

## *Plan Before You Play* - Book Review

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**P***lan Before You Play*. It's good advice and also the name of a new bridge book by Howard Ringel (*Virtualbookworm.com* Publishing, College Station, Texas).

It is often said that many contracts are thrown away by not giving the hand sufficient thought at trick one. Sometimes declarers just start grabbing tricks, especially on what looks like an easy hand, and then go "into the tank" when there's a bad snag, like a bad suit break. It is often the case that with proper planning at the beginning of the hand, you could have surmounted the bad luck. But now, it's too late.

Ringel suggests you ask yourself a battery of questions at the beginning of each hand, such as: How many tricks do I need (sometimes it's how many losers do I have)? How many tricks have I got off the top? Which suits offer the best possibility for more tricks? Is there a suit that threatens the contract (what could go wrong and how can I guard against it?).

In what order should I play my cards? How many trumps are out? Can I pull them all without delay (sometimes not if you have to do some ruffing, often in the short hand, before drawing trumps)?

With slight variations, the author usually asks one of two basic lists of questions at the start of each hand. The answers guide you to the optimal line of play.

And always remember the auction during the play of the hand. Many players seem to forget the bidding the minute dummy comes down. Of course, if the opponents were silent, then you have few clues (although sometimes even a failure to bid could imply something).

If they bid, that information may prove invaluable, a possible map to where the outstanding high cards are, and some indication of opposing suit splits.