



Around the world with 52 cards

Travels and adventures of a bridge pro

Migry Zur Campanile

As most of you know, 2004 is an Olympic year and the mythical torch has been slowly winding its way to Athens, where the Games will start on the 13th of August. Only a few, though, will be aware that the World Bridge Olympics are also scheduled to take place this year but in a different venue, Istanbul, and at a different time, the end of October. It seems, therefore, only right to cast a look back at the previous edition of the event, which took place in August 2000 in the Dutch town of Maastricht.

Proudly hailed as the oldest city in the Netherlands, Maastricht is located at its southernmost point, squeezed in between the Belgium and German borders, peacefully perching on the banks of the Maas River, 133 miles from Amsterdam. Maastricht is a hidden delight of undiscovered charm. Wandering in the Old Town through the narrow clinker paved streets bordered by austere but impressive houses, or whiling away the hours sitting in one of the many cafes, one can feel the history and culture of this ancient town come alive.

The best way, however, to really get to know a city is to get hopelessly lost in it. I must stake our claim to fame in that respect, since we regularly managed to miss the complex set of turns that led to the playing venue from our hotel, and (believe

it or not) the same would happen on the way back!

We were based some distance from the center, in a more modern part of town, and that meant an amusing daily struggle against the draconian one-way system to find the right way into the town itself. We often managed to drive around for 30-40 minutes in this modern day labyrinth, to cover a distance of just over two miles as the crow flies.

Our most significant achievement was when, returning one night from the Conference Center where the event was taking place, we ended up on our merry way to Aachen, a city in neighboring Germany, when the sudden change in the language of the road sign mercifully alerted us to our mistake.

The World Bridge Olympics included the main Open and Ladies teams Championships and, in the second week, a Transnational Mixed Teams. After a narrow defeat in the direct knock-out phase of the Ladies teams at the hands of the powerful Dutch squad, I had the good fortune to play on the winning team in the transnational event partnering the Polish champion Piotr Gawrys and with teammates Jill Meyers, John Mohan, Sam Lev and Irina Levitina.

As many of you know, Sam is an Israeli who moved to the USA in the late eighties and quickly established himself as one of the top players in the country. His sharp analytic mind and superb table presence make him a truly awesome competitor. Here is a hand from the round robin of the Mixed Teams. Let's see how well you do in his place:

Round 13, Board 2
 South dealer
 East-West vul (board rotated for convenience)

Sitting East, you hold:

♠ K 9 4 ♥ A J 6 ♦ J 3 2 ♣ K Q 9 8

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

Partner leads the ♣6 and this is what you can see....

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

♣ 6	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center; width: 40px; height: 40px;"> <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		
	N										
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I guess that 99% of all players would play a third club, which declarer will take with the ace. Next come six rounds of diamonds, declarer discarding all of dummy's spades.

How do you defend?

Tough to find the correct discards, isn't it? This is the whole hand:

Naturally you cover dummy's card with the ♣Q, which holds the trick, declarer following with the deuce.

Any ideas about the likely distribution or a possible defensive strategy?

Not yet? OK, well I am sure you will continue with the ♣K, which also wins the trick. Declarer follows with the ♣4 and partner the ♣3.

And now?

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

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

And this is the position we reached with East to discard on the last diamond:

<p>♠ — ♥ K 9 7 4 ♦ — ♣ —</p>	<p>♠ K 9 ♥ A J ♦ — ♣ 8</p>	<p>South dealer E-W vul</p> <p>♠ Q 7 5 ♥ K 9 7 4 3 ♦ 8 7 6 ♣ J 10</p>	<p>♠ K 9 4 ♥ A J 6 ♦ J 3 2 ♣ K Q 9 8</p>						
<p>♠ 10 ♥ Q 8 5 ♦ — ♣ —</p>	<table border="1" style="margin: auto;"> <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	<p>♠ 10 6 3 2 ♥ Q 8 5 2 ♦ 5 ♣ 7 6 5 3</p>	<p>♠ A J 8 ♥ 10 ♦ A K Q 10 9 4 ♣ A 5 2</p>
	N								
W	S	E							

Whatever he pitches, East will be forced to provide the ninth trick to declarer. After a club pitch, South will play ♠A and a spade; after the ♥J pitch, declarer will play the ♥10, and finally if East gambles all on blanking his ♠K, declarer is odds on to read the position correctly — by playing the ♠A she will end up with 10 tricks in the bag.

Yes, as you can see, nothing helps at this point.

The truth is you missed your chance to shine after your ♣K held the trick; not Sam though.

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

After winning the second club, he cashed the ♥A and then exited with a club! Such an extraordinary play was based on a very accurate assumption of declarer's holding. He correctly placed South with a solid diamond suit for her 3NT rebid as well as the two black aces, and he immediately saw the danger arising from the lazy club return at trick three. Now there was nothing declarer could do, with her ♥K stranded in dummy, she was held to eight tricks.

It's important to note that even if declarer had been 2-2-6-3, Sam's play was unlikely to cost, since declarer would probably still pursue the same endplay line. But if South held 2-2-6-3, West would hold five spades and would have led one — a good clue about South's actual distribution.

Bravo, Sam! But did you spot how declarer could have avoided defeat?

Had she read the lead correctly, she should have guessed that clubs were splitting 4-4 and that there was no point in ducking the second round. She could, therefore, have ensured her contract by

making the unorthodox play of winning the second club, and then running her diamonds. Eventually, as the cards lie, East cannot help supplying a welcome gift in the major suits, after cashing the remaining clubs.

Lev deep in thought....

