

## Von Impski Files Ch26

### Chapter 26: The Lenny Coup

Bruce Lenny has just returned from another stint at representative duty. As usual, he had lots of stories of his superb play and fantastic coups. This one is worth replicating for posterity.

As usual, Bruce started with a question for us.

“You are West, ALL VUL. East is dealer. You hold:

♠ A K Q J 10 3 2

♥ 7 5

♦ J 10 9

♣ 6

“4S”, the voice of Willy Riskett piped up. Willy is the bidding expert and knows all the answers before the questions are asked.

“Momma poppa, 4S is cold,” Al Lansem, our declarer play expert, continued with the charade.

“Double, can’t possibly make,” that was the voice of Ant Slocar, the best defender in the club.

With all these international reps and experts, I was sure we were going to get an interesting discussion, without the need to hear the rest of Lenny’s story or see the other three hands, I thought.

Bruce continued, undaunted by all the banter.

“Can I now put the question to you? Your partner opens 4H. Right hand opponent doubles.”

“4S,” Willy Riskett was still sure of his ground.

“Like I said, 4S must be cold, so bid it,” that from Al Lansem.

“4S, since 4H will probably be defeated.” That of course was Ant Slocar.

“Who were you playing against, Bruce, the village idiots or what?” It was my turn for facetiousness but Bruce took me quite seriously.

“Actually, we were playing against the Olfarts from the Canary Islands. It was Muriel who doubled for takeout. It was quite clear to me that I had to wait and see what happened. I passed and Harold bid 4S! That was passed round to me and of course I PASSED.”

“Mmm, obviously you can’t bid 4S NOW, can you? Should have done it immediately”, Willy Riskett was still insisting on a 4S contract but clearly this was not what he had had in mind.

“Double. Don’t think they can make,” Ant the defensive expert was also insistent.

“Double, since I would have made 4S I don’t think THEY can,” was Al’s contribution.

“Don’t be ridiculous you guys, they would have run to 5C or 5D wouldn’t they? And when I doubled that, I would have got 800 at best. Let me tell you what happened to 4S. Here are all the hands.” Bruce scribbled them down on the nearest bit of paper he could find.

DEALER EAST ALL VUL

### North

♠ 9 6 4

♥ K 4 2

♦ K 4 3

♣ Q J 7 3

### West

♠ A K Q J 10 3 2

♥ 7 5

♦ J 10 9

♣ 6

### East

♠

♥ A Q J 10 9 8 6

♦ Q 2

♣ 10 9 5 4

### South

♠ 8 7 5

♥ 3

♦ A 8 7 6 5

♣ A K 8 2

“I passed the 4S out and Robbie led a club. Harold won on table and futilely tried the three of hearts, to the king and Robbie’s ace.” The Robbie he was referring to was Robina Freemason, one of this country’s leading lady players. She’d had little trouble in diagnosing the need for a club lead.

Lenny continued: “When Robbie won the ace of hearts, she unerringly continued with another club. I ruffed, drew trumps, and then led my second heart. Down NINE!”

“So you made 4S, with overtricks. I told you you should have bid 4S,” Willy Riskett was still insisting.

“Yes, 4S is the only makeable contract your way. Cold of course, unlike 4H. That is easily defeated because the defence can cash two diamonds and then lead two clubs which will force dummy to ruff and now North also makes the king of hearts. No such problem in a spade contract,” Al Lansem knew what could be made and what couldn’t.

“And of course whether you defended perfectly or not, it was declarer who fell down on the job. All that silly old Harold had to do was take his two diamond tricks before trying that silly heart play, and he would have escaped for –700, and seeing you could have scored 800 in any other doubled contract, you could well have thrown a few imps down the drain,” Ant Slocar was still insisting on the double.

I couldn’t resist getting a word or two in myself. “Where did you think their tricks were going to come from if they had chosen what was clearly a 3-3 spade fit to play in? And besides which, if opponents happily bid to a contract they can’t make, they don’t ever seem to want to try for a better one anyway, so why NOT double? That is what my good friend the Mad Professor Royker taught me 20 years ago. Was he sitting NS at the other table, by the way? Anyway, would you not have preferred +5200? That would have been an even better story.”

Ant Slocar was deep in thought. “Actually, maybe we should give Bruce’s brilliant pass of 4S the benefit of the doubt. You are right in that 5C or 5D doubled PROBABLY go for 800, but there is another possibility. If North plays in 4NT doubled, the defence is not that easy, and EW might only defeat that by TWO. I’m sure the Olfarts would have bid to 4NT, if they were to run at all. After all they wanted to play in 4S with three small spades in each hand, why would they not try 4NT with the same spade stoppers? North would end up in 4NT, and only the lead of a heart would take that down three. I suspect that Robbie might have been reluctant to give away a heart trick seeing her entries were rather limited. She would have led a ‘safe’ club and even Harold would have found the avoidance play of leading a diamond towards the ace and ducking if Robbie produced the queen, or winning the ace and then ducking on the way back. In fact that same avoidance play can probably reduce 5C by NORTH to down two! So maybe our friend Lenny is a bridge genius after all.”

Then, after a bit of reflection, Slocar continued.

“And by the way, Al, 4S is not frigid at all, even though most expert defenders would lead a club and MAKE it frigid. You see, NS can engineer a heart ruff, either on a DIAMOND lead or a HEART lead. However, on a DIAMOND lead, they must switch to a heart while North still has an entry, and on a HEART lead, it has to specifically be the KING. I hope you can see why, but if you can’t, a LOW heart lead runs to West’s SEVEN and trumps can be drawn! With a club lead, declarer has a club ruff to get to hand to draw trumps, and a club lead is what, I guarantee, most top defenders would choose.”

Now, if Lenny had bid 4S and the defenders found the brilliant defence to defeat him, I wonder whether the story would ever have emerged? I suspect not, even though the Olfarts would then have been in for the brilliancy defence prize.

Footnote: There are other quite interesting possibilities. Try 3NT by North, with East leading a club. Declarer wins CQ in hand and immediately leads a diamond. If East ducks, take the DA and exit low D. East wins and if East exits another club, take the club, DK and run the diamonds and clubs ending in dummy. West must keep the 75 of hearts and East must unblock the 8, 9 and 10 of hearts and keep the AQJ6, otherwise the H3 is led and East is thrown in to allow North's king to make for the ninth trick!