

CAUTIOUS BIDDER [124]

The Llangollen Swiss Teams, these days held in the Bryn Howell hotel, a few miles East of Llangollen, has long been one of my favourite bridge events. The setting is glorious, the venue is congenial (albeit a little cramped with thirty-two teams in attendance), and one gets to play some different opponents, including several strong teams from across the border. I partnered Steve Burgoyne - our first attempt at playing in a tournament together - whilst Sue partnered Helen Houston (likewise). As might have been anticipated, Sue and I travelled home on better terms than is often the case when we have spent the weekend playing in partnership. The way of the future, perhaps.

There were a host of challenging hands over the weekend. This was one to which Steve and I did not quite do justice, but thanks to the generosity of opponents we managed to gain IMPs nonetheless.

Board 8. West dealt; both non-vul

	♠1084	
	♥J7652	
	♦4	
	♣KJ106	
♠K32		♠AJ976
♥void		♥A9
♦KQJ108753		♦A96
♣53		♣A72
	♠Q5	
	♥KQ10843	
	♦2	
	♣Q984	

What do you open on the West hand? My choice would be One Diamond, following which I would keep repeating the suit until partner got the message. Steve opted for the high road, opening Four Diamonds. I don't mind that, although it would be very dangerous at Pairs by virtue of your having bi-passed Three No Trumps which could easily prove to be the highest scoring spot. Anyway, Four Diamonds it was.

What to bid now as East? Ideally Steve and I would have discussed the meaning to be ascribed to Four Hearts/Spades, and likewise to Four No Trumps. Needless to say, our system discussions had not got that far. For what it's worth, I think any new suit should be a cue, whilst 4NT should be to play, but I was well aware that alternative meanings are possible. So I simply leapt to Six Diamonds. Agricultural but practical, that's me.

North led a club. The play in Six Diamonds is not particularly challenging. In practice Steve drew the necessary round of trumps, discarded his potential losing club on the Ace of hearts, and in due course took the losing spade finesse, emerging with a comfortable twelve tricks. I don't blame him – no need to waste precious brain cells on making overtricks at Teams. But it's worth noting that thirteen tricks are laydown, and entirely risk-free. You have ample entries to dummy, including three trump entries. So, ditch a spade, rather than a club, on the Ace of hearts, then ruff out the spades. Even a 4-1 spade break presents no problem. I didn't discover whether any East/West pair bid the Grand. I'd be

impressed if they did.

We gained nine IMPs because at the other table in our match West opened Three Diamonds, which East simply raised to Three No Trumps. I've seen some underbids in my time, but opening that West hand Three Diamonds takes the biscuit.

Cautious Bidder will now take a break until the new year. Merry Christmas to my devoted reader.

GD