Week 84

Minor suit contracts tend to be the poor relation in bridge, with the predeliction for the majors and no trumps.

Here are two hands from recent events which focus on bidding to 5 of a minor.

Qxx  
Jx  
Axx  
Axxxx

Axxx  
void  
KQJxxx  
Kxx

With North the dealer, our uncontested auction went as follows:

Pass - 1D - 2D - 2D - 3D - 3S (values in the suit) - 5D

I thought this auction was ok, and certainly the traveller revealed many pairs had missed game. The play on a top heart lead was uncomplicated since with clubs 3-2 there were 11 winners with no need to worry about the spades (6 diamonds, 4 clubs and AS).

Then our second hand:

Txxx  
K  
ATxxx  
ATx

AK  
xx  
KJxx  
KQxxx

A poor pair of hands if you suffer from the common disease " Threenotrumpitis" since the hearts are wide open.

There were two common uncontested sequences with South the dealer:

1)  Playing weak no trumps

1C - 1D - 3D - which gives North an awkward bid since neither 3S (values therein ?) or 3NT (a bit rustic) describe the hand very well. At teams, the prudent course of action is to head towards 5 or 6 minor and forget about 3NT - although at matchpoints one must consider the latter.

2)  Playing strong no trumps

I would opt to start with 1NT since 1C leaves me with no sensible rebid and I would no doubt find I was quickly entering -300 on my score card for down 3 as the defence cash the first 7 tricks.

6D is a perfectly decent contract and makes with 2-2 trumps (around 42%) or if either hand has a singleton QD (one quarter of the 3-1 breaks) which is a further 12% making the slam around 54%.