

The 11th NEC Cup

by Pietro Campanile

The NEC Cup is one of the most prestigious invitational teams tournaments in the crowded constellation of the international bridge calendar. It is staged in Yokohama in the early-mid part of February and the Japanese Bridge League, generously sponsored by NEC, one of the largest computer manufacturers in the world, traditionally provides a lavish setting and thoroughly professional staffing, overseen by the tireless efforts of Tadayoshi Nakatani. This year's edition took place from the 6th through the 12th of February and saw the participation of a strong batch of foreign teams as well as an abundant local contingent of players, some strong some not so strong, to complete a total roster of 42 teams under the expert direction of the ever smiling Richard Grenside.

It was hard to pinpoint the pre-tournament favorites. The general-consensus short list was: the Italian Lavazza team (Bocchi-Duboin; Madala-Ferraro), the defend-

ers Israel, which included my wife Migry (Barel-Campanile, Israel and Doron Yadlin), USA Mahaffey (Kwiecien-Pszczola; Lair-Cohler; Shenkin-Mahaffey) and the Venice Cup women champions from France (Cronier-Willard; D'Ovidio – Gaviard). There were plenty of other good quality contenders to make up the field: two strong Australian teams, FISK (a multi-national selection including Cronier-Gupta and Sundelin-Carruthers), a British team led by Paul Hackett and many other competitive local teams whose performance would surprise more titled opponents.

The format of the tournament is based on an eight-round Swiss of 20 boards per match, with the top eight finishers clashing in direct knock-out matches over 40 boards, leading to semifinals and a 64-boards final.

The round-robin matches provided a rich and assorted collection of interesting deals to choose from.

A Tricky Rebid

North dealer		♠ Q 3								
Both vul		♥ 5 2								
		♦ K 7 5 4 3								
		♣ J 9 4 3								
♠ 8 6 2	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td><td></td></tr> </table>	W	N	E	S			♠ 10 7 4		
W	N	E								
S										
♥ K 10 6		♥ Q 9 8 4 3								
♦ J 10 8 6		♦ A Q 2								
♣ K 7 6		♣ 10 2								
		♠ A K J 9 5								
		♥ A J 7								
		♦ 9								
		♣ A Q 8 5								

Given the wide ranging distributional possibilities included in South's jump-shift rebid of 3♣ after 1♠-1NT, it is not at all easy to find the correct reply with the North hand. Holding ♣J-x-x-x and a ragged six-count, a raise to 4♣ seems way too much, which is why I prefer bidding one's time with 3♠, despite the risk of burying the club fit.

How should South continue over 3♠? The most flexible bid at this point is 3NT, to leave open all the possibilities, giving North a chance to bid 4♣, 4♠ or pass. The

other advantage of 3NT is that it guarantees a real club suit for the 3♣ bid, and after North supports it with 4♣, showing a worse hand than a direct 4♣ over 3♣, the pair can happily reach the safe ports of 4♠ or 5♣.

North dealer	♠ Q 3							
Both vul	♥ 5 2							
	♦ K 7 5 4 3							
	♣ J 9 4 3							
♠ 8 6 2		♠ 10 7 4						
♥ K 10 6	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center; width: 30px; height: 30px;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td>S</td><td>E</td></tr> </table>		N		W	S	E	♥ Q 9 8 4 3
	N							
W	S	E						
♦ J 10 8 6		♦ A Q 2						
♣ K 7 6		♣ 10 2						
	♠ A K J 9 5							
	♥ A J 7							
	♦ 9							
	♣ A Q 8 5							

Closed Room			
West	North	East	South
Cohler	Armstrong	Lair	Hackett
—	pass	pass	1 ♠
pass	1 NT	pass	2 ♣
(all pass)			

In the USA Mahaffey-Hackett second-round match, Paul Hackett opted for a strangely conservative 2♣ rebid and was left to play there, making up one of the three pairs out of 42 who did not reach game. Two clubs made five for +150.



“Tosh”
Andrew McIntosh

Open Room			
West	North	East	South
McIntosh	Kwiecien	Mizel	Pszczola
—	pass	pass	1 ♠
pass	1 NT	pass	3 ♣
pass	4 ♠	(all pass)	

At the other table, Kwiecien opted for a practical raise to 4♠ (a fast-arrival bid in their system), counting on his Q-x to pull full weight opposite partner’s good spades. This led to an interesting tussle between Pszczola (“Pepsi”) as declarer and Scottish internationalist Andrew McIntosh (“Tosh”) as defender. Tosh led the ♦J, which held, and switched to a trump. Pepsi won in dummy to play a club to the queen, ducked by West. Now declarer drew trumps and played ace and another club. Tosh won and got out with a diamond, and declarer had to lose two hearts for one down.

If Pepsi had used the ♠Q entry to ruff a diamond before drawing trumps and then played clubs from hand, the defense would have still prevailed. West takes the ♣K at the right time* to deprive declarer of a second club entry to dummy (to make sure that declarer cannot ruff out the ♦A and return to a club to cash diamonds). Four spades was made about half the time it was bid; three N-S pairs reached 6♣ and failed; 5♣ made twice and went down three times.

*To prevent declarer from reaching dummy twice in clubs, West must duck if declarer leads the ♣A and ♣Q. But West wins the king if declarer leads ♣A and a low club (or a low club first)! Interesting position: West must take his ♣K on South’s low club, not his honor! — editor

A Southern Belle

North dealer	North	
Both vul	♠ 9 3	
	♥ 8 7 6 5	
	♦ A K J 2	
	♣ A 9 8	
West (Bianchedi)		East (Lambardi)
♠ Q 7 6 2		♠ K J 10 8
♥ 9 4 2		♥ 3
♦ 9 5 4		♦ 10 8 6 3
♣ Q 7 5		♣ 10 6 4 3
	South (Linda)	
	♠ A 5 4	
	♥ A K Q J 10	
	♦ Q 7	
	♣ K J 2	

Seven hearts was attempted a respectable 14 times out of 42, with mixed results: Eight declarers eventually lost to the ♣Q, while the remaining six made their grand slam. One of those was Linda Lewis in the USA/Mori vs. South America match in the fourth round of the qualifications. Here's what happened at her table.

West led the ♠6 (third and fifth) to the 3, 8 and ace. Linda drew trumps in three rounds, Lambardi (East) discarding the ♠K-10, and then cashed the diamonds, discarding spades (Bianchedi, West, pitching a spade).

	♠ 9	
	♥ 8	
	♦ —	
	♣ A 9 8	
♠ Q 7		♠ 10
♥ —		♥ —
♦ —		♦ —
♣ Q 7 5		♣ 10 6 4 3
	♠ —	
	♥ J 10	
	♦ —	
	♣ K J 2	



When she played the ♥8 from dummy, East discarded a club, but surprisingly so did West, who was known to have at least another spade, which was safe to discard. A careful declarer could not miss such a strange action, and, as often happens, those who are busy "weaving the tangled web" get caught up in it. Had West discarded his ♠7, declarer would likely have gone with the odds and finessed the ♣J, since East was known to hold four of the remaining seven clubs. Instead, Linda deduced that West's action could only make sense if he was trying to create the impression that he could afford a club discard, and would not be so

inclined to do that without the ♣Q, since that would appear to pinpoint to declarer its being in partner's hand.

I guess it was a little like a game of bluff and counter-bluff. But backing her judgment, Linda led the ♣J and ran it for +2210, so she was the one to have the last laugh. Had West covered the ♣J, a play worthy of Grosvenor if one was found holding Q-10-x in the suit, Linda would have automatically finessed East for the ♣10, as otherwise, with ♣Q-10-x, West could be assured of a club trick anyway and would not have attempted to deceive her with his club pitch.

At the other table, Koneru led a trump and Frontaura ran all his tricks to find out more about the distribution of the club suit, and then played with the odds, going one off. Linda's sharp play brought in 20 imps and contributed heavily to USA/Mori's 68-57 win, 17-13 in victory points.



Linda Lewis

The fifth round saw the important clash between the two teams heading the field: Lavazza and Israel. The match was full of interesting boards and the Israelis had much the better of it, taking full advantage of the occasional slip-up by their highly rated Italian opponents.

The Italian Slip-up

South dealer	♠ 9 8 7		
E-W vul	♥ 9		
	♦ K 6 5 2		
	♣ A Q 10 9 5		
♠ K		♠ A Q 10 4 3	
♥ 6 4		♥ A K 8 3 2	
♦ A Q J 10 7 3		♦ 4	
♣ K J 3 2		♣ 6 4	
	♠ J 6 5 2		
	♥ Q J 10 7 5		
	♦ 9 8		
	♣ 8 7		



Closed Room

South	West	North	East
<i>Campanile</i>	<i>Duboin</i>	<i>Barel</i>	<i>Bocchi</i>
pass	1 ♦	2 ♣	2 ♠
(all pass)			

Opening lead: ♣8

In the Closed Room Bocchi-Duboin had a surprising mix-up over whether 2♠ was or wasn't forcing. Bocchi thought it was, while Duboin obviously didn't. I guess they were both happy afterwards they didn't have Lauria at the other table to whom they would have to explain why they had



Barel (center) vs. Bocchi

stopped in 2♠ with a combined 27 count. Bocchi, however, went down one in 2♠, when he won the heart shift at trick two and finessed to the ♦Q. North won, cashed his ♣A, and returned a trump. Bocchi cashed the ♦A, throwing a heart, and then led a heart. North won and the defenders proceeded to crossruff.

Open Room

South	West	North	East
<i>Ferraro</i>	<i>Doron</i>	<i>Madala</i>	<i>Israel</i>
pass	1 ♦	pass	1 ♠
pass	2 ♣	double	2 ♥
pass	2 NT	pass	3 ♥
double	3 NT	pass	pass
double	(all pass)		

In the Open Room Madala chose quite sensibly not to overcall 2♣, but then North-South engaged in a frenzy of doubles which might have allegedly been meant to help out the defense. But, as it so often happens, they only managed to give declarer a pretty good idea of the lie of the cards. The final double by Ferraro was rather speculative and probably based on the consideration that the suits did not appear to be splitting kindly for declarer, without thinking how damaging that would be to the defensive communications themselves.

The auction had been clear enough to steer Madala away from a minor-suit lead and the Argentinean opted to lead the ♠9 (a heart lead would not have fared better). Doron won the spade lead in hand, cashed dummy's ♥A-K, getting the news in that suit, then the ♠A-Q, and led a diamond to the queen and king. Madala was now forced to put declarer back in his hand to cash his diamond winners, and Doron emerged with five diamonds to go with his five major-suit tricks: 3NT doubled plus one for a resounding +950; 14 imps to Israel,

leading eventually to a convincing 23-7 win over the fancied Italians.



Madala (center) vs. Israel Yadlin

The round-robin finished with the following standing:

1	ISRAEL	159
2	Italy	153
3	Japan YOI	149
4/5	France Women	144
4/5	Australia-Klinger	144
6/7	USA/Kasle	142
6/7	Australia-Del'Monte	142
8	TAJIMA	138
Non-qualifiers:		
9	FISK	137
10	USA/Mahaffey	136
11/12	Paul Hackett	132

The quarterfinals saw the favorites Italy and Israel easily disposing of their opponents. In the match between USA/Kasle and Australia/Del Monte this board ensured a large swing for the Australians:

West dealer	♠ A		
E-W vul	♥ A J 7 6 5		
	♦ A Q J 4		
	♣ K J 4		
♠ K J 8 5 2		♠ —	
♥ Q 9 8		♥ K 10 4 2	
♦ 5 3		♦ 10 8 7 6 2	
♣ A 10 6		♣ 8 7 5 2	
		♠ Q 10 9 7 6 4 3	
		♥ 3	
		♦ K 9	
		♣ Q 9 3	



Closed Room			
West	North	East	South
Kasle	Fruewirth	Sutherland	Del Monte
pass	1 ♥	pass	1 ♠
pass	2 ♦*	pass	2 ♠
pass	4 ♠	pass	pass
double	pass	pass	redouble
(all pass)			

*forcing one round

Opening lead: ♦ 5

At first glance it appears that West's ♠K-J-8-5-2 holding should guarantee three trump tricks for the defense which, together with the ♣A, should ensure defeat of the contract. In bridge, however, it very rarely pays to heed first glances and Ishmael ("Ish") Del Monte demonstrated that this was not so after manly redoubling 4♠ to set up the scene for his declarer bravura performance.

Kasle led the ♦ 5 to dummy's queen. Declarer continued with the ♠A, ♥A, heart ruff, club to the jack, club to the queen and Kasle's ace. West exited with ♥Q, ruffed by Del Monte, who finished clearing the side suits with a club to the king and the ♦A. Now declarer, who was down to Q-10-9-7 of trumps while West had K-J-8-5, ruffed the ♦J with ♠10 and Kasle was faced with an unpalatable choice: neither over-ruffing nor under-ruffing would generate the three trump tricks he needed, so the contract was made, +880.

West dealer	♠ A		
E-W vul	♥ A J 7 6 5		
	♦ A Q J 4		
	♣ K J 4		
♠ K J 8 5 2		♠ —	
♥ Q 9 8		♥ K 10 4 2	
♦ 5 3		♦ 10 8 7 6 2	
♣ A 10 6		♣ 8 7 5 2	
		♠ Q 10 9 7 6 4 3	
		♥ 3	
		♦ K 9	
		♣ Q 9 3	



Open Room

West	North	East	South
Hans	Hayden	Nunn	Onstott
pass	1 ♥	pass	1 ♠
pass	3 ♦	pass	4 ♠
double	(all pass)		

Opening lead: ♦ 3

At the other table Onstott got the lead of the ♦ 3 from Hans, whose objective all along was to avoid the fate befallen to Kastle by trying to paint a false picture of his distribution for declarer. Onstott won with the ♦ K, played ♠ A and the ♣ K. Hans took

the ace and exited with the ♥ Q, continuing his “disinformation” job. Onstott won the ace, ruffed a heart and played two rounds of clubs, finishing in hand to lead the ♠ 10. Hans, however, had a diamond left to exit, so he could safely take the ♠ J and get out of hand, waiting for declarer to give him two more trump tricks. He was able to duck the nine or queen later: one down, -100 and 14 well deserved imps to Del Monte. Despite this board, Kastle went on to win the match and faced Israel in the semifinal, while the Japanese Open team would face Italy in the other semifinal.

While Israel was never really troubled by Kastle and cruised on to a berth in the final, Italy was soon having a hard time against the Japanese super-aggressive methods. The match went head to head most of the way and it was mostly due to the relative partnership inexperience of Madala-Ferraro that Japan managed to secure enough imps to defeat the Italians.

Here is a typical example described in inimitable fashion by Eric Kokish, the editor of the superb bulletins that accompany the event:

Kantar’s Double-Dummy Korner
by Eddie Kantar

	♠ A 9 2		
	♥ 10 3 2		
	♦ A K 10 9 8		
	♣ J 2		
♠ K 8 7 6		♠ Q 10 5	
♥ K 6 5		♥ Q 9 8 7	
♦ 5 4		♦ 3 2	
♣ Q 10 6 5		♣ K 9 8 7	
		♠ J 4 3	
		♥ A J 4	
		♦ Q J 7 6	
		♣ A 4 3	



You are South in 3NT. West leads the ♠ 6. Your mission is to make 3NT against any defense. You can do it! Solution on page 32.

South dealer	♠ 10 4 3		
Both vul	♥ 8 6		
	♦ 10 7 4 3 2		
	♣ J 9 5		
♠ A Q 8 7 6 2		♠ J 9 5	
♥ A Q 10 7		♥ J 9 4 3	
♦ J 8		♦ 9 6 5	
♣ Q		♣ 8 6 3	
	♠ K		
	♥ K 5 2		
	♦ A K Q		
	♣ A K 10 7 4 2		



third rounds of spades, only to have Ino lead a heart through the king: -100. He [Ferraro] was not right about clubs, though, as he could make 5♣ from his side. Meanwhile, the vulnerable E-W could make 4♠ (Imakura was remarkably conservative himself), so Ferraro could dare to hope that going down in 3♦ wouldn't turn out too badly.

Open Room

South	West	North	East
Ferraro	Imakura	Madala	Ino
1 ♣	1 ♠	pass	pass
double	pass	2 ♦	pass
2 ♠	pass	3 ♦	(all pass)

“Those hopes were dashed when Chen took, as usual, a much more aggressive approach with the South cards and got away with it. Duboin, expecting Chen to hold the guarded ♠K, made the well-reasoned lead of the ♥A. Bocchi tried to discourage by following with the 4, an even card. Duboin had no reason to change his mind about spades, and continued with the ♥Q. Chen took the rest for +690 and Japan gained 13 imps, 76-62.

Closed Room

South	West	North	East
Chen	Duboin	Furuta	Bocchi
2 ♣	2 ♠	double*	pass
3 NT	(all pass)		

“In the other semifinal match, Kasle opened 2♣, rebid 3♣ in competition, and bid 5♣ when raised to 4♣, a nicely measured auction, which got the USA team a well deserved +600 and a three-imp loss! In the other room in fact, Campanile opened 1♣, reopened 1♠ with a double, and over West's 2♥, reopened with 3NT. She made seven on a low spade lead, taking the last trick with the ♥5 after discarding the ♥2 and ♥K on diamonds! Now *that*, dear readers, is bidding. Could it be that she came across the vial of testosterone misplaced by Ferraro and Imakura?”

*0 or 1 control


“Ferraro may have used his quota of testosterone in the previous session; his pass of 3♦, needing virtually nothing but some appropriate minor-suit length, took partnership trust to a superhuman level. Theoretically, however, Ferraro was right . . . about 5♦ — Madala went down in 3♦ by throwing clubs from dummy on the second and



Migry Campanile

Testosterone or not, it cannot be a coincidence that for the third year running, the Israeli team of Michael Barel-Migry Campanile, Doron and Israel Yadlin had succeeded in reaching the final of the NEC Cup, something that has not been done before in this event.

One of the reasons for their success is the way both pairs use disarmingly simple natural methods to best effect. Let us look for example at Board 5 from the first session of the semifinal. First look at the Italy-Japan match:

North dealer	♠ 7		
N-S vul	♥ Q 8 4 3		
	♦ A 10 9 6 2		
	♣ K 8 2		
♠ Q 10 8 5 4		♠ A K 9 3 2	
♥ 10 9 6		♥ K 7 5	
♦ Q 7 3		♦ 8 5	
♣ J 9		♣ 10 5 4	
	♠ J 6		
	♥ A J 2		
	♦ K J 4		
	♣ A Q 7 6 3		

Open Room			
West	North	East	South
<i>Imakura</i>	<i>Madala</i>	<i>Ino</i>	<i>Ferraro</i>
—	pass	pass	1 NT
pass	2 ♣	pass	2 ♦
pass	3 ♦	pass	3 ♥
pass	3 ♠	double	pass
pass	redouble	pass	3 NT
(all pass)			

Closed Room			
West	North	East	South
<i>Duboin</i>	<i>Furuta</i>	<i>Bocchi</i>	<i>Chen</i>
—	pass	pass	1 NT
pass	2 ♣	pass	2 ♦
pass	3 ♦	pass	3 NT
(all pass)			

As Kokish aptly puts it “If two pairs of this stature can bid these cards to 3NT after North expresses interest in alternative strains, there’s something rotten in the state of (fill in the blank). An ignoble push with N-S -100.” The funny thing is that at Ferraro’s table, Madala and Ino could not

have done more to warn the Italian about the glaring weakness in the spade suit and the ensuing 3NT bid on ♠J-x is puzzling to say the least, since with spade length Madala would simply have bid 3NT himself over 3♥. At the other table Furuta’s antennas must have sensed some danger and opted for a cloudy 3♦ bid over 2♦ but his extra sensorial powers were obviously not enough to overrule partner’s subsequent 3NT.

Now look at the Israel-USA match. In that match the Americans had a routine Stayman auction with Sutherlin (North for Kasle) rebidding an automatic, if uninspired, 3NT over 2♦. At the other table Migry Campanile and Michael Barel showed how the hand should be bid with natural methods:

West	North	East	South
<i>Onstott</i>	<i>Barel</i>	<i>Hayden</i>	<i>Campanile</i>
—	pass	pass	1 NT
pass	2 ♣	pass	2 ♦
pass	3 ♦	pass	3 ♥
pass	5 ♦	(all pass)	

This sequence shows that nothing is routine in bridge: After Migry failed to bid 3NT over 3♦, Barel could draw the necessary inferences and realize that it made no sense for him to do so. The 5♦ contract deserved to make, and it did, supplying Israel with a well deserved 12 imps and the Bulletin Editors’ Prize for “Best bid hand using natural methods.”

Israel’s opponents in this year’s final would be Japan-YOI (Dawei Chen-Kazuo Furuta, Yasuhiro Shimizu-Yoshiyuki Nakamura, Masayuki Ino-Tadashi Imakura), a team that included all the best Japanese players and is considered stronger than the Japan Open team, which had reached the quarter finals at the last Bridge Olympiad

in Istanbul. The strength of their claim was based on being the only team to have defeated Israel in the round-robin and disposed of the Italian Lavazza juggernaut in the semis.

The final saw the Israelis quickly build a fairly sizeable lead thanks to accurate play by both pairs. The result at the half-way point was 75-42. The third quarter saw another imp being added to the gap and it seemed that Japan would need to pull a small miracle to recover 34imps in 16 boards. Alas, small miracles do happen in the land of the Rising Sun, especially when the hands are distributional enough to reward aggressive actions. And aggressive is certainly what Japan YOI proved to be in the last quarter. On quite a few boards the Japanese gambles worked wonders and the seemingly insurmountable gap quickly shrank to a mere 9imps when the last board hit the table.

Would it make life easier if I told you that the card you select can be worth \$6,000 and mean the sole difference between finishing first or second?

Here is the whole hand:

South dealer ♠ 8 4 2
 N-S vul ♥ 8 7 4
 ♦ K Q
 ♣ A K Q 7 4

♠ Q	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ K J 6 5 3
		N									
W			E								
		S									
♥ A 10 6 2	♥ —										
♦ J 8 7 6 5	♦ A 9 3 2										
♣ 6 5 3	♣ J 10 8 2										

♠ A 10 9 7
 ♥ K Q J 9 5 3
 ♦ 10 4
 ♣ 9

As you can see, the normal diamond lead (there's no point in leading the ♠Q spade into declarer's advertised strength with ♥A-10-x-x of trumps)* takes away East's entry to the winning spades and gives declarer the time to set up the fifth club in dummy to dispose of his spade losers... unless...

North ♠ 8 4 2 ♥ 8 7 4 ♦ K Q ♣ A K Q 7 4	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		East (you) ♠ K J 6 5 3 ♥ — ♦ A 9 3 2 ♣ J 10 8 2
	N										
W		E									
	S										

♦ 6

South	West	North	East
1 ♥	pass	2 ♣	pass
2 ♥	pass	3 ♥	pass
3 ♠	pass	4 ♣	pass
4 ♥	(all pass)		

Opening lead: ♦6

You take your ♦A and you play back...?



The Final

*Las Vegas, 1971: "Always lead your singleton."
 — Benito Garozzo confides to young Matthew, future BT editor. I suppose, however, if Barel had followed the sage's advice of always leading your singleton, it would have ruined Migry's chance to shine. — editor

