

MOUNTNESSING BRIDGE CLUB

Meets every Thursday at 7.25 for 7.30
at Mountnessing Village Hall, Roman Road, Mountnessing, Essex, England, CM15 0UG

Board 13: Bid 'misfits' cautiously

Hand played on 18th September 2008
Board number 13 Red Section
Dealer North
Vulnerability Both
Submitted by Alaric Cundy

North		East	
♠KJT2		♠AQ863	
♥Q74		♥85	
♦QT3		♦void	
♣T83		AKQ975	
West		Bidding:	
♠void		North	East
♥KJT962		No	1♠
♦86542		No	3♣
♣42			
South		South	West
♠9754		2♦	2♥
♥A3		End	
♦AKJ97			
♣J6			

At our table, East West bid cautiously, and finished up as the only pair to make a contract on the East / West cards, and hence they earned a complete 'top' on the board.

It is interesting to consider what potential there is for improving on the resulting score of 3♣+1 - by either side!

With East / West playing in a club contract, the best defence is for South to start off with a trump, but I suspect that I was not the only player in the room to try a top diamond. Declarer ruffs the diamond in hand, and trumps a spade in Dummy. A second diamond is trumped in hand, then a second spade is trumped in Dummy. Declarer now has the problem as to how to get back to hand to draw trumps while retaining trump control. In practice, a third diamond was trumped, and the outstanding trumps were drawn - meaning that Declarer had by now run out. I (South) made the mistake of discarding the small heart on the third trump. At this stage East can cash out for 9 tricks (three top trumps, two spade ruffs in dummy and three diamond ruffs in hand, plus the Ace of Spades), but instead led a heart towards Dummy. South rued not having a small heart left, so had to rise with the Ace. He could cash two diamonds, but Declarer made the ♥K as well as the ♠A for an overtrick. Had South retained a small heart, Declarer may have guessed badly, and finished up losing two hearts and two diamonds.

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On an initial trump lead, the play goes differently, as now Declarer can only trump one spade in Dummy. The consolation is that Declarer keeps better control of the hand, because he / she only has to ruff one diamond in hand before trying the heart suit. Again, much depends on how well Declarer guesses in that suit. Let us suppose that after one trump, one spade ruff, one diamond ruff back to hand, and then two more trumps - that is 5 tricks so far - Declarer plays a heart towards Dummy, South ducks, and the King wins. In total now Declarer will be held to six natural trump tricks, one spade ruff in Dummy, one heart and one spade, and will only be able to improve on that if either defender kindly leads a spade, enabling the finesse to be taken.

It is interesting to think how a heart contract played by West might fare.

North is likely to lead a diamond - partner's suit - and the play could go: trump the lead in Dummy, cash the spade Ace, discarding a diamond, ruff a spade, ruff another diamond, play three top clubs, discarding another diamond when South ruffs the third one. The defence can take one more diamond and two more trumps for a total of four tricks, so 3♥ looks like a making bet on that defence. If North finds an initial trump lead - say a trump to the Ace and a trump back - Declarer will cross to dummy with a club, cash the ♠A for one diamond discard, and will then attempt to run the clubs. One diamond will go on the third top club, and another will go on the fourth club, which North will ruff. Declarer will still have two losing diamonds in hand to go with the two trump losers - again that would be 3♥ making. In practice, the only pair to try a heart contract made just 8 tricks.

So the real challenge on this hand for East / West is not to overbid it. Most players would open the East hand with 1♣ and South will overcall 1♦. Some partnerships adopt the style that a 2♥ bid from West in this situation would show long hearts with a weak hand, and that could be an excellent route to a realistic contract. If West bids 1♥, North is likely to bid 2♦ and East may feel obliged to try 2♠. Now East / West will do well to subside in either 3♣ or 3♥.