

MOUNTNESSING BRIDGE CLUB

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

IF YOU MESS UP AN ARTIFICIAL BID, THEN BRIDGE ETIQUETTE MAY TAKE YOU TO A FARCICAL DISASTER

Hand played on 31/01/2013
Board number 6
Dealer East
Vulnerability East / West
Submitted by Alaric Cundy

The Hands

North

♠6
♥J9654
♦T82
♣KJ74

West

♠T93
♥83
♦KJ9763
♣AT

East

♠54
♥A72
♦AQ5
♣Q8652

South

♠AKQJ872
♥KQT
♦4
♣93

The Bidding

North	East	South	West
	1NT	x	2♦
x	2♥	4♠	5♦
x	5♥	x	End

As Bridge disasters go, this one may have set new records. East should be congratulated on 'taking his medicine' - even if it did turn out to be exceptionally vile-tasting!

The auction started routinely enough - pretty well anyone playing a 12-14 1NT opener would have selected that bid on the East hand - the 5th club makes it a little bit better than "a really grotty 12-count". Likewise, anyone would have doubled holding the South hand. Clearly West has an ideal hand for a 'rescue' into Diamonds, but how you achieve that aim will depend on your partnership methods. Some common styles are:

1. Redouble shows an unspecified 5-card plus suit, and opener bids 2♣, which is treated as 'pass or correct'
2. A bid of a suit shows the lower ranking of two (or more) 4-card suits
3. A bid of a suit, including 2♣, is natural with 5+ cards
4. The double is ignored, and all bids have their normal meanings, e.g., Stayman, Transfers, etc.
5. Redouble is natural - "I expect this contract to make"
6. Redouble is a transfer to a minor suit
7. Redouble shows two or more 4-card suits, and the partnership continues to bid 'up the line' until they reach an undoubled resting place, or a 4-3 or better fit is found.

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To an extent, partnerships can 'mix and match' from this list, so long as the overall agreement does not include contradictions, and covers both the 5-card and multiple 4-card suits options. But of course, it is vital that both players have the **same** understanding of their methods...

At the table, East took the 2♦ bid as a transfer to hearts, but West intended it as natural. The seeds for chaos were sown as soon as East announced 'transfer to Hearts'. East dutifully bid 2♥, but now South, not holding a hand that wanted to defend a low-level doubled suit contract, thought he had settled the matter by jumping to 4♠. West should have accepted that bid as a 'get out of jail free' card, but instead confounded the matter by choosing to emphasise that in fact the hand held diamonds by sacrificing in 5♦. East should be admired for behaving impeccably here. West had initially shown a heart suit and followed it up with a free bid of 5♦. With all the bidding that was going on, and especially given the unfavourable vulnerability, the logical explanation was that West held a really wild red 2-suiter, probably with very few top cards, but probably 6-5 or even 6-6 shape. With equal length in both partner's suits, East dutifully corrected 5♦* into the first bid suit, 5♥. Indeed, on that interpretation, East may have seen possibilities of making this contract - a 2-2 heart break, plus a six-card diamond suit headed by the Jack, Ten, and with the ♦K onside and it would come home. If just one of those assumptions was wrong, then the contract might be just the one off - potentially a good save against a non-vulnerable 4♠ making. But there again, if West's hand was only slightly better - e.g., included the ♥K and five small cards, then an overtrick was even feasible. However, in practice, 5♥ duly got doubled and went 8 off, for an unlikely score of 2,300 to the opponents.

No, disasters do not come much bigger than this one!

Reflections

In the ensuing discussion it was questioned whether East should be obliged to bid 5♥, the answer to which is 'yes'. East had interpreted, and indeed announced, the original 2♦ bid as a transfer to hearts. Etiquette says that he is only permitted to change his mind in the light of subsequent legitimate information. The only information that is legitimate are the 13 cards that he can see in his hand, and the various bids made. If, for example, NS had engineered their way into 4♥, then it would have been obvious that partner had mis-bid, and then East would be allowed to 'field' it. The logical explanation was as described above, and East's chosen action was completely consistent with it. Exceptionally painful, but consistent - and honourable.