

CAUTIOUS BIDDER [108]

Last weekend saw the WBU Green Point Pairs and teams, held at the Lysaght Institute on the southern edge of Newport. The event was well attended (76 pairs; 36 teams) and superbly directed by Ian Mitchell and Colin Simcox. Colin and his wife Marilyn even double as furniture removers – a valuable contribution given that Lysaght's, whilst a superb bridge venue in most respects, is not the easiest from the point of view of setting up and removing bridge equipment. That's what we'll need in the future as the country slides into penury – more multi-tasking bridge directors.

The following hand arose in the Teams on Sunday. It was Board 9 in match 5, and it presented a considerable challenge to North/South in the bidding, and also, potentially, to East/West in defence.

Dealer North; E/W vul

	♠K5432	
	♥AJ10653	
	♦6	
	♣J	
♠Q96		♠AJ
♥742		♥98
♦K1053		♦AQ74
♣652		♣Q10984
	♠1087	
	♥KQ	
	♦J982	
	♣AK73	

If you study the hand carefully you will see that the only making game contract (which is to say, the only game contract that Deep Finesse can make) is Four Hearts played by the North hand. But how to get there? Only 10 out of 36 North/South pairs managed it. This was the bidding at my table, where Sue and I sat East/West against Gilly Clench and Gillian Fawcett.

W	N	E	S
	P	1N	P
P	2C*	P	2S
P	4S	P	P
P			

The North hand is potentially powerful, but the fact that hearts are longer than spades presents a difficulty, so Gilly opted to pass in first seat. She subsequently 'emerged' with Two Clubs (promising the majors) and when her partner indicated a preference for spades (although not promising any values beyond what might be inferred from East/West coming to rest in 1NT), Gilly leapt to Four Spades.

This was less than optimal. North/South were now playing in the wrong strain, from the wrong hand. Gilly also had to cope with her partner's slightly stunned expression at a sequence which denied opening values but which - somehow along the way, rather like Popeye on the spinach - had been inflated to the level of a game force. It's possible that a Three Hearts rebid from North might better have described the hand – maximum for her

bidding to date, with longer hearts.

Sue found the lead necessary to defeat Four Spades - a low diamond - but then I let it through. If you study the hand carefully you will see that even if Gillian Fawcett plays the spades to best advantage - which she did, ducking twice to hold herself to two losers in the suit (well done), she cannot cope with continued diamond forces. She is destined to run out of trumps in the North hand. So I needed to return a diamond; then, when in with the Jack of spades, a third diamond; and finally, when in with the Ace of spades, a fourth diamond. And that is it for declarer: she has to concede a third trump trick.

Sadly, this proved beyond me at the time. I returned a club, thinking that if partner held the Ace of that suit, rather than the King of diamonds, declarer's club loser would disappear. This was poor thinking on my part. Declarer's trump holding in the South hand could well be tenuous, and was quite likely to comprise no more than three cards, whilst Sue had led a low diamond, promising an honour. Her chances of holding the King of diamonds were far greater than of her holding the club Ace, so it is clear that I should have aimed to force the dummy. Duh!

As it was, Gillian was able to win the club switch; then duck a spade. I played a second diamond at this point, but it was of course too late. Very annoying for me, and slightly more annoying for Sue. Still, well played by declarer.

At the other table in our match our team-mates Robert Mott and Ann Sharples sat North/South. Bob also passed with the North hand, following which Simon Gottschalk, sitting East, opened a Precision diamond. This came back round to Bob, who bid Two Diamonds, intended as Michaels. I don't know if Ann took the same view of her partner's Two Diamond call - perhaps not, as she leapt to Three No Trumps. This was some going opposite a partner who had passed in first seat, but far be it from me to criticise aggressive bidding. Feisty, perhaps, is the word. Bob corrected to Four Hearts, so the right contract had been reached, albeit by slightly unorthodox means.

Four Hearts made in comfort when Simon Gottschalk did not find the diamond lead, so Bob could afford to lose three spades. Just another flat board.

You will of course want to know what I would have done with the North hand. I cannot tell a lie: I would have opened it One Heart. I have an opening hand, so I open it. Probably in a minority of one.

GD