



Around the world with 52 cards

Travels and adventures of a bridge pro

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A few years ago I took a month off to fulfill my old dream of touring the USA "coast to coast." Seattle was one of the stops and I had a wonderful time there. Besides its scenic beauty, some of the best winter sports resorts are only a short drive away. Walking around the city and its diverse neighborhoods I kept noticing a certain tingling feeling in the air of hearty, colorful wackiness that escapes definition, a "devil may care" aura pervading what looks like the outward exterior of the classic American metropolis.

Still the ubiquitous symbols of the city are coffee and rain. Both are in abundant supply, in just about equal measures, it seems. Makes you wonder if the coffee shops don't just collect the rain in huge funnels and process it right into pots ready for consumption.

As soon as I got the first glimpse of the "Space Needle," a flood of memories took me back to the first time I ventured across the Atlantic. It was for the Olympics held there in 1984 and my American experience began with a big egg on my face, before the trip even started.

I was only a junior then and, having just been added to the Israeli Ladies team after a late withdrawal of one of the other pairs, I was tremendously excited at the prospect of traveling to the States to play in an Olympiad. When I asked about the venue I was

told that it would be held in Seattle, Washington.

Well, I did not know much about Seattle, but Washington? I was already imagining myself walking along Pennsylvania Avenue, gazing at the White House, Capitol Hill and all those places, which I had only seen briefly on television. I wanted to be ready for my trip, so I went out and bought a guide (on Washington, of course), which I read from cover to cover.

The date of our trip came closer and closer and we started to have some training weekends with the open team, which at the time included living legends like Shmuel Lev and Elyakim Shaufel. I had just rounded my teens and my bridge was not exactly a thing of beauty, but I felt that I had one great advantage over them: I knew all there was to know about one of the playing venues.

During the first break, I immediately started my tour-guide impersonation, dropping names here and there, so that the "guys" would realize that, while my bridge skills might not be all there, they would do well to listen to me if they needed to find a good restaurant! Far from getting their attention, I seemed to be causing some peculiar reactions. Eventually, Shaufel took me aside and asked me quietly why I seemed so keen to share with them all these facts about Washington. When he heard

my surprised reply, he looked up in disbelief and with a big wide grin related the sad news about Seattle being in the *state* of Washington, which had nothing to do with the U.S. capital itself. When I heard that, my face must have turned very red. I had never felt so embarrassed in my life! (Till then anyway!) But like the gentleman that he was, Shaufel never breathed a word to his teammates, and my odd behavior was quickly forgotten.

Elyakim Shaufel, who sadly passed away three months ago, had an uncanny talent for finding that elusive simple play to solve a complex hand. Here is an example from that 1984 Olympiad played in the match against France that contributed to Israel's 22-8 win.

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

After South opened the bidding, this board turned into a veritable graveyard for expert declarers across the field. It seemed almost impossible to stay out of slam, and invariably the scorecards were dotted with all sorts of possible contracts from 6♣ doubled to 6♦ doubled and the odd 6♥ doubled, with 6NT being the most common, most of them accompanied by the dreaded minus sign.

Szvarc-Mouiel got to 6NT from the North seat and received a spade lead. Declarer won in dummy with the ♠K, cashed all his diamonds and then ducked a club to East. After taking the spade return, the French declarer could not avoid going down once the clubs did not split.

At the other table, Shaufel and Lev bid the hand as follows:

	South	West	North	East
	<i>Shaufel</i>	<i>Perron</i>	<i>Lev</i>	<i>Chemla</i>
	1 ♥	pass	2 ♣	pass
	2 ♦	pass	2 ♠	pass
	3 ♦	pass	4 ♣	pass
	4 ♦	pass	4 NT	pass
	5 ♦	pass	6 ♦	(all pass)

Six diamonds looks like an equally perilous undertaking. Once the 4-2 split in the trump suit is revealed, declarer seems unable to get the clubs running. Can you see how Shaufel managed to make the hand?

Solution

The Israeli champion detected the problem in the hand and solved it effortlessly. He took the spade lead in hand and ducked a club.

There was nothing that the defense could do now. He won the spade return, ruffed a club and drew trumps, discarding a spade and heart from dummy. The ♥A and ♣A-K-9-7 were left in dummy for a deceptively easy 12 tricks.

