

CAUTIOUS BIDDER [123]

Bridge, what a horrible game.....the occasional good result followed, as night follows day, by some exquisite horror. One minute cock of the walk; the next, a feather duster. I should retire before my heart gives out.

This weekend's South Wales Congress, held in Porthcawl under the usual excellent direction of Ian Mitchell, had everything going for it – except, in our case, consistency of performance. To qualify comfortably for both main finals and then to finish stone last in both would be a challenge to anyone's equanimity, and mine still hasn't recovered. The following two boards, played in succession in the Teams final, give some indication of the sort of thing that went on. Top class bridge it certainly was not.

Board 22. East dealt; East/West vulnerable.

	♠J8654	
	♥53	
	♦Q	
	♣Q8762	
♠2		♠107
♥1064		♥AKQJ972
♦AJ10942		♦K
♣AJ3		♣1054
	♠AKQ93	
	♥8	
	♦87653	
	♣K9	

This was the bidding at our table, with Sue and I sitting North/South.

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

*3C was *Ghestem*, promising at least 5/5 in spades and diamonds.

To put it at its kindest, East/West failed to do justice to their magnificent holdings. West should certainly have done more than make a minimum raise of his partner's suit. Most tournament players have the agreement that a simple raise on this auction promises little in the way of high cards, whilst bidding one of the opponents' suits (which one is a matter of partnership agreement) denotes a constructive raise. This was East's expectation, as indicated by the post-hand discussion. Even having responded so feebly in the first instance, West had a further opportunity, which he surely ought to have taken.

As you can see, there was no defence to Four Spades, whilst East/West have a heart slam their way. Slam is not easy to bid, and our team-mates, Chris Rochelle and Simon Gottschalk, did not quite manage it, but at least they bid on to Five Hearts, so that was a double game swing and 15 IMPs in our favour.

Not to worry, our opponents probably said to themselves, we'll get it back on the next board. As indeed they did, with considerable assistance from me.

Board 23. South dealt; both vulnerable.

	♠J976	
	♥ void	
	♦A854	
	♣KQ653	
♠KQ10432		♠8
♥4		♥AKQJ108652
♦Q		♦K76
♣AJ872		♣ void
	♠A5	
	♥973	
	♦J10932	
	♣1094	

We bid this one as follows.

S	W	N	E
P	1S	2C	2H
P	2S	P	4NT*
P	5S*	P	6H
P	P	P	

**To employ RKCB holding a void is not recommended, and to do so with partner under a false impression as to which is the trump suit is asking for trouble.*

This was another less than distinguished auction by East/West, leaving them once again deep in the mire. But they were about to be rescued by the cavalry. I was that cavalry.

As you can see, Six Hearts suffers the minor inconvenience of being off two cashing Aces. However, that was not the end of the story. Bearing in mind my overcall (questionable, as ever), my partner might have been expected to lead a club – which gives the contract immediately: a spade is discarded and the fortunate trump void in the North hand means that declarer cannot be prevented from ruffing his second potential diamond loser.

So, contract made? No, not quite.....my brilliant partner led the Jack of diamonds! I'm not sure why Sue opted to lead a diamond rather than a club, but whereas a club lead would have given the contract, we were now home free. Well done partner.

Home free? I'm not so sure about that. I took the Ace of diamonds and contemplated my return. Why hadn't Sue led a club? Could it be that she didn't have any? Which was more likely: that Sue was void in clubs, or that she had the Ace of spades?

After giving the matter due consideration, I returneda club. Contract made.

This was, needless to say, quite mad. The bidding sequence positively screamed the possibility, indeed the likelihood, of a Blackwood disaster. And for Sue to have a club void, East would have had to advance to slam holding three small clubs. I don't think so.

So the IMPs gained on the previous board were generously returned, and.....a sadder and a wiser man, he rose the morrow morn.

GD