

Better Bridge

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One event that has virtually disappeared from the tournament bridge scene — and good riddance — is the individual tournament. In this form of competition each contestant plays one hand with each other player at the table, before joining battle on the succeeding round with three other players. And so it goes.

Obviously it is impractical to arrange partnership understandings with so many players in the limited time available for discussion, so bidding systems are kept simple and conventional bids held to a minimum. Any deviation from the standard is perilous. And what is standard these days?

It is understandable why many bridge players shy from entering individual tournaments. Today's hand supports this thesis and demonstrates the anguish of the individual.

The bidding is not recommended. North's call of three spades is marginal. Give partner a doubleton king of spades and a minimum 16 high card points for a no-trump opening and the partnership is likely headed for trouble. For three spades is a game force.

Better is a Stayman call of two clubs requesting a major suit from partner. Over a two-diamond or two-heart reply a two-spade call would

do full justice to the North hand, showing five spades and inviting a further bid.

Almost as attractive is a relay of two hearts (playing Jacoby transfers), calling for opener to bid two spades. Now responder completes the picture by bidding two no-trump to reflect a five-card spade suit and a good seven to a bad nine points.

A moment ago we suggested keeping conventional bids in check. Remember this is an individual tournament. So scrap Jacoby and handle Stayman with kid gloves.

Any new suit call by opener over three spades accepts spades as trump, shows a maximum no-trump, an interest in slam, and a feature which is probably an ace. It is 100 per cent forcing. In a practiced partnership this treatment is standard. To attempt a cue bid with a new partner is risky. To do so in an individual tournament is foolhardy. South should settle for four spades at his second turn. Had he done so, however, there would be no story.

West led a low trump hoping to cut down dummy's ruffing power (?). Declarer put up the ten from dummy which held the trick when East decided not to sacrifice his queen.

For want of better South continued with three rounds of spades, East trumping the third lead. A club switch was necessary to hold declarer to 10 tricks but East didn't find it. Instead he made the amazing return of the 10 of dia-

monds which was covered by the jack, king and ace. Now declarer played his ace and king of trumps.

The queen of diamonds was followed by a low diamond to the eight. With trumps gone declarer was able to jettison his three losing clubs on the two remaining spades and the diamond nine. Four hearts making six!

Proper defense will beat four hearts one trick since South should lose two trump tricks and two clubs. Four spades makes four or five depending upon whether or not declarer works out the diamond situation.

South's perseverance and his ability to mask his displeasure with dummy's bidding produced a top result.

		North	
		S	Q 10 9 6 2
		H	10 7
		D	A 9 8 4
		C	J 3
West	East		
S 7 5 3	S 8 4		
H J 9 4	H Q 8 5 3		
D K 7 6 2	D 10 5		
C K 10 6	C A Q 9 5 2		
		South	
		S	A K J
		H	A K 6 2
		D	♠ J 3
		C	8 7 4

Dealer: North. Neither side was vulnerable.

North	East	South	West
Pass	Pass	1 NT	Pass
3 S	Pass	4 H	Pass
Pass !	Pass		

West led the four of hearts.

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