



NEC Bridge Festival

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Bulletin Number 7

Editors: Rich Colker, Barry Rigal

Barel-Zack Triumph in Asuka Cup Matsuo-Yokoe Win JCBL Pairs



Asuka Cup Winners: Zack-Barel



JCBL Cup Winner: Yokoe-Matsuo

Top Finishers in Asuka Cup And JCBL Pairs

Rank	Asuka Cup		JCBL Pairs	
	Pair	Score	Pair	Score
1	Zack-Barel	3226.90	Yokoe-Matsuo	52.5
2	Ju-Shi	3007.11	Mr. & Mrs. Nakazawa	50.0
3	Garvey-Carroll	2978.40	Mr. & Mrs. Uchida	47.5
4	Niekawa-Yamada	2977.40		
5	Fu-Asakoshi	2936.10		
6	Shimoichi-Matsuo	2891.20		
7	Kubo-Nakagawa	2888.89		
8	Jacobs-Schollaardt	2857.89		
9	Jiang-Zhao	2838.90		
10	Wang-Cheng	2826.40		

NEC Cup Bridge Festival on the Web

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<http://www.jcbl.or.jp/game/nec/necfest.html>

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NEC Cup Bridge Festival 2007

Domo Arigato

On behalf of all the participants, we would like to congratulate our corporate sponsor **NEC** for once again joining with **JCBL** to produce a bridge event of the highest quality and competitiveness. We see more and more that each year the **NEC Bridge Festival** attracts the interest of the best players in the world. Many participants consider the NEC tournament to be one of their best bridge experiences. Once again, congratulations to the sponsors and especially to the **JCBL** staff.

Yokohama, and especially the Pacifico, are wonderful places and get better and better each year. The Exhibition Hall again proved to be a first-class playing venue. The weather was great for this year's festival and the people warm and friendly, as always. It is our continuing great pleasure to be reunited with our many friends and to share once again the happy times, the fun and the excitement of this tournament. Your kindness and generosity warm our hearts.

The significant prizes and broad participation continue to make the **NEC Bridge Festival** an important event on the bridge calendar, one which continues to grow in prestige. This year's field of 47 teams in the NEC Cup was one of the largest fields in recent memory, one of the strongest, and the quality of play continues to be impressive.

The Bulletin Editors are grateful to those who provided us with deals, stories and other material to help us keep you informed. Many thanks to *Nakatani-san* and *Yoshida-san* for their leadership and friendship. Thanks also to *Richard Grenside*, tormented Director, who as always ran a smooth and pleasant tournament; to *Sue Grenside* for her excellent support and good humor; to *Omasa-san*, for his remarkable technical and computer support—often suffering with us well into the wee hours of the morning; to *Nakamura-san*, *Watanabe-san* and *Tashiro-san* for their wonderful pictures (which as always we subjected to our peculiar sense of humor); to *Suzuki-san* for his help with many things, both technical and otherwise; to *Ogawa-san* his supervision of all things BBO, to the many who brought us gifts, food and moral support, especially during our late-night work sessions. Thanks also to the many volunteers who performed the myriad functions critical to making this tournament a success, while we remained absorbed in our work. We consider all of you part of our extended family here in Japan. And finally, thanks to the players, who produced such a rich source of exciting, top-level bridge for us to write about.



Warmest regards, *Rich, Barry, and the Bulletin Staff*

The Idiot's Finesse: first, pick your idiot

by Barry Rigal

Dir: West
Vul: None

♠ 1032
♥ K974
♦ J64
♣ KJ6

♠ Q9754
♥ 83
♦ 97
♣ AQ54

♠ KJ6
♥ J1052
♦ K1083
♣ 97

♠ A8
♥ AQ6
♦ AQ52
♣ 10832

the singleton ♠Q, declarer has 10 tricks.

Dir: East
Vul: E/W

♠ K64
♥ A J
♦ AQ1097
♣ J84

♠ Q
♥ 762
♦ K653
♣ AKQ106

♠ 109532
♥ 1083
♦ J842
♣ 7

♠ AJ87
♥ KQ954
♦ ---
♣ 9 5 3 2

When I checked out a couple of deals from the Nail Life Master Open Pairs final, at the NABC in Hawaii last fall, I saw two defenders attempt the same deceptive maneuver—with very different results. The first South was defending 3NT by East after a 2♠ opener by West (spades and a minor, 7-10 HCP). A low heart went to the king and ace. When declarer played the ♠A, South smoothly dropped the jack. Now, when declarer advanced the ♠8 and saw a low spade from South, he went up with the queen—you have to get up very early in the morning to get up before Paul Marston.

When Marston cleared the spade suit, South mistakenly shifted to a diamond and declarer had nine tricks.

By contrast, Danny Sprung as South led a diamond against the same contract at another table. Declarer won the first diamond and led the ♠A. Sprung also dropped the jack, and declarer continued with his other spade to the 9 and 10—the idiot's finesse since it assumes South has blown a trick by wasting his jack from J10x. Back came a diamond, and seven tricks was the limit.

The next deal (hands rotated) comes from the same session (see top of next column)

It is very easy—and very tempting—for South to let this contract through. South leads the ♣A and ♣K and sees North discard. What could be more natural than to cash the ♣Q and lead a fourth club? Not good enough.

Declarer ruffs in dummy, cashes the ♥A, then ruffs a diamond to hand and draws trumps. With the aid of

West	North	East	South
2♣	2♦	Pass	1♥
Pass	3♣	Pass	2♥
Pass	4♥	All Pass	3♠

Lynn Deas did very well at trick three to shift to a trump. Now, although declarer can make the contract double dummy, he could not find a way home at the table.

But note what happens if North makes the “natural” discard of a spade at trick two. After drawing trumps and leading a spade to king and a spade back to the ten and jack. This ending is reached:

♠ 95
♥ ---
♦ J84
♣ ---

♠ 4
♥ ---
♦ AQ10
♣ J

♠ A8
♥ 4
♦ ---
♣ 95

♠ ---
♥ ---
♦ K65
♣ Q10

Declarer plays the ♠A and another spade to North for the diamond endplay and ten tricks, right? Wrong. North unblocks the ♠9 under the ace and South takes the last two tricks.

Bridge Defense - What's Going On (7)?

by Mike Lawrence

East deals, N/S vulnerable.

West	North	East	South
3♣	Dbl	Pass	Pass
All Pass		4♣	4♠

NORTH
 ♠ AJ73
 ♥ KQ964
 ♦ KQ3
 ♣ 8

EAST
 ♠ K2
 ♥ A1032
 ♦ 872
 ♣ 10643

No. You must be careful. If you carelessly return the ♥2 or ♥3, West may decide you have a club entry. Remember, you did raise clubs. Your partner doesn't know you have the ♠K and he might underlead the ♣A hoping for a second heart ruff. Partner will be entitled to do this because he will read a small heart as suit preference for clubs. Don't embarrass partner. Return the ten for him to ruff.

♠ AJ73
 ♥ KQ964
 ♦ KQ3
 ♣ 8

♠ 96
 ♥ 5
 ♦ 10654
 ♣ AQJ952

♠ K2
 ♥ A1032
 ♦ 872
 ♣ 10643

♠ Q10854
 ♥ J87
 ♦ AJ9
 ♣ K7

West leads the ♥5 to your ace. South follows with the jack. What do you think is happening? Did partner lead a singleton heart? Or was partner just making a neutral lead? What is your plan?

The ♥5 is surely a singleton. Declarer has made a falsecard, attempting to throw you off the track. Consider the alternatives. If that isn't a singleton heart, it has to be from the 875, these being the missing hearts. Would West really lead a heart from this holding? Hard to believe that this is his best lead.

You should play partner for a singleton heart for two reasons. First, it doesn't make sense for partner to lead a heart if it isn't a singleton. Secondly, if partner has a singleton heart, it will be easy to set 4♠ if partner has either minor-suit ace to cash. Just return a heart and give partner a ruff.

Is that all there is to this hand?

Look at this hand from West's point of view. West can see a way to beat 4♠ if East has the ♣K, which is likely given East's club raise. BUT, if East returns the ♥10, that is clearly suit preference for diamonds.

West will take the ♣A and will lead a diamond to East's "ace." East won't have it, but when he takes the setting trick with the ♠K, West will probably forgive him.

TAKING CARE OF PARTNER

This is known as taking care of partner. He will appreciate it. NOTE West's third seat 3♣ bid. An excellent tactic in third seat. Give West credit for enterprise.

For more of Michael Lawrence on bridge, visit his web site at: www.michaelslawrence.com

Question and Answer

Question

Answer

How Do You Catch a Unique Rabbit?

Unique Up On It.

How Do You Catch a Tame Rabbit?

Tame Way, Unique Up On It.

What Do You Call Santa's Helpers?

Subordinate Clauses.

Dog Days of Summer Stir Memories of Old Deal

by Richard Pavlicek

I played today's deal 14 summers ago when visiting my uncle Phil, who lives in Dogmandu, Nepal. Phil and I were N/S, and our opponents professed to be the top two Dogmanian players...but I suspect the only two would be equally descriptive.

The bidding was a bit whimsical. I overcalled East's opening bid with 2♥ and Phil jumped directly to game. When East bid 4♠, I competed to 5♥, confident that Phil would produce a lot of high cards for his bid. Unfortunately, Phil was thinking the same thing about my bids, so he continued to 6♥.

Dir: East ♠ J1098
Vul: N/S ♥ QJ10
 ♦ K98
 ♣ AK3

♠ 765 ♠ AKQ432
♥ — ♥ 543
♦ 76432 ♦ AJ10
♣ QJ854 ♣ 2

♠ —
♥ AK98762
♦ Q5
♣ 10976

West	North	East	South
		1♠	2♥
2♠	4♥	4♠	5♥
Pass	6♥	All Pass	

There we were, in a hopeless slam. West led the ♠7; jack, ace (East tried to fool me), ruff. I crossed to dummy with a trump to lead a low diamond—perhaps I could sneak it through East, who was likely to hold the ace. East ducked as anticipated, and I won the queen. A glimmer of hope now appeared.

I crossed to dummy with a second trump and led the ♠10; East ducked and I threw my last diamond. I ruffed a diamond—just in case the ace appeared (no luck)—then I drew East's last trump with the ace. West was marked for club length and strength (he had no other high cards), so I led the ♣10; jack, ace. Back to my hand with a ruff to lead the ♣9; queen, king. Another club lead forced out the eight-spot and my hand was high.

Making 6♥! Phil was ecstatic as he entered the score—this was rubber bridge at 100 dogmas a point—while I jotted down the hand (so I could write this column 14 years later). The next day at dinner I noticed the contract could have been beaten. Can you spot the winning defense?

East should take his ♦A, right? Wrong. Declarer then gets two discards (one on the ♦K, one on the spade suit) so he never has to lose a club trick. The solution is more subtle.

East must duck the opening lead. This forces declarer to take his discard prematurely—before leading to the ♦Q. Now if I were East I would have done that; it's the doggoned truth!

For more of Richard Pavlicek on bridge, visit his web site at: www.rpbridge.net

The One-Day Pairs

If at first you don't succeed, switch, switch again (Or, Confessions of a shifty character)

Paul Hackett gave me this deal from the Asuka Cup, in which both he and his partner took full advantage of a slip by declarer. It is a good rule in defense at bridge to find a suit to lead and stick with it, but circumstances alter cases.

Bd: 2 North
Dir: West ♠ 1092
Vul: N/S ♥ K
 ♦ AK1087
 ♣ Q952

West East
♠ AQ6 ♠ 75
♥ Q974 ♥ J853
♦ J963 ♦ Q4
♣ 43 ♣ AJ1076

South
♠ KJ843
♥ A1062
♦ 52
♣ K8

West	North	East	South
Hackett		Shinamura	
Pass	1♦	Pass	1♠
Pass	2♣	Pass	2NT
All Pass			

Hackett led a heart to dummy's king, and declarer ran the ♠10 to Paul's queen. Despite receiving an encouraging heart at trick one Paul shifted to a club to the ten and king. Back came a spade, ducked, and a spade on which East, Kyoko Shinamura, pitched a low heart. Now Paul knew declarer had ♠KJ, ♥A, and ♣K so he shifted, again, this time to a diamond. Declarer misjudged by rising with the king and exiting from dummy with a low club. Kyoko cashed the ♣AJ, then played the ♦Q. Declarer did his best to recover by ducking, but Kyoko implacably exited with her fourth club and dummy was endplayed to lead diamonds to Paul for down one. The defenders took two tricks in diamonds, spades and clubs, but never scored a heart trick, thanks to Paul's switches.

Revisiting the Finals: Sets One and Two

Bd: 11
 Dir: South
 Vul: None

North
 ♠ 108654
 ♥ K8
 ♦ 7632
 ♣ 53

West
 ♠ Q932
 ♥ 654
 ♦ KQ
 ♣ AKJ2

East
 ♠ K
 ♥ AQ107
 ♦ A1094
 ♣ Q986

South
 ♠ AJ7
 ♥ J932
 ♦ J85
 ♣ 1074

Bd: 14
 Dir: East
 Vul: None

North
 ♠ K3
 ♥ K8742
 ♦ Q752
 ♣ A2

West
 ♠ 52
 ♥ Q5
 ♦ KJ109
 ♣ J6543

East
 ♠ A10987
 ♥ AJ106
 ♦ 63
 ♣ Q10

South
 ♠ QJ64
 ♥ 93
 ♦ A84
 ♣ K987

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Bertens</i>	<i>Gromov</i>	<i>Bakkeren</i>	<i>Dubin</i>
			Pass
1NT	Pass	2♣	Pass
2♠	Pass	3♣	Pass
3♦	Pass	4♦	Pass
4NT	Pass	5♥	Pass
6♣	All Pass		

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Zmud'ski</i>	<i>Jacobs</i>	<i>Balicki</i>	<i>Schollaardt</i>
			Pass
1NT	Pass	2♣	Pass
2♠	Pass	3NT	All Pass

Bakkeren went looking for the gold at the end of the rainbow, and found himself in a quite playable slam (note that this was facing a 15-count). The 3♣ bid was systemically no more than a four-card suit, a fine hand for the methods.

We remarked on the Bertens-Bakkeren auction here to 6♣ and speculated on how E/W would know if they had a four-four club fit or if West could ever raise clubs with three. The answer is as follows. The pair use Stayman to guarantee invitational values so respond 2NT to 2♣ with a five-card major. Hence 2M is four, not five.

Accordingly, on the actual sequence West would bid 3NT with three trumps and a minimum and can bid 3♥ or 3♦ as a cue-bid with four trumps. This allows the partnership to stop low with only a four-three fit, and to identify their total trumps immediately.

We switched the auctions on both Boards 14 and 26 (well one of us did but corporate accountability gives Rich as much blame as me—according to me). Corrected below:

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Bertens</i>	<i>Gromov</i>	<i>Bakkeren</i>	<i>Dubin</i>
		1♠	Pass
1NT	2♦(♦+♥)	All Pass	

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Zmud'ski</i>	<i>Jacobs</i>	<i>Balicki</i>	<i>Schollaardt</i>
		1♠	Pass
1NT	Pass	2♥	Pass
2♠	All Pass		

Bd: 26
 Dir: East
 Vul: Both

North
 ♠ Q8
 ♥ AK9875
 ♦ ---
 ♣ AK987

West
 ♠ 54
 ♥ 643
 ♦ AK842
 ♣ Q104

East
 ♠ AJ109762
 ♥ QJ
 ♦ J763
 ♣ ---

South
 ♠ K3
 ♥ 102
 ♦ Q1095
 ♣ J6532

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Bertens</i>	<i>Gromov</i>	<i>Bakkeren</i>	<i>Dubin</i>
		3♠	Pass
Pass	4♣	Pass	5♣
All Pass			

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Zmud'ski</i>	<i>Jacobs</i>	<i>Balicki</i>	<i>Schollaardt</i>
		1♠	Pass
1NT	2♠	3♠	4♣
Pass	4♥	All Pass	

Next an amplification:

We admired Huub Bertens' play in 6♣. He explained to me this morning why he had known to run the heart lead in 6♣. Before I tell you, any guesses?

Bd: 16
 Dir: West
 Vul: E/W

North
 ♠ J6
 ♥ Q92
 ♦ J97643
 ♣ 97

West
 ♠ 73
 ♥ J5
 ♦ KQ5
 ♣ KQ10652

East
 ♠ K10542
 ♥ AK64
 ♦ A2
 ♣ AJ

South
 ♠ AQ98
 ♥ 10873
 ♦ 108
 ♣ 843

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Bertens</i>	<i>Gromov</i>	<i>Bakkeren</i>	<i>Dubin</i>
1♣	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♣	Pass	2♥	Pass
2NT	Pass	4♣	Pass
4♦	Pass	4♠ (KC)	Pass
4NT	Pass	6♣	All Pass

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Zmud'ski</i>	<i>Jacobs</i>	<i>Balicki</i>	<i>Schollaardt</i>
2♣	Pass	2♦	Pass
3♣(Min)	Pass	3♦	Pass
3NT	Pass	4♣(KC)	Pass
4♥	Pass	6♣	All Pass

The answer is that East's 4♠ was Key Card, and when the tray came through (remember North and East are screenmates so South bids on the same side of the screen as West), Bertens, West, noticed South flicker, and decided that he was contemplating doubling, but was not sure if 4♠xx might be the best spot for E/W. Accordingly, declarer decided the ♠A was wrong; better, therefore, to rely on the hearts behaving.

Pick Your Poison – by Rich Colker

John Armstrong showed us this hand from the first session of the Asuka Cup, the two-session pair game that caps off the NEC Cup Bridge festival each year. John's partner was Miho Sekizawa. Their opponents were Israel's Michael Barel and Yaniv Zack.

Bd: 22
 Dir: East
 Vul: E/W

North
 ♠ K963
 ♥ AQ5
 ♦ 83
 ♣ J975

West
 ♠ J
 ♥ K
 ♦ AQ10976
 ♣ AK842

East
 ♠ 10874
 ♥ 1084
 ♦ J54
 ♣ Q103

South
 ♠ AQ52
 ♥ J97632
 ♦ K2
 ♣ 6

West	North	East	South
<i>Sekizawa</i>	<i>Barel</i>	<i>Armstrong</i>	<i>Zack</i>
		Pass	1♥
2♦	3♦	Pass	3♥
4♣	Dbl	4♦	4♥
All Pass			

Sekizawa led the ♣A and continued the suit. Zack ruffed, played a heart to the king and ace, ruffed a club, ♠A, spade to the king (discovering the potential loser there), and then led the ♣J from dummy. What was Armstrong to do? If he pitched, Zack would throw a spade and put Sekizawa under pressure. If she ducks, that's Zack's tenth trick. If she breaks diamonds, the ♦K scores. And if she leads a club, Zack ruffs high in dummy, pitching a diamond from hand, and finesses the ♥9.

So Armstrong ruffed. Zack overruffed, drew the last trump, and played a diamond to the king, not caring if it won or lost. If it won, he was home. If it lost, the defense could cash another diamond but whoever won that trick would have a problem. If West won, she would have to give declarer a ruff-and-sluff; if East won, he would have his choice of a ruff-and-sluff or leading a spade. Either way Zack had his tenth and game-going trick.



"Imakura-san, this is your mother..."

NEC Cup Final: POLAND/RUSSIA vs The NETHERLANDS

by Barry Rigal

Third Segment (Boards 33-48):

Neither team is lacking in machismo; there would be no change of line-ups by the team with seating rights. After all, with the match level, each team was thinking: how could those plonkers be so lucky for a third set in a row?

Bd: 33
Dir: North
Vul: None

North
♠ A875
♥ KQJ10632
♦ 5
♣ 10

West
♠ Q64
♥ 975
♦ J32
♣ 8432

East
♠ K103
♥ A4
♦ AQ7
♣ AKQ76

South
♠ J92
♥ 8
♦ K109864
♣ J95

Open Room

West <i>Bertens</i>	North <i>Gromov</i>	East <i>Bakkeren</i>	South <i>Dubinin</i>
	1♥	Dbl	2♣(♦)
Pass	3♥	Dbl	Pass
4♣	All Pass		

Closed Room

West <i>Zmud'ski</i>	North <i>Jacobs</i>	East <i>Balicki</i>	South <i>Schollaardt</i>
	1♥	Dbl	Pass
2♣	3♥	3NT	All Pass

Balicki's 3NT was down two before it got out of the starting blocks. What about 4♣? On the reasonable diamond lead (and yes, someone up in the clouds is muttering "I deal him ♥KQJ10 and what does he lead?") declarer flew with the ace, drew trumps and led the diamond to the queen. On a heart return he needed the spade finesse. No luck, but still 2 imps, for the lead 58-56.



"Would you autograph my coffee cup, please, Mr. Zmudzinski?"

Bd: 34
Dir: East
Vul: N/S

North
♠ KJ964
♥ K7
♦ A43
♣ 432

West
♠ Q1083
♥ 6
♦ J105
♣ AQJ98

East
♠ A75
♥ 84
♦ KQ82
♣ K1076

South
♠ 2
♥ AQJ109532
♦ 976
♣ 5

Open Room

West <i>Bertens</i>	North <i>Gromov</i>	East <i>Bakkeren</i>	South <i>Dubinin</i>
		1♦	3♥
Dbl.	4♥	Pass	Pass
Dbl.	All Pass		

Closed Room

West <i>Zmud'ski</i>	North <i>Jacobs</i>	East <i>Balicki</i>	South <i>Schollaardt</i>
		1♣	3♥
Dbl.	4♥	Pass	Pass
5♣	Dbl.	All Pass	

The random nature of the minor-suit opening for East had an impact on the auction, since Zmudzinski had no idea how much shape his partner had when Jacobs stayed out of the auction. That discretion gave Jacobs a chance to double 5♣, and the defenders made no mistake, cashing ♥A and shifting to spades, good enough for 300.

Mind you, it was the result from the other table that was going to be critical, and the defenders needed to lead diamonds at once or after one club to set the contract. But the opening bid had made that easy. Dubinin won the diamond lead and misguessed spades—his best practical chance since the defenders were surely going to be able to work out which minor-suit honors were standing up. That was 11 imps, and a 13-imp lead for The Netherlands.

When all else fails, read the instructions

Bd: 35
 Dlr: South
 Vul: E/W

	North	
	♠ 109743	
	♥ J1052	
	♦ 1054	
	♣ 4	
West		East
♠ Q		♠ KJ85
♥ Q963		♥ 7
♦ KQ96		♦ AJ732
♣ 8653		♣ KJ10
	South	
	♠ A62	
	♥ AK84	
	♦ 8	
	♣ AQ972	

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Bertens</i>	<i>Gromov</i>	<i>Bakkeren</i>	<i>Dubinín</i>
Pass	1♦	Pass	1♣(STR)
Pass	1♠(NEG)	Pass	2♣
Pass	2♥	Dbf	Pass
3♦	All Pass		

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Zmud'ski</i>	<i>Jacobs</i>	<i>Balicki</i>	<i>Schollaardt</i>
Pass	1♦(W)	Pass	2♣
Pass	2♦®)	Pass	2♥
All Pass			

Jacobs gambled over the 2♣ bid that his side would have a better place to play. Right he was. 2♥ played like a dream, while in the other room the fact that N/S had apparently found a fit persuaded Bakkeren to double in the middle of a live auction. The club ruff defeated 3♦ but The Netherlands still gained an imp.

Bd: 36
 Dlr: West
 Vul: Both

	North	
	♠ Q543	
	♥ Q762	
	♦ 52	
	♣ 753	
West		East
♠ 87		♠ 96
♥ A109854		♥ 3
♦ Q109		♦ AKJ43
♣ 104		♣ AKQ98
	South	
	♠ AKJ102	
	♥ KJ	
	♦ 876	
	♣ J62	

To err is human; to really foul things up takes a computer.

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Bertens</i>	<i>Gromov</i>	<i>Bakkeren</i>	<i>Dubinín</i>
2♦(Multi)	Pass	2♥	2♠
Pass	Pass	3♦	Pass
Pass	3♠	Pass	Pass
4♦	All Pass		

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Zmud'ski</i>	<i>Jacobs</i>	<i>Balicki</i>	<i>Schollaardt</i>
Pass	Pass	1♦	1♠
2♥	Pass	2♠	Pass
3♦	Pass	4♣	Pass
4♥	Pass	5♦	All Pass

We've made some rather off-hand comments about the B/Z aggression, but it is all directed at making their opponents life difficult. They are aggressive, yes, manic, no. Hence, Zmudzinski passed the West cards, then backed in to show a non-forcing hand with hearts at his second turn. Charmed at knowing of values opposite, Balicki drove to game in the minor of his partner's choice and wrapped up 600. Does that look easy enough? Yes, but in the other room East made no attempt to try for game on a hand with 3½ losers facing a vulnerable opening bid. I could live with the idea that you have no way to show the minors immediately or at your second turn, but when partner balances in support can't you find 5♦ now? Surely the Young Chelsea doctrine TTASL (Teach them a Sharp Lesson), which requires you to bid game when they reopen, is in point, even in Amsterdam. It was 66-70 to The Netherlands now, and the action (and sickness) continued unabated.

Bd: 37
 Dlr: North
 Vul: N/S

	North	
	♠ 10984	
	♥ 765	
	♦ J64	
	♣ J75	
West		East
♠ A7		♠ Q52
♥ KQJ8		♥ 109432
♦ AQ7		♦ 532
♣ A943		♣ Q8
	South	
	♠ KJ63	
	♥ A	
	♦ K1098	
	♣ K1062	

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Bertens</i>	<i>Gromov</i>	<i>Bakkeren</i>	<i>Dubinín</i>
Dbf.	Pass	Pass	1♦
2♦	Pass	1♥	Pass
4♥	Pass	2♥	Pass
	All Pass		

Closed Room			
West	North	East	South
<i>Zmud'ski</i>	<i>Jacobs</i>	<i>Balicki</i>	<i>Schollaardt</i>
	Pass	Pass	1NT
All Pass			

1-4-4-4 shapes within one's notrump range may be tough to handle, but hands with four spades are so easy to bid that to see someone open 1NT at unfavorable vulnerability (even with a singleton ace) fair turns the stomach. Justice was not quite done when Zmudzinski could not double for penalties, but the contract went down 300 on the obvious top heart lead, the defenders allowing declarer to come to two diamonds, a spade and a heart, but endplaying him to lead clubs from his hand.

That figured to be a great result for The Netherlands, right? 1NT down three is a good save against 3NT. Well, one can hardly blame the Dutch for bidding to 4♥; only repeated diamond leads and perhaps the unblock of the ♦K would beat that. Dubinin duly led the ♦10. Declarer took a long while, but eventually moved fast. The ♦Q held, and Dubinin was in with the ♥A to lead the ♦K, ducked. Yes, a low diamond by South would have avoided this. Back came a third diamond, then two top trumps from dummy and a club to the seven, eight and ten. What now? Dubinin's low club did not work; declarer won in hand and ran the hearts to squeeze South. Contract made for a hard-earned 3 imps. Of course in retrospect we can all see that the ♣K was unlikely to cost, since if North had started life with the ♣Q7 he would have risen with the queen to shift to a spade and take his partner off any endplay. It was 73-66 now.

Bd: 39	North
Dir: South	♠ Q2
Vul: Both	♥ J9
	♦ AK10852
	♣ 976

West	East
♠ J973	♠ 1086
♥ KQ86	♥ A53
♦ QJ	♦ 764
♣ Q104	♣ AK53

South
♠ AK54
♥ 10742
♦ 93
♣ J82

Open Room			
West	North	East	South
<i>Bertens</i>	<i>Gromov</i>	<i>Bakkeren</i>	<i>Dubinin</i>
			Pass
Pass	1♦	Pass	1♥
Pass	2♦	All Pass	

Closed Room			
West	North	East	South
<i>Zmud'ski</i>	<i>Jacobs</i>	<i>Balicki</i>	<i>Schollaardt</i>
			Pass
Pass	2♦	Pass	Pass
Dbl.	Pass	2♥	All Pass

The absence of a weak 2♦ did not hurt the Russians; they stole the opponents' suit, hearts, and bought the hand in 2♦, making 90 when the defense cashed out. Meanwhile, Balicki had to play 2♥, and the defense crashed their spade honors but cashed two spades and took a ruff, then took the top diamonds. Now the ♦10, on which South throws a club, gives the defense the upper hand. However, on Jacobs' actual play of a club back Balicki could take the rest via the trump finesse. Easy game, bridge; 5 imps, making the score 73-71

Bd: 40	North
Dir: West	♠ A64
Vul: None	♥ 98762
	♦ 973
	♣ A5

West	East
♠ K	♠ QJ8532
♥ J54	♥ KQ10
♦ AK10642	♦ J8
♣ K74	♣ 93

South
♠ 1097
♥ A3
♦ Q5
♣ QJ10862

Open Room			
West	North	East	South
<i>Bertens</i>	<i>Gromov</i>	<i>Bakkeren</i>	<i>Dubinin</i>
1NT	Pass	2♥	Pass
2♠	Pass	4♠	All Pass

Closed Room			
West	North	East	South
<i>Zmud'ski</i>	<i>Jacobs</i>	<i>Balicki</i>	<i>Schollaardt</i>
1♦	Pass	1♠	2♣
2♦	Pass	2♠	All Pass

Back to virtue and vice again. The merits of opening 1NT with the West cards—as a semi-psych if you like—are open to discussion. But once in a while you steal from yourself, as here. While Balicki had a convenient way to make a mild invite, Bakkeren had enough, he thought, to drive to 4♠ and did so. With trumps three-three the game had play.

On the ♣A lead, Dubinin dropped the ♣Q (suit preference) and Gromov got the message, leading a heart and continuing the suit to get the ruff. Well done, and 4 imps to the Alliance, now leading 75-73.

Bd: 41
 Dir: North
 Vul: E/W

North	♠ 952	♥ Q47	♦ 9863	♣ KQ4
West	♠ QJ4	♥ 109863	♦ AK10	♣ 73
East	♠ AK63	♥ J	♦ QJ42	♣ AJ86
South	♠ 1087	♥ AK75	♦ 75	♣ 10952

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Bertens</i>	<i>Gromov</i>	<i>Bakkeren</i>	<i>Dubinin</i>
	Pass	1♦	Pass
1♥	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♠	Pass	4♠	All Pass

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Zmud'ski</i>	<i>Jacobs</i>	<i>Balicki</i>	<i>Schollaardt</i>
	Pass	1♦	Pass
1♥	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♣	Pass	2NT	Pass
3NT	All Pass		

3NT may be inelegant but it has nine tricks. 4♠ may be elegant and satisfy the restless ghost of Alphonse Moysé, but it does not have ten winners. Bakkeren received the lead of a top heart and a low heart. He ruffed, led a diamond to dummy, a club to the king and ace, a diamond to dummy, and a club up. The defenders could get one ruff but that was it. Not the most comfortable imp Bakkeren has ever gained, but he'd take it. 75-74 now, to the Alliance.

Bd: 42
 Dir: East
 Vul: Both

North	♠ 952	♥ J652	♦ KQ964	♣ 6
West	♠ 104	♥ KQ1094	♦ 872	♣ 985
East	♠ J63	♥ 8	♦ AJ5	♣ AKQJ32
South	♠ AKQ87	♥ A73	♦ 103	♣ 1074

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Bertens</i>	<i>Gromov</i>	<i>Bakkeren</i>	<i>Dubinin</i>
		1♣	1♠
2♦(♥)	2♠	3♣	All Pass

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Zmud'ski</i>	<i>Jacobs</i>	<i>Balicki</i>	<i>Schollaardt</i>
		1♣	1♠
Pass	2♠	3♣	Pass
3♥	Pass	4♣	All Pass

West's 2♦ transfer was a stretch, but when his partner bid 3♣ (playing Good-Bad 2NT this showed extras) he could pass happily, whereas in the other room Zmudzinski was looking for game facing an announced good hand. A trump lead might have been best against 4♣, but Martin Schollaardt believes in a kind and just creator, and so he leads his sequences when he has one. After that, the defenders played three rounds of spades, the right defense to use dummy's entry prematurely. Declarer was left with two diamonds and a heart to lose.

Against 3♣, Dubinin cashed one top spade and shifted to diamonds. To have a chance to succeed declarer must duck. Now he can win the trump return and duck a spade, or win the diamond return and exit with a heart or spade; South cannot get his partner in for the ruff. When Bakkeren won the diamond at trick two he was doomed to one down, but that was still 3 imps and a 77-75 lead.

Two inconsequential overtricks exchanged hands on the next two deals, then came a hand where modern science showed at its best. The rule about making omelets is that you have to break an egg or two. Here was one sacrificed—but not to an especially good cause.

Bd: 45
 Dir: North
 Vul: Both

North	♠ Q1095	♥ 10	♦ 94	♣ KQ10762
West	♠ J742	♥ Q832	♦ Q75	♣ AJ
East	♠ A3	♥ AJ976	♦ K82	♣ 985
South	♠ K86	♥ K54	♦ AJ1063	♣ 43

Open Room			
West	North	East	South
<i>Bertens</i>	<i>Gromov</i>	<i>Bakkeren</i>	<i>Dubin</i>
	Pass	1♥	Pass
2NT(♥)	Pass	3♥	All Pass
Closed Room			
West	North	East	South
<i>Zmud'ski</i>	<i>Jacobs</i>	<i>Balicki</i>	<i>Schollaardt</i>
Pass	1♥	Pass	
3♣(♥)	Pass	3♥	All Pass

Both tables felt obligated to play at the three level, since with nine trumps Larry Cohen will come around and rap you over the knuckles if you stop in two. Humph. In these days of lighter and lighter opening bids why do you have to go minus just to prove you can? Of course with trumps not behaving both tables had offered 6 imps to the God of Total Tricks, secure in the knowledge that N/S can make 3♣ and might well have bid it if left to their own devices. One hopes the E/W pairs felt that the sacrifice was worth it.

Bd: 46	North		
Dir: East	♠ 853		
Vul: None	♥ KQ		
	♦ Q3		
	♣ K108742		
	West	East	
	♠ AQ107	♠ KJ64	
	♥ 32	♥ A98764	
	♦ AKJ86	♦ ---	
	♣ A5	♣ Q96	
	South		
	♠ 92		
	♥ J105		
	♦ 1097542		
	♣ J3		

Open Room			
West	North	East	South
<i>Bertens</i>	<i>Gromov</i>	<i>Bakkeren</i>	<i>Dubin</i>
		1♥	Pass
2♦	Pass	2♥	Pass
2♠	Pass	3♠	Pass
4♣	Pass	4♥	Pass
4NT	Pass	5♥	Pass
5NT	Pass	6♠	All Pass



Busy, busy, busy...

Closed Room			
West	North	East	South
<i>Zmud'ski</i>	<i>Jacobs</i>	<i>Balicki</i>	<i>Schollaardt</i>
		1♥	Pass
2♦	Pass	2♥	Pass
2♠	Pass	3♠	Pass
3NT	Pass	4♥	Pass
6♠	All Pass		

Both tables bid competently to 6♠, but appearances are slightly deceptive since Balicki (according to our unnamed source again) had shown a 4-5-2-2 pattern with no club stop. Zmudzinski now figured that even if there were no top losers there would be too much work to do—a little surprising since opposite ♠K, ♥AK and ♦Q the grand slam is quite playable. By contrast, in the other room Bertens was looking for a grand slam and had he found the ♥K opposite he would have bid one.

Both tables elected to duck a heart early since they could survive a bad trump break, but probably could not cope with a bad heart break. Sensibly done, and no swing.

With no swing on the last two deals either, the match would enter its last quarter with Poland/Russia trailing The Netherlands by half an imp. Since in 2004 Russia (including Gromov-Dubin) had defeated Hungary by half an imp, we could be sure that this would not be the closest international match ever—but all our expectations would be that it would go down to the wire.



"It's called a stomach, Hirata-san."

NEC Cup Final: POLAND/RUSSIA vs The NETHERLANDS

by Barry Rigal

Fourth Segment (Boards 49-64):

Bd: 49
Dir: North
Vul: None

North
♠ K72
♥ AJ
♦ 8743
♣ J962

West
♠ J95
♥ Q983
♦ Q109
♣ Q105

East
♠ Q3
♥ K10752
♦ A652
♣ A3

South
♠ A10864
♥ 64
♦ KJ
♣ K874

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Bertens</i>	<i>Gromov</i>	<i>Bakkeren</i>	<i>Dubinin</i>
	Pass	1♥	1♠
2♥	2♠	All Pass	

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Zmud'ski</i>	<i>Jacobs</i>	<i>Balicki</i>	<i>Schollaardt</i>
	Pass	1♥	1♠
2♥	2♠	Pass	Pass
3♥	All Pass		

Bd: 51
Dir: South
Vul: E/W

North
♠ 2
♥ J9854
♦ AJ4
♣ J873

West
♠ AQ106
♥ A7
♦ Q9865
♣ Q2

East
♠ 8543
♥ Q1032
♦ 32
♣ A94

South
♠ KJ97
♥ K6
♦ K107
♣ K1065

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Bertens</i>	<i>Gromov</i>	<i>Bakkeren</i>	<i>Dubinin</i>
			1NT
Pass	2♦	Pass	2♥
Dbl	Pass	2♠	All Pass

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Zmud'ski</i>	<i>Jacobs</i>	<i>Balicki</i>	<i>Schollaardt</i>
			1♦
Pass	1♥	Pass	1♠
Pass	1NT	Pass	Pass
Dbl	2♣	All Pass	

We've not demonstrated our great love for the Law of Total Tricks (LOTT everywhere else in the world, Chiba LOTTE in Japan). Time to come back and support Zmudzinski's 3♥ bid. Yes, IF partner has a doubleton king or queen of spades this could be wrong, but why should he? Non-vulnerable, I think you are gambling 3 imps against 6, and although you know partner to be likely to be two-five in the majors, your intermediates in the minors mean you may have play for 3♥, and they may have play for 2♠, and the auction is not yet over—they may bid on.

This is not a unanimous position amongst the editors (Rich expectorated loudly on the 3♥ bid) but let's look at the record. 2♠ figures to make: you'd expect declarer to get the diamond guess right, and Dubinin duly did so. Accordingly, bidding on to 3♥ figures to gain you 1 or 2 imps depending on how the play in 3♥ goes. Not so fast. The defenders led a trump to the jack and king, declarer a diamond to the king, and now South had a problem. The winning defense is to lead a heart, or I suppose to underlead in spades, but when Schollaardt played ♠A and another spade the club shift came too late. Balicki could take the ♣A, cross to the ♦Q, and pitch the club on the ♠J, then concede a trump. 6 imps and an 83-78 lead

Against 2♠ (both E/W pairs taking adventurous views in the auction) Dubinin led the ♥K. Declarer won and ducked a diamond, took South's ♠9 shift with the queen and ducked another diamond. Back came a heart. Bakkeren took the ♥Q, crossed to the ♠A as South split his honors—declarer would have put in the ♠10 had he not done so—ruffed a diamond and ruffed a heart, then ruffed a winning diamond with the ♠8. Dubinin could overruff and exit with a trump, collecting a club at the death, but declarer had eight tricks.

Against 2♣, reached after an interesting decision by Jacobs to reverse with only four clubs, the defenders led a diamond and continued hearts when in with the ♥K. Declarer covered with the eight to force the ten, won the diamond switch, and guessed trumps by leading to the ♣K and continuing the suit. West's heart play at trick two looked as if he was searching for a trump promotion; therefore, this was a logical play. He lost two clubs, two hearts, and one spade for 6 imps and the lead at 84-83.

Bd: 52
 Dir: West
 Vul: Both

West
 ♠ A
 ♥ Q4
 ♦ AK874
 ♣ AK542

North
 ♠ J10965
 ♥ K1062
 ♦ 95
 ♣ Q9

East
 ♠ K83
 ♥ J987
 ♦ ---
 ♣ J108763

South
 ♠ Q742
 ♥ A53
 ♦ QJ10632
 ♣ ---

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Bertens</i>	<i>Gromov</i>	<i>Bakkeren</i>	<i>Dubinin</i>
1♣	Pass	1♦	2♦
Dbl.	Pass	3♦	Pass
3NT	All Pass		

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Zmud'ski</i>	<i>Jacobs</i>	<i>Balicki</i>	<i>Schollaardt</i>
1♣	Pass	1♦	2♦
Pass	Pass	Dbl.	All Pass

Both tables went head-hunting, but Bakkeren was not interested in defending and one can understand why. 3NT had ten top tricks. 2♦ was not a bad spot, despite the trump break. Schollaardt ruffed the club lead and played a spade. Zmudzinski won and carefully led two top trumps, then pumped declarer with a club. The defenders took two spades and five trump tricks one way or another; down 500, and 4 more imps to The Netherlands, leading 88-83.

Bd: 53
 Dir: North
 Vul: N/S

West
 ♠ KJ432
 ♥ J4
 ♦ Q8652
 ♣ 7

North
 ♠ 1076
 ♥ A9
 ♦ AK43
 ♣ KJ94

East
 ♠ A9
 ♥ KQ1052
 ♦ 107
 ♣ 10832

South
 ♠ Q85
 ♥ 8763
 ♦ J9
 ♣ AQ65

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Bertens</i>	<i>Gromov</i>	<i>Bakkeren</i>	<i>Dubinin</i>
Rdbl	1NT	2♦(1 Maj)	Dbl
Pass	Pass	2♥	Pass
	2NT	All Pass	

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Zmud'ski</i>	<i>Jacobs</i>	<i>Balicki</i>	<i>Schollaardt</i>
Pass	1NT	Pass	2♦
Pass	2♥	Pass	2♠(1)
	2NT	All Pass	

(1) Four hearts, range ask

2♥ is down only one, even on best defense, and you can understand why Dubinin (facing a 12-15 notrump, remember) did not double. Gromov, in a forcing position, tried 2NT but that was enough. Meanwhile, Schollaardt's try for game facing a 14-16 notrump looks pushy at first (or indeed second) glance.

Both tables reached a delicate spot. Gromov received a low heart lead to allow the defenders to unblock the suit. He won, ran four clubs, and advanced the ♦J. Bertens ducked impassively, and declarer had to weigh up the odds of going three down against making. Eventually he rose with the ♦K and cashed out for down one.

Balicki led his singleton club against 2NT—an interesting choice. (We say interesting when we can't decide if it is successful or unsuccessful, or just plain weird.) Jacobs won in hand and played a diamond to the jack. Zmudzinski won and naturally did not find the spade shift; instead he switched to the ♥J, as would I, I must confess. Declarer claimed eight tricks; it was 94-83 now.

Bd: 54
 Dir: East
 Vul: E/W

West
 ♠ AQJ753
 ♥ QJ65
 ♦ 10
 ♣ 72

North
 ♠ 982
 ♥ A4
 ♦ K875
 ♣ AQJ4

East
 ♠ K64
 ♥ 1032
 ♦ A632
 ♣ 1063

South
 ♠ 10
 ♥ K987
 ♦ QJ94
 ♣ K985

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Bertens</i>	<i>Gromov</i>	<i>Bakkeren</i>	<i>Dubin</i>
		Pass	Pass
1♠	Pass	2♣	Dbl
3♠	4NT	Dbl.	Pass
Pass	5♣	All Pass	

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Zmud'ski</i>	<i>Jacobs</i>	<i>Balicki</i>	<i>Schollaardt</i>
		Pass	Pass
1♠	Pass	2♣	Pass
4♠	All Pass		

Huge differences in hand valuation by the two teams did not create the massive swing that might have materialized on a slightly different lie of the cards. Zmudzinski's 4♠ effort found the perfect dummy and no heart ruff so he got out for down one, on an auction where he was going to buy the hand in 3♠ had he wanted to.

Dubin's light but 'normal' double of 2♣ as a passed hand persuaded Gromov to try a game; maybe one side or the other could make one. On a trump lead 5♦ would have gone for 300, so his decision to play clubs from the North seat (down one on the diamond ruff) was a good one. 4 imps to The Netherlands, leading 98-83 now.

Bd: 55
Dir: South
Vul: Both

North
♠ 7653
♥ A6
♦ Q543
♣ K94

West
♠ J942
♥ K5
♦ 1076
♣ 8753

East
♠ KQ
♥ QJ7
♦ AJ82
♣ AQ62

South
♠ A108
♥ 1098432
♦ K9
♣ J10

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Bertens</i>	<i>Gromov</i>	<i>Bakkeren</i>	<i>Dubin</i>
Pass	2♥	2NT	2♦(Multi)
		All Pass	

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Zmud'ski</i>	<i>Jacobs</i>	<i>Balicki</i>	<i>Schollaardt</i>
Pass	Pass	1♣	1♥
Pass	Pass	1NT	All Pass

Both tables played notrump on a heart lead, Dubin after opening a Multi hand that would have the commentators frothing at the mouth were they capable of such passion. "My flabber has never been so ghastrated" as Francis Howard would say. And worse, the call worked, getting Bakkeren a level higher than in the other room.

Both defenders led a heart, and neither declarer found the winning play at double-dummy of playing low. Both rose with the king and North took his ♥A and returned the suit. Balicki sneaked one spade through, the defenders took the next and cleared the hearts. Now Balicki had to decide whether to exit with a club or a diamond. The diamond play looks normal to me, but Schollaardt had signaled for clubs on the third heart. Balicki decided to believe him and played ♣A and another club. Fool me once, shame on you...

In the other room Dubin had played the ♥8 after winning the ♠A. Bakkeren believed him and exited with the ace and another diamond, for down one. No swing, and The Netherlands remained 15 imps in front. But not for long.

Bd: 56
Dir: West
Vul: None

North
♠ 987
♥ 10
♦ 92
♣ AKJ10542

West
♠ QJ10632
♥ K74
♦ Q1083
♣ ---

East
♠ 4
♥ Q9852
♦ AK6
♣ Q973

South
♠ AK5
♥ AJ63
♦ J754
♣ 86

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Bertens</i>	<i>Gromov</i>	<i>Bakkeren</i>	<i>Dubin</i>
Pass	Pass	1♥	Pass
1♠	3♣	Pass	Pass
4♣	Pass	4♥	Dbl
All Pass			

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Zmud'ski</i>	<i>Jacobs</i>	<i>Balicki</i>	<i>Schollaardt</i>
2♦(Multi)	3♣	Pass	3NT
All Pass			

The issues raised by this board are so many and varied that we do not have time to consider any of them in as much detail as they deserve. Would you consider the West hand an opening bid at the one,

two (or even three) level? Would you consider the North hand an opening bid at the two, three, or four level?

It pains me to have to recordimps won by a player passing the North hand almost as much as it satisfies me to see West's initial pass coming back and biting him on the rear end.

The bottom line was that in 3NT on a top spade lead South was a favorite to make; if clubs were not four-zero the defenders were not much better than even money to be able to cash out the diamonds for four tricks, I'd say.

But this was not the layout of South's dreams. The four-zero clubs allowed Balicki to duck the first club and kill the suit. That led to down three.

In 4♥x on a club lead declarer ruffed the first trick, led a diamond to hand and a spade up. Dubinin won and played ace and another heart. Bakkeren took three diamonds, a club ruff, and four trump tricks for down two; 10imps to the Alliance, down by 5imps.

The next deal saw a lead change:

Bd: 57 North
 Dir: North ♠ Q74
 Vul: E/W ♥ ---
 ♦ Q876432
 ♣ AKQ

West
 ♠ 863
 ♥ KJ52
 ♦ K5
 ♣ J765

East
 ♠ J1052
 ♥ A1073
 ♦ A10
 ♣ 984

South
 ♠ AK9
 ♥ Q9864
 ♦ J9
 ♣ 1032

Open Room			
West	North	East	South
<i>Bertens</i>	<i>Gromov</i>	<i>Bakkeren</i>	<i>Dubinin</i>
	1♦	Pass	1♥
Pass	2♣	Pass	2♦
Pass	3♦	Pass	3♠
Pass	4♣	Pass	5♦
All Pass			

Closed Room			
West	North	East	South
<i>Zmud'ski</i>	<i>Jacobs</i>	<i>Balicki</i>	<i>Schollaardt</i>
	1♦	Pass	1♥
Pass	2♦	All Pass	

Gromov-Dubinin play that 2♣ here shows extra

diamond length since they can transfer after the major-suit responses, because they will never have balanced hands for the 1♦ opening. Dubinin did not show extras by completing the transfer so Gromov's decision to bid on created the swing. The tempo of the auction was completely different in the other room, where South had to decide whether to stretch for a non-vulnerable game, and wisely did not do so.

In 5♦ Gromov ruffed the first trick and crossed to dummy to pass the ♦9. This guarded against either defender having a singleton honor and was a sensible enough line, though nothing mattered since 11 tricks were a foregone conclusion on any line. The Alliance led 100-99—with more to come.

Bd: 58 North
 Dir: East ♠ A98
 Vul: Both ♥ KJ106
 ♦ AKQ43
 ♣ J

West
 ♠ J10
 ♥ Q74
 ♦ 5
 ♣ AKQ10642

East
 ♠ Q64
 ♥ A98
 ♦ 8762
 ♣ 873

South
 ♠ K7532
 ♥ 532
 ♦ J109
 ♣ 95

Open Room			
West	North	East	South
<i>Bertens</i>	<i>Gromov</i>	<i>Bakkeren</i>	<i>Dubinin</i>
		Pass	Pass
3NT	Dbl	4♣	Pass
Pass	Dbl	Pass	4♠
All Pass			
Closed Room			
West	North	East	South
<i>Zmud'ski</i>	<i>Jacobs</i>	<i>Balicki</i>	<i>Schollaardt</i>
		Pass	Pass
2♣	2♦	Pass	2♠
3♣	Dbl	Pass	3♠
All Pass			

The level of preemption made the difference here. Dubinin had the pleasant choice of collecting 500 or bidding on to 4♠, and chose the latter. Schollaardt might have bid 4♠ over Jacobs' value-showing second double. It is easy to be wise after the fact. In 4♠ Dubinin got a top club lead and a trump shift. He rose with the ♠A, played a spade to the king, ruffed a club, came to the ♦J, gave up a spade, and claimed ten tricks. In 3♠ Schollaardt received the defense of two rounds of clubs. He played ♠A and played safe when he passed the ♠9. West won and played a

heart, and declarer guessed right. It was still 10imps to the Alliance, up by 11 now. Would it last?

Bd: 59 North
 Dir: South ♠ 8
 Vul: None ♥ 108
 ♦ AJ7642
 ♣ 10985

West
 ♠ KJ742
 ♥ AKJ43
 ♦ 9
 ♣ J6

East
 ♠ Q9653
 ♥ 65
 ♦ K10
 ♣ AK73

South
 ♠ A10
 ♥ Q972
 ♦ Q853
 ♣ Q42

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Bertens</i>	<i>Gromov</i>	<i>Bakkeren</i>	<i>Dubinín</i>
1♠	Pass	2NT(♠)	Pass
3♣	Pass	3♦	Pass
3♥	Pass	3♠	Pass
4♦	Pass	4♠	All Pass

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Zmud'ski</i>	<i>Jacobs</i>	<i>Balicki</i>	<i>Schollaardt</i>
1♠	Pass	3♣(♠GF)	Pass
3♥	Pass	3♠	Pass
4♦	Pass	4♠	Pass
5♥	Pass	6♠	All Pass

There are those of us (are you listening Eric?) who are very sniffy about using Blackwood. It is as if you are supposed to KNOW how many aces your side has. But if you cue-bid second- and first-round controls indiscriminately how are you supposed to know? Judgment is all very well, but give me system any day.

Zmudzinski's decision to bid on without a club control made Balicki think he must have the ace-king of both majors. (But would he not bid 5♠ with that hand?) Mind you, I'm not sure Zmudzinski has enough for a third try without a club control (consider ♠AQxx ♥xxx ♦AKQ ♣xxx opposite).

Bertens got to show his diamond shortage and East, having forced to game, had nothing more to say without a heart control. So their auction was never really in danger of getting out of control. The match was back to level—if you discount the half imp for carry-forward in the glass case that Poland could break open in cases of emergency.

Bd: 60 North
 Dir: West ♠ 83
 Vul: N/S ♥ AK6
 ♦ A10642
 ♣ 985

West
 ♠ K96542
 ♥ 10
 ♦ K987
 ♣ Q4

East
 ♠ A107
 ♥ Q52
 ♦ QJ5
 ♣ KJ63

South
 ♠ QJ
 ♥ J98743
 ♦ 3
 ♣ A1072

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Bertens</i>	<i>Gromov</i>	<i>Bakkeren</i>	<i>Dubinín</i>
Pass	Pass	1♣	Pass
1♠	Pass	1NT	Pass
2♣	Pass	2♠	Pass
3♦	Pass	3♠	All Pass

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Zmud'ski</i>	<i>Jacobs</i>	<i>Balicki</i>	<i>Schollaardt</i>
2♦	Pass	2♥	Pass
2♠	All Pass		

In 2♠ the defense can take two diamond ruffs and three aces. Jacobs led a top heart and shifted to a club. Back came a diamond for the ruff and declarer had the rest. +140 looked good enough. But in the other room, Gromov had heard West invite to game with spades and diamonds. With the possibility of a diamond ruff coming in dummy, he elected to lead a trump, and declarer guessed the suit at once to make +170. It is easy to see why North might be kicking himself for his choice of lead here (declarer's actual shape of six-four ought not to have been a surprise since facing a balanced 12-14 it would be hard to imagine a hand worth a game try as a passed hand without extra shape). The heart losers might go if you don't cash them, so the ♦A to look at dummy makes a lot of sense. It was The Netherlands by 1 imp now.



Bd: 61 North
 Dlr: North ♠ AK6
 Vul: Both ♥ 8753
 ♦ 1053
 ♣ 954

West
 ♠ 107
 ♥ 10642
 ♦ QJ
 ♣ Q10862

East
 ♠ J2
 ♥ AKJ9
 ♦ K9874
 ♣ AK

South
 ♠ Q98543
 ♥ Q
 ♦ A62
 ♣ J73

Bd: 62 North
 Dlr: East ♠ KJ
 Vul: None ♥ Q10974
 ♦ A1032
 ♣ 85

West
 ♠ A65
 ♥ A52
 ♦ 654
 ♣ 9642

South
 ♠ Q9732
 ♥ K3
 ♦ KJ
 ♣ QJ107

East
 ♠ 1084
 ♥ J86
 ♦ Q987
 ♣ AK3

Open Room

West	North	East	South
Bertens	Gromov	Bakkeren	Dubinin
	Pass	1♦	1♠
Dbl	2♠	2NT	Pass
3♣	Pass	4♥	All Pass

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
Zmud'ski	Jacobs	Balicki	Schollaardt
	Pass	1♣	1♠
Pass	2♠	Dbl	Pass
2NT	Pass	3♦	Pass
3♥	Pass	4♥	All Pass

Open Room

West	North	East	South
Bertens	Gromov	Bakkeren	Dubinin
		Pass	1♠
Pass	2♥	Pass	2♠
All Pass			

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
Zmud'ski	Jacobs	Balicki	Schollaardt
		Pass	1♠
Pass	2♦	Pass	2♥
Pass	2♠	All Pass	

Both tables reached 4♥ here, Bakkeren as East after Bertens' etiolated negative double, Zmudzinski as West after showing an invitational hand facing Balicki's strong Polish-Club sequence. The defense that would surely set 4♥ is to cash two spades and play two rounds of diamonds, whereupon declarer will take a first-round heart finesse. In practice, when the weak hand is dummy this defense is plausible. Dubinin led a spade, and Gromov shifted to diamonds. Dubinin won and played back a spade. Gromov played... a club. Declarer cashed the ♥A and claimed a moment later. Where the weak hand was declarer it was harder, I think. The defenders cashed two spades exited with a passive club, and declarer also took one top heart at once and was out of the woods. Still The Netherlands by 1 imp.

Gromov-Dubinin only play one 2/1 auction as non-forcing; this is it. Jacobs had a transfer auction to show a mild invitation to game and approximately this major-suit pattern. Well bid both pairs.

In 2♠ Zmudzinski led the ♣6 and Balicki played three rounds of the suit, threatening to get a trump promotion on the fourth. Schollaardt countered by leading a heart to the queen, ♠K ducked, as East tossed the ♠8, three rounds of diamonds ruffed low, the fourth club ruffed high, a diamond ruffed with the ♠7, and now declarer had two more trump tricks by force. Bertens' diamond lead was far less threatening. Declarer won cheaply and drove out the ♠A, and the defenders cashed their clubs. But it was all over now. No swing; The Netherlands by an imp.



"That's right! The round, bumpy ones are the clubs."



"Can't seem to get through a session without my pick-me-up."

Bd: 63
 Dlr: South
 Vul: N/S

West
 ♠ KQ42
 ♥ KQ2
 ♦ K83
 ♣ 943

North
 ♠ 765
 ♥ 964
 ♦ Q9542
 ♣ 85

East
 ♠ 93
 ♥ 10875
 ♦ J106
 ♣ AKQ6

South
 ♠ AJ108
 ♥ AJ3
 ♦ A7
 ♣ J1072

Bd: 64
 Dlr: West
 Vul: E/W

West
 ♠ J1084
 ♥ K10
 ♦ K7
 ♣ Q10762

North
 ♠ 97
 ♥ AJ983
 ♦ 63
 ♣ 9854

South
 ♠ KQ63
 ♥ Q542
 ♦ AQ1095
 ♣ ---

East
 ♠ A52
 ♥ 76
 ♦ J842
 ♣ AKJ3

Open and Closed Rooms

West	North	East	South
<i>Bertens</i>	<i>Gromov</i>	<i>Bakkeren</i>	<i>Dubinín</i>
<i>Zmud'ski</i>	<i>Jacobs</i>	<i>Balicki</i>	<i>Schollaardt</i>
			1NT

All Pass

Bertens led a low spade and declarer took the jack and played the ♦A and a second diamond to the queen. So far so good. Now a heart to the jack and queen, a club shift to the queen for a spade through to the jack and queen. Bertens cashed the ♦K (South pitching the ♥3), played a club to the king, and when a heart came through Dubinín took his ace and cashed his ♠A before trying to build a club trick (because hearts were blocked this would have led to down one). He therefore went down two.

Where Zmudzinski led a low spade Schollaardt won the jack, played ace and another diamond, and Zmudzinski took the ♦K—which looks good, does it not? Next came a club to the queen, a spade to the ten and queen, a club to the king, and the ♥8 to the three and queen. The defenders had got everything right so far, but then came a club back to the ace for a second heart. Schollaardt rose with the ♥A and played the fourth club; Zmudzinski pitched his diamond but was endplayed with the ♥K to lead spades at trick 12. 3 undertrick imps; The Netherlands by 4 imps.



Separated at birth, reunited at last

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Bertens</i>	<i>Gromov</i>	<i>Bakkeren</i>	<i>Dubinín</i>
Pass	2♥(♥+m)	Pass	4♥
All Pass			

Closed Room

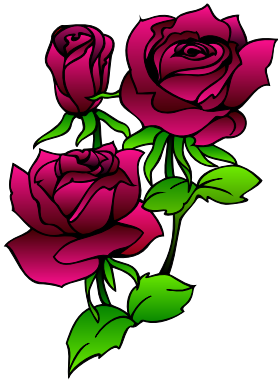
West	North	East	South
<i>Zmud'ski</i>	<i>Jacobs</i>	<i>Balicki</i>	<i>Schollaardt</i>
Pass	Pass	1♣	Dbl
1♠	2♥	Dbl	4♥
All Pass			

The last chance for the Alliance came when both N/S pairs bid to 4♥ on the minority of the high cards. Zmudzinski was happy enough to defend; he did not want to double facing a third-in-hand opener, where he did not want partner to take it out. Balicki led a top club, ruffed, took the ♠A, and shifted to a trump. Declarer won and took a diamond finesse, losing, but still had enough dummy entries to ruff out the diamonds, and the two-two trump break gave him 11 tricks.

Had Bakkeren stretched to double 2♥ bad things would have happened when Dubinín bid 4♥. As it was, with only three spades he sold out, and the danger was past. Gromov got a club lead and ruffed to play a spade. Bakkeren won and led a second club. Now declarer played a crossruff and never took a trump finesse, so he lost a heart at the death. 1 more imp to The Netherlands, who won 114-109. In a 64-board match to hold your opponents well under 2 imps per board is impressive stuff; to lose when you do that implies your opponents have played very well, and that was certainly my impression.

The Netherlands had taken a big lead three times in the match and been pegged back on each occasion. Their ability to fight back at the death was huge; they are truly worthy winners.

Images of Our Game: a “thoughtful” retrospective



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