



Bath Replays

11 A spanner in the works

Board 21. Thursday January 18, 2007

The word 'psyche' can arouse strong feelings - normally overwhelmingly negative - but psychic bids are quite legal (see below) and can be very effective, as the following hand shows. With North the dealer and NS vulnerable, the bidding was as follows:

North	East	South	West
Pass	3♦!	Double	3♠!!
4♣!!!	Pass	4♥	All pass

Final contract: 4♥ by South.

A quick review of the auction:

North decided to pass first in hand, East entered the auction with an aggressive pre-empt (one would have to say that it's not the most robust of suits) and South doubled for take-out. Enter a mischievous West, who picked off North's spade suit with a psyche of 3♠. For some reason North didn't pass or double, but thought his hand was worth 4♣. In situations such as these, if you're fixed, it's generally better to stay fixed than try to mastermind a bid: the 4♣ bid removes the possibility of a penalty and also takes 3NT by South from the equation. East passed, having done his work, and South closed the auction with 4♥.

♠ 1098643	♠ 75
♥ KJ	♥ Q4
♦ 5	♦ J98764
♣ AJ53	♣ 1097
♠ 2	♠ 75
♥ 10983	♥ Q4
♦ AQ10	♦ J98764
♣ KQ864	♣ 1097
♠ AKQJ	♠ 75
♥ A7652	♥ Q4
♦ K32	♦ J98764
♣ 2	♣ 1097

West led the ♥10 to the Jack, Queen and Ace. South now led a club to the Ace and ruffed a club. Then a heart to the King (!), followed by another club ruff! (What's wrong with cashing spades?) At this point South only had one trump left and was in a spot of difficulty. He cashed the ♠A and tried to cash the King. West ruffed, cashed the diamond Ace, drew South's last trump and cashed his winning clubs. That was three off: one diamond, two hearts and three clubs. Not too shabby when 6♠ is cold for North-South.

Points to be gleaned:

1. If you do not have a penalty double available to expose the psyche, then Pass is the best option, as it leaves most possibilities open. South's failure to overcall 3NT over 3♦ suggests an unbalanced or huge balanced hand.
2. If you're fixed for a bid, it's generally better to stay fixed rather than mastermind something. Don't forget, partner is still there, and you must hope he will do something sensible.
3. Note that the final contract was not doubled. When you've manoeuvred the opponents into a bad contract, DO NOT undo the good work by doubling. They will now smell a rat and remove to something better - in this case, 4♠.

*Peter Sampson
June 2007*

The Orange Book defines a psyche as 'a deliberate and gross mis-statement of honour strength and/or suit length'. Generally speaking, the rules state that a psyche is a legitimate ploy as long as the psycher's partner is as surprised as the opposition. Any kind of partnership understanding relating to psyches, however, is not permitted, and if the TD concludes that the psycher's partner has 'fielded' a psyche, a penalty is likely to be applied. For a full discussion of what constitutes a 'green', 'amber' and 'red' psyche, see pages 29-30 of the new Orange Book. *Chris Jones*