Micro Bridge Lesson 40

End Plays

Rationale

	♣AT4
♣KJ6	

We've all tried to play suits such as the one above without losing a trick. Do we play ♣A then ♣4 to the ♣J or ♣K then ♣6 to the ♣T? It's usually just a guess. Look how much better that it is when the *opponents* lead the suit first. Now, you are sure of avoiding a loser in the suit by following the familiar bridge adage "second-hand-low". While this will sometimes happen by accident, on other occasions you can *force* the opponents to open the suit by removing the other suits and then giving them the lead. This process is called an *End Play*. Most commonly, the opponent will have to either provide a ruff and discard or "*resolve the suit*". i.e. Sort out the suit about which we are concerned. In either case, one of our losers will disappear.

♠AKT4	♠QJ93
♥A64	♥K32
♦AT4	♦KJ6
♣AK2	♣Q74

Despite 34 HCP, 6S is not laydown. The flat (4333) shape is notorious for producing one less trick. EW are also called *mirror* hands. i.e They have exactly the same number of cards in each suit. Mirror hands are also notorious for producing one less trick. The solution to mirror hands is often an endplay. Can you see how to make 12 tricks above provided trumps are 3-2?

Draw trumps in three rounds. Then play all your clubs and all your hearts. Obviously, you will lose the 3rd heart. Now, your opponent is fixed.

♠T	♠9
♦AT4	♦KJ6

If he leads a 4th heart or 4th club, you will pitch a diamond from one hand and ruff in the other. Now, you can ruff the 3rd diamond. Much better than trying to guess who holds the ♦Q. So, the slam is cold provided trumps are 3-2. How will you handle trumps being 4-1? Not very well. You will need to leave trumps out and hope that the person winning the 3rd heart doesn't hold the trumps with which they can exit from their hand. Notice that 6NT is nowhere near as good a contract. The endplay is not possible as the opponent can cash a side suit. You will have to try to guess the diamonds. This hand proves yet again – *At the slam level, you want to play in the safest contract*.

This hand is from Klinger's Guide to Better Bridge

	♠KT4 ♥A54 ♦A43 ♣Q743	
♠65 ♥JT82 ♦QT872 ♣T5		♠A82 ♥97 ♦95 ♣AKJ862
	♠QJ973 ♥KQ63 ♦KJ6 ♣9	

South plays 4S after the lead of the CT. South ruffs the 2nd club and leads trumps. East wins SA and returns 3rd club which South ruffs high. It appears that success depends on hearts breaking 3-3 or finding the DQ onside. Not so. Play FOUR rounds of hearts. Although West wins the 4th heart, he is endplayed and must return a diamond avoiding the loser in that suit.

A common technique to produce an endplay is to eliminate side suits through ruffing or throwing a loser on a loser. From Card Play Technique (Mollo):-

♠A	♠J2
♥Q3	♥AK4
♦AQ32	♦9876
♣AQT432	♣KJ65

North leads SK against 6C.Plan your play. The success appears to depend on DK being found. Not so. Presuming North has SQ, he can be endplayed. Win SA, draw trumps, eliminate hearts and lead SJ, pitching a losing diamond on this losing spade. Now, North must lead a diamond into declarer's AQ or lead a major allowing DQ to be pitched, ruffing in dummy. Can you see another plan? Ruff SJ, eliminate hearts and run the D9. If South covers, so do you. if North wins DK, he is endplayed. Old timers will give you a tip "*When you see AQ9, think endplay*"

Avoiding an endplay is fun. Sometimes, you can pitch a high card in a suit where you know partner holds, or might hold, the next winner. This prevents declarer from throwing you in. Of course, you need to be sure. Is this declarer up to the task of endplaying you? This plan is attractive when you are known to hold most, or all, of the high cards. for the defence. To counter that, you should cash winners when it is safe to do so and retain an exit card. On other hands, partner can help. In the above hand, can you see how South might help North to avoid the endplay? After winning SA, East shifts to Dx. Now, South must win DK to produce the endplay. Not likely so early in the hand. This defensive manouvre is called *breaking up the endplay*.

	♠AQ8	
♠J72		♠KT9
	♠654	

Defending 3NT by South, all suits except spades have been played. South idly leads S6. Is West awake? If he sleepily plays low, declarer will play the S8 and East will be endplayed. West can be a hero by rising SJ.

Defenders should also watch for the chance to endplay dummy. Sometimes, you can put declarer on the table to force an extra trick. Against NT,

	♠KQT ♥A	
♠AJ42		♠76 ♥6 ♦7
	♠65 ♦86	

If East exits with D7 or S7, declarer makes 3 tricks. Exit H6, and west will do the rest. West will duck SK then win the remaining two tricks.