



## 4 Trust your opponents - and still get zero

Phil Green

Bridge players can often be heard discussing the relative merits of Teams and Pairs scoring. I have always much preferred Teams as I feel you have a clearer idea of what you are trying to achieve on each hand. The downside is that you have to buy three drinks instead of one if you commit an absolute howler. Hand 2 from Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> December is a classic example of the bad luck that haunts us all in pairs.

As East you deal and open a Weak 2♥. South passes and partner (Andrew Parkes) raises to 3♥, a simple nuisance bid. North doubles, you pass, South jumps to 4♠, North bids 5♥, South bids 5♠ and North goes on to 6♠. Now you look at the vulnerability and see that you are Green and they are Red.

|          |           |
|----------|-----------|
| HERON    | ♠ 5       |
| WEST     | ♥ AK10843 |
| 2 Dealer | ♦ J954    |
| SOUTH    | ♣ J3      |



What do you do next? (Note there would have been no point in doubling the 5♥, which simply gives South another possible call.)



The first problem is to decide if 6♠ is making. In this case I decided to trust my opponents, who shall remain nameless to protect their modesty. So will 7♥ be a good save? Eventually I managed to calculate that minus 6 would only be 1400, against their 1430. Assuming partner has not taken leave of his senses we should have 6 tricks in Hearts, and must be able to either promote a Diamond trick, or ruff one in dummy, so it looks like at least 7 tricks. Out came the 7♥ bid. South with three choices (7♠, Pass & Double) got it right. Don't you wish you had a partner who guessed right when the odds were 2 to 1 against?



As you will see from the full deal, 7♥-4 was well within my capabilities and 12 tricks in ♠ is equally easy. I accepted the BridgeMate score of -800 and was disappointed to find that our North/South opponents had scored 100%. Never mind, 'that score will improve' said Andrew reassuringly. Examining the results on the Internet the following day revealed that he was not strictly correct, but at least it had not got worse. The most common score was 680 to North/South, although one East/West pair had been allowed to get away with 5♥-2, not even doubled!

|           |           |
|-----------|-----------|
| ♠ KJ10643 | ♠ 5       |
| ♥ -       | ♥ AK10843 |
| ♦ K7      | ♦ J954    |
| ♣ AK987   | ♣ J3      |
| ♠ 72      | HERON     |
| ♥ QJ72    | WEST      |
| ♦ A1032   | 2 Dealer  |
| ♣ 1042    | SOUTH     |
| ♠ AQ98    | ♠ 5       |
| ♥ 965     | ♥ AK10843 |
| ♦ Q86     | ♦ J954    |
| ♣ Q65     | ♣ J3      |

This is the injustice of pairs. We achieved the par result on the hand and scored zero, because we were playing against the only opponents who had bid the slam. At teams we would also have scored the par result, but would have lost only 3 imps playing with any of the other North/South pairs and might have gained 12 IMPs if the opposition East/West had been timid, or their system had not allowed them to start 2♥ Pass 3♥. As I often say when scoring a poor result, 'pairs is a silly game'.

The point of this story is that I took the advice given by Richard Samter, who is a regular team mate of mine, in the previous article and trusted the opposition to know what they were doing, but I still scored Zero. I could have achieved the same score by ignoring Richard and following my own advice that 'there are more little green cards in a bidding box than anything else for a reason', but then there would have been no article!