

REFLECTIONS FROM THE SEA END – NOVEMBER 2015

This morning as I am wont to do, I fed my darling pussycats their meaty chunks in gravy and as they lapped up their nectar, I chanced to see a movie still about the famous “Whisky Galore” incident. The look of rapture on all their faces reminded me of the simple pleasures that delight us through all our lives and I recalled some of those occasions in my bridge career which have lingered long in my memory.

In my previous articles, I have recounted several of these events and no doubt I will relate many more. Indeed I remember fondly the time when I bid and made my first grand slam which was in a Cambridge University club duplicate where I won my first master points. Also when I won my first prize duplicate at the Young Chelsea BC, I recall that the prize was large enough to buy my first bottle of Champagne with which I celebrated my victory. Great moments, but the occasion I treasure even more was the hand where I proved to myself that I could play bridge at the highest level.

I was playing in Spain in a big international pairs tournament against two European Champions and I held S Axx H QJx D KJ10987x C void. I opened 1Diamond at Game All and after 2 passes RHO Doubled. LHO bid 2 Clubs and after a little thought RHO bid 2NT which was raised to game. I was on lead and I reflected on my prospects which looked very poor.

Partner could not have much and the opponents certainly had enough general values for game. Partner probably had a few clubs and could conceivably have a slow stopper in the suit but he could not have an outside entry let alone have a major which could actually be set up. Leading a diamond into the strong hand might well give a second trick in the suit but if it didn't then the contract might well go off. Also the bidding seemed relatively normal and most other players in my seat would probably lead a diamond.

So I decided on leading a diamond, but which diamond to lead? Assuming that both missing diamond honours were in declarer's hand then it wouldn't matter which card I led. But declarer's stop may only be Axx (which might have been a reason for thinking a bit before bidding 2NT) and then either partner or LHO would hold the Queen singleton or doubleton. If they had these holdings then I must lead the King to catch the singleton Q and of course if partner had the doubleton he should/would unblock the Q under the lead. So I led the King of Diamonds and dummy duly went down with the singleton Queen and partner DID have a slow Club stopper and so the contract went off.

I remember the reaction at the table where no actual comment was made. However Declarer nodded respectfully in my direction and the hand appeared in the championship bulletin the next day. To say I was chuffed would be an understatement, since it was the first time I had knowingly found a successful play for the right reason.

But just as in cricket where batsmen often seem to score a fine century in the first innings of a Test only to record a duck in the second innings, the noble sport of bridge tends to have the last laugh. On the very next hand, I made a speculative weak jump overcall over the opponents' strong club opening and was doubled for a large penalty, thus only achieving a flat round!

Oh well, It was ever thus. Until next month then.

Geoffrey Wolfarth, Hove.