

A Thousand Strategies -Book Review

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The *Encyclopedia of Card Play Techniques at Bridge* by Guy Leve (Master Point Press of Toronto) lives up to its name. The author has painstakingly collected and catalogued bridge hands with the aim of describing every possible tactic available to declarer and defenders during the play of a hand, from the commonplace to the exceedingly rare. A thousand types of strategies are included in this comprehensive compendium.

Topics include basic finesses as well as ruffing finesses, endplays, plus a variety of squeeze plays that take up more than a third of the book. There's the ducking play, hold up play, avoidance play, loser-on-loser play, a bunch of deceptive plays (always fun), blocking and unblocking plays, uppercuts, trump coups and the like.

Some of the diagrams are complete hands, and some are limited to single suits.

The book isn't easy reading, probably for ambitious advanced intermediates on up. There is an immense amount of material here. Master even 25% of it and your game will improve immeasurably.

Some of the coups catalogued are familiar, the Bath Coup, the Alcatraz Coup, the Vienna Coup, the Merrimac Coup, the Deschappelles Coup and the like but some included in the section on deceptive plays will be new to most readers.

How about the Coca-Cola Coup? Late in the play of a hand, and with there having been many discards, declarer *South* had a count on the hand. He had two small clubs in hand and was leading toward the ace-queen in dummy, the first time the suit had been played. Declarer knew left hand opponent had two clubs and right hand opponent only one.

As declarer played a small club from hand and left hand opponent followed low, *East* as right hand opponent seemingly nonchalantly ordered a coke from a passing waiter. Why would he pick that time to order a coke? Arguably unethically, *East* was bending over backwards to appear uninterested in the hand. Declarer saw through the ruse, and against the normal probabilities, called for dummy's ace, dropping *East's* singleton king.

If *South* had taken the finesse, losing to the singleton king, *East* had a good heart to cash. Sneaky.

There is also the Cigarette Coup, another psychological ploy from Victor Mollo's fictional Menagerie series, the Al Capone Coup, and a section enticingly titled, "Creating confusion so something good might happen."