



Larry Cohen
www.larryco.com

The Real Deal

Using new minor forcing

I welcome you to a humbling deal from the Gatlinburg Regional. This mammoth tournament attracts the world's best players. When I arrived on a Monday night in April, my first match featured 24 boards against one of the world's top-10 pairs, Balicki-Zmudzinski. Our prize for winning? Twenty-four deals against Meckstroth-Rodwell. This is quite a tournament.

Several days later (against less famous opponents), I held:

♠KJ1097 ♥84 ♦K2 ♣AK97.

Both vulnerable, the dealer on my left opened 2♥. My partner doubled and right-hand opponent raised to 3♥. It is annoying that opponents are making and raising preempts so often; I would have liked more room. I felt this hand was too good to bid only 4♠. So, I tried 5♠.

There is some confusion about jumps to five of a major. When the opponents are bidding a suit, usually such a jump is a slam invite, looking for a control (ace, king, singleton or void). My hand (with two low hearts) was typical. Partner put me in 6♠ and this turned out to be a good contract:

key to accurate bidding is to know which bids are invitational and show hands of that strength. That brings up this month's topic: New minor forcing convention is such a useful bidding device. b 1N. The new bid give in

♠ A Q 8 2
♥ 2
♦ A 8 7 5
♣ Q 5 4 3

♠ K J 10 9 7
♥ 8 4
♦ K 2
♣ A K 9 7

LHO led the ♥K and switched to a trump. Your thoughts?

Aside from the heart loser, the only other potential trick to be lost is in clubs. (Your other heart will be ruffed in dummy, of course). If clubs are 3-2 there will be no problem. You can also survive a 4-1 club break if LHO's singleton is the jack or 10. You will end up with a marked finesse against East on the third round.

Before touching clubs, it can't hurt to follow general principles. In an effort to learn about the lie of the cards, I drew trump (they were 2-2), ruffed my heart in dummy and, in the process, ruffed out the diamonds (4-3, with opener having four) to leave:

♠ Q
♥ —
♦ —
♣ Q 5 4 3

♠ J
♥ —
♦ —
♣ A K 9 7

Notice that I was careful to keep the higher trump in dummy, where it might be needed. Watch. I played a low club to the queen and all fol-

lowed low. Now another club from dummy, East played low, and you?

Were you counting? LHO started with four diamonds, two spades, and presumably six hearts. The club he played on the first round should be his only one.

RHO started with ♣J-10-x-x. I triumphantly put in the ♣9 (had RHO split, I had that crucial re-entry to dummy to finesse later), and ...

This was the full deal:

| | | |
|-------------|---|--------------|
| ♠ A Q 8 2 | | ♠ 4 3 |
| ♥ 2 | | ♥ Q 10 9 7 6 |
| ♦ A 8 7 5 | | ♦ Q J 3 |
| ♣ Q 5 4 3 | | ♣ 10 6 2 |
| ♠ 6 5 | N | |
| ♥ A K J 5 3 | W | |
| ♦ 10 9 6 4 | E | |
| ♣ J 8 | S | |
| | | ♠ K J 10 9 7 |
| | | ♥ 8 4 |
| | | ♦ K 2 |
| | | ♣ A K 9 7 |

Shock and embarrassment. LHO won the ♣J, down one in a "cold" contract. LHO had only five hearts, and RHO had raised only to 3♥ with five-card support. They got me!

My teammates were surprised that their minus 680 was a loss (not a gain) of 13 IMPs. Sorry guys, but if I had to do it all over again, I'd make the same losing play. □

Visit Larry's website www.larryco.com for his free monthly web articles, bridge news, and information about Larry's planned Far East bridge-teaching cruises.