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The *Defense in the 21st Century* course is an eight- or nine-week course focusing on the defensive aspect of bridge. It is the third in a series of five courses. The first course, *Bidding in the 21st Century*, concentrates on the fundamentals of bidding and play. The second course, *Play of the Hand in the 21st Century*, focuses on techniques on the play of the cards. The fourth course is, *Commonly Used Conventions*, and the fifth course is *More Commonly Used Conventions*.

Each series consists of three parts:

- Student text
- Student workshop
- Teacher manual

The basic material covered in the course is in the student text. The student workshop, packaged with the student text, has exercises to be done by the students during the class and includes the practice play hands. Each class is designed to last approximately two hours. The Teacher manual contains general material to help the teacher successfully conduct the lesson series. It also has specific information on each of the lessons. The manual covers what can be taught and suggests an order for presenting the concepts. It has been designed so that it can be used as a basis for classes with varying levels of experience and age. The teacher may adapt the material so that it is suitable for a specific class.

Assumptions

Defense in the 21st Century is the third step in a five-part series of bridge lessons, and it is generally assumed that the students are familiar with the material presented in the previous two programs, *Bidding in the 21st Century* and the *Play of the Hand in the 21st Century*. That is, the students will be expected to be familiar with the general concepts of bridge bidding and the play of the hand.

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The students should be able to follow a simple auction to reach a suitable final contract on the pre-dealt deals. The students are not expected to be able to deal with complex bidding or play situations. For example, they are not expected to be familiar with bids which involve judgment (*e.g.*, opening light and competitive auctions involving redoubles and penalty doubles) and are not expected to be familiar with advanced conventional bids and treatments (*e.g.*, Flannery, Michaels and negative doubles). The negative double convention is included as the bonus chapter in this series.

The teacher should assume that the students are familiar with some of the fundamentals necessary to defend a hand. For example, they will have already made opening leads against both notrump and suit contracts.

It will be assumed, however, that we can start from scratch. The focus of the course is defense and students at this stage need a lot of help in this area.

The students most likely will have picked up a basic vocabulary about bridge. Terms such as “second hand low” and “third hand high” are familiar to them. This makes it easier to discuss the

defense. As will be pointed out later, however, care still must be taken not to introduce new terms for defense before they are fully explained.

Although the *Defense in the 21st Century* course is designed as a sequel to the *Bidding in the 21st Century* and *Play of the Hand in the 21st Century* courses, it is also designed to stand on its own. This allows it to be used with students who have not taken any other course but are (or assume that they are) familiar with the fundamentals of bidding and play and wish to improve their defense. It also assumes the knowledge of the Stayman convention and Jacoby transfer bids.

As the program is designed to be taught in the classroom, it should incorporate sound educational concepts.

- **Maximum student involvement.** The students should be involved in every step of the learning process. It should not be a passive activity with the teacher lecturing and the students listening and trying to absorb. The students must be doing, experimenting and discovering the fundamental concepts themselves. They take an active role. The teacher is there as a guide.
- **A spiral approach to the curriculum.** That is, basic concepts are introduced one at a time, as needed, and the same concepts are reintroduced at a later stage and expanded upon. It is not necessary to cover everything that could happen the first time an idea is introduced. The students need only concentrate on one new point at a time to tackle the task at hand. As experience and confidence grow, the new concept can be discussed in more depth and the students' scope can be expanded.
- **A simple approach.** There is no need to make things any more complex than they already are. Don't try to cover everything that could possibly happen for fear that a simple idea is uninteresting to the students. In fact, the opposite is true. When the students can grasp a concept, however small, they feel a measure of success and achievement and their confidence grows. They start to enjoy the learning experience and hunger for more.

Defense Concepts

We often hear students say, "I hope I don't get any high cards. I want to be the dummy." When students are faced with defending at this point in their education, their general attitude is one of confusion. They don't know where to start. They vaguely understand guidelines about leading – fourth from your longest and strongest. They usually defend by instinct and find it a frustrating experience. Even if they defeat the contract, they are not sure whether they did the right things and rarely learn anything from the experience. If declarer makes the contract, the experience is worse. They are usually convinced that they will never "get it."

We want to give students the chance to play and defend with confidence! They are presented with a structured approach which is easy to follow. They learn how to formulate a plan and how to execute it. Whether or not they make the best plan initially is not important. They have objectives in mind and can see how their plan works, learning something through doing. Perhaps they are even getting ideas on how to improve their plan for the next time.

In addition to having guidelines on making a plan, the students need the appropriate tools with which to carry out their plan. The various techniques should be presented one at a time, allowing the students to become familiar with them in various guises before moving on to the next technique.

Slowly, students build up a toolbox of techniques which will help them carry out their plan. For the approach to be successful, students must be given hands to play which reinforce the concepts they have learned.

In practical terms, the letters PLAN have been used to help the students plan the defense. It works both with notrump and trump contracts. It helps to organize the defense into four basic steps:

- *Pause to consider your objectives*
- *Look at your winners*
- *Analyze your alternatives*
- *Now put it all together*

There is a difference in the approach to defending a notrump contract and defending a suit contract. Nonetheless, the basic steps remain the same, and the students can learn to follow them through for any deal.

The various techniques to be taught for defending a notrump contract (for the third planning step) are:

- Promoting high cards (*e.g.*, developing a sure trick when holding the king and the queen in a suit).
- Suit establishment (*e.g.*, developing tricks through length).
- Finessing (*e.g.*, attempting to develop a second trick when holding the ace and the queen in a suit).

The additional technique which needs to be introduced when playing in a suit contract is:

- Ruffing declarer's winners.

Once the basic techniques are mastered, the students can be introduced to some of the concepts involved in putting it all together (*e.g.*, the fourth planning step). These include:

- Being aware of entries.
- Combining techniques.

The students can apply the planning concept and use the various tools to defend. The PLAN provides an environment for spiral education. As the students become familiar with the basics, more advanced techniques can be introduced. For example, more complex variations of finesses or suit establishment can be discussed at later stages in this course and/or in the subsequent course. The students don't have to unlearn anything but can build on to the established concepts.

Lesson Format

The course consists of eight lessons of about two hours each with an optional ninth lesson. The lessons are in four parts:

- Introduction to the particular defensive concepts being covered (about 40 minutes).
- Introduction of a useful guideline for the play of the cards (about 10 minutes).
- Review of some of the bidding concepts covered in the *Bidding* course (about 10 minutes).
- A set of four pre-dealt hands which utilize the concepts that have been taught (about 60 minutes).

The first 40 minutes involve the teacher discussing the concepts with the students (laying out some practical examples on the table) and the students doing simple exercises from the workbook which reinforce the particular concept.

A play concept is then introduced and there is an exercise to reinforce the idea.

In the bidding review, to avoid losing the focus on the defense, discussion should be kept to a minimum. If there are a lot of questions, students can be referred to the *Bidding or Play of the Hand* textbook. If you are falling behind schedule, some of the exercises can be left as homework.

During the second hour, the students bid and play hands which have been designed to use the concepts (and only those concepts) which have been discussed. It is essential to the success of the lessons that the students get to play all four of the pre-dealt deals, so everyone gets an opportunity to be declarer. If you are running behind at the end of the first hour, skip the remaining exercises and move on to the play. As mentioned earlier, the teacher should first walk through the bidding, the choice of opening lead and how both declarer and the defenders should formulate a plan. The deal is then bid and played.

At about 15 minutes per deal, the students will get through only the four pre-dealt deals in a lesson period. Some classes progress more rapidly than others, however, and may be able to handle more deals. There are many deals in the student text itself which can be used. Knowing the speed of the class, the teacher can pre-deal as many as necessary. The deals in the text are all designed so that they can be bid to the appropriate contract using the bidding concepts already covered. The only thing to be careful about is that South is always the declarer in the textbook examples, so you will have to rotate the hands.

After the first few lessons, the students will start to play more quickly, and the teacher will not need to take as much time to walk through the deals. The students will become familiar with the planning steps and can be given less direction and allowed to experiment more on their own. Once the basic planning steps have been covered and reviewed, the introduction of new defensive concepts does not take up as much time. With their increased confidence, students can grasp concepts much more quickly.

Student text

In theory, the students can read the text and then do the workshop exercises. In practice, since the text is part of a classroom program, students do the workshop exercises first with the assistance of the teacher. Then they use the text to review the concepts covered and fill in any missing details.

The student text can stand on its own as a complete description of the basic principles of defense. Each lesson contains a narrative description of the concepts involved supplemented with ample illustrations to help the students absorb the ideas. It is essentially the basis of the material covered by the teacher in the first hour of each lesson.

Student workshop

This section of the program contains the classroom exercises and practice deals. For each lesson, approximately four exercises are introduced covering the fundamentals of defense; one exercise focuses on play and one exercise concentrates on bidding.

The remaining exercises consist of the deals themselves. The design of the deals is a key element

to the success of the program. The following ideas are incorporated:

- The deals move sequentially from one concept to the next and do not involve concepts which have not yet been covered. Within each lesson, the deals sometimes move from one-step problems (*e.g.*, involving only one concept such as a finesse) to two-step problems (*e.g.*, combining a finesse with ruffing declarer's winners) to three-step problems (*e.g.*, watching entries while taking a finesse and ruffing declarer's winners). In addition, deals in subsequent lessons incorporate the material from previous lessons as the students build up confidence and ability.
- The deals contain an element of excitement and drama for the students. This does not mean that they are complex. Instead, they focus on the concepts the students will encounter with considerable frequency rather than some exotic situation that rarely occurs. The students get excited seeing the concept in action and learning they would be unable to defeat the contract without utilizing it.
- The deals need to be authentic in the sense that the students are taught to defend in the same manner as an expert would defend. There should be no scope to deviate from the recommended defense to improve on the result. Even though the deals are pre-dealt, the students should not be given the impression that the situation is artificially contrived.
- The *Defense in the 21st Century* course presents a good opportunity to reinforce the sound bidding and play practices introduced in the *Bidding in the 21st Century* and the *Play of the Hand in the 21st Century* courses. The deals are representative of the various contracts that one would encounter during a session of bridge: a mixture of suit and notrump contracts; a mixture of partscore and game contracts with the occasional slam contract; a mixture of bidding situations including overcalls and takeout doubles.
- The deals illustrate the point they were intended to make. If the students apply the appropriate principle, they defeat the contract. Otherwise, the declarer makes the contract.
- The deals give each student at the table an opportunity to be declarer. While it is easier for students to understand a deal presented in a textbook with South as the declarer, the pre-dealt deals are presented with declarer in various positions at the table. The dealer is not always the declarer, and the declarer does not automatically rotate clockwise around the table. This is to ensure that the deals more closely simulate real action at the table and to add an element of drama to each deal.

Summary

The *Defense in the 21st Century* course is designed to focus on the defense. Although bidding and play are discussed, the exercises move the students quickly through the material so that they don't take over the lesson.

It is important that the deals be pre-dealt so that there is time for the students to play the deals.