

CHAPTER 19

THE ANTI HERO

This was quite an important teams match. I was playing with Bond Dabbler. Bond is something of an anti hero in the bridge world. He gets himself into and out of some incredibly sticky situations, so much so that it is always exciting sitting opposite him at the bridge table. In the bridge world he is also known as '700'. Funny that! No, not because he's like a backwards James Bond at all. The reason why he's nicknamed '700' (seven - double - oh! as some call him) is because he is a very keen preemptive bidder, and his most regular number in such escapades used to be 700 (to the opponents). Not that even 700 was always a bad result. Just let me tell you about one incident.

I can't recall the actual hands, but in a fairly good class Match Point tournament Bond, Not Vulnerable against Vulnerable opponents, took a flyer in 5C as a sacrifice against opponents' freely bid 4H. He fought vainly in his doubled contract but despite his brilliant dummy play was unable to avoid -700. So, when the score was being entered, what did we find? The whole room, in 4H, was making SEVEN because two suits broke and two finesses also worked, which was all that was required to make all thirteen tricks. Our -700 stood out like a beacon, TOP BOARD! THAT encouraged him to keep doing it during the next, less successful, session, but the final moment of true glory occurred on the very last board of the tournament. Bond picked up a completely flat Yarborough, well not a GENUINE one because he had four clubs to the ten. His Vulnerable right hand opponent opened 1C. Bond DOUBLED!!! The next opponent REDOUBLED. I had very little of anything at all, in fact my solitary picture card was the jack of clubs, so I passed. The original opener passed, and Dabbler, well, what do you think he bid NOW? No, not 1D, not 1H, Not 1S and not even 1NT. HE PASSED!!!!

As play went on and declarer kept taking trick after trick, my face turned greener each time. But the good thing was that thanks to the fact that I DID have the jack of clubs, opponents only made SIX. Their score, once we managed to work it out, was 2180! Yes, you guessed it. EVERY pair was in 7NT making SEVEN. The score for that was: 2220. Dabbler had psyched us to a complete and undisputed top board since not even the worst pairs could stay out of 7NT with a 19 count opposite 20!

As word got round about the exploits of our own Bond ('Seven Double Oh') the powers of the bridge world decided that the scoring system was inequitable, and to put paid to such atrocities, increased the penalty structure. NOW down four not vulnerable is minus 800 and 1C doubled and redoubled and Vulnerable making Six is worth exactly 2230. The latter thanks to them fiddling with the extra 50 that one always got for a doubled contract that made. It was known as '50 for the insult'. There used to be NO extra 50 if the insult was thrown back at the doubler with a REDOUBLE. But no doubt thanks to Bond's escapades having made world news, the powers that be also added an extra 50 for a REDOUBLED contract that made. Poor Bond! After all that, he had the option of being re nicknamed '800' or giving the game up. No wonder he chose the latter.

But let me get back to the story of our teams match, against two absolutely ADORABLE ladies, Dora Dingleby and Polly Pretty. Well, one a 'Dora' –bleh! and the other a bit more pleasant.

With both sides vulnerable, I was South, Bond North, Dora West and Polly East.

BOARD 4 DLR W ALL VUL

North (Bond Dabbler)		
♠ A Q 5 4		
♥ A 6 4 2		
♦ A J 7 4 2		
♣		
West (Dora Dingleby)	East (Polly Pretty)	
♠ J 10 8	♠ 9 7	
♥ 7	♥ J 10 9 8	
♦ Q 10 9 8	♦ 6 3	
♣ A K Q J 10	♣ 8 7 6 5 4	
South (Von Impski)		
♠ K 6 3 2		
♥ K Q 5 3		
♦ K 5		
♣ 9 3 2		

Dora opened 1C and Bond doubled. Polly passed. I had sufficient values to bid to at least Three Hearts or Spades, but which? Maybe I should even bid directly to game. After all, we were playing 'Major Oriented' doubles, and I had great cards in both majors. I thought I'd temporise, so I bid 2C. This of course was forcing and asking Bond to choose a major. But Bond had other ideas. He was too strong to just bid HIS major at the two level. Also, he had BOTH majors. So, to show his extra strength, he bid THREE CLUBS. I now knew we had enough for game, and because I also had both majors, I bid FOUR Clubs to ask Bond to bid game in whichever major he preferred. Bond liked his hand even better now, and bid FIVE Clubs. Clearly, that was a CUE BID showing first round club control and an even BETTER hand. Well, if he was THAT good and had presumably a VOID in Clubs (Dora wouldn't open unless she had a REASONABLE hand, and therefore her values were clearly in clubs, including the ace at least and probably some other honours), then MY hand was good enough for a SMALL SLAM.

So, I bid 6C, continuing to ask Bond to choose the major. At this stage, in typical fashion, Bond got so carried away with the symmetry and beauty of the bidding that he could not resist a bid of SEVEN Clubs. After all, I WAS sounding stronger and stronger and HE had everything covered! Let ME choose the major I preferred to play in - at the SEVEN level! They don't call him SEVEN DOUBLE OH for nothing, I thought. But I had one more trick up my sleeve. He KNOWS I have the majors, I'll force HIM to choose, AND to have to play the contract. That will teach him! So I bid SEVEN DIAMONDS. Dora at this stage was having some form of apoplexy and finally could contain herself no longer. She DOUBLED with a huff, a puff and a hugely sarcastic snort. She didn't need words to tell us the contempt she held for such idiotic bidding!

Dabbler REDOUBLED! I don't know if he was paying me back, but clearly he wanted ME to pick MY major. So I bid 7H. Two passes followed but this time Polly doubled. But when it was Bond's turn, he once MORE redoubled. Polly has NEVER been known to double any contract which she has ANY doubt about defeating, so I did the only sensible thing and bid SEVEN SPADES. Dora was by this stage in the mood for the obvious slaughter that was to take place and couldn't double quickly enough. Kamikaze Bond, of course, was also in the swing of things and redoubled. This time I passed. Before herself passing, Dora very smugly remarked: "You don't play the SOS redouble at the SEVEN SPADE level, then, do you?" She then slapped down her ace of clubs very quickly indeed. She was sure that we had no more than a scattered 12 count each.

As for the bidding, WELL!! This had been a true thing of beauty, symphonic indeed, so let me recap it in its true glory:

W	N	E	S
1C	DBL	NB	2C
NB	3C	NB	4C
NB	5C	NB	6C
NB	7C	NB	7D
DBL	REDBL	NB	7H
DBL	REDBL	NB	7S
DBL	REDBL	NB	NB
NB			

Can you imagine it? Clubs had been bid at EVERY level of the bidding before any other suit was mentioned! And whether you agree or not, EVERY bid was sensible and logical, at least up to SIX Clubs. After that, mayhem was probably more descriptive. And there was mayhem to follow after the hand was finished as well.

Dummy appeared and was not too different to what I had expected, even for Bond Dabbler.
Let's have a look at all the hands again:

BOARD 4 DLR W ALL VUL

North (Bond Dabbler)			
♠ A Q 5 4			
♥ A 6 4 2			
♦ A J 7 4 2			
♣			
West (Dora Dingleby)		East (Polly Pretty)	
♠ J 10 8		♠ 9 7	
♥ 7		♥ J 10 9 8	
♦ Q 10 9 8		♦ 6 3	
♣ A K Q J 10		♣ 8 7 6 5 4	
South (Von Impski)			
♠ K 6 3 2			
♥ K Q 5 3			
♦ K 5			
♣ 9 3 2			

I thanked Bond most profusely and asked him to ruff low. I then took dummy's two top trumps and came to hand with a heart and ruffed a second club. Returning to hand with the king of diamonds, I drew Dora's last trump, then played to the ace of hearts and back to my king. The situation now was:

BOARD 4 DLR W ALL VUL

North (Bond Dabbler)			
♠			
♥			
♦ A J 7 4			
♣			
West (Dora Dingleby)		East (Polly Pretsel)	
♠		♠	
♥		♥ J	
♦ Q 10 9		♦ 6	
♣ K		♣ 8 7	
South (Von Impski)			
♠ 6			
♥ 5			
♦ 5			
♣ 9			

When I produced my final trump, Dora defiantly threw her king of clubs on the table, and I just as defiantly produced the nine from my hand, without even calling for a card from dummy.

I couldn't resist beginning with the banter: "Just as well we DO play the SOS redouble up to 7H, partner. Great way to reach the perfect contract. But I wasn't sure whether your redouble of 7S was asking me to bid 7NT, but enough was enough I thought. We wouldn't have made 7NT would we? You really DID overbid a bit though, don't you think? You did have the controls but absolutely nothing by way of intermediates did you?"

Dabbler rejoined. "Intermediates, schmintermediates? Who needs intermediates? But YOU had the one intermediate that mattered, the NINE of clubs. What a wonderful little squeeze!"

Dora was absolutely fuming: "SOS redoubles indeed! You didn't have any IDEA what you were doing DID you? And as for your STUPID dummy play! All you had to do was take the diamond finesse earlier and set the suit up with a ruff. For YOUR wonderful line, I needed to have all five top clubs. Ridiculous!"

"But I KNEW you had them. Polly ALWAYS doubles every contract she is SURE of defeating. Since Bond bid 7C and Polly did NOT double, I knew she could have no higher card than the EIGHT since I had the nine. Anyway, squeezes are much more exciting than momma poppa plays."

I did not want to admit that I'd forgotten that Polly had doubled 7H and therefore THEY were NOT going to break. I'd just been merely going to cash them up and watch Dora squirm for a while.

Then, Polly had to have a say. "But WHY did you double 7D, Dora? I'm sure they wouldn't have made THAT?"

"WHY did YOU double 7H, Polly? They wouldn't have made THAT either!"

Dabbler, our Bond in shining armour, came to the rescue: "I wasn't EVER going to pass 7D. Of COURSE I was going to bid 7H, which YOU, Polly, were quite RIGHT to double. It wasn't making, and neither was 7S. Why throw an extra 100 away by NOT doubling?"

I knew he was being facetious and riling Dora, and she took the bait very nicely.

"More utter nonsense. You saw that even the COUNT made the grand in spades, and he COULD have made it much more easily as well. Utter piffle."

Polly had been thoughtful all the while. Now she emerged with an absolute gem. "Dora, didn't YOUR mum ever teach you that against a GRAND slam, the ONLY recommended lead is a TRUMP? That's the first thing MY mum taught ME!"

Dora was very close to doing Polly a real mischief, so I thought I'd better interrupt. "I'm quite sure that the trump lead would not have made any difference. Mind you, a trump lead DOES make life much more difficult but there is a very complex line to make, based on a dummy reversal coupled with a double squeeze at the end. YOU can see how I would have made it can't you, Dora?"

"Hmmp! Of COURSE!"

I was quite sure that if there WAS a line to make 7S on a trump lead, I certainly wouldn't have found it. I still think about the hand now and again, but still haven't found the answer. I'm also sure that Ms Dingleby is still trying to work out how I would have made it. But I do know ONE thing: she's never ever going to ask me!