



IMAGINATIVE CARDPLAY

TERENCE REESE & ROGER TRÉZEL



IMAGINATIVE CARDPLAY

TERENCE REESE & ROGER TRÉZEL

Text © 2014 The Estates of Terence Reese and Roger Trézel

Cover image © Roger Whiteway

All rights reserved. It is illegal to reproduce any portion of this material, except by special arrangement with the publisher. Reproduction of this material without authorization, by any duplication process whatsoever, is a violation of copyright.

Master Point Press 331 Douglas Ave., Toronto, Ontario, Canada

M5M 1H2 (416)781-0351

Email: info@masterpointpress.com

www.masterpointpress.com, www.teachbridge.com

www.bridgeblogging.com, www.ebooksbridge.com

Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

Reese, Terence

[Works. Selections]

Imaginative cardplay / Terence Reese and Roger Trézel.

(Master bridge series)

Contents: Those extra chances in bridge -- Master the odds in bridge -- Snares and swindles in bridge -- The art of defense in bridge.

Issued in print and electronic formats.

ISBN 978-1-77140-015-2 (pbk).--ISBN 978-1-55494-607-5 (pdf).--

ISBN 978-1-55494-652-5 (epub).--ISBN 978-1-77140-801-1 (mobi)

1. Contract bridge. I. Title.

GV1282.3.R443 2014

795.41'5

C2014-906128-5

C2014-906129-3

Editor

Mark Horton

Copyeditor/Interior format

Sally Sparrow

Cover and interior design

Olena S. Sullivan/New Mediatrix

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	5
Part I: THOSE EXTRA CHANCES	7
Part II: MASTER THE ODDS	67
Why Odds are Important	68
Probabilities of Distribution	70
Probabilities of Dropping a Particular Card	72
Chances of a Successful Finesse	77
Part III: SNARES AND SWINDLES	133
Part I: Deception in attack	135
Part II: Deception in defense	169
Part IV: THE ART OF DEFENSE	187
The Opening Lead	188
To Cover or Not to Cover?	191
Encouraging Signals	194
Distributional Signals	197
Suit-Preference Signals	199
Ducking in Defense	201
Blocking and Unblockng Plays in Defense	227
Trump Promotion and the Uppercut	231
Imagination in Defense	239

INTRODUCTION

The play of the cards at bridge is a big subject, capable of filling many large books. In the 1970s, Roger Trézel, the great French player and writer, had the idea of breaking up the game into several small books, each dealing with one of the standard forms of technique. He judged, quite rightly as it turned out, that this scheme would appeal both to comparative beginners, who would be able to learn the game by stages, and to experienced players wishing to extend their knowledge of a particular branch of play.

The English version was prepared in collaboration with Terence Reese, and appeared in eight small volumes. This new edition, updated and revised for the modern player, presents the eight original booklets as two larger compendiums, entitled *Accurate Cardplay* and *Imaginative Cardplay*.

PART I

THOSE EXTRA
CHANCES

The original French title of this section was *Précautions et Soins*, a phrase used in medicine that is similar in meaning to the motorist's 'due care and attention'. Some of the examples that follow appear to involve safety plays, but they are not exactly that, for there is no guarantee of success. The problem is to find the line of play that offers the best chance.

There are several examples on standard themes such as suit establishment, technique in finessing, avoiding a dangerous lead, attacking the danger hand, averting a ruff, and many forms of communication play. In every case, the right line of play can be determined by logical analysis; the reader is not called upon to perform feats of counting or deduction, nor is a knowledge of endplays demanded. These are basic techniques with which the aspiring player must be familiar.

EXAMPLE 1

There is nothing fixed about the timing of a finesse in bridge. On many hands the declarer will postpone a finesse until the last possible moment, hoping that somehow it can be avoided. The deal below was different: quite early in the play the declarer took a finesse that could not possibly gain a trick in the suit, even if it succeeded. The finesse was nevertheless necessary because it provided an extra entry to the dummy.

	♠ 9 5 3										
	♥ 8 6 5 2										
	♦ 6 5 4										
	♣ A Q 10										
♠ 8 7 6 2	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center; width: 100px; height: 100px;"> <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		♠ Q 10 4
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ —		♥ Q 7 4 3									
♦ J 10 9 8 7		♦ A 3 2									
♣ J 9 8 7		♣ 6 5 2									
	♠ A K J										
	♥ A K J 10 9										
	♦ K Q										
	♣ K 4 3										

North-South reached an optimistic contract of 6♥. West led the jack of diamonds, East won with the ace and returned a diamond to the declarer's king. On the ace of hearts West showed out, discarding a diamond.

South had been hoping for an even break in hearts, but now it was evident that he would need two finesses to pick up East's queen. The ace and queen of clubs would supply entries for this purpose, but what about the third round of spades? Dropping a doubleton queen was a slender chance.

The solution was to take an 'unnecessary' finesse of the ten of clubs. When this succeeded, South was able to finesse against the queen of spades as well as against the queen of hearts.

You may think that declarer could begin with a club to the queen, intending to finesse the ten on the next round. But this would give West the chance to make the fine blocking play of the jack of clubs on the second round. Then declarer would be unable to obtain three entries in clubs.

EXAMPLE 2

Do not allow yourself to be deflected from the right line of play by a danger that is real in one sense, but imaginary in another: imaginary, because if the feared distribution exists, then the contract will be impossible anyway. The theme illustrated below is very common.

	♠ K 7 2		
	♥ A 5 3		
	♦ J 10 4		
	♣ J 7 5 3		
♠ 8 5	<div style="display: flex; flex-direction: column; align-items: center; justify-content: center; gap: 10px;"> N W E S </div>		♠ 9 6 3
♥ 8 7			♥ J 10 9 4
♦ A K Q 7 3			♦ 9 8
♣ Q 10 9 6			♣ K 8 4 2
	♠ A Q J 10 4		
	♥ K Q 6 2		
	♦ 6 5 2		
	♣ A		

South was the dealer, with both sides vulnerable, and the bidding went like this:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♠
pass	2♠	pass	3♥
pass	4♠	all pass	

It is rare for a player with such a flat hand to accept a game try in a major, but North correctly attached importance to the good cards in each of the suits bid by his partner.

The defense began with three rounds of diamonds. When his partner discarded a low club on the third round, West switched to the eight of hearts, which was won by the declarer's king.

Now, if the hearts are divided 3-3, the hand presents no problem. But a 4-2 break is more likely and the declarer must consider what he can do to overcome that distribution.

The solution is to draw just two rounds of trumps, then play on hearts. It may seem a little dangerous to leave a trump outstanding, but if you study the matter more closely you will

see that this line provides an extra chance and no additional risk. If the hearts are 4-2 you are not going to make the contract anyway. But there is a chance that the last trump will be in the same hand as the long heart. As the cards lie, South draws two trumps with the ace and queen, and then plays on hearts, ruffing the fourth round with dummy's king of spades.

Since there are always people who write to say 'Your analysis is wrong because...', we will make a small safety play of our own by adding that there is another line of play that may possibly succeed. Suppose that declarer, ignoring the play we have suggested, cashes ace of clubs, plays three rounds of trumps, finishing in dummy, and ruffs a club. Then he plays off the fifth trump. If East began with ♣KQ, or any six clubs plus four hearts, he will be squeezed. A good player would note this possibility but would reject it in favor of the play described above.

EXAMPLE 3

This type of hand is often a source of trouble in the bidding:

♠ K Q 5 2 ♥ A 10 9 3 2 ♦ 9 3 ♣ A Q

You open 1♥ and partner responds 1NT. Do you then rebid 2♥ or do you pass? Undoubtedly, the pass is correct, because partner has had an opportunity to respond 1♠ on a four-card suit and has not done so, and in any event, reversing into 2♠ would show a much better hand. Some players seek to escape this problem by employing the Flannery convention, but this brings its own headaches, including giving away too much information to the opponents.

When the deal below was played, South found a heart fit, but then failed to respect his partner's sign-off.

	♠ 7 6 3											
	♥ K 8 7											
	♦ A 8 4											
	♣ 8 7 4 2											
♠ J 9 8 ♥ J 6 5 ♦ K Q J 10 ♣ 10 9 6	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 40px; height: 40px; 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		♠ A 10 4 ♥ Q 4 ♦ 7 6 5 2 ♣ K J 5 3	
	N											
W		E										
	S											
	♠ K Q 5 2											
	♥ A 10 9 3 2											
	♦ 9 3											
	♣ A Q											

The bidding went:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♥
pass	2♥	pass	2♠
pass	3♥	pass	4♥
all pass			

West led the king of diamonds and obviously prospects were poor. To make the contract, South would need the club finesse and he could afford to lose only one heart and one spade. He had to find East with ♠Axx, and for the club finesse and two leads up to ♠KQxx he would need three entries to the table. Only two were visible — the ace of diamonds and the king of hearts.

South created the extra entry by a maneuver similar to that used on Example 1. Having won the first trick with the ace of diamonds, he successfully finessed the queen of clubs, then led the ten of hearts and let it run to East's queen. When the defense played diamonds, South ruffed the third round with the nine of hearts, led a low heart and finessed the eight, which held. He played a spade to the king, entered dummy with the king of hearts, and led another spade to the queen. When the spades broke 3-3 he was able to claim the contract and was, no doubt, proud of his enterprise.

EXAMPLE 4

While it is usual, as we remarked earlier, to postpone a finesse in a side suit, there are times when it is clear that the finesse must be taken some time and there may be advantages in taking it early on.

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

In contrast to some that we have noted up to now, this hand was quite well bid:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♣	pass	1♦
pass	1NT	pass	3♦
pass	3♠	pass	4♣
pass	4♠	pass	6♦
all pass			

This pair, like many today, played South's 3♦ as forcing, and North evaluated his diamond fit and controls correctly.

Bidding a slam with a combined 27 points and no singleton or void is a good achievement, but South's play was not as commendable as the bidding. Having won the spade lead in dummy he played the ace and another diamond, this being the best way to avoid two losers in the suit. He was reasonably lucky in the trump suit, but when the heart finesse lost he was one down.

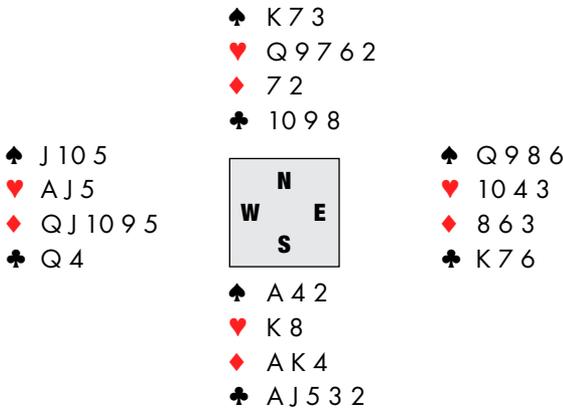
What was wrong with the play? Well, the two red suits must be studied in combination. If the heart finesse is right, then it is right to play the diamonds as South did. But if the heart finesse

is wrong, then declarer must play the trump suit to lose no tricks at all. The only chance for this is to lead the queen from dummy, in the hope of pinning a singleton jack in the West hand. (Note that it will not help to drop a singleton king in either hand.)

Since the play in the trump suit depends on the fate of the heart finesse, the declarer's first move should be to test the hearts by finessing the queen at Trick 2. West (unless he is exceptionally perceptive) will win with the king. Knowing then that he cannot afford to lose any trick in diamonds, South will broach the suit by leading the queen from dummy. East will probably not cover with the king; if he does, the jack will fall under the ace and South will reenter dummy to finesse against East's $\heartsuit 94$.

EXAMPLE 5

Sometimes it is not at all easy to work out the only distribution of the adverse cards that will provide a chance for the contract. South had a plan of sorts on the deal below, but at best he was depending on a defensive error.



The bidding did not take long:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	pass	pass	2NT
pass	3♦	pass	3♥
pass	3NT	all pass	

South liked his prime cards and five-card suit enough to stretch to a 2NT opening, and a simple transfer sequence led to 3NT. West led the queen of diamonds.

There was not much point in holding up the first diamond — it might even be a mistake to let the defense switch to spades with a trick in the bag. South won the diamond lead, therefore, and considered his prospects.

There was a reasonable chance to make four tricks in clubs. With two entries to dummy, declarer could take two finesses; with only one entry, he could lead low from hand, playing West for Qx or Kx. But four clubs, two diamonds and two spades would add up to only eight tricks. Having concluded that he would need at least one trick from hearts, South led the king of hearts at Trick 2. He hoped that the defense, seeing the heart suit in dummy, would allow the king to hold. West captured the ace of hearts at once, however, and cleared the diamonds. Whether he played on hearts or clubs now, South could make only eight tricks.

Since his aim was to slip through just one trick in hearts, South should have thought of leading a *low* heart at Trick 2. As it happens, this play confronts the defense with a dilemma to which there is no answer. If West plays low, South wins with the queen in dummy and switches to clubs, establishing four tricks in this suit; if West goes up with the ace of hearts to clear the diamonds, then South can make four tricks in hearts, which also is enough for his contract.

This lead of a low heart has good chances of success even if the hearts are not 3-3. Holding either ♥Ax, or ♥AJxx, West may fail to go up with the ace, not realizing that declarer's intention is to go up with the queen and then abandon the suit.

EXAMPLE 6

There are various suit combinations where the declarer seems to need just a simple finesse; but when there is a possibility that the critical card may be well guarded, he may need to be careful which card he leads on the first round.

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

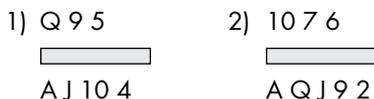
Holding 20 points and a fair ration of tens and nines, South opened classically with 2NT. North’s ace and jack were sufficient for a raise to 3NT. (Note that it would be foolish for North, with 4-3-3-3 distribution, to bid a Stayman 3♣, looking for a fit in spades. He would find the fit all right, but in spades there are four inevitable losers, apart from the trump suit.)

West led the queen of hearts and South was confronted with a simple proposition: if he could pick up the king of spades there would be nine tricks — no more, no less.

Pleased to find that there were no problems, South won with the ace of hearts and put the spade finesse to the test by leading the jack from dummy. East did not oblige by covering with the king — which would, indeed, have been poor play. When the jack was not covered, South thought for a moment about unblocking the ten. Realizing eventually that this could make no difference, he played low from hand and followed with another spade, finessing the ten. When West showed out it was apparent that he would have to lose a spade to the king and would be unable to make more than eight tricks.

All that was required here was to lead the nine from dummy on the first round of spades, not the jack. Then the defense cannot prevent the declarer from winning four spade tricks.

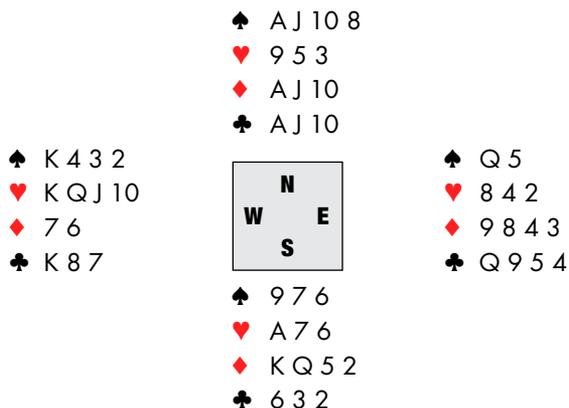
Here are two more combinations where some care may be needed:



To pick up four fast tricks when East holds Kxxx, South must lead the nine from dummy in the first example. In the second example, South leads the ten from dummy and should unblock the nine from his own hand. This will enable him to run five quick tricks when West has a singleton eight.

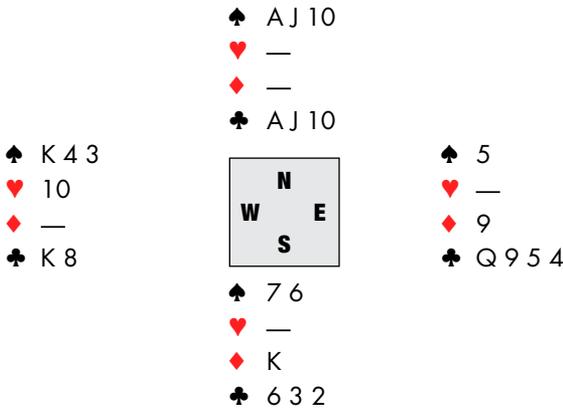
EXAMPLE 7

On the next hand South has a run of six cards in sequence from the jack to the six, but the contract still depends on which card he leads first.



South ends up in 3NT after West has opened 1♥ in third seat. West leads the king of hearts, and as this is evidently the danger suit South holds up his ace until the third round. There are seven tricks on top and a reasonably good lie of the spades will produce the extra tricks that are required. Let us say that after winning the third round of hearts South leads the nine of spades, as many players would. East wins with the queen and returns a diamond — the safest play available.

Taking care not to block the diamonds, South wins with the ace in dummy, cashes the jack, and overtakes the ten with the queen. The position is then:



When South leads the fourth diamond West must let go the ten of hearts, while dummy throws a club. South now finesses the ten of spades. If he has read the distribution well enough to follow with the ace of clubs, he will test the defense: West must drop the king of clubs to avoid being thrown in and forced to lead another spade.

As we have seen, the endgame may be a little tricky. South has no problem at all, on the other hand, if his first play in spades is a low card towards the ten. Later on, he can advance the nine of spades and make three tricks in the suit.

EXAMPLE 8

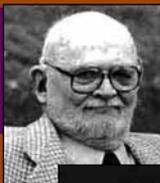
To play a hand of bridge well, a declarer must study the prospects in individual suits, and then form an overall plan that takes all the elements into account.

Players are often advised to lead the highest card for a finesse when they will not mind if this card is covered. On most hands, holding 10xx opposite AJ98x, it would be in order to lead the ten; but as we have seen, the entry position may have a bearing.

Learn from the Masters

In the 1970s, two of the best bridge writers of all time collaborated on a series of eight small books on a number of aspects of cardplay at bridge. These books have long been out of print, and are republished now in two combined volumes, edited and updated by BRIDGE magazine editor Mark Horton.

Imaginative Cardplay is the second of these two books, and comprises the following titles from the original series: *Those Extra Chances in Bridge*; *Master the Odds in Bridge*; *Snares and Swindles in Bridge*; and *The Art of Defense in Bridge*.



TERENCE REESE (1913-1996, UK) was a world champion and one of the best-ever writers on the game. His *Reese on Play* and *The Expert Game* are classics of bridge literature.



ROGER TRÉZEL (1918-1986, France) was a multiple world champion. His partnership with Pierre Jaïs is regarded as one of the greatest in the history of the game.

