

BRIDGE

WHEN I was at school I featured poorly in history classes. I could never resist asking "But what would have happened if...". This seemed to infuriate my tutor who would splutter "But it *didn't* happen!" Perhaps I was ahead of my time — a popular branch of science fiction is described as alternative history. Back to bridge, and in another intriguing deal from the recent Lederer Memorial Trophy a "What do you think would have happened if..." type of question came along.

Love all; dealer North.

North

♠987

♥A Q 10 8 2

♦A J 7 6

♣10

West

♠Q J 6

♥7 6 4 3

♦3

♣A Q J 8 7

East

♠K 5 2

♥J 9

♦9 4

♣K 9 6 5 3 2

South

♠A 10 4 3

♥K 5

♦K Q 10 8 5 2

♣4

The same hands were played in all of the matches but I thought that Glyn O'Liggins and Andrew O'Robson (sorry, Liggins and Robson, but as two of our leading English juniors, they were co-opted to make up the numbers of the Irish team and promptly re-named by the humorists of the press) made an efficient start to the bidding.

North opened One Heart and raised his partners response of Two Diamonds to Three. South tried Three Spades, North signed off with Four Diamonds but when South tried again with Four

Hearts he bid 4NT. No, not Blackwood but, by partnership arrangement, an encouraging noise, stronger than Five Diamonds but denying the ace of clubs.

At this point South should have taken the plunge towards the small slam but the auction petered out in Five Diamonds.

At another table Scotland reached the slam on their slim values and West, after cashing the ace of clubs, switched to the queen of spades.

It was easy to win, draw trumps and play off ♥K but what would have happened if East had false-carded with the jack? In order to discard three spades from hand

declarer needed five tricks from the heart suit. Be honest, would you not have been tempted to finesse the eight on the second round of the suit?

Even as it was, with the nine falling (which might easily have been from nine and another) declarer gave the suit a long hard look before dropping the jack.

Robson, in only Five Diamonds, had fewer problems after the lead of ♠Q. Now, just by playing top hearts, the losing club went away and the very worst that could happen to him would be that he lost two spades.

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INDEPENDENT 1987

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SWEDEN, the current European Champions, won the Lederer Memorial Trophy last weekend.

They were only breaking their journey en route for the World Championships in Jamaica, but they broke it very effectively, winning by a comfortable margin from England, with Scotland a close third.

Sometimes an event such as the Lederer generates unfamiliar partnerships — take this week's hand, where the defenders were highly distinguished players but not exactly en rapport:

Love all; dealer East

North	
♠10 5	
♥8 7 4	
♦K J 3	
♣A K 7 5 4	
West	East
♠7 2	♠8 6 4
♥K J 10 9	♥A 3
♦10 9 8 4	♦A 7 6 2
♣9 6 2	♣J 10 8 3
South	
♠A K Q J 9 3	
♥Q 6 5 2	
♦Q 5	
♣Q	

The Swedish South opened One Spade, North responded Two Clubs and South rebid Three Spades. North went on to Four Spades and all passed. The defence seemed to be off to a good start when West led ♥J to East's ace. A heart came back and West won the next two tricks in the suit. On the second East discarded ♦2.

A diamond at this point would have meant one off without the option but although the partners had arranged to play reverse signals and East thought that ♦2 — a low card — called for a diamond switch, West did not see it in this light and led a fourth round of hearts. Oddly enough, this should not have been fatal, for declarer was forced to ruff high with dummy's ♠10 and now had no entry to dummy's ♠A K after he had unblocked with the queen. With no apparent chance of avoiding a

diamond loser, declarer reeled off six rounds of trumps. West took an early opportunity to discard a club, all of dummy's diamonds went away, and at the end East was faced with the alternative of discarding ♦A or unguarding the clubs.

The defence spent a happy minute or two apportioning the blame. John Collings, as West, after his initial outrage conceded cheerfully that he had done two bad things to his partner's one.

East might well have cashed ♦A at trick two before continuing hearts, West might have led a diamond at trick four, but it was criminal of him to discard a club from his 9 6 2, rather than part with a useless diamond. The nine of clubs would have been the setting trick after the necessary overtaking in the suit.

In spite of the little accidents (but only in the bridge sense) the event was excellently staged by Warwick Pitch and the Young Chelsea Bridge Club and remains one of the great pleasures for bridge kibitzers.

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