

CAUTIOUS BIDDER [122]

The EBU Tollemache Trophy is one of the most demanding events that East Wales players have an opportunity to play in. It is the English inter-counties Teams of Eight, and all four Welsh regions are invited to participate, although only East Wales takes up the invitation. The qualifying event was held this past weekend and we played in an eight team group that included London, Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire.

This actually wasn't a bad draw, as shown by the fact that whilst London ran away with the group, four counties were in the running for the coveted second qualifying spot. Sadly we were not amongst them; East Wales does not have the playing resources to compete very effectively in the Tolle at present, but that does not mean we should abandon the event. For those players who have the privilege of playing in it, the Tollemache is possibly the most enjoyable bridge event of the year. Certainly that is how I regard it. It is a learning experience, and an opportunity that I think we should continue to grasp.

One difference between competition at this level and club bridge is the determination to bid every conceivable game, and pretty well every possible slam. This in turn puts a premium upon accurate defence, because when your opponents over-reach you have to make sure you defend accurately to get them down. My partner did very well to take advantage of a defensive lapse on this hand.

Dealer South; Both vul

	♠10863	
	♥AK9542	
	♦3	
	♣103	
♠92		♠AQ7
♥Q7		♥863
♦AJ864		♦109752
♣AQJ4		♣85
	♠KJ53	
	♥J10	
	♦KQ	
	♣K9762	

We played this hand against Nottinghamshire, with Sue and I sitting North/South. The bidding at our table was as follows.

<u>S</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>E</u>
1C	1D	1H	3D
P	P	X	P
3S	P	4S	P
P	P		

The bidding was fairly routine up to the point where I bid Four Spades. That was a bit of a stretch, but I hate missing vulnerable games. This one might have gone two down, but even top players err on occasion, and Sue did very well to make the most of a rare mistake by the distinguished West. He began with the Ace of diamonds, partner giving him count in the suit and Sue's Queen falling. A trump continuation is best at this point, but even a heart switch is good enough. Fatally, West played a second diamond, enabling Sue

to throw a club from dummy.

Sue next advanced the Jack of hearts, which was covered by the Queen, and won in dummy. She then played a trump, East ducking and Sue winning with her Jack of trumps in hand. Then a further heart to dummy, followed by another trump, this time East taking his Ace. He now played a club through (the 8), covered by Sue with the 9 and taken by West with the Jack.

There is nothing that West can do at this point. After considerable thought he played the Ace of clubs, which Sue ruffed. It would have been a fatal error had she drawn East's trump at this point as she would then have had no access to her established hearts in dummy. Instead Sue played on hearts immediately. East was free to ruff in with his Queen of trumps whenever he wished; declarer still had access to dummy with her 10 of trumps. She had made her contract for the loss of just two trumps and a club.

This was a valiant effort in a losing cause as we lost to Notts by 20-0. Sometimes good bridge has to be its own reward.

GD