

The Lessons of Experience  
*Or*  
What I learned from the 2010 CNTCs

*By Neil Kimelman*

***Here is an article I wrote over a decade ago, about my experience in The 2010 Canadian Open Team Championships. NK***

They say experience is the best teacher. I agree wholeheartedly. I and my teammates spend many hours, alone and together, pouring over hands. We look for the good and the bad, and find both in abundance. We are always future-focused. That is, less concerned about laying blame, and more intent on having an agreement for next time a certain situation reappears.

So I thought I would share what I took away from the 2010's edition of our Canadian Bridge Week Championships (CBCs). Hopefully you can enjoy some learning as well, either through the following experiences, or from your own.

**Lesson #1 - Know when Exclusion Blackwood applies.**

I made the decision to review my partnerships agreements on Exclusion Blackwood after one pair on our team playing in 5♦ on the following two hands from Day 1 of the Round-Robin:

♠ KJ8	♠ AQ65432
♥ K9	♥ A3
♦ QJ10	♦
♣ AJ1085	♣ KQ76

-600 and -2210 meant 21 IMPs to the bad guys.

**Lesson #2 – Beware of bids that may allow the opponents to double, thus finding a good sacrifice.**

You hold: ♠Void ♥QJ109865 ♦AJ972 ♣2. Nobody vulnerable and partner opens 1♣. Over your 1♥ response partner bids 3♥! Now what? I decided that this was not a time for science as it would be hard to find out everything that I needed to know.

I had no fear of playing in 4♠ since partner and I had recently reviewed Exclusion Blackwood, but was more concerned with giving east a chance to double my 4♠ bid, and possibly find a profitable sacrifice. So I bid a simple 6♥, and all was well when partner tabled ♠KQ42 ♥A743 ♦K6 ♣A96.

### Lesson #3 – The 2NT Runout.

On day 2 we had a narrow win over the Daniel Korbel team (more about them later). It could have been more had I got this one right: None Vul., you as north hold ♠84 ♥Q9742 ♦J95 ♣A104. The bidding proceeds:

West	North	East	South
Wolpert	Kimelman	Korbel	Gohl
-	-	Pass	1♠
2♥	Pass	2NT	Pass
Pass	?		

Had east passed I would have passed 2♥ doubled. Do I penalize 2NT? I chose not to double. The full deal:

♠ 84  
♥ Q9742  
♦ J95  
♣ A104

♠ 2	♠ KJ75
♥ AKJ105	♥ 86
♦ 843	♦ Q1062
♣ K985	♣ Q72

♠ AQ10963  
♥ 3

♦ AK7  
♣ J63

At the other table 2♥ doubled was -500. We beat 2NT two for +100, and lost 9 IMPs. I discussed this hand with Daniel later. He said he has used this bid in the past to ward off a possible reopening double and a penalty pass. Running later will almost always fetch a double. One key of this bid is to have soft values with stoppers in the opener's suit.

In retrospect I still think a double, though a bit aggressive, is right. Partner should now know to lead a heart which should be the best lead, and avoid kicking a trick. It also will allow partner to place you with some high card points that he likely would not otherwise. Doubling would have led to down four, +800.

**Lesson #4** – Opening one of a minor with 6-5 hands.

This hand contributed greatly to our 47-4 rout of the Janicki team on Day 1:

♠ AJ3  
♥ K1096  
♦ 832  
♣ Q84

♠ Q95	♠ K108764
♥ 2	♥ Q74
♦ AKJ9654	♦ Q10
♣ 109	♣ 72

♠ 2  
♥ AJ853  
♦ 7  
♣ AKJ654

In my book I talk about the importance of opening one a minor when 6-5 with a major. Experience has shown me it is better to get to the right suit, even if one level higher.

To my satisfaction my partner Karl Gohl opened 1♣. After a overcall of 1♦, I bid 1♥. After key card partner put me in 6♥, knowing we had at least a 9 card heart

fit, which would increase the chances of finding the ♥Q. The opponents bidding made it relatively easy to pick up the queen, and we won 11 IMPs.

There is more than one lesson here. Experience has also shown me that a 1♥ bid is better than a negative double, which always shows 4-4 or 4-5 in the majors.

### Lesson #5 – Bid 3NT when it is right!

This is not something new to experienced players. Nine tricks are often easier than ten or eleven, and you are not subject to bad trump breaks, ruffs etc... The only downside is that 3NT is the best defended contract, probably because it is the most frequent contract!

In our 5<sup>th</sup> match on day one my teammates, Doug Fisher and Bob Todd, bid two 3NT contracts for pickups. They were notable for two different reasons:

♠ KQ852  
♥ KJ643  
♦ 97  
♣ 8

♠ 10763	♠ J94
♥	♥ AQ107
♦ A6532	♦ KJ
♣ J432	♣ AKQ6

♠ A  
♥ 9852  
♦ Q1064  
♣ 10975

West	North	East	South
Todd		Fisher	
-	-	1♣	Pass
1♦	1♥!	2NT	Pass
3NT	All Pass		

The 2NT rebid shows 19-20 HCPs. Still, it's not easy bidding 3NT with a void in the opponent's suit.

The next one I find a little more instructive:

♠ KJ2  
 ♥ 6  
 ♦ J98643  
 ♣ 865

♠ Q643	♠ A1075
♥ 842	♥ AJ105
♦ Q1052	♦ K7
♣ J10	♣ AQ7

♠ 98  
 ♥ KQ973  
 ♦ A  
 ♣ K9432

West	North	East	South
Todd		Fisher	
-	-	1♣	1♥
Dble	Pass	2NT	Pass
3NT	All Pass		

2NT is the best bid. It shows your high cards accurately, protects your K♦, and you have great hearts. Bob Todd wisely chose not to investigate a 4-4 spade fit. The key is his heart length. It is easy to envision the opponents being able to negotiate heart ruffs, whereas the heart suit might be difficult to set up in no-trump with north short in that suit.

A spade contract can easily be subject to one or more heart ruff. Switch the K♥ with the A♥ and you see the defence can take the first six tricks! (A♥, ♥ ruff, back to the A♦ for another ♥ ruff with the J♠, ♦ ruff, ♥ ruff with the K♠). On the actual hand 4 spades is down two and 3NT made fairly easily.

**Lesson #6 – Selecting a Quarter Final Opponent when you do well in the Round-Robin Phase.**

After much experience in finishing in the 4-8 spots during the previous 5+ years, our team (TODD) was determined to finish in the top three at the end of the Round-Robin, thus controlling to some extent the team we will face.

Despite losing our last two matches we ended up 2<sup>nd</sup> only 3 IMPs out of first. We had a choice of 3 teams – yeah!!! To our regret we chose the five person KORBEL team. This is despite having lost to Daniel (with different team members) in last year's CNTC quarter finals. Sure enough we ended up in the same place losing after being down lots after three quarters.

The lesson – DO NOT CHOOSE KORBEL AGAIN! EVER!

However it goes a bit deeper. My guess is that the KORBEL squad (Korbel, Wolpert, Miles, Taylor, Balcombe) has a much lower average age than the other two choices we had – HANNA (Hanna, Lebi, Cannell, Kirr, Hobart, Mittleman) and THURSTON (Thurston, Willis, Lindop, Baxter).

Korbel beat us (we had two 'older' players on our team). HANNA and THURSTON lost their quarter final matches. Hmmm....

Anyways that is it for this year. I have grown to embrace the adage, 'What doesn't kill you makes you stronger.' There is always Regina in 2011 (or 2025 in Toronto). See you there!