

CAUTIOUS BIDDER [117]

The East Wales Teams Championships, formerly the 'Louis Lermon', has been re-named the Patrick Jourdain Teams in honour of Patrick. Earlier this month the event had its first outing under its new moniker. Seven teams competed. This was Board 13, which my team played against Bill Parkinson's Gwent/Brecon combo. Bill sat North, and made Four Spades. As things turned out, that was a game swing.

Bill runs the East Wales site, so for the past sixteen Cautious Bidders I've been looking for a hand to show off Bill's bridge talents. It's been a bit like Sir Galahad and the Holy Grail (he got here eventually, I'm led to believe), but here, finally, is Bill's starring hand.

Dealer North; both vul

	♠AJ103	
	♥Q8654	
	♦Q	
	♣A54	
♠9876		♠void
♥AJ102		♥K97
♦542		♦KJ98
♣63		♣KQJ982
	♠KQ542	
	♥3	
	♦A10763	
	♣107	

It's slightly surprising that Bill, who sat North, got to bid spades before his partner, but I'm given to understand that Kath Fewster doubled East's 2C overcall, so Bill ended up as declarer in Four Spades. I did not observe the play at this table, but I am told by Sue that having received a club lead, Bill immediately embarked on a diamond/heart cross-ruff. When a third round of clubs was played, he ruffed high. When West took her heart trick she continued the suit, so Bill continued the cross-ruff, eventually running out of trumps, but not before he had garnered ten tricks. Well played.

This was the bidding at my table.

<u>W</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>E</u>	<u>S</u>
	1H	2C	2S
P	4C	P	4D
P	4S	P	P
P			

The contract is a little harder played by South, because West can lead a trump – as indeed she did. How should Chris Rochelle play now? Since declarer has just two winners outside the trump suit, any further tricks would seem to have to come from trumps – a grand total of eight trump winners if declarer is to make his contract. Since the defence has already attacked trumps, the position is delicate. Declarer can begin the cross ruff, but he needs to start with diamonds, rather than to play a heart off the dummy. This is because he has to extract a price from West if West is to gain the lead in order to play a second round of trumps. That price has to be that West plays her Ace of hearts 'on thin air', in front of dummy's Queen. A further trump can then be played, but declarer will be able in due

course to enjoy his Queen of hearts as a winner in its own right, thereby compensating for the loss of a trump trick.

Chris, having received a trump lead, opted to play a heart (rather than a diamond) off the dummy at trick two. Bill did the same, but in his case the defence hadn't been able to start with a trump. That might seem a trivial difference, but it proved fatal. Against Chris, West could win the heart cheaply at trick two, and play another trump. Chris could continue the cross-ruff, but he eventually found himself a trick short.

Chris might have thought to play a diamond off the dummy at trick two, waiting to broach hearts until he was in his own hand, playing towards the dummy, but it was hardly the worst mistake he's ever made, and it was unlucky that it proved fatal in this instance.

Incidentally Chris was directing the event, and since I can barely follow suit when directing, I am inclined to believe that even for Chris, with all his experience, it makes a difference. There is a tendency to operate on automatic pilot because you are thinking all the time about your responsibilities to the room. It was a little unlucky that on this hand automatic pilot wasn't good enough.

GD