

CAUTIOUS BIDDER [106]

The following innocent-looking hand came up in the Gloucester/Hereford Green Point Swiss Teams, held in Ross this past weekend. As West you have opened a strong No Trump and your partner has expertly raised you to Three No Trumps. North leads the Queen of hearts. Bear in mind that this is Teams scoring, so no need to worry over-much about overtricks; just make your contract. Don't look down! Decide on your line of play before reading on.

♠K54	♠AQ
♥A3	♥742
♦AK952	♦Q876
♣Q104	♣J872

No expert would get this hand wrong. Many club players will – and some may consider themselves unlucky. I'm sure that you, dear reader, are not in that category – although, as ever with 'problem' positions, it's rather easier once you've been told that there is some point of interest in the hand.

As you can see below, there is indeed a point of interest, and some declarers went down. Many card play 'positions' in bridge simply have to be learned. Unless you're a bridge genius you will get most things wrong the first time you come across them. This is a typical example.

Dealer East; both vul

	♠108732	
	♥QJ106	
	♦ -	
	♣AK95	
♠K54		♠AQ
♥A3		♥742
♦AK952		♦Q876
♣Q104		♣J872
	♠J96	
	♥K985	
	♦J1043	
	♣63	

There is one potential difficulty in the hand – what if the diamonds break 4-nil?

If North has four diamonds you are booked for a diamond loser – there is literally nothing you can do about it, beyond praying for a mis-defence. But if South has four diamonds, there *is* something you can do about it. Provided, that is, that you broach the suit by first cashing the Queen in dummy. So that is what you must do, and on this hand your foresight is rewarded. You can then take the marked finesse against South, returning to dummy with a spade in order to repeat the process. South is helpless.

If you haven't come across this position before, there is no shame in getting it wrong. In fact there are rather more positions, holding two top honours in one hand and a single top

honour in the other, where it is necessary to begin by cashing an honour in the hand in which you hold the two high cards. So that may be your bridge 'instinct' until you think rather more carefully about this particular layout. This is the exception to the general rule – begin by cashing the single honour card.

So if you didn't know this before, you've been alerted to it now. And the next time you come across this layout at the table, say in ten years time, thanks to this article you will be bound to get it right. Thank me later.

Oh, did I forget to mention that Sarah Amos was the lead director? And did I say that she was brilliant, as usual? She was.

GD