

Summertown Bridge Bulletin, 7th February 2022

Congratulations to Paul and Roger, first by a long way.

I spent much of my time yesterday evening watching my partner play contracts. This is of course much more restful than playing them yourself, positively enjoyable in online bridge when you can see both hands from the start. You can plan how you would play it, tell your partner afterwards if your way would have been better than theirs, and congratulate them if your plan would have led to disaster. I have chosen to talk about play and defence on three of the many game hands.

Dlr: South
 Vul: E/W

♠ K J
 ♥ A 6 5
 ♦ Q 10 2
 ♣ Q J 10 9 3

Optimum
NS +420

♠ Q 7 5 4
 ♥ 9 7 2
 ♦ A 8 4 3
 ♣ 6 4

NORTH
 3
 SOUTH

♠ 10 8 6
 ♥ J 10
 ♦ K J 5
 ♣ K 8 7 5 2

♠ A 9 3 2
 ♥ K Q 8 4 3
 ♦ 9 7 6
 ♣ A

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

13
 6 8
 13

On Hand 3, eight pairs were in 4♥ making anything from 8 to 13 tricks. Five got a club lead. Four declarers played high from dummy and two Easts covered with the ♠K. NO, NEVER, TAKE IT BACK (except you're not allowed to). Declarer can then dump all three diamonds after drawing trumps. One declarer played small from dummy, so East was not even tempted. The other clever Easts played small (hopefully without hesitating), leaving declarer, not sure where the ♠K is, to decide what to do next.

Most other declarers got a spade lead, giving a free finesse and needing just one spade ruff to make the contract fairly certain. Or you can forget about ruffing a spade - play ♣A, draw trumps ending in dummy and take the ruffing finesse in clubs, throwing a diamond if East plays small. This obviously works on the actual hand - but if the ruffing finesse had lost and the ♦J were on the left, you would lose two diamonds and the club, one more trick than the simple-minded play. Why are there always far more options than described in a typical bridge column?

Dlr: West
 Vul: None
 Optimum
 NS -430

♠ J 5 2
 ♥ J 8 6 4 3
 ♦ K
 ♣ Q 9 4 2

♠ A K 9
 ♥ K 10 9
 ♦ A 3 2
 ♣ K 6 5 3

NORTH
 WEST 8 EAST
 SOUTH

♠ Q 10 8 6 4
 ♥ A 5
 ♦ J 10 8 5
 ♣ J 7

♠ 7 3
 ♥ Q 7 2
 ♦ Q 9 7 6 4
 ♣ A 10 8

7
 17 8
 8

♣	♦	♥	♠	N
-	-	-	-	-
-	-	-	-	-
2	3	1	4	4
2	3	1	4	4

On Hand 8, most pairs were in no-trumps by West, while three were in 4♠ by E. Typically in no-trumps you get a heart lead, the Queen forcing your King. Of course you don't know about the singleton ♦K. You can see hopefully five spades, two hearts, a diamond and a club if the Ace is on your left (or if the opps. lead them some time, which they won't). After cashing the spades – seeing maybe a diamond and club discarded from South - some simply led up to the ♣K, which here worked. But if the ♣A had been wrong, they would have lost a load of club tricks. Others led the ♦J hoping, I suppose, that something would turn up. What turned up, too many times, is that South

covered crashing North's King, and declarer's problems were over. It happened to at least one of the 4♠ players as well. DON'T COVER THE FIRST OF TOUCHING HONOURS. Not ever. Well, not very often.

Hand 9 was mostly played in 4♠ by West, getting a heart lead. I know what I would have done. Draw trumps in two rounds, small club to the Queen. If the ♣K is wrong and a diamond comes back, play the Ace, and ruff a club, hope the Jack comes down and I can then get back to throw two diamond losers away on the long clubs. Unfortunately, as the cards lie, this would not have worked and I would end up with just the mouldy 10 tricks.

Dlr: North
 Vul: E/W
 Optimum
 NS -650

♠ 7 2
 ♥ 10 7 6 5 4 2
 ♦ 10 7 3
 ♣ K 8

♠ A Q J 6 5 3
 ♥ 9 8
 ♦ J 9 8
 ♣ Q 4

NORTH
 WEST 9 EAST
 SOUTH

♠ K 10 8
 ♥ A J
 ♦ A Q 2
 ♣ A 10 7 3 2

3
 10 18
 9

♣	♦	♥	♠	N
-	-	1	-	-
-	-	1	-	-
3	1	-	5	3
2	1	-	5	3

So how come four pairs made 11 tricks? Well, typically, they take two rounds of trumps and then either finesse the diamond, or lead a heart; either way South gets the lead and wonders what to do next. Another heart gives a ruff and discard, a diamond does not harm but South does not know that, so they lead a club, and declarer avoids a club loser.

I still think my play should have been superior, but it's a good job I was just dummy.