



NEC Bridge Festival

Sunday, February 12, 2012
Bulletin Number 6

Editors: Rich Colker, Barry Rigal

Down Under is the 2012 NEC Cup Champion

Down Under (Sartaj Hans, Tony Nunn, Martin Reid, Peter Newell), a team comprised of a pair of Aussies and a pair of Kiwis, overcame a 15-imp first-quarter deficit to take the lead at the half by 3imps. They picked up 21 moreimps in the third quarter and added 1 more imp in the fourth for good measure to win the 2012 NEC Cup. The runners up, the Bulgarian All Stars (Valio Kovachev, Vladi Isporski, Manol Iliev, Hristo Hristov), kept the match close and highly competitive until the last few boards. Indeed, with just four boards remaining the All Stars were within 7imps of the lead but suffered two adverse swings, one of 6imps and the other of 11imps, on the next two boards to put the match out of reach. Congratulations to the winners and runners up and thanks from everyone here at the NEC and viewers around the world for such an exciting match. Coverage of the first three quarters begins on page 14. The final session will appear in Bulletin 7 tomorrow evening.



NEC Cup Winners

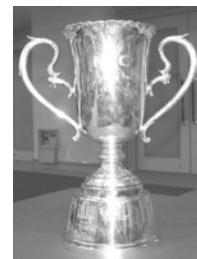


NEC Cup Runners-up



NEC Cup Final: Quarter-by-Quarter Results

Team	C/O	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	Final
Bulgarian All Stars	.5	34	18	20	27	99
Down Under		19	36	41	28	124



For the results of the Saturday Pair Games and Yokohama Swiss see pages 3-4

Convention Regulations for Side (Pair) Games

(An explanation for foreign players)

Unlike the NEC Cup, which is an international event, and the Yokohama Swiss Teams, in which all non-brown-sticker conventions are permitted, the Yokohama IMP Pairs and Asuka Cup are rated as Japanese regional or national events, for which JCBL regulations for domestic events apply strictly. We ask for your compliance with the regulations explained below. If you have any questions about what is allowed, please ask the JCBL staff. Please note that use of unauthorized conventions may be penalized. We thank you for your cooperation.

All side games at the NEC Bridge Festival (the Yokohama IMP Pairs and Asuka Cup) are restricted to "List C" conventions as described below. The use of the Multi-2♦ is strictly prohibited and will be subject to penalty.

LIST C (Yokohama IMP Pairs/Asuka Cup)

Opening Bids

- 1♣ or 1♦ may be used as an all-purpose opening bid (artificial or natural) promising a minimum of 10 HCP (e.g.: Precision 1♣ and 1♦; Polish 1♣, etc.)
- 2♣ artificial opening bid indicating one of:
 - a strong hand, balanced or unbalanced
 - a three-suiter with a minimum of 10 HCP (e.g., Roman 3-suiter, etc.)
- 2♦ artificial opening bid showing one of:
 - at least 5-4 distribution in the majors with a minimum of 10 HCP (e.g., Flannery, anti-Flannery etc.)
 - a strong hand, balanced or unbalanced
 - a three-suiter with a minimum of 10 HCP (e.g., Roman 3-suiter, etc.)
- Opening suit bid at the two level or higher indicating the bid suit, another known suit, a minimum of 10 HCP and at least 5-4 distribution in the suits.
- Opening notrump bid at the two level or higher indicating at least 5-4 distribution in the minors, 10 or more HCP.
- Opening 3NT bid indicating:
 - any solid suit or
 - a broken minor suit.
- Opening four-level bid transferring to a known suit (e.g., Namyats, etc.).
- Strong opening at the two level or higher, asking Ace, King, Queen, singleton, void, trump quality.

Responses and Rebids

- 1♦ as a forcing, artificial response to 1♣.
- 1NT response to a major-suit opening bid, forcing for one round; may not guarantee game invitational or better values.
- Conventional responses which guarantee game forcing or better values. May not be part of a relay system.
- 2♣ or 2♦ response to 3rd- or 4th-seat major-suit opener asking the quality of the opening bid.
- Single or higher jump shifts (including into notrump) to indicate a raise or to force to game.
- All responses to;
 - artificial strong opening bids with 15 HCP or more.
 - opening bids of 2♣ or higher (weak 2s must guarantee 10 opening points: opening points=HCP + number of cards in longest suit).

- All constructive calls starting with the opening bidder's second call.
- Calls that ask for aces, kings, queens, singletons, voids, trump quality and responses thereto.
- All calls after a natural notrump (including those that have two non-consecutive ranges, neither of which exceeds 3 HCP). No conventional responses are allowed over natural notrump bids with a lower limit of fewer than 10 HCP or with a range of greater than 5 HCP.

Competitive Bids

- Any conventional balancing calls.
- Conventional doubles and redoubles and responses (including free bids) thereto.
- Notrump overcall for either:
 - two-suited takeout showing at least 5-4 distribution and at least one known suit. (At the 4 level or higher there is no requirement to have a known suit.)
 - three-suited takeout (as with a takeout double, at least 3 cards in each of the 3 suits).
- Jump overcalls into a suit to indicate at least 5-4 distribution in two known suits, and responses thereto.
- Cuebid of an opponent's suit and responses thereto, except that a cuebid that could be weak, directly over an opening bid, must show at least one known suit.
- Comic 1NT overcall.
- Defense to:
 - conventional calls (including takeout doubles).
 - natural notrump opening bids and overcalls.
 - opening bids of 2♣ or higher.
- Nos. 5 through 9 under "Responses and Rebids" above apply to both pairs.
- Transfer overcall to show a specified suit at the four level.

Carding

- All leads and signaling methods are approved except for: a) odd-even signals, b) encrypted signals, c) dual-message carding strategies, except on each defender's first discard, d) any method when the pair using it are deemed to be playing it in a manner which is not compatible with the maintenance of proper tempo.

LIST D (NEC Cup/Yokohama Swiss Teams)

Category 3 of WBF Systems Policy applies

Beginners Cup (under 20 MP) — 22 pairs

Rank	Names	Score
1	Chiyo Watanabe Kouu Mikami	109.00
2	Noriko Negishi Kiyoko Koizumi	108.00
3	Kinuko Sakurai Fumiko Miyazaki	105.00

Beginners Cup (under 5 MP) — 26 pairs

Rank	Names	Score
1	Miho Tanno Takehiko Takahashi	95.50
2	Hiroshi Kitamura Yoshikazu Ida	91.50
3	Kazuko Mishima Kiyomi Okukawa	90.50

Debutante Cup — 14 pairs

Rank	Names	Score
1	Osamu Akimoto Masatada Inooka	57.50
2	Hisaya Hattori Mitsuharu Yoshida	56.00
3	Kiyoshi Hasebe Kazuko Ozawa	54.50



Beginners Cup (under 5)



Debutante Cup



Beginners Cup (under 20)

Late score corrections in the Yokohama IMP Pairs have changed some of the rankings. The revised 1-14 rankings are:

Yokohama IMP Pairs (Revised) — 40 pairs

Rank	Names	Score
1	Gu Ling Lu Yan	1535
2	Shugo Tanaka Hiroki Yokoi	1448
3	Herstein Liu Patrick Huang	1160
4	Tadashi Imakura Shunsuke Morimura	975
5	Yasuko Kosaka Mark LaForge	731
6	Kenji Miyakuni Yukiko Tokunaga	685
7	Hwang Iyn Ryung Sung Kyung Hae	673
8	Ilsub Chung Taeho Cho	504
9	Mitsue Tajima Takahiro Kamiyo	501
10	JuiYiu Shih ChiMon Lin	499
11	Chen Dawei Kazuo Furuta	422
12	Kunio Ueda Ying Xiaoying	396
13	Kyoko Ohno Akihiko Yamada	361
14	Yoko Maruyama Keisuke Akama	348



Lu Yan — Gu Ling

Team Rosters: 17th NEC Cup

#	Team Name	Members
1	China Geely Auto:	Gui Shengyue, Zhang Banxiang, Yang Lixin, Dai Jianming, Zhuang Zejun
2	ONI-TAKA:	Masayuki Ino, Takahiko Hirata, Masaaki Takayama, Kazuhiko Yamada, Takeshi Niekawa, Tadashi Teramoto
3	Bulgarian All Stars:	Valio Kovachev, Vladi Isporski, Manol Iliev, Hristo Hristov
4	China Women 2:	Wang Wenfei, Wang Ping, Wang Liping, Wu Shaohong
5	NEDUK:	David Bakhshi, David Gold, Louk Verhees, Ricco van Prooijen
6	Oz Players:	Ron Klinger, Matt Mullamphy, Bill Jacobs, Ben Thompson
7	Stamatov:	Julian Stefanov, Vladimir Mihov, Jerry Stamatov, Diyan Danailov
8	Down Under:	Sartaj Hans, Tony Nunn, Martin Reid, Peter Newell

Yokohama Swiss Teams: Final Standings



Yokohama Swiss Teams Winners: Yeh Bros

Rank	VP Total	Team Members
1	165	Chen Yeh, JuiYiu Shih, ChiMou Lin, Herstein Liu, Patrick Huang, Grace Lin
2	156	Paul Hackett, Justin Hackett, Tom Hanlon, Hugh McGann
3	153	David Bakhshi, David Gold, Louk Verhees, Ricco van Prooijen
4	151	Ryo Okuno, Akira Ohara, Zhang Shudi, Fu Zhong
5	147	Wang Wenfei, Wang Ping, Wang Liping, Wu Shaohong
6	145	Lu Dong, Ju Chuancheng, Shi Zhengjun, Li Rui, Wang Yanhong, Shi Miao
7	144	Ron Klinger, Matt Mullamphy, Bill Jacobs, Ben Thompson
8	141	Yumiko Yamamoto, Mitsutaka Takemura, Tsutomu Nakamura, Koichiro Kurata
9	140	Robert Geller, Setsuko Ogihara, Hiroya Abe, Chieko Yamazaki
10	138	Kyoko Sengoku, Hiroki Yokoi, Shugo Tanaka, Takashi Matsuda
10	138	Yasuko Kosaka, Kazuo Takano, Keiko Enomoto, Kazuko Tsumori
12	137	Kyoko Ohno, Yoshiyuki Nakamura, Akihiko Yamada, Makoto Hirata
13	136	Gui Shengyue, Zhang Banxiang, Yang Lixin, Dai Jianming
13	136	Hiroaki Miura, Michiko Masuda, Akira Hotta, Daisuke Sugimoto
15	133	Julian Stefanov, Vladimir Mihov, Jerry Stamatov, Diyan Danailov
16	132	Keiko Matsuzaki, Taeko Kawamura, Yukiko Umezu, Etsuko Naito
16	132	Yuki Fukuyoshi, Takeshi Hanayama, Michiko Ono, Hiroko Ota
18	131	Sun Ming, Wang Hongli, Gu Ling, Lu Yan
19	129	Lusje Olha Bojoh, Julita Grace Tueje, Kristina Wahyu Murniati, Suci Amita Dewi
20	128	Chieko Ichikawa, Kuniko Saito, Atsuko Kurita, Yoshiko Murata
20	128	Kenji Miyakuni, Sakiko Naito, Ayako Miyakuni, Yukiko Tokunaga
20	128	Junko Yamashiro, Yoko Shimominami, Kazuko Okamoto, Miyako Miyazaki
20	128	Nobuko Matsubara, Sachiko Yamamura, Michiko Iwahashi, Hideyuki Sango
24	127	Takako Nakatani, Harue Iemori, Junko Tsubaki, Akiko Miyata
24	127	Mitsuko Tsuyama, Kiyoko Usui, Sachiko Ueno, Mamiko Odaira

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
(100 min)
¥3,500

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

The 7th Asia Pacific Bridge Federation Congress FUKUOKA, JAPAN, 2012



August 25th - September 2nd, 2012



APBF Team Championships (Open / Women / Senior / Youth)
APBF Open Pairs

The Japan Contract Bridge League would like to welcome our bridge friends from all over the world to participate in the 7th APBF Congress, now an OPEN event similar to the European Open Championships, which will be held in Fukuoka, Japan, from August 25th to September 2nd, 2012.

Fukuoka, a historical city located in the Kyushu island, has developed as the Asian Gateway, connected with direct flights from/to various Asian cities and with ferries from/to Busan, Korea. The venue of the 2012 Congress will be the Hilton Fukuoka Sea Hawk, the hotel well known as the largest convention and resort hotel in West Japan. We believe that all our friend players, coaches, and officials would love the relaxing atmosphere of the venue and the warmest welcome from the people of Fukuoka.

We look forward to seeing you all and share wonderful moments of bridge and friendship at the 2012 APBF Congress!

Japan Contract Bridge League
2012 APBF Congress Organizing Committee

Venue : Hilton Fukuoka Sea Hawk

The Hilton Fukuoka Sea Hawk is located in the city of Fukuoka, on Hakata bay, just 20 minutes drive from Fukuoka International Airport or downtown Fukuoka.

"2012 APBF" website
<http://www.jcbl.or.jp/apbf2012/>



Accommodation ... Reserve at **SPECIAL ROOM RATES** via 2012 APBF website !

- ◆ **Hilton Fukuoka Sea Hawk** - *Stay at the APBF venue!* <http://www.fukuokaseahawk.hilton.com/>
- ◆ **Hyatt Residential Suites Fukuoka** - *With kitchen and laundry/dryer machine!* <http://www.hyatt-rsf.co.jp/>

* All Youth team players participating in the APBF Championships, will be subsidized 2,000 yen per player per night (excluding NPC/coach) by the JCBL.

CONTACT: Japan Contract Bridge League, 2012 APBF Congress Organizing Committee
Phone: 81-3-3357-3741 Fax: 81-3-3357-7444 E-mail: apbf2012@jcbl.or.jp

Provisional Program

*The precise time schedule will be determined based on the final number of participating teams in each series.

APBF Congress Championships			Side-Games	
DATE	TIME	EVENT	TIME	EVENT
8/24 (Fri)	19:00-20:00	APBF Delegates' Meeting (1)		
8/25 (Sat)	10:00-11:00	Captains' Meeting		
	11:00-12:00	APBF Delegates' Meeting (2)		
	12:30-14:00	Opening Ceremony & Welcome Reception		
	14:30-22:00	APBF Open Pairs (Q1/Q2)		
8/26 (Sun)	10:00-17:30	APBF Open Pairs (F1/F2)		
	10:00-17:30	Open Pairs (Consolation)		
8/27 (Mon)	10:00-19:50	APBF Teams Qualifying (RR)		To be announced
8/28 (Tue)	10:00-19:50	APBF Teams Qualifying (RR)		To be announced
8/29 (Wed)	10:00-19:50	APBF Teams Qualifying (RR)		To be announced
8/30 (Thu)	10:00-19:50	APBF Teams Qualifying (RR)	10:00-17:30	Open Teams (Q1/Q2)
			10:00-17:30	△1000MP Teams (Q1/Q2)
8/31 (Fri)	10:00-19:50	APBF Teams Qualifying (RR)	10:00-17:30	Open Teams (F1/F2)
			10:00-17:30	△1000MP Teams (F1/F2)
			10:00-17:30	Stratified Pairs
9/ 1 (Sat)	10:00-19:50	APBF Teams Semi-Finals (KO)	10:00-17:30	Fukuoka Mayor's Cup (Q1/Q2) [Open Teams]
9/ 2 (Sun)	10:00-17:30	APBF Teams Final (KO)	10:00-17:30	Fukuoka Mayor's Cup (F1/F2) [Open Teams]
	18:30-21:30	Victory Banquet & Awards Ceremony	10:00-17:30	TV Nishinippon Cup [Open Pairs]



NEC Semi-finals (2nd half): NEDUK vs Bulgarian All Stars

by Barry Rigal

We conclude our coverage of the second half of the NEC Cup semi-finals.

Bd: 17 North
 Dlr: North ♠ 10
 Vul: None ♥ K98532
 ♦ KQ863
 ♣ 10

West
 ♠ Q753
 ♥ J107
 ♦ 1094
 ♣ 875

East
 ♠ AJ42
 ♥ ---
 ♦ AJ7
 ♣ KQJ932

South
 ♠ K986
 ♥ AQ64
 ♦ 52
 ♣ A64

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Iliev</i>	<i>v Prooijen</i>	<i>Hristov</i>	<i>Verhees</i>
	2♦(1)	Dbf	4♥
Pass	Pass	Dbf	All Pass
(1) ♦+♥			

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Bakhshi</i>	<i>Isporski</i>	<i>Gold</i>	<i>Kovachev</i>
	Pass	1♣	Dbf
Pass	4♥	Dbf	Pass
4♠	5♦	Pass	5♥
All Pass			

Both tables got the two red suits in, in their own ways. But whereas Gold's double of 4♥ was clearly for takeout, that was far less clear in the other room. East might have done better to bid clubs, then double (or, indeed, bid spades). Iliev crossed his fingers and hoped that his side had the wherewithal for four tricks on defense but with diamonds 3-3 all they could take were their two aces. Plus 690 meant 6imps for NEDUK, when no forcing pass was established in the other room (a sensible agreement, I think). NEDUK led 46-33 now.

ONI-TAKA started brightly on their path to recovering 33imps, playing 5♥x in one room and defending 5♥ in the other to gain 5imps. Both Norths opened the bidding and went to the five level on finding a fit but the Australian East felt obliged to double as a general indication that "They can't do that to me!" They could.

Bd: 18 North
 Dlr: East ♠ QJ9
 Vul: N/S ♥ K1083
 ♦ 84
 ♣ J932

West
 ♠ K76
 ♥ 752
 ♦ AKQJ
 ♣ K105

East
 ♠ 10543
 ♥ QJ964
 ♦ 7653
 ♣ ---

South
 ♠ A82
 ♥ A
 ♦ 1092
 ♣ AQ8764

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Iliev</i>	<i>v Prooijen</i>	<i>Hristov</i>	<i>Verhees</i>
		Pass	2♣
2NT	Pass	3♣	Dbf
Pass	Pass	3♥	Pass
3NT			

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Bakhshi</i>	<i>Isporski</i>	<i>Gold</i>	<i>Kovachev</i>
		Pass	1♣
1NT	Pass	2♦	Pass
2♥	Pass	Pass	Dbf
Pass	3♣	All Pass	

In the Open room Hristov bid Stayman over 2NT intending to pass the response, but the double messed up his timing. It was now no longer clear whether 3♥ should be weak or strong. Verhees had shown either clubs or spades and clubs, hence his double to confirm the hand-type. Van Prooijen must have been close to doubling 3NT but E/W might have escaped for -300 in either hearts or diamonds, I suppose. As it was the defenders had eight winners against 3NT but never got the ♥K; declarer escaped for -150. This only cost an imp when Kovachev backed into his opponents' auction to get his side to 3♣. Bakhshi had his four winners and that was all. Minus 110, but an imp for NEDUK, leading 47-33.

Here Australia bought the contract in both rooms, playing 3♣ for +110 and 3♦ down one (-50) on a club lead (declarer pitched a spade from dummy and later lost three hearts and a spade). 57-27 now for Down Under.

Bd: 19 North
 Dir: South ♠ 103
 Vul: E/W ♥ Q2
 ♦ 987
 ♣ AJ10832

West
 ♠ KQJ5
 ♥ J9753
 ♦ Q4
 ♣ K4

East
 ♠ 2
 ♥ A1064
 ♦ AJ10532
 ♣ Q7

South
 ♠ A98764
 ♥ K8
 ♦ K6
 ♣ 965

Bd: 20 North
 Dir: West ♠ 1062
 Vul: Both ♥ 104
 ♦ Q6
 ♣ KJ9632

West
 ♠ AQ854
 ♥ 85
 ♦ 532
 ♣ 1085

East
 ♠ 97
 ♥ Q973
 ♦ A109
 ♣ AQ74

South
 ♠ KJ3
 ♥ AKJ62
 ♦ KJ874
 ♣ ---

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Iliev</i>	<i>v Prooijen</i>	<i>Hristov</i>	<i>Verhees</i>

Pass	1NT	Dbl	2♠
4♥	All Pass		

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Bakhshi</i>	<i>Isporski</i>	<i>Gold</i>	<i>Kovachev</i>

Pass	1NT	2♦	Pass
2NT	3♣	Pass	Pass
3♦	Pass	Pass	4♣
All Pass			

The Bulgarians won the bidding battle here but lost the war — but it was close. Gold's decision to bid 2♦ over 1NT has the merit of simplifying the auction but it lost the heart fit for good. Bakhshi competed to 3♦ but sold out to Kovachev's effervescent balance of 4♣. The defenders led spades and in the fulness of time scored a trick in each suit.

While 4♥ appears hopeless, Iliev gave himself a decent chance. He got a spade lead and a club shift to the ace for a club return. He won in hand and played out his top spades. Van Prooijen discarded, though I think he knew his partner had the ♥K or he could not beat the contract. Now declarer played a heart to the ace and to avoid being endplayed Verhees unblocked the ♥K to let his partner in for the diamond play. Nicely done. 4 imps to NEDUK, to make it 51-33.

Nunn-Hans with the E/W cards sold out to 3♣ when the auction followed the one in the Closed Room till Nunn passed 3♣ rather than bidding 3♦. Minus 110 was still good enough for a 5 imp gain since Yamada (West) jumped to 3NT at his second turn when he heard his partner come in with 2♦. On a club lead declarer had no choice but to finesse in diamonds and go three down when it lost.

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Iliev</i>	<i>v Prooijen</i>	<i>Hristov</i>	<i>Verhees</i>

Pass	Pass	1♦	1♥
1♠	2♣	Pass	2♦
Pass	2♥	Pass	2NT
Pass	3♣	Pass	3♦
Pass	3♥	Pass	

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Bakhshi</i>	<i>Isporski</i>	<i>Gold</i>	<i>Kovachev</i>

Pass	Pass	1♣	2NT
Pass	3♦	All Pass	

You can decide if you prefer South's simple route in the Closed Room or his complex one in the other room. Kovachev's decision to treat his hand as two-suited looks wrong to me both on values and shape. If I had done that I would surely have bid 3♠ over 3♦. That might have been doubled by West and 3NT would have been hopeless (see below). There again, 3♦ was about to go down when Gold led the ace and a second diamond. Isporski won and led a spade to the king and ace, and now the spade ruff sets the hand. But Bakhshi returned a third diamond and declarer now conceded just a heart and a spade. It is hard to blame either defender here; had Gold led a low diamond declarer wins in hand and can perhaps exploit his powerful ♦6 to ruff a heart.

The defense to 3♥ led a club: nine, queen, ruff. Declarer played a diamond to the queen and ace and now E/W took two spades and a spade ruff. However, declarer could ruff a diamond to dummy to take the trump finesse and make +140. The set score was 12-0 and NEDUK led the All Stars 52-33.

Newell-Reid played the hand in a sedate 2♥ when East bid clubs, West bid spades, and South bid the red suits. His +140 went well with +300 from the other room, where Teramoto had followed the recommended but unsuccessful line of bidding 2NT

followed by the 3♠ shape description over 3♦. Nunn led a club to his partner's queen and ducked the spade return. That let the defenders take their three minor-suit winners and four spades in good order. The lead was up to 45 imps now.

Bd: 21 North
 Dlr: North ♠ KQ754
 Vul: N/S ♥ 962
 ♦ ---
 ♣ KQJ42

West
 ♠ A62
 ♥ KQJ
 ♦ 108742
 ♣ 83

East
 ♠ J3
 ♥ A1085
 ♦ 963
 ♣ A976

South
 ♠ 1098
 ♥ 743
 ♦ AKQJ5
 ♣ 105

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Iliev</i>	<i>v Prooijen</i>	<i>Hristov</i>	<i>Verhees</i>
	2♣	Pass	2♦
Pass	2♠	Pass	3♠
Pass	4♠	All Pass	

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Bakhshi</i>	<i>Isporski</i>	<i>Gold</i>	<i>Kovachev</i>
	1♠	Pass	2♥(♠)
Pass	4♠	All Pass	

When fate deals you a hand like East's to lead from it is hard not to feel that someone up there really doesn't like you. Both Easts picked a small diamond and declarer pitched all his hearts and went after clubs. In one room van Prooijen let Hristov score his ♠J by leading out trumps from hand. In the other room Isporski played a sort of cross-ruff and when in with the ♠A Bakhshi played on hearts to let declarer draw trumps and make +650. 1 imp for the All Stars, down 18 now.

No swing at 650 in our other match (but Newell-Reid dodged a bullet when despite their transfer openings and responses they still managed to get North to declare 4♠; well done, I think).



"My hobby is hand gestures."

Bd: 22 North
 Dlr: East ♠ A1094
 Vul: E/W ♥ K532
 ♦ 104
 ♣ KJ2

West
 ♠ 62
 ♥ AQ9
 ♦ K9632
 ♣ Q54

East
 ♠ KQJ75
 ♥ 10
 ♦ A85
 ♣ 10973

South
 ♠ 83
 ♥ J8764
 ♦ QJ7
 ♣ A86

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Iliev</i>	<i>v Prooijen</i>	<i>Hristov</i>	<i>Verhees</i>
		1♠	Pass
1NT	Pass	2♣	Pass
2NT	All Pass		

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Bakhshi</i>	<i>Isporski</i>	<i>Gold</i>	<i>Kovachev</i>
		Pass	Pass
Pass	1♣	1♠	Dbl
Rdbl	2♥	2♠	3♥
All Pass			

The Bulgarians declared the contract in both rooms, not for the first time, and held their losses in 3♥ to the obvious spade and two tricks in each red suit. Down one. 2NT on a low heart lead to the jack and queen allowed Iliev to lead a spade to the king, a diamond to the king, and a spade to the queen. With two spade winners in the bank he shifted his attention back to diamonds and set up that suit while he still had the heart entry. There was nothing the defenders could do after the lead, I think. And why wouldn't you lead your nine-card fit? 2 imps to the All Stars, down 52-36.

4 more imps went Down Under's way when Niekawa as East sold out to 2♥ and found he could not beat it while Nunn-Hans pushed their opponents to 3♥. The lead was 49 imp now.



"Mine says the dim sum comes with both wasabe and rice."

Bd: 23
 Dir: South
 Vul: Both

North
 ♠ KJ
 ♥ J109
 ♦ J10762
 ♣ 1073

West
 ♠ 986
 ♥ AK83
 ♦ AQ5
 ♣ Q52

East
 ♠ A103
 ♥ 765
 ♦ 4
 ♣ AK9864

South
 ♠ Q7542
 ♥ Q42
 ♦ K983
 ♣ J

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Iliev</i>	<i>v Prooijen</i>	<i>Hristov</i>	<i>Verhees</i>
1♦	Pass	2♣	Pass
2♥	Pass	3NT	All Pass

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Bakhshi</i>	<i>Isporski</i>	<i>Gold</i>	<i>Kovachev</i>
1NT	Pass	2♣	Pass
2♦	Pass	3♣	Pass
4♣	Pass	4♦	Pass
4♥	Pass	4♠	Pass
5♣	All Pass		

The Bulgarians won the battle, in a sense, when they played 3NT without exploring slam, though why Iliev did not open 1NT is a story for another day. On a spade lead Hristov won the second round and peeled off the clubs, then managed to duck a heart to North at the end to bring in the second overtrick.

5♣ is a distinctly delicate contract on a spade lead, but with the diamond finesse working it cannot be defeated. Kovachev led the ♣J and declarer essentially duplicated the play at notrump by running clubs and playing out hearts from the top. Now he did not need the diamond finesse. 2 imps to All Stars, down 13.

ONI-TAKA gained an overtrick imp but needed more — in a hurry. The lead was 48 and there were only nine deals to go.



"Now all together, 'Hallelujah!'"

Bd: 24
 Dir: West
 Vul: None

North
 ♠ AQJ95
 ♥ KQ10987
 ♦ 2
 ♣ 10

West
 ♠ 1042
 ♥ 54
 ♦ 863
 ♣ J9842

East
 ♠ K6
 ♥ A2
 ♦ AKQ10954
 ♣ K6

South
 ♠ 873
 ♥ J63
 ♦ J7
 ♣ AQ753

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Iliev</i>	<i>v Prooijen</i>	<i>Hristov</i>	<i>Verhees</i>
Pass	1♠	Dbl	Rdbl.
Pass	4♥/♠	5♦	All Pass

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Bakhshi</i>	<i>Isporski</i>	<i>Gold</i>	<i>Kovachev</i>
Pass	1♠	3NT	Pass
Pass	4♥	All Pass	

What did we say about Bulgaria declaring the hands in both rooms? Here too they bought the hand in game undoubled in both rooms (Kovachev doing well to pass 4♥ and play the nine-card fit; Gold doing well not to double game to show his extras). It is certainly not clear that anyone had a double of 5♦ in the Closed Room but of course that would have held the loss on the board. 8 more imps, and now we were down to single digits. NEDUK led 52-46.

Both tables in our second match played 4♥ here. An overtrick for Down Under put the lead back to 49.

Bd: 25
 Dir: North
 Vul: E/W

North
 ♠ QJ9872
 ♥ 95
 ♦ J97
 ♣ 107

West
 ♠ A4
 ♥ AJ104
 ♦ 104
 ♣ AKJ65

East
 ♠ K3
 ♥ Q73
 ♦ AQ8532
 ♣ 84

South
 ♠ 1065
 ♥ K862
 ♦ K6
 ♣ Q932

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Iliev</i>	<i>v Prooijen</i>	<i>Hristov</i>	<i>Verhees</i>
	2♠	Pass	3♠
Dbl	Pass	3NT	All Pass

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Bakhshi</i>	<i>Isporski</i>	<i>Gold</i>	<i>Kovachev</i>
	Pass	1♦	Pass
2♣	Pass	2♦	Pass
2♥	Pass	2NT	Pass
3♦	Pass	3NT	All Pass

Some excellent judgment on what was rather a deathtrap hand kept both sides comfortably low in our featured match. Note especially the restraint of the Bulgarian North not to open at favorable vulnerability and of Hristov in the Open Room not to overcall 3♦. Equally, both Bakhshi and Gold might have done more or differently to reach 4NT here (change the ♦2 to the ♦J and slam is really quite good for E/W). 3NT was quite high enough today. Having “underbid” it, Gold proceeded to overplay it. He won the heart lead in hand and repeated the heart finesse, then led a diamond to the seven and eight. That gave him 12 tricks but only 2 imps, though it could easily have been more. On a spade lead against 3NT I think you are supposed to play on clubs, then fall back on hearts. Hristov won the spade lead in dummy and passed the ♦10, covered all around (had North ducked what would declarer have done, I wonder?). Eventually Hristov repeated the diamond finesse and emerged with 10 tricks, but not without a bad moment or two, I’ll wager. Still, 2 imps to NEDUK put them back up by 8.

In our other match ONI-TAKA finally put a big swing on the board. Newell-Reid got the spades in and sold out to 3NT on the Open Room auction. Declarer, Niekawa, won the spade lead, took a club finesse, then set up hearts for nine winners. In 4NT Nunn as West won the spade lead and led a diamond to the queen and king. When it lost he needed both club and heart finesses and a break and could not quite do it, since there was no way to duck a trick and rectify the count. 12 imps left the lead at 37.



“Are you talkin’ to me? Are you talkin’ to *me*?”

Bd: 26	North
Dlr: East	♠ 92
Vul: Both	♥ 108432
	♦ 63
	♣ AQJ2

West	East
♠ AQ1084	♠ K653
♥ K7	♥ AQ6
♦ AQ105	♦ 842
♣ 74	♣ 853
South	
♠ J7	
♥ J95	
♦ KJ97	
♣ K1096	

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Iliev</i>	<i>v Prooijen</i>	<i>Hristov</i>	<i>Verhees</i>
		Pass	Pass
1♠	Pass	2♠	Pass
4♠	All Pass		

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Bakhshi</i>	<i>Isporski</i>	<i>Gold</i>	<i>Kovachev</i>
		Pass	Pass
1♠	Pass	2♥(♠)	Pass
4♠	All Pass		

All four Norths led a heart and the declarers drew trumps, shook a club on the hearts, led a diamond to the ten, then crossed back to dummy in trumps to repeat the diamond finesse. Plus 680 and no swing anywhere.

Bd: 27	North
Dlr: South	♠ KQ965
Vul: None	♥ 82
	♦ 74
	♣ QJ73

West	East
♠ J83	♠ A10
♥ 765	♥ K3
♦ 8	♦ AKQJ10965
♣ AK9862	♣ 4
South	
♠ 742	
♥ AQJ1094	
♦ 32	
♣ 105	

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Iliev</i>	<i>v Prooijen</i>	<i>Hristov</i>	<i>Verhees</i>
		Pass	Pass
3♣	Pass	3NT	All Pass

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Bakhshi</i>	<i>Isporski</i>	<i>Gold</i>	<i>Kovachev</i>
			2♥
Pass	Pass	Dbl	Pass
3♣	Pass	3NT	All Pass

Kovachev had bid hearts so he led spades. Verhees had not (2♥ is not a weak two) so he did lead hearts. Gold had 11 top tricks and no more, Hristov had a trick and a tempo to squeeze North in the black suits for +520. 2 imps made it 54-48 for NEDUK.

Teramoto found the spade lead to hold 3NT to +460 but in the other room Niekawa had jumped to 5♦ over 2♥ and he made +420 for an imp to Down Under. Time was running out; 37 imps needed in five deals.

Bd: 28	North
Dlr: West	♠ 98743
Vul: N/S	♥ 932
	♦ AKJ5
	♣ Q

West	East
♠ QJ	♠ AK65
♥ KQ87	♥ A10
♦ Q107642	♦ 8
♣ K	♣ A96542

South
♠ 102
♥ J654
♦ 93
♣ J10873

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Iliev</i>	<i>v Prooijen</i>	<i>Hristov</i>	<i>Verhees</i>
1♦	Pass	2♣	Pass
2♦	Pass	2♠	Pass
3NT	All Pass		

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Bakhshi</i>	<i>Isporski</i>	<i>Gold</i>	<i>Kovachev</i>
1♦	Pass	2♣	Pass
2♦	Pass	2♠	Pass
2NT	Pass	3NT	All Pass

Iliev's somewhat uncouth jump to 3NT ended the auction. Bakhshi's 2NT suggested a minimum or real extras and Gold was not interested anymore. On a low heart lead from North Iliev had to deal with some serious blockage issues. He chose to play the ♥A and run the ♦8, covered by the nine (good), ten and jack. Now North returned the ♥9 and declarer was home free. He won in hand and drove out the diamond honors with spade and club cards to get back to hand as many times as necessary.

In the other room the ♥9 lead gave declarer nine top tricks: four spades, four hearts and one club. He tried to set up clubs for overtricks but was held to nine, and that gave All Stars one more imp. The score was 54-49 now for NEDUK.

ONI-TAKA gained the overtrick imp to make the margin 36.

Bd: 29	North
Dlr: North	♠ KJ72
Vul: Both	♥ KJ82
	♦ 854
	♣ 85

West	East
♠ 9863	♠ AQ54
♥ AQ6	♥ 954
♦ Q	♦ A62
♣ AKQJ7	♣ 964

South
♠ 10
♥ 1073
♦ KJ10973
♣ 1032

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Iliev</i>	<i>v Prooijen</i>	<i>Hristov</i>	<i>Verhees</i>
	Pass	Pass	Pass
1♣	Pass	1♥(BAL)	2♦
3♣	Pass	3♦	Pass
3♠	Pass	4♦	Pass
4♠	All Pass		

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Bakhshi</i>	<i>Isporski</i>	<i>Gold</i>	<i>Kovachev</i>
	Pass	Pass	Pass
1♣	Pass	1♠	2♦
4♠	All Pass		

When Iliev declared 4♠ from the West seat on a diamond lead he rose with the ♦A, ruffed a diamond, led a spade to the queen and ruffed another diamond, conceding just two trump tricks when spades did not break. Gold had a far harder task on the devilish lead of the ♥10 from Kovachev; well done, him. Declarer covered and Isporski won to lead back a diamond. Gold took the ace and elected to play South for the ♠K. He ducked a spade to South who played a second heart. Gold put up the ace and led a spade, covering North's card. He expected that South might win and have no more hearts left, but the good news of the finesse succeeding was more than outweighed by the fact that North had a trump trick and only two clubs, so he had to get in by ruffing a club before declarer could pitch his remaining heart loser. 13 imps from nowhere for Kovachev; 62-54, All Stars.

Reid led a heart against East's 4♠, so the defense was still in with a shout. But Newell shifted to a low trump at the second trick. Declarer put in the queen and could now play clubs with a tempo in hand. He made +620 whereas Teramoto led a diamond to concede 650.

Bd: 30
Dlr: East
Vul: None

North
♠ AJ109
♥ AK852
♦ 1053
♣ K

West
♠ K
♥ J74
♦ A86
♣ 1098654

East
♠ 6543
♥ ---
♦ QJ97
♣ QJ732

South
♠ Q872
♥ Q10963
♦ K42
♣ A

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Iliev</i>	<i>v Prooijen</i>	<i>Hristov</i>	<i>Verhees</i>

Pass	2♣(R)	Pass	1♠
Pass	2♠	Pass	2♥
Pass	3♦	Pass	3♣
Pass	4♥	All Pass	3♥

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Bakhshi</i>	<i>Isporski</i>	<i>Gold</i>	<i>Kovachev</i>

Pass	2♣(R)	Pass	1♥
Pass	3♣	Pass	2NT
Pass	3♥	Pass	3♦
Pass	4♥	All Pass	3♠

Both tables relayed successfully to stop in 4♥. Bakhshi took a shot at underleading his ♦A and that was an overtrick for All Stars, leading by 9 now. In our other match both tables conceded 450; no swing.

Bd: 31
Dlr: South
Vul: N/S

North
♠ 10964
♥ A105
♦ A9
♣ 10543

West
♠ QJ52
♥ J
♦ 832
♣ AJ762

East
♠ A873
♥ K86
♦ K1054
♣ KQ

South
♠ K
♥ Q97432
♦ QJ76
♣ 98

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Iliev</i>	<i>v Prooijen</i>	<i>Hristov</i>	<i>Verhees</i>

Pass	Pass	1NT	Pass
2♣	Pass	2♠	Pass
4♠	Pass		

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Bakhshi</i>	<i>Isporski</i>	<i>Gold</i>	<i>Kovachev</i>

Pass	Pass	1NT	Pass
3♥(1)	Pass	3♠	Pass
4♠	Pass		

(1) Three suited short hearts

Bakhshi showed a three-suiter (either 5-4 minors or 4441 or this pattern) and Gold backed into spades. Kovachev led hearts, trying for the force, and Isporski shifted to ace and another diamond. Gold won, cashed the ♥K to discard the diamond loser, and then had to tackle trumps. When he led a small trump South won and played a third diamond, promoting a trump for North. The play went in identical fashion up to trick six, but van Prooijen revoked by playing a club on the first trump and corrected it in time. Although there were no trick penalties, Verhees had to lead a club in the ending and the trump promotion got away. It was 20imps now for All Stars.

In the other match both tables led the ♦Q against 4♠, which looks best. Declarer won and played the ♠A...what's the problem? Declarer could unblock clubs and pitch losers from hand on the run of the clubs to bring home +420 with the minimum of discomfort.

Bd: 32
Dlr: West
Vul: E/W

North
♠ 5
♥ K32
♦ K3
♣ KQ98642

West
♠ A1097
♥ AQ75
♦ J9852
♣ ---

East
♠ KQJ42
♥ J1094
♦ 6
♣ AJ7

South
♠ 863
♥ 86
♦ AQ1074
♣ 1053

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Iliev</i>	<i>v Prooijen</i>	<i>Hristov</i>	<i>Verhees</i>

1♦	2♣	DbI	3♣
3♠	5♣	DbI	All Pass

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Bakhshi</i>	<i>Isporski</i>	<i>Gold</i>	<i>Kovachev</i>
1♦	3♣	3♠	4♣
4♠	All Pass		

The Bulgarians missed the sacrifice when North felt he had done his all by his immediate action, while van Prooijen started low and then committed to the five level. NEDUK gained 8imps but All Stars had won a low scoring match by 12.

ONI-TAKA found the save to pick up the same 8imps and at least have the moral victory of winning the set. But Down Under had won the war.



"I've got a secret."

NEC Final (1st Quarter): Bulgarian All Stars vs Down Under

by Rich Colker

Bd: 1
 Dlr: North
 Vul: None

North
 ♠ 87432
 ♥ ---
 ♦ A109753
 ♣ A2

West
 ♠ AQ106
 ♥ KQ103
 ♦ 2
 ♣ 9874

East
 ♠ KJ
 ♥ J92
 ♦ KQ84
 ♣ Q653

South
 ♠ 95
 ♥ A87654
 ♦ J6
 ♣ KJ10

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Nunn</i>	<i>Isporski</i>	<i>Hans</i>	<i>Kovachev</i>
	Pass	1NT	2♦(♥)
Dbf	Pass	Pass	2♥
All Pass			

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Iliev</i>	<i>Newell</i>	<i>Hristov</i>	<i>Reid</i>
	1♥(♠)	Pass	2♦(1M)
All Pass			

Isporski's pass of 2♦x may or may not have shown a strong desire to play diamonds (though it surely showed a desire not to play in at least one of the majors, or he would have bid a pass-or-correct 2♥) — some pairs play a pass as simply neutral. When that came back around to Kovachev he bid his suit, perhaps because Isporski's pass didn't guarantee a real diamond suit or perhaps because he had not yet

shown which major was his and because he had six of them. In any case the 6-0 fit was probably not going to play as well as the 6-2 fit would have, but playing undoubled certainly has an attraction.

Nunn got off to the expected diamond lead, Kovachev winning the ace and exiting with a spade to Hans' king. Hans cashed the ♦Q (Nunn pitching the ♣9), then played the ♦K, ruffed with the eight and over-ruffed with the ten. Next Nunn cashed the ♠A and switched to the ♣8, perhaps not the best choice. Kovachev ducked, took Nunn's queen with his king, and played ace and a trump. When Nunn's queen held he was able to play the ♠10 for Hans to ruff with the ♥J and the defense still had a trump trick coming for down two, +100. Maybe a double of 2♥ by someone wouldn't have been such a bad idea. (Or maybe Nunn thought his pass of 2♥ was forcing.)

A temporarily dyslexic Editor who shall remain nameless saw nothing strange about the Closed Room auction — North bid his diamonds and South bid his hearts! Oh, well, at least the Kiwis knew how to find *their* 6-2 fit. Iliev led the ♣9 and Reid unexpectedly hopped up with the ace to lead a spade from dummy. Hristov stepped up with the king, which held, and tabled a low diamond — presumably to stop declarer from ruffing spades in hand. That probably did not work as well as was hoped when dummy's seven won the trick. Hristov won a second spade and thought better about playing a second trump, instead trying a club. Reid stepped up with the king (why?), eschewing the extra club trick being presented him, cashed the ♥A pitching a spade, ruffed a heart, ruffed a spade in

hand (Hristov pitching his last heart), ruffed a club, and called for a spade. Hristov ruffed and the deal mercifully ended when nine tricks were agreed for declarer; +110. First blood, 5 imps Down Under.

Bd: 2 North
 Dlr: East ♠ Q64
 Vul: N/S ♥ AJ65
 ♦ A83
 ♣ AK10

West	East
♠ K53	♠ A107
♥ Q73	♥ K108
♦ KQJ7	♦ 1042
♣ 952	♣ 8743
	South
	♠ J982
	♥ 942
	♦ 965
	♣ QJ6

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Nunn</i>	<i>Isporski</i>	<i>Hans</i>	<i>Kovachev</i>
		Pass	Pass
Pass	1♣	Pass	1♦
Pass	1NT	All Pass	

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Iliev</i>	<i>Newell</i>	<i>Hristov</i>	<i>Reid</i>
		Pass	Pass
1♦	Dbl	Pass	1♠
Pass	1NT	All Pass	

N/S in both rooms played 1NT with their four-triple-three hands facing one another and no eight-card fit. In the Open Room Hristov led a low club, which did not exactly terrorize declarer. Newell won the king in hand and tabled the ♠Q, which held. So far, so good. A low spade now went to the ten, jack and king and Iliev rather woodenly switched back to clubs when his diamonds seem (at least to us) to scream "Me, me!" (This is especially so when the partnership's preferred opening lead from a suit such as 8743 is the three.) Newell carefully won the ♣A in hand (preserving the ♣Q as an entry to the fourth spade) and played a third spade. Hristov won the ace perforce and triumphantly played a third club, finally establishing his ♣4 as a winner. In dummy with the ♣Q Newell cashed the ♠9 and eventually scored his two red-suit aces as well for +90.

In the Closed Room, where Nunn had gotten in his third-seat diamond lead director, Hans led the ♦2. Nunn's jack held and he continued the suit, Isporski winning and exiting with a diamond. Nunn won, cashed his last diamond (♠4, ♣8, ♥2), and with a choice to make between the majors led a spade

(Hans' ♣8 discouraged clubs and appears to have had suit-preference implications) to the ace. A spade was returned, ducked to the queen and now Isporski simply cashed out for down one, -100. Another 5 imps to NEDUK, leading now 10-0.

Bd: 3 North
 Dlr: South ♠ J5
 Vul: E/W ♥ 109
 ♦ J63
 ♣ Q87543

West	East
♠ 84	♠ AK963
♥ Q86	♥ KJ54
♦ A97542	♦ KQ10
♣ K9	♣ A
	South
	♠ Q1072
	♥ A732
	♦ 8
	♣ J1062

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Nunn</i>	<i>Isporski</i>	<i>Hans</i>	<i>Kovachev</i>
			Pass
Pass	Pass	1♠	Pass
1NT	Pass	2♣(1)	Pass
2♦(2)	Pass	2♥(3)	Pass
2♠(4)	Pass	2NT(5)	Pass
3♣(6)	Pass	3NT(7)	All Pass

(1) Gazzilli, 16+ or ♠+♣; (2) 8+ hcp
 (3) Puppet to 2♠; (4) As instructed
 (5) 5♠+4♥; (6) Ask; (7) BAL (5=4=2=2)

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Iliev</i>	<i>Newell</i>	<i>Hristov</i>	<i>Reid</i>
			Pass
Pass	Pass	1♣(STR)	Pass
1♥(1)	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♦	Pass	2♥	Pass
2NT	Pass	3♦	Pass
3♥	Pass	6♦	All Pass

(1) 3 controls (we think)

In the Open Room Hans eventually decided to treat his hand as balanced after showing 5-4 in the majors, which may explain why Nunn decided not to pursue a possible diamond contract. The brunt of the blame therefore seems to rest on Hans' decision to treat his hand as balanced rather than to bid out his shape (3♦ over 3♣ would have shown a non-specific 5=4=3-1 and Nunn could have asked which), after which Nunn would surely have inquired. There was not much to the play. Isporski led a club and Nunn tested diamonds, claiming 12 tricks when the suit broke (giving up the ♥A); +690.

In the Closed Room Iliev and Hristov conducted an auction equal in length, if not in artificial complexity, to the one in the Open Room, and landed in 6♦, which made easily for +1370. 12 imps to the All Stars, ahead now 12-10.

Bd: 4 North
 Dlr: West ♠ J42
 Vul: Both ♥ A82
 ♦ J7432
 ♣ K6

West	East
♠ AK7	♠ 98653
♥ Q96	♥ 10543
♦ 108	♦ 5
♣ AJ1032	♣ 754

South
 ♠ Q10
 ♥ KJ7
 ♦ AKQ96
 ♣ Q98

Open Room

West	North	East	South
Nunn	Isporski	Hans	Kovachev
1♣	Pass	Pass	3NT

All Pass

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
Iliev	Newell	Hristov	Reid
1NT	Pass	2♥(♠)	Pass
2♠	All Pass		

A system decision plus some luck propelled the Open Room All Stars into another big pick-up here. Nunn decided his 14 points and good five-card club suit were too good for a weak notrump, so he opened a natural 1♣. When this came around to Kovachev he made a bid that few would think of (it certainly would never have occurred to us) — 3NT. Fortunately for him, on the lie of the cards, with the spades being blocked and East lacking even a prayer of an entry, the contract was cold. Nunn led ace, king and a third spade and Kovachev diddled around in the diamond suit a bit before finally playing a club towards dummy. When Nunn flew with the ace Kovachev had 10 tricks for +630.

In the Closed Room Iliev did open the West hand 1NT and now Hristov could show his spades via a transfer. Reid was blown clear out of the auction, and settled for defending 2♠. To add injury to injury, the defense to 2♠ was anything but simple. Newell led the only suit capable of defeating 2♠: a diamond. Reid won and continued the suit, ruffed, and Iliev played a club to the jack and king. A trump now is the best defense (a heart to the king works too but South must then shift to a trump immediately), but Newell

returned his low club to the queen and ace and now declarer was home free (with the defense unable to force three heart tricks). He could draw trumps and take four clubs and four trump tricks for +110. (In practice Iliev drew only one round of trumps before playing the ♣10, but when Newell ruffed, this line reduced to the other. Had Newell pitched and had Iliev continued clubs without drawing one more trump the contract could have been set.) That was 12 more imps to the All Stars, leading now 24-10.

Bd: 5 North
 Dlr: North ♠ K10
 Vul: N/S ♥ K9
 ♦ KQJ10
 ♣ Q9842

West
 ♠ A9874
 ♥ Q865
 ♦ 7542
 ♣ ---

East
 ♠ J3
 ♥ J42
 ♦ 83
 ♣ AK10765

South
 ♠ Q652
 ♥ A1073
 ♦ A96
 ♣ J3

Open Room

West	North	East	South
Nunn	Isporski	Hans	Kovachev
Pass	1♦	2♣	Dbl
Pass	2NT	Pass	3NT

All Pass

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
Iliev	Newell	Hristov	Reid
Pass	1NT	Pass	2♣
Pass	2♦	Pass	3NT

All Pass

3NT does not look like anyone's idea of a great contract, but it is unbeatable when played by North. (If South is declarer a low heart lead is fatal, although in practice it would be difficult for West not to lead a spade.) The defense in both rooms was similar. Both Easts led a low club, declarer winning an intermediate spot as West discarded (a spade by Nunn, a diamond by Iliev). In the Open Room declarer now played three rounds of diamonds, ending in hand (East pitching a club), and exited with a low club to the king (West pitching his last diamond). Hans tried the ♠J. Declarer won in hand, cashed his last diamond, and set up his ninth trick by playing the ♠10; +600.

In the Closed Room there was an opportunity for a big swing. After winning the club lead in hand Newell immediately returned a low club to the king, Iliev

pitching a second diamond. Hristov got out with a diamond and Newell won the ace and led a spade. When Iliev followed low Newell had to rise with the king in order to insure his game, but he inserted the ten and now the stage was set for the contract to fail. Hristov won the jack and switched back to diamonds. Newell cashed out the suit (Iliev pitching one spade along the way), then led the ♠K to the ace. Iliev played back a spade to the queen and Newell returned the favor by playing the last spade to Iliev's nine, leaving the three-card ending below.

♠ --- ♥ K9 ♦ --- ♣ 9	♠ --- ♥ J2 ♦ --- ♣ A
♠ --- ♥ Q86 ♦ --- ♣ ---	♠ --- ♥ A107 ♦ --- ♣ ---

With four tricks already in for the defense Iliev simply needed to exit with his low heart to set 3NT. Instead he tabled the ♥Q. Newell won the king and when the jack appeared on the next round he wrote down +600 on his scorecard. A push; still 24-10 for the All Stars — but the Stars were shining just a little bit dimmer after that.

Bd: 6
 Dir: East
 Vul: E/W

North
 ♠ K10852
 ♥ Q3
 ♦ Q5
 ♣ KJ74

West ♠ Q9 ♥ AJ9872 ♦ AJ3 ♣ 105	East ♠ J4 ♥ K10654 ♦ K9876 ♣ 6
South ♠ A763 ♥ --- ♦ 1042 ♣ AQ9832	

Open Room

West	North	East	South
Nunn	Isporski	Hans	Kovachev
1♥	1♠	4♥	4♠
All Pass		Pass	1♣

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
Iliev	Newell	Hristov	Reid
4♥	5♣	2♥(♥+m)	3♣
		All Pass	

When Hans led his singleton club against 4♠ in the Open Room Isporski simply drew trumps and claimed 13 tricks; +510. Against 5♣ in the Closed Room Iliev knew his partner had the red suits and chose the right one to lead. He continued with a second diamond and declarer claimed +400. 3 more imps to the All Stars, who led 27-10.

Bd: 7
 Dir: South
 Vul: Both

North ♠ 74 ♥ A1074 ♦ AK964 ♣ Q10	East ♠ AK10862 ♥ 5 ♦ Q853 ♣ 84
West ♠ J953 ♥ KQ862 ♦ J7 ♣ 76	South ♠ Q ♥ J93 ♦ 102 ♣ AKJ9532

Open Room

West	North	East	South
Nunn	Isporski	Hans	Kovachev
Pass	5♣	All Pass	3♣

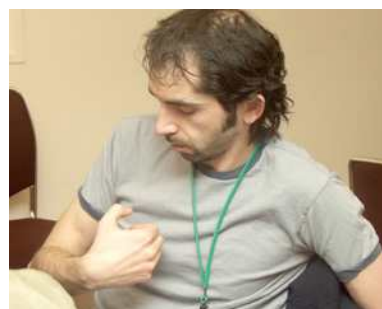
Closed Room

West	North	East	South
Iliev	Newell	Hristov	Reid
Pass	3♦(R)	3♠	3♣(1)
4♠	Dbl	All Pass	Pass

(1) 6+ clubs, 10-12 hcp

There wasn't much to the play in 5♣ in the Open Room. Nunn led the ♥K and declarer claimed 11 tricks for +600.

Against 4♠x in the Closed Room Reid cashed the ♣AK, then found the obvious (from the sight of dummy) diamond shift. Newell cashed the ace-king of that suit and sat back waiting for his heart trick for +500 but a 3-imp loss. All Stars, 30-10.



"Ya gotta have heart — no matter which side of your chest it's on."

Bd: 8
 Dir: West
 Vul: None

North
 ♠ Q865
 ♥ 1084
 ♦ A3
 ♣ 10876

West
 ♠ KJ942
 ♥ 7
 ♦ J1064
 ♣ 932

East
 ♠ 10
 ♥ 532
 ♦ K952
 ♣ AKQJ5

South
 ♠ A73
 ♥ AKQJ96
 ♦ Q87
 ♣ 4

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Nunn</i>	<i>Isporski</i>	<i>Hans</i>	<i>Kovachev</i>
Pass	Pass	1♣	1♥
1♠	2♥	Pass	4♥

All Pass

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Iliev</i>	<i>Newell</i>	<i>Hristov</i>	<i>Reid</i>
Pass	2♦(♠+m)	3♣	3♥
Pass	4♥	All Pass	

The only danger to the play in 4♥ was for East to win a club lead and switch to his singleton ♠10. Now declarer must rise with the ace to avoid giving up a ruff — and the contract. And that's precisely what the South player did at both tables. A push at 420; still 30-10 All Stars.

Bd: 9
 Dir: North
 Vul: E/W

North
 ♠ Q98
 ♥ 542
 ♦ 764
 ♣ AQ72

West
 ♠ 42
 ♥ 87
 ♦ J103
 ♣ K98653

East
 ♠ KJ10
 ♥ J109
 ♦ AQ852
 ♣ 104

South
 ♠ A7653
 ♥ AKQ63
 ♦ K9
 ♣ J

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Nunn</i>	<i>Isporski</i>	<i>Hans</i>	<i>Kovachev</i>
Pass	Pass	1NT	Dbf
Rdbl(1)	Pass	2♣	Dbf(T/O)
Pass(♣)	Pass	2♦	Pass
Pass	Dbf	All Pass	

(1) Puppet to 2♣, usually a one-suiter

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Iliev</i>	<i>Newell</i>	<i>Hristov</i>	<i>Reid</i>
Pass	Pass	1♦	1♠
All Pass	2♠	Pass	4♠

The Open Room auction leaves one of your Editors scratching his head with wonder. Yes, sometimes a 2♣ bidder will not really have long clubs but if the partnership has ways to show various two-suiters, as this one does, then West will almost always have at least five clubs (unless he has a 3=3=3=4 Yarborough and the partnership runs with such hands). The chances of 2♦ being a better spot go way down if West really does have clubs, and here, with six of them, he is a 2-to-1 underdog to have more than two diamonds — and may have fewer. Scratch, scratch. And on the actual hand 2♣x figured to go down just a single trick. Against 2♦x Kovachev led the ♥K, then switched to the ♣10, K, A, 4. Isporski cashed the ♣Q and led a third round at which point play ceased and declarer was given six tricks; down two, -500.

There was really nothing to the play in 4♠, declarer having just two trumps and a diamond (which was led) to lose. Plus 420 sent another 2 imps to the All Star (and it could have been far worse), leading now 32-10.

Bd: 10
 Dir: East
 Vul: Both

North
 ♠ AQ10
 ♥ AKJ3
 ♦ 1073
 ♣ 742

West
 ♠ K75
 ♥ Q985
 ♦ 962
 ♣ K63

East
 ♠ J92
 ♥ 6
 ♦ AKQ854
 ♣ A98

South
 ♠ 8643
 ♥ 10742
 ♦ J
 ♣ QJ105

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Nunn</i>	<i>Isporski</i>	<i>Hans</i>	<i>Kovachev</i>
1♥	Pass	1♦	Pass
Pass	Pass	2♦	All Pass

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Iliev</i>	<i>Newell</i>	<i>Hristov</i>	<i>Reid</i>
1NT	Pass	1♦	Pass
3NT	All Pass	3♦	Pass

Hans' 2♦ rebid looks a bit timid to us, but on this deal, with the major-suit cards all sitting wrong for declarer, it worked out rather well. Kovachev led the ♣Q. Hans won in hand, drew trumps, led a heart to the eight and king, won the club return, and came off dummy with a spade. When Isporski took the queen Hans could claim nine tricks for +110.

In the Open Room where Hristov rebid a more normal 3♦ the Bulgarians reached 3NT. Newell led the ♥A, got discouragement from Reid, and switched to the ♣7. When Reid's ♠10 held the trick he made a well-judged switch to a spade, and Newell was able to quickly cash out for down one, -100. That was 5imps to Down Under, their first gain since Board 2. 32-15 now, All Stars.

Bd: 11
 Dir: South
 Vul: None

North	♠ AKQ2
	♥ 64
	♦ J854
	♣ 1052
West	
	♠ J74
	♥ AJ8
	♦ KQ1097
	♣ 73
South	
	♠ 93
	♥ KQ107
	♦ A6
	♣ AKQ94

East
 ♠ 10865
 ♥ 9532
 ♦ 32
 ♣ J86

The auction in the two rooms were lengthy and complex, but all roads led to 3NT by N/S. In the Open Room where Isporski (North) played it and Nunn had overcalled 1♦ Hans led a diamond, ducked to Nunn's queen, and Nunn returned a low diamond to hold declarer to 10 tricks; +430. In the Closed Room where E/W had been silent Reid (South) played it and Iliev led the ♦K. Reid won, crossed to dummy and a heart to the king, ducked, and then led a diamond up, emerging with 11 tricks, +460, for a 1-imp pick-up. 32-16, All Stars.

Bd: 12
 Dir: West
 Vul: N/S

North	♠ J1075
	♥ Q4
	♦ AK1043
	♣ Q5
West	
	♠ AQ3
	♥ KJ109
	♦ 2
	♣ A10973
South	
	♠ 962
	♥ A876
	♦ Q986
	♣ J6

East
 ♠ K84
 ♥ 532
 ♦ J75
 ♣ K842

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Nunn</i>	<i>Isporski</i>	<i>Hans</i>	<i>Kovachev</i>
1♣	1♦	2♣	3♦

All Pass
 Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Iliev</i>	<i>Newell</i>	<i>Hristov</i>	<i>Reid</i>
2♣(♣)	2♦	3♣	3♦
3♥	Pass	4♣	All Pass

The age-old story, clubs versus diamonds. In the Open Room diamonds won — and wished they hadn't. Hans led a trump. Isporski won, drew the remaining trumps, and led a club. Hans won the second club, led a heart to the king, and now the defense cashed their spade winners for +200.

In the Closed Room Iliev had some extras and a secondary heart suit in reserve, so he made a 3♥ game try and Hristov quickly retreated to 4♣. With trumps 2-2 there were only a diamond and two hearts to lose, for +130. That was 2 more imps for Down Under, trailing now 32-18.

Bd: 13
 Dir: North
 Vul: Both

North	♠ 1032
	♥ 9
	♦ AQ98754
	♣ A10

West		East
	♠ Q64	♠ 85
	♥ J842	♥ A10763
	♦ 10	♦ J32
	♣ J8765	♣ 432

South
 ♠ AKJ97
 ♥ KQ5
 ♦ K6
 ♣ KQ9

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Nunn</i>	<i>Isporski</i>	<i>Hans</i>	<i>Kovachev</i>
	1♦	Pass	1♠
Pass	2♦	Pass	2♥(F1)
Pass	3♦	Pass	4♦
Pass	4♥	Pass	5♣
Pass	6♦	Pass	6NT

All Pass
 Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Iliev</i>	<i>Newell</i>	<i>Hristov</i>	<i>Reid</i>
	1♠(♦)	Pass	1NT(F)
Pass	2♦	Pass	2♥(F)
Pass	2NT	Pass	3♣
Pass	4♣	Pass	4♦
Pass	5♣	Pass	6NT

All Pass

Both tables reached the excellent 6NT. In the Open Room Nunn led a club and when the heart-spade show-up squeeze against East failed to materialize he claimed 12 tricks, +1440. In the Closed Room Iliev led a spade and Reid claimed all 13 tricks for +1470 and another 1-imp pick-up. The All Stars has picked up imps on four straight boards to trail now by just 13 at 32-19.

Bd: 14
Dir: East
Vul: None

North
♠ Q862
♥ K875
♦ K104
♣ K4

West
♠ 73
♥ J942
♦ AQ9
♣ QJ65

East
♠ KJ10954
♥ A63
♦ 8
♣ A103

South
♠ A
♥ Q10
♦ J76532
♣ 9872

Both E/W pairs bought the hand cheaply for 2♠ after uncontested auctions. In the Open Room Hans received a club lead and when dummy's queen held he used his two entries to take spade finesses. Since the suit split 4-1 he had to lose two hearts and two spades and had no more entries to repeat the club finesse (if indeed the king was onside). So at trick 12 with only the ♣A10 left Hans banged down the ace and when the king fell he had his overtrick, +140.

The play was even more interesting in the Closed Room where Reid led a diamond. Hristov won the ace and tried the spade finesse, ruffed the diamond return, led a low heart to the queen, ruffed another diamond return, cashed the ♥A and then exited with his last heart, establishing dummy's ♥J. Newell won and found the only exit that didn't give up a trick immediately, the ♠8. Hristov won, cashed the ♣A, and got out with a club to the queen. With no diamonds left, whatever Newell returned would provide Hristov with the rest of the tricks. In practice Newell tried the ♥7 but Hristov jettisoned the ♣10, won the ♥J in dummy, and had a trump coup to pick up the ♠Q. All that for a push at +140. No swing, still 32-19 All Stars.



"Does anyone have any glue solvent?"

Bd: 15
Dir: South
Vul: N/S

North
♠ 1086
♥ QJ54
♦ K62
♣ Q74

West
♠ AQ9
♥ 1096
♦ A973
♣ J86

East
♠ ---
♥ AK872
♦ J854
♣ A1053

South
♠ KJ75432
♥ 3
♦ Q10
♣ K92

Open Room

West	North	East	South
Nunn	Isporski	Hans	Kovachev
			2♠
Pass	Pass	Dbl	Pass
3NT	All Pass		

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
Iliev	Newell	Hristov	Reid
			1♥(1)
Pass	2♠(WK)	Dbl	3♠
3NT	All Pass		
(1) 4+ clubs, 9-13 hcp			

Both tables received a spade lead against 3NT. Declarer won the trick and passed the ♥10, which held, then played the ♥9 to the jack and king, later repeating the heart finesse for nine tricks. A push at +400; still the All Stars by 13 at 32-19.

Last dance, last chance...this set.

Bd: 16
Dir: West
Vul: E/W

North
♠ K962
♥ 105
♦ A6
♣ K8754

West
♠ AJ3
♥ AJ9
♦ K1093
♣ A63

East
♠ Q104
♥ Q8732
♦ J752
♣ J

South
♠ 875
♥ K64
♦ Q84
♣ Q1092

Open Room

West	North	East	South
Nunn	Isporski	Hans	Kovachev
1♦	Pass	1♥	Pass
1NT(STR)	Pass	2♣(1)	Pass
2♦	All Pass		
(1) Puppet to 2♦			

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Iliev</i>	<i>Newell</i>	<i>Hristov</i>	<i>Reid</i>
1NT	Pass	2♦(♥)	Pass
2♥	All Pass		

Against Nunn's 2♦ contract in the Open Room Isporski led ace and a another trump. Nunn won, drew a third round, and played hearts from the top, claiming 10 tricks for +130 when the spade finesse was off. Against Iliev's 2♥ in the Closed Room Newell also led a trump, ducked to declarer's nine. Iliev played the ♣A, ruffed a club, then repeated the heart finesse. When that won he tabled the ♦10. Newell rose with the ace, not suspecting the actual diamond position (and not wanting to be endplayed later), and played a third club. Iliev ruffed, passed the ♠10 to the king, and Newell got out with his last diamond. When the ♦J was covered by the queen Iliev could claim 11 tricks, +200. That returned 2 imps to the All Stars, who finished the first quarter leading the NEC Cup final 34-19.



"Pilot to tower, am I cleared for takeoff?"

NEC Final (2nd Quarter): Bulgarian All Stars vs Down Under

by Barry Rigal

The All Stars added to their 15-imp lead on the first board out.

Bd: 17
 Dlr: North
 Vul: None

North
♠ K103
♥ K96
♦ Q65
♣ KQ65

West
♠ A6
♥ Q752
♦ K10983
♣ 98

East
♠ 2
♥ AJ1084
♦ J2
♣ AJ1072

South
♠ QJ98754
♥ 3
♦ A74
♣ 43

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Reid</i>	<i>Isporski</i>	<i>Newell</i>	<i>Kovachev</i>
	1♣	1♥	4♠

All Pass

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Iliev</i>	<i>Hans</i>	<i>Hristov</i>	<i>Nunn</i>
	1NT	2♥(♥ + m)	4♦(♠)
Dbl	4♠	Pass	Pass
5♥	All Pass		

West's 5♥ bid looks wild, but who other than the Editors would argue with success? East came through with the right singleton, a good diamond guess and the heart finesse behaved as it should. Plus 450 went well with -50 from 4♠ (a heart lead to the eight and a diamond shift putting paid to any minimal chances declarer might have). There was no realistic way either East or West could compete over 4♠ though I suppose someone might have doubled. It was 43-19 to All Stars now.

Bd: 18
 Dlr: East
 Vul: N/S

North
♠ AQ72
♥ Q842
♦ Q10
♣ 843

West
♠ 4
♥ 73
♦ AK98632
♣ KQ2

East
♠ 965
♥ J106
♦ 54
♣ A10976

South
♠ KJ1083
♥ AK95
♦ J7
♣ J5

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Reid</i>	<i>Isporski</i>	<i>Newell</i>	<i>Kovachev</i>
<i>Iliev</i>	<i>Hans</i>	<i>Hristov</i>	<i>Nunn</i>
		Pass	1♠
4♦	4♠	All Pass	

As Johnny Miller once said about a golfer's chances: "They are between slim and none — and Slim has just left the building." Technically the chances of 4♥ making were between slim and none. The chances of 4♠ making had definitely left the building. Both Norths would point out accurately that they had beaten par here (to continue our golf metaphor) since 4♦ was cold and E/W had carelessly failed to double 4♠ for 200. Unconvinced, East would ask him to move on to the next deal...and so we shall.

Bd: 19	North
Dlr: South	♠ AQ102
Vul: E/W	♥ A9
	♦ AK9
	♣ KQ84

West
♠ 973
♥ 764
♦ 1065
♣ J932

East
♠ 864
♥ QJ1053
♦ Q7
♣ A65

South
♠ KJ5
♥ K82
♦ J8432
♣ 107

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Reid</i>	<i>Isporski</i>	<i>Newell</i>	<i>Kovachev</i>
			Pass
Pass	2♦	Pass	2♥
Pass	2NT	Pass	3♣(1)
Pass	3♦	Pass	3♠(2)
Pass	3NT	All Pass	

- (1) Puppet Stayman
- (2) Transfer to 3NT

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Iliev</i>	<i>Hans</i>	<i>Hristov</i>	<i>Nunn</i>
			Pass
Pass	2NT	Pass	3NT
All Pass			

You would not want to get beyond 3NT here until you found the ♦Q falling in two rounds. Both pairs bid competently to the best spot and pushed the board at 490. Still 43-19, All Stars.

Bd: 20	North
Dlr: West	♠ QJ1074
Vul: Both	♥ Q6543
	♦ 10
	♣ 74

West
♠ 653
♥ K972
♦ AKJ6
♣ KJ

East
♠ K982
♥ ---
♦ 9542
♣ A10652

South
♠ A
♥ AJ108
♦ Q873
♣ Q983

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Reid</i>	<i>Isporski</i>	<i>Newell</i>	<i>Kovachev</i>
1♣(STR)	Dbl(♥+♠)	1♦	4♥
Pass	Pass	Dbl	All Pass

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Iliev</i>	<i>Hans</i>	<i>Hristov</i>	<i>Nunn</i>
1NT	Pass	2♣	Pass
2♥	Pass	2NT	All Pass

2NT on a top spade lead, ducked in dummy, saw the ♠A put in a welcome appearance. So far so good for Iliev. But the defense shifted to the ♥J, then the ♥10 when that was ducked. Iliev went up with the king (pitching a club and a diamond from dummy) and took the ♦A, dropping the ten. Maybe the best play now is to run the ♣J, but nothing works. Declarer actually led the ♣J to the ace and took a diamond finesse and had seven tricks but no more.

The bad trump break meant that Kovachev would be fighting to escape for down one in 4♥x. E/W cashed the ♦A (East playing the discouraging nine), the ♣K, then led the ♣J to the ace. Back came a diamond so Kovachev's seven forced the jack. One round of trumps revealed the bad news, as declarer put in the jack and East ducked, which doesn't feel right to me. Now declarer could ruff out the diamonds and cross-ruff. West could trump the third club with the ♥7 to force the queen but he still had his one trump trick and no more. 7 imps to Down Under, down 26-43.



"When I say 'Marco,' you're supposed to say 'Polo.'"

Bd: 21 North
 Dir: North ♠ A10863
 Vul: N/S ♥ KQ107
 ♦ 92
 ♣ 64

West
 ♠ J2
 ♥ J9632
 ♦ K1083
 ♣ A10

East
 ♠ K75
 ♥ 8
 ♦ J6
 ♣ KJ87532

South
 ♠ Q94
 ♥ A54
 ♦ AQ754
 ♣ Q9

Bd: 22 North
 Dir: East ♠ 97643
 Vul: E/W ♥ AQ8
 ♦ J53
 ♣ A7

West
 ♠ 102
 ♥ J962
 ♦ 104
 ♣ K5432

East
 ♠ AQJ8
 ♥ K753
 ♦ 92
 ♣ Q109

South
 ♠ K5
 ♥ 104
 ♦ AKQ876
 ♣ J86

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Reid</i>	<i>Isporski</i>	<i>Newell</i>	<i>Kovachev</i>
	Pass	Pass	1♦
1♥	1♠	2♣	2♠
Pass	Pass	3♣	All Pass

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Iliev</i>	<i>Hans</i>	<i>Hristov</i>	<i>Nunn</i>
	Pass	3♣	Pass
Pass	Dbl	Pass	3♦
All Pass			

Yet again what might appear a silly result was really nobody's fault. If you open 3♣ at unfavorable vulnerability in second seat many (including both your Editors) would expect rather more in the way of internal solidity. RC is holding out for the ♣109 or the ♣Q instead of them both. BR would settle just for the ♣10 — but "He'd feel conflicted about it" (Robert De Niro in Analyze This).

3♣ in the Open Room came in for a painless +130. In the Closed Room Hans' reopening double had a number of ways to win and one way to lose badly, and this was it. 3♦ received the defense of two rounds of clubs and a heart shift. If declarer had played ace and another diamond he might have escaped for two down, but why couldn't a finesse work for him? When the ♦Q lost to the ace the defenders had a heart ruff and two trump tricks and a spade still to come. Down 300 meant 5imps for All Stars, leading 48-26.



"There's no moon out tonight."

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Reid</i>	<i>Isporski</i>	<i>Newell</i>	<i>Kovachev</i>
		Pass	1NT
Pass	2♥	Pass	2♠
Pass	3NT	All Pass	

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Iliev</i>	<i>Hans</i>	<i>Hristov</i>	<i>Nunn</i>
		1♦	All Pass

1♦ is not the contract you'd wish on your worst enemy (I take that back, maybe it is the contract you'd want him to play at unfavorable vulnerability.) The defense gave declarer a chance to collect more than three tricks (it is hard for South to know who has the trump length and thus how many rounds of trumps to draw). So Nunn played three rounds of trumps and then played a club to the ace for a club back. Declarer won the second club in dummy and took a losing spade finesse. Nunn ran his trumps and triple-squeezed East out of his fourth trick.

That meant N/S would have to make 3NT to flatten the board, and Kovachev opened a 15-17 notrump (who's counting?) to get to that spot. After the lead of the ♣3 to the queen Newell tried to be a hero: he played ace and another spade "knowing" declarer has at most one spade, one heart and one club trick. East could see that he would get in with his ♥Q after declarer cashed his diamonds...and so he did, but not at the moment he would have liked. I'm sure West was very sympathetic; I know I would have been. No swing and still 48-26.

Some people are like Slinkies...not really good for anything, but you can't help smiling when you see one tumble down the stairs.

Bd: 23
 Dir: South
 Vul: Both

North
 ♠ Q43
 ♥ 743
 ♦ Q62
 ♣ Q875

West
 ♠ AJ1065
 ♥ QJ85
 ♦ K73
 ♣ 2

East
 ♠ K82
 ♥ 96
 ♦ AJ10954
 ♣ 104

South
 ♠ 97
 ♥ AK102
 ♦ 8
 ♣ AKJ963

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Reid</i>	<i>Isporski</i>	<i>Newell</i>	<i>Kovachev</i>
1♠	Pass	2♠	1♣
Pass	4♣	All Pass	3♥

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Iliev</i>	<i>Hans</i>	<i>Hristov</i>	<i>Nunn</i>
1♠	Pass	3♦	1♣
4♠	All Pass		3♥

Despite all appearances to the contrary, the general philosophy of the Australian team is not nearly as close to the all-out aggression of the All Stars. Here again the Bulgarians bought the hand in both rooms, but this time a declarer error meant that they recorded a small loss and not a large gain.

In the Open Room Newell found a somewhat heavy single raise of spades and N/S bought the hand in 4♣, losing the obvious three fast tricks together with a slow heart. In the other room I heartily approve of East's fit-jump in diamonds. It may have only three trumps but the playing strength and honor location make it close to ideal. Nunn joined in along the way but Iliev jumped to 4♠ and now all he had to do was make it. Hans led a heart. Nunn cashed his three winners, then played a second club. Declarer tried a couple of winning hearts to see what North would do (did he want him to ruff in from ♠Q9x?) but when North discarded he guessed trumps right, then played ♦K, ♦A to go one down. At the moment he misguessed I think he knew South had to have ten cards in hearts and clubs (with nine he would have doubled 3♦ or North might have bid 5♣) so the diamond finesse was about a sure thing. But Down Under would take the 5 imps to trail 48-31.

Bd: 24
 Dir: West
 Vul: None

North
 ♠ AQ95
 ♥ ---
 ♦ KQ94
 ♣ Q10874

West
 ♠ K72
 ♥ KQ8742
 ♦ 6
 ♣ KJ3

East
 ♠ J10864
 ♥ J6
 ♦ J10
 ♣ A962

South
 ♠ 3
 ♥ A10953
 ♦ A87532
 ♣ 5

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Reid</i>	<i>Isporski</i>	<i>Newell</i>	<i>Kovachev</i>
1♦(♥)	1♥	Pass	3♦
All Pass			

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Iliev</i>	<i>Hans</i>	<i>Hristov</i>	<i>Nunn</i>
1♥	Dbl	Pass	4♦
Pass	5♦	All Pass	

The question of how high to go as South and whether to raise as North is all about system, not judgment. To my eyes the 4♦ bid looks dangerous with partner potentially having spades and a good hand, while Kovachev's bid looks reasonable (but from North's pass I wonder if he thought he had already shown great heart shortage, since perhaps he had a double of 1♥ for more balanced hands). Both Wests led a top heart. Declarer ruffed and led a low club from dummy. Hristov ducked and declarer eventually established a long club for 11 tricks. Newell flew with the ♣A and the clubs could be established for two tricks and +170. It made no imp difference; Down Under had 6 imps and trailed 48-37.

Bd: 25
 Dir: North
 Vul: E/W

North
 ♠ AQ1095
 ♥ 42
 ♦ 974
 ♣ K97

West
 ♠ K7
 ♥ AKJ96
 ♦ 85
 ♣ AJ32

East
 ♠ 32
 ♥ 873
 ♦ AJ632
 ♣ Q85

South
 ♠ J864
 ♥ Q105
 ♦ KQ10
 ♣ 1064

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Reid</i>	<i>Isporski</i>	<i>Newell</i>	<i>Kovachev</i>
	Pass	Pass	Pass
1♣(STR)	1♠	Pass	2♣
2♥	Pass	4♥	4♠
Dbl	All Pass		

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Iliev</i>	<i>Hans</i>	<i>Hristov</i>	<i>Nunn</i>
	1♠	Pass	2♠
2NT	Pass	3♦	Pass
4♥	All Pass		

It would appear that E/W might not have been on the same wavelength here, since East appears to have been trying to get to diamonds and West appears to have been bidding a natural 2NT...or not. We just can't tell from looking at his hand. Yet again Bulgaria bought the hand in both rooms and again they regretted it, despite the moderately helpful trump lead from Hans. All Iliev could do was hope for a defensive error and none was forthcoming. Eventually South won a diamond trick and broached spades, and declarer was down like a stone.

In the Closed Room Kovachev's decision to sacrifice was exceptionally aggressive; after all, his partner rated to be balanced and weak, and so the sacrifice could not cost less than 300 and rated to be 500 unless all the finesses worked, in which case you would defeat 4♥. So it proved. The spade, club and diamond finesses worked but that was still -300 against nothing. 9 imps to Down Under and it was 48-46 now.

Bd: 26
Dir: East
Vul: Both

North
♠ AJ1042
♥ AQ3
♦ AQ3
♣ Q8

West
♠ 5
♥ K976
♦ 10765
♣ AJ52

East
♠ 73
♥ 1082
♦ J84
♣ K10963

South
♠ KQ986
♥ J54
♦ K92
♣ 74

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Reid</i>	<i>Isporski</i>	<i>Newell</i>	<i>Kovachev</i>
		Pass	Pass
Pass	2♣	Pass	2♥(♠)
Pass	2NT(♠)	Pass	3♥(♠)
Pass	3♠(♠)	Pass	4♠
All Pass			

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Iliev</i>	<i>Hans</i>	<i>Hristov</i>	<i>Nunn</i>
		Pass	Pass
Pass	2NT	Pass	3♥(♠)
Pass	3♠	Pass	3NT
Pass	4♠	All Pass	

Both tables showed 19-21 and found the spade fit and both declarers managed to endplay West to lead hearts and bring home an overtrick. Only an imp at stake — and these matches are never decided by an imp, are they?

Bd: 27
Dir: South
Vul: None

North
♠ K7
♥ 97
♦ 109876
♣ AQ107

West
♠ 2
♥ AQJ432
♦ KQJ3
♣ K5

East
♠ A1098
♥ K1085
♦ 42
♣ J98

South
♠ QJ6543
♥ 6
♦ A5
♣ 6432

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Reid</i>	<i>Isporski</i>	<i>Newell</i>	<i>Kovachev</i>
			2♠
Dbl	Pass	3♥	Pass
4♥	All Pass		

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Iliev</i>	<i>Hans</i>	<i>Hristov</i>	<i>Nunn</i>
			3♠
4♥	4♠	Dbl	All Pass

It must have been the strength of Nunn's intermediates in the black suits that tempted him into the excess of the three-level preempt. Or maybe he had the ♣2 mixed in with his spades. He had done well to give his opponents a chance to seriously misjudge the board. Unluckily for N/S Hristov had good enough spades to opt to double 4♠ rather than bid on. As a result the All Stars collected two trumps and one trick in each side-suit for +300. After a top diamond lead Nunn played to ruff diamonds in hand (had spades and diamonds broken that would have led to 4♠ making). Of course 4♥ handled very easily for ten tricks, so Down Under gained 3 imps anyway, and led 49-48.

Bd: 28
 Dir: West
 Vul: N/S

North
 ♠ K97
 ♥ AQJ9
 ♦ Q962
 ♣ 75

West
 ♠ 63
 ♥ 6532
 ♦ KJ43
 ♣ Q109

East
 ♠ Q542
 ♥ 87
 ♦ A
 ♣ AJ8643

South
 ♠ AJ108
 ♥ K104
 ♦ 10875
 ♣ K2

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Reid</i>	<i>Isporski</i>	<i>Newell</i>	<i>Kovachev</i>
2♣(1)	Pass	Pass	Dbl
2♦	Dbl	3♣	Pass
Pass	3♦	Pass	3NT

All Pass

(1) weak: hearts and another

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Iliev</i>	<i>Hans</i>	<i>Hristov</i>	<i>Nunn</i>
Pass	1NT	Pass	3♠(1)
Pass	3NT	All Pass	

Two outstanding results for the N/S pairs here. Both tables bid to 3NT on a combined 23 HCP — the All Stars in the face of an artificial barrage from their opponents — and both guessed the ♠Q to collect 600. Of course you could argue that Newell missed his chance to get more in his opponents' faces but he knew they did not have the values for game and he was simply looking to avoid playing a foolish contract. Had he responded he would surely have kept his opponents silent. When he passed over 2♣ Kovachev balanced and now Isporski was not going to stop short of game if he could find a club stopper opposite.

Both declarers won the club lead and cashed four hearts, East pitching a spade and a club. With East marked with only one diamond and two hearts Kovachev knew whom to play for the ♠Q. In the other room where North was declaring 3NT the low club lead meant Hans knew less about the hand. He too cashed off the hearts and East threw first a spade, then a club (pitching two spades would not have worked; declarer is in the wrong hand to finesse against West for the ♠Q). No swing. Well done by both N/S pairs. Still 49-48 Down under.

Bd: 29
 Dir: North
 Vul: Both

North
 ♠ A53
 ♥ K542
 ♦ K53
 ♣ 532

West
 ♠ 106
 ♥ A3
 ♦ A10976
 ♣ QJ87

East
 ♠ J984
 ♥ QJ10
 ♦ J8
 ♣ K1096

South
 ♠ KQ72
 ♥ 9876
 ♦ Q42
 ♣ A4

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Reid</i>	<i>Isporski</i>	<i>Newell</i>	<i>Kovachev</i>
	Pass	Pass	1♣
1♦	Dbl	1NT	All Pass

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Iliev</i>	<i>Hans</i>	<i>Hristov</i>	<i>Nunn</i>
			All Pass

The Closed Room sequence would be duplicated at many tables, I'm sure, South being unwilling to open his only "lead-directing" suit. Kovachev could open a Polish-style club without worrying about really showing the suit. Everyone then joined in and South had achieved his target of getting his opponents to declare the contract with less than half the deck between them plus the advantage of his having the lead. So far so good. But despite being able to lead his side's eight-card fit declarer could set up clubs and come to seven tricks with a minimum of trouble. 52-48 now for Down Under.

Bd: 30
 Dir: East
 Vul: None

North
 ♠ Q3
 ♥ 10765
 ♦ K986
 ♣ QJ2

West
 ♠ K87
 ♥ AJ843
 ♦ 104
 ♣ 1075

East
 ♠ AJ1052
 ♥ Q2
 ♦ 53
 ♣ A984

South
 ♠ 964
 ♥ K9
 ♦ AQJ72
 ♣ K63

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Reid</i>	<i>Isporski</i>	<i>Newell</i>	<i>Kovachev</i>
2♥(♠)	Pass	1♥(♠)	Pass
All Pass		2♠	3♦

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Iliev</i>	<i>Hans</i>	<i>Hristov</i>	<i>Nunn</i>
2♠	Pass	1♠	Pass
3♥	Pass	3♠	3♦
			All Pass

I'm not sure whether this board proves anything. My instincts are that when E/W compete to the three level with an eight-card fit they are generally taking an odds-against position. And that was broadly true here. 3♦ went down one after the defenders took two spades and two hearts and collected their ♣A later.

Meanwhile 3♠ needed the heart and spade finesses to come to nine tricks. When Hristov did the necessary (Nunn did his best by leading a club but declarer picked the position) that was 3 imps back to All Stars, down 53-52.

Bd: 31	North
Dlr: South	♠ A543
Vul: N/S	♥ J98743
	♦ 43
	♣ A

West	East
♠ Q2	♠ K76
♥ AKQ	♥ 105
♦ K75	♦ AJ108
♣ Q10754	♣ 9863

South
♠ J1098
♥ 62
♦ Q962
♣ KJ2

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Reid</i>	<i>Isporski</i>	<i>Newell</i>	<i>Kovachev</i>
1♣(STR)	Pass	1♦	Pass
1NT	Pass	2♠	Pass
2NT	All Pass		

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Iliev</i>	<i>Hans</i>	<i>Hristov</i>	<i>Nunn</i>
1♦	Pass	1NT	Pass
			All Pass

Notrump partscores at both tables but when Reid was declarer he won the heart and ducked a club. Now he could set up clubs for three tricks and come

to nine winners without relying on diamonds. Nunn led a top spade and held 1NT to +90: three spades, two clubs and one in the wash. 55-52 to Down Under.

Bd: 32	North
Dlr: West	♠ A96
Vul: E/W	♥ 1082
	♦ KQ10
	♣ A873

West	East
♠ Q1083	♠ KJ52
♥ K43	♥ J6
♦ 42	♦ AJ65
♣ K954	♣ QJ2

South
♠ 74
♥ AQ975
♦ 9873
♣ 106

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Reid</i>	<i>Isporski</i>	<i>Newell</i>	<i>Kovachev</i>
Pass	1NT	Pass	2♦
Pass	2♥	All Pass	

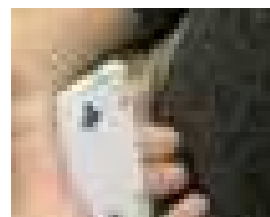
Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Iliev</i>	<i>Hans</i>	<i>Hristov</i>	<i>Nunn</i>
Pass	1♣	1♦	Dbl(♥)
Pass	1NT	All Pass	

Two more quiet results here. In 2♥ on a top club lead declarer took two heart finesses and eventually set up a long diamond for +110. In 1NT on a spade lead declarer came to four heart tricks and one in each of the other suits for +90. It was 55-53 to Down Under at half time.



"This is my highest card."



NEC Final (3rd Quarter): Bulgarian All Stars vs Down Under

by Barry Rigal

Bd: 33
Dlr: North
Vul: None

North
♠ KQ76
♥ ---
♦ Q10852
♣ 10943

West
♠ 984
♥ K82
♦ AK9763
♣ 5

East
♠ A2
♥ AQ75
♦ J
♣ AKQJ62

South
♠ J1053
♥ J109643
♦ 4
♣ 87

Bd: 34
Dlr: East
Vul: N/S

North
♠ Q54
♥ A762
♦ 1086
♣ A97

West
♠ K873
♥ KJ10
♦ 942
♣ 832

East
♠ A2
♥ Q9854
♦ KJ73
♣ 106

South
♠ J1096
♥ 3
♦ AQ5
♣ KQJ54

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Reid</i>	<i>Isporski</i>	<i>Newell</i>	<i>Kovachev</i>
		1♣	2♥
3♦	Pass	4♣	Pass
4♦	Pass	4NT	Pass
5♥	Pass	6NT	All Pass

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Iliev</i>	<i>Hans</i>	<i>Hristov</i>	<i>Nunn</i>
		1♣	1♥
2♦	Pass	3♣	Pass
3♦	Pass	3♥	Pass
3NT	Pass	6♣	All Pass

Both tables started with a strong club (Newell's beginning at 13) and once Reid set up a game force Newell knew his side had values to spare. He opted for the notrump slam to protect his heart tenace and perhaps for fear of a heart ruff.

Against 6NT Kovachev led a spade, setting up his side's trick, but it was one they could not get till trick 13. Meanwhile Hans did well in a sense not to double 6♣ because he could see that he might get a ruff at the expense of his partner's heart trick. Nunn led a diamond. Declarer won and drew trumps, then took his discard. Neither declarer could get a squeeze going for the overtrick. 2 imps for Down Under to make the score 57-52.



Hail Brittania

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Reid</i>	<i>Isporski</i>	<i>Newell</i>	<i>Kovachev</i>
		1♦(♥)	1♥
2♥	Pass	Pass	Dbl
Pass	2NT	Pass	3♣
Pass	3NT	All Pass	

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Iliev</i>	<i>Hans</i>	<i>Hristov</i>	<i>Nunn</i>
		1♥	Dbl
1NT(♥)	Dbl	2♥	3♣
Pass	Pass	3♦	Pass
3♥	All Pass		

Kovachev's reentry into his opponent's auction made his partner think they could make game. He followed a sequence that expressed doubt about notrump but that might force him to run to 4♣, which looks easy to make since declarer can pitch dummy's diamond loser if the defenders take a spade ruff. 3NT was apparently hopeless. Declarer held up the ♥A till the third round, pitching spades from dummy, took the diamond finesse, and peeled off the clubs. East had only to come down to the bare ♠A and a master heart together with the ♦KJ and he would beat the hand whenever it could be beaten. But he kept two spades and two diamonds while West hung on to four rather than three spades and one diamond. Declarer now exited with a spade and when West made the final defensive error of ducking (as opposed to winning and returning the suit) West had to concede the last trick to declarer's ♠Q.

The defenders let Hristov out for down one in 3♥ by cashing their diamond winners prematurely, so the All Stars had retaken the lead with this 11 imp swing 63-57.

Bd: 35
 Dir: South
 Vul: E/W

North
 ♠ AK832
 ♥ A754
 ♦ QJ8
 ♣ A

West
 ♠ J5
 ♥ 108
 ♦ A742
 ♣ K10743

East
 ♠ Q107
 ♥ J93
 ♦ K963
 ♣ J85

South
 ♠ 964
 ♥ KQ62
 ♦ 105
 ♣ Q962

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Reid</i>	<i>Isporski</i>	<i>Newell</i>	<i>Kovachev</i>
<i>Iliev</i>	<i>Hans</i>	<i>Hristov</i>	<i>Nunn</i>
Pass	1♠	Pass	Pass
Pass	4♠	All Pass	2♠

4♠ was bid at both tables, this being a contract that might be able to survive a bad heart break though not a bad trump break. Careful play on a club lead is to play a diamond at once (if you play one round of trumps, as Isporski discovered, the opponents can play three rounds of trumps and you don't have any trumps left in dummy to survive the bad heart break). Hans received a heart lead and did play on diamonds at once. Noimps for him but maybe a small tick in St. Peter's record.

Bd: 36
 Dir: West
 Vul: Both

North
 ♠ 875
 ♥ 982
 ♦ 7
 ♣ J98765

West
 ♠ J102
 ♥ KJ7
 ♦ Q2
 ♣ Q10432

East
 ♠ 96
 ♥ AQ6
 ♦ AK109843
 ♣ A

South
 ♠ AKQ43
 ♥ 10543
 ♦ J65
 ♣ K

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Reid</i>	<i>Isporski</i>	<i>Newell</i>	<i>Kovachev</i>
Pass	Pass	1♣	1♠
3♠	Dbl	3♦	Pass
Rdbl	Pass	Pass	Pass
4♦	Pass	3NT	Pass
		5♦	All Pass

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Iliev</i>	<i>Hans</i>	<i>Hristov</i>	<i>Nunn</i>
		1♣	1♠
2♠(1)	Pass	3♦	Pass
3NT	Pass	5♦	All Pass

(1) GF balanced no spade stop

Both tables flirted with playing 3NT in the face of their opponents bidding spades. Hristov knew that his partner did not have more than half a stopper but did have values, so he knew where he wanted to play. Reid's pass of 3♠x denied a half-stopper so Reid could also avoid embarrassment here. The play took a few seconds and we could move on with matching E/W 600s. Still 63-57 for All Stars.

Bd: 37
 Dir: North
 Vul: N/S

North
 ♠ K642
 ♥ K875
 ♦ 2
 ♣ A862

West
 ♠ QJ7
 ♥ 1096
 ♦ Q9853
 ♣ 43

East
 ♠ A10953
 ♥ J2
 ♦ A
 ♣ KQJ95

South
 ♠ 8
 ♥ AQ43
 ♦ KJ10764
 ♣ 107

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Reid</i>	<i>Isporski</i>	<i>Newell</i>	<i>Kovachev</i>
Pass	Pass	1♣	1♦
2♠	3♥	1♠	Dbl
		4♠	All Pass

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Iliev</i>	<i>Hans</i>	<i>Hristov</i>	<i>Nunn</i>
	Pass	1♠	2♦
2♠	Dbl	Rdbl	3♥
Pass	Pass	4♣	Pass
4♠	All Pass		

I'm not sure why Hristov needed to paint a picture of his hand for the defenders as opposed to blasting 4♠ earlier but since it worked to get South off to the one lead that would let 4♠ through (a trump) he obviously knew best. To succeed after a trump lead declarer must play three rounds of trumps at once and then rely on the ♣10 coming down; far from obvious. In fact, Hristov played a club at trick two and now he could only reach dummy by ruffing a club, thus preventing the necessary trump finesse.

Kovachev did exceptionally well to lead the ♥A and continue the suit. Declarer ruffed to play clubs and the defenders won the second club to lead a fourth heart. When Newell ruffed in dummy he had transposed into the same position as had been reached at the other table and could not avoid one down; no swing again.

Bd: 38 North
 Dir: East ♠ K3
 Vul: E/W ♥ QJ842
 ♦ 10954
 ♣ Q5

West
 ♠ AQJ10972
 ♥ ---
 ♦ KJ76
 ♣ 98

East
 ♠ 864
 ♥ 10953
 ♦ ---
 ♣ AJ10743

South
 ♠ 5
 ♥ AK76
 ♦ AQ832
 ♣ K62

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Reid</i>	<i>Isporski</i>	<i>Newell</i>	<i>Kovachev</i>
3♠	Dbl	4♠	Dbl

All Pass

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Iliev</i>	<i>Hans</i>	<i>Hristov</i>	<i>Nunn</i>
3♠	Dbl	4♠	Dbl
Pass	5♦	Pass	Pass
Dbl	All Pass		

If you only looked at the N/S cards and knew the ♠K was a trick on defense you'd be happy you were defending 4♠, right? After all, you have one trick in each black suit and surely you can manage two tricks from the red suits. Sorry, wrong number. The 4-0 breaks in the red suits meant that after the ♥Q lead declarer could happily cross-ruff for +790. Of course the bad breaks meant that 5♦x was no fun either. The defenders led the ♠A, shifted to a club for the ♣A and a heart ruff, and took their two trump tricks to make +500 for the All Stars. But the 7imps went the other way. 64-63 for Down Under and another lead change.

I didn't say it was your fault,
 I said I was blaming you.

Bd: 39 North
 Dir: South ♠ A863
 Vul: Both ♥ 1074
 ♦ A953
 ♣ 93

West
 ♠ QJ9
 ♥ ---
 ♦ K102
 ♣ QJ86542

East
 ♠ K74
 ♥ QJ63
 ♦ QJ4
 ♣ K107

South
 ♠ 1052
 ♥ AK9852
 ♦ 876
 ♣ A

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Reid</i>	<i>Isporski</i>	<i>Newell</i>	<i>Kovachev</i>
2♣	3♣	3NT	1♥
5♣	Dbl	All Pass	4♥

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Iliev</i>	<i>Hans</i>	<i>Hristov</i>	<i>Nunn</i>
Pass	2♥	Pass	1♥
3♣	Pass	Pass	3♥
All Pass			

5♣x lost one trick to the three cashing aces (shades of the previous deal but at least neither the ♠A nor the ♦A got ruffed away. A far more restrained approach by everyone in the Closed Room produced a much more interesting contract. The defenders led a top club — one could hardly blame them — and Nunn won in hand and ducked a diamond. Back came a spade, ducked, and a club ruffed. Nunn cashed the ♥A and ducked a heart to East, who now had a choice of plays:

♠ A86
 ♥ 7
 ♦ A95
 ♣ ---

♠ J9
 ♥ ---
 ♦ K2
 ♣ 654

♠ K7
 ♥ Q6
 ♦ QJ
 ♣ K

♠ 105
 ♥ K98
 ♦ 87
 ♣ ---

A club would let declarer pitch a loser, ruff in dummy, then ruff out the suit from which he had discarded and just lose one more trick one way or another. A diamond or spade back would let declarer win in

dummy and take the trump finesse, then give up a trick in the suit led to establish a discard for the loser in the other suit. This was still a 2-imp loss for Down Under, though. All Stars led 65-64 now.

Bd: 40
 Dlr: West
 Vul: None

North
 ♠ J3
 ♥ K973
 ♦ 106
 ♣ J9652

West
 ♠ A76
 ♥ 654
 ♦ AQ3
 ♣ AQ87

East
 ♠ Q94
 ♥ J10
 ♦ 8752
 ♣ K1043

South
 ♠ K10852
 ♥ AQ82
 ♦ KJ94
 ♣ ---

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Reid</i>	<i>Isporski</i>	<i>Newell</i>	<i>Kovachev</i>
1♣(STR)	Pass	1♦(WK)	1♠
Pass	Pass	1NT	All Pass

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Iliev</i>	<i>Hans</i>	<i>Hristov</i>	<i>Nunn</i>
1NT	Pass	Pass	2♣ (MAJs)
Pass	2♥	All Pass	

For the first time this match (maybe ever) Kovachev was seriously outbid, and given the result here I'm sure it won't happen again soon. Throughout the match we've seen the Bulgarians bid whenever it was feasible and sometimes even when it wasn't so South's decision to bid spades, then stay silent thereafter looks very strange. 1NT on the lead of the ♦J saw declarer win in dummy, cash the ♣A, then play two more rounds of the suit, finessing. Now a diamond to the queen led to South being endplayed eventually to lead spades for +120.

In the other room East led a trump against 2♥. Hans won in hand and played a spade to the nine and ten. West ducked so Hans led a low spade from dummy and West won to force dummy with a club. Declarer ruffed, ruffed a spade, drew trumps and had +110 for 6 imps to Down Under. The fourth lead change of the set made it 70-65 to Down Under.



Bd: 41
 Dlr: North
 Vul: E/W

North
 ♠ 4
 ♥ Q9753
 ♦ J1093
 ♣ AQ4

West
 ♠ QJ63
 ♥ AK6
 ♦ 865
 ♣ 1063

East
 ♠ K9
 ♥ 42
 ♦ AK74
 ♣ KJ875

South
 ♠ A108752
 ♥ J108
 ♦ Q2
 ♣ 92

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Reid</i>	<i>Isporski</i>	<i>Newell</i>	<i>Kovachev</i>
Pass	2♠	1NT	2♦(♥/♠)
Pass	Pass	All Pass	

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Iliev</i>	<i>Hans</i>	<i>Hristov</i>	<i>Nunn</i>
Pass	1♥	Pass	2♥
Pass	Pass	2NT	3♥
All Pass			

Hans-Nunn have recently decided to reduce the strength of their major-suit openings at favorable vulnerability, but they lowered the bar to new depths here and emerged smelling of roses. While Isporski discovered that the reward for passing the North cards was to get to 2♠ on his singleton, Hans played 3♥. The defenders led a top diamond and shifted to clubs, rather than to trumps, for which one can hardly blame East. Nunn won the club shift cheaply and ruffed a club in dummy, then knocked out the ♦A. All he had to lose were the two top trumps for +140.

Against 2♠ the defenders led a top diamond and shifted to a club, but when declarer played a trump to the nine, ten and jack the defenders took their heart ruff and collected seven tricks for +100, and 6 imps for Down Under. The running total was 76-65 now.



The master surveys his domain

Bd: 42
 Dir: East
 Vul: Both

North
 ♠ Q832
 ♥ Q754
 ♦ J87
 ♣ 83

West
 ♠ J5
 ♥ AJ2
 ♦ AK9532
 ♣ J9

East
 ♠ 10976
 ♥ 83
 ♦ 10
 ♣ AQ7652

South
 ♠ AK4
 ♥ K1096
 ♦ Q64
 ♣ K104

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Reid</i>	<i>Isporski</i>	<i>Newell</i>	<i>Kovachev</i>
		2♦(1)	2NT

All Pass

(1) spades and a minor 5-8

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Iliev</i>	<i>Hans</i>	<i>Hristov</i>	<i>Nunn</i>
		Pass	1♣

1♦ All Pass

It somehow feels wrong to me that opening the East hand 2♦ should gain imps (indeed, even mentioning the spade suit seems perverted), but I must admit that I'm biased here. Had Kovachev passed the final contract would have been 2♦. As it was West must have been very tempted to double 2NT. Would you lead a high or low diamond here? I'd vote for a low one but of course today it did not matter. Reid led a top diamond, then a low one, and declarer played on hearts, letting West cash out for +200.

In 1♦ Iliev scored the same seven tricks as in the other room: five diamonds and two aces for +70. But Down Under had another 4 imps to lead 80-65.

Bd: 43
 Dir: South
 Vul: None

North
 ♠ AJ864
 ♥ 1062
 ♦ KQ2
 ♣ K8

West
 ♠ KQ75
 ♥ AK75
 ♦ A7
 ♣ A74

East
 ♠ 92
 ♥ 983
 ♦ 9643
 ♣ QJ63

South
 ♠ 103
 ♥ QJ4
 ♦ J1085
 ♣ 10952

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Reid</i>	<i>Isporski</i>	<i>Newell</i>	<i>Kovachev</i>
1♣(STR)	1♠	Pass	Pass
Dbl	Pass	2♣	Pass
2NT	All Pass		

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Iliev</i>	<i>Hans</i>	<i>Hristov</i>	<i>Nunn</i>
1♣(STR)	1♠	All Pass	

Iliev's decision to pass out 1♠ seems wrong-headed to me. Even if partner has 0-4 you bid 1NT and at least you are playing in a contract you hope to make out of your own hand. Hans played 1♠ on a top club lead ducked around to his king. He advanced the ♥K, ducked all around, then exited with a club to let West cash the ♣A, ♥AK, and play a third club. Hans ruffed and played the ♦K, won by West who then exited in diamonds. Declarer was up to four tricks now. He led the ♣10, ruffed with the ♠7 and over-ruffed, then led his remaining diamond for West to ruff. In the three-card ending declarer had ♠AJx facing ♠10x and was sure of two trump tricks whatever happened next.

Isporski's low spade lead let declarer win in hand and advance a low club. Isporski took his king and returned the suit and now Reid ducked a heart. With that suit 3-3 he had three tricks in each rounded suit and one in each of the other suits for +120. I wonder if a top diamond lead is not the indicated defense at trick one, given partner's silence. Even a shift to a top diamond would have beaten 2NT. The lead for Down Under was now 20 imps.

Bd: 44
 Dir: West
 Vul: N/S

North
 ♠ AQ953
 ♥ 1082
 ♦ ---
 ♣ AQ1084

West
 ♠ J10
 ♥ KJ
 ♦ A108532
 ♣ K53

East
 ♠ 762
 ♥ A76
 ♦ KQJ76
 ♣ J7

South
 ♠ K84
 ♥ Q9543
 ♦ 94
 ♣ 962

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Reid</i>	<i>Isporski</i>	<i>Newell</i>	<i>Kovachev</i>
1♠(♦)	2♠	5♦	All Pass

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Iliev</i>	<i>Hans</i>	<i>Hristov</i>	<i>Nunn</i>
1♦	3♣(♣+♠)	3♦	Pass
5♦	All Pass		

Both tables reached a poor 5♦ contract, partly because they didn't know what their opponents could make and didn't want to have to find out. (The answer appears to be 3♠.) The difference between the two tables was only which way up the game was played. Hans led a heart from the North hand and now declarer was on the club position to make. Down one was still a 2-imp gain. Kovachev led the ♠K against 5♦ and shifted to a club when his partner followed with the five. Well done, though in fact whether he continued spades or shifted to clubs he was always defeating the game by two tricks. 2 imps for the All Stars reduced the lead to 18.

Bd: 45
 Dir: North
 Vul: Both

North
 ♠ 962
 ♥ KJ632
 ♦ AQ9
 ♣ Q8

West
 ♠ A54
 ♥ 975
 ♦ 87652
 ♣ A10

East
 ♠ KQ3
 ♥ Q8
 ♦ J10
 ♣ KJ7654

South
 ♠ J1087
 ♥ A104
 ♦ K43
 ♣ 932

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Reid</i>	<i>Isporski</i>	<i>Newell</i>	<i>Kovachev</i>
<i>Iliev</i>	<i>Hans</i>	<i>Hristov</i>	<i>Nunn</i>
	1♥	2♣	2♥

All Pass

Both tables played 2♥, on identical auctions. Each East led a diamond honor, and the contract reduced to finding the trump queen. East's club length and failure to lead a spade might point one way, his presumed diamond shortage another. One Editor swears by a Buffalo Nickel he reserves for precisely this position, our other Editor, a mathematician, tells us that the answer is stochastic, or aleatory. But then again he always did like long words. Irregardless, it came down to a guess and Isporski got it right, Hans got it wrong. 5 imps to All Stars, down 13 now.



How big was that dummy?

Bd: 46
 Dir: East
 Vul: None

North
 ♠ AKQ1074
 ♥ KJ2
 ♦ J97
 ♣ 7

West
 ♠ 95
 ♥ 964
 ♦ 64
 ♣ Q109643

East
 ♠ 832
 ♥ 87
 ♦ AQ1053
 ♣ AJ8

South
 ♠ J6
 ♥ AQ1053
 ♦ K82
 ♣ K52

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Reid</i>	<i>Isporski</i>	<i>Newell</i>	<i>Kovachev</i>
2♠(♣)	3♠	1NT	Pass
All Pass		Pass	4♠

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Iliev</i>	<i>Hans</i>	<i>Hristov</i>	<i>Nunn</i>
2♣(NF)	3♠(FIT)	1♦	1♥
		4♣	4♥

Against 4♠ Newell led the ♣A, shifted to the ace and another diamond, and declarer claimed. I suppose the lead of the ♦A in an attempt to give partner ruffs might be a reasonable one.

In the other room Iliev's decision to lead a trump as opposed to a diamond strikes me as worth at least a 1-imp loss. Down Under would take the first 12 tricks and their imp to go up 14, and move smartly along.

Bd: 47
 Dir: South
 Vul: N/S

North
 ♠ J7
 ♥ J98
 ♦ J1043
 ♣ AJ94

West
 ♠ 932
 ♥ AQ7
 ♦ 52
 ♣ K8653

East
 ♠ K10865
 ♥ 532
 ♦ Q8
 ♣ 1072

South
 ♠ AQ4
 ♥ K1064
 ♦ AK976
 ♣ Q

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Reid</i>	<i>Isporski</i>	<i>Newell</i>	<i>Kovachev</i>
Pass	2♦	Pass	1♦
All Pass			3NT

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Iliev</i>	<i>Hans</i>	<i>Hristov</i>	<i>Nunn</i>
			1♦
Pass	1NT	Pass	2NT
Pass	3NT	All Pass	

Neither auction is without its flaws. After Isporski's single raise Kovachev blasted 3NT with a singleton in a side-suit, while Hans declared 3NT from the weak hand. Both players received a lead from a black suit into a tenace. The difference was that the club lead did not cost a trick and the spade lead did. Hans played on hearts to make +660 while Kovachev ended up with +630. No harm no foul. On to the last deal with Down Under leading by 15imps.

Bd: 48	North
Dlr: West	♠ 9763
Vul: E/W	♥ AQ864
	♦ 63
	♣ 75

West
♠ AQ85
♥ 9732
♦ 9
♣ Q1084

East
♠ K2
♥ K10
♦ KJ842
♣ AJ63

South
♠ J104
♥ J5
♦ AQ1075
♣ K92

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Reid</i>	<i>Isporski</i>	<i>Newell</i>	<i>Kovachev</i>
Pass	Pass	1NT	Pass
Pass	2♣(♥+♠)	2♦	Dbl
Pass	2♥	Pass	2♠
Dbl	All Pass		

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Iliev</i>	<i>Hans</i>	<i>Hristov</i>	<i>Nunn</i>
Pass	Pass	1NT	Pass
2♣	Pass	2♦	Pass
3NT	All Pass		

Iliev's blast to 3NT was on the optimistic side. Nunn led a low diamond and had just enough time to be happy with his lead before the ♦9 scored the trick, as it always seems to do here. Declarer was now in with a realistic chance but when he took a club finesse and it lost Nunn simply exited in clubs. Declarer won in hand, played a third club to dummy and a heart up. Hans won the ace, played a diamond through, and Nunn won cheaply to exit in hearts. Declarer has one trick in each red suit and three in each black suit but no play for a ninth.

In the other room Isporski balanced over a 12-15 notrump to show the majors, and when Newell came again Kovachev tried to teach him a sharp lesson. Instead, though, it was he who learned the hard way that you can never rely on partner to do what you want him to. Isporski either thought the double asked for his longer suit or he ran from fear, and Kovachev played 2♠ on a diamond lead to his ten. A losing heart finesse saw Newell exit with the ace and another club. Declarer won his king, played a heart to dummy and a trump to the jack and queen, and Reid returned a low spade to his partner's king. Now a diamond honor would have let Reid ruff, draw trumps, and exit in clubs to collect a heart at the end. Instead Newell played a club. Declarer could ruff, cash the ♥Q and ruff a heart and had six tricks. But when he tried to cash the ♦A West ruffed, drew the trump, and had the ♣Q for trick 13. Down 300 and 9imps to Down Under, leading by 24 with 16 to play.

Our coverage of the fourth quarter of the NEC Cup final will appear in tonight's Bulletin 7.

17th NEC Bridge Festival Daily Schedule

Day/Date	Time	Event	Venue
Sunday (Feb. 12)	10:00-17:00	Asuka Cup (Open Pairs)	501, 502
	18:00-20:00	Closing Ceremony	503

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