

5/99

Ups & Downs

By David J. Weiss

The Flight A Barometer Pairs at the Long Beach (Queen Mary) Regional was one of the best events I have played in recently. It was really exciting to see our names bobbing on and off the leader board. (It was less exciting, but more rewarding, for Mike Erickson and Dan Molnar since their names were atop the board almost from wire to wire; and they won handily.)

Try this defensive problem faced by Steve Sturm:

	<u>North</u>		
	♠A		
	♥K9764		
	♦KJ98754		
	♣---		
<u>West</u>			
♠76			
♥5			
♦AQ2			
♣KQJ9532			
<u>Bare</u>	<u>S. Sturm</u>	<u>Weiss</u>	<u>C. Sturm</u>
Pass	1♣	2NT	Dbl.
3♦	4♣	4♦	5♣
Pass	Pass	5♦	Pass
Pass	Pass		

Steve led the ♥5 and Gerry took Charlotte's Jack with the ace. Bare led the ♦6 toward dummy. How would you defend?

Steve took the ace (as expected, East showed out) and played a spade. Next came the ♥K, on which East played the three and declarer the ten. Now what?

Now nothing. You can't beat the hand anymore. You needed to duck the first diamond. If declarer wins the trick and tries a heart, you must not ruff. If, instead, declarer floats the ♦6, and then plays another one, you must rise and sacrifice your queen. It's a very strange hand. Declarer wants to draw the trumps, but if he does he can't survive. East' heart spots defeat the contract. And Steve's arguable opening lead probably didn't matter.

	<u>North</u>		
	♠A		
	♥K9764		
	♦KJ98754		
	♣---		
<u>West</u>		<u>East</u>	
♠76		♠J8532	
♥5		♥QJ832	
♦AQ2		♦---	
♣KQJ9532	<u>South</u>	♣A84	
	♠KQ1094		
	♥A10		
	♦1063		
	♣1076		

The next deal shows that sometimes even the innocent have no chance. There wasn't even a problem. We just took our 3½ matchpoints (out of 25) and went on to the next board.

	<u>North</u>		
	♠8752		
	♥K5		
	♦K10762		
	♣KQ		
<u>West</u>		<u>East</u>	
♠AK9		♠J4	
♥J1082		♥9643	
♦Q3		♦AJ	
♣J1052	<u>South</u>	♣97643	
	♠Q1063		
	♥AQ7		
	♦9854		
	♣A8		

North-South can make eight tricks in spades, and East-West can take eight in clubs. With no one vulnerable, there were 50s and 100s all over the place. At our table, though, Mike Pudlin as South opened a 10-12 notrump and we had nothing to say. I led the heart Jack and Mike

attacked diamonds to score up 120. I wouldn't have led a club even if I had seen dummy.

We had much more control during our round against the Kauders. On the first board I held: ♠QJ1093, ♥4♦, KQ1053, ♣Q5. They were vulnerable. The auction began with 1♥ - Pass - 2♣, and I faced my first decision. I chose 2♦, thinking that this was not our deal and a diamond lead was likely to be best. But things really heated up. Jim rebid 2♥ and Lynda jumped to 5♥. Holding ♠865, ♥KQJ62, ♦A72, ♣K8, what should Jim bid now? He chose 6♥ rather than 6♦ and it came around to me again.

Now I faced a fascinating decision. I knew Jim's diamond control was the ace and was confident that they could make a grand. Still, they had gotten to slam and that was not likely to be good for us. I decided to save in 6♣, planning to bid seven unless Gerry doubled if they bid on. My spade bid from nowhere seemed to startle everyone and Jim doubled, doubtless with internal indignation.

	<u>North</u>	
	♠K742	
	♥853	
	♦864	
	♣743	
<u>West</u>		<u>East</u>
♠865		♠A
♥KQJ62		♥A1097
♦A72		♦J9
♣K8		♣AJ10962
	<u>South</u>	
	♠QJ1093	
	♥4	
	♦KQ1053	
	♣Q5	

What makes bridge so much fun is that I wouldn't have chosen any of the calls made by East-West after the opening round. Nevertheless, they got to a place where they could have attained a moderate score by driving us to the seven-level. As it was, I went down 800 for 16 matchpoints. Minus 1100 would have given us slightly over average.

This time we were vulnerable. I held: ♠KJ962, ♥A, ♦A107, ♣K85. Gerry opened 1♦, Lynda passed, and I bid 1♠. Then Jim tried 3NT, which came around to me. With my 17 points, I didn't think he could make that, so I doubled. Now Jim came out of the bushes with 4♥, and Gerry bid 4♣. It was time for Roman Key Card, so I tried that. But Jim wasn't through, he bid 5♥. This had an unexpected effect. Gerry could now show two aces, which he did by bidding 5NT (those 50 pages of notes help!), but he could not tell me whether he had the trump queen.

Well, he probably did, I thought, since he bid 4♣ voluntarily. So now it was time to see if he had anything extra. I bid 6♥. Good news came, Gerry bid 7♦. That must show at least KQxxx, so I bid 7NT. I expected to take five spades, one heart, five diamonds, and three clubs. That seemed like a sufficient margin of error.

	<u>North</u>
	♠A104
	♥Q
	♦KJ843
	♣A942
	<u>South</u>
	♠KJ962
	♥A
	♦A107
	♣KQ85

So Jim had achieved his objective. His messing around had induced us to reach a contract we certainly didn't want to be in. Gerry had a slightly different hand than I had pictured during the auction. On a club lead, I

won and played the spade ace, followed by the ten. When spades came home, the contract proved easy. LHO followed to two spades and two clubs. Since I placed him with at least eight hearts, he could have--at most--one diamond. Therefore, cashing the ♦K, followed by a finesse of the ten, had to bring home the contract. And so it proved; we scored a full 25 matchpoints. Good bidding, Gerry.