

## CAUTIOUS BIDDER [20]

Last Sunday saw the final of the WBU Inter-club Teams of Eight, directed by Sarah Amos at The Pavilion, Llandrindod Wells. Sadly, it was a fiasco. We've had other WBU fiascos this year, but those could be blamed on the weather. This one was self-inflicted. Somehow (and as usual with these things, we'll never know the full story) the WBU had failed to clarify the booking, with the Pavilion apparently due to be vacated by 5pm, long before the event itself was due to finish. Poor Sarah learned this only at the tea interval, requiring her to cut short the event, and requiring the players to play at indecent speed to get through a truncated programme. As a result we played seven boards against our first four opponents, and just four (rushed) boards against the other three.

This was a shoot yourself in the foot episode of spectacular proportions, which sadly for the WBU invited reflections on the theme of breweries and over-indulged drinking events conducted therein. The one mitigating factor from the organisers' perspective lay in the conduct and attitude of the Pavilion workers – a pair of 'volunteers' (as the bloke loudly informed us on several occasions) of a singularly boorish stamp who gave every appearance of having been recruited from a nearby penal establishment. They were hostile from the outset, and determined not to give an inch in their resolve to see us off the premises on the dot of five o'clock.

This hand is taken from the first set when we still thought we were taking part in a normal bridge event. Sue and I sat North/South against Mike Best and Kevin Maddox who were representing Bridgend.

### Session 1, Board 8, Dealer West; both non-vul

	♠AJ102	
	♥1097	
	♦J42	
	♣975	
♠K765		♠4
♥AKQ		♥J86
♦Q75		♦K10963
♣QJ3		♣AK106
	♠Q983	
	♥5432	
	♦A8	
	♣842	

Mike and Kevin bid as follows.

<u>W</u>	<u>E</u>
1C*	1D
1N	3N

What to lead? I gave thought to leading a spade, but decided that was too committal. It was all too likely that a spade lead would gift declarer a trick that he would be unable to secure unaided. Or so I reasoned. Rightly so, for once. As you can see, a spade lead would have given declarer the King, and with spades breaking 4/4 it would have been a simple matter for Mike Best to establish a diamond for his ninth trick. Anyway I led the nine of hearts. So far so good.

Needing to establish two diamond tricks to bring his total to nine, Mike led a diamond to dummy and inserted the nine. Sue took her Ace.

Mike now had his nine tricks. We for our part had one, so we needed the next four. Could we get them? Clearly a spade switch was called for, but which spade? Take a careful look at the hand. A low spade is no good. Declarer ducks; I win with the 10; and that's the end. How about the Queen? That looks more promising, but in that case I would have to unblock the 10 (or Jack). Would I have been up to that? I'd like to think so, but who knows. After that Sue would have to play the 9 (or 8), and that would be the end of the road for declarer – the defence would have its four spade tricks.

As it was, Sue tried a different tack – she began with the spade 9, which Mike of course ducked. I contributed the 2. So far so good. What next? As you can see, it had to be the Queen now, to avoid my being end-played as North. Unfortunately this is where the story ends. Sue did not give enough thought to the various possible spade lay-outs. Her next card was the 8. Mike ducked again, and I was end-played. I won the trick perforce with my 10. I could then cash my Ace, but that was it.

I thought it was an interesting position. As you can see, East/West can make Five Diamonds (or even Five Clubs) provided declarer locates the Jack of diamonds. But Three No Trumps should go down. It was an opportunity missed.

The event was won by Llanfairfechan - which, judging by their team composition, is a vast conurbation on the North Wales coast, stretching from Bangor in the West to the Wirral in the East.

GD