

## CAUTIOUS BIDDER [101]

Back again. I'll try to put up something most weeks.

This past weekend saw the final of the *Welsh Inter-club Teams of Eight*. Congratulations to Penarth, who won comfortably. Nine teams competed: four from the East; three from the West (that was two each for Cardiff and Swansea); and two from the North. No team from Mid Wales, whom I believe did not hold a heat, whilst one of the North teams – Llanfairfechan – fielded at least four players who I suspect had never been near the place. (I bet they can't spell it either, and they certainly can't pronounce it.) This is not to suggest, or imply, that they were not members; only that North Wales representation was not quite as generous as might appear at first sight. Don't they play bridge in Wrexham any more? Coming on top of the pathetic turn-out in the Webber Cup, which had just one team from the North and one *player* from the Mid, it appears that North and Mid Wales are struggling to attract any new players to the tournament game.

The fact that the field was so South Wales dominated did lead to some chuntering to the effect that we should not be dragged all the way to Llanidloes to play the final. I don't agree with that – if we are to have a national inter-club competition, the final more or less has to be in mid Wales. To do otherwise would be to give up on the North altogether. Thanks to Jean Hand for organising the event in these difficult circumstances, and to Sarah Amos for her usual skilled directing.

The only other point worth considering, in organisational terms, is the timing of the final. Mid June does tend to see rather a lot of absentees, especially given the clash with the European Championships, so I wonder whether a date earlier in the year would make life easier for everyone. (That is not an excuse by the way; Penarth lost two international players to the Europeans and they seemed to manage well enough.)

I'll give just one hand – Board 11 from Session One – which required good high level judgement from at least three players at the table.

**Dealer South; no-one vul**

	♠K5	
	♥AJ5	
	♦KQ10754	
	♣Q5	
♠J62		♠AQ109843
♥3		♥7
♦AJ862		♦void
♣KJ94		♣A8632
	♠7	
	♥KQ1098632	
	♦93	
	♣107	

As is typical with this type of distributional hand, there was a wide range of results, and several large swings in consequence. At one table E/W did not see fit to enter the auction, enabling a grateful South to go two down undoubled in Four Hearts, and there were three other tables at which N/S were permitted to buy the contract in Five Hearts (twice undoubled), ours being one.

What should happen? The Four Heart opening is surely routine, and North has nothing to say. When Four Hearts comes round to East it is essential that she considers her playing strength, which is enormous, rather than count her 'points'. Provided East does this, Four Spades is automatic. This is what happened at my table. Four Spades came round to me, and whilst in the North seat it's possible to go wrong on this kind of auction with this kind of hand, you really should bid on. Pass is too feeble for words, and you have completely the wrong hand to double Four Spades for penalties.

East should leave the next decision to her partner, so Five Hearts will come round to West. At match-pointed Pairs there is a case for doubling Five Hearts, but surely not at IMP scoring where the game bonus is so critical. For all that we are meant to leave the 5 level to the opponents, there are exceptions to every 'rule', and this is one of them. The West hand has too much in the way of offensive strength to pass, and so should bid Five Spades.

That should be the end. As you can see, Six Spades makes on the layout, given the favourable position in both black suits, but there is no way that slam can be bid with confidence. So Five Spades it is. North has no business doubling that. He should remember that his partner's Four Heart call was a pre-empt and promised no defence.

## **EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIPS**

The European Teams Championships is currently taking place in Budapest. Wales is represented in both the Open and Seniors competitions. More on this after the event concludes next weekend. Meanwhile worth bearing in mind that you can watch the best of the action live as it happens on BBO (Bridge Base Online – free to download).

GD