

CAUTIOUS BIDDER [104]

The Mid Wales Congress, held in Llandrindod this past weekend, attracted an entry of 35 teams – slightly up on last year, and including a team of Juniors, which was pleasing. The organisers of this event have made a number of attempts over the years to enliven the standard Swiss Teams format, last year coming up with a formula that bewildered everyone and produced a very odd-looking prize list. But the objective – which was to give lower ranking teams something to play for in the later stages of the event – was a laudable one; it was only the lack of numbers that produced a rather bizarre outcome. This year the same objective was pursued, but with rather less complexity and a slightly larger field. As far as I could tell, it worked well.

At the lunch break on Sunday, with three matches still to be played, the bottom twelve teams were split off into three mini leagues, each of four teams. There was then a round robin within each league, with prizes for the winners of each. The only problem lay in the burden upon the director, Sarah Amos, who had to cope with a triad at the foot of the main field, plus the three mini leagues. Needless to say Sarah was completely unruffled - however hard she was paddling beneath the surface, as far as the players were concerned all was serene.

The event was characterised by what seemed to me to be an unusually large number of slam hands, divided more or less evenly between North/South and East/West. My team didn't bid nearly enough of them. Our President and his team-mates, on the other hand, must have had their bidding boots on – so many congratulations to Paddy Murphy, Mark Roderick, Laura Woodruff and Mike Close.

This was a hand we played against the eventual winners.

Dealer East; both vul

	♠J1064	
	♥J	
	♦7653	
	♣QJ93	
♠AK32		♠Q7
♥842		♥AKQ106
♦AK109		♦J2
♣A2		♣K876
	♠985	
	♥9753	
	♦Q84	
	♣1054	

Laura and Mike bid as follows:

E	W
1H	1S
1NT	2C
3H	4NT
5S	5NT
6D	7H

Well bid. I believe Laura's 1NT rebid showed a hand in the 12-16 range. 2C was checkback, and when Laura showed a fifth heart and a good hand in context Mike knew that the Grand Slam was a distinct possibility. The Roman Key Card enquiries elicited the further good news that the partnership was in possession of all the Aces and Kings, plus the Queen of trumps, making thirteen tricks comfortably with the odds, albeit not a certainty.

As you can see, there was very little to the play. A trump was led, the Jack falling from North, and all Laura had to do was ruff one losing club in the dummy before drawing South's remaining trumps. The extra spade in dummy took care of her other losing club.

Our team-mates play a strong club system, so when Simon Gottschalk, sitting East, opened One Heart, Chris Rochelle knew his partner had less than a sixteen count. Accordingly Chris dismissed any thought of a Grand Slam, jumping straight to Six Hearts. I think that may fairly be characterised as 'agricultural' – although not modern day agriculture, obviously; I'd say it was more fifteenth century, around the time when the open field system gave way to enclosures.

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