**A Bridge to Inspired Declarer Play – Julian Laderman**

The author of this book will not be familiar to many, but his previous book “A Bridge to Simple Squeezes” which won the 2006 Book of the Year Award of the American Bridge Teachers’ Association, has already established him as a fine bridge writer. He continues the good work with this, his second bridge book.

The main part of this book comprises thirty eight declarer play problems set out two-to-a -page. In each case you are given the bidding (with explanation where needed) and then asked how you would proceed. Immediately following a set of four problems (on facing pages) you find the solutions, each taking up a full two pages. These not only give the recommended line of play which forms the answer to the specific problem but also a very clear explanation of the thought processes which should lead you to this correct solution. The author lists the type of play that has been explained and also the “inspirational features” that should be noticed and which should then point the declarer in the right direction.

A useful feature (especially for a bridge teacher who wishes to use some of the hands) is the final line of each solution, the “Create Deal Exercise”. Here, you are asked to modify the deal (either the defender’s hands or perhaps the declarer and dummy hands) so that you may consider if the recommended play is still appropriate under the changed circumstances. This answers the question often posed when given a problem of this type: “Yes, the answer works as the cards are, but what if...?” and the author gives sample deals with this modification to illustrate how to approach each under the changed circumstances. As an example, a problem may be given where one of the opponents opens the bidding with 1♠, and the line of play is suggested by the values shown by this opening bid. The “Create Deal Exercise” might then be “How would you play the hand if the opening bid had instead been a weak 2♠?”

After these modified deals, which have brief explanations of the way in which declarer’s play might have to be changed from the original problem, there are two appendices. These are both about probabilities, and are a strong clue as to the profession of the author (a New York maths professor). They will interest the more mathematically-minded reader, but will have limited appeal for most. I suspect that most readers will skip through these, although if they do they will miss some useful material on how to handle certain suit combinations.

The book is described on the back cover as aimed at the Newcomer/Intermediate player. I would strongly suggest that the newcomer would find most of these problems rather hard, but for the intermediate player (almost anyone who plays club bridge) they are really excellent. The problems are not grouped in any way, and my only (very minor) grumble is that each problem is given a heading (e.g. Safety First) which may, on occasion, give a clue to the right line of play. It would perhaps have been better to include the heading only on the page giving the solution to the problem.

I would strongly recommend this book for anyone short of expert who wishes to polish up their declarer play.