

Outplay the Computer - Software Review

Jan Janitschke and Norma Sands, both of Denver, are the proud authors of a new piece of computer software for improving your bridge game. The program is based on a format developed by bridge and computer expert Fred Gitelman of Las Vegas.

Jan Janitschke is the top masterpoint holder in Colorado, winner of several national championships, and has been a professional bridge player for over 30 years.

Norma Sands is also one of the top masterpoint holders in the state, with numerous regional and sectional titles, and has been teaching the game for several decades.

Bridge Master 2000 (CD-ROM) allows you to improve your declarer play by testing you against the computer on a variety of deals. The computer, of course, defends well, which means that most of the mistakes you make will lead to the defeat of your contract. There are 100 hands for intermediates to experts, and supplemental sets are available.

Many years ago there was a book with a collection of bridge stories, including one about a fellow playing against a super computer. Of course, in a way, the computer cheated, because anytime the fellow chose a line of play that was less than optimum (namely the one line of play that would guarantee the contract against any distribution of the opposing cards), the evil computer would shuffle around the opposing hands, to make sure he went down in his contract. But of course, we now have something close to that learning tool for real. As it is, most of the time in real life, when you make a mistake as declarer or choose something less than the optimum line of play, the defenders' cards are not so unluckily distributed that you end up paying for your mistake. So sometimes players blunder blithely on, thinking they had played the hand well.

Think how fast your game would improve if every single time you adopted anything other than the best line of play, you failed. A lot of rude awakenings but instructional ones (ahh yes, you could have protected against that five-zero break in a side suit, etc).

Learning by trial and error only works when you know that you have erred. At the real life bridge table, bad play often goes unpunished and sometimes even rewarded (you take an inferior line of play that happens to work on the distribution of cards on that hand).

Bridge Master 2000 (Sands/Janitschke edition) is available for \$39.95 plus \$4.00 postage and handling from Rocky Mountain Books at POB 100663, Denver, Colo., 80201 or 303 771-6654. Or, call Baron Barclay Bridge Supplies at 1 800 274 -2221.

Or contact Bridge Base Inc. at 10550 Hope Mills Dr. in Las Vegas, 89135 or 702 341-9993 or bbi@bridgebase.com

Lots of choices.