

July 11, 2010

2010 Flight A Canadian National Team Championship

by Judith and Nicholas Gartaganis

Every year the Canadian Bridge Federation hosts the Canadian Bridge Championships, eight full days of play to determine Canada's national champions. The competition includes Open Pairs, Women's Teams, Open Teams (Flight A Canadian National Team Championship [CNTC]), Flight B CNTC and Senior Teams. This year, the CBC was held May 29 to June 5 in Markham, Ontario. Thanks to the work of countless volunteers, the participants were treated to wonderful hospitality. Congratulations to the organizing committee for staging a most successful week of bridge. Winners of the various events were:

Open Pairs:

Naveed Ather, Lino D'Souza

IMP Pairs:

Richard Chan, Weidong Shen

Senior Teams:

Boris Baran, John Carruthers, John Gowdy, Eric Murray, Michael Schoenborn, Joey Silver

Women's Teams:

Sondra Blank, Francine Cimon, Susan Culham, Kismet Fung, Pamela Nisbet, Isabelle Smith,

Flight B CNTC:

Jack Lee, Brian Liu, Eric Pan, Zoran Pecca, Kelvin Raywood, Kai Zhou

Flight A CNTC Round Robin

Twenty-three teams entered the Flight A CNTC. A complete round robin of 10-board matches was played over four days to determine eight qualifiers for the quarter-finals. The World Bridge Federation 30 Victory Point (VP) scale was used with 25 VPs being the maximum a team could win and zero VPs, the minimum. Teams that tied each earned 15 VPs. The field included the betting line favourite, Hanna, whose roster boasted 20 individual CNTC wins.

After twelve rounds (end of Day 2), the leader board looked like this:

Gartaganis (Judith Gartaganis, Nicholas Gartaganis, Piotr Klimowicz, Gordon Campbell)

Todd (Bob Todd, Douglas Fisher, Neil Kimelman, K.W. Gohl, Marielle Brentnall, Jerry Cohen)

Janicki (Paul Janicki, James Priebe, Robert Kuz, Barry Senensky, Stephen Cooper, Jordan Cohen)

Whiteman (Jonathan Steinberg, Michael Kenny, Mike Cafferata, David Colbert, John Zaluski, Ed Zaluski)

Thurston (Paul Thurston, David Willis, Roy Hughes, David Turner, David Lindop, Doug Baxter)

Hanna (Nader Hanna, Robert Lebi, Drew Cannell, George Mittelman, Martin Kirr, Arno Hobart)

Rayner (John Rayner, Michael Roche, Karen Cumpstone, Joan Eaton, Andy Stark, Eric Shepherd)

Korbel (Daniel Korbel, Darren Wolpert, Danny Miles, Ross Taylor, Keith Balcombe).

Only 24 VPs separated 1st and 8th place and many teams were still within striking distance.

At the end of Day 3, with five rounds remaining, Gamble (Michael Gamble, Vince Oddy, Roy Dalton, Ranald Davidson, Larry Crevier, Marc-Andre Fourcaudot) and Jotcham (Ray Jotcham, Steve Mackay, Lewis Richardson, Eiji Kujirai, John Duquette, Ron Bishop) were tied for 9th place, just 3 VPs behind 8th place Korbel.

Entering the last match, only Gartaganis (381) and Todd (380) had clinched playoff spots. Realistically, Whiteman (373) and Janicki (370) were secure. No fewer than seven teams were battling for the remaining four qualifying places: Thurston (366), Rayner (363), Hanna (358), Gamble (352), Altay (352) Korbel (345) and Jotcham (345).

In the last round Gamble faced Anderson (Richard Anderson, Janice Anderson, Kevin Young, Peter Worby, Cal McLeod, Claire Jones) and managed only 13 VPs. Meanwhile, Jotcham squared off against Simon (Allan Simon, Brad Boyle, David Caplan, Mark Caplan, Michael Newcombe, Sandy McIlwain) and won 20-10. That left Gamble and Jotcham tied with 365 VPs.

It turned out there was no need to break the tie. In the other key match, Korbel battled Altay (Andy Altay, Steve Aarons, Gabriel Nita-Saguna, Mihail Gabriel Neagu, Fred Hoffer, Donald Piafsky) and came up with a big win, capturing 23 VPs. This vaulted them into the last qualifying position. After 22 rounds over four days, the round robin had produced this top ten:

Gartaganis	392
Todd	389
Janicki	387
Whiteman	386
Thurston	385
Rayner	379
Hanna	379
Korbel	368
Gamble	365
Jotcham	365

Hands From The Round Robin

The Simon team started strongly capturing 48 of 50 VPs in the first two matches. Brad Boyle and Allan Simon reached 6NT on this hand from Round 1. Then Brad dazzled by bringing the contract home.

RR1 – Board 5

Dealer: North

Vulnerable: N/S

	♠ K84		
	♥ AK753		
	♦ 9742		
	♣ Q		
♠ QJ983		♠ 1072	
♥ 1092		♥ 864	
♦ KQJ5		♦ 63	
♣ 6		♣ J10972	
	♠ A5		
	♥ QJ		
	♦ A108		
	♣ AK8543		

The lead was the $\heartsuit K$, ducked, and West continued a second diamond. Brad won, unblocked his heart honours, crossed to the $\clubsuit Q$, and ran three more hearts. East could spare only one club discard so had to throw a spade. Brad pitched a diamond and all his small clubs. He came to hand with a spade and played the $\clubsuit AK$, squeezing West in diamonds and spades, a lovely non-simultaneous double squeeze. At the other table, North was declarer and East led the $\clubsuit J$. Assuming declarer enters dummy with a heart and discovers the bad news when the $\clubsuit A$ is played, the same squeeze position can be achieved by ducking a diamond at that point. Win the return in dummy, overtake the 2nd heart honour and finish the hearts (there is no winning line if hearts do not split 3-3). Dummy can be re-entered with whichever Ace remains to play the last top club. A spade lead attacks the entries needed to execute the squeeze and will defeat the slam.

In the second round Gordon and Piotr reached a magical $6\heartsuit$ to win 11 IMPs. Gordon's decision to upgrade his hand to a strong club opening was a good start. When the opponents put them under pressure with the leap to the four level, Piotr judged well to keep the auction alive by raising to $5\heartsuit$.

RR2 – Board 11

Dealer: South

Vulnerable: None

	♠ 108753		
	♥ 1072		
	♦ K852		
	♣ 7		
♠ Q2		♠ --	
♥ AKQJ943		♥ 86	
♦ 107		♦ QJ943	
♣ Q6		♣ KJ8532	
	♠ AKJ964		
	♥ 5		
	♦ A6		
	♣ A1094		

West	North	East	South
			1♣ ⁽¹⁾
4♥	Pass	Pass	4♠
Pass	5♠	Pass	6♠

⁽¹⁾ Polish club, F1 but not necessarily strong

In Round 7, Gordon and Piotr found their spade fit, but chose to play in 3NT with $\heartsuit AKQJ9$ $\heartsuit 73$ $\heartsuit Q54$ $\clubsuit Q95$ opposite $\heartsuit 1032$ $\heartsuit KJ5$ $\heartsuit AK7$ $\clubsuit 10842$. The no trump game came home while $4\heartsuit$ at the other table had no play.

In Round 16, a wild hand greeted the players, with many different outcomes.

RR16 – Board 4

Dealer: West

Vulnerable: Both

♠ 106 ♥ AKQJ10954 ♦ -- ♣ 864		♠ J75 ♥ 7 ♦ K1093 ♣ AQ732	
♠ AKQ9432 ♥ 6 ♦ AQJ6 ♣ 10		♠ 8 ♥ 832 ♦ 87542 ♣ KJ95	

West	North	East	South
1♣ ⁽¹⁾	4♥	Pass ⁽²⁾	5♣
6♠	7♥	Double	Pass
Pass	Pass		

⁽¹⁾ Strong club

⁽²⁾ Shows 3+ controls, K=1, A=2

At our table the bidding was at the 5-level by the time it was West's second turn to bid. This hand exposes the Achilles heel of strong club systems. If the opponents are able to pre-empt or make a psychic overcall, strong club players often cannot recover. Ron Bishop made the value bid with the North hand and John Duquette, knowing that he and Ron had a big heart fit, made a thoughtful lead-directing 5♣ call. West had no idea about the correct level or even the correct strain so took his best shot with 6♠. Ron could be sure that 7♥ would be a profitable sacrifice and bid accordingly. Looking at all four hands it's easy to see that North can lead a low heart to his partner's eight to obtain a diamond ruff to beat 6♠. Fine for those who like to take big positions, but bad team bridge. We beat 7♥x for +800 while our partners defended 5♠. Piotr led the ♥5 asking for a diamond ruff. At some tables the lead was the ♥4 and when South got in he tried to give partner a club ruff (you have to love partners who pay attention to spot cards)! At one table, North underled his hearts and the ♥7 in dummy held as South decided to give count!

In Round 21 the ten-board segment included these two East/West beauties:

West	East
♠Q8532	♠AK107
♥--	♥AK93
♦AK862	♦J9
♣A98	♣Q74

<u>West</u>	<u>East</u>
♠K953	♠AQ7
♥K5	♥AQ7
♦98752	♦AKQ63
♣AK	♣82

On the first hand West is the initial bidder while on the second East is the first to bid. At our table we were fortunate to judge well and reach both grand slams. Teams that successfully reached grand slams appreciably boosted their team's chance of making the play-offs.

The Quarter-Finals

Despite a loss to Thurston in the final match, Gartaganis managed to retain its hold on 1st place. The bonus for finishing first was the option of choosing one's opponent from among the 4th to 8th place finishers. In the semi-finals the remaining highest-placed team would be able to choose its opponent from the surviving squads.

The quarter-final matchups were:

Gartaganis	versus	Rayner
Todd	versus	Korbel
Janicki	versus	Thurston
Whiteman	versus	Hanna

Quarter-Finals - Q1

We were fortunate to get off to a good start against Rayner. We found a good non-vulnerable sacrifice in 5♦ (see below) after John Rayner and Michael Roche bid to 4♠. In fact only the 3-0 diamond break defeats 5♦. Our partners were pushed to 5♠ which made when West did not obtain his club ruff.

QF1 – Board 2

Dealer: East

Vulnerable: N/S

	♠ AKJ985		
	♥ 10		
	♦ KJ4		
	♣ 1072		
♠ 1064		♠ 7	
♥ A52		♥ KQJ3	
♦ AQ10982		♦ 7653	
♣ 8		♣ A543	
		♠ Q32	
	♥ 98764		
	♦ --		
	♣ KQJ96		

Three hands later, we bid to 6♠ with these hands:

<u>West</u>	<u>East</u>
♠Q8752	♠AK106
♥KJ84	♥103
♦A	♦KJ82
♣AJ2	♣K54

John Rayner made a lead-directing double of 5♥ (Blackwood response) and the play was trivial (♥AQ965 was onside). Andy Stark and Eric Shepherd took a more conservative view and rested in game.

On Board 9, Michael Roche had to lead from ♠7542 ♥9754 ♦109 ♣QJ7 against 5♦ after 1NT (11-13) on his left, 2♣ by partner showing both majors, 5♦ on his right. He found the dynamite lead of a spade to pick up 13 IMPs. Andy and Eric got the bidding right to reach 3NT which was impregnable on any lead. The four hands were:

QF1 – Board 9

Dealer: North

Vulnerable: E/W

	♠ 7542		
	♥ 9754		
	♦ 109		
	♣ QJ7		
♠ 106		♠ K83	
♥ 3		♥ AKQ6	
♦ AK876432		♦ J5	
♣ K6		♣ 10532	
	♠ AQJ9		
	♥ J1082		
	♦ Q		
	♣ A984		

One of our surprise gains was the result of a gadget Piotr and Gordon play.

QF1 – Board 13

Dealer: North

Vulnerable: Both

<p>♠ J74 ♥ K ♦ K1075 ♣ A10854</p>		<p>♠ K98532 ♥ 32 ♦ Q63 ♣ 62</p>
<p>♠ 6 ♥ AQJ10987 ♦ A984 ♣ K</p>		<p>♠ AQ10 ♥ 654 ♦ J2 ♣ QJ973</p>

NicholasG	MichaelR	JudithG	JohnR
<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
--	Pass	2♠	Pass
3♥	Pass	3♠	Pass
4♥	Pass	Pass	Pass

4♥ failed by one trick and looked to be a loss or at best a push. We hadn't reckoned on our partners at the other table.

AndyS	PiotrK	EricS	GordonC
<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
--	1♦	Pass	2♠ ⁽¹⁾
4♥	Pass	Pass	4♠ ⁽²⁾
Pass	5♣	Pass	Pass
Pass			

⁽¹⁾ Either 9-12 balanced, or 8-10 with 6+good clubs

⁽²⁾ Hoping partner has a second suit

Gordon inferred that Piotr was short in hearts and, having already denied 4+ spades, offered 4♠ as a possible contract. The first piece of good news was that Piotr didn't assume Gordon had forgotten that they no longer played weak jump shifts! The second piece of good news was that partner's other suit was clubs. With both black Kings onside and a good guess in the diamond suit, Piotr wrapped up the club game for +600.

A short time later, Piotr and Gordon scooped 3NT:

QF1 – Board 14

Dealer: North

Vulnerable: None

	♠ 4		
	♥ 852		
	♦ A987642		
	♣ 73		
♠ J109852		♠ Q63	
♥ J4		♥ KQ63	
♦ 53		♦ J	
♣ QJ2		♣ AK986	
	♠ AK7		
	♥ A1097		
	♦ KQ10		
	♣ 1054		

When East opened 1♣, Gordon unabashedly claimed possession of a club stopper with a 1NT overcall. Piotr transferred to diamonds and over Gordon's super-accept he bid 3NT. West started with the ♠J hoping for a favourable distribution of the suit and Gordon claimed ten tricks. At our table we bought the hand for 4♠ (doubled of course), but our partners had already won the board. 4♠ was just off one, so we picked up another 8 IMPs.

The segment closed with a 13-IMP pickup when, in a competitive auction, we doubled John in 3♥ and defeated the contract two tricks for +500.

When the smoke cleared at the close of the segment, Gartaganis was up over Rayner, 66 - 14. In the other matches, Korbel held a healthy lead against Todd (61-29) while Janicki had narrowly edged Thurston 37-31 and Hanna had outscored Whiteman 51-43.

Quarter-Finals - Q2

Joan Eaton and Karen Cumpstone entered the fray for Rayner. Both are former winners of the Canadian Women's Team Championship (CWTC). Quite a few blows were exchanged in the second quarter of Gartaganis-Rayner match, but the final tally was a 1-IMP gain for Gartaganis (33-32) now leading by 53 IMPs.

In other quarter-final matches Todd clawed back some ground from Korbel by winning the set 27-12 (now trailing by only 17). Janicki continued to add to its lead taking the quarter 30-21 (now leading by 15 over Thurston). The Whiteman-Hanna match was essentially a tie as Whiteman recovered 4 IMPs (Hanna leading by 4).

Quarter-Finals - Q3

In the third quarter Rayner scored heavily on Board 1, when we defended 3♦x for a paltry 300 while Roche and Rayner zoomed to slam and Gordon's lead gave up the 12th trick. Most of this came back when Karen, on a blind lead against 5♦, chose the ♣8 holding ♠K9765 ♥A976 ♦93 ♣84. All she knew was that declarer was 3-3-4-3 with 8-10 HCP. The dummy was known to be

strong, but had announced nothing more. Unfortunately the lead was into declarer's ♣KQ10 (dummy held ♣A752) for the 11th trick. At the other table, West declared 5♦ on the less helpful ♠Q lead. When clubs did not produce the game-going trick, that contract drifted off one.

Midway through the segment the IMP totals were about equal for both teams. Then Gartaganis won more IMPs when Judith led a spade against North's 3NT, while Gordon (playing the hand from the other direction) faced a less testing lead of the ♣Q.

<u>North</u>	<u>South</u>
♠KJ	♠A6
♥J	♥Q9852
♦KQ10853	♦742
♣K964	♣AJ8

With a winning diamond guess, declarer is home no matter the lead (the singleton ♦A was behind the ♦KQ10). Even if declarer has to give up a second diamond trick, with the ♥10 onside the defence's only chance is an immediate spade lead.

Rayner struck back immediately when we took a phantom save against 4♥. Rayner's plus scores at both tables translated to an 11-IMP pickup. The set finished with Gartaganis winning the quarter 46-45 (now leading by 54). In other quarter-final matches Korbel had a strong set against Todd (52-13) and entered the final set up 56. Whiteman put together an impressive 30-6 score to go into the fourth quarter up 20 over Hanna and Janicki continued to add to its lead by winning the third set 37-23 (now leading by 29 over Thurston).

One of Whiteman's big third segment gains was a game swing generated when Michael Kenny judged well to suggest 3NT rather than 4♥ as a contract. He inferred that his partner likely held a weak NT type hand and that potential ruffs might doom the heart game. So, despite a weak club holding, Michael made the winning 3♦ probe which led to an 11-IMP gain for Whiteman. This swing was replicated in our match when Gordon and Piotr found the same excellent 3NT contract.

QF3 – Board 8

Dealer: West

Vulnerable: None

	♠ Q10		
	♥ KQ62		
	♦ KJ4		
	♣ K1084		
♠ 9875432		♠ K6	
♥ 1073		♥ J	
♦ 9		♦ A10852	
♣ 32		♣ AQ976	
	♠ AJ		
	♥ A9854		
	♦ Q763		
	♣ J5		

NaderH	JonathanS	RobertL	MichaelK
<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
Pass	1♣	1♦	1♥
Pass	2♥	3♣	3♦
Pass	3NT	Pass	Pass
Pass			

JohnR	PiotrK	MichaelR	GordonC
<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
Pass	1♣	1♦	1♥
Pass	1NT	2♣	Double
2♠	3♥	Pass	3♠
Pass	3NT	Pass	Pass
Pass			

(1) 14-16 balanced

(2) Extra values

Quarter-Finals - Q4

The last segment of the quarter-finals was a low-scoring affair in the Gartaganis-Rayner match. There were just two notable swings. The first was created by a bidding decision on Board 21.

You hear LHO open 1♣, a pass from partner and 1♦ by RHO. You hold ♠Q1062 ♥AQ654 ♦6 ♣Q86. Nicholas chose to double rather than bid 1♥. RHO redoubled, partner bid spades and eventually LHO blasted into 3NT. Poor partner couldn't divine that leading from ♥K103 was better than leading from ♠J953, -630 and a loss of 11 IMPs.

Those IMPs came back five boards later on Board 26 when the opponents languished in 1♥ while we vaulted into game courtesy of playing a strong club system. The final set was 22-15 in favour of Gartaganis who had won the match 167-106.

Korbel took the 4th segment 69-23 and won its match handily (194-92). Janicki continued to play strongly, winning all four quarters to prevail 148-106 over Thurston. Whiteman was solid in the fourth quarter and outscored Hanna 39-19 to win the match 133-93.

As the highest remaining seed Gartaganis again was given choice of opponent, all of whom were playing in form. Faced with only bad options, Gartaganis selected Janicki leaving Whiteman to battle Korbel.

Semi-Finals - Q1

Early on Gartaganis scored the first major swing of the match.

SF1 – Board 4

Dealer: West

Vulnerable: Both

♠ 4 ♥ A962 ♦ AJ52 ♣ Q762		♠ KQ103 ♥ KJ ♦ KQ73 ♣ A98	♠ A976 ♥ 7 ♦ 864 ♣ KJ1043
		♠ J852 ♥ Q108543 ♦ 109 ♣ 5	

NicholasG	BobK	JudithG	BarryS
<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
1♥	Double	1♠	Pass
2♣	Double	3♣	Pass
Pass	Pass		

Once West opens 1♥ the opponents have little chance to reach their best spot. 3♣ made eleven tricks. At the other table our partners reached 4♥ after West passed and Gordon made a weak jump shift over Piotr’s 1♦. South gathered in ten tricks when the defence slipped. East had to guess at trick one whether his partner had led a singleton or doubleton spade. Three boards later Janicki scored its first (and not last) major blow.

SF1 – Board 7

Dealer: South

Vulnerable: Both

♠ 864 ♥ KQ105 ♦ A875 ♣ K5		♠ KQ10 ♥ J987 ♦ KJ9 ♣ J92	♠ A ♥ A6 ♦ Q1064 ♣ Q108743
		♠ J97532 ♥ 432 ♦ 32 ♣ A6	

NicholasG	BobK	JudithG	BarryS
<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
--	--	--	Pass
1NT ⁽¹⁾	Pass	2♣ ⁽²⁾	Pass
2♥	Pass	3♣ ⁽³⁾	Pass
Pass	Pass		

⁽¹⁾ 11-13

⁽²⁾ Stayman with at most invitational values

⁽³⁾ Invitational with 5+ clubs, unlikely to have 4 spades

The favourable lie in clubs and diamonds allowed Judith to wrap up eleven tricks. At the other table Stephen Cooper and Jordan Cohen aggressively bid to 5♦ and were rewarded with +600, 10 IMPs to Janicki.

After a brief respite where overtrick IMPs were exchanged Janicki earned a double game swing.

SF1 – Board 11

Dealer: South

Vulnerable: None

	♠ QJ105		
	♥ 92		
	♦ AK95		
	♣ AQ2		
♠ A9872		♠ K43	
♥ AK1087		♥ Q6543	
♦ Q6		♦ 7	
♣ 10		♣ J865	
	♠ 6		
	♥ J		
	♦ J108432		
	♣ K9743		

NicholasG	BobK	JudithG	BarryS
<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
--	--	--	Pass
1♠	1NT	2♠	2NT ⁽¹⁾
3♥	Pass	4♥	4NT
Pass	5♦	Pass	Pass
Pass			

⁽¹⁾ Relay to 3♣ (Lebensohl)

At the other table East/West bought the contract for 4♥ when Gordon pessimistically took only one bid with his 6-5. Both games made, 13 IMPs to Janicki.

Board 12 was another 13-IMP gain for Janicki when Piotr and Gordon went down in 6♥ with ♠A73 ♥A ♦A32 ♣A87654 opposite ♠106 ♥KQJ932 ♦KJ74 ♣3. Assuming no trump loser, this has fair chances. The slam needs either a 3-3 break in clubs or ♦A32 opposite ♦KJ74 to stand up for four tricks or to have a squeeze materialize if the ♦Q is onside without 3-3 diamonds. Then Janicki padded its total with 5 IMPs by defeating partscores at both tables.

Heading into the penultimate board of the segment Janicki was leading by 27 IMPs.

SF1 – Board 17

Dealer: North

Vulnerable: None

<p>♠ J9 ♥ AK65 ♦ Q76 ♣ AK62</p>		<p>♠ Q1054 ♥ 97 ♦ J10985 ♣ 109</p>
<p>♠ 3 ♥ 1042 ♦ AK432 ♣ J743</p>		<p>♠ AK8762 ♥ QJ83 ♦ -- ♣ Q85</p>

At our table, North declared 6♥. Declarer ruffed the opening diamond lead and drew two rounds of trumps with dummy's ♥QJ. He then cashed the ♠A, travelled to hand with the ♣A and played the ♠J to the ♠K. When West ruffed and returned a high diamond, the slam could no longer be made. Declarer had a blind spot, not seeing that it was safe to run the ♠J. Trumps were known to be 3-2 and only a club ruff threatened the slam. Surely East would not have led a diamond if holding a singleton club.

Piotr, as North, received the same lead and played the ♠A followed by the ♥K and the ♠J to the King. West ruffed with the ♥4 and returned the ♦K which Piotr won in dummy with the ♥J. When declarer led a spade from dummy West played the ♥10 overruffed by the ♥A. Piotr pulled the last trump with the ♥Q and used the ♥6 to establish the spade suit. Plus 1430 translated into a 14-IMP pickup for Gartaganis, easing some of the pain from earlier boards. By the end of the segment Janicki led Gartaganis 44-31. In the other semi-final, the margin was nearly identical, with Korbel in the early lead, 37-25.

Semi-Finals - Q2

The second quarter was a relatively tame affair. On Board 21, both East-West pairs reached 3NT with ♠98765 ♥A62 ♦J4 ♣AKQ opposite ♠AQ ♥953 ♦K86 ♣J9854 after interference. The ♦AQ were offside, but the ♠K was onside -- contract making. Gartaganis won 6 IMPs for making partscores at both tables and then gave those IMPs up two boards later by going down in partscores at both tables.

Gartaganis recovered 10 IMPs on Board 27 when Judith and Nicholas chose to play 4♠ (in a 5-3 fit) rather than 3NT (the contract at the other table) and another 7 IMPs two boards later when Janicki's aggressive 4♥ contract needed trumps 3-2 with the ♥A favourably placed, but that layout did not materialize. Janicki scored 11 IMPs on Board 31 when Piotr and Gordon had a misunderstanding and landed in a poor 4-3 spade fit instead of a solid 6-1 heart fit.

On Board 33, both our partners and their counterparts missed the best spot -- a delicate 5♣ or 5♦. With ♠7 ♥A98 ♦KJ104 ♣QJ1094 opposite ♠A82 ♥K54 ♦A876 ♣K75, the final contract at both tables was 3NT, failing by two tricks.

On Board 36, both teams missed a thin 4♥ that depended on useful shortness in each of the hands. The combined holdings were ♠83 ♥KQJ94 ♦A9754 ♣7 opposite ♠AKQ1076 ♥1076 ♦J♣1065.

Gartaganis took the segment 29-20, reducing Janicki's lead to 4 (64-60). In the other match, Korbel tacked on another 16 IMPs and led Whiteman 72-48.

Semi-Finals - Q3

The third segment turned out to be the deciding quarter in our match. The first big gain occurred early.

SF3 – Board 2

Dealer: East

Vulnerable: N/S

♠ AJ109 ♥ KQ ♦ K54 ♣ 7543		♠ 842 ♥ 104 ♦ J10732 ♣ 862	♠ 5 ♥ J65 ♦ AQ8 ♣ AKQJ109
♠ KQ763 ♥ A98732 ♦ 96 ♣ --			

StephenC	NicholasG	JordanC	JudithG
<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
--	--	Pass	1♠
2♣	3♣	Pass	3♠
Pass	4♠	Pass	Pass
Pass			

GordonC	PaulJ	PiotrK	JimP
<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
--	--	Pass	Pass
1♣ ⁽¹⁾	Pass	1♦ ⁽²⁾	Double
3♣	Pass	Pass	3♥
Pass	3♠	Pass	Pass
Pass			

⁽¹⁾ Polish club, F1 but not necessarily strong

⁽²⁾ Artificial, various hands; 0-6 HCP if holding one or both majors

At our table Judith made a tactical underbid of 3♠ over partner's limit+ cue bid. Holding a void in clubs and only 9 HCP it was almost guaranteed that the auction would not die but if it did so, it would likely be to the opponents' detriment. Partner raised to 4♠ and declarer made 12 easy tricks. At the other table South did not open and North/South lost their way, playing in a partscore, 10 IMPs to Gartaganis. Janicki gained back 6 IMPs when Piotr and Gordon overreached to 5♣. During the next eight boards Gartaganis outscored Janicki 49-0. We reached an extremely lucky 3NT with only 22 HCP, but all the finesses were working. On Board 7, both Gartaganis pairs played in no trump. Where Judith opened and played in 1NT, the offense scored four tricks for -300. At the other table Judith's hand opened 1♦, Piotr balanced with 1NT and was raised to game. The defence scored those same 4 tricks for +600, 7 IMPs to Gartaganis.

On Board 8 the swing was in the defence of a game contract.

SF3 – Board 8

Dealer: West

Vulnerable: None

	♠ 642		
	♥ Q2		
	♦ Q753		
	♣ 10862		
♠ 109875		♠ 3	
♥ K976		♥ AJ10854	
♦ J64		♦ K82	
♣ 3		♣ AQ7	
	♠ AKQJ		
	♥ 3		
	♦ A109		
	♣ KJ954		

GordonC	PaulJ	PiotrK	JimP
<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
Pass	Pass	1♥	Double
2♥ ⁽¹⁾	Pass	2♠ ⁽²⁾	3♣
4♥	Pass	Pass	Pass

⁽¹⁾ Weak raise

⁽²⁾ Short suit game try

South led the ♠A and continued spades. That allowed Piotr to draw two rounds of trumps and establish the fifth spade as his tenth trick. Against the same contract and a similar auction, Judith led the ♠K and switched to the ♥3. Declarer played for the ♦Q or ♦AQ to be with LHO, leading up to dummy's ♦J. From there, the contract drifted off one and another 10 IMPs came our way. Deep Finesse would win the first round of trumps with the Ace and continue with a low diamond from both hands, endplaying the opponents into conceding the game going trick. South has only losing options: lead a club into the AQ, help to set up spades or set up the ♦K. If North overtakes the ♦9 to lead through declarer, the combined ♦KJ will be good for a later trick. There are several other variations, but all involve the same diamond play.

On Board 9 you hold ♠AKQ103 ♥93 ♦AJ9 ♣QJ3 (vulnerable versus not). RHO opens a strong club and you bid 1♠. LHO's ensuing pass shows less than 8 HCP. Partner leaps to 4♠ and RHO bids 5♥. From the auction it appears that both partner and RHO are distributional. Do you bid on? If you double, and defend accurately, you win 4 IMPs. If you choose to bid, you push the board. If you pass you lose 12 IMPs. Partner's hand is ♠J652 ♥-- ♦Q8642 ♣K1098. With the ♦K onside you can wrap up 12 tricks in spades.

After Gartaganis won 14 more IMPs on partscore battles Janicki put something in its column with a 3-IMP gain for two fewer undertricks on Board 14. With ♠KQ9542 ♥-- ♦A2 ♣Q10852 opposite ♠7 ♥AQ8432 ♦J965 ♣A4 both Gordon-Piotr and their counterparts ignored the misfit and bid to game anyway (Janicki to 3NT; Gartaganis to 4♥).

Janicki's respite was brief as the result of this defensive gem by Piotr and Gordon.

SF3 – Board 16

Dealer: West

Vulnerable: E/W

♠ 1054 ♥ 1043 ♦ 4 ♣ AKQJ96		♠ J96 ♥ A962 ♦ KJ7 ♣ 743	♠ 3 ♥ KQ85 ♦ A8532 ♣ 852
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GordonC	PaulJ	PiotrK	JimP
<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
1♠	2♣	2♠	3♣
3♦	Pass	4♠	Pass
Pass	5♣	Pass	Pass
Double	Pass	Pass	Pass

Against 5♣x Piotr made the excellent lead of a low trump. North won in hand and played a heart to dummy's King. It was important for Piotr to duck otherwise declarer could have made the contract with double dummy play (establish the fifth diamond with three ruffs: ♦A and ruff a diamond high, overtake the ♥10 to ruff another diamond high, finesse the ♥8 for a third ruff high and, finally, use the ♣8 as a late entry to cash the red suit winners). In dummy with the heart, declarer came off the table with the ♠3 and it was Gordon's turn to make a dynamite duck to Piotr's ♠J! That allowed Piotr to play another round of trumps. North had no way to overcome this defence. At our table the auction was tamer and Nicholas played 5♣ (undoubled) on a low spade lead and the ♦9 switch. Declarer eventually scored eleven tricks and Gartaganis had added 11 IMPs more to its total. Gartaganis won the segment 77-10 and had surged to a 137-74 lead. In the other semi-final match Korbek won yet another segment 51-28 to lead 127-78.

Semi-Finals - Q4

The fourth quarter had plenty of scope for Janicki to make a comeback. On Board 20, Nicholas and Judith reached 4♥ on a 4-3 fit. The defence missed its chance to tap declarer and capitalize on the 4-2 trump break. The other table reached 3NT and needed three tricks from A832 opposite K105. After a spade lead Cooper played three rounds of clubs ending in hand. He then led a low diamond towards the ♦A, West played the nine. On the third round of clubs East had pitched a diamond. Cooper correctly concluded that the ♦9 was likely a singleton and he finessed the ten on the way back. This was a fortunate 1-IMP gain for Gartaganis rather than a double-digit loss.

SF4 – Board 20

Dealer: West

Vulnerable: Both

	♠ 74		
	♥ QJ3		
	♦ A832		
	♣ Q874		
♠ J10953		♠ Q862	
♥ K876		♥ A2	
♦ 9		♦ QJ764	
♣ 1065		♣ J2	
	♠ AK		
	♥ 10954		
	♦ K105		
	♣ AK93		

Janicki registered two double-digit swings, one for opting to take a different finesse in a game contract and the other for excellent bidding to arrive at a laydown grand slam. The final segment ended up in a draw at 30-30. Gartaganis had prevailed largely on the back of a storming third quarter. Korbel too, had won the fourth quarter in its match against Whiteman. The final tallies were:

Gartaganis	167	Janicki	104
Korbel	178	Whiteman	106

Gartaganis no longer had a choice of opponents.

Finals

Day 1 - Segment 1

Korbel versus Gartaganis rated to be an interesting match, more so because of the links among the various players. In an impressive return to the finals, Darren Wolpert and Daniel Korbel were defending their 2009 championship. Darren's first CNTC appearance was in 1995 when he substituted for a player on the Gartaganis team who had to leave because of a family emergency. Darren and Judith had 30 minutes to fill out a convention card! The two of them played incredibly well as a partnership, helping to propel the team (other members were Peter Jones playing with Nicholas) to a qualifying spot. Darren is not only very talented, but has impeccable table manners and unimpeachable ethics. Although we knew little about Daniel prior to this year, it is clear that in terms of talent and decorum, he is a perfect match for Darren.

Daniel and Darren's team-mates were Danny Miles, Keith Balcombe and Ross Taylor. Danny is a young player with considerable skill and a great future, but he did not play any boards in the finals. Keith is a long-time friend and an integral part of many of the successes we have enjoyed. Ross is a well-known player and was augmented (with Keith) to the 1982 Canadian CNTC team (Nicholas, Zygmunt Marcinski, Voyteck Pomykalski, Gordon Crispin) that competed against that year's winners of the Reisinger, Vanderbilt, Spingold and GNT for the right to represent North America in the Bermuda Bowl.

In bridge, as in many other sporting events, psychology plays a major role in the outcome of competitions. This in part explains why sports psychologists are used extensively and why the best team (on paper) does not always win. Apart from skill and luck, mental toughness is a key factor. Individuals have to play up to their potential. Quite often, the reason for lack of success lies in playing to avoid losing rather than playing to win. It is difficult to adjust one's thinking in that respect.

Gartaganis struck first with a game-swing on Board 1:

Segment 1 - Board 1

Dealer: North

Vulnerable: None

<p>♠ Q98 ♥ A9832 ♦ 9 ♣ Q542</p>		<p>♠ AKJ2 ♥ 6 ♦ AK8643 ♣ KJ</p>
<p>♠ 7653 ♥ QJ5 ♦ QJ75 ♣ 93</p>		<p>♠ 104 ♥ K1074 ♦ 102 ♣ A10876</p>

DarrenW	NicholasG	DanielK	JudithG
<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
--	Pass	1♦	Pass
1♠	Double	3♥ ⁽¹⁾	Double
3♠	Pass	4♠	Pass
Pass	Pass		

⁽¹⁾ Splinter in support of spades

Nicholas led the ♦9. Declarer won the ♦K, cashed two rounds of spades and continued with a diamond to the Queen. North ruffed and played the obligatory ♣2. Darren guessed to play the ♣K and the defence had four tricks. At the other table Keith started with the ♣2 and Gordon played the ♣J, limiting the defence to three tricks.

On Board 3 both North-South pairs declared 4♠ and needed to play a side suit of ♣A73 opposite ♣J9654 for only one loser. Both took the same line: eliminate the side suits and exit with ♣A and another club. The defenders had no counter (unblocking from honour doubleton wouldn't have helped since the ♣10 was onside). Gordon's double cost 5 imps.

On Board 4, after West's opening 3♣ and East's 3NT, South had to lead from ♠Q87 ♥A754 ♦KQ653 ♣4. A low heart was chosen at one table and a low diamond at the other. Both leads gave declarer a 9th trick.

On Board 5 Daniel and Darren reached an aggressive 24-point 3NT. The contract came down to a two-way finesse for the ♣Q, but Daniel misguessed.

Board 6 could have been a Bridge World challenge hand. How can North-South reach the best contract?

Segment 1 - Board 6

Dealer: East

Vulnerable: E/W

	♠ AJ1075		
	♥ Q8		
	♦ 53		
	♣ AK92		
♠ KQ4	<div style="background-color: #0056b3; color: white; padding: 10px; display: inline-block; text-align: center;"> N W ■ E S </div>	♠ 983	
♥ 10432		♥ AJ976	
♦ QJ		♦ 1092	
♣ 6543		♣ Q7	
	♠ 62		
	♥ K5		
	♦ AK8764		
	♣ J108		

DarrenW	NicholasG	DanielK	JudithG
<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
--	--	Pass	1NT ⁽¹⁾
Pass	2♦ ⁽²⁾	Pass	3♦ ⁽³⁾
Pass	3♠	Pass	3NT
Pass	4♠	Pass	Pass
Pass			

⁽¹⁾ 11-13

⁽²⁾ Forcing to game Stayman

⁽³⁾ 5+ diamonds, no 4-card major

GordonC	KeithB	PiotrK	RossT
<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
--	--	Pass	1♦
Pass	1♠	Pass	2♦
Pass	3♣	Pass	3NT
Pass	Pass	Pass	

Nicholas knew that hearts might be a crucial weakness (South could hold at most three) and the ♠10 filled in the suit. 4♠ made eleven tricks on the lead of the ♣Q. His decision deserved a better fate but, when Gordon tracked the ♠K against 3NT, there was no swing.

Board 8 was an unlikely push. Piotr and Gordon reached a ambitious 4♠ game that attracted a double. The contract needed the ♦Q onside and no trump losers with ♠A7543 opposite ♠K1098. The rule of restricted choice proved unreliable as Gordon lost to a doubleton ♠QJ for -100.

Meanwhile at the other table Nicholas bought the contract with a weak 1NT opening and he scooped seven tricks for +90.

Board 9 had the potential for a large pickup for both teams.

Segment 1 - Board 9

Dealer: North

Vulnerable: E/W

<p>♠ QJ103 ♥ KJ7 ♦ KJ73 ♣ J5</p>		<p>♠ A65 ♥ 98 ♦ A1084 ♣ A832</p>	<p>♠ 742 ♥ 10543 ♦ Q965 ♣ 104</p>
<p>♠ K98 ♥ AQ62 ♦ 2 ♣ KQ976</p>			

DarrenW	NicholasG	DanielK	JudithG
<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
--	1NT ⁽¹⁾	Pass	2♣ ⁽²⁾
Pass	2♠	Pass	Pass
Pass			

⁽¹⁾ 11-13

⁽²⁾ Stayman, at most invitational values

GordonC	KeithB	PiotrK	RossT
<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
--	1NT ⁽¹⁾	Pass	Pass
Double	Pass	Pass	Redouble
Pass	2♦	Double	Pass
Pass	Pass		

⁽¹⁾ 11-14

Both North-South pairs expected to gain, given that East/West can make a vulnerable 3NT against any lead. 4 IMPs to Gartaganis for avoiding a double.

On the next board we bid our own 24 HCP 3NT that needed ♥Q onside doubleton or tripleton (with additional chances if the defence was unable to cash three tricks in a side suit). None of the above panned out, lose 7.

Gartaganis was leading by 13 IMPs but stumbled badly on the last board of the set.

Segment 1 - Board 16

Dealer: West

Vulnerable: E/W

♠ 54 ♥ Q8 ♦ AK8752 ♣ AK9		♠ 73 ♥ K106 ♦ 94 ♣ Q106532	♠ K10962 ♥ J932 ♦ Q106 ♣ 8
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DarrenW	NicholasG	DanielK	JudithG
<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
1♣	1NT	3♣ ⁽¹⁾	4♣
Pass	4♦	Pass	4♠
Double ⁽²⁾	5♦	Double	Pass
Pass	Pass		

⁽¹⁾ Pre-emptive raise

⁽²⁾ "You guys may have reached the finals, but I don't think you know what you are doing"

We went off the rails and vaulted into 5♦, losing -300. At the other table Keith and Ross defended 2♣x. In the mid-game, Keith made a spectacular underlead of the ♦AK to put his partner in for a spade ruff. +200 together with +300 at the other table translated into 11 IMPs. The segment finished at 27-25 in favour of Gartaganis.

Day 1 - Segment 2

The second segment started with an overtrick IMP to Korbel. On Board 18, our strong club system allowed us to stop in 2♦, just making while Darren and Daniel had to go one off in 3♦. Both tables reached 5♣ on Board 19; 2 IMPs came our way courtesy of a power double. That left the running score 34-26 in our favour. Korbel turned the match around over the next few boards. On Board 20 we had a systemic accident, playing in a paltry 2NT when nine tricks were available. At the other table:

Segment 2 - Board 20

Dealer: West

Vulnerable: Both

♠ 105 ♥ K962 ♦ AJ963 ♣ 93		♠ AQ84 ♥ AQ74 ♦ K ♣ Q765	♠ J632 ♥ 10853 ♦ 54 ♣ KJ2
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DarrenW	GordonC	DanielK	PiotrK
<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
Pass	Pass	1NT	Pass
3♥ ⁽¹⁾	Double	5♣	Pass
Pass	Pass		

⁽¹⁾ Short in ♥, both minors

Piotr started with the ♥3 and Daniel took the ♥K with the Ace to play the ♦K. Gordon won and returned a low heart. After winning the ♥Q, Daniel paused to take stock. A potential swing of 16 IMPs rode on his decision in the trump suit. North had already shown 7 HCP and the ♣K would bring the hand close to a "Campbell opener". Daniel advanced the ♣Q ...right! Korb wrapped up 5♣ and won 10 IMPs for his team.

Board 21 was a push when both East-West pairs failed in 4♥. Then more bad news for the Alberta squad.

Segment 2 - Board 22

Dealer: East

Vulnerable: E/W

	♠ A3											
	♥ AK972											
	♦ K107											
	♣ A94											
♠ Q107	<div style="background-color: #0056b3; color: white; padding: 10px; display: inline-block;"> <table style="border: none; text-align: center; width: 40px; height: 40px;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td>■</td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table> </div>		N		W	■	E		S		♠ KJ98652	
	N											
W	■	E										
	S											
♥ Q104		♥ J653										
♦ 98		♦ AJ										
♣ Q10653		♣ --										
	♠ 4											
	♥ 8											
	♦ Q65432											
	♣ KJ872											

NicholasG	KeithB	JudithG	RossT
<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
--	--	1♠	Pass
2♠	Double	4♠ ⁽¹⁾	Pass
Pass	Double	Pass	4NT
Pass	5♣	Pass	Pass
Double ⁽²⁾	Pass	5♠ ⁽³⁾	Pass
Pass	Double ⁽⁴⁾	Pass	Pass
Pass			

⁽¹⁾ Systemically sets up a forcing pass situation

⁽²⁾ I wish I could pass

⁽³⁾ I so totally regret my last bid

⁽⁴⁾ Thank you, Santa

When the smoke cleared Keith and Ross had collected +500. Note Ross' decision to pass 4♠ and hope partner could reopen. His subsequent 4NT gave a perfect picture of his hand without overstating his values.

At the other table the auction was considerably different.

DarrenW	GordonC	DanielK	PiotrK
<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
--	--	3♠	Pass
Pass	Double	Pass	4NT
Pass	5NT	Pass	6♦
Pass	Pass	Double	Pass
Pass	Pass		

Daniel and Darren collected +100 that went nicely with the +500 at the other table.

The bleeding continued.

Segment 2 - Board 23

Dealer: South

Vulnerable: Both

♠ 2 ♥ K986 ♦ A95 ♣ 86542		♠ J10874 ♥ -- ♦ 863 ♣ AJ973	♠ AQ53 ♥ J10532 ♦ J4 ♣ Q10
♠ K96 ♥ AQ74 ♦ KQ1072 ♣ K			

At our table a strong club auction led to a final contract of 4♠ declared by West. Keith led the ♣2. Declarer played low and South inserted the ♣10. Nicholas advanced the ♦K, which Keith won to lead the ♣8. Declarer covered with the ♣9 and ruffed when Ross produced ♣Q. Now, when declarer played the ♠K, Ross correctly ducked and won the spade continuation. Ross returned the ♦J, but there was no way for Nicholas to overcome the 4-1 spade break. Nicholas had to fly with ♣A on the second round of the suit to have a chance.

At the other table, East was declarer in 4♠. Piotr spurned the more passive ♥J lead in favour of the ♦J, covered by the ♦K. Gordon won the ♦A and returned the ♦9, which Daniel won in the dummy. Fearing the diamond ruff Daniel played the ♥A for a diamond discard and led the ♠6 to his Ten and Piotr's Queen. At this point Piotr had his first chance to beat the contract (cash the ♠A and return a heart). When Piotr returned the ♥J Daniel followed low, ruffing in hand to play a spade up to dummy's nine (Piotr's second chance to win the ♠A and return a heart). With the 4-1 break revealed, Daniel cashed the ♣K, ruffed a heart to his hand, and cashed the ♣A. The end position was as follows:

♠ -- ♥ 9 ♦ -- ♣ 865		♠ J ♥ -- ♦ -- ♣ J97	♠ A5 ♥ 105 ♦ -- ♣ --
♠ K ♥ 7 ♦ 107 ♣ --			

Even though Piotr still had two trumps including the Ace, while Daniel was down to only one trump in each hand, South was helpless. Declarer led good clubs from hand. If Piotr ruffed low, Daniel could overruff and play good diamonds from the dummy. If Piotr ruffed high to return a trump, Daniel could claim the remainder of the tricks.

At this juncture of the match, Korbel had catapulted into a 60-34 lead. The next two boards were quiet pushes. Then we played in 1NT, just in, while Daniel and Darren were in 2NT down one (win 5).

On the next two boards the teams exchanged overtrick IMPs and the running total was Korbel 62 – Gartaganis 40.

Boards 29 to 31 once again turned the match around, this time with the Western team surging to reclaim the lead.

Segment 2 - Board 29

Dealer: North

Vulnerable: Both

<p>♠ K9 ♥ J10842 ♦ J7 ♣ KQ72</p>		<p>♠ Q5 ♥ 9 ♦ AQ9642 ♣ AJ104</p>	<p>♠ 10742 ♥ AQ75 ♦ 10 ♣ 9853</p>
		<p>♠ AJ863 ♥ K63 ♦ K853 ♣ 6</p>	

NicholasG	KeithB	JudithG	RossT
<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
--	1♦	Pass	1♠
Pass	2♦	Pass	4♣ ⁽¹⁾
Pass	4NT	Pass	5♥
Pass	6♦	Pass	Pass
Pass			

⁽¹⁾ Splinter in support of diamonds

East did not have an obvious lead. Based on the auction it appeared declarer was not staring at two quick heart losers. A good argument could be made for a trump lead to cut down on club ruffs or even a club lead to potentially tap dummy before spades could be set up. Fortunately, Judith chose a spade. Keith had no option but to finesse and the spotlight turned to West. Some inferences could be drawn: Keith and Ross were playing a weak 1NT system and Nicholas extracted from Ross that 2♦ usually indicated an unbalanced hand. West could construct a number of hands where declarer had the ♥A and not the ♣A. However, he finally decided to

return a heart and that was that ... the contract was defeated. At the other table North showed a singleton heart and 5♦ was the final resting spot.

Many might find the lead of a spade to be obvious when given the hand as a problem. However, everyone knows that problem hands trigger "alarm bells" alerting them that normal actions may not apply. In this match, every player faced 128 bid, lead, play and/or defensive problems and finding the correct solution every time was not so simple. As one might expect, the level of play in the final match ranged from impressive through bizarre as the players battled fatigue and pressure.

The next hand brought more good news for Gartaganis.

Segment 2 - Board 30

Dealer: East

Vulnerable: None

♠ AJ10862 ♥ K3 ♦ A62 ♣ Q2			♠ 9 ♥ J1095 ♦ Q8 ♣ AK9853
♠ 75 ♥ Q8642 ♦ 9543 ♣ J4			♠ KQ43 ♥ A7 ♦ KJ107 ♣ 1076

NicholasG	KeithB	JudithG	RossT
West	North	East	South
--	--	2♣ ⁽¹⁾	Pass
2♥ ⁽²⁾	2♠	3♠ ⁽³⁾	4♠
Pass	Pass	5♥	5♠
Pass	Pass	Pass	

⁽¹⁾ 11-16, 5+ clubs

⁽²⁾ Natural, F1

⁽³⁾ Strong raise to 4♥

In the play, Keith discovered that East held six clubs, one spade and at least three hearts. He finessed West for the ♦Q and we scored +50 to win 11 IMPs (our partners played in 4♠ after East opened 1♣). This hand had two points of interest. The first is Ross' decision to bid 4♠ rather than cue bidding 4♥ to involve partner in the final decision. When East carried on to 5♥ he was trapped by his original bid and had to guess. The second point of interest is that had declarer run all his winners prior to guessing diamonds West would have been forced to release his ♥Q to hold three diamonds. Declarer would have counted East for the ♣AK and ♥J and might then have guessed that she needed the ♦Q for the auction.

The Gartaganis streak continued.

Segment 2 - Board 31

Dealer: South

Vulnerable: N/S

	♠ Q		
	♥ Q97		
	♦ 843		
	♣ KJ7652		
♠ A864 ♥ J2 ♦ J95 ♣ AQ104		♠ K75 ♥ K8543 ♦ KQ6 ♣ 93	
	♠ J10932		
	♥ A106		
	♦ A1072		
	♣ 8		

NicholasG	KeithB	JudithG	RossT
<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
--	--	--	Pass
1NT ⁽¹⁾	Pass	2♥ ⁽²⁾	2♠
Pass	Pass	Double ⁽³⁾	Pass
3♣	Pass ⁽⁴⁾	Pass	Pass

⁽¹⁾ 11-13

⁽²⁾ Natural, to play, but partner can raise with a non-minimum

⁽³⁾ Takeout

⁽⁴⁾ Santa visits again ... too good to be true

DarrenW	GordonC	DanielK	PiotrK
<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
--	--	--	Pass
1♣	Pass	1♥	Double
Pass	2♣	Pass	2♠
Pass	Pass	Double	Pass
Pass	Pass		

At our table we dodged a bullet since Keith liked 3♣ too much and knew his partner had less than opening values. At the other table Piotr ended up in 2♠x, having interpreted Gordon's 2♣ as a takeout cue bid when it was intended as natural. On the lead of the ♠4, Daniel won his King and returned the ♥3 (to the Jack and Queen). Piotr tried a diamond to his Ace and then the ♠J. Darren won the ♠A, cashed the ♣A and returned the ♥2 to declarer's ten. Piotr could draw trumps and establish his fourth diamond for the eighth trick, +670.

The final board of the segment was a push in 3NT.

After no fewer than six double-digit swings over 16 boards, the second set had ended up as a net gain of 10 for Gartaganis, now up 74-62. In fact, the lead was to swing back and forth frequently during the coming segments.

Day 1 - Segment 3

The third segment started with a 2-IMP pickup for Gartaganis on Board 1, when we beat 2♣ three tricks against South's seven trick 1NT at the other table. After a flat game bid and made by both sides Korbek won 7 IMPs for a successful sacrifice (4♥x for minus 300 versus a vulnerable 5♦ game).

Then Korbek picked up another 10 IMPs on Board 4 when we missed a lay-down vulnerable game bid by Keith and Ross at the other table. Both East-West pairs went down a trick in game contracts on Board 5 and Gartaganis gained 2 IMPs on the next board when Judith was able to hold the down tricks to one trick fewer than her counterpart in a hopeless 4♠ contract.

The next board had pickup potential for both sides.

Segment 3 - Board 7

Dealer: South

Vulnerable: Both

♠ AJ9642 ♥ J92 ♦ Q ♣ A52		♠ 75 ♥ AK106 ♦ A109542 ♣ 8	♠ 3 ♥ Q87 ♦ KJ8763 ♣ K73
♠ KQ108 ♥ 543 ♦ -- ♣ QJ10964			

DarrenW	NicholasG	DanielK	JudithG
<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
--	--	--	Pass
Pass	1♠	2♦	4♠
5♦	Pass	Pass	5♠
Pass	Pass	Pass	
GordonC	KeithB	PiotrK	RossT
<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
--	--	--	Pass
Pass	2♠ ⁽¹⁾	3♦	4♠
5♦	Pass	Pass	Pass

⁽¹⁾ 4-11

At our table Judith made the right decision to bid 5♠ over 5♦ to win 11 IMPs. Although she hoped the game would make, instead it turned out to be a profitable sacrifice against the vulnerable diamond game.

Undaunted, for the next nine boards Korbel held Gartaganis scoreless while picking up 16 IMPs, They made a number of good decisions about level, strain and play, including this one:

Segment 3 - Board 16

Dealer: West

Vulnerable: E/W

♠ KQ109 ♥ A963 ♦ 873 ♣ 95		♠ 874 ♥ J5 ♦ A654 ♣ A1082	♠ 6532 ♥ Q ♦ Q1092 ♣ KQ73
♠ AJ ♥ K108742 ♦ KJ ♣ J64			

We reached 4♥ (2♥ by South in fourth seat and 4♥ by North). South had to guess diamonds after two rounds of clubs and then the obligatory low diamond through declarer. Good lead by Darren as it was essential for the defence to take their tricks immediately. The quarter finished 33-15 in favour of Korbel (now leading 95-89).

Day 1 - Segment 4

The fourth segment started well for Gartaganis who outscored Korbel 27-1 on the first seven boards. On Board 17 where Darren and Daniel bid to 3NT, the play went back and forth, but eventually the defence prevailed. At the other table Piotr and Gordon went plus in 2♠ making three. Gartaganis gave up an overtrick on Board 18 and then won 11 IMPs when Nicholas and Judith played in 4♠ making while Ross and Keith played in 3NT down one. Another 10 IMPs went to Gartaganis on Board 23 when we made 3NT while Ross and Keith rested in 3♦ down one. Gartaganis now led by 20 IMPs.

Just as Gartaganis was starting to see some daylight Korbel went on a 24-0 run, recapturing the lead. On Board 24, Ross and Keith bid an ambitious, but cold 4♥ game while their counterparts languished in 3♣, making ten tricks. Board 25 saw Keith and Ross stopping in 3♣ while Nicholas and Judith drove to 5♣. Neither contract made, but that was still 2 IMPs to Korbel.

Next was a 7-IMP gain for Korbel because each West chose a different action:

Segment 4 - Board 26

Dealer: East

Vulnerable: Both

	♠ K		
	♥ 932		
	♦ 1083		
	♣ K105432		
♠ 87653 ♥ K7 ♦ AKQ7 ♣ Q6		♠ AJ ♥ 108654 ♦ J92 ♣ J98	
	♠ Q10942		
	♥ AQJ		
	♦ 654		
	♣ A7		

DarrenW	NicholasG	DanielK	JudithG
<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
--	--	Pass	1NT ⁽¹⁾
Double	Pass ⁽²⁾	Pass	Redouble
Pass	2♣	2♥	Pass
Pass	Pass		

⁽¹⁾ 11-13

⁽²⁾ Asking partner to redouble - usually a one-suited runout

GordonC	KeithB	PiotrK	RossT
<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
--	--	Pass	1NT ⁽¹⁾
2♦ ⁽²⁾	Pass	2♥ ⁽³⁾	Pass
2♠	Pass	Pass	Pass ⁽⁴⁾

⁽¹⁾ 11-14

⁽²⁾ Spades plus another suit

⁽³⁾ Pass or correct

⁽⁴⁾ Yummy!

Gordon had no chance in 2♠, conceding -200. In 2♥ Daniel scampered home with eight tricks. Another 6 IMPs went Korbel's way when both pairs brought home partscores. Board 28 was a 1-IMP gain for Korbel when both pairs bought the contract for 1NT and North-South could make 8 tricks (+120 at one table versus -100 at the other). Korbel had jumped ahead 120-116.

The two tables produced completely different auctions on Board 30:

Segment 4 - Board 30

Dealer: East

Vulnerable: None

	♠ J		
	♥ J3		
	♦ AK742		
	♣ K10752		
♠ A108752 ♥ Q876 ♦ -- ♣ A84		♠ 9 ♥ A1092 ♦ Q10986 ♣ J63	
	♠ KQ643		
	♥ K54		
	♦ J53		
	♣ Q9		

DarrenW	NicholasG	DanielK	JudithG
<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
--	--	Pass	1NT ⁽¹⁾
2♦ ⁽²⁾	3NT ⁽³⁾	Pass	Pass ⁽⁴⁾
Pass			

⁽¹⁾ 11-13

⁽²⁾ Hearts or spades

⁽³⁾ Can't remember whether we consider their anchor suit to be hearts or spades ... no problem, no stopper in either!

⁽⁴⁾ I don't remember which suit you don't have stopped ... no problem, I've got you covered.

GordonC	KeithB	PiotrK	RossT
<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
--	--	Pass	Pass
1♠	2♦	Pass	2NT
Pass	Pass	Double	Pass
Pass	3♣ ⁽¹⁾	Pass	Pass ⁽²⁾
Double ⁽³⁾	Pass	Pass	3♦ ⁽⁴⁾
Double ⁽⁵⁾	Pass	Pass	Pass

⁽¹⁾ They flushed me out

⁽²⁾ No double no trouble

⁽³⁾ I hope I am not doubling a cold contract

⁽⁴⁾ I always preferred diamonds anyway

⁽⁵⁾ Phew – why give partner the pleasure of doubling!

In 3NT declarer won the ♠J and led a low diamond. Daniel won the ♦Q on which Darren pitched the ♥8 expecting that when his partner returned a spade, he would set up the suit. Daniel, hoping to tangle declarer's entries, chose to return a diamond. Judith won the ♦J and led the ♣Q. Darren

won with the ♣A and after some thought returned a low heart to Daniel's Ace. Daniel continued diamonds. Judith won the ♦K, travelled to hand with the ♥K and finessed clubs, losing to the Jack. Daniel could see a one-trick set by dummy-locking declarer and that's what he did. At the other table the auction took a completely different turn. Piotr and Gordon collected +300 against 3♦x, giving Gartaganis 6 IMPs.

On the next board, both sides missed a good 6♣. On the final board of the segment Nicholas stepped into the Twilight Zone:

Segment 4 - Board 32

Dealer: West

Vulnerable: E/W

	♠ 10652										
	♥ A102										
	♦ KJ109										
	♣ 103										
♠ AK984	<div style="background-color: #0056b3; color: white; padding: 10px; display: inline-block;"> <table style="border: none; text-align: center; width: 100%;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td>■</td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table> </div>		N		W	■	E		S		♠ QJ73
	N										
W	■	E									
	S										
♥ J		♥ 9765									
♦ A86		♦ Q2									
♣ KQ82		♣ J74									
	♠ --										
	♥ KQ843										
	♦ 7543										
	♣ A965										

DarrenW	NicholasG	DanielK	JudithG
West	North	East	South
1♠	Pass	2♠	Double
4♠	5♦ ⁽¹⁾	Pass	Pass
Double ⁽²⁾	Pass ⁽³⁾	Pass	Pass

⁽¹⁾ Did I really bid 5♦ - what in the world was I thinking!

⁽²⁾ You're not serious

⁽³⁾ OMG! How will I explain this to my team-mates? Good thing benching me is not an option!

Our partners played in 4♠ on the (lucky) lead of the ♦10. Their +620 minimized the potential damage of Nicholas' bid. In 5♦x, the lead was the ♠Q. Declarer tried to avoid going for an outlandish number; -500 was bad enough. The segment ended in favour of Gartaganis 37-25 (now leading 126-120).

The two 4-handed teams tackled 64 boards over the first day and had played essentially to a draw. Both teams were tired and departed for a well-deserved rest, each hoping a new day would bring more IMPs their way.

Day 2 - Segment 5

The fifth segment started with a 2-IMP pickup for Gartaganis when it could have been much more.

Segment 5 - Board 1

Dealer: North

Vulnerable: None

	♠ J763											
	♥ 643											
	♦ 73											
	♣ Q863											
♠ K105 ♥ K10987 ♦ AQ6 ♣ KJ	<div style="background-color: #0056b3; color: white; padding: 10px; display: inline-block;"> <table style="border: none; text-align: center; width: 100%;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td>■</td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table> </div>		N		W	■	E		S		♠ 984 ♥ A2 ♦ 542 ♣ A10752	
	N											
W	■	E										
	S											
	♠ AQ2											
	♥ QJ5											
	♦ KJ1098											
	♣ 94											

NicholasG	KeithB	JudithG	RossT
<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
--	Pass	Pass	1NT ⁽¹⁾
Double ⁽²⁾	Pass	Pass	2♦
Pass	Pass	Double ⁽³⁾	Pass
Pass	Pass		

⁽¹⁾ 11-14

⁽²⁾ Good hand

⁽³⁾ Penalty (at least it isn't game if it makes)

DarrenW	GordonC	DanielK	PiotrK
<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
--	Pass	Pass	1NT ⁽¹⁾
Double ⁽²⁾	Redouble ⁽³⁾	Pass	2♦
2♥	Pass	4♥	Pass
Pass	Pass		

⁽¹⁾ 11-13

⁽²⁾ Good hand

⁽³⁾ Clubs plus a major or diamonds plus spades

Against 2♦x West led a heart and the defence eventually scored eight tricks for +500. Against 4♥ Gordon started with the ♦7. Darren won this trick and ran the ♣J. After cashing the ♣K, he continued with the ♥K and a heart to the Ace. He tried to cash the ♣A and pitched a spade when Piotr ruffed with the ♥Q. South returned a diamond, won by declarer with the ♦Q. On the run of trumps Piotr lost focus and pitched one diamond too many. When declarer exited in diamonds, he was endplayed into conceding a trick to the ♠K, +420.

Board 3 was a 5-IMP gain for Korbel when a natural diamond opening by Darren allowed Daniel to preempt and push his opponents too high in spades. At the other table a nebulous diamond opening silenced any further competitive bidding. Korbel won an overtrick IMP on Board 4 and four more on this hand:

Segment 5 - Board 5

Dealer: North

Vulnerable: N/S

	♠ 953											
	♥ AJ97											
	♦ Q754											
	♣ 95											
♠ A62	<div style="background-color: #0056b3; color: white; padding: 10px; display: inline-block;"> <table style="border: 1px solid white; text-align: center; width: 40px; height: 40px;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td>■</td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table> </div>		N		W	■	E		S		♠ J107	
	N											
W	■	E										
	S											
♥ 108632		♥ KQ54										
♦ 108		♦ KJ2										
♣ J82		♣ Q73										
	♠ KQ84											
	♥ --											
	♦ A963											
	♣ AK1064											

NicholasG	KeithB	JudithG	RossT
<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
--	Pass	1NT ⁽¹⁾	Double ⁽²⁾
Pass ⁽³⁾	Pass	Redouble	Pass
2♥	Double	Pass	Pass
Pass			

⁽¹⁾ 11-13

⁽²⁾ Good hand

⁽³⁾ Asks partner to redouble - usually a one-suited runout

DarrenW	GordonC	DanielK	PiotrK
<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
--	Pass	Pass	1♣
Pass	1♥	Pass	1♠
Pass	Pass	Pass	

At our table Keith doubled us in 2♥. It was our bad luck to find a nine-card fit yet discover that the opponents had enough in hearts for a penalty double. Keith too felt unlucky when dummy's hearts were tabled. He started the ♣9 and ruffed the third round of the suit. Keith exited a spade to the Jack, Queen and Ace. A heart up to the King revealed the bad trump break. At this point declarer played a low spade from dummy and Ross erred by rising with the King. He returned a spade to dummy's ten. There was no way for declarer to avoid the loss of three red suit tricks. +300 versus -140 at the other table gave Korbel 4 IMPs and the lead had swung to the Eastern squad. Gartaganis picked up 2 IMPs when Piotr managed one fewer undertricks than his counterpart.

Then both sides found a good vulnerable save against a making game contract. Overtrick IMPs were exchanged on Boards 8 and 9. On Board 10, Gartaganis picked up 6 IMPs when Darren and Daniel were not unduly rewarded for a 23-point 3NT that needed a favourable lie in hearts plus defensive help. After an overtrick to Gartaganis, followed by two pushes the only major swing of the segment occurred.

Segment 5 - Board 14

Dealer: East

Vulnerable: None

	♠ 72											
	♥ KQJ8											
	♦ AQ86											
	♣ K72											
♠ K1053	<div style="background-color: #0056b3; color: white; padding: 10px; display: inline-block;"> <table style="border: none; text-align: center; width: 100%;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td>■</td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table> </div>		N		W	■	E		S		♠ AQ964	
	N											
W	■	E										
	S											
♥ 4		♥ 762										
♦ 10974		♦ K5										
♣ J1086		♣ A94										
	♠ J8											
	♥ A10953											
	♦ J32											
	♣ Q53											

NicholasG	KeithB	JudithG	RossT
West	North	East	South
--	--	1♠	Pass
4♠	Pass	Pass	Pass

DarrenW	GordonC	DanielK	PiotrK
West	North	East	South
--	--	1♠	Pass
3♠ ⁽¹⁾	Double	Pass	4♥
Pass	Pass	Pass	

⁽¹⁾ Weak

With the cards sitting favourably, Judith wrapped up +420 in 4♠. Those same favourable cards created four inescapable losers in 4♥. Gartaganis reeled in 10 IMPs.

On Board 15, not for the first time, both Gartaganis pairs bought the contract.

Segment 5 - Board 15

Dealer: South

Vulnerable: N/S

	♠ 94		
	♥ 9854		
	♦ 6		
	♣ AK10642		
♠ K87 ♥ QJ632 ♦ AQ7 ♣ 73		♠ J532 ♥ A7 ♦ K10532 ♣ J9	
	♠ AQ106		
	♥ K10		
	♦ J984		
	♣ Q85		

NicholasG	KeithB	JudithG	RossT
<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
--	--	--	1NT ⁽¹⁾
2♥	2NT ⁽²⁾	Double	Pass
Pass	3♣	Pass	Pass
3♦	Pass	Pass	Pass

⁽¹⁾ 11-14

⁽²⁾ Relay to 3♣

DarrenW	GordonC	DanielK	PiotrK
<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
--	--	--	1NT ⁽¹⁾
Pass	2♣	Pass	2♠
Pass	3♣ ⁽²⁾	Pass	3NT
Pass	Pass	Pass	

⁽¹⁾ 11-13

⁽²⁾ Invitational

At our table we bought the contract in 3♦. Nicholas reasoned that Judith held at most two hearts and three clubs so his 3♦ bid stood a decent chance to be successful. Nicholas was also well aware that it is difficult for weak NT-ers to accurately judge below-game defensive prospects in competitive auctions. He was unlikely to run into a double. After Keith cashed two clubs he switched to the ♠9. Ross erred by rising with the Ace and returning a low spade. Declarer accepted the generous offer of a free trick and won the ♠7 in hand. Still, with diamonds breaking badly the outcome was -50. At the other table Gordon and Piotr bid to a skinny 3NT – a contract that often comes home when the defence is unable to sort out their winners. Darren started the proceedings with the ♦Q. When that held, he switched to a low heart. Daniel won the ♥A and continued the suit. Piotr won in hand with the ♥K and ran clubs, to reach this end position:

	♠ 94		
	♥ 98		
	♦ --		
	♣ --		
♠ K7	<div style="background-color: #0056b3; color: white; padding: 10px; display: inline-block;"> N W ■ E S </div>	♠ J5	
♥ Q		♥ --	
♦ A		♦ K10	
♣ --		♣ --	
	♠ AQ		
	♥ --		
	♦ J9		
	♣ --		

Had declarer read the layout correctly he could have exited a heart and collected two spade tricks to make his contract. Instead of winning 11 IMPs, Gartaganis lost 6. Board 16 was a push in a routine 4♥ game. Gartaganis had won the segment 21-17 and led 147-137.

Day 2 - Segment 6

Korbel piled up the IMPs in the sixth segment of the finals. On Board 17 Nicholas was allowed to score his 7th trick in 1NT when the defence failed to cash all its winners, but Korbel won 3 IMPs when Gordon and Piotr were on different wavelengths about the applicability of transfers in a competitive situation, and played in a 3-3 fit down four.

Next up was a grand slam, handled nicely by Darren and Daniel.

Segment 6 - Board 18

Dealer: East

Vulnerable: N/S

	♠ 108		
	♥ J632		
	♦ J94		
	♣ AK32		
♠ K9752	<div style="background-color: #0056b3; color: white; padding: 10px; display: inline-block;"> N W ■ E S </div>	♠ AQJ64	
♥ AQ987		♥ K4	
♦ A72		♦ KQ85	
♣ --		♣ Q8	
	♠ 3		
	♥ 105		
	♦ 1063		
	♣ J1097654		

DarrenW	NicholasG	DanielK	JudithG
<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
--	--	1♠	Pass
2NT	Pass	3♥ ⁽¹⁾	Pass
3♠	Pass	4♣	Pass
4♦	Pass	4♥	Pass
5NT	Pass	6♦	Pass
7♠	Pass	Pass	Pass

⁽¹⁾ Balanced hand with extra values

GordonC	KeithB	PiotrK	RossT
<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
--	--	1♠	Pass
6♠	Pass	Pass	Pass

Gordon's leap to 6♠ neither divulged information to the opponents nor invited any further bidding from partner— a victory for brevity, but a failure on this hand. Korbel deservedly won 11 IMPs.

Daniel and Darren bid vulnerable games on the next two boards while Gordon and Piotr played in conservative partscores adding another 20 IMPs to Korbel's total (now leading 171-147). After a one-board respite for Gartaganis, Korbel was back at it, adding 4 IMPs for beating contracts at both tables and another overtrick IMP.

Board 25 involved a high-level bidding decision.

Segment 6 - Board 25

Dealer: North

Vulnerable: E/W

	♠ --	
	♥ J8754	
	♦ KQ743	
	♣ K107	
♠ AJ942		♠ Q108765
♥ A		♥ 1063
♦ A98		♦ 2
♣ 9832		♣ QJ5
	♠ K3	
	♥ KQ92	
	♦ J1065	
	♣ A64	

DarrenW	NicholasG	DanielK	JudithG
<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
--	Pass	Pass	1♥
1♠	2♠	4♠	Pass
Pass	5♥	5♠	Pass
Pass	Pass		

GordonC	KeithB	PiotrK	RossT
<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
--	Pass	Pass	1NT ⁽¹⁾
2♠	3♥	4♠	Pass
Pass	5♦	Pass	5♥
Double	Pass	Pass	Pass

⁽¹⁾ 11-14

At our table Daniel judged to bid 5♠ and was rewarded with an 8-IMP gain when the ♠K was onside and clubs broke favourably, while his team-mates bought the contract in 5♥x. Note that, with Darren on lead against 5♥, the defence might lose its diamond ruffs, thus turning a sacrifice into a making contract. At the other table Piotr led a diamond and was able to secure two ruffs for +300. Korbel up 184-147.

Gartaganis finally made some noise with an overtrick IMP, but then Korbel racked up another double-digit swing.

Segment 6 - Board 28

Dealer: West

Vulnerable: N/S

	♠ 87543		
	♥ Q97		
	♦ 106		
	♣ J53		
♠ KQ62		♠ A109	
♥ K862		♥ A1054	
♦ A82		♦ Q5	
♣ 84		♣ A762	
	♠ J		
	♥ J3		
	♦ KJ9743		
	♣ KQ109		

DarrenW	NicholasG	DanielK	JudithG
<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
1♦	Pass	1♥	Pass
2♥	Pass	2♠	Pass
3♥	Pass	4♥	Pass
Pass	Pass		

GordonC	KeithB	PiotrK	RossT
<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
1NT ⁽¹⁾	Pass	2♣	2♦
2♥	Pass	4♥	Pass
Pass	Pass		

⁽¹⁾ 11-14

System differences led to different declarers and generated a swing. At our table Judith led the ♠J and Daniel collected ten easy tricks for +420. Gordon faced the ♦10 lead and eventually discovered that South held six diamonds and at least three clubs. He took a safety play in trumps, leading ♥K and finessing the ♥10. Eleven of South's cards had been revealed. At the critical juncture of the hand he took a first round finesse against the ♠J (knowing North had spade length and suspecting that South would have a singleton) and went -200. Korbel had upped its lead to 47 IMPs and was threatening to make the match a runaway. It was the low point for our team.

Gartaganis finally clawed back some of the difference when Gordon and Piotr bid and made 7NT after a 1♦ opening (see below) by East (♦K inside!) while Darren and Daniel stopped in 6NT.

Segment 6 - Board 29 – Both Vulnerable

<u>West</u>	<u>East</u>
♠AK32	♠Q7
♥AJ5	♥KQ93
♦J3	♦AQ1054
♣AK73	♣QJ

On the next deal both players had to lead from ♠AJ5 ♥K8 ♦10964 ♣AJ93 after hearing 2♠ by RHO and 4♠ by LHO. Gordon led the ♣A which allowed the defence to collect all their tricks. Darren led the more passive ♦10 and that let declarer shed a club loser on dummy's top diamonds. Korbel still led 195-171, but there were no longer signs of cardiac arrest by Gartaganis.

The segment ended quietly. Both teams reached a 23 HCP 3NT that needed a helpful lead or sub-optimal defence in the mid-game -- +430 at both tables. Board 32 was a push at 5♣ making.

Korbel had won the segment 58-24 and was taking a useful 24-IMP lead into the final 32 boards.

Day 2 - Segment 7

On Board 1 Darren and Daniel were in the same strain, but one level lower than Piotr and Gordon. However, Judith found a trump lead to defeat the club partscore – no swing. Board 2 saw both North-South pairs reach an unmakeable 3NT. Piotr and Gordon had two chances to untangle the defence, but failed to do so. +13 IMPs to Korbel to up its lead to 37 (208-171).

In another twist of fortune, these were the last IMPs that Korbel would score in the segment. Gartaganis scored an overtrick IMP on Board 3 and another 2 IMPs when Piotr and Gordon played in a heart partscore +170 while their counterparts played in a diamond partscore +110.

Board 5 was another action hand:

Segment 7 - Board 5

Dealer: North

Vulnerable: N/S

♠ A10842 ♥ Q8652 ♦ 4 ♣ Q5		♠ 9 ♥ 10974 ♦ 875 ♣ KJ964	♠ KQJ76 ♥ KJ ♦ AJ93 ♣ 103
------------------------------------	--	------------------------------------	------------------------------------

DarrenW	NicholasG	DanielK	JudithG
<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
--	Pass	Pass	1NT ⁽¹⁾
Pass	2♥ ⁽²⁾	Pass	3♠
Pass	4♠	Pass	Pass
Pass			

⁽¹⁾ 14-16

⁽²⁾ Transfer to spades

GordonC	KeithB	PiotrK	RossT
<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
--	Pass	Pass	1♠
2♦	4♦ ⁽¹⁾	4NT ⁽²⁾	Double
5♣	Pass	Pass	5♦
Pass	5♠	Pass	Pass
Pass			

⁽¹⁾ Splinter in support of spades

⁽²⁾ Diamond raise with a club side suit (handy bid!)

The difference in system openings allowed Gordon to get into the auction with an overcall. Piotr's bold 4NT was very effective. 5♣ is an excellent sacrifice against 4♠, but the situation turned out even better when Ross pushed on to 5♠. 12 IMPs to Gartaganis. Good things continued to happen for the Alberta squad.

Segment 7 - Board 6

Dealer: East

Vulnerable: E/W

	♠ 765										
	♥ 32										
	♦ AQ1074										
	♣ 832										
♠ QJ82	<div style="background-color: #0056b3; color: white; padding: 10px; display: inline-block;"> <table style="border: none; text-align: center; width: 100%;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td>■</td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table> </div>		N		W	■	E		S		♠ A103
	N										
W	■	E									
	S										
♥ 9854		♥ KJ10									
♦ J93		♦ 852									
♣ 75		♣ KJ106									
	♠ K94										
	♥ AQ76										
	♦ K6										
	♣ AQ94										

DarrenW	NicholasG	DanielK	JudithG
West	North	East	South
--	--	1♣	1NT
Pass	3NT	Pass	Pass
Pass			

GordonC	KeithB	PiotrK	RossT
West	North	East	South
--	--	1NT ⁽¹⁾	Double
2♥ ⁽²⁾	3♦	Pass	3NT
Pass	Pass	Pass	

⁽¹⁾ 11-13

⁽²⁾ Hearts plus spades

At our table Darren led the ♠2 to the ♠A and returned the ♠10 which was ducked. Daniel shifted to the ♣J. Judith won with the ♣Q and exited a low club to the ♣8 and Daniel's ten. Daniel tried the ♥J, declarer winning the finesse. Judith had nine sure tricks and when diamonds broke, she was able to claim ten.

Strange things were afoot at the other table. Gordon initiated proceedings with the ♠Q and when it held, he continued with the ♠2 to Piotr's Ace. The ♥J was pushed through and Ross too won the finesse. He chose to exit a low heart to Piotr's ♥10. Piotr got out with his last spade and declarer's King won. Ross proceeded to cash the ♥A and then two rounds of diamonds ending in dummy. He continued by finessing the ♣Q and then tried to endplay Piotr with two more rounds of clubs. When the smoke cleared, the contract was down one - another 10 IMPs for Gartaganis.

Declarer's line could only be right if East held four diamonds to the Jack and was unable or incapable of unblocking in clubs.

Both teams bid to 5♦ on Board 7 down one, but Gordon and Piotr found the double for 3 IMPs.

Then on Board 9, Ross and Keith stopped in 3♦ despite their 25 HCP. That drifted off one while we bid to 3NT and grabbed nine tricks when Darren misguessed the opening lead. +400 was worth another 10 IMPs.

After three quiet boards which saw 2 IMPs in the Gartaganis column, another big gain came along.

Segment 7 - Board 13

Dealer: North

Vulnerable: Both

	♠ 107543										
	♥ Q109										
	♦ K2										
	♣ Q83										
♠ 62	<div style="background-color: #0056b3; color: white; padding: 10px; display: inline-block;"> <table style="border: none; text-align: center; width: 100%;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td>■</td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table> </div>		N		W	■	E		S		♠ QJ8
	N										
W	■	E									
	S										
♥ 64		♥ AK75									
♦ AQJ73		♦ 9864									
♣ A1065		♣ KJ									
	♠ AK9										
	♥ J832										
	♦ 105										
	♣ 9742										

DarrenW	NicholasG	DanielK	JudithG
<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
--	Pass	1♦	Pass
2♦ ⁽¹⁾	Pass	3♦ ⁽²⁾	Pass
3NT	Pass	Pass	Pass

⁽¹⁾ Game force

⁽²⁾ Balanced minimum

GordonC	KeithB	PiotrK	RossT
<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
--	Pass	1♦	Pass
2♦ ⁽¹⁾	Pass	2NT ⁽²⁾	Pass
3♣	Pass	3NT	Pass
Pass	Pass		

⁽¹⁾ 11+ HCP, forcing to 3♦

⁽²⁾ 14-16

At our table North was on lead with the (long but weak) spades and started with his fourth best. After some thought, South cleared spades and Darren had no choice but to finesse South for the ♦K, +50 for Gartaganis. East declared at the other table and Ross started with the ♠A (not their power lead). Keith discouraged and Ross switched to the ♥2 won by declarer's ♥K. When Piotr finessed the ♦Q, Keith won and returned the ♥10. Piotr ducked, won the heart continuation and guessed well to travel to dummy to finesse North for the ♣Q. A well-earned +430 and yet another 12 IMPs to Gartaganis.

The final big swing of the segment happened on the penultimate deal.

Segment 7 - Board 15

Dealer: South

Vulnerable: N/S

	♠ --		
	♥ AK8742		
	♦ J65		
	♣ AJ106		
♠ AKJ54	<div style="background-color: #0070C0; color: white; padding: 10px; display: inline-block; text-align: center;"> N W ■ E S </div>	♠ 10872	
♥ 65		♥ QJ9	
♦ 8732		♦ K94	
♣ Q2		♣ 975	
	♠ Q963		
	♥ 103		
	♦ AQ10		
	♣ K843		

DarrenW	NicholasG	DanielK	JudithG
<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
--	--	--	1NT ⁽¹⁾
2♠ ⁽²⁾	4♥	Pass	Pass
Pass			

⁽¹⁾ 11-13

⁽²⁾ Spades plus a minor

GordonC	KeithB	PiotrK	RossT
<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
--	--	--	Pass
1♠	2♥	2♠	Double ⁽¹⁾
Redouble!	3♣	Pass	Pass
Pass			

⁽¹⁾ Takeout

At our table, Judith's 1NT ensured we would reach game. Note Daniel's good decision to pass 4♥ - had he tried 4♠ we would have collected +1100. When Gordon chose an opportune time for a psychic redouble, both opponents were convinced that their *partner* had minimum values.

Conservative actions followed and resulted in four embarrassing overtricks in 3♣. Gartaganis had piled 10 more IMPs on to its total.

The final board of the segment was a normal 4♥ contract, bid and made at both tables. On the back of a 62-13 segment, Gartaganis had taken back the lead now ahead 233-208.

Day 2 - Segment 8

After 112 boards, it was still anyone's match heading into the last 16 boards. Both teams, playing four-handed, would have to draw on their already drained mental energy reserves for one more encounter.

On Board 17 both sides got to a NT partial, but Keith and Ross were precariously one level higher -- a push at +120. Next was one of those "how high should we go partner" questions.

Segment 8 - Board 18

Dealer: East

Vulnerable: N/S

	♠ K943		
	♥ --		
	♦ QJ10864		
	♣ 974		
♠ A2	<div style="background-color: #0056b3; color: white; padding: 10px; display: inline-block; text-align: center;"> N W ■ E S </div>	♠ 108	
♥ AK87653		♥ Q942	
♦ 3		♦ AK2	
♣ AKJ		♣ 10532	
	♠ QJ765		
	♥ J10		
	♦ 975		
	♣ Q86		

DarrenW	NicholasG	DanielK	JudithG
<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
--	--	Pass	Pass
2♣	Pass	2♦	Pass
2♥ ⁽¹⁾	Pass	2♠	Pass
3♥	Pass	4NT	Pass
5♣	Pass	5NT	Pass
6♣ ⁽²⁾	Pass	6♦	Pass
6♥	Pass	Pass	Pass
Pass			

⁽¹⁾ Kokish relay to 2♠

⁽²⁾ King of clubs

GordonC	KeithB	PiotrK	RossT
<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
--	--	Pass	Pass
1♣ ⁽¹⁾	2♦	2NT	Pass
3♥ ⁽²⁾	Pass	4♦	Pass
4♠ ⁽³⁾	Pass	5♣	Pass
5♦ ⁽⁴⁾	Pass	6♦ ⁽⁵⁾	Pass
7NT	Pass	Pass	Pass

(1) Polish club, F1, not necessarily strong

(2) 5+ hearts, 18+ HCP

(3) Kickback - Ace asking

(4) ♥Q asking bid

(5) ♥Q plus ♦K

At both tables the strong hand had all the relevant control-related information, plus knew that partner hadn't opened. It was essentially a flip of a coin. Factors in favour of bidding 7♥ included:

- partner may hold the ♣Q (but that would bring the hand total to 11 HCP)
- partner may have a doubleton club
- the slam is no worse than 50%

In a close match there are the additional considerations. Are your opponents aggressive bidders? Which way do you wish to swing?

Gordon thought that North might hold a 7-card diamond suit given the unfavourable vulnerability, but in any event he thought South probably held longer clubs than North, and would therefore be more likely to hold the ♣Q. Furthermore he was unable to construct an East hand that could benefit by playing in a trump contract so he avoided any remote chance of a diamond ruff by playing in 7NT. He also reasoned that there might be additional squeeze chances in 7NT, but fatigue made him overlook the fact that on a diamond lead all squeeze chances are eliminated. The BBO commentators discussed whether, in 7♥, declarer should finesse for the ♣Q or pitch the ♣J on the ♦K and then try to ruff it out. The ♣Q was in the slot and the grand slam came home. Gartaganis now led 244-208.

Korbel put together three successive gains to draw within 25. The biggest was an 8-IMP pickup when Judith made an injudicious takeout double after partner opened 1NT (11-13) and RHO bid 2♠ (spades plus a minor). Nicholas ended up in 3♣ (overcaller's second suit) down three vulnerable, but fortunately undoubled.

Board 22 combined bad luck for Daniel and Darren with good judgment by Gordon.

Segment 8 - Board 22

Dealer: East

Vulnerable: E/W

	♠ 2		
	♥ A7		
	♦ K10984		
	♣ 87654		
♠ J3 ♥ KQ543 ♦ QJ5 ♣ Q93		♠ KQ9 ♥ J109 ♦ A7632 ♣ A2	
	♠ A1087654		
	♥ 862		
	♦ --		
	♣ KJ10		

DarrenW	NicholasG	DanielK	JudithG
<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
--	--	1NT	2♠
3♥	Pass	4♥	Pass
Pass	Pass		

GordonC	KeithB	PiotrK	RossT
<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
--	--	1♦	1♠
Double	Pass	1NT ⁽¹⁾	2♠
3NT	Pass	Pass	Pass
Pass			

⁽¹⁾ 14-16

At our table Darren had plenty to force to game with 3♥ over Judith's 2♠ and Daniel reasonably enough (with ruffing values in clubs) raised to 4♥. They ran into an ambush. After ruffing the second round of spades (South had given suit preference for diamonds) North dutifully returned the ♦10. Poor Darren. He rose with the Ace and eventually went down four, -400. Gordon made an excellent decision to venture a negative double over the 1♠ overcall (rather than bidding his 5-card heart suit) because of all the soft values in his hand. When partner rebid 1NT he continued the good work by raising to 3NT.. That contract was impregnable, +600 and a big 14 IMPs for Gartaganis. Time was running out for Korbel, down 39 with 10 boards remaining.

Would you and your partner reach slam after a strong 1NT opening?

Segment 8 - Board 23 – Both Vulnerable

<u>West</u>	<u>East</u>
♠KQ	♠AJ106542
♥A654	♥--
♦K9	♦QJ64
♣A10843	♣Q9

Neither table managed to do so. At the critical juncture of the auction Darren knew his partner had long spades, a heart void and slam interest. With the ♥A "wasted", he had a difficult choice to make and chose the five level.

Korbel counterpunched on the next three boards to claw back 24 IMPs. Board 24 was a double partscore swing netting 7 IMPs. On Board 25 Darren and Daniel reached 4♠, +650, while Gordon was inexplicably conservative and failed to raise his partner to game. The 10-IMP gain made the score Gartaganis 258, Korbel 236 with seven boards remaining. Then ...

Segment 8 - Board 26

Dealer: East
Vulnerable: Both

	♠ --		
	♥ AKQ7		
	♦ AKQ9		
	♣ 98732		
♠ K10854		♠ AQ972	
♥ 109652		♥ 4	
♦ 108		♦ 764	
♣ 6		♣ KQJ10	
	♠ J63		
	♥ J83		
	♦ J532		
	♣ A54		

DarrenW	NicholasG	DanielK	JudithG
<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
--	--	1♠	Pass
4♠	Double ⁽¹⁾	Pass	5♦ ⁽²⁾
Pass	Pass	Pass	

⁽¹⁾ Takeout

⁽²⁾ Ugh! But as Edgar Kaplan once said, "if partner makes a takeout double, take it out"

GordonC	KeithB	PiotrK	RossT
<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
4♠	Double	1♠	Pass
Pass		Pass	Pass

Darren started with the ♣6. Declarer won the ♣A and with little thought, started to draw trumps. As she called for the third round, her partner said, "We've got plenty of time". "Too late", she admitted. 5♦ is cold on any lead. 4♠x went down one so Korbel picked up 7 IMPs instead of losing 9 IMPs. The Gartaganis lead was down to 15 IMPs with six boards remaining.

Board 27 was a 3♦ partscore at both tables on the lead of a low heart. When Ross declared, there had been a 1♥ overcall by LHO so he played the ♥Q holding ♥A108 in his hand opposite ♥Q76. Judith found the same play with no interference bidding. Misguessing would have led to down one. Board 28 was another partial, this time in 2♥ for a push at +170.

Korbel needed some swing hands and the next deal was just the ticket.

Segment 8 - Board 29

Dealer: North

Vulnerable: Both

	♠ KJ863		
	♥ J864		
	♦ KQ54		
	♣ --		
♠ Q105		♠ 9	
♥ K109		♥ AQ75	
♦ A32		♦ J1097	
♣ A873		♣ KQJ4	
	♠ A742		
	♥ 32		
	♦ 86		
	♣ 109652		

DarrenW	NicholasG	DanielK	JudithG
<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
--	1♠	Double	2♠ ⁽¹⁾
Double ⁽²⁾	Pass	3♣	Pass
3NT	Pass	4♥	Pass
5♣	Pass	Pass	Pass

⁽¹⁾ Weak raise

⁽²⁾ Takeout - usually denies four hearts

GordonC	KeithB	PiotrK	RossT
<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
--	1♠	Double	3♠ ⁽¹⁾
Double ⁽²⁾	Pass	4♣	Pass
Pass	Pass		

⁽¹⁾ Weak raise

⁽²⁾ Takeout - usually denies four hearts

Both Norths opened an aggressive 1♠. Against 5♣ Judith led the ♣2 and Daniel could have won the “mini-wish” trick by running it to the ♣4 in his hand. He naturally played the ♣7 from dummy. Judith continued the effective defence by leading trumps again when in with the ♠A. Daniel could not handle the dastardly break and ended up down three for -300. At the other table, Gordon picked a great time to be conservative and that, coupled with Ross's ♠A lead, allowed Piotr to manufacture nine winners for -100. 5 IMPs to Gartaganis left Korbel stuck 20.

On Board 30 Darren-Daniel and Gordon-Piotr stopped accurately in 3♠ making nine tricks. The next deal saw these same pairs reached a pushy 3NT, only to find that the suit that was to be the main source of tricks split badly. One less undertrick for Korbel translated to a 2-IMP gain. Gartaganis was ahead by 18 with just one deal to go.

Segment 8 - Board 32

Dealer: North

Vulnerable: None

	♠ --		
	♥ KQJ8764		
	♦ A95		
	♣ QJ2		
♠ AJ864		♠ KQ93	
♥ 10532		♥ A	
♦ J83		♦ KQ104	
♣ K		♣ 9653	
	♠ 10752		
	♥ 9		
	♦ 762		
	♣ A10874		

DarrenW	NicholasG	DanielK	JudithG
<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
--	1♥	Double	1♠
Double	3♥	3♠	Pass
4♥	Pass	4♠	Pass
Pass	Pass		

GordonC	KeithB	PiotrK	RossT
<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
--	1♥	Double	Pass
2♠	3♥	4♠	Pass
Pass	Pass		

The hand was anti-climactic. At our table Judith led the ♥9. Daniel won the ♥A to play a diamond to the Jack and Ace. He ruffed the ♥Q return high and ran the ♠9. When that held he played a club, eventually ending with eleven tricks for +650. At the other table Keith led the ♥K. Gordon won the ♥A, drew a round of trumps with the ♠K and realized, to his dismay, that ten tricks were not assured. He recovered nicely by playing a club to Ross' Ace. On the return of a low spade Gordon won the ♠9 and led the ♦K which held the trick. He continued with a diamond to the Jack, won by the ♦A. Had Keith ducked the second diamond, a defensive play that was difficult to make, the contract would have been defeated. Keith returned a high heart. That allowed Gordon to ruff high in the dummy, draw trumps and claim ten tricks, +620. Korbelt won 1 IMP, but Gartaganis had held on to win the final 263-246.

The CNTC trophy once again takes up residence in Alberta. This was the second win for Piotr Klimowicz (2007) and Judith Gartaganis (2001) and the third for Gordon Campbell (1984, 2001) and Nicholas Gartaganis (1982, 2001).

The members of the Korbelt team were classy opponents and equally deserving to win. In the end, with the lead having changed hands so many times, it was almost a random outcome determined by the length of the match.

Winning the CNTC is always a great experience, but nothing is sweeter than winning with your spouse and two of your very best friends.