**Week 12**

This week's hand is from one of the finest bridge players and writers, the American, Mike Lawrence. His book how to read your opponents cards is a classic on deduction and inference in the card play.

You play in a contract of 3nt  by south with the following hands

xxx

KQx

xxxx

AKx

AKJ

Jxx

Q9xx

xxx

the bidding has gone an initial pass from East who later overcalled 1s with west passing throughout.

The lead is HT and you note that the contract is dreadful since you have only 6 clear tricks. East wins the HA and switches to the ST how do you play?

One of the key things to count in card play is the location of the important honours and the bidding or absence of bidding is the guide here .So East passed initially and later overcalled 1s ( N/S play strong No trumps).

The other subtle principle is assumption by which is meant how do we need the cards to lie in order to provide us with a chance?

Counting our tricks we see 2 clubs, 2 hearts and 2 top spades .Therefore in order to succeed we need 3 spades in total  and also 2 diamond tricks .In order to score 2 diamond tricks we need East to hold both the ace and king of the suit and the suit to break 3-2 as we will lead twice towards our queen in the closed hand .

But think about the bidding if we require East to hold DA & DK and he has already shown us the HA and passed initially as dealer we know he cannot hold the SQ since that would amount to a 13 count which would open the bidding.

Therefore the placement of the outstanding honours and our assumption means we should now rise with SA rather than finesse and if the diamonds lie as we hope we will later drop the doubleton SQ with West.

A difficult hand certainly but it illustrates two very important principles of card play.

**Week 11**

Declarer made a wonderful play on this week's hand which requires incredible vision. I was tempted to wait a week before giving the solution to see if players could find the winning play .

See if you can emulate the Australian genius Michael Courtney

You reach a contract of 6d at game all with

KQxx

Axxx

KTx

Ax

xx

KJxxx

AQJxxx

void

The bidding has been of interest since East (an international) has overcalled 5c and then doubles the final contract.

What do you make of this and how do you play on the lead of SJ?

The double can only be because East has a void and that void can only be in hearts so he hopes to collect a ruff together with the SA.

If East has a heart void how on earth can we take 12 tricks with the heart suit lying so unkindly. There is only one chance which is to find East with the singleton SA when we can score 2 spade tricks CA , 6 diamonds and 2 hearts and now the run of the CA and 6 diamonds will squeeze West between the QTxx hearts and the spade guard for the 12th trick.

Declarer followed this superb reasoning and played low on the spade lead and this was the only means by which the contract could be made since the West and East hands were

JT9xxx

QT9x

xx

K

A

void

xx

QJT9xxxxxx

The low spade at trick 1 is a truly brilliant play.