**Week 64**

This week a bidding problem and also a play problem.

 Bidding is about checking for a fit and evaluating the combined assets in order to determine the strain and level at which to play. Try your hand at this one

 Xx

AJx

AQx

AKQxx

AKQx

X

Xxx

Txxxx

A cold 6c with a combined 29 count. There are three plus features here

1. A ten card club fit.
2. very good controls aces and kings.
3. A key shortage in hearts facing the ace.

If north opens 2nt the bidding will continue with south checking for a spade fit and when none comes to light the hand is worth one move with a natural 4c bid. North will now fall off their chair with excitement and 6c will surely be reached. Many players will see only a nine  count and just bid 3nt which will be right quite often but as long as you have sound methods and are able to bid 4c and if partner does not like the suit bid 4nt to play right there you are able to make a try and then sign off.

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You play in 3nt by south following a 1 spade overcall by your right hand opponent.

 Jx

AQx

AKxxx

Axx

Axxx

Kxx

Xx

Txxx

The lead is the spade 8 what is your plan?

 You have 7 top tricks so must develop the diamond suit for extra winners and that requires the suit to divide 3 -3 .There is of course another issue you must not allow east to gain the lead since they will cash 4 further spades to defeat you .

 You require West to hold Qxx in diamonds and must lead through them twice.

 So duck the lead win the second spade and lead a diamond if West plays low rise with the king and return to hand with a heart to play a second diamond. When West holds Qxx they will have no answer since if a low diamond is played declarer rises with the ace and plays a third round to west's queen who has no spades left. If West rises with the queen declarer simply ducks and east never gains the lead to enjoy their spades.

 This is a classic avoidance play since the critical point is to keep East off lead

**Week 63**

Avon held a successful Green Point event weekend at Thornbury Leisure Centre last weekend. Congratulations to Simon Richards' team for their win in the Swiss Teams and Miles Cowling & Ron Davis for winning the Swiss Pairs, including duffing up your correspondent in round 5. Two problems from the weekend

 xx

AKQxx

KQxx

xx

 your side bid 1c -1h -3nt ?

3nt was not a balanced hand here. Andrew Urbanski and I were playing strong no trump and 5 card majors so 2nt showed 18/19 and 3nt a hand with 6/7 good clubs and stoppers in spades and diamonds in a hand too good to rebid 3c. Therefore slam is very much in the frame and how to proceed?

 You could just Blackwood your way on the assumption (reasonable) that partner has a spade control or alternatively set clubs and cue. So following the latter course 4c -4d -4h -5c pin pointing the lack of a spade control. I generally opt for a ‘waffly’ scientific method in such situations telling the opposition precisely what to lead but here I opted to blast slam bidding 6nt rather than 6c for the extra points and found partner with

 QJx

J

Axx

AKQJxxx

so we had plenty of tricks (15 in all) but no spade control. Well done to the lady on my right for finding the spade lead.

 Then a tricky defensive situation

 Qx

Ax

Qxxx

AJTxx

1c (2s) -p (3s) -p (4s). 2s was a rather rare strong jump overcall and dummy is

xx

QJxx

AT9x

xxx

The lead is C9. How do you defend?

 Declarer has 6 spade tricks quite possibly and from the lead most likely KQx in clubs so how do we score 4 tricks?

 If declarer has 6 spade tricks plus 2 clubs and DA we must play partner for the DK and also DJ since if declarer has HK the QJ can be established and the DA is the entry to those winners. A diamond switch is needed at trick 2 here in most situations and I think is only wrong when declarer holds precisely

 AKxxxx

x

Kxx

KQx

 There are two aces and a trump to lose and the diamond switch would in this case allow declarer to avoid a diamond loser owing to the presence of the Ten and Nine in the dummy.

 Here the diamond switch was necessary as declarer held

 AKxxxx

K

Jxx

KQx

 So the defence had two aces together with a trump trick and 1 diamond but without a diamond switch declarer can lead the singleton HK and if the defence ducks play diamonds for 1 loser and if it wins discard both diamond losers on the HQ & HJ.