

## "Law of Total Tricks", Dam\* It!

**Bruce Thompson**

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### Board #21

SDBC 99er Game

Tuesday P.M. 11/9/20

Dealer: NORTH

Vul: N/S

	NORTH (4)	
	<b>S:</b> T 4	
	<b>H:</b> J 9 7 5 4 3	
	<b>D:</b> K T 9	
	<b>C:</b> 7 6	
WEST (14)		EAST (8)
<b>S:</b> A K 6 2		<b>S:</b> 8 7
<b>H:</b>		<b>H:</b> Q 8
<b>D:</b> A J 7 4 3		<b>D:</b> Q 6 5
<b>C:</b> Q 9 5 3		<b>C:</b> K J T 8 4 2
	SOUTH (14)	
	<b>S:</b> Q J 9 5 3	
	<b>H:</b> A K T 6 2	
	<b>D:</b> 8 2	
	<b>C:</b> A	

### Bidding

NORTH: PASS	EAST: PASS	SOUTH: 1 <b>S</b>	WEST: 2 <b>D</b>
NORTH: PASS	EAST: 2 <b>C</b>	SOUTH: 2 <b>H</b>	WEST: 3 <b>D</b>
NORTH: 4 <b>H</b>	EAST: PASS	SOUTH: PASS	WEST: PASS

This bidding occurred today on the last Board in the competition. Unfortunately, after bidding, but before play, the BBO servers crashed. Thereafter, NORTH and SOUTH immediately spoke telephonically, using cell phones. Due to Sun spots, this call was broadcast to all other cell phones throughout the Savannah region. We now pick up on the conversation between,

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NORTH, Esther Klinkentoast-Houstonhousen, and SOUTH, Jack Farktoasthousen.

JACK: Esther, how the **holy hell** could you raise my Heart bid to a game contract bid? I had 14 HCPs, and you had only 4. That means **we only had 18 HCPs**. You cannot possibly make a 4 Heart bid with only 18 HCPs! Even a simpleton knows that! You need something like 27 HCPs to make a 4 Heart contract!!! No rational person could bid that way!!!

ESTHER: Now look here, Jack. We were in a competitive auction. I took your first bid to show opening points and 5 Spades, and your second bid to likely show 5 Hearts. *Two-suited hands play well*. This bid also shows shortages in both Minors, and thus trumping potential against the Minor suits.

JACK: You gotta be kiddin'. You thought we could make a 4 Heart bid with 18 HCPs. What the hell have you been smokin'?

ESTHER: Well, you remember that nice, sweet, adorable, handsome man, Bruce Thompson, busted his chops writing a massive bridge Instructional Handout over the weekend. He taught about the "**Law of Total Tricks**." The Law says, in a competitive auction you can almost always *bid safely to the level of the number of trump tricks you have minus 6*. We had 11 Heart trump!  $11 - 6 = 5$ , so I thought this would be a reasonable bid.

JACK: Bruce Thompson, Smompson. That man is a straight-up fool! And just because someone is totally, abjectly silly doesn't mean he is hilarious, at least to anyone other than himself. I think he made that "**Law of Total Tricks**" stuff up out of whole cloth. The rumor in the Club is that he is heavily into a cornucopia of psychotropic meds.

ESTHER: No, no. I looked up some of the references he cited, and others as well. This "Law of Total Tricks" is the real deal. And I think you can sometimes make 4 Hearts with only 18 HCPs. Look at those books written by international world bridge champion Marty Begin, **Points Schmoints!**, and **More Points Schmoints!** I think those titles may be suggesting that sometimes points aren't the main deal. That Bergin guy has 20 conventions named after him, and he invented the

very influential "**Rule of 20**" [which says, *no matter in which chair you are sitting, if your HCPs plus the number of cards in your two longest suits equals 20 more more, you can (must) open*].

**And Now, from Bruce, The Rest of the Story...**

3 of 4 N/S pairs today bid to a Heart contract, and 1 E/W pair bid to a 5-Diamond contract. Two N/S pairs made 4, one N/S pair made 3. The 5 Diamond contract went down 2.

This Board will go down 1, with E/W taking the Ace and King of Spades, the Ace of Diamonds, and East trumping the 2 of Spades led by WEST. WEST knowing to lead the 2 of Spades toward EAST will turn on whether EAST and WEST know how to signal "attitude," such that EAST can tell WEST, "I have doubleton Spades, so lead it back to me the 3<sup>rd</sup> time." If you are "playing the room," a less experienced level of competition, you might wish to assume that this communication might not happen.

In any case, on this Board, the 4 Heart bid is a reasonable bid. Of course, it would even be more clear cut if NORTH had just a few more HCPs!