

TALES OF AKARANA

“Innocent Bystanders”

Or were we? Everyone (well nearly everyone..or some people!) say they love Swiss Pairs. I might sometimes even agree with them, or some of them, or some of the time but there is one time when I and others are not so enamoured with this form of the game... and that is when the opposition bid a tough, low point count but unbeatable slam against me. So, on this particular evening, I was not so enamoured as it happened twice!

<i>Board 9</i>		♠ A Q 2										
North Deals		♥ A K 5										
E-W Vul		♦ J 10 7 5										
		♣ J 7 6										
♠ 4		<div style="display: inline-block; background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 5px; border: 1px solid black;"> <table style="border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center; width: 60px; height: 60px;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table> </div>		N		W		E		S		♠ J 6 5 3
	N											
W		E										
	S											
♥ J 7 3			♥ 8 6									
♦ 9 8 6			♦ A 4 3 2									
♣ K Q 8 5 4 2			♣ 10 9 3									
		♠ K 10 9 8 7										
		♥ Q 10 9 4 2										
		♦ K Q										
		♣ A										
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>									
	1 ♦	Pass	1 ♠									
Pass	1 NT	Pass	2 ♣									
Dbl	2 ♠	Pass	4 NT									
Pass	5 ♠	Pass	6 ♠									
All pass												

The “driver” was Bev Henton in the South seat. Her partner, Bev Guilford, showed 15-17 balanced with her 1NT rebid with Bev H checking for her partner’s length in the major suits (2♣). Did anyone notice my interference at this point? Perhaps Bev did as after discovering her partner was minimum with three spades and less than four hearts, Bev H launched into Key Card and getting the great news of 2+ the trump queen, bid the spade slam.

What a fine minimum Bev G produced with the ♦JT providing a parking spot for any possible heart losers. Oh, the ♥K was pretty handy too.

It is likely, certainly possible that Bev H would have taken a chance on Key Card even without my club length and strength indicator though my double seemed to increase the chance of a good response. Yes, a club lead to 3NT seemed a good idea at the time but I was not quite so sure of the wisdom of the double when I found myself on lead to a slam.

On then to the second match against Denis Humphries and Dave Dolbel. It had started well when they had overstretched and conceded 300 in a competitive high-level board where the 4 level was the limit for both sides. They struck back with a' vengeance!

Board 28		♠ J 9 6 5	
West Deals		♥ A Q 4 3	
N-S Vul		♦ A K 3	
		♣ 10 6	
♠ K 3		<div style="display: inline-block; background-color: green; color: white; padding: 5px; border: 1px solid black;"> N W E S </div>	♠ A Q 10 8 7
♥ 10 7			♥ K 8 6
♦ J 10 9 6 4			♦ —
♣ A J 8 7			♣ K Q 9 5 2
		♠ 4 2	
		♥ J 9 5 2	
		♦ Q 8 7 5 2	
		♣ 4 3	
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
Pass	1 ♦	2 ♦	3 ♦
Dbl	Pass	4 ♣	Pass
4 ♦	Pass	4 ♥	Pass
6 ♣	All pass		

1♦ is normally 4+ diamonds except with the shape held and unable to bid 1NT. Denis' 2♦ Michaels' bid showed a good hand with spades and another suit. David's double was on-going with Denis then showing his second suit in a forcing auction.

4♦ showed 1 or 4 key cards in a hand co-operating with his partner. 4♥ asked for more information and with virtually nothing wasted in

the suit David could tell his partner was void, and two priceless black honour cards, David bid the cold slam.

When you eat up the bidding space as South did with their 3♦ call, you run the risk of giving valuable information from one opponent to another. Had South passed 2♦, East-West would have had more room to explore but could West be certain that East was void in clubs? In effect, the pre-emption seemed to work in the opposition's favour. Nevertheless, a very well bid slam on a board where some pairs struggled even to reach game.

You can judge whether we, the opposition, were “innocent bystanders” or contributed to our own poor results by a couple of usually innocuous actions.

I was a little less happy with Swiss Pairs after this evening. Nevertheless, it will be back for more at the week-end. Maybe, then, the slam opportunities will switch direction.

Richard Solomon