



Around the world with 52 cards

Travels and adventures of a bridge pro

Migry Zur Campanile

If you are still unsure as to where to travel for your next holiday, take my advice and go to Japan. Only two months have gone by since my visit there to play in the NEC Cup, and never before have I experienced such warm hospitality by people who, despite having often only a tenuous command of English, would go overboard trying to be friendly and helpful while sporting an honest and disarming smile. This kind of smile is a very distant cousin of the fake “commercial” version that most of us westerners have sadly become familiar with.

During the first week in Yokohama (where the tournament took place) we had very little time for sight-seeing. After the tournament we were anxious to spend time as tourists, and we began by going to Kyoto on the famous bullet-train. Two hours and 620 kms later we arrived at our destination! Cities like Venice and Paris demand to be explored on foot so that their sights, sounds, smells, and textures be savored to the fullest, and the same is true of Kyoto. The beauty of the cherry blossoms, the echo of a temple bell, the aroma of soy and sake, and the caress of a silk kimono on a beautifully made-up geisha, all experienced in a single day’s walk, was a sharp contrast to the hyper-modern, gadget-addicted society that thrives around it.

I thoroughly enjoyed my stay there, despite experiencing in Kyoto the latest entry in the top-ten most embarrassing “Migry moments.” After a long arduous day of temple sight-seeing, we began to search for a restaurant to grace with our patronage. Since our Japanese was non-existent, we had to rely on a careful scrutiny of the life-size plastic replica dishes, which most restaurants feature in their windows for the tourists. Eventually we entered a typical Japanese mix-and-match restaurant offering a broad variety of local cuisine: sushi, sashimi, tempura, yakitori and so on. To our amazement the owner spoke some English and helped us select our food. In a lull between the different courses, I examined a large aquarium located in a corner of the restaurant. It contained colorful jelly-like fishes, and when the owner suggested we try one of these squids as sashimi (meaning uncooked), I enthusiastically agreed. He proceeded to fish one out of the aquarium and gave it to the chef to prepare. Five minutes later, a beautifully garnished squid was served to us on a bed of sea-weed. It looked really yummy and I enthusiastically stuck my chopsticks in to get a taste when, upon being touched, the squid turned its head and waved its tendrils at me! I let out a most blood-curdling shriek and screamed: “Kill it! Kill it! I want it dead!” This seemed to cause much merriment and laughter

among staff and guests alike. Eventually I was presented by a grinning waiter with half a squid sashimi and half a squid tempura (fried). It was actually delicious but it took some time to get back to the "eating mode" and enjoy it. (I had to finish it alone, since my husband steadfastly declined to partake of any of it, alleging that Italian customs forbid eating a dish that only moments before had the good manners of greeting him.)

The last event of the NEC was the two-session Asuka Pairs Cup, which I played with Michael Barel, who was introduced to you last month in my husband's report of this tournament. In a matchpoint event one should always look for some small "extra" to bring in a good score even when playing what appears to be a dull board.

Here's an example (board rotated for convenience):



Board 16
 East dealer
 E-W vul

North (Barel)
 ♠ Q 10 6 4
 ♥ 8
 ♦ A 6 5 2
 ♣ A K J 9

South (Migry)
 ♠ A 7 2
 ♥ K 5 4
 ♦ K J 10 8 7
 ♣ 6 4

West	North	East	South
—	—	pass	1 ♦
1 ♥	double	pass	1 NT
pass	3 NT	(all pass)	

Opening lead: ♥Q

I took the lead with the ♥K, East playing the ♥9 (standard carding), and immediately tested the diamonds by playing low to the ♦A and a diamond down, with the ♦Q mercifully showing up on my right and saving me a nasty guess on the layout of the suit. Now there were nine easy tricks with the chance of a tenth if one wants to risk the club finesse. Can you see an alternative plan?

I am not fond of finesses: Like many players I know, I have a feeling that although 50-50 are the advertised odds, in my case it's more like 30-70 if not worse.

A moment in the Asuka Pairs

Board 16
 East dealer
 E-W vul

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

South
 ♠ A 7 2
 ♥ K 5 4
 ♦ K J 10 8 7
 ♣ 6 4

Board 16
 East dealer
 E-W vul

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

West
 ♠ K J 9
 ♥ A Q J 10 2
 ♦ 9 4
 ♣ 8 7 2

East
 ♠ 8 5 3
 ♥ 9 7 6 3
 ♦ Q 3
 ♣ Q 10 5 3

South
 ♠ A 7 2
 ♥ K 5 4
 ♦ K J 10 8 7
 ♣ 6 4

Therefore, I decided to find out a bit more about the distribution before committing myself to a club finesse, so I continued with a third round of diamonds, West pitching a club and East pitching a heart. The club pitch from West was worth some analysis: He was marked with five hearts (if East's ♥9 was to be trusted) and I had seen two diamonds. That would leave him six black cards, with a high chance of one of them being the ♠K or the ♣Q because of the vulnerable 1♥ overcall. Since West was highly unlikely to pitch a club from a holding of Q-x-x-x, the chances of the club finesse working looked remote.

The full hand was:



West	North	East	South
<i>Hosoda</i>	<i>Barel</i>	<i>Kunitomo</i>	<i>Zur Campanile</i>
—	—	pass	1 ♦
1 ♥	double	pass	1 NT
pass	3 NT	(all pass)	

Opening lead: ♥Q

On that basis, I continued with the two top clubs, both opponents following, and cashed my two remaining diamonds, both West and East pitching a heart and a spade. According to the discards, West was left with three top hearts and two spades, so I couldn't lose anything by exiting with a heart. If West had the ♠K he would now be end-played in spades, after cashing his top hearts. As you can see from the layout, that was indeed the case and 630 brought almost a 90% score on the board.

To hold me to nine tricks, West had to keep the ♥2 and throw an honor instead. Then East can win my heart exit, cash the ♣Q and lead a spade.

The Buddha in Kamakur