

CANADIAN SALT LAKE CITY DIARY

By Keith Balcombe

Introduction

The World Bridge Federation (W.B.F.) sponsored an attraction event (Grand Prix) just prior to the 2002 Salt Lake City Winter Olympic Games in order to promote bridge as a mind sport to the International Olympic Committee (I.O.C.). The W.B.F. hoped for the inclusion of bridge as a sport in the Winter 2006 Olympics in Torino, Italy. Men's, Women's and Junior events were showcased to convince the I.O.C., mostly non bridge players, that this type of event is popular and that it reflects the Olympic spirit. Officials from the W.B.F. hope to show the I.O.C. that bridge can fill the vacant time slot between the outdoor events that typically end at about 3 p.m. and the ice events that usually start in the early evening.

As a result of these issues, this event had some very strict guidelines about a variety of aspects of Olympic life. These included restrictions about complicated bidding systems, behaviour, dress code, random drug testing and the overall high level of security. After a day or two, the players and other participants became used to these ways of life in Salt Lake City.

There were ten teams from all over the world competing in each of the Men's and Women's events plus a four team Junior event. We were to play twelve boards against each other team using IMPs converted to Victory Points based on the W.B.F. 25 VP scale. The top four teams from each main event would qualify for the semi-finals.

Day One Friday February 1

This was a travel day for everyone. My Albertan teammates, **Nicholas Gartaganis** (captain); **Peter Jones** and **Gordon Campbell** (my partner), and their wives, drove the fifteen hours to Salt Lake City in the Western USA. **Fred Gitelman**, **Joe Silver** and myself (**Keith Balcombe**) all flew separately from Eastern Canada. My wife (Dianne) and I arose at 5 a.m. in order to fly to Atlanta in the Eastern USA to connect to Salt Lake City. We got as far as the runway in Toronto before a mechanical problem forced the plane to turn back. We eventually arrived in Salt Lake City six hours late, but our wonderful teammates had waited for us to arrive in order to have the whole team together for dinner.

Day Two Saturday February 2

Today featured a leisurely schedule with the Opening Ceremony starting at 6 p.m. and then two matches after that, with the first match against the USA on Vugraph.

We drove around SLC a little and witnessed the spectacular setting for the 2002 Winter Olympics. The visible preparations were substantial and spectacular. There was also security everywhere, including at the Hilton playing site. It seemed that almost everyone in town was wearing a uniform and nametag.

The Opening Ceremony of the fourth I.O.C. Grand Prix was graced by a number of distinguished guests. They included **Marc Hodler & Tony Khoury** (members of the Executive Board of the I.O.C.), **Mario Pescante** (the President of the European Olympic Committee) and Polish I.O.C. member **Irena Szewinska**, the Gold Medal winner in the Olympic 400 metres at Montreal in 1976. Many of the leading figures in the world of bridge administration were also present. **José Damiani** (President of the W.B.F.), **Gianarrigo Rona** (President of the European Bridge League) and Canadian **George Retek**, the President of the American Contract Bridge League.

Speeches were followed by the Olympic theme music and the introduction of the players. The competing teams include the reigning Venice Cup, Olympiad and World Junior Champions. My digital camera decided to mysteriously stop working up as the Canadian Women's team was introduced, so I was not able to take any pictures. Very disappointing. Our red and white Canadian uniforms [donated by MasterPoint Press and Bridge Base Online] were very spectacular compared to all other uniforms, and we were very proud to be wearing them and the Canadian pins donated by John Duquette. We later discovered that Poland's playing uniforms were also very colourful red and white.

Very well fabricated screens that divided the tables diagonally were used in all matches. Players alerted and explained their own bids, usually in writing. Since Gordon and I play a system with many detailed agreements, this would be a test for us.

The Vugraph was quite well done, featuring one key match and all of the results from the other matches. Each table had its own set of computer preduplicated hands, so each table played the boards in the same order. This allows for a running comparison of each match. The players who were sitting out can watch the Vugraph and have the nerve racking experience of following their team's progress, even if their team is not involved in the featured Vugraph match. North usually performed quite a bit of paperwork, including the official score card for the table and separate score slips for each hand. These score slips were then hand carried to the Vugraph. The featured match is excellently covered by two cameras on closed circuit TV, along with expert commentary from Barry Rigal, Eric Kokish, Bobby Wolff, George Jacobs and a few other experts.

Match One vs U.S.A.

Our first match featured Fred and Joey on Vugraph against Cohen and Berkowitz. Peter and Nicholas were in the Closed Room against Richard Freeman and Nick Nickell. Canada managed only two swings in the twelve board match, but we made the most of them for the win.

The match started with a bang that ended up being a loud push.

NORTH
 S A964
 H 1052
 D 2
 C AK864

WEST
 S 53
 H QJ864
 D AK64
 C J7

EAST
 S KJ72
 H K973
 D QJ85
 C 10

SOUTH
 S Q108
 H A
 D 10973
 C Q9532

CLOSED ROOM	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	Freeman	Gartaganis	Nickell	Jones
	4H	1C	Double	3C
	Double	5C	Pass	Pass
		All Pass		
VUGRAPH ROOM	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	Gitelman	Berkowitz	Silver	Cohen
		2D [Short ♦]	Pass	3C
	Pass	Pass	Double	Redouble
	4H	Pass	Pass	5C
	Double	All Pass		

After Nickell's initial takeout double, it was not difficult for Gartaganis to deduce the location of the ♠K when it came time for that. Gartaganis easily scored up eleven tricks for plus 550.

On Vugraph, the auction was quite different. After the Precision 2D opening, Silver could have assured a nice gain by passing, but passing on Vugraph seemed very wimpy to me. The question in the play, after Silver's initial pass, was whether Cohen would get the spade suit right. Gitelman started with a trump, a good start considering how revealing the lead of the ♦K would have been. Cohen won in dummy and played a Diamond to his 10 and Gitelman's Ace, Gitelman then exited with a low Heart to the 10, King and Ace. Cohen followed consecutive Diamond ruffs and Heart ruffs with a Club to the Queen. Cohen had seen what he needed to see in the red suits, so he played a Spade to the Ace and a low Spade and soon claimed his doubled contract.

Another push followed, then Canada displayed some good bidding judgment to land our first big swing.

NORTH

S 105
H 6
D J109542
C J875

WEST

S Q9432
H Q
D K63
C A943

EAST

S AJ
H AJ98743
D void
C KQ102

SOUTH

S K876
H K1052
D AQ87
C 6

CLOSED ROOM	WEST Freeman	NORTH Gartaganis	EAST Nickell	SOUTH Jones
	1S 4C	3D [weak] 4D	Double 6C	1D Pass All Pass
VUGRAPH ROOM	WEST Gitelman	NORTH Berkowitz	EAST Silver	SOUTH Cohen
	Pass 4H All Pass	3D [weak] 5D	3H 5H	1D 3S Double

In the Closed Room, the bad breaks in clubs and hearts doomed the 6C contract; Freeman could manage no more than eleven tricks. A key bid for Canada was the Gartaganis 4D bid that stole the opportunity for Nickell to cue bid in order to clearly invite slam. Well done Nicholas Gartaganis for that bid.

In the Open Room, Gitelman did well to raise his partner on a singleton honor, but he must have had some trepidation when Cohen applied the axe. Cohen was no doubt pleased to hear the opponents reach the five level in his second best suit. The lead of the ♦A seemed to give up a trick, but the contract was cold on any lead because Cohen was destined to be endplayed at some point to lead a Spade or a Diamond. Silver ruffed the ♦A and played a low heart, winning the Queen in dummy when Cohen played low. Joey discarded the ♠J on the ♦K and played a Spade to the ace, followed by the ♥A. Silver soon claimed for +850 and a 14 IMP gain for the good guys.

Three more pushes followed. That left the score at 14-0 for Canada with six boards left; still anyone's match.

NORTH

S 107532
 H J543
 D 1042
 C 8

WEST

S 98
 H AKQ97
 D AKQ65
 C Q

EAST

S AQJ
 H 86
 D 93
 C AKJ1042

SOUTH

S K64
 H 102
 D J87
 C 97653

CLOSED ROOM	WEST Freeman	NORTH Gartaganis	EAST Nickell	SOUTH Jones
				Pass
	2C	Pass	3C	Pass
	3H	Pass	4C	Pass
	4D	Pass	4S	Pass
	6C	Pass	7C	All Pass
OPEN ROOM	WEST Gitelman	NORTH Berkowitz	EAST Silver	SOUTH Cohen
				Pass
	2C	Pass	3C	Pass
	3H	Pass	4C	Pass
	4D	Pass	4S	Pass
	5C	Pass	5S	Pass
	5NT	Pass	7NT	All Pass

In the Closed Room, Gartaganis made the critical lead of the ♠3 and Freeman went up with the ace. The lead deprived him of a safe way back to dummy after leading a low Club to the Queen to guard against a bad split in trumps. He could have succeeded even after the damaging opening lead if he guessed which red suit to play after a Club to the Queen. Rather than guess, he made the reasonable but fatal play of cashing the ♣A at trick two. The trump loser was now unavoidable and Freeman was down one.

The auction and result were once again quite different in the Open Room. Fred also got a spade lead against 7NT. He went up with the ace and earned high marks from the Vugraph judges by displaying flawless technique. Instead of relying on clubs to break, Gitelman played a heart at trick two, cashed the AKQ in the suit and turned to diamonds when hearts did not divide 3-3. When diamonds did break favorably, Gitelman was able to claim the grand slam and earn 20 IMPs for Canada.

The final score was 34-5 for Canada, which converted to 23-7 in Victory Points. We had played very well in both rooms against tough opponents. Our team now walked a more confidence step.

Match Two vs India

India was a relatively unknown four person team (I could very much relate to that). I was rather nervous on the first couple of hands and I had some trouble concentrating. The match started eventfully for my partner, Gordon Campbell, and I with a doubled sacrifice and a hand fairly close to slam that we played in 4H. My opponent cleverly falsecarded in trumps, so I ended up making five to lose an IMP.

On the next hand, Gordon picked up ♠K4; ♥J9653; ♦843; ♣J53, with only the opponents Vulnerable. The bidding proceeded: 1H by RHO, Pass by Gordon; 2H by LHO, Double by me, 4H by RHO. Now what? Do you double? What do you lead? Gordon doubled (I agree with his choice) and led the ♠K. That turned out to be the only lead to let it make, a lead that was duplicated in the vast majority of the ten Men's and Women's matches. I added fuel to the fire by doing something silly to concede -990, instead of -790 for a 9 IMP loss.

The very next hand, 6H was bid by both teams with:

SOUTH	NORTH
S J10	S AK8
H AK9864	H J102
D A102	D K93
C J2	C AK107

The opening lead was a low Spade at both tables. How would YOU play it? The Indian declarer reasonably played low on the opening lead and lost to the ♠Q. Declarer later also lost a trump trick, a very unlucky result. Peter Jones for Canada rose with the Ace after the Spade lead, got to see a few tricks and later ruffed the third round of Clubs, dropping the Queen. The match was now all even.

Things started to go well for Canada as India bid a no play slam against Gordon and I. Then both tables had similar bidding accidents:

	NORTH	
	S KQ96432	
	H void	
	D 87	
	C 10865	
WEST		EAST
S A		S 108
H AQJ107532		H K984
D J10		D A432
C Q4		C J32
	SOUTH	
	S J75	
	H 6	
	D KQ965	
	C AK97	

CLOSED ROOM	WEST Campbell	NORTH Shah	EAST Balcombe	SOUTH Ruia
	3NT (Solid [!] Major, NF)	Pass	4S (you have ♠ as I hold ♥K)	Pass
	5H (no, I have ♥)	Pass	Pass (??? OK then)	Pass
OPEN ROOM	WEST Badrinath	NORTH Gartaganis	EAST Krishnan	SOUTH Jones
	3NT (Solid Major, NF)	Pass	4S (you must have ♠)	Pass
	5H (no, I have ♥)	Pass	5S (5H must be a cue bid)	All Pass

As you can guess, 5S on the 2-1 fit was a disaster, down 8, Vulnerable. To make matters worse for India, Gordon was allowed to make 5H. A whopping 16 IMPs to Canada and the match ended with Canada winning by 31 IMPs, once again 23-7 in Victory Points.

Guess what, the Canadian Men's team is leading after the first day!! The Women's team is not as fortunate. After the first day, the standings are:

Men's Teams			Women's Teams		
1	Canada	46	1	Netherlands	43
2	Australia	40	2	Great Britain	42
2	Italy	40	3	Germany	38
4	Poland	31	4	China	36
5	USA	28	5	USA	30
6	Norway	27	5	Austria	30
6	Indonesia	27	7	Canada	29
6	Brazil	27	8	Japan	19
9	India	20	9	South Africa	15
10	Egypt	13	9	France	15

Day Three Sunday February 3

A heavy schedule today with matches against Australia, Norway, Italy and Indonesia. Gordon and I are scheduled to play against Australia, Italy and Indonesia. The Norway match is to be covered on the e-bridge Internet Vugraph. Rumours are that the e-bridge Internet coverage has not been as popular as the Bridge Base Online coverage of the Canadian National Team Championship (CNTC) final match in August of 2001.

Match Three vs Australia

Gordon and I played Phil Gue and Terry Brown, two very nice Australians who we had met during the Opening Ceremony.

Once again, this match started with a bang. I picked up: ♠K6, ♥10986, ♦Q852, ♣Q93. The bidding proceeded to 6S with my RHO showing 5-5 in the majors with a ♦ control and LHO a club suit and probably a balanced hand. What would YOU lead? Based on this information, I decided to lead a low diamond. Wrong!! I had to lead a heart and then give Gordon a ruff when I won the ♠King. In retrospect, my diamond lead was really not very well thought out. If Gordon has ♦K, then declarer probably has Ax(x) of diamonds. Declarer can surely pitch the ♦ loser(s) on the AK of Clubs, a likely Club holding, since I have the ♣Q. The ♥10 was very unlikely to blow a trick. Interestingly, about half of the field bid slam and they all made it.

On the second hand, Terry Brown, my LHO and Gordon's screenmate, held with only his side Vulnerable: ♠A6, ♥KJ65, ♦942, ♣AQ43. The bidding proceeded 1NT (12-14 hcp) by RHO (me); Brown passed, 2H Transfer by Gordon, Gue passed and I obediently bid 2S. It was Brown's turn again. Should he pass 2S or double for takeout? Terry decided to double and that led to +1700 for Canada in 3C doubled. To the credit of the Australian pair, they joked and laughed about this result and we all went onto the next hand.

After one unsuccessful attempt at 3NT by each side, Gordon held: : ♠9, ♥J10982, ♦A8652, ♣92. The bidding proceeded: (1C)-Double-(Redouble)-?? Gordon decided to take full advantage of the favourable vulnerability and preempt with 3H. This key bid allowed me to bid 5H over 5C, which was doubled and turned out to be cold for an overtrick despite holding only 15 hcp between us. We ended up winning the match by 30 IMPs, for our third consecutive 23-7 VP win.

Who would have believed it! Our team was now 16 Victory Points ahead of second place. However, we were about to come back to earth in a big way.

Match Four vs Norway

Fred and Joey faced Tor Helness and Jon-Egil Furunes with Nicholas and Peter in the other room. On the first board, Canada suffered a big loss, a harbinger of future events for today.

NORTH

S KQ93
H void
D K9652
C J643

WEST

S J7642
H J43
D J83
C 107

EAST

S 85
H AK109872
D A104
C 2

SOUTH

S A10
H Q65
D Q7
C AKQ985

CLOSED ROOM	WEST Gitelman	NORTH Helness	EAST Silver	SOUTH Furunes
	Pass	Pass	1H	1NT
	Pass	3H (♥ shortage)	Pass	5C
	Pass	6C	All Pass	
OPEN ROOM	WEST Aa	NORTH Gartaganis	EAST Grontheim	SOUTH Jones
	Pass	Pass	1H	2C
	Pass	2H	3H	3NT
	All Pass			

Obviously, 6C was cold, 13 IMPs to Norway.

The match continued to be wild with a total of seven major swings on only twelve boards. On board 19, Gartaganis made 4S with the trumps 5-0 offside, while Helness was going three down in 6S. Nicholas made 4D doubled, while Silver-Gitelman collected 200 against 4S. However, Helness-Furunes made 3NT for a 11 IMP gain after Gartaganis suffered from "captain's fatigue" and miscounted his points and failed to open a strong 1NT.

Then, nine more IMPs to Norway when Helness made 3NT with:

<u>Helness</u>	<u>Furunes</u>	<u>Gitelman</u>	<u>Helness</u>	<u>Auction:</u> <u>Silver</u>	<u>Furunes</u>
S A94	S K53	Pass	1D	Pass	1H
H 1076	H AQ94	2C	Pass	Pass	3D
D A832	D Q943	Pass	3NT	All Pass	
C KQ4	C 32				

Helness double finessed in Hearts, pinning the ♥8 offside in the process.

The end result of the match was our first big loss, in a high scoring match throughout the event, 35-49 or 11-19 in VP's. Our lead over Italy, the current World Champions and our next opponent, was now down to 10.7 VPs since we had received a 1/3 VP penalty for slow play (Norway received a 2/3 VP Penalty).

Match Five vs Italy

Undaunted, Fred and Joey faced Duboin and Ferraro from Italy. Gordon and I played against the unfamiliar partnership of De Falco and Versace, because Versace's regular partner, Lorenzo Lauria, was sick. For a change, the early boards were relatively uneventful, but the Italians played very well at both tables.

What do you bid with ♠9875, ♥A10985, ♦A, ♣J98 (Both Vulnerable) after a 1D opening in fourth seat? I chose a 1H overcall. Against us, De Falco and Versace breezed into 3NT, which was cold. Ferraro chose double with my cards. His double worked out much better as partner was able to preempt in Spades, forcing the opponents to 5D. Joey misguessed the play in 5D to lose a game swing.

A couple of boards later, De Falco found the only lead to beat Gordon's 4S, a trump, which would have been an unreasonable lead from Joe Silver's hand on a completely different auction at the other table.

Later in the match, this hand occurred:

NORTH

S K2
H AJ5
D Q876
C J987

WEST

S Q10654
H 1072
D 1092
C 32

EAST

S A873
H 986
D AK5
C Q54

SOUTH

S J9
H KQ43
D J43
C AK106

CLOSED ROOM	WEST Gitelman	NORTH Duboin	EAST Silver	SOUTH Ferraro
	1S Pass	Pass 4H (!)	1C 2S All Pass	Pass Double
OPEN ROOM	WEST Versace	NORTH Campbell	EAST De Falco	SOUTH Balcombe
			1C	All Pass

We were quite pleased with our result of +400, against 1C. However it was overshadowed by the 620 from 4H.

Next, Gitelman had to lead against 3NT on an uninformative auction. He held ♠7654, ♥J9742, ♦8, ♣A95. Fred led a Heart, as we all would. Unlucky, as that give declarer a trick with the ♥10, which was almost certainly his only route to nine tricks. Another 11 IMPs to the Italians.

Canada eventually lost 7-42 in IMPs, which converted to 6-24 VP loss to Italy. They had now passed us in the standings, but at least we maintained second place.

Match Six vs Indonesia

The sixth match was against Indonesia, who were in fourth place at that time. Campbell and I played with Jones and Gartaganis at the other table. Our opponents were very quiet. We were quite fortunate that most competitors spoke English quite well which simplified the exchange of information at the table.

On the first board I held (All Vulnerable): ♠J, ♥102, ♦K108642, ♣10963. RHO opened a strong 1C. I decided to preempt 2D, even though Vulnerable. LHO passed and then Gordon bid 2S. I hastily passed this and the opponents balanced with 3H and played there. We gained 10 IMPs as our team-mates bid the cold game. Later in the match, I managed to go three down in 4H while Nicholas was going four down in 3S. Those collective undertricks cost us 11 IMPs. However, Nicholas and Peter recovered 11 IMPs by making a gambling 3NT (make 600 or down 300) with a long Diamond suit.

We won by 5 IMPs, 16-14 in VP. I was thankful since I had misdefended two other hands in this match.

That left the standings after the second day with only three matches remaining in the round robin:

Men's Teams			Women's Teams		
1	Italy	113	1	Netherlands	106
2	Norway	105.3	1	Germany	106
3	Canada	101.7	1	USA	106
4	Indonesia	94	4	Austria	95.3
5	Poland	92.5	5	France	95
6	India	86.5	6	China	93
7	USA	79	7	Great Britain	82
8	Brazil	76	8	South Africa	79
9	Australia	73	9	Canada	69.3
10	Egypt	71	10	Japan	60

(The partial VP's resulted from late play penalties assessed by the Directing staff)

Day Four Monday February 4

Today there were three matches to complete the round robin. The four top teams would then play the first quarter (twelve boards) of the semi-final after the dinner break. I certainly hoped that Canada was going to play in the semi-final. Gordon and I are scheduled to play the powerful Polish team and then Egypt in the last match.

Match Seven vs Brazil

The other guys were scheduled to start against Brazil, which included the great Gabriel Chagas on their team. Canada started well as Nicholas and Peter gained a 13 IMP swing by bidding to a reasonable slam:

		<u>Auction:</u>	
<u>Gartaganis</u>	<u>Jones</u>	<u>Gartaganis</u>	<u>Jones</u>
S AK864	S Q	1S	2C
H A7432	H Q6	2H	3C
D A108	D J7	3H	4C
C void	C AK1087652	4NT [Keycard]	5H
		6C	

Later, Gitelman gained a key overtrick by executing a version of a "Crocodile Coup". The final score was a 29-19 win for Canada, 18-12 in Victory Points. Without Fred's overtrick, we would have scored "only" 17 VPs. Bridge can be a very close game sometimes. This win moved us close to second place.

After arriving in Salt Lake City with no expectations, I now very much wanted to qualify in order to have a chance at winning a medal and gaining some valuable experience in long matches against very strong teams.

Match Eight vs Poland

Gordon and I sat down against the reigning World Pair Champions, Michal Kwiecien and Jack (Pepsi) Pszczola, arguably the best pair in the world. They turned out to be very nice people.

They also played very well. On one of the first hands, Gordon held at unfavourable vulnerability:

<u>Campbell</u>			<u>Auction:</u>		
S AQ8532	<u>Kwiecien</u>	<u>Campbell</u>	<u>Pszczola</u>	<u>Balcombe</u>	
H A	Pass	1S	Pass	1NT	[forcing]
D J8765	2H	3D [extras]	3H	4D	
C 2	Pass	<u>??</u>			

Would you Pass or bid 4S or bid 5D? Gordon bid 4S, got doubled and scored +790.

The match hinged on the last two boards. The first one:

NORTH

S K9865
H KQ6
D Q973
C 6

WEST

S Q107
H 98
D AK2
C J9832

EAST

S J32
H J532
D 54
C AK54

SOUTH

S A4
H A1054
D J1086
C Q107

OPEN ROOM	WEST Balicki	NORTH Silver	EAST Zmudzinski	SOUTH Gitelman
	Pass	1S	Pass	Pass
	Pass	2D	Pass	1NT
	All Pass			<u>2NT</u>
CLOSED ROOM	WEST Campbell	NORTH Pszczola	EAST Balcombe	SOUTH Kwiecien
	Pass	1S	Pass	Pass
	Pass	2D	Pass	1NT
	All Pass			<u>3S</u>

Neither contract was particularly good. Perhaps a 3D raise by South would be sufficient, but the thirst for a vulnerable game makes everyone stretch to offer more than a token 3D invitation. Gordon and I misdefended 3S for -140. The Poles made no mistakes against Fred, who ended up -300, for a 10 IMP loss.

The second of these two hands was:

NORTH

S Q1054
H KQ92
D void
C QJ753

WEST

S A96
H A87
D 1064
C K982

EAST

S K
H 106
D AKQJ8532
C A4

SOUTH

S J8732
H J543
D 97
C 106

OPEN ROOM	WEST Balicki	NORTH Silver	EAST Zmudzinski	SOUTH Gitelman
	1C [Polish]	Pass	2D [5+♦, GF]	Pass
	2NT	Pass	3D	Pass
	3NT	All Pass		
CLOSED ROOM	WEST Campbell	NORTH Pszczola	EAST Balcombe	SOUTH Kwiecien
	Pass	Pass	2C [Art, strong]	Pass
	2D [Art, GF]	Pass	3D	Pass
	4D	Pass	5D	Pass
	6D	All Pass		

Neither partnership dealt very well with these hands. I opened a strong 2C mostly to try to freeze out the aggressive Poles. I never really thought that slam was a possibility. The Polish auction was probably predicated on their light opening bids with most 11 hcp balanced hands.

Anyway those swings essentially cancelled each other out and Canada ended up losing by 5 IMPs or 14-16 in VP's. We were now in second place, almost assured of qualifying. One more match to go.

Match Nine vs Egypt

Egypt was second last in the standings, but was playing very well today. Third place Poland was playing fourth place Indonesia. Fourth place Norway was playing Brazil, who were always a strong team. These matchups could favour Canada, but...

On the first board, I held ♠J43, ♥K854, ♦J7, ♣AQ105. Campbell opened 1H (All Vulnerable) and RHO bid 2D. Since we play 5 card Majors and Gordon has no more than 16 hcp, I am allowed to leap to 4H. I decided to make a limit raise and then my LHO bid 3NT. This was passed back to me and I decided that the opponents must have running Diamonds, so I bid 4H. This was wrong as LHO's penalty double informed me. Gordon went down -500 for a 9 IMP loss.

Two boards later, Gordon was perhaps uncharacteristically shaken by the earlier -500. He made a conservative bid and we missed a Vulnerable 4S. Another 10 IMPs away. Not a good start.

How would you play 4S with these cards when LHO leads the ♣King?

Gordon

S QJ973
H QJ5
D 932
C 98

Keith

S AK65
H void
D QJ85
C A5432

Auction:

Gordon

Pass
1S

(Pass)
(4H)

Keith

1C
4S
(1H)
All Pass

Well, I hope that you drew two rounds of trumps ending in your hand and then led a low diamond towards the QJxx. The singleton ♦10 comes up on your left and you lose two Diamonds and one Club. Do not duck the Club lead as your RHO has a singleton Club. Unfortunately Gordon did not chose this line of play and we lost another 8 IMPs.

Then, Gordon and I bid a competitive Vulnerable 4S, which was cold but unbid by the Egyptians with our cards. However, those IMPs went back to Egypt, with interest, after we went down in yet another game that the Egyptian declarer made with our cards.

The comparison was a bit grim for Gordon and myself because of our poor results in this match. However, we quickly learned that we could lose by 45 IMPs and still qualify. Well, we tested that by losing by 35 IMPs. Needless to say, Gordon and I were relieved that we had not blown it.

The final round robin standings were:

Men's Teams			Women's Teams		
1	Italy	173	1	France	163
2	Norway	144.3	2	Germany	152
3	Poland	141.5	3	USA	151
4	Canada	140.7	4	Netherlands	148
5	Indonesia	135	5	Austria	139.3
6	Brazil	129	6	China	137
7	Egypt	129	7	Great Britain	130
8	USA	127	8	Canada	119.3
9	India	113.5	9	South Africa	100
10	Australia	109	10	Japan	96

Well done to both Italy in the Men's event and France in the Women's event. You may recall that France was at the other end of the table after the first day of play. Quite a comeback. France scored 148 on their last eight matches to average 18.5 VPS or winning each match by about 11 IMPs. The Canadian ladies never really got on track.

The round robin winner had the right to chose its opponent from the other qualifier. There were to be four quarters of twelve boards, the first quarter today and the balance of the match tomorrow. It was now dinner time and we quickly found out from Nicholas that Italy chose Canada (wouldn't you?) and that Keith and Gordon would not play until the next day. The French ladies chose to play the Netherlands.

Semi Final 1st Quarter vs Italy

Italy had the maximum carry over allowed by the conditions of contest, 6 IMPs. Nicholas and Peter faced De Falco and Versace on Vugraph while Joey and Fred faced Duboin and Ferraro in the Closed Room.

The first major swing was on board 4, where Nicholas decided to pass Peter's 1C opening with ♠Q62, ♥10754, ♦QJ6, ♣1032. That led to a loss because Versace in passout seat also passed with a Club stack. De Falco led a trump and the result was -300 in 1C, a 5 IMP swing to Italy.

Then came the hand that may cause Gartaganis a sleepless night or two (EW Vulnerable).

NORTH

S KJ642
H A943
D 864
C 9

WEST

S A109
H J108
D K107
C 10732

EAST

S 5
H 2
D AJ953
C AKQJ86

SOUTH

S Q873
H KQ765
D Q2
C 54

VUGRAPH ROOM	WEST Jones	NORTH De Falco	EAST Gartaganis	SOUTH Versace
	Pass 6C	3C [♥ limit raise] All Pass	1C 4D	1H Pass
CLOSED ROOM	WEST Duboin	NORTH Silver	EAST Ferraro	SOUTH Gitelman
	Double 4NT Double	2S [Fit showing] 5H All Pass	1C 3D 6C	1H 4S 6H

Unfortunately for Canada, Gitelman took the save in what turned out to be the wrong suit. 6H suffered a Spade ruff for -800, while 6H only goes down -500. A cool 23 IMP swing would result from the play of the Diamond suit by Gartaganis. Gartaganis skillfully found out about the Spade hcp and inferred about the Heart hcp. Nicholas also found out that North probably had 5-4-3-1 distribution. The Canadian supporters in the Vugraph room were deeply saddened as Nicholas misguessed the ♦Q to lose 14 IMPs. The classy and cool folks that they are, Nicholas and Peter shrugged off this bad result and went on to the next hand.

On the very next board, Jones and Duboin both played in 4S. Duboin went two down, -200. The Vugraph commentators, looking at all four hands, found a double dummy line for one down. Jones indeed took the suggested line of play and saved three IMPs for Canada.

Canada was still down by two game swings. It was about to get worse.

The Italian EW pair, Duboin-Ferraro, played in 5D doubled, which was cold on the lie of the cards without an unlikely Spade lead. Italy scored +750. The Canadian EW pair, Gartaganis-Jones, chose 5C doubled, which was cold without a Heart lead and continuation. However, Versace duly did what exactly what was required and Italy scored +200. Another 14 IMPs to Italy.

On the final board, both NS pairs got too high in 4H, off two aces and two trump tricks. However, Jones for Canada not unreasonably underled one of the cashing aces on the opening lead trying to tap dummy and potentially preserve Nicholas's trump tricks. Unfortunately, Gartaganis did not put up the king. Another 13 IMPs to Italy as declarer scored his unsupported Queen.

At the end of these twelve boards, Italy led 49-12. Almost everyone decided that the inexperienced Canadians were about to fall quickly and quietly to the reigning World Champions.

Day Five Tuesday February 5

Today ,the last three quarters of each semifinal were scheduled, dinner and then the first quarter of the final. We were down by 37 IMPs, but there are still lots of boards left.

Semi Final 2nd Quarter vs Italy

Today, Gordon and I started in the Closed Room against Duboin, my screenmate, and Ferraro. Disaster struck right away as Ferraro guessed the ♦Queen to make 3NT, while Gitelman did not. Another 12 IMPs to Italy.

A flat board in a partscore battle was followed by a game swing to Canada (FINALLY!) when I overcalled 1NT after a third seat 1H opening with ♠986, ♥Q32, ♦AK, ♣AKQ65. Ferraro decided not to lead a Heart and instead led his best suit, Clubs. That turned out to be virtually the only lead to let me make it as I scored the ♣9 in dummy. A slam swing occurred for Canada on the next hand when Duboin-Ferraro had an ace asking mixup. Perhaps these guys are not perfect after all.

On board 21, we lost a game swing because Gordon led ♣King against 3NT. A1096 of Clubs appeared in the dummy and a balanced hand. Playing quickly, declarer led the ♥10 from the dummy and I failed to climb up with my ♥Ace to preserve Gordon's entry. Gordon had the ♥King and he lost his entry for the long Club. Rats! 12 IMPs away. A further 5 IMPs went to Italy when Campbell and I misdefended a sacrifice.

The net result of this session is that Canada lost another 5 IMPs to Italy, 29-34. We were now trailing by 42 IMPs overall. There was no time to think about this, as Gordon and I were assigned to play in the Open Room for the critical third quarter.

Semi Final 3rd Quarter vs Italy

Time to pull up our socks. I sat North with Dano De Falco as my screenmate. Gordon had Versace as his screenmate. Jones-Gartaganis faced Duboin and Ferraro in the Open Room.

The very first hand was a tricky 4H game. How would you play this hand on a ♠2 opening lead?

<u>De Falco</u>	<u>Versace</u>		<u>Auction:</u> (All Vulnerable)		
S Q10	S A9	<u>Balcombe</u>	<u>De Falco</u>	<u>Campbell</u>	<u>Versace</u>
H K6	H AQ97532	Pass	1D	1S	2H
D AQ107432	D J	Pass	3D	Pass	4H
C 64	C J83	All Pass			

Versace decided to set up Diamonds while there was still a Heart entry. On the Spade lead, the ♠10 from dummy forced the ♠J and Versace won the Ace. Declarer then led the ♦J to the ♦A and dropped the singleton ♦K offside! Versace than led a good Diamond from dummy and pitched his Spade loser when Gordon ruffed. Versace ruffed the Spade return and drew trumps ending in dummy, claiming for 420 to Italy. Unfortunately, Jones did not duplicate this line of play after dropping the singleton Diamond King and Canada lost another 10 IMPs to trail by 52 overall.

What would you bid with this hand?

S KJ865		<u>Auction:</u> (NS Vulnerable)		
H 1098	<u>Balcombe</u>	<u>De Falco</u>	<u>Campbell</u>	<u>Versace</u>
D Q108		1H	Pass	4H
C A7	<u>??</u>			

Normally, my theory is that a competitive 4H bid is often a transfer to 4S. Would you bid 4S at unfavourable vulnerability with a 5332 10-count? Well, I didn't. Yet, the cards lie so that you cannot go down in 4S! Gordon held: ♠Q94, ♥void, ♦AJ7542, ♣J1098. We beat 4H one trick for +50. The good news was that Nicholas and Peter scored +140 in 3H, after a strong NT auction. We actually won 5 IMPs.

Two flat boards and then board 5 came along (NS Vulnerable):

NORTH

S J9753
H KQ9
D QJ863
C Pass

WEST

S Q4
H A65
D K5
C K98432

EAST

S 82
H 873
D A107
C A10765

SOUTH

S AK106
H J1042
D 942
C QJ

OPEN ROOM	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	Jones	Duboin	Gartaganis	Ferraro
	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass
CLOSED ROOM	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	Versace	Balcombe	De Falco	Campbell
	2C	3C [Strong ♠ raise]	3S [Strong ♣ raise]	1S
	4C	4S	All Pass	Pass [Not forcing]

Gordon guessed the Spades correctly and we scored +620 to win 12 IMPs. It's not often that a Vulnerable game is scored when the board is passed out in the other room. We now trailed by "only" 35 IMPs

When I bid the obvious 4S, I thought that the Italians would save in 5C, so I changed my mind in midstream about what exactly to bid over 4C. I first reached for the 4S bidding card. Then I reached for the 4H bidding card, to show Gordon where my hcp were, but I did not want to risk Gordon passing 4H, so I changed my mind again and pulled out the 4S card. This had the accidental effect of looking like indecision about bidding 4S to De Falco on my side of the screen, so he did not even consider saving. Unfortunately, he did appear to become a little upset, perhaps justifiably so. After the hand, I felt rather embarrassed. Perhaps the lesson here, of course, is that you should never reach for the bidding box until you are absolutely sure that is the bid you wish to make.

Canada gained an overtrick IMP on the next hand. After that, I held ♠KJ943, ♥8532, ♦QJ107, ♣void. Gordon opened 1D in first position which was doubled by Versace. I bid 1H, which was a transfer to Spades. This resulted in a director call by Dano De Falco to see if we can play these transfers (we had already checked) and De Falco was informed that we could indeed play them. Dano was not very happy about the director's affirmation because Italy had been barred from playing a not dissimilar convention. Indeed, some of the system restrictions to make the bidding more comprehensive to the I.O.C. members did seem a little strange. De Falco then bid 2C over my 1H transfer. Gordon "raised" to 2S and I bid game. Gordon played it very skillfully to make six and win two more overtrick IMPs.

Canada gained another overtrick IMP on the next board. Then on board 9, I held: ♠Q743, ♥void, ♦KQ86, ♣109842. Versace opened 1H in fourth seat and I decided to double since I was at favourable vulnerability. This resulted in a 4S sacrifice from Gordon. The Italian defense was perfect, so Gordon was down 3, -500 against their Vulnerable game. Canada gained another three IMPs to only trail by 28 IMPs.

When I picked up board 9, I noticed that board 10 was missing. The director then delivered the missing board 10 back. It had to be reshuffled because it was fouled. On this redealt hand, I picked up: ♠void, ♥K7432, ♦AQJ84, ♣AQJ. Gordon opened a weak Vulnerable 2S in second seat and then Versace overcalled 2NT. Well, I did not fly all day on Friday to pass, so I doubled. This was passed back to Versace who ran to 3D. I doubled again and everyone passed. I led a fifth best Heart from the King to Gordon's Ace, with J96 appearing in a featureless dummy. Gordon took some time before returning the ♥10 and now I had a dilemma. Logically, the Heart return should be from a doubleton heart with 6-2-1-4 distribution, otherwise Gordon would lead a Club through. In spite of this, Gordon's delay strongly suggested that he had three Hearts. So, I did the ethical thing and returned a Heart for Gordon to "ruff". Versace dumped a Club loser on the good ♥J and I was later endplayed in Diamonds to give him the ♣K, but we still collected +1100 for 10 IMPs. 1100 against the World Champs; perhaps these guys are human.

The last two boards were pushes in routine games, so Canada won the quarter 34-10. Canada was now just 18 IMPs behind and on a roll. Remember that board 10 was fouled. If you can gain 10 IMPs on a fouled board, I was personally now convinced that we were a team of destiny. I just needed to convince the rest of the world.

Semi Final 4th Quarter vs Italy

Gordon and I were sent to play NS in the closed room against Lorenzo Lauria and Versace. Lauria appeared to be mostly recovered from the flu. The first hand, board 13, brought more good news to Canada.

NORTH

S Q107
H AQ96
D AJ3
C J97

WEST

S AJ92
H J
D 1087
C K10632

EAST

S K863
H K10743
D 64
C 84

SOUTH

S 54
H 852
D KQ952
C AQ5

OPEN ROOM	WEST Gitelman	NORTH Duboin	EAST Silver	SOUTH Ferraro
	Pass	1C	Pass	1D
	All Pass	1H	Pass	2D
CLOSED ROOM	WEST Versace	NORTH Balcombe	EAST Lauria	SOUTH Campbell
	Pass	1NT [12-14 hcp]	Pass	2C
	Pass	2H	All Pass	3D [invitational]
		3NT		

I easily made 3NT, so Canada gained 11 IMPs to now trailed by only 7 IMPs. The Canadian supporters in the Vugraph room were cheering enthusiastically.

The next hand was a push at 3S EW, down one, a poor result for NS. On board 15, these were the EW cards:

<u>Versace</u>	<u>Lauria</u>	<u>Versace</u>	<u>Lauria</u>	<u>Gitelman</u>	<u>Silver</u>
<u>Gitelman</u>	<u>Silver</u>	1H	1S	1H	1S
S K8	S A972	2C [Art, strong]	2D [Art, 8+hcp]	2NT	3NT
H AJ10943	H 86	3H	4C		
D AQ6	D KJ7	4D	4S		
C Q2	C A763	5D	5H		

Against the Italian's 5H, I led a Club to Gordon's King and then I later scored the ♥K and the ♥Q for one down. Since Fred made 3NT, we gained 10 IMPs and Canada was now actually LEADING the match by 3 IMPs. The Canadian spectators in the Vugraph room continued to cheer. Italy then gained 2 IMPs back for 7NT against 7C when both EW pairs skillfully bid to a cold grand slam. Canada by one IMP.

Following that, I held: ♠K, ♥Q74, ♦A9654, ♣KJ62 at unfavourable vulnerability. The auction proceeded: (Pass)-Pass-(1S)-??. Would you double? I consider myself very aggressive, but I thought that I did not have enough offense. The auction continued: (2S)-Pass-(Pass) back to me. Would you balance? I decided that I did not like the vulnerability, so I passed again. This was wrong as 3D was cold. Now, what do you lead? I led a Club, possibly the only lead to let 2S make as Gordon held the singleton ♣4. Thankfully, our team-mates also scored +110 to halve the board. Still Canada by lone IMP.

The next hand was a fairly routine 3NT for EW, very close to slam. Both tables played it well to score 660. No swing. This was the first of the remaining six boards, almost all potential slam hands for EW. Both EW pairs bid to 5D on the next hand while fishing for slam. The ♦K was onside, so twelve tricks were cold. Canada clung to the one IMP lead.

On board 21, EW were cold for twelve tricks (again) in 6C or even 6H on the 4-3 fit. Lauria-Versace bid to 3NT and Silver-Gitelman to 5C. Unfortunately for Canada, Gordon led a Spade from J1054 rather than a Diamond from AJ54, so Italy made 3NT with two overtricks off five cashing Diamonds. Two IMPs to Italy, so Italy now led by 1 IMP. The players could only guess at the score, but it had to be close. Board 22:

NORTH

S 85
H J1073
D J10986
C A6

WEST

S J32
H AQ854
D A42
C J10

EAST

S AK109764
H K92
D K3
C 3

SOUTH

S Q
H 6
D Q75
C KQ987542

OPEN ROOM	WEST Gitelman	NORTH Duboin	EAST Silver	SOUTH Ferraro
	4S	5C	1S	4C
	6S	All Pass	5S	Pass
CLOSED ROOM	WEST Versace	NORTH Balcombe	EAST Lauria	SOUTH Campbell
	Double [Negative]	Pass	1S	4C
			4S	All Pass

I did not raise to 5C because I did not want to push them to slam. This result meant 13 IMPs to Canada, and a lead in the match by 12 IMPs.

Board 23, the second last board, was a nightmare for Fred.

	NORTH	
	S 2	
	H Q97654	
	D 1075	
	C 974	
WEST		EAST
S AK		S Q1097
H AK108		H 2
D QJ3		D K64
C A865		C KQJ32
	SOUTH	
	S J86543	
	H J3	
	D A982	
	C 10	

OPEN ROOM	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	Gitelman	Duboin	Silver	Ferraro
	2NT	Pass	3C	Pass
	3H	Pass	4C	Pass
	4D (!)	Pass	6C	All Pass
CLOSED ROOM	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	Versace	Balcombe	Lauria	Campbell
	2NT	Pass	3C	Pass
	3D [≥ 1 Major]	Pass	3H [4 card Spades]	Pass
	3NT [4 card Hearts]	Pass	4C	Pass
	4H	Pass	6C	All Pass

Gitelman's 4D bid may look strange, but there was method to his imaginative call. Fred later explained: "I knew that if I cuebid 4H, my partner would not be able to cuebid Spades, so I psyched the diamond cuebid." Ferraro led the \spadesuit A and Fred put down the dummy, noting that his partner did not thank him for the thirteen cards lying on the table in front of him. Very quickly, Silver was claiming, and Gitelman feared the worst – that Silver had claimed for down one. "I thought we might have won it on the previous board," Fred later said, "but then I thought we had lost it on that board."

The last board was an anti-climatic part score, worth one IMP to Italy.

Not knowing the score, Gordon and I rushed out to compare. The Vugraph spectators already "knew" the result, but everyone was very quiet during the comparison until it was officially determined that we won by 11 IMPs. Unbelievable!! We came back from 52 IMPs down against the World Champions. We also overcame both the devastating \spadesuit Q misguess by Nicholas in 6C and the 6 IMP carryover for Italy. Each pair was able to put bad results in their back pocket and continue onto the next board.

Time for the dinner break and then on to the first twelve board quarter against Poland, another World Champion strength team. But we were guaranteed at least a silver medal.

Final 1st Quarter vs Poland

Gordon and I started EW against the same nice guys in the Closed Room that we had faced in the round robin, Kwiecien and Pszczola. Jones and Gartaganis were NS on Vugraph. I started with Pepsi as my screenmate. We shook each other's hands and play started. Poland had a 2.5 IMP carryover from their round robin victory. Most of the match was broadcast live worldwide via e-bridge on the Internet.

The match began with six push boards, a indication of how low scoring this match would be. Gordon and I were not without hope as Kwiecien and Pszczola bid to 6C on a very tough hand with 7NT cold because the weak hand has the correct Jack. I also doubled Kwiecien in 4S after Gordon opened a weak 1NT, but Kwiecien played it perfectly to escape for one down and a push board.

NORTH

S J984
H 82
D J1084
C QJ6

WEST

S A63
H 104
D 97
C AK10875

EAST

S K1072
H QJ7653
D KQ6
C void

SOUTH

S Q5
H AK9
D A532
C 9432

OPEN ROOM	WEST Balicki	NORTH Gartaganis	EAST Zmudzinski	SOUTH Jones
				1D
	2C	Pass	2H	Pass
	3C	Pass	3H	Pass
	4H	All Pass		
CLOSED ROOM	WEST Campbell	NORTH Pszczola	EAST Balcombe	SOUTH Kwiecien
				1C [2+ Clubs]
	2C [Natural]	Pass	2H [invitational]	Pass
	3H	Pass	4H	All Pass

The auctions at both tables were an interesting contrast. Balicki and Zmudzinski appeared to bid fairly easily to game while Campbell and I struggled to reach it. Game is probably poor, but being Vulnerable, both pairs would prefer to be in it than not. Opener led the ♠Q at both tables won in hand with the ♠K. This lead showed ♠QJx(x) or ♠Qx. Zmudzinski then led a Heart towards the ♥10, which Jones won with ♥K to lead another Spade. Declarer was committed at this point and finessed it by playing low and hoped to win the ♠10. Nicholas won the ♠J and gave Peter a ruff. The red suit aces quickly followed for down two, +200 to Canada.

Against me, Pszczola encouraged the ♠Q lead with the ♠4, so I thought that the lead was likely from Qx. I decided that my best chance was to win a Diamond and then discard the other two on the ♣AK. I led the ♦Q and Kwiecien ducked, so I traveled to the ♠A, discarded the remaining Diamonds and led a Spade towards the ♠10. If Pepsi had ducked the Spade lead from the dummy, the contract is almost certainly defeated by Kwiecien ruffing and then extracting dummy's trumps. I ended up making +620 for a 13 IMP gain. Canada now led by the unlikely amount of 10.5 IMPs.

The rest of the hands were also low scoring. Nicholas and Peter went down -200 in an unlucky 4S doubled on board 12 when two finesses through the opening bidder lost. We bought the hand in 3H +140 in the other direction, but it was soon discovered that Gordon and I gave slightly different information on each side of the screen. Gordon told Kwiecien that my negative double promised 4+♠, while I told Pszczola that my double only promised 3+♠. The directors considered the hand and penalized Canada 2 IMPs, a reasonable judgment in my view.

The score at the end of the first quarter totaled 13 to 9.5 in favour of Canada. Only 20 IMPs scored total over 12 boards. Gordon and I had played in each of the four sessions today which made us feel better after our poor round against Egypt the previous evening. In the Women's final, France was leading USA by 33 IMPs, including France's maximum 10 IMP carryover. By comparison, the women scored 53 total IMPs over the same twelve boards.

Day Five Wednesday February 6

Gordon and I sat out the second quarter. Fred and Joey played EW against Balicki and Zmudzinski on Vugraph. The Canadian contingent watched on Vugraph, all sitting close together with the Canadian flag unfurled. Jones and Gartaganis played against Kwiecien and Pszczola in the Closed Room.

Final 2nd Quarter vs Poland

On the first board, Fred and Joey defended skillfully to beat Zmudzinski in an unlucky 4H on Vugraph by two tricks, although it was mis-scored as only one down. To the credit of the Poles, once the comparison was completed at the end of the quarter, they quickly agreed that the contract was down two. For now, the Vugraph scored this board as a push and so shall I in this monologue.

The next board was also a push at 110 in Spades for EW. Both EW pairs then did very well to bid a Vulnerable 3NT in a competitive auction. 3NT turned out to be cold, so this was yet another halved board.

Gitelman shone on board 16, after an aggressive raise by Silver. Fred saw:

<u>Gitelman</u>	<u>Silver</u>	<u>Auction:</u> (EW Vulnerable)			
S KQJ2	S 7653	<u>Gitelman</u>	<u>Balicki</u>	<u>Silver</u>	<u>Zmudzinski</u>
H A63	H 5	1C	2H	Double	Pass
D A102	D K983	2S	Pass	3S	Pass
C 985	C KQ104	4S	All Pass		

Cezary Balicki led the ♦6, and Gitelman studied the dummy for an usually long time before starting to play. Eventually, he played low, and won Zmudzinski's ♦J with the ace. Fred then cashed the ♥A, ruffed a Heart and played a Spade to his King and Balicki's Ace. Balicki exited with his ♠10 to Gitelman's queen. Fred then ruffed his last Heart and played a low Diamond from dummy. Zmudzinski won the ♦Q and played another round of Hearts, but Gitelman was able to ruff, draw the last trump and claim, giving up only the ♣A from there. That meant +620 and 11 IMPs to Canada for a 14.5 IMP lead, since Gartaganis-Jones had given up only 100 in 3H doubled.

The IMP drought continued for Poland when Silver decided to rebid only 2S after 1S-1NT with ♠AKQ975, ♥106, ♦Q8, ♣KJ6. 2S squeaked in with +140 while the Poles went down in 3NT in the Closed Room. Another 5 IMPs to Canada for a 19.5 IMP lead. The Canadian contingent, including Gordon and I, were very much enjoying the Vugraph presentation.

Four more pushes followed and then the last two boards each featured potential slam hands, one for each pair.

The first potential slam was for NS:

NORTH

S Q7
H J4
D AK74
C Q9865

WEST

S KJ8654
H Q652
D 32
C 10

EAST

S 932
H 10
D J986
C K7432

SOUTH

S A10
H AK9873
D Q105
C AJ

OPEN ROOM	WEST Gitelman	NORTH Balicki	EAST Silver	SOUTH Zmudzinski
	2S Pass All Pass	3S [Stopper ask] 5C	Pass Pass	1C [Polish Club] 4H [Strong?] 6C
CLOSED ROOM	WEST Kwiecien	NORTH Gartaganis	EAST Pszczola	SOUTH Jones
	1S All Pass	Double	2S	1H 4H

With his good spots and the fall of East's ♥10, Peter Jones had no trouble taking twelve tricks for plus 680.

Zmudzinski's 1C opener was Polish, meaning it could be a minimum balanced hand or any of a wide variety of strong, unbalanced hands. It appeared that, after the 3S cuebid, South was to bid 3NT with a minimum and a Spade stopper. Zmudzinski's 4H bid, therefore, showed a strong hand. The way the auction developed might have worked out all right for Poland were it not for the terrible break in Clubs. Still, it seems that Gitelman's 2S bid somewhat derailed the NS auction. Fred started with a low diamond to the Jack and Queen. Zmudzinski cashed the ♣A and followed with the Jack, ducked by Silver. Now Zmudzinski was forced to use a Diamond entry to dummy to drive out the ♣K. Joe won the third round of Clubs and played the ♥10. Zmudzinski took the ♥A and, preparatory to squeezing West in the majors, cashed the ♠A, before going to dummy again with a Diamond. Had Diamonds been 3-3, Fred would indeed have been squeezed in the majors, but Zmudzinski didn't have enough tricks. In the end, Declarer could not endplay Gitelman for down one by exiting with dummy's ♠Q because he did not unblock the ♥J earlier. Zmudzinski settled for -200 and a 13-IMP loss.

On the last board: Balicki held: ♠AJ98743, ♥85, ♦void, ♣Q863. The auction proceeded (Pass)-4S from Balicki-(5D)-5S from Zmudzinski-(6D)-All Pass. Zmudzinski led the ♠5 (low from doubletons) to Balicki's Ace and the dummy arrived with: ♠K, ♥K107, ♦Q9832, ♣K975. What should Balicki lead now? Very quickly, he returned a Heart. This picked up the Heart suit and Silver discarded his singleton Club on a winning Heart. Making 6D off the Spade Ace and the Club Ace. This was a win of 10 IMPs against the 3NT in the Closed Room.

After getting the scores corrected from the earlier mis-scored board, Canada had outscored the mighty Polish team 44-0 in the second quarter to lead 57 to 9.5! Wait a minute, this lead is more or less the same position as Italy was against Canada yesterday.

Final 3rd Quarter vs Poland

Gordon and I faced Kwiecien and Pszczola again in the Open Room. There was now e-bridge coverage on the Internet at both tables. The Women's' final was on Vugraph.

This was board one for the EW pairs:

<u>Zmudzinski</u> <u>Campbell</u>	<u>Balicki</u> <u>Balcombe</u>	<u>Campbell</u>	<u>Auctions:</u> (Nobody Vulnerable)		
S K8	S 76	2H	<u>Pszczola</u> 1S	<u>Balcombe</u> Pass	<u>Kwiecien</u> 1NT
H AQ98732	H J65	<u>Zmudzinski</u>	3S	All Pass	
D K3	D A764		<u>Gartaganis</u> 1S	<u>Balicki</u> Pass	<u>Jones</u> Pass
C 52	C Q1074	3H	Pass	4H	All Pass

That was 9 IMPs to Poland when Zmudzinski dropped the singleton King of Hearts offside since Gartaganis had opened the bidding and Jones had shown up with a few Diamond hcp. We struck back when I made a passed hand takeout double of 1H at favourable vulnerability with ♠Q876, ♥1064, ♦AJ9, ♣A87. LHO redoubled and Gordon bid a tricky 1S for the lead with ♠AJ9. That worked well, as it got me off to the right lead against 5C for +200. 7 IMPs back to Canada.

However, I did not signal correctly on the next board defending 4H. At trick two, having led the King of Diamonds, Gordon underled his ♦A to the ♦Q that I was supposed to have for my signal. Declarer won the ♦Q instead and scored 420, 11 IMPs to Poland.

More bad news for Canada as Gordon and I defended 1NT for -150 while Balicki and Zmudzinski bid and made 2S with our cards, 6 IMPs away. Poland now only trailed Canada by only 28 IMPs. We picked up a couple of undertrick IMPs, then the Poles struck again at our table. They bid and made a Vulnerable 3NT with a 6-3 Spade fit and only 21 hcp. My lead gave the contract away immediately, but we would have had to defend double dummy to beat it. Canada's lead was down to a much smaller 20 IMPs now.

We finished the quarter by losing some undertrick IMPs and lost the quarter 9-39. Our lead was now 17.5 IMPs. Since Gordon and I had not done very well, I was almost hoping that Nicholas would sit us out in the fourth quarter. No such luck, the captain directed us to be NS in the Closed Room. Gordon and I had the option from our captain to play on Vugraph, but I felt that the last quarter was no time to start my TV career.

Final 4th Quarter vs Poland

This time, we played NS in the Closed Room against Balicki and Zmudzinski. We had not played these guys during the previous 48 boards against Poland. They looked very determined, but so did we.

The quarter started with both NS pairs bidding and making a close Vulnerable 4H. Another push followed as EW had an easy 140 available in Spades with no competition. The third board featured another routine Vulnerable 4S, but Balicki and Zmudzinski managed to get a ruff to stop any overtricks. Just an IMP to Poland, Canada by 16.5 IMPs.

On the next hand, I held in second seat at favourable vulnerability: ♠KQ7632, ♥865, ♦A105, ♣10. RHO passed as I decided that this hand was too good for 2S and not strong enough for 1S. LHO opened 1H, Gordon passed and RHO bid 2H. I could now easily bid 2S and everyone passed. To my horror, dummy tabled: ♠1054, ♥Q7, ♦KQ876, ♣AQ9. Everything split, so we scored +170. Ugh. Fortunately, Kwiecien and Pszczola didn't do much better after opening my hand 2S, so we lost only 1 IMP the board.

On the next hand, I held as dealer: ♠AK1098, ♥82, ♦A6, ♣A982. I opened 1S and Balicki overcalled 2D, passed back to me. Should I balance? What with? I eventually decided to double and we ended up in 3H, undoubled, down four. Silver and Gitelman had gone two down in 4D after trying for game, so this added up to a sizable loss, even undoubled. 7 IMPs to Poland and a 9.5 IMP lead for Canada.

The next three hands were well played pushes. Then Poland gained 2 IMPs on an undertrick. Canada had a 6.5 IMP lead with three boards to play. The Vugraph audience was glued to the screen. The Canadian wives were biting their fingernails. Nicholas and Peter were pacing around the Vugraph room. It was such a low scoring segment, the Vugraph commentators were all speculating if we could win even if Canada might score **NO** IMPs in the final quarter.

Board 22 was next, a very exciting board.

NORTH
S AQJ743
H J73
D 93
C 54

WEST
S K8
H AKQ942
D 10
C J1096

EAST
S 10
H 6
D K865
C AKQ8732

SOUTH
S 9652
H 1085
D AQJ742
C void

OPEN ROOM	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	Gitelman	Pszczola	Silver	Kwiecien
	2H [Fit showing]	2S	1C	1D
	6C	Pass	5C	5S
	Double	All Pass	Pass	6S
CLOSED ROOM	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	Zmudzinski	Balcombe	Balicki	Campbell
	1H [5+ ♥]	1S	1C [Polish Club]	1D
	6C	6S	2C [5+♣, F1]	5S
			Double	All Pass

As you can see, this was not a huge success for NS, but an entirely reasonable action in this type of auction. Note that if East makes the mistake of leading Clubs, 6S doubled will almost certainly make. After four rounds of Hearts, I ruffed with the ♠Q and then ruffed a Club in order to take the Spade finesse. 300 to EW at both tables, just another push in this match.

Later Gordon said that he had taken a long time before bidding 5S, as he was considering the tactics. He knew that the Poles were likely cold for a vulnerable 6C and he did not want them to have room to use Blackwood. Unfortunately, the 5S bid puts too much pressure on a Non Vulnerable partner to not sacrifice even if we have two aces. Gordon now believes he should have passed or made some other “nothing” bid, allow the opponents to use Blackwood, and then bid Spades at whatever level they reached. In effect he would learn from the opponents how many Aces they were missing and perhaps even if either opponent held a Spade void.

On the second last board, Gordon held: ♠K8, ♥Q2, ♦KJ103, ♣J10852. Dummy has shown 6♣ and 4♦ and 11 to 13 hcp or so. You have virtually no idea what declarer has after a relay auction. What do you lead? Gordon led the ♦K. Good choice as it almost assured us one down. I faltered a little later in the hand (remember, declarer’s hand is unknown) and finessed myself when declarer was short of board entries. I was trying to take away a winning option before he discovered the bad heart break. The net result was +100 for Canada. But wait, the defense was even better in the Open Room. Fred went down three, -300.

Five IMPs to Poland, Canada by 1.5 IMPs. One board left. What a remarkable finish! The last board:

NORTH

S AJ97
H K9
D AQ6
C AQ75

WEST

S Q8
H AQ1043
D K98532
C void

EAST

S 1052
H 62
D J104
C K8643

SOUTH

S K643
H J875
D 7
C J1092

CLOSED ROOM	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	Zmudzinski	Balcombe	Balicki	Campbell
OPEN ROOM	Gitelman	Pszczola	Silver	Kwiecien
	1H	Double	Pass	1S
	2D	2H	Pass	3C
	Pass	4S	All Pass	

Against Campbell, Zmudzinski led a low Diamond. Campbell, expecting bad breaks, finessed the ♦Q, which turned out to be a key play. He then cashed the ♠A and noted West play the ♠8. So, Gordon safety played the Spades by passing the ♠J to the ♠Q. No problem, as he made 4S when the ♥A was onside, as expected.

Gordon and I exited quickly from the Closed Room after this hand, expecting to compare right away as we are slow and our other pairs are usually finished first. We emerged to see very long faces on our wives, who had been too nervous to continue watching in the Vugraph room. I immediately thought that we were in trouble.

While Gordon and I waited to compare scores, Kwiecien was also declaring 4S on this hand. Fred made the intelligent shot of leading the ♥A and continuing the suit. Now declarer really had a tough problem. He elected to play Spades in the same fashion as Gordon, Ace then Jack. Now, Gitelman won the ♠Q and gave Silver an overruff. Later, Silver won the ♣K for one down. We heard later that Kwiecien obviously realized that his play was risky on the Heart lead, but he felt the Poles had not made up the deficit so he needed a swing.

It **HAD** been possible to win without scoring an IMP in the fourth quarter, but the last board gave us the championship for Canada by 11.5 IMPs. In a show of class, almost the first people to congratulate me were Versace and De Falco from the Italian team.

Wow!! We had beaten two of the top teams in the world to win. Over these last two matches, we had even overcome two pairs allowing declarer to win an unsupported Queen. The team was very supportive of bad results and Nicholas was a really fantastic captain, doing all the right things. It is no mean feat to be a playing captain and play as well as Nicholas did.

The medals ceremony was wonderful. We held up the Canadian flag and sang the Canadian National Anthem. My wife then led a chorus of Happy Birthday for a very embarrassed Freddy, who just turned 37 years old. Nice birthday present, Fred. This turned out to be the first gold medal for Canada in a W.B.F. team event.

Will bridge make it into the Winter Olympics in 2006? Who knows, but I will always treasure this win.

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