

Winsome & Cathyssome

In the defense department

There is trouble at Club America — the most sumptuous, successful and prestigious bridge club in the world. Visitors from around the globe grace its tables. The rich and famous spend hours shuffling the cards and spinning tales of past bridge exploits.

Maugham and Sharif Gates and Buffet and dozens of other luminaries have often mixed it up with Ma and Pa Kettle. Winnie won some. Ike even liked it.

It was long the quintessence of democracy. Everyone was welcome — until recently, when a pair of strangers descended on the club and terrorized nearly everybody.

At Kaida and Kandy Har *By Zeke Jabbour* and his teacher's soul to let Har, students of Josama Yomama, are a well-known international pair. They are experts on sacrifices, suicide squeezes and other nefarious practices, some totally unfamiliar.

The club was losing people. The club manager, Rudy Toot Toot, *Dime Magazine's* Player of the Year, was so concerned that he consulted the club's attorney, Glumi Sosumi, former chief counsel of Enron Japan, to see if anything could be done. Glumi was pessimistic. He thought only a change in the laws could help.

"Not good enough," said Rudy. "Club America's people have to learn to defend. I'm calling in Donald Dooright Dunsweil, the club's expert on defense."

Donald said he would provide club defenders a set of rules to follow. And that's how I got involved. Mr. Dunsweil remembered that I had done some columns on the Law of Rules. So, he asked me — actually, he had Sharon order me — to produce a list of rules for defense. Then I remembered something, too. That's how my friend Marty got involved.

Marty Hirschman is the editor of the

Michigan Bridge Association's official publication *Table Talk*, which he is kind enough to send me.

Marty is trained as a lawyer, performs as an administrative judge, is a bridge expert and an active professional bridge player and he has the soul of a teacher. That's good. In many cultures teachers are honored above all others except parents and rich people — sometimes, even above parents.

Marty's propensity to preach to his MBA constituency causes him to feature excellent front-page lessons in *Table Talk*. I remembered that he had published a set of Rules for Defense!

So I contacted Judge Hirschman and appealed to his patriotism and his teacher's soul to let me steal. I didn't want the lyrics, just the tune. I promised to praise him and his magazine or, as an alternative, to put his feet in cement. He was very cooperative. They understand that kind of talk in Jimmy Hoffa country.

True to good government practice, I then took Marty's list, doubled it, expanded the text, bloated its significance and took credit. Following is the report I submitted:

Some rules for defense

By Zeke

Rules, of course, are not laws. There is only one essential rule on defense: figure out where the critical cards are and, based on that information, make the most effective play. To do this you have to *listen to the bidding, count out declarer's hand and count out partner's hand* — then do the right thing. That ain't easy. So, failing that, there are some good general rules to follow.

1. When dummy comes down, add dummy's high-card points to your

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own. That information is likely to be useful before the end of the deal.

2. **Play on your suits, not their suits.** "Your" suits are the ones in which your side owns later-round winners, *i.e.*, the second- or third-round winners in a trump contract, third-, fourth- and fifth-round winners at notrump.

3. **At notrump, one should usually continue playing the suit led by partner.** A good rule, but it's important to note that there are exceptions. Once again, judgment comes into play. No sense in being like a dog on a bone when the beef is somewhere else.

4. **At notrump, you should switch suits when declarer owns the fourth round of the suit led or when another suit clearly offers better chances.**

5. **Don't lead an unsupported ace in the early defense.** Aces are entries to your hand. It is said that when you strike a king, you must kill him. Only an ace or a trump can do that. Save your aces to kill kings and queens.

6. **Lead up to weakness.** For example, lead toward three low cards in dummy (unless it's important to kill an entry to dummy). There's a poem they teach in bridge kindergarten: "When dummy is on your right, lead the weakest suit in sight." The rhyme makes reason.

7. **Note partner's signals and follow partner's defense.** If he asks you to do something, do it. Don't insult him unless he deserves it. If he switches the defense, try to determine why and defend accordingly.

8. **Lean on your partner and let him feel comfortable leaning on you.** If you are dependable and he is dependable, you'll be okay.

9. **Sometimes the only way to beat a contract is for partner to have a specific card.** When there is a reasonable chance he could have it, *play him for it.* Occasionally you should ask your

self what you would do if you were not afraid, and then do it.

10. **When dummy's shape indicates a trump switch, switch to a trump.** When dummy is *weak* (doesn't have a source of tricks), contains just a couple of trumps and a short side suit, switch to a trump whenever you can do so without giving up a trick. But use your head. Sometimes it is clear that declarer can't have any losers to ruff in dummy's short suit.

11. **Don't duck a trick without a specific reason.** What kind of reason? It might be important to make declarer guess, to block an entry or to freeze out a long suit in dummy. In particular, don't duck the setting trick unless you know it can't go away and ducking may result in more tricks for your side. Pard will not be thrilled if you duck and they make it. Nor will you.



12. **Whenever you know or can infer that you or partner is long in trumps, consider a forcing defense.** I mean by that, shortening declarer's trump holding by forcing him to ruff your long suit. This defense usually begins with an attacking lead, *i.e.*, your longest and strongest suit.

13. **Concentrate. Watch the spots.** Whether declaring or defending, it is embarrassing when a 7 or an 8 becomes good and you are unaware of it. Besides, the way spot cards fall may contain other messages of value.

14. **Confuse the opponents, not your partner.** Confused opponents are usually friendly opponents. A confused partner is not your friend. Help guide partner's defense. Signal whenever the advantage of informing partner is greater than the disadvantage of giving declarer information. When you do signal, try to make it clear.

15. **Remember, bidding should be a part of your total defensive repertoire.** Lead-directing overcalls, lead-selection doubles and pushing the opponents