

bridge Canada

TEAM WILLIS, 2026 CANADIAN TEAM CHAMPIONSHIPS.

L TO R MARC-ANDRÉ FOURCAUDOT, NIC L'ÉCUYER,
DAVID WILLIS, JEFF BLOND, BRAD BART.

See full story on Page 10.



CANADIAN TEAM KE WINS THE YOUTH NORTH AMERICAN BRIDGE CHAMPIONSHIP (YNABC) IN MINNEAPOLIS.

L TO R WILSON HALL, CASPER GU, SHELLEY BURNS,
RUDY CHENG, NINA KE.

See full story in Junior update, page 26.



THE CANADIAN BRIDGE FEDERATION

The mission of the Canadian Bridge Federation is to promote bridge within Canada and protect and advance the national interests of Canadian bridge, including the selection and support of Canadian bridge teams and players for international bridge competition.



07



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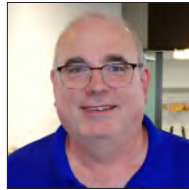
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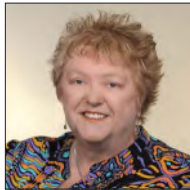
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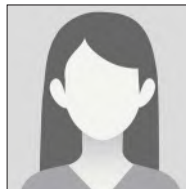
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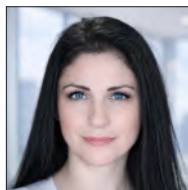
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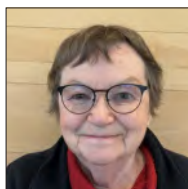
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EDITOR'S MESSAGE

The Goods

I WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

I have been having technical issues with my editor email account. So please forward any, and all feedback to kimmie85257@hotmail.com. I welcome any ideas you may have for future articles.

2026 CANADIAN BRIDGE CHAMPIONSHIPS

Well another successful year for the Canadian Bridge Federation Team trials. Penticton was a great venue, and the weather cooperated. Inside this issue you will find articles written by the winning teams (except the CSTC winners), and the very exciting hands that contributed to their successes!

Alas, there is no representing Canada in my crystal ball, at least for the near future. But I am proud to have competed, and am very hopeful that the highly skilled teams who are going to Poland in August, will represent Canadian Bridge in a great way. Good luck all!! Coverage of Canadian teams will be in the **December issue of Bridge Canada**.

MEET... MARIELLE DECELLES-BRETNALL

Get to know this multi-faceted, talented CBF Board member in this issue!

JUNIOR BRIDGE IN CANADA FOCUS

Again, thank you Casper Gu for the wonderful articles on Canadian Junior players and events! Also, congratulations to Casper Gu, Wilson Hall, Rudy Cheng and Nina Ke, who won the 2026 National Youth Open Swiss Teams as an all-Canadian team! Well done!!

QUEBEC CITY, 2027!

Put it your calendars: The Canadian Bridge Championships will start May 19th in beautiful Quebec City. As much as Penticton is scenic, it is hard to compete in the majesty and history that is Quebec City. C'est une occasion de pratiquer mon français! Please refer to the CBF website for January and February qualification dates.

There is an event for every CBF member, regardless of their level! Consider participating! See more in the CBF Eh! Article.

OOPS! I DID IT AGAIN!

My 4th book, *Winning Bidding Strategies* is now published, and available for purchase. For more information, please see page 49.

Neil Kimelman
Bridge Canada Managing Editor



Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet. Only through experience of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened, ambition inspired, and success achieved." This emphasizes that challenges are essential for personal growth and achievement.

Helen Keller



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

As I write this column, I am preparing to play in the **World Championships** in **Katowice, Poland**. This year is an "Open" year where there is no qualification or restriction as to whom you team up with, so I am making the most of the opportunity to play against some of the best players in the world!

I'm playing in the Mixed Championships with my regular partner Kelvin Raywood, and we have teamed up with two French pairs. I'm also playing with a new partner Paul Janicki who is on our CBF Board, and we have teamed up with a French pair and a Romanian pair.

I'm sharing this with you especially to encourage others to be brave in entering competitions against those whom you might feel are much better than you. How better to improve your game than to test yourself against the best? Remember, **Bridge is a journey...**

I am excited about our second annual **Celebrity Auction**, and I am reaching out to **top players worldwide** to be a part of this exciting event by volunteering to offer a game or to play in our Celebrity game. Please go to cbf.ca to sign up! We appreciate your support.

We are continuing with our regular and new initiatives, and I would like to acknowledge our hard-working Board for their dedication and commitment to helping to grow this game and in helping to offer wonderful Canadian events to players of all abilities. I'm very happy to welcome **Kathy McDonald** from Kingston, Ontario to our Board, as a Director at Large: she brings experience as a Club Manager, Tournament Director and Bridge enthusiast!

Shelley Burns
President@cbf.ca

Katowice, Poland



CBF Eh!

WHAT'S GOIN' ON

- **2027 Celebrity Classic.** We are ecstatic to announce our 2nd annual worldwide community building event that will culminate with a Celebrity game on Monday March 8, 2027 @ 1pm ET.

Our inaugural 2026 event was a resounding success that raised a net C\$20K to support CBF operations, but more importantly, it engaged players worldwide with the unique opportunity to play with and against world class bridge experts.

The auction opens on November 1st, 2026, with “**buy now**” opportunities.

Scan QR code or visit cbf.ca for details.



- **Attention top players and Bridge Celebrities:**
Please sign up now to offer a lesson, or to play in the celebrity game – go to cbf.ca.
- **New Website.** Sometime in September, we will launch our new and improved website (thank you Sondra!). Same address, www.cbf.ca, but new presentation. Highlights: **Events Calendar**, and **Partnership Matching** for all events.

CONGRATULATIONS TO...

- Everyone who participated in our **2026 Canadian Bridge Championships** in Penticton this past June.
- Special congratulations to our youth, the **ACBL Educational Foundation** champions:



(L-R): Swiss Teams winners (Wilson Hall, Casper Gu, Rudy Cheng, Nina Ke), Shelley Burns, Pairs winners (Zachariah Willie, William Lui)

ONGOING

- **Maple Leaf Games** (all levels) on Real Bridge – every Friday @ 7pm ET.
Set up a RealBridge account and join any Friday!
- **Team League** (Open & B flight) on Real Bridge – Thursdays @ 8pm ET starting October 1st. Sign up at cbf.ca

UPCOMING

- **“Erin Berry” Rookie-Master** game at your local club on Tuesday October 13. Ask your club manager to run this special game at any time slot that suits your Club.
- **Mixed Pairs** (NEW EVENT) on Real Bridge - two-day event on November 7/8.

GET INVOLVED

- **Zonal Director.** Elections will be held for Directors of Zones III and VI with three-year terms commencing January 1st. Deadline for nominations is September 15th.
- **Directors @ Large.** We welcome expressions of interest from members who seek an appointment to contribute directly to the governance and growth of bridge in Canada. We currently have one position available.
- Contact our Elections Officer admin@cbf.ca for information.

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- Opt in with your ACBL membership, or signup/renew at www.cbf.ca for C\$25/year, or \$65/3 years.
- Join in and be a part of the Canadian bridge scene, because community does not build itself!

KEEP IN TOUCH

- website – www.cbf.ca
- emails – admin@cbf.ca; president@cbf.ca





DANNY MILES HONOURED: FINALIST FOR IBPA 2025 PLAY OF THE HAND AWARD

By Neil Kimelman

Danny Miles is a finalist for the International Bridge Press Association (IBPA) 2025 Award, for best played bridge hand. This prestigious honour may be a first for a Canadian player.

The hand occurred during the 2025 CNTCs semi-final match between FELDMAN and LUO. I wrote the following article about Danny's amazing play, for the June 2025 IBPA magazine. Here is an excerpt from this article:

2025 Canadian Bridge Championships

Team Feldman (Jason Feldman, Danny Miles, Jacob Freeman, Daniel Lavee, Jeff Smith, and Fred Pollack) emerged from the original quarterfinalists to capture the Sam Gold trophy as the CNTC Open Champions, beating Luo (Jianfeng Luo, Shigang Liang, Kai Zhou, Alex Hong, Yan Wang, and Edward Xu) in the final, 219-157, over 112 boards.

This play problem took place in the second quarter of Feldman's match against the Luo team (Jaiwei Luo, Fengming Chen, Qian Ren and Tiger Hu).

Danny Miles and Jason Feldman bid up to a nice 7♥ contract. The full deal:

Feldman

♠ 96
♥ K32
♦ AKJ1097
♣ K2

Miles

♠ AKJ
♥ AQ1096
♦ 5
♣ AQ106

The bidding:

Miles	Feldman
1♥	2♦
3♣ ¹	3♥
3NT ²	4♠ ³
5♣ ⁴	5♦ ⁵
5♠ ⁶	7♥ ¹
Pass	

1. Extra shape/strength.
2. Serious slam try, spade cue bid.
3. RKC.
4. 3 keycards.
5. ♥Q ask.
6. I have the ♥Q and ♠K.

The grand slam depends on little more than not losing a trump trick. West didn't take very long before deciding on a low spade lead, which went to the 10 and Jack.

Miles considered the lead, a very odd choice, leading away from a queen into the spade cuebid. A trump would be the "standard" lead against a grand slam. Backing his judgement that West had either one or four trumps, Miles cashed the ace of hearts and continued with the ten, running it when West followed low!

Plus 2210 was good for a 20-IMP pickup on the way to a 139-91 victory.

Selection and Awards Ceremony

The winners will be decided during a two day Congress in China, November 9-10, 2026. If selected, Danny (and myself as journalist) will be invited, and honoured, at the 2025 Awards Ceremony, which will be held in Hainan China, Feb. 27 - March 2, 2027.

2026 CANADIAN NATIONAL TEAM CHAMPIONSHIPS

By Brad Bart

Welcome back to the CNTC, Canada's premier team event! Let's get right to some hands, shall we? I'll give you three, starting with a high stakes opening lead problem.

1. As West you hold ♠A98 ♥53 ♦K1095 ♣Q1072 against this bouncy, uninformative auction:

Both vul, IMPs.

West	North	East	South
—	—	Pass	4♥
Pass	6♥	Pass	Pass
Pass			

What's your poison?

2. Next, with ♠KQ752 ♥K9 ♦J ♣KQ1063 you open 1♠ and the opponents quickly sail into 5♦. Partner doubles, and leads the ♠J. This is what you see:

E/W Vul, IMPs.

West	North	East	South
—	Pass	1♠	4♦
Pass	5♦	Pass	Pass
Dbl	All Pass		

Dummy

♠ A1086
♥ A753
♦ Q532
♣ 2

West

♠
♥
♦
♣

East

♠ KQ752
♥ K9
♦ J
♣ KQ1063

South

♠
♥
♦
♣

Declarer wins trick one in dummy, cashes the ♦Q (partner follows), and leads the ♠6. Plan your defense.

3. Finally, you are on play in 4♥ after a transfer sequence.

Both vul, IMPs.

West	North	East	South
—	Pass	Pass	2NT
Pass	3♦	Pass	3♥
Pass	3NT	Pass	4♣
Pass	4♥	Pass	Pass
Pass			

Dummy

♠ 109
♥ Q9842
♦ K
♣ Q7642

South

♠ AK75
♥ A107
♦ AQ95
♣ K8

The opening lead is the ♠Q. Plan the play.

Before I share what happened on those, let's go back to the beginning, shall we?

For those unfamiliar, the CNTCs are held annually in two stages: a complete round-robin for three days, leading to a knockout phase for the top eight qualifiers. In the post-Covid years, the round-robin has largely been conducted on the RealBridge platform to mixed reviews. I admit to being a bit old school on this myself. I prefer to hold real cards and play at a real table in a tournament environment where there are fewer pet birds, cell phones, or spouses to chirp their intrusions. But the plusses are undeniable. The biggest is the reduced travel costs for the players. I believe this has been the strongest factor in boosting recent participation, which seems to be holding steady at around 16 teams.

The second biggest plus is that the same hands are played at all tables, so you can compare your actions against what everyone else did. That led me to report this hand, problem one from earlier where the opponents went 4♥-6♥ and you held ♠A98 ♥53 ♦K1095 ♣Q1072, four viable suits to lead from. The reason this board stood out was that at all other tables, the auction was some variation of 3♥-4♥. In other words, this was the only 1 of 16 tables to bid slam. Decision time: What would you lead?

Conventional wisdom says to lead your ace, but this doesn't work today when you spike dummy's source of tricks.

[RR8, Board 29, hands rotated] Both vul, IMPs.

Dummy

♠ QJ1063
♥ A94
♦ AJ3
♣ AJ

West

♠ A98
♥ 53
♦ K1095
♣ Q1072

East

♠ 542
♥ 2
♦ Q742
♣ K9653

South

♠ K7
♥ KQJ10876
♦ 86
♣ 84

Caplan**West**

—
Pass
Pass

North

—
6♥

East

Pass
Pass

Kujirai**South**

4♥
Pass

Credit to my former teammate Mark Caplan, who has a great sense of timing for such jumps to slam. He earned 13 IMPs for his team.

[RR15, Board 51]

Here's another hand from the round-robin, again dealing with pre-empting opponents. Red against white, you hold ♠Q10 ♥A984 ♦AJ82 ♣A94. They open 3♣ on your left, pass, pass to you. Your call.

**Bridge....is not
a game of chance!**



My partner Jeff Blond held these cards and elected to pass, citing that 3NT was a little too dangerous. He was not alone: Three others holding his cards also went quietly versus the four that bid 3NT. Unfortunately, the hand was:

Dummy		
♠	A43	
♥	KQJ65	
♦	973	
♣	87	
West		East
♠	KJ98752	♠ Q10
♥	73	♥ A984
♦	K54	♦ AJ82
♣	5	♣ A94
South		
♠	6	
♥	102	
♦	Q106	
♣	KQJ10632	

Not only did we go minus (3♣ was cold), but it turns out we could make 4♠! It was one of those situations where one hand held a lot of values but little shape, but the other held the complement: a lot of shape but few values. Getting those hands to come together can often be difficult when the opponents preempt. But maybe I had enough for a 3♠ overcall. Would you have? Of those holding my cards, five chose to bid 3♠ versus four that passed. The danger of course is that partner might be expecting more than a mere seven count from your vul 3♠ bid. Indeed, one of those five pairs landed in slam after bidding 3♠.

At the other table, teammates Nic L'Écuyer and Marc-André Fourcaudot (Fork) took to thievery. Nic responded 3♥ with the North cards, raised to 4♥ by Fork. Nobody had a double, so that was down four and –200, a very cheap save against 4♠.

As the round robin was about to conclude, the top four qualifiers were pretty much decided with one match to go. But amazingly all but one team had a mathematical chance to hit the top 8! When the smoke cleared the leaderboard was:

194.92 GARTAGANIS
172.64 WILLIS
170.82 TODD
169.35 SHI YAN
153.88 BRENTNALL
150.82 BATES
149.89 BUCHANAN
144.80 ROCHE

... but 8th place Roche led the 15th place team by only 7.65 VPs — a very tight finish for everyone involved.

KNOCKOUT PHASE

The playoff phase was contested for four days in picturesque Penticton British Columbia, alongside their fabulous regional bridge tournament. Our team — WILLIS (Brad Bart, Jeff Blond, Marc-André Fourcaudot, Nic L'Écuyer, David Willis), a largely Montreal-based team but with David seconded to work in London and myself rooted in Vancouver — finished 2nd in the round-robin and would thus have the 2nd choice of opponents from 5th-8th. We picked the Alberta-based BATES (Steve Bates, Bernie Lambert, Yi Peng Mai, Xiao Dong Zhao) and won comfortably 214-86. Here's one hand where Jeff's aggressive style generated a nice swing.

[QF1, Board 2] N/S vul, IMPs:

Dummy		
♠	A8	
♥	Q43	
♦	J82	
♣	AQ743	
West (me)		East
♠	Q109	♠ J6532
♥	J106	♥ 7
♦	K10	♦ AQ9764
♣	109852	♣ J
South		
♠	K74	
♥	AK9852	
♦	53	
♣	K6	

<u>Bart</u>		<u>Blond</u>	
West	North	East	South
—	—	2♠ ¹	3♥
Pass	3♠	4♦	Pass
4♠	Dbl	Pass	5♥
Pass	Pass	Pass	

1. 5+ spades, 4+ minor, 4-10 HCP

We play a 2♠ opener as a preemptive 2-suiter. (2♦ shows a weak two in a major.) His bid promises only 5-4, so when the bidding allowed a convenient opportunity to show his 5-6, Jeff jumped at it! With the diamonds running and trumps 3-2, the 4♠ save was going to show a good profit — down one on a tapping defense.

But South took the push and caught a nice dummy. On the ♦K lead, Jeff overtook with the ♦A, a nice play to cater to my holding a singleton, then cashed the ♦Q and led a third diamond to deliver the uppercut. Down one for +100 was a 12 IMP pickup versus +620 at the other table.

The other quarterfinals went similarly for the balance of the top 4. Winnipeggers BRETNALL (Marielle Brentnall, Rasim Sari, Ganesan Sekhar, Mike Shaw) fell to GARTAGANIS 190-101. Edmontonians BUCHANAN (Chris Buchanan, Peter Jones, Vincent Lambert, Allan Terplawy) trailed by 60 at halftime to TODD, but rallied back 34 IMPs in the 3rd quarter to put themselves within striking distance. But TODD shut the door in the 4th: 167-122. And finally SHI YAN made Victorians ROCHE (Doug Fraser, Sandra Fraser, James Galand, Daniel Lyder, Gerry McCully, Michael Roche) cry uncle after 3 quarters, their lead being 180-66.

For the semifinals, GARTAGANIS was permitted their choice of opponent, and they picked Winnipeggers TODD (Doug Fisher, Ray Hornby, Neil Kimelman, Bob Todd). It was a one-sided affair to the tune of 166-48 IMPs after 3 sets; TODD tapped out early. We were left to face SHI YAN (Alex Hong, Jianfeng Luo, Rock Shi Yan, Yan Wang, Edward Xu, Zheng Zhang), four members from the Toronto area and two from Vancouver. Shi Yan

himself is no stranger to the Canadian teams, having won the CNTC in 2014; the others have been knocking at the door in recent years. In particular Hong, Wang and Xu were runners up in the recent 3-day NABC Swiss in San Francisco.

Our semifinal was also one-sided, but not in the way our team had hoped. SHI YAN took an 18-IMP lead in the 1st quarter, and would build on it through the 3rd. Even when we thought we had a decent card in the 2nd set, it was only good enough to produce a 3-IMP win. One of the key boards from the 2nd segment:

[SF2, Board 20] Both vul, IMPs

		North	
		♠ 83	
		♥ 52	
		♦ K962	
		♣ AJ853	
West		East	
♠ K52		♠ AQJ974	
♥ QJ10964		♥ AK	
♦ 7		♦ AJ8	
♣ 762		♣ Q4	
		South	
		♠ 106	
		♥ 873	
		♦ Q10543	
		♣ K109	
		<u>Fork</u>	
West	North	East	South
2♦ ¹	Pass	2NT ²	Pass
3♦ ³	Pass	6♥	Pass
Pass	Pass		

1. multi - weak 2 in either major
2. asking for description
3. hearts, not a minimum

Perhaps not the most scientific of auctions, but there's something to be said for Nic jumping to slam in a spot like this. In one universe, partner might have club control, and then you are probably at the mercy of the spade hook to make. In another universe — ahem, this

universe — you are cold on the lead. With nothing to go on, South led a trump and thereafter 13 tricks were easy. +1460. Credit to Fork for not woodenly showing a min with his good six count.

The other table saw the less aspirational auction 2♥ -4♥. We didn't feel the need to lead the unsupported ♣A against a 4-level contract, but I'd like to think we might have done so against 2♥-6♥. Regardless, with +1460 on the ledger we were going to win 13 IMPs on any lead.

We entered the final segment trailing SHI YAN by 27 IMPs. Many have asked what happened in that final segment to turn the match around so sharply. All I can say is that the cards were very friendly to us when we needed it. Jeff and I had a monster card, including bidding two pushy slams that made, capitalizing on some opportunities from the opponents, and landing on our feet in a couple dicey spots. And we needed every cent of it to finally take the lead during the comparison of the very last board — one of our slam swings — to win the match 132-125.

But alas it wasn't the clean set I thought it was. Nic said that I could've made one of the games in which I went down. Here's the hand:

[SF4, Board 21, hands rotated] E/W Vul, IMPs:

Dummy

♠ A1086
♥ A753
♦ Q532
♣ 2

South

♠ 43
♥ 104
♦ AK109874
♣ 97

After two passes, East opened 1♠. I overcalled 4♦ and Jeff raised to 5♦. Pass, pass, double by West. The opening lead was the ♠J. I could not avoid a loser in each side suit, so down one and -100 for a push. But Nic suggested that my spade spots were good enough

to generate a discard. I double-checked my math that the outstanding ♠KQ97 had dummy's ♠1086 surrounded. I still didn't see it.

"There is a chance," Nic explained, "if you lead a low spade from dummy." This was the full layout:

Dummy

♠ A1086
♥ A753
♦ Q532
♣ 2

West

♠ J9
♥ QJ862
♦ 6
♣ AJ854

East

♠ KQ752
♥ K9
♦ J
♣ KQ1063

South

♠ 43
♥ 104
♦ AK109874
♣ 97

This was problem 2 that I posed to you earlier. If you cash a diamond and lead a spade towards the closed hand, East has to guess whether partner led from ♠J9 or the singleton ♠J. Guess wrong and they crash with partner's ♠9. So humbling. There's always something to learn at bridge.

The final boss would be the formidable team GARTAGANIS (Judith Gartaganis, Nicholas Gartaganis, David Sabourin, Jeffrey Smith). The Gartaganii are hall of famers from Calgary; Sabourin and Smith are future hall of famers from Ottawa; all have won this event multiple times.

Even though our team held the lead at the end of every segment, the match was close the whole way. I mean, it looked like it was going gangbusters for us when we jumped out to a 42 IMP lead after the first two sets, but then GARTAGANIS hit back hard in the third, erasing all but 8 of our lead.

The teams remained in touch the entire way, despite the copious opportunities for swings. Don't get me wrong, we weren't trying to swing on purpose. But with

Jeff and my weak notrump, the Gartaganii's strong club and Sabourin-Smith's aggressively stanced Polish club, the final tally swelled to a whopping 306-242 after 120 boards. A few match highlights before closing this out.

[F7, Board 3, hands rotated] Vul N/S, IMPs.

		North	
		♠ AKQ5	
		♥ AK9	
		♦ 106	
		♣ K872	
West		East	
♠ 964		♠ J2	
♥ Q5		♥ 742	
♦ AK8743		♦ QJ9	
♣ 106		♣ AJ543	
		South	
		♠ 10873	
		♥ J10863	
		♦ 52	
		♣ Q9	
Fork		Willis	
West	North	East	South
—	—	Pass	Pass
1♦	Dbl	2♣	Pass
2♦	Dbl	3♦	3♥
Pass	Pass	Pass	

Willis threw a spanner in the works with his 2♣ bid. Then another with his raise to 3♦ to see them stop short. -170. Meanwhile...

		Blond		Bart	
		North		East	
		South		South	
		♠ —		♠ —	
		♥ —		♥ —	
		♦ —		♦ —	
		♣ —		♣ —	
West	North	East	South	West	North
—	—	Pass	Pass	—	—
3♦	Dbl	4♦	Pass	3♦	Dbl
Pass	Dbl	Pass	4♥	Pass	Dbl
Pass	Pass	Pass		Pass	Pass

The heart game isn't hopeless, but it isn't odds on, needing to pick up both hearts and spades without loss. But the layout was super friendly, and that was +620 and 10 IMPs to WILLIS. Next, a 4♥ contract played by Nick Gartaganis (the third problem from earlier).

[F5, Board 10, hands rotated]

		Dummy	
		♠ 109	
		♥ Q9842	
		♦ K	
		♣ Q7642	
		South	
		♠ AK75	
		♥ A107	
		♦ AQ95	
		♣ K8	

Nick won the spade, unblocked the ♦K, and led a club to the ♣K. That would not only set up the ♣Q as a side winner, but would enable a club ruff for his game-going trick no matter how trumps broke. If everything behaved, that is. But West won and returned a club, ruffed by East! A spade came back, and Nick won, cashed the two top diamonds, and ruffed a spade. This was the position with dummy to lead:

		Dummy	
		♠ —	
		♥ Q984	
		♦ —	
		♣ 7	
		South	
		♠ 7	
		♥ A107	
		♦ 9	
		♣ —	

A club was led and Nick watched East's discard. It was a spade, so his next move was to ruff a diamond in dummy, both following. (If it instead had been a diamond, he would have ruffed a spade.) East was now counted out: he started with 4 spades, 4 diamonds, 1 club ... and therefore 4 hearts. Nick therefore called for dummy's *queen of hearts*, a play that would pick up all the 1-4 breaks except singleton ♥K with West. A well-earned +620.

		Dummy	
		♠ 109	
		♥ Q9842	
		♦ K	
		♣ Q7642	
West		East	
♠ QJ2		♠ 8643	
♥ 5		♥ KJ63	
♦ J832		♦ 10764	
♣ AJ953		♣ 10	
		South	
		♠ AK75	
		♥ A107	
		♦ AQ95	
		♣ K8	

Last a slam deal from the final segment, the themes being preemption and hand evaluation.

[F8, Board 26, hands rotated] Both vul, IMPs

		Dummy	
		♠ KQ105	
		♥ A86	
		♦ AJ9532	
		♣ —	
West		East	
♠ J6		♠ 32	
♥ Q75		♥ K1094	
♦ 7		♦ Q84	
♣ K1076532		♣ AQJ4	
		South	
		♠ A9874	
		♥ J32	
		♦ K106	
		♣ 98	
		Blond	Bart
West	North	East	South
—	1♦	Pass	1♠
3♣	4♣	5♣	5♦
Pass	5♥	Pass	5♠
Pass	6♠	Pass	Pass

Pass

Jeff applied a full upgrade to his club void and strong controls: his hand was working overtime. And with my 5th spade and prime diamond filler, I was more than happy to cooperate. Jeff's 5♥ was an attempt to keep a grand slam in the picture. He was right: 13 tricks were available! But when I tapped the brakes, we settled for 6♠ and +1460.

L'Écuyer

West	North	East	South
—	1♦ ¹	Pass	1♠
Pass	4♣ ²	Pass	4♠
Pass	Pass	Pass	

1. Precision style.
2. Splinter raise.

In context the 4♣ rebid was capped at 15HCPs, making it difficult to go higher. Nic led a heart at trick one, and when the ♦Q didn't fall under the ♦AK, that was +620 and 13 IMPs to WILLIS.

I will conclude first by mentioning this was the first CNTC win for David Willis. And it's about freaking time! The rest of us have previously won somewhere between 2 and ∞ times, so I guess the cap is now ∞ + 1. (Nic has the most number of CNTC wins in history, now a perfect 10. WTG Nic!)

Second, I would like to give a hearty shout-out to Nic, Fork and David. This was my first time teaming with you, and it was superb. You made me feel very welcome — Y'all are great guys and fine players. Last, but not least is my partner Jeff who played amazing. You delivered time and again over 420 boards over 7 days — Phew! Thank you my man for putting up with me through the best and the worst of it. Though our team is not heading to Poland, we wish Nic all the luck as he and the star studded Street team take on the world in the Rosenblum.

We will see you in 2027 in Québec City! Go Habs go!



THE 2026 CANADIAN MIXED TEAMS

By Judith and Nicholas Gartaganis

L to R, Cindy He, Yimei Cao, Nick Gartagnis, Judy Gartaganis, Jeffrey Smith, Kismet Fung, Edward Xu, Yan Wang.

The 2026 Canadian Mixed Team Championship (CMTC) playoffs were held in Penticton this past June. The thirteen team round robin was played online in January. The Kersey team dominated while our team (alongside Kismet Fung and Jeffrey Smith) finished in third place out of eight qualifiers.

After defeating the Demme and Fourcaudot teams in the preliminary playoff rounds, we faced the Xu team in the final. Team Xu (Edward Xu, Yimei Cao, Cindy He, Yan Wang) had finished the round robin in second place. At halftime our lead was a slender 2 IMPs. As in the prior playoff matches our team surged in the third quarter and came away with a comfortable win. This was Kismet’s second CMTC win and eighth Canadian championship title (6 CWTC wins). Jeffrey was winning his first CMTC and seventh championship (1 COPC win and 5 CNTC wins). Each of Jeff’s wins was with a different partner!

In a lengthy competition, you will be faced with many challenges, especially in the bidding. Consistently choosing reasonable, even if not the best, actions is the key to success. Here are a few hands to test your bridge judgement.

1. At favourable vulnerability you hold (East):
 ♠Q10 ♥1062 ♦A765 ♣J1073

North	East	South	West
—	—	1♠	DBL
3♠ ¹	Pass	4♠	DBL
Pass	?		
	1. weak raise		

WHAT IS YOUR CALL?

2. At favourable vulnerability you hold (West):
 ♠J109432 ♥A ♦KJ10983 ♣—

North	East	South	West
1♥	2♣	2NT ¹	3♠
4♥	4♠	Pass	Pass
DBL	All Pass		

1. 4-card+ in hearts, limit raise or better

The ♥10 is led, South plays the King and you win the Ace, partner having produced this dummy:
 ♠A6 ♥832 ♦Q2 ♣KJ7542

There has been a lot of bidding. Your partner has shown tremendous faith in you by raising to 4♠ with ♠A6. What is your plan for the trump suit?

3. At unfavourable vulnerability you hold (West):

♠A87 ♥7 ♦AK10652 ♣J106

North	East	South	West
1♥	Pass	4♠?	

WHAT IS YOUR CALL?

4. With no one vulnerable you hold:

♠987 ♥AKQJ53 ♦AK ♣K9

You open a strong, artificial 1♣ and hear an artificial, negative 1♦ from partner, showing 0-7 HCP. You decide to force to game and roll out 2♣ (artificial control ask). You discover that partner has one King. Your side is in a game-forcing auction and your options are to start showing your heart suit at the three-level or to leap to game. Your partner would be declarer in a heart contract since 2♥ was the response to show one control. How do you proceed?

5. With no one vulnerable you hold (North):

♠73 ♥J1076 ♦Q8 ♣AKQ105

North	East	South	West
—	—	—	3♦
Pass	Pass	3♠	Pass
?			

WHAT IS YOUR CALL?

6. With no one vulnerable you hold (South):

♠KQJ62 ♥Q ♦AJ6532 ♣7

North	East	South	West
—	—	—	1♣
Pass	1♥	1♠	DBL ¹
2♣ ²	Pass	4♠	All Pass

1. 3-card heart support

2. 3-card limit raise in spades

The ♦10 is led, and you run this to your ♦J RHO playing the ♦7. Partner's hand:

♠A43 ♥K1043 ♦K8 ♣J862

Can you take advantage of this favourable lead?

QUIZ RESULTS

1. At favourable vulnerability you hold (East):

♠Q10 ♥1062 ♦A765 ♣J1073

North	East	South	West
—	—	1♠	DBL
3♠ ¹	Pass	4♠	DBL
Pass	?		

1. weak raise

Passing will earn you -590. Partner's hand is:

♠— ♥KQ54 ♦QJ103 ♣AKQ96

At the table East chose 4NT (two places to play) and the final contract was 5♣. With the ♠K offside and the ♥AJ7 over the ♥KQ, the result was -50. At the other table 4♠ made so we gained 10 IMPs.

2. At favourable vulnerability you hold (West):

♠J109432 ♥A ♦KJ10983 ♣—

North	East	South	West
1♥	2♣	2NT ¹	3♠
4♥	4♠	Pass	Pass
DBL	All Pass		

1. 4-card+ in hearts, limit raise+

The ♥10 is led, South plays the King and you win the Ace, partner having produced this dummy:

♠A6 ♥832 ♦Q2 ♣KJ7542

Declarer opted to run the ♠J and lost to the ♠Q. At this point if the spades are 4-1 and the opponents opt to return hearts you will lose control. However, the return was a diamond, threatening a ruff. Luckily, there was no ruff to be had and, in fact, the spades were 3-2 with both honours behind the ♠A6 so any line succeeds.

Plus 590 produced a gain of 9 IMPs because at the other table the contract was 3♠ making with an overtrick.

3. At unfavourable vulnerability you hold (West):

♠A87 ♥7 ♦AK10652 ♣J106

North	East	South	West
1♥	Pass	4♠	?

At the table West chose to pass and found out to his dismay that making 5♦ was easy. Partner held:

♠Q ♥AJ854 ♦J943 ♣Q53

There were no bad breaks or ruffs available so you collected a paltry +100. This amounted to a loss of 11 IMPs because, when South chose a less aggressive response to 1♥ holding eight spades, the opponents had no trouble reaching 5♦.

4. Board 14 – Finals (Session 1) With no one vulnerable you hold:

♠987 ♥AKQJ53 ♦AK ♣K9

After your strong opening, you discover that partner has 0-7 HCP with one King, and it is your call.

The soon-to-be declarer chose 3NT with some trepidation, hoping for a favourable club lead or to find the ♠A in front of partner's King. Unfortunately he had to deal with an unhelpful heart lead. Dummy tabled:

♠K ♥87 ♦Q108532 ♣J762

Without much hope, declarer cashed eight red-suit winners. Both opponents came under discarding pressure and made a couple of ill-advised pitches. They did not capitalize, allowing the ♣K to score at trick 13. At the other table, 4♥ was the final contract and, even though a club lead gave declarer her ninth trick, a trump switch doomed that contract. + 10 IMPs.

5. With no one vulnerable you hold (North):

♠73 ♥J1076 ♦Q8 ♣AKQ105

North	East	South	West
—	—	—	3♦
Pass	Pass	3♠	Pass
?			

The spade support was anaemic, but the game was IMPs after all, so North chose to bid game. This was the wrong time to do anything but pass. Partner's hand was:

♠KQJ642 ♥K92 ♦6 ♣J83

After the ♣9 lead East was able to give West two club ruffs. Your teammates came through, racking up a nifty +400 when East craftily bid 3NT over partner's 3♦ opening. She was able to score seven diamond tricks to go with the two major suit Aces. Had poor South put his X-ray vision to work, the club lead would have taught East a lesson. Our team picked up the game swing.

6. With no one vulnerable you hold (South):

♠KQJ62 ♥Q ♦AJ6532 ♣7

North	East	South	West
—	—	—	1♣
Pass	1♥	1♠	DBL ¹
2♣ ²	Pass	4♠	All Pass

1. 3-card heart support
2. 3-card limit raise in spades

The ♦10 is led, and you run this to your ♦J RHO playing the ♦7. Partner's hand:

♠A43 ♥K1043 ♦K8 ♣J862

The lead allows you to protect against bad breaks in both spades and diamonds. Cash the ♠K and play a diamond to the King. If either opponent ruffs and plays clubs you are in control. Play another round of diamonds and ruff with the ♠A, draw trumps and claim 10 tricks. If either opponent refuses to ruff the second round of diamonds you can draw trumps and concede a diamond.

You didn't have to get all these hands right to win the CMTC, but each good decision bolsters confidence, not to mention the plus column on the scorecard.



2026 CANADIAN WOMEN'S TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP REPORT

By Sondra Blank

Every great bridge victory probably starts with months of partnership practice, detailed system discussions, and careful preparation. This is not one of those stories.

Our team came together at the last minute. Susan and I had played together maybe three times. She lives in Alberta, I live in Quebec, and our bridge philosophies could politely be described as... different. Before the event we negotiated what can only be described as a peace treaty. "Can we play this gadget?" "No." "How about this one?" "Absolutely not." Eventually I wore her down. We agreed to play exactly two of my gadgets: 2NT over a major opening to show 10+ points with four-card support, and South African Transfers over 2NT. Naturally, after all that negotiating... neither convention came up.

Brenda and Marielle weren't exactly seasoned partners either. They had only recently been paired together so we'd actually have a complete team. Between the four of us, "practice" mostly consisted of optimistic text messages and the occasional promise that we'd schedule a practice match later. Then came Day One of the round robins. There were six teams. Four would qualify for the playoffs. Simple enough. Apparently not. By the end of the day we'd managed a grand total of 35.19 Victory Points out of a possible 100. To put that into perspective, we weren't just outside the qualifying spots — we were more than 20 Victory Points behind fourth place.

Day 2 began with one simple objective: stay alive. Technically, we still controlled our own destiny. Realistically, after our Day 1 performance, none of us were exactly browsing flights to Penticton. Whether it was a better night's sleep, finally settling into our partnerships, or simply convincing the bridge gods we'd suffered enough, Day 2 felt better. The cards cooperated a little more, the bidding made a little more sense, and somehow we found ourselves winning matches.

By the end of the round robin we'd earned 60.15 Victory Points on Day 2 — just enough to complete the comeback. When the dust settled, the standings looked like this:

1. Galbraith
2. Smith
3. Connell
4. Blank

We had sneaked into the playoffs by just 4 Victory Points over Team Burns. Not exactly a commanding performance.

As the first-place team, Galbraith had the privilege of choosing their semifinal opponent. They selected Connell, which meant we would face Team Smith in the other semi-final. Honestly, we were just happy to still be in the building.

PLAYOFFS

We had five whole months before the playoffs, and we all solemnly promised we'd practice regularly. We meant every word. We practiced for the first two weeks... and the last two weeks. The three months in the middle remain unaccounted for.

Session 1 – Board 10

Dealer East, both vulnerable. As East I picked up this hand: ♠KQJ8753 ♥K9 ♦- ♣AKJ5.

The auction started: 1♠ – 1NT – 3♣ (wishing we were playing Gazzilli...) – 4♣! Our general agreement was simple enough: if a minor suit was agreed at the three-level, then 4♣ or 4♦ would be Key Card Blackwood. However, the evening before the semifinals, Susan suggested a couple of exceptions where four of a minor would instead be keycard. It sounded perfectly reasonable, so I agreed without giving it much thought. After all...what were the chances it would actually come up?

Apparently, pretty good—because about 12 hours later, I found myself staring at the auction and wondering: Is this one of those exceptions Susan was talking about? I genuinely wasn't sure. I bid 5♦, intending it as Exclusion Key Card, but fully aware that it might instead be interpreted as showing an odd number of key cards with a diamond void. The tray came back with 6♣. Was this a signoff, or was partner responding to Key Card?



Some people say bridge is a card game. I call it an exercise in patience, gossip, and passive-aggressive commentary.

Author unknown

I thought for a little while and passed. As it turned out, we were not quite on the same wavelength. The full deal:

North

♠ 642
♥ J642
♦ K843
♣ 73

West

♠ A
♥ A5
♦ J9765
♣ Q8642

East

♠ KQJ8753
♥ K9
♦ —
♣ AKJ5

South

♠ 109
♥ Q10873
♦ AQ102
♣ 109

Sometimes in bridge, it's better to be lucky than good. We made all thirteen tricks, while our teammates defended 4♠ at the other table. Fortunately, that wasn't the only board where things worked out better than we deserved.

Session 2 – Board 28. Dealer West, N-S vul.

North

♠ Q1096542
♥ Q54
♦ A
♣ 106

West

♠ K
♥ J106
♦ K10863
♣ K984

East

♠ A3
♥ A92
♦ 752
♣ QJ753

South

♠ J87
♥ K873
♦ QJ94
♣ A2

North (Marielle) had arrived in what could generously be called an optimistic 4♠, after an auction of (P) – 3♠ – (P) – 4♠. After a club lead, the contract looked to

have essentially no play — two spades, two hearts, and a club to lose. Marielle's only real chance was to disguise her intentions: make it look like she needed to ruff clubs in dummy, and hope for a miracle of honors crashing in the spade suit as a result.

East won the second club and thought for some time before cashing the ♠A — crashing partner's ♠K — and exiting with another spade. Declarer won in dummy and led a low heart to the queen and ace. East then played a diamond to the ♦Q, ♦K, and ♦A, but that was the end of the defense: declarer pitched her last loser on the jack of diamonds and claimed the rest for a very lucky 4♠ made. At our table, E-W stopped in 3♠ and went down one — for +12 IMPs to us.

Session 3 – Board 10. Dealer East, Both vul.

You'll often hear that at IMPs you shouldn't double a contract simply because you think you can beat it by one trick. This board is a good example of why.

North	
♠ —	
♥ AKQ4	
♦ A1076	
♣ Q8753	
West	East
♠ AQJ542	♠ 8763
♥ 752	♥ J98
♦ KQ5	♦ 984
♣ 2	♣ AJ6
South	
♠ K109	
♥ 1063	
♦ J32	
♣ K1094	

The auction was similar at both tables:

P – P – 1♠ – Dbl – 2♠ – 3♣ – 3♠ – 5♣. At one table East doubled; at the other, East passed.

Brenda (South) declared 5♣ doubled. The opening lead was the ♦K ducked, and followed by a second diamond. South ducked, and won the second diamond with the J in hand, crossed to dummy with the ♥A, and faced the critical club position. Without any other information,

the club suit is a pure guess. But the double changed everything. East had doubled while holding no values in the red suits and it was hard to imagine East doubling on the strength of a spade card and the ♣A alone. The double strongly suggested East held a genuine club holding. South finessed the ♣10, which held, and when West followed, played a second club to the queen. Declarer could then claim.

At the other table, East resisted the temptation to double. And without that extra piece of information, declarer misguessed the club suit and went down one. +650 and 12 IMPs.

Session 2 – Board 30

I picked up ♠10 ♥10 ♦J10974 ♣KJ10762. At both tables the auction began the same way: 1NT – (3♠). My first instinct was to bid 4♠, intending it as both minors and asking partner to choose. Then the doubts crept in.

What if Susan thinks it's some sort of slam try? What if she plays 4NT as the minors and 4♠ as quantitative?

With no partnership agreement, every bid suddenly seemed dangerous. I decided to simply bid 5♣. Worst case, we'd have a 6-2 club fit. If we happened to miss a better diamond fit...well, so be it. As it turned out, 5♣ made exactly for +400. At the other table, our teammates played in 3♠ down 1, for -50. The full deal:

North	
♠ 10	
♥ 10	
♦ J10974	
♣ KJ10762	
West	East
♠ KQJ832	♠ A74
♥ K4	♥ J9853
♦ K62	♦ 853
♣ 94	♣ Q5
South	
♠ 965	
♥ AQ762	
♦ AQ	
♣ A83	

Session 2 – Board 20

I should preface this by saying that I am not a fan of weak jump shifts in response to partner's opening bid. I much prefer playing other gadgets. That said, in accordance with our partnership peace treaty, I had agreed to play weak jump shifts with Susan. So, vulnerable against not, I picked up ♠AJ10762 ♥842 ♦96 ♣102. Partner opened 1♣ in first seat—and isn't this exactly the hand weak jump shifts were invented for? So I bid 2♠. Susan held ♠KQ9 ♥QJ10x ♦AQ ♣AJxx. She judged that 4♠ would have too many potential losers, while she could probably wrap up nine tricks no trump. So she bid 3NT.

North led a fourth-best diamond and, just as Susan expected, she had exactly nine tricks. At the other table, our opponents played in 4♠, which had very little play. Another vulnerable game swing for us and a small win for weak jump shifts. The full deal:

North	
♠ 54	
♥ 9	
♦ K107532	
♣ K954	
West	East
♠ KQ9	♠ AJ10762
♥ QJ105	♥ 842
♦ AQ	♦ 96
♣ AJ86	♣ 102
South	
♠ 83	
♥ AK763	
♦ J84	
♣ Q73	

If there's a lesson to this story, I'm honestly not sure what it is. Apparently, you don't need months of perfect preparation. You don't need to agree on every convention. And occasionally you can even survive forgetting what your own bids mean. You do, however, need great teammates, a little luck, and opponents willing to help every now and then.

Against all odds and occasionally our own agreements....we're going to Poland.

PLAN YOUR CNTC DEFENCE

SOLUTION PAGE 47

The Canadian Bridge Championships were held in Penticton this past June. Here is an easy one from the CNTC Quarterfinals. You are West, holding, ♠AK53 ♥Q7 ♦KQ52 ♣1042, and hear this auction.

West	North	East	South
1NT ¹	Dbl	2♦ ²	Pass
2♥	2♠	Pass	3♠
Pass	4♠	All Pass	
1. 12-14.			
2. Five plus hearts, weak.			

Partner leads the ♦10. Dummy has:

Dummy
 ♠QJ10
 ♥K9654
 ♦J3
 ♣983

Declarer plays the three from dummy. Plan your defence. You are playing upside down count and attitude?



FINDLAY, 2026 CSTC Winner. L to r Dan Bertrand, Ian Findlay, Paul Janicki, Gordon Campbell.

CANADIAN BRIDGE CHAMPIONSHIPS: HIGH LEVEL DEFENCE

By Neil Kimelman

Here is a hand, which may not be featured in primary articles about the Canadian National Team Championships, but is definitely worthy of note.

CNTC Semi-final match between Gartaganis and Todd. 3rd quarter, Board 12:

1. Playing IMPs, neither vul, you pick up as West:
♠Q6 ♥AQ95 ♦954 ♣K843. The bidding goes:

Jeff Smith West 1♣ Pass Pass All Pass	Neil Kimelman North 1♥ 2♦ 3♠	David Sabourin East Pass Pass Pass	Ray Hornby South 1♠ ¹ 3♣ 4♠
---	---	---	---

1. Forcing.

WHAT DO YOU LEAD?

The full deal:

	Kimelman	
	♠ 103	
	♥ KJ1032	
	♦ A1073	
	♣ J9	
Smith		Sabourin
♠ Q6		♠ 852
♥ AQ95		♥ 632
♦ 954		♦ QJ62
♣ K843		♣ A106
	Hornby	
	♠ AKJ974	
	♥ 8	
	♦ K8	
	♣ Q752	

Jeff Smith found the devastating lead of the ♠6, against the pushy game! Even if Ray somehow divines the spade position, he still has four losers, with the club ten poorly placed. Ray won the spade lead, and led a heart up, Jeff hopping up with the ace. He continued his masterful defence by switching to the ♦9, leaving Ray no glimmer of hope.

A normal looking opening club lead would have left the defence with no recourse, with the bidding and trick one marking West with the spade queen. A spade switch by East, and continuation, is best, but declarer simply gives up a 2nd club. Declarer eventually scores six spades, two diamonds, one club and either one heart or a club ruff. A diamond shift isn't any better, as declarer simply wins in their hand, and leads their stiff heart up at trick three.

Had Ray known how it would go in 4♠, I am sure he is regretting his decision not to bid 3NT over 3♠.

Nice defence Jeff!!

Declarer to partner after they put down the dummy:

'Where is the hand you held during the bidding?'





MEET... MARIELLE DECELLES-BRENTNALL

Editor's note: *It is my pleasure to introduce Marielle, and have her tell us a bit about her life journey. Marielle and I enjoyed a brief partnership, and played together on several CNTC squads, while she was rapidly developing her bridge skills.*

Besides being a wonderful person, and giving back to the bridge community, in my opinion she is one of most underrated bridge players in Canada. NK.

Tell us about early life?

I grew up in the small town of La Broquerie, Manitoba, where I completed my high school education. From an early age, I was very active in sports and enjoyed the opportunities that competition provided. One of the highlights of my athletic years was representing Manitoba at the Western Canada Games in mixed badminton.

Music was also an important part of my early life. I took piano lessons and completed Grade 8 piano, an accomplishment that required years of practice, dedication, and perseverance.

How about your career and business?

My working career began in 1978 with CN Rail, where I worked as a clerk typist. In 1981, I transferred to VIA Rail and became a bilingual secretary to the Vice President. While working full-time, I continued my education part-time and completed my Bachelor of Commerce degree. I continued to advance through the organization and, in 1989, became Director of Western Canada.

After 18 years with VIA Rail, I retired in 1996 to take on a new challenge and start my own telecommunications company. I began the business on my own, and over

the years it grew into a successful company that now employs 14 people. Building the company from the ground up has been one of the most rewarding chapters of my professional life.

When did you starting playing bridge?

My passion for competitive bridge began somewhat unexpectedly. After starting my business, a neighbour suggested that I should take an afternoon off and come play bridge. I took her advice, and when I discovered duplicate bridge in 2000, I became hooked.

What about bridge accomplishments?

Since then, bridge has become a major part of my life. I have competed at both the B and A levels and have had the privilege of representing District 2 on numerous occasions in both A and B events. Among my accomplishments, I have won CNTC B events twice, as well as the Canadian IMP Pairs, the Canadian Mixed Teams, and most recently, the Canadian Women's Teams.

Looking forward?

Bridge has given me the opportunity to compete, travel, meet wonderful people, and continually challenge myself. I am especially looking forward to representing Canada at the World Bridge Tournament in Poland this year.

Looking back, my journey has taken me from a small town in Manitoba, through a rewarding career and entrepreneurship, to competitive bridge at the national and international level. Throughout it all, I have valued hard work, lifelong learning, new challenges, and the importance of taking opportunities when they come along.



SEVEN PLAYERS, FIVE TROPHY WINS, ONE NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

Canadian Juniors at the 2026 Youth NABC.

By Rudy Cheng & Nina Ke

During the summer, the two of us travelled to Minneapolis, Minnesota for the Youth North American Bridge Championships (YNABC), a tournament that is considered among the best for juniors 21 years old and under.

Bridge is famous as a game played mainly by older generations. The YNABC is the opposite. For three days, everybody in the room is under 21, and entry is free. It was hosted in the Minneapolis Convention Center, which is connected by a skywalk to the other buildings downtown, much like Toronto's PATH. There are trophies, gold Masterpoints and a \$1000 scholarship offer for two of the big events. For a Canadian junior this is the strongest competition available on this continent without getting on a plane to Europe or Asia. It is also a proving ground, containing three days of building confidence, communication habits with your partner, and quick decision-making under pressure.

IT IS NOT A HOLIDAY

People might assume that seven young bridge players flying to Minnesota in July are mostly there for fun. That is not really true. Plane tickets are expensive, our parents took time off work to come with us, the Canadian Bridge Federation covered part of the cost of sending all seven of us, and that money comes from volunteers and donors who believe junior bridge is worth paying for. When people spend that on you, you

feel you ought to bring something home. We came to find out whether our bridge had actually improved since last year.



Seven Canadian junior players with Danny Miles. From Left to Right: Nina Ke, Rudy Cheng, Casper Gu, Wilson Hall, Danny Miles, Annie Zhang, Zachariah Willie, William Liu

The Seven

All seven Canadian junior players are from Ontario. Nina Ke, 13, and Rudy Cheng, 14, are both from North York. Casper Gu, 16, is from Barrie, and his partner Wilson Hall, 17, lives in Newmarket — but he was in China for the summer and made a 15-hour flight back just to play this event. Annie Zhang from Burlington is the youngest on the team: she is 11 and has only been playing bridge for 10 months. Zachariah Willie, 13, is from Innisfil and learned bridge through a school program. William Liu is 15 and from Oakville.

Danny Miles, our team leader and the CBF Junior Coordinator, is a four-time Canadian champion. With the players ready, we set out for the first day of the competition.

Day 1 — Thursday, July 16

Thursday was marked with warm-up practice sessions and meeting up with old friends who had played with us at the World Youth Teams Championships in Italy the previous summer.

In the morning, William Liu won a trophy for 1st place in his direction, which was the first win for the whole Canadian team. Thursday afternoon, there was also a team event, where Team Willie, Annie, Zach, Casper and Wilson finished third.



*The post-game discussion for Team Willie.
From Left to Right, Wilson Hall, Wenbo Gu, Casper Gu,
Zachariah Willie, Annie Zhang*

Bridge is a sport in which you can only win if your teammates play well. You cannot control how good they are, but you can make them play better and more comfortably while with you*. After Team Willie narrowly missed first place, the players sat together on the floor and went through what they could improve the next day.

Editor's note: *Well said!! Nk*

Day 2 — Friday, July 17

The official competition began with the pairs event. We played the qualifying session in the morning, and all of the Canadian players qualified for the afternoon final.

The morning was a huge success. William Liu and his partner had an amazing score of 72.94% in their section, which gave Canada its second win. Casper and Wilson also finished 1st in their section, making it Canada's third win. The three of them received trophies for their performance.

During the lunch break, an ACBL reporter visited and asked us a couple of questions. When we were asked which celebrity might enjoy the game, one of our answers was, 'Magnus Carlsen. He is very good at chess.'

The two of us scored 58% in the morning and sat seventh. In the afternoon we played much better, scored 59.72%, and finished third overall, behind two strong American pairs.

Only the top two received the big trophies. We stood at the back of the room while the pairs ahead of us collected theirs. There was one day left.

Day 3 — Saturday, July 18



Danny Miles visits the junior players before the team event

Saturday was the day everyone came for: the Swiss Team Championship. Looking around the room, we could pick out the USA1 and USA2 players, and several juniors who share a surname with someone well known in this bridge world. The all-Canadian Team Ke consisted of Nina Ke, Rudy Cheng, Casper Gu and Wilson Hall.

The tournament turned out to be far more interesting than we expected. We tied our first match and lost

the second one, so our start was not great and things were getting a little scary. Thankfully we won the next two matches and went into the second half of the qualification in 3rd place with 53 VPs. The leading teams were still within reach, so we knew we had a chance. We tried not to think about the final result and just tackled each hand one by one.

Then something small and ridiculous happened. In the third afternoon round the opponents offered Casper a piece of gum, and from that moment on he appeared to have unlocked a cheat code: having something to chew on in his mouth calmed him down and he didn't make a single error for the rest of the game. Every contract he declared came home with an overtrick, and Wilson's verdict at the end of it was, 'From now on, I'll buy you packs of gum at every tournament. Deal?'

We won every match in the final session with some expert bidding, collecting 67 VPs in the afternoon and finishing with 73.05 VPs including carryover. During the eight rounds we played the team that eventually finished second twice, and we beat them both times. With every win we moved closer to the top, and the last few matches were exciting because we knew the championship was right there. In the end we finished 17.6 VPs ahead and became the Youth Swiss champions. After coming so close to a big trophy the day before, we finally got one, and it was even bigger than we had hoped for. We actually did it. That was win number four.



*Team Ke with CBF President Shelley Burns
From Left to Right, Wilson Hall, Casper Gu, Shelley Burns,
Rudy Cheng, Nina Ke*

ZACH AND ANNIE

Meanwhile Zach and Annie had teamed up with an American pair. That is one of the best things about this tournament — you are not stuck with the people you arrived with, and by the end of the weekend the room has quietly rearranged itself into friendships that cross the border.

During the morning session, one of their hands turned out to hold an extra card in the middle of a small slam. The penalty was heavy, Zach and Annie missed the afternoon final by a single VP.

They did not complain about it. The rules exist so that everyone in the room is playing the same game, and a table where the count is wrong is not that game. They took the ruling, entered the afternoon non-qualifying event instead, and finished first.

Win number five — which meant all seven of us flew home from Minneapolis with at least one trophy.

A HAND FROM THE PAIRS FINAL

By Rudy Cheng

North

♠ QJ
♥ AK97
♦ KJ105
♣ KJ6

West

♠ 107642
♥ 103
♦ Q963
♣ A7

East

♠ K985
♥ 54
♦ A7
♣ Q9852

South

♠ A3
♥ QJ862
♦ 842
♣ 1053

I sat South and was declarer in a contract of 4♥. The lead was the 6 of diamonds, and as soon as I saw the dummy I counted five potential losers, with finesses available in spades, clubs and diamonds.

My immediate thought was to play the 10, because West wouldn't underlead an ace — giving it to East,

and if East also had the queen, I was always losing two tricks.

West won with the ace and returned a club: afraid of playing diamonds because of the KJ5 in the dummy, afraid of returning a spade because I was guaranteed to have the ace, which would give a free trick, and afraid of playing hearts because hearts were trump.

It then went a low club to the ace, and then West played a diamond. I confidently played the jack and began drawing trumps. I drew four rounds even though I was met with a 2-2 split. The reason was to force the opponents to discard, and hopefully to discard incorrectly. This eventually caused West to throw a diamond, letting me set up the suit for a club discard.

Finally I was pleased to see the spade finesse working, making five for 450 and a 100% score. The other declarers only made four hearts, so making five was a top.

WHAT THE TRIP WAS ACTUALLY ABOUT

Last year Terrence Rego, who coached Canada's U16 team, told us that the most important thing in a bridge tournament is to make fewer mistakes than the other side. If you don't make mistakes, you will usually be fine.

The hand above is a fair illustration of what he meant, and so was most of the weekend. Over three days we won a great many boards because our opponents went wrong. That is not something to feel clever about — it is simply what this game is. Everyone in that room made mistakes, we included, and the pairs who beat us on Friday taught us more in two hours than a month of practice would have.

Our job is not to be brilliant. It is to be steady, and to be honest with ourselves about the boards we got wrong on the flight home.

As we were heading home, reflecting on those critical hands, we realized that our participation in the YNABC brought us much more than just a victory — it was a reminder of how rewarding, competitive and community-driven Youth Bridge can be.

NEXT STEPS

Casper has now played in three Youth NABCs. After the awards ceremony, he and Wilson agreed that this would be their last. From now on they want to move into open events and test themselves against stronger competition.

Such as the Spingold...! Maybe.

As for the rest of us, the Youth NABC will be back next summer, and so will we.

INTERMEDIATE DECLARER PLAY PROBLEM

SOLUTION PAGE 48

Contract: 4♠. IMPs. E-W vulnerable. West is the dealer. The bidding:

West	North	East	South
—	—	—	2♠
3♥	4♠	All Pass	

North

♠ K2
♥ 52
♦ AK95
♣ AKQ107

South

♠ AQ10743
♥ 1096
♦ 62
♣ 53

Lead: West leads three round of hearts. Plan the play.



NOT SO FAST! A BRIDGE MOVIE

By Neil Kimelman

Note: A bridge movie is intended to give the reader bidding and play decisions as the hand develops. For maximum enjoyment answer the bolded questions, before reading the suggested answers.

Playing IMPs, neither vul, you pick up as South:

♠KJ102 ♥65 ♦AK76543 ♣-. East is dealer.

The bidding starts:

West	North	East	South
—	—	Pass	1♦
2♣	Dbl	3♣?	

DO YOU BID 4♠?

That is where my mind automatically went. Yes, you could risk it, and if partner has four spades I would rate its chance to be fairly good. But not so fast!

WHAT IS YOUR ANALYSIS OF LIKELY OUTCOMES?

If partner has four spades, you probably have a very good chance of making four spades, although bad splits can lead to multiple undertricks.

One problem is that partner may have only three spades, with a hand where their double was the least of the evils. Consider ♠AQx ♥K10xx ♦xxx ♣10xx. Here 4♠ might go down, when 6♦ is probably better than 50% on the bidding.

ANYTHING ELSE?

Yes. The opponents are bidding, and it might be their hand! I mean, after all, you have 11 HCPs, and partner may have as little as 6 HCPs (you may think this latter point count is too little for partner, but I disagree, and could be the subject of a future article ☺).

Even if they cannot make game, they may be able to effectively score a small minus in 5♣.

THEN HOW MANY SPADES SHOULD YOU BID?

Not so fast! Don't bid spades on this round of bidding.

WHAT IS BETTER?

I like the choice I made at the table, 3♦. My plan was to bid spades next. The **plusses** of this approach are:

- Partner will play you for 6-4 or 7-4 shape, and will chose the right denomination to play in.
- The opponents may less likely be able make the right bidding choice at the five and/or six level.
- You avoid ending up in a 4-3 spade fit, going -800, by bidding a direct 4♠.

The minuses:

- The auction may end in 3♦ when you can make a game in spades.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER 3♦?

You got what you wanted, and the bidding continued:

West	North	East	South
—	—	Pass	1♦
2♣	Dbl	3♣	3♦
4♣	Pass	Pass	4♠
All Pass			

East led the ♣A. You fetch a good dummy:

Dummy

♠ AQ75
♥ KJ1032
♦ 109
♣ 53

Declarer

♠ KJ102
♥ 65
♦ AK76543
♣ —

The opening lead is the ♣A.

WHAT IS YOUR PLAN?

Before embarking on any declarer play, you want to ask yourself the questions:

1. How many tricks do I need?
2. How many tricks can I count?
3. How many losers do I have off the top?

Here you need 10 tricks. You can only count 8 tricks: 2 diamonds, 4 top trumps and two club ruffs. Remarkably, you only have 1 or 2 cashable losers.

If you were in 7♠ (choke!) you would need to ruff two clubs, and need diamonds 2-2, and one defender to

hold exactly ♠98. Ruff the club with the ♠K, ♠J to the ace, ruff a 2nd club, lead your last spade overtaking with the ♠Q, cash the ♠7, and run the diamonds! Bridge is such an easy game.

If you were in 6♠ (a smaller choke), you would need spades 3-2, and diamonds either 2-2 or 3-1. If the former, ruff a club, pull trumps, and run the diamonds. Otherwise, you would have to lead a heart at trick two and guess right.

Fortunately you are only in four, and can take some insurance against some relatively bad breaks in diamonds and spades.

WHAT DO YOU DO IN 4♠?

If you pull trump, you either need a 3-2 spade combined with a 2-2 or 3-1 diamond break, or spades 4-1 with diamonds 2-2. This might work, but (you guessed it), not so fast!

I think the best line is to lead a heart at trick two, trying to build heart tricks. Let's say you put in the ♥J, and it loses to the queen.

WHAT CAN THE DEFENCE RETURN THAT CAN HURT?

Not much! If they return a club, ruff, and lead a 2nd heart. Unless hearts are 5-1 you can succeed whatever the defence does.

If they return a trump, win in your hand, and lead a heart as before. If they return an unlikely diamond win, and lead a heart. You can afford two heart losers, and a diamond ruff. But you still end up with 10 tricks after losing three.



True competition is about respect, fairness and growth.

WHAT SHOULD YOU NOT DO?

1. Pull trumps. If spades are 4-1, you need a 2-2 diamond break. If you stop pulling trump you are still in trouble as you either still need a 2-2 diamond break or have to guess the hearts.
2. Try to ruff a diamond at trick two. This opens you up to losing 2 hearts and 2 ruffs. Cash the top three diamonds (East started with one) pitching a club. This is the ending: The full deal:

Dummy

♠ AQ75
♥ KJ1032
♦ 109
♣ 53

West

♠ 6
♥ AQ4
♦ QJ8
♣ AK10862

East

♠ 9843
♥ 987
♦ 2
♣ QJ974

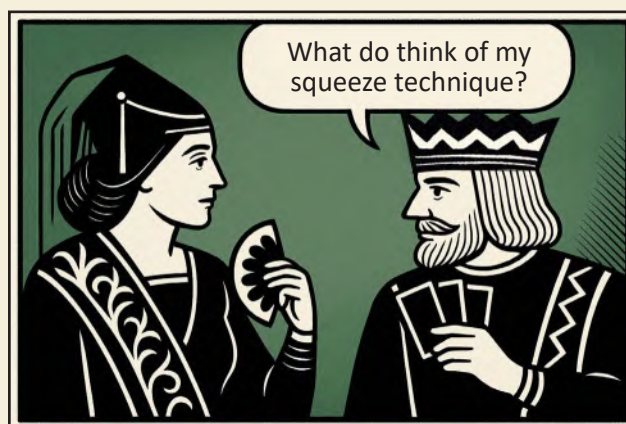
Declarer

♠ KJ102
♥ 65
♦ AK76543
♣ —

On some hands there is an urgency to take a certain line. This could be pulling trumps, discarding a loser, or ruffing a loser in the short trump hand. But everytime you commit to a line, your flexibility in changing courses, after each trick, is reduced.

The key is to recognize hands where you have the option of going slow, learning what the opponents hold and how they defend, before full committing to a certain line of play. Before you play to early tricks, ask yourself 'not so fast?'

Ethan & Sam



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the GREAT CANADIAN BIDDING CONTEST



September 2026 TGCBC

Host: Danny Miles

For panelists, and their bids, see page 45

Editor's note: I am very pleased to continue the recent tradition of having other Canadian Experts hosting TGCBC. The September Host is **Danny Miles**. Danny has won four CNTCs, and represented Canada internationally, as recently as 2025. He is frequently the expert with the highest TGCBC total, and also a finalist for the best played hand, world-wide (see other article). Originally from Winnipeg, he now lives in the Toronto area with his wife and two daughters.

Also welcome our newest panelist, **Sarfaraz (Sarfi) Khan**. With over 30 years of competitive and coaching experience, Sarfaraz Khan stands among Pakistan's most accomplished bridge professionals. He is a five-time Pakistan National Open Team Champion and has represented the country at the highest levels, including five World Championships, three BFAME Open Team events, and multiple international tournaments across Asia, the Middle East, Europe, and Australia. Sarfaraz holds an MBA and currently lives and works at the TD Bank in Toronto.

The top panelist for September was **Edward Xu**, with a **perfect 60!** My teammate and good friend, **Bob Todd**, was only one back with 59. Congrats to David Johnson who had the top reader score!

1. North dealer. As South, you hold
 ♠Q4 ♥7 ♦KJ853 ♣K10942. Neither vul, IMPs.

West	North	East	South
—	1♥	Pass	1NT
Pass	3♥	Pass	?

What do you bid?

Call	Score	Votes
4♥	10	8
3NT	9	7
Pass	8	5
3♠	6	1

A tough deal to start. We have a near maximum in high cards for our 1NT call, but strain is an issue. The largest vote is to play game in partner's suit:

Lebi: "4♥. We have the values for game, can't be a genius in the spade suit to play 3NT."

Treble: "4♥. There are approximately enough points for game, with partner's 16-18 opposite my 9-count. 3NT is the alternative contract, and if North has Kxx or Axx opposite my doubleton queen, could be best from my side. My hand will probably contribute two eventual tricks in a major-suit contract, hopefully before the opponents get four."

Todd: "4♥. Partner has shown something like a 5 loser hand with a good 6 card or longer heart suit. I may have a ton of tricks or not. Why complicate things by guessing."

Guessing was exactly what some panelists thought they were doing:

Lorber: "4♥. Hard to know how much of this hand's values will be of use, but there's bound to be some help, so game could be cold. With no aces and unclear communication between dummy and declarer, the chances of 9 quick tricks in 3NT seems smaller than that of the opponents getting to 5 winners before we reach 9. Based on my trick taking assumptions, IMP odds favor bidding game."

Kuz: "4♥. A Spade lead is coming from both sides... one stopper may not be enough."

Kimelman: "4♥. 3NT is ok, but will look pretty silly opposite xx in spades. Even with a full stopper, we may not be able to run nine top tricks."

Thurston: "4♥ – play well my partner!"

A healthy group followed Bob Hamman's Rule: When 3NT is a possible contract that is the bid you should make. But as Kimelman mentions, that would look silly opposite short/weak spades. This panelist was not concerned:

Chen: "3NT. When there is no other evidence, mathematically I assume that my good partner has length and a stopper in my shortest suit, spades here."

Most of the Hamman followers admitted they were taking a stab:

Stark: "3NT. Prepared to be wrong, but the lure of a game bonus is too enticing."

Xu: "3NT. Pass, 3NT, 4♥ all can be right."

Du: "3NT. Not comfortable passing here, as this is IMPS. I would pass 3♥ if this was MP."

Lindop: "3NT. Can't help myself. At least I have two suits well-stopped. Hopefully partner has some help in spades. Doesn't preclude partner from bidding 4♥, and I don't see an intelligent way to determine if 4♥ is best."

Khan: "3NT. Might right-side on some layouts. Very close to passing non-vul. We need partner to have the ♥10, a 1 loser suit, a spade card and a minor suit Ace and still need some luck. We have at least 25 HCP and I don't want to mastermind. Closer to a pass at MP"

Cimon: "3NT. My hand is not really good, with no aces and no real stopper in spades. But if my partner has some fit in a minor, I might make 3NT, while going down in 3♥."

Very interesting argument from Francine – a hand like Kxx AKxxxx AQx x may make 3NT from our side while a 4-2 trump break could scuttle even 3♥. The lack of a second heart is not to be discounted. In fact, it was the key factor for many of those going low:

Jacob: "Pass, with a singleton heart and a questionable spade holding, I am not bidding 3NT."

Cooper: "Pass. Although I have a medium strength hand for 1NT, my heart fit is very poor, and I have zero sure winners (my guess is at most two of my three high cards are working). Not vulnerable, the bonus isn't as magnetic a draw."

Grainger: "Pass. Maybe bid vul, but partner is going to have a stiff opposite one of those minors 9 out of 10 times."

Deng: "Pass. I'm not sure what else to do. It seems unlikely we can make 4♥ from here."

Marcinski: "Pass. Opponents' silence suggests that Opener has some ♠ length and hence (i) risk of ♠ losers despite my possibly helpful Q; (ii) increased likelihood that at least one of my minor suit Kings is not pulling its weight; and (iii) increased likelihood of tangled communications. Had we been vulnerable I would have been more inclined towards (what I assess to be) aggression."

There does exist a call which should show an unusual hand – the "impossible" 3♠. But what should that show? Limit raise in hearts? Both minors? Fishing for a 3NT bid with a spade card? The panel mostly ignored the possibility, but a few mentioned it, while one bid it:

Balcombe: "3♠. This is a close decision. No fit but decent HCP. Partner might have a) Axx, KQJ10xx, xx, AQx which makes game fairly good – as long as that game is 3NT. Or partner might have b) xxx, AKxxxx,

Ax, Axx which makes 3♥ the best spot. Or partner might have c) xx, KQJxxxx, Ax, Axx which makes 4♥ reasonable. I will make a bid that might confuse partner, but it can't really be a slam try since we have a game invitational hand opposite a 6 to 11 HCP 1NT. It is forcing to elicit another bid from partner. With hands a) and b) partner should rebid 3NT and 4♥ with hand c)."

Cooper: "Although 3♠ might be nice if it suggested this hand (no fit, both minors, enough to hold out hope for game, leaving 3NT as an option), that would require some agreement we don't have. People use it in different ways, typically showing two hearts or even a three-card limit raise that has slam aspirations, asking for shortness!"

Treble: "I'd like to bid 3♠ as an asking bid but am not sure it will be taken as such."

Lindop: "I don't think 3♠ would be asking for help in this auction"

Turner should be fresh for the rest of the problems, as he joined the largest group of panelists without as so much as a sweat:

Turner: "4♥. Nothing else really occurred to me".

In real life, this deal occurred in a knockout at a regional. Opener held ♠J9x ♥AKQJxx ♦Ax ♣xx. The ♣A was offside. As so often happens, the Hamman disciples came out smelling like roses.

2. North dealer. As South, you hold ♠QJ2 ♥AJ542 ♦10973 ♣J. Neither vul, IMPs.

West	North	East	South
—	1♦	1♠	Dbl
1NT	3♦	Pass	?

- Do you agree with the double?
- What is your call?

a. Call	Score	Votes
Yes	10	20
No	8	1

Most of the panel felt the hand was not good enough for 2♥; I agree. The values are soft, there is a singleton Jack, and the hearts have no "body" – I'd be more tempted with a hand like K10x AJ109x 10973 J. The hand does have the requisite 9 cards in the red suits for a fit showing jump to 3♥, but to me that bid screams diamonds and hearts – this hand does not.

Marcinski: "Faute de mieux: enough to bid; not enough strength or hearts for 2♥; a tad light, not enough diamonds, and too NT-oriented for a space-consuming 3♥ 'fit-showing jump'"

A key is whether partner can still have 3 hearts.

Turner: "Yes, you've got safety in diamonds I suppose, but you'll likely lose a 5-3 heart fit."

Deng: "Normally, if partner has three hearts, they would show them immediately. Therefore, I interpret the 3♦ bid as denying three-card heart support."

I've partnered Eve; she uses a 2♦ opener to show 18-19 HCP balanced; hence, a 2NT rebid after 1m-1M shows this specific problem hand – 6+ of the minor, 3 card major support, and extras (14-16ish) – a great treatment when it comes up!

Speaking of great treatments, the Dutch use a handy "switch" when the bad guys overcall 1♠ after our 1m opener – 2♥ shows the other minor, while 2 of the other minor is constructive or stronger with 5+ hearts. It comes up more than you think and solves the problem of competing with a 5-3 heart fit (after 1♣-(1♠)-2♦ (showing 5+ hearts)-(2♠)-). It also more narrowly defines the negative double as exactly 4 hearts, or very weak if longer. And keeps responder from guessing wrong when in standard it would go 1m-(1♠)-Dbl-(P)-1NT. Does responder pull 1NT to 2♥ with 5 of them? There's a reason the Dutch are viewed as the scientists when it comes to bidding theory.

Editor's note: I have played a form of the Dutch system, known as *Miser*, for 20 years. It has been great! *nk*

Only one dissent (with a second on the fence):

Treble: "Not sure I agree with the negative double; I prefer a 2♦ raise after RHO's overcall."

Stark: "Not entirely, as I am tempted to bid 2♥. Yes this is a bit of a stretch, but I like the four-card diamond support to go with the 5th heart. But I can live with double."

b) Call	Score	Votes
3NT	10	7
5♦	9	6
4♦	8	3
3♠	8	2
3♥	8	2
5♣	7	1

Now to the tough part – we have an unusual hand on the auction. How high do we go? Diamonds or Notrump? Do we give up on hearts? 6 calls drew support. Let's start with the most popular:

Kuz: "3NT. A toughie. I am worried about a ♠ ruff with no raise on my right. Partner should be at least xxx x AKxxxx AQx."

Khan: "3NT Can envision 12 tricks opposite Kx, x, AQJxxxx, Axx. Partner rates to have more of a distributional hand as the opponents are also in the auction. 3NT might need AKxxxxx in diamonds and ♣A. Bid the 9 trick game and hope..."

Todd: "3NT. There is a lot of bidding going on! If West's 1NT is to be believed, he probably has some ♥ and ♣ cards and a diamond honour but not solid clubs. It would be nice to get partner's input about 3N vs 5♦ but there isn't room for clarity."

Jacob: "3NT; 9 tricks rather than 11."

Balcombe: "3NT. I expect partner to have 7 diamonds and West to have diamond King, although maybe 1NT is

a psyche. Passing or raising seems to have a spade ruff to contend with. Of course, 3NT has issues about clubs, but nobody bid them."

Xu: "3NT. Partner makes a jump; both 3NT and 5♦ can be good, but you never know."

Grainger: "3NT. 3♥ if I'm sure that it's forcing, but I don't know if it is. If partner lacks both the ♠AK you want to get to 3NT, if he has one, you want to get to diamonds. 3♥ is the only bid that can get this done, but not if it gets passed."

Opting to go straight to the 11 trick game, more worried about the unbid suit in Notrump than a spade ruff in 5♦:

Deng: "5♦. Since we have a confirmed diamond fit, the opponents likely have a fit elsewhere. Because West didn't support spades, they probably have a club fit, which makes 3NT a risky choice. 5♦ is my preferred aggressive action."

Cimon: "5♦. The fact the spade was not raised, I am afraid to lose two spades and a ruff but at 3NT I can lose 6 clubs, more dangerous, since it is West on lead."

Lindop: "5♦. Strange auction. West didn't show spade support but did show something in diamonds. Partner presumably has at most three clubs, so 3NT may be down off the top. I don't have an easy way to show five hearts (**note: the Dutch already have! See part a**), although 3♥ might do that if we've agreed it is forcing in this auction. I think it should be, but I'm not going to risk it with great support for partner plus an ace and club shortness."

Thurston (putting his partner through the paces): "5♦ – he's warmed up after #1."

Lorber: "5♦. I am assuming that partner's double of 1NT would show 3 card heart support and that he has denied a fit. Otherwise, I'd mark time with 3♠ and barring an immediate 4♥ bid from partner, bid 5♦. Even with a spade card in partner's hand, clubs could be a problem in 3NT"

Marcinski, summarizing: “We don’t have the bidding space to assess if 3NT is more desirable than 5♦ - and in my judgment the latter is (considerably?) more likely to be better, particularly as we might be off the entire ♣ suit. What are my alternatives? Pass is pusillanimous (if we need a ♦ finesse to make game it sounds like it will successful); 3♥ grossly overstates hearts and understates diamonds; 3♠ is shrouded in ambiguity and can only confuse; 3NT is conceivable but aims for a narrow target within the ambit of Opener’s hand type range; 4♣ is a bid that I’ve seen many partnerships have misunderstandings on whether it’s natural and/or a force; 4♦ is certainly plausible but not forcing (I prefer GF) and facing 0-2 hearts (I assume that Opener would have doubled 1N with 3♥’s) I assess that my values are sufficient to insist on game; 4♥ is a peculiar and a rare bid shrouded in interpretative uncertainty (my best guess is a choice of red suit games with 6♥’s and 4+ ♦’s); 4♠ would be a splinter in spades; 4NT would be Blackwood; 5♣ is a splinter but overstates the hand.”

Not quite committing to game, perhaps discounting the soft spades:

Treble: “4♦. 3♥ doesn’t appeal to me; partner may expect the rounded suits with longer/better hearts. The auction is somewhat baffling; LHO hasn’t raised spades and opener hasn’t doubled 1NT so likely jumping on playing strength rather than a wealth of high cards. I have four-card support, a side ace and ruffing values in clubs. It’s time to confirm a fit. We should have a decent play for 10 or 11 tricks in a diamond contract, and like the previous hand, I’m a bit leery about 3NT.”

Chen: “4♦. I have too many QJs which aren’t that good for a suit contract. Still I have 4 diamonds, a singleton and an Ace, so I would invite 5♦. Also 4♦ gives partner a chance to bid 4♥ if he has 3 Hearts before going to 5♦. 3NT could be a best contract, but it’s completely a guess.”

Stark: “4♦. In notrump, who knows what our club stopper situation is? That could be Overcaller’s sneak attack. In short, while ♠QJx suggests bidding 3NT, the ♥A, 4-card diamond support and stiff club suggest a diamond contract”

Is 3♥ forcing? Grainger has his doubts – he’s as experienced and accomplished as any, so we shouldn’t take his views lightly. These panelists are certain that when opener jumps in their own suit, you can’t pull to your own suit with a weak hand:

Lebi: “3♥. Forcing 1 round (one doesn’t pull a part score to another part score in a strongish auction). Still have 3NT and 5♦ as possible landing spots.”

Turner: “3♥. Forcing once you’re taking partner out of his long suit, but he might expect 6 hearts with a little less strength. I think 5♦ next regardless of what he bids might work out.”

When in doubt about strain, but want to be in game or even slam, resort to the cuebid:

Kimelman: “I certainly like my hand for diamonds. I think 3♥ puts too much emphasis on the heart suit, and partner may be tempted to raise with Qx or Kx. I bid 3♠. I will pass 4♥, but cuebid 4♣ over 3NT, trying for the diamond slam. Too strong for 4♦. Give partner Kx x AKxxxx Axx, and slam needs a 2-1 trump break.”

Cooper: “3♠. I’d bid 4♦ if it was clearly forcing, but I don’t see why it must be. Slam is possible.”

Taking an even more aggressive approach at a potential slam, while providing quite a strong example hand for partner:

Du: “5♣. This should be a splinter, as you didn’t bid 2♣ after the 1♠ overcall. Slam is very possible if partner has a proper hand, such as Ax, Kx, AKJxxx, Axx.”

What happened in real life? This took place in a club game but partner’s hand has been lost forever in the ethos...

3. South dealer. E-W vul, IMPs. As South, you hold
♠A762 ♥KJ4 ♦A7532 ♣A.

West	North	East	South
—	—	—	1♦
1♠	Dbl	Pass	?

What is your call?

Call	Score	Votes
2♠	10	6
2NT	10	5
2♥	9	3
Pass	9	1
3♥	9	3
1NT	8	2
2♦	7	1

Ouch! Not often you see seven choices receive votes at opener's second turn. How difficult could it be to make a simple rebid? Turns out, very...

Todd: "2♥. Good problem. Not enough to force to game and no invitational jumps really fit. I have no tricks in NT unless partner has a pretty good hand. The real choices seem to be 2♥ or 2♠. If partner has extra values, he can raise Hearts. If I bid 2♠ and partner doesn't have extras we will be too high."

A minimum rebid or a (game forcing?) cuebid...those are the two extremes that Bob is torn between. What about some middle ground?

Cimon: "3♥. Not a perfect bid, but my lack of four hearts is compensated by many controls."

Kimelman: "3♥. Need to show my values. Although I am missing a heart for this bid, I can visualize running a lot of tricks off the top in 4♥. Give partner something like x AQ10x xxx Jxxxx, and you can see what I mean."

Marcinski: "3♥: right on strength, orientation, and these hearts look like four, don't they? I would have preferred opening 1NT instead of 1♦ (not that it would have necessarily solved the analogous problem of say 1N-(2♠)-Dbl-(Pass)."

Going high:

Lindop: "2♠. Awkward. I could bid 2♥, but that is an inaccurate description of both by heart length and my strength. 1NT is an underbid and poor description and 2NT is an overbid and poor description. I'm left with looking for help from partner. Hopefully partner will show a five-card heart suit. If partner bids clubs, I'll correct to diamonds and see what happens from there. Perhaps partner will bid notrump."

Cooper: "2♠. Nothing fits well. Old Time rubber bridge probably just bids 3♥. Game is possible in diamonds, hearts or notrump. Partner tends to be aggressive in this position, and we may not have game at all. Is there a safe part-score? We're low enough that this cue-bid shouldn't force us to game, and partner should be aware that opener may have some awkward holdings and be compelled to bid something! It should show extra values, no clear alternative bid. That leaves all other direct actions to be fairly pure and descriptive and reliable. Continuations: Over 2N or 3♠, bid 3NT; over 3♣/♦, bid 3♥ which should show three. Over 3♥, raise. Cheers if he bids 3NT."

Stark: "2♠. Just a general show of strength. The follow-up bids are worth discussing. But I just can't bear to bid some number of hearts here as I believe they should all show four-card heart support."

Thurston: "2♠ – stalling for time – as Al Roth often wrote, if I survive this round, I may be ok!"

Jacob: "2♠. Over 3♣ or 3♦, I will bid 3♥"

Lebi: "2♠. Don't yet know where we are going with my intermediate strength hand, hoping for 5 Hearts."

Which takes us back to problem #2 – wouldn't it be nice to know if partner had exactly 4 hearts or a hand with 5+ hearts and constructive or better values? The Dutch would do well on these deals...

Going low:

Balcombe: "I would have opened 1NT on the previous round. No strong enough for 2NT, way too strong for 1NT. I choose to support hearts. I considered 3♥ but we are non-vul, so I won't press."

Turner: “1NT. Hopefully in tempo. This is a very suit-oriented hand, it’s true, but some number of hearts (my first idea) will get tapped in the long hand and/or get over-ruffed in spades. If partner has an in-between hand (say 10 points or so) the poor spots and handling charges may make 1N the limit. This hand would have been difficult even without the interference.”

Treble: “2♥. This is a pretty fair hand but with no clear direction. If I had a fourth heart, I would jump in the major, but as things stand, I’ll conserve bidding space. Even if we’re on a seven-card fit, the contract should play well. Game is unlikely if responder can’t take further action.”

Du: “1NT. I wish I had opened 1NT”

Kuz: “2♦. An underbid. I have cards but no tricks. I need partner to be able to bid a second time. Rebidding ♦ shows length and maybe makes it easier to make that second call.”

The desire to go back and open 1NT was echoed by more than a handful of panelists. I don’t buy it. This is a suit-oriented hand with a singleton, “aces and spaces”, and 19 times out of 20, an easy rebid. It is easy to envision getting to the wrong part score or missing a spade game opposite say, KQxx Qx xxxx xxx. Which brings us to the 2NT argument:

Xu: “2NT. I would have opened 1NT with this hand”

Deng: “2NT. I would have opened 1NT instead of 1♦ to avoid a difficult rebid problem. As the auction stands, 2NT is the most descriptive move I can make now.”

Chen: “2NT. I would have opened 1NT with this hand. Now I have no other better choice. 2NT may justify my hand, with a HCP range of 15-17. With 18+, I will cuebid 2♠”

Lorber: “2NT. I wish I had opened 1NT (particularly given the unfolding of events). Now I must lie:
(i) 3♥ having neither 4♥ nor Spade shortness
(ii) 3♦ without a six card suit, let alone a strong 5 card

suit

(iii) 2♥ with too much strength (or worse, because it makes game more remote, 2♦)

(iv) 2♠ implies game forcing values and I won’t be better placed to describe than having bid 2NT

(iv) 2NT I’m a little under strength, but I have 3 Aces and we could still find a 5-3 heart fit.

Khan: “2NT. 2NT (16-17) invitational opposite partner’s double. A negative double of 1♠ shows 7/8+ HCP. Responder can pass with a min and bid game with 9+. Good for partnerships to discuss this sequence and agree on the follow-ups”

I agree with the 2NT bidders. A jump to 2NT here shouldn’t promise the requisite 18-19 as it does without interference. That hand can cuebid. It should show a hand with sound 1NT strength that did not open 1NT; usually because they are off shape and hold overcaller’s suit. There’s another strategy which I feel is under-used, when holding overcaller’s suit:

Grainger: “Pass. Partner probably has 2 (even 3) spades, we’re white vs red and I have no other sane call.”

What did partner have? We don’t know, as this was an old bidding poll problem from decades ago. Interestingly, the panelists then did not mention going back and opening 1NT.

4) Matchpoints, North dealer, N-S vul. As South you hold
♠KQ10863 ♥53 ♦AQ105 ♣A.

West	North	East	South
—	1NT	Pass	2♥
Pass	2♠	Pass	3♦
Pass	3NT	Pass	?

What is your call?

Call	Score	Votes
4♣	10	7
4NT	10	5
4♠	9	4
5♠	9	3
6♠	8	1
4♥	8	1

A promising collection which garnered 5 different votes. Does responder's third call show length or shortness? Let's hear from those who made the most popular call:

Stark: "4♣. Since it's matchpoints, partner might still have a fit with us and just be wanting to get all the marbles in notrump. So let's try 4♣, which shows slam interest, and see if partner can bid diamonds or spades. If so, I'll bid again. If pard bids 4NT over 4♣ then I guess I have to subside."

Marcinski: "4♣, intending to rebid 4♠ over either 4♦ or 4♥ showing 6=2=4=1 or 6=3=4=0 slam try with no ♥ control. In the event that Opener raises to 5♣ (yes, he should be aware that 4♣ need not be 5=1=4=3) I will retreat to 5♠ (yes – with some risk).

Xu: "4♣. I have to try showing slam interest in spades, and the 5 level seems safe."

Treble: "4♣. I'm not willing to quit with a four-loser hand opposite a strong notrump. I thought briefly of 4NT as notrump likely plays for the same number of tricks as spades or diamonds, but I'd like to find out if partner has enough coverage in diamonds and the majors, and I think the cue-bid addresses that need. I'll then bid x4Sx over x4Dx, and 4NT (1430 for spades) if opener co-operates with x4Hx."

Todd: "4♣ – what else?"

Lorber: "4♣. I'm probably heading for 6♠. I play 5NT over 3NT on this auction as pick a slam, but that isn't a universal treatment. If so, I'd convert 6♦ to 6♠ implying the choice is between Spades and NT. 4NT over 3NT is usually invitational on this auction, not blackwood. If I rebid diamonds and get raised, it doesn't help. Maybe partner will cue bid hearts or prefer spades allowing me to bid blackwood next."

Asking the same question as me:

Lebi: "4♣. Depends on what your agreement is for your 3rd bid after showing 2 suits opposite a 1NT opener. Is it length or shortness or an Ace? Failing that, I simply bid 4♣ and await partners next bid."

Deng: "4♥. This requires a partnership agreement: does a new suit at the 4-level show length or shortness? Playing with my regular partner, this shows a long suit, so I would bid 4♥. If partner follows with 4♠ or 4NT, I would bid 5♣. Given this hand's strength, the 5-level should be safe."

Issuing a straight invite, some emphasizing spades, some not:

Kimelman: "4NT. I think this hand is strong enough to invite slam, but just. 4NT is probably better than 5♠. Hope partner can correctly value pointed suit Jacks."

Lindop: "5♠. With a hand that values as 17 points – 15 high-card points plus 2 length points – I'm too strong for only 4♠. Partner will consider the ♠A or ♠J as a valuable card in this auction and hopefully continue to slam. If partner has two low spades, we'll hope we aren't too high."

Cimon: "5♠. I need a little support in spades. Partner shows only 2 spades. I think they should go with ♠Jx and pass with xx. It is possible that we're missing two aces, but not probable."

Du: "4NT. The worst scenario is that your partner's hand is heavy in hearts and clubs, such as xx, AKQx, xxx, KQJx. Slam is almost hopeless in this case. However, partner may also have good fit hands for slams, like xx, AKxx, KJx, KJxx; hopefully he will choose 6♦ with this hand."

Chen: "4NT, to invite slam. Partner will have values in hearts and clubs from their 3NT bid, so my 6 semi-solid spades will be as good as in 6NT which scores better at matchpoints than 6♠."

Cooper: "4NT. 6NT probably depends on the jack of

spades. It's worth inviting. Opener will know xx of spades is a minus. Opener should have good stoppers in the other two suits so I can't see how it would be better to play in spades."

Jacob: "5♠. The hand is better than a mild slam invitation"

Turner: "4NT. We could be off two aces easily enough, and with a borderline acceptance he'll appreciate Jx of spades and king of diamonds. While it's possible 6♦ could be best, it could also fall prey to a spade ruff with 6N making."

Retreating to 4♠ sounds regressive, but the panel still views it as a mild slam try. With an ordinary hand that wished to play 4♠, a Texas Transfer would have been utilized initially.

Balcombe: "4♠. Partner could have a hand that is cold for grand slam (e.g. AJ, AJx, KJx, Kxxxx), so we cannot Pass 3NT. My spades are not good enough to jump to 5♠, so I bid 4♠ which I think implies 6-4 or 6-5 slam try values since we did not simply Texas to 4♠."

Thurston: "4♠ – a tad slammish, yes?"

Grainger: "4♠. Partner knows I have a slam try or I would have just Texas'd."

Kuz: "4♠. This should be a slam try with a very good 6-4. 4♠ can also take 12 tricks when off 2 aces so I might beat 3NT score-wise."

Rounding out the votes is a direct leap to slam, while an excellent point about a popular modern treatment – transfers over transfers. The idea being responder's second bid (after transferring to 2M initially) is also a transfer. This leaves room for opener to show no fit, 1 fit, or both fits, including whether their hand is slam suitable or not. You lose out on showing 5 spades and a balanced invite (1N-2♥-2♠-2NT is GF with spades and clubs), but this hand just bids Stayman and then 2♠, showing 5 spades invitational.

Khan: "6♠. This hand makes an excellent case for playing transfers over transfers when we open 1NT."

It gives an extra round of bidding space, which is invaluable. Opener can have 17 HCP with no ♥ control (Ax, QJxx, KJx, KQJx) or a 3433 15 HCP hand with 13 tricks (Ax, Axxx, KJx, Kxxx). Bidding what I think we can make most of the time."

At the table, partner held Ax AKxx Jxx KJ10x so both 6♠ and 6NT need either spades to come in or the diamond finesse. 6NT is where you want to play at matchpoints, but making +980 in spades is sure to score well above average too. The 5♠ bidders will surely catch a raise. If you bid 4♠, does partner advance with 4♥, 4♠ or 4NT? Either way, you'll have a second decision to make.

5. West is the dealer. Both vul, IMPs. As South, you hold ♠AQ92 ♥J4 ♦73 ♣AJ954.

West	North	East	South
2♦	Pass	Pass	?

What is your call?

Call	Score	Votes
Pass	10	10
Dbl	10	9
2♠	9	2

To act or not? To bid a 4 card major or risk playing a 4-2 fit in the other major? Perhaps unusual, but not surprisingly, not a single panelist bid their longest suit. Most were guessing. We'll start with a prediction that misses:

Kuz: "Pass. This won't be a popular choice. But, for game to be reasonable, partner had to act over 2♦. If it is a part score hand, with no ELC (Equal Level Conversion), there is a problem when partner responds 2♥. If partner has a trap pass, the undertricks are still 100's. If we declare with a bad fit, it is 100's the other way." **Grainger:** "Pass. Anything could be right here, but no call is reasonable."

Thurston: "Pass – too worn out from declaring to test the waters! Second choice – 2♠"

Cimon: "Pass. At matchpoints I will bid 2♠, but at IMPs I

prefer to pass; too dangerous to suffer a big penalty."

Todd: "Partner seems to have diamonds. 2♠ might work but it could be disastrous also. 3♣ works if partner has a club fit with diamonds and extras. Partner couldn't bid 2NT or double. Sometimes passing is the tough bid – I pass."

Treble: "Pass. I'd like to balance but can't really justify it. Move the jack of hearts over to the spade suit or change it to the queen of clubs, and that would be enough for me to venture a x3Cx bid."

Jacob: "Pass. No game (at least unlikely) and an awkward hand."

Turner: "Pass. Colour me chicken. My first thought was an "Edgar Kaplan" 3♣ bid, but partner, expecting more, might chance 3NT on a partial-fitting 9 count. 2♠ might get us to 2NT on that hand, which might be poor but undoubted. The payoff for action is partner with a weak NT including a diamond stopper (better than Qxx), but maybe 3NT doesn't fetch on that hand either."

Lebi: "Pass. I can't think of anything else to bid without having my partner get way too optimistic."

Khan: "Pass. No safety in bidding. Game is possible, but if we double (which is the only other bid I can think of), we might get too high with no fit. I'm not willing to compete for the part score at this vulnerability with this hand."

Preferring to act and keep things flexible (which could be a nice penalty against 2♦ doubled, or a silly Burns Law violation in a 4-2 heart fit):

Lorber: "Double. 'I had a diamond in with my hearts... The potential big wins are defending 2♦ doubled or finding game in spades or NT. The downside is getting doubled in too many hearts (could be any level). Note

that I don't play any form of equal level conversion, where say, I could convert the cheapest suit (2♥) bid by partner to the next suit (2♠) imply 9 cards in the next 2 suits."

Lindop: "Double. Can't be perfect against preempts. I feel I have enough that I need to take some action in the balancing seat. If we land in a 4-2 heart fit, that's no worse than a 4-2 spade fit if I balance 2♠. Pass or 3♣ could be best, but I'm not going quietly. Maybe partner will pass and we'll collect a nice penalty."

Du: "Double. Hopefully partner will not jump too high in hearts."

Deng: "Double. I don't play that a double followed by a new suit shows a powerhouse against a preempt; we use Equal Level Conversion (ELC). If a partnership doesn't use that convention, I agree that bidding 2♠ or 3♣ directly is the better approach."

Chen: "Double. If partner bids hearts, I will change it to spades and hope he understands I have spades and clubs. With a single suited spade hand, I would have bid 2 or 3 spades instead of Double. I think that partner won't bid 4♥ over my balancing Double; he would have bid 2♥ instead of Pass after 2♦."

Cooper: "Double. There are several reasonable options, but double best keeps the auction flexible. Passing is possible, especially because you may be entering the auction without a fit. You have only 12 HCP, and partner's pass over the opening bid makes game unlikely. Still, double has practical appeal: partner may bid spades, leave the double in, or choose notrump. The main drawback is shape. Double is not perfect and could land you in hearts with weak trumps. However, your Jx with a doubleton diamond, threatening a ruff, has value, and the hand is too awkward for a confident natural action. Other choices are less attractive. A three-level overcall on a broken five-card suit feels heavy, while bidding a four-card suit at the two level would be overly bold. On balance, double is the most practical call."

Xu: "Double. An off shape Double is normal, especially when balancing."

Marcinski: "Double. Too few diamonds and too much strength (game could easily make facing many hand types that would have passed as Lurker) to Pass; there is some hope of a penalty pass by Lurker and if so this hand will not be a disappointment for a balancing seat Double. Not enough spades for 2♠ and I'd rather lie about heart length with Double than lie about spade length with 2♠. 3♣ is misleading and inflexible by just about every conceivable measure. True, without the luxury of so-called "equal-level conversion" this is an awkward hand and Double may land us in a silly spot (as you table your Dummy in a heart contract, apologize and slip a diamond among the hearts), but that's being pessimistic whereas IMPs rewards optimism."

Kimelman: "Finally, an easy one! Double (Ray Hornby knows). I don't mind balancing with a black suit, except you lose the penalty double. Too big a price to pay, IMO. If partner bids hearts, I will pass. I always play with good declarers!"

He'd better not partner Thurston – he's worn out!

We wrap up with the pair that loves their major suits. We've all made 4-card overcalls at the one level (perhaps even successfully!) but introducing a 4-bagger at the two level is really rolling the dice. Even if we catch suitable values opposite, there is a splendid chance we end in the wrong strain. If we belong in spades, Double should work just fine.

Stark: "2♠. Ugh, no bid is perfect, and probably only one of them is the winner on the lay of the cards. I'll try my luck in spades. Second choice: Pass, and rue the day we are cold for game."

Balcombe: "2♠. Partner has a balanced hand that cannot Double or bid 2NT so a maximum of about 14 HCP, most likely in the 8 to 10 range. Opener rates to have decent diamonds as they are Vul. We could make 4♠ if she has something like KJxx, xx, Kxx, KQxx."

Did you guess right? We'll never know. This problem was given to me by a friend (I passed), and to be perfectly honest, I don't remember the result! Maybe next time I get a chance to host, my memory will be better.

It Sounds Like...

I was interviewing a cleaning lady that was applying for a position in helping with the upkeep in a house I was renovating and occupying in this small town of Manitoba community. When I asked the reason she left her last employer she replied, "Well sir, they paid good wages, but I'm telling ya' it was the most ridiculous and sinful place I ever worked."

Why last night they were playing some kind of game called Bridge and a lot of local town folk were there that I recognized from social pages of our town paper. I was about to bring in the refreshments when I heard one man say, "Lay down and I'll see what you got."

Another man said, "I've got strength but no length." Then another man says to a lady, "Take your hand off my trick." I pretty damn near dropped the tray and dropped dead just then, when I was shocked to my senses to hear the lady answer, "You jumped me twice when you said you didn't have the strength for one more raise."

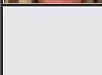
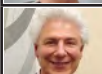
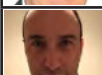
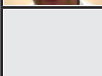
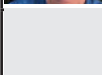
Another lady was talking about protecting her honor. And I couldn't believe it, in this respectable community, hearing yet another lady call out, now it's time for me to play with your husband and you play with mine."

Well, with them shenanigans goin' on, I just got my hat and coat and as I was leaving, I hope to die if one of them didn't say, "Well, I guess we'll all go home now cuz this is the last rubber."



PANELIST ANSWERS

September 2026 Bidding Contest

		Hand 1		Hand 2		Hand 3		Hand 4		Hand 5		
	Name	Bid	Score	Bid	Score	Bid	Score	Bid	Score	Bid	Score	Total
	Keith Balcombe	3♠	6	y3NT	20	2♥	9	4♠	9	2♠	10	54
	Fengming Chen	3NT	9	y4♦	18	2NT	10	4NT	10	Dbl	10	57
	Francine Cimon	3NT	9	y5♦	19	3♥	9	5♠	9	Pass	10	56
	Stephen Cooper	Pass	8	y3♠	18	2♠	10	4NT	10	Dbl	10	56
	Eve Deng	Pass	8	y3♠	18	2NT	10	4♥	8	2♠	10	54
	Terry Du	3NT	9	y5♣	17	1NT	8	4NT	10	Dbl	10	54
	David Grainger	Pass	8	y3NT	20	Pass	9	4♠	9	Pass	10	56
	Dan Jacob	Pass	8	y3NT	20	2♠	10	5♠	9	Pass	10	57
	Sarf Khan	3NT	9	y3NT	20	2NT	10	6♠	8	Pass	10	57
	Neil Kimelman	4♥	10	y3♠	18	3♥	9	4NT	10	Dbl	10	57
	Bob Kuz	4♥	10	y3NT	20	2♦	7	4♠	9	Pass	8	54
	Robert Lebi	4♥	10	y3♥	18	2♠	10	4♣	10	Pass	10	58
	David Lindop	3NT	10	y5♦	19	2♠	10	5♠	9	Dbl	10	58
	Michel Lorber	4♥	10	y5♦	19	2NT	10	4♣	10	Dbl	10	59
	Zyg Marcinski	Pass	8	y5♦	19	3♥	9	4♣	10	Dbl	10	56
	Andy Stark	3NT	9	n4♦	18	2♠	10	4♣	10	2♠	10	57
	Paul Thurston	4♥	10	y5♦	19	2♠	10	4♠	9	Pass	10	58
	Bob Todd	4♥	10	y3NT	20	2♥	9	4♣	10	Pass	10	59
	Bill Treble	4♥	10	n4♦	18	2♥	9	4♣	10	Pass	10	57
	David Turner	4♥	10	y3♥	18	1NT	8	4NT	10	Pass	7	53
	Edward Xu	3NT	10	y3NT	20	2NT	10	4♣	10	Dbl	10	60



DECEMBER 2026 PROBLEMS

Host: David Turner

Readers are invited to submit your solutions, to TGCBC by **November 15th**. Top point getter will be mentioned.

Editor's note: Readers are welcome to send in their bids, and compete against the expert panel! Top two reads will be recognized in the December Bridge Canada. NK

1. IMPs. Dealer: West, all Vul, as South you hold:

♠A32 ♥J8 ♦— ♣AKQ98432

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♦	1♠	2♣ ¹
Pass	2NT	Pass	?

1. Forcing for one round.

What do you bid?

2. IMPs, Dealer: East, Vul: NS. As South you hold

♠982 ♥J872 ♦1072 ♣K93.

West	North	East	South
—	—	2♦	Pass
3♦	Dbl	Pass	3♥
Pass	4♦	Pass	4♥
Pass	4♠	Pass	?

What do you bid?

3. IMPs, Dealer: E, Vul: None. As South you hold

♠962 ♥A10 ♦Q32 ♣QJ1095.

West	North	East	South
—	—	1♠	Pass
Pass	Dbl	2♠	3♣
Pass	3♦	Pass	?

What do you bid?

4. IMPs, Dealer: South, Vul: Both. As South you hold

♠AQ6 ♥A42 ♦A109542 ♣A.

West	North	East	South
—	—	—	1♦
Pass	1♥	Pass	?

What do you bid?

5. IMPs, Dealer: North, Vul: Both. As South, you hold

♠54 ♥QJ852 ♦AKJ876 ♣—.

West	North	East	South
—	1♦	2♣	2♥
3♣	4♥	Pass	?

What do you bid?

PLAN YOUR CNTC DEFENCE

PROBLEM PAGE 23

The Canadian Bridge Championships were held in Penticton this past June. Here is an easy one from the CNTC Quarterfinals. You are West, holding, ♠AK53 ♥Q7 ♦KQ52 ♣1042, and hear this auction.

West	North	East	South
1NT ¹	Dbl	2♦ ²	Pass
2♥	2♠	Pass	3♠
Pass	4♠	All Pass	

1. 12-14.
2. Five plus hearts, weak.

Partner leads the ♦10. Dummy has:

Dummy
 ♠ QJ10
 ♥ K9654
 ♦ J3
 ♣ 983

Declarer plays the three from dummy. Plan your defence. You are playing upside down count and attitude?

Solution

Actually this is much easier when posed as a problem. Declarer is marked with a stiff ace of hearts, from the bidding. You are pretty certain that East has some diamond length, as they have most one spade. The priority is to shift to trumps, forcing declarer to use their trump entry prematurely. Don't encourage with the 2! Declarer will just duck, and the game is cold, which is what happened at the other table. Play the ♦Q, and then play three rounds of trump. The full deal:

North			
♠	98742	♠	6
♥	A	♥	J10832
♦	A76	♦	10984
♣	AKQ5	♣	J76
West		East	
♠	AK53	♠	6
♥	Q7	♥	J10832
♦	KQ52	♦	10984
♣	1042	♣	J76
South			
♠	QJ10	♠	6
♥	K9654	♥	J10832
♦	J3	♦	10984
♣	983	♣	J76

Takeaways

1. Be ready! If you didn't starting thinking as West until trick 2, it would be too late.
2. Notice declarer had a choice – either play West for a mistake, or hope for a 3-3 club break. Whatever they decide, they should do it quick! The longer they think before playing from dummy, the better the chance that West will start thinking.

INTERMEDIATE DECLARER PLAY SOLUTION

PROBLEM PAGE 29

Contract: 4♠. IMPs. E-W vulnerable. West is the dealer. The bidding:

West	North	East	South
—	—	—	2♠
3♥	4♠	All Pass	

North

♠ K2
♥ 52
♦ AK95
♣ AKQ107

South

♠ AQ10743
♥ 1096
♦ 62
♣ 53

Lead: West leads three round of hearts. Plan the play.

The first decision: do you ruff with the ♠K? No. You can afford to lose one spade. You ruff low and East follows.

Cash the ♠K. Do not overtake, as that gives up two trump tricks if spades are 4-1. Now lead ♦ AK. All follow. Now the 2nd key play – play ♣AK. If West ruffs, they must give you an entry back to your hand, to pull the remaining three trumps.

The danger on the hand, is not to cash the ♣

AK. If you just lead a diamond, West can overruff you, and put you back in dummy for a trump promotion. The full deal:

North

♠ K2
♥ 52
♦ AK95
♣ AKQ107

West

♠ J985
♥ AKQJ7
♦ 73
♣ J9

East

♠ 6
♥ 843
♦ QJ1084
♣ 8642

South

♠ AQ10743
♥ 1096
♦ 62
♣ 53

Bridge is an engrossing game!!

In the 1980's one of the best sectionals in Minnesota was held at the Holiday Inn, in Detroit Lakes. The hotel sat directly on the lake, and was attended by players from North Dakota, Ontario, Minnesota and Manitoba.

After the Sunday Swiss, a car full of five Winnipeggers were heading home. Down Highway 10 to Fargo, and North on Interstate 29 to the Border.

The conversation was hot and heavy. Just over three hours later a large green mileage sign appeared – 3 miles to Watertown, South Dakota! They had turned South on I29 instead of North!



Winning Bidding Strategies

A new book by Neil Kimelman

Neil has written his 4th bridge book, **Winning Bidding Strategies**. Here is a brief description of its content, in his own words:

My goal is to address some esoteric and difficult-to-teach expert bridge practices, such as table feel, drawing inferences, and other difficult-to-learn strategies. Most of these cannot be found in other bridge literature.

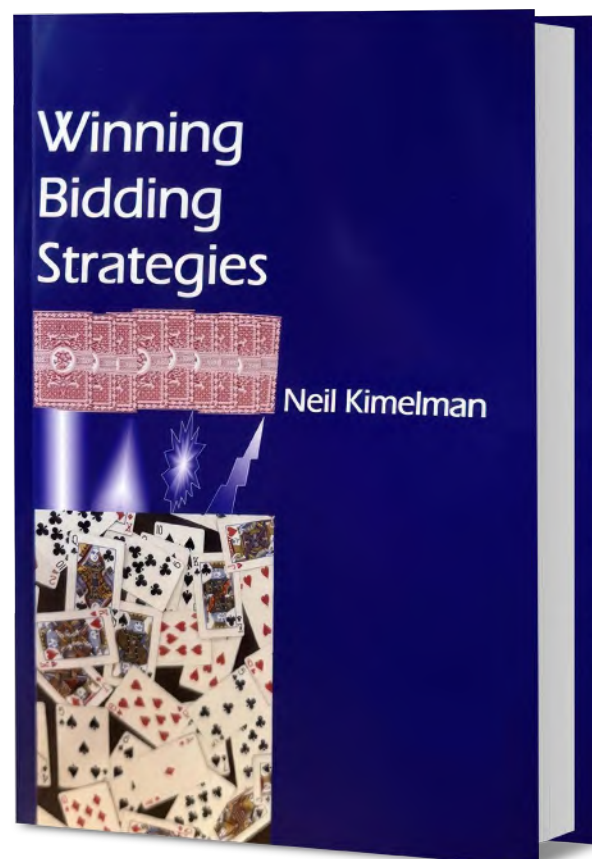
*Part I considers **Indirect Strategies**, which you may apply at the table, but many of them also come into play at other times.*

- Getting ready.
- Partnership Care.
- At the Table.
- Away from the Table.
- Learning.

*Part II focuses on **direct strategies**. These are strategies for bidding in general as well as slam bidding. Slam bidding gets its own chapter. First, I believe this is an area where partnerships have the lowest percentage of success. Combine this with the fact that slam swings usually result in a 10-14-IMP difference, and it is obvious that improving the number of slams you make will directly improve your winning percentage. I can't promise that every reader will become an expert or world-class player. However, the strategies that follow are ones that are extremely important tools to have in your bridge toolkit and, if put to effective use, will definitely make a positive difference in your game. Here are the direct strategies covered:*

- Hand Evaluation.
- Visualizing Partner's hand.
- Changing Bidding Priorities.
- Two bids and a double (TBAD).
- Deception in bidding.
- Do not bid situations.
- Penalizing.
- Preempting and bidding over preempts.
- Slam bidding.

This is an advanced bridge book. However all players can benefit from Indirect Strategies right away, and apply the Direct Strategies over time. The book can be purchased from me (kimmie85257@hotmail.com), directly from the publisher, at hnbpub.com.



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

2026

MONTH	DATE	EVENTS
AUGUST	Aug 20 - Sept 3	World Bridge Series - Poland (Open Year)
SEPTEMBER	Fridays 8:00 pm ET	Maple Leaf Bridge Games - RealBridge
	All Month	Qualifying games for the 2027 CBC - COPC & Teams
	All Month	International Fund Games
	Sept 1-30	Registration for CBF Online Team League
	Sept 28 AM or AFT	ACBL-wide Silver Senior Pairs (2 of 2)
OCTOBER	Fridays 8:00 pm ET	Maple Leaf Bridge Games - RealBridge
	All Month	Qualifying games for the 2027 CBC - COPC & Teams
	All Month	CBF Online Team League - Oct through Feb.
	All Month	Jane Johnson Club Appreciation Games
	October 13	Erin Berry Rookie Master Game - In Bridge Clubs
	October 19	CBC Round Robin Registration Opens
	Oct. 21 AM or AFT	ACBL-wide Instant Matchpoint Game
NOVEMBER	Fridays 7:00 pm ET	Maple Leaf Bridge Games - RealBridge
	All Month	Qualifying games for the 2027 CBC - COPC & Teams
	November 7-8	Canadian Championship - Mixed Pairs
DECEMBER	Fridays 7:00 pm ET	Maple Leaf Bridge Games - RealBridge
	All Month	Qualifying games for the 2027 CBC - COPC & Teams
	December 14-20	Stardust Week - Gold Points at Clubs