**Week 62**

A little known condition suffered by some bridge players is called "Sound Bidders Disease ".

The key symptoms of the disease are as follows:-

1. A failure to put the opposition under sufficient pressure with pre-emptive bids; typically when not vulnerable because the hand is considered unsuitable in some respect e.g. the suit not good enough or the distribution of the hand is impure or we might lose a penalty.
2. A tendency to underbid in the game and slam zones.
3. A tendency not to overcall in marginal situations.
4. The underbidding of hands where our side have a fit. Such hands should in general be overbid not underbid for two reasons to pressurise the opposition and because the total number of tricks available to each side increases with fits and increases even more if each side have a double fit (a fit in two suits).
5. Taking a cautious approach in sacrifice situations often due to an inability to see the big picture of the hand in terms of what the opposition can make.

 One of the big differences between pairs and teams bridge is that playing teams the game bonus is much sought after and so a cautious approach in this area can prove very costly whereas at match points bidding marginal games is less critical.

 I am often asked what style of opponent I prefer to play against and the answer is without hesitation the conservative player who is technically very sound and orthodox since all the bridge inferences and information tend to be clear. The player who pre-empts a lot and pressurises you and overcalls very light is much more difficult to play against.

 The other point to remember is that when your side is vulnerable all actions should be sound but when not vulnerable it is a bidders game so get into the auction as much and as often as you can.

 I will let you into a secret when I started playing the game I think I showed symptoms of the Disease but plenty of therapy have assisted me in this respect and now I have almost a clean bill of health!

**Week61**

 This week some bidding problems which cropped up at the Spring 4s in Stratford over the May bank holiday weekend. First you hold

 Kxxx

AJ

KQTx

KTxx

 It is game all and you hear 1h -p- 1nt ? 1nt may be up to 11 if that makes any difference but denies spades. For most partnerships double would be take out of hearts here so this hand fits pretty well for that action. The alternative is to pass since partner will not hold many values although if you have a fit (spades) then a part score may well be available. I chose double and found partner with

xxx

Txxx

xx

xxxx

 He bid 2c got doubled and played the hand very well to lose only 800. How many imps did this cost? In fact it was a gain of 8! A weak NT went p-p and the above hand doubled -p-p redbl and they stuck this for +1160! (Partner has a frying pan or fire choice here since 2s or 2c can lose 1100)

 Then an example of a superb flat board in our match against one of the best teams in the field.

 void

AJTxxx

AT8x

KJx

AJxx

void

KQJxx

Axxx

at both tables 7d was reached a contract which requires the hearts to be established so no problem if the suit is 4-3 ( a 62% shot ) but trickier if the suit breaks badly. The top Bulgarian pair bid it at our table and our team mates flattened it.

 Finally another awkward bidding problem you hold

 AKJxxx

x

AQJxx

x

 the bidding starts with a weak NT on your right ? The popular defence to no trump openings in bridge at the moment (conventions are like fashion ideas) is called Multi Landy in which 2c shows both majors, 2d one major 2M that major and a minor and 2nt minors.

To show just spades is very conservative (and even I would not do that!) and also to show spades and a minor is likewise likely to miss a game quite often. Double is maybe better but still hard to describe this hand with your rebid if you get one.

In the good old days a bid of 2nt showed a strong 2 suiter such as this perfect but that has also been superseded. At our table 4s was tried.

 Partner held

 xx

AJxxx

Kxxx

xx

 so 6d is the place to play but few found that contract.

**Week 60**

This week a couple of hands from the Regional Final of the Garden Cities played on Saturday at the club. There were 9 south western counties playing and the Bristol Bridge Club Team representing Avon were the winners thus qualifying for the Final. This proved a difficult to bid grand slam.

 Axxxx

AKJx

xx

AK

J

Qxxxxxx

AKxx

J

 7h is ice cold. Typically the bidding began 1s -2h now what should north bid? 4h or maybe 4c (cue). The problem is many pairs play 4c or 4d as a splinter here rather than a cue bid. Playing 2/1 game forcing 3h is available and now cue bidding will begin 4c -4d -4s so now the 7-4-1-1 hand can use Blackwood making the hand straightforward. You would expect to reach 7h. Chris Dixon and I had a more difficult time because LHO opened 2nt (5-9 both minors) now we bid 3d (take out with better spades) (5c ) 5h -p-6h. I guess I might have bid 6h rather than 5h and partner might have tried 6c over 5h.

Then a most peculiar hand

Qxxxx

void

Jx

Jxxxxx

void

KJxx

KQTxx

AKQx

it often went 3 passes to the 3 suited hand which opened 1d. At several tables north passed holding only 4 points playing the lay down 6c in 1d a most odd decision. Our team mates bought it in 2h at the other table for +110 a huge result. We bid uncontested 1d -1s -2c -3c -3h -4c -5c for +620 a fair effort. Notice two bids 2c and 3c. The south hand is very complicated so much the best rebid is 2c economical and still makes it possible to reach a heart contract whereas rebid 2h and reaching clubs becomes difficult. Also notice the raise to 3c pass would be very short sighted since the hand has improved a huge amount.

**Week 59**

A pair of play problems this week which are both quite antiquated in their origin. You reach 6nt after a simple auction on the following lay out

 Ax

JTx

QJxxx

Axx

 QJT

AKQxx

Ax

KQx

 the lead is a heart. You have 10 top tricks and an 11th is easily available so how to play the spade and diamond suits?

 One declarer played DA diamond to the queen, which held and now he was at the crossroads since he could play for an even diamond break or take the spade finesse. He chose the latter going off pointing out that a finesse was better than playing for a 3-3 break.

 A superior line is available rather than ace other diamond lead low to the Queen at trick 2. If this loses to the king you can test the suit and fall back on the spade finesse if diamonds are 4-2 and if the queen holds you simply establish a spade for your 12th trick.

As you may suspect my favourite hands involve deductions akin to the detective work of Hercule Poirot or Sherlock Holmes and the next hand is a classic courtesy of Jeremy Flint.

 You play in 6s after East has opened 4h with the following

 A9xx

x

AQxxx

AQx

KJxxxx

Kxx

K

KJx

 A heart is led to the ace and a second heart is ruffed with the ten overuffed in dummy. Most declarers reasoned that holding 8 hearts the drop in the trump suit represented the best line for the contract when a low spade appeared on their right.

 There are some very subtle inferences available here firstly it is safe to lead a diamond to the king and cross to the CQ to lead DA. The idea behind these manoeuvres is to work out east's shape. The reason east must hold a card in each minor is they would double holding a void for the lead (the Lightner Double).

If East discards a club on the second diamond then south also discards a club and follows with the DQ discarding his third.