

CAUTIOUS BIDDER [111]

The Welsh Foursomes, which had experienced a temporary and not very successful re-location to mid Wales, returned to Newport at the weekend. An entry of just twenty teams was presumably not what the organisers were looking for, and it is plain that further thought needs to be given to the scheduling of events over the summer period. The Foursomes came just four weeks after the August Green Point events, also held at Lysaght's (and much more successful), and I'd suggest that this is not a big enough gap.

As it was, Ian Mitchell and Colin Simcox were faced with running a Swiss event comprising twenty teams over a scheduled fourteen matches. Not easy! They did remarkably well in the circumstances to construct a movement that avoided repeat matches on either day, although inevitably teams found themselves playing opponents on the Sunday whom they had met the previous day.

The spirit of a Swiss event was thereby preserved as far as it was feasible to do so, but it did strike me (or rather, it struck Ian Mitchell, who mentioned it to me) that the advertising for this event should be more broadly framed so as to allow the directors some flexibility in constructing a sensible movement in light of the actual entry. For example, an entry of 20 teams for a 2 day event lends itself perfectly well to a full Multiple movement of 19 matches, say of 5 boards per match. I doubt anyone would have complained, but having advertised a Swiss, Swiss it had to be.

The team of Filip and Diane Kurbalija, Peter Goodman and Jeremy Dhondy rather ran away with the event, whilst the rest of us struggled to preserve some measure of respectability. This hand came up right at the end (Board 23, match 14). It proved very expensive for my team and illustrated one of the most fascinating aspects of bridge, namely that a great many hands that tend to be made could in fact be defeated, whilst conversely a great many hands that tend to be defeated could in fact be made. See which category you think this one falls into.

Dealer South; Both vul

	♠A96	
	♥AJ10983	
	♦Q5	
	♣AK	
♠QJ87		♠K542
♥K72		♥ -
♦J973		♦AK104
♣Q5		♣J10632
	♠103	
	♥Q654	
	♦862	
	♣9874	

At my table the bidding was as follows:

S	W	N	E
P	P	1H	X
2H	2S	4H	4S
P	P	X	all pass

I thought Double was automatic on the North hand. I started with the King of clubs, mainly in hopes of engineering a ruff in the suit. The sight of dummy gave me pause, not to say a few minor palpitations, and without a clear plan in mind, but hoping to give nothing away, I switched to a low diamond. Declarer, Liz Atkinson, was not unduly troubled by this. She won, and played on trumps. I took my Ace on the second round before cashing my other club winner and exiting with the Queen of diamonds. Declarer could win, draw the last trump, and claim.

I am used to doubling out the opponents so the result didn't worry me unduly – I thought it was just one of those things. Or I did until I learned that my team-mate, Barry Wennell, had played in the same contract and gone down. In fact, consulting the results online, eight East/West pairs played in Four Spades, seven of them doubled. Only four made it.

This was the defence that Barry received. King of clubs, then a low heart! Now that is a good shot, and much more challenging than my own feeble effort. What was declarer to do – play North for the Ace and run the heart round to his hand? Not so easy. Barry ruffed, and played the King of trumps. That was ducked, so a further trump was played to his Queen, this time taken by Gilly Clench in the North seat. Gilly thereupon cashed her second club winner, followed by.....another heart.

I never found out if this second heart was the Ace or another low one. The Ace is best because Barry can't get it right – he has to ruff. The promotion of the King of hearts in his own hand is immaterial. A second low heart – if that is what happened – would have been a mistake, because it would have given Barry a second chance to do the right thing.

When Barry ruffed the second heart, that was with his last trump in dummy. He had a master trump in hand with which to draw North's last trump, but how was he to reach it? There was no way off the dummy that would prevent Gilly making her final trump by ruffing.

In fact the only way for declarer to succeed given the heart switch at trick two was to summon his courage to the sticking point and run it round to his King in hand. Easy enough to say now; not so easy at the time.

So was this a hand that was made, but should have gone down; or was it a hand that went down, but should have been made? You decide.

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