

Summertown Bridge Bulletin, 3 January 2022

Happy New Year to everyone, I guess for many of us it was the first bridge of 2022, although I see ten of you were playing in the OBC Monday pairs this morning. Gluttons for punishment.

Well done to the winners, Mike and Irene, followed by Alison and Robert, both pairs scoring over 60%. [And I also saw Robert was first at Oxford this morning, a good start to 2022.]

I usually try to find some common theme in the hands I describe, preferably in the areas of play or defence, rather than bidding, where everyone disagrees because there are no right or wrong answers. But this evening, although most hands had points of interest, I could not connect anything together.

So here to start with, is Board 6:

Dlr: East
 Vul: E/W

♠ J 9
 ♥ K 6
 ♦ J 10 8
 ♣ K Q 9 6 4 2

Optimum
 NS
 -1440

♠ Q 4 3
 ♥ Q J 9 4 3 2
 ♦ Q
 ♣ A 7 3

WEST NORTH EAST
 SOUTH
 6

♠ K 10 5 2
 ♥ A 10 8
 ♦ A K 9
 ♣ 10 8 5

10
 11 14
 5

♠ A 8 7 6
 ♥ 7 5
 ♦ 7 6 5 4 3 2
 ♣ J

	♣	♦	♥	♠	N
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	2	3	6	5	6
W	2	2	6	5	6

What's that saying about insanity being defined as doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result? * I (and others) made a mistake on this board very similar to one I made - *and wrote about* - a few months ago.

Just about everyone is in 4♥ by East or West, always getting a club lead. You can avoid two club losers by taking your Ace, then cashing ♦Q, playing to the ♥A and dumping your two club losers on the top diamonds. This line will probably lose a trump trick, but if you try the heart finesse first and it loses, your contract will go down (losing one heart, two clubs and a spade), so you don't dare to risk it.

Some declarers led a *low* heart to their Ace. But you may as well lead the ♥Q, and maybe some Norths holding the King will be stupid enough to cover. You've guessed it, I was North and I covered. Actually after the ♦Q I was expecting another diamond and when Rita played ♥Q I hesitated long enough that I might as well play my King. So we were one of just three tables where they made 12 tricks.

**wrongly attributed to Einstein*

I felt unlucky on board 8:

At most tables North opened 1NT and East passed. South can then safely bid 2♣, Stayman. If North bids a major, South passes; if North bids 2♦, South signs off in 2♥ (assuming you play this as a sign-off, which most people do). So on this board you end up in 2♠, a superior contract to 2♥. In fact at four tables, South missed this chance and simply transferred to hearts rather than make the Stayman bid.

Against 2♥ by North, East has a very difficult lead. Most chose ♠A, hoping to find partner with the King and getting a ruff I suppose, although

with 15 points, it seems to me the chance of finding partner with the King is not so great. In fact this lead is helpful to declarer.

But our East – and one other - doubled 1NT (rightly, I think, as he has a point more than the maximum opener can have). In our system, all South can then do is sign off in hearts, via a redouble and 2♣ bid from North. So we not only get into the worse contract, it is played by South, and West has no problem choosing the ♣8 lead.

Finally, I must mention this slam hand. Whether you are in 6♠ or 6♦, you have to drop the ♦Q or hope that they do not get the ♣A on the first trick, as you can then hastily dump your club loser on a top heart. But this is pairs, so 6♠ will obviously score better, as long as you can make it ...

After the bidding 1♠ - 2♥, two Wests ignored their diamond suit and rebid 3♠, and they were the only ones who got to the superior slam. But what does East do if partner's second bid is 3♦? I thought I was too strong for 4♦ or 5♦, so I bid 4♣, trying to say 'I think there's slam here, help!'.

Anyway we got to 6♦, maybe more by luck than judgement – and even though North did lead a club, we managed to make it.