

## CAUTIOUS BIDDER [15]

This week at Cardiff saw the Italo Basiletti Memorial Men's and Ladies' Pairs events. Italo was a very popular member of the Cardiff club and it is good that we have these annual competitions to remember him by.

Eleven pairs competed in each section – a satisfactory turn-out given the need in some instances to make up new partnerships. The Ladies' event was won by Sarah Amos and Nalini Dewan – Sarah carrying all before her in club events at the moment. I played with John Marshall in the Men's. John played a notably solid game (I take back everything I've said about him), but that was not enough to trouble the runaway winners, Mike Hirst and Mike Pownall.

Here is a hand (Board 17) that we played against the eventual winners.

**Dealer North; both non-vul**

	♠KQ852	
	♥AQJ	
	♦J9	
	♣953	
♠J10		♠A6
♥K942		♥105
♦1052		♦AKQ8764
♣A874		♣J6
	♠9743	
	♥8763	
	♦3	
	♣KQ102	

John and I sat East/West, with the two Mikes sitting North/South. This was the bidding at our table.

<u>W</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>E</u>	<u>S</u>
	1S	3N	4S
P	P	P	

Any thoughts? My overcall of Three No Trumps would not be everyone's choice, but it was a practical shot and – I would suggest – pretty much routine for anyone with a reasonable grasp of the bridge scoring system, and of the most likely route to game, which has to be via 3NT. The diamond overcall, on the other hand, is what they teach you in beginners classes (not in the Cardiff club, obviously), along with the need to have 25 points between the two hands before you bid game.

As you can see, Three No Trumps has a very easy nine tricks, and would have secured us an excellent board. Sadly Mike Pownall was sitting South, and he bid Four Spades. Again, the Four Spade call would not be everyone's choice, but it is clearly the right bid. In order for Four Spades to be right, South has to judge that Three No Trumps by East is likely to make. How can South judge that? He judges it in the same way as you judge a lot of things in bridge – by taking a look at your right hand opponent and deciding whether or not he is an idiot. Mike Pownall would, if asked – or even if not asked – give a speedy response to that question, but he bid Four Spades anyway.

It was the right call, but in order to make it you need good bridge judgement. Sadly, that is something else that they don't teach you in beginners classes (how could they, since it takes years to acquire?). So how do you acquire it? Perhaps never, but your best shot is to find a very good player and persuade him or her to partner you on a regular basis. Set aside a few years. Try to absorb everything they tell you, and ditch your unhelpful ego which is screaming at you to resist the message that much of what you thought you knew about the game is rubbish. Accept that if you really want to play bridge well you need to absorb an entirely new set of precepts. It's hard, and not many learners (because we all have egos) are up for it.

Back to the hand. Playing in Four Spades, Mike Hirst had just 13 points in his own hand and 5 points in the dummy. But he also had ten tricks, losing just one spade (since they broke 2/2), no hearts (the King being onside), one diamond, and one club (the Jack falling doubleton).

That was a well earned 100% for North/South, and of course zero for us. Personally I don't mind that. I work hard for my bad boards, but when it's decent bridge all round I'm happy to accept my fate. Sharon Winter and Ann Hirst also bid and made Four Spades – so just one pair in each section.

Cautious Bidder will be on holiday in Ireland next week, so there will be a break in transmission. Console yourselves by re-reading all the back numbers.

GD