

Aw, I Was Just Lucky

By Rich Waugh
American Bridge Teacher's Quarterly

Playing rubber bridge several weeks ago, I dealt and picked up the following cards:

♠ A Q 4
♥ 8 6 3 2
♦ 5
♣ K J 10 8 7

We were vulnerable and the opponents were not. I looked at my cards and saw a pretty average hand. One good point about it was that whatever honors I had were concentrated in two suits. At any rate, the hand was not strong enough to open so I passed. Left-hand opponent began proceedings with a bid of one diamond. Partner passed and right-hand opponent responded one heart. Nothing much had happened thus far to change my opinion of my hand, and it wasn't good enough to risk a vulnerable two-level overcall, so I passed again. LHO bid two hearts, partner passed and RHO bid three diamonds. Again I passed. LHO accepted the game try with a bid of four hearts and it went pass, pass to me.

Here's the bidding again:

West <i>LHO</i>	North <i>Partner</i>	East <i>RHO</i>	South <i>Me</i>
			Pass
1 ♦	Pass	1 ♥	Pass
2 ♥	Pass	3 ♦	Pass
4 ♥	Pass	Pass	?

What had I learned from the bidding?

- The opponents had minimum values for their game. LHO made a minimum rebid of two hearts. RHO made a game *try* of three diamonds; apparently he couldn't force to game either. I expected them to have somewhere between 24 and 27 points, including distribution. If that was the case, partner must have some values, probably about 5-8 HCP.
- How many hearts did partner have? Each opponent had advertised at least four hearts. It was even quite likely they had a nine-card fit. At any rate, they had at least eight and I was looking at four, leaving partner with, at most, a singleton. And with such short hearts, it seemed likely partner would have a few black cards to compliment mine.
- Where was the spade suit? Both opponents had the opportunity to bid spades at a low level and neither did so. Therefore, it was likely neither of them held a four-card spade suit. That being the case, partner must have at least four spades and, with his shortness in hearts, was a heavy favorite to hold more than four.

All of a sudden my cards started to look like gold! All the black suit honors would be working with partner's, my singleton diamond took on new luster, and even my heart length was an asset, since it marked partner with no more than a singleton (and, apparently, no wasted values in hearts).

Here was a hand not good enough for a two-level overcall and now I wanted to bid, vulnerable, at the four- or five-level! In fact, I was convinced it must be right to bid. My only problem was what I should bid. I really wanted to make a takeout double but, unfortunately, a double at this point would be strictly for penalties and partner would (correctly) pass. My choice seemed to be between a really offbeat, but reasonably sound, four spades – the inference that partner held at least five spades was so strong that a four spade call by me might well be the winning action! – and a somewhat saner five clubs. I bid five

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clubs. Be sure to notice I made the bid with the full expectation of fulfilling the contract. At that vulnerability, I wouldn't even think of sacrificing. LHO doubled and led the heart king.

Dummy hit the table with:

♠ K 10 9 6 3
♥ —
♦ A 6 4 2
♣ 9 6 5 3

opposite my:

♠ A Q 4
♥ 8 6 3 2
♦ 5
♣ K J 10 8 7

About what I'd anticipated. When the club queen turned up onside, I quickly wrapped up twelve tricks. As expected, four spades would have been cold, too! Was I simply lucky? Perhaps. I was fortunate to find partner with the ace of diamonds instead of some other, less useful values. But take away the ace and the hand still makes five clubs.

Lucky? You decide.