



# Anyone for Poker?



I've been watching some of the tennis from the Australian Open over the past few days. I am quite taken with Dominic Thiem's on-court presence. From his facial expression and his general demeanor, you can't tell whether he has just played a superb shot for a winner or totally mangled a great opportunity. The point is that players like this give no comfort to their opponents, in particular no hint that something has gone wrong.



This would be a great asset to bring to the Bridge table. Unfortunately, it's not something I'm renowned for! A couple of weeks ago, I totally misplayed a hand as declarer, leading a little diamond from my hand instead of an honour, and thereby blocking myself from dummy's winners. At the end of the hand, I started to say what I had done, but everyone already knew. *Just as well you don't play poker*, commented my partner. By contrast, there are players at the Club who are very hard to play against because you can never tell what they are thinking; have I made a killing lead? Have they missed a ruffing opportunity? They will not give you any help from their body language.



When you are declarer, controlling your body language is simply a means of not giving comfort to the enemy. But when you are a defender, or during the bidding, conveying information by body language is not only unwise, **it is unlawful**. If your partner alerts your bid and you suddenly realize you have forgotten your agreed system, put on your best poker face and bid on. If you signal for a particular suit lead and your partner ignores your signal, do not frown or shift in your seat or look glum; play on. Any indication to partner that something has gone wrong, or right, is unauthorized information and can bring the wrath of the Director upon you. And at the end of the hand, if you have done well, don't gloat, but if the opposition have done well, by all means congratulate them. Most of this is just good manners, and good sportsmanship, but sometimes it moves into the realms of lawfulness and ethics. So, the best advice is to practice your best poker face. In other words, do what I say not what I do!



**Peter Peterson, Tournament Director**