from the occasional rotation of the hands for convenience of presentation— nothing has been altered. (Some of the immaterial spot cards might differ slightly from the original deals, as I have chosen to 'fill in the blanks' when a deal has been presented to me with suits in the form of AQxxx, for example.)

I have also taken some artistic liberties by occasionally making up inner dialogues for Peter's opponents in an attempt to give an impression of what went through their minds during the play. I sincerely apologize to these players if I have misrepresented their chain of thought or put words into their mouths that they never would have uttered in real life. Actual dialogues between Fredin and his opponents are reconstructed according to Fredin's selective memory. These players can blame Mr. Fredin for any misrepresentation.

Many of the deals in this book are advanced or very advanced, and they might be somewhat challenging for the average player. My hope and ambition, however, is that experts and non-experts alike will be able to enjoy the book.

CHAPTER 1

THE BEGINNING

HOW IT ALL STARTED

Anders Peter Mathias Fredin was born in 1969 in Harplinge, a small suburb of Halmstad, a city of 58,000 souls located in the southern Swedish province of Halland.

Sweden in the late sixties and seventies was a homogenous and prosperous country. Having avoided the horrors of the Second World War through neutrality, Sweden had enjoyed an unprecedented rise in average income in the post-war era. It was very much a model society that nations across the globe looked upon with admiration and sometimes envy. It was the country of tennis great Björn Borg, movie director Ingmar Bergman, skier Ingemar Stenmark and author Astrid Lindgren (creator of Pippi Longstocking), along with Volvo, IKEA, and the Nobel Prize. Extremely low crime rates, a high standard of living and equal opportunities for all characterized Sweden back then.

It was in this almost utopian bliss that the young Peter Fredin grew up with his two older sisters Monica and Christina, his mother, Margaretha (who worked at the local post office) and his father, Hartvig (who worked in a local convenience store). He didn't stand out in school; he didn't excel in mathematics or other academic fields.

He lived a carefree life, chasing girls and playing sports like all normal boys. In other words, there were no signs of the young Fredin having extraordinary talent for anything at all.

Then one sunny day in June of 1985, Peter's father took his teenage son to a beginner's course in bridge. Hartvig was an average club player, but he loved the game and wanted to introduce his 15-year-old son to bridge. The rest is history.

The teenager instantly took to the game, and the young Fredin showed remarkable prowess right away. In his own words: 'For the first time in my young life I had found something that I really wanted to commit to. I was good at sports, but bridge triggered something inside of me that is hard to describe. The best way to put it is probably *instant connection*.' Peter had fallen in love — with bridge. Within a few months of taking up the game seriously, he already outplayed seasoned bridge players on a regular basis. From then on Fredin lived and breathed bridge. He played it for hours on end, every day, all year long. He dropped out of high school and worked for a brief period as a mailman, but he never really looked back. Bridge had become his life.



Peter Fredin in a local newspaper after winning the 1990 Junior Swedish National Pairs with Martin de Knijff

VENGEANCE IS MINE

As a young bridge prodigy Peter often found himself partnering older players who paid him small change to play with them in tournaments. Fredin's highly imaginative way of playing bridge materialized very early, as the following outrageous deal from 1988 clearly demonstrates. He was playing in a pairs tournament with a lovable lady in her late seventies against two very angry and offensive men.

Peter: 'Now and again you meet players whom you simply don't like. These two men were being obnoxious to my sweet, old partner. I remember getting very annoyed with them, and I really wanted to punish them very, very badly. The bridge gods must have read my mind.'

Here is the layout that the bridge gods dealt the vengeful Fredin:

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

West	North	East	South
<i>Angry Man 1</i>	<i>Nice Old Lady</i>	<i>Angry Man 2</i>	<i>Peter Fredin</i>
pass	1♥	pass	1♠ ¹
all pass	4♠ ²	pass	6NT ³

1. In a few seconds I will be declaring 3NT.
2. No you will not.
3. This can never give us a worse score than 4♠ down two or three.

The bidding calls for some explanation, to put it mildly.

Peter: 'I am — of course — not very proud of my bidding. The plan was to become declarer no matter what, so I bid 1♠, hoping the Nice Old Lady would bid 2♦ or 2♥, so I could declare in 3NT. But horrors of horrors; her next bid was a nightmarish 4♠. This could never end well for us, so what was I to do other than bid 6NT... huh?'

STOP

Before you read on: Fredin made this contract when West led the ♣J. How?



When West led the ♣J, Fredin examined the dummy for a few seconds without a worry on his youthful face. He then gave the Nice Old Lady a charming and apparently confident smile, thanked her for the dummy and calmly asked her to play the ♦3. When East played a discouraging ♣4, Fredin played the ♣8!

A totally unsuspecting West sloppily continued clubs, and fifteen seconds later Peter wrote down +1440 on his slip by way of five tricks in hearts, two tricks in diamonds after a finesse, and five tricks in clubs.

The post-mortem was hilarious as East started yelling at West for continuing clubs. 'I played the ♣4, you fool!' West didn't know what to answer his fuming partner. Instead he turned his attention to the smiling youngster sitting to his right. 'How in hell could you bid 6NT?' he snarled, pointing an accusing finger at Fredin.

Peter, who inwardly was enjoying every second of their bickering, gave him a puzzled look, as if he didn't understand the question. 'I'm not sure what you mean... I made it, didn't I?' Fredin, now ignoring his livid opponents, who kept yelling, turned to the Nice Old Lady and with a note of surprise exclaimed, 'Wow! Come to think of it, we can't make any game contract. I love your bid of 4♠, partner, very well done!'

Fredin and the Nice Old Lady went on to win the event by a huge margin, but partnering club players and nice old ladies only counted for a fraction of the time Fredin spent on bridge in this period. He continued to get better and better.

His almost meteoric progress didn't go unnoticed. In the 80s, Sweden was already one of the top bridge nations in the world, and the young Fredin was soon to be found on the Swedish Junior teams, playing on the 22-25 team when he was only eighteen years old. Between 1988 and 2000 Peter was for all practical purposes a semi-pro. He was making a living from the prize money he got out of his many tournament wins, too many to list in this book. The main part of his income, however, came from playing bridge for money. In 2000 he became a full-fledged professional bridge player when he joined the professional circuit playing with Magnus Lindkvist on Rita Shugart's team in the ACBL Nationals.



2006 Open Swiss - 2nd place

*(Top row l-r) Norberto Bocchi, Giorgio Duboin, Marc Jacobus,
(Bottom row l-r) Magnus Lindkvist, Lou Ann O'Rourke, Peter Fredin*

Fredin and Lindkvist had a long run of successes together for nearly a decade. Then between 2007 and 2015 Fredin played the major international tournaments almost solely with countryman Björn Fallenius who was based in New York, and more recently he has started to form a partnership with Johan Sylvan.

GET RID OF THAT ACE!

Peter Fredin was just out of his teens when this epic deal was played at the Swedish Junior Pairs Championships in 1990. It is a Fredin classic, and it demonstrates that even at this tender age he had an uncanny knack of knowing when to disregard ‘normal’ lines of play, and find brilliant, gutsy and deceptive alternatives.

Both Vul.

♠ A 5 3
 ♥ K J
 ♦ K 9 7 6
 ♣ 9 8 7 4

 ♠ K J 7 6
 ♥ A Q
 ♦ A Q J 10 4 3
 ♣ K

West	North	East	South
	<i>Björnlund</i>		<i>Fredin</i>
pass	1♣	4♥	6NT
all pass			

The ♥3 was led, and young Fredin had good reason to be disappointed when his partner tabled the dummy. There were no tricks coming from the club suit, and the two honors in hearts were worthless. Trying hard not to convey his worries to his opponents, Fredin instantly played a card from dummy. He wasn't a favorite to make this slam, far from it. It was — however — by no means hopeless, and he had already made up his mind how to play the hand.

STOP

Before you read on: How would you play the contract?



Did you go for the only mathematical chance — ♠Qxx in the East hand, giving you twelve tricks by way of four in spades, two in hearts and six in diamonds? Well, don't feel bad, most players would — but not Fredin. He dismissed this possibility outright. Fredin was very confident that East would have an unbalanced two-suited hand, thus dramatically reducing the *a priori* 18% probability of his having ♠Qxx. However, he would of course never dismiss a winning plan, no matter how small its chance of success, if he weren't absolutely convinced that a better alternative existed, a better plan, plain and simple.

Fredin realized that West would always be able to hold on to his ♠Qxx and two clubs, preventing an endplay, and no squeeze was on. His first objective was to get a trick with the ♣K. This would bring his total tally up to eleven tricks, giving him the same result as the players who ended up in six diamonds minus one, and with a club trick in the bag maybe, just maybe, something else would materialize. East might still have the ♠Q, or perhaps he could set up an endplay anyway by way of a devious deception!

STOP

Before you read on: So what card did Fredin play at Trick 2?



After winning the opening lead with the ♥K in dummy our fearless prodigy immediately played a smooth and innocent-looking ♣9 toward his hand!

This was the full deal:

	♠ A 5 3				
	♥ K J				
	♦ K 9 7 6				
	♣ 9 8 7 4				
♠ Q 10 9 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	♠ 8
N					
W E					
S					
♥ 6 3		♥ 10 9 8 7 5 4 2			
♦ 8 5 2		♦ —			
♣ A 6 3		♣ Q J 10 5 2			
	♠ K J 7 6				
	♥ A Q				
	♦ A Q J 10 4 3				
	♣ K				

Leading a club from dummy might look crazy or even desperate. But it really isn't when you are playing against competent opposition, as you are about to see. After all, even if the ♣K lost to the ♣A, he would still be able to try for the small chance of East's holding ♠Qxx any time the opponents didn't continue clubs, which would be the case if the club honors were divided between East and West.

It started out perfectly. East ducked dummy's ♣9, which is good technique if South has the ♣AK6. Having survived the first hurdle, Fredin turned his attention to West, also a very promising junior, and inwardly sighed with relief when he too followed the script and ducked the ♣K. Ducking is a correct and standard play against a known balanced or semi-balanced hand. It gives a declarer with ♣KQ10 a later guess, and West was sure it could never cost anything. Wrong! This was precisely what Fredin had banked on. He now cashed five of his diamonds and the ♥A, noting that West along the way discarded an encouraging ♠2 followed by the ♠10, while East discarded all his useless hearts. This gave away the spade distribution as 5-1, West having started with ♠Q109xx.

The five-card position with South on lead looked like this:

	♠ A 5										
	♥ —										
	♦ —										
	♣ 8 7 4										
♠ Q 9 4	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100%; text-align: center;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 8
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ —		♥ —									
♦ —		♦ —									
♣ A 3		♣ Q J 10 5									
	♠ K J 7 6										
	♥ —										
	♦ 3										
	♣ —										

Fredin now played the ♦3. This was the critical moment. It is obvious to anyone looking at all the cards that West *must* unblock his toxic ♣A. But this is not easy for West to figure out. He was convinced that South had the ♣QJ or ♣Q10. East could of course have helped him out by discarding a helpful ♣Q earlier, but he never thought about it, because he was convinced that Fredin had the ♣A.

Poor West, bridge is just harder when you play against Fredin. It looked like the only hope was that partner held the ♠K, so he discarded a fatal ♣3, and Fredin discarded one of his small clubs from dummy. He then played a low spade to the ♠A in dummy, and the ♣4 to West's stiff ♣A.

Finito la comedia: West had to lead from his ♠Q9 into Fredin's ♠KJ.

THE INTUITIVE FREDIN

Fredin felt great when he wrote +1440 on his score sheet for making 6NT. He had trusted his intuition and made an impossible slam by using a psychological line of play based on deception instead of the 'normal' textbook play.

I give the credit for this deal to Fredin's 'intuition' for a good reason. It may come as a surprise to you (it sure did to me), but Peter Fredin has no intimate knowledge of card statistics or probabilities. They don't interest him all that much. He puts more trust in his table presence and natural instincts than in numbers from a probability chart.

This deal is a great example of Fredin's intuitive way of playing bridge. It was his instinct, not his non-existent knowledge of probability theory, that made him reject the 18% line for his contract (\spadesuit Qxx onside) as an acceptable benchmark. He was also intuitively aware that after East's preempt it was the much lower *a posteriori* odds of around 8% to which his plan should be compared. His intuition also 'told' him that his plan was superior to all other alternatives. As it turned out, Fredin was right. He apparently made the 'correct' intuitive choice.

It is hard to argue against success. It is, however, also hard, if not impossible, to say anything meaningful about *exactly* how often Fredin's plan will succeed without simulating the deal on a computer, but a 'guesstimation' can give us an idea. Fredin will make the contract one out of four times playing the way he did, if the guesstimation numbers are correct. This is a whopping seven percentage points better than the 18% for finding the \spadesuit Qxx with East and more than three times as good when you adjust these odds to 8% after the preempt.

Chances of making the contract <i>a priori</i>	=	appr. 18%
Chances of making the contract <i>a posteriori</i>	=	appr. 8%
Chances of making the contract with Fredin's psychological plan	=	appr. 25%

(a) Fredin needs the \clubsuit AQ to be divided between his opponents. Making this a slightly less than 50-50 proposition cannot be far from the truth ($P1 = 0.48$). (b) He also needs both of his opponents to duck when the honors are divided. Good players will do that very fre-

quently. Let's put this number at 90% for each player ($P2 = 0.81$). And finally (c) when West has the $\clubsuit A$, Fredin needs West to fail to unblock it or East to have the $\spadesuit Q$. I put the probability that West doesn't unblock as 80%, and the combined probability of East having the $\clubsuit A$ as well as the $\spadesuit Q$ as 25% ($P3 = 0.65$). For Fredin's play to be correct, the probability of all these three events occurring must be higher than the approximately 8% chance of finding East with $\spadesuit Qxx$ after preempt. If not, Fredin lucked out, and won with an inferior plan. Let's find out. This is done by multiplying $P1$, $P2$ and $P3 = (0.48) \times (0.81) \times (0.65) \times 100\% = 25.3\%$.

Fredin: 'Numerical approximations have nothing to do with practical bridge. No one does it like that. Listen... when I decide to disregard the normal so called "mathematical" line of play and go for a psychological plan instead, I — more or less subconsciously — utilize four things: 1) my intuition, 2) my experience from having played hundreds of thousands of hands, 3) my table feel, and last, but not least, 4) I play the players. Almost all my opponents in a big tournament are strong international players, but now and again I play festival bridge where the skill level of the pairs varies from world-class to near beginner. I would, of course, never embark on a complicated deceptive play against a normal recreational player.' He goes on to reject totally the notion that there should be some kind of fundamental difference between a psychological approach to bridge and a mathematical approach:

'Of course not. It is utter nonsense to think that way. Bridge is a game of incomplete information. The expert players are better equipped to extract the missing information utilizing a variety of different skills, ranging from deductions, system agreements, positive and negative inferences, card play technique, table presence and a host of other methods. All bridge players, from the expert to the beginner, weigh the pros and the cons of any given plan and at the end they go for the line of play that they think has the highest likelihood of success. Sometimes this line of play is based on a deceptive or a psychological plan, much more frequently it is not.'

Fredin goes on to explain that it is therefore a gross misconception to think that psychology and mathematics represent two different ways of playing bridge. They are in fact two sides of the same coin. He speculates that the misconception about the nature of the game stems from the undisputable fact that the vast majority of

bridge players simply are unaware of how often there will be a psychological plan that is superior to the ‘correct’ technical line of play.

‘Oh, yes... deceptive opportunities occur all the time. Unfortunately most bridge players are not wired to think in these alternative lines. Their local bridge teacher has often effectively killed their imagination and creativity on their first day of learning about the game. I have actually been accused of cheating several times by ignorant players who simply refused to believe that you could play a hand the way I did without some inside information.’

FEAR IS THE MIND-KILLER

This deal somehow in a nutshell *defines* the way Fredin plays bridge. It is the story of a player whose approach to the game is different from almost any other bridge player you have ever encountered. First, Fredin utilized his card-reading skills to reject the only mathematical chance of making a contract in favor of a psychological/deceptive plan. He then, with supreme confidence and totally fearlessly, went on to carry out his gutsy plan.

The confidence-thing and the fearlessness might sound irrelevant, like buzz words at a sales pitch. But they are not. These two character traits are of paramount importance for Fredin to be successful in the way he plays bridge, as you will see in the many deals to come. Peter Fredin has never in his life been afraid to look like a complete idiot when he chooses one of his intuitive non-mathematical lines of play. The reason is simple: he firmly believes in what he is doing, which is why he is doing it; and should a plan — for whatever reason — turn out badly, so be it!

Very few non-expert bridge players can honestly claim the same. The rest of us are now and again motivated by fears when we play: fear of going down in a contract, fear of taking a critical finesse, fear of partner’s wrath, fear of looking stupid, fear of being laughed at, fear of not qualifying, fear of this and fear of that.

Fredin: ‘Yes! I have lost count of the times when I have seen players go down in makable contracts, simply because they were afraid to take dangerous, but necessary actions.’

This author can relate to that statement. I have done it myself on many occasions: out of fear I have chosen what in my heart I knew to be an inferior line of play and succumbed to wishful thinking. It

always starts with a soft-spoken and silky inner voice trying to make me take the coward's road by whispering sweet little lies made up to persuade me that what I am about to do is wrong. Sometimes I succumb to this siren song; sometimes so do you.

But Fredin, never! As he puts it: 'Fear is the mind-killer.' Fredin goes on to explain that fear is a 'two-way-street', meaning that while you as a bridge player have to battle your own internal demons, you should not be blind to the obvious fact that so do your opponents. 'Of course they do. And that is why, playing the way I do, sometimes apparently out of nowhere I will be rewarded big-time, even by very strong opposition. I am referring to the invisible mind game constantly going on between bridge experts when we engage in combat at the table.'

MESSING WITH MY MIND

There is a very big and frequently overlooked upside to playing bridge the 'Fredin Way': *your expert opponents will begin to 'misdéfend' otherwise easy defensive positions.* They are actually forced to do so, if they know that you are capable of some of the plays you'll see in this book. After all, if they always play according to the textbook and you do not, then you have radically increased your chances of success against these players. This is the classical 'play-the-player' mind game where 'you know that I know that you know that I...' all of a sudden becomes an integrated part of bridge when playing against Fredin... or like Fredin!

Fredin: 'That is so true. Just recently Simon Hult twice made non-textbook plays because he (rightfully) was afraid of being "kidnapped", as we call it in Sweden. He was wrong on both occasions, and probably looked like an idiot to people who don't realize the invisible mind game that is going on between true experts. Trust me, Hult is not an idiot, he is fast becoming one of the superstars in international bridge, as are three other young Swedes: Hult's partner Simon Ekenberg and the Rimstedt twins, Mikael and Ola. The future, when it comes to bridge that is, looks bright for Sweden.'

Imagine two scenarios in the examples below:

1. You are playing against your good friend Joe Average from the local club, and,
2. You are playing against Peter Fredin.

You will instantly realize that although you are playing a card game called bridge in both scenarios, the two games are for all practical purposes completely different. Against Joe Average you are under no pressure whatsoever. You will (have to) play as you have always done against him: the 'textbook' play. Not doing so will cost you points. Against Fredin, however, it is a different ballgame. You are literally forced into a guessing game where you will get it right some of the time, but for sure not all of the time.

Example 1

	♣ 10 5
♣ J 7 3 2	<input type="text"/>

You are defending against 4♥ declared by Fredin, and lead a small club to partner's ♣Q and Fredin's ♣A. You have no clues about the club suit, from the bidding. What do you do when Fredin now leads the ♣4 towards dummy?

Here are two possible layouts:

A

	♣ 10 5	
♣ J 7 3 2	<input type="text"/>	♣ Q 9 8 6
	♣ A K 4	

B

	♣ 10 5	
♣ J 7 3 2	<input type="text"/>	♣ K Q 8
	♣ A 9 6 4	

If you play low, he might have Hand A (just ask Jeff Meckstroth). If you play high, he might have Hand B, where going up with the jack will make it possible for declarer to establish the ♣9 later for a vital discard.

Against Joe Average you play low every time, but against Fredin you have to play high some of the time. The question is, do you play high now or next time?

Example 2

♠ K 3 ♠ Q 9 5 2

You are defending against a spade contract, and Fredin, who is declaring the hand as South, has shown six-plus spades and can't afford two trump losers. What do you do when Fredin leads the ♠J from his hand?

A

♠ K 3 ♠ Q 9 5 2
 ♠ 10
 ♠ A J 8 7 6 4

B

♠ K 3 ♠ Q 9 5 2
 ♠ A
 ♠ J 10 8 7 6 4

If you play low, and you are in position A, partner will be very displeased. But what if you play the king, and the position is B? Then I am sure your partnership will be hanging by a thread, and soon may be a thing of the past.

Joe Average is no problem. You will always play him for B.

Example 3

♠ Q 9 7 ♠ K 8 6 4

You are defending against Fredin. He is known to have a strong two-suited hand in the majors, and is playing in hearts. Trumps are drawn. What do you do when he leads the ♠J from hand in this position?

A

♠ Q 9 7 ♠ K 8 6 4
 ♠ 10
 ♠ A J 5 3 2

B

♠ Q 9 7 ♠ K 8 6 4
 ♠ 2
 ♠ A J 10 5 3

Is he trying to lure you into withholding the ♠Q, because he knows spades are 3-1? Or is the jack just the standard play from AJ10xx, where going up with the queen will be an unmitigated catastrophe?

You might be able to figure out what Fredin is up to some of the time in these positions, but definitely not all of the time. Fredin's

peers, the super experts, will have a better track record than other players, but even they will fail.

Fredin: ‘There are a plethora of psychological play-the-player guessing combinations like the ones above — thousands upon thousands actually. And they come in all shapes and forms. The key factor is to identify them during play, as declarer, but also as a defender. This will be completely impossible if you don’t rewire your way of thinking about bridge. My guess is that at present we are further away from ‘perfect bridge’ than most experts think. We are not even remotely close; the science of bridge as a card game will continue to evolve for many years, and the best players fifty years from now will be much stronger than the best players today.’



Peter Fredin, 2000

GENERAL INTEREST

My recurring nightmare is that Peter is sitting both on my left and on my right... Bob Hamman

This may be the funniest bridge biography you will ever read. Peter Fredin of Sweden won the 2009 European Pairs, and is a multiple medalist in world events. Other top-level experts fear and respect him as a challenging opponent, whose imaginative style and exceptional card-reading put them under constant pressure. His approach to bridge is unusual, and often owes more to table feel and psychology than to the mathematics of the game. Danish journalist Jeppe Juhl, a close personal friend, has collected some of Fredin's best and worst moments into a book that offers superlative entertainment for any bridge player. You'll be looking forward to trying some of these plays yourself!



JEPPE JUHL (Denmark) is an award-winning print and TV journalist who also happens to be an expert player of poker, bridge, chess, backgammon and Scrabble.



PETER FREDIN (Sweden) has several top-three finishes in world pairs and teams competitions, and has won numerous events in his native Sweden and around the world.



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