The Two-minute Interview

Sue Lawley

Sue Lawley is one of Britain's best known radio and television broadcasters, hosting *Desert Island Discs* for eighteen years. She has now become famous as the first winner of Sky Arts TV's *Bridge: Celebrity Grand Slam* (see page 17).

How did you start playing bridge?
I took up bridge in my late twenties. My husband and our next door neighbours taught me and we became hugely keen, playing into the wee small hours. We were producing children in those days and I have to confess to having fed a baby at the bridge table.

And after that?
I divorced and re-married a non-bridge player so I hardly played for twenty years. Then we bought a house in a small coastal town in East Devon. The local 'Bridge & Croquet Club' turned out to be thriving and suddenly I discovered the bug had bitten me again! I was very rusty but the members were patient with me – formal, precise, sticklers for the rules and etiquette, and *mustard* at the game!

And now?
Over the last fourteen years I've learned much more than I ever knew about bridge, and I play regularly during holidays. I know that If I'm not getting the cards, I need to sit on my hanky instead of walking around my chair.

What does bridge mean to you?
Just as when I was 30 years old, the sound of the cards being shuffled sets my heart a-flutter and banishes any sense of tiredness. Bridge for me is true escapism – there's no room in your head for any of life's serious concerns when you're short of entries to the table, the opposition's strength is all on the wrong side and you've said you can make three no-trumps.

Let the opponents play in a vulnerable part-score

PAIRS TACTICS

Andrew Robson

ALTHOUGH (as we saw in the last issue) vulnerability is irrelevant at match-point duplicate in an uncontested auction, it is hugely relevant in the competitive arena. And it is not only your vulnerability that matters – it is also the opponents'.

Take this hand:

♠ A J 7 5 2
♥ Q 3 2
♦ Q 8 5 2
♣ 7

after the bidding has gone 1NT – Pass – Pass to you. Should you protect with a bid of 2♠? Say you are non-vulnerable.

It is certainly very tempting – after all you don't really fancy defending 1NT on a likely opening club lead from partner. So do you or don't you?

Me – I don't have enough information. I know that my side is non-vulnerable but I haven't been told whether or not my opponents are non-vulnerable – almost as important. This deal shows what I mean:

N/S Game. Dealer South.

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

West	North	East	South
			1NT
Pass	Pass	?[1]	

[1] Should East pass or bid 2♠?

At the table East bid 2♠. He bought a useful dummy, and played well. Winning South's small club lead with dummy's king, he ran the ten of hearts at trick two. South won the ace and, with no good play, led a second club. Winning the ace and discarding a diamond, declarer led a second heart. North won the king and persevered with a third club. Declarer ruffed and led a low trump to the queen (South ducking), a trump back to the ace, and a third trump, pleased to see the 3-3 split (throwing the last club from dummy). He ruffed the club return (a diamond going from dummy), cashed the queen of hearts, then led towards the king of diamonds, with the winning thirteenth heart waiting to be enjoyed. All South could win was the ace of diamonds. 2♠ +1 and +140.

East awaited the traveller/Bridgemate with interest – surely his bold bidding and accurate play had earned a near-top . . .

Nope – a near bottom!

Can you see why? At other tables the less venturesome Easts had let South play 1NT, which fares miserably. Without torturing you with the details, all declarer is likely to win is one spade, two hearts, one diamond and one club. The dreaded -200. A row of +200s to East-West meant that our East's +140 scored just 32% of the matchpoints.

It was the opponents' vulnerability that had been all-important here. Had they been non-vulnerable, then +140 would have been a near-top (compared with lots of +100 defending 1NT down two). Not so with North-South vulnerable.

Andrew's Tip: Be happy to defend a part-score deal when the opponents are vulnerable – and you might get the magic +200. ❐