

CAUTIOUS BIDDER [47]

The Vince Bevan is the West Wales Pairs Championship. This year the organisers declared it an 'open' event, and so, last Sunday, a few Cardiff players trekked westwards, augmenting the usual entry and by their presence contributing to an enjoyable fifteen table competition.

As it turns out this was all highly irregular. 'Open' events require WBU approval – and doubtless the payment of some dosh. Not that any of this mattered to the players, although there was some trepidation as we headed home with a (small) stash of Western area masterpoints secreted about our person. Would we be stopped at the border (around Bridgend, I guess) and required to hand back our ill-gotten gains? We kept a careful look-out, but saw no flashing blue lights.

It reminded me of a story concerning Rob Sheehan, one of England's finest ever players, who many years ago was stopped whilst driving abroad. Sheehan, who had committed some minor infraction, was asked to produce his driving licence. Sadly he didn't have it on him. But, ever resourceful, Sheehan fished out his EBU masterpoint certificate, which seeing as he was a Grand master was quite an impressive looking document. He offered it to the policeman, who struggled to understand its import but nonetheless declared himself satisfied. Sheehan claimed afterwards that it was the only known occasion on which masterpoints had been of some practical use.

This hand from the weekend would have been small potatoes at Teams, but at matchpoints every board matters and we got this one wrong.

Board 3; Dealer West; East/West vulnerable

	♠A1052	
	♥A	
	♦AQ1063	
	♣Q87	
♠K976		♠J3
♥KJ8		♥10643
♦K		♦J7542
♣A10954		♣KJ
	♠Q84	
	♥Q9752	
	♦98	
	♣632	

This was the bidding at our table, Sue and I sitting East/West.

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

Two Hearts was not a good spot, so it's worth trying to establish where exactly we went wrong. A number of calls might be questioned. The first is my decision to bid 1H following North's 1D overcall. I didn't fancy a trap pass – my diamonds aren't good enough to convert Sue's re-opening X to a penalty double at the one level. I might have doubled for

take-out, but Sue and I have the agreement that a double here promises 4/4 in the majors. I might have bid 1N – probably best, on reflection. Or I could bid my mouldy 4 card heart suit, this being my actual choice.

When North rebid his diamonds I thought things were going pretty well for us. A double from me now would have been competitive, asking Sue to further describe her hand, but the last thing I wanted to do was disturb 2D, so I passed, hoping Sue would find a double. This, in my view, is what she should have done, but Sue had three hearts and elected to show delayed support for her partner's suit.

And there, unhappily, we rested. Even double dummy I would have struggled to make eight tricks. As it was I managed to go just one down for what was still a very poor matchpoint score.

2D doubled would have stood no chance. Deep Finesse takes it two down, but even the more likely one down would have delivered a perfectly satisfactory score.

I am a huge fan of low level competitive doubles, and believe that most players do not employ them nearly enough. They are a wonderfully useful addition to one's bidding vocabulary and can be called upon in a host of different scenarios, for a variety of purposes.

Sue agrees she would have done better to double on this hand. I have mentioned the possibility of my responding 1NT, rather than 1H, because I want to show how reasonable I am and not someone inclined to blame partner when things go wrong.

GD