

The Five Level

Bridge is full of old sayings, giving sage advice based on experience. Most would have heard “the five level is for the opposition”. What does that mean in practice? Generally if the opposition bid over your major game, let them play there either doubled or not. It, of course, is not as simple as that as Board 1 showed on Tuesday evening.

Once you introduce wild distributions everyone is on a guess.

Aggressive bidding with shape always puts the opposition under pressure.

S 74

H AKJ75

D AK3

C A98

S AK106532

S ----

H 3

H 92

D 764

D Q852

C 43

C KQJ10762

S QJ98

H Q10864

D J109

C 5

Five pairs played in 5H, four of whom went one off. One played in 4H making ten tricks. Two E/W pairs bought the contract one in 4S, the other in 5C each going four off for 800.

Probable/possible bidding-

1H- (3C)-3H-(4S)

?

Even to this stage it is a bit Russian Roulette.

North has a standard 1H opening and most Easts playing weak jump overcalls will bid 3C or even 4C. South can raise in hearts but not enough to do more. Now comes the first decision. West knows that it is likely that N/S have game in hearts. Opposite a WJO there may even be a slam on, do you sit passively or get involved. Bidding 4S puts the opposition under pressure. You have no idea whether this a

good sacrifice, a possible make or a big penalty, but neither do the opposition. All these A/Ks suggest a possible double, but 5 pairs decided to bid on either to compete or investigate a slam.

Deep finesse tells us that 5H is a make and any North hearing the aforementioned bidding slipped up if they went one down. Everyone got the KC lead, pause for thought, recap the bidding. West has long spades, at least six and in view of East's failure to lead a singleton spade in Partner's suit certainly seven. Consider the pips, playing spades three times will establish the remaining card. Win the AC draw the trumps and play a spade towards dummy. West will win and a diamond is now best for the defence, win and play the second spade. Win the next diamond, ruff a club and you now have a ruffing finesse in spades. West is helpless and the losing diamond goes on the winning spade.

I suspect that most declarers finessed the diamond, a 50% chance. A bit of care would have revealed the 100% line.

My mantra applies here “ the information is there use it”.