

THE 2012 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

By Danny Miles

In mid-August the World Bridge Games (formerly called the Olympiad) as part of the World Mind Games, were held in Lille, France. In the Open division, 60 teams were divided into 4 groups, with the top 4 teams in each group qualifying for the round of 16 start of the knockout phase. Each group had one top “seeded” team – USA, Netherlands, Italy, and Monaco. The remainder of the groups were chosen using approximate rankings of countries with the goal of keeping relative strength of each group the same. Each team would play the other 13 teams in their group in 16-board matches (plus one Bye), 3 matches per day. The playing conditions were outstanding. A spacious playing area with excellent lighting featured lots of room between tables. The tables, screens, trays and cards were all like new. Each table received their own set of 16 boards; no caddies were needed. Security was well thought out – random cell phone checks were conducted, caddies accompanied players to the restrooms, and there were even subtle strategies – with the screens setup, a player could typically have a relatively unobstructed view of one player at the next table; however, that player in view was always the same geographical direction as you. If anyone was trying to sneak a peek at a hand, they would only see the hand that they themselves would hold; all Norths were not facing the same end of the room. There were numerous competent directors available. In addition to 5 matches each round being broadcast on the Internet, the Bridgemates in use meant those following online were able to see the contract, lead, result, and IMPs scored in each match *in real time*.

Canada’s open team would be the 2012 CNTC champions – Nic L’Ecuyer/Vince Demuy; Les Amoils/Darren Wolpert; and Dan Korbel/Danny Miles. They would be augmented by NPC and Coach Nick and Judy Gartaganis, respectively.

Canada started out against Scotland and their very first board got them off on the right foot:

Board 1. Dealer North. None Vulnerable.

	♠ 8		
	♥ A K 2		
	♦ K 8 5 4		
	♣ A Q J 8 5		
♠ J T 3	<div style="background-color: black; color: white; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> N W E S </div>	♠ A Q 9 6 4	
♥ J 7 5		♥ Q T 8 6 3	
♦ Q 3 2		♦ T 7 6	
♣ K 9 4 2		♣ -	
	♠ K 7 5 2		
	♥ 9 4		
	♦ A J 9		
	♣ T 7 6 3		

Miles	North	Korbel	South
	1C	2C	3C
P	3D	P	3S
P	3NT	All Pass	

Korbel, East, started with the S6, which went to the 2, T, and 8. Miles continued with the SJ, which was ducked around. A heart shift left the defence in good shape. Declarer won, played a diamond to the Ace, ran the C10, then continued clubs, Miles splitting. Declarer played a diamond, needing a dummy entry, and was at the crossroads. He guessed wrong and went up with the Jack. Locked out of dummy, he finished 3 down (mispitching in the endgame), 11 IMPs to Canada.

It didn't take long until Korbel had a big decision to make. Holding

♠ A Q 8 5
 ♥ Q T 9 8 4
 ♦ J 6
 ♣ 3 2

His side stayed silent as he heard the opponents bid (starting with LHO):

2C * - 3D** - 4C - 4S - 7C

* either strong or a weak-2 in diamonds

** assuming a weak-2, bumping up the pre-empt

Would you double 7C for a spade lead? Do you want a spade lead? Should double ask for a spade lead or a diamond lead?

Korbel made the winning decision to pass. Miles held:

♠ 9 7 6 4
♥ K J 2
♦ T 8 7
♣ 8 6 5

and led a trump. Dummy hit with:

♠ K J T 3 2
♥ 7 6 3
♦ Q 5 3 2
♣ 4

A spade lead would have led to disaster, since declarer held void, Ax, AKx4, AKQJxxx; a spade lead lets declarer ruff out the S-AQ (notice the key card in dummy – the D5 – which provides a 2nd entry). +50 was good for another 11 IMPs where as a spade lead would have led to a 15 IMP loss (14 if no double).

On the final board of the match, Korbel was in the hot seat:

♠ K T 9 8 6 3
♥ 9
♦ J T 6 5
♣ 4 2

Vulnerable vs not, he heard partner open 1H (usually denying 4 spades, playing Flannery). RHO overcalled 2D. It continued Pass, 3D, Pass, Pass to him. Do you or don't you? Despite the singleton in partner's suit and 4 trumps, today you should bid. 3S catches a raise to 4S as you buy the nicest dummy you will ever buy in 4S:

♠ A 5 2
♥ A K 8 4 3
♦ 4
♣ Q J T 7

Now you just have to make it. LHO starts with 2 top clubs, and then continues with a third, RHO ruffing with the Queen. Korbel overruffed and showed that he was determined not to waste his great 3S bid; he

ran the ST, winning, and the rest was easy. +620 was worth another 11 IMPs and got Canada off to a great start, with a 24-6 win in VPs.

Match 2 vs Singapore was a hard fought affair, with Canada coming out on top 16-14. Singapore bid a 27 HCP slam on a finesse; one of only 2 teams to bid it in our group of 14. Today the slam made. The other swing came when Miles held

♠ K J
♥ A K Q 8 6 3 2
♦ A Q 5
♣ 2

After opening 1H (2C might be a better choice), LHO overcalled 1S, partner passed, and RHO bid 2D. Miles bid 3NT, which Korbel corrected to 4H, and RHO expressed doubt with a double. The bad news? Korbel held a Yarborough. The good news? He was 5-4-1-3. Miles had bought well again, Korbel putting down:

♠ 9 8 7 6 5
♥ 9 7 5 4
♦ 3
♣ 6 5 4

2 spades and a club had to be lost, but that was still +790 and a healthy 14 IMPs to Canada.

Match 3 was a disappointment as Canada lost 23-7 to the eventual champions, Sweden.

Day 2 started with a 17-13 win over Slovakia, who were near the bottom of the standings. Our afternoon match pitted us against group leaders South Africa. Only two big swings (Korbel/Miles played in 3Dx making for a swing to Canada, while South Africa stayed low on a terrible misfit while the rest of the room, including the other table, got too high and went for a number). Canada lost all the small swings. Their luck (or lack thereof) was demonstrated on this board:

Korbel

♠ 7 6
♥ A 9 5
♦ K 8 7 6 2
♣ T 7 5

Miles

♠ A J 8
♥ K Q 8 4 2

♦ A 4 3
♣ J 8

Miles chose to open 1NT (15-17) then turn down Korbel's 2NT invitation. With hearts breaking 3-2 (if they didn't, the opponents could probably make a bunch of spades), 2NT seems like a pretty safe contract. Only clubs 6-2, with no doubleton honour, and (presumably) the 6-bagger in opening leader's hand, would defeat it. Today was Canada's unlucky day. Down 1, lose 5, which contributed to a 20-10 loss.

Match 6 brought on Trinidad & Tobago, and Canada got off to an early lead when 3NT was played from different sides, resulting in different opening leads, making the Canadian declarer's task much easier. Next came two successive swing hands:

♠ A 8 2
♥ 4 2
♦ T 9 4
♣ 9 8 7 4 3

Miles quickly found himself on lead after this auction:

LHO	RHO
1C*	3H**
6H	Pass

* Strong, artificial, 16+, forcing

** Spade shortness, either 4441 or 5440, game forcing

What would you lead?

Miles tracked the D4, which was the killer when dummy had:

♠ K Q J 5 3
♥ A J 5 3
♦ A 8 6
♣ A

and Korbel possessed the DK. Down 1 was good for 13 IMPs to Canada. The very next hand, Korbel and Miles were in the hot seat again. Miles picked up:

♠ Q 8 7 3
♥ A 5

♦ J T 8 3

♣ K Q T

Korbel opened 2D Flannery, showing 5 or 6 hearts, 4 spades, and 10-16 points. Miles was prepared to bid 2NT asking about Korbel's hand, when RHO doubled. The opponents had no agreement on what double meant, so Miles showed values and inquired anyway by bidding 2NT. After LHO bid 3C, Miles was prepared to bid 3NT, but Korbel pre-empted that by jumping to 4H. Clearly this showed extras, a 6th heart, and likely strong trumps. Miles saw no need to correct to their potentially flimsy 4-4 spade fit with soft cards in the minors, which could be used to throw Korbel's spades away. That was indeed the case as Korbel had bid 4H on:

♠ A T 4 2

♥ K Q J 8 4 2

♦ Q 4

♣ 7

With opening leader (the doubler) possessing all the defensive assets, it was an easy road to 10 tricks and another 13 imps as Wolpert/Amoils defeated 4S two tricks at the other table. Canada ended with an 18-12 win.

Day 3 saw team Canada make its move. With a very tough day 4 looming (favourites Russia, Italy, and a Bye), Canada knew they needed to kick it into gear. Match 7 vs Morocco started poorly when Miles failed to read Korbel's well thought-out lead vs a slam to lose 12 imps. Things turned around quickly. Morocco bid a terrible slam (needing to bring home trumps missing queen-fifth, then requiring two side suit finesses) handing 12 IMPs to Canada. Miles/Korbel found a neat defence to beat 3NT for another 12 IMPs, then Miles was wondering what he had done, when red vs white he balanced 1S over 1H-Pass-Pass with

♠ Q T 7 6 5

♥ T 9 7 5

♦ A Q 3

♣ J

In no time at all, the opponents bounced their way to six clubs. Fortunately, they were only on an 8 card fit and went down 3 doubled for 10 IMPs to Canada. Canada picked up another 10 when Morocco stayed low, which was not the case for L'Ecuyer/Demuy who chalked up +620. The final swing of the match occurred when Miles chose a fortunate opening bid, vul against not:

Miles

♠ A T 9 3

♥ 7

♦ 9 6 5 4
♣ A K 9 2

Korbel

♠ K J 6 4
♥ A Q 5
♦ Q
♣ Q J T 5 4

Miles Korbel

1C* (4H) 4NT** (Pass)

6C (6H) Dbl All Pass

* Typically open 1D with 4-4 in the minors unless large suit disparity

** Slam try in clubs

Miles judged his singleton and three controls worthy of bidding the excellent slam, and when the opponents sacrificed, Canada took the money, 10 IMPs, and a maximum 25 VPs in the match. The result brought Canada just 6 VPs out of the final qualifying spot.

Match 8 vs Thailand saw the IMPs flying from the get go, with Canada up 25-23 after a mere 7 boards.

Later, very light interference kept L'Ecuyer/Demuy out of a grand slam, bid by Thailand at the other table for a 17 IMP swing. The final swing of the match came when Miles had to lead from:

♠ J 4 3
♥ K T 2
♦ K 9
♣ A 9 5 4 2

after hearing 1H on his right, 1S on his left, 2S on his right, 4H on his left. He started with the CA. This was not a success when dummy said "sorry, I pulled the wrong bidding card, I meant to bid 4S" and put down:

♠ K 9 8 7 6
♥ Q 9
♦ J 8 4
♣ K Q 7

With hearts a frustrating 3-3, the defence could not score 1 trick in every suit. Miles/Korbel set up their spade ruff, but could not get a diamond trick (declarer held ATxx, AJxxx, ATx, x). This 12 IMP loss finished off a 15-15 tie in VPs (55-53 Canada in IMPs).

Match 9 was against Bermuda; a big victory was needed to carry momentum into a tough day 4.

Bermuda scored a swing on this deal. You hold:

♠ 5 4 3
♥ T 5 4 3
♦ T 9 6
♣ A K J

And hear the opponents bid 1NT on your right, 4H (Texas transfer), 4S. You lead a high club and see:

♠ K Q J T 9 8 7
♥ Q
♦ 8 4
♣ 8 4 2

Partner plays the 7 (upside down carding), declarer the 3. What do you lead to trick 2?

I hope you shifted to a trump, because today that is the only defence that works, catching partner's Ace. How are you supposed to find it? I have no idea. Only 2 tables out of 14 defeated 4 Spades. One when it was played from the other side and opening leader found the club lead; the other time was Bermuda. Their defender led a trump at trick *one*, whereupon the obvious club shift led to down one. Easy game. Another hand of interest:

♠ 9 4
♥ 4 2
♦ A T 9 8 7 3
♣ 8 6 2

RHO opens a strong 1NT and the opponents Stayman their way to 4H. You chose to lead a small trump and the following dummy appears:

♠ Q 8 5
♥ 8 7 5 3
♦ J 4
♣ A K 9 5

Partner plays the King, which holds, and shifts to the D5, declarer playing the D6. What do you play and why?

4H was defeated by about half the field. You should duck the diamond Ace. If partner had a singleton diamond, you should trust they would win the first trump with the Ace, denying the king. This was the full deal:

	♠ 9 4	
	♥ 4 2	
	♦ A T 9 8 7 3	
	♣ 8 6 2	
♠ A K J 6	<div style="background-color: black; color: white; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> N W E S </div>	♠ Q 8 5
♥ Q J T 6		♥ 8 7 5 3
♦ K Q 6		♦ J 4
♣ T 7		♣ A K 9 5
	♠ T 7 3 2	
	♥ A K 9	
	♦ 5 2	
	♣ Q J 4 3	

It's not every day that you get to score 3 tricks with Ace-King-Nine of trumps vs a 4-4 fit but today you should. Bermuda failed to defeat 4H, contributing to a 21-9 win for Canada, which had picked up 61 VPs on the day, still 7 VPs out of a qualifying spot.

A tough day 4 was looming with Canada just out of a qualifying spot. Facing 2nd place Russia, Canada started quickly:

Board 18. Dealer East. N-S Vulnerable.

	♠ Q 6 2	
	♥ 9 3	
	♦ K 6	
	♣ A K J 6 4 3	
♠ K T 7	<div style="background-color: black; color: white; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> N W E S </div>	♠ A 8
♥ J 4		♥ Q 8 7 6 5 2
♦ A T 9 8 5 2		♦ J 7 3
♣ Q 9		♣ 8 5
	♠ J 9 5 4 3	
	♥ A K T	
	♦ Q 4	
	♣ T 7 2	

Korbel (East) opened 2H and Miles upped the ante to 3H. Both opponents stayed conservative and Russia defended, missing their vul game, bid by Demuy/L'Ecuyer over the same interference.

Next, Russia struck with a weak bid at favourable. Miles held

♠ 7
 ♥ A Q T 7 5 4 3
 ♦ Q 6 5 2
 ♣ T

And his RHO opened 2S, which shows 5 spades and 4+ in a minor, 3-9 HCP. He chose to overcall 3H, LHO bid 4S, and partner doubled. Going swimmingly thus far! Miles went into the tank for a long time, thinking about whether to bid 5H or pass, and also what to lead against 4Sx if he passed. What would your choice be?

Eventually Miles passed and led a diamond. The operation was a success but the patient died:

♠ Q J 8 4 2 ♥ K 9 8 ♦ A 8 ♣ A 9 8		♠ 7 ♥ A Q T 7 5 4 3 ♦ Q 6 5 2 ♣ T	<div style="background-color: black; color: white; padding: 5px; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 0 auto; display: flex; flex-direction: column; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> N W E S </div>	♠ A T ♥ J 2 ♦ K J 9 4 3 ♣ K 7 5 3
		♠ K 9 6 5 3 ♥ 6 ♦ T 7 ♣ Q J 6 4 2		

Miles found the lead to defeat 4S for +100, but without a weak 2-suited opening bid in their arsenal, Demuy/L'Ecuyer understandably were frozen out after P-3H-P-4H and defended for -620; Miles' decision mattered little.

Next came an interesting bidding problem:

♠ A J 7 5 3
 ♥ A K J 7 4
 ♦ Q J T
 ♣ -

Vul vs not, Miles heard his partner open 1D (promising at least 4), responded 1S, and saw LHO overcall 2H. Miles reopened double, Korbel bid 3C, and Miles had to choose between 3NT with a void or starting with a force then showing diamond support. He chose 3NT, which was a success when Korbel tabled

♠ K 2
♥ 2
♦ A 8 7 3 2
♣ A 8 5 4 2

An opening low heart lead made the play trivial, and 3NT making was a swing vs 4S going down at the other table (spades broke 4-2 and diamonds broke 5-0 offside).

Russia's last IMPs would come when Miles turned down a game invite non-vul holding

♠ A Q 7 2
♥ J T 8
♦ Q 9 7
♣ A K 7

After opening a strong 1NT, partner transferred to hearts and bid 2NT. Miles signed off in 3H but unfortunately 3NT was decent as partner's K-6-5-3-2 of hearts played for 4 tricks with A-Q-7 onside. Russia reached 3NT to win 6 IMPs. However, Canada would win 3 more partscore swings and 11 IMPs when Demuy/L'Ecuyer racked up a vulnerable overtrick in 2Cx while Miles/Korbel played 2H making 3. The final tally was a 23-7 VP win for Canada. Up next were one of the pre-tournament favourites and leaders of the group, Italy.

Italy opened with a 4 IMP score when Miles/Korbel doubled Bocchi's 5C opening bid, which proved to be cold. Canada got that back with interest thanks to a thoughtful bid by Korbel. Holding

♠ K 9
♥ Q T 8 6 3 2
♦ A K 3
♣ 6 2

At favourable vulnerability, he opened 1H, LHO overcalled 1S, and partner bid 3C, fit-showing (clubs and hearts, forcing for one round). RHO raised to 3S. What would you bid? Korbel found an excellent call – 4D. This ensured their side would find their diamond ruff should the opponents bid 4S. After this call, Italy had their choice of poisons – defending 4H for 420 or bidding on to 4S and going -500. They chose the former, which was worth 11 IMPs to Canada when Amoils/Wolpert bid 4S at the other table and Italy misjudged and pushed to 5H, which went down 1 doubled.

Italy then scored two swings – one when Italy's weak notrump put a 5-card heart suit on lead vs 3NT. A spade lead was required to defeat the hand, which was found at the other table as that opening leader

held 4 spades (and 2 hearts). Italy's other swing came when Miles misjudged the trump position in 4 hearts doubled, failing to consider the 1NT opener might have a singleton king (he did – and he did again later in the match too!). Italy were then the only team in the group to bid slam on the following cards:

♠ J T 7 6
♥ Q 2
♦ K T 4 3 2
♣ A 8

♠ A Q 9 8 5
♥ A 8 6
♦ A J 7
♣ K T

With LHO having overcalled 2H, Madala declared 6S on a low club lead. He played 2 clubs ending in dummy, ran the SJ successfully, and then played a diamond to the Jack, LHO showing out and pitching. The rest was easy for 11 IMPs in the Italian column.

The final board of the match produced a swing in Italy's favour. Miles showed poor judgement holding

♠ J 6 3
♥ 6 3
♦ T 6 5
♣ Q 8 7 4 3

He heard partner open 1D (promising 4) in 3rd chair, red vs white. This was passed around to LHO, who reopened with a double, and it went pass, pass. While declaring 1-of-a-minor doubled is almost never a winning proposition, a number of arguments point toward passing it out – you have a potential ruffing value, the ten of diamonds might prevent RHO from drawing trump (picture say, Qxxx in declarer's hand), and if the opponents have no 8 card fit, opener is therefore 3-4-4-2 or 4-4-4-1. Nonetheless Miles pulled to 2C which got doubled and went down 4. The other table played a partscore so Canada lost 14 IMPs (passing 1Dx leads to -500 and a loss of 8 IMPs) and lost the match 21-9. After collecting 18 VPs for the Bye, Canada entered the final day 10 VPs out of qualifying. It would be an uphill climb.

The final day of the round robin began with a convincing win over a less experienced squad from Kenya. Korbel/Miles made a no-play 3NT while L'Ecuyer/Demuy collected a number, and Kenya reached a hopeless slam. After just two boards, it was 28-0 Canada. One lighter moment in the match was when Korbel reached 3NT after a 1H overcall on his left:

♠ A T
♥ A 7

♦ T 9 7 4
♣ Q J T 8 2

♠ Q 5 3
♥ J 4
♦ A K 8
♣ A 7 6 4 3

LHO led his suit, a heart, which went to RHO's queen; RHO returned the king of hearts. Korbel called for the club queen, RHO following low. Having seen his LHO bid conservatively on a previous hand, Korbel went up with the ace, dropping the singleton king. This was good for...a 1 IMP loss. The auction was more complex at the other table and Demuy/L'Ecuyer had doubled 3C – each of them thinking their partner had clubs! Luckily the opponents ran from their 10 card club fit to 3NT, but the opening lead was...the singleton king of clubs! This did not pose a threat to the contract. Canada scored the maximum 25 VPs creating a logjam with 4 teams within 1 VP of each other, with 2 of those teams to qualify. Canada would play Romania and Argentina to close things out, 2 of the teams in contention.

Match 14 against Romania could provide Canada with a bit of a buffer going into the final match. Canada picked up the only two significant swings in the match, in each case defeating a major suit game that made at the other table. Those 22 IMPs were the margin of victory as Canada had moved into 4th place with a 20-10 VP win. The final match against Argentina would determine the last qualifier. Canada was in 4th, 3 VPs ahead of Argentina, so even a 16-14 loss would see the Canadians through.

The very first board featured a defensive problem that most of the field got wrong.


♠ A K 6
♥ T 6 5
♦ K Q 7
♣ J 7 6 2

The opponents reach 4S quickly after 1S – 2NT (forcing spade raise) – 4S (minimum with no shortness). You lead a high diamond and see:

♠ T 7 4 3
♥ A J 4 3 2
♦ A J
♣ Q 8

Declarer wins the ace in dummy, partner playing the ten (upside down) and declarer the 2, and plays a trump to his queen and your ace. You cash the other high diamond, partner playing the 5 and declarer the 4. Your move.

Sooner or later declarer is going to make use of dummy's hearts. While a club shift is dangerous, it is clearly the best chance; and if the defence has a heart trick coming, it is not going anywhere. Even if you held Kxxx of clubs, you still should shift to one, hoping there is a guess. The full deal:

<p>♠ Q J 9 5 2 ♥ K Q ♦ 4 3 2 ♣ A 9 3</p>		<p>♠ A K 6 ♥ T 6 5 ♦ K Q 7 ♣ J 7 6 2</p>
<p>♠ 8 ♥ 9 8 7 ♦ T 9 8 6 5 ♣ K T 5 4</p>	<p>♠ T 7 4 3 ♥ A J 4 3 2 ♦ A J ♣ Q 8</p>	

Neither defender in our match found the winning defence.

Argentina struck back for 9 IMPs on board two, scoring 500 on defence at the 1-level doubled, while Canada missed their 3NT which would've held the loss to 3 IMPs. Canada would go on a tear from there however, scoring 34 of the next 37 IMPs. Amoils/Wolpert reached an excellent 4S, making 5 despite trumps breaking 4-1; Argentina missed the game at the other table. Next:

♠ J
♥ J 8 6 4
♦ A K Q 9 6 4 3
♣ 5

Partner opens 1H with none vulnerable. RHO overcalls 4S. What do you bid? Amoils/Wolpert had no trouble bidding slam, opener having

♠ 5 3
♥ A K T 7 5 3
♦ T
♣ A Q J 7

This was good for 11 IMPs when Argentina stopped in 5 at the other table. Argentina later bid a slam needing an ace onside, and it was, for 13 IMPs. With 3 boards to go, Canada was up by 4 IMPs and could taste the playoffs. A push in 1NT was followed by the clincher:

Board 15. Dealer South. N-S Vulnerable.

	♠ T 7 5 3		
	♥ Q 7		
	♦ A Q T 6		
	♣ A K J		
♠ K J 6 4 2	<div style="background-color: black; color: white; padding: 10px; display: inline-block;"> N W E S </div>	♠ A	
♥ K T 8 6		♥ A 9 5 3 2	
♦ 7 5		♦ J 9 8 2	
♣ 7 5		♣ Q T 8	
	♠ Q 9 8		
	♥ J 4		
	♦ K 4 3		
	♣ 9 6 4 3 2		

L'Ecuyer/Demuy played 1NT down 2 as North-South for -200. At the other table, after North opened 1NT in 3rd chair, Wolpert (West) reopened double showing the majors. At this vulnerability Amoils made the winning decision to pass and he led a low heart. The focus shifted to Wolpert, who made no mistake going up with the king. Declarer was held to 5 tricks; +500 and 7 IMPs to Canada. With that, Canada had clinched enough VPs to qualify for the playoffs in the Open division at the Olympiad for the first time since 1972.

Playoffs

Monaco, having finished first in group D, chose to play Canada (they got to choose among 2nd, 3rd, or 4th in group C – Russia, Sweden, or Canada) in a 96 board match in six segments over 2 days.

Monaco, regarded by many as the top team in the world, picked up a game swing early, arriving in 3NT with a 5-3 heart fit and soft values elsewhere. Canada struck back as Demuy and L'Ecuyer bid these cards to 3NT:

♠ K Q 7 4
♥ 8 6 4 2

♦ Q
 ♣ Q 9 4 2

 ♠ A T 2
 ♥ K 9 7 5
 ♦ A K J
 ♣ J 6 5

And took 9 tricks while 4H suffered the four obvious losers in the other room. The rest of the first quarter was dull. Multon picked up a swing for Monaco with a nice double, holding

♠ 6
 ♥ K J T
 ♦ A Q T 2
 ♣ 8 6 4 3 2

The opponents bid 1D (RHO) – 1H – 2H – 3NT – Pass to him. Partner was virtually certain to lead a spade, which would have allowed 3NT to make. Multon doubled for a diamond lead through dummy, then doubled again when Canada ran to 4H. Both contracts were booked for down 2 on a diamond lead. Monaco took a 28-12 lead into segment 2.

Canada rallied in segment 2, despite an early accident in which they reached slam off two aces. Then

Board 22. Dealer East. E-W Vulnerable.

	♠ 9 6 5 3 ♥ T 9 ♦ 6 4 ♣ T 7 6 5 3		
♠ K T 8 7 2 ♥ 5 ♦ K Q J 8 ♣ A 9 2	<div style="background-color: black; color: white; padding: 10px; display: inline-block; text-align: center;"> N W E S </div>	♠ 4 ♥ A K J 8 3 2 ♦ A T 3 2 ♣ 8 4	
	♠ A Q J ♥ Q 7 6 4 ♦ 9 7 5 ♣ K Q J		

4H turns out to be the best contract with the T9 of hearts falling doubleton; understandably Monaco reached 3NT after south had overcalled 1NT. After a club opening lead (would you falsecard with the queen as south?), declarer misjudged the play and ended down 1, good for 12 IMPs when Canada collected 500 against 2Cx in the other room.

Canada struck again. Holding


♠ A Q 4 2
 ♥ T 6 4
 ♦ 9 8 7 6 3
 ♣ 7

Your RHO shows long clubs, then spades (likely 6-5), while partner has pre-empted in hearts. The opponents settle in 6C, you lead a heart and dummy goes down:

♠ K J
 ♥ A 7 2
 ♦ A K T 5 4
 ♣ J 6 5


Declarer calls for the ace, plays a trump to his ace, then a low spade toward the KJ. Do you win or duck? If you win, what do you return?

Careful! If declarer had a second heart, he would have pitched it on a diamond. The diamond suit is the danger. If you win, you must shift to a diamond, the full deal being:

♠ A Q 4 2 ♥ T 6 4 ♦ 9 8 7 6 3 ♣ 7		♠ K J ♥ A 7 2 ♦ A K T 5 4 ♣ J 6 5
♠ 9 8 6 5 3 ♥ 3 ♦ 2 ♣ A K Q 9 4 2		
		♠ T 7 ♥ K Q J 9 8 5 ♦ Q J ♣ T 8 3

On any other shift declarer has the timing to ruff a spade high, draw trump and score 3 diamond tricks with the QJ falling. Amoils/Wolpert defeated 6C to pick up 12 IMPs vs 4S making at the other table.

Monaco struck back for 15 IMPs when Canada got caught after balancing and running into a trump stack. Then Canada judged well at both tables, defeating Monaco's 5Dx one trick and Monaco's 4Hx one trick (it could have been more with a ruff) to pickup 9 IMPs. The final board of the segment put 10 fortunate IMPs in Canada's column.

♠ 9 8 6 4			
♥ T 5 3			
♦ J T 5 2			
♣ Q 8			
♠ A 3			♠ Q J T 7 5 2
♥ Q			♥ A 8 7 6 2
♦ Q 9 6 4 3			♦ K
♣ K J 7 6 4			♣ 9
		♠ K	
		♥ K J 9 4	
		♦ A 8 7	
		♣ A T 5 3 2	


Looking at just the misfitting east-west hands, game is terrible. However, today it happens to make. Demuy/L'Ecuyer, as is their custom, were aggressively in 4S. Canada took the segment 57-29 to go up 69-57 in the match.

Segment three started with Canada picking up 4 IMPs when Korbel made a nice falsecard to give Fantoni a losing option in 2S, while Helgemo/Helness got to a hopeless 3NT at the other table. Then Fantoni faced a defensive problem:

♠ K Q T 8 7 2
♥ 5 2
♦ A Q 4
♣ T 5


After LHO opens 1C and RHO bids 1H, you overcall 1S. LHO jumps to 3C, RHO bids 3H (forcing) and LHO raises to 4H. You lead the SK and dummy hits with:

♠ J 9 5
♥ A K

<p>♠ J 9 6 5 3 ♥ - ♦ A T 6 4 3 ♣ Q T 6</p>		<p>♠ A T ♥ A T 4 ♦ Q 9 ♣ A K J 8 7 5</p>
<p>♠ K Q 8 7 4 2 ♥ 9 5 2 ♦ 5 2 ♣ 3 2</p>	<p>♠ - ♥ K Q J 8 7 6 3 ♦ K J 8 7 ♣ 9 4</p>	

Demuy made a thoughtful lead of the HJ. They lead the K from AK at the 5-level or higher so this ensured L'Ecuyer would ruff if he could. The defence scored their 5 trumps separately, plus the AK of diamonds for down 5, +1400. Miles made a valiant attempt at making 4S but wound up two down, still good for 15 IMPs.

Monaco scored small dribs and drabs in overtrick IMPs before Canada struck again:

<p>♠ Q J 9 8 5 ♥ K ♦ 9 5 3 ♣ Q 9 7 6</p>		<p>♠ A K 3 ♥ Q 7 2 ♦ K Q J 8 7 6 ♣ 5</p>
<p>♠ 7 4 ♥ A J 4 ♦ T 4 2 ♣ A K J T 2</p>	<p>♠ T 6 2 ♥ T 9 8 6 5 3 ♦ A ♣ 8 4 3</p>	

Monaco reached 6D which is a fair contract. On the HT opening lead however, the contract has no chance unless declarer is playing with mirrors (rise ace, three rounds of clubs, north having to cover, then A-K of spades, spade ruff, ten of clubs pitching your last heart). In practice declarer played low from dummy and also suffered the ruff for down two, 11 IMPs to Canada who played 3NT at the other table. Canada would take a 106-78 lead at the halfway point.

By the midway point of segment 4, no board had produced more than a 2 IMP swing, until Miles/Korbel went down an extra trick in 1NT x, good for 5 IMPs to Monaco. The first large swing came when both tables arrived in 4S. Wolpert quite reasonably underled an ace early in the play to give declarer a guess with KJ. Declarer went up king and shook the other card on side suit winners. This proved unlucky as declarer had to lose two trumps and a side suit trick elsewhere, so cashing the ace would have led to one down, as occurred at the other table. Canada picked up 5 IMPs when Fantoni made a speculative double holding

♠ 9 8 7 5
 ♥ 3
 ♦ A K 8 7 3
 ♣ Q T 5

After RHO opened Flannery (5-6 hearts, 4 spades), LHO invited, RHO showed at least 3 diamonds, LHO signed off in 3H, RHO bid 4H. The Flannery opener had a super max and even with the defence scoring two diamonds and a diamond ruff, the contract was cold.

The final swing of the segment occurred on the last board. Miles/Korbel were on their way to a good result when a nightmare disaster in the bidding cost Canada 19 IMPs. Monaco led 119-115 with two segments to go, and talk was spreading about a potential huge upset.

Canada scored the first big swing of segment 5.

Board 3. Dealer South. E-W Vulnerable.

<p>♠ T 8 ♥ 9 8 5 ♦ T 6 5 4 2 ♣ A 9 6</p>	<div style="border: 2px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 0 auto; display: flex; flex-direction: column; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> <div style="margin-bottom: 5px;">N</div> <div style="margin-bottom: 5px;">W</div> <div style="margin-bottom: 5px;">E</div> <div style="margin-bottom: 5px;">S</div> </div>	<p>♠ Q 5 ♥ A K J 3 2 ♦ J 9 3 ♣ K Q 3</p> <p>♠ K 4 2 ♥ - ♦ A K Q 8 7 ♣ T 8 7 5 4</p>
	<p>♠ A J 9 7 6 3 ♥ Q T 7 6 4 ♦ - ♣ J 2</p>	

The 3-0 trump break meant 6H was slightly uncomfortable but essentially came down to the spade finesse. With the monarch in front of the ace, 6H was duly bid and made by Monaco. L'Ecuyer/Demuy were more adventurous:

1♠ Pass 2♥ Pass
4♦ Pass 4NT Pass
6♥ Pass 7♥ (!) Pass
Pass Pass

A high diamond was led. With trumps breaking 3-0 and lack of entries to the North hand, declarer needed to score 7 trumps (2 via diamond ruffs) and 6 spade tricks. When the moment of truth arrived, East failed to cover the SQ so there was no guess. +1510 was 11 more IMPs to Canada. Monaco picked up 12 on the very next deal when Miles went one down in a tricky 4H that made at the other table.

Canada struck back a few boards later. Put yourself in declarer's shoes.

Dummy

♠ A 7 4
♥ K 9 8 2
♦ K T 9 2
♣ K 2

Declarer

♠ K Q J
♥ Q T 6
♦ A 8 4
♣ J 7 6 3

You arrive in 3NT after opening 1C. LHO leads the S6, fourth best or second best from a bad suit. You win the ace (RHO dropping the 10) and play a heart to the jack and your queen. The heart ten is taken by RHO's ace, and he returns the spade 9. You win and play a diamond to the king and the ten of diamonds, RHO following low. You decide to win the ace. This is the position:

Dummy

♠ 7
♥ K 9
♦ 9 2
♣ K 2

Declarer

♠ K
 ♥ 6
 ♦ 8
 ♣ J 7 6 3

You need four more tricks; you have 1 spade and 2 hearts ready to cash and either need diamonds 3-3, the club ace onside, or some type of endplay.

You cash a heart, RHO pitching the CT (upside down). You then cash dummy's last heart, RHO pitching a low club. Finally you play dummy's spade and RHO pitches the DQ.


Dummy

♠
 ♥
 ♦ 9 2
 ♣ K 2

Declarer

♠
 ♥
 ♦ 8
 ♣ J 7 6

You are in hand and need just one more trick. You know LHO has two good spades to cash if he gets in. It appears he also has the diamond jack. If his other card was the club ace, he would have claimed by now. You hope he has the queen or a low club, then RHO will be forced to give you a trick at the end to the jack of clubs. After thinking for a good 10 minutes, you play a club and....you've been had:

♠ A 7 4 ♥ K 9 8 2 ♦ K T 9 2 ♣ K 2		♠ T 9 ♥ A J ♦ Q J 6 3 ♣ A T 9 8 5
♠ 8 6 5 3 2 ♥ 7 5 4 3 ♦ 7 5 ♣ Q 4	♠ K Q J ♥ Q T 6 ♦ A 8 4	

♣ J 7 6 3

Not many players would throw away a sure winner in order to save a loser, but Korbel could see what was about to happen (he was getting thrown in with a diamond to allow dummy's CK to score) so he pitched the diamond queen to make it look like he was both avoiding an endplay and creating an entry to Miles' winning spades. Down 1 was worth 12 IMPs to Canada when 3NT made 4 at the other table.

Monaco got 10 IMPs back in 3NT when Korbel led the H7, dummy had K64 and Miles held AT9. Miles had to decide whether Korbel led from QJ87 (play low) or 87xx (win the ace and shift to dummy's weak suit). Miles guess wrong; the other table led the HQ so there were no problems.

Later in the segment Miles/Korbel played 3NT with 24 HCP, a source of tricks, but a side suit of K8xxx in declarer's hand opposite a void. The defence led the suit, setting up the king. After declarer knocked out an ace, the defence needed to take four tricks in the opening leader's suit immediately. The suit was originally 4-4 however, so Canada racked up 7 IMPs as the other table played a partial.

The very next board was kind to Canada as well. Korbel picked up

♠ A Q J 8 3
♥ Q 5 2
♦ -
♣ K Q T 9 6

White against red, RHO opened 1H and Korbel chose to overcall 1S rather than bid Michaels with an "in between" hand. LHO bid 2D, RHO rebid 2H, and Korbel competed with 3C. Unfortunately for Canada, Korbel's two suits were breaking 5-1 and he was about to go for a number. Fortunately though, his LHO held 5 spades and the singleton club, and simply jumped to 4H rather than pass 3C around to partner. Monaco went down 2 in a 5-2 fit in 4H, while L'Ecuyer/Demuy collected a number when the player with Korbel's cards chose to Michaels. Demuy doubled and there would be no escape. 12 IMPs to Canada.

The final board of the segment would bring more joy to Canadian supporters.

Let's put you under the spotlight. You hold:

♠ J 9 7 4 3
♥ K J
♦ 7 5
♣ A J 4 3

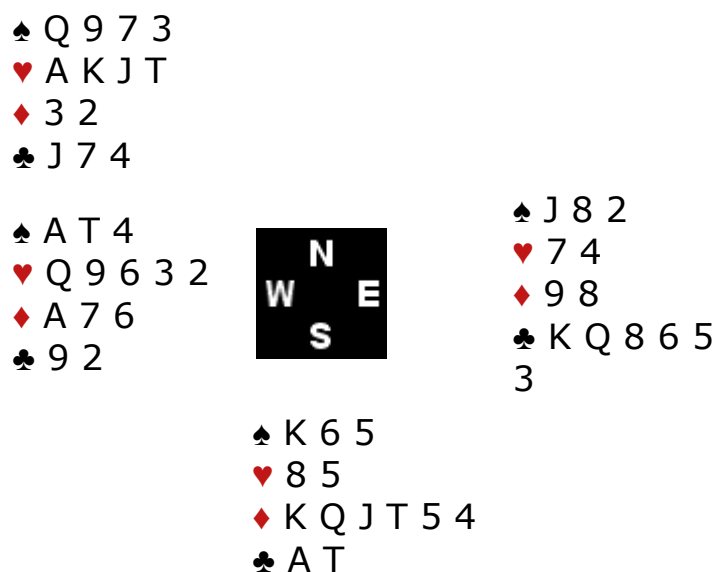
With only the opponent's vulnerable, LHO opens 1D (promising 4+), partner makes a weak jump overcall of 2S, and RHO jumps to 3NT. Do you reflexively bid 4S? Geir Helgemo of Monaco passed, confident in his chances of beating 3NT. After all, declarer likely needs 7 or 8 tricks outside of spades (and if he can

score those tricks, you might be -800 in 4Sx). You pass, and 3NT becomes the final contract. What do you lead?

It doesn't seem like much of a problem. Who wouldn't lead a spade? The 4 if you play 4th best. However, this may present a problem. You know your side has a pile of spades, but partner doesn't. After all, you passed 3NT, right? The correct lead must be the jack, which clears up the position for partner. In real life, Helgemo led the 4, his partner held the expected KQTxxx and played the queen; declarer ducked, and worried declarer held AJx, the defender shifted. Declarer scooped up 9 tricks (yes, his stopper of Ax opposite a void was a bit thin) for +600 and 7 IMPs to Canada when L'Ecuyer/Demuy achieved the "par" result of -300 in 5Sx, sacrificing over 5D. The 2S overcaller also had a chance to save Monaco by playing the ST at trick one.

Canada won the high scoring segment 57-35 and would take a 172-154 lead into the sixth and deciding segment. Could Canada realize the dream of scoring one of the biggest upsets in recent memory?

It was not to be. Canada's 18 IMP lead was gone in 2 hands. Monaco poured on 44 unanswered IMPs in the first 6 hands, and while Canada was only down 26, with the momentum on the Monacan side the match was effectively over. Monaco would add another 14 IMPs to win the final segment 58-0 and the match by 40 IMPs. Were there hands Canada could have done better on in the decisive segment? Of course. Could they have done enough to win? Maybe. Monaco played at the top of their game when it mattered most, similar to their final quarter destruction of the Nickell team in the 2012 Spingold.



When Canada sat North-South, they played a quiet 3D on a slight misunderstanding that kept them out of game. Do you want to be in 3NT on the club nine lead, after RHO doubled an artificial club bid (and at some tables, LHO overcalled 1H)? At first glance, it seems easy – 2 clubs, 5 diamonds, at least 2 hearts, maybe a spade, gets you well past 9 tricks. Upon review, it is not so easy – how do you intend to return to your hand to cash your diamonds when West holds up his ace one time? Maybe you should take

heart finesses instead of playing diamonds? That would still leave you short of 9 tricks, but we're getting warmer. Demuy spotted the winning line in about 5 seconds (but unfortunately he was playing in diamonds). Duck the opening club lead (giving up your natural second club trick), win the second club, finesse a heart, return to a diamond (LHO must duck), take another heart finesse, cash dummy's last two hearts (pitching a diamond and a spade from hand), then play diamonds. When LHO wins, he has no more clubs; he can cash one long heart but then must give you access to your hand via spades. Canada did not lead clubs against 3NT at the other table so Canada lost 11 IMPs, just one hand where Canada may have done better.

That spelled the end for Canada's Open team in at the 2012 World Bridge Games. Officially they would go down in the record books tied for 9th place. While lady luck found her way onto Canada's side numerous times in the round robin and playoffs, one nightmare segment against one of the best teams in the world proved to be the difference. Everyone is looking forward to the 2013 Bermuda Bowl in Bali, Indonesia where Canada will take another shot at world glory.