

The NEC Cup

by Pietro Campanile

The NEC Cup is one of the most prestigious invitational teams tournaments in the overcrowded 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 staff overseen by the tireless efforts of Tadayoshi Nakatani.

This year's edition took place from Feb. 9 to 15 and saw the arrival of yet again a strong batch of foreign teams as well as the participation of an abundant local contingent of players, some strong some not so strong, to complete a record total of 52 teams.

It was difficult to pinpoint the pre-tournament favorites: The general consensus short-listed as possible winners were teams from Poland/Russia (Balicki-Zmudzinski, Gromov-Petrinin), the holders England (Senior, Armstrong, Callaghan, Lambardi), Indonesia (Lasut-Manoppo, Karwur-Panelewen), Bulgaria (Karaivanov-

Trendafilov, Stamatov-Tsonchev) and USA/Germany (a.k.a. "Three gals and an extra Molson to boot" — Sabine Auken, Kerri Sanborn, Janice Molson and husband Mark).*

There were plenty of other good quality contenders to make up the field: strong teams from Iceland, Israel, USA, Australia, Canada, open and ladies teams from China and from Chinese Taipei, not to mention quite a few 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 a semifinals and a 64-board final.

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

The prize that might have been

One of the early matches between would-be contenders for the title saw Bulgaria square off against Iceland in round two.

*Since three players on this team live in the USA (although Mark Molson is a Canadian) and one lives in Europe, we will refer to this team throughout the rest of the article as USA+. — *Editor*

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

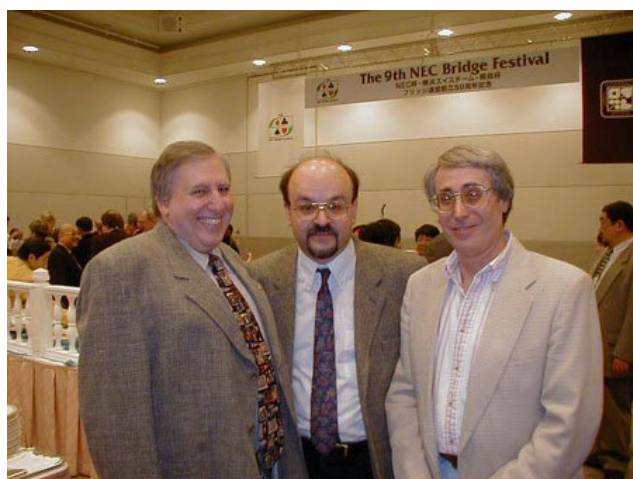
In the second board of the match both E-W pairs got to the normal 3NT spot from the West seat. After receiving the ♥K lead, they took their ace after ducking one round, with both Souths signaling an even number of hearts. Karaivanov, being a true Bulgarian and, therefore, quite reluctant to put his trust in the kindness of the cards, led a club to the ♣J, cashed the two top spades, getting false count from both opponents, cleared the clubs, both opponents pitching a diamond, and played a heart to

North. Had he been right (if North had been dealt a 2-5-3-3 with the ♦K), we would have spent the next page extolling his card-reading skills while filing his details to short-list him for the Best Played hand of the tournament. Unfortunately, the cards were kind (unkind ?) and the ♦K was onside, meekly waiting to be finessed. Ingimarsson (North) cashed his hearts and his ♠Q before exiting with a diamond at trick 13 — 3NT, down one, -50.

At the other table Anton Haraldsson, being a practical chap, took the more mundane view of running the ♦J after clearing clubs and checking for a miracle stiff ♠Q-J. That was nine tricks and an early swing for the Icelanders, who cruised to a 47-24 win, or 20-10 in Victory Points (VP).

A tale of two openings

The fourth round featured the clash between the previous NEC Cup holders, England, and USA+. The match turned out to be a cliffhanger, with England running up a 30-imp lead over the first 10 boards only to be caught and tied going into the very last hand.



Pietro Campanile, author of this month's feature article, is seen here flanked by Eric Kokish (left) and Rich Colker, right. Pietro is an Arts Management Consultant, who recently decided to take up bridge journalism and is now the assistant editor of the Israeli Bridge Magazine as well as a frequent guest writer for other bridge magazines. Pietro is married to Migry.

Board 1	North		
North dealer	♠ 8 6 5 2		
None vul	♥ A Q 3		
	♦ A 9 7 5 4		
	♣ 4		
West		East	
♠ Q 10		♠ A K 9 3	
♥ 5		♥ 10 9 8 6	
♦ K Q J 10 8 2		♦ 3	
♣ 10 6 5 2		♣ K J 9 8	
	South		
	♠ J 7 4		
	♥ K J 7 4 2		
	♦ 6		
	♣ A Q 7 3		

West	North	East	South
Callaghan	Auken	Armstrong	Sanborn
—	pass	1 ♣	1 ♥
2 ♣ (1)	2 ♦ (2)	pass	2 ♥
3 ♦	(all pass)		

- (1) diamonds
- (2) hearts

West	North	East	South
M. Molson	Senior	J. Molson	Lambardi
—	1 ♦	double	1 ♥
pass	2 ♥	pass	4 ♥
(all pass)			

Once upon a time, when FDR's "New Deal" speech had to share front page coverage with the latest bridge escapades of Mr. Ely Culbertson, there were players like Hal Sims and Oswald Jacoby who wouldn't have hesitated to open the North hand.

"Aces ain't deuces," Big Hal used to say. This, perhaps, ran through Brian Senior's

head, since the action-bidder "par excellence" had no qualms about opening 1♦ and later raising with three cards his partner's 1♥ bid, propelling his side to a playable game that was missed at the other table.

Had Mark Molson found the inspired lead of the ♠Q, getting the defense off to four rounds of spades, Lambardi might have come to rue Senior's carefree bidding (even if he ruffs the fourth round of spades with the ♥7, declarer would still fail, because when he crossruffs the hand, East can promote the setting trick by ruffing diamonds high at every opportunity). On the actual ♦K lead, declarer won, finessed the ♣Q, played the ♣A, ruffed a club low and led a diamond from dummy, with East pitching a spade. Lambardi ruffed the diamond, then ruffed a club with the ♥Q, cashed the ♥A and led another diamond leaving Janice Seamon Molson in a losing bind. If she ruffed, declarer could pitch a spade and would be able to guess from her earlier play to ruff the third round of spades low; if she discarded, declarer would make his ♥7. At the table she chose to discard a spade, but either way England would have ended up scoring an optimal +420. At the other table Callaghan's 3♦ swiftly went down after the ♥A lead, followed by three rounds of clubs and later the ♦A. That was -50 but still 9imps to England.*

This match was dead even going into the last board:

*Anti-editor: Sabine was uncharacteristically conservative on this hand. She'd get almost as good a result as Brian Senior after her original pass if she takes a crack at 3♦! The defense takes two clubs, two club ruffs, the ♥K and ♦K for +300.

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

Open Room

West	North	East	South
Callaghan	Auken	Armstrong	Sanborn
pass	pass	pass	1 NT
pass	2♥ (xfer)	pass	2♠
(all pass)			

After an untroubled auction, Auken/Sanborn reached their normal contract of 2♠. Callaghan found the excellent lead of the ♥2, ducked to the jack, The club return was ducked to the king and a second heart gave the defenders two more tricks. The thirteenth heart now would have promoted the ♠Q for the setting trick, and a diamond would have forced an immediate guess, but Armstrong played a second club. Sanborn won and backed her judgment by cashing her top spades to make her contract, a diamond going on the long club: +110.

Perhaps Callaghan should have cashed the ♦A before leading the second heart as Armstrong's failure to double 2♥ probably precluded his holding ace-queen-jack-fifth. Armstrong's defense would have been best had Callaghan been dealt the ace or king of trumps instead of the ♦A.

At the other table, things were very different (hand rotated)....

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



Closed Room

West	North	East	South
J. Molson	Lambardi	M. Molson	Senior
—	—	pass	pass
1♥	double	2♥	2♠
pass	3♥	pass	3 NT
(all pass)			

Janice Seamon Molson has made an indelible mark in women's bridge thanks to her reputation as a gutsy fighter as well as a superb technical player. Here she struck again with a third-seat vulnerable 1♥, a "being on a roll" kind of bid, having just reaped some juicy dividends on the previous boards. Her action pushed Lambardi/Senior into an unsound 3NT. Janice led the ♦2 to the jack and ace and Mark switched to a deceptive ♥2. As a result, Janice won the jack and cashed her ace. When that failed to oust the ♥K, she reverted to diamonds. With black clouds of many vulnerable undertricks looming perilously over his head, Senior cashed the ♠A-K and was delighted to see the queen drop. He cashed his remaining winners and took the club finesse for his contract: -200.

USA+ gained 7 imps and won the match 44-36, 16-14 in VP, completing a convincing come-back against a tough opponent.

Saving you, saving me (aha!)

After four rounds, the standings were headed by Poland/Russia, who had just completed a comprehensive 25-5 rout of the second place Israeli team, thus achieving a commanding 17 VP lead over USA+.

We had left the Bulgarians after their second round loss to Iceland, in a deal where the cards were lying rather too kindly for Karaivanov's taste. It seems only right to highlight this partnership's chance to shine in a match where they were facing Slam Dunk, one of the top Japanese teams in the competition.

It is very tempting for South to bid 5♦ over 4♠, especially if he hears any kind of encouraging noise from his partner. After Stamatov promised diamond values with his pass of 3♦, it would have taken some formidable restraint for Tsonchev not to go for the save in 5♦, even at equal vulnerability.

"Taking insurance" is often an easy way out when there is a high-level competitive bidding decision to make, but here it could have easily cost a double-digit swing as the play in 4♠ is not at all straightforward. If South manages to put in a diamond rebid at the four level, declarer might play him for a doubleton ♥A and try to slip through a heart to the king, then strip his black exit cards and endplay him into giving him a ruff and discard to make the club loser disappear. An alternative and much better plan, especially after the given auction, would be to play a low club from the East hand at some point, hoping for the suit to split 3-3 and pitch a heart on the fourth

Board 4	North	
West dealer	♠ 7 3	
All vul	♥ Q J 9 7 4	
	♦ K 7	
	♣ Q 8 7 5	
West		East
♠ A J 9 6 5		♠ K Q 10 4 2
♥ K 8 5		♥ 10 6 3
♦ 10 6		♦ 4
♣ 10 4 3		♣ A K 6 2
	South	
	♠ 8	
	♥ A 2	
	♦ A Q J 9 8 5 3 2	
	♣ J 9	

Open Room

West	North	East	South
Shimizu	Stamatov	Miyakuni	Tsonchev
pass	pass	1 ♠	2 ♦
3 ♦	pass (1)	3 ♥	5 ♦
pass	pass	double	(all pass)

(1) I would like a diamond lead

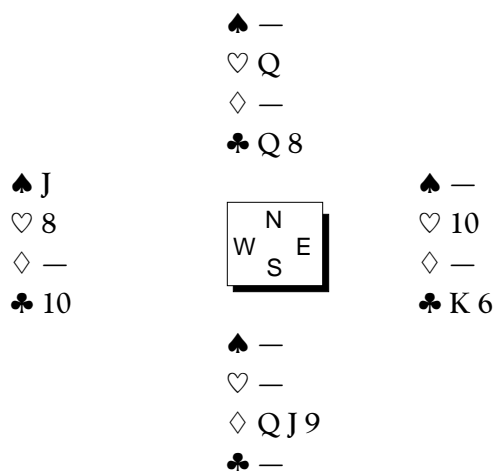
Closed Room

West	North	East	South
Karaivanov	Hirata	Trendafilov	Chen
pass	pass	1 ♠	2 ♦
2NT (1)	pass	4 ♠	(all pass)

(1) good raise in spades club.

That was the line of Trendafilov in the Closed Room after receiving a diamond lead, ruffing the continuation and drawing trumps in two rounds. In this position many declarers played both top clubs before ducking one, with the result that North was able to play a heart to the ace and wait for the setting trick. Trendafilov, instead, cashed only one top club, noting the fall of the 9, and then played the ♣2 from hand, taken by Chen with the ♣J. Chen switched to ♥A and a heart.

What the Bulgarian champion did not miss was that this line would give him the additional chance of squeezing North in hearts and clubs whenever clubs were 4-2 with South holding a doubleton honor, while cashing both top clubs would destroy the communications for the squeeze. After declarer took the heart return with the ♠K, he proceeded to cash his top spades and the last trump gave North an impossible discard problem:



Trendafilov's efforts were rewarded with a 3-imp gain for his team, when they were in danger of losing 12 once 5♦ doubled went two off for -500. Nevertheless, it would have been better for declarer to give up a club *on the first round of the suit*, since, as the play went, if North held the ♣Q-J-x-x, he could win the second club and play a third round, breaking up the squeeze.

The last match of the second day, the sixth of the round-robin, saw another tough battle between the two top placed teams when USA+ played Poland/Russia.

*Anti-editor: Perhaps they play negative free bids or 2♣ would be a game force. He might not like to bid notrump when partner's diamonds could be two small.

Our undercover "Moyses" from Russia

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

While most tables reached the normal 3NT (down one), after E-W overcalled and raised hearts, here Alexander Petrunin chose the Moysian dimension:

Open Room

West	North	East	South
Sanborn	Gromov	Auken	Petrunin
—	1 ♦ (1)	1 ♥	double (2)
2 ♥	4 ♥ (3)	pass	4 ♠
(all pass)			

- (1) Precision
- (2) Negative, usually with four spades
- (3) Splinter "raise" to 4♠

Trying to fathom the reasons why Petrunin opted to double instead of bidding 2♣ or a top heavy 1NT has meant sleepless nights and deep blue rings around my eyes. A lengthy stay in a secluded monastery in the Himalayas to seek heavenly guidance on the matter did not help me to solve the enigma, so I ask any kind soul out there who might be able to shed light on the mystery* to contact me at the Buddhist Retreat, Mount Everest, Nepal.

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

Open Room

West	North	East	South
Sanborn	Gromov	Auken	Petrinin
—	1 ♦ (1)	1 ♥	double (2)
2 ♥	4 ♥ (3)	pass	4 ♠
(all pass)			

- (1) Precision
- (2) Negative, usually with four spades
- (3) Splinter "raise" to 4♠



Alexander "Moyses" Petrunin

Since Petrunin's first call basically guaranteed four spades, Gromov splintered to 4♥ with his control rich hand and a supposedly useful shortage, slam being a sound proposition facing ♠Q and the two minor aces. Petrunin received a club lead from Sanborn, won in hand to play a diamond up and successfully sneak past the ♦A.*

*a costly error, since the ♦A was the setting trick

He then played a heart from dummy, taken by Auken with her ♥A. He won the club return with dummy's ♣K, ruffed a diamond, and played three high hearts, overruffing the nine with the ace on the fourth round. Then he played dummy's penultimate diamond. Auken ruffed high, to return a low trump to the 7 and 8. The last diamond from dummy held his losses to one more trump trick, 12 imps to Poland/Russia. Nevertheless, USA+ won the match 58-26, or 22-8 in VPs.

This result meant a considerable bunching up in the standings with the top five teams separated by a mere 3 VPs with two more rounds to go.

The seventh round saw the resurgence of Poland/Russia as they blitzed England 25-4, while the powerful come-back of another USA team (Itabashi-Robison, Hayden-Kantor) continued with a 17-13 win in the derby with the hitherto undefeated USA+.

Whose suit is it, anyway?

One of the most curious deals of the round was this one. A creative bidding effort by the Canadian foursome churned out a rather unexpected result in the match against the Japanese open team.

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

Open Room

West	North	East	South
Kaku	Carruthers	Takayama	Silver
—	—	1 ♦	1 ♠
(all pass)			

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
Graves	Imakura	Mittelman	Ino
—	—	1 ♦	pass
1 ♠	pass	2 ♠	(all pass)

Never one to be hindered by paltry considerations like vulnerability and suit quality, Joey Silver decided to pull out one of his trademark four-card overcalls to get his 14 count out and working. When his overcall was passed out, he bought a dummy that despite its trump shortage contributed two precious cards. Cool and collected, declarer ducked the opening lead of the ♦3 to East's king, finessed the ♥Q at trick two, led the ♣7 to dummy's king, the ♠9 to the ten and king, and then advanced the ♣10. When Kaku ducked, Silver had six sure winners and made the ♠Q later for a remarkable +80,

At the other table Mittelman-Graves could not match their teammate's achieve-

ment and managed to take only six tricks in their 4-4 spade fit, losing a trick in each minor, two hearts and three trumps for two down 100 and an imp to Japan. It was a great hand for the "Joey Silver — Whatever you can do, I can do better — Hall of Fame collection" which has no doubt already been forwarded to the domiciles of current and previous teammates (which I guess must include 90% of Canadian bridge players). Canada went on to win the match 51-32, 19-11 in VP.

These were the top-10 standings after the seventh round:

Rank	Team	VPs
1	POLAND/RUSSIA	142
2	USA	133
3	USA+	131
4	ISRAEL	129
5	INDONESIA	128
6	ICELAND	125
7	CANADA	123
8/9	ENGLAND	120
8/9	BULGARIA	120
10	CHINA LADIES	119

Crocodile Rock

Going into the last round of the Swiss and the two matches which looked likely to decide the top seeding for the quarter-finals were Poland/Russia vs. USA and USA+ vs. Israel.

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

Open Room

West	North	East	South
Gromov	Itabashi	Petrunin	Robison
—	pass	pass	2 NT
(all pass)			

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
Hayden	Balicki	Kantor	Zmudzinski
—	pass	2 ♥	double
pass	2 ♠	pass	2 NT
(all pass)			

In Poland/Russia vs. USA both Souths declared 2NT. Zmudzinski got the friendlier lead of the ♥10, induced by Kantor's 2♥ bid, which he won with the ♥J. He played on diamonds, Hayden winning the second round and shifting to a low club. Zmudzinski won the third round, cashed the ♥A (West throwing a club) and his two remaining diamonds, then played ♠A (Kantor carefully unblocking the king) and a spade. That was the chance for Hayden to take on the "Crocodile Dundee" mantle and rise with his queen, swallowing Kantor's jack. But when Hayden decided instead for the "Ebenezer Scrooge" cloak and tried a cheap ♠10, Kantor was forced to win the jack and now had to give Zmudzinski his

eighth trick with the ♥K. [Editor's note: As the play went, it wouldn't help for East to throw the ♠K or ♠K-J on the diamonds, because declarer can then lead a low spade, endplaying West. The ♦♠J was certainly more likely to be in the South hand than the East hand; nevertheless, West can save the day by discarding a *spade* instead of a club.)

In the Closed Room Gromov led the ♣K and a low club as Robison held off his ace until the third round. Gromov won the first diamond, cashed his two remaining clubs, then exited with a low spade leaving Robison a trick short; -100, 6 imps to Poland/Russia.

The Americans came back strongly, though, to win the match 52-24, 21-9 in VP. Israel beat USA+ 49-33, 18-12 VP, and in the other critical match-ups Canada beat Iceland 21-9, while England defeated Bulgaria 16-14 to claim the last qualifying berth. China Ladies quashed the hopes of the last Japanese team in contention with a 21-9 win, which meant a seventh place finish. Final round robin top-8 standings were:

Rank	Team	VPs
1	USA	154
2	POLAND/RUSSIA	151
3	INDONESIA	150
4	ISRAEL	147
5	CANADA	144
6	USA+	143
7	CHINA LADIES	140
8	ENGLAND	136

The top three teams could now pick their opponents: USA picked China Ladies, Poland/Russia chose the fourth placed Israeli team (probably on the strength of their round-robin 25-5 victory), and Indo-

nesia chose USA+. That left Canada vs. England. There was no carryover except for half an imp going to the team in each match that finished higher in the round-robin standings (this was for tie-breaking purposes).

In the quarter-finals the Chinese ladies team made quick work of the top placed USA with a one-sided 131-60 score, while Indonesia managed to hang on to enough of the 36-imp lead they picked up in the first half to end the ambitions of Aukensanborn and the Molsons, with a final score of 71-57.

China Ladies were slowly turning into the surprise of the tournament but few were aware that it included plenty of talent with players who have made frequent appearances for the national team (including Zhou Xiao Ying, the top ranked Chinese lady player for much of the eighties, and erstwhile partner of Sun Ming, who had withdrawn from bridge activity for family reasons).

The other two matches turned out to be much tighter affairs with the lead frequently changing hands. My wife, Migry, was playing for Israel, partnered by Michael Barel. Their teammates were Doron and Israel Yadlin, two brothers.



Simon Kantor of the USA team

Rank	Team	VPs
1	USA	154
2	POLAND/RUSSIA	151
3	INDONESIA	150
4	ISRAEL	147
5	CANADA	144
6	USA+	143
7	CHINA LADIES	140
8	ENGLAND	136



OK, guys, better luck next time. The USA+ team bites the dust against Indonesia in the quarter-final.



The Israeli team, at the awards ceremony.

Slowly slowly . . .

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

All four tables got to the same 6♠ doubled contract.

Poland/Russia vs. Israel

Open Room

South	West	North	East
<i>Petrinin</i>	<i>D. Yadlin</i>	<i>Gromov</i>	<i>I. Yadlin</i>
1 ♣ (1)	2 ♠ (2)	pass	4 ♠
6 ♥	pass	pass	6 ♠
double	(all pass)		

(1) Strong, artificial

(2) Sound overcall in spades (you could say that again!)

Closed Room

South	West	North	East
<i>Barel</i>	<i>Zmudzinski</i>	<i>Migry</i>	<i>Balicki</i>
2 ♣	2 ♠	double (1)	redouble (2)
5 ♥	pass	pass	5 ♠
6 ♥	pass	pass	6 ♠
double	(all pass)		

(1) Very weak

(2) Fear not partner, I have you covered!

Canada vs. England

Open Room

South	West	North	East
<i>Mittelman</i>	<i>Callaghan</i>	<i>Graves</i>	<i>Armstrong</i>
1 ♥	1 ♠	2 ♥	4 ♥ (splinter)
6 ♥	pass	pass	6 ♠
double	(all pass)		

(1) Splinter raise

Closed Room

South	West	North	East
<i>Lambardi</i>	<i>Carruthers</i>	<i>Senior</i>	<i>Silver</i>
2 ♣	2 ♠	pass	3 ♠
4 ♥	pass	pass	4 ♠
5 ♥	pass	6 ♥	6 ♠
pass	pass	double	(all pass)

In Poland/Russia vs. Israel, Petrunin found himself in the increasingly common, albeit unfortunate, situation of opening a strong club only to see the bidding return to him at the 4♠ level. He reasonably decided that this was not the hand for scientific prodding and placed a "bid on if you dare" 6♥ on the tray. East dared and was promptly doubled. Barel at the other table knew that his partner would not contribute much to the cause and went on slowly but surely to 6♥, again East saving twice. Both North players cleverly led the ♣9 and South won the ace. Alex Petrunin cashed the ♦A before returning a club while Michael Barel returned the ♣2 immediately. Declarer had to lose two diamonds for -500. No swing.

George Mittelman did not start playing bridge yesterday and, after contemplating his beautiful two loser hand, must have had a tingling feeling that if Mr. Murphy was to be believed, his hearts would be routinely outbid by the opponents' spades and the best chance he had to buy the contract was to forego a 2♣ opener, get his suit out

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

Canada vs. England

Open Room

South	West	North	East
<i>Mittelman</i>	<i>Callaghan</i>	<i>Graves</i>	<i>Armstrong</i>
1 ♥	1 ♠	2 ♥	4 ♥ (splinter)
6 ♥	pass	pass	6 ♠
double	(all pass)		

Closed Room

South	West	North	East
<i>Lambardi</i>	<i>Carruthers</i>	<i>Senior</i>	<i>Silver</i>
2 ♣	2 ♠	pass	3 ♠
4 ♥	pass	pass	4 ♠
5 ♥	pass	6 ♥	6 ♠
pass	pass	double	(all pass)

immediately and to slowly be “pushed” to the five- or six-heart level depending upon his partner’s reaction to his 1♥ opening. Graves, having been thoroughly schooled in the same softly-softly approach, volunteered a delicate 2♥ with his six-card support. Long John Armstrong, however, has also been round the block once or twice and took no notice of the Canadians’ pussy-footing, taking the save in 6♠. Graves led a trump. Mittelman cashed the ♦A when he won the ♣A, down 500.

If those results, tactics, deception and insurance, were interesting, consider the sandbagging efforts of Joey “Now you see it, now you don’t” Silver, who took the panoramic route, stopping to admire the view in 3♣ and 4♠ before having to “save” in 6♠. Why “save” you might ask? Well, hmmm ... believe it or not this is what happened at the table (sorry Pablo, but your check bounced)!

Brian Senior (North) appreciated that a heart lead was not only pointless but also potentially dangerous, but couldn’t tell whether the defenders’ outside trick source was in clubs or diamonds. Hoping to know more after seeing dummy and thinking it might be important to hold the lead, Brian made the expert lead of the ♦K. Unfortunately for him, he was in no position to lead to trick two. Pablo Lambardi, who had been granted that privilege, was not keen to cash the ♣A at the potential cost of a 300-point undertrick, and saw no pressing need to worry about dummy’s diamonds (his partner held the ♦Q, right?). Accordingly, he decided to exit “passively” with a heart to force dummy. John Carruthers was delighted to accept that force and absolutely thrilled at being able to discard one of his four clubs. The other three went on dummy’s diamonds after trumps were drawn and he chalked up +1660. Make it 19 imps to Canada.

In the other matches Indonesia gained 11 imps against USA+ when Mark and Janice Molson forged on to 7♥ but were unable to convince Henky Lasut/Eddy Manoppo to sacrifice while China Ladies gained an unusual imp by selling out to 4♥ in one room for -480 while doubling 6♠ for +500 in the other.

Cloak and Dagger

Board 13 North
 North dealer ♠ A 9 6 2
 All vul ♥ J 7 6
 ♦ 10 9 8 2
 ♣ 9 5

West
 ♠ K 7 5 4 3
 ♥ A 10 9 5 2
 ♦ 7
 ♣ 6 3

East
 ♠ —
 ♥ Q 8 4 3
 ♦ Q J 5 4 3
 ♣ Q 8 7 4

South
 ♠ Q J 10 8
 ♥ K
 ♦ A K 6
 ♣ A K J 10 2

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>D. Yadlin</i>	<i>Gromov</i>	<i>I. Yadlin</i>	<i>Petrinin</i>
—	pass	pass	1 ♣ (1)
2 ♣ (2)	pass (3)	3 ♦ (4)	double (5)
3 ♥	4 ♦	pass	5 ♦
pass	pass	double	(all pass)

- (1) Strong, artificial
- (2) Diamonds, or both majors
- (3) 5-7, perhaps more if no 5-card suit
- (4) pass-or-correct
- (5) Penalty of diamonds and/or not minimum



Heads or Tails? For Seeding Rights.

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Zmudzinski</i>	<i>Migry</i>	<i>Balicki</i>	<i>Barel</i>
—	pass	pass	1 ♣
1 ♠	pass	pass	2 NT
pass	3 NT	(all pass)	

The Russians' Precision 1♣ opening seemed tailor-made to bring the best out of the Yadlins' cloak and dagger repertoire. Here Petrunin (South) had a tough bid over Israel Yadlin's 3♦ and decided to show his strength as well as his diamond values with a double. When Doron Yadlin revealed his shape, Gromov could either pass 3♥ to show a minimum or "raise" his partner's diamonds. When he chose the latter, Petrunin was once again on the spot, but with 26+ points on the line it would have been a remarkable view not to go to game. Bidding 4♠ on the way would have worked but such a bid, after Doron had shown a major two-suiter, would have required some extensive prior knowledge of the hand records. Five diamonds doubled went three down after ♥A and a heart, with declarer doing his level best to extricate eight tricks by repeatedly forcing East with spades past West's king.

At the other table Zmudzinski was right to lead a heart against Barel's 3NT, but he led his lowest rather than his highest. Barel won the ♥K, finessed in spades, and spurned the club finesse for +600. That was 16 imps to Israel, losing the match by 5 now at 27-32.



"I don't like this one bit!"
 thinks Balicki

Luck be a lady tonight

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

Poland vs. Israel

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>I. Yadlin</i>	<i>Petrinin</i>	<i>D. Yadlin</i>	<i>Gromov</i>
3 ♣	pass	4 ♣	double
4 ♦	double	5 ♣	double
(all pass)			

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Balicki</i>	<i>Barel</i>	<i>Zmudzinski</i>	<i>Migry</i>
pass	pass	pass	2 NT
pass	3 ♣ (1)	pass	3 ♦ (2)
pass	3 ♥ (3)	pass	3 NT
pass	4 ♦	pass	6 ♦
(all pass)			

- (1) Puppet Stayman
- (2) At least one four-card major
- (3) Four spades

Once Doron Yadlin (East) chose a restrained 4♣ initial action over his partner's 3♣ opening, probably mindful of his major-suit values and of earlier random holdings from his partner in the same position, the stage was set to uncover another potential agreement black-hole: Would Gromov's pass

over 5♣ have been forcing at red vs. green and, therefore, was his double showing an unsuitable hand for bidding on? If, however, the double was simply meant to show values, then 5♦ from North should be clear-cut. My opinion is that the double of 4♦ should promise a bid over 5♣ and, therefore, Gromov's hand would have been best described with a "pass and pull" action. As it went the Yadlins were down 800 in 5♣ doubled but Israel gained 11imps when Migry brought home 6♦ against the odds after Balicki decided to hide in the bushes with his eight-card club suit, thus denying declarer the vital information that might have guided her to divine the actual layout.

Migry got the ♣J lead, on which she discarded a spade from dummy; now cashing the second top club could have somewhat simplified her task, forcing Balicki to find the ♠Q exit when in with the ♦A and leaving declarer to draw the correct inferences in later play. At the table, instead, Migry knocked out the ace of trumps and threw a heart, instead of a second spade, on the club continuation, sensibly deciding to play for hearts 3-3 or ♥Q doubleton. She drew the outstanding trump and tried to ruff out the ♥Q. When that failed, there was little to do apart from hoping for an "allegedly" impossible layout by playing West for a 2-2-1-8 shape and hoping that Zmudzinsky (East) was holding the spades as well as the ♥Q. She ran her trumps to find that she had indeed squeezed Zmudzinski in the majors and brought home 1370.

Methods, methods

One of the pleasures of covering an event such as this with Eric Kokish, a.k.a. the Archimandrite of Bidding Theory, is the chance to listen to his deep analysis of otherwise plain bidding sequences, which are turned inside out and given a totally

new and often unexpected meaning to plug some gaping holes in a natural system. This hand provided Eric with plenty of ammunition to vent his spleen at the many players who were rambling in the dark, because of “inferior” agreements:

Board 12	North	East
West dealer	♠ A Q 7 3	♠ —
N-S vul	♥ 9 7 6 2	♥ 10 4 3
	♦ Q 7 5 3 2	♦ A 10 9 6
	♣ —	♣ K J 9 7 3 2
West		South
♠ K J 9 6 5		♠ 10 8 4 2
♥ A K Q 5		♥ J 8
♦ —		♦ K J 8 4
♣ A Q 8 6		♣ 10 5 4

Kokish: “I could write a book on this one, but the anticipated sales numbers would cause me to rethink my position. Before getting into what happened, I will share my theoretical and heretical opinions with you. After 1♠-1NT, I believe that West should settle for 2♥, which gives him his best chance to get his shape across if the bidding continues. And here I am aware that many would pass 2♥, but I wouldn’t recommend that either. East bids 3♣ over 2♥ and all is sweetness and light. Blah blah blah. If West jumps to 3♥ I would love to bid 4♣ with the East hand but my agreement is that this would be an advance cue-bid for hearts (5♣ would be natural). What’s left for me is 3NT or 3♠ and I’m a 3♠ guy because it leaves opener the most room to finish describing his hand. But then I believe that 3♠ doesn’t mean a lot while 3NT does (extras, lots of stoppers, 2-2-(5-4) shape). Over 3♠ West can bid 3NT when that

looks right, 4♥ to complete a 5-5, 4♠ with an independent suit, or four of a minor with three or four of those to complete his pattern. Here West bids 4♣, after which all is again sweetness and light.”

Canada vs. England Open Room

West	North	East	South
Senior	Silver	Lambardi	Carruthers
1 ♠	pass	1 NT	pass
3 ♥	pass	3 NT	pass
4 ♣	pass	4 ♥	(all pass)

To prove Eric’s point, one need only look at the Senior-Lambardi auction where the Englishman managed to actually bid out his shape only to have Lambardi give preference to hearts since he could not bring himself to believe that 4♣ was natural when he was looking at K-J-9-x-x-x in the suit.

Poland/Russia vs. Israel Open Room

West	North	East	South
D. Yadlin	Balicki	I. Yadlin	Zmudzinski
1 ♠	pass	1 NT(1)	pass
3 ♥	pass	4 ♥	(all pass)

The Yadlin brothers finished also in 4♥, +450, but did not even get close to uncovering their club fit.



The Israeli team is busy scoring it up....

West dealer ♠ A Q 7 3
 N-S vul ♥ 9 7 6 2
 ♦ Q 7 5 3 2
 ♣ —

West
 ♠ K J 9 6 5
 ♥ A K Q 5
 ♦ —
 ♣ A Q 8 6

East
 ♠ —
 ♥ 10 4 3
 ♦ A 10 9 6
 ♣ K J 9 7 3 2

South
 ♠ 10 8 4 2
 ♥ J 8
 ♦ K J 8 4
 ♣ 10 5 4

Poland/Russia vs. Israel Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Petrinin</i>	<i>Migry</i>	<i>Gromov</i>	<i>Barel</i>
1 ♣ (1)	pass	2 ♣	pass
4 ♦ (2)	pass	4 ♠ (3)	pass
5 ♣	(all pass)		

- (1) Strong, artificial
- (2) Exclusion Blackwood
- (3) One keycard outside of diamonds

The Russians seemed to be best positioned to land in 6♣ thanks to Gromov's 2♣ reply over his partner strong club opening, but Petrinin launched himself into Exclusion RKCB and then he demurely bid 5♣ when Gromov showed one key card outside of diamonds. The truth is Gromov read 4♦ as simply void-showing and had meant 4♠ as a cue-bid. Petrinin scored two overtricks in 5♣ for +440. No swing.



Semifinal Match

Canada vs. England Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Mittelman</i>	<i>Armstrong</i>	<i>Graves</i>	<i>Callaghan</i>
1 ♠	pass	1 NT (forcing)	pass
3 ♥	pass	4 ♣	pass
6 ♣	double	pass	pass
redouble	(all pass)		

At one table, however, the basic natural bidding tools of the veteran Graves-Mittelman partnership worked wonders. George not only leaped to 6♣ once Graves disclosed his club suit at the four level, but promptly redoubled Armstrong's lead directing double, a well grounded action taken straight out of the "Don't you know who I am?" — Mittelman's book of gutsy bridge, since the Canadian was sure that since Graves was extremely unlikely to hold a doubleton spade, a two down penalty was odds against, with the mathematics therefore favoring the redouble. And right he was. Callaghan (South) had too many spades to follow Armstrong's advice, so he led the ♥J. Graves won, cashed the ♣A, and led a low spade. When Armstrong put in the queen Graves ruffed, drew trumps, ruffed out the ♠A, and claimed: +1580. That was 15 imps to Canada, who trailed by 11 with eight hands to go, 73-84, after that well-deserved gain.

England, however, managed to survive another tight battle and defeat the valiant Canadians 97-93.5. In the other close match Israel scraped through by the tiniest of margins, beating the pre-tournament favorites by 64-63.5, a victory by half an imp, leaving Poland/Russia, along with USA, to rue their quarter-final picks.

The two semifinal matches were: Indonesia vs. Israel and China Ladies vs. England.

Silence is golden

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

Board 2 provided the first swing in both matches. In the Indonesia-Israel match, Doron Yadlin (West) opted to simply transfer to 2♠ after the 1NT opening, a choice that must have taken into account their partnership's aggressive opening style. Two spades made with an overtrick, +140. At the other table Karwur showed no such restraint and Panelewen was happy to accept his 2NT game invitation. Barel (South) led the inevitable heart to the 10, queen and ace, and declarer now started spades, playing ♠A and running the ten. Migry took her queen and played the ♣K, ducked all round with Barel playing the 8. She then switched to the ♥8, covered by the ♥9 and ducked by Barel in the hope that his partner had started with Q-8-x. That was declarer's ninth trick for +400 and first blood to Indonesia.

In the other match the auctions were quite different. "Those who speak too much will end up with flies in their mouth." This Italian saying could easily serve as the caption for this board....

Open Room

West	North	East	South
Callaghan	Lu	Armstrong	Hou
—	—	1 NT	pass
2♥ (xfer)	pass	2♠	pass
2 NT	pass	3♥	pass
3 NT	(all pass)		

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
Wang	Senior	Yan	Lambardi
—	—	1♣ (strong)	pass
1♠	pass	2♥	pass
2 NT	pass	3 NT	(all pass)

The "en passant" 3♥ call from Armstrong (although a reasonable bid) would come back to haunt him, as Hou was dissuaded from leading her five-card heart suit. Without a heart lead, declarer's task was considerably more difficult. Hou found the lead of the ♣10 and Armstrong ducked twice, took his ♣A on the third round, and played the ♥10, queen, ace. He continued with the ♦A hoping for something to happen and then ended up playing for a magic layout in spades with Q-x-x onside. When that failed, Lu could collect all of her clubs and play a heart to Hou's king. Declarer also lost a diamond for three down, -150.

Wang (West) got the ♣K lead. Trusting Lambardi's signal, she took the second round of clubs and started hearts, Senior covering the ten. The fall of the 8 on the second round meant that she could develop a third winner on power. South switched to a diamond to the queen and ace, but a spade shift would have been better. Wang drove out the ♥7, Lambardi exited with his last heart, and Wang played ♦K and a third diamond to establish the thirteenth diamond in her hand. Wang took two spades, three hearts, three diamonds and the ♣A

for +400 and a 10-imp gain. The score was China 10, England 2, and an early sign that England was in for a much tougher battle than they might have anticipated.

The ghost of the singleton king of clubs

Board 16	North		
West dealer	♠ 10 9 6		
E-W vul	♥ A Q 6		
	♦ J 3		
	♣ A J 8 7 5		
West		East	
♠ A 7 2		♠ Q 4 3	
♥ 9 8 7		♥ J 5 4 2	
♦ 10 9 6 5		♦ A Q 8 7 2	
♣ 4 3 2		♣ K	
	South		
	♠ K J 8 5		
	♥ K 10 3		
	♦ K 4		
	♣ Q 10 9 6		

Indonesia vs. Israel

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>D. Yadlin</i>	<i>Manoppo</i>	<i>I. Yadlin</i>	<i>Lasut</i>
pass	1 ♦ (1)	pass	1 ♠
pass	1 NT	pass	3 NT
(all pass)			

(1) Precision (could be as few as two)

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Karwur</i>	<i>Migry</i>	<i>Panelewen</i>	<i>Barel</i>
pass	1 ♣	1 ♦	1 ♠
3 ♦	pass	pass	double
pass	3 ♠	pass	4 ♣
pass	4 ♥	pass	4 ♠
(all pass)			

Manoppo's systemic 1♦ opening worked very much against him, since it silenced the possible diamond overcall from the opposition. The Indonesians sailed to 3NT where they lost four diamonds, the ♣K and the ♠A.

At the other table, the bidding made it somewhat easier for Barel to locate his side's 4-3 spade fit. Nevertheless his decision to bid 4♠ was not straightforward and it earned him a free one-month supply of falafel when it proved to be a winner. After a diamond to the ace and a diamond back Barel crossed to a high heart to pass the ♠10, which held. The ♠6 went to the 8 and ace, and back came a second heart. Barel won in hand, lost the club finesse and finished with ten tricks for +420 and 11 imps. Israel took the lead 27-22.

In the other match, the English got to 3NT while the Chinese stopped in 1NT. Their conservative action, however, generated unexpected dividends when 3NT turned out to be no fun for those who still deny the validity of the "rule" that the ♣K is always singleton offside. Since Brian Senior, like Manoppo, belongs to that stubborn minority, he had no practical chance to take nine tricks after a diamond lead. Despite blocking the diamonds, the defense still managed to collect three diamond tricks, the ♠A and, the singleton ♣K! At the other table Lu (in 1NT) took ten generous tricks after the ♦2 lead to the ♦K, a losing club finesse and a low diamond return to her singleton ♦J! It was another big gain for China, now leading 48-14.

A few boards later China struck again:

Board 25	North	
North dealer	♠ J 10 7	
N-S vul	♥ A 10 7 6	
	♦ 10 9 7 5 3	
	♣ J	
West		East
♠ A K 6		♠ Q 9 4 3
♥ 8		♥ Q J 9
♦ A K 8 4		♦ 6 2
♣ 10 8 6 4 2		♣ A Q 9 5
	South	
	♠ 8 5 2	
	♥ K 5 4 3 2	
	♦ Q J	
	♣ K 7 3	

Indonesia vs. Israel			
Open Room			
West	North	East	South
<i>D. Yadlin</i>	<i>Manoppo</i>	<i>I. Yadlin</i>	<i>Lasut</i>
—	pass	1 ♣	pass
2 ♣ (inverted)	pass	2 ♥	pass
3 NT	(all pass)		

Closed Room			
West	North	East	South
<i>Karwur</i>	<i>Migry</i>	<i>Panelewen</i>	<i>Barel</i>
—	pass	pass	pass
1 ♦ (2+)	pass	1 ♠	pass
2 ♣	pass	2 NT	pass
3 ♠	pass	4 ♣	(all pass)

China Ladies vs. England

Open Room			
West	North	East	South
<i>Callaghan</i>	<i>Zhou</i>	<i>Armstrong</i>	<i>Dong</i>
—	pass	pass	pass
1 ♣	pass	1 ♠	pass
2 ♠	pass	2 NT	pass
3 ♦	pass	3 NT	(all pass)

Closed Room			
West	North	East	South
<i>Hou</i>	<i>Senior</i>	<i>Lu</i>	<i>Lambardi</i>
—	pass	pass	pass
1 ♦ (2+)	pass	1 ♠	pass
2 ♣	pass	2 ♥	pass
3 ♠	pass	4 ♣	pass
4 ♦	pass	5 ♣	(all pass)

Lu (East in the second auction) showed excellent bidding judgment. Her sequence to 5♣, exploring all possible alternatives on the way, was a good demonstration of how effective this pair could be. Five clubs rates to be a much better spot than 3NT but the blockage in hearts could come to the rescue of a lucky declarer. Both Armstrong and D. Yadlin got a heart lead against 3NT, but from different sides. At the Englishman's table the ♥3 from South went to the ace and the ♥10 back was correctly ducked by Dong. Armstrong, however, was unaware of the blockage and decided to run his tricks before taking the club finesse. So he cashed four rounds of spades and two top diamonds and then finessed in clubs. But

cashing the thirteenth spade allowed North to get rid of that cursed ♥7, which was blocking the suit. As a result, Dong could now cash her two winning hearts when she got the lead with the ♣K. Three notrump was down one and 10 more "heavy" imps went to China. China 64, England 47.

Doron Yadlin (West) got the ♥6 lead, and the queen won the first trick. He saw no reason to delay the club finesse, hoping

that, if that failed, the opponents would not have a clear idea of his values and his distribution and might decide not to continue hearts. He came to hand and took the club finesse. His foresight was rewarded when the actual layout meant that the defense could not extricate their heart winners. Since the Indonesians stopped in 4♣ after an auction that was similar to that of the Chinese until the critical pass over 4♣ by Karwur, Israel gained 6 imps.

Both leading teams managed to stretch their leads, completing two convincing wins over their opponents: China Ladies vs. England 94-65, Israel vs. Indonesia 92-47. The final was going to be China Ladies vs. Israel.

Signaling woes

The first hand of the final supplied plenty of material for discussion:

Board 1	North		East
North dealer	♠ 10 8 5 3		♠ 6 4 2
None vul	♥ A K Q 3		♥ 6 2
	♦ Q 10 7		♦ A 9 8 6
	♣ Q 7		♣ A 10 4 2
West		South	
♠ Q J 9 7		♠ A K	
♥ 9 7		♥ J 10 8 5 4	
♦ J		♦ K 5 4 3 2	
♣ K J 9 8 6 5		♣ 3	

Against 4♥ both West players led the ♦J, 7, ace, low. East returned the ♦6 and both declarers followed with the 5, concealing two lower spot cards in an attempt to convince West that the 6 was a high diamond suggesting a switch to spades. Wang Yanhong was not deceived and switched to the ♣6 (fifth from six). Yan Ru won the ace and dealt her partner another diamond ruff for one down, -50. Michael Barel got it wrong at the other table by switching to the ♠Q, +450, 11 imps to China.

While at first glance it may feel right to play the ♦6 as a low spot, as Wang did once declarer ditched the 3 and the 5, a deeper analysis reveals that the guess is a totally even-money proposition, with nine layouts

where the 6 is simply a neutral or semi-neutral card and three each where it is respectively high or low. Anders Wirgren has recently published an illuminating article on signaling systems, pointing out that each method has its bad cases but that it's important to play with the percentages when trying to resolve ambiguous situations. His opinion on the case in question tends to back up Barel's judgment at the table: "West is missing these spots: 9865432. Since there are two higher and four lower, the 6 tends to be high. So I would go wrong at the table, just like Barel." That can come as a little consolation to the Israeli defender who lost 11 imps for being "right."

The Israeli pair's carding agreement caused another unfortunate swing on board 6:



Where can we find one imp?

The Russians and Poles search but come up empty-handed after their quarter-final match against Israel.

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

Both Souths opened 4♠ and played there, without opposition bidding. This proved to be an easy hand to defend for Wang/Yan when East followed to the ♥A with the 9. West cashed two more hearts and the ♦A, -50.

In contrast, Barel/Migry had their problems. Barel led the ♥K, asking for count, and Migry followed with the 4, even cards showing an even number of cards (when even cards are available). West switched to the ♦A, trying to get some clarification, 3, 10, king. East was trying to discourage a diamond continuation while asking for a heart (lowest even is the most discouraging card, suit-preference implications not relevant in "unknown-length" situations). But West "knew" that East could not hold the ♦4 or ♦6, which would be more clearly discouraging, in that order. As the ♦10 was most likely to be from relative shortness, declarer figured to indeed be shorter in hearts than diamonds. Therefore, Barel did not revert to hearts and continued diamonds, hoping that East could ruff and would also hold the ace of trumps to set the contract. Perhaps he was unlucky in finding the actual layout, but my gut feeling is

that it should have been much easier to get this right (in comparison to the earlier board) since a singleton ♦10 with East would mean that declarer was exactly 7-1-5-0. Dong discarded hearts on the ♦Q and ♣K and took the trump finesse for +450. That was 11 imps to China, pulling away to a 30-6 lead.

After some wild imps changing hands in the next ten boards, Israel struck back:

Board 18	North	
East dealer	♠ K 10 9 6	
N-S vul	♥ 8 5 4 3	
	♦ J 4	
	♣ Q 7 5	
West		East
♠ A 8 7 4		♠ J 3
♥ A K Q 9		♥ J 7 6 2
♦ 10 9		♦ A Q 8 7
♣ 10 6 2		♣ A J 8
	South	
	♠ Q 5 2	
	♥ 10	
	♦ K 6 5 3 2	
	♣ K 9 4 3	

Both sides got to 4♥, but the systemic differences meant that Yan would declare it from the East seat, after a weak notrump opening and a Stayman sequence, and Barel from West. Yan took the ♠2 lead with dummy's ace, presumably in order to take a diamond finesse and set up some winners on which to pitch her possible club losers. Her ♦9 went to the 4, 7, king, with Doron Yadlin (North) making the good play of not covering with the jack. South played back a heart, which she won in dummy and continued with a second diamond to the jack and ace. (If North had played the ♦J on the first diamond, declarer, with three diamond tricks in the bank, would have known to lead spades at this point.)

Board 18	♠ K 10 9 6	
East dealer	♥ 8 5 4 3	
N-S vul	♦ J 4	
	♣ Q 7 5	
♠ A 8 7 4		♠ J 3
♥ A K Q 9		♥ J 7 6 2
♦ 10 9		♦ A Q 8 7
♣ 10 6 2		♣ A J 8
	♠ Q 5 2	
	♥ 10	
	♦ K 6 5 3 2	
	♣ K 9 4 3	

A heart to dummy now revealed the bad trump split, and when she played back a second spade, Doron could rise with the ♠K

and play a third round of trumps, leaving Yan a trick short. One down, -50.

Barel (West) got a trump lead. He won in hand and played the ♦10 to the jack (which he must have been pleased to see), queen and king. Hou returned a spade and Barel ducked, won the spade return and ruffed a spade. With the ♦9 an entry to ruff his fourth spade with the ♥J, Barel now had the necessary communications to draw trumps and cross back to dummy with the ♣A to cash his last two diamonds. Losing only a spade and a diamond meant a big +450 and 11 imps to Israel.

After 32 boards China Ladies led 93-80, and those early "signaling" swings had had a huge effect on the half-time score.

Board 38	North	
East dealer	♠ Q J 8 6	
E-W vul	♥ K 10 4 3 2	
	♦ 9 2	
	♣ K 8	
West		East
♠ 10 5 3		♠ A
♥ 5		♥ A Q 9 8 7 6
♦ J 10 8 7 6		♦ A K 4
♣ Q J 9 4		♣ A 5 2
	South	
	♠ K 9 7 4 2	
	♥ J	
	♦ Q 5 3	
	♣ 10 7 6 3	

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
Barel	Zhu	Migry	Dong
—	—	2 ♣	pass
2 ♦	pass	2 ♥	pass
3 ♦	pass	4 ♦	pass
5 ♦	(all pass)		

Once again the strong club opening did not fare well against competition, although Lu's view to drive immediately to game with her hand had something to do with the poor final score. It's a mystery why Lu did not double 2♦♠ for takeout. Perhaps double was not available to her for systemic reasons (maybe it shows an upper range balanced hand). Doron's "greedy" double added insult to injury, and the contract went two off for -500.

Open Room

West	North	East	South
Hou	D. Yadlin	Lu	I. Yadlin
—	—	1 ♣ (strong)	1 ♠
pass	2 ♠	4 ♥	pass
pass	double	(all pass)	

At the other table a good old-fashioned natural sequence got the Israelis to a delicate 5♦. Barel took the trump lead with dummy's ace and played ♥A, heart ruff, ♣Q to king and ace, finessing the ten on the way back, spade to the ace, heart ruff, spade ruff, heart. Dong ruffed in with her ♦Q and Barel threw his last spade. Dong

played back a trump but Barel had to make two of the last three tricks for +600 and a healthy 15 imps injection to revitalize the Israeli hopes to win the trophy. The score was: China 103, Israel 95.

A couple of misunderstandings cost Israel dearly in some of the first boards of the last set of 16 and the gap between the two teams widened until this deal all but sealed China's victory.

Board 59	North		East
South dealer	♠ A K 10 4 2		♠ Q 7 5 3
None vul	♥ —		♥ 10 7 6
	♦ Q J 9 3		♦ A 10 7
	♣ K 7 6 2		♣ A Q 5
West		South	
♠ J 9		♠ 8 6	
♥ K J 9 8 4 3		♥ A Q 5 2	
♦ K 4		♦ 8 6 5 2	
♣ 9 4 3		♣ J 10 8	

Open Room			
South	West	North	East
I. Yadlin	Wang	D. Yadlin	Yan
pass	2 ♦ (1)	2 ♠	3 ♥
pass	pass	double	(all pass)

(1) Multi



Closed Room			
South	West	North	East
Dong	Barel	Zhu	Migry
Pass	2 ♦ (1)	2 ♠	double (2)
pass	3 ♥	(all pass)	

- (1) Multi
- (2) Competitive, not penalty

It is difficult to blame either of the Yadlins for their action on this board. Doron's reopening double is clear-cut and his brother's subsequent pass could easily have nailed the only plus for their side, since the alternative calls of 3♠, 3NT (yuk!) and 4♦ would mostly work only if matched with the kind of values that will defeat 3♥. Yan had no problems in making the contract and the resulting 11-imps gain meant a 156-118 score with five boards to play.

The final score was 163 to 130. China Ladies had demonstrated a remarkable ability to successfully scrap with the best scrappers in the business, like Senior-Lambardi and the Yadlins, while playing equally well against more technical pairs. Good teams make their own luck and it was evident to anyone who had been watching that China was indeed the team of destiny this year, consistently doing the right thing on the deals that mattered.

The Israeli team played well for the most part, too, and their accomplishment in reaching this final after defeating Indonesia and the Poland/Russia powerhouse is in no way diminished by losing to such a worthy winner.

China Ladies win the whole thing!