

The Second European Open Championship

By Pietro Campanile

Made wiser by the many problems that plagued the first edition of this championship two years ago in Menton, first and foremost the lack of air-conditioning in a town which enjoyed an average daily temperature of 34° C and 90% humidity, the European Bridge League selected the Canaries Island, and namely Tenerife, as the host for its second edition. The venue was the five-star "Mare Nostrum" complex which offered the players luxurious accommodation and a wealth of facilities together with spacious and air-conditioned (yes!) playing halls. The field of participants included dozens of world and European champions and also most of the top Israeli players, some of whom had had such a spectacular success in the previous edition of the championship (namely team Kalish winning the Open and Birman-Levin finishing second in the Pairs).

More detailed reports on the performance of Israeli competitors will be published next month, here there will be a quick rundown on the results, interspersed with some interesting hands.

The event which kicked off the championship was the mixed teams and it soon became clear that the trend, started in its previous edition, which saw the favorite teams getting unceremoniously knocked out would continue. By the time we reached the semifinals, teams including Meckstroth, Bocchi, Rosenberg, Zia and many other champions were already out of contention. The Israeli-Dutch Team Herbst (Herbst-Barr, Van Cleef-Van Ettinger, Michielsen) lost a hard fought semifinal against Team Goldberg, a Swedish team which eventually was defeated in the final by the Norwegian Team Erichsen (B. & T. Brogeland, T. & G. Helness, E. & H. Erichsen) an unlikely assortment of three husband and wife partnerships proving that such

combinations can achieve success (are you reading this, Migry?).

A board which caused a lot of swings across the field in the round of 32 was the following:

Board 12. Dealer West. N/S Vul.

| | | | |
|----------|----------|---------|--|
| | ♠ K | | |
| | ♥ 1064 | | |
| | ♦ AKJ96 | | |
| | ♣ AK83 | | |
| ♠ 107632 | | ♠ AQJ94 | |
| ♥ A83 | | ♥ K952 | |
| ♦ 107 | | ♦ 854 | |
| ♣ 642 | | ♣ 5 | |
| | ♠ 85 | | |
| | ♥ QJ7 | | |
| | ♦ Q32 | | |
| | ♣ QJ1097 | | |

A majority of the pairs in N/S were warned by E/W interference that 3NT might not be such a sound spot and ended up mostly in 5♣, a contract which has three top losers and seems destined to fail, however the defense lost its way on many tables and did not cash out its three winners. The problem was solved very neatly in the match between the American O'Rourke Team and Goldberg. Against 5♣ by North, bid after an overcall and a preemptive raise in spades by East-West, East led the ♠A, denying the ♠K, and Meckstroth in West realizing that North had to have a singleton ♠K, followed with the ♠10, playing upside down count and normal suit preference. Once North dropped the ♠K on the ♠A, it was easy for East to continue with the heart following the suit preference indication given by her partner. On a few other tables the Einsteinian axiom that "Everything is relative" was extended to the concept of what is and isn't a stopper. In the match between De Botton and Kowalski the bidding proceeded along similar lines: North opened 1♦ and East overcalled 1♠, raised by South to 2♦, with



West jumping to 3♠. Nick Sandqvist for De Botton trusted his singleton ♠K and quickly bid 3NT as North. Everyone passed, and on the unimaginative low spade lead declarer had +660 to reward his cheeky bid. In the other room the wily Pole, Apollinaire Kowalski, also bid 3NT after the same auction, but Janet De Botton in East was not ready to give up just yet and bid 4♥ as the knowledge that the ♠K was on her right and that partner was short in diamonds meant that 4♠ would either be a make or a cheap save. South tried 4NT, everybody passed but the suspicious Janet led the ♠A for down four!

The Norwegian early domination of this championship was confirmed when Tor Helness and his wife managed to complete a stunning double winning also the mixed pairs competition with an average of 57.76%, ahead of Willard-Mouiel (France) with 57.42% and, in third place, Michael and Debbie Rosenberg (USA) with 55.63%. Let us see a board which exemplifies the winning approach of the Norwegian pair:

Board 22. Dealer East. E/W Vul.

| | | | |
|---------|---------|---------|--|
| | ♠ 8762 | | |
| | ♥ KQ87 | | |
| | ♦ J987 | | |
| | ♣ A | | |
| ♠ AKQJ5 | | ♠ 943 | |
| ♥ 9642 | | ♥ J10 | |
| ♦ 10 | | ♦ K42 | |
| ♣ 832 | | ♣ QJ974 | |
| | ♠ 10 | | |
| | ♥ A53 | | |
| | ♦ AQ653 | | |
| | ♣ K1065 | | |

| West | North | East | South |
|---------|-----------|----------|-----------|
| Trapani | T.Helness | Popa | G.Helness |
| | | Pass | 1♦ |
| 1♠ | Dbf | 2♠ | 3♣ |
| 3♠ | Dbf | All Pass | |

North's double is a typical match-point action to protect the likely plus in their diamond partscore and South did very well to pass the double: a winning decision no doubt heavily influenced by the vulnerability position. Tor led the ♣A and immediately switched to a trump. Declarer took in hand and tried to set up a heart ruff, but Tor was having none of it: he jumped in whenever Trapani played hearts and sent back trumps to hold declarer to five spade tricks and a club for a huge +800 and a 97% score on the hand.

The Senior events were dominated by Italy which won the Teams with Fornaciari and the Pairs with Abate-Morelli. The Rand team (Rand, Mattsson, Arvatz, Ravid, Carruthers, Pencharz) completed a great run by finishing in 3rd-4th place after narrowly losing the semifinal against Szenberg (Poland) by 70-74.

The Ladies teams was convincingly won by the French national team (D'Ovidio, Gaviard, Cronier, Willard), while the Ladies pairs went surprisingly to the Norwegians Svendsen-Langeland who had only managed to qualify through the backdoor of the B Semifinal.

The Open teams was the last event in the busy Championship schedule and included a number of Israeli teams; only two of them, however, succeeded in progressing through to the direct elimination stage in the round of 32: Team Kalish (Kalish-Podgur; D. & I. Yadlin) and Team Bareket (Bareket-Roll; Barel, Zack, Zur Campanile), the latter getting through after winning a traumatic and controversial match against the Italian Lavazza team (more about that next month).

In the round of 32, Kalish defeated the

Tor Helness



The podium of the Mixed Pairs event: the victory kiss between Helness husband and wife pair

English Team Wolfahrt while Bareket continued its surprising run with a victory over the highly fancied Rubin team, due to represent the USA in next Bermuda Bowl. Unfortunately both teams were eliminated in the next round after two very close matches: Kalish lost 26-32 to Hecht (Denmark) and Bareket lost 52-60 to Ozdil. The only remaining Israeli player left in the competition was thus Eldad Ginossar, partnering the Turkish champion Melih Ozdil, who had put together a last minute team with a scratch English pair (Bakhshi-Holland). The last part of their semifinal match versus the Orange 1 Team (essentially the Dutch National team: Jansma-Verhees, Bakkeren-Bertens, Muller De Wijs) will prove to be the highlight of the tournament.

We take up the action halfway in the second part of the match: there are only seven boards left to play and Team Orange has accumulated a seemingly insurmountable 37 IMPs lead: Orange 1 54 – Ozdil 17.

Board 21 – N/S Vul – Dealer North

| | | |
|-----------|-------|----------|
| ♠ K10985 | | ♠ A4 |
| ♥ Q83 | | ♥ 942 |
| ♦ 973 | | ♦ AKJ5 |
| ♣ A10 | | ♣ 9752 |
| ♠ QJ7 | W N E | ♠ 632 |
| ♥ KJ10765 | | ♥ A |
| ♦ Q82 | | ♦ 1064 |
| ♣ 8 | | ♣ KQJ643 |

| West | North | East | South |
|---------|---------|---------|----------|
| Holland | De Wijs | Bakhshi | Muller |
| | Pass | 1♦ | Pass |
| 1♥ | 1♠ | Pass | 2♠ |
| 3♥ | Pass | 4♥! | All Pass |

No doubt influenced by the way the match had been going, Bakhshi-Holland in E/W were the only pair in the semifinals to get to the unbeatable 4♥. Declarer lost the obvious three tricks and chalked up a precious +420 and a gain of 8 IMPs when Ozdil was left to play in 3♣-1 at the other table. Orange 1 – Ozdil 54-25.

Board 22 – East Dealer – E/W Vul

| | | |
|---------|-------|-----------|
| ♠ AK87 | | ♠ Q |
| ♥ K75 | | ♥ 432 |
| ♦ A4 | | ♦ J986532 |
| ♣ A1096 | | ♣ Q8 |
| ♠ 9542 | W N E | ♠ J1063 |
| ♥ QJ8 | | ♥ A1096 |
| ♦ KQ7 | | ♦ 10 |
| ♣ KJ5 | | ♣ 7432 |

The contract reached at both tables was 4♠ but that was after rather different auctions:

| West | North | East | South |
|---------|---------|----------|--------|
| Holland | De Wijs | Bakhshi | Muller |
| | | Pass | Pass |
| Pass | 1♣ | 1♦ | Dbl |
| 1NT | Pass | 2♦ | Dbl |
| Pass | 2♠ | Pass | 3♠ |
| Pass | 4♠ | All Pass | |

Bakhshi found the best lead of a heart and declarer had no reason not to finesse the spades, eventually losing a spade, a heart, two clubs and another trick when he ran out of trumps in the end position for 4♠-2.

At the other table there was no diamond overcall and Ozdil ended up declaring 4♣ after this auction:

| West | North | East | South |
|------------------------------------|----------|---------|-------|
| Jansma | Ginossar | Verhees | Ozdil |
| | | Pass | Pass |
| Pass | 1♣ | Pass | 1♥ |
| Pass | 2NT | Pass | 3♥(1) |
| Pass | 4♦(2) | Pass | 4♣ |
| Pass | Pass | Pass | |
| (1) 4♥ and 4♣ (2) Please bid 4♣ | | | |

The first important decision was Ginossar's 4♦ bid, letting his partner be declarer. An excellent move given his holding of ♥Kxx to go with partner's second suit and the unsupported aces in the minors, which meant that it would be best if the lead went through the North hand rather than towards it. This created a problem for Jansma who had to choose between several unattractive options: a club lead was out of the question while a red suit lead could turn out disastrous with most of the points in North, giving declarer the chance to avoid any guessing in the chosen suit. Eventually Jansma opted for what he thought was the safest lead: the ♠4.

Ozdil did not take long to work out that on this auction Jansma would never have lead a spade if he held the ♠Q, so he rose with the ♠A dropping Verhees's singleton ♠Q. Having got off to such a great start, Ozdil threaded very carefully to make

sure of his contract: he ducked a club, took with the ♦A the diamond return and continued with ♣A and a club. Jansma took his ♣K and tried cashing the ♦Q, but declarer was now home and dry: he ruffed the diamond, drew two rounds of trumps, went to dummy with the ♥K and took the last trump, claiming ten tricks for a further 11 IMPs gain. Orange 1 – Ozdil 54 – 36. The next two deals gave back to Orange 1 three overtrick IMPs to give them a 21 IMPs lead with four boards to go but Ozdil was not finished yet.

In board 25 a pushy Dutch contract was aggressively doubled by Bakhshi-Holland and went two down for -300, while Ozdil-Ginossar succeeded in stopping at the two level with 2♠ an easy make. 9 more IMPs for Ozdil: Orange 1 – Ozdil 57-45 with only two boards to go, since board 26 turned out to be flat.

Board 27 – South Dealer – All NV

| | | | |
|----------|----------|---------|--|
| | ♠ AQ9872 | | |
| | ♥ 10 | | |
| | ♦ J9 | | |
| | ♣ KJ63 | | |
| ♠ K106 | | ♠ 54 | |
| ♥ A | | ♥ 76432 | |
| ♦ K10875 | | ♦ 6432 | |
| ♣ 10972 | | ♣ Q8 | |
| | | | |
| | ♠ J3 | | |
| | ♥ KQJ985 | | |
| | ♦ AQ | | |
| | ♣ A54 | | |

This hand exemplifies in my view why bridge is such an unpredictable game: if we look at North-South we can see that their best fit and likely trump suit is spades, with a combined holding of eight cards, moreover the missing ♠K is on side and the suit divides with a friendly 3-2

split. On the other hand, a spade contract is limited to ten or eleven tricks after East leads a diamond since declarer will likely lose a diamond and a spade (unless he can see through the back of the cards!). The best chance to make twelve tricks is actually in hearts, where N/S have only seven cards and the suit splits 5-1!

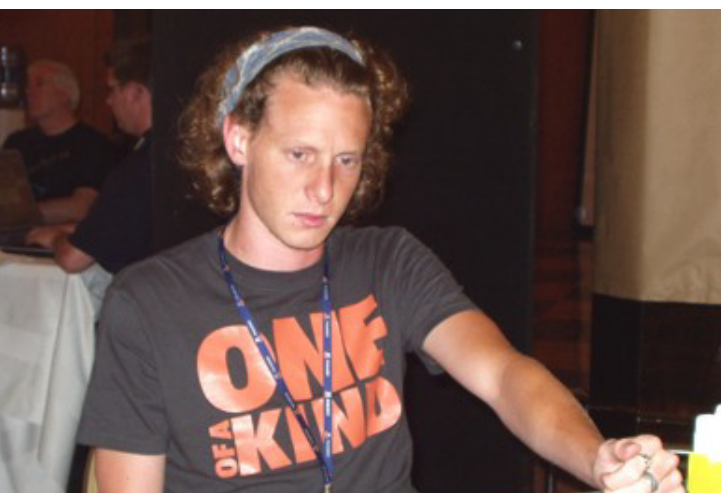
At the table where the Dutch were N/S the final contract was 4♥, after Holland in West had interfered with 1NT overcall, showing minors, on South strong 1♣ opening.

At the other table Ozdil seemed to be heading towards the impossible 6♣ until...

| West | North | East | South |
|---|----------|---------|--------|
| Jansma | Ginossar | Verhees | Ozdil |
| | | | 1♥ |
| Pass | 1♠(1) | Pass | 3♥ |
| Pass | 3♣ | Pass | 4♣(2) |
| Pass | 4♥(2) | Pass | 4NT(3) |
| Pass | 5♦(4) | Pass | 6♥! |
| Pass | Pass | Pass | |
| 1) 5+ Spades 2) Cuebid agreeing spades 3) RKCB 4) 1 or 4 keycards out of 5 | | | |

When Ozdil agreed spades with his 4♣ cuebid, Ginossar was faced with a tough decision: he felt that they might have enough for slam but could not ask 4NT because of his diamond weakness, therefore he resolved to make a possibly nebulous 4♥ cuebid, an unusual step since a singleton opposite partner's strong suit can hardly be considered a useful asset. When Ginossar showed only one ace, Ozdil must have realized that his partner's 4♥ could not be based on the ♥A since that would mean that his spade suit would

Eldad Ginossar



Melih Ozdil





be at most Q high, hardly likely when he showed interest in slam, and therefore decided to revert back to his chunky heart suit despite the danger of a possible 6-1 fit but with the important plus of protecting his \heartsuit AQ, rather than trying his luck in $6\clubsuit$ with a potentially weak trump suit. That put Jansma once again in a terrible bind: essentially he had to choose between an aggressive diamond lead and a passive club lead. Quite understandably the Dutch champion, worried by what sounded like a huge double fit, decided to lead the \heartsuit 5. Ozdil must have been truly delighted both by the lead and by the priceless singleton \heartsuit 10 in dummy, which meant that he had a fairly easy time gathering twelve tricks despite the 5-1 trump split. However the slam is makeable also after the \clubsuit 10 lead, which will help declarer in guessing the club suit, since the lead is unlikely to come from Q109x or Q10x. The slam brought another 11 IMPs to Ozdil who was now only ONE Imp behind the Dutch before the last and decisive board! Orange 1 – Ozdil 57-56.

Let us move behind the South seat of the Turkish champion who picks up the following:

♠ 1052
♥ 4
♦ QJ1087654
♣ 4

With N/S vulnerable, Ginossar opened a strong NT and East overcalled $2\heartsuit$, showing an undisclosed major. Rejecting the impulsive idea of bidding $5\heartsuit$, you come in the auction with $2NT$, transfer to either minor. Partner complies with $3\clubsuit$ and East surprisingly bids $3\heartsuit$. What do you now?

Here is a recap of the bidding:

| West | North | East | South |
|-------------|------------|-----------|------------|
| Jansma | Ginossar | Verhees | Ozdil |
| | 1NT | 2♥ | 2NT |
| Pass | 3♣ | 3♥ | ?? |

While you think, it is time to show you the board and relate that at the other table

Bakhshi-Holland, probably still thinking that they had to catch up, pushed on to $3NT$ on the East-West cards going two off for -100.

Board 28 – Dealer North – N/S Vul

| | | | |
|---------|--|-------------|----------|
| | | ♠ 63 | |
| | | ♥ AQ87 | |
| | | ♦ K32 | |
| | | ♣ AQ102 | |
| ♠ J4 | | | ♠ AKQ987 |
| ♥ K1096 | | | ♥ J532 |
| ♦ A9 | | | ♦ - |
| ♣ J9753 | | | ♣ K86 |
| | | ♠ 1052 | |
| | | ♥ 4 | |
| | | ♦ QJ1087654 | |
| | | ♣ 4 | |

Ozdil had a tough bid but had he gone on with $4\heartsuit$ he would have made +130 and squared the match. However the Turkish player preferred to pass, hoping that $3\heartsuit$ might go off and the ensuing plus would be enough to see them through. $3\heartsuit$ did go off, but only one down after a heart lead (\heartsuit Q, \heartsuit A, heart ruff, club to the \clubsuit A and heart ruff). The resulting 2 IMPs to Orange 1 meant the end of an amazing match and, all in all, a deserved victory for the Dutch team, who went on to the final where they quickly disposed of the Polish Miroglio team (Kowalsky, Romansky, Stepinsky, Tuszinsky) winning 103-23, with the Poles withdrawing before the last set.

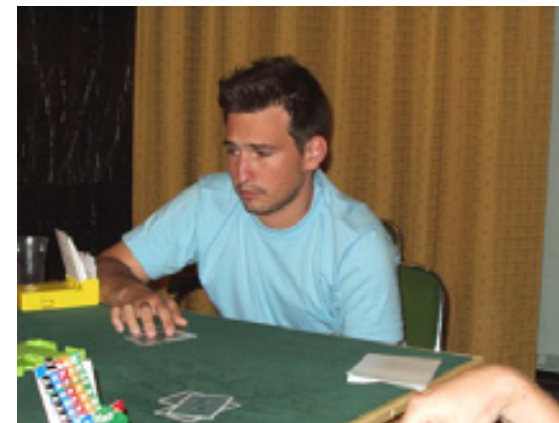
The Open Pairs was the last event in the championship and saw the participation of several Israeli competitors, including Birman-Levin who were trying to defend their second place from the last edition. Only one Israeli pair, however, made it to the four sessions final A where 52 pairs would contest the title: Michael Barel and Yaniv Zack, who eventually finished with a very respectable 13th place. The competition had a thrilling finale when, just before the last hand was due to be played, the top two pairs, the Poles Kowalky-Tuszinszky and the Italian brothers Furio and Stelio Di Bello, were divided by 0.01%, meaning



Apollinaire Kowalsky



Piotr Tuszinsky



Stelio Di Bello

Furio Di Bello



that the Italians had to outperform the Poles in the last board in order to win the championship. To add spice to this distant confrontation, both pairs would be North-South and both declared the same 1NT contract, the Di Bellos against the Bessis father and son pair and the Poles against Hauge –Helness.

Board 24 – West Dealer – None Vul

| | | |
|--------|---|----------|
| ♠ A8 | | ♠ KJ2 |
| ♥ AQ42 | | ♥ K63 |
| ♦ 9732 | | ♦ K54 |
| ♣ K84 | | ♣ 10765 |
| ♠ Q93 | N | ♠ KJ2 |
| ♥ 1075 | W | ♥ K63 |
| ♦ AJ86 | E | ♦ K54 |
| ♣ 1093 | S | ♣ 10765 |
| | | ♠ 107654 |
| | | ♥ J98 |
| | | ♦ Q10 |
| | | ♣ AQ2 |

Both declarers got the ♣5 lead, taken in dummy with the ♣Q, tried the ♥J which held and continued with a heart to the ♥Q, East taking his ♥K and sending back another club. Declarer took in dummy with the ♣A and played a heart to the ♥A and the fourth heart, East and West pitching a diamond at both tables. Next came a diamond up, East jumped in with the ♦K and sent back another club to declarer's ♣K. Both Di Bello and Kowalsky continued

along the same line and played a diamond to the ♦Q and West's ♦A reaching this position with West on play:

| | | |
|-------|---|----------|
| ♠ A8 | | ♠ KJ2 |
| ♥ - | | ♥ - |
| ♦ 97 | | ♦ - |
| ♣ - | | ♣ 10 |
| ♠ Q93 | N | ♠ KJ2 |
| ♥ - | W | ♥ - |
| ♦ J | E | ♦ - |
| ♣ - | S | ♣ 10 |
| | | ♠ 107654 |
| | | ♥ - |
| | | ♦ - |
| | | ♣ AQ2 |

The path of the game now diverged: Hauge cashed the ♦J before playing back a spade, gifting Kowalsky with the overtrick he had worked so hard to set up, while Olivier Bessis sent back a spade, restricting declarer to seven tricks. The result of the board meant that Kowalsky-Tuszinsky were the new European Open Pairs champions, while the valiant young challengers from Italy would have to content themselves with a second place and wonder what might have happened had they played the last board against different opponents!



The winners of the ladies Teams: Gaviard, Cronier, Willard and D'Ovidio

The Dutch players of Orange 1 celebrate their victory in the Open teams event

