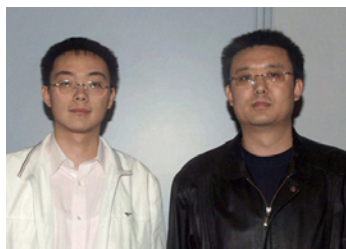


NEC Bridge Festival

Sunday, February 15, 2009
Bulletin Number 7

Editors: Rich Colker, Barry Rigal

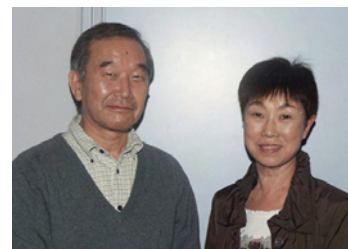
Ino-Toyofuku Triumph in Asuka Cup G. Nakasone-L.M. Nakasome Win JCBL Pairs



2nd Place: 2009 Asuka Cup



Winners: 2009 Asuka Cup



3rd Place: 2009 Asuka Cup



Winners: 2009 JCBL Pairs

Top Finishers in Asuka Cup And JCBL Pairs

Rank	Asuka Cup		JCBL Pairs	
	Pair	Score	Pair	Score
1	Masayuki Ino–Kyoko Toyofuku	2927.11	Goro Nakasone–Lia Maria Nakasone	28.50
2	Liu Jing–Li Jie	2678.77	Tadashi Tsuyama–Koichi Okitani	26.50
3	Masakazu Hirota–Shuko Umeda	2675.36	Shintaro Sugio–Takashi Hirai	25.00
4	Keiko Furuya–Takehiko Tada	2620.38	Akitoshi Nagao–Ritsuko Nagao	25.00
5	Amir Levin–Michael Barel	2617.76		
6	Diego Brenner–Kyoko Shimamura	2613.92		
7	Hisami Kataoka–Hideo Togawa	2603.46		
8	Tomoko Sakai–Akiko Miyata	2584.62		
9	Ishmael Del'Monte–Shoko Imai	2583.35		
10	Morris Chang–Patrick Huang	2577.21		

NEC Cup Bridge Festival 2009

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. More and more each year the **NEC Bridge Festival** attracts the interest of the best players in the world, many considering the NEC tournament 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 and get better each year. The Exhibition Hall is a first-class playing venue. The weather this year was especially great—unseasonably warm and dry—for this year's festival and the people were warm and friendly, as always. It is our continuing great pleasure to be invited back each year to reunite 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. And since today is also Valentine's Day, we would like to take this opportunity to wish everyone a day of love and joy—not just for today, but for every day in the year to come.

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 46 teams in the NEC Cup included many strong teams, including many rapidly improving Japanese teams, as witnessed by the fact that three Japanese teams qualified for the KOs and one narrowly missed winning in the final. We can only hope that our role in this tournament has contributed in some small way to Japan's and JCBL's success.

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 *Yoshida-san* for his leadership and friendship. Thanks also to *Richard Grenside*, tormented Director, who as ever ran a smooth and pleasant tournament; to *Sue Grenside* for her friendship and good humor; to *Omasa-san*, for his remarkable technical, computer, and directing support; to *Nakamura-san*, for his wonderful pictures (which as usual we subjected to our peculiar sense of humor) but even more because he surely must have drawn the short straw this year and consequently been assigned the job of suffering with us late into the night so that you would have daily bulletins fresh with your morning breakfast; to *Akito-san*, *Masato-san*, *Atsushi-san*, *Yuji-san*, and *Tashiro-san* for all their hard work; to *Suzuki-san* for his help with many things, both technical and otherwise; to *Miura-san* for his work with BBO and to BBO itself; and to the many who brought us food and moral support during our work sessions. Thanks also to the many volunteers who perform the myriad functions critical to making this tournament a success, while we remained absorbed in our work. As you know 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*

Asuka Cup: First Session

by Barry Rigal

I stopped by the playing area for today's Asuka Cup to watch a board or two and noted that in deference to the foreign players, many local players never seemed to bid when their opponents opened their mouths. This is rarely the right tactics—unless the deal is such a deathtrap that you want to stay out altogether.

Bd: 8	North		
Dlr: West	♠ QJ107		
Vul: None	♥ 104		
	♦ 642		
	♣ J732		
West		East	
♠ 8		♠ 6543	
♥ K7		♥ A962	
♦ AKQ1073		♦ J98	
♣ AK94		♣ Q6	
	South		
	♠ AK92		
	♥ QJ853		
	♦ 5		
	♣ 1085		

This deal proved very awkward for the field, even though the auction started smoothly at most tables along the following lines:

West	North	East	South
1♦	Pass	1♥	Pass
3♣	Pass	3♦	Pass
??			

What is West to do now? If you play (and if you don't you should) that responder bids 3♦ whenever possible a rebids in hearts show a decent suit; use 3♠ for weak spade length; 3NT shows a real spade stop but probably only four hearts) then at his third turn West knows that 3NT will almost never be right. At some tables I was watching West bid 3♠ and passed 3NT; at others West invented 3♥, hoping to hear 3NT, and ended in 5♦. Ton Bakkeren, playing with Ricco van Prooijen, found the solution: he jumped to 4♠, a self-agreeing splinter, and Ricco had three working cards and no wasted values, so he ended proceedings with a majestic jump to 6♦.

Ron Klinger bid 3♠ over 3♦ but converted Nik Demirev's 3NT to 4♦. Over Demirev's 4♥ bid Klinger bid slam, but if he had made the cue-bid of 4♠ I'm sure Demirev would have bid the slam himself.

Robert Geller, playing with Setzuko Ogihara, also reached slam, but he had help from a South player suffering from logorrhea, an irresistible desire to hear

yourself talk. (And if that is not the definition of "bulletin editor" what is? *Speak for yourself RC.*) At his first turn South tried 1♠, so North raised to 3♠ and Geller volunteered diamond support at the four level That let Ogihara know that she was facing a fit and values, so she drove the hand to slam now. Well done all three pairs.

Bidding slam scored 68.5 (83 top); making 420 was worth 36, while +400 was worth only 14.5.

Bd: 15	North		
Dlr: South	♠ Q74		
Vul: N/S	♥ ---		
	♦ KQJ872		
	♣ AKQ10		
West		East	
♠ J93		♠ K10	
♥ Q10843		♥ AJ9762	
♦ A103		♦ 6	
♣ 98		♣ 7532	
	South		
	♠ A8652		
	♥ K5		
	♦ 954		
	♣ J64		

When the opponents preempt you often try to get to the best contract possible, not necessarily the best possible contract. For example, Fu sat North and heard the auction proceed:

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♦	2♥	Pass
4♥	??		Pass

A double would get his side to 4♠ on a four-three fit, or maybe to 4♥x, but his hand did not look right for defense. So he tried 4NT (minors, better diamonds) and his partner converted happily enough to 5♦. On the lead of the ♥A declarer had a home for his third spade and wrapped up 5♦.

By contrast, at another table David Bakhshi as South traded on his passed hand status to introduce his spades. That got him to 4♠ after Malinowski jumped to 4♥ and respected his signoff. After a heart lead he used his club entry to ruff a second heart in hand, play the ♠Q, covered all around, and a second spade before claiming +620 when the suit behaved.

Making 620 was a spectacular 74 out of 83 while making 5♦ was worth 63: many pairs sacrificed in 5♥ and now it was hard for N/S to defend and collect

300, though even that score would have been above average because of the number of pairs going down in 5♠ or 6♦.

There is a fine line between “bunny bashing” (trying to bid and make impossible contracts against weak players) and bidding to the right spot and hoping the field will protect you.

Michael Barel sat West here and heard the auction start as shown below:

Bd: 18	North		
Dlr: East	♠ 85		
Vul: N/S	♥ KQ87		
	♦ K103		
	♣ A643		
West		East	
♠ AKQJ103		♠ 6	
♥ J54		♥ A962	
♦ 6		♦ QJ8542	
♣ J105		♣ K7	
	South		
	♠ 9742		
	♥ 103		
	♦ A97		
	♣ Q982		

West	North	East	South
		1♦	Pass
1♠	Dbl	2♦	Pass
??			

Barel took an extremely pessimistic but hardly unreasonable position and bid only 3♠. The singleton diamond was terrible, but there again, you do have a good opening bid. Right he was, in a sense, since even 3♠ is too high (unless the defenders lead a top heart; now the fall of the ten gives you a route to nine tricks without too much pain).

The issue often turned out to be the tenth trick, far more important at Ron Klinger's table since he had bid 4♠ at his second turn. The defenders led the ♥K, ducked, a club to dummy's king, and Klinger led a low diamond from the board. South could not take the pressure and hopped up with the ace and accurately returned the ♥10. (If he fails to do this declarer runs all but one trump and forces North to keep two diamonds and three hearts and thus pitch the ♣A, so declarer just gives up a club and pins the ♥10.) The ♥10 was covered all around and declarer ran the trumps. This was the ending as the ultimate trump hit the deck.

♠ ---		♠ ---
♥ 87		♥ 96
♦ K		♦ Q
♣ A		♣ 7
♠ 3		
♥ 4		
♦ ---		
♣ J10		
♠ ---		
♥ ---		
♦ 9		
♣ Q98		

Klinger led the last trump and North was forced to throw his ♣A. Declarer pitched the club from dummy and South erred by discarding her diamond. Now Klinger led the ♣J from hand and South was forced to win and return a club, leaving Klinger with a club and a heart for the last two tricks.

At another table Ishmael Del'monte as West jumped to 3NT over 2♦ (we know which side of the bunny bashing divide he lines up on) and played along similar lines. Even making 140 would have collected an above average result; making 400 was worth 71 and making 420 raked in 77 on the 83 top.

I saw Artur Malinowski and David Bakhshi conduct a smooth auction to one of the best spots on Board 23.

Bd: 23	North		
Dlr: South	♠ AK10752		
Vul: Both	♥ J95		
	♦ 3		
	♣ K95		
West		East	
♠ J6		♠ 8	
♥ 432		♥ AKQ86	
♦ AQJ874		♦ K10652	
♣ J7		♣ A8	
	South		
	♠ Q943		
	♥ 107		
	♦ 9		
	♣ Q106432		

West	North	East	South
			Pass
2♦	2♠	4NT	Pass
5♣(0/3)	Pass	6♦	All Pass

Yes, 6♥ might get you all, or most, of the match-points but playing 6♦ was going to be good enough in a pairs event of moderate standard. I can't see any sensible way to put hearts on the agenda over the 2♠ intervention, since a direct 3♥ would not be forcing. One needs to offer an alternative slam via 5NT and frankly, it might be better to settle for diamonds since

6♥ might go down on a bad trump break or a diamond ruff on a bad day.

What about South in the auction under discussion? When East jumped to 4NT it was open to her to consider that, unless he had lost his mind, East had precisely a singleton spade and a source of tricks, presumably hearts. Partner would have long spades and might well have an honor in clubs. Even if he did not, 6♠ could lose no more than two hearts one diamond and two clubs, could it? Sacrificing against the slam might not increase your matchpoint score enormously (several pairs missed slam) but it is the best you can do. In fact, you would get about an average minus for the save. Making slam was worth

71 out of 83; only one pair bid and made 6♥ here.

Of course some E/W pairs did even worse. When Paul Hackett was North he was allowed to open 1♠. After a 2♥ overcall his partner jumped preemptively to 3♠, ending the auction. The defenders led a top heart and shifted to clubs; that was a cool 140, not bad against your opponents' slam.

One could do worse still. One visitor doubled 1♠ with the East cards and heard the auction proceed: 3♠ on his left, 4♦ from partner. He decided the time was right for Blackwood and his partner put the dummy down. Minus 300 did *not* trouble the scorers, except for the pairs doubling 3♠ and letting it make.

Expert Play

by Barry Rigal

Dir: South

Vul: E/W

♠ 1086

♥ Q98

♦ K10432

♣ K9

♠ J9532

♥ A3

♦ A765

♣ A8

♠ K 4

♥ J6542

♦ QJ8

♣ J107

♠ AQ7

♥ K107

♦ 9

♣ Q65432

On this deal from the first semifinal session of the Kaplan Blue Ribbon Pairs a couple of years back a normal auction would see E/W compete to 2♠ or 2♦, so N/S might do well to bid up to 3♣.

Consider a 3♣ contract on the lead of a low spade to the six, king and ace. Declarer needs to build a quick discard for his spade loser, and the natural play is a diamond. To hold a club contract to nine tricks, West must hop up with the ♦A and shift to the ♠J, locking declarer in hand and preventing him from drawing trumps. On any other defense, declarer pitches his spade (be it a winner or a loser) on the ♦K, then exploits the favorable lie in hearts and clubs to make 10 tricks.

NEC Cup Bridge Festival on the Web

Follow the action at the 14th NEC Cup Bridge Festival by surfing to:

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

Follow our featured matches on Vugraph each day at: www.bridgebase.com

NEC Final (4th quarter): Japan Open vs China LongZhu Women

by Barry Rigal

Bd: 49
Dlr: North
Vul: None

North
♠ 7
♥ AQ10765
♦ AQ7
♣ K62

West
♠ AK4
♥ 9
♦ K108652
♣ 973

East
♠ Q1063
♥ 432
♦ J943
♣ J5

South
♠ J9852
♥ KJ8
♦ ---
♣ AQ1084

Open Room

West	North	East	South
Chen	Sun	Furuta	Hongli
	1♥	Pass	1♠
2♦	2♥	Pass	4♦
Pass	4NT	Pass	6♦(1)
Pass	6♥	All Pass	

(1) 2 key cards plus a diamond void

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
Wenfei	Ino	Liu	Imakura
	1♥	Pass	2♣
Pass	2♥	Pass	3♥
Pass	3♠	Pass	4♣
Pass	4NT	Pass	5♥
Pass	6♥	All Pass	

I like Imakura's decision to respond 2♣, setting up a game force by bidding where he lived. Both auctions went very smoothly to the best spot. Both tables conceded a spade; Liu led the suit, Sun won the trump lead and ducked a spade; no swing, still 108-98 to China.

Bd: 50
Dlr: East
Vul: N/S

North
♠ KQ8632
♥ K53
♦ AK
♣ 87

West
♠ 74
♥ 10962
♦ 843
♣ K1052

East
♠ AJ10
♥ Q7
♦ QJ102
♣ QJ93

South
♠ 95
♥ AJ84
♦ 9765
♣ A64

Open Room

West	North	East	South
Chen	Sun	Furuta	Hongli
		1♣	Pass
1♦(♥)	1♠	1NT	Pass
Pass	2♠	All Pass	

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
Wenfei	Ino	Liu	Imakura
		1♦	Pass
1♥	1♠	1NT	Pass
Pass	2♠	All Pass	

Both Wests were unprepared to go gently into that good night; they responded to the opening bid and now it was going to be nearly impossible for N/S to get to the playable game, which will make as the cards lie when the heart finesse succeeds. No swing, but well done by both Wests.

Bd: 51
Dlr: South
Vul: E/W

North
♠ QJ43
♥ J2
♦ QJ8
♣ KJ84

West
♠ A
♥ 9864
♦ K5432
♣ 762

East
♠ K10952
♥ Q7
♦ A10976
♣ A

South
♠ 876
♥ AK1053
♦ ---
♣ Q10953

Open Room

West	North	East	South
Chen	Sun	Furuta	Hongli
		1♥	Dbl(support)
Pass	1♠	2♦	Pass
2♠	Dbl	Pass	Pass
4♦	Pass	5♦	Pass
Pass	Dbl	All Pass	

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
Wenfei	Ino	Liu	Imakura
			2♥(♥+m)
Pass	3♣(P/C)	Dbl	Pass
4♦	Pass	5♦	All Pass

Well bid by both E/W pairs. Operation successful, but undertaker required. Sun's double increased the Chinese lead to 111-98.

Bd: 52
 Dir: West
 Vul: Both

North	♠ KQ1064
	♥ K2
	♦ Q95
	♣ J52

West

♠ 53
♥ J10854
♦ J742
♣ 73

East

♠ AJ8
♥ Q73
♦ A86
♣ AK98

South

♠ 972
♥ A96
♦ K103
♣ Q1064

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Chen</i>	<i>Sun</i>	<i>Furuta</i>	<i>Hongli</i>
	1♠	1NT	Dbl
2♦(♥)	Pass	2♥	2♠
All Pass			

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Wenfei</i>	<i>Ino</i>	<i>Liu</i>	<i>Imakura</i>
	Pass	1♣*	Pass
1♦	1♠	1NT	Pass
2♦(♥)	Pass	2♥	All Pass

Another deal on which China did well early in the auction to get in fast (Furuta-Chen non-vulnerable are the most aggressive of the pairs on either team but the other Japanese are closer to standard). The ladies bought the hand in both rooms and stole an overtrick when South pitched a club prematurely, setting up a spade and a club discard for West's diamonds. 2♠ only failed because the club ruff was not with the trump trick. 112-98 now.

The bad luck continued for both E/W pairs, but perhaps they could be consoled by the fact that in the other room the cards were lying equally badly.

Bd: 53
 Dir: North
 Vul: N/S

North	♠ 107
	♥ K987
	♦ 10753
	♣ QJ6

West

♠ 852
♥ J4
♦ Q98
♣ AK1075

East

♠ AKQ
♥ A2
♦ AK6
♣ 98432

South

♠ J9643
♥ Q10653
♦ J42
♣ ---

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Chen</i>	<i>Sun</i>	<i>Furuta</i>	<i>Hongli</i>
	Pass	2NT	Pass
3NT(♣)	Pass	4♣	Pass
4NT	Pass	6♣	All Pass

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Wenfei</i>	<i>Ino</i>	<i>Liu</i>	<i>Imakura</i>
	Pass	2NT	Pass
4NT	Pass	6♣	All Pass

Beautifully bid, thought both Easts as dummy went down. But a second or two later they snarled at their screenmate opponent and sulkily gave 50 points to the bad guys. Still 112-98.

The next deal was flat (Ino doing his best to create a problem for his side with a lead directing double in a strong club auction that might have produced redoubled overtricks had his partner not been equipped with a rescue suit).

Then...

Bd: 55
 Dir: South
 Vul: Both

North	♠ Q82
	♥ AK5
	♦ AQ63
	♣ 654

West

♠ A103
♥ QJ843
♦ J42
♣ 87

East

♠ J965
♥ 976
♦ 1075
♣ AK9

South

♠ K74
♥ 102
♦ K98
♣ QJ1032

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Chen</i>	<i>Sun</i>	<i>Furuta</i>	<i>Hongli</i>
			Pass
Pass	1NT	Pass	2♣
Pass	2♦	Pass	2NT
All Pass			

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Wenfei</i>	<i>Ino</i>	<i>Liu</i>	<i>Imakura</i>
			Pass
Pass	1NT	Pass	3NT
All Pass			

For what it is worth, I think the South hand is a drive to game, not an invite, and Furuta's opening heart lead a highly anti-percentage action. But it is hard to

argue with the response that 2NT would have been the limit of the hand on a spade lead so that both South and East guessed the hand perfectly. Color me unconvinced (and prepared to argue the case).

In the other room it was a lot easier to argue with Wenfei's decision to put up the ♠A at trick 1; declarer now had nine tricks when West continued spades. 12 deserved imps to Japan; 110-112 to China, and we were almost half-way through the final set.

Bd: 56
Dir: West
Vul: None

North
♠ Q987543
♥ J2
♦ Q7
♣ K3

West
♠ J6
♥ Q653
♦ AK10842
♣ 6

East
♠ K
♥ A974
♦ J65
♣ J10742

South
♠ A102
♥ K108
♦ 93
♣ AQ985

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Chen</i>	<i>Sun</i>	<i>Furuta</i>	<i>Hongli</i>
1♦	2♠	Pass	3♠

All Pass

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Wenfei</i>	<i>Ino</i>	<i>Liu</i>	<i>Imakura</i>
1♦*	3♠	Pass	4♠

All Pass

The more aggressive preempt brought home the bacon. In 4♠ on Liu's low club lead declarer had 11 tricks despite misguessing the hearts at the end, though game was no better than finding the ♠K singleton—really, even on a club lead, and it might have been a lot worse. 7 imps to Japan, up 117-112.

Bd: 57
Dir: North
Vul: E/W

North
♠ 10832
♥ K94
♦ 9642
♣ A3

West
♠ K765
♥ J10872
♦ J
♣ Q62

East
♠ J4
♥ Q5
♦ AK1075
♣ K984

South
♠ AQ9
♥ A63
♦ Q83
♣ J1075

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Chen</i>	<i>Sun</i>	<i>Furuta</i>	<i>Hongli</i>
		1♦	Dbl
Rdbl(♥)	1♠	2♣	All Pass

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Wenfei</i>	<i>Ino</i>	<i>Liu</i>	<i>Imakura</i>
		1♦	Pass
1♠	Pass	2♣	All Pass

Both tables reached 2♣ here, Imakura finding the idiosyncratic lead of the ♠A when a low club looks a more textbook approach. Imakura continued the spade attack, leading the ♠Q next, and Liu took the king to advance a low heart to Imakura's ace. A third spade was ruffed in hand and now it looks plausible for Liu to cash the diamonds, pitching the spade from dummy to avoid a trump promotion. She did not do so, perhaps because the fourth spade would let South pitch an equally awkward heart if North had the thirteenth spade. Instead she led a second heart to Ino and now the fourth spade was ruffed and overruffed, giving the defense four tricks in the bag. A trump play now dooms the contract but Imakura played a low diamond. The ♦J held, so Liu led a club to the king and a club back, ducking in dummy. The ace fell, and Ino had only red-suit cards to lead, so declarer had the rest.

In the other room the low trump lead to the ace for a trump back left Furuta no choice but to pass the ♦J. When it lost, the defense had three major-suit tricks and three minor-suit winners. 5 imps to China; the match was level.

Bd: 58
Dir: East
Vul: Both

North
♠ J
♥ 652
♦ QJ83
♣ AJ984

West
♠ Q1075
♥ J107
♦ 10654
♣ K7

East
♠ K43
♥ A43
♦ A972
♣ 1052

South
♠ A9862
♥ KQ98
♦ K
♣ Q63

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Chen</i>	<i>Sun</i>	<i>Furuta</i>	<i>Hongli</i>
		1♦	Dbl
1♥(♠)	2♣	Dbl(supp)	Pass
2♦	Pass	Pass	3♣
All Pass			

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
Wenfei	Ino	Liu	Imakura
		Pass	1♠
Pass	1NT	Pass	2♥
All Pass			

I'm not sure what to make of Hongli's 3♣ bid. It seems to me that there was a fair chance her partner was 1=3=5=4 on this auction. But perhaps with that North would have doubled 2♦ (indeed, with her actual hand that would have been my choice). Regardless, 3♣ played just fine and came to an impressive +150. But defending 2♦ on the admittedly inspired lead of the ♦K would have been even better.

In the other room Ino had a nightmare call at his second turn and guessed to pass. 2♥ on the initial low trump lead, ducked to declarer's nine, allowed declarer to advance the ♦K, ducked all around. Now declarer crossruffed and established a trick in both minors in the process. By the time he had finished he had ten tricks in the bag. Just an imp, but it gave Japan back the lead at 118-117.

Bd: 59	North
Dlr: South	♠ AK108
Vul: None	♥ J76
	♦ Q73
	♣ 987

West
♠ 97632
♥ 4
♦ K10654
♣ 52

East
♠ 5
♥ K983
♦ J8
♣ AKQJ63

South
♠ QJ4
♥ AQ1052
♦ A92
♣ 104

Open Room

West	North	East	South
Chen	Sun	Furuta	Hongli
			1♥
Pass	2♥	3♣	All Pass

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
Wenfei	Ino	Liu	Imakura
			1♥
Pass	3♣(1)	3NT	4♥

All Pass

(1) Balanced limit raise in hearts

The sane auction in the Open Room saw N/S sell out to 3♣; might Sun have doubled this? I think I would have. The defenders did well by leading spades and shifting to trumps. Declarer guessed diamonds of

course once North had shown up with the top spades, but that was still two down.

The pressure seemed to be getting to the players, if the Closed Room auction is anything to go by, as everybody competed for the privilege of going down. 4♥ looks hopeless today, but Wenfei, perhaps misreading her partner's hand type, led a low diamond. Declarer now played low from dummy, a move that is hard to understand, though it *could* be right, of course. After trumps split four-one there were four tricks for the defenders to cash and China was back in front with those 4 imps, 121-118.

An overtrick imp to China in a normal 3NT contract made the lead 4 imps, 122-118. Time for some more serious action.

Bd: 61	North
Dlr: North	♠ 42
Vul: Both	♥ AK1073
	♦ 4
	♣ AK732

West
♠ KJ
♥ J954
♦ AK2
♣ 10865

East
♠ AQ109865
♥ Q6
♦ J
♣ QJ4

South
♠ 73
♥ 82
♦ Q10987653
♣ 9

Open Room

West	North	East	South
Chen	Sun	Furuta	Hongli
	1♥	1♠	Pass
1NT	2♣	2♠	Pass
3♣	Pass	3♥	Pass
4♠	All Pass		

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
Wenfei	Ino	Liu	Imakura
	1♥	1♠	Pass
1NT	2♣	3NT	All Pass

Liu followed Hamman's rule: with soft cards in hearts and clubs notrumps would be fine. And who leads diamonds on this bidding? A low club lead let Wenfei take the first ten. With the defenders having four tricks against spades in aces and kings, not to mention a club ruff, that looked good when Furuta declared 4♠. Hongli led a club. Sun cashed two rounds of clubs (the king and ace, in that order) on which South threw a low heart and then, instead of taking a top heart she played the highest club. Hongli ruffed and must have lost her own spot card since

she shifted to diamonds. Both hearts went away now. No swing, and much wailing and gnashing of teeth, no doubt.

Three deals to go; all to play for; China by 4.

Bd: 62
Dlr: East
Vul: None

North
♠ A753
♥ 10943
♦ J106
♣ 82

West
♠ QJ62
♥ KQ8
♦ AQ42
♣ Q10

East
♠ K984
♥ 765
♦ 5
♣ AK975

South
♠ 10
♥ AJ2
♦ K9873
♣ J643

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Chen</i>	<i>Sun</i>	<i>Furuta</i>	<i>Hongli</i>
		1♣	1♦

3NT All Pass

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Wenfei</i>	<i>Ino</i>	<i>Liu</i>	<i>Imakura</i>
		Pass	Pass
1♣	Pass	2♣	Pass
2NT	Pass	3♥	Pass
3NT	All Pass		

I'm not sure why Chen thought he could give up on slam after the diamond overcall pinpointed that the finesse would work for him. Of course as usual the non-vulnerable Furuta had less than an invitation facing his opening bid and 3NT was not a great spot on a diamond lead. Chen was forced to duck the first two rounds of the suit to cut communications and emerged with ten tricks when he knocked out the ♠A and South unwisely ducked the ♥A, hoping her partner had the ♣Q. That led to her being triple-squeezed for 430. But that was still good enough for a 1 imp pickup when the defense led and continued hearts against Wenfei's 3NT. North shifted to a club when in with the ♠A and declarer claimed the rest. The margin was 5 imps now.



"I just can't bear it."

Bd: 63
Dlr: South
Vul: N/S

North
♠ Q94
♥ A85
♦ 654
♣ 6532

West
♠ A102
♥ K943
♦ J9
♣ AJ108

East
♠ 653
♥ J102
♦ KQ7
♣ KQ97

South
♠ KJ87
♥ Q76
♦ A10832
♣ 4

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Chen</i>	<i>Sun</i>	<i>Furuta</i>	<i>Hongli</i>
		1NT	1♦*
			All Pass

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Wenfei</i>	<i>Ino</i>	<i>Liu</i>	<i>Imakura</i>
			Pass
1NT	Pass	3NT	All Pass

The defenders led and continued diamonds against 1NT. Declarer finessed in hearts and had ten top tricks with hearts breaking, but only claimed nine of them. How would 3NT play? If it made, we might have to come back to that claim and check what really happened.

Against 3NT Ino led an unimaginative ♣5. Declarer won in dummy, dropping the ♣8 from hand, and took a heart finesse. North ducked but took the second heart...and time stood still. If declarer has four club tricks and the ♥K then that is eight of her 14-16 HCP. She has another 6-8 points, partner has 7-9 points in all. What is the least partner needs to set the hand?

It is hard to be objective but it seems to me (knowing the hand) that the odds favor playing partner for spade length and either two of the top four spade cards and the ♦A, or both the ♠A and ♠K. If you shift to a diamond and partner does have the ♦AJxx that won't necessarily be enough, unless he has the ♠A as well. Otherwise, declarer might come to nine tricks via a spade, three hearts, four clubs and a diamond. For a diamond to be right partner needs two out of two diamond honors *and* either the ♠A or a misguess from declarer, or perhaps the ♦AJ10 and the ♠A/♥K. A spade needs good spades and either the ♦A or ♥K.

One of the editors, who didn't know the hand, couldn't make up his mind and finally said that

whatever North did was okay by him. Let's leave it at that. Ino played a diamond and declarer claimed ten tricks a moment later. 7 imps to China instead of five the other way; the lead was up to 12 imps.

Bd: 64
Dlr: West
Vul: E/W

North
♠ A4
♥ KQ32
♦ 65
♣ 109763

West
♠ J10753
♥ 864
♦ 102
♣ AKQ

East
♠ KQ86
♥ AJ107
♦ J9
♣ 854

South
♠ 92
♥ 95
♦ AKQ8743
♣ J2

Open Room

West	North	East	South
Chen	Sun	Furuta	Hongli
Pass	Pass	1♣	4♦
All Pass			

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
Wenfei	Ino	Liu	Imakura
Pass	Pass	1♥	4♦
Dbl.	Pass	4♠	All Pass

The last deal of the match was probably not going to overturn the Chinese lead—just as well given the torment that Liu was subject to. Having opened a four-card major for perhaps the first time in the event, she then had to decide if she was supposed to bid 4♠, which might easily be doubled and set 800, or pass out 4♦ and concede 510 or the like. Eventually she bid 4♠. There was no double, and thus no trouble; the defenders missed their heart ruff and collected only 100. Since Chen had judged excellently not to act (he could not stand a 4♥ response to the negative double) Japan had a final 4 imps to reduce the margin to 130-122. It may not have been the best played finals we've seen, but it was surely one of the most exciting.

There are faces I remember...



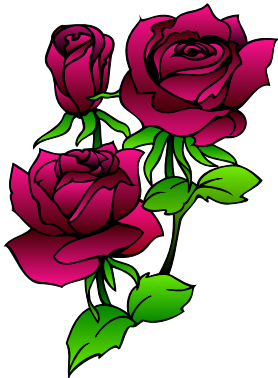
Narita Bus Schedule

From the Intercontinental
(120 minutes)
¥3,500

06:40
07:40
08:40
11:40
12:40
14:10

From the YCAT
(90 min)
¥3,500

Every 15-20 minutes from
05:15 to 19:30



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