

The House of Horrors

By Pietro Campanile

It is a dark, moonless night. You are hurriedly walking along in a deserted parking lot while the heavy rain beats down on the street like the rhythm of a crazy tip-tap dancer. You hear a noise behind you...you turn and you see someone running towards you. Where are the car keys? Too late! He quickly gets by you and shouts: "I don't believe what you did ! I just don't believe it!" He leaves you there, alone with your nightmare crowding your mind again and again : the cards start a macabre dance in front of your eyes, it is that hand , yes the one you knew you should have made and yet..pain... misery...one off! Your partner getting up to move for the next round, the look of disappointment and incredulity in his face... a look which had turned into bitter resentment by the time he had spoken to you just now: a \$300 first prize gone because of your inept play.

If only I hadn't..if I had...how much would you give to go back: to stamp those cards firmly on the table, to faultlessly execute the dazzling play you thought about only after you despondently wrote the -100 on the scoresheet, to bask in the light of the admiring kibitzers when you explain to them in a condescending way your brilliant line of play... how much indeed?

"It all comes down to ability"- you say to yourself- "and concentration, of course, yes.. concentration. I bet Hamman would have made the hand in a minute flat!

Hmmm..these things only happen to people like me, Gold Master indeed... more likely Cardboard Master after the way I butchered that hand!"

Yet such mishaps do not occur only to the average club player: many , many champions have had their nightmare come true in hands which your average Joe would have bid and made without a problem. Of course these hands never make the newspaper columns... oh no! There we only see the inspired plays, the razor-sharp defenses, the amazing leads.



I think it is time to bring some of these guys back down to earth with the rest of us, don't you?

We move to the delightful surroundings of the Italian Lake District in Como where the 1958 final of the Bermuda Bowl is taking place between Italy and the USA. It is an epic struggle between two great teams but also between two very different systemic worlds: the traditional American 5 card major, supported by a variety of gadgets but essentially still 99% natural, and the new strong club systems pioneered by the likes of Forquet and Belladonna.

Let us sit with Crawford and Becker (two of the all-time stars of American bridge) playing versus Pietro Forquet and his partner, Guglielmo Siniscalco.

Here are Crawford's cards:

♠ K6
♥ Q42
♦ K76432
♣ J7

NV vs VUL

You hear Forquet open 1♣ (strong =17+HCP) to your left and Siniscalco reply with 1♠ (showing 3 controls: an Ace and a King or 3 Kings).

Now you did not come here to let these pesky Italian systems walk all over you so how about making it more difficult for them to find the right contract?

Anyone for a weak jump 3♦ bid? Well Crawford certainly was not known for his shyness at the bridge table and he duly bid 3♦ which was quickly doubled and passed out. Let us see what happens next, having a look at the whole hand:

♠ 9532
♥ 7653
♦ 5
♣ Q952

♠ AJ8
♥ A108
♦ AQ109
♣ K106

♠ Q1074
♥ KJ9
♦ J8
♣ A843

♠ K6
♥ Q42
♦ K76432
♣ J7

West	North	East	South
Forquet	Becker	Siniscalco	Crawford
1♣(1)	Pass	1♠(2)	3♦
Dbl(3)	Pass	Pass	Pass
(1) Strong, artificial, 17+ HCP (2) 3 controls (3) Are you that keen to go back to New York ?			

Forquet leads a small club to the ace and Siniscalco switches to a spade. After cashing two top spades and the ♣K, Forquet plays a third round of spades. Crawford ruffs and plays a small diamond, Siniscalco winning the jack to play the ♠10, which holds the trick as both Crawford and Forquet discard. Siniscalco returns a trump so Crawford has to lose three more trumps and two top hearts.

Let's add it up: declarer makes a spade ruff and the ♦K... that's it, just two tricks. 3♦ doubled, down seven!! 1300 points to Italy (with the old penalty schedule in place).

The best part was yet to come: Crawford had to go and explain to his team mates where that strange -1300 score came from in a hand where at the other table they must have put away the 3NT+1 result as another flat board !

Does this nice little tale help making you forget the 800s you gave away with those "creative" jump overcalls on Qxxxxx?



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Let us go on looking at some more mishaps suffered by the high and mighty of bridge, champions whose names we associate with exotic squeezes and ingenious bidding decisions and yet, as we will see, also have their nightmarish misunderstandings and end up paying huge penalties just like... well...just like us really.

Let us fly together to sunny Perth, on the western coast of Australia.

No, we are not here to do some scuba-diving but to kibitz the deal which will be the turning point of the 1989 Ladies World Cup Semifinal between Germany and Holland.

There are 15 boards to go and Germany is leading by 25 IMPs and then comes board 114:

Dealer East, North-South Vulnerable

♠J643		
♥AK93		
♦Q542		
♣J		
♠AQ107		♠K9852
♥J		♥6
♦KJ		♦983
♣KQ9754		♣A862
♠-		
♥Q1087542		
♦A1076		
♣103		

In the closed room the bidding proceeds rather unimaginatively: after two initial passes the German pair reaches almost unopposed the normal contract of 4♣, making eleven tricks after West guessed

the diamonds.

It is true that N/S can make 5♥, or save in 6♥, but the adverse vulnerability clearly put the brakes on their willingness to compete.

Will the same happen in the open room? Noooo, I hear you say, otherwise why on earth would we be reading about it?

Ok, you got me there. Maybe I gave too much away.

Still let us go back and see what happens when the top German pair of Sabine Zenkel and Daniela von Arnim have to tackle this very distributional deal.

But first a little digression, Sabine and Daniela are well known in the bridge world for having one of the most complete and thorough system files, with a very aggressive bidding style full of hostile two-way pre-emptive bids (meaning that they either promise the suit bid or another specified one).

Of course we all agree that conventions are very sexy things and every bridge player above club master will happily fill his card with a lot of these beauties just because.... he can!

However, we must truthfully admit that from time to time we have all been guilty of forgetting that we agreed to the odd late addition to the convention card and let partner unhappily stew in a 3♣ in a 3-2 fit.

Do you really think that such disasters are the sole domain of us non-experts?

Well.....think again! In the open room Daniela von Arnim in South decides proudly to show off her special gadget and opens 3♥ with her hand, a bid promising either long hearts or...long clubs!

Van der Pas cannot do much else apart from doubling.

Over to Sabine. From her point of view it is all cut and dry: her partner has long clubs and hopefully good ones given the vulnerability. She has enough defensive values in the other suits to make any 4 level contract by the opponents a tough proposition, therefore, to take away a possible 3♠ and make life difficult for the Dutch, she decides to "anticipate" her partner's bid with an a-systemic 4♣.

After all, what could possibly go wrong with that?

The other Dutch girl, Elly Schippers, is under pressure, she can bid 4♠ but that may well overstate her rather slim values, so she opts for the wait and see approach and follows Sabine's 4♣ with a double.

Back to Daniela. Well we can all guess her thought process here: partner bids 4♣ over the double of 3♥, while the normal action would be pass. This must be showing a very good club suit and that, opposite her spade void, is looking very yummy (what is 4♣X making vulnerable?). The fateful green card is slowly placed on the bidding tray, followed by two more to close the auction at the rather tricky spot of 4♣X, to the surprise and delight of Marjike van der Pas whose holding in the opponents trump suit is only KQ9xxx!

Let us have a recap of the bidding :

West	North	East	South
van der Pas	Zenkel	Schippers	von Arnim
		Pass	3♥
Dbl	4♣	Dbl	Pass
Pass	Pass		

Now we must say this for declarer, she did not jump up and scream at the sight of dummy and she managed to collect four tricks after the friendly spade lead thanks to two spade ruffs and the two red aces (a club lead would have curtailed the ruffs leaving her with a -2300 score).

Her achievement of limiting the loss at -1700 was not exactly cheered on by her team-mates who ended up losing 15 IMPs on the hand.

Germany did not get through to the final that year.

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Our quest into the dark recesses of the bridge archives to uncover the forgotten disasters incurred by top class experts goes on.

In the first article of this series we showed how the Italian Blue Team came to enjoy a nice penalty from a dubious overcall of their strong club action; not to be accused of national bias it seems only fair to show the "Maestros" on the giving end as well. Let us move to Stockholm, the venue for the 1956 European Championships.

Italy and France are in hot contention for first place and, in board 37 of their direct confrontation; Forquet-Siniscalco and Jais-Trezel have to battle over the following explosive layout:

♠ KQ107643			
♥ -			
♦ K87653			
♣ -			
♠ -		♠ J852	
♥ KQJ732		♥ A1096	
♦ QJ10		♦ 94	
♣ 8654		♣ 972	
	♠ A9		
	♥ 854		
	♦ A2		
	♣ AKQJ103		

E-W vul; Dlr West

In the open room the French got swiftly to 6♣ after Avarelli (Belladonna's partner) in West passed and North opened 4♣.

In the closed room the bidding was rather more exciting:

West	North	East	South
Jais	Forquet	Trezel	Siniscalco
1♥	4♣	Pass	4NT
Pass	6♦	Pass	6♣
Pass	7♠	Pass	?

Clearly Trezel did not believe that there could be a hand where partner opens and the opponents can make a grand slam when he holds Jxxx in trumps and an outside Ace!



Siniscalco

You can see Siniscalco's problem: the spades could not be splitting since nobody would venture a double at this level without being absolutely sure that declarer cannot take advantage of the now revealed trump position to make his contract; yet he had this incredible club suit which could be an excellent source of tricks also in NT. Hmmm... NT you might ask? Are we looking at the same deal? Well if Forquet himself raised 6♣ to 7♣, a bid which is such an obvious breach of discipline, he clearly is not doing so with an aceless hand!

You can guess what happened next Our unfortunate Italian champion removed the now cold 7♣ doubled to the rather less attractive spot of 7NT, which was doubled with a relish by the very same Trezel. The French proceeded to cash the first 6 tricks for a resounding +1100 which, added up with the 1430 at the other table, provided a nice little swing to the transalpine team. Here, however, the mettle of the great player showed through and through: Forquet did not say a single word to his partner about the extraordinary mishap and proceeded to play the remaining 11 boards of the session as if nothing at all had happened.

The final result of the match was 42-42 IMPs and the draw was enough to keep Italy in first place. This European Championship turned up to be the first of what would be a very long series of trophies for the Italian team, which will soon achieve its legendary status. The happy outcome after such a huge disaster during a crucial match confirmed that confidence in one's partner and supportive attitude can often be a critical factor in transforming a good team into a winning one. As Perroux, the Italian captain, put it when asked at the start of its tenure which players he would be looking to field in his team: "I am not looking for great players for my team, but for players to make my team great."

Bridge moral of the story :

"It is always better the evil you know than the one you don't!"



Forquet

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There is nothing more satisfying for a bridge player than outsmarting one's opponents. It is a fact that when given the chance we will all delight in selecting a "deceptive" play instead of the "standard" one. I still remember fondly the time I led the $\heartsuit 9$ from K92 against a hearts slam, finding dummy with AQxx in the suit: declarer, quite reasonably, declined to take the finesse and opted to play for a side suit splitting 3-3 instead. $6\heartsuit-1$: great feeling, awed looks from kibitzers, huge points swing but also a devastating follow up of crazy leads which only succeeded in giving away impossible contracts by gifting declarers with unexpected tricks or deceiving partner as to my actual holding in the suit.

That is when I decided to leave the "brilliant" leads to those players with better table presence to guide them and who are not too worried by the odd disaster or two when they end up leading astray their own partners. No big deal you might say, you cannot make an omelette without breaking eggs. Unfortunately sometimes the omelette is not at all tasty while the eggs stay broken.

Let us go back twenty years to the golden era of the French team, which at the time was enriched by the immense skill of players like Chemla, Mari, Perron, Szvarc, Lebel, Mouiel, Soulet, Levy and others. World champions, Olympic champions, European champions, their string of victories was even more surprising because of the relatively simple natural systems they adopted: the classic French version of Five-Cards Majors and 16-18 NT with emphasis on sound bidding and meticulous count signals in defense was a refreshing change from the artificial

mumbo-jumbo which had been so popular on the international bridge scene.

One of the best French pairs of the time was Lebel-Soulet, so it was no surprise when they qualified to represent their country at the 1985 European Championships in Salsomaggiore, Italy. The French were quite naturally the favorites but they had to contend with a strong Austrian challenge and getting to the last rounds it seemed like a favorable calendar would see them through as long as they would take advantage of it by beating by large enough margins the teams they were going to meet. So it was that our two top French players, eager for blood, got to board 25 of their supposedly easy match against Switzerland with a card that did not show a lot of plus positions for their side.

Board 25 – E/W VUL – South Dealer

		\spadesuit KQ	
		\heartsuit KJ8753	
		\diamondsuit 963	
		\clubsuit 64	
\spadesuit AJ1087652	N	\spadesuit 943	
\heartsuit -	W	\heartsuit 10	
\diamondsuit 105	E	\diamondsuit KJ72	
\clubsuit Q102	S	\clubsuit K9873	
		\spadesuit -	
		\heartsuit AQ9642	
		\diamondsuit AQ84	
		\clubsuit AJ5	

That is how the bidding unfolded:

West	North	East	South
Soulet	Doche	Lebel	Bernasconi
			1\heartsuit
3\spadesuit	4\heartsuit	4\spadesuit	5\diamondsuit
Pass	6\heartsuit	Pass	7\heartsuit
Pass	Pass	Pass	

The enterprising Swiss champion Bernasconi, not suspecting dummy's wasted values in spades bid the grand, not helped by the ill-advised $6\heartsuit$ bid of his partner. $7\heartsuit$ has very little play: declarer cannot avoid losing two tricks in the minors and infact in the other room Chemla and Perron got to the normal $6\heartsuit$ but went one off after the $\clubsuit 2$ lead to the $\clubsuit K$ and the $\clubsuit A$.

Sometimes knowledge can be a dangerous thing and it is especially true here where Soulet, who did not have an easy lead anyway, could reconstruct many scenarios where the $\spadesuit A$ or the $\clubsuit 2$ lead would be disastrous. Therefore he put on his fox hat and decided to lead a deceptive $\clubsuit 10$. Lebel naturally assumed that his partner had led from shortage and, playing declarer for AQJx, followed with a low club. Bernasconi now had 12 tricks with the diamond finesse on but unfortunately for him he was in $7\heartsuit$ so he had to find a way not to lose any diamonds at all. He could see that there had to have been some sort of misunderstanding at trick one and decided to play it all on a pseudo squeeze hoping that Lebel held the diamond honors as well as the $\clubsuit K$. Therefore he drew the outstanding trump, ruffed dummy's spades and ran all the trumps. Lebel was now in a terrible bind: he knew "for sure" that declarer had started with

\spadesuit -
 \heartsuit AQ9642
 \diamondsuit A??
 \clubsuit AQJ5

and therefore he felt that his only choice was to hope that Soulet had the $\diamondsuit Q$ and to pitch his diamonds keeping the $\clubsuit K$ guarded. This was very good news for Bernasconi who quickly cashed his AQx of diamonds to make the grand slam.

It is difficult to imagine Lebel's expression when he found out that his partner had the $\clubsuit Q$ all along but what we do know is that:

- 1) France lost the match 5-25
- 2) France failed to get to a qualifying spot for the World Championship
- 3) Lebel and Soulet stopped playing together after the event.

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Preemptive raises, feather-light openings, out of shape take out doubles: this is what we think bridge on the fast lane is all about and that is what we often dread when we dare to venture amongst the bridge playing elite. The truth is that most expert players rely on what I call "Tchou-Tchou" bridge, from the sound that those dear old steam locomotives used to make: they will play as steady as they can, after all they are not the ones to need swings to get the upper hand. They can afford to rely on their superior technique to extricate more tricks than the opponents in most contracts and they will bid some very ambitious games, trusting their declarer skills and our faulty defense to let the majority of them through. Naturally they will be all too ready to apply the axe when we generously volunteer our heads for the chopping block. So it is actually quite rare to see top class experts take their lives in their hands and open a collection of rubbish or psyche a NT overcall. Of course in the heat of the competitive battle, even they can sometimes forget how much they can safely push their opponents on the basis of distribution values alone.

This month we are flying to exotic Beijing where the 1995 World Bridge Championships (aka Bermuda Bowl) are being played. The final is an all-American affair, but that does not mean as you would imagine that there are two USA teams contending the world crown. No, surprisingly enough the Canadians (Kokish-Silver; Mittelman-Gitelman and Baran-Molson) have managed to beat a host of challengers to gain the right to battle it for the title with the star studded USA team of Hamman-Wolff; Meckstroth-



Rodwell and Nickell-Freeman. After the first 64 boards the match is in balance with the Canadians leading by one imp. Let us look at board 67, Dlr South, E/W Vul.

♠ 972	♠ KQ5	♠ 1084
♥ AK1094	♥ Q876	♥ -
♦ 63	♦ K1052	♦ AQJ9
♣ 1084	♣ J2	♣ KQ9765
	♠ AJ63	
	♥ J532	
	♦ 874	
	♣ A3	

West	North	East	South
Baran	Hamman	Molson	Wolff
			Pass
Pass	1♥	2♣	3♥
Pass	Pass	Pass	

In the closed room Hamman opened 1♥ in third position and USA bought the contract in 3♥ after Molson overcalled 2♣. Baran in West could not double Wolff's 3♥ bid as that would not have been penalty and Molson's values were a tad short of a reopening double. 3♥-2=100 for Canada.

In the open room the bidding was quite different.

West	North	East	South
Meckstroth	Gitelman	Rodwell	Mittelman
			Pass
Pass	Pass	2♣*	Dbl
2♥	Dbl	3♣	Pass
Pass	3♦	Dbl	Pass
Pass	Pass		

* Precision

Nothing like systemic variations to get

swings going. Gitelman decided not to open in third seat his moth-eaten 11 count and that allowed Rodwell to open a "natural" 2♣ showing a club one-suiter and up to 15 points. That gave Mittelman a problem: he knew that because of the different systems the opening at the other table would likely be 1♣ and not 2♣; over 1♣ the person sitting South there would probably chance, as a passed hand, a take-out double. What should he do now? As we have often seen it is a very troublesome feeling when a player thinks he has been shut out by the opponents system and this is the time when even the best can be led astray by their own reasoning and believe that a very unsound action is their only reasonable option. Mittelman ended up convincing himself to go for a very unsound take-out double at the two level with a balanced 10 count facing a passed partner. When Meckstroth bid 2♥, Gitelman doubled to show hearts and Rodwell quite naturally removed that to 3♣. The spotlight now turned to Gitelman in the pass-out position: he had to decide whether his values were enough to compete further. Given his partner's double and with 11 points, chunky spades and decent diamonds, it did not take him long to put the fateful 3♦ card on the table. Rodwell doubled and Mittelman was left with the miserable choice of having to sit the double or to remove it to 3♥ knowing that the suit split 5-0. He passed. Rodwell led the ♠K against 3♦ doubled, which Gitelman ducked. He took the second club with the ♣A and run the ♦7 to Rodwell's ♦9. The ♠10 came back won by the ♠J in dummy. Declarer continued with a heart, won by Meckstroth (Rodwell pitching a spade) and played back his last trump. Rodwell won his ♦J, cashed the ♦A and started on his clubs. Gitelman had only one trump trick and a spade left to take for 3♦!-5=1100 and 14 IMPs on the hand to the USA, which pulled clear in this set of 16 boards leading by 172-122, an advantage they managed to hang on to until the end winning the final by 339-296. The dramatic outcome of Mittelman's action should be a powerful deterrent to stop us from thinking that a bad hand can suddenly get better only because the opponents pre-empt us or make an unusual system bid.

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Sometimes it is difficult to even imagine the tremendous pressure that players can be under when they are involved in the last decisive boards of an immensely prestigious event like a World or a European championship. Sitting at home and poring over the hands or watching them being played live in the VuGraph theatre can easily make us think that we could hold our own against these guys without breaking too much of a sweat: after all seeing the 52 cards neatly displayed can somewhat improve anyone's declarer skill, can't it?



Giorgio Belladonna

Let us look together at one of the most incredible boards ever to decide a world championship: we are in Stockholm in 1983 and the final of the Bermuda Bowl is drawing to its end. It has been an amazing struggle between an Italian team trying to recapture its former glory (Belladonna-Garozzo, De Falco-Franco, Lauria-Mosca) and its greatest antagonist: the USA (Hamman-Wolff, Sontag-Weichsel, Becker-Rubin). There are only two boards left to play out of 176 and the lead has been changing constantly; the players on both sides show on their faces the incredible tension and the stress they are under while the VuGraph theatre is in a frenzy of excitement.

The closed room has already finished and the Italian supporters are confident of their impending victory: Italy leads by 8 IMPs and the last two boards are easy games where nothing should go wrong.

Board 175 E/W Vul, East dealer

	♠ AKJ962	
	♥ K73	
	♦ KQ3	
	♣ 8	
♠ 74		♠ -
♥ 5		♥ Q10982
♦ AJ108		♦ 97642
♣ QJ7643		♣ A95
	♠ Q10853	
	♥ AJ54	
	♦ 5	
	♣ K102	

(Board rotated for convenience)

The Americans have played here 4♣ making 5.

The two old Italian masters bid the hand as follows:

West	North	East	South
Weichsel	Belladonna	Sontag	Garozzo
		Pass	1♠
Pass	2NT	Pass	3♣
Pass	4NT	Pass	5♦
Pass	6♣!!!	All Pass	

The stunned Italian fans could simply not comprehend what had just happened, while the American themselves were still waiting for the final bid to be corrected to the inevitable 5♠ after the Vu-Graph operator realized his mistake.

But it was no mistake: Belladonna did indeed bid 6♣ after a sequence that looks to the average player like a simple strong spade raise followed by Blackwood. How could he get it wrong? A bridge legend like him miscounting aces?

Well it was not quite as simple as that. After Garozzo decided to open 1♠ with his shapely 10 count, Belladonna took the opportunity to bid 2NT, showing a spade raise and an unspecified singleton, either a game or a slam try. The normal continuation would be for Garozzo to bid 3♣ and afterwards a 3 level bid would show the suit of the singleton and be a try for game, a 4 level bid would invite slam. But Garozzo did not relay and attempted to sign off in 3♣, probably wishing he had never opened. Belladonna was now faced with the unthinkable: his partner, arguably the most eminent bridge theoretician around, had decided not to use the system bid. What could this 3♣ mean? After a lot of head scratching and no doubt weary and tired from the tense contest, Belladonna



took the 3♣ to be a trump-ask, imaginatively wheeled out by his creative partner. Unfortunately, he also worked out that the correct reply to show his spades values would be 4NT. Easy to guess what happened next: Garozzo replied as if 4NT was RKCB in spades and Belladonna took the 5♦ bid to show a cue-bid in diamonds, denying the ♣A: the "logical" conclusion was for him to bid 6♣. After Weichsel led the ♣Q to his partner ♣A, Garozzo quickly claimed one off for an 11 IMPs gain to the USA which won the trophy defeating Italy 413-408.

Such an incredible mental block, with the great champion literally thinking himself into such an unlikely and complex spot should serve as a great lesson for all of us.

There comes a point towards the end of a long match or a tough pairs session when we feel our lucidity slipping by and yet instead of acknowledging this by trying to take the simple way out of most bidding and play problems we often torture ourselves by dreaming impossible scenarios when the unlikely becomes a certainty and the unsound a necessity. This is the time when one should remember that KISS (Keep It Simple Stupid!) is not just the acronym for a no-frills system but the golden key to unlock the door of success.

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The recent thrilling final of the Bermuda Bowl and its astonishing conclusion, viewed online by more than 5000 spectators on bridgebase.com, has served as a powerful reminder that bridge can be a great spectator sport. The live screening of important events has greatly benefited from the huge technological advances of the last decade and nowadays almost all international events are able to provide a highly refined Vu-Graph service, which is great fun for your average bridge addict but it can turn into an exquisite torture for the players looking at their team-mates efforts live on screen.

Let us move to Tenerife, one of the Canary Islands and the venue for the 2001 European championships. The event itself has been dominated by Italy and before the last round of the tournament the top four positions are basically locked. What is yet to be decided is the outcome of the race for the all important fifth place, the last qualifying spot for the Bermuda Bowl. France, Israel and Denmark are involved in a very close finish with the French slightly ahead but also due to play the toughest opponents, the highly talented but temperamental Bulgarians. It is no surprise, therefore, that this is the match that the organizers decide to screen for the last session of the VuGraph and by the time we get to the last board the theatre is completely full and the tension is very high. The French have not been doing so well but because of the other results they only need a decent score in the last board to get their ticket for the 2001 World championship.

Here is board 20, the last of the event:

Board 20 All vul, dealer West

♠ KJ876	♠ 543	♠ A9
♥ J	♥ K109753	♥ AQ86
♦ 52	♦ 64	♦ KQ3
♣ KQJ96	♣ 102	♣ A543
	♠ Q102	
	♥ 42	
	♦ AJ10987	
	♣ 87	

In most of the other matches East-West have comfortably managed to get to the easy 6♣ and the commentators predict the same result here; in their estimates that will be enough to keep France in fifth place.

West	North	East	South
Palau	Mihov	Allegrini	Nanev
1♠	Pass	2♣	Pass
4♣	Pass	4♦	Dbl
Pass	Pass	4♥	Pass
5♣	Pass	?	

Palau and Allegrini look weary and incredibly tense, the pressure on them is enormous: the qualification for the World Championships was the very least that the ever ambitious French Federation would expect of its players.

The bidding proceeds normally until Palau opts for an optimistic 4♣ reply to his partner 2♣ bid: he does have great support but with an aceless hand he would have probably described his hand better bidding 3♣. The auction goes on but when his partner continues to express a strong wish for slam with 4♥, Palau

starts to have cold feet and the feeling that his first reply might have exaggerated his values leads him to another surprising action: he denies any further interest and bids 5♣ instead of showing his spade control.

Allegrini now is on the spot: he is looking at a powerhouse and yet his partner is braking like mad on the way to slam. The tension and the fatigue obviously have a big factor in the decision making process of the French player: he is afraid to lose a diamond and a spade and puts the fated green card on the tray causing dismay in the French supporters in the audience and especially to a certain Monsieur Michel Abecassis, who had been witnessing the last rounds of bidding unfolding slowly like the last terrifying scenes of a horror movie with himself and his team as the unwilling protagonists. The French champion could not understand how Allegrini would bring himself to believe that Palau might have bid 4♣ with a hand like Qxxxx-K-Jx-KQJxx, the only one where 6♣ has no play. Even QJxxx in spades would make the slam no worse than 50%. Unfortunately for him, there is not an awful he can do from his seat in the VuGraph theatre.

Anyway, all is well what ends well... since the team that benefited from the last gasp horror sequence of the French was Israel, who leaped over to fifth place thanks to a 21-9 win over Rumania and qualified for the 2001 World championships.

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יְגַרְהוּ נַפְשׁוֹ, יְגַרְהוּ מְדוֹן - "He that is of a greedy spirit stirs up strife" (Proverbs 28/25)

There are not that many bridge articles whose first line features a quotation from the Bible and yet those ancient words in their wisdom bear witness to the disastrous consequences that some greed-driven doubles have had in top level bridge.

Let us go back in time to Los Angeles in 1957, where all the best American players have gathered for the prestigious Winter Nationals. In the final round of the Men's Teams Samuel Stayman, one of the legendary names in bridge, becomes the first involuntary contributor to our "greedy" double parade.

Dlr W; All Vul

♠ -	♠ 92
♥ A987	♥ KQJ106
♦ KQ1098	♦ A
♣ AQJ7	♣ K8652
♠ AQJ1087543	♠ K6
♥ -	♥ 5432
♦ J64	♦ 7532
♣ 4	♣ 1093

West	North	East	South
Mathe	Stayman	Taylor	Seamon
4♠	Dbf	5♦	Pass
Pass!!	Dbf !!!	5♠	Pass
Pass	Dbf	Rdbl	Pass
Pass	Pass		

After Lew Mathe opened 4♠ and Stayman doubled, Taylor's choice of bid was somewhat surprising. Thinking that redouble would simply push North-South to find their big diamond fit, where they might or might not go the three down necessary to compensate them for the 650 or 680 on their line, and that with all his cards working he had some chances

of making 6♠ if partner had a first round control in hearts or clubs, Taylor opted for an imaginative 5♦ cue-bid. Mathe passed, strangely believing that his partner was trying to "save" him. Spotlight on Sam Stayman: somehow the great American champion decided that, given his spade void and East "alleged" scrambling action, South was sitting pretty with a wagonload of spades and this was the chance to collect a huge penalty in 5♦ or 5♠: so he doubled! One can easily guess how quickly the ashen-faced Taylor must have jumped at the chance to bid 5♠! Stayman backed up his assessment of the situation with a second, coherent but nonetheless disastrous, double and was promptly redoubled by a now exuberant East.

To add insult to injury, Stayman selected to lead the ♥A, which Mathe gleefully ruffed. Declarer then went to dummy with the ♦A, pitched a club and a diamond on the ♥K, ♥Q and continued with the ♠2, finessing the ♠K. When that succeeded, he ruffed in dummy the last diamond, ruffed a heart, cashed the ♠A and claimed thirteen tricks for a resounding score of +2000. Thanks to Stayman's double Mathe's team gained a total of 1320 points after 5♠ was bid at the other table, making 12 tricks after the ♦K lead (with declarer making the nice play of running the ♥K pitching a club), instead of conceding 600 or 700 for the vulnerable undertricks in 5♦ for an overall loss of at least 1280 points. Talking about greed being punished!

The event was (surprisingly!) won by Mathe and his Californian team (Mathe, Taylor, Oakie, Schleifer) while Stayman's team finished a distant fifth.

Our second "greedy" double brings us to the 1997 European Championships in Montecatini and the match between Sweden and Germany.

Dlr: North ; Vul: None

♠ -	♠ Q98
♥ AKQ105	♥ J73
♦ A1097	♦ K852
♣ KQ76	♣ J108
♠ AK10632	♠ J754
♥ 62	♥ 984
♦ QJ643	♦ -
♣ -	♣ A95432

West	North	East	South
Eriksson	Rath	Fredin	Tomski
	1♥	Pass	1♠
2♠	4♣	Pass	Pass
Dbf !!	4NT	Pass	5♣
Pass	6♣	Pass	7♣
Pass	Pass	Pass	

(1) May be four cards

West's 2♠ bid was natural and Rath decided to show his shape and his strength with a descriptive but somewhat unusual 4♣ bid. The bidding tray passed across to Tomski, who glanced in puzzlement at his partner's reply and, abiding by the old bridge proverb "When in doubt, pass", put a disastrous green card on the tray. Never fear, the Swedish cavalry was soon to come to the rescue: Eriksson doubled for penalty!! Unfortunately the tournament photographer was nowhere near when the bidding tray was moved across to record the facial expressions of both North and East when they realized what had taken place at the other side of the table. However, a greatly relieved Rath decided to take no more chances and bid 4NT as take-out and raised partner's 5♣ to 6♣. To make matters even worse for the hapless Swedes, Tomski finally woke up to realize that partner's sequence had to show a spade void and bid the grand slam. After they missed the chance to defend 4♣, it is not surprising to report that the Swedes were somewhat reluctant to take the cheap save in 7♠! The contract made easily but this does not conclude the story of what is probably the most disastrous deal in the history of Swedish bridge.

At the other table the top Swedish pair of Fallenius-Nilsland let the Germans play in 4♠ doubled: North led his two top hearts and switched to a club, but when declarer took out trumps he pitched a very expensive diamond, effectively throwing away the setting trick. Holowsky could now claim his game and +590, which added up with the +1440 at the other table, meant that Germany had managed to collect 2030 for a fat 19 IMPs in this one deal!

The bottom line: next time you hold an enormous, and unlikely, trump stack and you are about to double, remember Proverbs 28 and think if a sure gain is not better than risking to push the opponents into finding a superior contract.

The House of Horrors

By Pietro Campanile



Last month we had a look at how greed can often be the undoing of top class players who, while seeking to gather some substantial penalties by doubling unlikely contracts, may well end up pinpointing the way to a superior spot. However, ill advised doubles can often reap unexpected dividends by awakening in the opponents the dreaded ghost of the "Knight rushing to the rescue" and getting them to run from a cold doubled contract to a hopeless one.

Our first example comes from the Egypt-USA match in the qualifying rounds of the 1991 World Championships in Yokohama.

Dir East, All Vul

♠ A43			
♥ 109873			
♦ 73			
♣ 942			
♠ 862	N	E	♠ J95
♥ AJ52	W	S	♥ KQ6
♦ 98			♦ AQ
♣ AJ53			♣ K10876
			♠ KQ107
			♥ 4
			♦ KJ106542
			♣ Q

West	North	East	South
Rodwell	Salib	Meckstroth	Kordy
		1NT	2♠(1)
Db1(2)	3♣(3)	Db1	3♦
3NT	Pass	Pass	4♦
Db1	4♠!!	Db1	All Pass

(1) At least 4 spades and a longer minor
 (2) Points
 (3) Pass or correct

Easy for us to see that 4♦ makes thanks to the friendly trump position while 4♠ needs a trump lead to have any chance at all. Unfortunately for the Egyptians, Meckstroth opted for the ♥K lead,

immediately playing the ♣K and forcing dummy with another club. Declarer ruffed and played a spade to the ace and a diamond up, which Meckstroth won with the ♦A. After the club continuation, declarer ruffed again and cashed his ♦K but could do no better than gathering five tricks, a diamond, two spades and two ruffs for a resounding -1400. At the other table the USA made ten tricks in 3♦ doubled for 870, which meant a total of 20 IMPs gained on the hand.

While Kordy's choice to overcall 2♠ and not simply to get his diamond suit out is at best debatable, North's 4♠ bid is an awful decision on several grounds:

- 1) Partner bid 4♦ vulnerable, fully knowing that the balance of the points was largely with the opponents. This clearly showed a very unbalanced hand with much longer diamonds, at least six, but also that his diamonds were not solid, otherwise he would have not risked a potentially sizeable penalty and would have chosen to defend 3NT.
- 2) 4♠ could not possibly play any better than 4♦ even if partner had five spades, on the other hand it would likely turn into a disaster if partner had only four of them, because the defense would easily force declarer to lose control by repeatedly leading hearts or clubs, as indeed happened at the table.

Worth noting that the Egyptian's fate was shared by the illustrious Polish pair of Gawrys-Lasocki, who also played in 4♠ collecting five tricks but, probably thanks to their reputation, escaped undoubled. Let us now move back to 1960, when the first World Bridge Olympiad was played in Turin.

In one of the qualifying round robin

matches France was scheduled to play against Holland and this hand had a decisive bearing on the final result:

Dir South, All NV

♠ AK96543			
♥ -			
♦ Q652			
♣ Q8			
♠ 2	N	E	♠ QJ108
♥ A7532	W	S	♥ 4
♦ 10743			♦ AKJ9
♣ K62			♣ A753
			♠ 7
			♥ KQJ10986
			♦ 8
			♣ J1094

West	North	East	South
Jais	Boender	Trezel	Oudshoorn
			3♥
Pass	Pass	Db1	Pass
Pass	3♠!!	Db1	All Pass

Be honest, would you have passed out 3♥ doubled?

Hans Boender, our valiant Dutch knight, decided to come to his partner's rescue and put himself in 3♠ when 3♥ has good chances to make if the defense does not manage to avoid the reasonable club lead. Against 3♠ Trezel led the ♦A and switched to the ♠Q to Boender's ♠A, who continued with the ♣Q to Jais's ♣K, who made the good play of returning the ♦10, ducked all round and another diamond to his partner ♦J, who played back the ♠J. Boender ducked and Trezel carefully cashed his ♣A before switching to a heart. This quashed declarer's hopes of endplaying the French champion, who eventually took another spade for a total of eight tricks to the defense and 800 points to the French. At the other table Delmouly opened 3♥ too with the South hand and the bidding was identical until Bourchtoff passed out 3♥ doubled. West led the ♣2 to the ♣Q and the ♣A. East returned another club and that gave Delmouly an easy ride for nine tricks and 530 which added to the 800 meant a huge gain for the French team, who went on to claim the title.



The House of Horrors

By Pietro Campanile



Do you play standard Wormwood or RKCW?

This apparently meaningless question could well have been asked zillions of times at bridge tables all over the world if certain events had taken a different turn in 1933, when a letter from a then relatively unknown Easley Blackwood reached the desk of Ely Culbertson, editor of the "Bridge World" and uncontested top world bridge personality of the time.



Easley Blackwood

The letter contained a clearly written article explaining a new and disarmingly simple method to investigate slams. Blackwood had just been transferred to Indianapolis to take charge of the local branch of the Metropolitan Life Insurance company and fearing that his overt association with the game might alienate the sympathies of the god-fearing citizens of the Midwest state of Indiana, closed his letter expressing his reluctance at divulging the method under his own name and asked Culbertson to publish the article under the alias "Ernest Wormwood".

Ely, however, had his own self-serving agenda on the subject of bidding innovations and rejected the idea altogether since it conflicted with the dictates of his own widely used system.

Over the next few years the convention spread like wildfire across the American tournament scene, purely by word of mouth as a player from Indiana met a player from Washington, who met a player from New York and so on, and had been known after its creator, who eventually got his letter published in the September 1938 issue of the Bridge World but under his own name. Since then Blackwood has long become an almost indispensable tool for bridge players from novices to experts wishing to avoid the embarrassment of getting to a slam without enough aces.

Naturally, the use of the Blackwood convention cannot make up for good judgment, the very skill that many champions possess in abundance and that allows them to delicately probe towards slam with elegant and often mysterious sequences, disdainfully scorning the use of Easley's "primitive" gadget!

Let us step back in time to 1973: we are in the little known holiday heaven of Guaruja, in Brazil, where the mighty clash between the legendary Blue Team and the Dallas Aces will decide the winner of the Bermuda Bowl.

This is what happened in board 90: East dealer, All Vul

♠ AK74		♠ QJ82
♥ KJ943		♥ 876
♦ AQJ		♦ 2
♣ 8		♣ AK972
♠ 1096		♠ QJ82
♥ A102		♥ 876
♦ 97		♦ 2
♣ J6543		♣ AK972
♠ 53		♠ QJ82
♥ Q5		♥ 876
♦ K1086543		♦ 2
♣ Q10		♣ AK972

West	North	East	South
Garozzo	Wolff	Belladonna	Jacoby
		Pass	Pass
Pass	1♣(1)	Pass	1♥(2)
Pass	2♥	Pass	3♦
Pass	3♠	Pass	4♥
Pass	5♦	Pass	6♦
Pass	Pass	Pass	

(1) Strong, 17+HCP
(2) At most 2 Controls (an Ace or two Kings) and no more than 7HCP

Jacoby's final action is difficult to understand: despite having an absolute powerhouse within the constraints of his initial 1♥ reply, his partner was clearly in charge of the auction and had he felt that a slam could be a possibility he would probably have bid 4NT or an encouraging 5♣, instead of 5♦.

There was nothing much to the play after Garozzo led a small club, declarer had to concede down one.

Over to the closed room where the great Pietro Forquet was involved in a potentially deadly combination: playing a new system (Precision instead of the trusty Blue team Club he was used to) with a relatively new partner, Benito Bianchi.

West	North	East	South
Blumenthal	Forquet	Goldman	Bianchi
		Pass	Pass
Pass	1♣(1)	Pass	1♦
Pass	1♥	Pass	3♦
Pass	3♠	Pass	4♥
Pass	6♥!!	Pass	Pass
Pass			

(1) Precision 16+HCP

Continuation on page 40

Eric's World

By Eric Kokish



SEND THE RIGHT MESSAGE

Today's deal focuses on two important aspects of the game, competitive bidding and partnership defense.

Neither vulnerable Dealer West

♠ K109	
♥ 10983	
♦ K102	
♣ A75	
♠ QJ632	
♥ 65	
♦ A75	
♣ J43	

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	Pass	1♣
1♠	Dbl(1)	Pass	2♥
Pass	Pass	2♠	Pass
Pass	3♥	All Pass	

(1) Negative, 4+ hearts

Opening Lead: ♠Q

Put yourself in the West seat. You seem to have survived your frisky "modern" 1♠

overcall (even not vulnerable, it may not appeal to you and it doesn't turn me on either). East's delayed raise succeeded in nudging North-South up a notch to 3♥. Declarer plays the ♠9 from dummy and your ♠Q holds the first trick, East playing the eight. How do you continue?

There are two clues about the spade position. If East had ace-eight-small and the additional 4/5 points he must have on the auction, he would have raised to 2♠ directly. Support with support. As East knew that West's ♠Q would win the trick, it was unnecessary to play high (the eight) to encourage; giving count (small from three) would have been more appropriate. That points to East's holding precisely ♠A8 alone. The right course is to continue spades. The message you would like to send with your second spade play relates to the suit with which you might regain the lead, a low card for the lower suit (clubs), high for the higher (diamonds), a middle card to express no preference. Although it might seem like overkill, return the ♠J, a "suit preference" signal for diamonds. This form of defensive play has many applications; effective defenders are careful to help each other with their

carding when the information figures to be useful to their partners than declarer.

Declarer covers the ♠Q with the king. East wins the ace and returns the ♦9 to your ace. Along the lines of "top of nothing to show a weak holding," East is trying to tell you that he has no interest in a diamond return, underscoring his interest in a spade ruff. With a "surprise" third spade, East would have returned his fourth-best diamond (a low card) to confirm his interest in having that suit continued.

You return the ♠3 (neutral) for East to ruff. East exits safely with the ♣10 and eventually scores his ♦Q to defeat the contract. The complete deal:

♠ K109			
♥ 10983			
♦ K102			
♣ A75			
♠ QJ632			♠ A8
♥ 65			♥ K72
♦ A75			♦ Q964
♣ J43			♣ 10982
			♠ 754
			♥ AQJ4
			♦ J83
			♣ KQ6

The House of Horrors

From page 41

Oh not again!! What happened here? On the face of it the Italians made even more of a mess of it than the Americans, ending up in slam in a 5-2 fit with two aces missing!

Well, the bidding according to Bianchi was straightforward: he jumped to 3♦ to show his good suit, over 3♣ he had given delayed support in hearts, which

meant a doubleton since with three he would have raised hearts immediately, after which his partner, probably with a nice big heart suit, had bid directly the small slam. Unfortunately for him, when Forquet proceeded to explain the auction to Goldman, the tale he heard was rather different and only then remembered of the late addition to the system suggested by Garozzo and agreed during the long flight over: 3♦ was meant to show a 4414 hand with heart support and a diamond shortage, over which 3♣ was asking for controls (ace=2 and king=1) and 4♥

showed five. Since his partner was a passed hand, Forquet knew that he could not have the ♥Q as well as the 11 points he promised with the 4♥ bid and signed off in 6♥.

Amazing! A flat board with both sides bidding to slam without two cashing aces! Well, not quite. Goldman led a safe trump, to cut down the ruffs. Blumenthal won his ace and... played back another trump! Forquet let go of his lucky charm and quickly claimed 12 tricks. Which proves again that luck is the best convention of all!

The House of Horrors

By Pietro Campanile



Malmö Special

I have a confession to make: I am a BBO addict. Yes, I admit it: I watched almost every match screened online by Fred Gitelman's Bridgebase.com during the fortnight of the European Championship, trying to follow the alternating fortunes of our teams and at the same time fishing for material for my column. Such a twofold approach gave me a rather peculiar outlook on things, a bit like one of those hawkish American lawyers walking the streets of a busy intersection on the way to the office, but keenly watching out for a road accident, however tiny, whose victims he might approach to aggressively ply his trade.

Well, I was not disappointed: I saw some great bridge but also plenty of disasters both in bidding and play. Some led to surprising gains, like the 7NT bid by the top Swedish pair of Fredin-Lindkvist against Lauria-Versace without the ♠A and ♠K, who happily gathered 13 tricks when Lauria naturally opted to lead a neutral red suit, holding KJxx in spades. The fiery Italian was not amused when he discovered what had happened: his eloquent analogy in Italian vernacular between some specific anatomical parts of the two Swedish players and the Channel Tunnel was heard repeatedly over the next few days.

Some others, however, led to huge, and well deserved, negative swings for the unwitting perpetrators.

Warning from the Tourist Office: if you ever happen to visit Lithuania and you are introduced to a somber looking gentleman by the name of Poska, make absolutely sure not to mention the number 3400, as doing so might spark off an explosive reaction.

Curtain up on board 4 of the Italy-Lithuania match,

Dealer West. All Vul.

♠ J853			
♥ QJ5			
♦ Q76			
♣ AQ5			
♠ K62		♠ 1094	
♥ A743		♥ 10982	
♦ J84		♦ 103	
♣ 983		♣ J742	
		♠ AQ7	
		♥ K6	
		♦ AK952	
		♣ K106	

West	North	East	South
Birdalas	Bocchi	Poska	Duboin
Pass	1♣	1♠	2♣*
2♠	Pass	Pass	Dbl
Pass	Pass	Rdbl	All Pass

* Transfer to diamonds

Pervaded by a bout of creative inspiration, the Lithuanian decided to interfere with 1♠ to break up the Italians' conventional auction, using a gadget bid against strong club which shows either spades or 4-3 in the majors (obviously no mention of minimum point requirements is deemed necessary). Unfortunately the 1♣ opening was not strong, but showed most of the time a weak balanced hand, so West raised his partner's allegedly normal 1♠ overcall to 2♠ and did not budge even after Poska completed his contribution to the annals of bridge by redoubling the contract. The play soon assumed a Kafkaesque character when Bocchi-Duboin ruthlessly drew trumps and proceeded to cash all their winners, leaving declarer with a mere two tricks: the ♠K and the ♥A. 2♠ XX -6 is, you guessed it, -3400 for a small swing of 21 IMPs to the Italians, when Fantoni-Nunes failed to find the same amusing spot and let their opponents play in 3NT making 11 tricks.

For the lovers of history I can confirm that this is the first time that such a score has occurred in 47 editions of the European Championship. Amazingly enough it was not the last, as in the very same round this board came up in the Sweden-San Marino match:

Board 12 Dealer West. N/S Vul.

		♠ 76	
		♥ AKJ1098	
		♦ 106	
		♣ 1096	
♠ 10832			♠ AJ
♥ 5432			♥ -
♦ 3			♦ AKJ9854
♣ QJ53			♣ AK74
		♠ KQ954	
		♥ Q76	
		♦ Q72	
		♣ 82	

West	North	East	South
Nystrom	Catucci	Bertheau	Treoss
Pass	2♦*	Dbl	Pass
2♥	Pass	3♦	Pass
Pass	Pass		

*Multi

The Swedish players had a big misunderstanding against the good old-fashioned Multi 2♦ opening and were left stranded in 3♦ in a board where 6♣ is the top spot. A surprising gain for the underdogs? Not so fast.

West	North	East	South
Fazzardi	Lindqvist	Zucchini	Fredin
Pass	2♦(1)	Dbl	2♥(1)
Pass	Pass	3♥	Dbl
Pass	Pass	5♦	Pass
6♥	Dbl	Rdbl	Pass
Pass	Pass		

(1) Multi

(2) Pass or correct

The Multi strikes again: East cue-bid hearts, since he believed that North passing 2♥ pinpointed his major, while West was not fooled by the Swede's wily ploy of cloaking his real suit, took his partner's 3♥ bid at face value and over 5♦ (thought as showing a huge distributional hand in the reds) jumped to 6♥. To complete this comedy of misunderstandings East, having done his own thinking, interpreted 6♥ as "pick a grand" and redoubled to show first round control. 6♥ redoubled goes six off for a score of...3400 of course!!

The House of Horrors



By Pietro Campanile



One of the previous contenders for the sought after title of slam played with the smallest amount of trumps had seen as protagonists two of the biggest names in US Bridge: Eddie Kantar and Marshall Miles. Playing in the US Spring Nationals in 1975, the following scientific auction took place:

Dlr South, all vul

West	North	East	South
	Kantar		Miles
			2♣
Pass	2♦	Pass	2NT
Pass	4♦	Pass	4♥
Pass	4♠	Pass	7♣
Pass	Pass	Pass	

Would you care to try and make sense of it? No? Maybe listening to the explanations of the two champions might help (or not!).

Kantar held the following collection:

- ♠ AQ54
- ♥ 54
- ♦ Q1087653
- ♣ -

When his partner opened 2♣, he diligently replied with a "waiting" 2♦, Miles rebid 2NT showing a balanced hand of 22-24 points and Kantar reasonably enough, since they agreed not to play transfers over a NT rebid of 2♣, jumped to 4♦ to show a very long suit and a goodish hand. Miles continued with 4♥, taken as a cue-bid agreeing diamonds, and Kantar continued showing his spade control with 4♠ and here came the astounding reply of 7♣!! What could that be? Eventually Kantar came to the conclusion that his partner had a totally solid club suit, something like AKQJ109, and offering a choice of grand slams. Still unsure about the solidity of his partner's diamond support, Kantar decided to "trust" his partner and pass!

When he was asked what was the most embarrassing moment of his bridge career Charles Goren replied: "When in the final of the US Teams Championships I was left in a 5♠ contract needing to find the way to play the trump suit for only two losers with a void opposite K10xx".

What landed "Mr Bridge", as the champion used to be known, in such an impossible spot? Simple, Goren had previously cue-bid his spade void at the 4 level, when he cue-bid it again at the 5 level his partner took the rather inferior action of passing! Well he was not the first bridge player, and certainly won't be the last either, to be left to play in a silly contract because of a passed out cue bid.

The most spectacular specimen ever in that category was recently related by Svend Novrup, a Danish bridge journalist, and occurred in the final stages of the first division of the Danish League in a match between two top rated teams.

Dlr West – N/S Vul

♠ 92			
♥ A109652			
♦ 64			
♣ QJ9			
♠ AK10763		♠ QJ54	
♥ -		♥ -	
♦ K853		♦ AJ972	
♣ AK7		♣ 10543	
	♠ 8		
	♥ KQJ8743		
	♦ Q10		
	♣ 862		

This was the bidding:

West	North	East	South
Sorensen		Pedersen	
2♠(1)	Pass	4♥	Pass
4NT(2)	Pass	5♦(3)	Pass
5♥(3)	Pass	6♥	Pass
Pass	Pass		

- 1) Strong
- 2) 4NT Culbertson (positive, ongoing promising at least 3 out of 5 keycards)
- 3) Cue-bid

East bids were rather straightforward: 4♥ was obviously meant as a splinter agreeing spades, 5♦ was a cue-bid, 6♥ was last train before 6♠ asking for extras and showing a hand still interested in a grand.

On the other side of the screen West started off on the right track, taking 4♥ as a splinter and continued with the positive 4NT. After 5♦ and 5♥, the tray came back with 6♥ and that's when things took a turn for the worse. Sorensen thought and thought: could partner really still be looking for a grand at this point? The more he reflected on it the more he worried that the whole thing might be a colossal misunderstanding, and that 4♥ might have been natural all along. Racked with uncertainty he decided to play partner for some long and chunky one-suiter, forgetting that with such a hand he would never have bid 4♥ over a strong two when a forcing 3♥ was available to him.

The result was a new record breaking achievement: a slam in a 0-0 fit!!

Well done Denmark!

PARTNERSHIP BRIDGE

Bid Games, Invite Slams



By Matthew and Sarah Granovetter

Sarah: In a strong IMP Pairs, my partner and I had the following disaster. (I won't tell you where I was sitting yet, because I don't want my husband to be afraid to say who was wrong.)

Opener		Responder
♠ AK832		♠ Q10
♥ 8		♥ KQJ10
♦ 63		♦ AK754
♣ AQ963		♣ J5

1♠	2♦
3♣	3♥
3♠	6♠
Pass	

Sarah: Spades broke 3-3 with the jack in front of the Q-10, but the club finesse was off, so we were down one.

Matsiyahu: First of all, I prefer a 1♣ opening on 5-5 minimums, but that's a matter of style. The rebid of 3♣ is often played as extra values, but I know you like it to show 5-5 and not necessarily extras, so I will not criticize this bid either (folks, notice how careful I'm being). Responder's 3♥ was reasonable as fourth-suit forcing. No doubt she was hoping opener would rebid 3NT so she could raise naturally to 4NT to show her extra strength. Of course, nobody can blame opener for rebidding 3♠, since 3♥ did not promise anything in hearts. Now responder may have gone a bit too far in leaping to slam. Obviously, she hoped that opener held a slightly stronger hand (perhaps a sixth spade).

I have an interesting theory that applies here. Often one player stretches toward a game or slam; when both partners stretch on the same deal, the partnership gets overboard. To prevent this, try the following rule: Bid Games, Invite Slams. If a game looks close, don't invite the game - bid it. (The corollary is that a player who invites a game is the one who is stretching and

the other player should be conservative when accepting the invitation.) But if a slam looks close, don't bid it - invite it. Thus, the player who invites a slam, has full values and is merely checking to see that partner really has what he promised for his bidding.

Let's apply the theory to this deal. Assume responder wants to bid a slam over 3♣ (as she did); instead she bids only 5♠. This would say, "I want to bid six, but I am giving you a chance to play in five if you don't really have full values for your bids."

Sarah: Your theory is fine but your application here is horrendous. Responder did not even have a 5♠ bid, because, with her poor black-suit holdings and massive heart wastage, she should not be looking for slam. We surely have a heart loser (opener failed to bid 3NT), so slam requires too many specific cards.

Whatever happened to simple hand evaluation? When your partner bids two suits, look at your holdings in those suits and downgrade your stuff outside those suits. I would rebid 3NT with responder's hand and call it a day.

The Last Word (Matsiyahu): I can now guess fairly accurately where you were sitting. Therefore, may I suggest the following solution, which is one of my favorite toys (since I have the last word this month, I saved this little scientific toy for the end). When the bidding between opener and responder goes: 1a, 2b, 3c (a, b, and c being different suits), the jump to 4NT by responder is natural and quantitative. The bidding on this deal would go:

1♠	2♦
3♣	4NT
Pass	

The House of Horrors

From on page 42

What was going on at the other side of the table? Marshall Miles's holding was:

♠ KJ87
♥ AK63
♦ A4
♣ AK8

When Kantar bid 4♦, Miles jumped with excitement. Such luck! The beautiful sequence they had discussed a few months ago had finally come up: 4♦ here asked opener to show a four card minor or rebid 4♥ if he did not. Miles duly complied but was rather startled by Kantar's 4♣ reply, what that could be all about? The champion sank deep into thought and eventually came up with the "obvious" explanation: "Kantar had asked for my minor holdings and I denied any, he was not interested in majors so this 4♣ must be a cuebid, probably a spade void with a very long minor two-suiter, something like

♠ -
♥ x
♦ KQxxxx
♣ QJ10xxx

The genius I have for partner has found this fantastic way to show me what he has, how can I let this hand play in anything less than seven?".

Here was the whole hand:

		♠ AQ54		
		♥ 54		
		♦ Q1087653		
		♣ -		
♠ 102			♠ 963	
♥ QJ2			♥ 10987	
♦ K2			♦ J9	
♣ QJ10932			♣ 7654	
		♠ KJ87		
		♥ AK63		
		♦ A4		
		♣ AK8		

Poker faced Marshall Miles was not in any way put out by the sight of dummy, instead he played the contract as if his life depended on it and managed to go only five off, remarking happily at the hand how well he played to make the ♠8.

The House of Horrors

By Pietro Campanile

When I started playing bridge, I often got bored and disappointed if I had been dealt less than what I perceived was my share of high card points. After a tournament I would often blame the poor result on the fact the opponents had better cards and I would even undertake a meticulous reconstruction of each and every hand to prove my point (yes, no such thing as hand records at the time!). Sometimes I was right, more often not, but funny enough only a few years later my approach to the game changed so much that I began to hate being dealt huge and powerful hands, as by then I had started to realize how difficult it could be to elicit the right information from partner in order to make an informed decision as to the best contract to play.

Let us move to sunny Jamaica, the venue of the 1987 World Championship. The Bermuda Bowl final sees a surprise match-up between the USA star studded team (Hamman-Wolff, Martel-Stansby

step of passing when holding opening values while opening hands with 0-11 points), a practice that many saw as giving an unfair advantage due to the difficulty in setting up adequate and timely defensive counter-measures and that would eventually be strictly limited by the WBF in years to come. The Venice Cup final was immune to such controversies and saw a traditional match-up between USA (Wei-Radin, Chambers-Bjerkan, Deas-Palmer) and France (Cronier-Bordenave, Gaviard-Chevalley, Willard-Bessis).

Spotlight now on board 44; with the result still in the balance in both finals, the players in the East seat must have had a slight shock when they picked up their cards, a collection which was later nicknamed “the beauty of Ocho Rios” after the name of the location where the finals were taking place:

- ♠ AK7
- ♥ AKQ843
- ♦ A
- ♣ AK8

between 0 and 3 points. Decision time or rather I should say “Guessing time” as so far all the information you have received from your partner has not helped one bit (I know, I know, story of your life!).

Looking at the complete hand might be of some help and here it is, unfortunately our world final contenders in Jamaica did not have the same luxury:

West dealer – N/S Vul

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♠ QJ2 ♥ 76 ♦ 1086432 ♣ 54 	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: 40px; height: 40px; display: flex; flex-direction: column; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> N W S E </div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♠ 83 ♥ J52 ♦ KQ95 ♣ QJ109 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♠ AK7 ♥ AKQ843 ♦ A ♣ AK8
--	---	--	---

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♠ 109654 ♥ 109 ♦ J7 ♣ 7632

In the Venice Cup both the French and the American ladies failed to reach slam:

Open Room

West	North	East	South
Gaviard	Wei	Chevalley	Radin
Pass	Pass	2♦(1)	Pass
2♥(2)	Pass	3♥	Pass
3NT	Pass	4♣(3)	Pass
4♥	Pass	4♠(3)	Pass
5♥	Pass	Pass	Pass

1) Equivalent to a standard 2♣
 2) Negative relay
 3) Cue-bid

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
Bjerkan	Bordenave	Chambers	Cronier
Pass	Pass	2♣	Pass
2♦	Pass	2♥	Pass
3♣(1)	Pass	4♥	All Pass

1) Second negative

Will the gents perform better than the ladies? Any bets out there?

In the Closed Room Flint-Sheehan did not do much better and stopped in 5♥.

Continues on page 38



The 1987 Bermuda Bowl winners: USA

and Lawrence-Ross) and the challengers from Great Britain (Flint-Sheehan, Kirby-Armstrong, Brock-Forrester). The talk of the championship is, however, on the hot issue of the day: the proliferation of highly unusual systems (also adopted by two of the British pairs) which included the so-called strong pass (in brief: the unusual

How would you bid this hand with your normal methods? Let us assume you open 2♣ and over your partner’s 2♦ reply, you continue with 2♥. You will hear 3♣, second negative (surprised?), what now? If you have available a forcing 3♥, partner will raise you to 4♥, something he might do with two small hearts and anything

PARTNERSHIP BRIDGE

By Matthew and Sarah Granovetter



The House of Horrors

From page 40

Sarah: I know it's politically incorrect to be a solid bidder, but I believe in doing what I think is right no matter what the "authorities" say. Here's a case in point from a game I recently played. We were vulnerable and I was South, first to speak. Dlr: South
Vul: Both

♠ 1032 ♥ 65 ♦ J73 ♣ Q10652	N W E S	♠ KJ84 ♥ Q983 ♦ A10642 ♣ -
		♠ A97 ♥ AJ2 ♦ KQ ♣ A9843

West	North	East	South
			1NT
Pass	2NT	Pass	3NT
Pass	Pass	Pass	

West led the ♣5, and I took 10 tricks for plus 630 and a good score.

I opened 1 NT, playing a range of a good 15 to a poor 18. My partner raised to 2NT and I was charmed to bid 3NT. West led fourth from his longest and strongest and I had an easy time scoring up game with an overtrick.

At the other tables, South opened the bidding 1♣, and rebid 2NT over the 1♥ response (sometimes after East made a takeout double). North raised to game and most Souths went down after a spade or a diamond lead, although the game can be made even after a diamond lead if you play it just so. In the postmortem, everyone felt my hand was worth a full 18, that my good score was just lucky, and in the future my partner will feel

compelled to bid over 1NT with 7 high-card points.

Matthew: I don't like to quarrel with success, but I think an 18 point hand with a five-card suit qualifies as a full 18. It's true that the king-queen doubleton is a negative feature, but you do have all four suits stopped plus that fivebagger and a few nice spot cards.

Sarah: What you say is true, and therefore the decision was a close one. I went with my usual style, however, and chose to be maximum for my bidding rather than minimum (surely this is a minimum for 1♣-1X; 2NT). Years ago I played regularly with Canadian international Katie Thorpe, who bid conservatively in those days (perhaps now as well). It was always a pleasure to see her dummy hit because there was never less than expected and sometimes a little more. What's wrong with providing your partner with a little cushion in the play (by having extras) and the bidding (so partner feels comfortable bidding close games or making close penalty doubles) by being maximum for your bidding?

The Last Word (Matthew):

As long as you're consistent and throw no curve balls at partner, it's a good idea to be true to your style. You and your partner surely know, however, that solid bidding is "swinging" bidding these days (going against the field), so you have to be willing to roll with the punches when your style happens to score badly. Mind you, this is true of every convention and treatment out there, and being philosophical about system disasters is something intrinsic to all winning pairs.

The Granovetters can be reached through the Bridgetoday.com website

The real action, or lack thereof, was however in the open room where the final contract would be quite a surprising one.

First of all it is important to note that the Americans had decided that the best policy against the Brits' weird 1 level openings made on 0-11 points would be to simply ignore them whenever possible and to bid naturally as if they had not opened at all. Good idea, bad idea, who knows. This is what happened in the Open Room:

West	North	East	South
Lawrence	Armstrong	Ross	Forrester
Pass	1♦(1)	2♣(2)	Pass
Pass(?)	Pass		
1) 0-11			
2) Meant as a normal 2♣ opening			

Lawrence absent-mindedly passed his partner's 2♣ bid, taking it as a normal overcall instead of what the pre-match team agreement stipulated and the result was that Ross found himself playing the somewhat inferior contract of 2♣ in a 3-2 fit instead of 7♥. Well, a world final is a world final and as much as he would have liked to throw the cards out of the nearest window, Ross did not say a word and calmly started pondering what to do after Armstrong led the ♥10. He took the lead with the ♥A, cashed a second heart and wheeled out three rounds of clubs. Had Armstrong realized the real consistency of declarer's trump holding, he could have defeated the contract by returning a low diamond. Instead he continued with a fourth trump, letting Ross claim the rest for a deserved although disappointing +150. Britain's 8 IMPs gain was of little help though as the USA defeated their opponents 354-290, completing a world double started off by the victory of the USA ladies in the Venice Cup.

The House of Horrors

By Pietro Campanile

Only a few days ago I was playing with Migry in the Liga Leumit vs the Birman team and I picked up in South

♠ J6
♥ Q94
♦ AKJ76
♣ KJ7

Following three passes, I opened 1NT and heard West, Salek Zeligman, bid 2♣ for majors, Migry jumped to 3♥, asking for a stopper in the suit and I duly complied closing the auction with 3NT.

The lead was the ♠8 and Migry tabled her dummy, wished me good luck and left for the usual nicotine break.

When she returned a few minutes later, the hand was over and upon enquiring on the outcome she was informed that I had gone seven down. "No, really, what happened?" She asked again. I replied stone faced: "3NT-7=700 for them". She still thought we were all joking so our ever kind opponents agreed to reconstruct the hand for her benefit.

This was the layout:

West Dealer – All Vul

♠ K4			
♥ 875			
♦ 9532			
♣ AQ92			
♠ 987532		♠ AQ10	
♥ AK1063		♥ J2	
♦ 10		♦ Q84	
♣ 3		♣ 108654	
	♠ J6		
	♥ Q94		
	♦ AKJ76		
	♣ KJ7		

As I mentioned earlier, the lead was the ♠8. I played low from dummy and Dani Cohen took his ♠Q and continued with ♠A, ♠10 and ♥J. At this point Zeligman took over and run all his major winners leaving me the last two tricks.

Since we had done nothing particularly wrong I was confident that the result would be repeated at the other table, but science reared its ugly head: our West had available a gadget to show a weak major two-suiter and used it, shutting

out the opposition. East-West bought the contract in 3♠ making 4 for +170, a loss of 11 IMPs on the board. We lost the match by 13 IMPs.

Naturally I was sure that my exploit was nowhere near as catastrophic as those which usually make up my columns so I started looking for the worse possible outcome of a 3NT contract.

I had to go back quite a few years to find a suitable candidate: 40 years to be precise, to the 1965 European Championships in Ostende, Belgium.

The Sixties, as most of you know, was the era of the Italian Blue Team and their coach was often trying to check out new players who could one day take the place of the six champions in the main team. Since the Italians, as holders, were assured of participation to the next Bermuda Bowl, the Italian team at the European included a few unusual names amongst which the one of Renato Mondolfo who was to partner Giorgio Belladonna, the only member of the Blue Team to make the trip.

Despite the much weaker line-up, Italy won convincingly also thanks to boards like this:

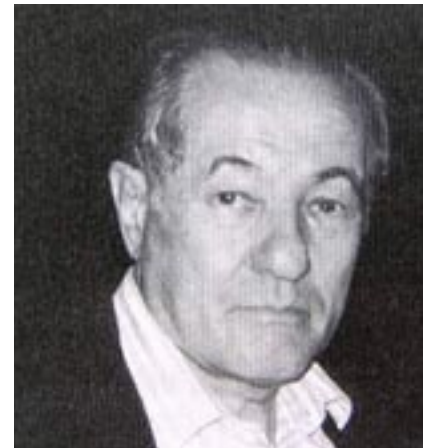
Dealer East – N/S Vul

♠ 109			
♥ 964			
♦ QJ85			
♣ 9875			
♠ 7643		♠ AKJ85	
♥ QJ10875		♥ A32	
♦ 964		♦ AK3	
♣ -		♣ 102	
	♠ Q2		
	♥ K		
	♦ 1072		
	♣ AKQJ643		

Belladonna opened a strong club in East and the Swiss star Bernasconi, a very talented but also very "imaginative" player whom we already met in an earlier column, wheeled out his own special version of the Gambling 3NT, which could be any solid suit (including majors) and promised one outside stopper. Both West and North

passed and when Belladonna doubled the spotlight moved to Ortiz-Patino in North, the millionaire who would years later become President of the WBF. Patino was faced with an impossible choice: partner could reasonably have any of three suits with a stopper outside and, looking at his own holding, he was more likely to have a major. Hoping rather optimistically that his cards would be enough to stop the minors and that partner held the necessary values to take care of the majors, Patino passed the double out.

Here is a recap of the bidding:



Pietro Bernasconi

West	North	East	South
Mondolfo	Ortiz-Patino	Belladonna	Bernasconi
		1♣*	3NT**
Pass	Pass	Dbf	Pass
Pass	Pass		
* Strong, 17+ HCP			
** Gambling			

Mondolfo led the ♥Q, taken by Belladonna with his ♥A, dropping declarer's singleton ♥K. That signaled the start of the Swiss rout: the Italians had no trouble in gathering all of the 13 tricks, with six hearts, five spades and two diamonds for a sensational score of -2600!!

After the hand a journalist asked Ortiz-Patino how he managed to keep calm when he saw his partner go nine down doubled in 3NT. The Swiss millionaire replied: "I am used to play with Bernasconi. It happens to him all the time!"

The House of Horrors

By Pietro Campanile



Siegbert Tarrasch, a great chess champion at the turn of the last century, wrote that "Chess is a game that does not admit excuses and does not forgive mistakes, since each player is solely responsible for his own result." From that point of view bridge is a lot more fun since we have an ideal candidate to blame whenever things go wrong: our partner! Opening leads, in particular, provide plenty of ammunition to spice up a discussion between players as there are very few deadly sins less deadly than not leading your partner's suit or giving away a slam because of a risky opening lead.

The first problem brings us back more than seventy years to 1933. Ely Culbertson had recently become the Numero Uno on the American bridge scene after his widely publicized triumph against Sidney Lenz in the so-called "Match of the Century" and the phenomenal sales of his Blue Book. His next target was Europe and, seeking to export there his bidding system (and the book sales that came with it), he gladly accepted a challenge by a strong French team in a match of 108 boards to be played in Paris.

Despite his hopes for an easy win, the French team led by the talented Pierre Albarran was putting up a strong resistance and the match was still in the balance right to the end. In the last set, sitting West and partnering his wife Josephine, who many thought was the better player of the two, Ely picked up the following:

♠ QJ853
♥ -
♦ QJ2
♣ 98765

and the bidding went:

West	North	East	South
Ely C.	Albarran	Josephine C.	Venizelos
		1♦	4♥
Pass	6♥*	Pass	Pass
Pass			

**Those were the days!!*

What would you lead? The ♠Q, the ♦Q or a club?

After a long time, Ely decided that Albarran could not possibly have two quick losers in diamonds for his 6♥ bid and that it would be much better for the defense to attempt to set up a spade trick while there was time: the ♠Q hit the table. Unfortunately for him this was the complete layout:

♠ A74			
♥ AJ107			
♦ 76			
♣ AKQ10			
♠ QJ853		♠ K1096	
♥ -	W N	♥ 8	
♦ QJ2	W N E	♦ AK10543	
♣ 98765	W N E S	♣ J2	
		♠ 2	
		♥ KQ965432	
		♦ 98	
		♣ 43	

It must have taken an enormous amount of restraint for Josephine to stop herself from reproaching her husband for not leading her suit but this was one married couple who always displayed a strong self-control at the table and this instance was no exception. Luckily for Ely and his European book sales, the match was adjudicated a draw after a curious incident in the last boards meant that the teams played a hand on the same line.

If Ely's choice could be considered somewhat unlucky, our next problem is much spicier: let us move forward in time to 1992, when the Bridge

Olympiad is hosted in the Italian town of Salsomaggiore. In the third set of the semifinal match between the two ladies teams of France and Austria, there was a very short bidding sequence:

West	North	East	South
Willard	Erhart	Bessis	Lindinger
	6♦!!	Pass	Pass
Pass			



Austrian champion Maria Erhart, widely considered one of the top players in Ladies bridge

It was a hot, hot summer in Salsomaggiore and it must have felt so much hotter for Veronique Bessis: there she was sorting her hand and next thing she found herself on lead against 6♦ holding

♠ 9763
♥ K9862
♦ 9
♣ A92

What would you lead? Keep in mind that Erhart had by then already achieved a unique reputation for occasionally choosing unorthodox bids and plays which would often produce rich dividends while making life miserable for her opponents. After a lot of soul-searching, Bessis selected the ♣A and that was the winning choice... for the Austrians!

Board 37 – N/S Vulnerable – Dealer North

♠ K2		♠ 9763
♥ A3		♥ K9862
♦ AKJ1087543		♦ 9
♣ -		♣ A92
♠ AQJ105	W N E	♠ 84
♥ Q1054		♥ J7
♦ -		♦ Q62
♣ K765		♣ QJ10843

The lead gave declarer an unexpected chance to make the contract and Maria Erhart promptly took it. The Austrian champion drew the correct inference from Bessis's thinking before the lead and deduced that she could not possibly hold ♣AK. Therefore she drew the outstanding trump with dummy's ♦Q and ran the ♣Q, which Willard did not cover, for what was essentially a marked ruffing finesse. Eventually she even made an overtrick.

At the other table the French pair reached the same contract, after a much longer auction, but the contract drifted one off after Doris Fischer in East had an easy time in finding the ♠7 lead, since her partner had managed to sneak in a 2♣ bid.

France lost 17 IMPs on that one hand and could only wonder at what might have been when Austria won the match 135-121 and went on to claim the Olympic title after defeating the English ladies in the final.

Kudos to Maria Erhart for finding once again the bid designed to give her opponent a torrid time, but was the ♣A lead really a reasonable choice? Even an aggressive player like Erhart would not have risked a double digit IMP swing at such a critical stage of a world championship semifinal without some kind of insurance. To assume that she could have bid a kamikaze 6♦ with two quick losers, in clubs or elsewhere, would be a remarkable view. Looking at Bessis' hand it seems much more likely that declarer is either singleton, void or holding some cover in the club suit (like a doubleton King for instance). In all of these three cases the ♣A would turn out to be a very dangerous lead which could at best avoid an overtrick and most likely give away the contract.

PARTNERSHIP BRIDGE

By Matthew Granovetter

Let Them Bid!

Guest: Alvin Roth

Sarah: When I married Matthew we lived in New York and were regular players at the Mayfair Club, run by the famous American theorist and player, Al Roth. He invented many of today's standard bidding methods, such as 5-card Majors, forcing notrump, and the negative double. He is also a very strong personality, and does not mince words. If we came to Roth with a problem, he would tell us exactly how wrong our thinking was, without being gentle about it! Here is an example. We were once discussing which is better, to open 1NT or open one of a minor. I like to open the bidding with one notrump, mainly because I enjoy our bidding structure. Our range is 15+ to 18; if 15, it must contain 3 and a half honor tricks.

Matthew: I also like 1NT. Not only is it a narrow-range bid and, as you said, the initiation of a comfortable auction, but it makes life difficult on the opponents when it is their hand.

Therefore, I pose this question: Shouldn't we always strive to open 1NT rather than one-of-a-minor when it is a close decision?

Roth: Don't talk like a child. All of your reasons for opening 1NT are wrong. First, your bidding system over 1NT is less accurate than over an opening 1♣: or 1♦:, because you are a level higher — especially at matchpoints, where your partscore bidding is so important.

Second, if you open every balanced 15-18 point hand one notrump, you are not using a narrow-range. I am 100% opposed to the 15-point notrump. Responder is always in fear of bidding on a marginal 8-point hand, which might produce a game.

Third, the world goes out of its way to try to preempt the opponents when they should be doing just the opposite.

Matthew: Wait a second. Certainly my opponents prefer to hear me open a minor suit than 1NT.

Sarah: Yes, but if you hold a hand good enough to open 1NT, who is more likely to own the hand, your side or the opponents?

Roth: That's why I stress that whenever you have a good suit rebid, you should not open 1NT. You should be delighted to let the opponents bid whenever you have a good hand. Their bids are clues to the play of the hand. To illustrate:

South dealer

None vulnerable

		♠ K2	
		♥ 1086	
		♦ AK82	
		♣ Q763	
♠ J103	W N E	♠ 9864	
♥ KJ752		♥ 93	
♦ Q43		♦ J1065	
♣ KJ		♣ 542	
		♠ AQ75	
		♥ AQ4	
		♦ 97	
		♣ A1098	

West	North	East	South
			1♣
1♥	Dbf	Pass	2♠
Pass	3♣	Pass	3NT
Pass	Pass	Pass	

Opening lead: ♥5

This was played at the Mayfair Club in the late-night \$50-an-imp game. At one table, South, playing 16-18 notrumps, began with 1♣ because of his small doubleton diamond and the safety of a 1♠ rebid. Over North's negative double, he bid 2♠, not forcing. North's 3♣ implied too much strength for a non-forcing 2♣ on the first round, and South bid 3NT.

Because of the 1♥ overcall, there was no problem in the play. Even if West had led a spade, declarer would have played the club suit correctly, with the knowledge that strength was to his left.

However, at the other table, where the auction went 1NT-3NT, declarer had no information. West led a heart and declarer made the technically best play of the 8 from dummy. The 9 forced the queen. Then he went to dummy's ♠K for the first of two club finesses through East — down one, minus 10 imps, minus 10 more imps for the match bonus, minus \$1,000.

The Last Word (**Sarah and Matthew**): Minus a thousand dollars?! We'll open 1♣.

The House of Horrors

By Pietro Campanile

A year ago I presented a couple of examples where a greedy defender comes to the rescue with an ill-timed double to alert the opponents of the terrible mess they got themselves in. After perusing some World Championship books from the eighties, I found two more incredible hands which illustrate once again how, even at the highest level of the game, you can often receive help from the most unlikely quarter.... your opponents! The first example comes from the quarter-finals of the 1984 Olympiad, with Poland facing Pakistan.

Board 36 – West Dealer – Vul both

♠ 862		♠ Q
♥ J954		♥ AK1062
♦ A		♦ Q96
♣ J10864		♣ A753
	♠ AJ1054	
	♥ Q73	
	♦ K53	
	♣ Q9	
	♠ K973	
	♥ 8	
	♦ J108742	
	♣ K2	

West	North	East	South
Przybora	Fazli	Martens	Munir
Pass	1♠	2♥	4♠
5♦	Pass	Pass!!	Dbi!!!
5♥	Pass	Pass	Dbi
Pass	Pass	Pass	

Since Przybora was a passed hand, he felt that his 5♦ bid would be unambiguously lead-directing. He explained it as such to his screenmate, Fazli. The two players on the other side of the screen were not in on the secret. Martens astonishingly passed, probably having overlooked that Przybora was a passed hand and thus could not possibly have the kind of diamond suit that could warrant a natural 5♦ bid, and Munir had only to pass to collect at least 600. No, despite the singleton heart which meant that his Polish opponents had got

themselves vulnerable into a terrible spot, he felt compelled to double 5♦. Imagine the look that Przybora and Fazli must have exchanged as the bidding tray reappeared under the screen! Przybora rescued himself to 5♥ and Munir felt obliged to double that contract too.

How much did Munir's indiscretion cost him, do you think? It was one of the least expensive bidding 'disasters' on record. In theory Munir was exchanging a "safe" four or five down in 5♦ for a possible make in 5♥ doubled, however Martens played for the drop in trumps and went one down for -200. At the other table the bidding was rather less exciting:

West	North	East	South
Masood	Gawryns	Zia	Wolny
	1♠	2♥	4♠
5♥	Dbi	All Pass	

After noticing that South had bid 4♠ holding only four trumps, Zia took the correct inference and played him for heart shortage, finessing in trumps and bringing home the contract for +850. So the Pakistanis gained 14 IMPs anyway. Let us raise the stakes and move up from the quarter final stage to the finals. We are in Perth, Australia, where the Venice Cup is being decided between USA and the Netherlands.

Board 57, North Dealer, E/W Vul

♠ -		♠ AQJ3
♥ A7		♥ Q1032
♦ K52		♦ A973
♣ AKQ86543		♣ J
	♠ K87652	
	♥ J	
	♦ QJ106	
	♣ 107	
	♠ 1094	
	♥ K98654	
	♦ 84	
	♣ 92	

The Netherlands were trailing by 36 IMPs halfway in the match, when this board came up.

In the Open Room the USA pair of Deas-Palmer stopped in 6♣, which made with an overtrick for +1390 to the USA. It looked very much like a potential plus position for the Dutch ladies, but I am sure nobody could have predicted the auction in the closed room:

West	North	East	South
Bakker	Gwordzinsky	Gielkens	Bethe
	2♠	2NT	3♠
4♠	Pass	5♥	Pass
7♣	Pass	7♦	Pass
Pass	Dbi!!!	7NT	Dbi
Pass	Pass	Pass	

After Gielkens overcalled 2NT with her offshape 15 count, the auction took off like a crazy Scud missile. Bakker had surely a tough bid over 3♠ but her idea to cue-bid with 4♠ was rather short-sighted since when she continued with 7♣ over 5♥, Gielkens was entitled to assume that her partner held a two-suiter, correcting the contract to 7♦ as a result. A more practical shot, facing a 15-17 NT, would have been to simply bid 4NT and hope to hear a 5♥ reply after which to bid 7♣ (and conversely 6♣ over 5♦).

At the table, Bakker passed 7♦, doubtless not too happy with this turn of events. Gwordzinsky, East for USA, looked at her impressive trump holding and not satisfied with the opponents reaching a clearly doomed grand slam vulnerable, decided to add insult to injury and doubled 7♦. Probably she was not particularly worried when the opponents ran to 7NT, doubled in turn by West. Not, that is, until dummy went down with an 8-card solid club suit! Deas got off to the best lead with the ♦8, won by declarer with the ♦K in dummy. Next came a club to the ♣J, a heart to the ♥A and then all the clubs from dummy. Gwordzinsky was unable to hold on to the diamonds while keeping the ♠K guarded and declarer happily wrapped up thirteen tricks for +2490. If East had passed 7♦ the USA would have collected +1590 (+17 IMPs) instead of losing 1100 (-15 IMPs) for a total swing of 32 IMPs!!

Luckily for them, despite the Netherlands overtaking them and leading by 13 IMPs with 16 boards to go, they pulled out of the hat a remarkable 72-23 score in the last set and cruised to victory with a final result of 355-319.

The House of Horrors

By Pietro Campanile

The faithful readers of our magazine know by heart that “defense is the most difficult part of the game”, a phrase which my one and only Editor and meatballs guru “extraordinaire” likes to insert at will in her “Improve your bridge” column. Having personally been guilty of countless heinous crimes in this area, I am certainly not one to argue with her. On the contrary, here is an outstanding example showing that even the giants of bridge should better thread carefully when the Sirens of misdefense sing their enchanting and yet deceiving melody.

Let us move back to Santiago del Chile, 1993: Norway and Brazil are involved in a thrilling fight to decide the team to contest against the Netherlands the final of the Bermuda Bowl. The Brazilian supporters are screaming their heads off: their team is leading by 9 IMPs with one board to go.

Board 96 – E/W Vul – Dealer West

♠ A3		♠ K1085
♥ J109		♥ AK543
♦ 8		♦ Q4
♣ Q1097652		♣ AJ
♠ 976	W N	♠ K1085
♥ Q862	W N	♥ AK543
♦ K10952	W N	♦ Q4
♣ K	W N	♣ AJ
	S E	
		♠ QJ42
		♥ 7
		♦ AJ763
		♣ 843

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
Helgemo	Chagas	Helness	Mello
Pass	3♣	Dbl	5♣
Dbl	Pass	Pass	Pass

In the closed room Chagas opened with an aggressive 3♣, doubled by Helness and quickly raised to 5♣ by Mello over which Helgemo took the correct view of doubling and not bidding 5♥, an unmakeable contract after a diamond lead by North. Against 5♣ doubled, Helness led the ♥A, partner playing a non-committal ♥6, and after a long pause he continued with the ♦Q, since if declarer had the ♦K then

Helgemo was sure to have the ♠A and the problem of what to switch to when in with the ♠A was solved. Chagas won the ♦Q with the ♦A, on which West played an encouraging ♦2, ruffed a diamond, ruffed a heart and then tried to ruff another diamond but was overruffed by Helness with the ♣J.

At this point the Norwegian champion could have reaped the benefits of his careful play and safely exited with the ♥K, squashing an eventual singleton Q in declarer’s hand and giving him the losing option of taking a spade finesse, but unsure as to the meaning of the ♥6 and worried about conceding a possible ruff and discard if declarer had started with 3 spades and two hearts, he preferred instead to play the ♠A first. When Helgemo had to lay perforce his ♣K under the ♠A, Helness suddenly froze and despite the fact that Helgemo would have never doubled 5♣ holding a 2551 shape, he decided to believe that declarer was indeed 3217 and without the ♠A. Therefore he exited with a low spade and the second defensive undertrick vanished in thin smoke causing the Brazilian supporters to become delirious with joy: Sirens 1 – Players 0. 5♣ doubled one off for -100 seemed a great result and even if Barbosa and Camacho misguessed and went on to 5♥ the negative swing of -300 and ensuing -7 IMPs would not be enough to stop Brazil from reaching the Bermuda Bowl final.

Barbosa-Camacho, however, did not let down their fans and correctly let their

Sergio Barbosa



Norwegian opponents play in 5♣ doubled after an identical auction to the one in the closed room. What could possibly go wrong now?

Barbosa in East started off with the obvious lead of the ♥A, on which Camacho played the ♥2.

After trying to figure out what could be the best continuation, Barbosa decided to play it “safe” and reduce dummy’s ruffing power by playing ♣A and a club. He tabled the ♣A and I guess he must have been somewhat disappointed to see his partner dejectedly throw the ♣K under the ♣A.

Suddenly things did not look too good: could declarer possibly make his contract after the defense “compressed” their two trump tricks into one? Clearly the danger came from the diamond suit: if declarer held the ♦K all was now lost unless the defense could cash at least one spade trick before they are pitched on dummy’s diamonds. Yet to under-lead his ♠K with ♠QJxx in dummy and without a clear sign from his partner seemed very dangerous. What to do? Maybe the answer lied in correctly decoding Camacho’s ♥2 at the first trick, a card which was too specific not to mean something. The Sirens of Misdefense were starting to meddle with Barbosa’s mind which became full of contrasting thoughts: “What could Camacho’s ♥2 mean? Did it say: “Partner do not continue hearts as I do not have the ♥Q, just make your normal switch”, that is to play a spade, or rather be a suit-preference signal and ask for a diamond instead? What would you do in Barbosa’s place?

The Sirens’ song was now whirring up with intensity and the Brazilian slowly lost his battle to resist their melody: “But that does not make much sense: I am holding the ♦Q and even if Camacho held the ♦K he would not want me to set up dummy’s long suit”. Succumbing to the enchantment, Barbosa finally pulled out a small spade to the horror of the Brazilian supporters. A thankful declarer could now avoid a spade loser and still ruff his two heart losers in dummy coming back to hand with the ♠A and with a spade ruff. Sirens 2 – Players 0. 5♣ doubled and made for +550 which together with +100 gave Norway an incredible +12 IMPs, enough to see them through to their first Bermuda bowl final.