



Matthew Thomson

**BID MORE, PLAY
MORE, ENJOY
MORE, WIN MORE**

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Bid More, Play More, Enjoy More, Win More, Bridge



with

♠ ♥ Matthew Thomson ♦ ♣

My best advice: “Evaluate” Your Hand
Bidding that is Active, Effective, and Holistic
Challenges of Competitive Bidding
Lethal Leads
Partnership Defence - Signals
Better Declarer Play in NTs and with Trumps

Preface

Everything I've included is accessible to the bridge player who plays primarily for enjoyment, mental stimulation and social interaction. Adaptation of these strategies into your game will, I'm confident, make a quantum leap in both your results and enjoyment of the game.

Personally, I would happily play all that follows – “I only teach what I would play”. I share with you advice, accrued over 40 years of successfully enjoying bridge.

May all your finesses win,

Matthew Thomson
Sydney
Australia

January, 2013

♠ Matthew Thomson

As a 5 year old, I spent the best part of a year in hospital where I played cards daily. My hospital hi-light was mastering of the poker school. It didn't take much encouragement to join the newly forming Brisbane Water Bridge Club in early 1975, the beginning of my bridge career.

International Bridge Highlights

I first represented Australia in the 1989 Pacific-Asia Teams (Jakarta). John Roberts was my partner in the 1995 World Teams (Beijing) and in the 1996 Olympiad (Rhodes). I was a finalist in the 2000 Olympiad (Maastricht), only to be beaten by eventual gold medalists Italy, and 5th in the 2003 World Teams (Monte Carlo), again beaten by the eventual gold medalists Italy.

After playing in the 2005 World Teams (Estoril) I took a break from competitive bridge. At the time, I was Australia's highest ranked international bridge player. Returning to competitive bridge in 2012, in partnership with Avi Kanetkar, we won the right to represent the Australian Open Team in the 2013 World Teams (Bali).

I'm currently a World International Master. My partners when representing the Australian Open Bridge Team have been: Peter Newman, John Roberts, Bobby Richman and Paul Marston.

Getting the Best Out of the Book

I recommend the book be employed as a constant companion, it includes:

1. *Individual* “evaluation” and judgement advice that will lead to better bridge.
2. *Individual* strategies for better leads, declarer play, and in combination with your partner, better defence.
3. System and *Partnership* Agreement recommendations that may best be introduced gradually, over a period of time.

The system proposed is holistic and consistent, a system I would happily play at any level, but the “best” system is one both you and your partner agree on, and are comfortable with.

I’ve indicated when clear partnership agreement is required (“Partnership Agreement Required”) and indicated where recommendations have common, alternative standard treatments.

Under the headings of “Why?”, I explain why I recommend a particular system treatment. Understand the “Why?” and you will understand how the recommended system fits together.

In addition to standard weak twos, I have included a section on the “dreaded” mini-multi 2♠. Playing the mini-multi is a good fun alternative and will cause problems for even the best opponents. You may never play the mini-multi, however it’s important to understand how such bids work, removing the mystery of playing against them.

Whatever your system choices, most important is to: “evaluate” your hand, be confident in your judgement, be confident in your strategies, and be confident in your partner. Enjoy your bridge, and you’ll enjoy better bridge.

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Hand Evaluation

The single, most important piece of advice I can give you, is to “*evaluate*” your hand.

Bridge is about *winning tricks*, not counting high card points (HCP). The strength of a bridge hand is its trick winning ability.

“Evaluate” a hand’s trick winning ability from its:

- Shape,
- Points, and
- Location of its honours.

This is your hand’s strength. “Evaluate” to determine whether to; bid more or bid less.

Hands with “**Shape**” are unbalanced hands. Unbalanced hands have a higher trick winning potential. When the long suits of an unbalanced hand fit with partner, their higher trick winning potential is realised.

Points are based on our HCP. We could adjust our points to better reflect a hand’s trick winning potential to:

Ace	= 4.4 points
King	= 3 points
Queen	= 1.8 points
Jack	= 0.8 points.

But rather than complicate point counting:

- with “quacks” (queens & jacks), especially in your short suits, be conservative, and
- with two (or more) aces be aggressive.

Aces in unbalanced hands are gold. Aces give you control and reduce the risk of ruffs (eg: the opponents lead a singleton). An ace opposite a singleton means no loser.

Points and HCP

“HCP” is strictly the high card points in a hand, however “Points” means the value of a hand after we “evaluate” it. For example, a hand with 14 HCP and a “5332” shape we evaluate as 15 points because of its five card suit (and as we will see, open 1NT).

EXPAND YOUR BRIDGE HORIZONS

Adoption of the bridge advice and strategies presented in this book into your game will result in you bidding more, declaring more, winning more, and enjoying your bridge more. The author's advice is to always *evaluate* your hand, and to show your "shape before strength". Better contracts and better bridge will be your reward.

The book is best employed as a constant companion. It provides individual advice, partnership strategies, and system recommendations that are consistent and holistic. Enjoy!



MATTHEW THOMSON is a current member of the Australian Bridge Team, and has been a finalist in both the Olympiad and the World Bridge Teams. A bridge professional and teacher, he lives in Sydney Australia with his wife, Cathryn, three adult children, Jeremy, Stephanie and Dominic, and with "Chubba" his Welsh Terrier.

