

April 25, 2019

Bridge with Richard Ward

There are many different skills needed to become an expert bridge player ranging from concentration and counting to card play and temperament. One skill that is sometimes easy to overlook is the importance of managing your partnership. A courteous partnership is a successful partnership. So, when your partner is playing even more appallingly than usual whilst you may be tempted to say: "You know, you may not be the worst player in the world, but if that person should die...." you will soon discover that this is not the way to the winners' podium.

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

The bidding was straightforward: 2C (big hand) - 2D (little hand) - 3NT (very big hand). Simple. West, unwilling to lead away from his ace, started proceedings with the ten of diamonds. South won in hand and played the ace and king of clubs. No luck there. One declarer tried to combine his chances by cashing the ace and king of hearts, hoping for a doubleton queen somewhere and, when there was no luck there either, crossed to dummy to lead up to the spade king. Oh dear! Still no luck. Was this contract doomed from the start? It might have helped if he had stopped to count his tricks before he committed to his line of play at trick four. Two hearts, three diamonds and two clubs equals 7. So, even if the spade ace was onside, that would be 8 tricks only. The other declarer could see two entries to dummy (look carefully), so he crossed to the diamond queen and played a heart to the jack. If that had lost, the heart ten would provide another entry to lead a spade. The 3-3 heart break produced the 9th trick. This is a complicated hand, but clearly the second declarer gave it a better shot than the first.
