Micro Bridge Lesson 33

Teams vs Pairs again

This was a board from a pairs game – an ordinary club session

Dlr N

	♠AQT85 ♥AQ3 ♦8 ♣KT83	
♠K732 ♥J875 ♦K53 ♣65		♠6 ♥T96 ♦QJ742 ♣9742
	♠J94 ♥K42 ♦AT96 ♣AQJ	

1 Bad Auction		2 Good Auction		3 Best Auction	
N	S	N	S	N	S
1S	2D	1S	2D	1S	2NT!
3NT	P	3C	3S	3D!	3H!
		3NT	4NT	4NT	5H
		5S	6S	6S	

1..This bad auction occurred when both partner and I made "Pairs Decisions". i.e. We both made decisions which we thought would lead to a good result at pairs. We did not have Jacoby 2NT (*Lesson 16)* in our system. So, I prepared to make a delayed game raise – hopefully finding out if partner had extra values or good shape. Partner figured the most likely contract was going to be 3NT. So, he bid it to disguise that diamonds were really the problem. It also indicated that he had a bit more than a minimum and was balanced! With my flat hand and extra HCP, I envisaged 10 or 11 tricks in 3NT or 4S. The extra 10 points for NT swayed me at pairs. Bridge players call this process "masterminding".

Moral: When you elect to play 3NT when you know 4 of a major is a viable contract, you better be right more often than you're wrong!

Partner was looking forward to a club or heart lead in his 3NT. In fact, he got a diamond lead and realized we were in bother. 6S was clearly making and we were about to get a poor score. The only way of salvaging anything from the board was to defeat all the other game bidders by getting a maximum in NT. He won the DA and banged down the SJ. If this finesse lost, we would probably make 8 tricks for a bottom. He could have just cashed 1S+3H+1D+4C for 9 tricks and 600. At pairs, that would still be a near bottom since it would be beaten by all the 4S bidders (680 at least). As the cards lie, he made all 13 tricks for 720. This defeated all the 4S bidders who made 13 tricks for 710.

The travelling score card looked like this with the scores in rank order.

7S	13	2210	*16mp*
6S	13	1460	*13mp*
6S	13	1460	*13mp*
3NT	**13**	**720**	***10mp***
4S	13	710	*5mp*
4S	13	710	*5mp*
4S	13	710	*5mp*
4S	13	710	*5mp*
3NT	9	600	*0mp*

As you can see, partner recovered to get 10 out of 16 matchpoints (62.5%).

Notice the 7S bidder who got 100% when the finesse worked. Had it failed, they get 0%. If they had settled for 6S, they would have a shared top for 88%. They risked everything to gain 12%. Clearly, that is a rash decision. At teams, when a weak team plays a strong team, there is a theory that you should consider 50% grand slams like this one. You are probably not going to beat them if the match follows its ordinary course. Imagine the blood draining from their faces as this grand rolls home! Notice that the 3NT bidder who simply took his 9 tricks got 0% for the board.

At teams, partner would have taken his 9 tricks for 600. This would minimize the damage provided the opponents hadn't bid the slam at the other table. (–680 or –710) If they bid 6S, nothing could save the board and probably the match!

2.. Of course, at teams – and at pairs too – our auction should have followed #2. 3C is forcing. "*3 over 2 over 1 is forcing*" is a well-accepted principle. *Lesson 7*. 3S by south now is also forcing. However it could be a doubleton with 2263 shape, highlighting the heart problem. 4NT should be RKC in spades. See *Lesson 3*. Although 4C would be Gerber, I need info on the trump quality. If I don't hear we hold SQ, then I'm not bidding this slam unless we hold all 5 keycards.

Consider some slightly different South hands:-

♠95	1S	2D
♥542	3C	3H!
♦AT963	3NT	
♣AQJ		

If we really belong in 3NT, we will still get there and played by the correct hand (North). Without spade support, North can envisage this auction. North should also consider a club contract.

♠9	1S	2D
♥542	3C	4C
♦AT963	4NT	5S
♣AQJ2	6C	

Again 3C is forcing. 4C is stronger than 5C under Fast Arrival (*Lesson 11*). If South turns up to have no keycards, then we will end in 5C. At teams, 600 vs 630 or 660 for 3NT is a small loss. At pairs, it is a terrible result. At pairs, South would probably have denied the club support and had the same auction as for the previous hand. Thus, we finish in 3NT "*with the field*" rather than risk being in 5C. Successful pairs players will frequently plan to be in the same contract as the rest of the field. Then, they rely on better defence and declarer play to get them results. When they elect to be in a contract different to the field, they will always want to be sure that it is a superior contract. This action confirms the well-accepted bridge principle :-*"Teams play better allows the investigation of minor suit contracts"*

3.. Under Jacoby, North rebids 3D as a splinter. This is good news for South who can now see where his losing diamonds can be pitched. Since we have agreed spades, 3H rebid shows a control and strongly suggesting slam interest. North needs no further encouragement..