

CAUTIOUS BIDDER [24]

The Mid Wales Congress had a new format this year – Pairs on the Saturday; Teams on the Sunday. That obviously made it more random than a two day event, but it gave everyone an opportunity to play just the one day rather than two. The event was held at The Pavilion, Llandrindod Wells, of blessed recent memory. The two key workers were again in evidence, and still struggling to cope with bridge players. I don't blame them entirely – a minority of tournament players can be as truculent as any teenager whilst possessed of a sense of entitlement to match that of an Oriental potentate. Still, these two 'volunteers' were always going to get into arguments.

Our team comprised Sue playing with Aida Aris and John Marshall and myself. I'd never previously played in a tournament with John. I saw it as akin to venturing into a snake-infested jungle in the company of an unstable witchdoctor. The team as a whole contained an intriguing mixture of styles – I viewed it as a cross between Songs of Praise and Love Island.

We did OK all things considered, the following being one of our better boards.

Session 2, Board 4, Dealer West; both vul

	♠AQ10852	
	♥6	
	♦98643	
	♣7	
♠9		♠KJ74
♥109842		♥753
♦102		♦J5
♣KJ432		♣AQ96
	♠63	
	♥AKQJ	
	♦AKQ7	
	♣1085	

Sue opened a weak Two Spades as North and Aida, with her magnificent holding, raised straight to game. Quite right too. The full auction was as follows.

W	N	E	S
P	2S	P	4S
P	P	P	P

West led a 'safe' heart and that was effectively the end of the defence. Sue's club loser went away and she eventually emerged with an overtrick, losing just two spades.

At the other table in the match we also had a Two Spades opening, but South thought he needed to enquire. This was their auction.

W	N	E	S
P	2S	P	2N
P	3D	P	4S
P	P	X	P
P	P		

North's Three Diamond response was 'Ogust', indicating a good trump suit but poor values outside. When I heard this, sitting East, my private thought was 'well, your trumps aren't as good as all that' – so I elected to double. Not wise, but in character.

With that strong trump holding, an aggressive lead was obviously called for, so I began with Ace and another club. Declarer ruffed the second club. She can still succeed, and my double might have helped her to find the right line. However, what she actually did was play the Ace and then the 10 of spades. That would have been fine had trumps broken 3/2, but on the actual 4/1 break she was in trouble. I was ahead of her.

I took the Jack of spades and played another club. Declarer ruffed again. She now had Q8 of trumps whilst I still had K7. She played the Queen and I won. I then led my fourth and final club, which she had to ruff. My 7 of spades was the last trump standing – so I made three spades in total, plus the Ace of clubs.

Whatever declarer does, she must not lay down the Ace of trumps. In fact don't broach trumps at all. Ruffing clubs in hand is fine, as is cashing red suit winners. Ruff and cash; ruff and cash – in almost any order. Sitting East, I will eventually be end-played to lead a spade round into declarer's holding.

My double was over-confident. Playing against Andrew Robson, I would have been made to pay - although, in my defence, had I been playing against Robson I hope I wouldn't have doubled.

GD