

NEC Bridge Festival

Saturday, February 14, 2015
Bulletin Number 5

Editors: Rich Colker, Barry Rigal

It's Hackett vs England/Netherlands in the NEC Cup Final

The king is dead. Long live the king! Team Russia was back, going for an NEC three-peat. They led 46-8 at the half. This was a done deal, right? Wrong! Team England/Netherlands (David Bakhshi, David Gold, Ricco van Prooijen, Louk Verhees) staged a comeback for the ages, outscoring Russia 59-8 in the second half for the right to meet top qualifier Hackett (Jason Hackett, Brian Senior, John Holland, Gunnar Hallberg) in today's NEC Cup final. Team Hackett has been cutting through this year's NEC Cup field like a warm knife through butter. They won the first half of their semi-final match by a score of 78-5 over England Hinden, last year's runner-up, at which point Hinden withdrew. So it's England/Netherlands versus Hackett in today's NEC Cup final. Good luck to the two finalists and congratulations to all the other qualifiers who gave us such a rousing day of playoff bridge yesterday. Check out page 3 for the address of the real-time updates site for today's final, and watch Vugraph at the Bridgebase address listed at the bottom of this page.

Quarter-final Results

Team	Carry	1-16	17-32	Final
Hackett	.5	41	53	94
SARA		14	3	17
Singapore	.5	38	24	62
England Hinden		30	35	65
SANDEN	.5	16	29	45
England/Netherlands		51	38	89
Sweden	.5	35	34	69
Russia		24	50	74

Semi-final Results

Team	Carry	1-16	17-32	Final
Hackett	.5	78		78
England Hinden		5	W/D	5
Russia	.5	46	8	54
England/Netherlands		8	59	67

NEC Cup Bridge Festival on the Web

Follow the action at the 20th NEC Cup Bridge Festival by surfing to:

<http://www.jcbl.or.jp/home/English/nec/tabid/1043/Default.aspx>

Follow our featured matches on Vugraph each day at: www.bridgebase.com

NEC Cup 2015: Conditions of Contest

A 12-round Swiss of 14-board matches will qualify the top 8 teams to the Knockout phase; no playbacks.

V.P. Scale: New WBF 14-board scale (20-point scale, continuous and given to two decimal places).

Seating Rights: Blind seating 10 minutes before the start of match.

KO-Phase Seating: The winner of a coin toss has the choice of seating in either of the two 16-board segments of the quarter- or semi-finals. In the four 16-board segments of the final, the choices will alternate over segments.

Swiss Pairings: First-round Swiss matches were made by randomly pairing each team in the top half with a team from the bottom half.

Home and Visiting: 1st numbered team sits N/S in the open room, E/W in the closed room.

Tie-Breaks: At the end of the Swiss, ties will be broken by IMP quotient. If more than two teams are involved, the latest version of WBF Conditions of Contest procedures will apply.

In the Knockout Phase, the team with the higher position from the Swiss will be assumed to have a ½-IMP carryover.

Systems: No HUM or Brown Sticker methods are permitted in this event. However, pairs may prepare written defenses against a two-level opening bid in a minor that shows a weak two-bid in either major, with or without the option of strong hand types. These defenses are deemed to be part of the opponents' convention cards.

Length of Matches: 2 hours will be allotted for each 14-board segment (or 2 hours and 15 minutes for each 16-board segment of the KOs). In addition, a 5-minute grace period will be allotted to each team. Overtime and slow play penalties as per the latest version of WBF Conditions of Contest.

Appeals: The WBF Code of Practice will be in effect. The Chief Director will have 12C1c authority. Appeals found to be without merit may incur a penalty of up to 3 VPs.

Match Scoring: Bridgemate scoring terminals will be used. Match results should be verified against the official result sheet (posted at the end of each match); score corrections and notifications of appeals will be permitted up until the start of the next session.

KO Draw: The team finishing 1st in the Swiss may choose their opponent from the teams finishing 4th-8th. The team finishing 2nd will have their choice of the remaining teams from the 4th-8th group. The team finishing 3rd will then have their choice of any one of the remaining teams. In addition, before the start of the Knockout Phase and after all quarter-final draws have been determined, the team that finishes 1st in the Swiss chooses their semi-final opponent from any of the other three quarter-final matches.

Security: No player may leave the playing area during play without permission, due to security concerns arising from the Bridge Base Online Broadcast and the upload of the results of all matches in progress on the web.

Smoking: Once play in a qualifying-round match or a KO-round session starts, smoking is prohibited at ALL times (including when a player leaves the playing room to go to the bathroom), until the player completes the play of all boards in the match or session. (For those wishing to smoke at other times, smoking rooms are located on the 3rd and 5th floors of the Conference Center.) Automatic penalties for violations will be assessed by the Director as follows: Qualifying Swiss — 1 VP for the 1st offense, 3 VPs for all subsequent offenses; KO — 3imps for the 1st offense, 10imps for all subsequent offenses.

Screen Hesitations: When a delay in the return of the tray is suspected, a player on the opposite side of the

screen must be the first to call attention to it (by summoning the Director). In case of dispute the call from the wrong side will be ignored, but in situations where the wrong side calls or a late call is made and there is no dispute the Director may accept the fact of the delayed call.

Electronic Equipment: Any and all electronic equipment capable of receiving or transmitting information to/from outside the playing room (e.g., cell phones, personal computers, iPads and the like) must be turned off at all times from the beginning of a match/session until the player has completed all boards in the match/session and left the playing area. In KO rounds, mobile phones in the playing area are prohibited during game time. Players with mobile phones should surrender their phones to the staff at the service desk and receive a number tag which is used to collect the phone after the game. The Director may authorize exceptions in emergency situations. Penalties for violations are the same as for smoking violations.

Photography/BBO Vugraph: By entering the event, players (and kibitzers) agree to authorize still and/or video photography by the JCBL and also to appear on BBO VuGraph whenever requested by the Director.

Team Rosters: 20th NEC Cup (KO Stage)

#	Team Name	Members
1	Hackett:	Jason Hackett, Brian Senior, John Holland, Gunnar Hallberg
2	Singapore:	Poon Hua, Loo Choon Chou, Kelvin Ng, Lam Cheng Yen
3	SANDEN:	Hu Mao Yuan, Yang Li Xin, Dai Jian Ming, Jin Ke, Wang Wei Min, Liu Yi Qian
4	SARA:	Tadashi Teramoto, Kumiko Sasahira, Hiroshi Kaku, Masaaki Takayama, Takeshi Niekawa, Shugo Tanaka
5	England Hinden:	Frances Hinden, Graham Osbourne, Alex Hydes, Mike Bell
6	Sweden:	Peter Fredin , Gary Gottlieb , David Probert, Thomas Andersson
7	Russia:	Andrey Gromov, Evgeny Gladyshev, Alexander Dubinin, Mikhail Krasnoselskii, Sebastiaan Drijver, Sjoert Brink
8	England/Netherlands:	David Bakhshi, David Gold, Ricco van Prooijen, Louk Verhees

Real-Time NEC Cup Match Updates on the Web

Wondering how your favorite team is doing in the KO stage? Surf to:
<http://www.jcbl.or.jp/home/English/nec/20th/result/tabid/1236/Default.aspx>
Then click on **Quarter-final Live Result**, **Semi-final Live Result** or **Final Live Result**
to follow the action as it happens.

BBO Viewer Available

You can see all hands, auctions and plays broadcast on BBO
by downloading Masakatsu Sugino's BBO Viewer at:
<http://keiyou.mydns.jp/bbo/allvug/>
(just click on the link for the session you wish to view)

Convention Regulations for Side (Pair) Games

(An explanation for foreign players)

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

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

LIST C (Yokohama IMP Pairs/Asuka Cup)

Opening Bids

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

Responses and Rebids

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

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

Competitive Bids

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

Carding


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

LIST D (NEC Cup/Yokohama Swiss Teams)


Category 3 of WBF Systems Policy applies

Yokohama IMP Pairs — 40 pairs


Rank	Names	Score
1	Keiko Enomoto Hiroaki Miura	1901
2	Sridharan Pad'abhan Sund'am Srinivasan	1766
3	Griff Ware Michael Wilkinson	1130
4	Tadashi Yoshida Sue Picus	892
5	Gopal Venkatesh Keyzad Anklesaria	865
6	Fumi Tanaka Hiroki Yokoi	821
7	Daisuke Sugimoto Yukiko Akayama	731
8	Ayako Miyakuni Sakiko Naito	686
9	Kazuhiro Hyodo Mayumi Nakamura	474
10	Sungae Yang Patrick Huang	434
11	Im Hyun Kwon Sooja	415
12	Park Jungyoon Kim Yoonkyung	409
13	Lee Bokhee Natsuko Nishida	370
14	Xue Xiaoli Tao Jianhua	295



IMP Pairs — 1st




IMP Pairs — 2nd



IMP Pairs — 3rd

Beginners Cup (under 20 MP) — 12 pairs


Rank	Names	Score
1	Atsuko Takeoka Kyouko Nakazawa	205
2	Makiko Inoue Tomoko Miyama	183
3	Yachiyo Nakazawa Yukari Nakadate	100
4	Toshiji Hiruma Yusuaki Yamashita	82
5	Kikuko Ikawa Akiko Nakao	27



Winners: Beginners (20)

Beginners Cup (under 5 MP) — 26 pairs


Rank	Names	Score
1	Haruyo Nakagawa Megumi Chino	321
2	Kumiko Oshita Mari Sato	317
3	Yae Naka Hiroko Sugano	241
4	Yuriko Kimura Miki Shinozaki	227
5	Kazuko Takeda Misako Takii	222
6	Takako Suematsu Masako Enomoto	220
7	Toyoko Kimura Tokie Horiuchi	190
8	Toshio Ishikawa Kenji Yagi	164
9	Keiko Oami Fusako Imoto	134
10	Shino Sekizaki Keiko Nishida	76



Winners: Beginners (5)

Debutante Cup — 12 pairs

Rank	Names	Score
1	Emiko Kawakami Machiko Yoshida	46.5
2	Izumi Hirasawa Kazuaki Ohara	46.0
3	Mituse Hiratsuka Kyoko Adachi	44.0
4	Toru Kato Kaoru Tamada	43.0
5	Mie Ashida Hiroko Hasegawa	44.0



Winners: Debutante

The Past Comes Alive

www.bridgedailybulletins.nl

Dutch players Frank van Wezel and Hans van de Konijnenberg both collect books, magazines and Daily Bulletins about bridge. They especially enjoy reading Daily Bulletins from the pre-internet era because these bulletins are a treasure trove of wonderful photographs, marvellous sketches, splendid deals, and tremendous stories and anecdotes.

Frank and Hans decided that this material should be at the disposal of all bridge players. At the same time, they want to save the history of bridge from oblivion. Therefore they launched a free website www.bridgedailybulletins.nl. On this site you can find thousands of scanned bulletins, both from the digital era and before. They posted WBF, EBL and ACBL championship bulletins, as well as many from miscellaneous tournaments around the world.

And if you have bulletins that they are missing, please contact them. Contact details can be found on the website.

As a taster of what the site has to offer, here is a deal, reported by Jean Besse, from the 1979 Bermuda Bowl, held in Rio.

Geza Ottlik versus Benito Garozzo

This was Board 8 of the Italy-Australia match, shown on the Vu-Graph:

Dir: West ♠ K3 Vul: None ♥ K97 ♦ A863 ♣ J854 ♠ J74 ♥ Q5 ♦ Q975 ♣ Q762 ♠ A1085 ♥ 108643 ♦ J10 ♣ A10	♠ Q962 ♥ AJ2 ♦ K42 ♣ K93
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Closed Room (Australia: N/S)

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♦	Db!	1♥
All Pass			

South made 8 tricks, and this was considered as a fair result for Australia who scored 110.

In the other room the Italians were more aggressive:

West	North	East	South
<i>Cummings</i>	<i>Lauria</i>	<i>Seres</i>	<i>Garozzo</i>
Pass	Pass	1♣	Db!
2♣	Db!	Pass	2♥
Pass	3♣	Pass	3♥
Pass	4♥!	All Pass	

West led the ♣2 and South's ♣10 won the first trick when East selected not to sacrifice his ♣K at trick 1. Garozzo had little hope to win, and with some resignation, he led a trump to dummy's ♥9 but Seres, East, was quick to seize his opportunity. He cashed ♥J and ♥A and led a third round of trumps, leaving declarer with 8 tricks, down two, and this was 5 IMP to Australia.

Sitting at the commentators' desk with Edgar Kaplan, I was not happy with South's play. I told Edgar that perhaps there was some play for the contract, but Edgar felt that a total of nine tricks was the limit, and, indeed, I could not give him evidence to the contrary.

Still unsatisfied, I decided to phone Geza Ottlik, the inventor of so many extraordinary plays and author of the no less extraordinary new book, "Adventures in Card Play."

I for once obtained a rapid connection with Budapest.

Besse – Hello, Geza, this is Jean Besse speaking from Rio.

Ottlik – Hell! It's 4 a.m. here.

Besse – Sorry, I forgot the time shift, so much I was worried about Board 8.

Ottlik – Are you going to discuss a hand at FOUR a.m.?

Besse – Come on, Geza, time is money. These were the cards. West led a club won by the 10 at Garozzo's 4♥ contract.

Ottlik – Come on, Jean. Didn't you EVER read chapter 4 of my book?

Besse – Hmm! Yes, I suppose. What is it about?

Ottlik – Elopement. Not girls elopement, trump elopement. If you just had applied this technique, dear Jean, you would have spared both your money and my sleep.

Besse – Do you mean that South could win 4♥?

How?

Ottlik – Easy, so easy. Just cash the ♣10 and ♣A, and then run the ♦10. East wins the ♦K. say he leads a club. You ruff, lead to dummy's ♦A, ruff a diamond, go to dummy with the ♠K and lead a fourth diamond in this position:

Dlr: West ♠ 3
 Vul: None ♥ K97
 ♦ 8
 ♣ J

♠ J7
 ♥ Q5
 ♦ Q
 ♣ Q

♠ Q96
 ♥ AJ2
 ♦ ---
 ♣ ---

♠ A108
 ♥ 1086
 ♦ ---
 ♣ ---

East is helpless. If he discards a spade, you ruff, play the ♠A and ruff a small spade. Now, North's fourth club kills the defense. Should East ruff with ♥J, you discard a spade and draw two rounds of trumps. Now you are home free and clear.

Besse – But when East wins the diamond, he need not help you with a club. He may, for example, lead a spade.

Ottlik – No worry: Win with the ♠A, then ♦A, diamond ruff, ♠K and a club ruff, third spade ruff in dummy and another club ruff in hand (East discards a spade as he wouldn't gain anything by ruffing with the jack). That brings down the following 3-card ending:

Dlr: West ♠ ---
 Vul: None ♥ K9
 ♦ 8
 ♣ ---

♠ ---
 ♥ Q5
 ♦ Q
 ♣ ---

♠ ---
 ♥ AJ2
 ♦ ---
 ♣ ---

♠ 10
 ♥ 108
 ♦ ---
 ♣ ---

South plays the ♠10 and, as you may easily work out, the defense is again helpless!

Besse – Thank you, Geza, and sleep well.

Ottlik – All right, Jean, and advise Benito to read my book.



"C'mon. Rock, paper, scissors."

Images of Our Game



"It's either a volcano erupting or that burrito I had for lunch."



"Sorry, but I don't think revoking is a good strategy."



"See, 3♦x was only 1400."



"No, I don't think there's enough time for that between sessions."



"Now them there's fightin' words, pardner."

NEC Quarter-finals (1st half): Hackett vs SARA

by Barry Rigal



Tanaka



Hallberg



Niekawa



Hackett



Teramoto



Sasahira



Senior



Holland

The winning team from the Swiss has traditionally exercised poor judgment in selecting their opponents for the quarter-finals. Let's see if Hackett could do any better.

Bd: 1
 Dir: North
 Vul: None

North
 ♠ K108
 ♥ 2
 ♦ J10982
 ♣ 7542

West
 ♠ J975
 ♥ 8763
 ♦ KQ4
 ♣ 109

East
 ♠ 42
 ♥ AJ105
 ♦ A653
 ♣ AK3

South
 ♠ AQ63
 ♥ KQ94
 ♦ 7
 ♣ QJ86

Open Room

West	North	East	South
Tanaka	Hallberg	Niekawa	Holland
Pass	Pass	1NT	2♣(♥+♠)
Pass	2♠	All Pass	

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
Hackett	Teramoto	Senior	Sasahira
		1NT	All Pass

The Hackett team bought the contract in both rooms. If Sasahira could find a top club lead 1NT would rate to go down, but her normal lead was surely going to be a heart. When she led a low heart declarer scored the ♥8 at trick one and had seven top tricks already. Senior played on spades, but the defenders accurately shifted to clubs to hold him to +90.

In the other room 2♠ was not much fun, but it was

undoubled and not vulnerable; how bad could it be? Hallberg won Niekawa's trump lead in hand and led a club up. East won the king and pressed on with spades. Declarer won in hand, led a heart to the king and ruffed a club, then led a club up. The defenders won and took a club ruff and now declarer had four spade tricks, a heart, a club, and a ruff for seven winners. Not bad at all; 1-0 for Hackett.

In Hinden-Singapore Frances Hinden as East doubled 2♠ on the Open Room auction. Osborne ran to 3♦, doubled "smartly" by Ng, and the defenders emerged with two spades, two hearts, and two diamonds. That 300 went nicely with 500 from 5♣x when a psychic notrump opening by Hydes saw his partner take him seriously and drive to game on a convoluted auction.

All the other four tables stayed low, Eng/Ned picking up a small swing for making 1NT and defeating 2NT.

If you are going to buy the hand in both rooms, it is best when non-vulnerable in each. Witness:

Bd: 2
 Dir: East
 Vul: N/S

North
 ♠ AJ1053
 ♥ KQ8
 ♦ 102
 ♣ KQ6

West
 ♠ K97
 ♥ 65
 ♦ AK654
 ♣ 1087

East
 ♠ 642
 ♥ AJ1074
 ♦ J
 ♣ AJ52

South
 ♠ Q8
 ♥ 932
 ♦ Q9873
 ♣ 943

Open Room			
West	North	East	South
Tanaka	Hallberg	Niekawa	Holland
		1♥	Pass
1NT	2♠	Pass	Pass
2NT	All Pass		
Closed Room			
West	North	East	South
Hackett	Teramoto	Senior	Sasahira
		1♥	Pass
1NT	2♠	All Pass	

Opinions differ from the Editors' table as to whether a double (from either side) of 2♠, or indeed of a suit responder might hold, is better played as takeout, optional or penalty. One editor leans toward defensive, one toward takeout. Regardless, it should be played approximately the same from either seat as an asymmetric treatment won't allow the partnership to act intelligently on too many hands.

Here Tanaka was prepared to try for game, Hackett was prepared to cut his partner some slack for a light opener at favorable vulnerability. Senior led his singleton diamond and Hackett won to shift to hearts, leaving declarer little option but to win the second heart and play trumps from hand. Hackett won to shift to clubs and Teramoto had four spades and one trick in each of the round suits for down 200.

In 2NT Tanaka was faced with four top spade losers so he needed hearts to behave very well for him. He won the spade lead and ducked a heart when North split his honors, allowing Hallberg to cash out his spades. All Hallberg could do now was exit in clubs. Tanaka won the ♣A, cashed his diamonds, then led a second heart and repeated the finesse for +120; 2 imps to Hackett, up 3-0.

That 200 in 2♠ was the result from both tables in Hinden-Singapore, but Gold-Bakhshi managed to stop in 2♣ as E/W while defeating 3♦ three tricks in the other room. Sweden also went plus in both rooms, defeating 2♠ and 3♦.

Bd: 3	North		
Dlr: South	♠ 10543		
Vul: E/W	♥ A83		
	♦ A73		
	♣ J87		
West		East	
♠ K2		♠ J87	
♥ 1075		♥ K94	
♦ K1065		♦ J42	
♣ Q954		♣ A632	
	South		
	♠ AQ96		
	♥ QJ62		
	♦ Q98		
	♣ K10		

Open Room			
West	North	East	South
Tanaka	Hallberg	Niekawa	Holland
			1♥
Pass	2♥	All Pass	
Closed Room			
West	North	East	South
Hackett	Teramoto	Senior	Sasahira
			1♦
Pass	1♠	Pass	2♠
All Pass			

Four-card majors and a strong notrump is the ultimate "quick and dirty" system, but sometimes your best fit gets away from you, as here. In return you get to practice your play in 4-3 fits. The Expert Game, Terence Reese's masterpiece, features many exercises in control for just that reason. In the old days you called a spade a spade even when you only had four of them.

Revenons a nos moutons. Holland played 2♥ on a trump lead and diamond shift. He correctly put in the nine to force the ten and led a spade to the nine and king. He won the spade return, drew trumps and led a diamond to the eight (knowing West would have led a diamond to trick one from J10x). He won the diamond return and could cash out the spades ending in dummy to misguess clubs and hold himself to eight tricks.

Teramoto played 2♠ on a trump lead. Hackett won the ♠K at trick one and continued the suit. Declarer drew trumps, led a heart to the ace, then a second heart. Continuing the passive theme the defense won the ♥K and played a third heart. Declarer pitched a diamond from hand, then eventually guessed clubs for the overtrick. That made it 3-1, Hackett.

Bd: 4	North		
Dlr: West	♠ AJ54		
Vul: Both	♥ ---		
	♦ AK1075		
	♣ 9876		
West		East	
♠ K7632		♠ 1098	
♥ 1098		♥ Q7653	
♦ 82		♦ 6	
♣ AK2		♣ J1043	
	South		
	♠ Q		
	♥ AKJ42		
	♦ QJ943		
	♣ Q5		

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Tanaka</i>	<i>Hallberg</i>	<i>Niekawa</i>	<i>Holland</i>
Pass	1♦	Pass	1♥
1♠	Pass	2♠	3♣
Pass	4♣	Pass	4♦
Pass	4♠	Pass	5♦

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Hackett</i>	<i>Teramoto</i>	<i>Senior</i>	<i>Sasahira</i>
Pass	1♦	Pass	1♥
1♠	2♣	2♠	3♠
Pass	3NT	All Pass	

Teramoto reached 3NT on a spade lead and simply took his nine winners. Hallberg reached 5♦ on the same spade lead and could draw trumps and discard a club on his top spade for 12 tricks. 4-1 to Hackett.

Had N/S reached 6♦ I wonder if a double from West would have secured the club lead he needed (East might know from the auction that West could not hold a heart void and that if he had two heart winners they would not be standing up). 4-1 now to Hackett.

My idle speculation became somehow more relevant when I saw that Verhees-van Prooijen had bid to 6♦. Their auction saw South relay over a 1♠ opening with a game-forcing 2♣ response to find North with a 4-1-5-3 hand type. Then South bid 4♦, to play 4♠ or as it turned out to invite slam in diamonds with one keycard. North raised himself to slam and West could have found a Lightner double with more confidence, but he didn't, and East led a heart, letting declarer finesse and claim 12 tricks a moment later.

To prove that more than one pair could psych, Gladysh-Krasnoselskii played 4♥ undoubled down 700 as E/W. After the unopposed auction: 1♠ - 2♥ - 4♥ I guess Krasnoselskii should not have played to make. Lose 2imps, and certainly cheap at the price!

Bd: 5
Dlr: North
Vul: N/S

North	♠ J104
	♥ K10
	♦ AQ
	♣ AJ9752
West	East
♠ 986532	♠ A7
♥ A6	♥ J532
♦ 953	♦ K8742
♣ Q6	♣ K4
South	
♠ KQ	
♥ Q9874	
♦ J106	
♣ 1083	

Open/Closed Rooms

West	North	East	South
<i>Tanaka</i>	<i>Hallberg</i>	<i>Niekawa</i>	<i>Holland</i>
<i>Hackett</i>	<i>Teramoto</i>	<i>Senior</i>	<i>Sasahira</i>
	1NT	Pass	2♦
Pass	2♥	Pass	2NT
Pass	3NT	All Pass	

Whether you transfer and invite with an eight-count is entirely up to you. The hand has so many positives and negatives that I'm sure we could have a whole range of opinions from treating the hand as an automatic continuation to a clear pass. Both Souths were swayed by the lure of the vulnerable game. Both Wests managed to signal their diamond length at trick one. Teramoto gave up on illegitimate chances to make the contract, clearing clubs and letting Senior establish diamonds. The defenders took two aces, a club and three diamonds; down two.

Hallberg tried the ♥K at trick two, hoping it would be ducked or that the defenders could not work out to switch back to diamonds. West won and cleared diamonds, so Hallberg knocked out the ♠A and the defenders cashed out. There was still a club to lose at the end; down two. No swing, still 4-1.

Ng found the way to steal the game. Having opened 1NT, he won the diamond lead in hand, led a spade to the king, then cleared clubs by leading the ten, covered by West. After winning the ♣K East decided to put her partner in with a heart for a diamond through, not knowing declarer had six clubs. Now declarer had one heart trick, one spade, two diamonds and five clubs. Singapore led 24-1 now.

On Board 6 in Hackett-SARA a strong notrump was passed out. Both defenses let through an overtrick on the opening lead in inelegant fashion (one led low from ♥AKxx, one led the nine from ♣J98x to keep partner from rising with the king from ♣Kxxx). Push.

The next deal demonstrated a somewhat surprising difference in approach to opening in third seat, vulnerable. What percentage of players do you think would pass the North hand?

Bd: 7
Dlr: South
Vul: Both

North	♠ J84
	♥ A10542
	♦ KJ3
	♣ J2
West	East
♠ 62	♠ AK107
♥ K9876	♥ J
♦ 1072	♦ A864
♣ K65	♣ Q1094
South	
♠ Q953	
♥ Q3	
♦ Q95	
♣ A873	

Open Room

West	North	East	South
Tanaka	Hallberg	Niekawa	Holland
Pass	Pass	1♦	Pass
1♥	Pass	1♠	Pass
1NT	All Pass		

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
Hackett	Teramoto	Senior	Sasahira
Pass	1♥	Dbl	Pass
1NT	Pass	Pass	2♥
All Pass			

Hallberg's discretion makes perfect sense; after all he didn't know he wanted a heart lead against the opponents' final contract and he was vulnerable. Had he led a spade against 1NT declarer might have struggled, but he led a heart and Tanaka won, led a club to the ten, and had seven winners.

In the other room 2♥ was not a thing of beauty and an early club lead might have resulted in -200. But Senior quite reasonably led the ♥J to clear up a guess of sorts. When he shifted to spades to let Hackett ruff with a trump trick, Teramoto had avoided a club loser; down 100. Still 4-1, Hackett.

In Hinden-Singapore Hydes led the ♠J against 1NT to defeat the part-score while in the other room East played 1♥ via a transfer response to 1♣; down one.

Just when you might think you have a bead on Hallberg's competitive style, along comes:

Bd: 8
 Dir: West
 Vul: None

North
♠ K86
♥ AQ932
♦ 8
♣ J842

West	East
♠ 7	♠ QJ104
♥ 1086	♥ KJ54
♦ KQ109432	♦ 7
♣ 63	♣ Q975

South
♠ A9532
♥ 7
♦ AJ65
♣ AK10

Open Room

West	North	East	South
Tanaka	Hallberg	Niekawa	Holland
3♦	3♥	Pass	3♠
Pass	4♠	All Pass	

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
Hackett	Teramoto	Senior	Sasahira
3♦	Pass	Pass	3♠
Pass	4♠	All Pass	

Sasahira won the diamond lead and made the mistake of playing a spade to dummy, then a club to the ace to take a heart finesse. Back came a trump. Declarer won to ruff a diamond. Senior over-ruffed, played the last trump, then exited with a low heart. Declarer rejected the club finesse and lost a club and a diamond at the end; down two.

The good news for SARA was that the hostile lie of the cards made the correct play in 4♠ very unclear. Holland won the diamond lead and immediately ruffed a diamond with the ♠8, over-ruffed by the ten. Endplayed, Niekawa got out with a top spade and Holland followed Andrew Robson's bridge tip "If they preempt and lead their suit they have a singleton trump." He won in dummy, finessed in spades, and had 10 tricks when West showed out. An alternative line might have been to take the club finesse and then play the ♠A and ♣AK before endplaying East with a trump. You can then discard a diamond on the ♣Q and wait for a heart lead into dummy's tenace.

Indeed, on a club lead this was almost exactly what Bell did to come home with ten tricks for Hinden. In the other room the auction started as in the Open Room. Yen bid 3NT over 3♥, ducked the diamond lead, won the spade shift, but now the bad spade break held him to just three tricks in each black suit and two aces. Down one; 24-14, Singapore.

Russia gained 12imps by beating 2♦x 300 and 6♠x 300 (even I might have doubled slam as East here) and led 12-8. Just to prove the point, Louk Verhees did *not* double 6♠ and collected +150; good for 8imps when West opened 4♦ in the other room, played there and went for 200. Someone get that team a red card (or three).

Trailing 15-1, SARA struck back at once.

Bd: 9
 Dir: North
 Vul: E/W

North
♠ K9
♥ 1097
♦ AQ75
♣ A765

West	East
♠ A10742	♠ J63
♥ KQ	♥ AJ8542
♦ 8	♦ 1043
♣ KJ1083	♣ 4

South
♠ Q85
♥ 63
♦ KJ962
♣ Q92

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Tanaka</i>	<i>Hallberg</i>	<i>Niekawa</i>	<i>Holland</i>
	1♦	Pass	2♦
2♠	3♦	3♠	4♦
4♠	All Pass		

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Hackett</i>	<i>Teramoto</i>	<i>Senior</i>	<i>Sasahira</i>
	1♦	2♥	3♦
3♥	All Pass		

I don't think a heart lead would have deflected Tanaka from the winning line in 4♠. As it was, after ace and another diamond he ruffed and led a low spade to the nine, jack and queen. He ruffed the next diamond, crossed his fingers, and laid down the ♠A. When he opened his eyes the ♠K was on the table, and +620 was on the scorecard. In context it hardly mattered that Senior misguessed the play in 3♥ on a diamond lead and heart shift. Had he won in dummy to lead the ♣J to South's queen he would have emerged with overtricks. But when he played the ♣K to Teramoto's ace, back came a second heart. Now the defenders got in with the ♣Q, cashed a diamond and played a spade to dislodge dummy's entry for down one. 12 imps to SARA left them trailing 15-13.

Hinden-Osbourne played 2♠ making three here but that was not enough since their teammates saved in 4NTx over 4♠ and went for 800. The same 12 imps went to Eng/Ned, who made 4♥ by guessing how to set up clubs while the SANDEN declarer played 4♠ and misguessed the play in trumps. Sweden gained 7 imps for making a part-score in spades and setting the game.

Bd: 10
 Dir: East
 Vul: Both

North
♠ A9
♥ Q932
♦ 97632
♣ Q8

West	East
♠ 8765	♠ KQ4
♥ 765	♥ K4
♦ KQJ84	♦ 105
♣ A	♣ KJ9763

South
♠ J1032
♥ AJ108
♦ A
♣ 10542

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Tanaka</i>	<i>Hallberg</i>	<i>Niekawa</i>	<i>Holland</i>
		1♣	Pass
1♠	Pass	2♣	Pass

3♣ All Pass

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Hackett</i>	<i>Teramoto</i>	<i>Senior</i>	<i>Sasahira</i>
		1♣	Pass
1♠	Pass	2♣	All Pass

Dick Walsh has a lot to answer for and deals like this make me wonder where exactly one draws the line to say: "I really don't have a four-card major." Both Wests showed no compunction introducing their suit of power and quality, and then had to guess what to do next. I would have thought the choice of actions to be which pass card to pull out, but the Senior Editor agrees with Tanaka's choice. Then again, both editors consider any bid but 2♠ by East at his second turn to be a non-starter, and that we would feel that way even if the bid guaranteed four trumps in support. (Not that 2♠ is a piece of cake, but that is neither here nor there; we don't let facts stand in the way of a good argument.)

Against 2♣ Sasahira led a trump. Senior won in dummy, crossed to the ♠K and played trumps. The defenders won the ♣10, the ♠A, cashed two hearts and took the ♦A. That was +90 for Senior and was worth 5 imps when the play followed the identical sequence against 3♣. 20-13 now, Hackett.

Bd: 11
 Dir: South
 Vul: None

North
♠ K4
♥ J74
♦ K9872
♣ AJ2

West	East
♠ J53	♠ Q1098
♥ 8653	♥ AQ1092
♦ J10	♦ Q63
♣ K1097	♣ 4

South
♠ A762
♥ K
♦ A54
♣ Q8653

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Tanaka</i>	<i>Hallberg</i>	<i>Niekawa</i>	<i>Holland</i>
			1♣
Pass	1♦	1♥	1♠
3♥	5♣	All Pass	

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Hackett</i>	<i>Teramoto</i>	<i>Senior</i>	<i>Sasahira</i>
			1♣
Pass	1♦	Dbl	1♠
Pass	2NT	All Pass	

Of the two auctions I surely prefer the Open Room sequence, where even though Holland turned up with the worst possible singleton heart holding, game was not without play. After a heart lead to the ace and a club to the jack, Holland tested trumps, then gave up a diamond to East. He could ruff two hearts in hand and a spade in dummy for nine tricks, but no more.

In the other room play took a somewhat unexpected turn when Senior led the ♠9 to declarer who played the ♣A, then a club to the queen and king. Senior signaled for hearts but Hackett led the ♠J around to dummy. Teramoto exited with a spade. Senior won, cashed his spades (forcing North to discard diamonds), then took the ♥A and played the ♦Q. Declarer won this in hand, took the ♣J (as Senior pitched a heart), then got out with a low heart. That left Senior with two hearts to cash and in the two-card ending Senior had two diamonds left, Hackett the ♦J and ♣10. Senior led a low diamond, letting declarer finesse to the bare jack for down three. Teramoto might have considered whether Hackett would really have dropped the ♦10 from ♦106 earlier in the deal but maybe that is nit-picking. In any event, Hackett had 2 imps to lead 22-15.

Hydes and Bell played 5♦ and couldn't quite bring it home but 3NT in the other room was down one for a push.

Sometimes the Editors wonder whether is enough hush-money in the world to silence them. The answer is no: the truth, like murder, will out. So fasten your seat-belts. Its going to be a bumpy ride.

Bd: 12
 Dir: West
 Vul: N/S

North
 ♠ 972
 ♥ Q9832
 ♦ AJ85
 ♣ 4

West
 ♠ KQJ8
 ♥ J107
 ♦ 62
 ♣ 10972

East
 ♠ A43
 ♥ 64
 ♦ KQ9
 ♣ AKJ83

South
 ♠ 1065
 ♥ AK5
 ♦ 10743
 ♣ Q65

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Tanaka</i>	<i>Hallberg</i>	<i>Niekawa</i>	<i>Holland</i>
Pass	Pass	1NT	All Pass

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Hackett</i>	<i>Teramoto</i>	<i>Senior</i>	<i>Sasahira</i>
Pass	Pass	1♣	Pass
1♠	Pass	2NT	Pass
3NT	All Pass		

The defenders cashed five hearts against 1NT and in due course declarer dislodged the ♦A for his seventh trick. Nicely stopped!

In the other room one can understand South leading a diamond, though I'd prefer to lead the ♦7 myself, system permitting. North won and pressed on with diamonds. Senior won, cashed two top clubs as North (playing reverse signals) pitched the ♥2 and ♠9, then instead of giving up for down one decided to clear clubs. A wise decision, since South won the ♣Q and exited in spades, letting declarer claim the rest. How many "m"s in Hmmp? Only two according to Google. 30-13, Hackett.

Both tables played 3NT in Hinden-Singapore. Bell led a top heart and cashed out for 100. Yen led a low diamond to the ace against Osborne. He considered it a worthwhile investment to drop an honor to ensure a diamond continuation, but when clubs did not behave he was back down to -100. Oh well, no one ever lost a match by 2 imps. The running score here was 38-14, Singapore. Well done to Probert-Andersson for stopping in part-score after a strong club. They played 2♠ for +140.

Both N/S pairs in our featured match did well, in a sense, here.

Bd: 13
 Dir: North
 Vul: Both

North
 ♠ KQJ763
 ♥ J
 ♦ J9
 ♣ KQJ6

West
 ♠ 4
 ♥ AK10632
 ♦ 632
 ♣ 832

East
 ♠ A1098
 ♥ Q875
 ♦ 854
 ♣ 97

South
 ♠ 52
 ♥ 94
 ♦ AKQ107
 ♣ A1054

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Tanaka</i>	<i>Hallberg</i>	<i>Niekawa</i>	<i>Holland</i>
Pass	1♠	Pass	2♦
Pass	2♠	Pass	4♠

All Pass

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Hackett</i>	<i>Teramoto</i>	<i>Senior</i>	<i>Sasahira</i>
Pass	1♠	Pass	2♦
2♥	2♠	3♥	3♠
Pass	4♠	All Pass	

You can see how it might be right to play 5♣ if North's spades were slightly weaker (say AJxxxx) and even as the cards lie, N/S might easily go overboard — or be pushed there. Both pairs coped competently with the problems of the deal, though, and the match score remained 30-13.

Only Drijver-Brink went overboard in 5♠ (admittedly they were somewhat unlucky).

Bd: 14 North
 Dlr: East ♠ K74
 Vul: None ♡ AKJ96
 ♢ 1098
 ♣ A9

West
 ♠ 1093
 ♡ Q105
 ♢ 2
 ♣ K87543

East
 ♠ AJ85
 ♡ 742
 ♢ AJ5
 ♣ Q102

South
 ♠ Q62
 ♡ 83
 ♢ KQ7643
 ♣ J6

Open/Closed Rooms

West	North	East	South
<i>Tanaka</i>	<i>Hallberg</i>	<i>Niekawa</i>	<i>Holland</i>
<i>Hackett</i>	<i>Teramoto</i>	<i>Senior</i>	<i>Sasahira</i>
3♣	3♡	1♣	1♢
		All Pass	

Neither North seemed to be quite confident if 3♡ was forcing (surely doubling and bidding 3♡ over 3♢, or even 4♡ over 3♠, was indicated). Senior led a trump against 3♡ and declarer led a diamond to the king. Now he drew trumps, then played a second diamond, and claimed 11 tricks when Senior took his ♢A.

In the other room the club lead gave Hallberg fits. He elected to play three rounds of hearts, and now a shift to the ♠10 would have ensured a fifth trick for the defense. But West switched back to clubs. Hallberg ruffed the following club and played for his only chance, that East was 4-3-3-3, by running the ♢10. Three rounds of diamonds put East in and when he exited with the ♠J declarer put up the queen and claimed ten tricks, to lose an imp. Cheap at the price.

For Hinden, Hydes played 2♡ making +170 after a precision 1♢ by East had silenced South, while in the other room Hinden led a club to defeat 4♡. (Declarer ducked, and the defense shifted to a spade to the queen. Declarer drew trump, but Hinden ducked two diamonds and collected two spades and a diamond in the end.)

Van Prooijen made 3NT as North after a heart lead while both tables in Russia-Sweden brought home 3NT. I guess if no one bids clubs, no one leads them.

Bd: 15 North
 Dlr: South ♠ AK9862
 Vul: N/S ♡ K42
 ♢ K9
 ♣ J6

West
 ♠ 5
 ♡ J107
 ♢ J10732
 ♣ KQ94

East
 ♠ Q107
 ♡ Q865
 ♢ ---
 ♣ A107532

South
 ♠ J43
 ♡ A93
 ♢ AQ8654
 ♣ 8

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Tanaka</i>	<i>Hallberg</i>	<i>Niekawa</i>	<i>Holland</i>
Pass	1♠	2♣	2♠
5♣	5♠	All Pass	

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Hackett</i>	<i>Teramoto</i>	<i>Senior</i>	<i>Sasahira</i>
Pass	1♠	Dbl	2♢
3♣	4♠	5♣	Pass
Pass	Dbl	All Pass	

Sasahira's decision to raise diamonds and not support spades over 5♣ left Teramoto with a very difficult decision; I certainly sympathize with his choice of double. After all, if partner had a singleton club she could hardly have three spades, could she? 5♣x doubled took the obvious ten tricks, while after a top club lead 5♠ was easy to play, declarer taking two top trumps, then discarding a heart on the diamonds and ruffing a club in dummy. It was 41-14 now to Hackett, and that remained the score at the half after both Wests guessed an ace-queen combination on the final deal to bring home +680.

In Singapore-Hinden Chou overcalled 1♠ with 3♣ as East, which got him to 5♣x down 100. A nice result, but his teammates bid unopposed to slam and the bad trump break doomed it. 5 imps to Hinden, down 38-25.

Let's take a look at that quiet last deal now.

Bd: 16
 Dir: West
 Vul: E/W

North
 ♠ 9
 ♥ Q876
 ♦ J10854
 ♣ A43

West
 ♠ AKJ43
 ♥ 9
 ♦ A9
 ♣ KJ1087

East
 ♠ Q1072
 ♥ 1042
 ♦ KQ32
 ♣ 52

South
 ♠ 865
 ♥ AKJ53
 ♦ 76
 ♣ Q96

Everyone played 4♠, except that when Mike Bell for Hinden heard the auction go 1♠ - 3♠ (mixed) to him, he tried 4♥. Now everyone kept bidding spades and hearts for a while, and the music stopped in 6♥x. The defenders led and continued spades. Declarer ruffed, ducked a diamond to West, won the heart return in hand and ducked a second diamond. Then he ruffed a diamond, ruffed a spade, ruffed a diamond and drew trumps, crossing to the ♣A to cash the long diamond and concede trick 13 to the ♣K. Down 500, but 5 imps meant Hinden trailed 38-30 at the break.

With 16 boards to go Sweden led by 11 imps, Eng/Ned by 35. We will see these two teams in the second half on BBO.

NEC Quarter-finals (2nd half): Sweden vs Russia

by Rich Colker



Andersson



Gromov



Probert



Brink



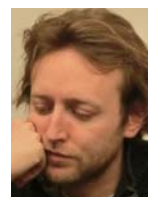
Fredin



Dubinin



Gottlieb



Drijver

Sweden entered the second half of their semi-final match against Russia with a fragile 11-imp lead, 35-24, and VuGraph fans did not have to wait long for the fireworks to begin.

Bd: 17
 Dir: North
 Vul: None

North
 ♠ J10
 ♥ QJ108532
 ♦ AJ9
 ♣ Q

West
 ♠ 98752
 ♥ 7
 ♦ Q1082
 ♣ A32

East
 ♠ KQ6
 ♥ 9
 ♦ 764
 ♣ 1098765

South
 ♠ A43
 ♥ AK64
 ♦ K53
 ♣ KJ4

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Ander'son</i>	<i>Gromov</i>	<i>Probert</i>	<i>Dubinin</i>
	4♥	Pass	4NT(KC)
Pass	5♣(1-4)	Pass	6♥

All Pass

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Brink</i>	<i>Fredin</i>	<i>Drijver</i>	<i>Gottlieb</i>
	1♥	Pass	2NT(♥)
Pass	3♣(1)	Pass	3♦
Dbl	3♥	Pass	4♥
Pass	4NT(2)	All Pass(!)	

(1) Shortness
 (2) Ace asking

In the Open Room Gromov-Dubinin bid briskly to 6♥, the success of which hung on the opening lead. Declarer's spade loser could be pitched on a club, but only with a non-spade lead. Probert may have heard of the old adage "If they have hearts, we have

spades,” or his ♠KQ may have called to him. Or the ♠K could have fallen on the table by mistake. In any case, the ♠K lead doomed the slam; down one, –50.

If someone has passed Blackwood, it’s a fair bet that Peter Fredin is close by. In the Closed Room Fredin showed a minimum in response to Gottlieb’s 2NT (an artificial game-forcing major-suit raise asking for further description). Gottlieb then asked further, and Fredin showed a singleton club. Now Gottlieb just bid game, perhaps thinking that the double would likely elicit a diamond lead through his king, which might well be fatal to a slam. Fredin then bid 4NT and Gottlieb passed! Perhaps he was convinced that a slam would fail. In any case, this was a bad-news, good-news, bad-news situation. The bad news was that Gottlieb passed a forcing bid when his partner did, in fact, have the situation he feared covered. The good news was that the slam could be beaten. But the final bad news was that the double might well have influenced Drijver to lead a diamond rather than the ♠K, in which case the slam would make. Unfortunately, we’ll never know. 4NT was easy. Gottlieb took 11 tricks (+460), even with a spade lead from Brink (both defenders pitched diamonds on the run of the hearts). That was 11 imps to Sweden, who increased their lead to 46-24.

The three tables who bid slam went down when East found the lead in front of his nose (for a push in SARA-Hackett) while the other two matches played game in each table.

Bd: 18 North
 Dir: East ♠ AK8
 Vul: N/S ♡ 2
 ♢ A1098653
 ♣ J6

West East
 ♠ J10964 ♠ Q752
 ♡ AKJ876 ♡ 4
 ♢ 7 ♢ QJ
 ♣ 3 ♣ AQ10975

South
 ♠ 3
 ♡ Q10953
 ♢ K42
 ♣ K842

Open Room
 West North East South
Ander’son Gromov Probert Dubinin
 2♥ 3♦ Pass Pass
 3♥ All Pass

Closed Room
 West North East South
Brink Fredin Drijver Gottlieb
 1♥ 2♦ Pass 3♦
 3♠ 5♦ Dbl All Pass

In the Open Room Andersson-Probert had problems finding their nine-card spade fit and consequently ended up playing 3♥ in the 6-1. Gromov led the ♠A, saw Dubinin’s 3, and switched to the ♦A, Dubinin contributing the 4. Now Gromov reverted to spades, cashing the king and giving Dubinin a ruff. Next came the ♦K, ruffed by Andersson, who then crossed to the ♣A, played a heart to the jack, and conceded a trick when the suit failed to split; down one, –50.

In the Closed Room Brink introduced his secondary spade suit at the same level that Andersson had declined to do so in the other room. But here Gottlieb had shown his diamond support so now Fredin leaped to 5♦ and Drijver doubled. The defense was exacting. Drijver led the ♥4 to the ten and jack and Brink switched to a club to obtain his ruff. Now a heart promoted a second trump trick for the defense. Down two, –500, and 11 imps back to Russia, who trailed by 11 imps again at 46-35.

Results here were all over the place. Best for N/S were Hallberg-Holland, playing 5♦ and making it on a spade lead. By contrast, Wang-Jin for SANDEN played 4♠x after South had overcalled in hearts, on the defense of the ♦A and three rounds of trumps. Declarer, Wang, guessed to finesse in hearts, then led a club to the ace and advanced the ♣Q to pin the doubleton jack. Wowza! 12 imps to SANDEN, closing the gap to 23 imps.

On Board 19 both N/S pairs played in game. The Russians played 3NT making +460, the Swedes played 4♠ (in the 5-2 fit) making +480 when the defense failed to take their two aces when they had the chance; 1 imp to Sweden, leading 47-35.

Bd: 20 North
 Dir: West ♠ Q75
 Vul: Both ♡ 1085
 ♢ Q10873
 ♣ 108

West East
 ♠ 983 ♠ AK4
 ♡ J9 ♡ A7632
 ♢ 5 ♢ J9
 ♣ QJ97642 ♣ AK5

South
 ♠ J1062
 ♡ KQ4
 ♢ AK642
 ♣ 3

Open Room
 West North East South
Ander’son Gromov Probert Dubinin
 Pass Pass 1♣(STR) 1♦
 Pass 3♦ All Pass

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Brink</i>	<i>Fredin</i>	<i>Drijver</i>	<i>Gottlieb</i>
3♣	Pass	4♦(KC)Dbl	
5♣	All Pass		

To paraphrase Shakespeare: "Vulnerability doth make cowards of us all." In the Open Room Probert wiped out when the Russians interrupted his strong club auction to preempt to a level at which he could not see reentering with such a poor suit. Surprisingly, 3♦ was cold on any defense and Dubinin was soon scoring up +110.

Sjoert Brink was the exception to the Shakespearian rule here and his 3♣ opening launched Drijver into slam mode. Luckily for the two Swedes, he managed to subside safely short of the big bonus levels. Indeed, 5♣ would have been cold even on less fortuitous lies of the cards, but here the 3-3 heart split made things easy (just set up a heart pitch for the third spade) and soon Brink was scoring up +600 for a useful 12-imp gain. Russia had come all the way back to tie Sweden at 47 all.

Verhees-van Prooijen were the only other pair to reach 5♣ here when after intervention to a strong club West managed to get his clubs into play. Hinden missed game in one room; not to worry, they played slam down a trick in the other. I *told* you those Singapore guys bid a lot. Hinden trailed 41-36 now.

Bd: 21
 Dir: North
 Vul: N/S

North
 ♠ AJ65
 ♥ 6
 ♦ A1075
 ♣ KQ108

West
 ♠ Q1032
 ♥ 1054
 ♦ J
 ♣ AJ742

East
 ♠ ---
 ♥ KJ973
 ♦ KQ9864
 ♣ 53

South
 ♠ K9874
 ♥ AQ82
 ♦ 32
 ♣ 96

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Ander'son</i>	<i>Gromov</i>	<i>Probert</i>	<i>Dubinin</i>
	1♦	1♥	Dbl
3♥	3♠	4♦	4♠
Dbl	All Pass		

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Brink</i>	<i>Fredin</i>	<i>Drijver</i>	<i>Gottlieb</i>
	1♦	1♥	1♠
3♥	4♠	5♥	Dbl
All Pass			

In the Open Room Probert made a practical 1♥ overcall after Gromov stole his real suit. Dubinin's double showed 4 or 5 spades (1♠ would have denied four or more spades) and now Andersson entered the Twilight Zone ("that's the signpost up ahead") with his jump to 3♥ and later double of 4♠. If he was hoping to get a chance to double 4♠ perhaps he should be careful what he wishes for; he just might get it. 4♠x was not the stuff of Andersson's dreams. Probert led a low heart to the ace and Gromov called for a club. Andersson rose with the ace and played a second heart. Gromov ruffed, cashed the ♣K, then the ♣Q (Probert pitching a diamond, as did dummy), then ruffed a club. Next he led a diamond to the ace, ruffed a diamond and got over-ruffed. He ruffed the heart return and claimed ten tricks; +790. What a revolting development that was.

In the Closed Room Brink also preemptively jump-raised his partner's overcall on ten-third (yes, we can see the side singleton) so this must be that "modern game" we've heard so much about. Good grief! If you wonder where Drijver's 4♥ bid came from you need look no further than the 3♥ bid (and yes, we can see Drijver's 6-5 hand but Fredin did open the suit naturally). Gottlieb led a diamond to the ace and Fredin switched to a trump. Gottlieb won the queen, cashed the ace (a spade from Fredin) and led a third round leaving Drijver with a loser in each minor for down three, -500. That was 7 more imps to Russia, who led for the first time this set at 54-47.

All the N/S pairs went plus here from a low of -200 from 3♥ down four to a high of +990 from 4♠x (both in Hackett vs SARA, the former gaining 13 imps). Our other close match saw Hinden gain 5 imps from 5♥x down four, leaving them level with Singapore.

On Board 22 both E/W pairs played game, the Dutch 5♣, the Swedes 3NT. Both contracts could be made several ways; a push at 600. Still 54-47 Russia, but Hinden sneaked in front of their opponents when Singapore collected only 500 from a sacrifice when 800 was available. It was 44-41 now.

Bd: 23
 Dir: South
 Vul: Both

North
 ♠ AK94
 ♥ J854
 ♦ 72
 ♣ A106

West
 ♠ 876
 ♥ Q
 ♦ AJ54
 ♣ KJ974

East
 ♠ QJ10532
 ♥ 103
 ♦ 1093
 ♣ Q8

South
 ♠ ---
 ♥ AK9762
 ♦ KQ86
 ♣ 532

Open Room
 West North East South
Ander'son Gromov Probert Dubinin
 Pass 2♣ Pass 2♦
 Pass 2♥ Pass 3♥
 Pass 3♠ Pass 4♦
 Pass 4♠ Pass 5♦
 Pass 6♥ All Pass

Closed Room
 West North East South
Brink Fredin Drijver Gottlieb
 Pass 2NT(GF♥) Pass 4♥(1)
 All Pass

(1) Spade void, min (11-14)

Maybe Gottlieb could have treated his hand as a non-minimum because of his sixth trump and honors in combination. Simpler is not always better, as Fredin-Gottlieb surely discovered during the comparison — if not earlier. At the risk of contradicting Shakespeare (ala Hamlet), here the play's *not* the thing; +680.

The Russians' auction in the Open Room may not have been a thing of beauty, but it was successful. Another 12 tricks, this time for +1430 and another 13 imps. Russian now led 67-47.

For Singapore Ng and Yen found the slam, to put them back in front by 10 imps.

Board 24 was a push when both N/S pairs made 1NT with an overtrick. The Swedes had not won an imp in five straight boards, but that was about to change.

Bd: 25 North
 Dlr: North ♠ A8765
 Vul: E/W ♥ A5
 ♦ Q652
 ♣ J2

West	East
♠ KQ	♠ 104
♥ 1084	♥ K963
♦ 104	♦ KJ3
♣ AK9743	♣ Q865

South
 ♠ J932
 ♥ QJ72
 ♦ A987
 ♣ 10

Open Room
 West North East South
Ander'son Gromov Probert Dubinin
 1♠ Pass 3♣(♠)
 Pass 3♠ All Pass

Closed Room
 West North East South
Brink Fredin Drijver Gottlieb
 Pass Pass Pass Pass
 1♣ 1♠ Dbl 3♣
 All Pass

Dubinin's 3♣ bid in the Open Room may have been a sort of mini-splinter or some variation on a Bergen Raise (as a passed hand); in any case, Gromov was not biting. Probert led a low club to the king and Andersson switched to the ♠Q. Gromov won, ruffed a club and passed the ♥Q to Probert who got out with the ♠10. Andersson won and played a heart. Back in with the ♥A Gromov led a diamond to the ace, pitched a diamond on the ♥J, but still had to lose two diamonds for down one, —50.

In the Closed Room Drijver led a trump against 3♣. Fredin won and, remembering Drijver's negative double (showing hearts), immediately led a low heart from hand. When Drijver ducked, the defense's heart trick evaporated. Fredin lost one spade, one club and two diamonds for a nifty +140 and 5 imps for Sweden, who now trailed by 15 at 67-52.

Somewhat curiously, the Swedes were the only table to hold a spade contract to eight tricks. Nine or even ten tricks were managed everywhere else — and for the record, everyone played in at least 3♣.

Bd: 26 North
 Dlr: East ♠ K1052
 Vul: Both ♥ 9
 ♦ A52
 ♣ AJ865

West	East
♠ 98	♠ Q4
♥ A10832	♥ KQJ76
♦ KQ6	♦ 873
♣ K104	♣ 932

South
 ♠ AJ763
 ♥ 54
 ♦ J1094
 ♣ Q7

Open Room
 West North East South
Ander'son Gromov Probert Dubinin
 Pass Pass
 1♥ Dbl 3♥ 3♠
 All Pass

Closed Room
 West North East South
Brink Fredin Drijver Gottlieb
 Pass Pass
 1♥ Dbl 4♥ 4♠
 All Pass

The high cards may be split 20-20 here but the tricks available in each side's suit are dramatically skewed in N/S's favor. In the Open Room Probert's sterile shape and spade value may have been factors in his decision to bid only 3♥, but it worked like a charm.

Dubinin competed as a passed hand and Gromov, who saw no reason to push things, played there. Andersson led a trump and now Dubinin could draw trumps, set up two pitches on clubs (via the finesse) for his heart losers, and come away with 12 tricks for +230. How embarrassing.

In the Closed Room Drijver's decision to bid his dense hearts to the max backfired when Gottlieb took the push and competed to the four level. Brink led the ♠A and switched to the ♦Q. Gottlieb won the ace and now, when he played a spade to the ace and a spade to the ten, Drijver won and returned a diamond to Brink's king to hold the game to 10 tricks; +620. Still, 9 imps (+650 would also have been 9 imps) was a welcome upgrade and Sweden now trailed by just 6 imps at 67-61.

The Singapore-Sweden match had gone quiet for a few deals; Singapore led 60-45.

Boards 27 and 28 were both pushes in our featured match. On 27 E/W played 4♠ making five (Hinden gaining 6 imps since they had been pushed to 5♠ and doubled there, making 11 tricks). Then on 28 Sweden-Russia saw 2♣ and 3♣ by E/W making four while Singapore picked up an undertrick imp to go back up by 11. Then came...

Bd: 29 North
 Dir: North ♠ A10932
 Vul: Both ♥ 92
 ♦ J732
 ♣ K5

West
 ♠ K74
 ♥ K53
 ♦ ---
 ♣ AJ87643

East
 ♠ 8
 ♥ J1074
 ♦ Q985
 ♣ Q1092

South
 ♠ QJ65
 ♥ AQ86
 ♦ AK1064
 ♣ ---

Open Room

West <i>Ander'son</i>	North <i>Gromov</i>	East <i>Probert</i>	South <i>Dubinin</i>
	Pass	Pass	1♣(STR)
2♣	2♠	3♣	4♣
5♣	Dbf	All Pass	

Closed Room

West <i>Brink</i>	North <i>Fredin</i>	East <i>Drijver</i>	South <i>Gottlieb</i>
	Pass	Pass	1♦
2♣	2♠	Pass	4♣
Pass	4♠	Pass	5♣
Pass	5♠	All Pass	

Gromov's double of 5♣ in the Open Room surely cast doubt on the value of Dubinin's ♣K, so we can sympathize with his pass, even though there is no defense against 6♠ (though there are ways to misplay it, especially after a low diamond lead). Gromov led the ♥9 to the ten, queen and king and Andersson played ace and a second club. Gromov won and switched to the ♦J: queen, king, ruff. Now Andersson led a heart to the seven and Dubinin's eight, then claimed nine tricks for down two, -500.

In the Closed Room the Swedes bid to the five level almost without competition and made 11 tricks after Drijver led the ♥10 by simply losing a trick in each red suit; +650. That was another 4 imps to Sweden, who trailed by just 2 imps at 67-65 with just three deals to go.

Hydes-Bell bid all the way to 6♠ after a preempt in clubs from West accelerated their auction. On a club lead Hydes ruffed high, took a trump finesse to the nine, ruffed a club high and finessed again in trumps. He could give up a diamond and still have 12 tricks (five spades two ruffs four diamonds and a heart). Those 13 imps gave his side a 64-62 lead. Dai and Yang also made slam for SANDEN, doubled to boot.

Board 30 was an easy-to-bid spade game for N/S, a push at +450. Russia led by 2 with two deals to go, Hinden led by the same number.

Bd: 31 North
 Dir: South ♠ KQ
 Vul: N/S ♥ A1086
 ♦ J32
 ♣ K654

West
 ♠ 98432
 ♥ KJ
 ♦ 10876
 ♣ QJ

East
 ♠ AJ10
 ♥ Q975
 ♦ A54
 ♣ 982

South
 ♠ 765
 ♥ 432
 ♦ KQ9
 ♣ A1073

Open Room

West <i>Ander'son</i>	North <i>Gromov</i>	East <i>Probert</i>	South <i>Dubinin</i>
Pass	1♦	Pass	1NT
All Pass			

Closed Room

West <i>Brink</i>	North <i>Fredin</i>	East <i>Drijver</i>	South <i>Gottlieb</i>
Pass	1♣	Pass	1NT
All Pass			

Each North player opened the minor dictated by his system (but with Peter Fredin and Andrey Gromov in the Norths seats, who knows?) and passed partner's

1NT response. Spotlight on Messrs Gottlieb and Dubinin — now “the play’s (*really*) the thing.”

Andersson led a spade to the king and ace and back came a spade. Dubinin won in dummy to try a low diamond. Probert rose ace, cashed his third spade, got a higher-suit shift signal, and dutifully tabled a heart, Andersson’s jack holding. Next West cashed his spade winners and got out with the ♣J. Dubinin won with dummy’s king, cashed two diamonds, and when Probert released all of his clubs claimed the last three tricks with the ♣A10 in hand (only the queen remained out) and the ♥A in dummy; +90.

At the other table the first two tricks were the same. Gottlieb cashed the ♣K (jack from Brink), then led a low diamond, ducked to his king. Next came the ♦Q to the ace, the ♠10, then a low heart to the jack and ace. Drijver now cashed the ♦J, leaving Brink with two good spades, the ♥K, the last diamond, and the ♣Q. So it was all or nothing. If Gottlieb got the clubs right he would add two club tricks to the five he already had. If he got it wrong Brink would claim. No pressure, this might only mean the match. He called for a low club and the eight appeared on his right. He inserted...the ten! A-r-r-r-g-g-g! Down two, -200, and 7 imps to Russia, ahead now by 9 at 74-65.

Hinden picked up an overtrick imp in 1NT to lead by 3; no pressure here either. Last dance, last chance.

Bd: 32	North		
Dlr: West	♠ 107		
Vul: E/W	♥ Q9632		
	♦ Q86		
	♣ 765		
West		East	
♠ AK432		♠ J5	
♥ 10		♥ AJ74	
♦ 942		♦ J1075	
♣ K984		♣ Q102	
	South		
	♠ Q986		
	♥ K85		
	♦ AK3		
	♣ AJ3		

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Ander'son</i>	<i>Gromov</i>	<i>Probert</i>	<i>Dubinin</i>
Pass	Pass	Pass	1NT
Pass	2♦(♥)	Pass	2♥
All Pass			

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Brink</i>	<i>Fredin</i>	<i>Drijver</i>	<i>Gottlieb</i>
Pass	Pass	Pass	1NT
Pass	2♦(♥)	Pass	2♥
2♠	All Pass		

Both N/S pairs had transfer auctions, the Russians

buying it for 2♥ in the Open Room and for 2♠ in the Closed Room. In the Open Room Andersson led the ♠A and when Probert followed with the five switched to the ♦2. Dubinin won the queen in dummy and called for the ♠10, jack, queen, king. Now Andersson tried the ♣8 to the queen and ace and Dubinin cashed a high spade (a club from dummy) as Probert ruffed. Back came the ♣10 to the jack and king and the ♠4 was led, ruffed in dummy with the ♥9 and over-ruffed with the jack. Declarer still had to lose a trick to the ace of trump (imagine that, and it wasn't even offside) and so settled for down one, -50.

In the Closed Room Fredin led the ♣5 (two, jack, king) against 2♠. Brink cashed the ♠AK and led a third spade to Gottlieb, who cashed his other spade winner, then the ♣A, then punted with a third club. But Brink still had to lose three diamonds and he too finished one down; -100. That was 4 imps back to Sweden, who fell just short at 74-69. It would be Russia versus England/Netherlands in one of the evening's semi-finals, and Hackett versus either Singapore or England Hinden in the other, depending on what happened here.

Both Norths in Hinden-Singapore played 2♥ after West got his spades in. Both Easts led the ♠J, covered by the queen and king, for a diamond shift to dummy's ace. A low spade from dummy put the two Wests to the test. They could take the ♠K but then had to shift to a club, not so easy given that dummy. After a diamond continuation declarer could cash a spade to pitch a club, win the next club with the ace, and lead a fourth spade to neutralize the defenders' trump trick. The board was a push at +110 and Hinden had survived to fight another day.



“Hi, mom!”

NEC Semi-finals (1st half): Hackett vs England Hinden

by Barry Rigal



Hinden



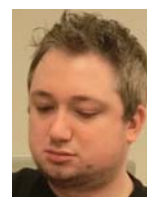
Senior



Osborne



Hallberg



Hydes



Holland



Hackett



Bell

Our focus will be on the Hackett-Osborne match for the first semi-final session, while keeping a weather eye on our other match.

The first deal saw both tables play 3NT and develop their ninth trick by first leading to a queen successfully, then building a slow additional winner. Hackett cobbled together an overtrick to lead 1-0.

Bd: 2
 Dir: East
 Vul: N/S

North	♠ AJ1083
	♥ K6
	♦ J74
	♣ A72

West

♠ 954
♥ 73
♦ AK10
♣ QJ865

East

♠ KQ762
♥ 92
♦ 863
♣ 1094

South

♠ ---
♥ AQJ10854
♦ Q952
♣ K3

Open Room — SF2

West	North	East	South
<i>Hinden</i>	<i>Senior</i>	<i>Osborne</i>	<i>Hackett</i>

Pass	4♠	Pass	5♣
Pass	5♥	All Pass	

Closed Room — SF2

West	North	East	South
<i>Hallberg</i>	<i>Hydes</i>	<i>Holland</i>	<i>Bell</i>

Pass	1♠	Pass	4♥
Pass	4NT	Pass	5♣
Pass	6♥	All Pass	

Whether you like the way Bell and Hydes handled

this deal might depend a little on whether the ♦AK were in the hand on lead. And had East had a doubleton diamond so that 5♥ was going down, his indiscretion would not have been costly. But today was not going to be his day. 5♥ was the limit, and Hackett had 13 IMPs to lead 14-0.

Both tables in our second match started 2♠-4♥-4♠-x. Gladysz passed it out and collected 800; Verhees bid 5♥ and scored 650. Personally, if I sat for that double my partner's trumps would take one trick, but maybe I haven't trained them well enough.

Bd: 3
 Dir: South
 Vul: E/W

North	♠ KQ4
	♥ K
	♦ AQ1084
	♣ AK82

West

♠ 653
♥ 107643
♦ 9
♣ J1095

East

♠ A107
♥ QJ2
♦ KJ76
♣ Q43

South

♠ J982
♥ A985
♦ 532
♣ 76

Open Room — SF2

West	North	East	South
<i>Hinden</i>	<i>Senior</i>	<i>Osborne</i>	<i>Hackett</i>

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

All Pass
 (1) Kokish
 (2) 20-22 balanced (allegedly)

Closed Room — SF2

West	North	East	South
<i>Hallberg</i>	<i>Hydes</i>	<i>Holland</i>	<i>Bell</i>
			Pass
Pass	1♦	Pass	1♥
Pass	3♣	Pass	3NT
All Pass			

Whether you like the way Senior handled his hand depends on whether N/S belong in a minor or 3NT. Today, obfuscation rather than accurate bidding was the order of the day. Senior got a top heart lead. East shifted to a diamond upon winning the ♠A, so he came to ten tricks. With the fall of the ♦9 it is hard to see a way to stop declarer coming to nine winners.

In the other room Hallberg's low heart lead gave the defenders a chance. Holland ducked the ♠K but won the next spade to continue the attack on hearts. Bell ducked the first and now a club shift was necessary. But Holland led another heart so Bell won and drove out the diamond honors to hold his loss to an imp. Hackett led 15-0.

Nine tricks always look there for the taking. That was the case for Krasnoselskii as Gold won an early spade to give declarer an entry to dummy. However, in the other room van Prooijen won the heart lead, played the ♠KQ, ducked, then opted for deception over the probability table by advancing the ♦8. This is a play that might, I suppose, have been right on a different day but certainly wasn't the correct move today. From his perspective he was trying to drop the doubleton ♦K, and was focusing on the 3-2 breaks and not specific 4-1 breaks. The defenders won the ♦9 and shifted to clubs to set up the defenders' fifth winner before declarer had nine; 15-1 for Russia.

Bd: 4
Dlr: West
Vul: Both

	North	
	♠ 1032	
	♥ Q975	
	♦ K92	
	♣ K76	
West		East
♠ J76		♠ KQ954
♥ J3		♥ A64
♦ AJ1074		♦ ---
♣ A104		♣ Q9852
	South	
	♠ A8	
	♥ K1082	
	♦ Q8653	
	♣ J3	

Open Room — SF2

West	North	East	South
<i>Hinden</i>	<i>Senior</i>	<i>Osborne</i>	<i>Hackett</i>
1♦	Pass	1♠	Pass
1NT	Pass	2♦(GF)	Pass
2♠	Pass	4♠	All Pass

Closed Room — SF2

West	North	East	South
<i>Hallberg</i>	<i>Hydes</i>	<i>Holland</i>	<i>Bell</i>
Pass	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♣(♠)	Pass	4♠	All Pass

Against 4♠ Bell led a low diamond. Holland rose with the ace and cleared spades, then led a club to the ten at his first turn, making ten tricks easy. In the other room Hinden's opening bid had eliminated diamonds from Hackett's agenda. With trump control, his choice of the ♣J not only makes sense, it worked like a treat. Osborne was forced to win this and play trumps, and the defenders took their club ruff with the short trumps, meaning that declarer could not avoid losing a heart since he could not draw all the trumps before cashing clubs to pitch dummy's hearts. 12 imps, and Hackett led 27-0.

The defenders each led a red suit in our other match. An opportunity missed.

Bd: 5
Dlr: North
Vul: N/S

	North	
	♠ J872	
	♥ 105	
	♦ AQ1098	
	♣ 95	
West		East
♠ K943		♠ A
♥ KQ763		♥ A8
♦ 7		♦ J32
♣ AK3		♣ QJ108742
	South	
	♠ Q1065	
	♥ J942	
	♦ K654	
	♣ 6	

Open Room — SF2

West	North	East	South
<i>Hinden</i>	<i>Senior</i>	<i>Osborne</i>	<i>Hackett</i>
	Pass	1♣	Pass
1♦(♥)	Pass	2♣	Pass
3♦(SPL)	Dbl	Pass	Pass
3♥	Pass	6♣	All Pass

Closed Room — SF2

West	North	East	South
<i>Hallberg</i>	<i>Hydes</i>	<i>Holland</i>	<i>Bell</i>
	Pass	1♣	Pass
1♥	Pass	2♣	Pass
2♠	Pass	3♣	Pass
4♣	Pass	4♥	Pass
4NT	Pass	5♠	Pass
6♣	All Pass		

Osborne's leap to slam may seem impetuous but he knew his partner had no first-round diamond control (there was no redouble) and she had cue-bid a

second-round heart control. Thus, she needed the ♣AK to have anything approaching what her bidding showed. Meanwhile, in the other room, Hallberg set clubs and heard his partner bypass a diamond control to cue-bid hearts, music to his ears. Well bid by both pairs for no swing; in fact, all four pairs managed to record +920.

Bd: 6 North
 Dir: East ♠ AJ853
 Vul: E/W ♥ J93
 ♦ 10
 ♣ A854

West
 ♠ 72
 ♥ Q62
 ♦ AKJ954
 ♣ 92

East
 ♠ K964
 ♥ K104
 ♦ 732
 ♣ J103

South
 ♠ Q10
 ♥ A875
 ♦ Q86
 ♣ KQ76

Open Room — SF2

West	North	East	South
<i>Hinden</i>	<i>Senior</i>	<i>Osborne</i>	<i>Hackett</i>
		Pass	1♣
2♦	Dbl	Pass	2♥

All Pass

Closed Room — SF2

West	North	East	South
<i>Hallberg</i>	<i>Hydes</i>	<i>Holland</i>	<i>Bell</i>
		Pass	1♦(1)
Pass	1♠	Pass	1NT
Pass	2♦(R)	Pass	2♥

All Pass

(1) Diamonds or 11-13 balanced

Where Bell was declarer he received a top diamond lead and club shift. He won in hand to lose the spade finesse, then won the club return in dummy to lead the ♥J, covered by the king and ace. Now he ruffed a diamond, then came to hand with the ♠10 to ruff another diamond and lead another top spade to pitch a club. Hallberg ruffed in and led a master diamond, on which East discarded a spade. South ruffed and led the ♣Q, forcing West to ruff with the ♥Q, leaving declarer with the ♥87 for one trick and the contract.

In the other room the play started in identical fashion but Osborne won the ♠K to lead a second diamond rather than a club. Hackett ruffed, then led out top spades pitching his last diamond as West ruffed in and led a second club. Hackett won this in dummy and passed the ♥J to West, who was down to just red cards. If she exited with a trump declarer would give up one trump only, so she played a diamond for

a ruff and discard. Hackett ruffed in dummy, pitching a club from hand, ruffed a spade to hand with the ♥8, and when he was not over-ruffed he could cash the ♥A leaving the master trump outstanding and lead a club to score his last trump at trick 13. No swing; still 27-0, Hackett.

Our other match unsportingly played spade and club part-scores, neither of which offered declarer much scope for brilliancy (other than drawing trump, taking finesses, cashing winners). Where's the fun in that?

Bd: 7 North
 Dir: South ♠ AQ6
 Vul: Both ♥ J10764
 ♦ A72
 ♣ Q3

West
 ♠ 82
 ♥ AK93
 ♦ K4
 ♣ A9542

East
 ♠ J53
 ♥ Q8
 ♦ Q953
 ♣ 10876

South
 ♠ K10974
 ♥ 52
 ♦ J1086
 ♣ KJ

Open Room — SF2

West	North	East	South
<i>Hinden</i>	<i>Senior</i>	<i>Osborne</i>	<i>Hackett</i>
			Pass
1NT	Pass	Pass	2♠

All Pass

Closed Room — SF2

West	North	East	South
<i>Hallberg</i>	<i>Hydes</i>	<i>Holland</i>	<i>Bell</i>
			Pass
1NT	All Pass		

Hydes led a heart against 1NT. Hallberg won in dummy and advanced the ♣10 (tempting a cover from HHx) and Hydes won the second club to cash the ♦A. Then, on receiving discouragement, he shifted to the ♠Q, then ace and another spade. Nicely done for down one, losing an imp to Jason Hackett's intrepid balance into 2♠ where after the ♥K lead and a shift to the ♦K nine tricks were easy. 28-0 now, Hackett.

These results were duplicated in our other match. Verhees earned his side the imp; 15-2, Russia.

There are many people in the bridge world who would argue that you cannot include the words "Brian Senior" and "balanced" in the same sentence. Those people would have more fuel for their argument from Board 3 and the following exhibit.

Bd: 8 North
 Dir: West ♠ AQ9876
 Vul: None ♥ A8
 ♦ AQ6
 ♣ A3

West
 ♠ K53
 ♥ Q10954
 ♦ K754
 ♣ 2

East
 ♠ 1042
 ♥ KJ
 ♦ J8
 ♣ KQJ974

South
 ♠ J
 ♥ 7632
 ♦ 10932
 ♣ 10865

Open Room — SF2

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

(1) Kokish

(2) Balanced 20-22...allegedly

Closed Room — SF2

West	North	East	South
<i>Hallberg</i>	<i>Hydes</i>	<i>Holland</i>	<i>Bell</i>
Pass	1♠	2♣	Pass
Pass	Dbf	Pass	2♥
Pass	3♠	All Pass	

I'm not sure if Hydes needed to bid 3♠ here, but could 2♠ be any hand with reasonable extras and a second suit of diamonds? Holland led a top club against 3♠ and Hydes won and led a spade to the jack and king. Hallberg Grosvenored declarer with a diamond shift and Hydes fell for it, running the switch around to let Holland win and cash a top club, then lead a low club for Hallberg to ruff. The defenders had a diamond and a heart trick to come for down one. Had Hallberg shifted to a heart instead of a diamond, might declarer have guessed which doubleton diamond honor he should pin?

In the other room East was doubtless delighted with his opening lead prospects until dummy came down. Senior was not overly tested to score the eight winners in his hand, and moved on with 5 imps in his bag. Doubtless he was wondering how much further he could push the boundaries of a balanced hand before they came to take him away. It was 33-0 now.

When David Bakhshi opened the West cards 2♥ that persuaded Krasnoselskii to double and bid spades (by no means an overbid) but he found himself in 3♠ as a result. In the three-card ending after the defense had resolutely refused to play diamonds, declarer

had a complete count and had to guess if the five-card heart preempt was more likely to have ♦Kxxx or ♦Jxxx on the side. He got it wrong. Since Verhees had been able to stop in 2♠ after opening a strong club, the 4 imps made the score 15-6, Russia.

Bd: 9 North
 Dir: North ♠ 7652
 Vul: E/W ♥ QJ5
 ♦ Q104
 ♣ Q62

West
 ♠ KQJ1093
 ♥ A8743
 ♦ 52
 ♣ ---

East
 ♠ A84
 ♥ K1096
 ♦ J
 ♣ 98543

South
 ♠ ---
 ♥ 2
 ♦ AK98763
 ♣ AKJ107

Open Room — SF1

West	North	East	South
<i>Bakhshi</i>	<i>Kras'skii</i>	<i>Gold</i>	<i>Gladys</i>
2♦	Pass	4♥	1♦
5♥	Pass	Pass	5♣
Pass	6♣	Dbf	5NT
Pass	6♦	Pass	Pass

Dbf All Pass

Closed Room — SF1

West	North	East	South
<i>Brink</i>	<i>v Prooijen</i>	<i>Drijver</i>	<i>Verhees</i>
2♦	Pass	Pass	1♦
5♦	Pass	4♦	4NT
	6♦	Dbf	All Pass

Open Room — SF2

West	North	East	South
<i>Hinden</i>	<i>Senior</i>	<i>Osborne</i>	<i>Hackett</i>
3♠	Pass	Pass	2♣
Pass	5♠	4♠	4NT
Pass	6♦	Pass	5NT
		All Pass	

Closed Room — SF2

West	North	East	South
<i>Hallberg</i>	<i>Hydes</i>	<i>Holland</i>	<i>Bell</i>
3♠	Pass	Pass	2♣
5♠	Pass	4♠	4NT
All Pass	5NT	Pass	6♣

Where to begin? Never have the commentators' flabbers been so gasted as by the fact that both Souths in our match opened 2♣. Doubtless they were worried that it would be passed out in 1♦, given the balanced natures of their hands. Both players

then had the joy of describing their hand as an equal two-suiter, but Hackett offered his partner the choice while Bell picked clubs when offered the choice (he thought his partner might have hearts and clubs). The $\diamond 10$ pushed Senior in the right direction.

Of course $6\clubsuit$ isn't much worse than $6\diamond$, and if trumps are 5-0 surely West can double. Not today, apparently, since in the Open Room Hinden didn't double and Osborne tried to cash the $\spadesuit A$ instead of leading a club. Make that Hmmmph with four "M"s. Since $6\clubsuit$ went four down, doomed by the 5-0 break, that was 15imps for Hackett, ahead now 48-0.

In our other match both tables played $6\diamond x$ from the South seat and both Wests tried to put partner in for the club ruff. Bakhshi led the $\spadesuit 9$, Brink a low heart. That was 15 well-earned imps for Russia, almost enough to wipe the taste of the auction in the other match from our mouths.

Bd: 10 North
 Dir: East \spadesuit AJ84
 Vul: Both \heartsuit K986
 \diamond QJ2
 \clubsuit K4

West East
 \spadesuit K763 \spadesuit 95
 \heartsuit Q753 \heartsuit AJ10
 \diamond AK65 \diamond 1097
 \clubsuit 10 \clubsuit AQ875

 South
 \spadesuit Q102
 \heartsuit 42
 \diamond 843
 \clubsuit J9632

Open Room — SF2

West	North	East	South
<i>Hinden</i>	<i>Senior</i>	<i>Osborne</i>	<i>Hackett</i>
		$1\clubsuit(2+)$	Pass
$1\diamond(\heartsuit)$	Pass	$1\heartsuit$	Pass
$2\spadesuit$	Pass	$3\diamond$	Pass
$4\spadesuit$	All Pass		

Closed Room — SF2

West	North	East	South
<i>Hallberg</i>	<i>Hydes</i>	<i>Holland</i>	<i>Bell</i>
		$1\clubsuit$	Pass
$1\heartsuit$	Pass	$2\heartsuit$	Pass
$2\spadesuit$	Pass	$3\heartsuit$	Pass
$4\heartsuit$	All Pass		

Let's be charitable, the normal state for the Editors, at least according to them. The bidding accident that happened here may have been due to what went before, but more likely to the fact that Hinden had been feeling unwell all day. There was some disagreement as to whether $3\diamond$ was a try for spades

or fourth-suit. Oh well, no double, no trouble.

While $4\heartsuit$ was an ugly spot, Hallberg did the best he could by winning the trump lead in dummy and then leading a low club to his ten and Hydes' king. Back came the $\diamond Q$ so Hallberg won in hand, repeated the heart finesse, then passed the $\diamond 10$. Hydes won and cashed the $\spadesuit A$, so Hallberg escaped for down one.

Hinden could take two hearts, two diamonds, a club and a ruff for six tricks and was allowed a seventh trick, but -300 still meant another 5 imps to Hackett, leading 53-0.

Russia added 2 imps, making a notrump part-score as E/W and going down only 100 in $2\spadesuit$ by South — quite an achievement.

There was more carnage to come.

Bd: 11 North
 Dir: South \spadesuit KQ6
 Vul: None \heartsuit 10654
 \diamond K6
 \clubsuit A762

West East
 \spadesuit 85 \spadesuit AJ972
 \heartsuit A9 \heartsuit KQJ8732
 \diamond AQ108754 \diamond ---
 \clubsuit 83 \clubsuit 10

 South
 \spadesuit 1043
 \heartsuit ---
 \diamond J932
 \clubsuit KQJ954

Open Room — SF2

West	North	East	South
<i>Hinden</i>	<i>Senior</i>	<i>Osborne</i>	<i>Hackett</i>
			$3\clubsuit$
$3\diamond$	$4\clubsuit$	$5\heartsuit$	Pass
$6\heartsuit$	All Pass		

Closed Room — SF2

West	North	East	South
<i>Hallberg</i>	<i>Hydes</i>	<i>Holland</i>	<i>Bell</i>
			$4\clubsuit$
$4\diamond$	$5\clubsuit$	$6\heartsuit$	Pass
Pass	Dbl	All Pass	

Where's that Lightner double on Board 9, you might ask. Alas, for Hinden it had wandered over to Board 11, at least that is what Mike Bell thought (and who can blame him). When he led a diamond it let declarer win and pitch his club, and now with spades 3-3 all roads led to +1210. Since the mundane defense of cashing the $\clubsuit K$ set $6\heartsuit$ a trick, 15 more imps flowed into the Hackett coffers; 68-0 now.

Both tables in England/Netherlands-Russia played the heart game for +450. Still 31-6 Russia.

Bd: 12
 Dlr: West
 Vul: N/S

North
 ♠ 753
 ♥ K8762
 ♦ 73
 ♣ 1096

West
 ♠ AJ8
 ♥ 943
 ♦ QJ108
 ♣ 743

East
 ♠ 10642
 ♥ 5
 ♦ AK64
 ♣ KQ85

South
 ♠ KQ9
 ♥ AQJ10
 ♦ 952
 ♣ AJ2

Open Room — SF2

West	North	East	South
<i>Hinden</i>	<i>Senior</i>	<i>Osborne</i>	<i>Hackett</i>
Pass	Pass	1♣	1NT
Pass	2♦ (♥)	Pass	2♠
Pass	3♦ (♥)	Pass	3♥
All Pass			

Closed Room — SF2

West	North	East	South
<i>Hallberg</i>	<i>Hydes</i>	<i>Holland</i>	<i>Bell</i>
Pass	Pass	1♣	1NT
Pass	2♦ (♥)	Pass	2♥
All Pass			

Bell judged very well not to break the transfer here. No doubt his sterile distribution was the reason, but it is easy to see how, opposite the same shape hand with the ♣K, game might be reasonable. Not today; with the ♠A offside, even 2♥ was quite high enough. Hinden had their first 5 imps of the set.

In our other match both tables played 3♥ down one.

Bd: 13
 Dlr: North
 Vul: Both

North
 ♠ QJ32
 ♥ A853
 ♦ A6
 ♣ KQJ

West
 ♠ A85
 ♥ QJ4
 ♦ Q752
 ♣ A52

East
 ♠ K10764
 ♥ 62
 ♦ K8
 ♣ 10763

South
 ♠ 9
 ♥ K1097
 ♦ J10943
 ♣ 984

Open Room — SF2

West	North	East	South
<i>Hinden</i>	<i>Senior</i>	<i>Osborne</i>	<i>Hackett</i>
West	North	East	South
<i>Hallberg</i>	<i>Hydes</i>	<i>Holland</i>	<i>Bell</i>
Pass	1♣	Pass	1♦
Pass	2♥	Pass	4♥
All Pass			

Senior's strong notrump opened and closed the auction. Osborne led a spade, ducking the second round of the suit when Senior split his honors. Hinden won the ♣A to play a third spade and declarer pitched a heart from hand on the last spade, coming down to three diamonds and four hearts in dummy, three hearts two diamonds and two clubs in hand. If Osborne played a club or a heart declarer would set up a heart, while if he played the ♦K declarer would develop a diamond winner. So 1NT could not be defeated.

In the other room Hydes' jump to 2♥ showed 17-19 with four hearts, so Bell took a flyer at the game. With a loser in each suit, the only question was whether declarer could come to nine tricks, which he did, to hold the loss to 5 imps. It was 73-5 now.

England/Netherlands scored their first imps for a while, making +140 in 3♥ and conceding +90 in 1NT. It was 31-8 now.

Bd: 14
 Dlr: East
 Vul: None

North
 ♠ A3
 ♥ 843
 ♦ AKJ8
 ♣ Q654

West
 ♠ KJ75
 ♥ 765
 ♦ 97642
 ♣ 9

East
 ♠ 1064
 ♥ AKQ92
 ♦ Q5
 ♣ A108

South
 ♠ Q982
 ♥ J10
 ♦ 103
 ♣ KJ732

Open Room — SF2

West	North	East	South
<i>Hinden</i>	<i>Senior</i>	<i>Osborne</i>	<i>Hackett</i>
Pass	Pass	1NT	All Pass

Closed Room — SF2

West	North	East	South
<i>Hallberg</i>	<i>Hydes</i>	<i>Holland</i>	<i>Bell</i>
2♣	Pass	2♥	All Pass

Hallberg's decision to go looking for greener pastures

seems right even when playing four-card Stayman. On this occasion it hit the jackpot because even on a trump lead declarer could ruff one club in dummy and set up a spade for his eighth trick. By contrast, in 1NT declarer has five hearts and a club but the defenders had at least seven winners as soon as they regained the lead. Personally I might have tried a spade to the king at trick two — which would have led to three down. Osborne cashed out and held the loss to -50, but still the 4 imps made it 77-5.

Russia scored a further 6 imps by buying the contract in 2♥ and 3♣ to make it 37-8. Brink opened 1♥ and was raised to 2♥, after which no one had anything to add; Gladysh-Krasnoselskii competed effectively over 1NT.

Bd: 15 North
 Dlr: South ♠ J6
 Vul: N/S ♥ AQ10742
 ♦ AQJ5
 ♣ 6

West
 ♠ A72
 ♥ 3
 ♦ K64
 ♣ KQJ854

East
 ♠ K109
 ♥ 9865
 ♦ 108732
 ♣ 10

South
 ♠ Q8543
 ♥ KJ
 ♦ 9
 ♣ A9732

Open Room — SF2

West	North	East	South
<i>Hinden</i>	<i>Senior</i>	<i>Osborne</i>	<i>Hackett</i>
			Pass
1♣	1♥	Pass	1♠
2♣	2♦	Pass	2♥
Pass	3♥	Pass	4♥
All Pass			

Closed Room — SF2

West	North	East	South
<i>Hallberg</i>	<i>Hydes</i>	<i>Holland</i>	<i>Bell</i>
			Pass
1♣	2♥	Pass	4♦
Pass	4♥	All Pass	

In 4♥ both Norths received a club lead, of course. They won the ♣A, finessed in diamonds, and when that held their paths diverged. Hydes ruffed a diamond and played a spade from dummy. West won the ace to play clubs and North ruffed with the ♥7, over-ruffed. Now Hydes needed the diamond to drop. For once this set his luck was in. Senior cashed the ♦A before ruffing a diamond. Had the ♦K not fallen he might have been able to ruff a club high back to hand to ruff another diamond and get out with a club, pitching a spade, to try to hold his losers to two black-suit cards and a spade. As it was, when the ♦K fell Senior could cash the ♥K, ruff a club high and draw trumps, giving up two spades and a trump.

Verhees as South could open 2♣ to show spades and clubs or long clubs. That silenced West and van Prooijen relayed to get his partner admit to a doubleton heart, so Verhees played 4♥ as South on a deceptive ♣Q lead. He won, played a diamond to the ace, ruffed a diamond, unblocked hearts, and ruffed a club with the ♥7 — clearly the best line against silent opponents but disastrous today. The defenders could over-ruff and cash three plain winners in due course. In the other room 3♣x cost only 300 but that was still enough to take Russia to the break, leading 46-8.

At 78-5, Hinden had had enough and opted for early doors. Our other match would proceed with Russia 16 deals away from a third consecutive final.

Who Said Comparisons Aren't Fun?



NEC Semi-finals (2nd half): Russia vs England/Netherlands

by Barry Rigal



Verhees



Gromov



v Prooijen



Brink



Gold



Drijver



Dubinin



Bakhshi

The second half of our remaining semi-final started with Russia holding a 38-imp lead. If England/Neth were going to make any headway, my instincts were that they needed to start quickly or desperation might sink in. As against that the methods used by the four pairs are sufficiently disparate that one could imagine swings being inherent in the deals just because of the different styles at work. It would make sense for England/Neth (who had the seed) to make sure the two strong club pairs were playing one another and the two pairs using natural methods were too, so as to maximize system variation.

Van Prooijen stepped out a fraction here, first with his initial choice of action, then bidding again with a minimum hand. He bought a pretty good hand for his aggressive choice, and Gromov felt unprepared to risk balancing, though if double was takeout it would not be absurd. Van Prooijen misguessed trumps by leading low towards dummy, but the fall of the ♣J10 rescued him and he lost just one trick in each side suit and two trumps, for +110. That went nicely with David Bakhshi's 2♠ contract where by coincidence, after a heart lead, he ended up ruffing two cards in dummy and losing one trick in each side-suit and two in trumps; also +110. Now that is symmetry for you.

Bd: 17
Dir: North
Vul: None

North
♠ 10532
♥ K9
♦ QJ1043
♣ J10

West
♠ K84
♥ 1052
♦ K982
♣ Q98

East
♠ Q9
♥ AJ876
♦ A65
♣ K53

South
♠ AJ76
♥ Q43
♦ 7
♣ A7642

Bd: 18
Dir: East
Vul: N/S

North
♠ K
♥ 962
♦ A32
♣ K98743

West
♠ AJ9
♥ Q4
♦ J854
♣ A652

East
♠ 10752
♥ A103
♦ K10976
♣ 10

South
♠ Q8643
♥ KJ875
♦ Q
♣ QJ

Open Room

West	North	East	South
Verhees	Gromov	v Prooijen	Dubinin
Pass	Pass	1NT	2♣(♣+M)
Pass	Pass	2♥	All Pass

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
Brink	Gold	Drijver	Bakhshi
Pass	Pass	1♥	Pass
2♥	Pass	Pass	2♠
All Pass			

Open Room

West	North	East	South
Verhees	Gromov	v Prooijen	Dubinin
1♦	Pass	1♠	Pass
1NT	Pass	2♣(♦)	Pass
2♦	Pass	Pass	2♥
2♠	3♥	All Pass	

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Brink</i>	<i>Gold</i>	<i>Drijver</i>	<i>Bakhshi</i>
		Pass	Pass
1NT	Pass	2♣	Pass
2♦	Pass	Pass	Dbl
Pass	3♣	All Pass	

Both Souths competed to prevent the opponents from playing 2♦, which would certainly have handled nicely. Against 3♣ the defenders led and continued trumps. Brink hopped up ace to play a diamond and Gold guessed hearts to give himself five clubs and one trick in each side-suit. But that was down one.

Superficially 3♥ looks like a more attractive spot. But after a diamond lead Dubinin had to rise with the ace and play a spade to the king. Then after a diamond continuation, he cross-ruffed spades and diamonds, led a club to the queen, lost a ruff, then ruffed a fourth diamond in dummy. In the three-card ending he had scored three spade tricks and four from the diamonds, having lost three tricks. But the lead was in dummy as he led a club, and the defenders were sure of two more trump tricks, whatever he did, for down one. No swing, still 46-14, Russia.

Bd: 19	North
Dlr: South	♠ 94
Vul: E/W	♥ K
	♦ J98752
	♣ AK108

West
♠ 106
♥ QJ1043
♦ AK43
♣ J2

East
♠ AK2
♥ A985
♦ Q10
♣ Q743

South
♠ QJ8753
♥ 762
♦ 6
♣ 965

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Verhees</i>	<i>Gromov</i>	<i>v Prooijen</i>	<i>Dubinin</i>
		3NT	3♠
Pass	Pass		All Pass

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Brink</i>	<i>Gold</i>	<i>Drijver</i>	<i>Bakhshi</i>
			3♠
Pass	4♠	All Pass	

The two Souths duplicated actions here. Gromov was prepared to defend but Gold's singleton heart persuaded him to act. Right he was. It was hard for Drijver to act, wasn't it? Maybe one should play double as penalty against this pair, but that is Monday morning quarter-backing.

Van Prooijen received a heart lead against 3NT and could come to an eleventh winner from the minors. In 4♠ Bakhshi scored four spade tricks and two clubs, for down four; 10 imps to England/Neth, down 46-24.

Both pairs then bid an excellent minor-suit grand slam, not much worse than a finesse for seven, with a combined 29 HCP. Russia then scored their first real pick-up of the set.

Bd: 21	North
Dlr: North	♠ 32
Vul: N/S	♥ KJ875
	♦ K10
	♣ A963

West
♠ 9654
♥ 92
♦ A985
♣ J84

East
♠ AKQJ10
♥ 10
♦ Q74
♣ KQ102

South
♠ 87
♥ AQ643
♦ J632
♣ 75

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Verhees</i>	<i>Gromov</i>	<i>v Prooijen</i>	<i>Dubinin</i>
	1♥	1♠	4♥

All Pass

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Brink</i>	<i>Gold</i>	<i>Drijver</i>	<i>Bakhshi</i>
	1♥	1♠	4♥
Pass	Pass	Dbl	Pass
4♠	All Pass		

Van Prooijen decided to defend 4♥, perhaps figuring partner's failure to save marked him with relatively short spades. He was wrong, catching his partner with just the right hand to make game his way laydown, while 4♥ might have escaped for down one. In fact, declarer misguessed diamonds, figuring East could not have that hand. Down two meant 6 imps to Russia, leading 53-24.

Bd: 22	North
Dlr: East	♠ 1054
Vul: E/W	♥ 76532
	♦ 75
	♣ KQ8

West
♠ A86
♥ J9
♦ AQJ63
♣ J94

East
♠ Q
♥ AQ1084
♦ K42
♣ A632

South
♠ KJ9732
♥ K
♦ 1098
♣ 1075

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Verhees</i>	<i>Gromov</i>	<i>v Prooijen</i>	<i>Dubin</i>
		2♥(1)	Pass
2NT	Pass	3♣	Pass
3♦	Pass	3♠	Dbl
5♦	All Pass		

(1) Hearts and clubs

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Brink</i>	<i>Gold</i>	<i>Drijver</i>	<i>Bakhshi</i>
		1♥	3♠
3NT	All Pass		

Van Prooijen showed hearts and clubs, then spade shortage, and Verhees knew to play 5♦ rather than 3NT. After a diamond lead the heart spots were good enough that declarer could ruff one spade in dummy, draw trumps, then simply take a heart finesse to lose just a spade and a heart.

In the other room Bakhshi's scary preempt endplayed Brink into a 3NT bid. After a spade lead to the queen and king, ducked, Bakhshi continued with the ♠2 and now Brink took some time. If he ducked this, pitching a diamond from dummy, the defenders would have to shift to clubs to trouble him. (Otherwise he could win the third spade and play ace and another heart with sufficient entries to dummy.) Eventually he rose with the ♠A, cashed diamonds, then passed the ♥9 to go two down. I didn't ask him, but perhaps his line of play was based on the utility of the overtricks here and the slimness of the chance of finding the ♥K singleton offside. Whatever the case, those 13imps made the match score 37-53 for Russia. Still plenty of time to go.

Bd: 23	North
Dlr: South	♠ 753
Vul: Both	♥ 853
	♦ A1054
	♣ A72

West
♠ A1062
♥ Q106
♦ J92
♣ 1094

East
♠ J9
♥ 9742
♦ K6
♣ QJ863

South
♠ KQ84
♥ AKJ
♦ Q873
♣ K5

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Verhees</i>	<i>Gromov</i>	<i>v Prooijen</i>	<i>Dubin</i>
			1♣(16+)
Pass	1NT	Pass	2♣
Pass	2♥(no M)	Pass	3NT
All Pass			

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Brink</i>	<i>Gold</i>	<i>Drijver</i>	<i>Bakhshi</i>
			1♦
Pass	2♦	Pass	2NT
Pass	3NT	All Pass	

Gromov, like Bakhshi, reached 3NT on a relatively uninformative auction. The difference was that after Brink's small spade lead declarer was cheaply in hand to lead a low diamond towards dummy. With the diamonds as they were he had no losing option. Brink put in the nine and Bakhshi covered with the ten. Drijver won to press on with spades but declarer covered the nine and had nine top tricks and a heart finesse for the tenth.

In the other room Gromov received a club lead. He ducked, won the next, set up diamonds, won the next club, and needed to take a spade trick (and thus for the ace to be offside). A spade to the king scored, and now when he cashed a top heart and played two more rounds of diamonds West had been squeezed down to two spades and two hearts. Gromov chose to finesse in hearts, letting Verhees win and return a heart, leaving dummy with two losers. Had declarer led a spade to the jack, king and ace he would have ensured the contract (unless West had failed to overcall a strong club holding ♠AJ1062). To quote GHW Bush (or Dana Carvey): "Not gonna happen. Wouldn't be prudent." The point is that West's last four cards had to be the bare ♠A and three hearts or two spades and two hearts, so either way leading a spade would earn declarer the ninth trick from the forced heart play. It was 53-49 now, Russia.

Bd: 24	North
Dlr: West	♠ AKQJ9763
Vul: None	♥ 62
	♦ A
	♣ J2

West
♠ ---
♥ KJ1054
♦ J742
♣ KQ93

East
♠ 10542
♥ Q8
♦ K96
♣ 10654

South
♠ 8
♥ A973
♦ Q10853
♣ A87

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Verhees</i>	<i>Gromov</i>	<i>v Prooijen</i>	<i>Dubin</i>
2♥(♥+♣)	Dbl	Pass	3♦
Pass	3♠	Pass	3NT
Pass	4♠	Pass	5♣
Dbl	Pass	Pass	Rdbl
Pass	5♦	Pass	5♥
Pass	6♠	All Pass	

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Brink</i>	<i>Gold</i>	<i>Drijver</i>	<i>Bakhshi</i>
1♥	4♠	All Pass	

The Closed Room auction looks simple enough, doesn't it? Gromov heard the "opening" 2♥ bid (9-13 hcp) and showed a powerhouse in spades, which he surely had. Dubinin invited game and thought he had enough to make one slam try, with which it is hard to argue. Now, after the exchange of cue-bids, I think everything was fine up until the last call, when Gromov should have bid 5♠ (the logic being that if Dubinin had the ♦K he would bid slam himself; if he didn't slam would be poor). Van Prooijen led a club against the slam; either a club or heart beats it but a trump (or an unlikely diamond) allows declarer to produce some sort of clash squeeze by pitching down to the bare ♣A and catching West in an unusual triple squeeze. The club lead gave Verhees an epic problem at trick two. Eventually he played the ♥K, perhaps playing North for 8-1-1-3. Whatever the case, this was good enough to leave declarer with no legitimate pressure. Eng/Neth had scored 36 imps in three deals to come back and take the lead 60-53.

The next board didn't look so promising when Bakhshi-Gold came to play it; they were about three deals behind the other room by now.

Bd: 25
Dlr: North
Vul: E/W

North
♠ 8642
♥ ---
♦ A764
♣ A10932

West
♠ AQ95
♥ A432
♦ J52
♣ 64

East
♠ KJ107
♥ KQJ108
♦ 93
♣ QJ

South
♠ 3
♥ 9765
♦ KQ108
♣ K875

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Verhees</i>	<i>Gromov</i>	<i>v Prooijen</i>	<i>Dubinin</i>
	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♦	Pass	2♥(1)	Pass
4♠	All Pass		

(1) Canape

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Brink</i>	<i>Gold</i>	<i>Drijver</i>	<i>Bakhshi</i>
	Pass	1♥	Pass
2NT	3♣	Pass	5♣
Dbl	All Pass		

4♠ suffers from some obvious defects but one can hardly blame North for not doubling. The defenders cashed a top diamond and shifted to hearts, thereby taking only three of their ruffs. Down 400 didn't look too terrible, but we hadn't taken into consideration the irrepressible David Gold, who came forth with 3♣ in the middle of his opponents' slammish auction. A moment later he was in 5♣x and after a top heart lead he could ruff and play to take three more ruffs in his own hand. This line involved giving up a ruff at the end, but by that time he could score four trumps in dummy, four ruffs in his hand, and three diamonds. Nicely done! Those 4 imps made it 64-53.

Both E/W pairs then did very well with a combined 19 HCP to collect 600 here:

West	East
♠ J75	♠ AQ4
♥ 8654	♥ A
♦ J8765	♦ AK1094
♣ 2	♣ 9863

Brink's 2NT response as West was a preemptive diamond raise that let Drijver make a 3♣ game-try, which Brink accepted. In the other room Verhees heard his partner show a strong club, then diamonds. He jumped to 4♦, letting van Prooijen raise to game. After the last deal, N/S knew better than to double.

The N/S pairs then bid a relatively straightforward 4♠, off three tricks, before the action started up again.

Bd: 28
Dlr: West
Vul: N/S

North
♠ KQJ87632
♥ Q64
♦ A8
♣ ---

West
♠ ---
♥ J109
♦ K9642
♣ J7432

East
♠ A104
♥ K87
♦ Q5
♣ AKQ86

South
♠ 95
♥ A532
♦ J1073
♣ 1095

Open Room

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

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Brink</i>	<i>Gold</i>	<i>Drijver</i>	<i>Bakhshi</i>
Pass	3NT(1)	Dbl	4♦(2)
4NT	Pass	5♣	Dbl

- (1) Good hand with a major
- (2) Bid your suit

I didn't get the chance to ask Verhees if he would have bid over 3♠ had Dubinin passed it out. As it was, Verhees offered him somewhat better trumps than he might have been expecting, and of course 5♣x needed nothing more than the heart finesse. Both Northerly defenders put their opponents to the test by winning the ♦A to lead a low heart, and both declarers rose to the challenge by ducking. A pair of +550s and no swing. Still 64-53.

Bd: 29	North
Dlr: North	♠ K53
Vul: Both	♥ Q432
	♦ Q42
	♣ A83

West
♠ AQ102
♥ 5
♦ AKJ1065
♣ QJ

East
♠ 976
♥ K107
♦ 73
♣ K7654

South
♠ J84
♥ AJ986
♦ 98
♣ 1092

Open Room

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

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Brink</i>	<i>Gold</i>	<i>Drijver</i>	<i>Bakhshi</i>
	Pass	Pass	Pass
1♦	Pass	1NT	Pass
2♠	Pass	2NT	Pass
3♥	Pass	3NT	All Pass

Both pairs managed to reach 3NT under their own steam; a tad high, but I agree that it looks hard to stay low. (Still, in the Closed Room if East showed a minimum 1NT response West should surely shut up shop in 3♦.)

Both Souths led a heart against 3NT and van Prooijen took a diamond finesse, perhaps hoping that if it won he could run the suit and catch South in a

squeeze. I'm not sure that is right, but it let him out for two down while Drijver's line of leading a spade to the king, hoping the ♠K was right and the ♦Q was doubleton, looks better but led to three down when dummy was squeezed on the run of the hearts. It was 67-53 now to England/Neth.

Three deals to go. The next deal was played in a quiet 2♠ by both Norths after they correctly took the low road with a 16-count following an opening bid to their left.

Okay, finally an exciting board or two to finish with for all you adrenalin junkies who haven't had enough swing material.

Bd: 31	North
Dlr: South	♠ AQ4
Vul: N/S	♥ KQ43
	♦ A107
	♣ KQ5

West
♠ 87
♥ A10987
♦ 653
♣ 1073

East
♠ J
♥ J652
♦ 9842
♣ A964

South
♠ K1096532
♥ ---
♦ KQJ
♣ J82

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Verhees</i>	<i>Gromov</i>	<i>v Prooijen</i>	<i>Dubinin</i>
			1♠
Pass	2♣	Pass	2♠
Pass	3♠	Pass	4♥
Pass	4NT	Pass	5♣
Pass	5♠	All Pass	

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Brink</i>	<i>Gold</i>	<i>Drijver</i>	<i>Bakhshi</i>
			4♠
Pass	4NT	Pass	5♦
Pass	5♠	All Pass	

This deal revealed a problem for the ability of both N/S pairs to explore for slam when what was critical was to locate a void. But it is hard to decide whether they were unlucky or caught by a lacuna in their methods. For sure, Bakhshi could hardly go past 5♠ with such bad trumps. I'm guessing that he probably knew his partner didn't have one weak suit or he might have used an asking bid instead of keycard. But you certainly might be facing a hand with the ♥A and less good spades. All very tricky.

I think there was more room for Dubinin and Gromov

to find out what was going on. If Dubinin had jumped to 5♥ over 3♠ that would certainly have solved today's problem — though it might well have led to a problem on a different layout. Anyway, the result was an unsatisfactory push board, and we moved to the last deal with Eng/Neth up 14, which looked more than sufficient — unless we had another slam board.

Bd: 32 North
 Dir: West ♠ AK10
 Vul: E/W ♥ KJ73
 ♦ 108
 ♣ KJ62

West
 ♠ 86543
 ♥ 2
 ♦ AK95
 ♣ 854

East
 ♠ 9
 ♥ 964
 ♦ Q643
 ♣ Q10973

South
 ♠ QJ72
 ♥ AQ1085
 ♦ J72
 ♣ A

Open Room
 West North East South
Verhees *Gromov* *v Prooijen* *Dubinin*
 Pass 1NT Pass 2♣
 Pass 2♥ Pass 3♣
 Pass 3♠ Pass 4♣
 Pass 4♥ All Pass

Closed Room
 West North East South
Brink *Gold* *Drijver* *Bakhshi*
 Pass 1♣ Pass 1♥
 Dbl Rdbl 2♦ Dbl
 Pass 3♥ Pass 4♥
 All Pass

The cue-bidding in the Open Room auction helped pinpoint the diamond problem; in the Closed Room the opponents bid diamonds, which kept E/W out of trouble. An overtrick imp for Russia left the margin at 13 imps, and Eng/Neth would take on Hackett after a scintillating second-half recovery.

20th NEC Bridge Festival Daily Schedule

Day/Date	Time	Event	Venue
Saturday (Feb. 14)	09:00-11:15	NEC Cup Final (1)	414, 415
	11:35-13:50	NEC Cup Final (2)	
	13:50-15:00	Lunch Break	
	15:00-17:15	NEC Cup Final (3)	
	17:35-19:50	NEC Cup Final (4)	
	10:00-17:00	Yokohama Swiss Teams	501, 502
Sunday (Feb. 15)	10:00-17:30	Asuka Cup (Open Pairs)	501, 502
	18:00-20:00	Closing Ceremony	503

Registration For Weekend Events

Anyone planning to play in:

Yokohama IMP Pairs	Friday 13 th
Yokohama Swiss Teams	Saturday 14 th
Asuka Cup	Sunday 15 th

should register in advance in the Secretariat (Room 417)

The registration deadline for each event is the previous evening