Play Better Bridge! – John Crawford's 7♣

John R. Crawford (1915-1976) was a bridge and backgammon expert and World Champion in both games. Playing at a gentlemen's club for high stakes one day, with two bored kibitzers behind him reading newspapers waiting to cut in, he responded 7♣ to partner's 3NT rebid:

Dummy: ♠ AKQ ♥ AQ86 ♦ KQT52 ♣ 9

J. Crawford: ♠ 3 ♥ K4 ♦ A6 ♣ AKQT8432

Crawford won the spade lead and saw immediately that the only way to go down was if one opponent had ♣J765. But finessing into a droppable J♣ would be embarassing. He led the 9♣ and played low from hand...and LHO discarded. How did he know?

(Answer on next slide….)

The One Rule Everyone Should Know

- ♠ Everyone has heard partner wrongly explain a bid or forget to alert or announce. Few, even the most experienced players, are sure what to do about it.
- ♥ Don’t spill the beans! You cannot alert partner about the error, by saying something or by reacting in such a way as to make it apparent that something has gone wrong. Keep a poker face! Perhaps partner will realize the error without your help.
- ♦ The correct time to let the opponents know there has been a problem depends on how the auction goes. If your side **plays the hand**, you must inform the opponents after the opening lead is made face down (but before it is faced). But if your side **defends**, partner must remain blissfully unaware until the end of the cardplay.
- ♣ Often it will be a non-issue – “oh, we all knew what was really happening” and no Director is needed. But sometimes the missed alert or mistaken explanation may have affected the result and the Director will be needed to sort things out and decide on an equitable solution. At tournaments I often tell players that I will need some time to come up with a fair ruling that will anger both sides equally!

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"As I thought about what to do after leading the 9♣ from dummy, I noticed complete silence around me. Both kibitzers behind me could see the nine-card fit and one defender's hand, and neither was bored enough to go back to reading the newspaper! If clubs were 2-2 or 3-1, or even 4-0 with the wrong defender, they'd both be reading stories and shuffling pages. Interest meant potential! So I took the finesse!"