**Week 58**

Slam bidding is a difficult area requiring as it does method, trust and confidence as a partnership. There are broadly two types of situation in this area. First hands where it is simply a matter of ascertaining how many key cards (aces) you hold in order to be sure all the key players are in place. You hold

 KQxxx

x

AKQxx

Ax

 if partner opens 1s you know you are going to at least 6s so Blackwood is correct and if partner shows two aces we will bid 7s since it would be very unlucky if partner turned up with 5 clubs and we had to lose a 2nd round trick in the suit.

 More difficult are hands which warrant a try for slam rather than just bidding it if we hold enough key cards. So

 AKQxx

x

AKxxx

Qx

 Say the bidding goes 1s -3s? Slam may be cold or may have two losers so what to do easy we bid 4d (control) and if partner can bid 4h ( control ) we continue with 5d pin pointing the club weakness (with CK we could bid 5c over 4h). Here we are making a try for slam prepared to stop if the response from partner is unsatisfactory.

 Two other points about slam bidding and controls (or lack of): Never use Blackwood holding a void for obvious reasons the ace of that suit is worthless in a suit contract and also never use it with two losers in a side suit (e.g. the hand above which has two club losers lacking any control).

 There are many other slam try situations. Partner opens 2nt and we hold

 x

Kxx

AQTxxx

Jxx

 bid 4d showing a 6 card or longer suit with slam interest but being prepared to stop if partner shows a lack of interest.

 A tip which is very useful in the slam area is if the partnership holds a minimum of 30 points between the two hands and a trump fit then always make at least one try above game.

One from a recent match

 x

xxx

AQJTxxx

Ax

 you hear 1c from partner you respond 1d (1s overcall) 3nt from partner? A 4d bid looks good since we have 7 1/2 tricks facing a hand of around 18/19 points. 4d of course cannot be passed and shows 6+ cards and a hand interested in a slam.

Good methods are of course important in the area of slam bidding and if I could recommend just two they would be the Jacoby 2nt response to 1M and splinter bids pinpointing shortage and agreeing partner's suit.

**Week 57**

This week I thought I would talk about an aspect of bridge which is not especially well understood by some club players the subjects of Unauthorised Information and Misinformation. During both the bidding and the play players may only use information derived from the legal calls  and plays of the board being played and which  is unaffected by unauthorised information from another source (Law 16) .

 Thus players MAY NOT USE erroneous information that may suggest a call or play for example a remark, a question, a reply to a question, an unexpected alert or failure to alert or unmistakable hesitation, unwanted speed, special emphasis, tone or gesture, movement or mannerism. In such a situation a player may not choose from among logical alternatives one which could have been demonstrably suggested over another by the extraneous information.

 An example of such a situation would be the following. Imagine you hold

 x

KJxx

Axxx

xxxx

 and the bidding goes 2s ( weak ) on your left pass -pass to you ? For many players a double now would be clear cut since it has 2 clear advantages, first it caters for partner holding a hand which wishes to penalise 2s and secondly it enables your side to compete the hand.

 Now imagine that partner had paused for a period before passing. That period of thought by partner suggests they have a reason to take some time and that can only be because they hold some reasonable values so it now becomes much safer for 4th hand to double. The slowness by partner followed by a pass is Unauthorised Information to partner who may not choose a bid demonstrably suggested by that pause so a TD would most probably disallow a double in this situation.

 This used to be called the 70% test so if 7 players out of 10 made a bid then the TD would allow otherwise they would cancel. (Bristol has one highly ethical player who applies his own 98 % test so woe betide any of his partners who think for periods and then pass but it is unusual to see such high principles and active ethics)

 It is also not well known that the same issue applies in the card play so imagine dummy holds a side suit of KQxx playing with a different suit as trumps and declarer leads low toward the above holding and sat over dummy the defender takes some time to play low. By thinking he has indicated possession of the ace which is again unauthorised information to their partner in the later defence. Adjustments for Unauthorised Information in card play are very rare (I have seen three in 30 years).

The other tricky judgment situation for directors is Misinformation. This covers situations in the bidding where a bid is not alerted which should have been, or an incorrect explanation is provided with regard to a given bid. In order for the director to award an adjustment in such circumstances the non offending side must have suffered damage as a consequence of the infraction which led to them receiving a poor score which would not otherwise have occurred had they be properly provided with the correct information.

The process in such situations is to call the director, explain the facts clearly and dispassionately to him or her and the TD will then provide a ruling and explain their reasons. The TD should also add that their decision is subject to a right of appeal.

Remember that calling the Director in either of the above situations is not a criticism of your opponents nor a thing to be avoided since the TD is an arbiter of fact and bridge law like a cricket umpire or referee in football or rugby. Playing bridge according to the laws is the proper way to conduct the game and a strongly ethical approach is the correct way to play bridge.

**Week 56**

I am continuing with a couple of interesting declarer play problems which cropped up in the recent Devon CBA Swiss Teams.

First you reach 4s with

Jxx

KT8x

QTx

Axx

AKQxxx

9x

x

KQxx

rho opened 1d and the lead is CJ.

You have 9 top tricks in the black suits and prospects for a 10th are excellent. Clubs may divide 3-3 or trumps 2-2 (with clubs not 3-3) in which case you will have a trump with which to ruff a putative club loser.

The technicians amongst you will notice you could draw just 2 rounds of trumps and then play to ruff the 4th club gaining on all of the above lay outs and also where the black suits are 4-2 and 3--1 with the same hand holding the length in the suits .

But there is a better line. Just look at those hearts. Taking 2 finesses playing for either HQ or HJ on your left can never cost since you can fall back on most of the black suit chances if the hearts fail.

 So win the club in hand and play 2 rounds of trumps( rho has 3 trumps so a 3rd round is needed )  followed by H9 this loses to the Q and a diamond is returned but you can ruff the 2nd round and finesse the HT which forces out the ace for the contract .

RHO held

 xxx

AQxx

AJxxx

x

if you do not draw all the trumps you will fail because clubs are 5-1 and trumps 3-1 and you lose 3 red tricks and a club ruff ! Then your correspondent found himself at the helm in 5c which produced a curious problem owing to a lack of bidding by the opposition!

Qxx

Jxx

Ax

Kxxxx

Kxxx

AQxx

x

AJTx

It was a convoluted precision sequence to a decent game starting with a 2c opener -pass -2nt (enquiry).

The defence played SA spade ruffed on your right? A heart was returned so with no alternative you play low and it goes ten jack .You now have enough tricks so it is just a question of the trumps.

So with no bidding which is more likely LHO to hold Qxx along with 5 spades and shortish hearts ( one or two seems likely although a singleton heart was not an attractive lead here ) or RHO to have started with the club length in which case LHO would have a void club and so would have a spade diamond 2 suiter on which he had not bid ? In addition if LHO has Qxx in trumps RHO has 11 red cards holding singletons in both black suits and has not bid either? It was a perplexing "dog which did not bark in the night "scenario and unlike that chap in the deerstalker I am only an average bridge detective.

So either way for the contract to be in danger one or other opponent has a 2 suiter upon which they have not bid rho the reds or lho spades and diamonds. I think the clue is it was easier for LHO to bid than rho just because my opener was at the 2 level ( 2c in the Ward version of Precision is 11-15 clubs ,clubs and a major or 3 suited with a singleton diamond my actual hand  )  therefore play LHO for Qxx in clubs rather than the spade diamond 2 suiter since this hand had the first opportunity to bid .This reasoning with regard to distribution is quite complex but it is the basis of good card play to count the distribution of the unseen hands ,location of missing honours and the tricks . Needless to say I took the other line to go down!