**Week 34**

A group of us have been enjoying a spot of late sun in Andalucía over the past week so I thought I would give a couple of hands which came up. There is a term in poker called "going on tilt " which means betting or playing wildly and the same applies to Bridge when you are pushing for a good result or behind in a match.

Take the following hand

Axxx
Axx
AKxxx
Q

you hear 1s from partner 3h on your right? A very good hand certainly and slam must be in the frame so what to do? A bid of 4s would be a huge underbid whereas Blackwood may be premature so how about a hedge with 4h to show a good raise in spades (ok you plan to bid again) partner bids 4s as expected but rho emerges with 5h; most peculiar but does this improve your own hand or not? It is now probable that rho has KQJ to 7 or 8 hearts which improves your hand still further as partner's values are likely to be where you need them to be.

So what to do just bid 6s is one option as 5s is very cautious .If you are of a scientific bent you might try 6h to suggest a grand slam to partner or maybe 5nt.

If you have gone on a "slight tilt "you may think the grand slam must have play so why not give it a whirl ?

Partner has

KJTxx
X
QJxx
Axx

so how would you play the trumps?  From the top playing for the drop or finesse through the partner of a he 5h bidder? The second line of play is certainly percentage and brings home the bacon here.

Then another bidding problem

Qxx
Axxxx
Void
AKQJx

Ax
Kx
Jxxx
Xxxxx

The bidding is uncontested and begins 1h 1nt now opinions will divide between 2c and 3c the north hand is certainly good but for me just short of a 3c bid which is around 18 points so if it goes 2c 3c what does north do next ? I am a great fan of the splinter bid to show shortage and here a jump to 4d would pave the way for the club slam as south will know their hand is excellent with no diamond wastage facing the shortage. Not a single pair reached this one in a field of 34 tables.

**Week 33**

This week I shall give a couple of slam hands from the Somerset Congress held in Weston Super Mare  at the weekend. The first is a question of bidding

Kxx

x

QJ9xx

AQxx

AQxxx

AKx

ATxx

J

The two possible slam contracts are 6s and 6d and in a teams event one would certainly prefer 6d since one is able to cater for 4-1 spades if the DK is wrong which would be fatal in 6s. In fact the hand cropped up in the Swiss Pairs and I was surprised to score 80% for playing in 6s.

The bidding typically went 1s -2d and now in Acol south has an awkward problem being way too strong for 3d he would like to make a bid agreeing diamonds showing extra strength which does not take you past 3nt, unfortunately no such bid exists !

 I like the technical bid of 4c which is a splinter (since 3c would be natural and GF) which shows a raise to 4d with short clubs and is also forcing to game. This paves the way for a slam and at pairs 6s by south is favourite or maybe 6nt played by north.

 Our second hand is a play problem. The contract is 6s and in the bidding LHO overcalled 2h.

Kxxx

Axxxx

x

QTx

AQJxx

void

AQJTx

Kxx

the lead is HK. You need to establish your side suit of diamonds but how to play the suit?

* Do you attempt to ruff 3 diamonds in dummy bringing in the suit provided it breaks no worse than 4-3 or
* do you take the simple finesse or
* the ruffing finesse leading A and Q of diamonds discarding if no king appears?

The first suffers from a problem of entries as  you will need to return to hand twice for the 2nd and 3rd diamond ruffs and control will be an issue (it is true you may be able to establish a club trick and then cross ruff the rest of  the hand provided  the defence does not play a trump but this line will require no overruff in diamonds on your right in addition) since trumps provide the only entries if the CA sits over the king and you will fail if you try this line.

The simple finesse is an option but the ruffing finesse is a still  better option and another clever move  is find out first who holds the CA since if it is on the right it is a near certainty that the overcaller will hold the  DK and so the ruffing finesse will be the best line of play.