

PLANNING THE PLAY



BARBARA SEAGRAM
DAVID BIRD

PLANNING THE PLAY



THE NEXT
LEVEL

BARBARA SEAGRAM
DAVID BIRD

MASTER POINT PRESS • TORONTO, CANADA

Text © 2017 Barbara Seagram and David Bird

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
214 Merton St. Suite 205
Toronto, Ontario, Canada
M4S 1A6 (647)956-4933

Email: info@masterpointpress.com

Websites: www.masterpointpress.com
www.teachbridge.com
www.bridgeblogging.com
www.ebooksbridge.com

Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

Seagram, Barbara, author

Planning the play : the next level / Barbara Seagram and David Bird.

Issued in print and electronic formats.

ISBN 978-1-77140-039-8 (softcover).--ISBN 978-1-55494-637-2 (PDF).--

ISBN 978-1-55494-682-2 (HTML).--ISBN 978-1-77140-881-3 (HTML)

1. Contract bridge. I. Bird, David, 1946-, author II. Title.

GV1282.3.S4188 2017

795.41'53

C2017-906084-8

C2017-906085-6

Canada

We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada.
Nous reconnaissons l'appui financier du gouvernement du Canada.

Editor

Ray Lee

Copy editor/interior format

Sally Sparrow

Cover and interior design

Olena S. Sullivan/New Mediatrix

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 21 20 19 18 17

CONTENTS

Introduction	5
--------------------	---

PART I USEFUL TECHNIQUES

1. Planning Your Entries	9
2. Planning the Establishment of a Suit	21
3. Plans that Involve Unblocking	33
4. Leading Through a Defender's High Card	45

PART II TAKING PRECAUTIONS

5. Planning Safety Plays	59
6. Keeping the Danger Hand Off Lead	76
7. Retaining Trump Control	89
8. Avoiding Ruffs and Trump Promotions	103
9. Planning Your Play to Trick 1	119

PART III PLANNING A STRATEGY

10. Planning a Dummy Reversal	135
11. Planning a Strip and Throw-in	147
12. Planning a Crossruff	163
13. Planning to combine chances	175

PART IV GRAND FINAL QUIZ

14. Twenty-six Planning Problems	190
---	-----

INTRODUCTION

In our previous book, *Planning the Play of a Bridge Hand*, we described how to make a plan. If you are playing in a suit contract, you begin by counting the losers in the hand with the longer trumps (usually declarer's hand). You might be in 4♠, for example, and start with this loser position:

Losers: ♠ 0 ♥ 1 ♦ 2 ♣ 1 Total: 4

You have four potential losers and must look for the best way to reduce this to three. The three main techniques are: ruffing a loser, discarding a loser and finessing.

The requirement on each deal is to express the plan as clearly and concisely as possible, for example:

PLAN: I will draw trumps, establish the diamond suit for a club discard and ruff a heart in dummy.

The method is a little different in notrump. You begin by counting the top tricks that you have. Perhaps you reach 3NT and begin with this number of tricks:

Winners: ♠ 2 ♥ 1 ♦ 2 ♣ 2 Total: 7

Your plan will seek the best way to create two extra tricks before the defenders can score the five tricks that they need. Again the aim is to express the plan as concisely as possible:

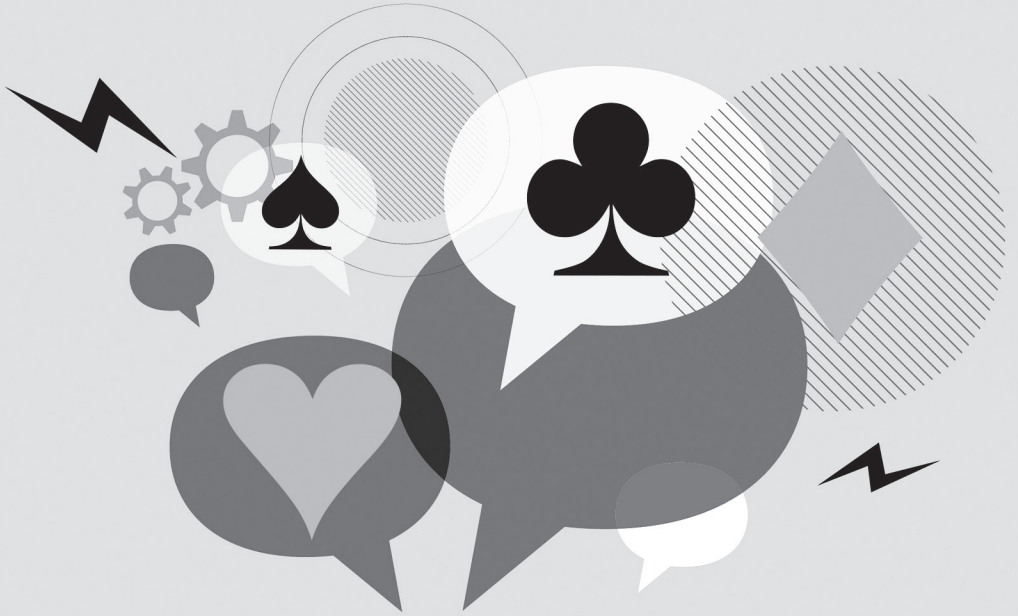
PLAN: I will hold up the ♠A for two rounds and finesse clubs into the safe East hand.

The first book was concerned mainly with basic deals. In this follow-up, we use the same planning methods but apply them to a much wider range of deals — ones that involve a greater range of cardplay techniques.

Is this going to be hard work, something like studying accountancy in some dusty college room? No. We will do our best to make it enjoyable. However, your greatest reward will come when you subsequently venture to the bridge table and discover that you can now make many more contracts than previously. If that's not enjoyable, we don't know what is!

Barbara and David

PART I



Useful Techniques

1

PLANNING YOUR ENTRIES

In *Planning the Play of a Bridge Hand* we covered the basic techniques involving entries. In this chapter we are going to — yes, you guessed it — move to the next level. We will see further techniques that you can use to create an important extra entry.

Creating entries in the trump suit

If it's not too early in the morning for you, we will start with a deal that requires a spark of imagination.

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

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ A K Q J 10 4 2
♥ —
♦ A Q 5 4
♣ 9 5

West	North	East	South
pass	1NT	pass	1♠
all pass			4♠

West leads the ♣A, ♣K and ♣Q against your spade game and you have these potential losers:

Losers: ♠ 0 ♥ 0 ♦ 3 ♣ 2 Total: 5

Did partner say, 'Two good cards for you,' as he put down the dummy? They're good cards only if you can reach the dummy. To do this, you must make good use of two other good cards in the dummy, the ♠87.

The defenders hold only one higher trump, so you can create a trump entry to dummy. The first necessary move is to ruff the third round of clubs with the ♠10, retaining your two low trumps. You then lead the ♠2 to dummy's ♠7.

East wins with the ♠9 and it makes no difference what he returns. If he returns a diamond, you will finesse the ♦Q. West had nothing to say over your 1♠ opening and has already shown the ♣AKQ, so there is a good chance that the finesse will win. When it does, you cross to the established ♠8 and discard two diamonds on the ♥AK. (If East returns a trump instead, you will take two discards and finesse the ♦Q yourself.)

PLAN: I will ruff high at Trick 3 and lead the ♠2 to the ♠7, to guarantee reaching the dummy. I will then discard two diamonds and finesse the ♦Q.

The next deal features a slightly different way of creating a much-needed entry:

♠ 7	♠ 10 4 2	♠ K 6 5									
♥ J 9 7 2	♥ 6 5 3	♥ Q 10 8									
♦ Q 10 6 3	♦ K 8 5 2	♦ J 9 7 4									
♣ Q J 10 8	♣ 7 6 4	♣ K 9 3									
	<table style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <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		
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ A Q J 9 8 3										
	♥ A K 4										
	♦ A										
	♣ A 5 2										

West	North	East	South
pass	2♦	pass	2♣
pass	4♠	all pass	2♠

West leads the ♣Q, East playing an encouraging ♣9. You win with the ♣A and see this potential loser count:

Losers: ♠ 1 ♥ 1 ♦ 0 ♣ 2 Total: 4

Dummy contains one precious jewel, the $\heartsuit K$, but how can you reach it? If trumps are 2-2, you can cross to the $\spadesuit 10$ on the third round and discard a heart on the $\heartsuit K$. Can you see a better chance?

After cashing the $\heartsuit A$, you should play the $\spadesuit Q$. If a defender wins with the $\spadesuit K$, you will be able to cross to the $\spadesuit 10$ to discard your heart loser. Suppose East refuses to win the first round of spades. What then?

You continue with the $\spadesuit J$. East has no good answer. If he holds up the $\spadesuit K$ again, you will play the $\spadesuit A$ and not lose a trump trick. If instead, he wins with the $\spadesuit K$, he will set up the $\spadesuit 10$ as an entry to the $\heartsuit K$. Ten tricks for you either way!

PLAN: I will win, cash the $\heartsuit A$ and play the $\spadesuit Q$. If this is taken, the $\spadesuit 10$ will be an entry to the $\heartsuit K$ for a heart discard. If it is ducked, I will continue with the $\spadesuit J$.

Entry plays to give yourself the best chance

Making a plan is not much use if you wait until there is no chance left of making the contract! Test yourself on this 3NT contract.

	\spadesuit 8 7 5 \heartsuit A J 4 \diamondsuit A K Q 9 6 3 \clubsuit K		
\spadesuit K 10 6 2 \heartsuit K 9 3 \diamondsuit J 7 5 \clubsuit J 8 6	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: 0 auto; display: flex; flex-direction: column; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> <div style="width: 100%; height: 100%; position: relative;"> N S W E </div> </div>	\spadesuit A Q 4 \heartsuit 10 7 6 2 \diamondsuit 10 \clubsuit Q 7 5 4 2	
	\spadesuit J 9 3 \heartsuit Q 8 5 \diamondsuit 8 4 2 \clubsuit A 10 9 3		

West	North	East	South
pass	1 \diamondsuit 3NT	pass all pass	1NT

West leads the $\spadesuit 2$ and the defenders take four spade tricks. You discard a heart from each hand, West then switching to the $\clubsuit 6$. What plan will you make?

Winners: \spadesuit 0 \heartsuit 1 \diamondsuit 6 \clubsuit 1 Total: 8

The original declarer won with dummy's ♣K and paused to make a plan. Unless diamonds broke 4-0, he could count a total of eight tricks. To reach the stranded ♣A for a ninth trick, he would need to find diamonds 2-2 and cross to the ♦8.

As often seems to happen when declarer does not take the best line, the cards were unforgiving. East showed out on the second round of diamonds and the game went one down.

If you make a plan right at the start, or certainly before you play to the first round of clubs, you will see that you should overtake the ♣K with the ♣A. You can then take the heart finesse, which is a better chance than relying on a 2-2 diamond break (around 50% instead of 40%). By good fortune, West holds the ♥K and you make the game.

PLAN: I will overtake the ♣K with the ♣A, so that I can take the heart finesse for my ninth trick.

Foreseeing entry difficulties

An important part of planning a contract is the ability to predict what may go wrong. You will then have at least a chance of side-stepping the problem. The next deal does not fall into any particular category but it illustrates that you often have to think a trick or two ahead. Give it a try!

	♠ 8											
	♥ 6 3											
	♦ A 8 5 4											
	♣ A K Q J 7 5											
♠ 4 2	<table border="1" style="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		♠ 9 6 5 3	
	N											
W		E										
	S											
♥ A K Q 10 7 2		♥ 9 5										
♦ 3 2		♦ K Q 10 9 6										
♣ 10 8 3		♣ 9 6										
	♠ A K Q J 10 7											
	♥ J 8 4											
	♦ J 7											
	♣ 4 2											

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

West leads the ♥A, East following with the ♥9. West continues with the ♥K, East playing the ♥5, and then the ♥Q. What is your plan?

You start with this loser position:

Losers: ♠ 0 ♥ 3 ♦ 1 ♣ 0 Total: 4

The original declarer, whose bookshelf contained no learned works on planning a contract, ruffed with dummy's ♠8. East overruffed with the ♠9 and returned the ♦K to dummy's ♦A. 'Right,' thought the declarer, 'I'd better have a think about this.'

It was too late. Declarer could play the ♣AK and reach his hand with a club ruff to draw trumps, but there would then be no entry back to dummy to discard his diamond loser.

Declarer began with diamond and club entries to the dummy. He also began with a quick trump entry to his hand. What he needed to do was to discard a diamond from dummy on the third round of hearts. On any continuation he would be able to win, draw trumps and discard the diamond loser on the clubs.

PLAN: I will discard a diamond from dummy on the third heart. This preserves all my entries and I will easily make the remaining tricks.

The original declarer failed to foresee an entry problem on this deal. See if you can find the right line.

♠ J 7 3	♠ 6	♠ Q 10 9 5 4									
♥ J 9 3 2	♥ 8 5	♥ A 7 6 4									
♦ A 8 6	♦ K 10 9 7 5 2	♦ 4									
♣ 7 5 2	♣ J 10 4 3	♣ A 9 6									
	<div style="border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; padding: 5px; margin: 5px;"> <table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100%; text-align: center;"> <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> </div>		N		W		E		S		
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ A K 8 2										
	♥ K Q 10										
	♦ Q J 3										
	♣ K Q 8										

West	North	East	South
pass	3NT	all pass	2NT

West leads the ♥2 to East's ace and the ♥4 is returned. How will you plan the contract?

Winners: ♠ 2 ♥ 2 ♦ 0 ♣ 0 Total: 4

Only four top tricks but you have plenty of scope for more in the minor suits. The hearts appear to be breaking 4-4, so perhaps you can restrict the defenders to their three aces and one long heart.

The original declarer lost no time in setting up the splendid diamond suit. The $\heartsuit Q$ was allowed to win and he continued with the $\heartsuit J$, also allowed to win. It was no longer possible to make the contract! He could clear the diamonds and win the heart return, but East would then freeze him out of the dummy by holding up the $\clubsuit A$ twice. The defenders eventually scored three aces, the $\heartsuit Q$ and a long heart.

The diamond suit offered a certain entry to dummy and the club suit did not. Declarer should therefore have played clubs first. When East won the third club and cleared the hearts, declarer would play the $\heartsuit Q$, ducked, and lead the $\heartsuit J$. He would then overtake with the $\heartsuit K$ if West did not take his ace. Whichever defender held the $\heartsuit A$, declarer could reach dummy in diamonds and cash the thirteenth club. Three clubs and two tricks in each of the other suits would bring his total to nine.

PLAN: I will play on clubs first, since the diamond suit offers a certain entry to dummy.

Preserving a key entry

Would you have seen how to look after the entry situation on this deal?

	\spadesuit A 8 5 2 \heartsuit K 8 3 \diamondsuit K 8 6 4 \clubsuit A 5											
\spadesuit 10 9 3 \heartsuit 10 7 5 2 \diamondsuit 3 \clubsuit Q J 8 7 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		\spadesuit K Q 6 \heartsuit 4 \diamondsuit A J 10 9 5 2 \clubsuit 10 6 2	
	N											
W		E										
	S											
	\spadesuit J 7 4 \heartsuit A Q J 9 6 \diamondsuit Q 7 \clubsuit K 9 4											

West	North	East	South
pass	1 \spadesuit	2 \diamondsuit	1 \heartsuit
pass	4 \heartsuit	all pass	pass

West leads the $\diamondsuit 3$, East rising with the $\diamondsuit A$ and returning the $\diamondsuit J$ for partner to ruff. What will your plan be when West switches to the $\spadesuit 10$? This is the loser position:

Losers: \spadesuit 2 \heartsuit 1 \diamondsuit 1 \clubsuit 1 Total: 5

The trump loser shown is the ruff that the defenders have already taken. You would like to discard a spade loser on the $\spadesuit K$. The problem is that you also need to ruff the third round of clubs. If West began with four trumps, now down to three, you will not be able to take a ruff and then ‘draw trumps ending in the dummy’ before enjoying your discard. What can be done?

You should play low from dummy on the spade switch, hoping that East holds the $\spadesuit KQ$. When he wins with one of his honors, he will not be able to return the suit safely. East in fact plays another diamond and you ruff with the $\heartsuit J$. You then take your club ruff, draw the outstanding trumps and enter dummy with the $\spadesuit A$ to discard a spade on the $\spadesuit K$.

PLAN: I will preserve the $\spadesuit A$ entry by playing low on the spade switch.

Retaining the lead in dummy

Top-class declarers have many special techniques at their disposal. Would you have played the club suit correctly on this deal?

\spadesuit 6 3	\spadesuit A K	\spadesuit 8 2			
\heartsuit K 9 4 2	\heartsuit Q 8 5	\heartsuit A J 10 7 3			
\diamondsuit 10 9 2	\diamondsuit J 8 7 5 4	\diamondsuit A Q 6			
\clubsuit K 8 6 3	\clubsuit 10 9 2	\clubsuit Q 7 4			
	<table style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	
N					
W E					
S					
	\spadesuit Q J 10 9 7 5 4				
	\heartsuit 6				
	\diamondsuit K 3				
	\clubsuit A J 5				

West	North	East	South
3 \heartsuit	pass	1 \heartsuit	1 \spadesuit
pass	4 \spadesuit	pass	3 \spadesuit
		all pass	

West makes life awkward with a preemptive raise to 3 \heartsuit but the spade game is reached. He leads the $\heartsuit 2$ to the $\heartsuit J$ and East continues with the $\heartsuit A$. What is your plan? You start with these potential losers:

Losers: \spadesuit 0 \heartsuit 1 \diamondsuit 2 \clubsuit 2 Total: 5

You ruff the second round of hearts and see that you have potential finesses to take in the minors but only two entries to dummy. You cross to the ♠K and must now make the key play. You lead the ♣2 (not the ♣10) to your ♣J. West wins with the ♣K and you must now hope that the ♣Q and ♦A both lie with the opening bidder.

You ruff the heart continuation, return to dummy with the ♠A and lead the ♣10. If East covers with the ♣Q, you can return to the ♣9 to lead towards the ♦K. If instead East plays a low club, you will remain in dummy to lead towards the ♦K. This pleasing situation would not have been possible if you had led the ♣10 on the first round of the suit.

PLAN: I will cross to a trump and lead the ♣2 to the ♣J. If West wins, I will be able to take two further finesses in the minor suits.

Remember these points...

- Dummy's trump holding may contain vital entries. Do not draw trumps until you are confident of the entry situation.
- You can often create extra entries by overtaking one honor with another, retaining a spot card that can be led to a higher spot card later.
- You can create entries to dummy by winning a trick in your hand with a higher card than is necessary. For example, you win with the ace from A10x to ensure an entry with dummy's QJx.
- Many a contract is lost by winning the opening lead in the wrong hand. Usually it is right to preserve the entry to the weaker hand, but it may be necessary to plan the entire play before you contribute a card to Trick 1.
- When entering dummy may be worth two extra tricks, it can be worth sacrificing a trick to create the entry. For example, with ♠98 opposite your ♠AKQJ53, you lead low towards dummy's two spot cards.

GETTING TO THE NEXT LEVEL

Seagram and Bird's *Planning the Play of a Bridge Hand* was named Book of the Year in 2010 by the American Bridge Teachers' Association. It introduced the basic principles of how to go about making a plan as declarer for beginning and improving players, and is a popular text for bridge teachers. This sequel extends the concept to more complex situations, and covers ideas such as safety plays, avoidance play, trump control, dummy reversal, and endplays. It will appeal to players who have a good grasp of the basics of declarer play, and are looking to improve from there.



BARBARA SEAGRAM (Canada) is the co-author of *25 Bridge Conventions You Should Know*, the bestselling book on the game in the last fifty years.



DAVID BIRD (UK) is perhaps the most prolific bridge author of all time, with more than 135 books to his credit.

