

April 11, 2019

Bridge with Richard Ward

The theory behind successful high-level bidding decisions is fraught with a number of conflicting platitudes such as: 'the 5-level belongs to the opponents'; 'let the opponents make the last guess'; 'use the Law of Total Tricks to bid immediately to the limit of your hand'; and, 'avoid double-game swings by taking out insurance – bid one more'. In this hand, North-South successfully followed the first two guidelines whilst ignoring the others.

NORTH		
♠	A 10 9 7 3	N/ NIL VUL
♥	10 8 7 5 3	
♦	Q 4	
♣	10	
WEST		EAST
♠	J 8	♠ K Q 4 2
♥	K 9	♥ -
♦	K J 9 2	♦ 10 8 7 6 5
♣	A Q 7 6 4	♣ J 5 3 2
SOUTH		
♠	6 5	
♥	A Q J 6 4 2	
♦	A 3	
♣	K 9 8	

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	PASS	PASS	1H
2C	4H	5C	PASS
PASS	DBL	ALL PASS	

The spotlight was on South who, after the 5C bid, would have liked a pass to be unconditionally forcing so that partner could make the final mistake (always a handy strategy!) – but it wasn't. So she just hoped that North could do something. If not, perhaps +50 would be better than -50. Who knows? North, whose 4H bid could have been weaker, doubled to show one defensive trick. South decided to defend – a very close decision indeed. Sometimes it's like walking a tightrope.

North led a heart, ruffed in dummy and the club finesse won. The ace of clubs revealed the unavoidable club loser and, when North showed up with the ace of spades, it was clear that South had the ace of diamonds. But was it A-Q-X or A-X? Reasoning that, if diamonds were breaking 3-1, then North would hold two singletons and could well have bid 5H. So a diamond to the king and another diamond salvaged ten tricks.

This is the par contract for both sides. 5H cannot be made and even 4H requires some handling. Say West leads the jack of spades, his only safe suit, against a 4H contract. Your Saturday morning challenge is to find your way home to ten tricks.
