**Week 44**

It is nice to be back following the Christmas and New Year break and I should like to wish everyone a happy 2019.

**The penalty double is a subject about which not very much is written but there are at least two situations where the double has this meaning.**You pick up

 K9xx

KTxx

x

QJxx

 the bidding starts pass - pass -1d (dbl ) you opt to redouble (showing 9-11 points and looking for a possible penalty). The bidding continues

(1s) 2d (2h)?  A double here would be penalty and the alternative would be to pass.

 Partner suggests a hand with 6 + diamonds which is minimum or sub minimum in strength for the opening and so with a hand suitable for defence partner would either pass or double. Right hand opponent shows a strong hand with hearts. At matchpoints a double would be clear, at teams the conservative (or feeble in my case) may pass in classical pass the buck style arguing that they have described a hand of this type already.

 Then

xx

AQ

QT8x

JTxxx

 p-p -1s (2d) ? you have a hand where seeking a penalty against 2d is an excellent option on this hand. Most pairs play that a double here is for takeout showing the unbid suits (hearts and clubs) and since bridge is very much a major suit orientated game that is not a sensible choice here without any heart support and no other bid is practical so you choose to pass. It continues -p to partner who holds

 Axxxx

Kxxx

Kx

Ax

 partner does indeed double and as planned you opt to defend 2d and you score 500 on a part score board . Note that double is much more flexible than 2h or pass on this hand and caters for the main possibility that partner wished to defend the diamond contract.

The hallmarks of a successful low level penalty double are threefold

 1 Your side has the balance of power

 2 The hand is a misfit

 3 The hand choosing to defend has 4 or more decent trumps.

**Week 43**

A pair of bidding hands for you this week which were of interest. Firstly

 xxx

AQTxx

Axx

Ax

AKQJxx

xxx

x

KQx

 Playing a 14-16 No Trump the sequence at the table was as follows

 1nt -2h -2s -4d -4h -4s -5c -6s

 A good sequence. 2h was a transfer and the jump to 4d (the key bid) showed a singleton or void diamond with 6 or more spades and a hand with slam interest (amusingly called a "self agreeing splinter") Since a 3d rebid would be natural and forcing to game the jump rebid in another suit is not needed in a natural sense. 4h and 5c were cue bids.

Playing weak no trumps you may start 1h -2s -3s and I think a cue bidding sequence should take you comfortably enough to 6s.

 AKxx

AJxx

xx

KJx

x

KQxx

Axx

ATxxx

a reasonable enough 6h here since if you do not receive a diamond lead it is nearly cold and even if you do you can still make it  if you can find the CQ.

Playing strong no trumps there were 2 approaches employ Stayman and if partner responds 2d try 3c in case you have a good fit when 6c might be available. The alternative approach was to show clubs (playing minor suit transfers 2s for clubs and 2nt for diamonds) and then continue with a natural 3h bid (1nt -2s -2nt -3h) this shows 4 hearts and 5 or more clubs.

I shall be taking a break over the festive season and returning in the New Year so would like to wish my readers (or should it be reader!) the compliments of the season.