**3.3 INSTRUCTIONS – JUNIOR COURSE BIDDING**

It is time for the second course in the series. In the first course, your students went through card play. Now it is time to introduce the bidding. One thing about this material is that it is based on five-card major openings. For you, the teacher, this will be an exciting and interesting experience. Already now, we want to draw your attention to the fact that you cannot teach the old systems you have taught before. A nice challenge for you, the teacher!

The compendium contains all the things you need to cover in the course. In this document, you will find some suggestions of what to emphasize and some choices of words which are good or less good. Some chapters are more self-explanatory than others. There will be students who understand how to ask for aces in 20 seconds, while others will take the entire semester to grasp the concepts of 1-over-1 and 2-over-1. This is a reason why the tips for different lesson vary a lot in length. Some chapters are simply more difficult to grasp than others.

Even if you think that four-card major openings are better than five-card ones, you should not talk about this in the course. Different methods have different advantages, but should a four-card opening be better on a certain hand, do not tell this to the students. Instead contact the authors of the material.

Some Advice from the Instruction to Course 1

The sections below concerns the creation of a friendly and safe classroom environment.

One basis of making students feel happy is to make them feel safe in the classroom. This can be done by keeping a *proper order* in the class. Be observant of what happens. *Eye contact and body language* is more important than any number of words. You have to win confidence of both the group and the individuals. *Learning all students’ names* often gives a good effect. A student whose name you know, feels seen.

Speak clearly and use words that the students understand. This is very important when you talk about bridge, which does have a language of its own. You will need to be *overly clear* when you explains certain things in bridge. Terms that are obvious to you, are not at all obvious to your students. If you can teach using humor, it is very good.

You may start with a short story about how you yourself started to play bridge. The most important thing to mention is that you learn new things every time you play bridge, and that this is both a challenge and the really fun part. Also feel free to tell about your own lack of knowledge and skill for example, by saying that “I don’t understand everything myself, but the more I train, the more I learn.” Bridge is a game of mistakes, and you, the teacher, must be seen as a human capable of mistakes. This will make the students less afraid of failure. Let the classroom be a place where you are allowed to be wrong, and learn from it.

Use Help from Assistant Teachers

You should use help from assistants, especially in the beginning, when you introduce bidding and the bidding box. It is much easier for the students to grasp (mentally and literally!), if they see it in real life, rather than reading about in a book.

Planning the Junior Course Bidding

The disposition of the material is ready for you, and we strongly recommend that you start with Chapter 1, continue with Chapter 2, and so on. How much you will be able to cover every time depends on how long your lessons are and the group you are teaching. In the beginning, new students typically plays one deal in around 15 minutes, but this varies very much. As the course goes on, the time per deal becomes shorter and shorter, and you will be able to cover more deals. You must adapt your teaching after how much time you have. In two hours, you will probably be able to cover one chapter in the compendium, if everyone will have time to play all the deals. This is not the idea, and normally, 1.5 hours should be enough per lesson. Note that there will be large differences between low years (1-3), higher years (7-9), and grownup students. It is not only a question of age, but also of how used your students are in playing cards.

A Typical Lesson

Start with a short repetition of the last lesson. This is important to make the knowledge stick, especially in bridge, since earlier problems and solutions usually come back in a refined format.

Then go over today’s chapter. This should not take longer than 10-15 minutes, especially when you teach younger students. They want to get to the card play as soon as the can.

Let the students ask questions. No question is too silly. Many question sis a sign of a good classroom “climate.”

Below is a list of what to mention during each of the lessons. If you have ideas for own additions, and you think that they could be useful for other bridge teachers, please contact the authors of this material. The same is true if you want to remove something.

Chapter 1 – Opening Bids and Responses

This is the first time the students will meet bidding and the bidding box. It is something new to them and it will take time. It is also important to get this right from the beginning, or you will have problems in future lessons.

Show both the bidding and the bidding box by demonstrating how it works. Sit down at a table with three other people and bid together with them. Show who starts the bidding (dealer) and how the bidding continues. The students will see how each player puts their bidding cards in a straight line with all calls visible in the order they were given.

You must make the students see the connection between the bidding and the “stair.” Of course it is good to know different hcp limits, but most of these will fall in place when the student knows what limits the stair has for different bid levels. A major suit opening shows at least five cards, and a minor suit opening show at least three. A player needs 12 hcp to open.

Explain the concepts of opener and responder, and make sure that the students understand that every player at the table can become one or the other. There are many hcp limits, and the students will have to learn them by heart, and understand where they come from.

Trumps support is a central concept. Make sure that the students realize that eight or more cards together on both hands is what we are after.

The authors have chosen the phrase “the longest minor.” It is a common concept to open “the best minor,” but it is the length that decides, and with equal lengths, there are two rules (diamonds with 4-4 and clubs with 3.3, as in SAYC and Two-Over-One).

A general advice is to try and get the students to understand that bridge is a game where we must cooperate, rather than a single layer making his own decisions. Both players give information to partner, and when one of them knows enough, he can make the final decision. Good questions are:

*“What have you told your partner?”*

*“What has your partner told you?”*

*“What is your combined strength?”*

Try to ask questions where both players are involved at the same time.

Chapter 2 – Responses without Support

Responder shows a new suit. Here it is important to tell that a new suit from responder implies that there is no trump support.

Playing four-card majors, one saying goes “look for majors.” In five-card majors, it is better to say “responder should look for four-card majors.”

When opener makes his second bid, there are new hcp limits. When opener is to choose his bid, he should ask two questions:

1. Which hand type do I have (support, two-suited, one-suited, or balanced)
2. Where am I in hcp, in my original interval?

In this chapter, there is only one hand type (trump support), but it is good to say that opener observes that he has support.

The second question may need some work. Tell that opener showed 12-21 hcp with the first (opening) bid. The second bid should be seen as relative to the first interval:

Hot cards = bid high

Luke warm = bid in the middle

Cold card = stay low

Chapter 3 – Notrump Bidding

Be careful to say that opener needs both 15-17 hcp and a balanced hand to open 1NT. Also make sure that 1NT has priority over one of a suit. The responses to 1NT should be connected to the stairs’ hcp limits.

Discuss the concept of invitation. You may explain it as meaning:

*“Partner, do you have a minimum or a maximum, compared to what you have already shown?”*

Chapter 4 – Notrump Bids and Overcalls

When opener bids 1NT in the second round, the students must understand that he cannot have 15-17 balanced. If so, he would have opened 1NT. Try to get them to understand this negative inference, since it is very common in bidding systems. When opener bids notrump in the second round, he is either weaker than 15-17 or stronger.

Do not say “a jump in notrump shows 18-19 hcp.” It is not correct, when the bidding goes 1X-1NT. In the same way, do not say “notrump on the lowest level shows 12-14 hcp.” It is better to say:

“If opener bids notrump on the same level as responder, it shows 12-14 hcp.”

“If opener bids notrump on the next level, it shows 18-19 hcp.”

The exact wording is not important, but use “the same level” and “the next level.”

Also mention opener’s hand type, because now there are two different hand types (support and balanced).

The most important thing about overcalls is to make the students understand that even if one side has opened, the other side can also bid.

Overcalls in a suit is usually easy, because most people feel like bidding when they have a good suit. Be more careful with the 1NT overcall. Here, the stopper is important. Give an example of what may happen without a stopper.

Chapter 5 – Different Hand Types

Be careful about the concept 2-over-1.

1. It only exists as responder’s first bid
2. It happens when responder bids a lower suit than the opening suit
3. A jump to two in a suit is something completely different
4. Be careful about the concept 2-over-1

Here you must explain what a jumping bid is. If you bid a suit on the two level, and you could have bid in on the one level, it is a jump, and not a 2-over-1.

A rule of memory for hcp is that 1-over-1 is 6 hcp and 2-over-1 is 12. Twice as much!

Explain the concept of “forcing to game.” Both players should trust that neither of them passes before game is reached.

Explain carefully that 1NT-over-1 does not promise a balanced hand. A 1-over-1 in a suit has priority over 1T-over-1.

Here you can also remind the student’s about the questions of opener’s hand types and strengths.

Chapter 6 – Doubles

There are many ways of explaining a take-out double. In addition to the text, you may point out that the double is a good call, because it informs about three suits, not just one. Also explain that partner must bid, even with no points.

A difference here is that partner to the doubler jumps directly to higher levels with a strong hand. In other situations, he may advance slowly with forcing bids.

Tell that penalty doubles are relatively unusual, but that they do occur. Point out that you get more points if you beat a doubled contract, but also that the opponent’s get more points if they make it.

Chapter 7 – Weak Two Openings and Preempts

The most important aspect in this chapter is that hcp are not the only way to evaluate a hand. Try to make the students count tricks when responding to preempts. Point out that honors in partner’s suit are very valuable.

Two balanced hands = think hcp!

One balanced plus one unbalanced = think tricks!

In the part about sacrifices, point out that the relative result is the important one, not the absolute point value.

Chapter 8 – Strong Hands

Here the new challenge is the concept of an artificial bid. The example in the compendium is good. A strong hand with spades opens two clubs (!). Also explain the point limits. One of a suit went up to 21, so two clubs must start at 22. With 18-19 you open one of a suit and with 20-21 you open 2T. The point limits *touch each other but do not overlap.*

Explain how responder must bid all the way to game, even when he has no points. Responder may be very weak, but opener is very strong. Also explain that 10 hcp with responder is very much. You are close to slam. The message is that it is our combined strength that matters, even if one hand is very weak.

Chapter 9 – More on Notrump Bidding

Start with repeating previous notrump bidding.

Transfer bids provide an excellent opportunity to explain that the suit bid and the suit shown are not always the same thing. A transfer is a bid that “demands” that partner bids the suit you want him to bid. As notrump opener, it is important to trust partner and do what he wants.

It is easy to mess up Stayman and transfers. You may explain:

If responder has *five or more* cards in *one* major – transfer

If responder has *four cards in one of both majors* – Stayman

Here, the students will face another logical conclusion from an omission. 1NT-2♣; 2♥-3NT. 2♣ shows at least one major. When responder does not accept ♥, he must have spades. This is a good practice in logics!

Explain that the whole purpose of both these methods is to find out whether the pair has a four-card major trump suit, and also to get the stronger hand to declare.

Chapter 10 – Asking for Aces

The ace-asking bid is a final check, to avoid a slam if we are missing two aces. Even if we seem to have a lot of hcp (enough for slam), it is good to make sure that we have enough aces.

Some students may not like that the 5 club response can be zero or four aces. Explain that the previous budding will tell.