

Post Tourney Blues

I seem to spend an inordinate amount of time looking for matchpoints or IMPS during journeys home from tournaments. I am always regretting this decision or that play on some hand or hands. I can't seem to get them out of my mind. I don't even seem to remember good plays or good bids. Is this supposed to indicate something about the quality of my bridge ?

On this particular drive home I was looking for a whole bunch of matchpoints. I had played in the Life Master Women's Pairs with Val Covalciuc and while we did distinguish ourselves with a third place in the event, we were FAR out of first place.

I won't dwell on looking at a single hand where we could have done better. (There were too many!) Instead I will emphasize how important it is to play to the end. In other words NEVER GIVE UP.

The LM Women's Pairs is a four-session event...two sessions of qualifying and then two final sessions. Our first session was somewhat disappointing. We didn't even make it to average. However, the second session was a whole lot better. In fact we managed to make it good enough to qualify in 20th place after the first two sessions.

The first final session the next day was also lack-luster, but we did pick up one place. We were now 19th....big deal! So on to the second final session (our fourth of the event).

We started out slowly with a few less than winning boards, but then we began to pick up a little steam. About midway through this session it became clear to me that some of our opponents were either very tired or had given up. Or at least the caliber of their play seemed to indicate that they knew they were finished. But we just kept plugging along.

To sidetrack slightly, I'd like to dwell on the unfairness not only to your partner but also to the partnerships you are competing against when you do not attempt to play your very best at all times. It is certainly true that bridge in these longer events becomes somewhat of an endurance contest as well as a contest of skill. That is all a part of tournament bridge. Therefore, when you enter an event, give it your best.....through all the boards.

But back to our final session. We eventually made it to third place ...largely due to our last four boards. Here's one of them.

Dir: East
Vul: E-W

North (Val)
♠ A9863
♥ Q3
♦ Q9
♣ J1098

West
♠ QJ
♥ J986
♦ A752
♣ Q64

East
♠ K102
♥ 10754
♦ KJ1063
♣ A

South (me)
♠ 754
♥ AK2
♦ 84
♣ K7532

| Bidding: | East | South | West | North |
|----------|--------|--------|------|--------|
| | 1♦ | Pass | 1♥ | Pass |
| | 2♥ | Pass | Pass | 2♠ (1) |
| | Pass | Pass | 3♦ | Pass |
| | 3♥ | 3♠ (2) | Pass | Pass |
| | 4♥ (3) | Double | Pass | Pass |
| | Pass | | | |

(1) A fairly normal balance
 (2) Punishing the balancer?????
 (3) Hmm...it seems to have worked. Now all we have to do is beat it.

Now this is the kind of hand that matchpoints is all about. My partner's balance of 2♠ seems rather normal to me as does West's 3♦ reopening bid. The latter is obviously not a game try because 2♥ had already been passed. Therefore, West did not think that game was a possibility, but she wanted to

compete. With a double fit who can blame her. Now 3♠ by me violates a lot of rules but we had favorable vulnerability on our side.

Now the 4th and final heart bid by West is a little beyond comprehension, but change her partner's hand to include better hearts without the spade cards and it looks to have a play. I do have some sympathy for her action, but she forgot one thing. Nobody balances the opponents into game without what they think is the ability to beat it, so it was certain to be doubled.

So 4♥X went down one trick for +200 for the good gals. But look what happens to 3♠X. With only mediocre defense it goes for 300. So what's the lesson of this hand? Take your plus score!!!!

Now as I said this hand came at the end of the event when perhaps E-W were looking for a top board. Instead they got a near zero.

So what lessons do we learn from this example?

(1) Matchpoints is about PLUS scores. Perhaps it won't be the best available score, but try to make sure it's plus.

(2) Balancing is not an exact science, but it's better than giving the opponents free rein. And sometimes you are rewarded more than you should be.

(3) And NEVER, NEVER GIVE UP.

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