

BRIDGE

By Paul Thurston

NORTH			
♠	73		
♥	QJ853		
♦	10974		
♣	J2		
WEST			
♠	KQ1052		
♥	96		
♦	J82		
♣	Q98		
SOUTH			
♠	AJ986		
♥	72		
♦	K3		
♣	7643		
Vulnerable: North-South			
Dealer: North			
The bidding:			
West	North	East	South
	Pass	1♦	1♣
Pass	Pass	Dbf	All Pass
Opening lead: ♦ 2			

If the following theme seems familiar, it is a recurring hobby horse I like to ride, and perhaps early in the new year is a good time for a re-mount, just in case it deters your partner from occasioning a disaster as severe as the one that befell today's North-South in a recent International match.

The reasons for overcalling are many and varied — to obstruct the opponents, to suggest

a good opening lead to your partner, sometimes even to find a profitable contract — but need to be weighed against the possibility of a successful penalty double by enterprising opponents.

On this layout, the signs warning against intervention were all there: North had already passed so East-West were the absolute favourites to hold the balance of power, South's side was vulnerable and his suit was minimal in length and only so-so in quality, but into the fray waded our hero with an overcall that sadly would be considered almost automatic by many players.

Just as automatic was West's pass (hopefully he didn't drool with anticipation!) and East's re-opening takeout double that West was only too pleased to pass and convert to a penalty-seeking exercise.

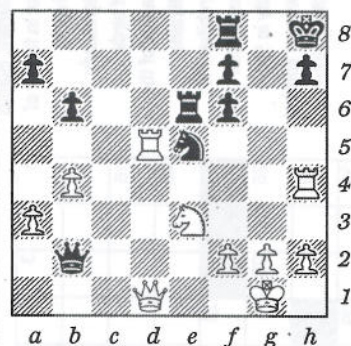
Actually more like a cherry-picking party, as East defended to the maximum by winning the first diamond and shifting to his trump. By the time the smoke cleared, South had taken but four tricks (three spades and the diamond King) to turn over the tidy sum of 800 points for the dubious pleasure of having made an overcall the likes of which

you'll all avoid in 2006 — won't you?

■ Feedback always welcome at thurston@computan.on.ca

CHESS

By Shelby Lyman



WHITE HAS A CRUSHER

Hint: Not 1. Qh5, as ... Qb1ch
2. Rd1 Qg6 stops mate at h7.

Solution:
1. Rd2! If ... Qc3, then 2. Qh5, etc. [Shulman-Khalifman '05].