

Arriving at the Telford Spa Hotel it quickly became clear that this was unlike any other spa weekend I'd ever attended! This was serious stuff and so it was that we settled down on Saturday afternoon to play 96 boards of bridge over four sessions. I had a quick team talk with myself and adopted my strategy for the weekend. Enjoy the event, it's just a game of cards, listen attentively to my partner's bidding and think carefully before responding, pay very close attention to his carding in defence, hope for a few gifts and accept them graciously (7NT from our opps was an easy double when we each held an ace, declarer having mistakenly taken a 5D response to 4NT as three keycards when in fact it was zero) and, realising the need for considerable stamina, stay awake!

Towards the end of the first day, around 11pm and having played 50 boards already, I was dealt this hand:

S: K

H: Kxxxx

D: Kxx

C: AQxx

I opened 1H, my partner bid 1S, I bid 2C and my partner, seemingly forgetting his own rules about bidding slowly, bid 6S. Quickly forgiven, this is his hand:

S: AQxxxxxx

H: Qx

D: J

C: x

North led the AD but clearly hadn't attended my team talk. He'd fallen asleep, ignored his partner's 8D, calling for a H, even though she slapped it down with considerable force, and continued with diamonds. Partner played the KD, discarding a heart in his hand. He played the KS and crossed to his hand by ruffing a diamond. He now started squeezing the opposition. The contract makes because South is guarding both the KC (the finesse if taken fails) and the AH. At trick 11 partner must play his ninth spade and discard the KH on the table leaving the QH and a small club in his hand and the AQ of clubs in dummy. South now has to choose between discarding a club from her Kx or the AH. Several people made 6S, even though two aces are missing!