

CHAPTER 15

Apparent Insanity for Fun and Profit

There is something funny about the way a desperate player will act to avoid bankruptcy. The threat of losing the game seems to bring out the creativity and imagination in many people. After all, since it's only a game, why not try a really way-out deal? If every other player in the game is willing to go along with it, what's the difference?

We have collected a sampling of some of the zaniest, wackiest, but still useful ideas that we have seen. If you find yourself in a real bind, why not try to use one or two of them? You can hide your desperation behind your laughter, and who knows? Maybe one of the fish will bite! Don't be afraid to use your own imagination to save your real estate empire. They laughed at some of Rockefeller's ideas too!

The first idea can work if one of your opponents is getting really frustrated by a housing shortage. If that's the case and you need some money, tell him that for the right fee you'll be happy to (a) build a hotel on one property of a color group which has four houses on each property already, thus releasing four houses onto the market, or (b) sell houses back to the Bank from one of your cheaper color groups. If the other player has plenty of cash and nothing to spend it on, he might be willing to pay you a very tidy sum to make houses available. Remember: it is illegal to sell or transfer houses between players. You can only promise to return houses to the Bank.

Selling free passes and free lands is just like selling insurance, right? Why not really go all out in opening up your very own insurance company? Offer to insure anything if you're paid enough. Insure your opponents against ever having to pay \$50 to get out of Jail again? Why not? Let your imagination run wild!

Options bring out the gambling nature in players, so be blatant and offer to gamble if you need the money badly enough. The rules never prohibit gambling, and since you're not using real money, the local authorities should have no objection. If you need some cash, why not bet a friend a \$100 bill that he can't roll a higher number on one die than you can? If you're in trouble, what've you got to lose?

This next trick is a real beauty. A friend of ours once saved a game using this one. He landed on another player's hotel and was in big trouble. After scrounging and selling, he was \$30 short. With a wild, desperate look in his eyes, he asked us if there was any objection to his making up the difference with money *from his own wallet!* We knew that he didn't like to lose, but this was definitely a first. We finally decided that anyone who was that devoted deserved a chance to pay in real cash, so we reluctantly agreed. Sure enough, he took out his wallet and pulled \$30 . . . *in Monopoly money!* He had come to the game with a wallet full of Monopoly money, just to trap us on a sucker's proposition.

If you play with a jackpot in the game (usually consisting of money collected from various taxes, assessments, and other fines, and often an additional \$500 from the Bank), this trick can net you a good amount from the gamblers in the game. If you are on the street before Free Parking, why not offer to sell your next turn? For a fee, a player could buy whatever happened

to you on your next throw of the dice. If the board is built up with lots of hotels, you could use the same idea, only reversed. You could agree to absorb any penalties which your customer incurred on his next throw of the dice. The effect would be similar to that of selling him a free pass on your own color group, except you'd be obligated to pay (instead of waive) a debt. *Caution:* if you guarantee to pay him enough money to cover any debt and then find that you can't raise the money, you are *bankrupt* to him, so watch out for Chance squares which might present him with an unexpected "Advance to Boardwalk." Finally, you could offer to buy the rent collection privilege on another player's color group for one turn. For a fee to the owner, you would be entitled to collect all rents on that property during that turn. (Frankly, it's no more than a lease.)

You could even take the previous ploy one step further. You could sell your rights to the jackpot. For a large sum of money now, you could promise that if you are the next player to land on Free Parking, you will turn over all the cash you collect from the jackpot to the person who buys your option. If there is enough money in the jackpot, selling those rights can bring in a hefty chunk of cash.

This gambit is pushing it a bit, but if you laugh enough, it can net you a few dollars. If the game is being played at your house, open a little store! "Sell" drinks and refreshments, liquor, and cigarettes. Since most players will refuse to pay their Monopoly money directly to you, have them pay it into the jackpot. That will make the pot sweeter—with their money! If you happen to land there, you deserve it. After all, it was your idea!

This next ploy is a dirty trick and really should be avoided unless you are playing against your worst ene-

mies. If you're willing to tolerate screams and threats, then the next time you sell or trade a property to someone else, mortgage it before you transfer it to close the deal. Do this very quietly, and if your opponent asks you when you mortgaged it, begin to count your money very intently and to whistle "Home on the Range." This maneuver is a very painful way to pick up a few extra dollars, but some players use it. Watch out for opponents who do!

This trick is complicated and almost impossible to use successfully, but if you're well coordinated and a smooth talker, it can net you a couple of dollars in time of desperation. Take one of your utilities or Railroads (never risk a color property) and ask if anyone wants to buy it at any price. If nobody wants to buy it, mortgage it and then toss it into the Bank. Announce that the Bank is auctioning off this property, that nobody is interested in buying it, and that you will buy it for \$10. Sold! By this time, your opponents will all be staring at you, wondering what you think you're doing with these shady maneuvers. Now, here's the trick: when you bought the property at auction from the Bank, you bought it unmortgaged! Now, mortgage it a second time and collect your mortgage money again. This shouldn't work and rarely will, but you never know . . .

The final cash-raising tactic is the most difficult to pull off, but if your opponents have been drinking heavily, it just might work. Announce that you are setting up . . . (are you ready?) . . . a Legal Defense Fund! Declare that any contributions made to your defense fund are totally tax-deductible. Any such contribution may be deducted from whatever they are forced to pay when they draw a Chance card assessing a Poor Tax, a Community Chest card assessing a School Tax, or when they land on the Luxury Tax or Income Tax

squares. Maybe your inebriated opponents would rather pay you now and deduct the expense at tax time.

We make no claims for the legality of any of these gimmicks to save you from disaster. However, if you can use your negotiating skill to convince the other players in the game to permit you to use them, more power to you!

Here are some unusual strategies which don't apply to quick raising of money. Rather, they have a more general effect of adding crazy nuances to your game:

1. Try to go first! It may seem unimportant, but the player who goes first has an edge over the other players, especially the player who goes last. The first player has very little chance of landing on properties which have already been bought during his entire first trip around the board. He has first crack at every color group he can get to. By the time the third and fourth players roll the dice, several other players have already trampled over some of the best properties.

So what can you do if you have the bad luck to roll a low number before the game and appear doomed to go last? Why not offer the guy who rolled the highest number \$100 to switch places with you? The right to go first is worth at least \$100, so why not try to buy it? In some college tournaments, players place sealed bids to determine who goes first. One player decided that going first was such an advantage that he bid a record \$225 for the privilege. He even won the game! So don't feel foolish offering \$50 or \$100 for that precious first roll.

2. Everyone knows that a "Get out of Jail Free" card is worth \$50 (the cost of paying your way out of Jail), right? Guess again! A "Get out of Jail Free" card is worth whatever another player is willing to pay for it. This card has a very important use other than as the traditional key to the Jail. It is often used as a *cash transfer device*.

Suppose you want to loan a player \$500. The rules officially outlaw all loans, so you simply buy his "Get out of Jail Free" card for \$500. When he has enough money to pay you back, he can buy the card back from you for \$500. The rules say that the owner of the "Get out of Jail Free" card can sell it for whatever he can get. In fighting a balance-of-power battle, it can be an indispensable weapon. What happens if *you* own the "Get out of Jail Free" card when you want to loan another player money? Sell it to him for \$1 and buy it back for \$501! The "Get out of Jail Free" card was used for that very purpose in the last World Monopoly Championships.

What does this mean as far as the value of the "Get out of Jail Free" card is concerned? It means that if your opponent draws such a card, it would be a good idea to offer him \$70 for it. He'll look at you as if you're some sort of a nut, but just smile. If he hesitates, offer him \$80. As you can see, they can be handy little cards, and even if you don't have to use it as a cash transfer device, it's well worth the extra \$30 to watch your opponents go up a wall trying to figure out what you could possibly do with the card to make it worth any more than \$50.

3. This next maneuver is commonly referred to as the Abby Normal strategy. It's a real zinger! The method of this strategy is never to collect any of the petty rents—the ones under \$30. This strategy is widely used by many tournament players, even though it might at first appear totally insane not to collect money owed to you, no matter how small. Here are some of the major benefits of this strategy:

a. If you don't collect the small rents, maybe your opponents won't either. In that case, Monopoly games go much quicker, since the players no longer have to count out those pesky little \$14 rents. In fact, if everyone agrees not to collect rents under \$30, you can stop using \$1 and \$5 bills and round everything off to the nearest \$10. You'll find that if everyone stops collecting the little rents, it will all even out in the long run. It's the big rents that make the difference.

b. If your opponents continue to collect all the petty rents, they will start to feel very cheap. This is especially true when you explain that the reason you're not collecting the rents is to help the game move faster so that *everyone* will benefit.

c. Even if your opponents still continue to collect the little ones, it will be very easy for you to convince them that you either are crazy or are employing a secret strategy. This can make the game a lot more fun for you. Mix them up even more and only collect even-numbered rents or rents that are divisible by 7! Better still, don't collect small rents until someone lands on your Mediterranean Avenue. Then make a big fuss and insist on receiving your mighty \$2. If you want a real treat, watch your opponents' faces.

The Abby Normal strategy may seem a bit weird, but it can really make the game entertaining for you. And stranger things have been known to pay off.

4. Earlier in this book, you met Gary, a true worshipper of the Green group. Now we introduce his sister Karen, and what is affectionately known as the Karen Joy strategy. The idea behind this ploy is to completely confuse your opponents. Pretend that you've fallen in love with a different color group every few turns. This will keep them totally in the dark as to the color group you are really after. (This strategy can even be used if you're not really sure which one you're really after.) Every few turns, make some comment about this or that color group being the absolute *best* and the one that you would really love to have. The trick is to be completely sincere when you talk in praise of each color group. Your opponents will be completely unable to fathom how you can possibly change your mind so often. Stay sincere and keep your opponents guessing! This way, it will be very easy to acquire the color group you are really after.

5. Or how about the old Blue Chips maneuver? At the start of the game, announce that your pet lion has eaten all of the Monopoly money. Explain that you have substituted poker chips for the missing money. If your

opponents have never played poker before, then you're in great shape. After all, if everyone is confused as to the true value of their money, an enterprising young guy could do very well for himself. Just think . . .

This concludes the introduction to the humorous, desperate side of Monopoly games. The next time things start getting dull, why not put some life into things? There is no reason why you shouldn't enjoy yourself while methodically crushing your opponents!

CHAPTER 15 SUMMARY

- I. Get paid to release houses.
- II. Insurance company.
- III. Gambling.
- IV. Monopoly money in the wallet.
- V. Jackpot insurance.
- VI. Sales jackpot rights.
- VII. Refreshments.
- VIII. Quick mortgaging.
- IX. Mortgage-auction-mortgage.
- X. Legal Defense Fund.
- XI. "Get out of Jail Free" card play.
- XII. Abby Normal strategy.
- XIII. Karen Joy strategy.
- XIV. Blue Chips maneuver.

CHAPTER 16

"The Brooklyn Bridge Is a Bargain"

Have you ever been talked into buying something that you really didn't need? If you haven't, you're a rare exception in today's society. In this modern, complex world, a good deal of time, effort, and money is constantly being spent in trying to influence people's decision-making processes. Entire industries, such as TV and radio, depend on the money they receive from advertisers who believe that commercials will increase the sales of their products. The art of convincing people can sometimes seem more like a science. Is it possible to apply some of that science to a Monopoly game? We can try.

Common sense dictates that in any capitalistic economy people will always act to safeguard *what they perceive as their best interests*. In addition, one of the principal complaints about a free-market economy is that people think only in terms of their short-term interests, neglecting the long-term effects of their actions (for example, people want cars, but don't care about pollution). These two weaknesses can be exploited when influencing the actions of opponents. Simply, whenever we negotiate, we should try to:

CHANGE OUR OPPONENT'S PERCEPTION OF HIS OWN BEST INTERESTS.

APPEAL TO HIS SHORT-SIGHTED NATURE.

No matter how seriously you may want to win, a Monopoly game is only a game. For this reason, many of the methods used to influence people in the real world will

not work. Your opponents realize that the worst thing that can happen to them in a game is that (horrors!) they might lose. For this reason, tactics like direct physical coercion are clearly ineffective—your opponent will just stand up and leave. You're wasting your breath if you try to convince your baby sister or disinterested boyfriend that "it's not really in your best interests to charge me that \$1100 rent." If you want to play to win, you will have to accept the fact that people who are playing only to have a good time will not be thinking in the same way that you do. If you don't realize this, Monopoly can be a very frustrating experience. When a good player tries to make a highly complex trade in a game which is geared toward simple, unsophisticated strategies, he is making a severe mistake. The first rule of trading is:

TAILOR YOUR STRATEGY TO THE GAME AT HAND.

Do not try to introduce the more advanced concepts into a game where they are unnecessary to ensure your victory or where they would be clearly out of place. There is no need to overpower and confuse your opponents with your knowledge. If you are engaged in a nice, easygoing Monopoly game, your general knowledge of investment timing and trading should be more than enough to win.

If you are a tennis champion playing with your eight-year-old brother, you do not need to serve aces and smash lobbs in order to win the game. Solid, steady playing will keep you on top. If in a Monopoly game things start looking dangerous, then it might be the time to bring in an option or a simple revenue-sharing agreement. Try to keep as many tricks up your sleeve as you possibly can.

But a Monopoly game is not a typical game. For some inexplicable reason, some players try to win with a passion and zeal that exceeds that found in their daily working life. Some players, viewing their jobs as frus-

trating, see the game as an escape into the high-finance world of real estate development and trading. These players are much more susceptible to arguments you may make about their own "self-interest" in the game. This leads to the second rule of trading:

THE MORE YOUR OPPONENTS CARE ABOUT WINNING, THE MORE EASILY INFLUENCED THEY WILL BE.

Suppose you find yourself in a real cutthroat game. Everyone cares about winning and losing, and nobody wants to make a bad deal. To beat these opponents, you will need more than your knowledge of investments and timing—they probably have the same knowledge. You will have to convince them to make deals which are better for you than they are for them. Not only will a good trader get the better end of the deal, he will also be able to do so without letting his opponent know it (at least not until it's too late to do anything about it). In fact, a really shrewd trader will make his opponent believe that he has robbed the trader blind. In any case, you want your opponent to believe that he has gotten at least an even deal. Your goal is to make trades that make you appear to be either a fair trader or a fool.

How do you go about convincing a highly suspicious opponent that the trade you are suggesting is really fair? The first and most reliable way is to explain the deal logically, in just the manner that your opponent wants to hear it. Your verbal representation will make an important impression on the person with whom you are trading. The way you describe a trade can alter the way in which a person views the entire situation.

Here is an example of the wrong way and the right way to present a proposal:

WRONG

"Don't be a turkey. Give me that Red property and I'll build on the three Reds. I agree not to charge you rent, and to show you how nice I am, I'll even give you half the money I take in. Why should you care if I have a powerful color group, as long as I don't hurt you? And

don't think that just because you're landing free, you're part owner. I can do whatever I want with those properties. Just be glad that I'm willing to put my own money into building houses that make your half revenues amount to something. Okay?"

RIGHT

"Why don't we become partners? Together we can do very well for ourselves and wipe these other guys out early. If we combine your third Red property with the two Reds that I have (or, If we combine your two Red properties with my third one and my money), then we would have a color group which could bring us a lot of income. I would be willing to pay for all the building costs and act as owner of the property. However, you would be completely immune from ever paying me rent on those properties, and of course, we would split any cash revenues I collect 50-50. If I invest some money and property and you throw in your property, we could start collecting a lot of money as soon as the other players start landing there. Then, after all the other players get wiped out, I'd tear everything down, since I can't possibly hurt you on *our* color group! Is it a deal?"

This rather obvious contrast displays both of the important trading principles clearly. You change your opponent's perception of you from a hostile enemy to an opponent with whom he can profitably cooperate until it becomes time to part ways. You point out the advantages clearly and admit that the deal would be profitable for both of you. You also encourage and exploit your opponent's shortsightedness by emphasizing the possibilities for immediate profits. You do *not* mention your long-term advantage of bankrupting power or your right to trade the color group away. Finally, you allay any fears which he might have by explaining that when you and your partner are the only players left in the game, the color group will become worthless.

In a simple trade which appears fair on the surface, a

clear, logical presentation which stresses advantages for both sides and which follows the two guidelines presented at the beginning of the chapter should prove quite convincing—even to your most doubtful opponent.

The trade you want to offer is not always so nice, however. Suppose the deal you want to propose is so blatantly unfair that if you were to explain it clearly, your opponent would instantly refuse. In such a case, it is necessary to convince your opponent that whatever you are offering him is far more valuable than it really is. You need to bluff a Monopoly player in the same way that an experienced poker player can bluff in a high-stakes poker game.

To bluff well in a Monopoly game, you need three attributes:

1. *Sincerity.* This can't be learned, but you can fake it with practice.

2. *A superior knowledge of the true value of those items which you are trading.* You already have this.

3. *The ability to successfully confuse your opponent.* By continuously bombarding your opponent with new proposals, irrelevant facts, and "evidence" of the fairness of your proposal, you never give your opponent a chance to see why the deal you are suggesting is really unfair. The rest of this chapter will deal with this attribute.

Here is an example of a bluffer in action:

<i>Evelyn</i>	<i>Liz</i>
3 Railroads	1 Railroad
1 Utility	1 Utility
1 Red property	2 Red properties

Liz has been trying to get the third Red property from Evelyn, and she's about to try again.

LIZ: Listen, Evelyn, I'll give you the fourth Railroad to complete your Railroad group and I'll give you the

second utility to complete your utility group, plus I'll even toss in some cash, if you give me your one Red property. Your Railroads would start collecting \$200 right away.

EVELYN: Well . . .

LIZ: It's a fair deal—two properties and some cash for one property.

EVELYN: Let me think about it for a while.

LIZ: No. We have to strike while the iron is hot. If you really don't think the deal is fair, I'm willing to turn it around—we've got to do something before Shelly gets too powerful. How about if you give me all of your Railroads and one utility, and I give you one of the Red properties.

EVELYN: But I'd need your other Red property to complete the color group.

LIZ: All right. I'll give you both Reds, but to compensate for my giving up an extra property, I'll want \$500 cash and immunity on the Red color group.

EVELYN: I still don't know . . .

LIZ: Look, Ev, I've offered it to you both ways. One way has to be better for you, so you choose which one. You give me the Railroads, the utilities, cash, and immunity in exchange for two of my properties, or I give you the Railroads, the utilities, and cash for *one* of your properties. We've got to trade now. We can't sit here forever.

EVELYN: I think I want the two Reds.

LIZ: Great. (*She smiles.*) Give me all four of those properties, \$500 cash, and don't forget—I'm immune forever on those Reds and you keep on paying me on the Railroads. Oh, by the way, these Red properties are mortgaged. And I really should get a quarter of your profits on the Reds.

EVELYN: Wait a second. I think I'll take the four Railroads and the two utilities, and just give you one Red property. By the way I want immunity on the Red color group.

LIZ: Well, okay.

* * *

The bluff worked. Of course, the far better deal was to take the Red group—Liz is probably cleaning up right now. Liz never really had any intention of trading away her two Reds, but she kept pretending until she finally convinced Evelyn that it would be foolish not to take two properties and some money in exchange for one. Notice how Liz claimed that she was going to “turn the deal around,” but when she reversed the offer, all sorts of new terms and conditions seemed to magically appear. This is a very common hustling tactic, and that’s just what Liz is doing—hustling. She pressured Evelyn into making the trade.

It is probably a better idea to learn how to spot a hustler and protect yourself than it is to try to become one. Sometimes, however, a good bluff involving turning a trade around to a position which you would never really accept can ensure your victory, not to mention making the game much more exciting for you.

A final word on bluffing. If your opponent is smart enough to see that you are offering a ridiculous deal, he will naturally try to call your bluff if you turn it around. As soon as you realize that you will not be able to get away with this bluff, you will have to back out as politely as possible. This is most believably done by suddenly “noticing” that your opponent has another property which you didn’t think he had, or “discovering” that you have much less money than you thought you did. An offer is not binding until both parties have agreed. A player can back out of a deal at any time until both parties have decided on the terms of a final agreement, and whatever properties are involved in the trade have changed hands. There is one danger in backing out of a bluff. Once your bluff has been exposed, you will find it very difficult to bluff at any later time in the game.

At this point, it is worth devoting some discussion to the concept of a “reversible” trade. *Reversing an offer* is taking the terms of an opponent’s offer and applying them in your “equivalent” counteroffer to him. For ex-

ample, suppose your opponent has Boardwalk and you have Park Place. If your opponent offers to buy Park Place for \$200 (he thinks you're a fool), you could reverse the offer by offering to buy Boardwalk from him for \$200. When your opponent refuses, it is good strategy at this point to tell your opponent that he should only bother to offer you trades which he would accept himself. His offers will become much fairer very quickly. Reversibility is often a very good test of the fairness of a deal.

However, not all offers are reversible. Sometimes you can't offer your opponent the same thing he offers you, and sometimes the true value of a property is much higher for one player than for another. If your opponent is offering you three Railroads, you obviously can't reverse the offer and offer him three Railroads! When it is possible to reverse an offer, it is sometimes a good idea to do so, even if you would have been happy to accept that offer in the first place. Why not see what his reaction is to taking what he's offering? He might decide to make his offer even sweeter. It usually doesn't hurt to ask.

Thus, a good trader is usually a good talker, and talking trades is what separates the robber barons from the robbed bankrupts in Monopoly. Just follow the guidelines and look for your opponent's weaknesses. In most cases, if you can phrase your deal right, your opponent will gladly go along with what you're saying, even if it really destroys his position.

So suggest an option; if the opponents balk, propose a partnership. No go? Sell insurance, and if things get really sticky, create a housing shortage and drive 'em all into the streets! Here's the one game where you can destroy empires and amass fortunes without harming a single soul—except, perhaps, somebody's pride. That's the magic of it all, for novices and tournament masters alike.

See you on Boardwalk!

CHAPTER 16 SUMMARY

- I. Perception of best interests.
- II. Shortsightedness.
- III. Tailor your strategy.
- IV. How much do your opponents care about winning?
- V. Bluffing.
- VI. Reversing an offer.