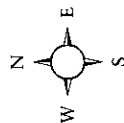
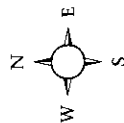


Part of the blame for this sort of unpleasantness must be awarded to administrators and writers, for insufficiently publicizing the requirement to call the director immediately.



TOURNAMENT
REPORT



NEVER SAY DIE

BY MIKE BECKER, BOCA RATON, FL
AND LARRY COHEN

A comeback from 53 imps down with only 16 boards to play requires a miracle. When the opponents are the reigning world champions, NICKELL (Dick Freeman, Nick Nickell; Bob Hamman, Paul Soloway; Jeff Meckstroth, Eric Rodwell), the task is even more daunting. This was the predicament our team, SCHWARTZ (Michael Becker, Richie Schwartz; David Berkowitz, Larry Cohen; Peter Boyd, Steve Robinson), faced in the semifinals of the 2004 Vanderbilt in Reno. The top-seeded and defending champion NICKELL had coasted into

the semis. Now, only a few hours' play separated it from a ticket to the final.

Mike: SCHWARTZ had the lineup choice in the fourth quarter. Boyd and Robinson, who had played the first three quarters, were due for a rest. Ordinarily, Richie and I would avoid Meckwell. They are very difficult to play against and have done well against us in the past. But, being behind by so much, SCHWARTZ decided to try something different: we lined up "backwards." Richie and I would face Meckwell, while David and Larry would oppose Hamway. Some great

MASTER SOLVERS' CLUB INSTRUCTIONS

To enter, submit your answers at the Master Solvers' Club section of www.bridgeworld.com or send answers, name, address, month of problems, and score from previous month to: MSC, The Bridge World, PO Box 299, Scarsdale NY 10583 USA. **Deadline:** 25th of the month before the problem month.

Problem suggestions by readers are often used and always appreciated.

Top scores are listed in the Honor Roll. A solver scoring 800 will be invited to join the panel for a month. The top two scorers for the year divide a 12-month panel stint and an appearance in Challenge the Champs.

Bridge World Standard is used by North-South. The system's agreements can be found in the August 2001 through February 2002 issues and at www.bridgeworld.com. Footnotes announce applicable treatments.

partnerships, like one-named singers and superstars, require only one name. "Meckwell" and "Hamman" have earned their singularity; neither the bridge world (nor *The Bridge World*) is ready to dub our partnership "Schwecker."

The boards were preduplicated, so the two rooms played deals 49-64 simultaneously, in that order.

Board 49

South dealer	Neither side vulnerable
WEST	EAST
♠ J 9 7 3	♠ A K Q 4 2
♥ Q 10 3	♥ 6
♦ A J	♦ K Q 7 5 2
♣ J 10 9 2	♣ 6 5
	SOUTH
	♥ 10 6 5
	♥ A 8 7 5 4 2
	♦ 4
	♣ A K 7

CLOSED ROOM

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
Rodwell	<i>Schwartz</i>	Meckstroth	<i>Becker</i>
1 ♠	Pass	2 ♠	2 ♠
3 ♣	3 ♠	Pass	4 ♠
Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass

Mike: I sat down in the Closed Room grumbling to myself about Schwartz's decision to play us against Meckwell. Soon I claimed 10 tricks on Board 49. It seemed like a dull start.

OPEN ROOM

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
<i>Berkowitz</i>	Hamman	<i>Cohen</i>	Soloway
1 ♠	Pass	4 ♠ (1)	4 ♠
Double*	Pass	5 ♠	(All Pass)
* "I want to bid on."			

Larry: Fourth-quarter comebacks from down 50-plus require a combination of good play, luck, and shrewd risk-taking. To accomplish a miracle comeback, the "trailers" must play their A-game, and the leaders must slump to their C-game. Perhaps more important, there must be deals with the potential for swings.

My jump to four hearts was the opening salvo in a fierce barrage, a signal that we wouldn't go quietly. Down by such a huge margin to a world-class team, it is nearly impossible to win by playing normally. Any opportunity to swing (without being totally reckless) should be taken.

Using a strong-club system allows one to jump from one to four in a major with any of a huge array of hand-types. This one was atypical, but down 53 is a desperate situation. David's double of four spades allows me to pass if I happened to have a strong hand with spade defense. With most hands (including the comic), responder pulls to five hearts.

Hamman led the spade three; Soloway won and returned a trump, which ran to dummy's nine. Declarer was close to making his contract. He played a diamond, which Hamman won to lead another trump. David won in dummy, ruffed a diamond, and ruffed a spade. He could have crossed in clubs and drawn the last trump, but in the forlorn hope of increasing his chances in the ending, instead ruffed another diamond. Hamman overruffed and cashed a spade for down two. Still, minus 100 and plus 420 gave 8imps to SCHWARTZ.

Board 50

North dealer; East-West vulnerable	
NORTH	EAST
♠ J 10	♠ Q 9 8 4 3 2
♥ 10 7	♥ 9
♦ 9 7 4 2	♦ A 10 5 3
♣ A K Q 9 2	♣ 8 6
	WEST
	♠ K 7 6
	♥ K 6 5 4 2
	♦ J 8
	♣ 7 5 4

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
Soloway	<i>Berkowitz</i>	Hamman	<i>Cohen</i>
3 ♠	Pass	4 ♠	2 ♠
			(All Pass)

OPEN ROOM

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
Soloway	<i>Berkowitz</i>	Hamman	<i>Cohen</i>
3 ♠	Pass	4 ♠	2 ♠
			(All Pass)

Larry: Hamman and Soloway did well to reach the best game. David led a spade to my queen and Soloway's ace. Needing only to find hearts no worse than four-two, declarer played the ace and another heart. David won, and we played spades to tap the South hand; down two, plus 100 for SCHWARTZ.

CHALLENGE THE CHAMPS

WEST HANDS FOR THE OCTOBER BIDDING MATCH

(East hands are on page 13.)

1. N. deals and opens two spades; S. bids three spades if possible; neither side vul.
2. East dealer; North-South vul.
3. South dealer; East-West vul.
4. West dealer; both sides vul.
5. North dealer; North-South vul.
6. East dealer; East-West vul.
7. South dealer; both sides vul.
8. West dealer; neither side vul.
9. North deals and opens two hearts; East-West vul.
10. East dealer; both sides vul.

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
<i>Becker</i>	Rodwell	<i>Schwartz</i>	Meckstroth
2 ♠	2 ♠	1 ♣	1 ♠
3 ♣*	Pass	Pass	Pass
forcing		Pass(1)	Pass

CLOSED ROOM

Mike: On the second deal, it was Richie's turn to operate. He took advantage of the favorable vulnerability to open the bidding. With poor hearts, no spade stopper, and no easy rebid, he passed my forcing three-club bid. I noted to screenmate Meckstroth that Richie might have psyched, but he was unperturbed. After the heart-nine lead, declarer won with dummy's ace and played jack of clubs, club to the queen, ten of hearts. Rodwell won with the king and returned a heart; when Meckstroth couldn't ruff, declarer claimed five. Holding 27 HCP, we had languished in a partscore, with no game available because of the bad heart break (a spade lead bears five clubs). Obviously, Lady Luck was looking over our shoulder. Plus 150 with 100 from the Open Room gave SCHWARTZ 6imps.

Board 51

South dealer
East-West vulnerable

NORTH
♠ Q J 5 3
♥ 10 5
♦ K 10 9 8
♣ K Q 7

EAST
♠ 8
♥ 9 7 6
♦ A Q 6 2
♣ 10 9 8 5 3

SOUTH
♠ 10 9 6
♥ A J 8 4 3 2
♦ J 3
♣ A J

WEST
♠ A K 7 4 2
♥ K Q
♦ 7 5 4
♣ 6 4 2

OPEN ROOM

SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST
Cohen *Soloway* *Berkowitz* *Hamman*
1 NT(!)* Pass Pass
*10-12

CLOSED ROOM

WEST NORTH EAST
Becker *Rodwell* *Schwartz*
1 ♣ Double 1 NT*
Pass 2 NT (AllPass)

SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST
Meckstroth *Becker* *Rodwell* *Schwartz*
1 ♥ Double 1 NT*
2 ♥ Pass 2 NT (AllPass)
*clubs

Larry: Another chance for swingy action stared me in the face. Rather than open one heart or two hearts, I tried a 10-12 notrump. This led to the perfect contract—a 10 in Challenge the Champs. The defense led spades, and I emerged effortlessly with eight tricks for 120. No swing.

Mike: Against two notrump, Richie



TEST YOUR PLAY

Problem A

Rubber bridge; South dealer; none vul.

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

SOUTH
♠ 8 4
♥ K Q J
♦ A Q 4
♣ A 8 6 5 2

SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST
1 NT Pass 4 ♥ Pass
4 ♣ Pass 6 ♣ (AllPass)

West leads the heart ace.

Plan the play.

Problem B

(Compare with Improve Your Play, Problem A; see page 67.)

Rubber bridge; South dealer; E-W vul.

NORTH
♠ K
♥ Q 7 5
♦ A K Q
♣ A Q 8 6 5 4

SOUTH
♠ A 8 6 5
♥ A K J
♦ J 5 2
♣ K 10 7

SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST
1 NT Pass 7 NT (AllPass)

Plan the play (a) if West leads the spade jack; (b) if West leads the diamond ten. (*Solutions on page 62.*)

Board 52

South dealer
Both sides vulnerable

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

CLOSED ROOM

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
<i>Becker</i>	<i>Rodwell</i>	<i>Schwartz</i>	<i>Meckstroth</i>
1 ♠	1 ♥	Pass	Pass
2 ♠	Pass	3 NT	Pass
4 ♣	Pass	4 ♥	Pass
6 ♣	Pass	4 NT	Pass
		7 ♣	(All Pass)

Mike: My hand was strong enough to open two clubs, but I tried something different. Was Richie's four notrump Blackwood or to play? I thought it was nonforcing. When I jumped to six clubs, it was nice that I had three aces and a void (which is what the bid would suggest if four notrump were Blackwood). Richie had enough to bid one more regardless. This looked like a flat board.

OPEN ROOM

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
<i>Soloway</i>	<i>Berkowitz</i>	<i>Hamman</i>	<i>Cohen</i>
1 ♣*	1 ♥	Double†	Pass#
2 ♠	Pass	2 ♠	Double%
6 ♣	Pass	Pass	Pass

*artificial; strong
†cards
#no ace, king, or queen of hearts
%please lead a heart anyway

Larry: This Hamman-Soloway auc-

tion was not a thing of beauty. Perhaps Soloway could have gone slower with three clubs, but that wouldn't have been clearly forcing. Maybe his picture jump to slam invited Hamman to raise with a top club.

The slam swing gave 13 imps to SCHWARTZ, and at this table there was a sense that the battle was on.

Board 53

West dealer
East-West vulnerable

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

CLOSED ROOM

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
<i>Becker</i>	<i>Rodwell</i>	<i>Schwartz</i>	<i>Meckstroth</i>
2 ♠	2 ♠	2 NT	3 ♣†
3 ♠	3 ♠	Pass	Pass
3 ♠	Pass	Pass	Pass

†weak club preempt
‡any diamond preempt
pass-or-correct

Mike: When Richie was able to enter the auction on a two level, we were allowed to play a gentle contract. I had only one top loser, but Rodwell led the club and shifted to a low heart. Meckstroth won and gave Rodwell a club ruff. Then, a third heart lapped me. I needed a spade to the king, but Meckstroth needed a ruff, to lead a club no-

hold my losses to down three, minus 150. I mentally complimented the opponents on a nice defense.

OPEN ROOM

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
<i>Soloway</i>	<i>Berkowitz</i>	<i>Hamman</i>	<i>Cohen</i>
3 ♠	3 NT	Double	Pass
4 ♠*	Double	Pass	Double
4 ♠	Pass	Pass	Double

*transfer (but this was unclear on the North-West side of the screen)

Larry: Over the three-level preempt, Hamman faced a tough decision. Never a wallflower, he overcalled bravely. When the smoke settled, Soloway landed in a contract that, on the surface, doesn't look too bad. It was bad. The defense was exactly the same as in the Closed Room, but here it was much more expensive for declarer: down four doubled gave us 800. I felt as if the opponents had just landed on New York Avenue, where I was the proud owner of four houses. Remarkably, this was a system triumph for being able to open a three-bid with a three-bid. That was 12 imps more to SCHWARTZ, maintaining an electrifying 39-0 run on just five deals. It was getting warm in the Open Room.

Board 54

[See top of next column.]

Larry: The West cards presented me with another chance to take a slightly unusual action that probably wouldn't be taken in the other room. It's hard to say whether the superlight two-club overcall was a success or a failure. With no interference, maybe North would land in three notrump and score 600 after a low-heart lead. After the interference, North might have upgraded his club king to reach the hopeless

South dealer: North-South vulnerable

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

OPEN ROOM

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
<i>Hamman</i>	<i>Cohen</i>	<i>Soloway</i>	<i>Berkowitz</i>
1 ♠	2 ♣	2 ♠	Double
3 ♠	Pass	Pass	Pass

spade game. In actuality, Hamman-Soloway rested in a sensible contract and scored 140: My low-heart lead went to David's king; he returned the club jack. I ducked, and declarer soon claimed nine tricks.

CLOSED ROOM

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
<i>Schwartz</i>	<i>Meckstroth</i>	<i>Becker</i>	<i>Rodwell</i>
1 ♠	Pass	1 NT*	2 ♠
Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass
3 ♠	3 ♠	3 ♠	Double
3 ♠	Pass	Pass	Pass

*semi-forcing

Mike: I had intended to show a three-trump game-invitational raise, but the auction caused me to reevaluate. My double of three hearts was cooperative; Richie had a clear-cut pull. Meckstroth led a low heart. Rodwell won with the ten, cashed another heart, and continued with the club jack. Meckstroth took that with the ace and returned a club. Richie finessed the ten and made an overtrick. But how important is an overtrick when you are down 53 imps?

Board 55

South dealer: both sides vulnerable

NORTH				SOUTH			
♠	K 8 3 2	♠	6	♠	A 8 7 2	♠	A K 3 2
♥	6	♥	A K 3 2	♥	10 7 6 4	♥	Q 10 8 2
♦	A 8 7 2	♦	10 8 2	♦	J 10 6	♦	K
WEST				EAST			
♠	Soloway	♠	Berkowitz	♠	Hamman	♠	Cohen
♥	1 ♠	♥	Double	♥	3 ♠*	♥	Pass
♦	Pass	♦	4 ♠	♦	(All Pass)	♦	Pass
♣	3 ♠*	♣	Pass	♣	Pass	♣	Pass

sailing. East returned a heart to my ten. West's jack, and dummy's ruff. I threw a heart on the club ace and ruffed a club to hand. After trumping my last heart in dummy, I played a spade to my jack and West's queen. East showed out, but this was the last trick for the defense. I could win any return and draw the last trump. The "marked" diamond finesse gave me 10 tricks and a slowly-played plus 620. I would have gone down if West had started with only two clubs along with his queen-nine-low in trumps. Perhaps there is a better single-dummy line of play available.

SOUTH		WEST		NORTH		EAST	
Meckstroth	1 ♣	Becker	1 ♠	Rodwell	1 ♠	Schwartz	3 ♣
Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass
Double	Double	Double	Double	Double	Double	Double	Double

Mike: Even playing five-card minors, I would normally open the West hand, with ace-king-jack-queen of hearts in a 3-4=3-3 minimum, one heart. But knowing Hamman would open one heart, I was compelled to do something else. Meckstroth did very well to offer a responsive double with only four working points. Richie led a club; declarer (North) won in dummy and played a heart. I falsescarded with the ace and reverted to clubs. Rodwell ruffed on the board, played a spade to the king and ace, and got home when the diamond queen turned up onside. Minus 620 didn't feel great, but I hoped for a push.

Board 56

[See top of next column.]

Mike: Against three notrump (by North), Richie (East) led a heart. Rodwell took the second round in dummy, then played a diamond to his jack

West dealer, neither side vulnerable

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

queen held. The heart six was returned; I won to play a diamond to dummy's jack and East's queen. Hamman dislodged my last heart stopper, and I knocked out his diamond ace, leaving:

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

When Hamman led the heart deuce, I had awkward discards to make. East's heart plays had indicated suit-preference for spades, so I expected him to have the spade king. Presuming Soloway would win the heart and shift to a spade, I had a chance. I'd need to take two diamonds, two hearts, one club, and three spades. So I had to save all of dummy's spades. To be able to keep queen-low of clubs in hand and ace-low in dummy, I had to throw the low diamond from the North hand. As expected, Soloway won and exited in spades. I ducked in dummy, hoping that Hamman would take his king—the fifth defensive trick. Then, I could untangle my remaining winners.

Hamman saw this coming, so he stuck in the spade ten. Now, my entries were bollixed. I crossed to dummy's diamond king and led a low spade, forcing Hamman to take his king. If he played a spade, it would let me throw dummy's losing club on the long diamond; of course, he played a club

and East's queen. Richie returned the heart queen. Declarer, nowhere near nine tricks, knocked out the diamond ace; Richie crossed to me in hearts, for our fourth trick. I played a club through, and Rodwell rose with the ace. He cashed his diamonds and threw Richie in with a club, but a safe exit with a third club let the defense score the spade king at the end for down two, plus 100.

OPEN ROOM			
SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
Cohen	Soloway	Berkowitz	Hamman
Pass	Pass	1 ♠	Pass
2 NT*	Pass	Pass	Pass
Invitational			

Larry: This was an easy chance to act differently than our counterparts. Meckwell haven't missed a 24-point three notrump this millennium, so stopping in two would likely create a swing. Soloway led a heart, and Hamman's

(Repeated for convenience.)

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

Both Souths announced a weak two-bid in spades; both Norths inquired, found a non-minimum opposite, and leaped to six spades. South's diamond jack is the key to the grand. In practice, it is probably best to play in only six: a three-zero trump break would doom the grand, and there is a chance that your counterparts wouldn't reach even a small slam—you might win 11 imps without risk. In this match, trumps were two-one; the board was pushed at 1010.

Board 60

Mike: At favorable vul, Richie bid: ♠ 9 ♠ 9 ♦ K Q 10 4 3 ♣ A Q 9 8 7 4.

As dealer, I opened one diamond; he raised to two, inverted. Meckstroth overcalled two spades, and I doubled for penalties. Would you sit? If not, what would you do? One argument against sitting is the fear of the opponents' secondary heart fit. Furthermore, the diamond honors might be worthless on defense. The only factor in favor of passing is the vulnerability. Reasonably enough, Richie chose the high road: He asked for aces and drove to six diamonds.

South dealer; East-West vulnerable

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

The home stretch started tamely with two normal vulnerable games, each team winning an overtrick imp. At least NICKELL was off the schneid. Then:

Board 59

South dealer; neither side vulnerable

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

CLOSED ROOM

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
<i>Becker</i>	Rodwell	Schwartz	Meckstroth
1 ♦	Pass	2 ♦*	2 ♣
Double	Pass	4 ♦*	Pass
4 NT	Pass	6 ♦	(All Pass)

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
Soloway	Berkowitz	Hamman	Cohen
1 NT*	Pass	3 ♦†	Pass
3 ♠	Pass	3 ♣#	Double
3 NT	Pass	4 ♣	Pass
4 ♦	Pass	4 ♠	Pass
5 ♣	Pass	6 ♦	(All Pass)

*key-card-ask in diamonds

As you can see, passing the double would have netted 800. Without that

spade overcall, Rodwell might have led a heart against six diamonds, after which slam would be a great proposition. But with a spade lead, I needed some luck: Meckstroth won with the spade king and shifted to a heart. I won and smacked the club jack on the table. After Rodwell ducked and the jack held, I had to decide which minor was more likely to break four-one. It made no difference on the lie of the cards. Down one. From my point of view, this might have been our last decent chance to get back in the match, and it had just flitted away. We were running out of boards.

Larry: For once, I knew what to lead. For a change, I didn't know what to do at trick two. David had played the spade five (standard count) on my king-lead. Should I try another spade, hoping that declarer had the deuce, or play North for one-one in the majors? If I shifted and declarer had solid minors and two low spades, it would be embarrassing: I continued spades (with a high one), but it didn't cost. Declarer couldn't bring in the clubs without a ruff in dummy. He might have survived with some bizarre line, but he led a club to the queen and laid down the club ace, which I ruffed. Down one left the quarter score at 47-1.

CHALLENGE THE CHAMPS

EAST HANDS FOR THE OCTOBER BIDDING MATCH

(West hands are on page 5.)

1. N. deals and opens two spades; S. bids three spades if possible; neither side vul.
2. East dealer; North-South vul.
3. South dealer; East-West vul.
4. West dealer; both sides vul.
5. North dealer; North-South vul.
6. East dealer; East-West vul.
7. South dealer; both sides vul.
8. West dealer; neither side vul.
9. North deals and opens two hearts; East-West vul.
10. East dealer; both sides vul.

Board 61 was a routine push at a partial, so the NICKELL lead remained at 7 imps. On the next deal, SCHWARTZ took the lead for the first time in the match:

Board 62

West dealer			
Neither side vulnerable			
SOUTH		NORTH	
♠ 9-	♠ 10 7 6 4	♠ A Q 10 7 4	♠ Q 10 6
WEST		EAST	
♠ K 10 7 6	♠ A O 8 3	♠ J 5 3	♠ 9 5 3
♠ 9	♠ K J 6 2	♠ 9 5 3	♠ K 4 2
♠ A 9 8 3			

CLOSED ROOM							
SOUTH		WEST		NORTH		EAST	
Rodwell	1 ♣	Schwartz	1 ♠	Meckstroth	1 ♠	Becker	1 ♠
2 ♠	2 ♣	3 ♠	3 ♠	4 ♠	3 ♠	3 ♠	3 ♠
Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass	Double

SOUTH
 ♠ J 5 4 2
 ♥ A K Q 8 2
 ♦ 8
 ♣ J 7 5

WEST
 ♠ Hamman
 ♥ Cohen
 ♦ Pass
 ♣ Pass (All Pass)

Larry: We bid aggressively to four hearts but wimped out when it came to doubling four spades. Against four undoubled spades, David led two high hearts, tapping the dummy (West). Soloway came to the closed hand (East) in clubs and led a diamond to dummy's jack and my queen. Instead of following David's forcing defense, I took my diamond ace and gave him a ruff for an immediate down one, plus 50. At IMPs, it's hard to resist taking the setting tricks (even if the missing diamonds were two-two, I expected the third round to promote a trump trick). Looking at all four hands, I can see that I collapsed several defensive tricks into just one. Any other defense would

have produced at least down two. At the time, I didn't think it a big deal, as we hadn't doubled. Meanwhile, I wondered whether four hearts could make:

Mike: Should Richie's hand be opened one diamond or one club? Bidding diamonds follows the old bid-the-suit-below-the-skeleton rule and mentions the suit you'd want raised or led. However, Harvey would probably open one diamond so a one-club opening was warranted. It turned out to make Rodwell's play in four hearts much more difficult. I had been trapped into doubling four hearts; partner had opened the bidding, I had ten points, and the opponents had been willing to play in three hearts a round of bidding earlier. But it was another thing Meckwell game that had some play:

Richie made a terrific lead: the heart nine. Rodwell considered his play for ten minutes, then won with the queen and led a diamond to the ace, ruffing a diamond (I played the nine), and led a spade from his hand to my queen. I returned a low heart, and Rodwell decided to play me for the jack. He ran the trick to dummy's ten and ruffed another diamond. Had the king appeared, he would have made the contract. When the king did not appear, he had a choice between ruffing two spades in the dummy or making a club trick and ruffing only one spade. He was soon down two. Our plus 300 added to 50 from the Open Room made the

quarter score 55-1, and we had done the undoable: caught up. We couldn't have imagined it at the time, but with two deals to go we led by 1 imp. We also didn't know that, having climbed all the way to the mountain top, we would slide back down on the next deal.

Board 63

West dealer			
East-West vulnerable			
SOUTH		NORTH	
♠ 9 8 7 2	♠ Q 8 7 6 4	♠ 10	♠ K J 2
WEST		EAST	
♠ A K J 6 5	♠ 10 4	♠ 10 4	♠ 9 8 7 6 2
♥ 9 3	♥ K	♥ K	♥ A 9 8 7 6 2
♦ Q J 3	♦ A 9 8 7 6 2	♦ A 9 8 7 6 2	♦ Q 9 7 6
♣ 8 4 3			

CLOSED ROOM							
SOUTH		WEST		NORTH		EAST	
Schwartz	1 ♣	Meckstroth	1 ♠	Becker	1 NT	Rodwell	1 NT
2 ♣*	2 ♣*	Pass	2 ♠	Pass	2 ♠	Pass	(All Pass)

SOUTH
 ♠ Q 3
 ♥ A J 10 5 2
 ♦ K 5 4
 ♣ A 10 5

WEST
 ♠ Cohen
 ♥ Pass
 ♦ 3 ♣*

Larry: I felt there was some chance that our team had caught up, but we'd need help from the Closed Room. The odds were that we were still trailing, so I decided to continue with my "don't do what they will do with my cards at the other table" strategy. Accordingly, I passed a West hand that I would normally open. Surely, Meckwell would open one spade. I was pleased with the way the auction developed, as I got to describe my hand perfectly on round two. Unfortunately, my best-laid plans wound up pushing the opponents into

a making game they would not have reached unassisted. After cashing two spades, I looked carefully at my hearts. Had they been jack-nine, I could have played a third spade for an uppercut. As it was, I shifted to the diamond queen to David's ace. Hamman ruffed the diamond return in dummy and led the heart queen. He knew from the auction that the finesse would win and, when it did, scored a much-needed plus 420.

Mike: Even though he might have been worth a two-heart overcall or a double, Richie decided to use a gadget. This "light-takeout" bid was a chance to do something that wouldn't happen at the other table. When dummy appeared, I saw that we'd missed a non-vul. game needing a bit more than a finesse. Maybe they would bid it and go down. I covered the spade ten with dummy's queen; Meckstroth took the king and ace, then led a low one. Rodwell uppercut with the king of trumps. Hoping that the diamond ace lay over the king, I overruffed and tried for a strip: heart to the queen, another spade ruff high, then the heart jack. I stayed in the dummy (South) to lead a low diamond. When Meckstroth played the jack, I realized the error of my ways. But instead of returning a diamond and giving me a two-way club guess, West shifted to a club, which, on this layout, guessed that suit for me. Plus 170 held the loss to 6 imps.

Board 64

West dealer			
East-West vulnerable			
	NORTH		EAST
	♠ K 6 3		♠ A Q J 9
	♥ K 9 5 3		♥ Q 4
	♦ K J 7		♦ 6 5
	♣ K 8 7		♣ Q J 5 3 2
WEST			
♠ 7 5			
♥ A J 2			
♦ Q 10 9 2			
♣ 10 9 6 4			
	SOUTH		
	♠ 10 8 4 2		
	♥ 10 8 7 6		
	♦ A 8 4 3		
	♣ A		
	OPEN ROOM		
SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
Cohen	Soloway	Berkowitz	Hamman
Pass	1 ♠*	Pass	Pass
1 ♠	Pass	2 ♠†	(All Pass)
*Precision; two-plus diamonds			
†13-15 if balanced			

to think that he couldn't have the heart ace. I went up with dummy's king and played another trump. I suppose I really couldn't find one of those ways to go down, and I was soon scoring up plus 110.

We ran quickly from the table out into the hallway. Note: When you are in the hallway awaiting the score comparison, it's usually a good sign when your teammates charge out first. The hallway was mobbed, but our teammates were still playing Board 64. Everyone with knowledge of the e-bridge on-line broadcast told us the match was very close. The consensus (which turned out to be correct) was that we trailed by 5 imps entering Board 64. Our only chance, it seemed, was for our teammates to be plus 100 or more. Maybe Meekstroh would stretch to four hearts down two? That would give us the 5 imps needed to tie the match.

CLOSED ROOM			
SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
Meekstroh	Becker	Rodwell	Schroth
Pass	Pass	1 ♠*	Pass
1 ♠	Pass	2 ♠	Double
Pass	2 NT†	Pass	3 ♣
3 ♠	Double(!)	(All Pass)	
*Precision; two-plus diamonds			
†minors			

Mike: We had no idea that the match was close or that we had to win 5 imps on this deal to achieve a tie. Richie's vulnerable takeout double of two hearts kept us in contention. Making three clubs would have won the match by one (110 and 110 is 6 imps); going down in three clubs would have lost it. But Meekstroh bid three hearts, slated to go down 50, for a swing of only 4 imps.

From my point of view, this was our last chance to make a comeback and my

last call of the match. I thought we had picked up about 15 imps at our table. If we could pick up 40 or so imps on this board, the match was ours. I had to go down fighting. I valiantly doubled to try to get 300. Maybe Richie could produce four or five tricks.

I led a spade to Richie's jack; he shifted to a diamond. Meekstroh took my queen with dummy's king and crossed to the ace of clubs. When declarer led the ten of hearts, I prayed that Richie had the queen. He did! The play was soon over. Big deal. Plus 100 instead of plus 50. I thought my double had earned an extra imp or two.

We walked into the hall, and everything became a blur. A crowd swarmed around us. Larry said the match was close. We added the scores and, sad to see, we'd lost by 3 imps. That was close all right. I thought of the last two times our team had battled NICKELL, each time losing by one swing. I got the customary, awful, sick feeling in my stomach, the one you get when you know that it had been within your own power to have won a match that you lost.

Then someone commented that we'd mis-scored, that in fact the match was tied. We recounted and found a 1-imp addition error. Then we went over the boards, one by one. When we went down one in six diamonds, I had felt vulnerable—but in fact we weren't. We had actually pushed that board and tied the match. The unbelievable had happened. What a great decision Richie made to line up our pairs backwards.

In looking back, I realize that the expression "it's better to be lucky than good" applied to both of our pairs. On a bad day, all of the operations might

have caused us to die on the table. We could just as easily have lost 53 imps.

Larry: It was a relief to see we hadn't lost by three (or two or one). Still, it wasn't a time for unconstrained joy. There was the little matter of an eight-board playoff to consider. Richie wanted to keep the same lineup, but Boyd and Robinson were anxious to get in. The solution? Richie decided to toss a coin. He said that fate was with us, and that if it came up heads, Boyd-Robinson would play; if tails, he and Mike would stay in. After his decision on the fourth quarter lineup had worked so well, who could argue with him? The coin went up, and it came down on heads.

There were no seating rights for the playoff. Each team submitted a lineup. Berkowitz-Cohen would face Meekstroh-Rodwell, while the rested Boyd-Robinson would play against Hamman-Soloway. We suspect that no coins were flipped in the NICKELL team huddle.

Extra Innings

After the first seven of eight scheduled deals, despite having had some mild good luck, SCHWARTZ was trailing by 1 imp. Unless our team gained exactly 1 imp, this was to be the final board:

PATRONIZE THE BOOKSHELF

The world's largest selection of bridge books, software and merchandise is available at the Baron Barclay Bookshelf. (See page 76.)

Board 72

South dealer; both sides vulnerable

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

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

OPEN ROOM			
SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
Robinson	Soloway	Boyd	Hannan
1 ♣ Pass	1 ♠ Pass	1 ♠ Pass	1 ♠ Pass
2 ♣ Pass	2 ♠ Pass	2 ♠ Pass	2 ♠ Pass
2 NT Pass	3 NT Pass	3 NT Pass	3 NT Pass

With the heart ace likely to be with East, the best contract is five diamonds, but three notrump is normal. Robinson won the heart lead with the king and placed the overcaller with the diamond king. With six club tricks, he wouldn't need the diamond finesse. One might play the diamond ace first (in case of a singleton king), then fall back on the clubs. No, Robinson played clubs right away but misguessed: club to the ace; club jack, low, low, queen. Ouch! The defenders managed not to block the hearts, so SCHWARTZ was down one, minus 100.

This time, Boyd-Robinson and Hamman-Soloway finished first. Out in the hallway (there were still plenty of people there at three a.m.), they were told (accurately) that SCHWARTZ trailed by 1 imp, pending the comparison of the last board. It looked bleak for us.

CLOSED ROOM

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
Rodwell	Berkowitz	Meckstroth	Cohen
1 NT* 14-16	Pass	3 NT	(All Pass)

Larry: David led the heart jack. How good it felt looking at my hearts and diamonds in combination with dummy's diamonds. Perhaps David had found a brilliant lead, avoiding his club length (it sure seemed as if he must have long clubs). I played low, and Rodwell won with the king. With no opposing bidding, the obvious line is to try the clubs from the top, falling back on the diamond finesse if necessary, making if the club queen drops or the diamonds come in. This is what Rodwell did. I won with the diamond king and crossed to David in hearts. He cashed a club, and we then finished the hearts for down two, plus 200. Sometimes, a play is right and the result wrong. The 3-imp swing gave SCHWARTZ its biggest lead of the match: 2imps.

And that's when the music stopped. You may recall Eric Kokish's Great Shuffler, who decides whether finessses win or lose and how trumps break. Maybe there also exists a Great Leveler (Shuffler's cousin?), who ensures that teams that win many close matches all so lose some every now and then. And vice-versa. Here, SCHWARTZ, having suffered several narrow defeats over the past few years, was facing a team that has won more close matches than any other in bridge history. Maybe The Great Leveler was watching, and maybe that's why we won. (And perhaps T.G.L. suffered a guilty conscience; four months later, NICKELL overcame a 71-imp deficit with 16 boards to play to win a Spingold semifinal.)



FIFTY YEARS AGO

It's a shame that the great brilliant deals in important events, but we'll take them wherever they appear. Alfred P. Sheinwold's report of the year's Summer Nationals in the September 1954 *Bridge World* included this gem from a side game. South was Sam Fry, Jr. [See next column.]

West led the deuce of diamonds, and declarer promptly called for dummy's queen, as if he held ace-doubleton in the closed hand. After the diamond king and ace were played, South led the club ten to dummy's jack (drawing trumps would have given East a chance to signal) and lost a heart finesse to West's king. Being human, West tried to cash the jack of diamonds.

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SOUTH dealer		Both sides vulnerable	
WEST		NORTH	
♠ 19 5 4	♦ K 8	♠ K 7 3	♦ 5 2
♦ J 7 3 2	♣ 9 8 3	♦ Q 9 5 4	♣ J 7 5 4
WEST		EAST	
♠ 19 5 4	♦ K 8	♠ A 10 8 6 2	♦ 10 7 4
♦ J 7 3 2	♣ 9 8 3	♦ K 10 8 6	♣ 6

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
2 ♣ Pass	2 ♠ Pass	2 ♠ Pass	2 ♠ Pass
2 ♠ Pass	3 NT Pass	3 NT Pass	3 NT Pass
4 ♣ Pass	4 ♠ Pass	5 ♣ Pass	5 ♣ Pass

KANTAR FOR THE DEFENSE

BY EDWIN B. KANTAR

You have been drafted to play in the Scottish Team Trials (the vision of E. B. K. in kilt and tam-o'-shanter makes our day—Ed.), and they are expecting big things from you. Can you come through?

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
Pass	Pass	Double	2 ♠
2 ♣	Pass	3 ♠	Pass
4 ♣	Pass	Pass	Pass

You aren't familiar with partner's weak two-bid philosophy, so, although you don't like the sound of the bidding, you don't double; and, relying on traditional values, you lead the diamond queen.

South wins with the ace, partner playing the six. Declarer leads a spade to the king and a second spade to the queen and ace, partner discarding an encouraging eight of hearts on the latter trick. Now what?

(Solution overleaf)