

# NEC Bridge Festival

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Bulletin Number 6

Editors: Rich Colker, Barry Rigal

## Hackett Victorious in the 2015 NEC Cup

Team Hackett (Jason Hackett, Brian Senior, John Holland, Gunnar Hallberg) had been running through the field here for four days straight. They qualified first in the Swiss more than 14 VP ahead of second, they won their quarter-final match by a score of 94-17, and as if that wasn't enough they beat up on their semi-final opponents to the tune of 78-5. Could anyone have thought that the final would be any different? Especially since they were playing the team that had qualified last for the KOs (less than 1 VP ahead of the next team), that had won their quarter-final match by 89-45 but their semi-final match only by 67-54. Who would have thought the final would be so close? Who? The Junior Editor, that's who! He predicted a close match and indeed the event hung on the final deal, where Justin Hackett had to find a critical shift at trick two to give his partner a ruff or those last-place qualifiers, England/Netherlands (David Bakhshi, David Gold, Ricco van Prooijen, Louk Verhees), would have been the champions. Well, Jason found the right shift and the rest is history, but the runners-up were no slouches and they thrilled the VuGraph audience — and both of your Editors —, and treated us all to a final to remember. Congratulations to the champs and the runners-up, and thanks for a thrilling ride.



2015 NEC Cup Champions: Hackett



2015 NEC Cup Runners-up: Eng/Neth

### NEC Cup Final: Quarter-by-Quarter Results

Team	C/O	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	Final
Hackett	.5	36	12	34	42	124
England/Netherlands		13	42	25	35	115



The results of the Saturday Pair Games and Yokohama Swiss are on 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 3<sup>rd</sup>- or 4<sup>th</sup>-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 (-20 / -5 / Debutante)



Beginners Cup (-20): 1<sup>st</sup>



Beginners Cup (-5): 1<sup>st</sup>



Debutante Cup: 1<sup>st</sup>

### Beginners Cup (<20 MP) 7 pairs

Rank	Name1	Name2	Score
1	Yuso Hirashita	Kazuo Genchi	78
2	Shigeo Kosugi	Takeshi Goto	56
3	Tsutomu Sato	Tadashi Irizawa	27
4			
5			

### Beginners Cup (<5 MP) 14 pairs

Name1	Name2	Score
Masayo Hosokawa	Atsuko Yokogoshi	211
Junko Suzuki	Miho Kudo	113
Kiyoko Ueda	Hiroko Megumi	104
Takako Ito	Hideko Jinbo	70
Mikiko Fukui	Haruyo Nakagawa	54

### Debutante Cup 12 pairs

Name1	Name2	Score
Miyuki Ando	Izumi Hirasawa	19.0
Toshiyasu Imaki	Hiroko Amagaya	17.5
Kazuaki Ohara	Isamu Masuyama	15.5

## Yokohama Swiss Teams: Final Standings



Yokohama Swiss teams: 1<sup>st</sup>



Yokohama Swiss teams: 2<sup>nd</sup>



Yokohama Swiss teams: 3<sup>rd</sup>

Rank	Score	Team	Team Members
1	114.07	Australia	Griff Ware, Michael Wilkinson, Avi Kanetkar, Terry Brown
2	113.24	Beijing Trinergy	Dong Lu, Chuancheng Ju, Zhengjun Shi, Lidang Dong, Haitao Liu, Yanhong Wang
3	108.77	Down Under	Sartaj Hans, Peter Gill, Martin Reid, Peter Newell
4	107.64	FooterZ	Ryo Okuno, Akira Ohara, Zhang Shudi, Fu Zhong
5	106.78	Japan Senior	Kyoko Ohno, Akihiko Yamada, Yoshiyuki Nakamura, Masayuki Ino, Kazuhiko Yamada
6	106.51	Singapore	Poon Hua, Loo Choon Chou, Kelvin Ng, Lam Cheng Yen
7	102.95	Air-TR	Yoko Fukuyama, Takashi Sumita, Mark LaForge, Toby Curtis, Kazuo Takano
8	100.91	Nishida	Natsuko Nishida, Masayasu Oga, Nobuko Setoguchi, Lee Bokhee
9	100.43	NAITO	Ryoga Tanaka, Sakiko Naito, Ayako Miyakuni, Kenji Miyakuni
10	96.08	Sanko	Takako Fujimoto, Keiko Furuya, Katsumi Takahashi, Hiroaki Miura
11	96.04	Sweden	Peter Fredin, Gary Gottlieb, David Probert, Thomas Andersson
12	95.71	SARA	Tadashi Teramoto, Kumiko Sasahira, Masaaki Takayama, Takeshi Niekawa, Shugo Tanaka
13	92.59	England/Hinden	Frances Hinden, Graham Osborne, Alex Hydes, Mike Bell
14	91.17	Masa	Akiko Yanagisawa, Katsuhiko Ueki, Masayuki Hayasaka, Toshiko Kaho
15	90.56	INDIA 2	Subhash Gupta, Swarnendu Banerji, Noriko Watanabe, Noriko Domichi
16	86.57	Tanaka	Fumi Tanaka, Hiroki Yokoi, Hiroyuki Taguchi, Motoaki Shiga
17	85.8	SANDEN	Hu Mao Yuan, Yang Li Xin, Dai Jian Ming, Jin Ke, Wang Wei Min, Liu Yi Qian
18	85.21	Kosaka	Yasuko Kosaka, Yumi Yanagida, Ying Xiaoying, Akiko Kawabata
19	84.75	Matsubara	Nobuko Matsubara, Sachiko Yamamura, Michiko Iwahashi, Hideyuki Sango
20	84.66	INDIA 1	Gopal Venkatesh, Sridharan Padmanabhan, Sunderram Srinivasan, Keyzad Anklesaria

## Team Rosters: 20<sup>th</sup> NEC Cup Final

#	Team Name	Members
1	Hackett:	Jason Hackett, Brian Senior, John Holland, Gunnar Hallberg
8	England/Netherlands:	David Bakhshi, David Gold, Ricco van Prooijen, Louk Verhees

# NEC Final (1<sup>st</sup> Quarter): Hackett vs England/Netherlands

by Barry Rigal



Bakhshi



Hallberg



Gold



Hackett



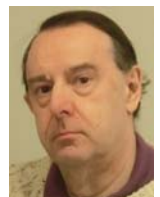
v Prooijen



Holland



Verhees



Senior

The finals feature regular teammates for the England team taking on one another. The two Davids, Gold and Bakhshi, and the Hacketts are part of the current Bermuda Bowl team; Brian Senior along with Gunnar Hallberg and John Holland have all been on England and GB teams over the last two decades. Some of them have progressed to the Senior teams now, but they remain at the very top of the competitive tree. Of course the Davids' teammates, Ricco van Prooijen and Louk Verhees won the Bermuda Bowl in 2011 and remain regular members of the Dutch national team. A good, highly competitive match is expected.

been; the defense can prevail on spade leads). Senior won the spade lead and played to ruff a spade in dummy. He advanced the ♠10, ducked all around. A club to the ace saw him play the ♥K and had both opponents followed he would have claimed. As it was, he set up the clubs but the defenders could play on spades and diamonds to obtain trump control so declarer could never score his long clubs. That was down one, and 5 imps to Eng/Neth when in 4♣ Gold won the spade lead, lost an early club finesse and then drew trumps to give up a club and a trick in each red suit for +130.

Bd: 1  
Dir: North  
Vul: None

North  
♠ J108432  
♥ 4  
♦ A953  
♣ 95

West  
♠ K7  
♥ 109  
♦ Q10742  
♣ Q764

East  
♠ A96  
♥ AKJ65  
♦ J  
♣ AJ102

South  
♠ Q5  
♥ Q8732  
♦ K86  
♣ K83

Bd: 2  
Dir: East  
Vul: N/S

North  
♠ K62  
♥ J73  
♦ KQJ8  
♣ QJ6

West  
♠ A  
♥ 982  
♦ 43  
♣ AK95432

East  
♠ Q10985  
♥ AK5  
♦ A9752  
♣ ---

South  
♠ J743  
♥ Q1064  
♦ 106  
♣ 1087

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Bakhshi</i>	<i>Hallberg</i>	<i>Gold</i>	<i>Holland</i>
	2♠	Dbl	Pass
2NT(wk)	Pass	3♥	Pass
3♠	Pass	4♣	All Pass

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Bakhshi</i>	<i>Hallberg</i>	<i>Gold</i>	<i>Holland</i>
		1♠	Pass
2♣	Pass	2♠(♦)	Pass
3♣	Pass	3NT	All Pass

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Hackett</i>	<i>v Prooijen</i>	<i>Senior</i>	<i>Verhees</i>
	2♠	Dbl	3♠
Pass	Pass	4♥	All Pass

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Hackett</i>	<i>v Prooijen</i>	<i>Senior</i>	<i>Verhees</i>
		1♠	Pass
2♣	Pass	2♦	Pass
3♣	Pass	3♦	Pass
4♣	Pass	5♣	All Pass

4♥ was not without play (as indeed 3NT would have



Maybe we will see this deal put in an appearance in challenge the champs one day. How do you like your chances in 4♥ on the 3-3 fit? No, you can't quite do it. I guess that means a club partscore is the target. 3NT had plenty of suits that could be established in the fulness of time — but no entries to them. Seven top winners obstinately remained all that could be taken. Meanwhile, against 5♣ van Prooijen led a top diamond. Hackett ducked and was now in with a chance against 3-3 diamonds and 3-3 clubs. He won the heart shift and played ace and another diamond. Verhees carefully ruffed in with the ♣10 and now declarer could do no better than discard his heart loser and concede a trump for down one and a modest, if Pyrrhic, victory.

This couldn't last; sober and respectable bridge has its place, but at the perfect moment and favorable vulnerability it was time for Ferdinand Sykes to put in an appearance.

Bd: 3                    North  
 Dlr: South           ♠ 976  
 Vul: E/W             ♥ Q654  
                            ♦ 1075  
                            ♣ K87

West  
 ♠ 8543  
 ♥ KJ92  
 ♦ 8  
 ♣ QJ42

East  
 ♠ KQ2  
 ♥ A3  
 ♦ KQJ932  
 ♣ A10

South  
 ♠ AJ10  
 ♥ 1087  
 ♦ A64  
 ♣ 9653

Open Room

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

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Hackett</i>	<i>v Prooijen</i>	<i>Senior</i>	<i>Verhees</i>
Pass	1♥	Dbl	Rdbl
1♠	Pass	2♦	Pass
2NT	Pass	3♠	Pass
3NT	All Pass		

Hackett and Senior had been there before so van Prooijen's *jeux d'esprit* did not discombobulate them unduly. Van Prooijen decided if they were good enough to bid they were good enough to lead, and Hackett won cheaply in hand and played a spade to

dummy, more hurt than surprised when it lost. He won the heart return and cleared diamonds, emerging with ten tricks.

In the other room Holland also led hearts. His choice of the ten went to the jack and queen from North (who was playing South to have led the ♥10 from something like ♥A107; quite a compliment). Now declarer emerged with 11 tricks when the diamonds behaved. That made it 6-2 to Eng/Neth.

Enough of such pussy-footing. Time for a real swing.

Bd: 4                    North  
 Dlr: West             ♠ 87  
 Vul: Both             ♥ AJ74  
                            ♦ 87432  
                            ♣ 109

West  
 ♠ QJ92  
 ♥ 85  
 ♦ AK1095  
 ♣ J6

East  
 ♠ A10  
 ♥ Q9632  
 ♦ QJ6  
 ♣ K83

South  
 ♠ K6543  
 ♥ K10  
 ♦ ---  
 ♣ AQ7542

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Bakhshi</i>	<i>Hallberg</i>	<i>Gold</i>	<i>Holland</i>
1♦	Pass	1♥	2♣
Pass	Pass	Dbl	2♠
Pass	3♣	3♦	All Pass

Closed Room

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

Where David Gold held the East cards his combination of doubling then bidding 3♦ showed better than an invitation in that suit. Bakhshi wasn't interested in bidding on but he found that 3♦ was too challenging to make against the lie of the black suits and the 5-0 trump break. There were two hearts, two clubs and an inevitable spade to lose.

Meanwhile, against 3NT Verhees led a low club and the jack scored as van Prooijen gave count. Senior led a low spade to the ten and if Verhees had ducked he would surely have defeated the game (as the cards lie) since declarer had no legitimate route to a ninth winner without giving up a spade, which would have let North pitch a discouraging diamond or an encouraging heart. Verhees took the ♠K and (as the

Bulletin Editor who was defending single-dummy did) exited with a spade. This would only be wrong if East had all the soft red-suit honors and no ♥A. Step forward with that precise hand, Mr Senior. Declarer now had nine winners and took no time at all to cash them; 12 imps to Hackett, up 14-6.

A subsequent question elicited the fact that South might have drawn the inference from Senior's delayed 3NT bid with both black-suits well-stopped that he did indeed have a hand with a diamond fit and thus some playing strength.

Bd: 5                    North  
 Dlr: North            ♠ 10  
 Vul: N/S                ♥ AJ862  
                               ♦ 743  
                               ♣ 8754

West ♠ 863 ♥ K974 ♦ KQ986 ♣ J	East ♠ QJ4 ♥ Q105 ♦ J10 ♣ AK932
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South  
 ♠ AK9752  
 ♥ 3  
 ♦ A52  
 ♣ Q106

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Bakhshi</i>	<i>Hallberg</i>	<i>Gold</i>	<i>Holland</i>
	Pass	1NT	2♦
Pass	2♠	Pass	Pass
3♦	All Pass		

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Hackett</i>	<i>v Prooijen</i>	<i>Senior</i>	<i>Verhees</i>
	Pass	1♣	1♠
Dbf	Pass	1NT	2♠
All Pass			

It isn't often that I'm surprised by the lack of competitive methods of a pair playing at this level, but David Bakhshi's decision to compete to 3♦ as opposed to making a takeout double or a two-suited action does look surprising to me. Yes, North had shown a heart fit, but what of it? As it turned out, no great harm was done, in a sense, when no one could double 3♦. The defenders cross-ruffed merrily (spade to the king — not the ace — for a heart shift) to take the first six tricks with the ♦A still to come. That was +150.

With 2♠ the contract in the other room Verhees would have to emerge with eight tricks to hold the loss to an imp. Senior won the unreadable ♣J as declarer followed with the six and had to decide what

to do next. Again, our single-dummy expert believes the diamond switch, found by Senior, to be perfectly reasonable. Of course had he cashed the second top club and found everyone following, he would have known what to do. After the diamond switch declarer could win and split out the trumps; +110, and a single imp to Hackett, leading 15-6.

The next deal saw both E/W pairs right-side a 3NT game with a side suit of Q752 facing the bare 8. In the abstract this makes whenever the critical suit is 4-4, the ace and king are together, or the suit blocks. A 5♣ contract would have needed about as much as this and would also have come home. No swing.

Bd: 7                    North  
 Dlr: South            ♠ 653  
 Vul: Both              ♥ A8  
                               ♦ AKQ1082  
                               ♣ 74

West ♠ AK10 ♥ J96 ♦ 5 ♣ AQJ852	East ♠ J9742 ♥ KQ10 ♦ J43 ♣ 63
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South  
 ♠ Q8  
 ♥ 75432  
 ♦ 976  
 ♣ K109

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Bakhshi</i>	<i>Hallberg</i>	<i>Gold</i>	<i>Holland</i>
1♣	1♦	1♥(♠)	Pass
2NT(1)	Pass	3NT	All Pass

(1) Clubs with spade fit...or natural?

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Hackett</i>	<i>v Prooijen</i>	<i>Senior</i>	<i>Verhees</i>
1♣	1♦	1♠	Pass
3♣	3♦	All Pass	

Jason Hackett passed 3♦ because he expected to buy relatively short clubs and could not envisage game as being practical facing a hand that could not act over 3♦. Had he bid 3♠ I suppose Senior would have raised to game and with the club finesse working, even repeated diamond leads would not disturb the contract against any 3-2 spade break; indeed, declarer might even survive a bad trump break. Van Prooijen took his seven red-suit winners and went home, with -200 looking a reasonable position. However, the accident from the Open Room cost blood. 3NT down three meant a loss of 11 imps instead of a gain of 9 imps, and Hackett led 26-6.

The next deal is interesting to me only because when

two good players do something I would never have considered, it should make me (and you too, gentle reader) reflect on whether its me or thee that's out of line.

You hold: ♠Q43 ♥K64 ♦A54 ♣K1043 and are on lead against 2♠ after a strong notrump and transfer auction. Partner is a passed hand who had the shot to double 2♥ and didn't — no real surprise there, I suppose. Over to you.

I'm guessing you all voted for a club, then a red suit, order to taste, and finally a trump. Both defenders opted for the ♠3, and this is what they found:

Bd: 8 North  
 Dlr: West ♠ A5  
 Vul: None ♥ AJ72  
 ♦ K972  
 ♣ A97

West  
 ♠ K72  
 ♥ Q1083  
 ♦ 83  
 ♣ J652

East  
 ♠ Q43  
 ♥ K64  
 ♦ A54  
 ♣ K1043

South  
 ♠ J10986  
 ♥ 95  
 ♦ QJ106  
 ♣ Q8

The trump lead conceded 140, as would a club, I think. A heart lead probably concedes 110, but a low diamond gives declarer losing options. Oh well.

Bd: 9 North  
 Dlr: North ♠ AQJ98  
 Vul: E/W ♥ KQ74  
 ♦ 85  
 ♣ J6

West  
 ♠ 72  
 ♥ 1093  
 ♦ K4  
 ♣ K108542

East  
 ♠ K6  
 ♥ AJ85  
 ♦ A1096  
 ♣ AQ3

South  
 ♠ 10543  
 ♥ 62  
 ♦ QJ732  
 ♣ 97

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Bakhshi</i>	<i>Hallberg</i>	<i>Gold</i>	<i>Holland</i>
	1♠	Dbl	3♠
4♣	Pass	4♠	Pass
5♣	All Pass		

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Hackett</i>	<i>v Prooijen</i>	<i>Senior</i>	<i>Verhees</i>
	1♥	1NT	Pass
2♠	Dbl	3♣	3♠
Pass	Pass	3NT	All Pass

Both E/Ws put a game on their cards, but in very different ways, and for the third time this set the Eng/Neth team took an action that swung double-digit imps in the wrong direction. In the Open Room Bakhshi took a sporting bid at the four-level and Gold had thoughts of slam, which came to nothing.

In the other room van Prooijen's canape opening was about to work in a very strange way. E/W were surely about to play 3♣ until Verhees came to the rescue by competing to 3♠, letting Senior take a two-way shot in the passout seat. Hackett had the perfect hand with which to sit for 3NT, and after a spade lead had ten winners and an imp for his pains. (Just to make the players feel better, our Senior Editor has duplicated all the losing actions taken by anyone in the finals so far. Bridge is so much easier with the sight of all four hands, isn't it?)

Bd: 10 North  
 Dlr: East ♠ A103  
 Vul: Both ♥ 9  
 ♦ AQ10865  
 ♣ AQ9

West  
 ♠ Q  
 ♥ AJ1086  
 ♦ J73  
 ♣ J1064

East  
 ♠ K87642  
 ♥ Q43  
 ♦ 94  
 ♣ K3

South  
 ♠ J95  
 ♥ K752  
 ♦ K2  
 ♣ 8752

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Bakhshi</i>	<i>Hallberg</i>	<i>Gold</i>	<i>Holland</i>
		Pass	Pass
Pass	1♦	1♠	Dbl
Pass	3NT	All Pass	

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Hackett</i>	<i>v Prooijen</i>	<i>Senior</i>	<i>Verhees</i>
		2♠	Pass
Pass	3♦	All Pass	

After what some might regard as an unsophisticated leap to 3NT Hallberg received the unwelcome heart lead. He flew up with the king and knew his fate at once. Had he ducked, I suspect a club would have

come back and he might well have finessed there to go two down. Still and all, I'm not sure I would have duplicated his play.

In the other room van Prooijen opted for the low road when he balanced over 2♠ into diamonds. We can all see the risks there but he hoped his partner would bid hearts or be able to raise diamonds if game was going to be good, and today his action worked perfectly. To cap it all Senior found the reasonable ♣K lead and van Prooijen emerged with an overtrick. Those 6 imps meant the score was 27-12 now.

Bd: 11  
 Dlr: South  
 Vul: None

North  
 ♠ K932  
 ♥ A109  
 ♦ KJ54  
 ♣ 52

West  
 ♠ Q7654  
 ♥ K6  
 ♦ A8  
 ♣ Q1093

East  
 ♠ J  
 ♥ QJ542  
 ♦ Q10732  
 ♣ 86

South  
 ♠ A108  
 ♥ 873  
 ♦ 96  
 ♣ AKJ74

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Bakhshi</i>	<i>Hallberg</i>	<i>Gold</i>	<i>Holland</i>
1♠	1NT	All Pass	1♣

1♠ 1NT All Pass

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Hackett</i>	<i>v Prooijen</i>	<i>Senior</i>	<i>Verhees</i>
1♠	1NT	All Pass	1♦

1♠ 1NT All Pass

Both Norths made the excellent decision not to invite game, a somewhat easier decision for van Prooijen who rated to be facing a balanced 11-13 whereas Holland had more hands in an intermediate range where game might be more playable.

The play was identical for nine tricks. East led hearts and the defenders played three rounds of the suit as West pitched a spade. Declarer played a spade to the jack and ace, then the ♠10, West covering to block the suit. North finessed unsuccessfully in clubs and the defense played ace and another diamond. South won the ♦K and now Hallberg cashed his spade winner and tried to run clubs, while van Prooijen unblocked spades, then end-played West at trick 12 with a club to give him a stepping-stone to the ♠9 for an overtrick. It was 27-13 now for Hackett.

Bd: 12  
 Dlr: West  
 Vul: N/S

North  
 ♠ 8  
 ♥ KJ9765  
 ♦ A854  
 ♣ K3

West  
 ♠ K765  
 ♥ Q842  
 ♦ J73  
 ♣ Q2

East  
 ♠ AJ10432  
 ♥ A10  
 ♦ 10  
 ♣ AJ84

South  
 ♠ Q9  
 ♥ 3  
 ♦ KQ962  
 ♣ 109765

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Bakhshi</i>	<i>Hallberg</i>	<i>Gold</i>	<i>Holland</i>
Pass	1♥	1♠	Dbf
3♥(♠)	4♥	4♠	All Pass

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Hackett</i>	<i>v Prooijen</i>	<i>Senior</i>	<i>Verhees</i>
Pass	2♦(1)	2♠	4♦
4♠	Dbf	Pass	5♦
Pass	Pass	Dbf	All Pass

(1) 5+♥, 4+♦ 10-15

Both N/S pairs put themselves in jeopardy but Hallberg's improvisation went unpunished whereas Senior was prepared to defend at the five-level. Against 4♠ the defenders took a trick in each red suit; +450 to E/W. But in 5♦, reached after van Prooijen doubled 4♠ to suggest extra shape and a willingness to sacrifice, Senior had a shot at a bonanza. He led the ace and another spade and declarer ruffed and immediately advanced the ♥J. Senior won his ace and could not read what was going on, other than that declarer had six hearts. He played ace and another club and declarer won, drew two rounds of trumps, then led a third club as Hackett ruffed in with the ♦J for down 500. 2 imps to Hackett, up 29-13.

After a quiet 3NT making nine tricks in each room, both pairs had the opportunity to put some delicate modern science into play.

Bd: 14  
 Dlr: East  
 Vul: None

North  
 ♠ AK1054  
 ♥ 6  
 ♦ A93  
 ♣ 7532

West  
 ♠ 76  
 ♥ 10973  
 ♦ K852  
 ♣ KJ10

East  
 ♠ J8  
 ♥ AKQJ42  
 ♦ Q107  
 ♣ Q6

South  
 ♠ Q932  
 ♥ 85  
 ♦ J64  
 ♣ A984



Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Bakhshi</i>	<i>Hallberg</i>	<i>Gold</i>	<i>Holland</i>
		1♥	Pass
2♦(♥)	2♠	3♥	3♣

All Pass

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Hackett</i>	<i>v Prooijen</i>	<i>Senior</i>	<i>Verhees</i>
		1♥	Pass
3♣(♥)	Dbl(t/o ♥)	3♥	3♠
Pass	4♠	All Pass	

Both tables showed a heart-raise, Hackett's a Law-ful Bergen raise, Bakhshi's a constructive two-level raise. While that got both Easts to 3♥, Hallberg got his spades in cheaply while van Prooijen thought he owed his partner another bid at his second turn. Inquiring minds might wonder why, but that is as may be. Nonetheless, this didn't have to be a tragedy since the defenders should have been able to avoid endplaying themselves, shouldn't they?

It wasn't so easy, though. After Hackett led a top heart against 4♠ Senior overtook to play the ♣Q, ducked. Verhees won the next club, ruffed out hearts, drew trumps, then played ace and another club. Hackett carefully gave a ruff and discard now, necessary to save partner from himself if declarer had ♦Q107, though that defense might not look so bright if declarer had started life with the ♦QJ4 and could discard from dummy and ruff in hand. As it was, though, the game was one down either way.

Hallberg played 3♠ from the North seat on repeated heart leads. He ruffed, stripped off the trumps, and ducked a club to West. He won the club return and played a third club, reaching the same ending. Bakhshi exited with the ♦K, hoping for a declarer error rather than play his partner for the ♦Q109. Hallberg guessed well, winning the ♦A and leading a diamond to the jack for +140 and 5 imps. It was 34-13 now.

Hackett added another 2 imps when Gold played to defeat a notrump part-score and cost himself a couple of overtrick imps. Then both pairs led fourth highest against a strong notrump, passed out, letting through the ninth trick. It was 36-13 at set end. Eng/Neth were quietly confident: they had their opponents exactly where they wanted them. Hackett would probably take the imps and let their opponents try to come back.



Some pictures just don't need captions!



"Beaten, but *not* defeated!"



"This certainly isn't like our Tuesday afternoon club game."

Images of Our Game



"What does it mean when you can't feel your face?"



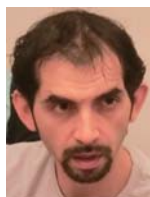
"Well, at least I'm not losing my hair."



"Good grief! Why me?"

# NEC Final (2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter): Hackett vs England/Netherlands

by Rich Colker



Bakhshi



Hallberg



Holland



Gold



Hackett



v Prooijen



Verhees



Senior

The second quarter saw Hackett leading, 36-13.

On Board 17 both E/W pairs bid to 4♥ with a balanced 17-count opposite a balanced 8-count and came up one trick short when the defenders in both rooms managed to obtain a diamond ruff to go with their three high-card winners.

Bd: 18  
Dlr: East  
Vul: N/S

North  
♠ KQ86  
♥ 102  
♦ A754  
♣ K62

West  
♠ 10974  
♥ KJ74  
♦ KJ8  
♣ 85

East  
♠ J5  
♥ A63  
♦ 109632  
♣ Q73

South  
♠ A32  
♥ Q985  
♦ Q  
♣ AJ1094

Open/Closed Rooms

West	North	East	South
Verhees	Senior	v Prooijen	Hackett
Hallberg	Gold	Holland	Bakhshi
Pass	1♠	Pass	1♣
Pass	4♠	All Pass	2♠

Both N/S pairs reached 4♠ in the 4-3 fit when 3NT was unbeatable (declarer can take nine tricks via the club finesse when he gets in and the defense can never take more than three hearts off the top). In 4♠ declarer has three unavoidable losers (two hearts and a trump) but no obvious road to ten winners unless the defense leads trumps, in which case 4♠ is cold (with careful play). For example, after a diamond lead (the lead Gold received in the Closed Room) declarer cannot draw trumps without expose himself

to several diamond losers in addition to his heart losers. Indeed, that is the line Gold followed, taking the club finesse early, then taking the top three trumps hoping to find the suit 3-3. When that did not happen the defense could ruff the third club and now Gold had to lose three diamonds, two hearts and a trump for down three, -300.

Initially it appeared as if declarer might somehow be able to duck a trump early to maintain control, hoping to take three spades, five clubs, one diamond and a diamond ruff while preventing West from retaining a trump to kill dummy's clubs. However, there was no obvious way to accomplish this and we finally asked Deep Finesse, who confirmed that this approach could not succeed. Another line we considered was to attack hearts early by passing the ♥10, hoping to find the jack outside and take one or two heart tricks to go with five clubs, one diamond and three trumps. This was the approach Senior tried in the Open Room after a club lead to the jack, but it also failed. He did, however, manage to negotiate a diamond ruff in dummy and so took eight tricks rather than the Closed Room's seven to finish down two, -200, for a 3-imp gain. Hackett now led 39-13.

Bd: 19  
Dlr: South  
Vul: E/W

North  
♠ J9  
♥ K7  
♦ A652  
♣ Q10942

West  
♠ 8642  
♥ 1054  
♦ Q1084  
♣ 53

East  
♠ AK1053  
♥ QJ32  
♦ J  
♣ KJ6

South  
♠ Q7  
♥ A986  
♦ K973  
♣ A87

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Verhees</i>	<i>Senior</i>	<i>v Prooijen</i>	<i>Hackett</i>
			1♣
Pass	1♦	1♠	2♦
2♠	3♣	3♥	Pass
3♠	All Pass		

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Hallberg</i>	<i>Gold</i>	<i>Holland</i>	<i>Bakhshi</i>
			1NT
Pass	Pass	2♣	Pass
2♠	Dbl	Pass	3♦
All Pass			

The success of the Dutch pair's 3♠ in the Open Room depended on whether the defense could negotiate any heart ruffs for North. Hackett led the ♦7 to the ace and Senior failed to find the magic ♥K switch, instead trying the ♣10. Van Prooijen inserted the jack, forcing the ace, and Hackett now had the defense's last chance for glory, but only if he could work out to under-lead in hearts. When instead he returned a club to the king, declarer cashed the ♠AK, solving the trump (and potential promotion) situation, and now just lost the two top hearts; +140.

In the Closed Room Holland-Hallberg found their spade fit but were outbid in diamonds when Bakhshi doubled 2♠ for the minors. 3♦ turned out to be a fine place to play, as long as N/S were not up to finding both heart ruffs against 2♠. 3♦ finished down one, -50, when the defense collected the obvious five tricks (two spades, two trumps and a club). That was 3imps back to Eng/Neth, evening out the session score but still trailing 39-16 in the match.

Bd: 20  
 Dir: West  
 Vul: Both

North
♠ AJ9
♥ K9
♦ AKJ32
♣ Q74

West	East
♠ KQ3	♠ 10652
♥ A32	♥ QJ1054
♦ 754	♦ 108
♣ AK102	♣ 96

South
♠ 874
♥ 876
♦ Q96
♣ J853

Open/Closed Rooms

West	North	East	South
<i>Verhees</i>	<i>Senior</i>	<i>v Prooijen</i>	<i>Hackett</i>
<i>Hallberg</i>	<i>Gold</i>	<i>Holland</i>	<i>Bakhshi</i>
1NT	Pass	2♦	Pass
2♥	Dbl	Pass	2NT
Pass	3♦	All Pass	

Both E/W's did well to locate the optimal 2♥ contract, then sell out to 3♦. In the Closed Room van Prooijen led a club on the go, got his ruff, and in due course the defense collected their two major-suit tricks for +100. In the Open Room Holland led the ♥Q to the ace and now Hallberg failed to cash the ♣K as a trial balloon and instead returned a low heart. Gold won, quickly drew trumps ending in dummy, then played a club toward his hand. Hallberg rose with the king (too late, Penguin) and now switched to the ♠K. Gold ducked and Hallberg persisted with the ♠Q, which did not exactly strike terror in the heart of declarer, and Gold could now claim 9 tricks for +110; 5imps for Eng/Neth, reducing the margin to 18 at 39-21.

On Board 21 N/S were cold for 11 tricks in spades (+650) but both tables sold out to 5♦x and collected 300 for a push.

On Board 22 both N/S pairs bid to 2♥ on a combined 22 hcp but game was cold when the missing ♥AQ both turned up onside. Senior took his 10 tricks but Gold managed to take 11 and add another imp to Eng/Neth's total, now trailing 39-22.

Bd: 23  
 Dir: South  
 Vul: Both

North
♠ KQ42
♥ A105
♦ Q1074
♣ 106

West	East
♠ AJ8763	♠ 95
♥ 9732	♥ KJ84
♦ J3	♦ 82
♣ 9	♣ AJ854

South
♠ 10
♥ Q6
♦ AK965
♣ KQ732

Open Room

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

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Hallberg</i>	<i>Gold</i>	<i>Holland</i>	<i>Bakhshi</i>
			1♦
2♠	3♣(♦)	Dbl	4♦
Pass	5♦	Dbl	All Pass

In the Open Room Senior-Hackett judged well not to try for bigger and better things and settle for game. The defense was not unfriendly. Van Prooijen led the

♠9 to the ace and back came a heart, ducked to the king, followed by a second heart. With nine tricks guaranteed Senior called for the ♣K and emerged with ten tricks for a healthy +630.

In the Closed Room Gold decided to show his diamond support immediately, probably thinking he had time to bid notrump later. When Holland doubled the club bid Bakhshi had hopes for bigger and better things, not envisioning the major wastage in both black suits. And by the time the auction had reached the five level it was too late to retreat to notrump. 5♦ looked to be a doomed contract and Hallberg got off to a good lead with the ♠9. Holland won the ace but at trick two he inexplicably switched to...the ♥K. Gold blinked, then quickly won the ace, drew trumps, knocked out the ♠A and claimed 11 tricks for +750. Wowza! That was 3 imps to Eng/Neth instead of 13 the other way. That 16-imp swing left Eng/Neth just 14 imps behind at 39-25.

On next two boards both sides bid to good games but in each case Hackett picked up an overtrick imp to increase their lead slightly to 41-25. Then came...

Bd: 26  
Dlr: East  
Vul: Both

North  
♠ KJ9  
♥ AJ6  
♦ A108  
♣ AQ76

West  
♠ Q765  
♥ KQ853  
♦ 963  
♣ 4

East  
♠ 842  
♥ 974  
♦ 52  
♣ J10953

South  
♠ A103  
♥ 102  
♦ KQJ74  
♣ K82

#### Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Verhees</i>	<i>Senior</i>	<i>v Prooijen</i>	<i>Hackett</i>
		Pass	1♣(2+)
1♥	2♥(♣)	Pass	3♣
Pass	3♦	Pass	4♦
Pass	4♥	Pass	4♠
Pass	4NT	Pass	5♥
Pass	6♣	All Pass	

#### Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Hallberg</i>	<i>Gold</i>	<i>Holland</i>	<i>Bakhshi</i>
		Pass	1♣(2+)
Pass	1♦	Pass	2♦
Pass	2♥	Pass	2NT
Pass	3♣	Pass	3♦
Pass	3NT	Pass	4♦
Pass	5NT	Pass	6♦
Pass	6NT	All Pass	

In the Open Room Senior-Hackett were not really on solid ground here but several aspects of the auction deserve mentioning. First, Senior had no good way of doing anything better than showing club support with his 2♥ cue-bid, even though Hackett could have had a minimum balanced hand with a doubleton club. Second, once Senior cue-bid 3♦ Hackett should have known that diamonds had to play as well or better than clubs (unless Senior hand a *lot* of good clubs, in which case he might have bid differently, such as bid a forcing 4♣ over 3♣). Third, Senior might have bid a pick-a-slam 5NT over Hackett's 4♠ cue-bid. And finally, Hackett should have converted 6♣ to 6♦ since opposite the ♦A — even if it was short — diamonds had to be a suitable trump suit. Of course the errors made by N/S here did not have to be punished as severely as they were, but in bridge, as in life, no good deed goes unpunished and usually no ill-deed does either. When the smoke had cleared 6♣ was down two, -200.

In the Closed Room Gold-Bakhshi had what appears to be a relay-type auction to the good 6NT contract (at least here trumps could not be 5-1) with 11 top tricks and plenty of chances for a twelfth (3-3 clubs; ♥KQ outside; two-way finesse for the ♠Q). Hallberg tabled the ♥K and Bakhshi claimed immediately; +1440. That was 17 huge imps to Eng/Neth, who took the lead in one "swell foop" at 42-41.

On Board 27 both N/S pairs played spade partials and lost the obvious four tricks for a push at +140. Then...

Bd: 28  
Dlr: West  
Vul: N/S

North  
♠ A3  
♥ A1043  
♦ 983  
♣ AQ109

West  
♠ K10  
♥ KJ765  
♦ J754  
♣ 65

East  
♠ J952  
♥ Q82  
♦ A1062  
♣ 43

South  
♠ Q8764  
♥ 9  
♦ KQ  
♣ KJ872

#### Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Verhees</i>	<i>Senior</i>	<i>v Prooijen</i>	<i>Hackett</i>
Pass	1♣(2+)	Pass	1♠
Pass	1NT	Pass	2♣(1)
Pass	2♦	Pass	2♠
Pass	3NT	All Pass	

(1) Checkback (for 3-card ♠ support)



Closed Room

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

The club suit got lost in the Open Room's checkback auction so when Hackett did not find secondary spade support he simply invited with 2♠ and Senior carried on with his super-max. Once again the pair did not have to pay so severely for not investigating for alternate strains. But Hackett did not have to be balanced and Senior did not really have the "goods" as far as stoppers in the red suits were concerned (though he was certainly balanced — which is not to be taken as a clinical diagnosis). Perhaps a 3♣ bid by someone would have saved the day here but this was not that day and the contract was tenuous at best. Van Prooijen led the ♦2, Verhees contributing the four, and Senior cashed three rounds of clubs before playing ♠A and a spade up. When the queen lost to the king he knew this was not going to be his day. The defense now cashed their three diamonds and two spades for down two, -200.

In the Closed Room the 1NT opening allowed South to show his two suits efficiently and now the pair cue-bid to 5♣, which was cold. The hand virtually played itself once Bakhshi guessed to duck the second spade; +600 and 13 more imps to Eng/Neth, who now led by 14 at 55-41.

Bd: 29  
 Dir: North  
 Vul: Both

North
♠ AK9
♥ 752
♦ 64
♣ AK873

West	East
♠ 864	♠ Q52
♥ 104	♥ AKJ8
♦ AK852	♦ QJ
♣ QJ2	♣ 9654

South
♠ J1073
♥ Q963
♦ 10973
♣ 10

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Verhees</i>	<i>Senior</i>	<i>v Prooijen</i>	<i>Hackett</i>
2NT	1♣	Dbl	Pass
Pass	Pass	3NT	All Pass

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Hallberg</i>	<i>Gold</i>	<i>Holland</i>	<i>Bakhshi</i>
Pass	1NT	All Pass	

The auction in the Open Room seems a bit too pushy (but what auction is not when you seat four experts around a bridge table?) and both editors would have opted to bid 2♦ rather than 2NT at our first turn. Still, 3NT did not have to be as poor a spot as it was what with the blockage in the suit declarer would have to rely on for most of his tricks. Senior led the ♣A which set up a couple of club tricks for declarer and a side entry to the diamonds — though the defense could still control whether it could be used before or after the diamond suit could be unblocked. That particular issue was resolved *post haste* as Senior continued with the king and a third club, returning the diamonds to limbo. Verhees led a diamond to the queen and overtook the jack, hoping to find the suit 3-3. But when Senior showed out on the third diamond (dummy pitching a spade) Verhees' last hope was for a misdefense: he led the ♥10, hoping Senior held the queen and would duck. Alas, Hackett won the ♥Q, cashed the ♦10, and led a spade to Senior, the defense taking three spades, two clubs, one heart and one diamond for down two, -200.

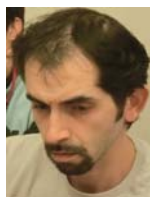
In the Closed Room Gold's 1NT ended the auction. Holland led the ♥A, then switched to the ♣6. Gold took the jack with the ace, then led a heart to the queen and a heart back. Holland won, cashed his fourth heart, then switched to the ♦Q and continued with the jack when the queen held. Hallberg overtook the second diamond, cashed a third, then got out with a spade to the ace for Gold to cash the king. With three cards remaining, the ♣K87, Gold exited with the ♣8. Holland, holding ♣954 opposite his partner's ♣Q2, won the nine and now declarer had the last two tricks (if he ducks Hallberg can win the queen and return a club for the defense to take another trick). Down one, -100, and 7 imps back to Hackett, who trailed by just 7 at 55-48.

The final three boards were all pushes: Board 30 was played in 2♠ by N/S making two; Boards 31 and 32 both were played in 4♥ by E/W making five.

The second session ended with Eng/Neth making a strong comeback from 23 down to go up by 14, to be up by 7 at the break. The second half figured to be equally exciting, so read on, Dear Reader, read on.

# NEC Final (3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter): Hackett vs England/Netherlands

by Barry Rigal



Bakhshi



Hallberg



Gold



Hackett



v Prooijen



Verhees



Senior



Holland

For the third set Eng/Neth would have to deal with the problem of being in the lead.

Bd: 33  
Dir: North  
Vul: None

North  
♠ KJ85  
♥ K964  
♦ A96  
♣ K7

West  
♠ Q2  
♥ J1032  
♦ Q54  
♣ AJ104

East  
♠ A109  
♥ Q8  
♦ K872  
♣ Q853

South  
♠ 7643  
♥ A75  
♦ J103  
♣ 962

## Open Room

West	North	East	South
Verhees	Hallberg	v Prooijen	Holland
	1♥	Pass	2♥
Pass	Pass	Dbl	Pass
2NT	Pass	3♣	All Pass

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
Hackett	Gold	Senior	Bakhshi
	1NT	All Pass	

Against 1NT the defenders led and continued clubs. Declarer, David Gold, won in hand, ducked a spade, and Hackett overtook his partner's ten to play the ♥J (yes a low heart might have worked better today) letting Gold win in dummy to lead a spade to the king and ace. Declarer was up to six tricks now while the defenders had three clubs and two spades. Had they cashed their clubs they would have squeezed declarer, but when Brian Senior played a second

heart it set up the ♥9 for the seventh winner.

In the Open Room N/S's quick and dirty four-card major style got them to the wrong spot — but their opponents didn't know it. They balanced themselves into 3♣ and the defenders led and continued trumps, letting Ricco van Prooijen build a spade winner to pitch a slow diamond loser. That let him out for down one (he lost two hearts and one trick in each suit), not bad, though of course 2♥ would have been extremely unsuccessful. One imp nonetheless for Eng/Neth, up 56-48.

Bd: 34  
Dir: East  
Vul: N/S

North  
♠ K9  
♥ K9  
♦ AQJ432  
♣ J87

West  
♠ 10763  
♥ A76  
♦ 10985  
♣ 53

East  
♠ AQJ  
♥ J2  
♦ K6  
♣ AQ10964

South  
♠ 8542  
♥ Q108543  
♦ 7  
♣ K2

## Open Room

West	North	East	South
Verhees	Hallberg	v Prooijen	Holland
		1♣	Pass
1♦	2♦	3♣	All Pass

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
Hackett	Gold	Senior	Bakhshi
		1♣	1♥
Pass	2♦	3♣	Pass
Pass	3♦	All Pass	

Gunnar Hallberg wasn't going to stick his neck out more than once without an excuse. Whether David Gold had reason to poke his head over the parapet repeatedly depends on whether you believe that a 1♥ overcall at this vulnerability shows a hand or a foot. We can see what David Bakhshi thought.

For Hackett, John Holland led his diamond against 3♣ and the defense took their ruff, then shifted to hearts. Van Prooijen made the normal play of rising with the ace and taking the club finesse. Had he instead taken the spade finesse he would have made nine tricks. As it was, he lost two club tricks, the ♠K, and one heart, ending up down two. But he would have been losing imps anyway since 3♦ was no fun at all on repeated club leads. Declarer took the diamond finesse, no doubt more in hope than expectation, and lost two clubs, two diamonds, two spades and a heart for down three. Hackett was back in front 57-56.

Bd: 35  
 Dlr: South  
 Vul: E/W

North  
 ♠ A862  
 ♥ K1098  
 ♦ 54  
 ♣ K42

West  
 ♠ KQ7  
 ♥ A2  
 ♦ 732  
 ♣ QJ876

East  
 ♠ J10953  
 ♥ QJ64  
 ♦ K  
 ♣ 953

South  
 ♠ 4  
 ♥ 753  
 ♦ AQJ10986  
 ♣ A10

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Verhees</i>	<i>Hallberg</i>	<i>v Prooijen</i>	<i>Holland</i>
Pass	1♥	Pass	1♦
Pass	2NT	Pass	2♦
Pass	4♥	All Pass	3♥

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Hackett</i>	<i>Gold</i>	<i>Senior</i>	<i>Bakhshi</i>
Pass	1♥	Pass	1♦
All Pass			2♦

While 3NT is a quite playable (and laydown) contract as the cards lie, with 5♦ a decent and equally successful spot, the same could not be said for 4♥. Van Prooijen led a top spade against 4♥ and Hallberg won, finessed in diamonds, then led a heart to his ten and East's jack. When a spade came back, Hallberg ruffed and led a second heart. Louk

Verhees won his ace, cashed a spade, and shifted to clubs. Declarer still had a trump and a spade to lose for down two; That was 6 somewhat surprising imps to Eng/Neth who had stayed low in the Closed Room.

Bd: 36  
 Dlr: West  
 Vul: Both

North  
 ♠ ---  
 ♥ AK432  
 ♦ J109  
 ♣ AQ762

West  
 ♠ 63  
 ♥ QJ98  
 ♦ K863  
 ♣ K53

East  
 ♠ Q8742  
 ♥ 107  
 ♦ A72  
 ♣ 1098

South  
 ♠ AKJ1095  
 ♥ 65  
 ♦ Q54  
 ♣ J4

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Verhees</i>	<i>Hallberg</i>	<i>v Prooijen</i>	<i>Holland</i>
Pass	1♥	Pass	1♠
Pass	2♣	Pass	3♠
Pass	4♠	All Pass	

Closed Room

<i>Hackett</i>	<i>Gold</i>	<i>Senior</i>	<i>Bakhshi</i>
Pass	1♥	Pass	1NT(1)
Pass	2♣(2)	Pass	2♦
Pass	3♣	Pass	4♠
All Pass			
(1) Spades			
(2) Extras or ♥+♣			

The excellent trump spots meant that 4♠ could survive the bad break. The defenders can take their two diamond tricks early, as Verhees and Hackett did, but when the club finesse succeeded there was no way for the defenders to promote a trump and declarer had ten winners.

Alternatively, the defense could have led a top heart. Now declarer can play to establish a diamond. East does best to win the ace and play back a heart but declarer can simply ruff the third heart as East pitches a diamond and reduce his trumps by finessing in clubs and singling in small trumps by ruffing more hearts, to come to six spades two clubs and two hearts.

If East does not rise with the ♦A at trick two declarer can arrange to set up and cash his diamond winner before East has time to get a discard.

No swing; still 57-56 for Hackett

Bd: 37  
 Dir: North  
 Vul: N/S

North  
 ♠ Q87  
 ♥ K8732  
 ♦ 107  
 ♣ KQ8

West  
 ♠ A102  
 ♥ A104  
 ♦ AK62  
 ♣ 762

East  
 ♠ KJ54  
 ♥ 95  
 ♦ Q985  
 ♣ J93

South  
 ♠ 963  
 ♥ QJ6  
 ♦ J43  
 ♣ A1054

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Verhees</i>	<i>Hallberg</i>	<i>v Prooijen</i>	<i>Holland</i>
	Pass	Pass	Pass
1NT	All Pass		

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Hackett</i>	<i>Gold</i>	<i>Senior</i>	<i>Bakhshi</i>
	Pass	Pass	Pass
1NT	All Pass		

Both tables played 1NT. After a heart lead Verhees ran diamonds and worked out from the discards to run spades for four tricks, when North discarded one early. Hackett settled for seven tricks by playing spades from the top where South had discarded a spade on the fourth round of diamonds. Those 2imps put Eng/Neth back up by an imp 58-57.

Bd: 38  
 Dir: East  
 Vul: E/W

North  
 ♠ J104  
 ♥ J84  
 ♦ 10842  
 ♣ 952

West  
 ♠ KQ872  
 ♥ ---  
 ♦ Q76  
 ♣ KJ1076

East  
 ♠ 953  
 ♥ KQ762  
 ♦ A5  
 ♣ Q83

South  
 ♠ A6  
 ♥ A10953  
 ♦ KJ93  
 ♣ A4

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Verhees</i>	<i>Hallberg</i>	<i>v Prooijen</i>	<i>Holland</i>
		Pass	1♥
2♥(♠+♣)	Pass	2♣	Dbl
Pass	3♥	Dbl	All Pass

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Hackett</i>	<i>Gold</i>	<i>Senior</i>	<i>Bakhshi</i>
		Pass	1♥
1♠	Pass	2♥	Pass
4♠	Pass		

Holland played the inelegant 3♥x on a top spade lead. He won and returned the suit, and now West shifted to a diamond to the ♦A for a diamond return. Holland finessed, lost the diamond ruff, won the club return to exit in clubs and ruffed the third club. Now he led the ♥3 to the eight and queen, the defenders' sixth trick, and East (down to a spade and ♥K76) had to lead a spade. This allowed South to pitch his ♦K and ruff in dummy, then lead the ♥J for the trump coup. Alternatively, East could have led a trump and conceded at once. Nicely done by declarer.

4♠ is not laydown by any means but is probably where you want to play, since it needs little more than the ♠A being where you expect it to be. It was easy enough to make today, losing a trick each in spades, clubs and diamonds. So Hackett had 8imps to lead 65-58.

Bd: 39  
 Dir: South  
 Vul: Both

North  
 ♠ K92  
 ♥ AK9  
 ♦ 10832  
 ♣ J32

West  
 ♠ AJ1064  
 ♥ 74  
 ♦ AKQJ  
 ♣ 108

East  
 ♠ 853  
 ♥ J8632  
 ♦ 95  
 ♣ AQ4

South  
 ♠ Q7  
 ♥ Q105  
 ♦ 764  
 ♣ K9765

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Verhees</i>	<i>Hallberg</i>	<i>v Prooijen</i>	<i>Holland</i>
			Pass
1♣(16+)	Pass	1♦	Pass
1♠	Pass	2♦(♥)	Pass
2♥	Pass	2♠	All Pass

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Hackett</i>	<i>Gold</i>	<i>Senior</i>	<i>Bakhshi</i>
			Pass
1♠	Pass	2♠	Pass
4♠	All Pass		

Senior was at the very low end of his constructive spade raise, since the partnership was using forcing



notrump over 1♠ to deal with the minimum raises. Again game is by no means absurd and probably only just outside the imp odds. But with the club finesse wrong the real question was whether declarer could scramble nine tricks. The cards cooperated today and Hackett held the loss to 6 imps. 65-64 now, Hackett.

Bd: 40 North  
 Dir: West ♠ 102  
 Vul: None ♥ 765  
 ♦ J8762  
 ♣ J109

West  
 ♠ A963  
 ♥ AQJ3  
 ♦ K4  
 ♣ 875

East  
 ♠ J4  
 ♥ 82  
 ♦ AQ1095  
 ♣ 6432

South  
 ♠ KQ875  
 ♥ K1094  
 ♦ 3  
 ♣ AKQ

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Verhees</i>	<i>Hallberg</i>	<i>v Prooijen</i>	<i>Holland</i>
1NT	Pass	Pass	Dbl
Pass	2♦	Pass	2♠
All Pass			

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Hackett</i>	<i>Gold</i>	<i>Senior</i>	<i>Bakhshi</i>
1♣	Pass	1♦	Dbl
Pass	1♥	2♣	3♥
All Pass			

While Holland kept his side low, and no one was going to double him, I wonder if Jason Hackett might have contemplated tickling 3♥? He knew where the ♥K was going to be and North rated to have a virtual Yarborough.

2♠ was not much fun to play, declarer scoring three club tricks and a ruff early, but East overtook his partner's ♦K to play hearts through, then overruffed the ♠10 on the fourth heart to collect the second undertrick. It was a bit more fun than 3♥, though. The defenders led clubs and Gold played top spades from dummy and eventually maneuvered three clubs and two trumps in dummy, plus a spade, all of which added up to -150; 2 imps to Hackett, to lead 67-64.

After a flat partscore Brian Senior was escorted to Room 101 for his worst nightmare.

Bd: 42 North  
 Dir: East ♠ KJ95  
 Vul: Both ♥ 972  
 ♦ J63  
 ♣ AK6

West  
 ♠ Q743  
 ♥ KJ53  
 ♦ A7  
 ♣ Q94

East  
 ♠ 862  
 ♥ Q64  
 ♦ Q842  
 ♣ 732

South  
 ♠ A10  
 ♥ A108  
 ♦ K1095  
 ♣ J1085

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Verhees</i>	<i>Hallberg</i>	<i>v Prooijen</i>	<i>Holland</i>
		Pass	1♦
Dbl	Rdbl	Pass	Pass
1♥	Pass	Pass	1NT
Pass	3NT	All Pass	

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Hackett</i>	<i>Gold</i>	<i>Senior</i>	<i>Bakhshi</i>
		Pass	1♣
Dbl	Rdbl	1♦	Dbl
All Pass			

Holland played his unappetising 3NT sensibly, winning the second heart to pass the ♦J. When the finesse for the ♦Q succeeded he needed only the spade finesse to scramble to nine tricks. Easy game, but the favorable lie of the cards meant that 1♦ was in serious danger of going for 1100.

Bakhshi started off with a low diamond to the jack and queen. Now Senior played on hearts and the defenders took the second one as Gold signaled for spades, not clubs. Bakhshi must have thought East had a top club. He played the ♠A and ♠10. Gold overtook and cashed ♠K to let Bakhshi pitch his heart. Now came a heart ruff and the ♣J through. Senior ducked, and Bakhshi played another club as Senior falsecarded to leave North in doubt as to the full shape. In the end Gold seems to have played Bakhshi for a 2-3-3-5 pattern when he didn't cash the third club but led his losing spade, to let Senior pitch his losing club and get out for 500. So much for disasters, I suppose. 3 imps to Hackett, ahead 70-64.

Hackett gained an imp from a Bakhshi safety-play. Then both tables played 2NT with 14 facing 9. When dummy came down both pairs knew they would make fewer than seven tricks if 1053 facing AQ876 did not play for four tricks — but if it did, they had missed game. This time they had missed game.

Bd: 45  
 Dir: North  
 Vul: Both

North  
 ♠ 1098542  
 ♥ ---  
 ♦ AQJ943  
 ♣ A

West  
 ♠ AJ3  
 ♥ AJ7632  
 ♦ 65  
 ♣ 95

East  
 ♠ KQ76  
 ♥ KQ10  
 ♦ 10  
 ♣ K10642

South  
 ♠ ---  
 ♥ 9854  
 ♦ K872  
 ♣ QJ873

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Verhees</i>	<i>Hallberg</i>	<i>v Prooijen</i>	<i>Holland</i>
	1♦	Dbl	3♦
4♥	5♦	Dbl	All Pass

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Hackett</i>	<i>Gold</i>	<i>Senior</i>	<i>Bakhshi</i>
	1♠	Pass	1NT
Pass	2♣(♦)	Pass	2♦
2♥	5♦	All Pass	

When van Prooijen doubled 5♦ he was doubtless saying "They cannot make 11 tricks here." He was right...up to a point. With diamonds and spades splitting 13 tricks were straightforward, and Hallberg had added another victim to an already long list. In the other room Senior never bid with the best hand at the table and was right; 11 imps to Hackett, 82-70.

After a quiet 3NT making 430 for each E/W pair, a somewhat random swing came along to differentiate the seniors from, the juniors-at-heart.

Bd: 47  
 Dir: South  
 Vul: N/S

North  
 ♠ 5  
 ♥ 10863  
 ♦ A654  
 ♣ 9872

West  
 ♠ 109643  
 ♥ J95  
 ♦ Q87  
 ♣ KJ

East  
 ♠ A8  
 ♥ KQ4  
 ♦ K92  
 ♣ AQ1063

South  
 ♠ KQJ72  
 ♥ A72  
 ♦ J103  
 ♣ 54

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Verhees</i>	<i>Hallberg</i>	<i>v Prooijen</i>	<i>Holland</i>
			Pass
Pass	Pass	1♣(16+)	1♠
Dbl	Pass	1NT	Pass
3NT	All Pass		

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Hackett</i>	<i>Gold</i>	<i>Senior</i>	<i>Bakhshi</i>
			1♠
Pass	Pass	Dbl	Pass
1NT	Pass	3NT	All Pass

Holland's initial pass had the rather random effect of right-siding van Prooijen's game. After a top spade lead nine tricks were by no means cold but declarer was far closer than he might have been. He won, led a heart to the jack and a heart to the king as Hallberg echoed to show an even number and Holland ducked twice. Yes, the winning defense is to win and play a third heart. But since South was a passed hand and the tempo of the earlier play had made it clear who had the ♥A, van Prooijen unblocked clubs and led a diamond toward his king with hearts still blocked. When the ♦K scored declarer claimed nine tricks for a 10-imp pick-up since Gold's spade lead against 3NT by North had set up the fifth winner for the defense immediately. It was 82-80 now for Hackett. Time for one more swingy deal before the last break:.

Bd: 48  
 Dir: West  
 Vul: E/W

North  
 ♠ AQ763  
 ♥ A9632  
 ♦ KJ  
 ♣ 10

West  
 ♠ K4  
 ♥ Q5  
 ♦ 105  
 ♣ AJ87432

East  
 ♠ J1052  
 ♥ 10  
 ♦ Q8643  
 ♣ Q96

South  
 ♠ 98  
 ♥ KJ874  
 ♦ A972  
 ♣ K5

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Verhees</i>	<i>Hallberg</i>	<i>v Prooijen</i>	<i>Holland</i>
2♣(1)	3♣(♠+♥)	Pass	4♥
All Pass			
(1) ♣/♠+♣			

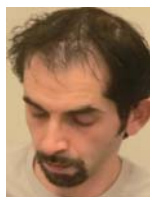
Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Hackett</i>	<i>Gold</i>	<i>Senior</i>	<i>Bakhshi</i>
1♣	2♦(♠+♥)	Pass	4♥
All Pass			

Neither South had the wherewithal to show a sound raise to 4♥, and even if they had it isn't clear how N/S would advance. Slam after all is on a finesse, even if one that figures to be right. With both tables exercising the same judgment, it would be Hackett trying to protect their 2-imp lead over the last 16 boards, reasonably confident their opponents would not be conceding today.

# NEC Final (4<sup>th</sup> Quarter): Hackett vs England/Netherlands

by Barry Rigal



Bakhshi



Hallberg



Gold



Hackett



v Prooijen



Holland



Verhees



Senior

For the fourth stanza the players would switch back to the line-up for the second set. No doubt Eng/Neth would be hoping for the same result.

Bd: 49  
 Dir: North  
 Vul: None

North  
 ♠ K1092  
 ♥ J98  
 ♦ 8  
 ♣ J10965

West  
 ♠ AJ8  
 ♥ 632  
 ♦ Q7  
 ♣ Q7432

East  
 ♠ Q4  
 ♥ K5  
 ♦ K1096543  
 ♣ AK

South  
 ♠ 7653  
 ♥ AQ1074  
 ♦ AJ2  
 ♣ 8

## Open Room

West	North	East	South
Hackett	Gold	Senior	Bakhshi
Pass	Pass	1♦	1♥
Pass	2♥	3♦	Pass
3♥	Pass	3NT	All Pass

## Closed Room

West	North	East	South
Verhees	Hallberg	v Prooijen	Holland
Pass	Pass	1♦	1♥
1♠(m's)	2♥	3♦	All Pass

In the Closed Room Verhees could make a takeout double that was oriented towards the minors and denied four spades (the Dutch system involves canape in the majors but the 1♦ opening covers all balanced hands outside the notrump range). As a result, Verhees felt no need to explore for game at his second turn since he had already shown values.

By contrast, Hackett had a huge hand for his original pass and drove Senior to game when he found a heart stopper opposite. Bakhshi found the textbook lead of the ♥A just in case he needed to drop or pin an honor. This time it wasn't necessary to defeat the game, but credit where it is due; 85-82. Eng/Neth.

We haven't seen much consistency between the two teams when it comes to overcalling. But on our next deal the teams were admittedly put into somewhat different positions.

Bd: 50  
 Dir: East  
 Vul: N/S

North  
 ♠ 10  
 ♥ 764  
 ♦ K965  
 ♣ AKQJ8

West  
 ♠ 984  
 ♥ AK952  
 ♦ J10  
 ♣ 1095

East  
 ♠ AQJ7  
 ♥ 108  
 ♦ AQ843  
 ♣ 72

South  
 ♠ K6532  
 ♥ QJ3  
 ♦ 72  
 ♣ 643

## Open Room

West	North	East	South
Hackett	Gold	Senior	Bakhshi
1♥	Pass	1♦	Pass
2♦	All Pass	1♠	Pass

## Closed Room

West	North	East	South
Verhees	Hallberg	v Prooijen	Holland
1NT	2♣	1♠	Pass
All Pass		2♦(Can.)	3♣

Gold heard a real diamond suit to his left, so rather than act directly over 1♥ he passed to await developments and judged not to compete to the three level when the opponents stopped in his long suit. This was very well reasoned, and it also had the significant effect of leaving declarer no idea about the opposing shapes. Bakhshi continued the good work on defense by leading clubs and Senior ruffed the third round to lead the ♥10 from his hand. Bakhshi ducked smoothly, so Senior won and finessed in spades. Next Bakhshi returned a top heart. Senior won and innocently led a second spade, letting Gold ruff in and play a third heart to force Senior to ruff again. Senior chose to ruff with the queen, an error in practice if not in theory, and now could do nothing but lead a third spade for Gold to ruff. When Gold led a fourth club Senior ruffed low in hand. But now he was unable to overruff in dummy or the ♦9 would become the setting trick. When he discarded from dummy Gold's ♦K became the sixth defensive trick.

Going down in 2♦ turned out not to be too expensive. 3♣ on a trump lead saw Hallberg draw trumps and lead a heart towards dummy's sequence. With both heart honors offside he could score only dummy's ♠K for -300. Those 8 imps made it 93-82.

Bd: 51	North		
Dlr: South	♠ 542		
Vul: E/W	♥ AQ75		
	♦ K4		
	♣ KJ94		
		East	
West		♠ QJ1096	
♠ 8		♥ J4	
♥ 9632		♦ A8753	
♦ Q1092		♣ 8	
♣ AQ105			
	South		
	♠ AK73		
	♥ K108		
	♦ J6		
	♣ 7632		

Open Room			
West	North	East	South
<i>Hackett</i>	<i>Gold</i>	<i>Senior</i>	<i>Bakhshi</i>
			1NT
Pass	2♣	Pass	2♦
Pass	2NT(F)	Pass	3♣
Pass	3♠	Dbl	3NT
All Pass			
Closed Room			
West	North	East	South
<i>Verhees</i>	<i>Hallberg</i>	<i>v Prooijen</i>	<i>Holland</i>
			Pass
Pass	1♥	1♠	Dbl
Pass	2♣	Pass	3♥
All Pass			

A straightforward Stayman auction would surely have seen Hackett lead a diamond, and now 3NT is very ugly indeed. After a spade lead Bakhshi played a club to the nine (good!), crossed to hand with the ♥K to lead a club to the ten and jack, then played the ♥A (better!). He next used the ♥10 as his additional entry to hand and led a third club up. When Hackett won his ♣A and led a low diamond it was the moment of truth. If Bakhshi had guessed right he would have landed one of the more improbable games we have seen at this event. But he misguessed and now the defenders cashed out the diamonds for down one.

Of course whatever one thinks of the 3NT contract it was no less elegant a spot than 3♥. Hallberg won the spade lead and cashed two hearts from hand, then led the ♣9. Charmed, Verhees won and played a third trump, then got in with the fourth trump to play diamonds. That left declarer, after he had guessed the diamonds, with just one club trick, one diamond, two spades and three hearts for down two. That was 2 imps to Eng/Neth to make it 95-82.

On the next deal Hackett scored an imp by playing 4♠ on their 6-1 fit and making ten tricks, while 3NT was a somewhat more comfortable spot but made only nine tricks. Spades were 3-3 offside and both the heart and club finesses were wrong.

	West		East
	♠ 5		♠ AQ9872
	♥ AQ86		♥ J
	♦ QJ7		♦ AK96
	♣ QJ532		♣ A8

It was 93-83 now for Eng/Neth.

Bd: 53	North		
Dlr: North	♠ Q10		
Vul: N/S	♥ J9754		
	♦ K987		
	♣ AK		
		West	East
		♠ KJ963	♠ A42
		♥ A8	♥ K3
		♦ A2	♦ 6543
		♣ J1095	♣ 8742
			South
			♠ 875
			♥ Q1062
			♦ QJ10
			♣ Q63

Open Room			
West	North	East	South
<i>Hackett</i>	<i>Gold</i>	<i>Senior</i>	<i>Bakhshi</i>
	1♥	Pass	3♥(mixed)
All Pass			



Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Verhees</i>	<i>Hallberg</i>	<i>v Prooijen</i>	<i>Holland</i>
	1♥	Pass	2♥
2♠	All Pass		

I'm not sure how the *Law* applies to this deal. With two nine-card fits I guess a total trick-count of 17 isn't so surprising, not that you'd want to have to make 3♠. But should Hallberg compete to 3♥ here? I think so, in the context of a four-card major system, but as everyone knows, those methods are not designed for accuracy in this area.

2♠ handled easily, declarer guessing trumps since he was only at the two level, but 3♥ was a different kettle of fish (do we agree with Hackett's failure to compete to 3♥?). With no entry to dummy, it looks as if the defenders cannot fail to cash out. However, Senior's ♣7 lead was systemically 3<sup>rd</sup>/lowest. When the defense got in with the ♥K to play a second club declarer led a diamond up and Hackett believed his partner, leading a third club to allow Gold to discard a spade loser and bring home +140. The lead was up to 102-83.

Bd: 54	North
Dlr: East	♠ AKQ
Vul: E/W	♥ KQ10
	♦ 642
	♣ Q1043

West
♠ 87654
♥ 76
♦ 987
♣ K72

East
♠ 32
♥ AJ432
♦ K10
♣ AJ98

South
♠ J109
♥ 985
♦ AQJ53
♣ 65

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Hackett</i>	<i>Gold</i>	<i>Senior</i>	<i>Bakhshi</i>
		1♥	Pass
1♠	Pass	2♣	All Pass

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Verhees</i>	<i>Hallberg</i>	<i>v Prooijen</i>	<i>Holland</i>
		2♥(♥+♣)	Pass
Pass	2NT	Pass	3NT
All Pass			

The limited two-suited opening backfired here when Hallberg had a far easier balance than in the Open Room. In 3NT Hallberg won the heart lead cheaply and set up his diamonds, making +430 when the

defenders did not cash out after he established his second heart trick. That was worth 8 imps against 2♣ down one. The defenders led spades, cashed out their five plain winners and eventually took a trump trick. It was 102-91 now.

Bd: 55	North
Dlr: South	♠ AK10853
Vul: Both	♥ ---
	♦ J7
	♣ K8543

West
♠ 76
♥ A8
♦ 432
♣ J109762

East
♠ 94
♥ Q7652
♦ AKQ86
♣ A

South
♠ QJ2
♥ KJ10943
♦ 1095
♣ Q

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Hackett</i>	<i>Gold</i>	<i>Senior</i>	<i>Bakhshi</i>
			2♥
Pass	2♠	3♦	3♠

All Pass  
Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Verhees</i>	<i>Hallberg</i>	<i>v Prooijen</i>	<i>Holland</i>
			2♥
Pass	2♠	Pass	3♠
Pass	4♠	All Pass	

Against 4♠ van Prooijen cashed two diamonds and shifted to trumps. Hallberg led the ♥K, covered and ruffed, then played a club up for van Prooijen to win his ace and play a second trump. Declarer passed the ♥J to East and claimed the rest for down one. In the other room Gold played 3♠ on a slightly more informative auction. After three rounds of diamonds Gold ruffed in and led a low club. Senior won and played a trump. Declarer won the trump in hand and could only go down if one of two very unlikely things happened. One was hearts 7-0 (unless this was the case declarer could ruff a club, ruff a heart low, ruff a club, ruff a heart, then draw trumps). The other was clubs 6-1, since declarer had a cross-ruff so long as the ♣K stood up. Clearly we are dealing in improbabilities but the first line is much better — and would have worked, whereas when the ♣K was ruffed by East nine tricks had just become eight. Still, no swing; Hackett trailing by 9 imps.

Would you like to play the N/S cards in 6♥ after a weak 2♠ by West?

Bd: 56  
 Dir: West  
 Vul: None

North  
 ♠ 53  
 ♥ A9  
 ♦ KJ86  
 ♣ AQ762

West	East
♠ KQ10864	♠ 97
♥ 64	♥ QJ3
♦ 10752	♦ Q94
♣ J	♣ 98543

South  
 ♠ AJ2  
 ♥ K108752  
 ♦ A3  
 ♣ K10

Slam is not a terrible spot, but after a top spade lead you would need to win, cash the top hearts, then play on clubs to find a 3-3 break or something very unlikely, as happens here. Both tables stopped in 3NT and wrapped up 11 tricks. No swing.

Hackett earned their 2 imps on the next deal.

Bd: 57  
 Dir: North  
 Vul: E/W

North  
 ♠ K92  
 ♥ A85  
 ♦ K10873  
 ♣ 95

West	East
♠ Q86	♠ AJ103
♥ 93	♥ K2
♦ A5	♦ J96
♣ KQ10842	♣ AJ76

South  
 ♠ 754  
 ♥ QJ10764  
 ♦ Q42  
 ♣ 3

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Hackett</i>	<i>Gold</i>	<i>Senior</i>	<i>Bakhshi</i>
	1NT	Dbl	3♥
Dbl	Pass	3♠	Pass
3NT	All Pass		

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Verhees</i>	<i>Hallberg</i>	<i>v Prooijen</i>	<i>Holland</i>
	Pass	1NT	Pass
2NT(1)	Pass	3♣	Pass
3NT	All Pass		

(1) Puppet Stayman

Van Prooijen declared 3NT on a heart lead. He won in hand and crossed to the ♣K to lead the ♠Q. Hallberg has been around the block enough times to recognize this sort of position, so he ducked

smoothly and declarer cashed out for nine tricks.

In the other room Hackett won the ♥K at trick one (pew!), ran his clubs, and finessed in spades, playing Gold to have something remotely close to his bidding (always dangerous at this vulnerability, but correct today).

Bd: 58  
 Dir: East  
 Vul: Both

North  
 ♠ K73  
 ♥ Q3  
 ♦ J854  
 ♣ 10975

West	East
♠ 652	♠ QJ104
♥ 65	♥ A10
♦ 62	♦ AKQ1073
♣ AKQ862	♣ 4

South  
 ♠ A98  
 ♥ KJ98742  
 ♦ 9  
 ♣ J3

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Hackett</i>	<i>Gold</i>	<i>Senior</i>	<i>Bakhshi</i>
		1♦	1♥
2♣	Pass	2♠	Pass
3♣	Pass	3NT	

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Verhees</i>	<i>Hallberg</i>	<i>v Prooijen</i>	<i>Holland</i>
		1♣(16+)	3♥
Dbl	Pass	3♠	Pass
4♥	Pass	5♦	Pass
5♠	Pass	6♦	Pass
6♠	All Pass		

In 3NT Senior won the heart lead and failed to cash one top diamond, a play that we can only assume means he is as tired as he has been claiming he is to us in the bulletin office. He tested clubs, then played diamonds from the top, as I suspect we all would. When nothing broke, he had seven tricks; no more, no less.

That still deserved to be a huge swing for his side given the ludicrous result at the other table, where the strong club ran into suitable preemption and E/W misjudged the deal about as badly as possible without running into a penalty double. After a club lead declarer pitched his heart loser, led a trump to the queen, ducked, then set about diamonds. South ruffed in, cashed the ♠A and played hearts, leaving declarer a diamond and a spade still to lose. Down 300 and only 3 imps to Hackett, trailing 96-102.

As if we hadn't see enough preemption...

Bd: 59  
 Dlr: South  
 Vul: None

North	♠ ---
	♥ A5
	♦ AQ7
	♣ AJ1098432

West	East
♠ A10985	♠ 72
♥ KQ64	♥ J1073
♦ 103	♦ K862
♣ 76	♣ KQ5

South
♠ KQJ643
♥ 982
♦ J954
♣ ---

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Hackett</i>	<i>Gold</i>	<i>Senior</i>	<i>Bakhshi</i>
			3♠
Pass	5♣	All Pass	

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Verhees</i>	<i>Hallberg</i>	<i>v Prooijen</i>	<i>Holland</i>
			3♠
Pass	4♠	All Pass	

As Holland discovered, when you have worked hard to earn a reputation as a solid citizen, you may fool the opponents but you will also find that partner cannot take a joke. Holland won the heart lead, cashed the ♣A to pitch a heart, then ruffed a club to hand to take a diamond finesse. His diamonds now acted as substitute trumps and he ended up losing a trick in each red suit and three trumps.

This was a flat board when Gold lost two clubs and a trick in each red suit in 5♣; no swing, yet again. I wonder what East would have led had North bid 3NT instead. Surely not a club.

Finally, somebody started doubling, and not a moment too soon.

Bd: 60  
 Dlr: West  
 Vul: N/S

North	♠ KQJ875
	♥ 1085
	♦ J10
	♣ Q10

West	East
♠ ---	♠ A94
♥ AJ42	♥ K63
♦ 6543	♦ A8
♣ A9873	♣ KJ542

South
♠ 10632
♥ Q97
♦ KQ972
♣ 6

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Hackett</i>	<i>Gold</i>	<i>Senior</i>	<i>Bakhshi</i>
Pass	2♠	2NT	4♠
Dbl	All Pass		

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Verhees</i>	<i>Hallberg</i>	<i>v Prooijen</i>	<i>Holland</i>
Pass	2♠	Dbl	4♠
4NT	Pass	5♣	All Pass

I'm not sure how E/W could ever find their way to slam in the Closed Room; they were never reaching one in the Open Room after Senior's entirely reasonable 2NT bid suggested spade values to Hackett. Mind you, +800 was an entirely acceptable alternative from West's perspective. Neither player in the Closed Room could commit beyond the five level and since 6♣ is rather worse than a finesse, that was entirely fine, in the abstract. Still, Hackett had 9imps from the 800 by which 4♠x failed (club lead, heart shift) against 420 from 5♣. It was 105-102 now.

Bd: 61  
 Dlr: North  
 Vul: Both

North	♠ 65
	♥ KJ8
	♦ A62
	♣ AJ1074

West	East
♠ A982	♠ 107
♥ 10	♥ A752
♦ KJ107	♦ Q983
♣ K952	♣ Q83

South
♠ KQJ43
♥ Q9643
♦ 54
♣ 6

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Hackett</i>	<i>Gold</i>	<i>Senior</i>	<i>Bakhshi</i>
	1♣	Pass	2♦(♠+♥)
Pass	2♥	Pass	3♥
Pass	4♥	All Pass	

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Verhees</i>	<i>Hallberg</i>	<i>v Prooijen</i>	<i>Holland</i>
	1♣	Pass	1♠
Pass	1NT	Pass	2♥
All Pass			

We think Bakhshi showed a mild invitation facing a typical weak notrump. Gold had aces and prime trump cards, all of which looked enough to accept. 4♥ looked perfectly playable on a diamond lead. Gold won, led a spade to the king and ace, and the defenders cashed a diamond before shifting to clubs

(I think a diamond continuation is indicated but maybe West thought East might have forgotten his leads again and led fourth-highest from five). Declarer won his ♣A, tested trumps, and East won the second heart to play a third, leaving dummy with a spade loser. Down one, gaining 5 imps against the +110 from the other room where repeated diamond leads cut declarer off from his fifth spade but still left him with eight winners. Eng/Neth trailed by 110-102.

Bd: 62 North  
 Dir: East ♠ K83  
 Vul: None ♡ 7643  
 ♦ 8532  
 ♣ J9

West  
 ♠ A4  
 ♡ Q8  
 ♦ A97  
 ♣ A108762

East  
 ♠ Q652  
 ♡ AK95  
 ♦ K10  
 ♣ K53

South  
 ♠ J1097  
 ♡ J102  
 ♦ QJ64  
 ♣ Q4

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Hackett</i>	<i>Gold</i>	<i>Senior</i>	<i>Bakhshi</i>
		1NT	Pass
2♠(♣)	Pass	3♣	Pass
4♣	Pass	4♦	Pass
4♠	Dbf	Pass	Pass
6♣	All Pass		

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Verhees</i>	<i>Hallberg</i>	<i>v Prooijen</i>	<i>Holland</i>
		1NT	Pass
2NT	Pass	3♣	Pass
3NT	All Pass		

We do not have the detailed system files to know if Verhees was specifically making a club slam try (we think so) or if 3♣ somehow rejected a club effort. Facing a 14-16 notrump West doesn't have a drive past 3NT but we think East has pretty good trumps, controls and a potential ruffing value, albeit in a minimum — but a jackless one.

Hackett unearthed the club fit, went past 3NT, found a cue-bid and tried for slam denying a heart control. Senior promised a heart control and simultaneously denied a spade card by passing 4♠x, and Hackett had heard enough, assuming that the spade loser might go on hearts or diamonds. A man can dream, can't he?

Well, with trumps 2-2, he was absolutely right in his

prediction; we will forgive him for missing the grand slam. It was 120-102 now and there were just two boards to come. Rich Colker was writing the headlines, the silversmith was designing the medals, but The Alliance was not prepared to hear the fat lady sing.

Bd: 63 North  
 Dir: South ♠ K108  
 Vul: N/S ♡ KQ1075  
 ♦ K9  
 ♣ KQ8

West  
 ♠ A643  
 ♡ J43  
 ♦ J1063  
 ♣ 62

East  
 ♠ Q5  
 ♡ A962  
 ♦ A842  
 ♣ J75

South  
 ♠ J972  
 ♡ 8  
 ♦ Q75  
 ♣ A10943

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Hackett</i>	<i>Gold</i>	<i>Senior</i>	<i>Bakhshi</i>
			Pass
Pass	1NT	Pass	2♣(1)
Pass	2♦	Pass	2♠(2)
Pass	3♡	Pass	3NT
All Pass			

(1) Puppet to 2♦, description to come  
 (2) Invitation in spades

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Verhees</i>	<i>Hallberg</i>	<i>v Prooijen</i>	<i>Holland</i>
			Pass
Pass	1NT	Pass	2♣
Pass	2♡	Pass	2♠
Pass	3♠	All Pass	

Real men apparently neither eat quiche nor pass notrump openers with seven-counts. Holland tried to invite showing four spades but it would appear that Hallberg expected five, given his raise. Against 3♠ the defenders led and continued clubs at every turn after declarer finessed a spade to East. They took two trumps, two diamonds, a heart and a ruff for down 200, while 3NT received a diamond lead from Senior — and can you blame him? Gold won in hand and advanced the ♡K, ducked, then led a diamond to the queen, then a spade. Hackett flew up with the ace and cashed out the diamonds, remaining on lead to play a heart through. Gold finessed the ten and claimed nine tricks a moment later. If we can take the name of a prominent Japanese player in vain: Tada!



It was 115-120 to Hackett. The fat lady had sat down, the silversmiths were searching for another piece of plate, Rich Colker had his finger jammed on the Delete key and the crowd was going wild.

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
Verhees	Hallberg	v Prooijen	Holland
5♦	All Pass		

Bd: 64            North  
 Dlr: West       ♠ AKQJ  
 Vul: E/W       ♥ Q97532  
                    ♦ 53  
                    ♣ 7

West  
 ♠ 8  
 ♥ 8  
 ♦ AQJ109742  
 ♣ A105

East  
 ♠ 96432  
 ♥ A64  
 ♦ ---  
 ♣ Q9832

South  
 ♠ 1075  
 ♥ KJ10  
 ♦ K86  
 ♣ KJ64

5♦ was never going to make, but after a spade lead and club shift declarer was home free with ten tricks. So the fate of 4♥ would determine first place and all the glory that this entailed. Senior led a club, Gold called for the jack, and Hackett won the ace, then paused for reflection. The defense wasn't hard when seeing all four hands, but surprisingly Hackett could not do that. If he exited with a spade declarer would simply draw trumps and use the ♣K to pitch one diamond loser. Hackett worked that out. He cashed the ♦A, then thoughtfully played the ♦2 to make sure Senior didn't play a spade and give up the setting trick. Even a player as tired as Brian wasn't going to lose the trump ace. Down one and 4imps made it 124-115 for Hackett, and a first win for two of the team (Senior was a winner from a decade ago; Jason won with Papa in 1998 and 2000).

Open Room

West	North	East	South
Hackett	Gold	Senior	Bakhshi
1♦	1♥	1♠	2♦
3♦	4♥	All Pass	

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## 20<sup>th</sup> NEC Bridge Festival Daily Schedule

Day/Date	Time	Event	Venue
Sunday (Feb. 15)	10:00-17:30	Asuka Cup (Open Pairs)	501, 502
	18:00-20:00	Closing Ceremony	503

### Narita Bus Schedule

From the Intercontinental  
 (120 minutes)  
 ¥3,500

From the YCAT  
 (100 min)  
 ¥3,500

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

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