

## CAUTIOUS BIDDER [33]

Last weekend saw the ever popular West of England Congress, returned to its spiritual home of the Winter Gardens Pavilion, Weston super Mare. The climax of the Congress was the Swiss Teams, played on the Sunday. This event was won in fine style by a junior team (yes, Juniors!) comprising Toby Nonnenmacher and Kyle Lam, lynchpins of the current English Junior squad, and Jonny Richards of this parish and his partner Helen Holmes.

My team, which included Simon Brindle and Tony Campbell of the Penarth club, played them in the penultimate match. We were fairly comprehensively outbid. I am sometimes accused of bidding like a Junior (it's not meant as a compliment), but I would be delighted to be compared with this foursome. Nonnenmacher and Lam in particular are a strong pairing (as well as being delightfully pleasant opponents) and are well on their way to international representation in the Open sphere. The following was one hand on which we were outbid.

### Session Two; Board 42; Dealer East; both vulnerable

	♠10864	
	♥QJ54	
	♦J4	
	♣Q98	
♠AJ		♠Q753
♥109876		♥ -
♦A1083		♦KQ9765
♣A5		♣J102
	♠K92	
	♥AK32	
	♦2	
	♣K7643	

This was the auction at the table where Sue and I sat North/South against Jonny and Helen.

<u>W</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>E</u>	<u>S</u>
		3D	P
3N	P	P	P

The confidence of youth. Helen's Three Diamond opening would not be everyone's choice – just six cards, with a four card major on the side – but it worked. Pre-empting with a 6 card suit is routine these days when non-vulnerable, and to do the same when vulnerable will work well on some hands, possibly a little less well on others. The same goes for her decision to pre-empt with a four card spade suit on the side (which is likely to remain buried). What I like about the bid is that it reveals an aggressive mindset, and if you are to make it in top class bridge you have to be aggressive. Sue might have doubled for take-out on the South hand (I would have done), but her decision to pass made no difference to the eventual outcome. Jonny can count to nine and he was always going to bid the No Trump game.

East/West have a combined 21 count, but Jonny was of course right to count tricks rather than points. Sue and I defended brilliantly, cashing our four heart winners, following which

Jonny claimed the rest. He had the spade finesse, but it wasn't needed as he held the thirteenth heart. Minus 600. East/West can in fact make a slam in diamonds, but that depends on a fortunate lie of the cards. Jonny's decision to bid Three No Trumps was the practical shot.

This was the auction at the other table in our match, with Tony sitting West and Simon, East.

<b>W</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>S</b>
		P	1C*
2H*	X	3D	P
P	P		

Simon can hardly be criticised for passing as East. He's a lot younger than me, but positively ancient compared with our fresh-cheeked opponents. South's One Club opening could be a short suit, so Tony, West, wheeled out the partnership defence, which is the same as when defending against a weak No Trump. Two Hearts promised hearts and a minor. North thought he had a hand to compete – hence the Double – and Simon bid Three Diamonds to close the auction. As he subsequently acknowledged, he might have done more – maybe a Two No Trumps enquiry - but his opponents had opened the bidding and shown responding values so it was not easy to envisage game for East/West.

Not easy to envisage game, let alone a slam. Simon played the hand well to emerge with twelve tricks, but that was a mere 170 points against the 600 conceded in our room, so 10 IMPs away.

Very well played by our feisty oppononts. For those us who won't see our twenties again (indeed, can't remember them) there are lessons to be learned from these juniors. Lam and Nonnenmacher are products of the English Junior programme overseen by Michael Byrne. They are the beneficiaries of a fantastic bridge education. They not only have youth on their side; they have been taught the game as it is played by experts. I have no truck with those who claim that you don't have to play bridge well in order to teach it. That's rubbish. Bridge is a game of astounding richness. That's what we should be aiming to teach, not Year 5 arithmetic.

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