**Week40**

I give a hand this week which posed problems in the bidding and also in the play.

 Jxxx

AKJTxxx

xx

void

 You are playing teams and are vulnerable with the opposition not. Do you pass or open 1h, 3h or 4h? Pass would not be a mistake just somewhat cautious. A 3h opener is not to my taste because of the 4 card spade holding since it will often be hard to reach 4s. 4h is perhaps the value bid but suffers from the same drawback as 3h. We are thus left with 1h and the rule of 20 (add your points to the number of cards in your 2 longest suits) makes his hand worth 20 and so 1h is fine. After a lively auction where partner responds 1s and the next hand bids 2c you reach 6s. Partner holds

 AKQxx

xx

Ax

Kxxx

 The lead is CA. Plan the play.

 Clearly you must make use of the 7 card heart suit in dummy so ruffing minor suit cards is a non starter. Imagine spades and hearts both break 3-1 now if you ruff the CA you will have a major problem in drawing trumps and establishing the heart suit if they require a ruff to set up .Discarding on the lead is the correct play retaining a 4th trump in dummy. The defence switch to a diamond and you win and cash SA LHO discarding a club?

 You are now in a position where if hearts break 3-1 with the short spade hand holding the 3 you cannot establish the suit without running into a ruff (if the hand with 4 spades has 3 or 4 hearts you can succeed but wait a minute if that is the lay out LHO has 12 minor suit cards and has made just the one bid it just cannot be the case).

 So think what LHO has, he discards 2 diamonds and 3 clubs when you draw trumps. What is his hand in that case he has 7 red cards and if that comprised 5 diamonds together with 6 clubs would he not have bid either the unusual 2NT or maybe diamonds?

 There is therefore a strong presumption that the club hand is not 0-2-5-6 shape for the above reason in which case a 3 card heart holding is very likely so cashing one top heart and finessing against the queen is the best line and more importantly will score you +1430 whereas playing for the drop leads to 3 off!

**Week 39**

Hot off the presses I have two hands from the weekend Tollemache qualifier (Inter Counties Teams of 8) where Avon finished 3rd in their 8 team group to once again miss out on the final by a narrow margin.

Slam bidding is important in teams play and makes for good reading so I shall give two hands in that area

xx

ATxxxx

AKQx

x

 AJx

KQx

xxxx

AJx

 A difficult one to reach I think owing to the good fits and low point count.

1h -2d -3d was a typical start with north dealer. Now many just bid 4h (have you discussed whether 3h would be forcing in your regular partnership?) and slam was missed .If 3h is forcing it is a much better bid and now north will show a control in clubs with 4c and the ball is passed back to south to bid 4h or 4s now quite a close decision the latter will lead to slam certainly the former will have suggested interest and it will be up to north to move forward.

My second hand is maybe easier

Axx

Tx

KTxx

AJxx

KQJTx

AKJxxx

Jx

void

the weak NT auction will probably go 1nt -2d -2h -2s (forcing for one round) -2nt -3s (game forcing 5-6 since with 5-5 or 6-5 one transfers to spades first) now is north worth a cue bid of 4c I think yes and now south certainly drives towards slam but requires a diamond control so bids 5c and hears 5d and now 6s. So the hallmarks of good bidding describe your shape accurately and notice again the subtle use of cue bidding 4c,5c and 5d are all cue bids with spades agreed as trumps .A defender who is listening carefully to this bidding may be able to do something clever on opening  lead by under leading the DA which gives declarer a nightmare decision at trick 1 in 6s .