

CAUTIOUS BIDDER [29]

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.....no, this is not Charles Dickens, but a lesser literary work - a tale of two Grands.

Last week saw Sue and I in Yorkshire, tramping the Dales. On Thursday, as we negotiated the summit scramble on Pen-y-Ghent in a howling gale with intermittent sheeting rain, partnership morale was at a low ebb, but we dried out on the way down and Sue can't wait to climb the neighbouring hills (or mountains, as she deems them to be), preferably camping next time in order to sample the full outward bound experience.

No holiday is complete without a game of bridge and we took in the three session Pairs event at the Northern Midweek Congress, held in Harrogate. We had a mediocre first session so when the second session began I was looking to make up ground (my excuse for a whole host of bridge sins). This board provided an early opportunity.

Session 2; Board 13; Dealer North; both vul

	♠J93	
	♥A1082	
	♦KJ52	
	♣98	
♠Q10762		♠854
♥Q53		♥9
♦97		♦Q10863
♣1072		♣Q543
	♠AK	
	♥KJ764	
	♦A4	
	♣AKJ6	

Sitting North/South (I was North) we bid as follows.

<u>N</u>	<u>S</u>
P	2D*
2S*	2N
3C*	3H
4D*	4N*
5C*	5D*
6D*	7H

We play the Multi. Sue's 2NT rebid promised 23/24 balanced. I enquired further and located the 5/4 heart fit. Four Diamonds was a Cue, with hearts agreed. Five Clubs showed one of the 5 'Aces' and Five Diamonds asked if I had the Queen of trumps. Six Diamonds was a little off piste. It claimed possession of the trump Queen, and also the King of diamonds. Well, one out of two ain't bad. I just hoped that with a nine card fit it wouldn't matter. As I said, we had some catching up to do.

Sue bid the Grand slam with confidence, but evinced mild displeasure when she saw the dummy. West had led a club, ensuring a third trick in that suit, but Sue still needed to sort out trumps. Grumpily she advanced the King of hearts, both opponents following, then paused for thought. I happened to notice that the lady sitting East appeared completely

relaxed, whilst her partner wore an expression of fixed concentration. Not much to go on, but one is entitled to take advantage of these things. Sue was more interested in the fact that West had eschewed the supposedly 'normal' trump lead against a Grand. She also wondered whether the nine of hearts might have restricted choice implications (I don't think it does). Anyway she played the Jack of hearts, West played low smoothly, and.....Sue ran it. What a brilliant partner! And what a good bid of mine, that Six Diamonds. Our opponents very sportingly congratulated us on our 100% board.

By the end of the session we had caught up, and now hoped to consolidate. This was the second board of the final session (we were now sitting East/West).

Session 3; Board 20; Dealer West; both vul

	♠2	
	♥Q10543	
	♦8642	
	♣752	
♠A983		♠KQJ6
♥AK982		♥J6
♦A		♦KJ1075
♣Q84		♣AK
	♠10754	
	♥7	
	♦Q93	
	♣J10963	

Sue sat West. We bid as follows.

W	E
1H	2D
2S	4C*
4D*	4N*
5D*	5N*
6H*	7S

Two Spades showed reversing values. Four Clubs and Four Diamonds were cues, with spades agreed. There followed a Roman Key Card enquiry, Sue admitting to three 'Aces'. I then asked for Kings, and Sue showed me the King of hearts. I thought it was enough, and felt positively virtuous as I bid the Grand. Off piste? - not me squire. Perish the thought.

As you can see, whilst this contract can undeniably be made, it is far from straightforward. One or other red suit has to be developed in order to arrive at thirteen tricks. Sue had more hearts than diamonds, so she decided that that was the suit to play on. She began with three rounds of clubs, ditching a heart from dummy, then followed with Ace and a small heart, ruffing with the 6. South could over-ruff and that was one down.

Hoping not to appear too much of a result merchant, I venture to suggest that playing on diamonds might have been a better bet. Admittedly you need something good to happen in the suit, but the intermediate honours in diamonds offer a number of possibilities. In order for the heart suit to come in you need a favourable distribution of both that suit and trumps. Also, the club suit provides a useful bridge to dummy, so it seemed a bit odd to destroy that link at the outset.

Needless to say, Deep Finesse would have had no problem. Three rounds of diamonds brings home the bacon.

So there you are: one triumph and one disaster. You can see now why I took her up that hill.

GD