



BULLETIN

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Editorial

In last week's Vanderbilt at the NABC, there was an error in the opening round, which caused some deals to be displayed online hours before they were played. Two matches were shown on vugraph, and in the second session the wrong boards were uploaded to the vugraph display for both matches. One of these matches was quickly rectified; the other initially went unnoticed, and ultimately the exposed boards from that match reappeared in the fourth set (Wold vs Xiao and Goodman vs Parrish, both matches playing the same boards on vugraph).

Apart from the loss of one vugraph session, the damage was minimal. Most of the sixteen players playing the exposed boards had been at the table during the second session, with no chance of seeing the tainted vugraph broadcast. The outcome could have been much more complicated, and the incident highlights the need for thorough event regulations to cater for situations like this.

Historically, decisions about whether to cancel boards, or replay sessions, have been made on the fly, leading to arguments and complaints. One famous example in Australia was the 1999 National Open Teams. A randomisation error in the dealing program produced several sets of boards that had been generated before (at another national event six months earlier). Only one player recognised the deals during the last set, but at least ten players had been involved in both events. The best that the directors could do was annul and replay the most recent set – and, more importantly, thoroughly check the integrity of the next day's boards.

If you see an indication that something is not as it should be, fixing the visible part of the problem is not always good enough. It's important to understand the cause, and be aware of the possibility of unexpected consequences. Replacing the Vanderbilt boards on the second session broadcast solved the immediate problem, but investigating the source of the wrong boards was the truly essential task.

It's a lesson that has many applications, in life and in bridge. If your hand has twelve cards and you see one face down on the floor, don't just put it back in your hand. If an email from your bank feels slightly unnatural, check that you are not the victim of a scam. If you notice a faint burning smell, don't just open a window. If a defender turns up with a card that you didn't think they would hold, go back to the start and re-examine why you decided that they didn't have it. If you feel you are being pressured to act immediately, slow down. If an obvious explanation doesn't quite fit, try to find one that does. If a car driving ahead of you is behaving erratically, give it space until you know what the driver is doing.

In a national final several years ago, the director placed Boards 17-32 on a table, and when the players finished Board 19, they saw that the next board was Board 21. They simply put it aside and picked up the next board (Board 20), then returned to Board 21 later. After the match, it was revealed that Boards 20 and 21 had both been misdealt (but dealt correctly at the other table, which had its own set of boards). I give the players 90% of the blame for that error. Expert bridge players have the experience to recognise that if a fresh set of boards is out of order, it is quite likely that they were dealt that way. The players should have called the director as soon as Board 21 appeared, just to be safe.

If something looks strange or out of place, it might be a mild symptom of something more serious. Rather than just fixing the symptom, it might be important to understand the full scope of the problem before things get worse.

US Army at the 1968 Far East Championship

*From Australian Bridge Magazine: recollections
of the US Operations mission in South Korea*

Frank Stewart, Fayette AL

Australian Bridge runs a regular column titled Fifty Years Ago, looking back at its 1970s issues. I can look back even further, for 57 years ago I had a surreal experience – one I fervently wish I could relive. In 1968 I found myself in Korea as a guest of the U.S. Eighth Army. I had been drafted right out of college, and wound up with a Military Police Company providing security at an ordnance compound fifteen miles south of Seoul.

It was good duty, and I had enough free time for regular bus trips into Seoul. I had discovered bridge in college, like many players of my generation. I played in my first duplicate in April 1967 and finished eighth of 11 pairs. I had read a few books and some borrowed copies of *The Bridge World*, but I was so ignorant that I didn't even know how little I knew. When I arrived in Korea I was the proud possessor of a fraction of an ACBL masterpoint.

In those days, there was, as far as I know, just one ACBL-affiliated bridge club in Korea. The Kimchi Duplicate Bridge Club met twice weekly: once at the USOM club in the Eighth Army compound, once at a private club in the city. I played at both as often as I could.

The club sent a team to the Far East Championships every year. In 1968, that event was set for October in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Too few players were willing or able to go, so I was added to the team by default – or more likely out of a sense of desperation.

I got 14 days of leave, and the next problem was getting to Malaysia; the other team members flew commercial, but I couldn't afford that on a corporal's pay. It was an odyssey. I took a bus to an Air Force base and caught a Military Air Transport flight to Okinawa. Thence another MATS flight to Penang Air Base in Thailand, thence a 90-mile taxi ride to Bangkok airport, and a commercial flight to Kuala Lumpur.

The "Korean" team had five players – and no Koreans. Two in addition to me were U.S. military: Ira Cohen, a Californian who later became a top U.S. expert (his team won the Team Trials one year) and Larry Richardson, a fine player from Wichita. Then there was Henrik Lau, who had been npc of Thailand's team in the 1967 Bermuda Bowl. The fifth player was a wonderful man named Carl Miller – an American, but a naturalised Korean citizen who worked for the Bank of Korea.

When I arrived, Ira and Larry had won the Pairs event preceding the Teams event. I was sick from my trip and unable to play. The hotel sent a doctor to my room, which used up most of my funds; Kuala Lumpur was an expensive city. Who paid the team's entry fee, I have no idea.

Partway through the event, Lau had to leave on business, and the team was stuck with me. And I played – sort of. I knew next to nothing about bridge, and here I was, up against the powerful Australian team (Tim Seres, Roelof Smilde, Jim Borin, Jessel & Nat Rothfield, Wally Scott) and the capable team from Taiwan. Other good players were there. Japan sent Akio Kurokawa, who was referred to by all as ace-king-ten. Somboon Nandhabiwat played for Thailand and Lionel da Silva for the Philippines. Hong Kong fielded a husband-wife pair. Their name escapes me, but it could have been Bickerson; they argued constantly.

A couple of deals have stayed in my memory. Against Taiwan, I played at 3NT with nine top tricks. I didn't take them and went down one. My partner was quite unhappy. But on another deal, against Australia, I actually distinguished myself. Vulnerable against not, my partner opened 1♥, and Seres, at my right, bid 3♠. After two passes, my partner reopened with 4♦. I held

♠ x x x ♥ A x ♦ K x x x ♣ x x x x

and with youthful ebullience, I leaped to 6♦. The slam made, and the kibitzers applauded! Seres and Smilde were gracious about it, as I recall. And Korea won that match. The event was a double round-robin, and Korea somehow won its other match against Australia as well. That led Jim Borin to remark ruefully that Taiwan, who were leading, would be in a lot of trouble when they came up against Korea.

Few of my decisions were as successful. I had no concept of discipline. I had no concept of how to play IMPs: bid vulnerable games, try to be plus on partscore deals and avoid disasters. We had a ton of deals where our teammates announced -620, and my partner and I had sold out cheaply.

Korea finished fifth or sixth of the eleven teams. Australia won the event, nipping Taiwan at the wire, but did not make the trip to the 1969 Bermuda Bowl in Rio; Taiwan represented the Far East, and lost to the Blue Team in the final. I returned to my base in Korea, retracing the same unlikely route by which I had reached Malaysia. In February 1969 I was discharged from the Army and came home.

Carl Miller died many years ago. He had a distinguished and honoured career away from bridge, in land conservation and horticulture. Presumably, Henrik Lau is long gone as well. Larry Richardson passed away in 2005; I believe he was 66. Ira Cohen has had a vastly successful career as a financial consultant in Bakersfield CA. In 2000, when my wife and I travelled there to get the baby girl we adopted, we visited with Ira.

And here's what has occurred to me – many times – to wonder: what if I could go back and play that tournament with 57 years of experience under my belt? What if I could relive those ten days knowing as much about the game as I do now? Is it barely possible that South Korea could have won the Far East and played for the Bermuda Bowl in 1969? Perchance to dream...



Rules are for fools, bid what you've got

Peter Gill, Sydney

Which is the best way to bid? Blindly following a set of rules as most players do, or making intelligent decisions based on the actual cards you hold, combined with useful bidding system agreements? In my opinion, the latter is best.

In the semi-final of Australia's National Open Teams in January, my opponents Michael Courtney and Chris Depasquale on both Boards 27 and 29 showed that "identifying where your tricks are" is more important than following bidding rules or counting points.

Board 27. Dealer South. Neither side vulnerable.

<p>♠ A 4 3 ♥ A K 8 ♦ 6 ♣ K Q 10 7 6 2</p> <p>♠ 7 5 2 ♥ 10 9 4 ♦ Q J 10 3 ♣ A J 3</p>	<p>♠ 9 8 6 ♥ Q 7 6 ♦ A 9 8 4 2 ♣ 5 4</p> <p>♠ K Q J 10 ♥ J 5 3 2 ♦ K 7 5 ♣ 9 8</p>
--	--

With EW silent, after two passes Chris Depasquale (North) opened 1♣. Michael Courtney (South) elected to respond 1♠ rather than 1♥. He told me later that he was nervous about his choice, knowing that he was taking on the field who would all bid 1♥, four card majors being traditionally bid up the line.

The advantages of 1♠ are not just if the auction becomes competitive, as 1♠ might guide partner to a spade lead. A holding such as KQJ10 can also be ideal for playing 4♠ or 6♠ in a 4-3 or even 4-2 fit if partner has the ace.

Depasquale rebid 3♦, which in their methods showed a hand with three spades to at least one honour (usually the ace or king) and 6+ clubs, either at the top end of a 3♣ rebid or too good for a 3♣ rebid. Michael now had no difficulty bidding 4♠.

Their auction therefore was:

West <i>Hudson</i>	North <i>Depasquale</i>	East <i>Gill</i>	South <i>Courtney</i>
Pass	1♣	Pass	1♠
Pass	3♦	Pass	4♠
All Pass			

The other three tables in the semi-finals all failed in 3NT after a 1♣-1♥-3♣-3NT auction which followed the rules

of modern bidding well, but didn't come to grips with the real bidding issues of the hand.

Many pairs play 1♣-1M-3♦ as a mini-splinter, but mini-splinters (like Bergen Raises) are, in my opinion, one of those conventions which are in vogue for a while but eventually will die out. Mini-splinters often help the opponents find winning opening leads, and after a simpler 1m-1M-3M auction responder can deduce that opener's shortage will probably be in responder's longest side suit, so my view is that they help the opponents more than partner. I think the Courtney meaning for 3♦ is much more effective.

Two boards later:

Board 29. Dealer North. Both sides vulnerable.

<p>♠ K Q 6 ♥ J ♦ A J 9 ♣ J 10 7 5 3 2</p> <p>♠ A 9 8 4 3 ♥ A 6 ♦ K 6 4 3 ♣ 9 8</p>	<p>♠ J 5 ♥ K 9 8 7 5 2 ♦ 10 8 5 ♣ K 4</p> <p>♠ 10 7 2 ♥ Q 10 4 3 ♦ Q 7 2 ♣ A Q 6</p>
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Courtney - Depasquale showed that counting points is merely a way to estimate tricks – it's the actual trick-taking potential that really matters.

Depasquale opened 1♣ as North. I overcalled 1♥. Because they play 1NT as constructive (7)8-11, in their system 2NT now is game forcing. So Michael logically bid 2NT, raised to 3NT for another 11-IMP gain. The bidding was:

West <i>Hudson</i>	North <i>Depasquale</i>	East <i>Gill</i>	South <i>Courtney</i>
Pass	1♣	1♥	2NT
	3NT	All Pass	

If RHO overcalls 1♥ and you have AKxx in hearts, your 7 HCP are providing two heart stoppers. If you have Q10xx in hearts, your mere 2 HCP also will often provide the same two heart stoppers, albeit more slowly. So Courtney upgraded his ♥Q10xx vigorously, and also loved having ♣AQx in partner's potentially long club suit. The point counters at the other tables didn't re-evaluate the South hand after the good news of the heart overcall of 1♥ or 2♥.



The most beautiful plays of 2025

from the Hungarian Bridge Federation
bridzs.hu

You may already have encountered the deals below during the course of 2025. Perhaps someone told the story in casual conversation, or maybe you were sent a link (“look at this, how beautiful!”). Naturally, some of them have also appeared previously in *Bridzsélet* articles. Think of this presentation as a festive, end-of-year collection, like the compilation of the best goals in sports programs: a reminder of just how beautiful our game can be.

So let us look at the very best of the best, in reverse order, according to the judgment of our distinguished jury (Gál Hegedűs, Gábor Minarik, and Balázs Szegedi).

Most beautiful declarer plays Péter Talyigás, Budapest

3rd place: Péter Marjai Far-sighted threat

Board 12. Dealer West. North-South vulnerable.

<p>♠ A 7 6 ♥ K 10 6 ♦ 7 5 4 3 ♣ A J 10</p> <p>♠ Q 10 5 ♥ 9 8 5 4 3 2 ♦ 10 8 ♣ 7 6</p> <p>♠ 8 2 ♥ Q J 7 ♦ A K 9 ♣ K Q 8 5 4</p>	<p>♠ K J 9 4 3 ♥ A ♦ Q J 6 2 ♣ 9 3 2</p>
--	--

West	North	East	South
<i>Trenka</i>	<i>Zábrádi</i>	<i>Kemény</i>	<i>Marjai</i>
2♥	Pass	Pass	2NT
Pass	3NT	All Pass	

These cards were dealt in Round 7 of the Budapest I/A Team Championship. Some readers may not know that Slovak bridge players use the term *Hungarian weak two* for a 2♥ opening by West with this sort of hand – which, in fact, occurred at many tables. Even where that was the case, resulting in South declaring 3NT, most West players still led a spade; and where West passed and North became declarer, East naturally found the spade lead.

What are the chances of making the contract? You could hope that the heart ace is with the short spade holding, or you could hope that East will find it difficult to discard on the run of the club suit. Or perhaps the two chances can be combined?

Against a spade lead, only Péter Marjai succeeded in making the contract. The key to the deal (and where Marjai differed from the other declarers) was that on the third spade one should not discard the seemingly useless diamond, but foresightedly throw a heart instead, preserving the diamond threat. East has no good response. If he discards even a single spade on the run of clubs, the heart ace can be driven out; if he discards two diamonds, the third diamond becomes good.

The contract would still have made even if the heart ace happened to be with West: after cashing the two top diamonds, if the suit is not established (because West still holds one), declarer can concede a heart to him to set up a heart trick.

* * * * *

2nd place: Gergely Siba Double endplay

Back in January, in the Budapest MP Championship (I/A division), most of the field failed in this 4♥ contract.

Board 15. Dealer South. North-South vulnerable.

<p>♠ J 5 4 3 ♥ K 6 4 ♦ K 10 ♣ J 4 3 2</p> <p>♠ Q 8 7 ♥ Q 7 5 ♦ A 7 2 ♣ Q 10 7 6</p> <p>♠ A K 6 2 ♥ A J 9 8 3 2 ♦ Q J ♣ 8</p>	<p>♠ 10 9 ♥ 10 ♦ 9 8 6 5 4 3 ♣ A K 9 5</p>
--	--

West	North	East	South
<i>Udvari</i>	<i>Ormay</i>	<i>Szóts</i>	<i>Siba</i>
Pass	2♥	Pass	4♥
All Pass			1♥

Three declarers cashed the heart ace, and when the ten fell, finessed the trump queen to make the contract. One player led a spade (unfortunately that was me), immediately giving declarer a tenth trick. The others

all lost one trick in each side suit – except for Gergely Siba, who, although he began trumps by playing the king, subsequently solved everything correctly.

West led the seven of clubs (third-best), and on the next club played the six, allowing declarer to deduce that the clubs were 4-4. He crossed to the king of hearts and ruffed a club, then led the jack of diamonds. West erred by playing low, and now the contract could not be beaten. Declarer rose with the king, ruffed the last club, and exited with a diamond leaving this position:

♠ J 5 4 3		
♥ 6 4		
♦ —		
♣ —		
♠ Q 8 7	♠ 10 9	
♥ Q 7	♥ —	
♦ 7	♦ 9 8 6 5	
♣ —	♣ —	
	♠ A K 6 2	
	♥ A J	
	♦ —	
	♣ —	

West was helpless: he played a spade, won by dummy's jack, and the trump queen was the last trick for the defence. Even if he had chosen what looked like the best defence, a diamond (which does not immediately give up a trick) he would still be endplayed later. Declarer ruffs in dummy, throwing a spade, and can exit in either major for the final endplay.

* * * * *

Equal 1st place: Adam Wildavsky A magical 3NT

Adam Wildavsky played on the winning G. Reason team at the IBBF, and in the semi-final he faced the following 3NT contract against world-class opposition:

Board 19. Dealer South. East-West vulnerable.

♠ Q J 8 7 3		
♥ Q J 7 6 2		
♦ 10 7		
♣ K		
♠ A K 10 4 2	♠ 6 5	
♥ A 9 8 5	♥ K 10 3	
♦ 8 3	♦ A J 2	
♣ Q 2	♣ A 10 7 4 3	
	♠ 9	
	♥ 4	
	♦ K Q 9 6 5 4	
	♣ J 9 8 6 5	

West	North	East	South
Homonnay	Zatorski	Wildavsky	Pachtmann
			3♦
Double	Pass	3NT	All Pass

In the other semi-final, two Hungarian teams met, where they perpetuated the reputation of Hungarian

preempts. Both Souths opened 4♦ and played there (one table doubled, for -800).

Wildavsky's team and their opponents preferred a less aggressive preempt on this deal: South opened 3♦ at both tables, West doubled at both, and East ventured 3NT.

The challenges begin at trick one: which card should be played from dummy after the club lead? At the other table, declarer called for the queen, and eventually went down four. Adam, however, played low from dummy on the small club, and the king fell in front of his ace. Trusting in a favourable distribution, he returned a club immediately, and this quickly revealed that South held at least eleven minor-suit cards.

From there it was only a matter of stripping North. He started with a heart to the jack and king, then played the jack of diamonds. South won with the king and exited with his spade to dummy's ace. Another heart was conceded to North's queen, and two more rounds of hearts led to this ending:

	♠ Q J 8 7	
	♥ —	
	♦ 10	
	♣ —	
♠ K 10 4 2		♠ 6
♥ —		♥ —
♦ 8		♦ A 2
♣ —		♣ 10 7
	♠ —	
	♥ —	
	♦ K 9 6	
	♣ J 9	

The ace of diamonds reduced North and West to just spades, and a spade was run to North's seven. Declarer ducked the spade queen continuation, and North had to lead into the king-ten.

There were several potential variations on this deal:

- *If North had not split his heart honours, it would not have been necessary for declarer to finesse the ten. North can be endplayed once in hearts to concede a heart trick, before the inevitable spade endplay.*
- *Having said that, finessing the ten of hearts will also work, even if it loses to a bare honour. North's remaining honour can be finessed for an eighth trick, then South can be endplayed with a club.*
- *If South has two spades, he can force declarer to play the ten on the second round, preventing the spade endplay. Declarer still survives by setting up a long spade, combined with the heart endplay.*
- *If North keeps the three of spades, aiming to strand declarer in hand with the six, declarer must overtake the six with the ten, and eventually North must lead away from the eight-three into the king-four.*
- *If North throws a spade early, keeping the heart length intact, then declarer needs to stay away from hearts and aim to set up a spade.*

Equal 1st place: Csaba Czímer

Exemplary safety play

In Round 3 of the Budapest Team Championship (I/A division), Board 32, players were probably tired, and most defenders produced a lacklustre defence on the final deal. Thus it happened that the judges awarded (joint) top marks for making a contract that was also made at almost every other table.

Board 32. Dealer West. East-West vulnerable.

♠ 10 7 2
♥ J 6 5
♦ A Q 9 8
♣ 8 6 3

♠ A Q 9 8 4
♥ A
♦ K J 7 6 4
♣ A 4

West	North	East	South
Szücs	Czímer	Jánosik	Szalka
Pass	Pass	1♥	2♥
2♠	3♠	Pass	4♠
All Pass			

Imagine that you are playing 4♠, and the opening lead is the king of hearts (as at every table). You win with the ace. What is your plan?

You can apparently afford to lose one club and two spades – provided the spades break 3-2. But if the defenders persist with hearts (which they failed to do at the other tables), then with a 4-1 spade split declarer may lose trump control.

Csaba Czímer, however, found the solution: he called for a low spade from dummy, and his ten won the trick!

♠ 10 7 2
♥ J 6 5
♦ A Q 9 8
♣ 8 6 3

♠ K J 6 3
♥ 10 8 4 3
♦ 3 2
♣ K 10 7

♠ 5
♥ K Q 9 7 2
♦ 10 5
♣ Q J 9 5 2

♠ A Q 9 8 4
♥ A
♦ K J 7 6 4
♣ A 4

Csaba Czímer



Declarer could now take one more round of trumps with the ace, and then play on diamonds. West could eventually take his two trump tricks and a club.

If West rises with the jack at trick two (or the ten loses to the jack in East) and the defenders continue hearts, South can discard a club. The next heart is ruffed, and declarer ducks another spade to the king. Now the fourth heart lead can be ruffed in dummy, the long trump is not shortened, and diamond entries remain to draw trumps safely.

Most beautiful defensive plays

Gergely Fazakas, Budapest

3rd place: Nikita Malinovskiy

A duck and a smart continuation

In Round 9 of the I/A Team Championship, the match Feel the Card vs SZTAKI produced the following deal, on which the SZTAKI pair reached 4♥. It was a common contract: at eight of the twelve tables the field reached a heart game, and at seven of those it was made.

Board 13. Dealer North. Both sides vulnerable.

♠ A Q 6 4 2
♥ Q 7 5 4 3
♦ 5
♣ K 4

♠ J 10 9 5
♥ K 9 6
♦ A J 8 2
♣ 6 2

♠ K 7 3
♥ 8 2
♦ K 10 9 7 4
♣ Q J 9

♠ 8
♥ A J 10
♦ Q 6 3
♣ A 10 8 7 5 3

West	North	East	South
Malinovskii	Kovács	Hegedűs	Szőnyi
Pass	1♠	Pass	2♣
Pass	2♥	Pass	3♣
Pass	3♥	Pass	4♥
All Pass			

Malinovskii sat West, and from the auction it was known that declarer had at least 5-5 in the majors. After the diamond lead and continuation, it became clear that declarer had a singleton diamond, likely a doubleton club, and a ragged heart suit. His values must be either a solid spade suit, or additional club honours – meaning that one black suit was bound to work for declarer.

When declarer played a cautious trump to the jack, Nikita ducked with the king. This is not always foolproof: it might expose you to an endplay later, and tempo losses on defence can be costly. In fact, at another table Csaba Czímer also ducked the finesse, and Gábor Szóts succeeded as declarer by abandoning the further

finesse – he switched to establishing clubs, cashed the heart ace, and relied on his now-good clubs to provide the necessary tricks.

At Nikita's table, however, declarer perhaps did not trust the heart and club suits to break kindly, so he crossed to the club king and repeated the trump finesse. West won and returned the third trump, removing the entry that declarer needed to establish clubs.

2nd place: Géza Homonnay

Géza surrounds the diamonds

During qualification for the four-team final of the National Team Championship, Gamax also faced a hard-fighting DEAC. At seven of the eight tables 3NT was the contract, and at the other six it was made – often with overtricks.

Board 17. Dealer North. Neither side vulnerable.

♠ 5 4
♥ 5 4 2
♦ A J 9 5
♣ A 7 6 3



♠ Q 2
♥ K 10 6
♦ 10 6 3
♣ K 10 9 5 4

West	North	East	South
<i>Homonnay</i>	<i>Sandor</i>	<i>Lakatos</i>	<i>Kertes</i>
	2NT	Pass	3NT

All Pass

After a 2NT-3NT auction, North is declarer. Partner leads the spade ten, dummy comes down with a doubleton queen in the suit, and it is clear that partner has about 2-4 points opposite.

Declarer wins the opening lead with the spade king and plays the club queen – West must win this, otherwise declarer already has nine tricks in the bag.

The only realistic chance to defeat the contract lies with partner's diamond king, so Géza played the jack of diamonds. Declarer did his best by ducking, hoping that East's king was doubleton, but there was no avoiding four diamond losers.

The full deal:

♠ A K J ♥ A Q J 9 3 ♦ Q 7 4 ♣ Q 2 ♠ 5 4 ♥ 5 4 2 ♦ A J 9 5 ♣ A 7 6 3	♠ 10 9 8 7 6 3 ♥ 8 7 ♦ K 8 2 ♣ J 8 ♠ Q 2 ♥ K 10 6 ♦ 10 6 3 ♣ K 10 9 5 4
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1st place: Tamás Hoffman and Ádám Magyar

Perfect choreography

Although the winning defensive deal was played on LoveBridge, unfortunately it occurred in a postponed match, so we do not know how others might have solved this problem faced by Tamás Hoffman and Ádám Magyar.

Board 9. Dealer North. East-West vulnerable.

♠ J 9 7 4 ♥ K J 9 2 ♦ K 8 6 ♣ 4 3 ♠ A Q 5 2 ♥ 10 4 3 ♦ J ♣ A K 8 5 2	♠ 10 8 ♥ Q 7 6 ♦ Q 7 5 4 3 ♣ Q 9 6 ♠ K 6 3 ♥ A 8 5 ♦ A 10 9 2 ♣ J 10 7
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West	North	East	South
<i>Szucs</i>	<i>Magyar</i>	<i>Janosik</i>	<i>Hoffman</i>
	Pass	Pass	1♦
Double	1♥	Pass	Pass
Double	Pass	1NT	Pass
Pass	Double	All Pass	

This was Board 9 of the Round 7 match between FÉSZEK and Bosszorkány. Both sides held 20 HCP, and at both tables East declared 1NT. The first twelve calls were identical, but the thirteenth differed: despite Hoffman's pass of 1♥, Ádám Magyar felt that his side held at least half the deck, and doubled 1NT.

Declarer had seven tricks available – five clubs and two spades via the finesse – and if he gained the lead the contract was clearly secure. This was demonstrated at the other table by Bosszorkány's declarer, Andrea Sinkovicz, after the passive club jack lead.

Here, after the active lead of the two of diamonds, Ádám Magyar saw that diamonds would have to be led twice to establish four diamond tricks, but the heart suit also had to be dealt with.

Ádám found the only winning card: the jack of hearts. This caught the queen, and on the way back, Ádám overtook his partner's eight of hearts with the nine, to lead a diamond. He then regained the lead in hearts to lead a third diamond, collecting four tricks in each red suit.

In addition to the technically correct play in the heart suit, the precise timing of the diamond leads was essential to achieve two down for +500. Any change in the order would have resulted in fewer tricks.



How to go down when all the finesses work

Marc Smith, Southampton

Cedric Lorenzini brought home his game on this deal from the final stages of the Mixed Teams at the European Winter Games in Prague.

Dealer South. Neither side vulnerable.

	♠ J 9 5		
	♥ 9 7 6 5 2		
	♦ J 3		
	♣ A Q 5		
♠ Q 4		♠ 8 6 2	
♥ Q J 3		♥ K 10 8	
♦ K 8 6 5 2		♦ 10 9 4	
♣ 10 7 2		♣ K J 9 6	
	♠ A K 10 7 3		
	♥ A 4		
	♦ A Q 7		
	♣ 8 4 3		

West	North	East	South
<i>Wang</i>	<i>Michielsen</i>	<i>Hampson</i>	<i>Lorenzini</i>
			1♠
Pass	2♠	Pass	2NT
Pass	4♠	All Pass	

Declarer has a problem on the club lead: if he plays the club queen and it loses, he will need to find both the king of diamonds and the queen of spades onside. Deciding that a world-class player was unlikely to underlead the club king, Lorenzini played low from dummy, East winning with the jack and returning a trump.

Lorenzini won and decided that, having given up on the club finesse, he would now do the same in diamonds – he played a low diamond from his hand towards the jack. Wenfei Wang rose with the king and played a second club, so declarer won with the ace and cashed the ace-queen of diamonds to dispose of dummy's remaining club. After ruffing a club in dummy, all that now remained was to bring in the trumps for no loser.

With five cards missing, the normal play is to finesse against the queen, but Lorenzini's instincts identified

two factors that did not compute. Why had West chosen to lead a club from ten-third, which is not a particularly appealing suit from which to lead? Would a trump from two low look like a more attractive option? Geoff Hampson had also returned a trump at trick two, when either red suit looked like a reasonable alternative. Would East not be more inclined to switch to a trump from three low cards than from Q-x-x? So, up went the spade king and down came West's queen. An impressive +620 for North-South.

Lorenzini's line of play would have led to defeat had the finesses in spades, diamonds and clubs all worked. With all three finesses wrong for declarer, inspired analysis of the opening lead was needed to produce a happy ending to the story.

Congratulations to the French/Swedish team – Daisy Chain, Cedric Lorenzini, Marion Michielsen, Hilda Setton, Pierre Franceschetti, Anne-Laure Tartarin and Quentin Robert – who won the 20-team Swiss final with a score of 116.89 VPs from their seven matches.

Double dummy play

Ron Pachtmann, Tel Aviv

Here is a nice hand that my partner, Piotr Zatorski, played in Prague:

Open BAM Round 2: SPS Poland vs Altshuler.
Board 10. Dealer East. Both sides vulnerable.

	♠ A K J 9		
	♥ A Q J 2		
	♦ A J 6		
	♣ 8 7		
♠ Q 8 3		♠ 7 5 2	
♥ 9 6 5 3		♥ K 10	
♦ Q 5 3		♦ K 10	
♣ 9 4 2		♣ A J 10 6 5 3	
	♠ 10 6 4		
	♥ 8 7 4		
	♦ 9 8 7 4 2		
	♣ K Q		

West	North	East	South
	<i>Zatorski</i>		<i>Pachtmann</i>
		2♣ ¹	Pass
Pass	Double	Pass	2♦ ²
Pass	2♥	Pass	3♦
Pass	3♠	Pass	4♥
All Pass			

1. Natural, Precision.
2. Artificial negative.

After some thought, East led the ace and another club. Piotr found the double dummy play of three rounds of spades (finessing the queen) then the heart ace and a low heart, endplaying East. It would not have helped East to unblock the king of hearts.

None of the other declarers in 4♥ managed more than eight tricks.



The IBPA John H. Lindsey II Bridge-Analysis Award

Barry Rigal, New York NY

In addition to all the awards for excellence that have been established by IBPA, and that have been ongoing for some time, we are very happy to announce that at the Annual General Meeting a new annual \$2500 award was established, with anonymous donors, but in the name of John H. Lindsey II.

Bridge-interested readers have, over the years, appreciated the excellent hand analyses and other writings of John H. Lindsey II. For many years his analytical skills (which preceded the use of the current crop of double-dummy tools) appeared in the columns of *The Bridge World*, tweaking the articles of the august columnists, who had, like Homer, nodded off. The analysis in which John excelled – determining the line of play maximizing either offensive or defensive chances – has not yet been computer-perfected.

The first John H. Lindsey II Bridge-Analysis Award is being made to Hugh Darwen for his sustained record of

superlative contributions in another area of the game, that of the construction of Double Dummy problems. Given the existence of tools such as Deep Finesse, doubtless fewer awards going forward will be made for double-dummy pieces. There are, however, many other strands of high-level thinking about the game worthy of award recognition. Hugh ran, perhaps for longer than he would care to admit, the *Double Dummy* feature of *Bridge Magazine*. His efforts as creator and editor left a permanent contribution to the game that few will match.

Additionally, his material has been collected into books. *Bridge Magic* is unmatched in this area, and more recently *A Compendium of Double Dummy Problems*, double dummy bridge problems from 1896 to 2005, was brought out by Master Point Press.

Those of us who enjoy every aspect of bridge writing will recognize that whereas there may be some dispute about the best players, journalists or organizers in Bridge, there is no serious challenger when it comes to the greatest living double-dummy analyst. So it gives me great pleasure to present the John H Lindsey Award for Bridge Analysis to Hugh Darwen.

Hugh is a computer scientist who worked for IBM United Kingdom from 1967 to 2004, and played an important role in the development of the relational model. From 1978 to 1982 he was chief architect of Business System 12, a database management system designed to faithfully embrace relational principles. He worked closely with Christopher J. Date and represented IBM on the ISO SQL committees (JTC1 SC32 WG3 Database Languages and WG4 SQL/MM) until his retirement.

He is the author of *The Askew Wall* and co-author, with Date, of *The Third Manifesto*, a proposal for supporting object-oriented programs with purely relational databases without compromising either side.

After leaving IBM, he lectured on relational databases at the Department of Computer Science at the University of Warwick (2004-2013). From 1989 to 2014 he was also a tutor and consultant for the Open University, which awarded him an honorary MUniv degree for academic and scholarly distinction. He later taught a database language designed by himself and Chris Date called Tutorial D, part of a proposed family of database query languages called "D". He has also received an honorary Doctor of Technology degree from the University of Wolverhampton. *Source: Wikipedia.*



Hugh Darwen

IBPA Column Service

Tim Bourke, Canberra

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without attributing the author or IBPA.*



1281. Dealer North. Both sides vulnerable.

♠ A K Q 5 ♥ A J 10 7 6 2 ♦ J 2 ♣ A ♠ 3 2 ♥ Q 9 8 5 ♦ 10 9 8 4 ♣ K 5 3	♠ J 10 9 7 ♥ K 3 ♦ A 7 5 ♣ 8 7 4 2 ♠ 8 6 4 ♥ 4 ♦ K Q 6 3 ♣ Q J 10 9 6
--	--

West	North	East	South
	1♥	Pass	1NT
Pass	2♠	Pass	2NT
Pass	3♥	Pass	3NT
All Pass			

This deal came up in a Teams game and both sides reached game in notrump on identical auctions. Both West players led the ten of diamonds. After dummy played low, so did East, and declarer's queen won the trick at both tables.

At the first table, the declarer had a game that was marked more by longevity than skill. This was shown when he continued with the ace and jack of hearts. After winning the king of hearts, East exited with a club to dummy's bare ace. Declarer continued his attack on hearts by leading a low one. West took the nine and queen then exited with a diamond. East took the ace of diamonds and locked declarer in dummy by leading the jack of spades. As the spades were not 3-3, declarer had to lose a spade for down one.

At the second table, declarer saw that making four heart tricks offered the best chance of success. Declarer saw that if hearts were 3-3 then any sensible play would do the job. So, he considered what would work if the suit was 4-2. The only time he could make four tricks then was if a defender had a doubleton king or queen. As a result, declarer played his four of hearts to dummy's ace, then continued with a low heart from dummy to East's now bare king.

After winning the club shift with dummy's bare ace, declarer called for the jack of hearts from dummy. West won his queen of hearts and the defenders could do no better than cash their two minor-suit winners. Dummy was high and declarer had nine tricks: three spades, four hearts and two tricks in the minor suits.

1282. Dealer South. North-South vulnerable.

♠ A 8 ♥ K J 4 3 ♦ K Q 7 6 5 ♣ 5 4 ♠ 10 6 4 ♥ 7 5 2 ♦ J 10 8 2 ♣ 10 9 8	♠ K 9 7 5 ♥ 9 8 6 ♦ — ♣ Q J 7 6 3 2 ♠ Q J 3 2 ♥ A Q 10 ♦ A 9 4 3 ♣ A K
---	---

West	North	East	South
			2NT ¹
Pass	3♣	Pass	3♠
Pass	6NT	All Pass	

1. 20-21 points

Perhaps North should have explored the possibilities in diamonds. Instead he settled for the slam in notrump.

West led the ten of clubs. Declarer began by counting his tricks, reaching at least twelve if the diamonds were not 4-0. After winning the first trick with the king of clubs he led a low diamond to dummy's king. East's discard of a low club put the contract in jeopardy.

Now he realised that a twelfth trick might come from the spade suit if West held the king. Before committing himself, however, he decided to gather more distributional information.

In that vein, declarer cashed three heart winners, finding the suit to be 3-3. This meant that there were six vacant places in the West hand to accommodate the king of spades compared to East's ten. So, playing East for the king of spades was a ten to six favourite. However, declarer saw that playing ace and another spade would be hopeless – there would be no way to

avoid a spade and a diamond loser. Instead, declarer called for dummy's eight of spades, catching East in a Morton's Fork. If East rose with the king of spades, declarer would have three spade tricks and his contract.

At the table, East followed with a low spade and declarer's queen won the trick. Declarer then conceded a diamond to West and claimed his contract, making two spades, four hearts, four diamonds and two clubs.

A final point is that if the queen of spades had lost to West's king, declarer might have recovered via a spade-diamond squeeze if West was long in both suits (say, a 4=3=4=2 shape).

1283. Dealer South. Neither side vulnerable.

<p>♠ 6 ♥ A 8 6 5 2 ♦ Q 10 7 6 2 ♣ 5 3</p> <p>♠ K J 9 8 5 4 ♥ J 7 4 ♦ 4 ♣ Q 9 8</p>	<p>♠ Q 7 2 ♥ Q 10 9 3 ♦ K 8 5 3 ♣ 6 4</p>
--	---

	♠ A 10 3 ♥ K ♦ A J 9 ♣ A K J 10 7 2		
West	North	East	South
	Pass	Pass	1♣
2♠	Double	3♠	3NT
All Pass			

South made the practical decision to bid the notrump game after the raise of West's weak jump overcall. He took the view that the club suit offered enough promise of tricks to warrant this choice.

West led the eight of spades and declarer ducked East's queen. He also ducked the spade continuation, throwing a low heart from dummy. After winning the third round of spades with the ace, throwing a second low heart from dummy, declarer paused to review his prospects.

Basically, he needed either six tricks in clubs or six tricks from the red suits.

Declarer's first move was to cash the ace and king of clubs, hoping to find a short queen of clubs. When only low cards appeared, declarer saw that there was no point in playing a third club, because even if it was East who had the queen, he would still need a second diamond trick to score a ninth trick, which could only happen if East had the king of diamonds.

Consequently, declarer switched his attention to the diamond suit. As he had only three tricks in the bag, he needed six tricks from the red suits – two in hearts and four in diamonds. So, after cashing the king of hearts, declarer played the ace and jack of diamonds. As there was no point in ducking a diamond, East took the king of diamonds and returned the suit. Declarer then claimed

nine tricks: a spade, two hearts, four diamonds and two clubs.

1284. Dealer South. Both sides vulnerable.

<p>♠ 9 7 3 ♥ 8 2 ♦ 8 7 5 ♣ 9 7 6 5 4</p> <p>♠ A K J 10 ♥ Q 7 6 3 ♦ 9 6 ♣ J 3 2</p>	<p>♠ Q 8 6 4 2 ♥ 9 ♦ Q 4 3 2 ♣ Q 10 8</p>
--	---

	♠ 5 ♥ A K J 10 5 4 ♦ A K J 10 ♣ A K		
West	North	East	South
			2♣
Pass	2♦	Pass	2♥
Pass	3♣ *	Pass	3♦
Pass	3♥	Pass	4♥
All Pass			

The bidding was routine after the artificial opening bid of 2♣, with 3♣ being a second negative. West began with the king and ace of spades, with East signalling that he had an odd number of cards in the suit. Declarer ruffed the second spade low, and realised that if trumps were 3-2, then ten tricks would be routine after cashing the ace and king of trumps. Also, this would make an over-trick if the queen of trumps was singleton or doubleton.

However, instead of playing his two top trumps, declarer paused to consider what he could do if trumps were 4-1. He saw that the only way to overcome such a division was to keep a trump in dummy while attempting to drive out the queen of trumps. As a result, declarer found the winning play of leading the jack of trumps at trick three. If West ducked this, then declarer would cash the two top trumps and play on diamonds. The defenders would then be limited to a spade, a trump and a diamond.

At the table, West took the jack of trumps with the queen and exited with a spade. Declarer ruffed this and was reduced to only three trumps, the same number as West. The problem now was how to make three diamond tricks without West scoring a ruff. Declarer realised that any play would work if the suit was 3-3 or 4=2. The question was how to handle a 2=4 break when the queen was in the hand with long diamonds.

Declarer found a form of symmetry to his play in trumps – he continued by leading the jack of diamonds next. East won this with his queen of diamonds and played a fourth spade. Declarer discarded a diamond from hand and ruffed it in dummy with the eight of trumps. After crossing back to hand with the king of clubs, declarer drew trumps and claimed ten tricks. He made five trumps, a spade ruff in dummy, two diamonds and two clubs.



BAMSA

Marketing for bridge

Samantha Punch, BAMSA



Bridge: A MindSport For All
Connects People, Challenges Minds

Bridge is often associated with an older generation of players. There has been a gradual decline in the popularity of bridge – the problem is how to attract the next generation of players. Bridge: A MindSport for All (BAMSA) has published a new academic paper which identifies types of bridge players, each with their own motivations for playing:

- The **self-improver** type plays bridge for the challenge, measuring progress and aiming for the next level.
- The **competitor** wants to win.
- The **socialiser** participates for the fun of the game and the social element.
- The **mind-gamer** is fascinated by people and loves to figure out what makes them tick. For them, bridge is another way of understanding human beings.

The paper investigates the stigmas that might deter younger players from taking up bridge. It suggests a new marketing approach for bridge based on the four types of players:

- **Education and Intergenerational Learning** (for self-improvers): Promote bridge's intellectual and

social benefits through education and intergenerational programmes.

- **Hybrid and Flexible Formats** (for competitors): Combine online play with in-person meet-ups to reflect modern leisure habits.
- **Inclusive Club Cultures** (for socialisers): Balance the social and competitive sides of bridge by ensuring new or casual players feel welcomed alongside more serious competitors.
- **Media and Digital Engagement** (for mind-gamers): Create media content that highlights the intellectual challenge and social enjoyment of bridge.

These marketing strategies have the potential to rebrand the image of bridge as a vibrant, intellectually engaging activity. The ultimate goal is to expand the reach of bridge to a new generation of players.

Read the full paper here: [Bridging stigma – Marketing the mindsport bridge to the next generation of players.](#)

Click here for a [summary of the paper.](#)

Many thanks to Fairlie Ruggles from Media Owners for developing the image to promote the four player types. Which of the four player types do you relate to most, or are you a hybrid of several types?

TYPES OF BRIDGE PLAYERS



→ THE SOCIALISER

Participates purely for the fun of the game
Enjoys social bridge (non competitive)
Motivation is to socialise with others
Purpose bridge is a relaxing distraction



→ THE SELF IMPROVER

Participates to improve their bridge skills
Enjoys a challenge
Motivation is measuring her own progress
Purpose to improve on their previous best



→ THE COMPETITOR

Participates when there is something at stake
Enjoys the adrenaline rush of calculated risk
Motivation is avoiding the pain of losing
Purpose Winning



→ THE MIND GAMER

Participates to understand people
Enjoys everyone's different approach
Motivation fascinated by human behaviour
Purpose is gaining insights for their internal gain



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A conversation with Professor Samantha Punch

The bridge world under the sociologist's lens

Francesca Canali, Padova

from the *European Transnationals* bulletin



She sits among you at every major tournament. She plays, she competes, she travels from city to city like everyone else. But while you obsess over squeezes and endplays, she is quietly observing something else entirely: you. How you interact, how you fight, how you build partnerships and break them, how you forgive (or don't).

Professor Samantha Punch is a sociologist at the University of Stirling, a Scottish international player, and the mind behind BAMSA (Bridge: A MindSport for All). She has written two books on the human side of elite bridge and published dozens of academic papers dissecting our community with the precision of a scientist and the empathy of someone who truly belongs to it.

We asked her to tell us what she has observed, openly and honestly. What she told us is fascinating, sometimes uncomfortable, and deeply recognisable.

Tell us a bit about yourself.

I'm 55, originally from England but I've been living in Scotland for a long time. I live with my life partner Stephen Peterkin, who is also my bridge partner, so our world is very much bridge!

How did you learn to play?

After finishing my PhD, I was looking for something to fill the gap. I just showed up at a bridge club, almost on a whim. They told me I had to take lessons first, and I didn't quite understand why. I thought they could just explain the basics and I'd be fine! But they were already on lesson 11, so someone brought me the notes for lessons 1 through 10. I read them and joined the group halfway through. And that was it.

What is your proudest bridge achievement?

Probably getting to the semi-final of the World Bridge Games in 2016, in Wrocław.

But it was also incredibly frustrating. We were beating France in the semi-final after the first half of the 96-board match, but we lost in the last quarter. Then we played China for the bronze medal and lost that too, after being ahead in the first set. So we came away with nothing. It was my best moment and my worst moment at the same time.

Perfect material for a sociologist, right?

Absolutely. A double-edged sword, as always in bridge. It was really painful to come away empty-handed after nearly two weeks of competition. I think our team just got a bit too tired.

You're a Professor of Sociology, but your academic path is quite unusual.

Yes, I always say I'm a professor of sociology with no formal sociological qualifications! My first degree was in Latin American Studies, with Spanish, Portuguese, and a dissertation on children in Bolivia. Then I did a PhD in Geography and Development Studies, looking at rural childhoods in South America. My first job was in Social Work at Stirling, studying teenagers in Scotland. The common thread was always childhood, and really, the work was sociological in nature, even though I was trained in other disciplines. When I realized that, I started publishing in sociology journals, teaching sociology, and one great way to learn a new discipline is to teach it. I was always one step ahead of the students!

Can we consider the bridge community a small society?

Absolutely. It's a microcosm of society. It incorporates much of what we see in broader society. But a couple of things make it unique. First, because it's a partnership game, we're always working with someone while playing against others. It's a very relational society: cooperation and harmony on one side, conflict and tension on the other.

Second, particularly at the top level, you're dealing with very intelligent people. You don't have to be especially clever to enjoy bridge socially or at club level, but at the very top, there are a lot of smart individuals. And that can mean we're quite a critical community. We tend to take things apart and question them, rather than seeing the good in them. There's a sharpness to our community that has a downside: we can be overly critical, even negative. But the other side of that coin is that we can also be a warm and supportive community that looks after each other.

At the top level, people travel from one tournament to the next, always meeting the same faces around the world. It's not a regular job where you go home and separate work from personal life. How does this shape relationships?

I think there's a big distinction between professional and amateur players. I'm an amateur. I can be extremely competitive at the table, but away from it, I don't have to worry about competition. I can have friendships, community, networks.

For professional players, it's harder. They're competing not only at the table but also away from it, for sponsors. And the sponsor pool is shrinking: there are fewer very wealthy sponsors coming through, while the number of professionals keeps growing. That creates real tension, because this is their livelihood, this is how they pay the bills.

From the interviews I've done, I've heard about some of the less pleasant manoeuvring that can happen. If you're playing on an amateur team, you can freely admit to mistakes. But on a professional team, if your contract isn't secure for the following year, you might be tempted to highlight your teammates' mistakes more than your own. It creates an ambiguous kind of community: on one hand, you're socializing and having fun with friends; on the other, you're competing for a smaller and smaller job market.

How does this constant duality of friendship and competition shape a person's personality over time?

I think people learn to navigate it in their own way. Those at the very top, who are more secure, can afford to just be themselves. But for those in the tier just below, it's a difficult tightrope to walk. There's a lot of uncertainty: contracts are precarious, sometimes only for a year, and I've heard of them being broken along the way.

Is it possible to have real friends in the bridge world?

That's an interesting question. Even as an amateur, all my holidays go to bridge. The last non-bridge holiday I had was about twenty years ago! Most of my weekends are bridge too. Over time, my friends outside bridge got tired of me never being available. They'd invite me to their 40th birthday or their wedding, and it would clash with a tournament I'd committed to months in advance. Gradually, those friendships faded.

And now that I also research bridge, there are no boundaries left between work and play. I'm always observing, always making connections, even when I'm playing.

So over the years, I've lost many of my non-bridge friends, and I've become more dependent on the bridge community. I genuinely believed those were real friendships. But I know of situations where someone very active in the bridge community went through a difficult time, and the support from bridge friends was

much less than expected. Old non-bridge friends would probably have rallied around more. Many bridge friends were just... absent.

I think as bridge players, we can be a bit selfish inside our bridge bubble. When we see people, we're great with them. But when we don't, it's out of sight, out of mind. We assume people have other networks, but for those who've given up their other networks for bridge, it can become very isolating.

That said, I'm sure this isn't the same for everyone. But it does raise the question: are bridge friends truly real friends, or just bridge friends?

Could there be a link between the personality it takes to become a top player and the ability to form deep personal connections?

I think so. In one of our studies, we looked at different types of players: competitors, socializers, self-improvers, and mind-gamers. There's a real distinction, especially between competitors and socializers.

To reach the elite level, you have to commit intensely, to the exclusion of many other things in your life. That focus on the game can come at the expense of relationships. And there may be another element: some highly intelligent bridge players might have slightly less emotional intelligence. If you're exceptionally good at cards, you might be less skilled at managing difficult emotions and relationships. So when something difficult happens, you avoid it because you don't know how to respond.

But I wouldn't say friendship is impossible. In my academic career, there's plenty of competition too, yet you still make good friends among competitors. I think the key difference is that in a regular job, there are structures to protect people: workplace policies, employment regulations, clear pathways. In bridge, everything is much more informal. Contracts aren't as robust. And that informality is what makes the trust issue more insecure.

What are your views on the women's category in a mind sport?

My views have evolved. I started out strongly believing we should get rid of it. I still think it's problematic in some ways, but I now feel it exists for a reason. Gender inequalities persist. Women still carry the bulk of childcare responsibilities, and at key points in a bridge career, they simply can't invest the same time as men. There will always be some structural inequalities. Attitudes are getting better. People are making fewer assumptions than they used to, and I think it has improved compared to twenty years ago. But until we reach genuine equity in training opportunities, playing opportunities, and access to the best partners and teammates, the women's category serves as a necessary safeguard.

The mixed category is becoming more important, and I've heard young women themselves starting to say they don't see the need for a separate women's category. When that generation feels they're competing on truly equal terms, perhaps we can gradually phase it out. But it could take a very long time, and the childcare issue might mean we never fully get there.

And the seniors' category?

I think it makes sense. Although you can play bridge throughout your whole life, most people do start to slow down. Thought processes change; it gets harder to remember a complex system. And as people live longer, the category is getting broader. Someone actually raised at the EBL seminar the idea of a "super senior" category, separating players aged 60+ from those aged 75+. There is a real difference between playing bridge at 60 and at 75, and if we have more and more people in their 80s wanting to compete, it might be worth considering.

Tell us about BAMSA. How did it all start?

It started in 2013. As a sociologist who also plays international bridge, I simply wanted to interview my heroes, pick the brains of the world's best players, and understand what goes on behind the scenes. The life of a professional bridge player is quite unique, and I was genuinely curious.

My plan was modest: do a couple of interviews at each tournament I attended, and after a few years, I'd have enough material for a book when I retired. But I was enjoying it so much that I thought, why sit on all this? At the same time, I'd been researching the sociology of childhood for over twenty years and was running out of fresh ideas. This could revitalize my research by connecting it to something I loved.

And there was a legitimate academic case for it. Bridge connects to community, well-being, mental health, brain fitness: these are major societal issues. It's not just a bit of fun. From the research, very clear themes emerged around power inequalities, the professional life, and especially gender inequalities. I realized the bridge world had no gender policies whatsoever, while every other sector of society did. As a sociologist, maybe I could encourage some of those policies to be developed.

How was it funded?

I started very small. A friend gave me literally €300 to get my first interviews transcribed. Then EBED (English Bridge Education & Development) gave me a small grant for a survey on bridge and well-being. We got over seven thousand responses from that, which produced a solid paper. Each success built credibility for the next step.

The EBL and WBF were supportive early on with small grants that we could do a lot with. Then came our first

big funding: the WBF contributed about €27,000. That was a game-changer.

As people saw we could deliver, that we published results and created accessible resources like videos, podcasts, and summaries, the crowdfunding became easier. Then Mike Levine from the US offered a matching grant: \$100,000, on the condition that I raised another \$100,000. That took a lot of work, but it was easier because of the track record we'd built. Norway has also been very supportive from the start.

For our current study on bridge in schools, we chose England, Scotland, the USA, and Norway precisely because those are the countries that really understood what we were doing and saw the value in evidence-based research for lobbying governments and getting bridge into schools.

We now have a new PhD on bridge funded by the Scottish Government, the University of Stirling and the WBF.

Is bridge too complex for modern society?

It's another double-edged sword. On one hand, yes, we need to make entry points simple, fun, and engaging. But on the other, we shouldn't dumb it down too much, because its complexity is what people love. From our interviews with young players, some say they don't have time to invest in learning the whole thing. But others say they love that you can't master it quickly, that it's challenging, that it makes you think. And because it's scaffolded in stages, you can enjoy it at each level.

I think the solution is to keep the traditional competitive format but introduce additional, more accessible formats alongside it. Like chess did with blitz and rapid. We need faster games, shorter formats, more flexibility. The "drop-in" idea is interesting: instead of committing to a three-hour club session, you play in one-hour segments and can come and go. Some people stay the whole session, others just play for an hour.

Bridge Battle is a good example of making the first encounter exciting and engaging. It's got characters, fun terminology, tangible outcomes. And Norway's cute animations are wonderful for that very first step. But we need to think carefully about how to transition people from those fun introductions to actual bridge.

We also need practical solutions at the club level. I heard about an idea from Florida where beginners play alongside the regular session, supervised by a different club member each week. The beginners get three "chips" that they can use to ask questions. It makes them think about when to use their questions rather than becoming dependent on constant help. And we desperately need something like *The Queen's Gambit* for bridge: a mainstream cultural moment that shows the diversity and excitement of the game. We have the stories for it. We have the scandals, the drama, the human interest.

Türkiye Winter Open Teams Championship

Erdal Sidar, Istanbul

This year's Championship was organised in Ankara from 31 January to 7 February, with 140 teams participating.

The Championship was won by Yılkırın (Salim Yılkırın, Özcan Pehlivan, Sinan Tatlıcıođlu, Emre Kaya, and Berk Bařaran). They defeated ATAÖÖY in the final, 191-86 IMPs, over 4 × 16 boards.

Let's look at a few deals.

RR6: Yılkırın vs Růya: 11.38-8.62

Board 14. Dealer East. Neither side vulnerable.

	♠ 7		
	♥ Q 10 8 5		
	♦ J 9 5 3		
	♣ Q 10 7 6		
♠ K 8 5 3		♠ A Q 10 6	
♥ J 9 4		♥ 7 6	
♦ A 10 7 6		♦ K 8 2	
♣ K 4		♣ A J 3 2	
	♠ J 9 4 2		
	♥ A K 3 2		
	♦ Q 4		
	♣ 9 8 5		

West	North	East	South
<i>Tatlıođlu</i>	<i>Özbay</i>	<i>Pehlivan</i>	<i>Uras</i>
1NT ¹	Pass	1♣	Pass
2♠	Pass	2♥ ²	Pass
		4♠	All Pass

1. May contain a four-card major.
2. Spades.

North led the seven of clubs, won by the jack in dummy. Declarer Sinan Tatlıcıođlu cashed the ace of spades and then the king. When he saw the 4-1 trump break, he played a heart from hand. The defence took their two heart tricks and played another club.

Declarer won with his king, ruffed the last heart, discarded a diamond on the ace of clubs, and cashed the diamond king and ace (as a precaution against a singleton diamond in South's hand).

Declarer then went to dummy with the spade queen, played dummy's last club, and collected the tenth trick by en passant.

The opponents' remaining diamond and spade winners fell together.

At the other table, 4♠ went down one.

Yılkırın won 10 IMPs.

R64: Yılkırın vs UŐAK BRİÇ: 141-115 IMPs

Board 31. Dealer South. East-West vulnerable.

	♠ K J 4		
	♥ A K 6 5 3		
	♦ A Q 9 5		
	♣ A		
♠ 7 5 2		♠ A	
♥ 7		♥ J 9 8 4 2	
♦ K J 8 6 4 3		♦ 10 7 2	
♣ Q J 2		♣ 9 6 5 3	
	♠ Q 10 9 8 6 3		
	♥ Q 10		
	♦ —		
	♣ K 10 8 7 4		

West	North	East	South
<i>Alakent</i>	<i>Bařaran</i>	<i>Çobanlı</i>	<i>Kaya</i>
Pass	4NT	Pass	3♠
Pass	6♠	All Pass	5♦ ¹

1. 0-3 keycards.

Seeing all the hands, what would you lead as West?

At the table, West led his singleton heart. Declarer Emre Kaya won with his queen, crossed to dummy with the ace of clubs, discarded his heart ten (a winner) on the ace of diamonds, and played the king of spades. East won and returned a heart, but declarer ruffed high and played another spade.

If the trumps had broken 2-2, the contract would have been easy (throw two losing clubs on the heart ace-king and ruff the third). But when East showed out on the second round of trumps, declarer ruffed a diamond to hand, cashed the king of clubs, and ruffed a club. With the queen-jack falling in three rounds, declarer had twelve tricks. At the other table, 6♠ went down one, so Yılkırın won 14 IMPs on the board.

R16: Yılkırın vs SAYIN ABİM: 123-155 IMPs

Board 35. Dealer South. Both sides vulnerable.

	♠ K 9 8 3		
	♥ 10 5 2		
	♦ 10 7 5 4		
	♣ A 4		
♠ A 2		♠ Q J 10	
♥ A K J 9 8 4		♥ 3	
♦ A J 6 2		♦ K Q 8	
♣ 3		♣ K 10 9 7 5 2	
	♠ 7 6 5 4		
	♥ Q 7 6		
	♦ 9 3		
	♣ Q J 8 6		

West <i>Zorlu</i>	North <i>Pehlivan</i>	East <i>Şakrak</i>	South <i>Tatlıcioğlu</i>
1♥	Pass	1NT	Pass
2♣	Pass	2♦ ¹	Pass
2NT	Pass	3♣	Pass
3♠	Pass	4♣	Pass
4♥	Pass	5♣	Pass
5♦	Pass	6♣	Pass
6♦	Double	6NT	Double
All Pass			

1. Misunderstanding. Zorlu showed hearts and diamonds, but Şakrak understood hearts and clubs.

Seeing all the hands, what would you lead to defeat 6NT? At the table, Tatlıcioğlu found the only winning lead: the seven of spades.

After the spade lead, Şakrak played on clubs instead of taking the heart finesse and went down three tricks.

At the other table, the contract was 4NT, making two overtricks. If the defence had not beaten 6NT, they would have lost 16 IMPs. Instead, they gained 16 IMPs – a 32-IMP difference.

QF4: Yılkıran vs Turkon: 121-97 IMPs
Board 55. Dealer North. Both sides vulnerable.

♠ A K 10	
♥ 9 7 3	
♦ Q 9 3	
♣ K Q 8 6	
♠ J	♠ Q 8 7 3 2
♥ A J 5 2	♥ 10 6
♦ A 10 8 7 2	♦ 6 5
♣ 9 5 2	♣ A J 10 4
♠ 9 6 5 4	
♥ K Q 8 4	
♦ K J 4	
♣ 7 3	

West <i>Kaya</i>	North <i>Kızılok</i>	East <i>Başaran</i>	South <i>Üzüm</i>
Pass	1NT	Pass	2♣
All Pass	2♦	Pass	2NT

East led the three of spades. Declarer Ömer Kızılok won West's jack with his king and played the three of hearts. East played the six, dummy the queen, and West (Emre Kaya) ducked.

Declarer returned to hand with the ace of spades and played another heart to dummy's king. West won and returned a low diamond. Declarer won with the nine of diamonds and played another heart, establishing the eight as a winner.

When West took the third heart, he returned a club, and East let declarer's king win. A third spade set up dummy's nine, but when East won the queen, he returned a diamond to West's ace. A second club through the queen gave East two club tricks for one

off (declarer guessed well to withhold the queen, or it would have been two off).

At the other table, 1NT by South made seven tricks, for 5 IMPs to Yılkıran.

Final: Yılkıran vs Ataköy: 119-77 IMPs
Board 46. Dealer East. Neither side vulnerable.

♠ K J 10 6 3		
♥ 6 3		
♦ 8 3		
♣ K Q 9 4		
♠ 7	♠ A 9 5 4	
♥ A K 10 5	♥ 4 2	
♦ K Q 6 5	♦ J 7 4	
♣ 10 5 3 2	♣ A J 7 6	
	♠ Q 8 2	
	♥ Q J 9 8 7	
	♦ A 10 9 2	
	♣ 8	

West <i>Tatlıoğlu</i>	North <i>Özcan</i>	East <i>Pehlivan</i>	South <i>Özkurt</i>
1♦	1♠	1NT	2♦
Pass	2♠	3♦	3♥
Double	3♠	Double	All Pass

Özcan Pehlivan led a low trump against 3♠ doubled. Declarer Okan Özcan won in hand and played a heart towards dummy's jack. West took the king and played the king of diamonds.

When declarer let the king hold, West felt he could no longer safely attack the red suits, and switched to a club. This went to the king and ace, and East cashed the ace of spades before returning a small spade. West discarded a heart and a diamond.

Declarer drew the last trump, and West (Tatlıcioğlu) could not afford to discard a club. After cashing the ace of diamonds, declarer returned to hand with a diamond ruff and played the queen and another club.

On the third club, East rose with the jack, capturing his partner's ten to avoid the endplay, and a heart to West's ace-ten took the last two tricks for three off doubled.

At the other table, 2♠ went down two, undoubled, so Yılkıran won 9 IMPs.



Salim Yılkıran, Berk Başaran,
Sinan Tatlıcioğlu (seated),
Özcan Pehlivan, Emre Kaya

A revisionist view of passing, part two

The Contrarian, Los Angeles CA

The myth of never selling out to opponents' 2♠ or lower bids

There prevails a common theme that one must compete against opponents who stop at the two level up to 2♠. What is that based on? Not on thousands of hands dealt, or computerised trials. I have seen none.

Some years ago, some expert players realised if the top pairs stop at the two level, it often means that it is your hand and they are stealing from you. So the word went around, "don't sell out below 2♠". When I have reviewed basic, intermediate or even advanced bridge books for *The Bridge World*, many authors routinely advise, "Never sell out to 2♠ or lower". No qualified exceptions. If these authors use the word never, it always leads to a stern black mark in my review. That has to be flawed advice. It cannot be right to always balance against opponents who stop at or below 2♠. It is right sometimes, but judgment must be applied.

I have been unscientifically keeping track of such hands for two years now. My results include both opponents selling out below 2♠, and also hands where we stop at the two level while we were cold for game.

So far, at least an average of 1½ to two times per session, in every Pairs event and even at IMPs, either our side or theirs will stop at two of a major, or two or three of a minor, while being cold for game. The number of times where it is right to balance at the two level is less than one time per match. First, it has to be your hand; second, you have to avoid getting doubled if you compete and have a misfit; and third, the opponents have to be unable to make game and have not underbid. Not a good parlay.

In about 50% of the hands where either our side or the opponents compete, the push to the three level has no effect, as the opening side will make three or even four without realising that game makes. This is more frequent than the times you compete and buy the contract at the three level making, or push the opponents to the three level down one.

In a few cases, opponents have reopened against our two of a major, and either my partner or I have made an encouraging side-suit bid and then bid a makeable game, often doubled. Occasionally the opponents competition at the three level forces us to defend or be pushed to the three level – sometimes it works for them, and sometimes we have an unexpected triumph doubling them at the three level for a top against a partscore.

In short, it seems twice as likely your opponents are cold, or have a good play for game, than it is that they are stealing the hand from you. If you push them up, they simply bid and make three, so you have risked a doubled set for nothing – or worse, you give them another chance to bid a cold game they otherwise missed.

Those who tell you, "don't sell out to a two level contract," do not describe what kinds of hands should reopen, and what kinds of hands that should give up and let them play at the two level. Sometimes it is right to reopen with a promising hand, but often you are giving the opponents a chance to wake up and bid game, or to double your unwise intervention.

Here is an obvious example of a hand that can balance over

1♥ Pass Pass ?
♠ A K J 9 7 4 ♥ Q ♦ A 4 ♣ K 10 8 2 .

You can bid 2♠ after partner and responder have passed the opening bid. This is not a preempt, it is an intermediate one-suited hand. Partner does not need much for you to make game: simply the spade queen or spade length and the queen-jack of clubs will do, or an ace with three or four spades. This is an example of a hand where it is clear to balance and show your strength. This clear-cut hand must still compete strongly, but the tougher decision arises when you are balanced without a long suit.

The downside of refusing to pass the opponents' partscore often goes undetected in a Team game. Suppose your side had a chance to pass out the opponents at 2♥ and your partner has reopened with a double against 2♥, causing your opponents to exchange some additional bidding information and now bid and make 4♥. When you get to your home table, your teammates announce "plus 620," and your partner announces "minus 620" – not "minus 620, but we could have let them play in 2♥ for -170." So sometimes it is not revealed that a reopening double or bid has cost your team the match, as the IMP catastrophe has been concealed.

Your LHO opens 1♣ followed by two passes and you hold:

♠ Q J 7 ♥ A 3 2 ♦ J 10 7 5 4 ♣ Q 10 .

Do you enter the auction, and if so, why? Consider partner's hand. He did not double 1♣, he did not overcall, he did not bid 1NT. If he has an opening bid, he may have club length but not enough to bid 1NT over 1♣. If you bid, do you bid 1♦ on a scrawny suit, or double

without at least a four-card major? If partner passed, it becomes more likely that opener is strong, perhaps 18-19 balanced, and if you act, opener may bid 1NT instead of being stranded in perhaps a 4-2 club fit if responder lacks enough points to respond to a mere 1♣ opener. If you bid, opener might bid 1NT, or his good four-card major, and you have actually helped your opponents find their best spot.

Another factor: if other players are not as strong as some of your opponents, passing when it is right requires no special card-playing skill or expertise, and can neutralise a pair who has underbid or is in the wrong spot. Even expert opponents sometimes fail to recognise their trick-taking potential.

At times it is right to balance. Suppose you hold:

♠ K Q 8 7 ♥ 6 ♦ A 10 7 5 3 2 ♣ J 9

1♣	Pass	1♥	Pass
2♥	Pass	Pass	?

Is it right to double here? Maybe. You do have shortness in hearts, four decent spades, and can handle either spades or diamonds. If partner bids 1NT or clubs, you have a bid of up to 3♦, but it is not without risk – you can be clobbered, or partner might be anxious to defend, if he has no fit for your hand, but does not want to leave in a double of 2♥.

Reverse the club and diamond holdings, and you will have to just pass, as you cannot handle a diamond response from partner.

If you reopen, do not be surprised if the opponents might have been cold for game or can punish you. The factor leading to a successful intervention against a low-level contract is having a long suit which has both safety and trick potential.

Avoid weak opening bids or bad preempts

Here is one I held in an IMP tourney recently on OKBridge:

♠ 5 4 ♥ A K 6 5 2 ♦ K 10 ♣ J 9 8 4

Who would not open, both vulnerable in second seat, after a pass at IMPs? This hand does qualify as an opener for most, but the reason I passed is that my partner and I play 2/1 forcing to game, and he has a tendency to make a 2/1 response with 12, sometimes 11 HCP. Most 2/1 players also play light openings, and once they open light and partner forces to game with a 2/1 bid, they cannot stop.

While my partner has opened ‘any 11 or 12’ contrary to most 2/1 disciples, I will tend not to open light. Aside from bidding a hopeless game, when partner opens 1♠ I can now bid 2♥, and now there is little danger of overbidding.

Aside from being unable to avoid a bad game if one opens light, there is also the possibility that partner has a strong hand a drives to slam, expecting an extra card in opener's hand, and failing because an essential side-suit king or queen is missing.

Incredibly, this is what actually happened on the above hand:

		Pass	Pass
1♦	Pass	1♥	Pass
2♥	Pass	3♣	Pass
4♥	Pass	Pass	?

I doubled 4♥, down two non-vulnerable for +300 for several IMPs. At most of the other tables, my counterparts, hearing a 1♥ opening bid, ignored their 4-4 heart fit and ended up making exactly 3NT. So this was a huge pickup, caused by not opening 1♥ with a marginal hand. No other pair was able to defend against a 4♥ contract.

Another situation is when you are 5-5 and lack the traditional points for an opening bid. I see this all the time.

First seat, neither side vulnerable, you hold

♠ 9 ♥ 2 ♦ K Q 10 8 7 ♣ A 9 7 6 5 2 .

How many would open 1♦ with this hand? How about 1♣? How many would pass? What do you have if you pass?

Say the auction proceeds after you pass in first seat:

Pass (1♥) Pass (1♠)

Now you can bid 1NT – there is no need to jump to 2NT as you have already passed in first seat. The danger of opening with this hand is (1) making partner believe you have more defence, and (2) in some cases you may not be able to show both suits. If you wait and later bid 1NT or jump to 2NT, you can show your big distribution and partner won't be misled.

If you pass, sometimes the opponents will open one of a minor – it happens often enough – and now your hand is not a real two-suiter, and you can either overcall in your other minor or (probably better) keep quiet. The lesson is: why open a distributional near-opener with minors when you can later bid an unusual notrump?

It is the same with 5-5 in the majors. Try passing and later making a cheap Michaels cue bid with

♠ Q 10 7 5 4 2 ♥ A Q 10 9 6 ♦ — ♣ 9 8

instead of opening 1♠. This way partner will not expect as much as if you had opened 1♠.

Once in a while you will be shut out by the opponents, and unable to show your suits and promising hand, but even with the 5-6 minor suit hand above, if you pass and the auction proceeds

			Pass
1♠	Pass	4♠	?

Unless vulnerable, you can now bid 4NT, and partner will know you have a two-suiter, probably the minors.

World Bridge Calendar

22-28 Mar	37 th International Bridge Festival	Tenerife, Canary Islands	asociacioncanariadebridge.com
25-29 Mar	Kalamata International Festival	Kalamata, Greece	hellasbridge.org
27-29 Mar	Fuengirola International	Costa del Sol, Spain	www.bridgewebs.com
27-29 Mar	WBF Online Women's Teams	RealBridge	worldbridge.org
3-6 Apr	Easter Festival	London, England	www.ebu.co.uk
11-12 Apr	Sweden: Teams semi-finals	Sweden	www.svenskbridge.se
12-16 Apr	South African 73rd National Congress	Cape Town, South Africa	www.sabf.co.za
13-21 Apr	Open USBC	Schaumburg IL, USA	usbf.org
16-19 Apr	Tórshavn Bridgefestival	Tórshavn, Faroe Islands	bridge.fo
17-19 Apr	Lady Milne Trophy	Belfast, Northern Ireland	www.bridgewebs.com/bgb
22-30 Apr	Mixed USBC	Schaumburg IL, USA	usbf.org
24-26 Apr	Greece Swiss Pairs Championships	Athens, Greece	hellasbridge.org
1-3 May	Austrian Team Championships	To be advised	www.bridgecentrum.at
1-5 May	The Spring Foursomes	Bristol, England	www.ebu.co.uk
1-10 May	Deutsches Bridgefestival	Wyk auf Föhr, Germany	www.bridge-verband.de
4-14 May	35th CACBF Zonal Championships	Guadeloupe	www.bridgewebs.com/cacbf/
14-17 May	European Online Mixed Teams	RealBridge	www.eurobridge.org
8-10 May	TARTU ÄRTU	Tartu, Estonia	thinking.ee/tartu2026
14-17 May	1st European Online Mixed Teams	Online	www.eurobridge.org
20-24 May	Contra Cup	Bucharest, Romania	www.cupacontra.ro
22-25 May	Norwegian Clubs Teams Final	Storefjell, Norway	www.bridge.no
22-25 May	12th German Bridge Trophy	Germany	www.bridge-verband.de
6-7 Jun	FFB National Division Teams	France	www.ffbridge.fr
15-17 Jun	The Teltscher Trophy (Senior Camrose)	England	www.ebu.co.uk
15-21 Jun	2026 Canadian Bridge Championship	Penticton BC, Canada	cbf.ca
18 Jun	De Ster Teams Café Tournament	Maastricht, The Netherlands	vcleeff@xs4all.nl
26 Jun - 5 Jul	European National Team Championships	Riga, Latvia	www.eurobridge.org
4-12 Jul	Danish Bridge Festival	Svendborg, Denmark	www.bridgefestival.dk
4-16 Jul	Australian National Championships	Canberra, Australia	www.abf.com.au
9-15 Jul	European Youth Team Championships	Riga, Latvia	www.eurobridge.org
9-19 Jul	Summer NABC	Minneapolis MN	www.acbl.org
24 Jul - 2 Aug	Sweden Bridge Festival	Örebro, Sweden	www.svenskbridge.se
31 Jul - 8 Aug	Norwegian Bridge Festival	Tønsberg, Norway	bridgefestival.no
2-8 Aug	World Youth Transnational	Hefei, China	www.worldbridge.org
2-9 Aug	International Bridgeweek Tulln	Tulln, Austria	www.bridgeaustria.at
12-16 Aug	Riga Invites	Riga, Latvia	www.rigainvites.lv
13-15 Aug	Mutton Cup	Madrid, Spain	www.mutton-cup.com
20-23 Aug	Bridgesteddford (National Welsh Congress)	Wales	welshbridgeunion.org
20 Aug - 3 Sep	World Bridge Series	Katowice, Poland	www.worldbridge.org
12-20 Sep	International Festival Pula	Pula, Croatia	www.pulabridgefestival.com
24-28 Sep	Vilnius Cup	Vilnius, Lithuania	
26 Nov - 6 Dec	Fall NABC	San Diego CA	www.acbl.org