

Slow play: The curse of the game

By Patty Johnson

An old tournament director friend of mine, John "Spider" Harris, was famous for the saying: "Slow play is the curse of the game." Nothing is more frustrating for tournament directors than having to herd players along like cattle when slow play isn't actually the problem.

If you take a moment to think about it, most of your opponents do not take that long to bid or play a deal - yet before you know it, the round is being called and you are nowhere near finished with the last board.

Here are some suggestions which, if followed, would solve many of our problems.

First: Do not postmortem between deals whether you are in a pair game or a Swiss team event. Finish the round and then discuss hands if there is still time. We, as directors, will not cut your time but I think you will find yourselves under less pressure by following this suggestion. Remember: We provide hand records in pair games so you don't have to worry about forgetting a particular holding.

Second: If you are on opening lead, make your lead before recording the contract in your private score. You will have plenty of time after leading to record the information and still see the entire first trick.

Third: Unless you have a legitimate reason to leave the table, such as the restroom or a smoke break, please remain at the table and visit with your opponents. You might actually find this enjoyable and a new way to make friends or future Swiss team partnerships.

I wish we could make these suggestions into rules enforceable by penalty, but none of us wants a bridge event decided by the pair with the fewest penalties. All I can do as a director is to ask the cooperation and help of all players because I think not only you but everyone else will enjoy their tournaments more.

Remember: Those who enjoy a tournament will continue to play. Do your part to make bridge enjoyable for yourself, your partner and your opponents - you can't play without them.

*Patty Johnson of Sebring FL, is a retired National
Tournament Director*

Source: NABC Daily Bulletins