

October 27, 2018

Bridge with Richard Ward

122 teams from 39 countries competed in the 8th European Open Championship played last year in Montecatini, Italy. The winning team was from Norway, overcoming Greece in the final. Today's hand from the event features high-level competitive bidding followed by expert declarer play.

	♠ A 9 3		N/ EW vul
	♥ 5 4 3 2		
	♦ Q J 6 5		
	♣ J 10		
♠ K Q J 10 7 2		♠ 6 5 4	
♥ A Q		♥ 9 8 7	
♦ 4		♦ 8 3	
♣ K 5 4 3		♣ 9 8 7 6 2	
	♠ 8		
	♥ K J 10 6		
	♦ A K 10 9 7 2		
	♣ A Q		

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	PASS	PASS	1D
4S	PASS	PASS	DBL
PASS	5D	PASS	PASS
DBL	PASS	PASS	PASS

This was a nice auction to a sensible spot with West jumping directly to his preferred contract of 4S, then South giving his partner the option of passing for penalties for +200, or bidding on for +400 provided he could bring home 11 tricks.

At first sight 5D appears to have three unavoidable losers, but declarer found an elimination play whilst keeping the club finesse as a last resort if this failed. He won the SK lead with the ace; ruffed a spade with the D7 keeping the valuable D2 for later; played DA then D9 to the DQ; ruffed his last spade with the D10; and then drew the last trump with D10 to DJ. Now he led a heart to the jack. West had no winning play at this point. He could take both hearts and then either lead a club around to the ace-queen or play another spade allowing declarer to trump in dummy whilst throwing his losing club.

Had West started with H A-Q-7, the elimination would not work as he could safely exit with his third heart. In that case, declarer would have crossed to dummy, using the carefully preserved D2 to the D5, to take the losing club finesse. This would have been a sad result after such thoughtful play.

At the other table, NS found their 4-4 heart fit and bid on to 5H over 4S. This had no play after repeated spade leads which promoted North's H9 for the setting trick.
