

CAUTIOUS BIDDER [14]

The Arthur James Bowl is the East Wales end of season Pairs event held to coincide with (and encourage attendance at) the East Wales Bridge Association AGM. It was held last weekend at Cardiff Bridge Club. Entry was free for a two session event, and we also had a magnificent meal (likewise free) provided by the wonderful Helen and her small band of helpers. It was surprising, given this largesse, that only eighteen pairs competed, but those are the times we live in.

The bridge was ably directed by Gareth Evans and seemed to be enjoyed by all. Steve Webb and Tim Barsby won both sessions of the event and so were very comfortable overall winners. Many congratulations to them on a fine performance.

This was a hand from Session 2, which Sue and I played against Martin Joseph and Veronica Burrows. It was a triumph for Martin.....and whatever is the opposite of a triumph for me.

Dealer South; both vul

	♠AK82	
	♥64	
	♦K108	
	♣A1076	
♠9765		♠Q
♥AQ		♥KJ1087532
♦J6543		♦Q
♣85		♣K93
	♠J1043	
	♥9	
	♦A972	
	♣QJ42	

Here was the bidding at our table. I was North, and Martin sat East.

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

Of the nine tables in play, four East/Wests played in Three Hearts; one played in Two Hearts; and four bid to the heart game. In one case where East bid game, N/S bid on to Four Spades, going one down. Martin was the only declarer to be doubled in Four Hearts.

The failure of some Easts to bid the full value of their hand (or what I consider to be its full value) is not surprising since one sees this sort of thing a lot, but it nonetheless betrays a lack of understanding of the bridge scoring system. Four Hearts may well not make (who can possibly tell?) but it is the correct bid on the hand given the eight card suit. Who can make what on these hands is in the lap of the bridge gods; your obligation, when holding such a magnificent suit, is to bid immediately to the level that your own self-supporting suit warrants – which is to the four level. So well done Martin.

My double as North was in part a reflection of my natural inclination at the bridge table to trade blow for blow, but it was backed by a modicum of science in that I judged my hand, all Aces and Kings, to be as good a defensive hand against a suit contract as I could possibly have held.

And was my opinion justified? As the play went, no, not quite. Sue led a club and I rose with the Ace to play a trump, the need to limit club ruffs in the dummy being now all too apparent. But Martin was not inconvenienced. He rose with the King of trumps, 'crocodiling' his Queen, and played the King of clubs, followed by a club ruff with the Ace. In the fullness of time he was able to return to hand to draw my last trump and claim his ten tricks. Not especially difficult, but still, nicely done.

You will observe, no doubt, that a heart lead, followed by a heart continuation when North wins the Ace of clubs, would have won the day for the defence. Should Sue have found the trump lead? Well, it would have been nice, but the lead of a singleton trump is not particularly attractive and on a different layout might well have proved disastrous. So the jury acquits the defendant.

What about earlier, in the bidding? Should she have bid Four Spades following my double? Sadly, that's a 'no' as well. Double of an opening Four Hearts is for take-out, but when the doubler has begun by opening a No Trump and then Four Hearts is bid as an overcall? I doubt many pairs have even considered this scenario since the double by the 1NT bidder is (ahem) a little unorthodox, but I can imagine rather more layouts where Four Hearts is booked for defeat – in which case South's decision to remove the double would have had steam coming out of North's ears. So not guilty again.

And what about North's Double? Automatic, wouldn't you say?

GD