

BRIDGE AT THE EDGE



BOYE BROGELAND & DAVID BIRD

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& DAVID BIRD



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<http://www.sarantakos.com/bridge/vugraph.html>

We retrieved the details of many deals from this source and thank Nikos warmly. We acknowledge also the annual world championship books, edited by Brian Senior and a prerequisite of any bridge lover's library. Finally, our thanks go to Christian Vennerød, who wrote some emotive articles in English on Norway's win in the 2008 European Championship.

David Bird and Boye Brogeland

PHOTO CREDITS:

Boye Brogeland's Partners:

Photo of Erik 'Silla' Sælensminde by Svein Erik Dahl.

Photo of Espen Erichsen by Trond Høiness.

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FOREWORD

One of the privileges open to a bridge writer is the chance to co-author a book with a world-class player — to delve inside their bridge mind and perhaps discover a secret or two on how they have achieved so much success. I have been fortunate to do this with some of the world's best players and it has always been a rewarding experience.

Boye Brogeland is an exceptionally bold and adventurous player, following his instinct and taking risks that few others would contemplate. Most unusually, he is very happy to publicize his failures as well as his successes. During the 2010 European Championship he and Svendsen bid to a small slam, missing the ace and king of trumps. I emailed him, 'Can you explain the bidding on that spade slam against Germany? Obviously we won't use the deal in the book, but I'd like to understand what the bids meant.' Boye responded, 'Of course you must put it into the book! It was a very interesting bidding problem.' You will find the deal on [page 214](#).

This book contains some 190 deals played by Boye at championship level. They illustrate the thrilling highs and depressing lows of top-level championship bridge. Boye and I have done our very best to convey the buzz and excitement of playing 'bridge at the edge'. Have we succeeded in this task? Only you can say.

David Bird
September, 2011

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INTRODUCTION

What is it that gets your juices flowing playing bridge? Is it a neatly timed elimination and throw-in, a perfectly executed double squeeze, or thirteen rounds of relays to get to the optimal spot? Maybe it's wielding the axe on your opponents and collecting a big number? All that stuff gets me excited too, but I find it even more thrilling to make a bid, a lead or a play — successful or not — that no textbook will ever recommend.

'Avoid big penalties' is a common maxim, especially playing IMPs or rubber bridge. Sensible as it may seem, I will go out of my way to help partner to find the right lead; I open light third in hand, I overcall on decent four-card suits, and I double Stayman or a transfer bid with any suit — long or short — that screams for the lead. If this means I look stupid from time to time when my opponents catch me speeding, so be it. In the long run I believe it is the right approach.

'Never underlead an ace against a trump contract' is another adage that bridge players are familiar with. Well, going against the mainstream can be extremely effective. No declarer expects it, and faced with a king-jack choice in dummy at Trick 1 he is almost certainly doomed. As long as you (and your partner) can stomach finding the occasional stiff king in dummy, underleading an ace is far less dangerous than most people think.

'Don't risk your contract trying to make an overtrick' is sound advice for IMPs and rubber bridge, but don't bank on it. There are situations when the likelihood of an overtrick is so high that you should play for it even though you risk going down in a cold contract. Math is a better guidance than the rule of thumb you were once taught. You have to bear in mind, though, that you have to explain to your teammates when you call out minus 100 at the comparison.

My most memorable 'minus 100' happened in the final of the Bermuda Bowl in Paris in 2001. I was declarer in a 3NT contract that had nine top winners after the lead. Rather than securing the contract and keeping my partner and teammates at ease, I tried for an overtrick since only a really unlucky lie of the cards would put me in any danger. Rose Meltzer and Kyle Larsen were happy to be given the chance to collect the next five tricks. Down one. And USA went on to win a close final.

In Shanghai in 2007 it was déjà vu. Norway was in the Bermuda Bowl final against the USA. I was declaring 3NT on the last board of a segment and had nine top tricks. I cashed eight of them and was left with the ace-queen of spades and a couple of diamonds in dummy. Based on my opponents' discards I was pretty sure that the king of spades was onside. Should I play it safe to avoid a possible disaster like six years ago, or should I follow my instincts?

My adrenalin was pumping. I asked myself how it would feel to lose the final by one IMP, knowing that an overtrick on this very hand could have made the difference. To me, that would be the worst case scenario, so I couldn't chicken out. I took the finesse.

Zia Mahmood, who has been my idol ever since I read his Bols Tip, 'Roll Over Houdini', won the king of spades and literally stood up to cash a winner. Now I was down to a guess — which two cards Michael Rosenberg had left. I was lucky: I got it right, I made the contract and we went on to win Norway's first Bermuda Bowl.

Don't play it safe. Play at the edge.

Boye Brogeland

BOYE BROGELAND'S PARTNERS



Erik 'Silla' Sælensminde. Boye met Erik when he was a student at the Norwegian School of Economics in Bergen. They adopted the Precision system and first made their mark in national events during 1993. Three years later they represented Norway in the Nordic Championships. The Rhodes Olympiad followed and then six consecutive European championships, where they collected one silver and four bronze medals. In five Bermuda Bowls they won one gold medal, one silver and one bronze. After the Bermuda Bowl triumph in Shanghai (2007) Boye and Erik decided to end their partnership on a high after fifteen years together.



Espen Erichsen. Espen and Boye were teammates in the Norwegian junior team that won the European championship in 1996 and were runners-up in the World Championship in 1997. In 1999 Espen moved to London to play in TGR's rubber bridge club. Espen and Boye have played together in five Cavendish Invitationals in Las Vegas, twice finishing in the money.



Espen Lindqvist. Boye and Espen formed a partnership in 2008 and just three months later topped the Butler scoring in the European Championship, where Norway took the gold medal. This was the first win for Norway in the event, following seven consecutive victories by Italy. In the 2009 Bermuda Bowl, Boye and Espen came second in the Butler scoring and Norway reached the quarter finals, where they played China. Trailing by 47.5 IMPs with 16 boards remaining, Norway finished strongly and took the lead 3 boards from the end. A swing on the penultimate board gave China victory by 2.5 IMPs.



Øyvind Saur. A dentist nowadays, Saur was Boye's partner from 1995 to 1999. They were the anchor pair in the Norwegian junior team, winning the Nordic Championships in 1995, the European Championships in 1996, and two Youth Bridge championships in the Netherlands. In 1997 Norway lost a hard fought final against Denmark in the World Junior Championships played in Canada. Saur is an inventive player with great card sense. Never missing a chance to take a backwards finesse, he is also the man behind the Peanut Butter Coup; when a Belgian declarer played the ace from a trump holding of A-x-x-x opposite Q-x-x-x, Saur dropped the king from K-J-10! Persuaded that trumps were 4-1, declarer then went one down.



Odin Svendsen. Odin and Boye were selected to play for Norway in the 2010 European Championships in Ostende. Norway, the defending champions, finished in a disappointing 14th place. Odin and Boye had a satisfactory tournament, finishing as the 6th-ranked pair in the Butler scoring.

Svendsen captained the Norway ladies team when they took 4th place in the 2000 Olympiad in Maastricht.



Tonje Aasand Brogeland. Tonje and Boye met as students in 1994 and have been together since 1997. She soon became a keen bridge player — mentored by Boye's partner, Øyvind Saur. In the European Open in Tenerife (2005), with their son Anders only two months old, Tonje and Boye won the Mixed Teams, together with Helen and Espen Erichsen, Gunn and Tor Helness. They have reached four European championship mixed pair finals, with a 5th place in San Remo (2009) their best result.

1

THROUGH THE BACK OF THE CARDS

How does a skilled declarer read the lie of the cards? He gathers evidence from a variety of sources: bids made by the opponents, bids not made by the opponents, the opening lead and defensive signals. He may also draw inferences from the chosen line of defense. Sometimes he will place a particular card or cards with one defender because the contract cannot be made unless that is the case. This assumption may lead him to conclude that the other defender holds some other vital missing card.

In this chapter we will look at some deals where Boye managed to read the cards successfully. We start with a deal where declarer has to find the ♠J to make his contract.

N-S Vul. ♠ A Q 10 5 2003 Euro Open mixed teams
 Dealer East ♥ A K J 6 Menton, France
 ♦ K Q 10
 ♣ 9 2

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

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
<i>Molson</i>	<i>Aasand</i>	<i>Seamon</i>	<i>Brogeland</i>
pass	1♥	pass	pass
pass	3♣	2♣	2♥
all pass		pass	3NT

Playing with his wife-to-be, Tonje, Boye ended in 3NT. When West led ace and another club, East won with the ♣K and cleared the club suit, her partner throwing a diamond. All now depended on declarer scoring four spade tricks, to go alongside four hearts and one club. Since East had started with six clubs to West's two, the initial odds suggested that West would hold more spades than East. In that case a finesse against the ♠J would be necessary if the card did not fall on the first two rounds.

Before playing spades, it is natural to seek some clues by cashing four rounds of hearts. The suit breaks 3-3 and let us suppose that West discards another diamond while East throws a club. How should declarer read the spade suit?

If East's hand is something like

♠ 7 2 ♥ 10 8 3 ♦ A 5 ♣ K J 8 5 4 3

she can afford to discard a club, while still keeping enough clubs to beat the contract. Would anyone actually discard this way when they had the useless ♦5 to pitch? If you judge it unlikely, you should read East for the hand that she actually held and therefore play for the drop on the third round of spades.

What happened at the table, then? Er, well... when East cleared the club suit she had the chance to give a suit preference signal. Rather than indicate the ♦A clearly, with a low club, she actually attempted a deception by signaling an entry in spades. This caused West to discard a spade on the last round of hearts, so Boye was never actually faced with the spade guess. However, he did reassure the

distressed defenders that he would have read the spade suit correctly if West had not made the fatal spade discard. (What a gentleman!)

Boye has never won the prestigious Norwegian Pairs, although he is determined to do so one day. In 1996 he and Erik Sælensminde racked up a sensational score but still finished behind Geir Helgemo and Lasse Aaseng. Boye's consolation was to win the Best Played Hand award, for reading the cards well on this deal:

N-S Vul.	♠ A 4 2	<i>1996 Norwegian Pairs</i>									
Dealer South	♥ 2	<i>Ulvik</i>									
	♦ 9 3										
	♣ J 10 9 8 7 5 2										
♠ Q J 10 9 7 5 3	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 8
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ J 10 8		♥ Q 7 4									
♦ 10 4 2		♦ Q J 8 5									
♣ —		♣ K Q 6 4 3									
	♠ K 6										
	♥ A K 9 6 5 3										
	♦ A K 7 6										
	♣ A										

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	<i>Sælensminde</i>		<i>Brogeland</i>
			2♣
4♠	dbl	pass	5♥
all pass			

Erik Sælensminde's double showed some values, around 5 points or more. How would you tackle 5♥ when West makes the rather strange lead of the ♠9?

Even if trumps break 3-3, which is less likely than normal after West's preempt, you will still need to avoid three losers in the red suits. Boye won the first trick with the ♠K. West presumably held seven spades, so the ♠9 lead was suspicious. It suggested that he was void in one of the minor suits and was trying to put East on lead to deliver a ruff. Boye saw that there was no point in trying to ruff a diamond in dummy. Even if the ruff passed by without accident, he would have no entry back to his hand. A club to the ace would surely be ruffed by West.

Boye continued by playing three rounds of trumps. The suit broke 3-3, he was pleased to see, and East won the third round with the queen. Boye won the low club return with the ace, West throwing a spade. The only chance of making the contract was an eventual squeeze and his next move was a low diamond towards the dummy. West does best to rise with the ♦10 and play a spade, killing the entry to dummy before declarer can make use of it. He chose to play low instead and East won dummy's ♦9 with the ♦J. These cards remained:

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

At this stage East could break the squeeze by returning a diamond. He preferred a 'safe' ♣K and that was curtains for the defense. Boye ruffed, played his remaining trumps and crossed to dummy with the ♠A. On this trick East had no good discard available from ♦Q85 and the ♣Q. He threw a diamond and Boye then scored three diamond tricks for the contract.

The key to the next deal was reading the lie of the trump suit. Would you have reached the same conclusion that Boye did?

<p>Neither Vul.</p> <p>Dealer South</p>	<p>♠ K Q J 7 6 2</p> <p>♥ J 5 4 2</p> <p>♦ —</p> <p>♣ A 8 2</p>	<p><i>2008 Icelandair Teams</i></p> <p><i>Reykjavik</i></p>			
<p>♠ 9 8 4</p> <p>♥ 9 7 3</p> <p>♦ J 9 6 4 2</p> <p>♣ Q 10</p>	<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	<p>♠ A 10 3</p> <p>♥ A Q</p> <p>♦ 7 5</p> <p>♣ K J 9 7 5 4</p>
N					
W E					
S					
<p>♠ 5</p> <p>♥ K 10 8 6</p> <p>♦ A K Q 10 8 3</p> <p>♣ 6 3</p>					

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	<i>Gillis</i>		<i>Brogeland</i>
			1♦
pass	1♠	2♣	2♦
pass	3♣	dbl	3♥
pass	4♥	all pass	

The heart fit was located and West led the ♣Q, won with dummy's ♣A. Boye led a low trump and East rose with the ace, continuing with the ♣K and ♣J. How would you play from this point?

With a certain spade loser to come, Boye had to avoid a second loser in the trump suit. East would need to hold the ♥Q, obviously. If East started with ♥AQ9, declarer would have to ruff the third club with the ♥8; he could then ruff a diamond and pick up the trump suit with a finesse of the ♥10. There would still be a likely loser in the diamond suit, however.

East surely held six clubs to West's two and was likely to be shorter than West in the trump suit. Boye therefore ruffed the third round of clubs with the ♥10. He then led the king of trumps, picking up East's bare queen. Before drawing the last trump, he cashed the ♦AKQ, throwing dummy's spot cards in spades. He then crossed to the ♥J, drawing West's last trump, and claimed the contract. East would score the ♠A for the defenders' third trick.

Play at the other table started the same way but declarer ruffed the third club with the ♥8. An overruff and an eventual spade trick put the contract one down. Boye's team, captained by Simon Gillis, went on to win the event.

Much as one of the present authors dislikes part-score contracts, every bridge book should surely contain at least one of them. Here it is: a 2♠ contract where the opponents were the Katz team from the USA. As you will see, the point of interest lies in reading the lie of the club suit.

Neither Vul. Dealer West	♠ K J 5 3 ♥ A 3 2 ♦ 10 5 2 ♣ K J 8	<i>2005 Icelandair Teams</i> <i>Reykjavik</i>									
♠ A 6 4 ♥ Q 6 4 ♦ 9 7 3 ♣ A 9 5 4	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: 0 auto;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 10 7 ♥ J 10 8 5 ♦ A K Q 6 4 ♣ Q 6
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ Q 9 8 2 ♥ K 9 7 ♦ J 8 ♣ 10 7 3 2										

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	<i>Sælensminde</i>		<i>Brogeland</i>
pass	1♣	1♦	1♠
2♦	2♠	all pass	

Three rounds of diamonds forced Boye to ruff. He played a trump to the king and a second trump to the ten, queen and ace. West returned his remaining trump, won in the South hand, and this was the position:

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BRIDGE SHOULD BE FUN!

So says Norway's Boye Brogeland, and he's a World Champion. If he didn't enjoy the game so much, he wouldn't play it. And he has his own ideas about how it should be played. He'd rather lose the world title by bidding a grand that goes down than be branded a chicken.

So get ready to follow him through the ups and downs of top-flight competition, as he encounters the proverbial thrill of victory and agony of defeat. This book is full of new bidding ideas, critical decisions, great cardplay, and roller-coaster excitement. It's never dull — *it's bridge at the edge!*

BOYE BROGELAND (Norway) has won both the World and European Championships, and is a regular participant in top-level North American tournaments.

DAVID BIRD (Southampton, UK) is the author of more than 100 books on bridge. His most recent include *Defensive Signaling* and the award-winning *Planning the Play of a Bridge Hand* (with Barbara Seagram).



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