COTTON CLUB SECTIONAL | TOURNAMENT TIP #5

Tournament Etiquette & Keeping the Game Moving

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Making the Cotton Club Sectional a Great Experience for Everyone

Friendship and camaraderie are part of what makes duplicate bridge enjoyable. At NELABC and RDBC, we know many of our fellow players. The Cotton Club Sectional is an opportunity to extend that same warmth to visitors from other clubs.

Here are some simple courtesies and tournament habits that preserve our hospitality, protect fair competition, and help keep the game moving.

A Warm Welcome at Every Table

Introduce yourselves, greet each new pair, and thank opponents at the end of the round. Treat every player with the same respect, regardless of experience or masterpoint rank. Answer appropriate questions about your partnership agreements, silence phones, and follow the Director's instructions.

A Smooth Start to Every Board

- Wait until at least one opponent is present before removing hands from the board. Count your 13 cards face down before looking at them.
- Opening leader: confirm it is your lead, place the card face down, and ask, "Any questions, partner?" Give everyone the chance to clarify the auction before facing the lead. Making the face-down lead before writing down the contract is a useful routine. If there is a problem, call the Director rather than withdrawing the card yourself.
- Dummy: spread your cards promptly after the opening lead is faced, before recording the contract. Everyone should wait until their turn to play; dummy should not touch or select a card until declarer names it.

Finishing Each Board with Care

Before anyone mixes or returns cards to the board, agree on how many tricks each side won. If the result is disputed, leave the cards undisturbed and call the Director—do not attempt to settle a contested result yourselves. Enter the result promptly in the Bridgemate, have an opponent verify it, and return all cards to the correct pockets.

Respecting Cards and the Previous Trick

Before turning your own card face down, you may ask to see the cards just played to that trick. After turning it face down, you generally cannot require others to show theirs again; you may inspect your own card from the most recent trick until your side plays to the next trick, without exposing it. After a board, ask permission before examining or touching an opponent's cards, and keep any analysis brief.

Helping Everyone Stay on Schedule

Be seated and ready for each round, play at a reasonable pace, and move promptly when the Director calls the next round. Thoughtful decisions deserve time; unnecessary delays and long between-board discussions do not. If your table falls behind, ask the Director for help rather than hurrying or blaming another player.

A Little Consideration Goes a Long Way

Sectional tables may be closer together than usual to accommodate visitors. Speak clearly enough for your table, but quietly enough not to distract neighbors. A conversation that feels private may carry several tables away.

Protecting Information About Boards

Comparing hands with friends is one of bridge's pleasures—but save those conversations until the session is finished, away from anyone still playing. Avoid discussing auctions, contracts, scores, or unusual distributions within earshot of players who may not yet have seen the board, including your teammates in a team event.

Fair Play at the Table

Encourage your partner and give opponents room to concentrate. Save critiques, unsolicited lessons, and postmortems for an appropriate time. Avoid gestures or remarks that could suggest a play: for example, dummy should not reach toward a suit before declarer calls for a card or remind declarer, for example, "You're in your hand *with the spade Ace*," that is, the rules allow dummy to prevent declarer from playing from the board when the lead is in declarer's hand, but dummy cannot provide additional information which could suggest a line of play.

THE SHORT VERSION

Welcome our guests. Handle cards carefully. Lead face down. Confirm results. Keep conversations considerate and information protected. Help the tournament run smoothly.

COMING NEXT — TIP #6: STRATIFICATION AND MASTERPOINTS

You don't have to beat everybody! At an ACBL sectional, players with different masterpoint holdings compete in strata. Tip #6 explains what those strata mean and how you may earn masterpoints without winning the entire field.