

# *The Elusive Masterpoint* - Book Review

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Novices and intermediates will want to take a look at Carl Vancelette's *The Elusive Masterpoint* (Squeeze Books, Vivisphere Publishing, Pough-keepsie, N.Y., 1 800 724-1100) and even more accomplished players may be reminded of their first hard struggles to attain Life Master by reading Vancelette's various tales about his life in bridge. Vancelette is currently a Bronze Life Master (500 to 1,000 masterpoint category) so likely he still isn't claiming top rank expert status. But who knows, maybe listening to someone who has recently been there, warning you of all the pitfalls one may encounter on the road to basic proficiency, will prove more illuminating than hearing from someone for whom the early days are so long ago, that they don't necessarily have a good grasp of what it's like to be tackling bridge and the duplicate and tournament scene for the first time.

And indeed, there are lots of pitfalls for the newer player. One is the tendency to want to add all the fancy gadgets and gimmicks, too many complications, to their convention card as quickly as possible, because "that's what the experts play." Playing the conventions you adopt well is more important than how many conventions you play.

Partnership trust and knowing what each other's bids actually mean, may be worth more than certain technical skills in the play of the cards.

And if you're not going to have fun, what's the point?

And, perhaps most importantly, there is no way you are going to attain even basic bridge proficiency, much less expert status, without countless disasters at the bridge table. You've got to get past the bad results.

Even most winning games in a single 26 hand session are likely going to include a couple of really rotten results.

When you get a bad result, what is your reaction? Do you try to learn from it, or at least quickly go on to the next hand, and forget about it? Or do you let it make you mad? Do you let it distract you from the future hands?

Do you try to immediately make up for it by taking a wild chance on the very next hand, thus more likely fetching yourself two bad results in a row, instead of getting back to average?

Composure and temperament are key elements in the progress of any bridge player. And don't criticize partner at the table. Then he or she gets defensive and blows the next hand because he or she is still busy thinking about the disaster.

There's plenty of witty writing, valuable insights and entertaining hands.

So, read the book or just get out there and head to the nearest bridge club or tournament and start compiling your own stories.