

## CAUTIOUS BIDDER [4]

The Cardiff League is probably the best club event in East Wales, and arguably (I have to be careful here) the best single club competition in Wales. In fact it is not exclusively a Cardiff event since some teams are augmented by players from further West and we also have two teams that are not Cardiff at all, but comprised of players from Penarth. The mix of nine teams works pretty well and this season in particular the competition has been an enthralling one. Thanks are due to the hard-working organiser, Liz Atkinson, and to the director, Chris Rochelle.

Just because I claim it's a good event does not of course mean that the standard is uniformly high. Quite often it is anything but, with matches decided following a spirited exchange of more or less egregious errors. Take the following hand.

Dealer North; E/W vul (hand rotated for convenience)

	♠K	
	♥105432	
	♦J8732	
	♣A7	
♠AJ1097		♠62
♥976		♥K
♦10		♦AKQ654
♣Q863		♣J954
	♠Q8543	
	♥AQJ8	
	♦9	
	♣K102	

This was the bidding at my table, where Sue and I sat North/South.

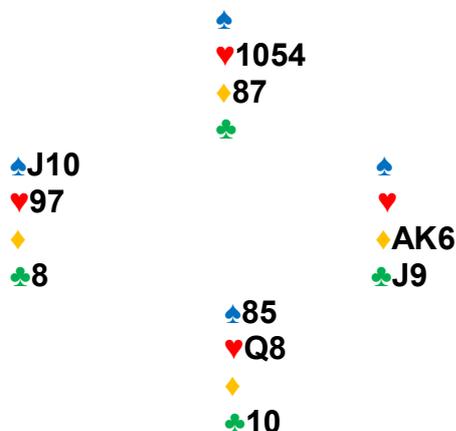
W	N	E	S
P	P	1D	1S
P	P	2C	2H
P	4H	P	P
X	P	P	P

There are several points to note. When my One Spade overcall came back round to East she might have passed the hand out, but of course she was very unlikely to do that in practice. Her actual choice of Two Clubs would have come as a disappointment to her partner, who was lurking with a penalty pass, but it made no difference. I would still have felt moved to show my second suit, which Sue – enterprisingly – raised to game. It is a point worth emphasising that players should always be prepared to re-evaluate their playing strength in light of further developments in the auction, and Sue certainly showed her willingness to do that here. West had a reasonable defensive hand given his partner's opening bid and so felt moved to express his opinion on my chances of making what was likely to be a fairly skimpy contract.

I wish I could say that I played the hand faultlessly, but actually I made a mess of it. All went swimmingly at first. West led his singleton diamond, covered by the Jack and won with the Queen. East then returned a low diamond. I didn't much like the look of that and

so ruffed (correctly) with the Jack. I then played a club to the Ace, followed by a trump, the King appearing, which I won with my Ace. I followed this with a spade to the King, West taking his Ace. West exited with the Queen of clubs, which I won in hand. I next played the Queen of spades and ruffed a spade.

We had reached this five card ending, I having lost two tricks to this point.



Can you see what I should have done next? It's not so difficult. I needed to ruff another diamond *high* (with the Queen), then a further spade ruff, followed by a further diamond, ruffed with my last trump in hand. West could over-ruff, but that would be the third and final trick for the defence. I would have only trumps left in dummy and could draw West's seven of trumps with my 10. No sweat.

But what did I do? In the end position shown above *I played a trump to my Queen*, East discarding a low diamond, followed by a further spade ruff. I now have *two* losers since when I ruff the next diamond West can over-ruff and play his final trump, leaving me with a losing diamond.

That's how the defence should have gone, except that East must have thought she needed to protect her club holding. Accordingly, when I ruffed the spade, she discarded her King of diamonds. This meant that when I led the diamond eight from dummy she perforce had to play her Ace. The seven of diamonds was thereby promoted to become my somewhat unlikely tenth trick.

A bit of a mess - and you might say, not worth writing up. Except that this was a genuinely interesting hand, and if I'd played it correctly I would have been quite pleased with myself. It's interesting that in order to make Four Hearts you have to ruff two diamonds HIGH, and then a third diamond LOW, conceding the over-ruff at that point in order to maximise your trump holding. Still, like Thomas Jefferson I cannot tell a lie, and this was how it actually went. Well, they say that bridge is a game of mistakes, and it certainly is the way I play it.

Four Hearts also made at the other table (I don't know whether this was by fair means or foul), but the double meant that we gained a few IMPs on the board.

GD