

Mike Dorn Wiss

HOW **NOT** TO PLAY BRIDGE

The Bridge Seminars of Professor
Gaston Gitane-Gauloise



FOREWORD BY FRED GITELMAN

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Foreword

In my first few visits to the local bridge club (1982 Toronto) only Mike Dorn Wiss stood out from the crowd.

Besides his attire (jeans, leather jacket, sometimes a cowboy hat) and his appearance (long hair, beard, younger than most), Mike seemed considerably more amusing than your average bridge player. You could tell he liked to have a good time.

Soon after I learned that Mike, aside from his amusement value, was a knowledgeable and skilled bridge player. He became my original bridge mentor.

Mike advocated learning from our mistakes as a vehicle to better play. In “How NOT to Play Bridge” Mike takes the concept of learning from mistakes to a whole new level. This book consists of 50 bridge ‘seminars’ that focus on the (many!) mistakes of an eccentric bridge player, Professor Gaston Gitane-Gauloise. There is much to be learned from the Professor’s errors.

And there’s more good news: it turned out my original instinct about Mike being amusing was right on. Bridge books that are as entertaining (and informative) as this one are few and far between. Enjoy!

- Fred Gitelman



Author's Note

There are few characters written in any genre which have not been based – at least in part – upon real people. Certainly that is the case of my character “Professor Gaston Gitane-Gauloise”, whom I have based upon an amalgam of three people I have known or been acquainted with at some point in my life. I have chosen satire as a presentation, since the form emphasizes a trait of weakness rather than a weak person, and not lampoon, which is a virulent and malicious *form* of satire. It is important to understand the difference. I have enjoyed turning this into a humorous, and I hope strong, form of teaching bridge.

The first of these models was my psychology professor in college, world known in his field and eccentric as a hatter. His podium posturing (and tendency to pontificate) was the frequent topic of post-class gossip and amusement. He favoured the tried and true tweed and leather-elbowed dress of academia common a half-century ago. I have melded his habits into those of Professor G G-G.

The second model was a player of bridge (I hesitate to call him a “bridge player”) who had acquired some infamy when alive, due mostly to his amusing approach to the game combined with an inflated self-image. I have incorporated some of his mannerisms – like chain-smoking – into Professor G G-G’s character. He and I once exchanged books we had written, as well as a modicum of mutual respect, although for different reasons. If he were alive today I’m sure his chest would puff in pride at being a partial inspiration for this book. Some of the hands I have chosen are examples of his game.

The third model I found in my mirror. What personal characteristics of mine are also within Professor G G-G I leave to those who know me personally to discover. (I do wear a beret from time to time, since being follicularly challenged can chill the pate, and mine works better when toasty.) Some of the hand examples of how not to play the game were from my own misplay, I confess. I’m not going to say which, unless of course the bribe is a huge one.

- MDW



Dedications

For Carlie Rose, who even from another corral is able to spur my horse, and to the Campbell's, Wayne and Hel-Sue, for popping my Bridge cherry.

Disclaimer (or Claimer) – choose one

Any resemblance to characters living or dead is probably intentional and not likely coincidental. Any litigation should be directed to the author's attorney, bearing in mind the difficulties inherent in acquiring blood from stones.

-MDW

How NOT to Play Bridge 1 - Evaluation

The enigmatic Professor parted the curtain at the rear of the auditorium stage and strode proudly to his podium. He was resplendently attired in a three-piece tweed suit, with only the sleeves of the jacket and cuffs of the trousers frayed. His vest, perhaps because a succession of illnesses had caused him to lose mass from his paunch allowing it to fit for the first time in years, looked new. His white hair tufted wildly over his ears as the light from an overhead spot bounced from his gleaming bald pate. He purposely surveyed his audience, scattered throughout the auditorium while filling fully a third of the seats. He cleared his throat.

“Today’s lesson, the initial example of my unique teaching method, will incorporate How Not to Evaluate a Hand with its frequent partner, How Not to Bid a Hand. In these cases I am always the South player, for column purposes of course.

“In first position at favourable vulnerability I held this hand...” The Professor tapped his computer notepad and the screen over his shoulder displayed: ♠AKJ87♥Q75♦KQ♣QJ2.

“I counted eighteen high card points and opened 1♠, my left hand opponent overcalled 2♥, and after two passes it was again my turn to bid. Well, knowing exactly how a Walrus evaluates a hand I quickly recounted my points and still found eighteen.

“Well,” he said again, pausing to inhale a slightly larger puff of smoke, and to exhale a small cough, “that is clearly the correct way not to evaluate this hand. Once the vulnerable opponent on my left bid 2♥ it became reasonable to discount the ♥Q as worthless, and likely the ♦K as well, for the ace was probably not with partner. Now my hand became a thirteen pointer, in effect a weak notrump with five spades, and with the soft minor suit values a lousy weak notrump at that. Furthermore, it was very unlikely partner had passed with heart length. All these clues point to a Pass as my correct call. Therefore, to illustrate to my many students and kibitzers what not to do, I took action and doubled. After all, perhaps partner *did* have a trump stack, and needed protection. Most partners need all the protection they can get, especially from me.

“My left hand opponent passed and partner bid 2♠. After another pass by my right hand opponent it was again my turn.

“What’s the problem you ask? Well, partner has preferred to support my suit, and I had to consider what not to bid now. Finally it came to me... since it could never be right to

show a hand with at least the strength of a 2NT opener, if not the shape, and having evaluated the eighteen down to a bad thirteen, it seemed the best thing not to do would be to show it as a good nineteen or more. So I found the unconscionable 3♥ cuebid! Then, when partner was endplayed into bidding 3NT, I pulled to 4♠ before 3NT was doubled, so I could also play the hand.

With another tap upon his notepad the Professor presented the full hand, which clearly justified his example of miscalculation.

E/W Vul
IMPs
Dealer: South
Lead: ♥A

Partner

♠ 94
♥ J94
♦ JT74
♣ K765

West

♠ T
♥ AKT86
♦ 9852
♣ A83



East

♠ Q7632
♥ 32
♦ A63
♣ T94

Prof. GG-G

♠ AKJ85
♥ Q75
♦ KQ
♣ QJ2

West	North	East	Prof. GG-G
			1♠
2♥	Pass	Pass	Double
Pass	2♠	Pass	3♥
Pass	3NT	Pass	4♠
Pass	Pass	Double	All Pass

“At this point my right hand opponent doubled, clearly for penalty and not conventional, and I went down three tricks for minus five hundred and a loss of ten imps.

“Seldom have I been able to show such a poignant example of how not to evaluate a hand along with how not to bid it. Had I passed 2♥, as many other experts would, I would be plus one hundred. Notice of course my unusual bridge intuition in doubling in the first place. Had my partner been on the same wavelength and passed instead of preference-supporting me, we would be plus two hundred, a fine result. Partners, however, are seldom perfect, and mine was no exception.”

Lighting up another Gauloise, the Professor tapped his pad and today’s lessons of *How Not To Play Bridge* appeared on the screen. He indicated them with an expansive hand gesture and a cloud of blue smoke, and read them aloud.

“One, do not downgrade your hand when your left hand opponent shows values.

BE RIGHT BY NOT DOING WRONG



The inimitable Professor Gaston Gitane-Gauloise demonstrates his unique Inverted Bridge Teaching Method, showing you by example what *not* to do in Bridge, thereby allowing you to improve your game by avoiding the commonplace (and some not-so-commonplace) errors to which all are prone. In his humble and self-deprecating manner Professor GG-G wheezes his way into your bridge acumen, and improves it.



MIKE DORN WISS is also the author of the acclaimed book *Shadow in the Bridge World*. Nowadays he divides his time between summers in Victoria, Canada and winters in Thailand, assiduously avoiding any hint of the snows under which he was weaned in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.