**The Setting Trick – Practical Problems in Bridge Defense  Ian McCance**

This is another book aimed at “Intermediate/Advanced” players, and I believe that it is more suited those who consider themselves advanced. There are one hundred problems where you are defending a contract and in each case you are given the bidding (with explanation) and the play to the first trick or the first few tricks. The question then posed is, in some form or other, “what next?”

The only fault with this style is that you are propelled to the point where you need to do something critical. Unfortunately, when we are playing there is no brilliant defensive player sitting at our shoulder who can lean forward at trick three (or four, or six) and ask “What do you do now?” We have to stop and figure it out for ourselves, and all too often we may find that the critical point came and went a trick or two ago. However, this is but a minor grumble.

There is no grouping of the hands into sections. Whilst it may be useful to teach a particular defensive technique by considering a number of hands illustrating it (e.g. holding up, trump promotions, etc) bridge in real life is not like that. As the author says, the deals are presented in no particular order and the level of difficulty is quite variable – because that is what bridge is like. A hand where you simply have to read correctly partner’s suit-preference signal may be followed by a rather more difficult hand where the right switch is needed to break up a squeeze later in the hand. Again, that is what defence is like – the straightforward followed by the difficult.

Another factor that makes this book stand out from others on defensive play is that the declarer is not infallible. Just as in real life, declarer makes mistakes, and the correct solutions to the defensive problems are sometimes based on taking advantage of these (usually slight) errors. This is only fair – why should we be the only ones allowed to make mistakes?

Defeating the contract is the aim in each of the deals – you are playing teams, not matchpoints, and the number of undertricks is unimportant. As the title implies, you are encouraged to find the setting trick – the fifth against three no trump, the second against a small slam, and so on.

I recommend this book for anyone who is serious about defence. The problems are grouped into sets of four, with the solutions following them, and tackling more than one or two of these quartets at once is quite hard work, but if you gradually work your way through this book your defence will become more thoughtful and more effective.