

# The 13th Bridge Olympiad

By Pietro Campanile

This year marked the first time the Bridge Olympiad has been held as part of a wider event called World Mind Sports Games, including also Chess, Draughts, Go, Xiangqi. The event was the first worldwide championship organized under the auspices of the International Mind Sports Association, of which the WBF President Damiani is a founder member and its taking place in Beijing, shortly after the Olympic Games, generated an enormous amount of interest and no less than 143 countries sent representatives to the event. As far as the Bridge Olympiad was concerned, 71 teams participated in the Open Teams, 54 in the Women and 32 in the Seniors. The biggest success, however, was in the Youth events which were divided for the first time in three ranges: under 28, under 26 and under 21. Thanks also to the generous offer of free accommodation extended to youth teams, a record 110 teams took part to the Youth events.

The most prestigious competition was the Open event and the likely contenders for the Open title included the reigning Bermuda Bowl champions from Norway (Helgemo-Helness; Grotheim-Aa; Tundal-Molberg), the Italians (Lauria-Versace, Sementa-Duboin, Fantoni-Nunes), the USA team (Nickell-Freeman; Meckstroth-Rodwell; Hamman-Compton), the Poles (Jassem-Martens; Gierulski-Skrzypczak; Pazur-Zawislak), with many other teams like Netherlands, Russia, Sweden, England, China, Germany and Israel (Ginossar-Pachtmann; Kalish-Podgur, I. Herbst-O.Herbst) holding outside chances for a medal.

A detailed look on the performance of all the Israeli teams will be published, as customary, when each captain submits his report. Here I shall try briefly to illustrate the competition as a whole.

The 71 Open teams were divided in four

groups from which the top four would go on to the knock-out stages. The first qualifying phase caused many surprises with teams like France, Russia, Denmark and Sweden failing to make the cut, while others like Estonia and Romania performed well above expectations and qualified for the second phase.

As usual the Olympiad is a great opportunity to discover new talents and here is an impressive effort by Ahsan Qureshi, from Pakistan, playing against Romania:

Dealer East. Both Vulnerable

♠ AK5		♠ 976
♥ Q109654	N	♥ -
♦ 6	W	♦ AJ1097
♣ AQ6	E	♣ J10752
	S	
		♠ 10832
		♥ KJ32
		♦ 82
		♣ K94

West	North	East	South
<i>Qureshi</i>		<i>Naqi</i>	
		Pass	Pass
1♥	Pass	1NT	Pass
2♣	Pass	3♣	Pass
3♠	Pass	4♣	Pass
4♥	Pass	5♣	All Pass

North led the ♦K, taken in dummy with the ace, South showing an even number with the 8. Declarer decided to take advantage of dummy's nearly solid diamond suit and ran the 7 to North's queen, pitching the ♠5 from hand. North returned the ♠Q, won by Qureshi in hand. A heart ruff was followed by the ♦J, ruffed by South with the 9 and overruffed by Qureshi with the queen. Declarer next cashed the ♠K,

ruffed a heart to dummy and played the ♦10. South ruffed with the ♣K, declarer overruffed with the ace and followed with the ♣6 to dummy's 7, a necessary precaution in case North had started with three trumps. Qureshi pulled trumps and conceded a spade at the end for a well-earned plus 600.

From a new talent to an old fox: the American Jeff Meckstroth. Here we see him at the helm of an incredibly thin 3NT contract, where most other N/S pairs went down in a partscore!

Dealer East. Both Vulnerable

♠ AQ87		♠ 1043
♥ 10542	N	♥ Q3
♦ A2	W	♦ J10764
♣ Q32	E	♣ J94
	S	
		♠ -
		♥ AKJ9
		♦ KQ853
		♣ 10763

West	North	East	South
<i>Jason</i>	<i>Rodwell</i>	<i>Justin</i>	<i>Meckstroth</i>
		Pass	1♦
Dbl	1♠	Pass	2♣
Pass	3♠	Pass	3NT
Pass	Pass	Pass	

Meckstroth's opponents were the Hackett twins, Justin and Jason, not exactly the kind of inexperienced defenders one would wish when handling such a seemingly hopeless contract.

West led the ♥2, the unbid suit, to queen and king, and now declarer could count on five top tricks plus one by force in diamonds. He reached dummy with a top club and played the ♦9, covered by ♦10,

♦Q and ♦A. With a switch to spades or clubs looking unattractive given dummy's holding, West continued with another heart hoping to find partner with the ♥9. Meckstroth had now four heart tricks in the bag and proceeded to establish his long club with two more rounds of that suit. West won the ♣Q and got out with a third round of hearts and declarer cashed his rounded-suit winners, getting to this position as the last club was cashed:

♠ KJ965			
♥ -			
♦ -			
♣ -			
♠ AQ87	N	♠ 104	
♥ -	W	♥ -	E
♦ 2	S	♦ J76	
♣ -		♣ -	
♠ -			
♥ -			
♦ K853			
♣ 10			

When declarer cashed his last club, West pitched the ♠7 and East pitched the ♠4, in order to hold on to his diamonds. Declarer now played a low diamond, won with the ♦6, and East exited with his last spade. Or, at least, he tried to. Unfortunately, his last spade was the ♠10 and not the four (would you have found the ♠10 discard at the table?). When the ♠10 rode around to dummy, Meckstroth played low leaving East with the trick and forcing him to lead away from his ♦J7 into declarer's ♦K8 at trick 12.

The first knock-out stage, the round of 16, brought two big surprises: Israel's loss against unfancied Romania and the USA losing to Poland. In the quarter finals Italy defeated Poland by 210-173, Norway beat China 214-159, England put paid to the hopes of the Cinderella of the event, crushing Romania 267-146 and Germany edged the Netherlands by 217-196. The two semifinals would see the mighty clash between Italy and Norway and an interesting match-up between two relative outsiders which had so far played some great bridge, England vs Germany. In the first semifinal Italy built up a seemingly unassailable lead by the



*Geir Helgemo*

halfway with a 138-59 score which left the Norwegians with very little hope of a recovery. Once the Italians continued to pile on points in the fourth and fifth set, the Norwegians decided to concede defeat without playing the last set with a final score of 210-111.

Here is the very first board of the match which turned out to be a good indicator of the current form of both teams: steady and accurate play by the Italians against some great occasional plays by the Norwegians whose success would often be undermined by inferior actions by teammates.

Dealer North. None Vulnerable

♠ 52			
♥ KJ863			
♦ A85			
♣ 1082			
♠ 74	N	♠ AKQ1093	
♥ Q9	W	♥ A72	E
♦ KQJ73	S	♦ 2	
♣ K973		♣ J54	
♠ J86			
♥ 1054			
♦ 10964			
♣ AQ6			

West	North	East	South
<i>Versace</i>	<i>Helness</i>	<i>Lauria</i>	<i>Helgemo</i>
	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♦	Pass	2♠	Pass
2NT	Pass	3♥	Pass
4♠	Pass	Pass	Pass

Geir Helgemo in the South seat found the amazing lead of the ♣Q, the only card to defeat the contract because it takes out the entry to the diamond suit out at trick one. The stroke of genius by the Norwegian champion turned out to be all for nothing. Lauria won the trick with the ♣K, pulled trumps and led his singleton diamond, Helgemo signaling an even number. Now all that Helness had to do was to win the first diamond and return a club. If Lauria ducks, Helgemo wins the ace and puts Lauria back in his hand with a third club. If Lauria plays the ♣J, Helgemo can win or duck — either play works. Declarer ends up losing at least one club, one diamond and two hearts.

Unfortunately for Norway, Helness ducked the ♦K and the ♦Q. That was 10 tricks for Italy and plus 420.

At the other table, Norway played in 3NT, a contract which needed a friendly opening lead to have some chances.

Unfortunately Claudio Nunes in South has never been known for being friendly when opening leads are concerned and found the low heart lead which gave no chance to the contract. Declarer ducked twice and then took his winners but that was it: down 2 and 11 IMPs for Italy in a board which could easily have had a completely opposite outcome.

The other semifinal was just about even at the half with Germany leading by 6IMPs. England however staged a powerful comeback and won the next two segment by a wide margin to lead 217-143 with 16 boards left. The German did sit down to contest the last set but when Wladow-Elinescu overreached several times in a desperate attempt to make up the deficit and paid instead 60 IMPs in five consecutive board, the German captain agreed to concede the match with eight boards still left to be played.

The final between Italy and England started on an even keel but a second quarter score of 46-4 propelled the Italians ahead and they easily managed to hang on till the end with a final score of 200-170.

That things did not go always go their way can be seen from this board:  
Dealer South, Both Vulnerable



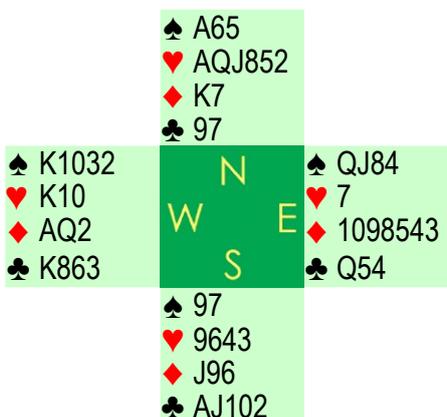
West	North	East	South
<i>Gold</i>	<i>Lauria</i>	<i>Townsend</i>	<i>Versace</i>
1NT	2♦ (1)	Pass	2♠ (2)
Pass	2NT (3)	Pass	3♥
Pass	4♥	Pass	Pass
Pass			

- 1) Long major
- 2) Pass/Correct
- 3) Good hand with hearts

West leads the ♥10. How would you plan the play?

With the 1NT marking 15-17 points in West there are at most 3-5 points in East. We appear to have a loser in each suit except perhaps hearts and there might be a chance to discard two spades on two clubs if we guess the layout of the suit. Anyway what do you play at trick one?

Versace rose with the ♥A expecting West to have led from ♥107 and to drop the singleton ♥K offside...not to be!! David Gold had infact led the ♥10 from an original holding of ♥K10! Here is the whole hand:



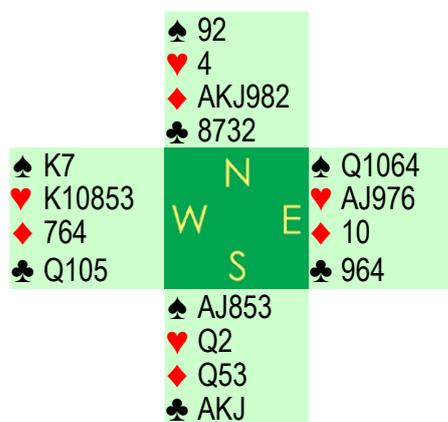
Versace tried to sneak the ♣9 past East, hoping to be able to set up two club winners, but Townsend covered with his ♣Q and declarer had to concede defeat, losing a trick in each suit.

One might have thought that Gold's inspired lead would have gained his side a vulnerable game swing but just like what happened after Helgemo's great ♣Q lead, his brilliancy was cancelled out when after having doubled 1NT for penalty, North ended up as declarer in 3NT, not having mentioned his hearts once! East led the ♠Q and that immediately scuttled the contract since if declarer took the club finesse, the defense would run five tricks while if he used the ♣A as entry to take the heart finesse, he could do no better than eight tricks. So the board was flat.

The Women's event saw the usual favorites riding ahead of the rest: France, England, USA, Germany and China showed that

they were much stronger than the other participants and with the exception of an inspired Turkish team which unexpectedly earned a semifinal berth against England, there were very few surprises. In the quarter finals England beat France and China staged a resolute comeback to defeat Germany. In the semifinals the Chinese team gave a repeat performance overcoming the USA team only in the last few boards while England had a fairly easy win against Turkey. The final was to be a last gasp affair despite England leading 190-143 with only 16 boards left. The Chinese staged their trademark comeback but were still 11 IMPs behind when the last board was placed on the table:

Dealer West, East-West vulnerable



At both tables the North-South players ended up in 3NT after North opened 3♦. Wang Hongli led the ♥5 at the table where Sally Brock was declarer. The lead was won by Sun Ming in East with the ♥A. Back came the ♥7, her original fourth best. After Sally Brock in South played the ♥Q, West went into the tank: if South had started with ♥QJ92 and East with ♥A76, holdings consistent with the play so far, she would now need to duck the ♥Q. Eventually Wang came to the correct conclusion that even if declarer held QJ92 of hearts then her duck would not help the defense since Brock would likely be able to get her nine tricks before giving up the lead to East. Her decision meant one down in 3NT and +50 for the Chinese. That meant that in order to win the world championship, the Chinese declarer at the other table would need not only to make her contract but also to score two overtricks to reach an 11 IMPs gain and a tied score. Heather Dhondy in West led the ♥5 and Nevena

