

## CAUTIOUS BIDDER [34]

Playing in the West of England Congress Swiss Teams, our team-mates, Simon Brindle and Tony Campbell, bid enterprisingly on this hand in our final match to earn a double figure swing for our team.

**Session Two; Board 48; Dealer West; East/West vulnerable**

	♠1094	
	♥J9	
	♦876	
	♣AJ943	
♠K763		♠AQJ82
♥A10863		♥ -
♦2		♦AQJ103
♣Q107		♣K65
	♠5	
	♥KQ7542	
	♦K954	
	♣82	

This was the auction at the table where Simon and Tony sat East/West.

<u>W</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>E</u>	<u>S</u>
P	P	1S	P
3D*	P	3H**	P
4H**	P	4N***	P
5H***	P	6S	P
P	P		

\* splinter

\*\* control

\*\*\* Roman Key Card Blackwood

Simon and Tony play five card majors. They also employ mini-splinters, and this (rather than having 3D as an old-fashioned game-force), helped get them off on the right foot. Simon needed to find a bid following his partner's 4H cue bid, and he opted for a Roman Key Card enquiry despite holding a heart void. Well, he had to bid something. It's not one for the purists, but it demonstrates sound hand evaluation, which is more to the point.

Six Spades is a reasonable contract, but far from cast iron. Given that declarer is almost bound to lose a trick to the Ace of clubs, the diamond suit has to be negotiated for no loser. Simon received the King of hearts lead, which he took with the Ace, jettisoning a club. He then drew two rounds of trumps, discovering the 3-1 break, before embarking on diamonds.

After this start Simon was unlikely to be able to ruff out the King of diamonds and so was faced with having to guess the location of that card. The ruffing finesse looks to be the best option, although in the event Simon was saved a headache when South contributed her King on the third round of the suit. With the diamond suit established he was then able to draw North's last trump and claim his contract.

With the considerable benefit of a leisurely study of the options on the hand, I wonder whether declarer might postpone playing on trumps in favour of broaching diamonds immediately. Assuming spades aren't led (as they weren't), it may be possible to play four rounds of diamonds, ruffing the second and third diamond low, and the fourth diamond with the King.

It's not easy to manage, but declarer's path back to hand is facilitated by North's possession of the Ace of clubs. With North holding the club Ace, declarer may then - provided diamonds break 4-3 and trumps are no worse than 3-1 - be able to bring home his contract regardless of the location of the King of diamonds.

Having said all that, I can see the attraction of the immediate trump play, especially at the end of a long day when the temptation to simplify the contract is at its strongest. The proof is in the pudding, and Simon made Six Spades.

Well bid chaps.

GD