



bridge

Canada



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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.



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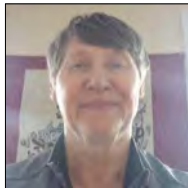
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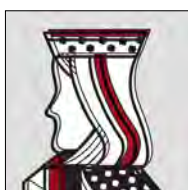
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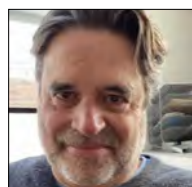
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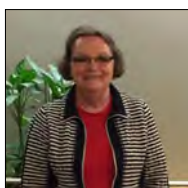
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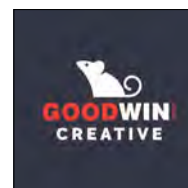
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THE CANADIAN BRIDGE FEDERATION PRESENTS



MAPLE LEAF BRIDGE NIGHTS

ACBL Sanctioned Duplicate Games on RealBridge

The Canadian Bridge Federation is proud to present an exciting opportunity for bridge players everywhere to take part in the new **MAPLE LEAF** online games, earn masterpoints, and support their home clubs in Canada.

We have formed a special partnership with **RealBridge**

RealBridge features a modern, user-friendly interface with built-in video and sound, delivering an authentic face-to-face bridge experience. It's entirely web-based—there's nothing to install—and it's incredibly easy to use. Even if you've never played online before!



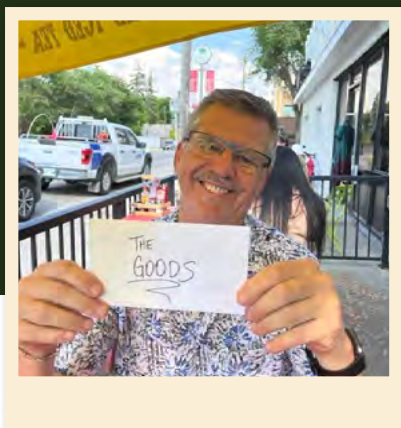
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- 16-board pairs game: \$5 Cdn or \$4 US; 24-board pairs game: \$8 Cdn or \$6 US.
- 499er: 7 pm ET - 16 boards; Open 7:10 pm ET - 24 boards.
- Non-ACBL members can set up an ACBL Guest Account.

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Be sure to check out our **Bridge Canada eMagazine**, available to the public and filled with news, stories, and insights for all bridge enthusiasts.



EDITOR'S MESSAGE

The Goods



WELCOME ALL!

I am taking a break from watching the 1st game of the World Series between the Blue Jays and Dodgers, as I am writing the December 'Goods' article (c'mon Blue Jays!). First, I would like to extend a warm welcome to bridge players from across the world! This is the first issue of Bridge Canada that is open to both CBF members, and non-members, alike. I hope you find value in reading Bridge Canada, which is published quarterly, March 1st, June 1st, September 1st and December 1st, and will consider supporting Canadian Bridge, by becoming a CBF member.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

In the past I have encouraged contributions from across Canada, in the form interesting hands, as well as local/regional stories from across our land. A good example of a contribution is the Newfoundland Hall of Fame article that I am very happy to include in the December issue of Bridge Canada.

I would also like to encourage any type of correspondence. I will publish all constructive material, signed or unsigned.



**CASPER GU, ASSISTANT
BRIDGE CANADA EDITOR,
JUNIOR AFFAIRS**

Stop the presses! I am delighted to welcome Casper Gu to the Bridge Canada Editorial Team. He will serve

as Bridge Canada's conduit for all things related to

youth and Junior Bridge in Canada. Casper is a Grade 10 student in Barrie Ontario. He has been playing bridge since 2019, and currently runs the weekly Canadian Junior League. Welcome Casper! For any questions related to Junior Bridge in Canada, or in this publication, Casper's contact info is: **casbridge705@gmail.com**

We will have lots of Junior content in the March 2026 issue of *Bridge Canada*.

2025 WORLD BRIDGE CHAMPIONSHIPS

The World Championships held in Denmark recently came to an end. The CBF sent four teams to represent Canada:

- Canadian National Team Championship (CNTC A's)
- Canadian Senior Team Championship (CSTCs)
- Canadian Mixed Team Championship CMTCC
- Canadian Women Team Championship (CWTCs)

Congrats to all Canadian representatives. It is important that we continue ratify CBF members to international events who:

- 1) Provide the best chance of success, and
- 2) Conduct themselves in appropriate ways, before and during World Events that make them worthy ambassadors of Canadian Bridge.

CBF ONLINE TEAM LEAGUE AND MAPLE LEAF GAMES

The **CBF Online Team League** continues to attract a large number of squads, making up the best Canadian players, as well as others who aspire to the same lofty standards. May the best team(s) win!

Also, if you have a free Friday evening, why not participate in the **CBF Maple Leaf games**? It is a great way to meet players from across Canadian and around the world (yes, it is open), as well as financially contribute to your local club. The RealBridge platform offers you the opportunity to see and talk to your tablemates, in real time.

NEWCOMERS' (0-300 MPS) TEAM LEAGUE

The CBF is launching a new CBF Newcomers' Team League in early 2026. A friendly, online event designed to introduce less experienced Canadian players (0-300 ACBL Masterpoints) to team play.

Games will be held on RealBridge, with short expert-led post-game discussions to help players learn from the hands they've just played. For more information please contact Sondra Blank at admin@cbf.ca.

I wish for all a joyous holiday season, and may you treasure the time spent with those dearest to you! See in the spring!

Neil Kimelman

Bridge Canada Managing Editor



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47TH. WORLD BRIDGE TEAMS – HERNING, DENMARK 2025 BERMUDA BOWL CHAMPIONSHIP

By Danny Miles

The Canadian National Team Championship (CNTC) is always the crown jewel of CBF's Bridge Week, but in 2025 the stakes felt higher than ever. The winners wouldn't just hoist the Sam Gold Trophy — they'd also earn the right to wear the maple leaf at the Bermuda Bowl, the Open World Bridge Championships. This year's event unfolded in downtown Toronto, alongside the annual Easter Regional. Hart House, a century-old University of Toronto landmark with soaring ceilings and gothic stone walls, proved an unforgettable — if unconventional — setting for a week of tense play.

When the cards settled, **Team Feldman** (Jason Feldman, Danny Miles, Jacob Freeman, Daniel Lavee, Jeff Smith, and Fred Pollack) emerged victorious from the eight quarterfinalists, booking their ticket to Herning, Denmark in August. Unfortunately, Lavee and Freeman would not be able to make the overseas journey, and were replaced with two veterans of the high-level scene: Darren Wolpert and Nick L'Ecuyer. The team was finalized with non-playing captain Marc-André Fourcaudot, whose experience as both a player and captain was vital to getting the best out of the team, both at and away from the table.

TRAVEL TURBULENCE BEFORE TAKEOFF

As if preparing for the Bermuda Bowl weren't stressful enough, Team Canada's journey to Denmark began with

an unexpected hurdle — the August 2025 Air Canada flight attendant strike. With only days to go before departure, flight cancellations and schedule changes rippled through the country. Several team members saw their original itineraries vanish overnight; others were forced to rebook on inconvenient, often costly, earlier flights to ensure they would make it to Herning in time for the opening ceremonies. A few players found themselves driving across the U.S. border in search of alternate international departures.

What should have been a smooth send-off turned into a logistical puzzle, complete with frantic phone calls, long drives, and sleepless nights. By the time everyone finally assembled in Denmark, *simply arriving* felt like the first victory of the tournament.

ARRIVAL IN HERNING

When the last of the Canadian contingent finally touched down, the mood shifted from travel anxiety to quiet excitement. Herning, a tidy Danish town surrounded by windmills and wide skies, proved an unexpectedly charming host. The playing site, the **MCH Kongrescenter**, was modern, efficient, and unmistakably Scandinavian — clean lines, good lighting, and coffee that could revive even the most jet-lagged bridge player. Teams settled into their routines: morning walks to shake off the travel fog, and the hum of friendly rivalry echoing through the lobby. After the

chaos of travel, the calm professionalism of the venue — and the sense of representing Canada on the world stage — reminded everyone why they'd made the journey. The Bermuda Bowl was about to begin.

Alongside the clean Scandinavian design came another innovation — the World Bridge Federation's new electronic bidding tablets. While cards were still physical, all bidding now took place digitally. It took only a few boards to adjust, but by the end of the event I was convinced: I never want to go back. No more insufficient bids, no more trays to shove back and forth, and no chance of unauthorized information from tempo or hesitation. Better still, there's no risk of sitting the wrong direction — each player checks in on the tablet before play, and it remembers your settings.

At the end of each deal, declarer enters the result, both defenders confirm, and the full hand layout appears instantly. Players can scroll back to view earlier deals — complete with double-dummy analysis (though sometimes it's better not to look!) — and after the final board, the system generates a full IMP scorecard. Still, even the best tech has its pitfalls. During the Transnational Teams that followed the Bermuda Bowl, one small oversight cost our team dearly. If North accidentally places a board rotated 180 degrees — so North and South are swapped — it's no issue with traditional cards: you just play it "the wrong way." But with tablets, the auction starts from the wrong hand. Our teammates discovered this the hard way when the bidding proceeded from the incorrect dealer, leading to a completely different auction and a bad result. The rules are clear: once the second call is made, play continues. A painful reminder that even in digital bridge, human error still finds a way.

With jet lag fading and the tablets mastered, it was time for the real challenge — the world's best at the Bermuda Bowl.

THE BERMUDA BOWL

The Bermuda Bowl is about as big as it gets in bridge — the world championship for Open Teams, held every two years under the World Bridge Federation. Twenty-four teams qualify from around the world through

national trials and zonal playoffs, each earning the chance to play for their country on the game's biggest stage.

The format starts with a full round robin, where every team plays each of the other 23. The top eight move on to two-day knockout matches. This year, the schedule got a small tweak: the round robin was trimmed from seven days to six, while all playoff matches — even the final — became two-day affairs (previously the final was three days). It made for a slightly more compact, but still very demanding, event.

One thing that really stood out when scanning the rosters was how pure the field looked — almost every team was built from three world-class pairs. There were very few sponsors or "clients" in sight. It seems like the trend has shifted, with most of the sponsors now gravitating to the relatively new Mixed Teams event, leaving the Bermuda Bowl as a straight-up contest among the best pairs in the world.

OFF TO A GREAT START

The opening match was against Chinese Taipei, and early on Miles faced a big decision:

Board 2, Dealer East, N-S vul.

♠ J2	
♥ QJ1075	
♦ 5	
♣ J10985	
♠ 4	♠ K987653
♥ A	♥ 94
♦ AKQ864	♦ J109
♣ AQ763	♣ 2
♠ AQ10	
♥ K8632	
♦ 732	
♣ K4	

Sitting West, partner opened 3♠ in first chair at favourable vulnerability. This could easily be a six card suit; if Feldman preempted in hearts, it almost certainly would be only six, as we are more aggressive with hearts as opposed to spades (a theory borrowed from the Dutch).

What should West do? Another problem is that nothing is forcing after a first seat white vs red preempt in our methods. 3NT would probably be the top choice in a bidding poll; Miles chose 4♠, which got doubled by South in passout seat. Now what? Miles ran to 5♦ and struck gold. Feldman provided a great dummy and Canada salvaged a push against 3NT making at the other table. 4♠ doubled may have made but 5♦ was a much better spot after the double.

Canada picked up three large swings - one for being pushed to a making slam; another when Feldman aggressively forced to game with 6 HCPs and 5-5 in the majors after partner opened 1NT (it was cold); and finally Feldman held ♠AKQJxx ♥J ♦xx ♣AKQx and heard partner open white versus, red 3♥ in first chair. We know from earlier this is almost certainly six, and 3♠ would not be forcing. Feldman took the low road with 4♠, while our counterparts got too high. Canada won 41-5 and was at the very top of the leaderboard after match 1!

KEEPING UP THE MOMENTUM

Canada continued their winning ways with two more wins over Australia and perennial favourite Switzerland, but was followed by losses to Italy and China. In the match against Switzerland, Jeff Smith found a great lead against Klukowski and Kalita, two of the top players in the world. Smith held ♠108 ♥Q8 ♦109543 ♣A632 and heard the vulnerable opponents bid 4♥-4NT (RKC)-5♦ (one, no ♥Q)-5♥. Smith assessed his best shot was to collect two clubs in addition to partner's ace, as dummy likely had a long strong suit to check for key cards and signoff. He led a low club and was rewarded when dummy was ♠AKQJxx ♥Kx ♦KQ ♣KJ10 and his partner Fred was kind enough to hold the club queen. Klukowski was capable of guessing correctly but eventually played low. +100 and +710 (4♥ making 7) gave Canada a healthy 13 IMPs. Smith and Pollack were the only pair (out of 24!) in the Bermuda Bowl to go plus on the deal.

Two wins and a tie had the team going to sleep in 4th place after Day 2. Day 3 opened with a key encounter with USA2.

Against USA2, Darren and Nick showed fine judgement in a low-level competitive auction. ♠KQ5 ♥K4 ♦KQ54 ♣10965 red vs white he opened 1♦ and heard 1NT on his left, Double from partner, 2♣ on his right. He did very well by making an aggressive double, which Nick was thrilled to pass with ♠J973 ♥A9765 ♦96 ♣AK.

Would 3NT make their way? They did not care, as they crushed 2♣ doubled, tricks for +500. In fact, 3NT failed by two tricks at the other table (and at most tables in the Bermuda Bowl). This helped Canada to a 56-14 win. Canada was looking down from near the top of the standings. Unfortunately, that would be the peak.

DAY OF RECKONING

The Day 4 schedule was much discussed amongst the team as we ended Day 3 still in the qualifying zone. It looked less like a day of bridge and more like a gauntlet: four matches against eventual top-9 finishers; including the eventual champions, USA1.

A slow start against USA1 (a 9-2 loss) was followed by a series of missteps against Norway, and then another tough defeat to a very strong Swedish squad. In the finale, a hard-fought battle, with Belgium came down to the wire - a very small slip in an excellent slam left Canada trailing late.

But Darren Wolpert struck back on lead against 3NT. Holding ♠AJ976 ♥Q32 ♦K1073 ♣2, he overcalled 1♠ after RHO opened 1♣. LHO raised to 2♣, RHO rebid 2NT (showing 15-17), and LHO closed proceedings with 3NT. Darren found the killing lead of a low diamond - the only lead to defeat the contract. Declarer had KQ10 of spades and AJ9 of diamonds, while Nick's Qxxx of diamonds. Of the 24 Bermuda Bowl tables, every East made 3NT (except one that accidentally played in a cuebid). Darren was the only one to find the winning diamond lead. 12 IMPs to the good guys!

Even so, we ended Day 4 in 14th place; it would take both sharp play and some good fortune to claw our way back to the top-eight qualifying group.

ONE LAST PUSH

One of Canada's best matches of the tournament was on VuGraph against Israel. The very first deal set the tone, as Feldman aggressively doubled the Israeli's freely bid game contract, which was defeated two tricks.

On board 3, facing a rare 2♥ opener showing a weak hand with hearts (most pairs play either multi 2♦ or some form of exotic two bids), Feldman balanced 2♠ with ♠KJ1075 ♥A63 ♦J954 ♣K. Miles advanced with 2NT rather than cuebid, holding ♠A64 ♥K85 ♦Q72 ♣Q952. This was raised to 3NT by Jason and doubled by the non-preemptor, who led the ♣J. Doubler had basically everything so the contract was impenetrable.

Canada picked up another 7 IMPs thanks to a good sacrifice by Smith-Pollack; at the other table, Miles-Feldman had to deal with Israel's mini (10-12) notrump opener. Miles-Feldman had a 5-4 spade fit and were gin for 650, but when the Israelis misjudged and passed a double of 2♣, Miles-Feldman elected to play 2Cx in their 4-4 fit for +380. Then, fireworks:

Board 10, dealer East, both vul.

♠ -	♠ J1086
♥ KQJ5	♥ A1087
♦ 87	♦ K4
♣ KQ87642	♣ A95
♠ AKQ954	♠ 732
♥ -	♥ 96432
♦ AJ63	♦ Q10952
♣ J103	♣ -

Miles held ♠AKQ954 ♥- ♦AJ63 ♣J103 and heard partner open 1♣ vulnerable. After a 1♠ reply, partner raised to 2♠. Science may not help much (Miles could jump to 4♥ to show a void), he elected to keep the opponents in the dark and jumped to 6♠. This went pass, pass, double. Unfortunately, not only were clubs 7-0, but neither of us held the ♣Q, and Miles held more

than two clubs. The high club lead was ruffed, and Canada was soon writing -400 on the card, for a 15 IMP loss. That was the only blemish, as Canada romped to a 51-17 victory, which also featured a great lead:

Vulnerable against not, you hold the powerful South hand. LHO opens 3♠, which of course may be only a six card suit at these colours. North doubles (not happy about it, but what can you do?). You conclude proceedings with a jump to 6♣. West (the preemptor) leads the ♦3. How do you plan the play?

♠ J
♥ K8632
♦ AQ1094
♣ 65
♠ A65
♥ A
♦ J6
♣ KQJ10873

It looks like the best shot is to dispose of your diamond loser on the ♥K and then decide whether to run the ♦Q through East, or attempt to ruff both of your spade losers in dummy, all while avoiding losing a trick to the ♣9.

That's what occurred at our table. Declarer won the ♦A, crossed to the ♥A, cashed the ♠A and continued with a spade ruff in dummy. He then cashed the HK, throwing the ♦J. He tried to enter his hand with a heart ruff, but was overruffed with the 9. West then led a trump so declarer ended two down.

The full deal:

♠ J	♠ K98
♥ K8632	♥ J10754
♦ AQ1094	♦ 8752
♣ 65	♣ A
♠ Q107432	♠ A65
♥ Q9	♥ A
♦ K3	♦ J6
♣ 942	♣ KQJ10873

Yes, West got you. Miles found a great lead of a low diamond from King-doubleton for a well-deserved 13 IMPs to Canada. Michael Klukowski of Switzerland also defeated 6♣ with a low diamond lead.

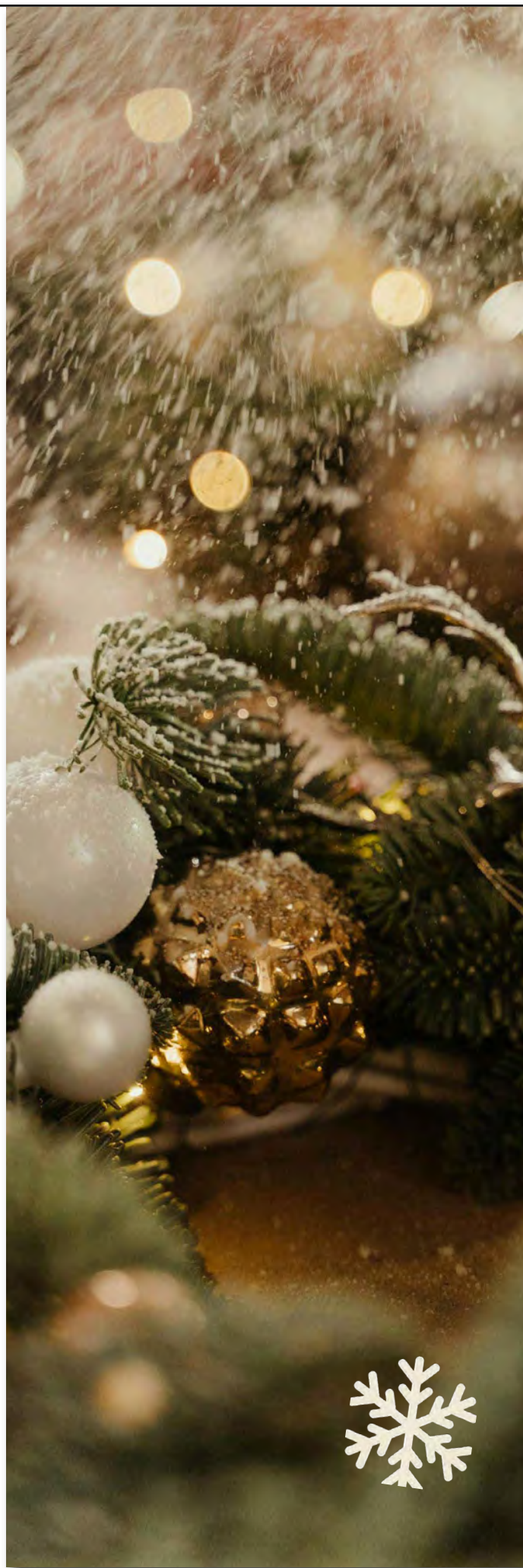
REFLECTIONS FROM HERNING

When the last board was scored, I finally had a moment to breathe. We hadn't come home with hardware, but we did bring back something lasting — the sense that we truly belonged on the world stage. Sitting amongst the world's best and realizing, "we're in this," was a special kind of validation.

One big eye-opener was how aggressive top teams are in the bidding, especially at favourable vulnerability. They simply never passed. Every hand that could be opened, was. Every preempt was pushed to the max. It was a great reminder that if you're not ready to compete, you'll get steamrolled. Knowing your competitive agreements — absolutely cold — is essential. What do you do when they play transfers over 1♣? How do you defend against 2♦ Multi or 2♦ showing both majors? What do your cue bids mean after interference? And when is 2NT natural in competition? (Hint: almost never.) These are the details that separate the merely solid from the truly world-class. Herning's calm charm was the perfect counterpoint to the chaos that got us there. We're already thinking about how to earn our way back.



AGE AND TREACHERY WILL DEFEAT
YOUTH AND SKILL.





47TH. WORLD BRIDGE TEAMS – HERNING, DENMARK SENIORS D'ORSI CHAMPIONSHIP

By Dan Jacob

The long trip to Denmark did not start well for those Canadian bridge players who booked the air travel using Air Canada. Just days before the planned travel, the weekend of September 15th, the airline announced that due to an unresolved labour dispute with the flight attendants many of the international flights will be cancelled. Nevertheless, most of the players managed to find alternate flights and made it to Herning, a bit stressed and tired, but more or less on time.

Our CSTC team was composed of: NPC Michael Yuen, Roy Hughes - David Turner; Michel Lorber - Zygmunt Marcinski; Piotr Klimowicz - Dan Jacob. All the members of our team arrived in Herning on time (most of us at least a day before the start of the tournament).

The championships were held at Herning Kongrescentre, located centrally, very close to most hotels, restaurants and bars. The Kongrescentre had kiosks for everything a bridge player may need: coffee, fast food, snacks, drinks (including draft beer). The playing areas were well organized, each table had additional lights mounted at the corners of the screens. For all events, the bidding was done using LoveBridge tablets. Lovebridge was also used for the VuGraph room which was located across the Centre in a pub (excellent location). You could follow four matches at the same time, have access to all the hands, bids etc. Great software!

The schedule was the same for all the team events, with four matches of 14 boards daily. Unfortunately, at the start of the tournament Roy didn't feel well (he recovered some after a day) so David and Roy played substantially less than the other two pairs.

In the D'Orsi Championship, our team struggled from the beginning and never reached a stage when we were close to a qualifying spot (only 8 teams out of 24 made the cut for the KO stage). Canada's open team had a great start, and for the first 2 -3 days they were in a qualifying spot. Unfortunately, they hit the wall on the 4th day and never recovered.

Being eliminated from the main event we entered the Transnational Teams (Canucks) and started just as lousy as in D'Orsi event. The difference this time was that starting with the 2nd. Qualifying day (the event had 3 qualifying days, Swiss style, 14 boards/round) we started a fast move towards the front, eventually finishing in the 7th qualifying spot (16 teams qualified). We survived the KO round of 16 but we lost in the Quarter Final. At least a small consolation following our poor showing in the main event.

Here are a few hands from both events that we think would be a good read (naturally, only the ones that make us look good 😊).

D'Orsi Teams, Rd. 6. You are dealt, as West, ♠A63 ♥AJ742 ♦KJ5 ♣85, and open 1♥. It goes pass, pass,

3NT, all pass. What is your lead? Roy found the killing lead of the ♦J. The full deal:

♠ J954	
♥ Q98	
♦ 8762	
♣ 93	
♠ A63	♠ 1087
♥ AJ742	♥ 63
♦ KJ5	♦ Q10943
♣ 85	♣ 1076
♠ KQ2	
♥ K105	
♦ A	
♣ AKQJ42	

Here is a hand from the later stages of the Transnational Teams RR, played very nicely by Michel, from the south seat.

Board 11, Dealer South, neither vul.

♠ 109
♥ A10943
♦ KJ5
♣ A94
♠ K72
♥ J6
♦ A872
♣ KQJ3

The auction:

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

The lead was the ♠3 (low from odd), 9, Q, K. Before considering the diamond finesse for the 9th trick at trick two, Michel crossed to the club ace (8 on the left - regular Smith), followed by a club to the king, RHO pitched an encouraging ♥2. Considering the spade play and the club suit revelation, it looked like West was 5-5 in the blacks. So Michel played:

Trick 4: ♠2, 5, 10, A.

Trick 5 (long pause): ♥Q, 6, 8, A.

Trick 6: ♣4, ♥5, Q, 7.

Trick 7: ♠7, 8, ♥3 (Trying to sever the communication or squeeze East if the spades were cashed).

Trick 8: ♠J, ♥4, ♦4, ♦2.

Extended pause, claim by Michel on the stated assumption that hearts were 1-5 and the diamonds were 2-4. The full deal:

♠ 109	
♥ A10943	
♦ KJ5	
♣ A94	
♠ J8653	♠ AQ4
♥ 8	♥ KQ752
♦ 63	♦ Q1094
♣ 108762	♣ 5
♠ K72	
♥ J6	
♦ A872	
♣ KQJ3	

Transnational Teams, Round 2, David (East) and Roy (West) in action. **Board 21, Dealer North, N-S vulnerable.**

♠ KJ109875	
♥ 102	
♦ 6	
♣ J75	
♠ AQ	♠ 42
♥ -	♥ AKQ65
♦ AKQ1074	♦ J92
♣ A10864	♣ KQ2
♠ 63	
♥ J98743	
♦ 853	
♣ J3	

The auction was:

Roy	North	David	South
	2♠	3♥	Pass
4♦	Pass	5♦	Pass
6♣	Pass	7♦!	

David' rational for bidding seven, was that Roy would not try for a grand slam without a spade control and with such a great club holding the slam should have a good play. As you can see 7NT, with 13 quick tricks, is the best contract. At the other table the opponents stopped in 6NT:

West	North	East	South
	2♠	3♥	Pass
6NT	All Pass		

And finally, a hand from the 1st. round D'Orsi Sr. Team event:

Board 2. Dealer East N-S vulnerable.

	♠ J2	
	♥ QJ1075	
	♦ 5	
	♣ J10985	
♠ 4		♠ K987653
♥ A		♥ 94
♦ AKQ864		♦ J109
♣ AQ763		♣ 2
	♠ AQ10	
	♥ K8632	
	♦ 732	
	♣ K4	

As east, I opened 2♦ (weak two in a major). Perhaps a bit conservative (early in the morning, second board of the tournament), but if we belonged in spades, at least the contract was going to be played by the stronger hand. In any case the auction continued (silent opposition):

West	East
	2♦ ¹
3♦	3♠
4♣	5♦
6♦	Pass

2♦ was multi. The rest of the auction was natural. North's lead was the ♥5. Once we escaped the trump lead the slam looked pretty good (spades 3-2 or if 4-1, ♠A on side, and trumps not worse than 3-1).

Trick 2: ♠4, J, 3, 10.

Trick 3: ♦5, 9, 2, 4.

Trick 4: ♠5, Q, ♦A, 2.

Trick 5: ♦5, ♥7, 10, 3.

Trick 6: ♠6, A, ♦K, ♥10.

Trick 7: ♦8, H10, DJ; D7 and claim: 6 diamonds, 4 spades, and two Aces.

To end, a bit of additional information about the Herning area, Denmark in general and some trivia offered by Cristina, my wife and travel adviser:

Danish Trivia

- Herning (a relatively new city by Euro standards, 150 years) is in the middle of the continental Denmark, which lays north of Germany. This region is called Jutland and the main airport connecting it to the rest of Europe is in Billund, "the city for children." Why? Billund is where LegoLand, LegoHome and Teddy Bear Museum are located. Tens of others attractions are also nearby: water and sculpture parks, aquariums, labyrinths, zoos, museums, street art, and so on.
- Denmark uses wind to produce 60% of its energy needs. A world leader!
- Denmark used to have a very strong textile industry from 1950 to 1970. It is now much weaker as textiles are produced cheaper in the East.
- There are many bog bodies that have been found mummified in graves uncovered during land development in Jutland. Tellund man is the most famous among them (2,100 years old, naturally preserved).
- The 50's revolutionary art movement known under the name of COBRA (a contraction of the names of Copenhagen, Brussels, and Amsterdam) was well represented by Danish artists. See CHPEA and AROS museums.

THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE OCCASIONALLY UGLY: THE CANADIAN MIXED TEAM WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP REPORT

By Paul Thurston

Fresh off a true Silky Sullivan in the National Final for Mixed Teams, our recently crowned CMTC Champions arrived in Herning, Denmark ready to make their mark on the world stage.

Torontonians Barry Senensky- Barbara Shnier with Winnipeggers Bob Kuz-Marielle Decelles-Brentnall were the core four from the National Playoffs. They augmented Montreal's Jeff Blond-Sondra Blank for the World event – a capable sixsome with a nice mixture of experience and ability ready to take on all comers.

I was pleased to take on the duties of Non-Playing Captain but things didn't turn out very well on that front as Air Canada's labour issues left me unable to secure alternate travel arrangements with the only available options having Jo-Anne and I getting to Herning no sooner than Thursday midday when the first two-plus days of the event had already gone by. But you don't need to hear all the gory details of that travel tribulation so let's get on to some bridge with Canada's first round opponent being an excellent Swedish team that was on most prognosticators' list as likely to qualify for the knockout rounds.

Many players like to “test the waters” on an early deal with a view to seeing what Lady Luck might have in store for them. Dealer was North, with E-W vul:

♠ -	♠ 10854
♥ A1097654	♥ J3
♦ J1098	♦ KQ6
♣ 107	♣ KJ65
♠ AQ9732	♠ KJ6
♥ Q2	♥ K8
♦ 742	♦ A53
♣ 84	♣ AQ932

West	North	East	South
	4♥	Pass	6♥

All Pass

Opening lead: ♦K. (One hurdle cleared thought Barry!)

Apparently a “water-tester supreme”, Barry Senensky started the auction with a slightly sub-par 4-level opening and Partner Barbara Shnier upped the ante with her own aggressive response by leaping to the six-level. All to reach a low percentage contract that merely needed declarer to play hearts for no loser, handle diamonds for three winners and find the ♣K onside.

Eventually finding everything he needed for success, Barry brought home twelve tricks and a favourable

double-digit swing of 11 IMPs. Of note: of the other 47 North-South pairs in the Mixed event, a total of zero reached this slam.

Not to be outdone in the slam department, Bob Kuz-Marielle-Descelles Brentnall provided this trust-your-partner exhibit: Dealer South, E-W vul.

♠ K109743	
♥ QJ10	
♦ A	
♣ J72	
♠ Q62	♠ -
♥ 52	♥ AK94
♦ 8765	♦ KQJ1093
♣ AKQ4	♣ 1083
♠ AJ85	
♥ 8763	
♦ 42	
♣ J965	

West	North	East	South
Pass	2♠	3♦	Pass
6♦	Dbf	All Pass	4♠

Opening lead: ♦A.

For his penalty double, North must have been thinking about Canadian Internationalists' penchant for bidding hopeless slams but this wasn't one of those cases as Bob lost to the trump ace and that was all the defenders could muster – another 14 IMPs to Canada when their Swedish counterparts didn't find the slam. All to end up with a 38-11 IMP score in Canada's favour and Second place overall in the Round Robin standings.

And while that was the “good” mentioned above, the “bad” arrived very quickly as in Match Two, our squad fell to a very aggressive team from India to the tune of 11-55 IMPs and only 1.35 Victory Points to our account. That dropped us to 16th place in the standings but it was early days – or so we thought. Despite some very encouraging results in those “early days”, our gals and guys couldn't muster the consistency needed to succeed in this type of competition. Good results:

- 18-17 win against a very good team from England.
- 32-21 win against South Africa
- 64-26 win against Australia.

It seemed on the heels of a good match, we'd have a disaster or two to leave us languishing in 20th spot where we stayed for the majority of the six-day qualifying sessions.

Ironically, while bidding and making slams contributed nicely to our first-match demolition of the Swedes, reaching failing slams was a big part of our slide to (and residence in) the lower echelons of the standings. Only six out of 48 pairs reached six notrump, Team Canada being one of those.

Dealer East. Vulnerable: E-W

♠ A53	
♥ A109	
♦ AQ975	
♣ K6	
♠ Q107	♠ J98
♥ 87654	♥ Q3
♦ 103	♦ J862
♣ QJ4	♣ 10987
♠ K642	
♥ KJ2	
♦ K4	
♣ A532	

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♦	Pass	1♣
Pass	2♥ ¹	Pass	3NT
Pass	4NT	Pass	6NT
All Pass			

Opening lead: ♥8.

North's 2♥ call was fourth-suit forcing, seeking more information with South denying three-card diamond support while showing her hand's balanced nature and no more than 14 HCPs.

That information might have been enough to curb the enthusiasm of many players but not our Canadian North who forged ahead with a quantitative invitation to slam, said invite being accepted. After the Queen-locating opening heart lead, the slam simply needed an odds-against 3-3 diamond split or a very lucky ♦J10. Not to be as this water was very deep and equally cold and turned over 11 IMPs to India as the Indian North-South resisted bidding slam with a combined 31 HCPs and no great source of extra tricks.

For one more foray into the Slam Zone, I really liked this partnership triumph that propelled Jeff Blond-Sandra Blank into a winning slam on this deal. Dealer North, E-W vul:

	♠ 874		
	♥ 6		
	♦ KQ98652		
	♣ 106		
♠ AJ		♠ K932	
♥ AKQJ75		♥ 10942	
♦ AJ10		♦ -	
♣ 87		♣ KQJ92	
	♠ Q1065		
	♥ 83		
	♦ 743		
	♣ A543		

West	North	East	South
	3♦	Dbl	Pass
4♦	Pass	4♥	Pass
4NT	Pass	5♣	Pass
6♥	All Pass		

Opening lead: ♦K.

Some interesting features to this auction starting with North's opening 3♦ bid that was in large measure motivated by his side's non-vulnerable status. Following the expert tactic of straining to enter the auction when short in the opponent's bid-suit, Jeff Blond got his side involved with an admittedly minimum takeout double. All to justifiably excite Sondra Blank holding half the deck's high cards and a very good heart suit. Four diamond cuebid to find partner with four-plus hearts followed by Key Card Blackwood with

East showing 0 or 3 of those. That lowered West's expectations as she settled for the small slam that was easily fulfilled.

Contrast these results: five pairs in the event reached seven hearts (!), perhaps after the same start as Blond-Blank but no check on Key Cards compared to six pairs stopping in game, one of those derailed by a campaign of deception launched by Marielle Decelles-Brentnall after Bob Kuz also opened three diamonds that elicited no immediate action by East.

Marielle quite correctly estimated that West was going to be holding a really powerful hand so she tried a semi-psyche by responding three notrump! West did get the ball rolling by doubling her side into the auction and they found the heart fit but not quite sure of how good the side suits might fit, their auction ground to an unsatisfying (for them!) halted in five hearts. Another double-digit slam swing for Canada as part of a scoreboard that showed a 52-19 IMP victory over a highly-favoured Polish team. We needed more of those kind of deals!





THE IBPA FILES: SUPERB REASONING - TEST YOUR EXPERT DECLARER PLAY

SOLUTION PAGE 36

♠ Q7652

♥ KQJ94

♦ 107

♣ 2

♠ AJ1084

♥ -

♦ J92

♣ QJ743

Contract: 4♠

Lead: ♦A.

The **bidding** went:

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

West led the ♦A followed by the ♦K, and the ♦Q, the third one ruffed in dummy. East played low (standard signals) and followed by playing up the line. When a club was played from North, East took the ace and played the ♠3. Should declarer finesse or play for the drop?

DECLARER PLAY PROBLEM

SOLUTION PAGE 35

Contract: 4♠. IMPs. The bidding:

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♠
Pass	4♥ ¹	Pass	4♠
All Pass			

1. Splinter.

Lead: ♥K. West wins the first trick, and shifts to a trump. East has three spades.

♠ J974

♥ 7

♦ AK52

♣ A986

♠ AKQ102

♥ 3

♦ J973

♣ 742

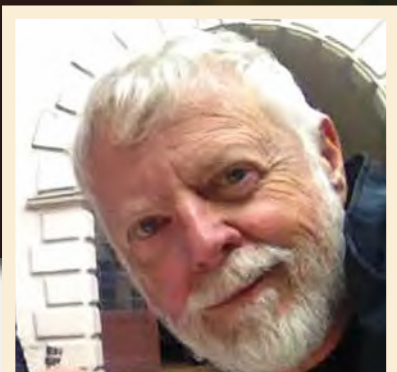


Plan the play.



QUESTION: WHY CAN'T PIRATES PLAY BRIDGE?

ANSWER: BECAUSE THEY ARE STANDING ON THE
DECK.



MEET... ALLAN CALLARD

CBF DIRECTOR FOR ZONE 1 (ATLANTIC PROVINCES)

Editor: *Allan has been playing bridge for more than sixty years, yet he says he still learns something every time he sits down at the table (as do we all 😊). In early 2025, he was elected to a three-year term on the Canadian Bridge Federation (CBF) Board of Directors. Let's get to know Allan a little better.*

What have you done with your life?

Not enough yet — but I'm working on it! I hope to stay active physically and mentally for many more years to come.

I joined the Royal Canadian Navy straight out of high school, beginning what turned out to be three decades of incredible experiences and international travel. About ten of those years were spent at sea, with the rest in shore postings in Halifax, Victoria, and Ottawa.

On a blind date in Halifax 57 years ago, I met my wife, Linda. We have two daughters — Nancy and Melissa — who now have adult children of their own, but they'll always be "our girls."

Because of frequent postings, we moved often, which meant our children changed schools many times. But they also travelled across Canada by car and air many times, and they journeyed from Alaska to Mexico, so their education was both academic and geographic!

When I retired from the Navy, Linda and I started a project management and management consulting

company, focusing mainly on healthcare and national defence projects throughout the Maritimes.

We call ourselves retired now, but the truth is, we're not very good at it! We've stayed busy with various not-for-profit organizations, both locally and nationally.

What about bridge?

I'm the webmaster for the Charlottetown Duplicate Bridge Club, www.CharlottetownBridge.ca — thanks for letting me give it a plug! I also volunteer as a coach for a group of novice players once a week. I'm delighted that we usually have around two dozen enthusiastic learners who enjoy improving in a friendly, non-competitive setting, and many of them have since joined our regular duplicate games.

Our Charlottetown DBC meets three afternoons a week, year-round, and it's a warm, sociable group — something I value deeply in this digital age. I first tried online bridge during COVID, but I didn't enjoy it much. Despite being a certified introvert, I truly relish playing face-to-face — it's such an important form of social connection, especially for seniors.

What do you like about bridge?

Everything! It's an extraordinary game that almost anyone can take up. Of course, there's a learning curve: we start with the basics, attempt that first finesse (usually with disappointing results!), and then spend

a lifetime trying to improve our skills, knowledge and, perhaps most importantly, our table manners.

Do you have any funny stories about bridge?

About fifty years ago, when I fancied myself an “expert,” my wife and I were playing by candlelight in a tent on Virginia Beach with very good friends. At the time, I had taught Linda to bid voids as aces — a system that, as it turned out, had its flaws! After we reached a 7NT redoubled contract, my left-hand opponent led an ace, and I apparently almost leapt over the candle that was sitting on the floor of the tent!

Are you an expert now?

Far from it! I love the game, and yes, I like to win, but I’ll never be a seriously competitive player.

Tell us about your work with the CBF.

I’ll start by confessing that I didn’t know what I didn’t know! I’ve since met some truly amazing people on the volunteer Board of Directors — all passionate about growing bridge in Canada and supporting our international teams.

Our biggest challenge is demonstrating value to the average bridge player: giving them a reason to join the CBF. The annual membership fee is just \$25 — less than one coffee a month — yet our numbers have dropped in recent years.

The question I hear most often is, “What’s in it for me?” I’d like to respond by paraphrasing President John F. Kennedy’s famous exhortation: “Ask not what the CBF can do for you; but ask instead what you can do for the Canadian bridge community.” Now that may be a little over the top, but the fact remains that we need more Canadians to become engaged with the CBF. In addition to our Board of Directors, we are always looking for volunteer resources. I invite your readers to spend some time on our www.cbf.ca website, and then offer to get involved by contacting our president, Shelley Burns, by emailing president@cbf.ca.

Many members don’t realize that, while our international teams receive CBF subsidies, they still

cover a significant share of their own costs and they devote countless hours to practice, as do their coaches.

The CBF is working hard to engage players at every level. We organize semi-annual Rookie-Master games, and participate in The Longest Day Alzheimer’s fundraisers in conjunction with the ACBL.

In 2025 the CBF created the **CBF Maple Leaf Games** on the **RealBridge.online** platform. This weekly game is a great way to earn ACBL masterpoints while supporting their local clubs through profit sharing. RealBridge allows use to see and interact with the other players, just like in an in person club game. Come join us in these weekly friendly matchpoint games, where you can meet fellow Canadians, as well as players from around the world!

We’re also launching Team League games, planning a **Celebrity Player auction, February 23, 2026 at 1:00 Eastern**. The CBF Board has also made Bridge Canada magazine publicly available online to share more news and inspiration across the bridge community.

What do you do to stay active physically and mentally?

I used to be a runner. Before my knees gave out, I completed eleven marathons and countless shorter races, plus I was the national representative of the Royal Canadian Legion in the amazing Nijmegen Marches in The Netherlands. The Nijmegen Marches were an incredible experience: essentially four marathons in four days with about 40,000 participants from around the world. I was part of the 200-strong Canadian military contingent (as a Veteran) marching in boots and combat clothing.

These days, I stay fit with four to five CrossFit workouts each week and a bit of biking, kayaking, hiking, and snowshoeing.

As for keeping the mind sharp — that’s what bridge is for!

Editor: *Thank you Allan for sharing your story, as well as serving on the CBF Board. Together we all contribute in building Bridge in Canada! It takes a village!*

NEWFOUNDLAND DBC INDUCTS FIRST THREE MEMBERS INTO ITS HALL OF FAME

By Rick Callahan

On Monday, October 6, 2025, **Bridge on the Edge** (BOTE), St. John's only Duplicate Bridge Club, proudly announced the creation of its Hall of Fame and inducted three honourees as their first patrons. Randy Bennett, John Clouston, and Edward (Ted) Power, three foundational figures of the game in our province, were all voted in unanimously by the membership.



Roy Perry, BOTE Club President, said that the inductees were nominated for their profound contributions as builders, teachers, and champions over numerous decades. "The success and vibrancy of Bridge on the Edge today, with over 150 dedicated members, is a direct result of the

efforts, energy, and vision of these three remarkable individuals. They didn't just excel at the play of the game; they created the structure and the organizational framework that would pave the road forward, to allow duplicate bridge to gain a footing and grow in St. John's and surrounding areas, over our last half-century."



Randy Bennett, an Open Pairs World Champion (Yokohama Cup, 2001), is widely considered one of the strongest players to ever play in Newfoundland and Labrador. Alongside his wife Marilyn, a Sapphire Life Master, they co-owned and managed the Ace of Clubs for nearly

30 years, dramatically improving the skill level of a generation of local players, through their teaching and regular games. Marilyn accepted on behalf of Randy.



John Clouston, our first ACBL accredited Club Director, was recognized as the organizational bedrock of the local game. An ACBL Life Master himself, (1969), John established and ran some of the earliest and most prominent bridge

clubs, laying the groundwork and infrastructure that supported the local bridge community for decades to come.



Edward "Ted" Power, also associated with many local bridge clubs, was celebrated as a true pioneer, becoming the first Newfoundlander to achieve the ACBL Life Master designation in 1968. Ted, also a Director and Club Owner, chaired

the first Newfoundland Sectional Duplicate Bridge Tournament and for years shared his profound bridge knowledge and expertise as a prolific bridge writer and columnist. Joe Power, Ted's son, on behalf of his family members, many of whom were in attendance, accepted on behalf of Ted and thanked BOTE for launching this exceptional initiative.

The Bridge on the Edge Hall of Fame will continue to recognize remarkable individuals, past and present, who have made significant, sustained contributions to the promotion and advancement of duplicate bridge in our province.



Sam: I love you Ethan...

Ethan: I love you too.

Sam...I mean it is so cute when you think you are right at the bridge table.



This one fellows loves to psyche, but his partner had his fill and tells him that from now one he is going to fine him 20 dollars every time he psyches. The 'psycher' agrees and everything is going along just fine until the psycher winds up playing against a guy he hates. The psycher is the dealer. He says to his partner: "By the way, here's the 20 dollars I owe you, one spade!"

Edwin Kantar.



THE ABCS OF BRIDGE TEAM GAMES

By Mike Hargreaves

INTRODUCTION

Team play is very different from Matchpoint (MPs) games that make up almost all club-level duplicate games. This article is intended to provide a solid foundation for players who either have not played many (or any) team games, or those who bid and play team games in the same way that they play Matchpoint hands.

We'll start by looking at the mechanics of a team game and how the scoring works. It is the scoring method that underlies, the sometimes profound differences, in how experienced players approach team games compared to MPs. Players familiar with the mechanics of how the event is run can skip the rest of the introduction.

Firstly: team games come in different formats but the most common are scored at **International Match Points (IMPs)** and so we will focus on those.

The two main variants are **Swiss Teams and Knockout Teams**. (Recently the ACBL has introduced a hybrid form: a Swiss team event that qualifies the top teams for a knockout stage. Don't worry about that.) The tips I'll be presenting are valid for all team game formats.

SWISS TEAMS

In a Swiss movement, there will be a series of short matches, usually 6-8 boards in length. Each team, having been assigned a number when they bought

the entry, goes to their 'home table'. The home table number is posted by the Director before the start of each round. Each team plays against one other team in each round. Your E-W pair travels to the home table of the other team, whose E-W pair comes to yours. The hands are played and then, when both tables have finished, the E-W pairs return to their home table and each team compares how they did.

SCORING AND REPORTING THE RESULTS

On any given hand, if the results at the two tables are identical or within 10 points (say 1NT making 2 at one table, for 120, and 3♣ making 3 at the other, for 110) no IMPs are scored. For differences of more than 10 points, look up the International Match Point (IMP) scoring, from the tables found on the inside of your Convention Card (CC). Then total up your pluses and minuses: if you scored more imps than your opponents, you win. If you score fewer, then you lose.

In the old days, Swiss events were scored by wins and losses, with a win by 1-3 imps being a .75 win, and a loss a .25 win. These days it is more common for the imp margin to be converted to Victory Points (VPs), also found on the Convention Card. There is more than one different method for awarding VPs, but we won't go into them here.

The captain of the winning team takes the score ticket to the other table to confirm the result. (It's not unusual for there to be some differences, but usually, these are

quickly resolved. One way to minimize different scores, is for players to check that E-W and N-S agree on the results before E-W returns to their home table.)

Once you have agreed on the final score, the winning team's captain hands in the final IMP results to the Director, who will assign the correct victory point score, and match you up with a new opponents, for the following match. (Don't worry about this if you are playing online, since the computer tracks everything and tells you the imp score after each match.)

Each round your team will be paired with a team close to yours in terms of total VPs, except that you won't ever play the same team twice even if you have exactly the same VPs. Again, this is all looked after by the Director. The team that finishes the event with the most VPs is the winner.

CBF ONLINE TEAM GAMES

These games are intended for new and very new players, to ensure you play against players at your level. The length of the matches are longer, usually from 14-20 boards (see more on Knockouts below).

For information on playing please go to **cbf.ca** or email **admin@cbf.ca**.

KNOCKOUTS

The other main variant is the Knockout or KO event. These days these are common at Regionals but rare at Sectionals. Most KO events now are two day affairs, with the field divided into brackets, according to masterpoint holdings. So a team with, say, 1000 masterpoints between them won't run into a team with 40,000 masterpoints! This ensures a relatively level playing field for each bracket and is an excellent introduction to KO Bridge for less experienced players.

KO matches are usually longer than Swiss matches, anywhere between 12 and 24 hands. (In the late stages of major championships...especially World Championships, the match may last for 120 boards!)

As the term knockout implies, two teams play against each other. The winner advances to the next round, while the loser either plays in a consolation, or is out of the event. The ideal is 16 teams in a bracket, such that after 3 rounds, only 2 are left and they play

for the event. These days, most tournaments don't have enough teams to do this and still have the less experienced players able to avoid playing a team against which they stand little chance, so brackets are often smaller, and may feature a round robin, where three teams play, and two survive to the next round.

So in terms of procedure it does matter whether you are in a KO or a Swiss but for almost all practical purposes, you can approach both variants in the same way. Winning tactics at one will usually be winning tactics at the other.

BIDDING AT IMPs

Let's start by comparing IMPs and MPs. At MPs, what counts is whether you did better than other pairs. In a 13 table club game, each hand is played by all pairs. If you are E-W, then what matters is how many other E-W pairs you beat. It doesn't matter whether you beat another pair's score by 10 points or 1,000 points...you get 1 matchpoint for every other E-W pair for which you score better.

In contrast, at IMPs the amount by which you beat (or were beaten) on any board really matters, and can matter a lot! This is because you don't just get 1 'point' for doing better than your counterpart. Remember that at IMPs you are only concerned with the team you are playing in the match. Scores at other tables are irrelevant.

A score difference of 10 is counted the same as no difference; a huge difference with MPs scoring where scoring 120 in 1NT could give you a top board if everyone else was +110, and a bottom if everyone else was +130. But at IMPs, either one is a tie, thus no score. It is called a 'push'.

At imps, small score differences lead to small imp scores, while large differences lead to larger IMP scores, bearing in mind that the imp table is designed to somewhat reduce the effect of very large score difference. A margin of 100 gives you 3 imps, but a margin of 1000 doesn't give you 30 IMPs...it is 'only' 14 imps. You do not need to memorize the IMP table but it's worth your while to spend a few minutes looking at it before playing a team game. You can find it on the inside of your convention card, or google it if at home.

IMP STRATEGY

The relative unimportance of tiny score differences affects bidding strategy. Since this article is threatening to grow into a book (😄), I'll resort to bullet points. I will have my email at the end of the article and I would be happy to expand on these points to any who are interested (including by phone or zoom if requested).

1. If you are bidding a game or slam, try to **bid the safest**, rather than the higher scoring one. If 6NT makes 75% of the time and 6♦ 100% of the time, bidding 6NT at MPs makes sense because 75% of the time you beat the 6♦ bidders. But at IMPs, it would be foolish. When you make, 75% of the time, you win 2 IMPs for the higher scoring slam but when you fail, 25% of the time, you lose 14 IMPs if not vulnerable and 16 IMPs if vulnerable. Not a winning approach in the long run.
2. If you are **vulnerable, be aggressive in bidding game**. Assume that if you bid a game and at the other table they stay in a part score...let's say 4♠ versus 3♠. If both tables take 10 tricks, you score +620 and they +170...you win 10 IMPs. If both sides take 9 tricks, your -100 and their +140 costs you 6 IMPs. So by bidding game, you are risking 6 imps to gain 10...pretty good odds. The same reasoning shows that not vulnerable you stand to win 6 imps for bidding (and making) a game not bid at the other table while risking 5 if it fails....pretty close to a 50-50 proposition. This is very different from matchpoints. At MPs, you want to avoid games that rate to fail more often than they make, but at imps it's definitely best, in the long run, to bid any vulnerable game that has a decent chance even if it rates to fail more often than it wins. Not vulnerable? Don't be as aggressive. It sounds paradoxical... you lose more going down if you're vulnerable, but that is only half the equation. You make a LOT more if the game comes home. So for game bidding, bid more at IMPs than at MPs, and even more if vulnerable.
3. Slam bidding works differently. **Bid the safest slam** but don't be hyper-aggressive. You will lose just the same for going down in a slam not bid at the other table as you win if you made it. So slams are basically a 50-50 proposition, just as they are at MPs.

4. **Don't make close doubles of part scores** if doing so give the opponents a game bonus if it makes. My rule of thumb is that I only double if I expect to beat it at least two tricks. That way I can be off by one and still set it. Do not double for penalty just because you have a strong hand. Your high cards won't win many tricks if they are getting ruffed!
5. Even worse than doubling on high cards when the opponents have great distribution is doubling on a surprising but not solid trump holding, especially if your declarer is a good player. QJ109...there's not much they can about your two trump tricks. QJ8. A skilled declarer, alerted to the bad break by your double, can often manage to save a trick. If you think that you have a surprise for declarer, it's usually best to keep it a surprise until the hand is being played!
6. **Sacrificing**. At MPs, one should generally avoid sacrificing. The late Grant Baze, one of the best MP players of all time, once gave as a tip the saying that 'The 5 level belongs to the opponents'. At IMPs the opposite is embodied in the saying 'when in doubt, bid one more'.

DECLARER PLAY AT IMPs

1. Unless you have sacrificed, always do your best to make your contract. In particular, don't even think about overtricks unless you know, beyond doubt, that there is **NO** risk in playing for the overtrick. At MPs it is sometimes winning bridge to try to take as many tricks as possible, even if doing so might risk the contract. Say you are in 3NT, and you see that you have missed a better 4♠ contract. You see that 4♠ always makes 10 tricks, for +420 or +620, depending on vulnerability. 3NT has an easy 9 tricks but the only way to take 10 is to risk a finesse, and if it loses, you go down in a cold contract. If you think that many pairs, in a MP field, will play in 4♠, you should risk your contract, and take the finesse.

Why? Because you are getting a bad score if you just take 9 tricks - you lose to everyone in 4♠. If the finesse loses, you've turned a bad board into a very bad board but if it wins, you've turned that bad board into a top board. Unless the bidding or play tells you that the finesse is very unlikely to win, take it.

But at imps, that would be crazy. Take your 9 tricks...maybe you tie the board, maybe you lose an imp...but if you finesse and it's wrong, you lose a game swing.

2. If your contract looks as if it will go down, but you are not doubled, try to picture how the cards have to lie to let you make. Ok, that may be a very unlikely lie of the cards, but so what? The difference between, say, going down two tricks or one, even vulnerable, is not going to cost you many IMPs but if you make it you will have won more imps than you were risking.
3. If your contract looks easy- this is a really important point - take a minute or two (or longer) before playing to trick one and think about what might go wrong. Say the hand is cold if trump break 3-2, which is the most common split when missing 5 cards...its 68.5% likely, absent clues from the bidding. Ok, fine. But what if trump break 4-1? Take a little time to think about how you can handle that. Maybe you can't....maybe you're doomed, but maybe there is a way around it. You may not find it, but you definitely won't find it if you don't look for it. Far too many declarers play too quickly to trick one.

DEFENDING AT IMPs

1. Don't worry about overtricks. Sure, take your tricks when it's obvious you can't beat the contract, but otherwise focus on how to set it, not how to hold it. It's the converse to how declarers should concentrate on making their contract rather than on taking as many tricks as possible. Defenders concentrate on setting the contract.
2. Don't worry about maximizing the penalty. Worry about extra undertricks only when you can see that there is literally no way that your play, aimed at getting an extra undertrick can't possibly let them make.

CONCLUSION

1. Playing team games is a lot of fun! It requires a different approach compared to matchpoints, and offers opportunities for plays that one would never make at that form of the game. I'll close with two points.

My email is m.hargreaves@shaw.ca. Feel free to ask questions. As my mentor, back when I was starting out as a lawyer, was fond of saying: there are no stupid questions. What better way is there to learn?

2. IMP scoring rewards bridge technique in a very different way than does MPs. In particular, it is rare to take what is known as a safety play at MPs. A safety play deliberately loses, or tries to lose, a trick that wouldn't need to be lost if the suit broke nicely.

Example 1:

Here's one from a Canadian Team Championship.... you are in 6♥ and your only worry is to avoid losing two trump tricks with ♥K942 in dummy and ♥AJ75 in hand. At MPs, you'd usually play the King then play low toward the AJ75, intending to put in the Jack if RHO played low. If the suit is 3-2 you lose at most one trick and may win them all, with Qxx onside. But when, as happened, LHO held Q10xx, this matchpoint line fails.

At IMPs, the correct play is to cash the ace and lead low to the K9xx, intending to cover whatever card LHO plays on the second round. If he shows out, so that it was Q10xx on your right: no problem...play the king on the 2nd round of the suit, and then lead towards your J7, through RHO's Q10. This safety play risks losing an overtrick but guarantees the contract against any 4-1 break. Both declarers took the safety play. Neither would have done so at matchpoints, where making 6 when 7 was 'cold' would not be a good move. So my second point is that anyone who finds that they really enjoy IMPs should try to find books on declarer play technique. I can recommend some to anyone interested.

FINALLY

I encourage you to dip your toes into Team Bridge. It offers different challenges than the 'same old' matchpoint game, and I think you'll have fun once you become familiar with the format!



**Bridge: The most fun you can have
with your clothes on.**

the GREAT CANADIAN BIDDING CONTEST



December 2025

TGCBC

Host: Mike Hargreaves

*For panelists, and their bids,
see page 33*

It is my pleasure to welcome a new host for the December TGCBC. Mike Hargreaves is another one of many Canadian expert/world class players, who, over the years has not played in as many tournaments as some of his peers. Despite this, Mike has 3 CNTC A wins, and two CSTC wins.

Welcome panelists and readers. TGCBC encourages problem submissions, and will consider using any deal. Preference will be given to those that are real hands, and the full deal and actual outcome are provided.

Danny Miles was the only panelist to score a perfect 50. Well done Danny! Especially as our host scoring was, how should say this, not in the holiday spirit of giving 😊. Honourable mention to Michel Lorber, with a score of 48. Our top reader score was Gary Booth, followed closely by Sheldon Spiers.

The March 2026 problems can be found later in the magazine. Why don't you play along, and see how your answers and thought processes compare to Canada's best!!

1. IMPs. North deals, both vul, South holds ♠52 ♥Q
♦AKQJ93 ♣10854.

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

1. Promises at least four spades and longer clubs.
2. Fourth suit forcing, to game.

- a) Do you agree with 2♥?
- b) What do you bid over 3♣?

Bid	Votes	Score
4♣	10	10
3♦	7	8
4♥	4	7
4♦	1	4
5♣	1	4

Question a) was just to smoke out any disagreement and, as expected virtually everyone was happy with forcing to game. The lone panelist in disagreement:

Hornby: 'No, 3♣. It is still IMPs.'

I don't understand this comment. It would seem that at vulnerable teams you want to ensure you get to game. Give partner an 8 count, Axxx ♥xx ♦x ♣Axxxxx, and 5♣ is cold on a 2-1 trump break!

The 2nd question was where the real issues arose. The 3♦ bidders had 3NT in mind, intending to look for a club slam only if partner bid something other than 3NT. Some sample comments:

Balcombe: 3♦. 'Perhaps partner has a heart stopper after all, I don't imagine this will be a popular choice.'

Cooper: 3♦ 'stress the best feature, pass 3NT.'

Lindop: 3♦ 'we could still belong in 3NT.'

The 4♣ bidders were prepared to go past 3NT in search of a slam.

Marcinski: 4♣. '3NT is out as opener may be 4-3-0-6 with one heart stopper and no entry to my diamonds.'

Miles: 4♣. 'Although I predict 3♦ will be the poll winner. Slam is a long way away.'

Xu: 4♣. 'You don't need too much for slam, try it.'

There were few comments from the 4♥ bidders, intended, and surely going to be read, as a splinter agreeing clubs. I think the main problem is going to be how the auction can continue meaningfully. Say partner cues 4♠. Now what? 4♣ at least gives us a chance to hear a forward gong 4♥ bid. One last note: this being IMPs, we need not be too worried about playing 5♣ rather than 3NT.

A couple of lone wolves:

Treble: 4♦. 'I think this should be fit-showing with a diamond suit like this and a club fit, since i could have bid 3♦ instead.'

Interesting, and possibly a good treatment, but partner will likely not figure that out.

Lebi: 5♣ 'hope for the best.'

Here is a good reason not to bid 5♣:

Kimelman: 4♣. 'Need to set trump. Despite this being a minimum, bidding 5♣, to discourage, is not a good treatment here, as you need to give partner a chance to key card.'

2. IMPS, South deals, NS vul. As South you hold ♠AQ632 ♥- ♦AKQ7653 ♣8.

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

1. Natural, game force

2. Promises some values, 2NT would have been a form of Lebensohl.

- a) Do you agree with 1♦?
- b) Do you agree with 2♠?
- c) Do you agree with 3♠?
- d) What do you bid?

Bid	Votes	Score
4♦	13	10
4♣	6	7
5♥	2	5
6♦	1	5
5♦	1	4

As with problem 1, the real issue is what to bid over 3NT. The other questions were not expected to generate much discussion and, with a couple of exceptions, the panel agreed with all of the actions to the point of decision.

Kimelman: c) No, I would have cue bid 3♥. We have found a fit, so we should be cue bidding controls, instead of muddying the waters with 3♠. My cheapest first round control is in hearts, and allows partner to cuebid the ♠K if they have it. If not they will cuebid the club ace. If they have neither, we would play in 5♦.

The big vote winner for d) was 4♦, which is a straightforward try for slam, without committing us to the six level. Some panelists were dreaming of a grand, while others were more realistic. 7♦ requires the ♣A, and either the ♠K or a singleton, with enough trumps to allow us to ruff out the King. We will usually need four trump support for that.

The also rans included 4♣. The problem with this bid is that partner may read it as a first round control and that could lead us to a silly result. Plus there is no hurry to bid clubs. If partner cue bids over 4♦ we can bid 5♣ to unequivocally show second round control.

The other minority choice was 5♥, Exclusion Keycard. Our presumed expert partner will understand this bid, but it is a blunt tool here. It commits you to slam and, while partner has 'some' values, they rate to be soft given his 3NT bid. For an example, ♠xx ♥KQxxx ♦Jxx ♣QJx wouldn't be unusual, and I'd prefer to avoid slam.

Todd: 5♥. If he shows the club Ace, I'll bid 6♣ and hope he appreciates the value of the spade King: *I'd hope that he would already have appreciated that and not bid 3NT.*

Lorber: 4♦. 'This confirms the 5th spade and suggests a diamond slam.' *This looks right to me. Yes, we are interested in slam but, no, we can't be sure it will be a good contract. Let's give partner room.*

Smith: 5♦. 'What I hope I can make. On a good day may inspire partner to bid six.'

That pessimism was not shared by any other panelist, but on the actual hand a bad layout doomed slam, so Julie would have been a winner at the table.

Jacob: 4♣. 'If partner doesn't bid 4♥, it's a plus.' *Yes, but isn't it more of a plus if we bid 4♦ and over 4♠, bid 5♣? Or hear 5♣ over 4♦?*

Simon: 4♣. 'I'm going to bid at least 6♦, and am still looking for 7♦.'

Treble: 4♦ 'still looking for a spade control.'

Cooper: 4♦. 'Might as well try science.'

Kuz: 4♦ 'hoping to hear 4♠ or 5♣'.

5♣ is probably all we need to bid slam. It may not make, but it probably won't be worse than a spade finesse.

Feldman: 6♦. 'I don't expect it to be much worse than on a finesse. Partner should not have both the ♠K and ♣A, to sign off (in 3NT).'

3. Matchpoints. West deals, both vul. South holds ♠J106 ♥AKJ42 ♦53 ♣A87.

West	North	East	South
1♦	P	1♥	P
1NT	Dbl	2♦	?

What do you bid?

Bid	Votes	Score
Dbl	18	10
2♠	4	6
3NT	1	4

What is going on? Well, the panel was confident that they knew, although they did not agree on every detail. The double of 1NT is takeout, and the reason he didn't bid last time is that he is short in hearts, and lacks the suit length to overcall a black suit. Some suggested 4-1-4-4 was a possibility, and that would make sense were it not for the 2♦ bid, which suggests that they probably have found an 8 card fit, and one panelist feared a 9 card fit. We have a very good hand, but it doesn't look to mesh well. So...what do we do?

75% of the panel voted to double, but that doesn't mean they all agree about what partner's bid meant. Some argued that it meant 'Do Something Intelligent, Partner'...known as a DSIP double. My partners try that on me, but usually end up disappointed. Others saw the double as penalty oriented while a couple thought it was takeout. My view: if we held four spades, we'd bid spades, and if we held five clubs, we'd bid clubs, so our double really can't be takeout. I think it is indeed a DSIP double but with a strong suggestion that leaving it in is the intelligent something he should do.

Simon: 2♠. 'I have to act.' *Yes, acting is clear, but choosing 2♠ is not so clear.*

Cooper: 2♠. *He suggests 4-1-4-4 for partner. Perhaps a double did not occur to him...if partner does have four diamonds, this should be a bloodbath.*

Grainger: Double. 'Partner usually has diamonds to some extent.'

Jacob: Double. 'I hope that partner will pass with a semi-balanced hand and 2-3 diamonds'. *Note that Dan expects to score well even if the opps have nine diamonds. I'd expect partner to be 4-1-3-5 or 4-2-3-4 most of the time.*

Miles: Double. 'Cheering for a trump lead.'

I'd not only be cheering but expecting a trump lead. Our double tells partner we are loaded in hearts and have decent values, so we want to limit their ruffing ability. Agreeing with me:

Feldman: Double. 'Time to collect our number. Hopefully partner remembers to lead a trump.'

L'Ecuyer: Double. 'Sounds like partner is 4135 or 4225. I expect to beat it. I think double suggests to do something. Not sure this is a clear cut penalty but they are vulnerable.'

That last point is powerful. Bidding 2♠ may get you +110 or even +140, but double stands to get you +200 or more, possibly a lot more.

4. IMPS. South deals, NS vul. As South you hold ♠J6 ♥J53 ♦AQJ10 ♣AK42.

West	North	East	South
			1NT
3♥	Dbl ¹	P	?

1. 1NT is 15-17 and the double is takeout.

Bid	Votes	Score
Pass	8	10
3NT	5	8
4NT	2	7
4♣	5	6
4♥	2	4
4♦	1	2

This was a good problem, generating 6 different answers. The popular one, chosen by half the panel, was to pass.

Deng: Pass. 'I want to get a plus score. I am not sure our side can make five of a minor'

Hornby: Pass 'I'll try for five tricks on defence.'

Miles: Pass 'Easier in a poll than at the table.'

Lorber: Pass 'where am I going?'

Todd: Pass. '4NT could work if partner has a long minor and short hearts.'

But many were not happy about passing, for an obvious reason. It could easily make!

Lindop: 4♣. 'They could take seven hearts and two spades in x3Hx.'

Kuz: 4♣. 'I worry that 3♥ is making if partner is a minimum.'

Cimon: 4♣. 'At imps it is too dangerous to pass. I bid clubs to allow partner to bid 4♦ with 4252 shape.'

What about 3NT?

Grainger: 3NT. 'Yuck, what can you do? It's not like their suit is ever solid white versus red. Bidding a four card minors is not a winner.'

Lebi: 3NT. 'and hold my breath.'

Four of the 3NT bidders were hoping that the heart suit would not run, while one thought that his 3NT was for the minors. I think he'd be very lucky if partner agreed with him, but maybe he'll make 3NT anyway.

Jacob: 3NT. 'It's extremely unlikely that West has the AKQ of hearts.'

That point, voiced by most of the 3NT bidders, is quite powerful if not quite ironclad. Most opponents holding a running suit with the notrump bidder vulnerable, will be hoping to be on lead against some number of notrump. Of course that doesn't mean we can make 3NT!

Plus the logic of a solid suit can be also applied by you and partner, as logically advocated by our esteemed BC Editor:

Kimelman: 4NT. Great problem! I expect partner is short in hearts. If they weren't, they would have bid 3NT instead of double, with enough values and two or three hearts, knowing the preempter will not have a solid suit.

All my points are working so want to be in game. Bidding four of a minor puts too much pressure on partner. I will bid 4NT, asking partner to choose a minor.

Yes if we are going to play in a minor, might as well as play in the right one. If partner is short in hearts, then five of a minor can easily make. Give partner ♠AKxx ♥xx ♦Kxxx ♣J10x. And they could have a stiff heart with 4-1-4-4 or 4-1-5-3 shape.

However, the following seems a little too optimistic.

Du: 4♥ 'partner is likely short in hearts, so looking for a minor suit game or slam.'

I downgraded 4♦, chosen by one panelist, because it handcuffs partner if he is 4-2-2-5/4-1-3-5 or even 4-2-3-4.

5. IMPs South deals, neither side vulnerable. South holds ♠AK2 ♥QJ6 ♦A987654 ♣-.

West	North	East	South
P	1♥	pass	1♦
			?

What do you bid?

Another problem that attracted six different bids.

Bid	Votes	Score
3♦	8	10
2♦	6	9
1♠	4	6
3♥	2	4
2♥	2	3
2♠	1	2

Marcinski: 2♦. 'Indubitably an underbid.'

Smith: 3♦ 'describes the hand well.'

I'm not sure whether Julie has her tongue in her cheek on that comment.

Grainger: 2♦. 'And hope the bidding is not over.'

Jacob: 3♦. 'It's not a perfect description.'

Todd: 2♦ 'I frequently raise on three but this is not the hand.'

Xu: 3♦. 'Here there is no perfect bid.'

L'Ecuyer: 2♦. 'Hopefully partner can take another call.'

Balcombe: 3♦. 'I don't see anything else that makes sense'

Miles: 2♦. 'Begs to play there instead of 7♥ (♠Qxxx ♥AKxxx ♦x ♣xxxx).

So we can see that while most rebid their diamonds, nobody (other perhaps Smith) is happy about it. Which no doubt explains the minority choices.

Deng: 3♥. 'There is no perfect bid.'

Treble: 1♠. 'What's the problem?' *Bill, sarcasm is reserved for the moderator.*

Hornby: 2♥. 'It's only a non vul game if we miss it.'

A valid point: at IMPs, missing a vulnerable game is a felony, but non vulnerable, only a misdemeanour. Your partner, however, has a different view:

Kimelman: Not the right hand to raise hearts. Way too good for 2♦, IMO. That leaves 1♠ and 3♦. I much prefer 1♠, as you give partner the maximum amount of space to describe their hand, as you cannot accurately describe your own.

That wraps it up and I hope you enjoyed the problems.



If you think that sex is better than bridge then you don't know how to play bridge.

PANELIST ANSWERS

December 2025 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	y/3♦	8	yyy4♦	10	Dbl	10	3NT	8	3♦	10	46
	Fengming Chen	y/4♣	10	yyy4	10	Dbl	10	4NT	7	2♥	3	40
	Francine Cimon	y/4♣	10	yyy4♠	7	2♠	6	4♣	6	2♦	9	38
	Stephen Cooper	y/3♦	8	yyy4♦	10	2♠	6	Pass	10	1♠	6	40
	Eve Deng	y/4♥	7	yyy5♥	5	Dbl	10	Pass	10	3♥	4	36
	Terry Du	y/4♥	7	nny/4♦	10	Dbl	10	4♥	4	2♠	2	33
	Jason Feldman	y/3♦	8	yyy6♦	5	Dbl	10	Pass	10	3♦	10	43
	David Grainger	y/4♥	7	yyy4♦	10	Dbl	10	3NT	8	2♦	9	44
	Ray Hornby	n/4♣	10	yyy4♦	10	Dbl	10	Pass	10	2♥	3	43
	Dan Jacob	y/3♦	8	yyy4♣	7	Dbl	10	3NT	8	3♦	10	43
	Neil Kimelman	y/4♣	10	yyyn4♦	10	Dbl	10	4NT	7	1♠	6	43
	Bob Kuz	y/4♥	7	yyy4♦	10	2♠	10	4♣	6	3♥	4	37
	Robert Lebi	y/5♣	4	yyy4♦	10	3NT	10	3NT	8	2♦	9	41
	Nick L'Ecuyer	y/3♦	8	yyy4♣	7	Dbl	10	4♦	2	2♦	9	36
	David Lindop	y/3♦	8	yyy4♦	10	Dbl	10	4♣	6	1♠	6	40
	Michel Lorber	y/3♦	8	yyy4♦	10	Dbl	10	Pass	10	3♦	10	48
	Zyg Marcinski	y/4♣	10	yyy4♣	7	Dbl	10	Pass	10	2♦	9	46
	Danny Miles	y/4♣	10	yyy4♦	10	Dbl	10	Pass	10	3♦	10	50
	Julie Smith	y/4♣	10	yyy4♣	7	2♠	6	4♣	6	3♦	10	39
	Paul Thurston	y/4♣	10	yyy/4♦	10	Dbl	10	4♣	6	3♦	10	46
	Bob Todd	y/4♣	10	yyy5♥	5	Dbl	10	Pass	10	2♦	9	44
	Bill Treble	y/4♦	4	yyyn4♦	10	Dbl	10	3NT	8	1♠	6	38
	Edward Xu	y/4♣	10	yyyn4♣	7	Dbl	10	4♥	4	3♦	10	41



MARCH 2026 PROBLEMS

Host: Neil Kimelman

To readers: submit your answers by February 7th.

1. As South, you hold ♠53 ♥64 ♦AKQJ53 ♣AK5. Both vul, IMPs.

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

What do you bid?

2. As South, you hold ♠4 ♥64 ♦A943 ♣KQ7632. Neither vul, teams.

West	North	East	South
	2♠	Pass	3♣ ¹
Dbl	4♠	4♥	

1. To play

What do you bid?

3. As South, you hold ♠AJ853 ♥64 ♦AQ10 ♣986. N-S vul, IMPs.

West	North	East	South
1♥	3♣	4♥	?

What do you bid?

4. As South you hold ♠102 ♥10976 ♦1052 ♣AKQ10. Neither vul, Matchpoints.

West	North	East	South
1♦	Pass	Pass	?

What do you bid?

5. Matchpoints, Neither vulnerable, North dealer. As South you hold ♠1072 ♥J5 ♦AKQ103 ♣A83.

West	North	East	South
	1♥	Pass	2♦
Pass	2♥	p	?

What do you bid?



DECLARER PLAY SOLUTION



PROBLEM PAGE 19

Contract: 4♠. IMPs. The bidding:

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♠
Pass	4♥ ¹	Pass	4♠
All Pass			

1. Splinter.

Lead: ♥K. West wins and shifts to a trump at trick two. East has three spades. Plan the play.

♠ 65	♠ J974	♠ 853
♥ KQ1096	♥ 7	♥ A8542
♦ 86	♦ AK52	♦ Q104
♣ KJ103	♣ A986	♣ Q5
	♠ AKQ102	
	♥ 3	
	♦ J973	
	♣ 742	

You have four possible losers, 1 heart, 2 clubs and 1 diamond. There are four main chances:

1. Singleton queen of diamonds with West.
2. Singleton queen of diamonds with East, and clubs 3-3.
3. Doubleton queen of diamonds.
4. The hand with Qxx in diamonds has only two clubs.

You can combine all these chances as follows:

Win the trump shift and pull trump. Then duck a club. Win the club return, and cash the ♦A. If West has a singleton queen of diamonds, you make four. If East has a singleton queen of diamonds, play a 3rd club, hoping they are 3-3.

If no queen appears on the first round of that suit, play two more rounds of diamonds. If the hand with the ♦Qxx started with only two clubs, they are end played in giving you a ruff and a sluff.



Harold Ogust is chairing a bidding panel taking place after the evening session at a National Championship. It is now running into the wee hours and Harold says he will only take one more question. A lady raises her hand and is recognized. She says she doesn't have a bridge question but was wondering how many people would stay for a membership meeting. They need a quorum. Harold says that is not the kind of question he had in mind, but how many would stay? Three people raise their hands. Harold says: "O.K, one more question. A fellow raises his hand and says he heard if the bidding is opened 2NT and this is passed around to fourth seat, fourth seat should double no matter what he has. Is that true? Jim Jacoby, one of the panelists, says he would like to field this question. He says: "Anyone who would double 2NT in 4th seat no matter what he had, would also vote to attend the membership meeting."

Edwin Kantar.



THE IBPA FILES:

SUPERB REASONING - TEST YOUR EXPERT DECLARER PLAY

By GeO Tislevoll, Auckland

PROBLEM PAGE 19

The De Botton team won the World Bridge Tour Masters in the beginning of October. In the semi-final against Iceland 1, 17-year-old super talent from Norway, Nicolai Heiberg-Evenstad, found a play based on world-class reasoning in a hand that apparently comes down to a guess. He didn't guess.

♠ Q7652
♥ KQJ94
♦ 107
♣ 2

♠ AJ1084
♥ -
♦ J92
♣ QJ743

Contract: 4♠

Lead: ♦A.

The **bidding** went:

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

West led the ♦A followed by the ♦K, and the ♦Q, the third one ruffed in dummy. East played low

(standard signals) and followed by playing up the line. When a club was played from North, East took the ace and played the ♠3. Should declarer finesse or play for the drop?

Solution

West has already shown 9 HCPs and East 4. The defenders still have 10 unseen HCPs, the ♠K, ♥A and the ♣K. There is more than enough space for the xSxK in the East hand. To play for the drop is in theory half the chance compared to playing for the finesse with 10 cards combined missing only the King. That West had opened the bidding is not a solid enough argument to play for the drop. It remains a difficult guess.

Nicolay played the Ace. Why? See below...

This was the full layout:

♠ Q7652
♥ KQJ94
♦ 107
♣ 2

♠ K
♥ A7652
♦ AKQ6
♣ 985

♠ 93
♥ 1083
♦ 8543
♣ AK106

♠ AJ1084
♥ -
♦ J92
♣ QJ743

One would generally be happy to win a trick for a singleton trump King behind the Ace, but it is a paradox that if West had sacrificed that card in trick three, the contract cannot be made. When East gets in on the club Ace he plays a second round of trumps, and the declarer will be one trump short in dummy to set up clubs.

As it went, the trump King dropped and declarer still had enough trumps to crossruff clubs and hearts until the club King came down, get back to his hand and pull East's xSx9 with his own last trump. The established club trick took the last trick, declarer's tenth. At the other table the declarer

in the same contract took the trump finesse and eventually went two down, DE BOTTON 13 IMPs.

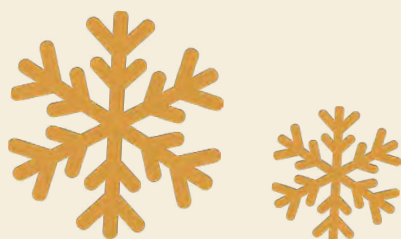
Was Nicolai's play just a lucky guess, or if not, how did he get it right?

The reasoning for dropping the King is excellent. It is about placing the unknown honour cards and combining it with the bidding and the play so far. That way he found out it was not likely that the spade finesse could be the winning choice. This is what he explained to me soon after the WBT event was finished:

Where are the Ace of hearts and the two black Kings placed? You can't know for sure, of course. If East has the Ace of hearts, he is unlikely to have one of the missing kings. So, if West has both the black Kings, to play for the drop in trumps is the only chance. However, if West, the opener has the Ace of hearts, East would have the King in either clubs or spades. Is it possible that East has the spade King doubleton? What kind of hand would that give West?

If East has $\spadesuit K3$, then West's hand is $\spadesuit x \heartsuit Axxxx$
 $\diamondsuit AKQx \clubsuit Kxx$ or possibly $\spadesuit x \heartsuit Axxxx \diamondsuit AKQ \clubsuit Kxxx$.
That is 16 HCPs and a nice shape. How did the bidding go? Over South's $2\spadesuit$, West bid $3\heartsuit$ which was simply competing. It is very likely that he would have made a game try with one of those hands. Therefore, those hands which make the spade finesse the winning play are very unlikely or maybe even nearly impossible.

It is rare that what looks like a simple guess is actually is a world class play.



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

2026

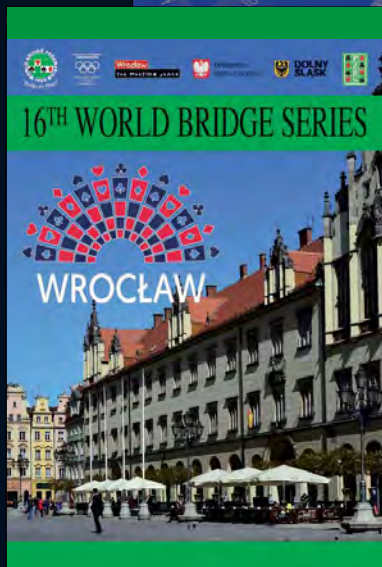
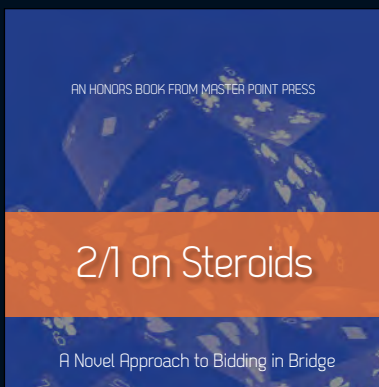
MONTH	DATE	EVENTS
JANUARY	Fridays 7:00 pm ET	Maple Leaf Bridge Games - RealBridge
	January 9/10/11	CMTC Round Robin on Realbridge
	January 13 AM or AFT	ACBL-wide Junior Fund Game
	January 16/17/18	CWTC Round Robin on Realbridge / CNTC C
	January 23/24/25	CNTC-A Round Robin on Realbridge
	Jan. 30/31 & Feb. 1	CSTC Round Robin on Realbridge / CNTC B
	TBD	PBU & CBF Transatlantic Seniors Cup
FEBRUARY	Fridays 7:00 pm ET	Maple Leaf Bridge Games - RealBridge
	February 7 AM or AFT	ACBL-wide International Fund Game
	February 16-22	CBF Canada wide STAC - F2F Bridge Clubs
MARCH	Fridays 7:00 pm ET	Maple Leaf Bridge Games - RealBridge
	March 16 AM or AFT	ACBL-wide Silver Senior Pairs (1 of 2)
	March 25 AM or AFT	ACBL-wide Charity Game (1 of 2)
APRIL	Fridays 7:00 pm ET	Maple Leaf Bridge Games - RealBridge
	All Month	In person Clubs - Charity Games
	April 13	Helen Shields Rookie Master Game - F2F Clubs
	April 30 AM or AFT	ACBL-wide Charity Game (2 of 2)
	TBD	COPC - Online
MAY	Fridays 7:00 pm ET	Maple Leaf Bridge Games - RealBridge
	All Month	Grass Roots Fund Games
	May 18-24	Stardust Week – Gold Points at Clubs
JUNE	Fridays 7:00 pm ET	Maple Leaf Bridge Games - RealBridge
	All Month	North American Pairs - Flight Open, A, B and C
	June 15 -21	Canadian Bridge Championships in Penticton, BC
		CNTC A-B-C / CWTC / CSTC / CMTC / COPC
	June 14-21 (1 day)	Day of Bridge / Alzheimer Societies

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

2026

MONTH	DATE	EVENTS
JULY	Fridays 7:00 pm ET	Maple Leaf Bridge Games - RealBridge
	All Month	North American Pairs - Flight Open, A, B and C
	TBD	World Youth Team Championships
AUGUST	Fridays 7:00 pm ET	Fridays 7:00 pm ET
	All Month	North American Pairs - Flight Open, A, B and C
	TBD	World Bridge Series (Open Year)
SEPTEMBER	Fridays 7:00 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)
	Sept 28 AM or AFT	ACBL-wide Silver Senior Pairs (2 of 2)
OCTOBER	Fridays 7:00 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 at in person Clubs
	October 19	CBC Round Robin Registration Opens
	October 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
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

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