



Bridge with Another Perfect Partner



John Carruthers



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I have four people to thank for help with the book: my wife, Katie Thorpe, who ensured that each deal had 52 unique cards and that the dealer actually started the auction; my best friend in the bridge world, P.O. Sundelin, who checks the analysis of all the bridge deals I publish, and whose greatest pleasure comes when he catches me out in a grammatical or syntactical error; and Ray Lee and Sally Sparrow, my terrific editor and copy editor, of Master Point Press.

My biggest debt of gratitude, however, is to P. F. Saunders for his unnamed protagonist and his Frankenstein monster, Wilson. I have named my own protagonist and it is me. The other characters in the book are named after: (i) relatives of mine (Selby and Basil, whose father was, coincidentally, Wilson, which gave me the idea for Selby and Basil, all of them Carruthers); (ii) Elizabethan historical literary figures (Shakespeare contemporaries), such as Christopher Marlowe, Ben Jonson, James Boswell, Thomas Kyd, and Thomas Nashe, and (iii) characters (and the four novel titles) in *The Alexandria Quartet* by Lawrence Durrell (Justine, Balthazar, Mountolive and Clea), which I'd read a couple of years before I read *Bridge with a Perfect Partner* and which I loved as much as Saunders' book.

Katie and I live in Kingsville, a small town in southwestern Ontario, an area chock full of place names taken from England: Windsor, Chatham, Essex, Harrow, London, Leamington, Stratford, Blenheim, and so on. In the book, I've turned Kingsville into Queensville and Jack's Gastropub, a won-

derful local eatery, into Jill's, for no other reason than that I felt like it, perhaps to fictionalize them, although I've kept the other place names the same.

All of us scribblers these days owe thanks to *Deep Finesse*. Not that we don't still make mistakes, but we make fewer of them, at least in the analysis of a bridge deal.

A few notes on terminology — for the most part, I have followed *The Bridge World's* standards: thus 'transportation' between two hands, referring to movement, not 'communication', which is either oral or written; a 'hand' contains thirteen cards, a 'deal' contains fifty-two; a 'low' card refers to rank, whereas a 'small' card would refer to its size or stature; and so on. Where I have not followed *TBW's* standards, such as beginning the bidding diagram with West (*TBW* begins theirs with South), I have followed those of the *International Bridge Press Association Bulletin*. Coincidentally, I am the editor of that august journal.

Introduction

Everyone occasionally picks up a book, even a bridge book, which resonates with them. Such an occurrence is rare for me but was definitely the case when I read *Bridge with a Perfect Partner* by P. F. Saunders, published in 1976. I'd read and delighted in Saunders' articles in *Bridge Magazine* (U.K.), now sadly defunct, for a few years before the book came out, so I was prepared to be entertained. Saunders' character Wilson, according to the flyleaf of the book, is, "... an austere character, whose scholarly discourses are enlivened by frequent flashes of mordant wit." Eric Milnes, at the time the editor of *Bridge Magazine*, put it a little more bluntly in his Foreword to the book: "I have sometimes speculated on the traumatic occurrences Mr. Saunders must have suffered at the bridge table for him to have been able to create so insufferable a character."

Whichever is closer to the truth, I, along with many others, was enthralled by Wilson's sense of humor. The hapless first-person narrator is never named and is nearly always analysis-deficient but, nonetheless, might have been described by Terence Reese as 'an earnest striver'. The narrator begins: "I must admit that I am a little nervous playing with my new partner, Wilson. He is very kind in explaining, when I go down in a contract, just how I could have made it and, when *he* goes down, just how my bidding misled him." We've all played with partners like that, I daresay, though few of them have had Wilson's devastating, articulate wit.

The following article appeared in *Bridge Magazine* in October of 1977 and will give you an idea of Wilson's, and the protagonist's, psyche. Since it was published long before the days of *Deep Finesse*, bridge analysis was rather more difficult and error-prone than it is today.

JUST WONDERFUL

By P. F. Saunders

“At game all,” said Wilson, “you are second to speak, holding:

♠ A K J 8 7 5 3 ♥ Q ♦ 8 3 ♣ A J 4

You hear one heart opened on your right. What do you bid?”

“Two spades.”

“You should prefer four spades. I am relieved, however, that you did not appear for one moment to consider doubling, with the intention of showing your spade strength later. The prostitution of the informatory double seems to be gaining in popularity.”

“Did you hold this hand?”

“I did. I bid two spades, and...?”

“But you said you preferred four spades.”

“I said that *you* should prefer four spades. It is better for you on these occasions to try to preclude further bidding. I, on the other hand, welcome information, especially from contesting opponents, and can use it! The strong jump overcall, which, as you know, I esteem (once again unfashionably, I fear) seems more effective than preemption, both in stimulating my partners and in provoking my opponents. This, in fact, was the complete auction, and these the cards I could see:

Game all; Dealer S.

♠ A K J 8 7 5 3
♥ Q
♦ 8 3
♣ A J 4



♠ 9 6 4
♥ J 8 5 3
♦ A Q 5
♣ 7 5 2

West	North	East	South
			1 ♥
2 ♠	3 ♣	3 ♠	4 ♦
4 ♠	all pass		

“North’s opening lead against my four-spade contract was the ten of hearts, South winning with the king. I won his club return with the ace and played

the ace of spades. When North followed with the queen, I could come to certain conclusions. What were they?”

“You could see nine tricks. But you had already lost one and looked like losing three more — two clubs and a diamond. South was certain to have the king of diamonds.”

“I was indeed apprehensive of one of South’s diamonds — but of his lowest, not his highest.”

“That’s ridiculous. You only say that sort of thing to see how I’ll take it.”

“You misjudge both my motives and my logic, the validity of which will shortly appear. South had clearly been dealt a two-five-five-one hand... You have a further objection?”

“Yes, I object to ‘clearly.’”

“Did not the auction proclaim his ten red cards? Did not the early play testify to his three black ones? I was not therefore devoid of hope, as I drew his remaining trump and finessed the queen of diamonds. Perhaps it is now time to reveal the distribution:

Game all; Dealer S.

♠ A K J 8 7 5 3	♠ Q	♠ 9 6 4
♥ Q	♥ 10 9 2	♥ J 8 5 3
♦ 8 3	♦ 6 4 2	♦ A Q 5
♣ A J 4	♣ K Q 10 9 8 3	♣ 7 5 2
	<div style="border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> N W E S </div>	
	♠ 10 2	
	♥ A K 7 6 4	
	♦ K J 10 9 7	
	♣ 6	

“Observe that my two-spade bid induced a dubious club call from North, a borderline raise from my partner, and a hazardous revelation of South’s second suit. Having won the fifth trick with the king of diamonds, South could do no better, as I had foreseen, than continue diamonds. He led the knave to dummy’s ace. I then played the five to his seven, which I did not ruff, preferring to discard a club! On lead once again and aware that another diamond would allow me to discard a second club, while ruffing in dummy, he desperately produced the ace of hearts. Now I was able to ruff, enter dummy with a trump and to play the winning knave of hearts.” Wilson paused.

“Go on,” I said.

“I was under the impression that I had been explicit. Surely you cannot still be puzzled by my small paradox in reference to South’s diamond holding? His lowest card of that suit had to be higher than his partner’s highest! Give South any one of North’s three diamonds in place of his seven, and he can duck that seventh trick into his partner’s hand and escape the endplay! After the third trick I could count the hands, see the probability of his being able to take evasive action, and fear the loss of my only chance of success. Can you wonder at my deep concern?”

“Yes, I can. In fact, it’s exactly what I’m doing!”

* * * * *

Rereading the Wilson articles a few years later, I noticed that Wilson need not have taken the diamond finesse at all. He could have run the eight of diamonds into South to endplay him. Furthermore, if North had had a diamond higher than the eight with which to cover that card... In any case, I wrote a parody of the Wilson articles in reply. It was published in *International Popular Bridge Monthly* (also, sadly, now defunct) in December, 1983. Yes, I know, that means it took me six years to discover Wilson’s misanalysis *and* it’s taken me almost forty years to follow up that first article by writing this book. Anyway, here is my maiden effort from 1983:

JUST AWFUL

*By J. G. Carruthers
with apologies to P. F. Saunders*

"I'm worried about you," I told Wilson.

"There's no need to be," he replied. "I've never felt better. I'm in perfect health, am financially secure, and some would say I've a talent at bridge."

Such modesty. "I am referring," I said, "to a hand which appeared under your pseudonym of P. F. Saunders in *Bridge Magazine*. You remember the hand of course." I noted with some satisfaction that my patronizing tone had penetrated his normal insensitivity. "However, I shall diagram it here for your convenience.

Game All. Dealer S.

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

West	North	East	South
2♠	3♣	3♠	1♥
4♠	all pass		4♦

"North led the heart ten and South won the king, then shifted to the six of clubs. You, West, rose with the ace and played off the two top spades. You then played a diamond to the queen and South's king, won the knave of diamonds return with the ace and discarded a club on the five of diamonds.

When South won this trick, he was forced to give you a ruff-sluff or to set up dummy's knave of hearts."

"Admirably and concisely stated," returned Wilson. As yet he had no inkling of what was to come.

"You effectively played South for KJ1097 of diamonds," I replied accusingly, hoping for an indiscretion on Wilson's part. I was not disappointed. He was putty in my hands.

"Just so," Wilson stated with a touch of asperity, "I am eagerly awaiting the point of this harangue." What an exaggeration!

"I'm coming to it; be patient," I said. "Suppose North had had one of the intermediate diamonds?"

"Then, of course," replied Wilson, "I'd have gone one off." Now he was a trifle annoyed. "It seems to me that I pointed this out to you in the course of our dialogue. I believe I remarked upon being apprehensive about the size of South's lowest diamond, since in the event of that player holding the six, four or deuce of diamonds, the hand could not be made." Now I had him!

"So you did," I countered, adopting for Wilson's benefit my most supercilious manner. "Suppose, however, that instead of trying to force South to win the third round of diamonds, you attempt to make him win the first round of the suit?"

Wilson paled, "You mean..."

"Precisely," I interrupted smoothly, "Run the eight of diamonds to South if North does not cover. If North covers the eight, you can still play as you described earlier and you're no worse off. Now I was in top gear. "You make the hand any time North has no diamond higher than the eight, already an improvement on your line of play, and also when North holds only one diamond higher than the eight, provided the others are the four and the two."

"I see," answered Wilson lamely, "then..."

"Then South must surrender your tenth trick by way of the knave of hearts, the queen of diamonds or a ruff-and-discard, depending on whether the eight of diamonds is covered or not."

"Yes, I don't know how I could have missed it," Wilson replied a little dispiritedly, "Perhaps the wine at dinner..."

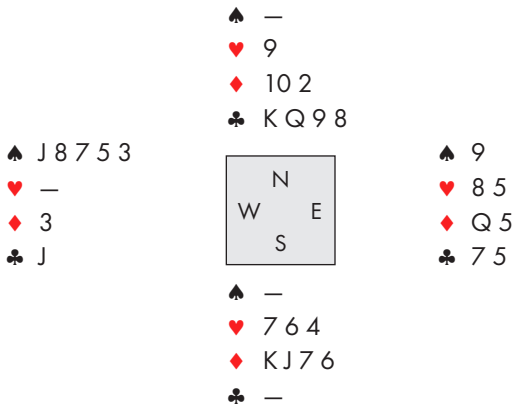
"Altogether," I continued, "this line of play wins against six additional combinations of North's diamonds that yours loses to." Wilson winced at this. "It represents an *a priori* improvement of seventeen percent. Would you say that was significant?"

"Sarcasm does not become you," Wilson replied, regaining a little spunk.

I was now ready to administer the *coup-de-grâce*. Quietly, I said, "That's not all."

“No?” was all the rejoinder Wilson could muster. He was so dejected, I could almost pity him. Almost.

“The hand is cold regardless of the rank of North’s diamonds!” I exclaimed, enjoying Wilson’s discomfort. I hurried on. “If North does not allow you to pass the diamond eight, play the ace of diamonds and lead the knave of hearts, discarding a minor-suit card. After drawing trumps of course. South is left on play at this point, West having lost two tricks:



“South must allow the heart nine to be ruffed out,” I continued, “establishing the eight for another discard, or concede a trick to the diamond queen. An unusual play, true, but provided one has the ability to deduce North’s heart holding from the bidding and early play, this line of play should not have proved too difficult for a competent declarer to find. Remember, South had bid to the four-level in the red suits but had already shown up with three black cards.” Wilson bridled at this.

“Can you wonder at my deep concern?”

Wilson remained blessedly silent for once.

Contents

Prologue — Selby	15
1. The Socratic Method	17
2. Premature Pride	20
3. A Bridge Certainty	22
4. A Bad Misguess	24
5. Setting Goals	27
6. Good Fortune	30
7. A Little Slack	32
8. The Lady Is No Tramp	34
9. A Tiny Precaution	37
10. Nice Play Indeed	40
11. Crocodile Tears	42
12. Luck, in Abundance	44
13. Marie Antoinette	47
14. 67% Keycard	50
15. The Dog that Didn't Bark	53
16. It's a Good Day to Elope	55
17. Myopia	57
18. Greed	60
19. Blinded by the Light	62
20. Sorry, Teammates	64
21. Eagerness	66
22. Roasted Goose	69
23. (I Can't Get No) Partial Satisfaction	72
24. Nines Are Wild	75
25. Making Certain	78
26. Fantasyland	80
27. Two Times Two	83
28. Double Dummy?	85
29. Playing the Odds	88
30. Counting and Observing	91
31. An Extra Undertrick	93
32. Patience	95
33. A Two-way Finesse	98
34. Deep Finesse	101
35. A Lead-inhibiting Double	103
36. Best Effort	105
37. Easy Peasy	107
38. Blinders	109
39. Choices	111
40. Great Expectations	113
41. Feline Philosophy	115

42. Detective Work	117
43. My My, Hey Hey	120
44. Falsecarding à la Papa	122
45. Would You Rather Play or Defend?	125
46. Defense from Another Planet	128
47. The Correct Order	130
48. Appalling Luck	133
49. A Dismal Performance	135
50. Two-to-One On	137
51. “Endplay, What Endplay?”	140
52. Simple, Really	142
53. No Play	144
54. Board-a-Match Delight	146
55. Misguess, No Guess	149
56. Restricted Choice	151
57. Smith?	153
58. Great Plays All Around	155
59. BBO Revelations	157
60. The Percentage Play?	160
61. Drawing Conclusions	163
62. The Prime Directive	166
63. Justice Is Not So Blind	169
64. The Right Track	171
65. Careless?	174
66. The Decision Tree	178
67. A Small Precaution	181
68. The Choice is Yours	183
69. Non-Intuitive	185
70. A Touch of Poor Luck	187
71. A Canadian Slam	189
72. Rote	193
73. An Ounce of Prevention	195
74. The Work of the Devil	197
75. Momentary Elation	200
76. Duck, Duck, Goose	202
77. Excellent Declarer Play?	204
78. A Greek Gift	207
79. Riverboat Gambler	210
80. The Last Hurrah	212

Prologue — Selby

“Carruthers!” boomed a voice I’d not heard for years; decades, actually. Katie and I were at the bar in Jill’s Gastropub, fortifying ourselves for the upcoming game at the local Queensville Bridge Club. The voice belonged to Wilson, of course, the ‘Perfect Partner’ made famous in *Bridge Magazine* by P. F. Saunders in the 1970s. I turned to greet him and was momentarily nonplussed as he was nowhere to be seen. Nevertheless, a young man approached me with his hand extended.

“Selby,” he proclaimed, “I’m Wilson’s great-nephew.”

“Goodness,” I replied, “I could have sworn...”

“I know,” he rejoined, “everyone says that I sound exactly like him. Delighted to meet you.”

“But what are you doing here?”

“I’ve accepted a position as Director of the Department of Agriculture Research Station in Harrow. I start next week. Tonight, I’m going to the bridge club.”

“Where are my manners?” I wondered aloud. “This is my wife, Katie. We’re also going to the club. Do you have a partner?”

“Hello, Katie, *enchanté*.” Did people outside France really say that these days? I wondered. “I’m hoping to pick up a partner at the club. That seems to be easier here than it is back home. Or so they tell me.”

Katie joined in. “Why don’t you two play together? I’ll go home and pick you up after the game.”

With the arrangements settled, Selby and I agreed on a pretty simple two-over-one system with only a few frills. It was not long before I discovered that Wilson’s voice was not the only similarity between them.

1. The Socratic Method

My new bridge partner, Selby, makes me a little nervous, as did his great-uncle Wilson before him. He's a little brasher than was Wilson and not quite as kind in explaining to me how I could have made my contract or defeated theirs and how, when we reach an unmakeable spot, my bidding steered us adrift. We meet for dinner weekly before the team game at the club.

"Allow me to give you a problem," Selby began at our last encounter.

"I don't need any more problems than I already have," I joked.

"True," Selby agreed, not joking, "but this is a bridge problem. I'll diagram it for you. You are South. Your opponents are expert-class players.

Dealer S. Neither vul.

♠ A 9 8 7 2

♥ K 5

♦ 5 4 3

♣ K 8 2

♠ 6

♥ A 3 2

♦ A K Q 7 6

♣ A 5 4 3

"You have quite a learned, if rather aggressive, auction," Selby expounded. "To wit..."

West	North	East	South
			1♦
pass	1♠	pass	2♣
pass	3♦	pass	3♥
pass	3♠	pass	4♣
pass	4♥	pass	4NT
pass	5♣ ¹	pass	5NT ²
pass	6♣ ³	pass	6♦
all pass			

- 1 or 4 keycards.
- Asks for specific kings; guarantees that all key cards and the queen of trumps are accounted for.
- King of clubs.

“Unfortunately, your bidding erudition lands you in a very poor slam,” Selby continued, “West leads the six of hearts, low from an odd number and third-best from an even number. What are your thoughts?”

I answered as best I could. “Assuming diamonds to be three-two, which seems a necessary condition, I have ten tricks, two shy of what I need. If hearts are no worse than five-three, I can trump the third in dummy. That’s eleven tricks and a three-three club break would see me home with a twelfth.”

“Admirably expounded,” Selby concurred. He could be a little pompous, again, just like his great-uncle. “At least the statement of the necessary conditions was. And how would you thus play?”

I replied, “I win the heart lead with the king in dummy, draw two rounds of trumps, play the ace of hearts and ruff the heart loser, come back to the ace of clubs to draw the last trump, then split out the clubs three-three. How did I do?”

Selby was prompt with his dismissal. “Off one, I’m afraid. Still, a valiant effort for one with such, ah... limited weapons at his disposal. Here is the complete deal:

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

“Your stated line of play has an expected success rate of a shade under twenty percent,” Selby went on. “Does the sight of all fifty-two cards suggest a better line of play to you?”

“No. Should it?”

“Yes. What about the spades? Four-three spades gives better odds than three-three clubs, does it not?”

“What about them? I cannot ruff them out as I can only use two trumps to do so and that would still leave East with a guard in the suit. If I ruffed three spades to set up the fifth card in the suit, I’d create a trump trick for West and I’d still have a club loser.”

“All that is true, but what about giving the opponents a spade trick?” Selby asked innocently.

“Ah, I see,” I said. “I’ll need the king of clubs as an entry to the fifth spade, so... win the ace of hearts, take two high trumps, play a spade to the ace and ruff a spade, play a heart to the king and ruff another spade. Ruff a heart and surrender a spade to East setting up the fifth one in dummy.” I was rather pleased with myself. Not, however, for long.

“Have you noticed that your heart ruff in the dummy exhausted West of the suit? Further, that he has a trump remaining?”

“Oh, I see. That means...”

“Precisely,” Selby interrupted, “East will lead a heart, creating a trump trick for his partner.”

Now I knew the answer. “So, the contract cannot be made after all. It was one of those play-or-defend problems and the answer was to defend. I needed West to hold the fourth spade to make six diamonds.”

Selby demurred. “On the contrary, the contract is indeed makeable on the diagrammed layout. Would you care to try again?”

I was a little puzzled, to say the least. “Spades must be the key. Suppose I duck the second or third round of spades?” I inquired hopefully.

Selby was in his element now. “That won’t work either with only three spades in the West hand. That defender will overruff a spade. Does that give you a clue?”

Selby’s Socratic method was beginning to wear on me. Nevertheless, I pondered hard. “Eureka!” I cried.

“You’ve seen it at last?” Selby asked me, not unkindly.

“Yes,” I replied excitedly. “I must duck the first round of spades, then I can ruff two of them, using the king of hearts and the heart ruff to do so! I win the ace of hearts at Trick 1, cash only one high trump, duck a spade, win the (say) trump return (nothing else is any better), cross to the king of hearts and ruff a spade. Then, ruff a heart, ruff another spade and draw the last trump. The king of clubs provides me with an entry to the ace of spades, voiding the suit in East’s hand, and the thirteenth spade is my twelfth trick.” I was chuffed.

“Bravo,” Selby exclaimed, “although you are now in time trouble in the match.” Some people always seem to see a half-empty glass. “There’s one more thing.”

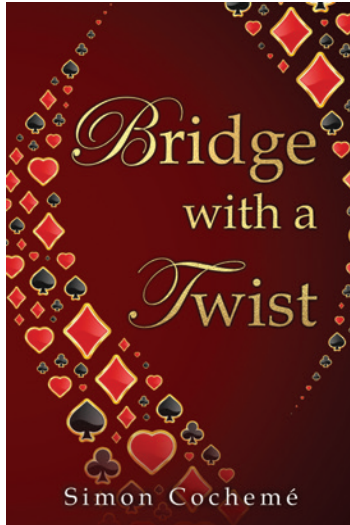
Isn’t there always? “Yes?”

“Did you notice that an initial club lead and a club continuation when the defenders get in with the spade knocks out the late entry to the spades and defeats the slam?”

My silence was apparently answer enough.

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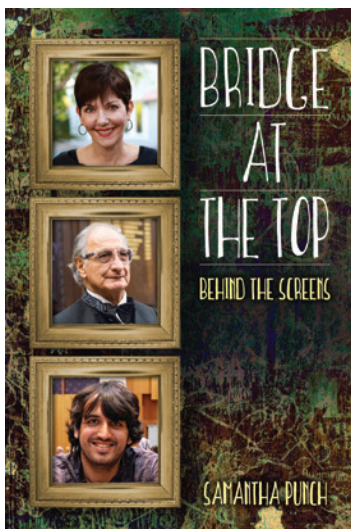
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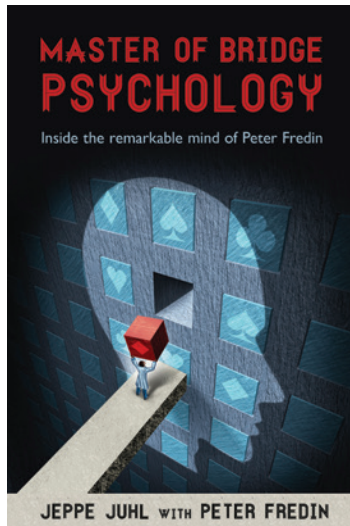
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Master of Bridge Psychology

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Jeppe Juhl with Peter Fredin

This may be the funniest, most fascinating bridge biography you will ever read. Peter Fredin of Sweden won the 2009 European Pairs championship, and is a multiple medalist in events at the world level. His style and approach to bridge owe more to psychology than to the mathematics of the game, something that often lands him in unusual situations at the table. Being one of the world's best card players, he can generally find a way to extricate himself. Danish journalist Jeppe Juhl, a close personal friend of Fredin, has collected some of Fredin's best and worst moments into a book that offers superlative entertainment for any bridge player.

Bridge with a Perfect Partner, by P. F. Saunders, was published in 1976. Many read and delighted in Saunders' articles in *Bridge Magazine* (UK), and Saunders' character Wilson, according to the flyleaf of the book, is "...an austere character, whose scholarly discourses are enlivened by frequent flashes of mordant wit." The anonymous narrator comments, "He is very kind in explaining, when I go down in a contract, just how I could have made it and, when he goes down, just how my bidding misled him." We've all played with partners like that, though few of them have had Wilson's devastating, articulate wit.

In this sequel, one of the world's top bridge journalists takes the reader through a brilliant series of deals, collected from tournaments all over the world. The style is highly reminiscent of Saunders' original and will give its readers just as much pleasure.



JOHN CARRUTHERS (Canada) is a well-known international bridge player, journalist and commentator on the game. He is currently the editor of the International Bridge Press Association's monthly *Bulletin*.

