

CAUTIOUS BIDDER [121]

Sunday saw a revival of the East Wales Mixed Pairs Championship – not as a qualifier for the national event, since that is now direct entry, but as a championship event in its own right. Thanks to Helen Houston, our ATO, and her various helpers, for all the organisational work involved, and for providing a slap-up tea. The players (fifteen pairs in total) enjoyed this free of charge, along with free entry. Policy with regard to charging in East Wales is erratic, to say the least, and whilst I am all for encouraging entries, I think we should be more consistent. The one argument that I could see for such largesse was that the Cardiff club is in the midst of a major kitchen renovation, so conditions were less hospitable than would normally be the case. (I helped with the washing up, and I haven't seen a bowl of washing-up water as filthy as that since my brief, undistinguished career as a boy scout.)

Congratulations to Liz Atkinson and Jason He, who had a storming first set and followed it with a strong second session to win comfortably. Results are on the Cardiff Bridge Club website.

The following was a challenging hand for East/West. At our table East opened Two No Trumps, her partner transferred to hearts, and then followed this up with 3NT, which East duly converted to Four Hearts. That seemed reasonable enough, although it was striking that only three East/West pairs bid to game (all three in Four Hearts) and of those only one made it. Three other pairs made ten tricks, but they were not in game.

Dealer North; Both non-vul

	♠102	
	♥QJ7	
	♦QJ1064	
	♣1065	
♠853		♠AK976
♥98532		♥A104
♦97		♦AK3
♣A97		♣Q4
	♠QJ4	
	♥K6	
	♦852	
	♣KJ832	

How would you tackle Four Hearts, on the lead of the five of diamonds from South? Declarer might calculate that she has three more or less certain losers (a spade and two hearts), and so must avoid a club loser in addition. She is helped (although she doesn't know it) by the fact that South cannot profitably lead a club. Were West the declarer he could be held to nine tricks.

As it is, declarer needs to concentrate her efforts on ensuring that North does not secure the lead in time to find the damaging club switch. ***This means delaying the point at which the trump suit is broached. It also entails ducking South's King of hearts exit card, should it come to that.***

So, win the diamond, then play a second diamond winner and a third, which is ruffed (yes, I know, in the long trump hand). Then play Ace, King, and a third spade. South wins, and has to find an exit card. Best is the King of hearts. If declarer takes this, she will have to

concede the lead to North, following which a club switch leads to defeat. So declarer ducks the King of hearts! Key play, as Andrew Robson would say.

South now plays a further heart, but declarer is in control. Her spades are established, so she plays a fourth spade. North can ruff this with her remaining trump winner, and play a club through, but declarer can take her Ace, then play a trump back to the ten of trumps in hand, in order to cash her fifth spade. That is four trump tricks, including the ruff, three spade winners, two diamonds, and a club. The losing club in hand goes on dummy's long trump.

Anyone who managed that, without defensive assistance, did extremely well.

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