

Chapter 23

The Big Event

So many years I have been waiting for my brilliance to be acknowledged in the media, and finally I've made it, in our 'In House' publication. Let me give you the story, as told in the club's magazine by its editor, Jacqueline Bidet. She has recently moved here from France, as you may have gathered from the name, but her bridge is on a par with the best in that country, or so I am told. Here is her story:

"The first night of the Errol McHairy Memorial Pairs on Monday night saw a really good turnout with 21 tables. This is a four night event and is highly competitive. The hands for the evening were very interesting with more than a smattering of slams.

The following hand brought a variety of bids and results.

ALL VUL DEALER W

♠ 8 7	
♥ 10 8 7 6 3	
♦ 3 2	
♣ Q 9 8 4	
♠ A K Q 6 2	♠ 5 4
♥ A K 9 5	♥ 4 2
♦ J	♦ A K 9 8 7 4
♣ K 6 3	♣ A J 7
♠ J 10 9 3	
♥ Q J	
♦ Q 10 6 5	
♣ 10 5 2	

I think most players when playing Acol opened one spade and after partner's 2 diamond response rebid 3 hearts. After that the results showed most pairs going two light in 6 NT, one or two stopping in 3 NT for quite a good score (not I believe deserved on such a high count of HCP) but at least 2 calling and making 6 spades.

Not being one of the latter I asked the Club expert, The Count Von Impski, how he and Hung Lo bid it. Hung Lo was partnering the Count for the night, as he was here on another of his Mental Health Symposia. The Count was sitting East and called 2 diamonds after his partner's one spade opening. His partner then rebid 3 Hearts and the Count could then see that their combined point count should produce a slam. However if he was to then bid 3NT that would be the end of the auction. He is also well known for his aversions to No Trump slams, he calls it the "No Trump Syndrome", therefore chose instead to bid 4 Clubs as a second suit to keep the bidding open and look for possible diamond support. (For those players who always take 4C as asking, they may see here the error of their ways). His partner, Hung Lo, now had his own dilemma. 4NT would be asking for Aces, which was not what he wanted so he had a choice between 5 Clubs and 4 Spades. Now it is true that the rebid of spades would suggest a 6 card suit but Hung Lo reasoned, quite rightly, that the spade suit was strong enough to warrant a rebid without getting into too much trouble.

As can be seen 6 Spades is the right spot. After a trump lead (best), declarer wins and immediately plays three rounds of hearts, ruffing the third. If South over ruffs, declarer can then clear trumps, play three rounds of diamonds ruffing the third, and when that suit fails to break, take the club finesse as a last resort. If South chooses to not over ruff, the play of the Ace and King of diamonds gets rid of the losing heart and a trump is conceded for 6 Spades bid and made. Is the play difficult? Not if you see the need to ruff a heart, and if you realise that even if a heart is over ruffed, it is likely to be by the hand with the long trumps anyway.

That is how I expected the hand was played, but when I asked the Count, he told me that Hung Lo had not played it that way at all. In fact, according to the Count, Hung Lo had not had one of his most inspired moments. He had not even received a trump lead, but the NINE OF CLUBS. Having eschewed the ‘free’ club finesse, he had won the king and immediately drawn trumps, not being able to ruff any hearts at all. But somehow, Hung Lo had still made. The Count thought the defence must have slipped up, as he wasn’t paying much attention at the time. I couldn’t believe that the famous Hung Lo could have been so remiss, so I thought I’d give him a call and ask him myself. This is what HIS story was.

The 6S Slam: The sequel. Hung Lo’s Story.

All Vul Dealer W

♠ A K Q 6 2	♠ 8 7	♠ 5 4
♥ A K 9 5	♥ 10 8 7 6 3	♥ 4 2
♦ J	♦ 3 2	♦ A K 9 8 7 4
♣ K 6 3	♣ Q 9 8 4	♣ A J 7
	♠ J 10 9 3	
	♥ Q J	
	♦ Q 10 6 5	
	♣ 10 5 2	

“That Count Von Impski. I really MUST try to get him an appointment with one of my colleagues, to see if he can be cured of his Nosixnotrumpophobia. He really is the other extreme of what he has termed the Notrumpophiles, who he insists have taken over his bridge club. He tells me that there is no such thing as a SUIT slam in this club. They just LOVE bidding No Trump slams. He, on the other hand, is a complete Notrumpophobe when it comes to slams, and avoids them like the plague. That is indeed what happened on this hand. When he bid 4C I chose to rebid 4S, my suit WAS, after all, as good as most six card suits. The Count, of course, put me into 6S. Well, when dummy went down, I could see that 6NT was almost a sure thing, as you say in this country. ONLY a very unlikely diamond distribution could beat 6NT.

The Notrumpophiles in the club would no doubt have bid THIS one to 6NT and would almost certainly MAKE. WITHOUT the need for more than three spade tricks. The only POSITIVE was that there was a chance, if spades were 3-3, that I could make SEVEN spades, and there was no way, unless there was a Q10 doubleton diamond with either opponent, that anyone would make 7NT. At least the CLUB finesse looked like it wasn’t working. But, with everyone expected to be in 6NT, I could not take the risk of getting over ruffed in hearts, I had to give myself a chance to make SEVEN spades to beat those Notrumpophiles. So, when Lady Goode-Evans led the nine of clubs, I won the KING of clubs at trick one and drew three rounds of trumps. Bad luck! What to do next? No choice but to play two top diamonds and ruff one. THEY did not break, with Lady Goode-Evans showing out. I then ruffed a diamond and finessed the jack of clubs, expecting the coming catastrophe, but that cunning Lady Goode-Evans, she had found the diabolical lead of the nine of clubs from her queen! The jack won, the ace also won, and I ruffed another diamond. With one card left, Lady Goode-Evans had the last trick with a heart but Rosie Green also had the last trick, with her top trump! That Von Impski, the success of this hand will now make it IMPOSSIBLE for me to convince him to see my fellow shrinkers, I’m afraid he will never be cured of his Fixations and Phobias now!”

“Well, that was Hung Lo’s story, somewhat different to the Count’s.”

And THAT, I’m afraid, was Jacqueline Bidet’s story, hardly complimentary of yours truly, was it? Hummph, Notrumpophobias indeed. Don’t know that I’ll be inviting that Hung Lo character to partner me again next time he is on one of his symposia!