

CAUTIOUS BIDDER [2]

Here is a second hand from the Lady Milne trials. I wanted to say something about it because so many pairs in the club game are much too passive when they have a known fit with partner. It is also the case that you have to enter the auction (with the right bid!) in order for any fit to be located. So don't go quietly – it's what your opponents want.

Look at this hand, played in the final match of the Lady Milne trial.

Dealer South; both non-vul

	♠AK3	
	♥9	
	♦J1054	
	♣AQ982	
♠Q7		♠1084
♥KQJ86		♥A105432
♦A8		♦3
♣7654		♣KJ3
	♠J9652	
	♥7	
	♦KQ9762	
	♣10	

At three of the four tables in play, the bidding was as follows.

<u>W</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>E</u>	<u>S</u>
			P
1H	2C	4H	P
P	P		

Any thoughts? East/West have bid aggressively (and appropriately) to the heart game. Let's explore what happened when they were allowed to play there.

North kicked off with her two top spades. She now needed to switch to Ace and another club in order to defeat the game. None of the three pairs defending 4H found this. At the table where I was kibitzing (and I assume at the other two tables likewise) North continued with a 'safe' third spade. Declarer could ruff this, draw trumps, and now by dint of playing twice towards dummy's club holding she was able to hold herself to just the one club loser. Game made.

This was a poor effort by North, who might at least have tried for the club ruff when she had the chance. But this only compounded what was already a poor board for North/South thanks to their feebleness in the bidding.

Let's go back to the start. Some pairs will have the agreement that they open 2 of a major to show a weak hand with that suit and a minor (at least five of the major; maybe only four of the minor). It's a useful agreement to have, and in this case it would have enabled South to open 2S, in which case the partnership would surely have competed to 4S over their opponent's heart contract. Still, if you don't have that agreement you probably won't be opening 2S as South. C'est la vie. However, that should not be the end of the story.

Let's move on to consider North's action over West's 1H opening. When opting to double the opponent's opening bid of a major, we all like to have four cards in the other major. By and large it's what partner will expect. So yes, we all like it, but it's not a *rule*. Sometimes you have to make the most descriptive bid available to you on your hand, even when it's not a perfect fit.

The club overcall is not 'wrong' exactly, but look what happened in practice: N/S were 'bounced' by their opponents and now South would have had to bid on an apparent misfit - not a practical proposition. South having passed, the North player would then have had to bid on over 4H having heard nothing from partner. Again, much too risky; she has to pass.

What a difference it would have made had North found a double at her first go. South's six 'points' are of course completely beside the point – she has a huge hand opposite North's double. It would be absolutely automatic for South to compete to 4S. As you can see, 4S is 'cold' even if the opponents secure their diamond ruff.

It's not that you can be certain that either of these games will make when you're engaged in the auction. Nothing can be assumed at that point. But in the Teams game especially, you have to bid, and bid aggressively, when you find a fit. If you go down, so be it. You will still in all likelihood have taken the right action. If you always take the 'safe' option, on the other hand, just watch those IMPs fly out the window.

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