

## The Unlucky Not-So-Expert

Many readers will be familiar with S. J. Simon's classic book "Why you lose at bridge" which includes the immortal Mr Smug, Futile Willie, Mrs Guggenheim and the Unlucky Expert.

I'm no expert, but I certainly felt unlucky on this hand from the Trumps Teams on 16 March, where I thought that, just for a change, I might have defended in expert fashion. South opened 1H and I bid 2H (Michaels) which elicited a 3S response from partner. However, the opponents reached 4H anyway. Feeling very clever, I underled my AK of spades and partner looked momentarily perplexed as his ♠10 held the trick, then worked it out and led a low club back for me to ruff.

Board 11 ♠985  
 Dir: S ♥864  
 Vul: Nil ♦QJ3  
 ♣T954

♠AK643  
 ♥T53  
 ♦98762  
 ♣

The suit preference signal meant that despite the ♦QJ in dummy I should return a diamond – partner took the ace, as declarer dropped the king, and gave me another club ruff. Surely defence this good will pick up some IMPs, I said to myself!

I was wrong. Simply leading and continuing spades makes life very awkward for declarer, and if East ducks the king of diamonds there is no access to dummy for the heart finesse, and the clubs don't break ... whereas our declarer crossed to dummy with the ♦Q, successfully took the heart finesse and dropped the king. We lost 2 IMPs on the board as teammates went 2 down on the not-so-darned-clever defence!

Board 11 ♠985  
 Dir: S ♥864  
 Vul: Nil ♦QJ3  
 ♣T954

|        |            |
|--------|------------|
| ♠AK643 | ♠QJT7      |
| ♥T53   | ♥K7        |
| ♦98762 | ♦A54       |
| ♣      | ♣J872      |
| 3      | ♠2         |
| 7 11   | ♥AQJ92     |
| 19     | ♦KT        |
|        | ♣AKQ63     |
|        | N: 3♣2♥1NT |
|        | S: 3♣3♥1NT |
|        | E: 3♦3♠    |
|        | W: 3♦3♠    |

In fact of the pairs that went off in 4H, three were down 1 and three were down 2. The only good thing that can be said is that we were better off than going down in 4S, which was what happened to 7 EW pairs.

The next exhibit from the same event is a bit of a bidding challenge. Do you have the methods to reach 6D on this hand? The approach recommended by Kevin Davies is that after 2NT by South showing 21-22 hcp and 3C puppet Stayman, a rebid of 3H shows less than 4 cards in both majors, then 3S by responder inquires for opener's minor suit, with opener's rebid of 3NT showing 4-4. Our teammates did reach 6D and were thus among only 4 of 20 who did so, although their bidding was slightly less than perfectly consistent with the systemic agreements ...

Board 26 ♠QJ95  
 Dlr: E ♥KJ43  
 Vul: All ♦K642  
 ♣T

|        |  |       |
|--------|--|-------|
| ♠T86   |  | ♠732  |
| ♥T62   |  | ♥A987 |
| ♦53    |  | ♦T87  |
| ♣K9653 |  | ♣J74  |

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|    |       |                |
|----|-------|----------------|
| 10 | ♠AK4  | N: 3♣6♦4♥6♠5NT |
| 3  | ♥Q5   | S: 3♣6♦5♥6♠5NT |
| 5  | ♦AQJ9 | E:             |
| 22 | ♣AQ82 | W:             |

Finally, the value of lead-directing doubles is often debated, but a double could have made all the difference to the defence of this hand. At our table, after 1D-1S-1NT-2C checkback, Michael Courtney sitting South boldly bid 3D, which may not be everyone's choice! When I bid 3NT for lack of anything better to do, a diamond was duly led. Lacking the ability to see through the back of the cards, I didn't play North for both the ♣K and the ♣J, and when I went 3 off it was painful. Partner might have converted to 4S which was always safe, but it's not obvious to do so. At the other table, the game-forcing checkback bid was 2D, and South thus had an opportunity for a lead-directing double. When this didn't happen, 3NT rolled home. Of 20 tables, 7 EW pairs made their contract (4 in 3NT, 2 in 4S and one in a hair-raising 5C) and 7 went down, while the other 6 scores involved NS going down in diamonds.

Board 16 ♠JT2  
 Dlr: W ♥T653  
 Vul: E-W ♦T4  
 ♣KJ64

|       |  |        |
|-------|--|--------|
| ♠A8   |  | ♠KQ743 |
| ♥J92  |  | ♥AQ84  |
| ♦A652 |  | ♦      |
| ♣A832 |  | ♣QT97  |

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|    |          |              |
|----|----------|--------------|
| 5  | ♠965     | N: 1♦        |
| 13 | ♥K7      | S: 1♦        |
| 13 | ♦KQJ9873 | E: 5♣4♥5♠4NT |
| 9  | ♣5       | W: 5♣4♥5♠4NT |