

# Summertown Bridge Bulletin 14 December 2020

by Trevor Dawn

Do I feel lucky?

The 1971 film Dirty Harry contains one of the most quoted pieces of dialogue in movie history (actually, it is more often than not misquoted). Clint Eastwood, the rebellious cop, having cornered the criminal, says: "You have to ask yourself one question: 'do I feel lucky?' Well, do you, punk?". The luck in question for the criminal is whether there are any bullets left in Eastwood's Magnum gun. The criminal is not sure, errs on the side of caution in believing there is still one bullet, and allows himself to be captured. The criminal made a mistake and there were no bullets left. He could have got away.

How many times in sport, as well as in life, are we faced with a choice as whether to take the aggressive option or play safe? There are no rights or wrongs to this and we are as likely to make the wrong choice as we are to make the right one. Bridge is no different and it is often the thought of penalties for making the wrong choice or the concern for the feelings of an aggrieved partner which influence our judgment. Risk and reward. There are occasions when caution leads to a successful evening; there are others where every gamble pays off. So, are there some evenings where, in Dirty Harry's words, 'I feel lucky' just happens to come true in key hands?

Monday 14<sup>th</sup> December had a number of hands where fortune favoured the brave. Notice now, that I have shifted the semantics slightly to a more proactive register. The random element of risk is now coated with a more acceptable level of analysis. Is there something more to gaining a good score than "I'll give it a go"?

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♠J5 ♥AK7 ♦42 ♣1098432	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="background-color: red; color: white; text-align: center;">W</td><td style="background-color: red; color: white; text-align: center;">North</td><td style="background-color: red; color: white; text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="background-color: red; color: white; text-align: center;">e</td><td style="background-color: white; color: red; text-align: center; font-size: 2em;">4</td><td style="background-color: red; color: white; text-align: center;">a</td></tr> <tr><td style="background-color: red; color: white; text-align: center;">s</td><td style="background-color: red; color: white; text-align: center;">South</td><td style="background-color: red; color: white; text-align: center;">s</td></tr> <tr><td style="background-color: red; color: white; text-align: center;">t</td><td></td><td style="background-color: red; color: white; text-align: center;">t</td></tr> </table>	W	North	E	e	4	a	s	South	s	t		t	♠AK87 ♥109 ♦K109865 ♣5																														
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Several hands from last night are illustrative. The first one I have chosen is hand 4. I do not know which systems were in train but I would guess that some were playing 3 weak 2s, one at least was playing a strong NT and others 2D as their strongest hand. This hand holds out possibilities for a competitive part-score auction, with both pairs being vulnerable adding an extra dimension to the bidding. I can empathise with every decision here but 3D by East with only 10 points seems to fit the "do I feel lucky" tag. Imagine partner's reaction if it were to go 2 off. The chances of doubletons in both majors opposite AK and trumps in dummy for at least one ruff are not great.

Dlr: West  
Vul: N/S

♠987  
♥J  
♦AQ10854  
♣K76

Optimum  
S 4Nx,N  
5Dx; -200

♠Q  
♥AQ65  
♦K7  
♣AJ8543

West 12 East

♠J10542  
♥987432  
♦J2  
♣--

	10		
16			2
	12		

♠AK63  
♥K10  
♦963  
♣Q1092

	♣	♦	♥	♠	N
N	1	4	-	1	-
S	1	3	-	1	3
E	-	-	4	-	-
W	-	-	4	-	-

The second hand is hand 12. Only two pairs were in 4H (only one of them landed the contract) and only one other made 10 tricks in hearts. Sitting East you have heard the bidding going on around you. If you look at the final results, it is not often you see contracts in all four suits. The question for East is how to maximise the non-vulnerable situation you are in. On the 'feel lucky' principle, what have you to lose in bidding 4H if you hear you partner bid hearts as her/his rebid? You have zero defensive values and there is a good chance that your second suit will come in useful at a later stage in the play.

The third hand I have chosen is our old friend of when to go on to bid at the five level. On hand 16, all pairs decided to go on to bid five of something, which in my experience is very unusual. Even in hand 2 (not featured here), there is often one hand that is not typical, while 3 pairs did not bid the slam (again not featured here) on hand 6. So, in this instance everyone 'felt lucky', though for some the result was more favourable than for others. I don't know why this should be, especially for E/W pairs where vulnerability was an issue. Perhaps the hand came at the end of the evening where those on a high felt why not, and those feeling that the fates had cheated them all evening felt they may as well go down fighting.

Dlr: West  
Vul: E/W

♠4  
♥AJ10763  
♦AK  
♣Q942

Optimum  
NS 5H;  
+450

♠QJ632  
♥5  
♦432  
♣AK53

West 16 East

♠AK1085  
♥K4  
♦7  
♣J10876

	14		
10			11
	5		

♠97  
♥Q982  
♦QJ109865  
♣--

	♣	♦	♥	♠	N
N	-	5	5	-	-
S	-	5	5	-	-
E	4	-	-	3	2
W	4	-	-	3	2

In the end, Harry Callaghan (Dirty Harry) was supposed to be on the side of justice but in fact he broke all the rules. So, how should one feel when one has been adventurous, got a great score of 480 on board 14 which ought to be a near top given the thinness of declarer's diamond holding, only to discover that you get 14% because almost everyone else has played it in NT and scored 490. 'I feel lucky' only works when the Gods say so. Had diamonds been the other way round it would have been a different story. Such is Fate! Now, "long, long ago in a galaxy far, far away" there may well have been just such a distribution on board 14, and therefore a different outcome.

Dlr: East  
Vul: None

♠J106  
♥10862  
♦AJ3  
♣1097

Optimum  
W 3N+1;  
-430

♠K3  
♥KQ5  
♦Q84  
♣AKQJ2

West 14 East

♠AQ4  
♥AJ43  
♦75  
♣8654

	6		
20			11
	3		

♠98752  
♥97  
♦K10962  
♣3

	♣	♦	♥	♠	N
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	5	1	4	-	2
W	5	1	4	-	4

I think I have been watching too many movies!