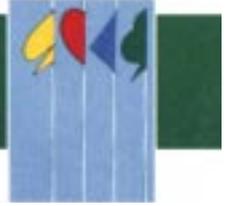




August 21
September 4
Lille 98

Daily News

WORLD BRIDGE CHAMPIONSHIPS



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Issue: 1

22nd August 1998

Damiani Opens Lille Games



José Damiani
President of the World Bridge Federation

WBF President Damiani declares Lille Games open

You will understand that I first wish to address Mr. Pierre Mauroy, senator and mayor of Lille, to thank him, not only in the name of the World Bridge Federation and the Federation Française de Bridge, but also in your name, for the warm welcome that he has reserved for us here in this magnificent reception room of the Town Hall.

The adventure began some years ago when France was chosen to organise these world championships. It was from that time that Minister Martine Aubry, with the support of the region, the European Union and the president of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Mr. Patrick Van Der Schriek, and the president of the Committee Grand Lille, Mr. Bruno Bonduelle, took every step to insure that Lille became the reality it is today, based on an idea put forward by Jean-Claude Lefrançois and implemented by Patrick Grenthe, president of the Committee of Flanders.

It is the support of all of them, coupled with the incomparable kindness and unflinching efficiency of the municipal services and those of the Lille Grand Palais that I wish to salute.

For our part, it is the third time we have organised the championships, after Biarritz in 1982 and Geneva in 1990, and I sincerely believe that Jean-Claude and I have managed to put the experience gained at your service. The whole of the French Bridge Federation, under the direction of President Michel Marmouget together with our international staff have only one aim: to ensure a quality competition for you by using all the most recent technology which we owe to the support of our private partners.

I would like to thank them all sincerely, whether it be the Société Générale, Louis Vuitton, Vivendi, Elf, the Jean Besse Foundation, Lipton Iced Tea, Tropico, Weston, Café de Colombie, Chateau d'Eau, Aberlou, Coralia, and all our technical partners: Air France, Citroen, Compaq, Darty, France Télécom and Ricoh.

Bridge, which has been admitted into the Olympic family and is a candidate for the Winter Olympics, has now entered a phase of development in which you are the actors.

These championships will bring together around 80 of the 110 members' countries, and you will participate in the largest event that has ever taken place, with participants aged from 9 to 99 years, from the youngest to the oldest, both men and women.

If the competition is, as you know rigorous, and I know I can count on you to ensure that the ethics are exceptional, a convivial atmosphere should reign, thanks to the conditions that we have prepared and to the welcome of the inhabitants of Lille. I wish all of you an excellent stay in Lille and I have the honour and the privilege of declaring these 1998 World Bridge Championships open.



Monsieur Pierre Mauroy
President of Lille-metropole

Lille mayor welcomes players

Pierre Mauroy, mayor of Lille and former prime minister of France, issued a warm and cordial welcome to all competitors at last night's opening ceremony at the Lille Town Hall. "France, and particularly Lille, a European metropolis, is happy to welcome you and to become, during the next fortnight, the world capital of bridge," he said as he opened his address.

He continued, "I want to extend a particular welcome to the many players who have come from more than 80 countries, from the five continents, to speak the universal language of bridge for two weeks in our city... We have the opportunity to underline how all possible means should be used to unite people, be they political, sporting or cultural."

He took a moment to salute Pierre Ghestem, a world champion; Michel Demol, 1998 French champion, and Jerome and Guillaume Grenthe, members of the French Junior team, all of whom are natives of this area.

Mayor Mauroy offered some thoughts on bridge in general.

"Over the years, bridge has undergone many changes which have progressively transformed a game sometimes thought to be a little elitist into a truly intellectual discipline with a large popular audience. Bridge is indeed a universal game, which nowadays brings together men and women of all ages from all backgrounds. The game has a triple objective: to think, to enjoy and to win.

"It is a school of self control, intellectual emulation and tactics whose success is growing in schools where it proves it can be accessible to all. 420 students already play bridge in our region in nearly 20 schools, and 300 of them are going to participate in Lille."

Olympic recognition of bridge as a discipline in the Winter Olympics was warmly backed. "This will be an extra advantage for a game which today has acquired a strong international following, thanks to becoming more democratic."



Brighton Friendly Internationals

One of our editorial team comes fresh from editing the bulletins at the English Bridge Union Summer Meeting in Brighton. The congress featured a four-team friendly international tournament with two English teams, the Chinese Ladies and an Australian Open team, playing a double round robin of 14-board matches.

The teams were:

Australia: Tony Jackman, Mike Robson, Jim Wallis, Ishmael Del'Monte

China: Sun Ming, Gu Ling, Zhang Yalan, Wang Wenfei, Zhang Yu, Wang Hongli

England (Mossop): Dave Mossop, Tony Forrester, Paul, Jason and Justin Hackett

England (Burn): David Burn, Joe Fawcett, Alan Mould, Gary Hyett

For Match 1, the MOSSOP team had only three members present, so Brian Senior stepped in to partner Justin against the Australians.

Session 1. Board 13. All Vul. Dealer North.

<p>♠ 2 ♥ A K 8 4 3 ♦ K 9 8 ♣ J 7 6 4</p>	<table style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		<p>♠ A 5 ♥ Q J 5 ♦ Q 10 2 ♣ K Q 10 8 2</p>	<p>♠ K Q J 8 7 3 ♥ 2 ♦ J 7 6 5 4 3 ♣ -</p>
	N											
W		E										
	S											

AUSTRALIA v MOSSOP

West	North	East	South
<i>Wallis</i>	<i>Paul H</i>	<i>Del'Monte</i>	<i>Mossop</i>
	1♥	1♠	Dble
Pass	INT	Pass	2♦
All Pass			

The auction requires a little explanation. Wallis/Del'Monte play that an overcall in the next suit up from the opening bid is either a natural overcall with opening values or an overcall in any suit with less than opening values. But, I hear you say, the East hand is a perfectly sound opening bid, so why did it not qualify for a 2♣ overcall? Well, having this toy at his disposal, Ishmael Del'Monte wanted to try it out at the first available opportunity, even though his hand did not really qualify, just to see how his opponents would handle it.

David Burn has been coach of British inter-

national teams for many years, partly because he is very good at coming up with workable defences to strange opposing methods. He had suggested that when this overcall came up the best thing was to double to say that you had been about to respond in the suit overcalled, otherwise pretend RHO had passed and just play your normal system. Hence, David Mossop's double of 1♠, which simply said that he would have responded 1♠ had East passed. Which also explains how Paul Hackett could rebid INT with a singleton spade.

Anyway, 2♦ was a very comfortable spot and Mossop emerged with ten tricks; +130.

West	North	East	South
<i>Senior</i>	<i>Jackman</i>	<i>Justin H</i>	<i>Robson</i>
	1♥	Pass	1♠
Pass	2♣	Pass	2♠
All Pass			

Justin chose not to overcall and the Australian pair never mentioned diamonds. Senior led his bare ace of diamonds and switched to a low club, hoping to get any club tricks belonging to his side cashed before they went on the hearts, or perhaps get a force going. Robson ruffed the club and played a heart to dummy then a spade to his king. He continued with the ♠Q to Justin's ace and back came a club, ruffed. Now declarer played a diamond towards the king. Senior thought he could see eight tricks for declarer whatever he did on this trick, but pitched a heart as this might save an overtrick on a different layout. The ♦K won and declarer played another diamond to Justin's queen, Senior throwing another heart. Justin played a club, declarer ruffing while Senior unblocked the ace, and now Robson cashed the ♠J and tried to sneak the ♦3 past Senior. A couple of careful recounts suggested that it was appropriate to ruff that and Justin threw his last heart, so had two clubs to take for the last two tricks; one down for -100 and 6 IMPs to MOSSOP.

Declarer needed to cash the ♥K when in dummy with the diamond and would now have had eight tricks.

CHINA v BURN

West	North	East	South
<i>Burn</i>	<i>Z Yalan</i>	<i>Fawcett</i>	<i>Gu Ling</i>
	1♥	Pass	1♠
Pass	2♣	Pass	2♠
All Pass			

The play started in exactly the same way as we have just seen but Burn did ruff in when

declarer led towards the ♦K. Now Gu was in control and actually came to ten tricks as Fawcett had unblocked the ♦Q under the ace, allowing her to throw the blocking king when she drew the last trumps and then run the diamonds; +170.

West	North	East	South
<i>Sun Ming</i>	<i>Mould</i>	<i>W Hingli</i>	<i>Hyett</i>
	1♥	2♣	2♠
3♥	Pass	3NT	4♦
5♣	Dble	All Pass	

5♣ doubled is one of the luckiest contracts I have ever seen. To make it, declarer actually needs the 4-0 trump break, otherwise South gets a heart ruff; she needs spades to be 6-1 so that the defence cannot get at their spade trick; and the heart honours must both be in the short spade hand so that an initial spade lead does not leave South with a heart entry to cash the established spade winner. All of this comes to pass!

Hyett led his heart and Mould won and, knowing his partner could not ruff the third round, switched to a spade. Wang Hongli won the ace of spades and played the ♠K. When she saw the 4-0 break she had no choice but to play on hearts. When Mould won his second top heart, he had no spade to play so switched to a diamond - not that it mattered. Declarer was able to throw her spade loser on the fourth heart and cross-ruff her way home, one diamond ruff being taken with the ace of trumps; +750 and 14 IMPs to CHINA.

Session 1. Board 16. E/W Vul. Dealer West.

<p>♠ K J ♥ A Q 5 4 ♦ K 9 8 7 6 3 ♣ 4</p>	<table style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		<p>♠ Q 9 4 ♥ 8 7 6 3 ♦ A ♣ Q 10 7 6 2</p>	<p>♠ A 10 5 2 ♥ J 10 2 ♦ Q 2 ♣ K J 9 5</p>
	N											
W		E										
	S											

This innocent looking deal produced four different contracts.

CHINA v AUSTRALIA

North	South
<i>Jackman</i>	<i>Robson</i>
1♦	1♠
2♦	Pass

seven-board set ended with MOSSOP leading by 51-1 IMPs. MOSSOP held on in the second half to win the match by 25-4 VPs. Meanwhile, BURN was beating the Australians 25-2.

The next deal was the liveliest of the final session:

Session 3. Board 21. N/S Vul. Dealer North.

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

CHINA v AUSTRALIA

West	North	East	South
Sun Ming	Jackman	W Hongli	Robson
	3♦	3♥	Pass
4♠	All Pass		

Wang Hongli contented herself with a simple 3♥ overcall of the opening pre-empt and

Sun Ming just jumped to 4♠, making all 13 tricks on a heart lead; +510.

Wallis and Del'Monte were more ambitious in the other room.

West	North	East	South
Del'Monte	Z Yalan	Wallis	Gu Ling
	3♦	4♥	Pass
4♠	Pass	4NT	Pass
5♥	Pass	6NT	All Pass

Any slam is very fortunate to make. As you can see, it is only the 8-0 diamond break which makes it impossible for the defence to get at their second ace, assuming of course that East/West can get the slam played by East. Wallis made all 13 tricks in 6NT for +1020 and 11 IMPs to AUSTRALIA.

BURN v MOSSOP

West	North	East	South
Forrester	Burn	Paul H	Fawcett
	3♦	3NT	4♣
6NT	All Pass		

Paul Hackett found a third different action with the East cards. When Fawcett competed with 4♣, Forrester gambled out 6NT, knowing that there was a big danger of a minor-suit ruff if he chose to play in a suit. Right he was. Had

Forrester tried 6♠, that would have gone down very quickly on ace and another diamond lead. 6NT made exactly after Fawcett cashed the ace of clubs then searched his hand in vain for a diamond; +990.

West	North	East	South
Mould	Jason H	Hyett	Justin H
	3♦	3♥	4♣
4♠	5♦	Dble	All Pass

Gary Hyett made the simple 3♥ overcall and now Justin bid his clubs. Justin clearly intended the 4♣ bid as natural but, like the rest of us, the twins play all sorts of new suit bids in competition as fit-showing, and Jason equally clearly thought that the 4♣ bid would also deliver some kind of diamond support. 5♦ doubled was not a success, going down 1100. The twins would have been relieved to only drop 3 IMPs for their little adventure, though explaining to teammates why their +990 was not worth a large swing may have proved a little difficult.

Final Table

1. England (Mossop)	120 VPs
2. England (Burn)	96 VPs
3. China	72 VPs
4. Australia	65 VPs

Brown-sticker conventions forbidden

No brown-sticker conventions may be used in the Mixed Pairs. Brown-sticker conventions are defined in the General Conditions of Contest. Penalties may be severe if use of a brown-sticker convention is found to cause a result that hurts the non-offending pair.



J.M. Weston sponsors the J.M. Weston Mixed Pairs.

Weston in Lille:
34-36 rue Grande, Chaussée, Lille



Compaq sponsors the Par Contest.

Schedule of events

(Today)

- 11:00 **Mixed Pairs**
(2nd qualifying Session)
- 11:00 **Continuous Pairs**
- 11:30 **Par contest**
(3rd Session)
- 15:30 **Par contest**
(4th Session)
- 16:00 **Mixed Pairs**
(3rd qualifying Session)

(Tomorrow)

- 11:00 **Mixed Pairs Finals**
(1st Session)
- 11:00 **Zonal Mixed Pairs**
(1st Session)
- 16:00 **Mixed Pairs Finals**
(2nd Session)
- 16:00 **Zonal Mixed Pairs**
(2nd Session)



WBF Congress

The World Bridge Federation Congress meeting will be held on

Wednesday, 26 August, at 9:30 a.m.

All countries are urged to send a delegate.

Refreshments will be served after the meeting.

The 1998 World Computer Bridge Championships

Mike Whittaker, one of the people responsible for developing the program Blue Chip Bridge, reports on the second World Championship for computers.

The American Summer Nationals, held in Chicago's Hilton Hotel, also played host to the World Computer Championships, sponsored by Baron Barclay and OK Bridge. Seven programs took part in the main event and two others joined for the separate bidding competition. Despite the relatively small turnout the event was an international one; programs from America, Canada, Germany, Japan and the UK took part. The favourite for the title was the American program GIB. UK hopes rested on Blue Chip Bridge, the program I have been involved in for the past four years, so please forgive the inevitable bias to this report.

Play Competition

A round robin event of 10-board matches would produce the four semi-finalists. Each match involved playing the boards twice, as N/S and E/W. The resulting IMP score was converted to Victory Points. Blue Chip had a tough draw on Day 1 against GIB and last year's winner, Bridge Baron. The GIB match was fairly close but GIB's better card play earned it a deserved 15-5 VP win. A difference in hand evaluation earned GIB 6 IMP's on this deal:

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

Both programs began 1♦-1♥-2NT. What would you do now with East's hand? Blue Chip passed but GIB raised to 3NT. The opening lead of a diamond produced the same eleven tricks for both programs. An opening spade lead would have been best but the contract could still have been made. This was one example of GIB's ability to appreciate the overall potential of its hand and not just simply how many points it had. The program's deal simulator and ultra fast double dummy analyser combine to add a degree of judgement to GIB's bidding which, as I understand it, can sometimes overrule the initial suggested bid.

A different example of GIB's bidding capabilities appeared on this hand:

♠ 7
♥ A 5 4 2
♦ J 7 5 4
♣ Q 7 6 4

After (1♠) - 2♦ - (2♠) GIB psyched 2NT!

Blue Chip ignored it and jumped to a good 4♠ contract but misplayed it to go one down. This cost 12 IMPs when, in the replay, GIB stopped in 3♠ and made ten tricks.

With the development of faster computers, bridge programs are now more able to calculate their play. It is quite possible for them to deliberately play a squeeze. For example, Bridge Baron had such an opportunity on this next hand. Playing in 3NT, Baron (East) arrived at this position after seven tricks:

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

Baron led the ♥6 and South was in trouble. A diamond discard would establish the suit. A club discard would allow Baron to cash the ♣A before returning to hand with the ♦K in order to cash the ♣J, squeezing South in spades and diamonds. When South discarded the ♠8 Baron followed up with the ♠3. South was criss-cross squeezed in the minors. However, Baron took pity after South threw the ♣K and simply cashed the King, Ace of diamonds, conceding a diamond to South.

Did Baron not see the squeeze?

We will never know because a) it did not need all six tricks to make the contract, and b) computers have not yet learned how to be sadistic.

Blue Chip appeared to have shaken off any effects of jet lag and began Day 2 with a 20-0 demolition job on Bridge Genii. Good bidding judgement was evident on this hand:

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

Most programs reached 4♥ which has no real chance. Bridge Genii and Blue Chip reached the better 3NT game; Genii via INT(15-17)-3NT and Blue Chip after 1♥-3♥-3NT-Pass. Unfortunately, neither game made.

The first contender to drop out was Bridge Genii. Nothing seemed to be going right for it. Mind you, it had to take the blame

for one of its bad results when a dubious weak 2♥ opening, holding Kxxx in spades, was doubled for take-out but left in for penalties. When the puff of smoke had cleared the Genii had conceded an 800 penalty and the match.

Meanwhile, the German program, Q+ Bridge, which had done well in the 1997 event, was recovering after early losses to GIB and Bridge Baron 8.

Successive wins of 20-0, 19-1 and 14-6 put it well in contention. With two rounds left to play, GIB, Bridge Baron 8 and Q+ Bridge looked certain to reach the semis. The fourth qualifying spot was a three horse race between the UK (Blue Chip Bridge), Japan (Micro-Bridge) and the USA (Meadowlark Bridge).

Blue Chip made the first move by defeating Meadowlark 14-6. Andrew Robson had come over to watch the last few hands and Blue Chip immediately took the opportunity to show off with a flashy (though unnecessary) play in a 4♥ contract. This was the position after six tricks with North on lead:

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

A small club was led from dummy and, when East showed out, Blue Chip discarded the ten of spades. West won with the club ten but was endplayed!

Meadowlark's last chance was against MicroBridge but the Japanese program won easily by 18-2. Meadowlark found itself in an awkward position on this hand:

♠ 10 3
♥ A Q 10 8 5 4
♦ -
♣ A K Q 6 4

With the opponents vulnerable, 1♦ is opened on your right. Assuming you overcall 1♥, what do you do next when LHO raises to 4♦ passed back to you?

Just about anything was the winning answer. Eleven tricks were easy in both hearts and clubs. Meadowlark passed and lost 12 IMPs. This did not surprise me too much. Pro-

grams which make use of a database for bidding tend to be less impressive on very shapely hands and/or quick, preemptive auctions.

They simply can't find a particularly close match within the database. This is sensible enough on grounds of frequency, reserving database space for the more common hand types, but it doesn't look too good when it happens.

In the crucial last match between Blue Chip and MicroBridge, Blue Chip was 15 IMP up after five boards but 10 IMP down after eight.

What would you lead as North after a 1S-2H-3NT auction?

<p>♠ 9 8 7 ♥ 10 7 ♦ A 9 3 ♣ A J 10 6 3</p>	<p>♠ J 10 4 ♥ A Q J 9 6 ♦ 10 7 5 4 ♣ K</p>	<p>♠ A K Q 2 ♥ 4 2 ♦ K Q J 8 ♣ Q 4 2</p>	<table style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100%; height: 100%; text-align: center; margin: 0 auto;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table> <p>♠ 6 5 3 ♥ K 8 5 3 ♦ 6 2 ♣ 9 8 7 5</p>		N		W		E		S	
	N											
W		E										
	S											

MicroBridge chose to lead a spade. Blue Chip won, established its three diamond tricks immediately and finished with nine tricks. Against MicroBridge, Blue Chip led the ♣J. MicroBridge could have made the same nine tricks but it won, cashed four spade tricks and took the heart finesse. All square with one to play.

The last hand was a 4♣ contract. With a few tricks left Blue Chip looked home and dry but it overlooked the need to ruff high, got overruffed with the last trump, and it was MicroBridge that went through to the semis.

The semi-finals were played over 34 boards. I have no hand records but GIB defeated Bridge Baron and Q+ won against Microbridge 8, neither match being very close. In the 54-board final GIB came through to win comfortably by 181-118 IMPs and take the title. Hans Leber, creator of Q+ Bridge, told me afterwards that GIB had gained many IMPs through superior bidding and not, as had been expected, from its card play. Could GIB do the double and add the bidding prize to its world championship title?

Bidding Competition

Each program had to bid the same 20 hands. The contracts reached were IMP-scored against the actual result when the hands had been played in a world class (human) competition. Any score approaching zero IMPs would therefore be an excellent result. Q+ had won the event last year with -40 IMPs. This year it was GIB, with a staggering +2 IMPs, that won. Blue Chip also did well and finished in second place. The top five scores were:

GIB +2, Blue Chip Bridge -30, Q+ Bridge -57, Bridge Baron -84, MicroBridge -88.

Side Events

MicroBridge and Q+ Bridge joined forces for a 12-board match against a team of American junior players. The juniors managed a 16 IMP win, mainly due to a slam hand.

GIB had the nerve to challenge one of the world's top pairs, Zia Mahmoud and Michael Rosenberg, to a match played live on the internet on OK Bridge. Zia and Rosenberg won, but not by a lot. The GIBs combined effectively on this hand, where Rosenberg (East) had to play 4♥:

<p>♠ A J 9 ♥ 7 3 ♦ K Q J 10 8 5 3 ♣ K</p>	<p>♠ K Q 4 ♥ A 10 ♦ 9 6 ♣ 8 7 6 5 4 2</p>	<p>♠ 8 5 3 ♥ K Q 9 8 5 2 ♦ A 4 ♣ Q J</p>	<table style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100%; height: 100%; text-align: center; margin: 0 auto;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table> <p>♠ 10 7 6 2 ♥ J 6 4 ♦ 7 2 ♣ A 10 9 3</p>		N		W		E		S	
	N											
W		E										
	S											

GIB1, South, led a small spade, won by the Queen. GIB2 switched to a diamond, won by dummy's jack. A heart to the King won, and Rosenberg then led a club, won by GIB1. A second diamond lead was won by the Ace and Rosenberg tried a spade to the jack, losing to the King. GIB2 cashed the ♥A before leading a small spade to dummy's Ace. Rosenberg found himself locked in dummy, forced to lead a diamond. This had the effect of promoting the ♥J for GIB2 and Rosenberg finished two down.

Finally, we come to the FAQ: (Frequently Asked Question) will the computers ever triumph against top quality human opposition? The idea has always been laughed at but I would not be too complacent. Before long the sheer calculating power of the computer will give it a definite edge over even the best human declarer in contracts that require technical expertise. However, I think that the complexities of the bidding language, the use of deception in play and defense and some abstract qualities, such as table presence, will keep the humans ahead, at least for a while.

The next computer world championships are scheduled for January 2000 in Bermuda. Blue Chip has already booked his ticket and is hard at work improving his game, and I have less than eighteen months to dream up an excuse to attend. I'm sure I'll think of something.

Blue Chip Bridge Ltd

e-mail: mike@bluechipbridge.co.uk
website: <http://www.bluechipbridge.co.uk>

Disastrous bid, devastating defence

North felt he had nowhere to go when his partner bid hearts over his diamond overcall of 1♠. The defenders, members of the Daily Bulletin staff, were playing in a match-point game.

Game North-South. Dealer West.

<p>♠ A J 10 6 5 ♥ Q 9 6 ♦ 10 ♣ A K J 4</p>	<p>♠ K Q 9 8 4 ♥ - ♦ A Q J 6 5 ♣ 9 6 2</p>	<table style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100%; height: 100%; text-align: center; margin: 0 auto;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table> <p>♠ 7 ♥ J 10 7 4 2 ♦ K 7 4 3 2 ♣ Q 10</p> <p>♠ 3 2 ♥ A K 8 5 3 ♦ 9 8 ♣ 8 7 5 3</p>		N		W		E		S		<table style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <th style="text-align: left;">West</th> <th style="text-align: left;">North</th> <th style="text-align: left;">East</th> <th style="text-align: left;">South</th> </tr> <tr> <td>1♠</td> <td>2♦</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>2♥</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pass</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>Pass!</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	West	North	East	South	1♠	2♦	Pass	2♥	Pass	Pass	Pass!	
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1♠	2♦	Pass	2♥																					
Pass	Pass	Pass!																						

Perhaps East was a bit wimpy in not doubling, but East-West scored well anyway. West led the ♣K, and after studying partner's 10 for a moment, switched to her singleton diamond. Declarer finessed, losing to the king, and East cashed his ♣Q. Next he fired back a diamond, ruffed, and West took her top clubs before cashing her ♠A and giving her partner a spade ruff. East returned a diamond, ruffed by declarer with the ♥8 and overruffed by West. West led another spade, East ruffing with the ♥10, and declarer was limited to just two tricks - the ace and king of trumps - for down six. Minus 600 was far better than any game East-West might have made, but game was far from a sure thing East-West.



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1 IMP - that was the margin twice in America's Spingold

The following is a shortened version of the report written for the ACBL Bridge Bulletin by Paul Linxwiler.

At this year's Spingold in Chicago, 1 IMP was enough to give Nick Nickell's team its fifth victory in the event in six years. And 1 IMP was enough to propel the team captained by Grant Baze into the final.

Few would argue that NICKELL has been the top North American squad of the Nineties. In addition to the five Spingold victories, NICKELL won three consecutive Reisingers (1993-95). Their formidable presence has been felt on the world stage, as well. They won the 1995 Bermuda Bowl in Beijing, and were runners-up in the 1997 Olympiad in Hammamet, Tunisia. NICKELL also won this year's International Team Trials, earning the right to represent the U.S. in the 2000 Bermuda Bowl in Bermuda.

The Nickell squad defeated the team captained by Grant Baze, who was the defending champion and the only team to have broken Nickell's string of wins in the Spingold that began in 1993. The final score was NICKELL 112, BAZE 111.

The winners

Jeff Meckstroth and **Eric Rodwell**. These two are on anybody's short list of the best pairs in the world. Between them, they have more than 50 North American championships and eight world titles. Meckstroth and Rodwell are among a group of perhaps a dozen players in the world who have won all three major world championships (Bermuda Bowl, Olympiad Teams and World Open Pairs). They are known for being extremely aggressive in the auction. Their Precision system is highly specialized and possesses a level of sophistication and complexity that has few rivals.

Bob Hamman and **Paul Soloway**. The World Bridge Federation has ranked Bob Hamman the top-rated player in the world since 1985. He has won more world championships than Meckstroth and Rodwell combined, and has nearly 40 North American wins. With this year's victory in the Spingold, Hamman now holds the record for number of wins in the event (11), eclipsing the records of longtime partner Bobby Wolff and the legendary Howard Schenken.

Paul Soloway is the most recent addition to the Nickell team, replacing Wolff after his split with Hamman earlier this year. Soloway is a three-time Bermuda Bowl winner and has 20 major wins to his name. Soloway was also a member of this year's winning Vanderbilt team.

Nick Nickell and **Richard Freeman**. It is a fact of life in top-level team bridge in the

U.S. that well-heeled patrons are often necessary to assemble the talent needed to win major events. When sponsors play as part of the team, they are often the squad's weak link.

Nickell, however, seems to be the exception to the rule. The success of his team is in large part due to the excellent, solid partnership that he and Freeman enjoy. Dick Freeman is a veteran player with 13 North American titles and one win in the Bermuda Bowl.

The runners-up were Baze, Michael Whitman, and Polish stars Marek Szymanowski, Marcin Lesniewski, Adam Zmudzinski and Cezary Balicki. This team (with Whitman replacing last year's team sponsor Tipton Golias) was the winner of the event last year. The Poles are world-class players with scores of national and European titles.

The semifinals

The two semifinal matches, NICKELL vs. ONSTOTT and BAZE vs. SCHWARTZ, could not have been more different in how their respective results were achieved.

ONSTOTT had had an amazing series of victories, and there was much speculation on how the underdog team would fare against NICKELL. ONSTOTT actually won the first quarter, 29-22, but then the roof caved in. NICKELL won the next set, 40-17, and the third quarter saw hapless ONSTOTT take an 82-7 shellacking that essentially ended matters. The final score: NICKELL 183, ONSTOTT 73.

The BAZE-SCHWARTZ contest began with the defending champions winning the first set, 42-20, and the second set, 41-22. In the third set, however, BAZE was clobbered, 86-10, to trail SCHWARTZ by 35 IMPs going into the last set - at least, that's the score that was reported on vugraph. Before delving into the scoring issue, however, take a look at some of the fireworks that occurred in the final quarter, beginning with one of the most unusual results in recent Spingold history:

Dealer South. Game all.

♠ 7	♠ AKQ643
♥ KJ84	♥ 63
♦ AQ1075	♦ 4
♣ 643	♣ AQ105
♠ 109852	♠ J
♥ AQ975	♥ 102
♦ -	♦ KJ98632
♣ 982	♣ KJ7

N	E
W	S

West	North	East	South
Balicki	Levin	Zmudzinski	S.Weinstein
			3♦
Pass	3♠	Pass	4♠
All Pass			

Psyching after partner preempts in a suit that you have a big fit for is an ancient ploy. The danger, of course, is that partner may believe you and raise, which is exactly what Steve Weinstein did on this deal.

Levin passed despite holding a singleton trump in a 10-trick contract. He could only hope that he had talked his opponents out of a vulnerable spade slam.

East, Zmudzinski, knew exactly what was going on but decided that partner would need specific cards for 6♠ to make, so he decided to pass (a double would only allow North to escape to 5♦) and beat his vulnerable opponents to a pulp. Levin finished down eight, minus 800.

Zmudzinski's view of the hand was vindicated, since in the open room Mark Lair and Ron Smith got to 6♠, but were doubled and went down one, minus 200. This was a 14-IMP swing for BAZE.

BAZE went on to win the final set, 50-12. Since they were down by 39 going into the last set, however, it appeared that they had lost the match by 1 IMP, 143-142. Indeed, much of the vugraph audience left after the last board, believing SCHWARTZ had won.

When the scores were carefully checked, however, scoring errors of 1 IMP each on two boards from the second quarter were discovered, and both corrections were against SCHWARTZ. The official final score, therefore, was BAZE 142, SCHWARTZ 141. The defending champions advanced to meet NICKELL in the final.

Smoking in Lille



We would like to remind you that non-smokers should always prevail. Smokers are kindly asked to ask prior permission to smoke from his or her screenmate. Non-smoking signs will be provided for posting at the tables.

The final

After the excitement of the semifinal, it seemed reasonable to expect the 64-board final to be anticlimactic. Not a chance. BAZE vs. NICKELL proved to be one of the closest contests ever.

NICKELL opened a 32-18 first-quarter lead. The largest swing of the set came on this deal:

Dealer North. Game all.

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

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

West	North	East	South
Zmudzinski	Freeman	Balicki	Nickell
	Pass	1♦	1♠
Dbf	Redbl	2♥	Pass
4♥	All Pass		

The Poles got to 4♥ on an auction where Freeman made a lead-directing redouble. Nickell led his fourth-best spade, won by dummy's ace. Balicki misguessed the heart position by leading a trump to the ace and another heart to the jack, losing to North's queen.

Freeman exited with the ♣10, which Balicki won with the ace. Declarer now tried a low diamond to the queen, won by North, who continued with his last club.

Balicki won the king and exited with a club to Nickell's queen. The defense collected two more diamonds, so Balicki finished down two for minus 200.

In the other room:

West	North	East	South
Meckstroth	Baze	Rodwell	Whitman
	Pass	1♦	2♠
Dbf	4♠	Dbf	All Pass

4♠ went down two after the defense scored one spade, two hearts and two clubs. Minus 500 for North-South, and a 12-IMP swing for NICKELL. BAZE won the second quarter, 21-13, but NICKELL led at the half 45-39. The third quarter ended in a 26-26 tie, with both teams earning two game swings each. With 16 boards to go, NICKELL led by 6 IMPs.

Over the first 10 of the last 16 boards, the lead swung back and forth. NICKELL was

down by 6 IMPs, when this deal came along:

Dealer South. Vulnerable none.

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

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

West	North	East	South
Hamman	Lesniewski	Soloway	Szymanowski
			1♠
Pass	2♦	Pass	2♠
Pass	3♥	Pass	5♦
All Pass			

Lesniewski declared a normal-looking 5♦ contract, against which Soloway led a low club. Hamman won the ace and returned a low heart. The defense eventually collected a spade trick after declarer successfully finessed the ♥Q. Plus 600 for BAZE.

In the open room, things were different:

West	North	East	South
Zmudzinski	Rodwell	Balicki	Meckstroth
			1♠
Pass	2♦	Pass	3♦
Pass	3♥	Pass	3♠
Pass	4♣	Pass	4♥
Pass	5♦	Pass	6♦
All Pass			

Balicki made the normal-looking lead of the ♠K-with disastrous consequences. Rodwell won the ace, drew trumps in two rounds and ran the ♥10 when West ducked. The club loser went away on a high heart and Rodwell lost only a spade trick to score up the slam. Plus 1370 for NICKELL and a 13-IMP pickup. NICKELL now led by 7 IMPs.

On the next board, however, BAZE found a save against a cold game and earned 8 IMPs. BAZE led by 1. NICKELL picked up 3 under-trick IMPs two boards later and went back ahead by 2.

On the next-to-last board, another opening-lead decision let Soloway make a non-vulnerable game that failed in the other room. 10 IMPs to NICKELL, who now led by 12.

On the last board, Szymanowski and Lesniewski bid and made a non-vulnerable spade game: plus 420. In the replay, Jeff Meckstroth failed by two tricks, for minus 100.

This was an 11-IMP swing for BAZE, but it left his team one IMP short.

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* *The Banker*, July 1998

