

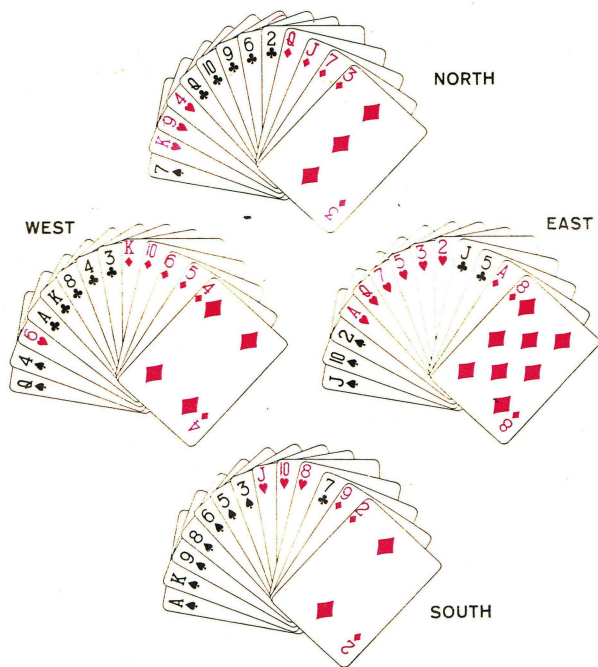


Picking the champions a bit ahead of time

Over the Halloween weekend, at Del Webb's Towne House in Phoenix, two top contract-bridge teams will duel for the right to represent America in the World Championship for the Bermuda Bowl, to be held in Stockholm next June. Since Italy will be defending without her great Blue Team, which won the bowl 10 times running (only two of the old Blues, Belladonna and Garozzo, are expected to play for the defenders), the Americans will go to Stockholm as favorites. It is true that any team which includes Belladonna and Garozzo must be considered a contender, but the cognoscenti believe that Italy will not win with Forquet, D'Alelio, Pabis-Ticci and Avarelli out of action.

In any event, in the Phoenix playoff—a six-session, 180-deal duel—the four-man team from Los Angeles, which is

East-West vulnerable
West dealer



WEST (Kehela)	NORTH (Wolff)	EAST (Murray)	SOUTH (Corn)
1♦	PASS	1♥	4♣
PASS	PASS	DBL.	(All Pass)

headed by Richard Walsh and which won the Vanderbilt Cup in the Spring Nationals in Cleveland, meets Ira Corn's Dallas Aces, who won the Spingold, the other big knockout team championship, at the Summer Nationals in Los Angeles. Walsh's team is young—average age under 30. It includes John Swanson, Jerry Hallee and last year's leading master-point winner, Paul Soloway. The Aces, a frankly professional team put together by Industrial Magnate Corn, include Jim Jacoby, Bobby Wolff, Bill Eisenberg, Bobby Goldman, Mike Lawrence and, the most recent addition, Bob Hamman. Until the team recruited Hamman, Corn himself played an occasional session, but he is too good a player to kid himself that he might make the Stockholm scene on his own table skill. In fact, asked to describe one of his Aces' good hands, Corn preferred to cite this one in which, as he put it, "A couple of slickers from Canada named Eric Murray and Sammy Kehela, did a little expert Corn-shucking."

The vulnerability favored preemptive tactics by South, but Corn's four-spade bid was a trifle overexuberant; two spades or three spades would have been better, especially against the Canadians' impeccable defense. Kehela led the ace of clubs—this pair leads ace from ace-king—and Murray dropped the jack, the automatic high-low to give the count rather than to demand a continuation of the suit. Kehela shifted to his singleton heart. Murray collected two heart tricks and gave his partner a third-round heart ruff. At this point most defenders would go wrong either by trying to cash a second club or by leading a low diamond. In the latter case, when East won the diamond shift the defenders could no longer both cash a second diamond trick and gain an overruff position for West in hearts. Should East lead a fourth heart after winning the diamond ace, South could simply discard his second diamond. Kehela did not fall into this trap. He milked the hand of its ultimate trick by leading the king of diamonds before putting partner in with the ace. Now, on the fourth round of hearts, declarer had his choice of ways to lose an extra trick. He could ruff high and lose two spade tricks to East. Or he could ruff low, get overruffed with West's queen and still lose a trump trick to East's jack. The defenders had eight tricks, and declarer was minus 900.