



the bookworms
albert and wendy
macdonald

This week's reviews were very enjoyable to do, as we are great bridge fans. Due to the number of books that are being reviewed, we have recruited that infamous bridge fiend, Dave MacRae, to review along with us. All but two of these are Dover publications and are easily available through the Card Shop. The other two are not worth ordering.

The Dover publications being reviewed this week are: Duplicate Bridge—Alfred Sheinwold \$2.35
The Precision System—C.C. Wei
Bridge Squeezes Complete—Clyde Love \$3.25
Bridge Conventions, Systems, and Plays—Terence Reese
Play Bridge With Reese—Terence Reese \$3.00

The Barclay publications: Elementary Bridge, and Intermediate Bridge, both by Shirley Silverman, and both \$1.25.

Alfred Sheinwold, one of the world's most prolific (and best) bridge writers, has clearly put together another winner in his Duplicate Bridge. While this book contains enough "meat" to satisfy even the most hardened veteran of the tournament circuit, it is clearly aimed at the good rubber bridge player who wishes to expand his horizons by tackling the more challenging game of duplicate.

As such, it does not tell you how to bid or play; rather it delineates the differences between the two games. In simple concise language it describes duplicate from the scoring to the bidding and playing styles to the various systems utilized by modern duplicate players. It even contains a section on how to run your own duplicate match.

So, if your interest is in the odd game around the Barn or in the residences, this book is not for you. But if you wish to expand your bridge horizons a little, there is no better way than to arm yourself with a copy of Duplicate Bridge -- and then haul your favorite partner off to the Charlottetown Duplicate Bridge Club (opposite the Tack Room in the Islander Motor Lodge, Monday and Friday nights at 8:00 p.m.)

C.C. Wei's "The Precision System" has to be among the most useless and uninteresting accounts of this system available. Of the three versions of this system which this writer has encountered -- Terence Reese's "Precision Bidding and Precision Play", Charles Goren's "Goren Presents The Precision System", and Wei's, the latter must clearly rank a definite third. The explanations are inadequate, the writing is dull, and the tone self-righteous.

Books on Bridge Cover Wide Range of Strategy

Wei may be justifiably proud of having created Precision--clearly the greatest advance in bidding theory since the point-count -- but as a writer he's a flop. The book's only redeeming feature is its account of the system's early success, and if that's what you want, there are better sources.

"Bridge Squeezes Complete" by Clyde Love is a superlative book which must be regarded as the definitive manual on this difficult but important area of bridge play. In reading this book I was at once struck by a sense of delight that someone had at last put together an account of squeezes which I could understand. It is written in clear terse language which reveals much.

Its one weakness is at the same time its major strength -- that it reads like a textbook. It is undoubtedly necessary for it to do so in order to explain its subject completely. In fact it was the first book that I have read where I found it useful to have a deck of cards at my side in order to play out the hand. For those willing to take the time and energy, this book could well be the most valuable book on advanced plays that you will ever read.

Finally, we come to the five books by Terence Reese, considered by many to be the greatest bridge player alive, and by many more (including myself) to be the greatest bridge writer. Note: Due to lack of space some of these will be reviewed next week. The first, "Bridge Conventions, Systems, and Plays", may be dismissed quickly. While its dictionary format enables it to cover its subject adequately even excellently, it suffers from the fault inherent in all dictionaries: great vocabulary, no plot.

In other words if a passing acquaintance with every major convention in use today is your desire then you need look no further. But if you expect this book to enable you to put together a coherent system of bidding and play--forget it.

The second, though, certainly deserves more than a passing yawn. Play Bridge With Breeze in sheer utility readability, insight and just plain enjoyment ranks far ahead of any other book being reviewed this week.

In this book Reese lets us look at the thought process of an expert, showing us the opening bid through to trick thirteen just how he thinks a hand through. A book that is designed more for the player with an ample knowledge of bridge it will be unreliable to your game.

With the economy of words and the sardonic comment that we have come to expect from this writer Mr. Reese has created a winner.

We were under the impression that Barclay Bridge Supplies were the bridge book suppliers of note. When we wrote for review copies we held high hopes of what they would be sending us.

Our hopes were dashed when we received two pamphlets for which they had the audacity to charge \$1.25 each. These books give a rather cursory examination of bridge in its most rudimentary terms. Ms. Silverman makes astounding generalities which this writer feels does more harm than good for example: Ms. Silverman says that in a no trump contract always refuse to win a trick the first or second time a suit is played to break communications. While this maybe an excellent idea in certain situations in no way is it an unwritten or written law.

The pamphlets are written in textbook form with answers at the bottom of pages. The author goes from extremely simple things to abstract laws which the beginner could not possibly follow in a regular game. For example on the same page she says count your points and then goes on to another law--find the opponents weaknesses. What puzzles me is that she has not told the beginner what are weaknesses and how the neophyte goes about finding them.

To sum up these books are poorly written, cheaply produced and overpriced. If Barclay Bridge supplies want to sell there works I hope they will come out with better materials.

As we have eleven bridge books to review we will complete them next week. Special thanks to Dave as he has completed about 90% of these reviews.



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