

TALES OF AKARANA

THE FOOLISH FIVE?

It's OK. There will be no names except my own. I have to admit to being guilty..or am I just being wise after the event? What would you do? There's not too much to this bidding sequence:

		♠	K J 10 7 4	
		♥	Q 9 5 3	
		♦	A Q J 8	
		♣	—	
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>	
	1 ♠	Dbl	Pass	
Pass	?			

You are, of course, North and rather to your surprise, you have been offered the opportunity to play in 1♠x. Would you accept it?

Reasons for passing:

You must be able to score a club ruff or two. That may well bring you close to making your contract.

Partner figures to have a fistful of clubs which would be most unwelcome if you redoubled (surely, surely for rescue?) or bid a suit. Something about going from “the frying pan into the fire”! A few seconds earlier you were contemplating having a nice constructive bidding sequence and yet now face a “devil if you do: devil if you don't” situation. Who is the “devil” on your right? It does not look like they passed by mistake! That, of course, would be another great reason for passing now! If only....



Another reason for passing would be if the auction developed like this:

West	North	East	South
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	1♠	x	Pass
Pass	xx	Pass	2♣
x	xx		

and partner with a glorious 2227 shape has the choice of playing this contract redoubled, choosing a 2-card red suit, bidding 3♣ (will this nightmare ever end!) or reverting back to 2♠ (South would turn to West and ask them if they needed to borrow a red card!)

Wake up! Surely that would not happen....but, why not?!

Reasons for bidding:

Partner does not have 7 clubs! Indeed, while the take-out double shows 4 hearts and usually only 4, there is every chance your partner has a 4-card red suit. Even, Jxx of one would allow you to score some tricks if they are kind enough not to lead trumps. You know spades are breaking badly but if you could find some kind of fit, the hand would play quite nicely on a cross-ruff, ruffing the two black suits.

Also, West has passed without most of the high spades. They must have lots of them...6..7... well, no more than 8! Not a good outlook in passing.

So, what's your decision? Are you prepared to risk the "frying pan"?

Assuming every North had the same problem, the voting was 6-7, with the movers winning. The movers were correct, too.

Board 21		♠ K J 10 7 4	
North Deals		♥ Q 9 5 3	
N-S Vul		♦ A Q J 8	
		♣ —	
♠ A Q 8 6 5 3 2			♠ —
♥ 7 4			♥ A J 10 2
♦ 3			♦ K 5 2
♣ K J 2			♣ A 9 7 6 5 4
		♠ 9	
		♥ K 8 6	
		♦ 10 9 7 6 4	
		♣ Q 10 8 3	
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	1♠	Dbl	Pass

Pass ?

Assuming you do move, redouble is the better way to go as there are two suits you can stand. East might, but should not, bid themselves. At least one South bid 2♦ and, rather strangely, but successfully played there. However, one North player bid diamonds and eventually got to play 3♦ and make an overtrick. Three East players played at too high a level in clubs, all failing. Fortune certainly favoured the movers.

In 1♠x, dummy was better than it might have been, with partner contributing a heart trick. Mainly, East led their top club with declarer being 2-0 up when the ♥K held. The odds were stacked against the diamond finesse working. Indeed, if declarer ruffs a second club and cashes ♦A (4-0 up. Could miracles happen?), they should finish just one down. Nobody achieved that.

So, “the foolish five” were good company for each other, recording -500 on a part-score hand where +110 was comfortably achievable.

A Great Escape

Yet, I did say that the voting was 7-6 in favour of moving. What happened, therefore, at the sixth table where 1♠x was passed out? The sixth declarer was Tom Jacob who ruffed the opening club lead and who played an unusual card at trick 2, the ♦J. East could not believe Tom's real holding and ducked this card. Next came a heart to the king and a diamond off table. West was not sure who held ♦A and discarded a club. Tom's ♦A won this trick (4-0 to Tom). He exited ♥Q to East who cashed the high ♥J. East discarded their last club from table, which proved fatal as Tom was eventually able to ruff his last losing heart with dummy's ♠9 which created three more trump tricks for Tom when West overruffed with ♠Q. One heart, two diamond and four trump tricks was really a case of triumphing in the face of disaster.

Despite that, it seems that those who sat out the double were perhaps being a little fatalistic, or optimistic if they thought they were in their best spot. I suppose had the auction ended in 2♣xx by North, this article might have been written from a different angle. Would you agree?

Richard Solomon

