

January 2018

One of the arguments I have put forward in previous articles is that it is often better to be lucky than good.

Here is a hand I played at a recent tournament at the club which demonstrates this point of view.

Bidding

Board 26

Dealer East

All vul

South	W	N	E	S
♠ AKJ10872			1H	1S(1)
♥ -	3H(2)	3S(3)	4H	4S (4)
♦ 842	pass	pass	5H(5)	5S
♣ K108	all pass			

- 1) Some would advocate a bid of 4S here, but this is just a little rich for me, or perhaps I'm just getting old
- 2) Weak raise with at least 4 hearts
- 3) A welcome bid from partner. I expect him to be stretching here so place him with a good 2S raise
- 4) A no brainer, we might go down but then 4H will probably make so it's still a good sacrifice. I settle down and wait for the opening lead from West
- 5) The killer bid! I am now regretting not bidding 4S straight off. I have no idea what to do. If 5H makes, I need to bid 5S, but 5S is almost definitely going down. Can we defeat 5H? Possibly, but my hand is not bristling with defensive tricks now that my partner has supported spades and what tricks can partner make? Maybe, possibly, probably.....I give in and take the push.

West leads the ♦J, the dummy comes down and my heart sinks. Partner has turned up with a much better hand than I expected. Eleven tricks in hearts seem highly unlikely, and my contract looks doomed to failure – I have taken the wrong decision again.

Plan your play.

North

♠ Q96
♥ J54
♦ AQ95
♣ QJ5

South

♠ AKJ10872
♥ -
♦ 842
♣ K108

Initial Analysis

More depressing still is without this lead I had a real chance of making this contract. As long as the trumps broke and the ♣A was with East which was almost a certainty, I could strip the hand and come down to this ending

North

♠ 6
♥ -
♦ AQ95
♣ -

South

♠ AK
♥ -
♦ 842
♣ -

Now when I lead a small Diamond towards dummy all I need to do is cover whatever card West plays and East is end played. West's lead has squashed that plan. Now it seems my only chance is to find West with the ♦10, but who am I kidding? This lead has a singleton written all over it. It costs me nothing to go through the motions and put the moment of truth off for as long as possible. So I go up with the ♦A, ruff a heart, return to dummy with a trump, all following. Another heart ruff, another spade to dummy, East discarding a heart, followed by a final heart ruff leaving this position.

North

♠ 6
♥ -
♦ Q95
♣ QJ5

South

♠ AK
♥ -
♦ 84
♣ K108

Now I play a small club to the queen won by the ace in East's hand. East now goes into a huddle. What's happening? Eventually he exits with a heart, I throw a diamond from hand and ruff in dummy conceding a diamond trick and claiming the rest.

Final Analysis

When I regain consciousness I realize this ending was not as unlikely as it seems. The opening lead marked East with five diamonds and the trump play revealed he started with only one spade. His opening bid guaranteed at least five hearts, so why not six? Instead of concentrating on the play, I spent my time ruing over my decision to bid 5S and thinking about how I could have made the hand if I didn't get a diamond lead. So the result came as a pleasant surprise. See what I mean about being lucky?