



Bath Replays

33 Trump reduction at the table Board 5. Nicko Plate, March, 2009.

Playing teams matches over a small number of boards, the result often hinges on 2 or 3 key boards. Maximising the score when you know you are in a good contract that your opponents are unlikely to be in will be a big contributor to a win. When the chance to make a textbook play is also added to the mix, this makes bridge an exciting and satisfying game. All this came together at hand 5 of a recent NICKO Plate match between Bath A and Clevedon A.

North opens a respectable 3S, and East contributes a competitive bid of 5C: this might seem risky, but is only going to lose 4 tricks. South now makes an excellent bid of 5S. With only 3 defensive tricks, it is much better to try for an uncertain vulnerable game than accept a small penalty. West, who can envisage 1 or 2 tricks in spades and a potential heart trick to go with anything East can contribute (surely he must have a trick or two!) doubles. The auction has been:

West	North	East	South
-	3♠	5♣	5♠
Dbl	All pass		

♠ QJ96432	♠ 7
♥ A105	♥ 7
♦ 93	♦ QJ4
♣ Q	♣ KJ986542
♠ A1085	♠ K
♥ K9864	♥ QJ32
♦ 876	♦ AK1052
♣ 10	♣ A73

North now awaits his fate as dummy is tabled and East leads ... ♥7. Surely a singleton. You thank dummy enthusiastically.

♥7, Q, K, A. Then a spade to 7, K and Ace. Having received confirmation that our 3 bids are invariably 7-card suits, West switches to clubs: 10, Q, K and Ace.

You lead a club. West discards a heart (not best) and you ruff.

You lead ♠Q, discarding a diamond, and receive confirmation that West has the rest of the trumps (10 and 8) in front of your J9.

Your contract (worth 850) is assured, as you can only lose two spades. However, the overtrick is worth 200 - that's 4 more IMPS if the opposition are making the contract undoubled. The technique to catch the defence's trumps is known as trump reduction and involves reducing your trumps down to the same number as held by the defence (2), and at the end being in dummy to lead any card so that the defence is forced to trump, allowing you to finesse their holding.

So having played three trumps and needing just two trumps at the end, you need to get rid of two trumps and end up in dummy. For that you need three entries - and you have them: ♦A, ♦K and ♥J. So lead a diamond to the Ace, ruff a club (ruff 1), a diamond to the King and ruff a diamond (ruff 2). You now have two spades and two hearts left in your hand. West must have the same. It is now straightforward to play 10 and another heart to the Jack and lead your last heart, which West is forced to ruff, giving you 12 tricks.

All very satisfying. West can of course prevent your overtrick in two ways: firstly by withholding K at trick 1, and then by discarding diamonds at every opportunity.

Thankfully, West was not on the same wavelength. And the outcome? Yes, we gained 9 IMPS when the opposition scored 650 for 4♠+1. And thanks to three further game swings where a combined team effort led to our team-mates making games while the opposition failed, the match was won. Bring on the next round. Why not try the excitement of teams play next autumn?

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