

CHALLENGE THE CHAMPS

ZHONG FU ^{AND} JACK ZHAO

VS.

KYOKO OHNO ^{AND} AKIHIKO YAMADA

CONDUCTED BY ERIC O. KOKISH & BEVERLY KRAFT

Challenge the Champs is a continuing matchpoint bidding battle. Each month, two leading pairs bid deals that are from tournaments or submitted by readers.

The Incumbents are Zhong Fu and Jack Zhao, who have represented China with distinction for many years, their crowning achievement coming in 2006, when they won the World Open Pairs in Verona. Just a few months before that they won the Vanderbilt in Dallas and have been successful playing professionally in America for the past five years. They employ “5542 Dutch Doubleton”: 5542 refers to the minimum number of cards required in the suit to open one spade, one heart, one diamond, or one club, respectively. One club can be a doubleton only in a balanced hand with 12-14 or 18-19 HCP. Where a considerable number of expert pairs have switched to transfer responses to one-club openings, the Chinese stars treat a one-of-a-major response as natural and positive (at least 7 HCP) and possibly concealing longer diamonds. A one-diamond response is either diamonds or 0-6 HCP (over that, opener’s one-notrump rebid shows 18-19 HCP; with a weak notrump, he may need to rebid in a three-card major). A one-notrump opening shows 15-17

HCP, two notrump 20-21 HCP. Two clubs is strong and artificial, but the meanings of other suit two-bids depend on opener’s table position: In first or second position, two diamond is Multi (weak two in a major or 22-23 HCP in a balanced hand), two hearts is weak with both majors, two spades is weak with spades and a minor. In third or fourth position, two-bids in suits other than clubs are weak, and there are corresponding adjustments in the handling of strong, balanced hands.

The Newcomers are Kyoko Ohno and Akihiko Yamada, who spearheaded the Japanese team to a triumph in the 2008 World Seniors Championship. Although it is popular among today’s experts to use personal variations of details within a standard framework, the Newcomers employ favored adjustments to the framework itself. For example, they use weak notrumps (which have gradually lost popularity from a high of about 25 percent among American experts); the context is a style similar to Kaplan-Sheinwold—for instance, opening in a minor and single-raising a

major-suit response is ing (the equivalent of port in a balanced hand HCP). Their two-diamond individualistic: 11-16 or 4=4=4=1. (Thus, it between Roman Two sion Two Diamonds inferences from special different than those in contexts.

Our thanks to Godalming, England, 2 and 7. Deal 1 is from Commonwealth Nations Deal 4 is from the 1 Deal 10 is from the 20 pionship.

1
North dealer; neither side vulnerable

WEST
 ♠ A 8
 ♥ 4 2
 ♦ A 9 6
 ♣ K Q 8 7 4 2

Zhao

2 ♣
 2 ♥
 3 ♠
 4 ♦
 7 ♣

Ohno

2 ♣
 2 ♥
 4 ♦
 6 ♦

Zhao’s two-club response is natural in a balanced hand. His continuation was a relay essential nature of secret. On round three