

## CAUTIOUS BIDDER [103]

The Welsh Swiss Pairs, held in Llandudno this past weekend, saw a somewhat reduced entry of 73 pairs, many of whom of course were from across the border. It's a shame that numbers are in decline given the excellent venue and playing conditions, not to mention the usual impeccable directing by Sarah Amos. The only real downside, as far as I was concerned, was the travelling. I think I'm getting too old to travel from Cardiff to Llandudno and back in two days, especially as the return journey was a nightmare of roadworks and accidents (fortunately not my own, although in my exhausted state that could not be guaranteed).

The event was won pretty comfortably by John Samson and Jason Hackett. This was Board 19 in Match 3, when Sue and I sat North/South against the eventual winners.

### Dealer South; E/W vul

	♠74	
	♥A10743	
	♦10	
	♣87542	
♠J		♠10863
♥86		♥952
♦KJ983		♦542
♣KQJ93		♣A106
	♠AKQ952	
	♥KQJ	
	♦AQ76	
	♣ -	

Sue opened the South hand with our strongest bid, Two Clubs, which John Sansom doubled in the West seat. No doubt some pairs distinguish between Two Diamonds and Pass with the North hand in these circumstances, but Sue and I had no agreements so I simply passed. Sue bid Two Spades and I had a choice, as I thought, between simply raising spades or showing my heart suit. I elected to bid Three Hearts, which Sue raised to the heart game – and I passed.

Needless to say, this was a poor effort on our part. I probably created some of the difficulty by bidding my own suit rather than simply supporting spades. Sue should in my view have done more than simply raise Three Hearts to game, but she feared that Four Clubs (or Four Diamonds) would be ambiguous. She also thought that having shown game in her own hand, and playing with a partner who is not backward in the slam zone, I would go on if I had the values to do so.

I don't think that's quite right: I needed more specific information if I was to advance on the North hand. It's a lot easier with hindsight, but I like Five Clubs from South – Exclusion Key Card Blackwood – which of course fits this hand to a 'T'. That would certainly have got us to the small slam, which is high enough.

Normally one would write this off as a very poor board, but in match-pointed pairs in a mixed field there was still plenty to play for. The objective, needless to say, was to make as many tricks as possible, ideally all thirteen – five hearts, a club ruff in the South (short trump) hand, the Ace of diamonds and six spade tricks.

So, ruff Jason's lead of the Ace of clubs; play two rounds of trumps; then Ace of diamonds followed by a diamond ruff in hand; and draw the last trump.

So far so good, but when I played a spade to the Ace, West dropped the Jack. It so happened that earlier in the day I had played against a lady who, with no apparent thought, had dropped my QJ of trumps offside before announcing to the world at large: "Thank goodness I don't believe in restricted choice". Well, that's certainly a point of view. I was painfully conscious that any remaining match-points depended upon my bringing in the spade suit. No option other than to go with the odds as I believed them to be. Accordingly, ruff a diamond back to hand, expending my last trump; then spade to dummy, putting in the nine.....

It transpired that no more than a quarter of the field had bid the small slam, so despite our feeble bidding this was a good board. Perhaps not so good had we been playing in the European Championships.

The organisers had enlivened the personal scorecards with a series of short bridge jokes. Bridge jokes are usually dire, but I liked this one.....

*A married couple are not speaking after a horrible game. As they drive home from a distant tournament they pass a field in which two donkeys are grazing. The husband breaks the silence by asking his wife: "Relatives of yours?" "Yes", she says, "in-laws".*

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