

The 2006 World Bridge Championships in Verona

By **Pietro Campanile**



The World Bridge Championships are one of the biggest jamborees of the bridge calendar. They take place every four years and are a transnational event meaning that anyone can play with anyone. Moreover, since there are no strict criteria for participation almost any player can join the party as long as they have the deep pockets needed to pay the stiff tournament fees the WBF requires: around 1500\$ per team and 1000\$ per pair are not the kind of pocket money that the average player carries around to pay for his club tournament.

To add insult to injury the WBF had appointed a travel agent to secure most of the venue accommodation (in Verona, Italy), in order to resell it at double the price if not more to those unwary visitors who were not shrewd enough to check prices elsewhere. As a meager bonus those who made their booking through the official agency would receive a paltry 10% discount on the entry fee. To give you an example of the sheer effrontery and greed displayed in setting the prices: a double room at the four star Tryp Hotel, where we stayed two years ago when Migry played in the Generali Masters in Verona, was being charged at 150 Euro per night instead of the 65 we paid. Once the travel agency could not hold the bookings it was trying to retain, a large batch of rooms was released in early May for normal sales and the price returned to its average of 60-70 Euro.

Anyway despite the hikes in hotel prices and the expensive entry fees, the participation to the championships was at record level and saw the attendance of all the top bridge stars, often playing in sponsored teams.

The event that kicked off the championship was the Mixed Pairs, with a three sessions qualifier to which took part 481 pairs with 181 of them admitted to the three session final. The winners were our main contributor and ex-Jerusalemite Matthew Granovetter playing with many times world champion Karen McCallum. A

separate account of their exploit can be read in Matthew's very own "How to win a World Championship in five easy steps" in this same magazine.

Another pair fancied to win the event was the formidable partnership of Kerri Sanborn and Larry Cohen, who finished eventually in seventh place. Here is Larry at the helm of a tough contract against the expert defense of Lew and JoAnna Stansby, who finished in third place:

Dealer North – None Vulnerable

♠ 875	♠ AJ	♠ Q10962
♥ KJ96	♥ A10832	♥ -
♦ 53	♦ K7	♦ Q842
♣ A983	♣ KJ76	♣ Q542
	♠ K43	
	♥ Q754	
	♦ AJ1096	
	♣ 10	

West	North	East	South
L. Stansby	Cohen	J. Stansby	Sanborn
	1♥	1♠	3♦
Pass	4♥	All Pass	

JoAnna Stansby led the ♠10 to declarer's ♠J, who cashed the ♥A and got the bad news. Cohen continued with the ♠A, the ♦K and a diamond to the ♦A in dummy. Next came the ♣10, which Lew Stansby ducked smoothly causing declarer to insert the ♣J which lost to East's ♣Q. JoAnna, correctly reading the position, returned a club which was ruffed in dummy. After a diamond ruff and a club ruff we have reached this position with the lead in dummy (South):

♠ -		♠ -
♥ 1083		♥ -
♦ -		♦ Q
♣ K		♣ 5
♠ -	♠ N	♠ Q9
♥ KJ9	♥ W	♥ -
♦ -	♦ S	♦ Q
♣ A	♣ E	♣ 5
		♠ K
		♥ Q
		♦ J10
		♣ -

At this point declarer had already gathered eight tricks, the last two he needed came in elegant fashion once Cohen played the ♦J: it would do West no good to ruff high as declarer would simply pitch his losing club, ruff the ♣A with the ♥Q and score the ♥10 en passant. If instead West discards the ♣A, declarer would ruff and, having already gathered nine tricks, then ruff his last club with the ♥Q ending play West who is forced to overruff and let declarer score his ♥10.

Our next deal brings up an interesting challenge players face at events such as these: with such large participation it is difficult to know what to expect from the opponents who come to your table since most of them will be unknown to you even if they are good players in their own right. Let us join Italian champion Alfredo Versace as he faced a rather unassuming married couple who have just come to his table, chatting happily as if bridge was the last thing on their minds.

Dealer West – E/W Vulnerable

♠ K97	♠ A4	♠ J10532
♥ KQ	♥ 10875	♥ J93
♦ AKQJ4	♦ 109865	♦ 7
♣ A82	♣ K3	♣ J1064
	♠ Q86	
	♥ A642	
	♦ 32	
	♣ Q975	

West	North	East	South
<i>Versace</i>	<i>B.Trent</i>	<i>Haemmerli</i>	<i>L.Trent</i>
2♣	Pass	2♦	Pass
2NT	Pass	3♥	Pass
3♠	Pass	4♠	All Pass



Alfredo Versace

After a standard auction, Versace found himself in 4♠ on the lead of the ♦10. The Italian declarer won in hand with a deceptive ♦K, ruffed the ♦4 in dummy in order to play a trump to the ♠9, once South followed with the ♠8, hoping to find the ♠Q doubleton onside and to restrict his trump losers to one. Bruce Trent won the ♠A and, unwilling to open another suit, continued with a third diamond. Versace pitched a club from dummy and Linda Trent in South showed out and ruffed with the ♠Q! After some thought, Linda played back a small club won by declarer with the ♣A. The layout must have been clear by now to Versace: North held both remaining spades and that created a problem since if he tried to pull trumps, ending in hand, and pitch the clubs on the winning diamonds, he would then be forced to play hearts and the defence could take the first round of the suit, tap dummy with a club and, with the hearts blocked, eventually score the setting trick with the fourth club. No, that will not do. After burning a few more brain cells, Versace found the solution: he should discard immediately dummy's clubs on the diamonds before drawing trumps (this could be done in safety since North was known to hold five diamonds and both trumps), and then knock out the ♥A, pull trumps ending in dummy and now enjoy his ♥J. From the planning to the execution: Versace cashed the ♦Q, discarding a club from dummy and ...South ruffed!!! Linda could now lead

a club to North's ♠K and the American pair had succeeded in swindling a World Champion out of a cold contract! 4♠-2 was not worth a lot of MPs to Alfredo who had been leading the field after the first session.

Our third deal from the Mixed Pairs shows how balancing can often lead to rather unexpected outcomes!

You hold:

♠ 43
♥ AKQ3
♦ 8
♣ KQJ1075

Playing against a strong club system, your RHO opens 1♥ (limited to 16 points), you bid 2♣, next comes a non forcing 2♠ from the opponent on your left, which gets passed around to you. What do you do now?

You would be a clairvoyant if you said pass: the chunky club suit, the shape, the points all seem to be screaming at you to bid again. So you duly comply, bid 3♣ and the next time you see the bidding tray the opponents have reached the dizzy heights of 6♦!!! Are you a man or a mouse? Naturally you double and lead the ♥A. Thirteen tricks later the broad smiling Austrian declarer has chalked up an overtrick in her doubled slam for +1190 and a 100% score, a rather better result than the 8% they would have got in 2♠+2!

Here is the complete deal:

Dealer South – None Vulnerable

		♠ AK1065		
		♥ -		
		♦ Q10753		
		♣ 832		
♠ 43			♠ Q872	
♥ AKQ3			♥ 10962	
♦ 8			♦ J4	
♣ KQJ1075			♣ 964	
		♠ J9		
		♥ J8754		
		♦ AK962		
		♣ A		

West	North	East	South
<i>Cichocki</i>	<i>Wernle</i>	<i>Hochecker</i>	<i>Smederevac</i>
			1♥
2♣	2♠	Pass	Pass
3♣	3♦	Pass	6♦
Pass	Pass	Pass	

Final Standings of the Mixed Pairs:

1 Karen MCCALLUM - Matt GRANOVETTER 59.28

2 Jill LEVIN - Bobby LEVIN 58.75

3 Joanna STANSBY - Lew STANSBY 58.47

The next event on the schedule was the Rosenblum Open Teams, played concurrently with the McConnell Ladies Teams. In the Rosenblum the 158 participating teams were divided in 16 seeded groups of 10-11 teams on an all-play-all format, the top four finishers from each group would then qualify for the knockouts, starting obviously with the rounds of 64 played over 56 boards. Four Israeli teams of some quality took part and they all made it through the qualifying round, a good sign of the healthy state of Israeli bridge. In the first round of knockouts, Team Altshuler (D. Birman-Fohrer, Liran-Levinger, A.Birman-Altshuler) got an hopeless draw against one of the best teams in the field and eventual winners of the event: Team Meltzer (Helgemo-Helness; Larsen-Meltzer; Sontag-Bates) which won the match 138-64. Team Bareket (Bareket-Roll; Lengy-Leibovits) was just as unlucky and played the eventual runners up: Swedish Team Henner (Fredin-Lindqvist; Bertheau-Nystrom; Jacobus-Henner) and lost to them by 100-130. Team Herbst (O.Herbst – I.Herbst; Barel-Zack; R. Barr) got through with a convincing win against a Canadian team, while Team Yadlin (I.Yadlin-D.Yadlin; Kalish-Podgur; Ginossar-Ozdil) defeated 102-78 a Pakistani formation.

The round generated quite a few surprise eliminations, none less than the victory of Team Schwarz (Schwarz-Willenken; El Ahmady-Sadek; Krekorian-Case) over the much fancied Italian Team Angelini (Lauria-Versace; Fantoni-Nunes; Sementa-Angelini). Another stunning upset was the defeat of the star-studded Team Jacobs (Rosenberg-Mahmood; Balicki-Zmudzinski; Katz-Jacobs) at the hands of a fairly unknown French team.

The elimination was all the more surprising as Jacobs had managed to recover an early deficit and had a 2 IMPs advantage with only one supposedly flat board to go.



Cezary Balicki



The winners of Rosenblum Cup: Team Meltzer

Dealer West – N/S Vulnerable

<p>♠ KQJ7 ♥ J2 ♦ QJ3 ♣ QJ93</p>	<p>N W E S</p>	<p>♠ 102 ♥ AK1073 ♦ 109 ♣ 10852</p>
<p>♠ A9863 ♥ Q54 ♦ 872 ♣ K7</p>		<p>♠ 54 ♥ 986 ♦ AK654 ♣ A64</p>

In the Open Room the French North-South had a swift auction and stopped in the normal contract after ascertaining the lack of a heart stopper for 3NT. 3♦ made in comfort and the French scored +110.

At the other table, all that Balicki-Zmudzinski needed to do was to bring back a plus score in order to get their

team through to the next round. This is what happened at their table:

West	North	East	South
<i>Queran</i>	<i>Balicki</i>	<i>Marina</i>	<i>Zmudzinski</i>
Pass	1♣	1♥	1♠
2♥	Pass	Pass	Dbf
Pass	2♠	Pass	3♦
Pass	4♣!!	Pass	Pass
Pass			

The auction started with a multi-meaning Polish 1♣ opening and after the 1♥ overcall, Zmudzinski's 1♠ was alerted as showing a 1NT reply without a heart stopper or a hand with long clubs. The next round of bidding is self-explanatory but the 3♦ call by South was alerted as showing four diamonds and five clubs, hence Balicki's "preference" to 4♣.

We shall never know who made a mistake

where, since the two Polish players are unlikely to release their hefty system book to satisfy our curiosity. The fact was that Balicki found himself in a contract where he would need a lot of help to get out with a plus score. Unfortunately the French were not in a helpful mood: Marina started off with three rounds of hearts, Balicki ruffed and tried a club finesse with the ♣J, hoping for a friendly layout in the suit. No joy: Queran took his ♣K, cashed the ♠A and exited with a spade. Balicki had no sensible line available that was not based on clubs 3-3, so he drew two more rounds of clubs and when the 4-2 split transpired, the whole deal fell down on him: he got back to hand with the ♦Q and tried to play a high spade but Marina ruffed, cashed her hearts and declarer only managed to score his ♦A in dummy. 4♣-4 and -400 meant eleven IMPs to the French and a laissez-passer to the next round.

The round of 32 saw the elimination of the Herbst team after a 104-142 loss inflicted by another powerhouse: Team Welland (Martel - Stansby; Levin - Weinstein; Fallenius - Welland), while Team Yadlin continued its race by narrowly edging out by 122-112 the strong Team Lynch (Cohen-Berkowitz; Passell-Wold; Dawson-Lynch). The sacrificial immolation of the pre-tournament favorites on the altar of serendipity continued with the devastating 31-146 (!!) loss suffered by Team Lavazza (Bocchi - Duboin; Madala - Ferraro; D'Avossa - Di Bello) against a Danish team which would in turn succumb to our Team Yadlin in the round of 16.

The last big "kahoona" to fall by the wayside was that perennial favorite: Team Nickell (Meckstroth-Rodwell; Hamman-Soloway; Nickell-Freeman) which was defeated 86-109 by Team Meltzer in the quarter finals.

The semifinal line-up was therefore: Yadlin-Henner and Meltzer-Welland. There will be a detailed account in our next issue of the exceptional tournament of Team Yadlin but even at this late stage they put up an excellent performance and were leading by 6 IMPs with two boards to go against their formidable opponents (essentially the Swedish Open Team), just

a small step away from the final. This was the board before last:

Dealer North – All Vulnerable

♠ 72		♠ QJ953
♥ K4		♥ J10965
♦ AK62		♦ 1084
♣ AKQ32		♣ -
♠ K864	N	♠ QJ953
♥ 873	W	♥ J10965
♦ J7	E	♦ 1084
♣ J985	S	♣ -
♠ A10		
♥ AQ2		
♦ Q953		
♣ 10764		

Playing a relatively unsophisticated system, it is quite normal to open 2NT with the North hand: the wealth of tricks and the two strong minor suits are well worth an upgrade. The problem is that after a Puppet Stayman inquiry and ensuing denial, South has very little to go on except a nebulous quantitative 4NT call, which North was bound to pass given his point count. The 4NT thus reached by Doron and Israel Yadlin made 11 tricks after a spade lead.

The Swedes unfortunately had much more refined tools at their disposal:

West	North	East	South
<i>Ozdil</i>	<i>Lindkvist</i>	<i>Ginossar</i>	<i>Fredin</i>
	1♣	Pass	3NT
Pass	4♣	Pass	4♥
Pass	5♦	Pass	5♠
Pass	5NT	Pass	6♣
Pass	Pass	Pass	

Israel and Doron Yadlin exchanging views during their semifinal match



Opposite North's multi-meaning 1♣ opening, Fredin's 3NT was showing a 12-14 balanced hand without majors and that told Lindkvist that he was assured of a club fit. Therefore he went on with 4♣ and after a round of cuebids, made a mild invitation to a grand slam with 5NT eventually resting in 6♣. The 4-0 trump split meant that 7♣ would have failed but not so 6♣ which generated +1370 and 12 IMPs to the Swedes which went on to win by 113-107. This set out a final between them and Team Meltzer which saw the clear victory of the Americans by a score of 179-133, while Kalish & Co improved on their fourth place finish in the 1994 World Championships in Albuquerque by winning the third place playoff against Team Welland (69-65).

Here is a curious deal from the final which could easily feature in one of my House of Horrors:

Dealer West – None Vulnerable

♠ 632		♠ J8
♥ AK8742		♥ 63
♦ J4		♦ KQ1096
♣ 85		♣ QJ72
♠ Q7	N	♠ J8
♥ J9	W	♥ 63
♦ A875	E	♦ KQ1096
♣ AK1063	S	♣ QJ72
		♠ AK10954
		♥ Q105
		♦ 32
		♣ 94

Nystrom decided to open an off shape 1NT in the West seat and was promptly raised to game. Against 3NT, Sontag

led a natural ♥4 (third and fifth) to Bates ♥Q. To make things easy for his partner, Bates thoughtfully cashed the ♠K before returning a heart and after what must have seemed to Nystrom a very very long time, the defense had gathered twelve tricks in the majors, restricting him to one trick: 3NT-8 = +400 to N/S!

At the other table the auction was identical but Fredin, whose timely doubles are the stuff of legend and feature in many a House of Horrors, decided to step on the stage once again and doubled 3NT for a spade lead in the South seat. Helgemo, who obviously was aware of his opponent's unusual claim to fame, thanked him for the kind warning and bid 4♣ which went quietly one off for a nice 8 IMPs swing to Meltzer.

The Ladies Teams went predictably down to an all USA final between Team Steiner (Sokolow-Seamon; Steiner-Letizia; Ponomareva-Gromova) and Team Narasimhan (Meyers-Levin; Narasimhan-Levitina; Rosenberg-Stansby). After a see-saw start, Steiner took off and quickly built up a lead thanks to precise play and very accurate defense. This was enough to see them through to a 140-90 victory.

Here is an example of inspired reading of the auction from the third set.

You hold in East:

♠ A10653
♥ 8
♦ 72
♣ A9742

and you need to select a lead against 6♦ after the following auction:

West	North	East	South
<i>Ponomareva</i>	<i>Meyers</i>	<i>Gromova</i>	<i>Levin</i>
			Pass
Pass	1♦	2♦(1)	3♦
4♠	5♦	Pass	Pass
5♠	6♦!!	Pass	Pass
Pass			
1) Spades and Clubs			

Here is the complete hand:

Dealer South – All Vulnerable

♠ -		♠ A10653
♥ AQJ9	N	♥ 8
♦ AKJ863	W	♦ 72
♣ QJ3	E	♣ A9742
♠ QJ742	S	♠ K98
♥ K107432		♥ 65
♦ 5		♦ Q1094
♣ 6		♣ K1085

If you led the ♣A AND continued with a second club, give yourselves a big pat on the shoulder as that is the only play to defeat 6♦. This is what Gromova did at the table and her great lead generated 12 IMPs for her team when Sokolow-Seamon made 5♦ at the other table (where the lead was the singleton heart!); all in all a 25 IMPs swing on the play of a single card, since if the slam had come in Steiner would have lost 13 IMPs.

Another great piece of news came from the Senior Teams where Salek Zeligman won first place playing in a USA/Polish team (Markovicz, Zaremba, Klukowski, Jezioro, Zeligman, Melman) which defeated by 59-53 the strong USA Finkel team (Mohan, J. Sutherland, Kastle, Finkel, A. Sutherland).

The last events on schedule were the Open and Ladies Pairs which were won respectively by the Chinese pair of Fu-Zhao and the Americans Levitina-Sanborn. No Israeli pairs made it to the top ten in either competition. A short report on those two events will be included in the next issue.

Most of the hands contained in this report have first been featured in the daily bulletin of the event.

Photos From Top

1. The winners of the Open Pairs: the Chinese Fu and Zhao.

2. The winners of the Ladies Pairs: the Americans Kerry Sanborn and Irina Levitina

3. The winners of the Senior Teams: Team Markovicz (our own Salek Zeligman is first from right)

4. The winners of the Ladies Teams: Team Steiner

