

Dear Players:

So here you are! You've come from far and wide to play our wonderful game at a National, Regional, or Sectional tournament. Good for you!

When you finally reach your destination, you are going to have some especially rewarding experiences. ACBL marketing and education departments have put together a fabulous program of lectures, workshops, and games, just for you, and all free!

One peculiar thing we've all noticed...the observation that you Newcomers seem to be having more fun than anyone else at the Nationals. You may notice that you have your own separate rooms. Have you wondered why? You laugh too much and are having *way* too much fun! You are a Bad Example.

There's no question you Novices are as competitive as the Open players. You are just as eager to win Masterpoints, although many of you are confused about pigmented points. (You're not alone!) You're just as intense when you bid and play. You enjoy your postmortems with the same verve as do your more experienced counterparts. You love looking at the hand records and examining alternatives.

So just why is it that you seem to be having more fun. Hmmm. Here are a couple thoughts.

1. You still think this is just a game, not a career choice. (This Holiday time of year it's easy to spot the Newcomers...they are in the malls shopping and in the store buying ingredients for cookies. Open players do all their shopping on-line at 3 a.m., don't cook any major meals, get rid of visitors after a couple hours—all so they can get back to their REAL job...at the bridge club.)

2. You can still have fun, even if you don't win. A well-played hand, even by an opponent, is a pleasure, the social interaction is exciting...especially at a tournament with all those NEW friends-to-be.

3. The game itself is your focus, rather than the win or loss. How the bidding went, the mysteries of the lie of the cards, is where your attention is. This is hard to verbalize, but the pleasure for many of you is still in the process rather than the outcome. Do you know what I mean?

4. And this one, I think, is the biggie. You aren't so positive you are right that you feel it necessary to castigate your partners and opponents about being wrong. The point of the discussions you have aren't centered on who was right or wrong, but more on "Where did the train that hit me come from?"

This is not to say that Open players aren't having fun or are grumpy and accusatory. Not at all. It just seems that you Newcomers are having more fun than anyone in the joint. Whatever you're doing, don't stop!!

(P.S. If you have any thoughts on why Newcomers seem to be having so much fun, email me at mronemus@comcast.net. I'd love to hear what you're thinking.)