



Bath Replays

9 A little learning ...

Board 4. Tuesday May 29, 2007

For the keen improver wading through shelvesful of intermediate bridge books, there is a danger of becoming sceptical about “prepared hands”. It’s easy for an author to fix a hand to demonstrate a neat teaching point, but how often do such situations occur in the real world? Well, quite a lot, actually, and therein lurks another danger ...

West opened the bidding with a weak 2♠. Her partner’s 2NT (Ogust) elicited 3♠ (= 2 of top 3 honours, maximum points), which was duly raised to 4♠.

I was sitting South, my partner led the ♦6, and East laid down the dummy.

You can imagine my excitement. Here was a “prepared hand”, but for real. My partner’s lead just had to be a singleton (with the 5432 conveniently on view in dummy, the 6 certainly wasn’t from a doubleton, anyway, and there must be better leads than low from J86), so up with the Ace, and West’s play of ♦J from J8 didn’t fool me for a moment.

Stop to think. Declarer has 6 trumps, leaving my partner with 3, so I can give him a ruff, and then possibly another. And my ♥A gives me another textbook opportunity. When I lead a diamond back for the ruff, I can tell partner about my convenient entry via a suit preference signal: ♦10 from me, ♦8 from declarer and my partner duly ruffs and leads back a small heart to my Ace.

This really is too easy. Candy from a baby. First three tricks to us, and so all that remains is for partner to ruff another diamond and ... *Oops*. Declarer ruffs high (with the ♠Q, I think), clears trumps in two rounds, finishing in the dummy, and is able to discard two losing hearts and a losing club on the three remaining diamond masters.

And of course if I hadn’t been so dazzled by all the textbook cleverness, I would have foreseen it. It was obvious. Declarer’s response to Ogust had shown the K and Q of trumps. With all those top trumps, and only 3 out, of course she was going to ruff high! As the full deal shows (and as I should have realised), the only chance of bringing down the contract was to return a heart to partner’s ♥K. He might not have had it, true, but his low heart lead suggested an honour, and better to try something that had a chance of success than something that had none!

What about partner? Well, I suppose he might have noted my heart signal and risked leading his ♥K before a small one to my Ace. As Ron Klinger’s Golden Rule of Defence has it: *Don’t give partner a chance to go wrong*.

On the other hand, it would have been a bit risky. It was also our first game together, and he didn’t yet know how wrong I can go, given the chance.

I’ve got my share of excuses. It was an early board, I was Director, and we were using Bridgmate for the first time that night ... Talking of which, webpage travellers produced via Bridgmate show all the contracts, so just to see how badly we had done, I checked out Board 4 and found that we hadn’t done that badly after all. Of the seven pairs that were in 4♠, six had made it, one of those with an overtrick. Not an impressive statistic for those playing NS that evening. Interestingly, sitting South at the only table that took the contract off was Bath BC’s first ever Bridgmate manager, who had plenty on his mind other than mere defence. There goes one of my excuses!

Chris Jones
30 May 2007



♠ 2
♥ A53
♦ A1097
♣ K9865

