

CAUTIOUS BIDDER [39]

Last Thursday saw the third round of the Cardiff League, at the conclusion of which my team's hope of winning the league lay on the floor of Cardiff Bridge Club, a bleeding corpse. My masochism has its limits, so I've chosen to write instead about the Children in Need Simultaneous Pairs held at the club on Wednesday this week. I partnered Chris Rochelle, whom I play with only occasionally these days, but we like to have the odd game just to remind ourselves what we're missing (and why we're missing it). Chris is a fine declarer, and had it not been for some egregious errors on my part we might have topped the national standings for the evening.

Here he is in action. On this first hand we were East/West (Chris sitting West).

Board 10; Dealer East; both vulnerable

	♠KQJ42	
	♥108	
	♦Q853	
	♣92	
♠7		♠10953
♥AQJ653		♥74
♦AK9		♦764
♣K74		♣AJ105
	♠A86	
	♥K92	
	♦J102	
	♣Q863	

We bid as follows.

<u>W</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>E</u>	<u>S</u>
		P	P
1H	1S	1N	2S
4H	P	P	P

My 1NT response left no pip unbid, and the same might be said of Chris's jump to Four Hearts. Still, it was an excellent contract, the two hands fitting well.

The defence began with two rounds of spades, Chris ruffing. It was risky to cross to dummy in order to take the heart finesse, and anyway Chris judged that the finesse would probably lose. Accordingly he played hearts from the top, South taking his King before switching to a diamond. Chris won that, drew the last trump, took a (losing) club finesse, and claimed his contract. Dummy's long club took care of the losing diamond in hand.

It wasn't a difficult hand to play, but several pairs didn't get to game – probably because one or other member of the partnership counted points rather than considered the trick potential of their hand.

We played this next one on the last round.

Board 27; Dealer South; both non-vulnerable

	♠72	
	♥KQJ43	
	♦A85	
	♣Q102	
♠Q654		♠J108
♥5		♥A10972
♦KQ96		♦1042
♣J986		♣53
	♠AK93	
	♥86	
	♦J73	
	♣AK74	

This time Chris and I sat North/South, Chris in the South seat. This was the bidding.

<u>W</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>E</u>	<u>S</u>
			1C
P	1H	P	1N
P	2C*	P	2S
P	3N	P	P
P			

My 2C bid was 'checkback'. Chris's 2S response denied three hearts and showed four spades.

This was matchpointed pairs, so the objective was to make as many tricks as possible. Like all good declarers, Chris does not approach this task purely from the perspective of his own difficulties and opportunities. No indeed; the defence also have their uncertainties and their confusions, and it is up to declarer to exploit them.

West led the King of diamonds, which Chris ducked. West correctly decided he needed to switch, and he opted for a low club (my choice would have been a heart, East being known to hold five cards in the suit). Chris won the club cheaply and played a heart to his King, which East ducked. He returned to hand with a spade, then advanced another heart. East ducked a second time (not sure why).

Chris having gratefully snaffled his second heart trick, he turned to clubs and cashed his winners in that suit, on which East threw a spade (hopefully retaining his hearts). Chris then cashed his second spade winner and exited with a spade. West took this trick cheaply and cashed the Queen of spades. That was the end for him. He only had diamonds remaining, and Chris was able to run the forced diamond exit to the Jack in his hand.

A nicely played ten tricks. I'll have to give him another game sometime, if he can bear it.

GD