



Bath Replays

26 When not to bid (5)

Board 20. Thursday 31 July, 2008.

Here's another instalment of the *When not to bid* series. There has been a lot written on protection, and the following example can only add to the weight of text on this subject. The dealer was West, with both sides vulnerable.

West	North	East	South
1♥	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♥ ¹	Pass	Pass	3♣!!!
Dbl ²	All pass		

¹ A slight underbid - may be able to catch up later.

² Catching up.

♠ Q975		
♥ J32		
♦ K1072		
♣ Q8		
♠ A4		♠ KJ103
♥ AQ8542		♥ 10
♦ 93		♦ QJ1864
♣ A54		♣ 1073
♠ 862		
♥ K97		
♦ A5		
♣ KJ962		

Let's have a look at the auction. First of all North's bidding was exemplary. In fact it was some of the best all night. The first two bids are straightforward: West's second effort is a slight underbid. Ideally, two-and-a-half hearts would describe the hand: the problem is we do not have that club (!) in our bag, so we have to make do with 2♥ and hope to catch up later. Enter the contestant in the South seat, who decides it's time to sally forth and enter the battle with a horrific 3♣, vulnerable. Why? I don't know. West is now able to 'catch up' as it were by doubling. Afterwards, South remarked that if the opponents have subsided at the two level, it's a good idea to protect. The problem for South here is that East/West have NOT found a fit. West does not possess a minor suit (he would bid it over the spade response) or have primary support for spades. Sometimes you just have to go quietly.

Anyway, the play:

West cashed the spade ace, East encouraging with the jack, and switched to the ♦9 which went to the Ace. South tackled trumps by leading small from hand. West rose with the ace and exited with a spade to East's ten. East returned his heart, and ruffed the third round. He next cashed the spade king. West throwing a diamond, and exited with a diamond for West to ruff. Four off. Ouch!

What can we take from this hand? In general, the time to protect is when the opponents have found a fit but have subsided at a low level. After something like 1♥ - INT - 2♦ - 2♥, to protect with 2♠ would not be unreasonable on fairly light values. In the above example, East/West have not found a fit, so to protect at the three level in this position and vulnerability is ... I'll leave you to decide.

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