

CAUTIOUS BIDDER [105]

I'll present this week's hand as an opening lead problem. It's taken from this year's Perry Shield, when Sue and I played for East Wales, alongside Patrick Jourdain and John Glubb, Mike Best and Mark Roderick.

This was my first Perry Shield for six years. The last time I'd partnered Chris Rochelle, and the East had won comfortably. The fact that it had taken so long to get another go, and that this was only Sue's second Perry, meant we were more determined than usual to do well. (Chris has yet to be selected following that win of six years ago, despite some moderate Perry results in the meantime – competition is tough in East Wales, it would seem).

By the time this hand appeared Sue and I were on a good run and it looked as if the Perry would lie between us and the West, winners of last year's event. Here is the hand, which came up on the Sunday when we were playing the Mid.

You are South, and it's you to find a lead against East's Six Clubs contract. Make sure you decide on your lead before reading on.

Dealer South; all non-vul

The South hand

♠52
♥10974
♦KJ8764
♣8

The auction:

<u>S</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>E</u>
P	1H	3S	3N
P	4H	P	6C

all pass

Whilst I was pleased with the way Sue and I played over the weekend, this hand displayed the gambling side of my bridge personality - one that I have struggled to control over the years, especially when things are going well - or conversely, very badly.

So, what did you lead? Did you lead a spade, your partner's suit? Maybe, because you have been presented with the hand as a lead problem, you think you should find an alternative? Really? Well, the bidding has taken a surprising turn, and East's leap to Six Clubs looks somewhat speculative, or perhaps – knowing him – completely mad, but is that any reason for you not to do the normal thing?

This was the hand.

Dealer South; all non-vul

	♠QJ107643	
	♥85	
	♦A9	
	♣64	
♠8		♠AK9
♥AKJ632		♥Q
♦102		♦Q53
♣KQ105		♣AJ9732
	♠52	
	♥10974	
	♦KJ8764	
	♣8	

South did indeed do 'the normal thing' and led a spade, and who can blame her. As you can see, it was the wrong thing to do in this instance, and thirteen tricks resulted.

Perhaps Sue might have bid Four Clubs at her second go. We'd almost certainly have got to Six Clubs played by West in that case - and North would have led his Ace and another diamond, for one down.

No doubt now is the time to provide a rational and cogent explanation for my Six Clubs bid. I'm not disposed to try too hard. I had a little more than I'd shown to date, and I did think that Sue could correct to Six Hearts, if needs be. I might also claim that I understand better than most that my opponents cannot see through the backs of the cards. That last is a serious point, for what it's worth. But we're really in the realm of personal psychology as much as bridge – or perhaps psychiatry, if you wish to be unkind. Maybe I should take the advice that various kind opponents have offered me over the years, and arrange a further visit to my GP. "Doctor, those pills you gave me.....they don't seem to be working".

GD