

Bridge

Janet de Botton

I love a celeb Q&A. You know the kind of thing. Q: When were you happiest? A: Right now. Q: What is your greatest fear? A: Something bad happening to my family. And on and on it goes in the general Miss America 'World Peace' kind of way until it comes to What is your guilty pleasure? And just occasionally it veers from the odd fag or tub of low-fat frozen yogurt to something slightly more exciting like 'Snogging my sister's boyfriend'. Well, my GP (in case you are interested) is nagging. In my time, I have nagged my husbands, my children, the occasional boyfriend and now I nag my bridge team. 'No doubled part scores,' I moan to deaf ears. And lately, 'Find your contract before you double theirs.'

Dealer South North/South vulnerable

	♠ J 4										
	♥ J 9 7 5 2										
	♦ J 8 3										
	♣ 8 6 5										
♠ Q10 8 7 3	<table border="1"><tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr></table>		N		W		E		S		♠ void
		N									
W			E								
		S									
♥ 4	♥ A10 6										
♦ A 9 7 5	♦ KQ10 6 4 2										
♣ K J 2	♣ A10 7 3										
	♠ A K 9 6 5 2										
	♥ K Q 8 3										
	♦ void										
	♣ Q 9 4										

West	North	East	South
			1♠
Pass	Pass	X	Pass
Pass	Pass		

One of the world's greatest players, Jeff Meckstroth, said, 'The biggest mistake of my career has been to try to penalise the opponents before we have explored our own limits.' Genius, Jeff. I couldn't have put it better myself.

This was the auction at one table in a recent match shown on BBO. If either East or West had taken any notice of the world champion's (or my) words, they wouldn't have had this car crash.

East thought it was very likely that West had a stack of spades, so he doubled instead of making the normal bid of 2♦. At this vulnerability, West couldn't resist the temptation to try for a large penalty, so he passed when he could have bid either 1NT or 2♦.

Here's the good news: they beat the contract by one sweaty trick for +200, but in the other room, 6♦ made with an overtrick.

Hate to say it, boys, but — I told you so!