

Good Bidding.... Not Good Luck



Luck plays its part in a hand of bridge. The best of contracts can succumb to a bad break while some with a much lesser chance of success come home thanks to some good fortune.

However, when many pairs miss games which with far less than the so called required 25 hcp, succeed with average luck, then they cannot claim misfortune.

Take a look at board 12.

<u>Board 12</u>		♠ 10 8 7 6 2	
West Deals		♥ A Q 10 2	
N-S Vul		♦ K 5	
		♣ K 9	
♠ K			♠ Q 9 3
♥ K 9 7 5 4			♥ 8 3
♦ Q J 7 6			♦ 9 8 3
♣ Q 8 3			♣ A 6 5 4 2
		♠ A J 5 4	
		♥ J 6	
		♦ A 10 4 2	
		♣ J 10 7	

West may either pass or open 2♥ (hearts and a minor). If they do open, North may either call 2♠ or pass. If North does pass, South has the chance to reopen with a double to which the only losing action for North is to subside in a spade partial. West will at least be relieved they are not vulnerable if North did decide to defend this doubled contract.


What though if West stayed silent? North starts off with 1♠ and South, either with a natural 3♠ value jump or via a Bergen bid, shows 10 or 11 hcp with 4 card spade support.

How good or bad is the North hand now? I am not a great fan of Losing Trick Count but this seems to be a great time to use it. Only a 6 loser opposite a supposed 8 loser in partner's hand (oops, we can see 9 losers! Those jacks devalue the hand though two aces are good and there's always a couple of 10's to save us in the post mortem!). North does not know any of that but

despite their minimum point count, game cannot be far away. Losing trick count says so. Those minor suit kings are potentially good cards, both being protected on the opening lead.

If East does lead a heart, one of declarer's problems will be solved. Otherwise, they will receive a neutral diamond. Split trump honours and something good to happen in just one of the heart and club suits. There are even chances of endplaying East into having to open up the club suit. It's a vulnerable 23 hcp game you want to be in ("why, Losing Trick Count says so", he says with just a little tongue in cheek!). Yet, half the field played in part score. Unlucky? No.

Moving on to Board 14.

<p><u>Board 14</u> East Deals None Vul</p>	<p>♠ A Q 10 8 4 ♥ A Q 8 4 ♦ 10 ♣ 6 5 2</p>	<p>♠ J 7 3 ♥ 6 2 ♦ A K Q J 7 4 ♣ Q 3</p>		<p>♠ 6 ♥ K 9 5 ♦ 9 5 2 ♣ K J 9 8 7 4</p>
	<p>♠ K 9 5 2 ♥ J 10 7 3 ♦ 8 6 3 ♣ A 10</p>			

West is likely to start proceedings with 1♦. I cannot see anything wrong with either 1♠ or double from North. After 1♠, East could compete in clubs and South in spades though South has a 9 loser (again!). Two tens again! Four card trump support again! Only one jack this time. Is that enough to invite game? Probably not.

The key to the cold 20 hcp game is North's shortage. The game (in either major) is that good that it can survive a losing heart finesse. Yet again, North has a 6 loser. Advocates of Losing Trick Count would deduct a loser for the double fit as a 9 loser and a 6 loser leaves us a trick short of game.

If West does not compete to the 3 level, then either a long suit help ask or short suit try (3♣ or 3♦ as applicable) by North would propel South into bidding game.

Were North to double initially, then South is a point short of jumping or forcing with 2♦. However, North would certainly compete in whichever suit South bid...and a 3♦ long suit help ask would then enable North to bid game.

Bridge, though, is a game of two sides....and “the other side”, East-West would get a poor result if they allowed the opposition to play in 4 of a major. They need to be able to diagnose a kind of double fit of their own. Three East-West pairs did well to dive in 5 of a minor, down one or down not at all if the defence do not take their two major suit tricks.

Not all North-South pairs got to 4 of a major, whether or not the opposition bid on. Good hand evaluation, whether or not through Losing Trick Count, was required to bid games with less than 25 hcp and which succeeded with only average luck. For those North-South pairs who missed the second game, the only good luck was that they scored better than those defending 5 of a minor.

They certainly cannot claim, as indeed in the first hand too, of bad luck for missing their major game.

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