

Von Impski Files Ch27

HUNG OVER AND LOW

I really thought that Hung Lo and I had become quite good friends since he's been a regular at the continuing Mental Health symposia here in Gumboot. But I had to wonder after the latest episode. We were enjoying a quiet drink or two after the regular club A Grade session.

Interesting hand the 5D one," Rags Bangsoon, a recent visitor to the club, mused. "Most people were down one with or without a spade lead, but of course it's cold on a heart which is what most people led. As the little dears did against me."

"You mean the one with the 3-0 diamond break?" queried Wally. "I got a heart lead but didn't have the entries. After finding the bad news I tried the clubs but they also broke badly and I could discard one spade from dummy on the king of hearts but then had to guess which way to finesse the spades, and West of course had both the ace and queen."

"If you'd had the TWO of hearts instead of the king, I bet you'd have made it. I think you guys at this club are somewhat frugal in your expenditure. Buy me another scotch, Count, while I explain."

As I raced off to the bar, being well aware of the need to foster good relations with prospective club members, I heard Rags continue, but let me give you the hands as they were before I recount the story.

Board 7 DLR S ALL VUL

♠ J 10

♥ K 9 7

♦ A K 8 6 3 2

♣ 6 3

♠ A Q 8 6 4

♥ Q J 10 6 5 4

♦

♣ 9 5

♠ 7 5 3

♥ 8 3 2

♦ Q J 5

♣ Q J 7 4

♠ K 9 2

♥ A

♦ 10 9 7 4

♣ A K 10 8 2

"The little lady East led the eight of hearts. A diamond to the ace revealed the bad news. I now had to try and avoid two spade losers so I took two rounds of clubs and ruffed one. I thought this was better than the double club finesse. Bad news again. A heart ruff and another club and now a club WAS set up. I ruffed my king of hearts and could discard a spade from hand on the good club. Bingo. But do you know, as they were moving to the next table, I overheard the lady East whisper to her partner: 'Not very good these newcomers, are they. He could have made SIX if he hadn't ruffed his good king of hearts! Dear me!'"

“Maybe you should have DOUBLED that statement, Rags.” The suggestion came from Willy Riskett, who had been my partner for the session. “ I played it in 3NT and made easily on a heart lead.”

“Mmm. But of course you would have gone down on a spade lead, as indeed I would have in 5D, so no real difference is there? And what do you mean by DOUBLED HER STATEMENT?”

Willy explained: “At this club, we have many conventions, and one of them is that we can DOUBLE a statement we believe is erroneous. There is an automatic \$10 bet on when we do. That of course can be REDOUBLED, which makes it \$20 and after that we can “CUBE” it and so on. Like the Backgammon cube. It’s quite fun, adds spice to the arguments. For instance, seeing as 3NT is cold even on a spade lead, I could double your statement that it goes down. I won’t of course, since you are a visitor”

(hands repeated for convenience)

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♥ Q J 10 6 5 4

♦

♣ 9 5

♠ 7 5 3

♥ 8 3 2

♦ Q J 5

♣ Q J 7 4

♠ K 9 2

♥ A

♦ 10 9 7 4

♣ A K 10 8 2

“That’s a good little convention. You say 3NT is cold on a spade lead?”

At this stage I couldn’t resist showing off my great analytical ability. Willy and I had actually discussed what would happen on a spade lead, so I thought I’d repeat what Willy had said to ME.

“Of course. Say the spade is ducked to my ten, the correct play from West. Declarer gets the bad news in diamonds and must try clubs. East has both, so I make three clubs, two diamonds, two hearts and two spades since I throw West in with a heart to lead a spade to my king. Simple. Pity we didn’t have a double on it Rags.”

“Not simple enough for me, I’m afraid,” Rags was not convinced. “But we can have that bet anyway can’t we. Just to try it out mind you.”

I was delighted. “Sure, let’s start with the usual. \$10 says I make as the cards lie.”

“OK, I redouble. Your play works if East is careless and does not split the clubs, but let’s say East does. You have only one diamond entry to hand and must use it to finesse clubs. They don’t break and you’re in fact down. You can’t throw West in with a heart AND play the clubs from dummy at the same time. But I can’t help but think there must be a sure fire way to make the 3NT contract the way the cards lie.”

I could see that Willy was desperately trying to attract my attention. But I was distracted by Hung Lo, who had arrived at our table. Yet I was so sure that there can’t be a way after all that I suggested to Rags that we double our bet again.

Rags, carried away with the idea, happily accepted.

“In fact, let’s make it \$80 or drinks all round if I can find someone who can find a foolproof way, and reason for, making 3NT. I watched this gentleman defend against us. I’m sure he can find a way.”

“You two haven’t met have you? Allow me to introduce my good friend Hung Lo from China. He’s visiting on a Mental Health symposium. You’re on, Rags, let’s ask Hung Lo how he would play the hand. You’ve certainly picked the right one. He’s well known world wide for his play and the Hung Lo doctrine of Mind Set at the bridge table.”

I could see Willy mouthing something at me.

It looked like “FIRST TEST CLUBS NOT DIAMONDS, that’s what I said you old fool” but was busy listening to Lo and his words of wisdom.

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“I win spade and test clubs IMMEDIATELY. No matter if West wins, cannot harm me. I can still try diamonds later and no difference in tricks, still 11. If club finesse works but diamonds don't, I still make my contract by taking three clubs, ace and king of hearts, two diamonds, and TWO spades, because I throw West in with a heart to lead spade round to king. IMPORTANT to keep diamond entries and test clubs BEFORE ANY diamonds. Even if club finesse loses to West, I make if West returns another spade: QUEEN is best, cutting down entries to my hand. I win king, lead to diamond king, finesse again in clubs and take club. Now I have three clubs, two diamonds, and two in each major. If West wins first time I finesse club and exits a heart, I can try diamonds, find bad news, finesse club, cash club and return with second diamond for same end play. Only problem is if West has exactly QJ doubleton in clubs and finds DIAMOND switch from their void.” Hung Lo was being more than unusually droll.

I did my best to find good reason not to pay up. “So, if East splits the clubs, what do you do?”

Hung Lo had no problem with that. “I win, only THEN test diamonds since I need entry anyway. Then finesse club. Then cash third club, cash heart ace and return to second top diamond. King of hearts and throw West in. West must always keep the spades because otherwise I can set up diamond tricks, and end play is inevitable. Same problem as before, really.”

I had to give in. “Well, Rags, I hope you've enjoyed our conventions,” I said as I grudgingly handed over the \$80. To myself I was thinking this really WAS a riches to Rags story. AND was that guy Lo REALLY a friend, doing that to me?

Hung Lo was, however, quite gracious. “Let ME buy the next round. I had a good day yesterday at the Casino, psychology even works at the roulette table.”

Rags was also more than gracious. “That's very nice of you, Hung Lo. And it was really nice to meet you. What say you pay for the spirits, the HIGHBALLS are on me.”