**Week 38**

A friend recently gave me a book about the great Australian player, Tim Seres, and some of the amazing hands he played during a stellar bridge career. Tim played bridge on a different level to almost everyone else.

First you reach an excellent contract of 7c on this deal

Qxxx

Axx

xx

QT9x

Ax

x

AKQJ9

AKJxx

No declarer in a huge field made 13 tricks here. If the diamonds divide 3-3 or 4-2 and clubs are not 4-0 the contract is cold since you can discard the spade losers on good diamonds and ruff the losing spade in dummy.

So direct your mind to the case where diamonds are 5-1 in which case if the hand with 5 also holds the SK it can be squeezed but you must get the timing right. Win the trump lead play HA and ruff a heart trump to dummy and ruff the third heart and cash the SA (key play) and now cash 2 further trumps in the dummy. At this point we have cashed the major suit aces and ruffed 2 hearts and played the 4 winning trumps in the dummy so have reached a 5 card end position in which neither defender can guard both the SK and the diamonds holding 5 of them. We have effected a dummy reversal and Vienna Coup (unblock of the SA) to effect the simple non positional squeeze!

My second hand is a bidding problem from a recent Swiss teams which is far from easy

J

QJTxx

QJTxxx

x

Axxx

AKx

AK

JT9x

South is the dealer and where they opened 1c the bidding typically went 1h -2nt -3d -3h -4h. If South was a dedicated 4 card majorite; it was even more awkward 1s -1nt -3nt.

The best chance of reaching a slam came where south was able to open 2nt -3d -3h -4d. The strong hand is clearly suitable if minimum so should bid 4s (cue bid) and if the red two suiter can show a club control the slam can be reached. I do not believe this was bid by anyone.

**Week 37**

This week we have a bidding and a play problem. The following hand came up in a recent match and proved trickier than it would appear on the surface. I will give both hands

AKxx

KQx

AKQJx

x

Qxx

ATxxx

xxx

xx

a virtually cold slam with 6d superior to 6h since in the latter contract there may be a trump loser. With the strong hand dealer the bidding started

2c -2d -3d-3h -3s -4d -4h

An excellent natural start to the auction. The 3h bid could be only 4 cards rather than 5 here so north painted a clear picture of the hand by bidding spades (in case it was a better fit than hearts) and then showing the heart support. The other hand now knows he has two very good cards (when they may have held nothing of value) facing a 4-3-5-1 shape with no club wastage so moves towards slam and the best efforts I can come up with here are  either 5h (general try) , 4nt (blackwood) or 4s (very subtle as we cannot hold 4 card support) or  just bidding 6d or 6h. Bidding 6d would score very well here.

Then a play problem courtesy of Hugh Kelsey (my favourite writer on card play)

QTx

xx

xx

AKxxxx

AKJxxx

AQx

xx

xx

You reach 4s and the bidding is relevant 1s (dbl) rdbl -p -p (-2c ) dbl (2d) 3s -p-4s .The opposition bidding is in brackets here so a takeout dbl on your left with at least 4 clubs.

DK is led and the switch is to the CQ you play the ace and to your relief it is not ruffed.

So you have 9 top tricks and the heart finesse is clearly wrong and a club ruff threatens so attempting to ruff a heart in dummy is also no good since you will lose 2 diamonds, HK and a club ruff .The only place for a 10th trick is in the club suit itself but it cannot be developed after drawing trumps owing to a lack of entries and if you play the CK it will be ruffed.

The solution is simple once you think of it - play a trump to hand to check they are not 4-0 (they are not) and then play a club playing low in the dummy when west covers. The defence have no answer to this move. They may try a diamond to east and a heart switch. You rise with the HA play a trump to the ten ruff a club in hand establishing the suit and draw trumps ending in dummy scoring in total 6 trumps, 1 heart and 3 clubs the defence making 2 diamonds and a club.