

Catch me if you can...



Not a night of great deeds, a night generally if you could keep your nose out of trouble you would score better. Trouble awaited round many corners, or bids too far:

How high would you bid this interesting collection?

♠ KQ762	You are East and hear the following:			
♥ K	West	North	East	South
♦ AK9653				1♥
♣ T	Pass	1♠	2♦	2♥
	Pass	Pass	?	

Why did North have to bid spades? That and your seemingly devalued ♥K have made your hand rather less appealing than first seemed. Nevertheless, you have a pretty fair hand with reason to think your partner could be of a little assistance. This time (only this time?!), they let down the bidders, of which there were a few. However, only two of the six Easts who tried 3♦ were doubled for their trouble.

<u>Board 7</u>		♠ A 10 8 5 4
South Deals		♥ 2
Both Vul		♦ J 8 4
		♣ K 8 5 2
♠ 9 3		♠ K Q 7 6 2
♥ 10 8 7 5 3		♥ K
♦ —		♦ A K 9 6 5 3
♣ Q J 9 7 6 3		♣ 10
		♠ J
		♥ A Q J 9 6 4
		♦ Q 10 7 2
		♣ A 4

It would be an unlucky day for South should 3♦ make. They are looking at 3 red suit tricks and the ♣A. Partner made a free bid. Can they not provide one defensive trick? They actually provided two (both in spades rather than ♣K) giving North-South a lucrative 500. In theory, South can do better by making 3NT but the only South who tried pulled up three tricks short. It looks like

South must play on East's long suit and then make a second spade trick to bring their number of tricks to 9.

Maybe East could bid 2♠ rather than 3♦ at their second turn as North's suit might be playable for East-West, though not on this occasion. The more bids East makes, the greater danger of attracting the axe.

Trigger Happy

West had a chance to wield the axe on the following board...but should they?

Board 1

North Deals

None Vul

♠ Q 9 4

♥ Q 4 3

♦ J 7 3

♣ K Q 10 2



<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	1 ♥	2 ♥	3 ♣
3 ♠	Pass	Pass	4 ♣
?			

2♥ showed 5+ spades and a 5+ minor with Intermediate or better values.

South appeared to have walked into some fairly hot water when they bid clubs for the second time. Time for the red card?

Well, there is a supplementary question if you answered "yes". That is, what are you going to do when North retreats to 4♥? Double that as well? If North does bid, you have just turned a small gain into a large loss!

Board 1

North Deals

None Vul

♠ Q 9 4

♥ Q 4 3

♦ J 7 3

♣ K Q 10 2

♠ 7

♥ A K J 10 5 2

♦ Q 10 9 4

♣ 6 3



♠ K 8 6 5

♥ 7

♦ K

♣ A J 9 8 7 5 4

♠ A J 10 3 2

♥ 9 8 6

♦ A 8 6 5 2

♣ —

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	1 ♥	2 ♥	3 ♣
3 ♠	Pass	Pass	4 ♣
All pass			

When faced with that decision over 4♣, Ian Berrington, West, chose to pass. His partner managed to under-lead his ♦A in a "good cause" (or so he thought!) and that meant 4♣ was only one down. However, try beating 4♥ by North.


After cashing both their aces, East can either switch to a trump which means declarer can afford a second diamond loser and will come to 10 tricks or else

can preserve West's ♥Q as a trick by exiting a spade. This allows a diamond to be ruffed with only a trump then to be lost as the second round of diamonds is ruffed, with ♦J falling under the ♦Q on the third round of the suit. The club loser is discarded on ♠K.

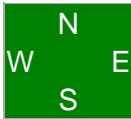
Thus, passing out 4♣ was a fine decision to make.

Twice bitten, third time shy

After a match in which our partnership conceded 200 twice and 300 once, I was too scared to take further action with the following:

<u>Board 3</u> South Deals E-W Vul		♠ 9 ♥ 6 2 ♦ A J 8 7 6 5 4 ♣ A 6 4	<table border="0"> <tr> <td style="padding-right: 20px;"><i>West</i></td> <td style="padding-right: 20px;"><i>North</i></td> <td style="padding-right: 20px;"><i>East</i></td> <td><i>South</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pass</td> <td>1 NT</td> <td>2 ♦</td> <td>1 ♠</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="4">All pass</td> </tr> </table>	<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>	Pass	1 NT	2 ♦	1 ♠	All pass			
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>												
Pass	1 NT	2 ♦	1 ♠												
All pass															

What horrors awaited me in 3♦? The answers were none as the diamond game needed little more than finding the ♥A with the opening bidder:

<u>Board 3</u> South Deals E-W Vul	♠ Q 5 ♥ Q J 8 3 ♦ Q 9 2 ♣ J 10 8 3	<table border="0"> <tr> <td style="padding-right: 20px;"><i>West</i></td> <td style="padding-right: 20px;"><i>North</i></td> <td style="padding-right: 20px;"><i>East</i></td> <td><i>South</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pass</td> <td>1 NT</td> <td>2 ♦</td> <td>1 ♠</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="4">All pass</td> </tr> </table>	<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>	Pass	1 NT	2 ♦	1 ♠	All pass			
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>											
Pass	1 NT	2 ♦	1 ♠											
All pass														
♠ A 7 6 4 ♥ K 10 5 4 ♦ 10 3 ♣ K Q 9		♠ 9 ♥ 6 2 ♦ A J 8 7 6 5 4 ♣ A 6 4												
	♠ K J 10 8 3 2 ♥ A 9 7 ♦ K ♣ 7 5 2													

Reaching game seemed harder than making it (only one pair recorded +600) with our +50 from 2♠ scant compensation.

Despite this board, knowing when to stay out of trouble is a harder skill to master than that of aggressive bidding.

Richard Solomon