

REFLECTIONS FROM THE SEA END – FEBRUARY 2016

Happy days are here again! England has a successful cricket team. The pussy-cats and I thrilled as Ben, that worthy buccaneer, regardless of risk smashed the Proteas to all areas of the ground (even using the scoop shot). It reminded me of another glorious day when I was fortunate enough to be present when after “Beefy” had smashed the Aussies at Headingley, “Boring Bob” mowed them down for a great win. These feats of derring –do often repeat themselves in other contexts and the other day I reflected on something similar which had happened at the bridge table.

My favourite bridge book is S.J.Simon’s “*Why you lose at Bridge*” and in its last chapter is a bridge deal which forms part of “*a rubber at the Club*”. It is the deal where the Unlucky Expert (UE), holding an effective worthless Yarborough, is on lead against a redoubled slam (6NT). However his partner, a weak player, thinks she is on lead but actually is not and looks very crestfallen when this is pointed out to her. Thus UE from the bidding and using his general bridge knowledge and experience, works out that his partner must have the AK of spades and in that case his opponents were likely to have 12 running tricks if he were to lead anything other than a spade.

This was very simple for UE, but he had a much more tricky problem to solve, namely was it ethical to lead a spade? He clearly had unauthorised information, and left to his own devices he would have led a diamond. UE gritted his teeth and rather than imperil his ethical reputation, he led a diamond and the contract went 2 off for 1000 points to him and his partner.

Well I recently held a near Yarborough in a Charity game and my earnest youthful partner asked during the auction about a 4th suit forcing bid of 3 spades and then passed. I was eventually on lead against 3nt and I too had an ethical problem. Could I ethically lead a spade? I decided for similar reasons NOT to lead a spade but chose to lead my shortest other suit which I was sure would give away a lot of overtricks and therefore matchpoints. In fact my lead was the only lead to defeat the contract and leading a spade would have given declarer a lot of overtricks.

I will always remember S.J.Simon’s famous last comments on his hand: “the UE sat in a daze throughout – was there justice after all!?” I asked myself the same question after my similar experience and I have yet to come up with any answer. Perhaps it is best that way!

Time to stop musing for another month.

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