

CAUTIOUS BIDDER [25]

The exercise of judgement is an inescapable element of bridge bidding, as is the acceptance of risk. If you don't like risk, or are not prepared to embrace it where necessary, you'll never be a bridge player. If you are never prepared to make bids that involve some element of risk then you are, in effect, giving up. No risk is no reward.

The most obvious risk scenario in bidding is following the other side's pre-emptive action. What to do..... Pass? Double? Bid on? It may be thought that to pass involves the least risk, but that is of course an illusion. At club level most bad boards are the product of under- rather than over-bidding. Take the following hand, which was the very last board played in the Hereford/Gloucestershire Swiss Teams, held in Ross on Wye last weekend.

Sue and I teamed up with Helen Houston and Nalini Dewan. This was the hand.

Session 2, Board 49, Dealer North; both non-vul

	♠K732	
	♥J43	
	♦AJ84	
	♣65	
♠AQ6		♠J10854
♥KQ8752		♥A6
♦963		♦KQ52
♣9		♣73
	♠9	
	♥109	
	♦107	
	♣AKQJ10842	

Following two passes, Sue opened a classic 'gambling' Three No Trumps in the South seat. West passed and I contemplated my final decision of the event. The partner of the 3N opener is meant to remove to Four Clubs when he judges that his side's weakness in one or more of the other three suits renders Three No Trumps an unlikely make. I might have done that, but it seemed to me that the contract had a chance (they might not lead a heart, and anyway there was no law against Sue holding the Queen of that suit). Also, Three No Trumps hadn't been doubled (not yet anyway), so any penalty would not be huge. Accordingly I went for the jackpot and elected to pass – as did East. This was the full auction.

W	N	E	S
	P	P	3N
P	P	P	

West led a low heart and the defence took the first seven tricks. Three down, for minus 150.

Was that a good board, a bad board, or an indifferent board? Well, it all depended on what transpired at the other table. You might note, incidentally, that Four Clubs should also go down, but only by one trick. It might even be made if the defence sets up dummy's King of spades before they broach diamonds.

South at the other table also opened Three No Trumps, but Nalini Dewan, sitting West, didn't pass. Nalini observed that she had six hearts and a hand that she would normally have opened. Nalini, as some of you may have noticed, is not easily deflected from a course of action that she has set herself. She had planned to open at the one level; now, if she entered the auction it would have to be at the four level. No matter – Nalini saw no ships. She bid Four Hearts. Brave lady! This was the full auction.

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

The defence was able to take just the one club, one diamond, and one spade. Four Hearts made, for plus 420 to East/West and a 7 IMP gain.

Would you have bid Four Hearts with Nalini's hand? Come to that, would I? Sadly, the answer for this Cautious Bidder has to be no. To enter the auction at the four level with that moderate collection is too rich for me. Nalini took a considerable risk, but on this occasion fortune favoured her. It wasn't the 'correct' bid on the hand – as she may discover if she ever tries it again. But I'd rather a team-mate who shows this degree of enterprise, even if she ends up with egg on her face, than one who always takes the safe (which is to say, the losing) option.

I have been known to say to partners and team-mates who have been far too passive where some degree of enterprise is called for: "Best take up flower-arranging". Well, it would seem that Nalini's destiny does not lie in the flower-beds.

GD