

A Bad & Awful Book Review

By Jared Johnson
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“Nobody’s any good at this game; the top players are just less bad than the rest.”

So says top player Michael Rosenberg of New York City. In his new book, *Bridge Master vs. Bridge Amateur* (Master Point Press of Toronto), Mark Horton suggests that the gulf between the top players and everyone else is not as wide as it seems. *“The chance to make esoteric plays just doesn’t come up often enough.”* He suggests that there are two keys to getting to the top, regularly taking advantage of small opportunities for gain in bidding and play (that won’t pay off every hand, but will yield dividends in the long run), and avoiding pointless errors. The book is a potpourri of tips for every area of the game, bidding, play and defense.

One example: Most players like to bid, so it won’t be hard to accept the recommendation to preempt more often and more aggressively. Horton provides a sample hand where preempting three diamonds between two bidding opponents, non-vulnerable against vulnerable of course, on jack-sixth of diamonds and an outside king works well. In actual tournament play the bid prevented the opponents getting to their normal slam.

Echoing the Rosenberg quote that launches the book, Horton closes with a quote from Bob Hamman of Dallas, the top ranked player in the world for a quarter century, and now ranked second, *“The best play badly and the rest are awful.”*

Then he makes one final pitch for concentration. Don’t rush to make a bid or a play. He quotes former chess prodigy and world champion, Bobby Fischer, *“When you have found a good move, look for a better one.”*