

TALES OF AKARANA

All routes lead to....

A case, perhaps, of what might have been. Sometimes, unfortunately, our own system works against us!

So, two questions for you.

First question. We give you the score and you tell us the contract. No warm up question....straight in! The score is + 460 and only your opponents are vulnerable.

Second question. What action do you take with the following hand?

	West	North	East	South
♠ K853				
♥ 4	1♣	Pass	1♥	x
♦ AKQ	?			
♣ AKQT2				

My first reaction is that no wonder the opening bid of 2♣ is underused if we start this hand at the 1 level. However, one's majors are not hugely strong so that unless partner produces 4+ spades, then our only likely game is 3NT. However, I digress...

There is one bid that you are not allowed to make...and that is probably the one which first comes to mind, "redouble" because you are playing support doubles and redoubles. Your heart support will be rather lacking in subsequent bidding. (Redouble would promise 3 card heart support.)

So, what's it to be?

Board 12

West Deals
N-S Vul

♠ K 8 5 3	♠ 7 4 2		
♥ 4	♥ K J 7 6 3		
♦ A K Q	♦ J 4 2		
♣ A K Q 10	♣ J 7		
2			
		♠ A 9	
		♥ Q 10 9 8	
		5	
		♦ 10 8 7 6	
		♣ 9 4	
		♠ Q J 10 6	
		♥ A 2	
		♦ 9 5 3	
		♣ 8 6 5 3	

West	North	East	South
1♣	Pass	1♥	Dbl
All pass			

I have to confess that bids like 2♠ (even though South promised 4 of them) or 3NT rather appealed to me though I was not at the table, yet alone had this problem.

West, Jonathan Westoby, chose to pass! Well, this denied 3 card or more heart support and should therefore in any subsequent bidding allow doubles to be for blood. There was just one snag. There was **no** subsequent bidding. Both North and East elected to pass! Indeed, both North and East (Steve Boughey) held five card heart suits.

What was unusual was the South hand!

There was an unlikely hero on this hand...and that was poor North, Chris Stuckey. His partner's double was psychic, ill-judged, crazy, stirring the pot...you choose whichever phrase you think best suits the action.



Any bid from Chris (1♠ or 1NT are surely the only options) would have resulted in huge penalties. Were North to declare 1NTx, they should be 5 light (-1400) while 1♠ x on almost any lead but especially ♠A should result in -1100. So, a fine pass, Chris. You might not have felt so but the end result was a triumph!

South (who can now be named without fear of prosecution, Paul Carson-Wenmoth) led ♠Q. Declarer, Steve Boughey, won in hand and played a diamond to dummy and a heart to the 8 and South's ace. Back came ♠J won in dummy to be followed by a spade ruff and then two more high diamonds.

Two high clubs followed with North having now only hearts left. A third club saw North ruff with ♥ 6, overruffed with ♥ 9. Steve exited his remaining diamond with North holding ♥ KJ7 and Steve ♥ Q10 as well as the diamond. He had to score one more trick...three overtricks.

In case scoring is not your forte, that is 30x2 (1♥ doubled and making) + 50 for part-score and 50 more for the insult + 100 for each overtrick, a total of 460. Of course, you had known that when you answered question 1 above.

At every other table, the contract, rather unsurprisingly, was 3NT and although a few declarers found ingenious lines to make fewer tricks, there were 11 on top for those who wanted them. Steve's 460 barely looked out of place until you checked the contracts.

One of the joys of bridge is that we all have different approaches. Paul's take-out double may not have appealed to many but it sure made the game interesting.

Richard Solomon