

LOOKING FOR 7 MATCHPOINTS

Like most of you I've had my share of long drives home following bridge tournaments. This time it was an approximately 12-hour trip so I had lots of time for thought and recollection. And I was thoroughly occupied looking for a few match points that would have won me a major NABC event.

On the preceding Thursday and Friday I had played in the Women's Pairs. After four sessions my partner and I ended up second in the event.....about 6 ½ matchpoints behind the leader.

Now you know how it is when you almost win.....you start thinking about all the matchpoints that you could have picked up....had you just done something a little different. There were a few boards where we could have turned near zeros into averages. Since top was 25 in the final two sessions, one average instead of a near zero would have done it easily. It's so easy to find those boards. They are the big round goose eggs on your score sheet!

On one of those boards you hold the following (everyone hot as they say)

♠
♥ 54
♦ J64
♣ AKQ98654

Your RHO is the dealer and opens 1♠. What is your bid?

Now undoubtedly there will be several different opinions on this. Before you make a decision, let's evaluate the hand.

You most likely have 8 tricks if clubs is the trump suit. And you may have 8 tricks in notrump if partner, who has yet to bid, has the other suits under control. However, it is also true that you have almost no defense...just whatever club tricks will cash. The Rule of 2, 3, and 4 would allow you to preempt to the five level.

What!! You don't use the Rule of 2, 3, and 4! In my humble opinion it is a rule worth knowing and applying. Basically it says that, with a weakish hand and a long suit, you can preempt the bidding as follows:

(A) At unequal and unfavorable vulnerability (red vs. white), two levels higher than the number of tricks that you hold.

(B) At equal vulnerability (red vs red or white vs white), three levels higher than the number of tricks you hold.

(C) At unequal and favorable vulnerability (white vs red), four levels higher than the number of tricks you hold.

So now back to the given hand. What's your choice of bids now?

According to the Rule, it would be okay to bid 5♣ immediately. You have 8 tricks in your hand and everyone is vulnerable so $8+3 = 11$ tricks or 5♣.

Some of you may have opted for a slower approach hoping that perhaps you can buy the contract at a lower level. But remember you are playing in a nationally rated event so the opponents will more than likely find the right spot if you give them room to do so.

So the purpose of preemptive bids such as this one is (1) to describe your hand to partner by attempting to portray how many tricks you can take in your contract, (2) to warn partner about your lack of defense, and (3) make it as difficult as possible for the opponents to find the right spot.

Who knows, but if you chose to bid 5♣, you just may have won a National championship!

© Marilyn Hemenway
April, 2007