

Summertown Bridge Bulletin, 15 November 2021

I always admire James when he does his splendid reports because he normally has not actually played in the event. I cannot generate interest in looking at an evening's bridge if I have not played the hands myself. Hence this evening my partner was in our room in a nice hotel in the New Forest, while I sat in an annexe just off the bar with the buzz of drinkers' conversations in the background.

My three hands this week have something in common in that they all involve possible 5-level sacrifices. You never like to mention hands where you yourself did well – or, which is the same thing, the opponents did badly. So you end up describing those in which you did less well or, as in the case of my first hand of the evening, you (that is, me) totally screwed up. And to prove it, here is Board 6:

Dir: East Vul: E/W	<p>♠ A 10 ♥ 3 ♦ Q 3 ♣ K J 10 9 7 5 4 3</p>	Optimum NS 7Cx: -1400																																							
<p>♠ Q ♥ 10 6 4 2 ♦ K J 8 7 6 4 ♣ A Q</p>	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">WEST</td><td style="background-color: #90EE90; text-align: center;">NORTH</td><td style="text-align: center;">EAST</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">WEST</td><td style="text-align: center; font-size: 2em;">6</td><td style="text-align: center;">EAST</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">WEST</td><td style="background-color: #90EE90; text-align: center;">SOUTH</td><td style="text-align: center;">EAST</td></tr> </table>	WEST	NORTH	EAST	WEST	6	EAST	WEST	SOUTH	EAST	<p>♠ K J 9 5 ♥ A K J 7 ♦ A 10 2 ♣ 8 2</p>																														
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W	-	6	4	4	6																																				

First the bidding. Leaving aside the possibility of game or even slam in diamonds, 4♥ can make, so 5♣ at favourable vulnerability looks like a good sacrifice, although it can well go for 800 unless you get helped. But of course one of the significant advantages of bidding 5♣ is that often the opponents will bid on as well, ignoring the well-known bridge maxim “the 5 level belongs to the opponents”. In this case three pairs did bid on, and duly went off. (I’m not blaming them, most of these bridge maxims are correct only half the time.)

Now my play: in 4♥ by W, bid after a 4♣ overcall by N. How can you possibly go one off after ♠A lead and then a club switch into my AQ? I assumed that North probably had a single trump and confirmed this by playing A and K of hearts. At the back of my mind was that generally in such circumstances you don’t lead another trump, because this allows South to take the Queen and draw the last trump while you still may lose a trick setting up the diamond. So I play ♦A, finesse the ♦J to lose to North’s Queen, and another club allows South to ruff with the ♥9. Disaster. Obviously in this case I should have happily carried on with trumps, because even if I have to lose a diamond, both the other suits are still stopped. It wasn’t the noise from the bar, it was just STUPID.

Dir: South
Vul: All

♠ - -
♥ Q J
♦ A K 9 8 5 3
♣ Q 10 8 3 2

Optimum
NS
5Dx, NS
5Cx:
-200

♠ A Q J 9 7 4 2
♥ 10 6
♦ 10 7 4
♣ 6

W NORTH E
S 7 A
T SOUTH T

♠ K 8 3
♥ 9 8 7 3 2
♦ 2
♣ A K 7 5

♠ 10 6 5
♥ A K 5 4
♦ Q J 6
♣ J 9 4

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

It would be nice to have statistics on how often it is correct to sacrifice in a minor over 4 of a major even when the vulnerabilities are equal.

Only 3 pairs sacrificed in 5♦ on Board 7, getting a good score for going one off. One is always thinking 'Well, maybe they can't make 4♠ or whatever'. But they always can.

And here is another one. If the opponents bid to 4♥, you need to sacrifice in 5♣. But after W has opened in spades, I with the South hand think to myself, surely I am likely to manage to get a spade ruff, they probably can't make 4♥. But they can, of course...

Dir: West
Vul: None

♠ K Q 10 9 6
♥ 9
♦ Q 9 8 7 2
♣ 10 8

Optimum
E 5H: -450

♠ J 8 7 4 2
♥ K Q J 8
♦ A
♣ A 5 3

W NORTH E
S 8 A
T SOUTH T

♠ A 5 3
♥ 10 6 5 4 3 2
♦ K 4 3
♣ 6

♠ 7
♥ A 7
♦ J 10 6 5
♣ K Q J 9 7 4 2

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

Finally I should add congratulations to this week's winners, Robert and Bridget.