

## CAUTIOUS BIDDER [132]

The Cardiff League has been running for some ten years (doesn't time fly?) and offers the most challenging club-based competition in the region. I take some paternal pride in the competition as I was its initiator, in the distant days of my first stint on the Cardiff committee. Tom Reddy took over from me, and the league is now in the capable hands of Liz Atkinson, with Chris Rochelle as director. They do a very good job.

The League is fixed date, on the third Thursday of every month through the winter. Each evening comprises two head to head matches, each match played as two segments of 7 boards. The VP conversion system employed is somewhat eccentric, with 2 VPs for each half match won, and a further 2 VPs for the overall win, plus an additional VP for wins in excess of 30 IMPs. It gives rise to some hard luck stories (told at length) and conversely to slices of good fortune (never mentioned).

This month our first match, against Liz Atkinson's team, saw 93 IMPs change hands (not something to be proud of, on the whole), but since the first 7 boards saw us lose by 35 IMPs, whilst the second 7 saw us win by 36 IMPs, we won 4-2 in Victory Points. It takes a bit of getting used to. Here's where some of those IMPs came and went. The following two boards each generated a 15 swing, in different directions.

### Board 5. Dealer North; North/South vulnerable

♠AJ3	
♥J52	
♦94	
♣KQ872	
♠KQ10852	♠6
♥AQ98	♥643
♦KQ10	♦7532
♣void	♣J9654
♠974	
♥K107	
♦AJ86	
♣A103	

The bidding at our table was as follows:

**N   E   S   W**

1N   P   3N   X

We were somewhat under-pointed for 3N (my fault, as usual), and Nalini Dewan did very well to double for a spade lead. Declarer has a pretty straightforward seven tricks, and an eighth can be achieved by dint of an eventual endplay against West, forcing an additional trick in one or other red suit. You do of course need the club finesse, and in order not to block the club suit it's necessary to take it immediately. I equivocated, cashing the club King first, and that meant that whilst I was able to establish a second diamond winner, I was unable to reach dummy to enjoy it. Seven tricks for minus 500 was a poor effort on my part, but well done Nalini.

At the other table in our match, West, Simon Gottschalk, doubled a 2S range enquiry, and then felt constrained to double the final contract of Two No Trumps. I didn't discover how the play went, but Mike Hirst was declarer and although spades were led, Mike found his way to eight tricks and 670 to North/South.

This was the other 15 IMP swing.

**Board 14. Dealer East; all non-vulnerable**

	♠10	
	♥864	
	♦109863	
	♣9842	
♠K6		♠98753
♥J753		♥KQ92
♦QJ5		♦74
♣AQJ5		♣63
	♠AQJ42	
	♥A10	
	♦AK2	
	♣K107	

Sue and I play a bit of system that few others in these parts seem to employ, but which I am convinced is a big winner. Our opening 2H bid shows a weak hand with both majors. I am massively sceptical of the supposed benefits of complex system in the hands of non-experts, but this little weapon has served me well over the years, and I thoroughly recommend it. Of course there is quite a lot to it, and you need - as ever - to exercise good judgement, but it is difficult to defend against.

On this hand we sat East/West, and the bidding was as follows.

<b>W</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>S</b>
		2H*	X
3H**	P	P	X
P	4D	P	5D
X	all pass		

Sue's 3H raise was pre-emptive - or at least, non-constructive (we enquire with 2NT on good hands). Following South's second Double, North *might* have passed (we are nowhere near to making nine tricks), but would you have passed on his hand? I don't think so. South's final raise to Five Diamonds was a mistake - she'd done enough with her two Doubles.

The defence was accurate, and declarer slightly less so, so we held him to five tricks - an 1100 penalty.

There were errors from North/South in both bidding and play, but the 2H opening (or, as a possible alternative, 2D) does put it to the opponents. It's going against my own interests to advocate it, but as you know I am selfless in these matters.

GD