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CONGRATULATIONS!



Team Allegra - Gold medal.

Congratulations to the Allegra team from Turin, Italy, who have won the European Champions Cup for a fifth consecutive year. The winners are Alejandro Bianchedi, Dennis Bilde, Norberto Bocchi, Massimiliano Di Franco, Giorgio Duboin and Agustin Madala. In the final they defeated the Dutch team, Onstein BC't by 114-41 IMPs over 32 boards. Onstein led for much of the first half of the final but Allegra took the lead on Board 16 and totally

dominated the second half of the match. Now the question is, can anyone prevent their winning the trophy yet again next year?

On behalf of the organisers, EBU and EBL, I hope that all our visitors have enjoyed the last few days, whether the bridge went well for you or not so well. And may I wish you all a safe journey home.

RESULTS

SEMIFINAL

Teams	c/o	1st	Tot	2nd	Total
ENG-EBU TEAM	0	26	26	16	42
NED-BC'T ONSTEIN	0	30	30	47	77

ITA-ANGELINI BRIDGE S.R.L.	0	27	27	20	47
ITA-G.S.ALLEGRA	0	36	36	38	74

NOR-HEIMDAL BK	0	40	40	41	81
TUR-CAYYOLU BRIDGE CLUB	0	39	39	16	55

ENG-ALLFREY	0	12	12	45	57
SWE-UPPSALABRIDGEN SKALMAN	0	46	46	9	55

FRA-SOULET	0	42	42	27	69
BUL-RADKOV	3	15	18	20	38

ROM-TOP BRIDGE BUCHAREST	0	21	21	29	50
DEN-PHARMASERVICE	0	50	50	27	77

FINAL

Teams	c/o	1st	Tot	2nd	Total
NED-BC'T ONSTEIN	0	38	38	0	38
ITA-G.S.ALLEGRA	0	46	46	68	114

ENG-EBU TEAM	0	30	30	63	93
ITA-ANGELINI BRIDGE S.R.L.	0	56	56	2	58

NOR-HEIMDAL BK	0	34	34	19	53
ENG-ALLFREY	0	41	41	41	82

SWE-UPPSALABRIDGEN SKALMAN	0	39	39	55	94
TUR-CAYYOLU BRIDGE CLUB	0	66	66	42	108

FRA-SOULET	0	52	52	15	67
DEN-PHARMASERVICE	0	9	9	30	39

ROM-TOP BRIDGE BUCHAREST	0	30	30	38	68
BUL-RADKOV	0	20	20	43	63



Team BC'T Onstein - Silver Medal



Team EBU - Bronze Medal

QUALIFICATION

Round 10



Allfrey (England) v Pharmaservice (Denmark)



With two rounds to play the Danish Pharmaservice team looked to have no hope of making the top four. England's Allfrey team, however, were lying fifth and two good matches could yet see them into the major semi-finals.

As it turned out, there were just two worthwhile swings in the match, both in favour of Allfrey.

Board 2. Dealer East. N/S Vul.

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

West	North	East	South
<i>Gold</i>	<i>Jepsen</i>	<i>Bell</i>	<i>Tofte</i>
–	–	Pass	Pass
2♠	3♣	Pass	3NT
All Pass			

West	North	East	South
<i>Graversen</i>	<i>Allfrey</i>	<i>Clemmensen</i>	<i>Robson</i>
–	–	Pass	Pass
1♠	2♣	Dble	Pass
2♦	3♣	Pass	3NT
Pass	Pass	Dble	All Pass

Both Wests opened in third seat, Pharmaservice's Hans Christian Graversen with 1♠, Allfrey's David Gold with 2♠. Over 2♠, Emil Jepsen had an obvious 3♣ overcall and, while not perhaps automatic, Lars Tofte a reasonable if mildly optimistic conversion to 3NT. Facing a weak two bid, Mike Bell had no temptation to double, though his club holding gave him hope for the defence.

Alexander Allfrey had a normal 2♣ overcall of the 1♠ opening and was also well worth his second bid. Knowing that he faced a good overcall, Andrew Robson took a stab at 3NT and Poul Clemmensen, who was facing a one-level opener, felt that his club holding and all-round values justified a penalty double. Robson could hardly have been confident of success, but he stood his ground and hoped for the best.

Gold led the five of diamonds to the ten, jack and king and

Tofte, with nowhere else to go for tricks, tried the club finesse. That lost and Bell returned the nine of diamonds to dummy's ace. Ace and another club cleared that suit and Bell returned a heart to dummy's ace – this would oblige declarer to cash the club winners and squeeze his own hand, possibly a necessary defence if Tofte had better diamonds. There were eight tricks now so the contract was down one for –100.

Facing a double, Graversen led the two of spades, Clemmensen winning the ace and continuing with his remaining spade. Robson won the king, Graversen following with the three, and took the club finesse. Clemmensen won the club and returned a diamond, imagining that his partner would have made a suit-preference signal at trick two. That was fatal to the defence. Robson won the ace of diamonds and cleared the clubs and had nine tricks for +750 and 13 IMPs to Allfrey. A heart switch when in with the king of clubs would have established an entry to the West hand for down three and 12 IMPs the other way.

Board 7. Dealer South. All Vul.

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

West	North	East	South
<i>Gold</i>	<i>Jepsen</i>	<i>Bell</i>	<i>Tofte</i>
–	–	–	Pass
1NT	Pass	2♥	Pass
2NT	Pass	3♥	Pass
3♠	All Pass		

West	North	East	South
<i>Graversen</i>	<i>Allfrey</i>	<i>Clemmensen</i>	<i>Robson</i>
–	–	–	Pass
1NT	2♣	Pass	3♣
All Pass			

The English defence to 1NT proved to be more effective than that of their opponents on this deal. Allfrey could overcall 2♣ to show clubs and another and Robson's raise

bought the contract. After a diamond lead, Allfrey lost only the two aces so came to 11 tricks for +150.

At the other table, Jepsen had no bid for the combination of five clubs and a four-card major so had to pass and Bell transferred to spades. When Gold broke the transfer, Bell retransferred and Gold became declarer in 3♠. Jepsen led the king of hearts and continued with the queen when Gold ducked. Gold won the second heart and drew trumps, ending in hand, then ruffed his last heart. Next

came ace and another club and it didn't matter who won this trick as North was going to win the next one with the ace of diamonds and be endplayed into giving a ruff and discard and the contract; +140 and 7 IMPs to Allfrey.

Allfrey also collected a few IMPs on the other deals to win by 24-0 IMPs, converting to 16.78-3.22 VPs. They lay fifth and in the final round of qualifying would meet Allegra, who were in fourth place, 5.72 VPs ahead of them in the rankings.

QUALIFICATION

Round 11



Allfrey (England) v Allegra (Italy)



While it was possible for other teams to drop out of the top four if they suffered a heavy enough defeat, or for others to move up into the top four with a very big win, it was very likely that one of these two teams would make it to the top four and the other would not. Forgetting about the other contenders, Allfrey needed to defeat Allegra by 9 IMPs to overtake them.

The set proved to be a very quiet one, though it began with a slam deal.

Board 11. Dealer South. None Vul.

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

West	North	East	South
Forrester	Bilde	Bakhshi	Duboin
—	—	—	INT
Pass	2♥	Pass	2♠
Pass	2NT	Pass	3♣
Pass	3♥	Pass	3NT
Pass	6♠	All Pass	

West	North	East	South
Madala	Gold	Bocchi	Bell
—	—	—	INT
Pass	2♥	Pass	2♠
Pass	2NT	Pass	3♣
Pass	3♦	Pass	3♥
Pass	3♠	Pass	3NT
Pass	5NT	Pass	6♣
All Pass			

I don't have the players' systems and am not going to guess what this all meant – beyond the fact that both Norths transferred to spades then relayed with 2NT. The key difference was that at the end Dennis Bilde just jumped to 6♠ while David Gold bid 5NT, pick a slam, and Mike Bell chose 6♣. There was nothing to the play of either contract and both declarers came to 12 tricks without breaking sweat. That meant +920 for Bell but +980 for Giorgio Duboin and 2 IMPs to Allegra.

The score had moved on to just 4-1 in favour of Allegra and it seemed that they were going to qualify for the top four without any real alarms, but then...

Board 18. Dealer East. N/S Vul.

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

West	North	East	South
Forrester	Bilde	Bakhshi	Duboin
—	—	1♦	1♠
Dble	3♠	4♦	Pass
4♠	Pass	5♣	Pass
5NT	Pass	7♦	All Pass

West	North	East	South
Madala	Gold	Bocchi	Bell
—	—	1♦	1♠
Dble	2♠	Dble	3♣
Dble	4♠	5♦	Pass
5♥	Pass	5♠	Pass
6♣	Pass	6♦	All Pass

Note the difference in approach of the two North players, with Bilde pre-empting to the limit while Gold contented himself with a single raise.

The pre-empt added momentum to an auction where, as it turned out, N/S did not want there to be too much momentum. David Bakhshi was not unduly inconvenienced by the 3♠ bid and quite happily repeated his diamonds at the four level. When Tony Forrester made a slam try then invited the grand slam, Bakhshi jumped to 7♦ and found that this was an excellent contract, dependent on either clubs or hearts behaving kindly. Having tested the club break, Bakhshi could rattle off the trumps and there was a show-up squeeze against South, who had to throw a heart to keep the fourth club – Bakhshi would therefore have also been successful had North held queen-doubleton heart as he would have known not to finesse at the end with South being marked with a club as his last card.

That was +1440 to Allfrey. Could Madala/Bocchi match them and also bid the grand?

With more space in which to operate, Bocchi chose to make a responsive double of 2♠ rather than rebid the diamonds. Bell attempted to sound stronger than was actually the case by making a game try of 3♣ and Gold, looking at a fourth trump, jumped to 4♠ over Madala's second double. Only now were diamonds rebid and the power of the East hand was not quite so clear as at the other table, where 4♦ had been bid facing only one double. There was an exchange of cuebids over 5♦ but neither player was quite confident enough to go on to Seven. Six Diamonds was worth +940 but that meant 11 IMPs to Allfrey, who led by 12-4 with two boards to play and needed one more IMP to snatch the fourth qualifying place. Would they rue playing the lower-scoring slam on the first board of the match?

Board 19 was a flat game and Board 20 was also a routine game, with the likely duplication of opening lead meaning another flat board. As it happened, the new partnership of Bell/Gold had a bidding mix-up in a relatively obscure sequence and ended up in a hopeless contract. Had they not done so, Allegra would have prevailed by just 0.06 VP.

SEMIFINAL

Round 1



Onstein BC't (Netherlands) v EBU (England)



With no carry-forwards to worry about the semi-finals were a straight 32-board shoot out played in two 16-board sessions.

The early deals were quiet affairs, but Onstein picked up a couple of swings to lead by 5-0 after four boards. Then came the first big swing of the match.

Board 5. Dealer North. N/S Vul.

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

West	North	East	South
v Lankveld	Saelensminde	v d Bos	Gillis
–	Pass	1♥	Pass
1♠	Pass	2♥	Pass
3♣	Pass	3♠	Pass
4♣	Pass	4♦	Pass
4♠	Pass	4NT	Pass
5♥	Pass	5♠	All Pass

West	North	East	South
Mahmood	Ritmeijer	Hanlon	Ticha
–	Pass	1♥	Pass
1♠	Pass	2♥	Pass
2NT	Pass	3♠	Pass
4♣	Pass	4♦	Pass
5♦	Pass	6♠	All Pass

Both Easts bid and rebid their hearts then admitted to some spade support and West started a slam hunt. When Joris van Lankveld made just one cuebid then signed off in 4♠, Berend van den Bos took control with 4NT but promptly signed off himself on discovering that there was a key card and the queen of spades missing. At the other table, Zia Mahmood was willing to go past game with the West cards and now Tom Hanlon, who had the missing heart control, bid the small slam.

With the losing heart going away on the queen of clubs, 6♠ has fair play – if there is no spade loser declarer has to negotiate diamonds for only one loser, either via two ruffs or via one ruff and a winning guess when he leads the singleton off the dummy.

However, slam is sub-par and justice was therefore done when there proved to be an unavoidable trump loser and both declarer were held to 11 tricks. That meant +450 for van Lankveld but –50 for Zia, and 11 IMPs to Onstein, increasing their lead to 16-0.

EBU picked up a few small swings to move closer so Onstein led by only 17-8 after ten boards.

Board 11. Dealer South. None Vul.

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



West	North	East	South
<i>v Lankveld</i>	<i>Saelensminde</i>	<i>v d Bos</i>	<i>Gillis</i>
–	–	–	Pass
Pass	1♠	2♥	3♥
Pass	4♠	All Pass	

West	North	East	South
<i>Mahmood</i>	<i>Ritmeijer</i>	<i>Hanlon</i>	<i>Ticha</i>
–	–	–	Pass
Pass	4♠	Dble	Pass
4NT	Dble	Pass	Pass
5♣	Dble	Pass	Pass
5♦	Pass	Pass	Dble
Pass	Pass	5♥	Dble
5NT	Dble	6♣	Dble
All Pass			

Erik Saelensminde opened 1♠ and van den Bos made a simple overcall. When Simon Gillis cuebid to show a constructive spade raise, van Lankveld had no reason to get involved when looking at a small singleton in his partner's suit. While van den Bos might have doubled 4♠ with his perfect take-out shape, he was too concerned that partner might pass, when his relatively low point count for the overcall then double combination might see the contract make. Van den Bos cashed two heart tricks then switched to a diamond and there was just a club to come; ten tricks for +420.

In the other room, Richard Ritmeijer opened at the four level and Hanlon had a clear double. Zia responded 4NT to the double, two places to play, and Ritmeijer doubled to show that he had a good hand for the 4♠ opening. Hanlon left the decision round to Zia who started with 5♣ but, when that got doubled, next tried his longer diamonds. Magdalena Ticha doubled that and now Hanlon seems to have taken Zia's sequence to suggest both red suits so converted to 5♥. Another double saw Zia run to 5NT to offer a choice of minors but Hanlon could not understand that his partner held longer diamonds than clubs, having first bid clubs, and chose clubs – doubled, of course – a frustrating outcome when they could have played in clubs a level lower.

Ritmeijer led the king of spades, ruffed in dummy. Zia set

about his side-suit, leading a diamond to the queen and ace. He won the heart return with the ace and led a club to the queen, ducked, followed by the jack of diamonds round to Ticha's king. She forced dummy with a spade and now Ritmeijer, who had discarded a heart on the second diamond, ruffed Zia's next play of the king of hearts. There was still the ace of trumps to lose so the contract was down three for –500 and 2 IMPs to Onstein; 19-8.

Board 12. Dealer West. N/S Vul.

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



West	North	East	South
<i>v Lankveld</i>	<i>Saelensminde</i>	<i>v d Bos</i>	<i>Gillis</i>
Pass	Pass	1♥	2♦
2♥	2♠	3♥	4♦
All Pass			

West	North	East	South
<i>Mahmood</i>	<i>Ritmeijer</i>	<i>Hanlon</i>	<i>Ticha</i>
Pass	Pass	3♥	3NT
All Pass			



Hanlon opened 3♥ in third seat and Ticha had little option but to overcall 3NT and hope for the best. Zia led the two of hearts to the jack and queen, ducked, and Hanlon continued with the king of hearts. Ticha cashed all the diamonds but there was no mistake from the defenders and eight tricks was her lot; down one for -100.

Van den Bos opened at the one level and Gillis made a simple overcall. When his opponents competed to 3♥, Gillis repeated his long suit at the four level and was left to play there. Van Lankveld led a trump so there was no pressure at all. Gillis drew the last trump then led a spade off the table and van den Bos went in with the ace and returned the king of hearts. That meant that Gillis could get rid of all of his losers on the spades and came to 12 tricks for +170 and 7 IMPs to EBU; 15-19.

mond lead should Ritmeijer become declarer, as seemed quite likely, while also allowing him to compete in clubs in a convenient manner at his next turn should that seem like a good idea. Hanlon now introduced his hearts then gave preference to diamonds and Ritmeijer doubled for penalties, ending the auction.

Ritmeijer led ace and another spade to Zia's king. He won the ace immediately when Zia tried to slip the jack of diamonds passed him and returned his singleton heart to the king, ace and ruff. Zia cashed the king of diamonds then led a club to the ace and a second round to jack, queen and king. Ritmeijer played the ten of diamonds but Zia simply won and played winning clubs, losing only to the nine of diamonds; nine tricks for +670 and 11 IMPs to EBU. We had a new leader at 26-19 in favour of EBU.

Board 13. Dealer North. All Vul.

♠ K 5 ♥ - ♦ K Q J 6 5 ♣ Q 10 6 5 3 2	<table style="margin: auto;"> <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>		N		W		E		S		♠ A J 9 6 3 ♥ 8 ♦ A 10 9 7 ♣ K 8 7	♠ Q 10 8 4 ♥ K Q 10 6 4 ♦ 3 2 ♣ A 9
	N											
W		E										
	S											
	♠ 7 2 ♥ A J 9 7 5 3 2 ♦ 8 4 ♣ J 4											

West	North	East	South
<i>v Lankveld</i>	<i>Saelensminde</i>	<i>v d Bos</i>	<i>Gillis</i>
-	1♠	2♥	Pass
2NT	All Pass		
West	North	East	South
<i>Mahmood</i>	<i>Ritmeijer</i>	<i>Hanlon</i>	<i>Ticha</i>
-	1♠	Pass	1NT
2♦	Pass	2♥	Pass
3♣	Pass	3♦	Pass
Pass	Dble	All Pass	

Saelensminde opened 1♠ and the 2♥ overcall must have surprised Gillis more than a little. He passed, hoping for a reopening double but suspecting in his heart that something would happen to prevent his defending 2♥ doubled. Sure enough, van Lankveld had sufficient values to try 2NT and nobody had anything to say over that.

Saelensminde led the six of spades and van Lankveld put in dummy's eight then played ace and another club to the jack, queen and king. Saelensminde tried the ten of diamonds now. Van Lankveld won the queen and cashed all the clubs then exited with the king of spades and came to two more tricks in the ending and nine in all for +150.

Ritmeijer too opened 1♠ but Hanlon did not overcall so Ticha got to respond 1NT and Zia overcalled. His choice of 2♦ rather than 2♣ reflected his preference for a dia-

Board 16. Dealer West. E/W Vul.

♠ 7 6 4 ♥ 8 ♦ J 6 4 3 2 ♣ J 5 4 3	<table style="margin: auto;"> <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>		N		W		E		S		♠ A Q J 5 2 ♥ A 9 7 6 4 ♦ K 9 7 ♣ -	♠ K 8 3 ♥ K J 5 3 ♦ - ♣ K 9 8 7 6 2
	N											
W		E										
	S											
	♠ 10 9 ♥ Q 10 2 ♦ A Q 10 8 5 ♣ A Q 10											

West	North	East	South
<i>v Lankveld</i>	<i>Saelensminde</i>	<i>v d Bos</i>	<i>Gillis</i>
Pass	1♠	Pass	2♦
Pass	2♥	Pass	2NT
Pass	3♦	Pass	3♠
Pass	4♣	Pass	4♦
Pass	4♥	Dble	Pass
Pass	Rdbl	Pass	5♣
Pass	6♦	All Pass	
West	North	East	South
<i>Mahmood</i>	<i>Ritmeijer</i>	<i>Hanlon</i>	<i>Ticha</i>
Pass	1♠	Pass	2♦
Pass	2♥	Pass	2NT
Pass	3♦	Pass	3NT
All Pass			

Ritmeijer opened 1♠, rebid 2♥ over the game-forcing 2♦ response, and showed his diamond support rather than the fifth heart at his next turn. With 6 HCP out of 14 facing at most a singleton, Ticha just signed off in 3NT.

Zia led the three of clubs to the king and ace. Ticha ran the ten of spades to the king and Hanlon returned the two of clubs. Ticha took her queen and cashed the ten of spades then led ace of diamonds and a diamond to the king to cash the spades. She had ten tricks for a solid +430.

The auction started in identical fashion in the other

room, but over 3♦ Gillis chose to show his spade tolerance and Saelensminde had sufficient extra playing potential to be worth a 4♣ cuebid. When he at his next turn cuebid the heart ace, van den Bos doubled and Gillis passed it back to his partner. It was unfortunate for N/S that they were in the middle of a cuebidding sequence with a different suit as trumps, because 4♥ redoubled looks to be a comfortable make with declarer knowing where the missing hearts are. Gillis took the redouble as confirming first-round control so made another cuebid of his own and now Saelensminde had heard enough and jumped to the diamond slam.

Van Lankveld led his singleton heart and, with the heart position marked from the bidding, Gillis rose with the ace

then went into a long study. A diamond to the ace got the bad news in that suit and Gillis next led the ten of spades and ran it, as he had to do. That lost to the king and van den Bos played king and another heart for his partner to ruff, van Lankveld throwing a spade on the king. He now returned a spade, cutting communications with the dummy. Gillis won in hand and led a diamond to the nine followed by the king of diamonds, then tried to cash the ace of spades for a club pitch but van Lankveld ruffed and, though he was now endplayed to lead into the club tenace, that was still down three for -150 and 11 IMPs to Onstein.

At set end, Onstein led by 30-26 IMPs. There was one more 16-board set to play.

SEMIFINAL

Round 1



Angelini (Italy) v Allegra (Italy)



The match is by far the most classic and fascinating of the Italian calendar of the last 20 years. The two teams have shared basically all available trophies in their country, and for good measure also most of the Champions Cups: out of the thirteen editions, ANGELINI has won six times, and ALLEGRA five (the first one and the last four).

The first board already spilled some blood, at the expense of the team from Turin (ALLEGRA, ANGELINI is from Rome), thanks to a creative lead made by Bocchi. The auction was the same at both tables:

West	North	East	South
Bilde	Tokay	Bocchi	Sementa
Versace	Bianchedi	Lauria	Madala
-	Pass	1♠	Dble
INT	All Pass		



and here are East's cards:

- ♠ A K 10 8 6
- ♥ Q 8 5
- ♦ J 6
- ♣ Q 5 2

Lauria simply led his lowest spade, while Norberto Bocchi selected the ♥Q. Not a big success:

Board 1. Dealer North. None Vulnerable.

♠ 9 7	♠ J 5 4 3	♠ A K 10 8 6									
♥ A 6 2	♥ K 9 7	♥ Q 8 5									
♦ 10 9 8 7 3	♦ A 5 2	♦ J 6									
♣ J 7 6	♣ 10 9 3	♣ Q 5 2									
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	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ Q 2										
	♥ J 10 4 3										
	♦ K Q 4										
	♣ A K 8 4										

The two overtricks put ANGELINI ahead 2-0, but ALLEGRA scored 1 IMP on the next board, once again thank to an overtrick in INT. A flat 4♥+1 followed, then the first double-digit swing of the match, due to a different bidding choice. Sitting East, you hold:

- ♠ Q 8 6 5 4
- ♥ K Q 10
- ♦ K 10
- ♣ Q 7 4

The auction starts with 1♥ from your partner and double on your right, you redouble, and South's 2♦ comes back to you. This is the problem faced by Lorenzo Lauria and Norberto Bocchi. Lauria bid 3♦, and respected his partner's

3NT, whereas Bocchi jumped to 4♥. Better the former:

Board 4. Dealer West. All Vulnerable.

♠ 7 3		♠ A K 10 9									
♥ A J 7 5 4		♥ 9 2									
♦ A Q 2		♦ J 5									
♣ J 5 2		♣ A K 10 9 3									
	<table border="1" style="background-color: #006400; color: 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>		N		W		E		S		♠ Q 8 6 5 4
	N										
W		E									
	S										
		♥ K Q 10									
		♦ K 10									
		♣ Q 7 4									
		♠ J 2									
		♥ 8 6 3									
		♦ 9 8 7 6 4 3									
		♣ 8 6									

Four Hearts failed by two tricks while 3NT was iron-proof, and ANGELINI got 13 IMPs to lead 15-1. The Romans added one immediately by playing game in a better strain (and had hearts been splitting 4-1 they would have won ten more), then they struck another big blow. This time in the spotlight were Bilde and Versace.

Suppose you know that your RHO has a minimum hand with six spades in a balanced hand, and you lead the ♥A against 4♠. Here is what you contemplate:

Board 6. Dealer East. E-W Vulnerable.

		♠ Q J 3									
		♥ J									
		♦ Q J 7 5 3									
		♣ K Q 10 7									
♠ 9 2											
♥ A 9 7 5 4 3 2											
♦ A 8											
♣ 6 4											
	<table border="1" style="background-color: #006400; color: 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>		N		W		E		S		
	N										
W		E									
	S										

Partner follows with the six, ostensibly giving count, and declarer play the 10. What next? Dennis Bilde switched to clubs, and Versace placed on the table his ♦A. Better the latter:

Board 6. Dealer East. E-W Vulnerable.

		♠ Q J 3									
		♥ J									
		♦ Q J 7 5 3									
		♣ K Q 10 7									
♠ 9 2		♠ K 10									
♥ A 9 7 5 4 3 2		♥ Q 8 6									
♦ A 8		♦ K 6 4									
♣ 6 4		♣ J 9 8 5 3									
	<table border="1" style="background-color: #006400; color: 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>		N		W		E		S		
	N										
W		E									
	S										
		♠ A 8 7 6 5 4									
		♥ K 10									
		♦ 10 9 2									
		♣ A 2									

The third round diamond ruff meant one down while Sementa claimed soon ten tricks. 10 IMPs put ANGELINI in front by 26-1.

ALLEGRA started its comeback thank to an interesting medium sized swing due to a better timing of the auction.

Board 7. Dealer South. All Vulnerable.

		♠ 6 4									
		♥ K Q J 9 4									
		♦ A 8 3 2									
		♣ 10 2									
♠ A K 10 9 8 3											
♥ 8 7 3 2											
♦ 4											
♣ J 8											
	<table border="1" style="background-color: #006400; color: 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>		N		W		E		S		♠ Q 2
	N										
W		E									
	S										
		♥ A 5									
		♦ 10 9 6									
		♣ A 9 7 6 5 4									
		♠ J 7 5									
		♥ 10 6									
		♦ K Q J 7 5									
		♣ K Q 3									

West	North	East	South
<i>Bilde</i>	<i>Tokay</i>	<i>Bocchi</i>	<i>Sementa</i>
—	—	—	1♦
1♠	2♣ <i>i</i>	Dble	Pass
2♠	3♦	3♠	All Pass
i = five hearts, 6-10			

West	North	East	South
<i>Versace</i>	<i>Bianchedi</i>	<i>Lauria</i>	<i>Madala</i>
—	—	—	Pass
Pass	1♥	Pass	2♦
2♠	Pass	Pass	Dble
Pass	3♦	All Pass	



There was basically nothing in the play, and both declarers got home, winning 6 IMPs. Two flat boards followed, then 1 IMP to ANGELINI, then ALLEGRA scored its first big swing.

Board 11. Dealer South. None Vul.

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

West	North	East	South
<i>Bilde</i>	<i>Tokay</i>	<i>Bocchi</i>	<i>Sementa</i>
-	-	-	Pass
Pass	1♠	Dble	2♠
3♦	4♠	5♦	All Pass

West	North	East	South
<i>Versace</i>	<i>Bianchedi</i>	<i>Lauria</i>	<i>Madala</i>
-	-	-	Pass
Pass	4♠	Double	Pass
4NT	Dble	Pass	5♠
Dble	All Pass		

Five Diamonds peacefully failed by one trick, but in 5♠ Lauria, after the ♥A lead and the three from his partner (reverse count) misread the position and switched to diamonds allowing Bianchedi to dispose his second heart on the ♦K and to score up his contract. 12 IMPs to ALLEGRA instead of 4 the other way.

Board 12 was flat in 3NT-1, Board 13 flat in 2NT just made, Board 14 flat (3NT-1 opposite to 4♣-1), then two consecutive gains for ALLEGRA to put them in front.

Board 15. Dealer South. N-S Vulnerable.

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

West	North	East	South
<i>Bilde</i>	<i>Tokay</i>	<i>Bocchi</i>	<i>Sementa</i>
-	-	-	1♣
Pass	1♥	1♠	Pass
Pass	Dble	Pass	2♦
Pass	2♥	Pass	3♥
Pass	4♥	All Pass	

West	North	East	South
<i>Versace</i>	<i>Bianchedi</i>	<i>Lauria</i>	<i>Madala</i>
-	-	-	1♣
Pass	1♦ i	1♠	Pass
Pass	Dble	Pass	2♦
Pass	2♥	All Pass	

i = hearts

Sementa chose a more aggressive action than his counterpart and paid the price. East simply played three rounds of spades and West, after over-ruffing, just cashed his ♣A. At the other table, after the identical start, Versace underled his ♣A and declarer had the rest for a total of 7 IMPs. Then something more significant:

Board 16. Dealer West. E/W Vul.

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



West	North	East	South
Bilde	Tokay	Bocchi	Sementa
Pass	1♠	Pass	2♦
Pass	2♥	Pass	2NTi
Pass	3♣ii	Pass	3♦iii
Pass	4♣iv	Pass	4♥v
Pass	4♠	All Pass	

i = relay, no spade fit

ii =minimum

iii =relay

iv =5530

v =sign off

West	North	East	South
Versace	Bianchedi	Lauria	Madala
Pass	1♠	Pass	2♣i
Pass	2♠ii	Pass	2NTiii
Pass	3♣iv	Pass	3♦v
Pass	3♥vi	Pass	3♠vii
Pass	4♣viii	Pass	4♦ix
Pass	4♥	All Pass	

i =GF

ii =four-plus hearts

iii =relay

iv=ten cards

v=relay, no spade fit

vi=5-5

vii =relay

viii =medium hand

ix = cue bid

Once Tokay had shown a minimum hand, you can understand why he then felt compelled to keep the auction alive, but Sementa simply passed. The play went badly for North: Bocchi led a club and Tokay put the ten. West's jack meant that he had to ruff and when he played a diamond toward dummy East ruffed and played another club. That was the crucial point: when declarer decided to play for the black kings to be reversed than they actually were, and put the ace up, he lost control. The ♠10 went to the king, and when Bocchi played the ♣K declarer's fate was sealed.

Although the trump suit split badly, Bianchedi didn't have problems in his contract, and ALLEGRA scored 12 IMPs to lead 36-27 at the half-way mark.



Closing Speech of EBL President Yves Aubry

Mr Keith McLean – Mayor of Milton Keynes
Mr Jeremy Dhondy - Chairman of the English Bridge Union

Dear Friends,

The 14th edition of the European Bridge Champions' Cup is nearly ending and this EBL competition is now one of the major events of the international calendar with the participation of all top European players. I want to thank the city of Milton Keynes for its great support.

All my congratulations to the English Bridge Union, its Chairman Jeremy Dhondy, and all the organising committee led by Heather Dhondy and Gordon Rainsford for the great job they have done to organise this 14th Champions' Cup in Milton Keynes.

I would like to thank all the staff members who have contributed to the perfect organisation of this competition.

Thank you to the organising committee: Heather Dhondy – Jeremy Dhondy – Maurizio Di Sacco – Josef Harsanyi – Dawn Mertens – Ian Payn – Gordon Rainsford

Thank you to the On-site Organisers: Sandra Claridge - Dawn Mertens

Thank you to the TDs, IT System & Scoring: Robin Barker – Ian Mitchell - Fotis Skoularikis

Thank you to the Daily Bulletin & Communications: Brian Senior – Simon Fellus

Thank you to the Duplication & caddies: Gill Pain – Adam Lugmayer – Richard Plummer – Fred Robinson – Dave Simmons – Philip Watson

Thank you to the Key-Board operators: Roger Bryant – Michael Clark – Catherine Curtis – Nick Doe – Roger Flood – Adrian Knight – Jane Jensen – David Kenward – Simon Stokes

Thank you also to all my colleagues of the EBL Executive Committee and the work done during the three days of meetings.

But I would above all thank you the players, thanks to you this competition became an EBL major competition. You have given throughout these three days, a nice image of bridge, a high level of play, a sporting spirit and friendships.

I am confident that the 14th Champions Cup will be for all of you, players, officers, journalists and guests, a great moment in bridge.

Again, thanks to you all and have a safe return home tomorrow.

SEMIFINAL

Round 2



Angelini (Italy) v Allegra (Italy)



In the all-Italian semi-final, holders Allegra led Angelini by 36-27 at the halfway point. Minor swings early in set two saw the score move on to 37-29 to Angelini after four boards.

he repeated the poor four-card suit, but Sementa went back to 5♦ where he was doubled by Bianchedi. Seeing a far bigger upside than downside if the contract was between ten and 11 tricks, Sementa redoubled, ending the auction.

Madala too led the singleton spade. Sementa won the ace and crossed to dummy with a heart, as we saw at the other table. However, when he next led a diamond, Bianchedi rose with the ace and returned a spade for his partner to ruff. Madala cashed the ace of clubs so the contract was one down for -200 and 8 IMPs to Allegra, who led by 45-29.

Board 21. Dealer North. N/S Vul.

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

West	North	East	South
<i>Tokay</i>	<i>Bianchedi</i>	<i>Sementa</i>	<i>Madala</i>
–	Pass	Pass	1♥
Dble	2♦	2♥	Pass
2♠	Pass	4♦	Pass
4♠	Pass	5♦	Pass
Pass	Dble	Rdbl	All Pass

West	North	East	South
<i>Duboin</i>	<i>Lauria</i>	<i>Bilde</i>	<i>Versace</i>
–	Pass	Pass	Pass
1♣	1♠	2♦	All Pass

Would you open the South hand in third seat and, if so, with 1♥ or 2♥? Personally, at this vulnerability I would probably pass, but if I did open it would be with a weak two bid, judging that the six-four shape compensated for the weak hearts. One Heart risks partner taking me seriously a little too often for my taste.

Anyway, Alfredo Versace, for Angelini, passed and passed again when Dennis Bilde bid 2♦ on his right. and that was that. Versace led his spade against 2♦ and Bilde won in hand, crossed to dummy with a heart and led a diamond up. When Lorenzo Lauria played low, he put up the king and returned a second round and a successful club guess at the end meant 11 tricks for +150.

Agustin Madala did open the South hand, and at the one level. Alejandro Bianchedi's 2♦ over the double showed a good raise to at least 2♥ and Antonio Sementa took the opportunity to cuebid. It looks as though Tokay may have taken his subsequent 4♦ bid as agreeing spades, given that

Board 22. Dealer East. E/W Vul.

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

West	North	East	South
<i>Tokay</i>	<i>Bianchedi</i>	<i>Sementa</i>	<i>Madala</i>
–	–	1♠	Pass
INT	2♦	2♠	Pass
Pass	Dble	All Pass	

West	North	East	South
<i>Duboin</i>	<i>Lauria</i>	<i>Bilde</i>	<i>Versace</i>
–	–	3♠	Pass
Pass	Dble	All Pass	

This time it was West's turn to have a decision regarding what to open a hand that didn't quite fit anywhere. Again, I ask, would you pass, or open 1♠, 2♠ or 3♠, bearing in mind the unfavourable vulnerability and weak suit for a pre-emptive bid?

Sementa opened at the one level then rebid his spades freely when he had the option of passing after the overcall. I'm sure we would all bid 2♠ here once we had chosen to open at the one level, but Sementa saw two passes round to Bianchedi who reopened with a double that was left in.

Madala led the nine of diamonds round to Sementa's bare ace. He led the two of spades, Madala winning the king and leading his second diamond to the seven, eight and ruff. Se-

menta played the jack of spades, ducked, and continued with the ten, which Madala won. He returned a low club to the king and Sementa ducked. The king of diamonds was ruffed and over-ruffed and Madala played the queen of clubs. Sementa won the ace, drew the last trump and conceded down two for -500.

Bilde opened with a full-blooded 3♠ and that went round to Lauria, who doubled, left in by Versace.

The lead was the nine of diamonds to the ten, jack and ace. Bilde played a spade towards the queen and Versace won the king to play a second diamond for the seven, eight and ruffed by declarer. Bilde played the six of hearts, Versace rising with the king and playing back the jack to the queen and ace. Lauria played the king of diamonds which Bilde ruffed with the jack. Versace discarded his small heart and now Bilde ducked a club. Lauria won the jack and returned the club five. Bilde won the ace and exited with his last club. He had to lose two trump tricks in the ending so was down three for -800 and 7 IMPs back to Angelini, trailing by 36-45.

spades. That passed off peacefully and now Sementa came to hand with a diamond to the ace and led a club towards the queen. Madala grabbed the king and cashed the ace of hearts before exiting with the queen of diamonds. Bianchedi could be endplayed to lead away from the jack of spades but that was still a trick short so -100.

Three No Trump was played from the west hand at the other table and again the lead was a low club. Duboin played low from the dummy so Versace won the king and returned a club to the ace. Duboin led a low spade off the table, the nine losing to the jack. That proved to be a very astute play, as Lauria had no way to know the position in the minor suits and his choice of the jack of clubs return was a disaster for the defence. Duboin won the queen and cashed the ten, throwing diamonds from the table, then led his remaining spade and had three spade tricks and two diamonds to come for +600 and 12 IMPs to Allegra, whose lead was up to 21 at 57-36.

Two boards later Allegra gained another 4 IMPs by going plus at both tables on defence to partscores; 61-36.

Board 23 Dealer South. All Vul.

	♠ J 7 5 2					
	♥ 3 2					
	♦ J 10 5 3					
	♣ J 5 4					
♠ 9 4	<table style="margin: auto; border: none;"> <tr><td style="padding: 0 5px;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 0 5px;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 0 5px;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠ K Q 10 6 3	
N						
W E						
S						
♥ Q J 8 7 4		♥ K 9				
♦ 8 7		♦ A K 4 2				
♣ Q 10 8 6		♣ A 7				
	♠ A 8					
	♥ A 10 6 5					
	♦ Q 9 6					
	♣ K 9 3 2					

West	North	East	South
<i>Tokay</i>	<i>Bianchedi</i>	<i>Sementa</i>	<i>Madala</i>
-	-	-	1♣
Pass	1♥	Dble	Pass
2♥	Pass	2NT	Pass
3NT	All Pass		

West	North	East	South
<i>Duboin</i>	<i>Lauria</i>	<i>Bilde</i>	<i>Versace</i>
-	-	-	1♣
Pass	Pass	Dble	Pass
1♥	Pass	1♠	Pass
1NT	Pass	3NT	All Pass

Bianchedi responded with a transfer to spades while Lauria passed, but the only difference this made was to vary which of their opponents declared the no trump game.

Madala led the three of clubs against Sementa who put in the ten so the jack forced his ace. He led the king of spades from hand, Madala winning the ace and trying a low heart, which ran round to declarer's king. Sementa led back the nine of hearts to dummy's queen then ran the nine of

Board 27. Dealer South. None Vul.

	♠ J 6 5					
	♥ Q 9 7 4 3 2					
	♦ Q 5 3					
	♣ Q					
♠ 10 3	<table style="margin: auto; border: none;"> <tr><td style="padding: 0 5px;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 0 5px;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 0 5px;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠ Q 4 2	
N						
W E						
S						
♥ A 6		♥ J 8				
♦ J 8 7		♦ A K 10 9 6 2				
♣ K J 9 8 6 5		♣ 4 2				
	♠ A K 9 8 7					
	♥ K 10 5					
	♦ 4					
	♣ A 10 7 3					



West	North	East	South
<i>Tokay</i>	<i>Bianchedi</i>	<i>Sementa</i>	<i>Madala</i>
–	–	–	1♠
2♣	2♠	3♦	Dble
4♦	All Pass		

West	North	East	South
<i>Duboin</i>	<i>Lauria</i>	<i>Bilde</i>	<i>Versace</i>
–	–	–	1♠
3♣	3♠	Pass	4♠
All Pass			

Duboin made a weak jump overcall and, when Lauria was willing to be bullied into supporting spades at the three level, Versace had enough extra to go on to the thin game.

Duboin attacked with the ace of hearts then switched to the king of clubs to pin dummy's bare queen but the opening lead had already destroyed any hopes the defence may have had of defeating the game. Versace won the club switch, cashed the ace of spades, on which Duboin dropped the ten. Versace switched his attention to hearts now, Duboin ruffing the third round and playing a club. Bilde had to come to a trump trick now but that was all; 10 tricks for +420.

Tokay made only a simple overcall which left room for Bianchedi to make a simple spade raise. When Sementa now introduced his diamond suit, Madala doubled as a game try and Tokay raised to 4♦. Bianchedi, of course, did not fancy game chances so passed and Madala accepted his partner's decision and also passed.

Madala cashed the ace of spades then accurately switched to the five of hearts. Sementa won the ace and played the ten of spades, covered all around. Madala led a trump now, ducked to Sementa's nine. Declarer played a club up and Madala took the ace and, seeing his partner's queen, gave him a club ruff. There was still a heart to come so the con-

tract was down two for –100 but 8 IMPs to Angelini, closing to 44-61 with five boards to play.

Angelini picked up two small swings over the next few deals and went into the final board down by 47-61.

Board 32. Dealer West. E/W Vul.

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

West	North	East	South
<i>Tokay</i>	<i>Bianchedi</i>	<i>Sementa</i>	<i>Madala</i>
1♦	Pass	1♠	2♣
Pass	4♣	Dble	Pass
4♠	Pass	6♦	All Pass

West	North	East	South
<i>Duboin</i>	<i>Lauria</i>	<i>Bilde</i>	<i>Versace</i>
1♦	Pass	INT	Pass
3♠	Pass	4♦	Pass
4♥	Pass	4♠	Pass
4NT	Pass	5♣	Pass
5♦	Pass	5♠	Pass
6♦	Pass	7♦	All Pass

This deal illustrates once again how much easier it is to bid constructively against silent opponents than when they are in your face and taking away valuable bidding space.

Duboin opened a natural 1♦ and the INT response was an artificial game force. I don't have their methods at my disposal so can only guess what was going on from this point but they clearly understood each other as the cold grand slam was reached for +2140.

At the other table, Sementa made a natural 1♠ response and Madala scraped up an overcall. Tokay passed rather than take the opportunity to show his extra diamond length and now Bianchedi's 4♣ pre-empt left E/W with a lot of work to do if they were to find their way to the grand slam. Sementa doubled for take-out then jumped to 6♦ over Tokay's 4♠ response. While it would still have been difficult, perhaps East should cuebid 5♣ rather than double 4♣ – or even jump to 6♣ to confirm the void. And how much easier might it have been had Tokay rebid 2♦ when he had the opportunity to do so – would it now have been clear that a 5♣ bid from East would be Exclusion Keycard?

Six Diamonds also made all 13 tricks but +1390 meant 13 IMPs to Allegra and they were in the final, having run out winners by 74-47.



FINAL

Round 1



Allegra (Italy) v Onstein BC't (Netherlands)



So the holders, Allegra of Italy, would face off against another previous winner in Onstein BC't of the Netherlands in the 32-board final, which would be played over two 16-board segments.

Board 1. Dealer North. None Vul.

♠ K Q 10 9 7 6 ♥ 5 ♦ 4 2 ♣ 6 5 3 2	<table border="1" style="background-color: #006400; color: white; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto;"> <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>		N		W		E		S		♠ A 8 ♥ 10 9 3 ♦ Q 7 5 ♣ K Q 10 8 4
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♠ J 5 3 ♥ K 8 6 2 ♦ A 10 9 6 3 ♣ 9	♠ 4 2 ♥ A Q J 7 4 ♦ K J 8 ♣ A J 7										

West	North	East	South
<i>Ticha</i>	<i>Bocchi</i>	<i>Ritmeijer</i>	<i>Bilde</i>
–	3♠	All Pass	

West	North	East	South
<i>Madala</i>	<i>v d Bos</i>	<i>Bianchedi</i>	<i>v Lankveld</i>
–	3♠	Pass	4♠
All Pass			

Both Norths opened 3♠ – six-four shape is usually worth an extra level of pre-empt compared to a flatter side-suit distribution if the main suit is not too weak – and Joris van Lankveld, for Onstein, raised to game, while Dennis Bilde, for Allegra, did not.

Alejandro Bianchedi led the king of clubs against 4♠. Berend van den Bos ducked, following with the five from hand, and Bianchedi read the position correctly and continued with the ten of clubs. Van den Bos put in the jack but the ruff doomed his contract immediately. Agustin Madala returned a trump so Bianchedi won the ace and gave him a second ruff and now Madala cashed the diamond ace for down two and –100.

Richard Ritmeijer too led the king of clubs. Playing a level lower, Norberto Bocchi won the ace immediately and led a spade to his nine and the appearance of the ace was good news. Ritmeijer was unable to read the reverse-count nine of clubs so tried a diamond instead and Bocchi got that right, calling for the jack. Magdalena Ticha won the ace and returned the ten to dummy's king. Bocchi led a spade, drew trumps and led a club up. He was allowed to make an over-trick so scored up +170 and that was worth 7 IMPs to Allegra.

Board 2. Dealer East. N/S Vul.

♠ A 10 ♥ A K J 10 7 4 ♦ 8 6 4 ♣ 10 5	<table border="1" style="background-color: #006400; color: white; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto;"> <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>		N		W		E		S		♠ K 4 ♥ 9 5 3 2 ♦ J 2 ♣ A K 9 3 2
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♠ Q J 8 7 6 5 ♥ Q ♦ K Q 7 5 3 ♣ 8	♠ 9 3 2 ♥ 8 6 ♦ A 10 9 ♣ Q J 7 6 4										

West	North	East	South
<i>Ticha</i>	<i>Bocchi</i>	<i>Ritmeijer</i>	<i>Bilde</i>
–	–	INT	Pass
4♣	4♥	Pass	4♠
Pass	Pass	5♥	Pass
Pass	Dble	All Pass	

West	North	East	South
<i>Madala</i>	<i>v d Bos</i>	<i>Bianchedi</i>	<i>v Lankveld</i>
–	–	1♣	Pass
1♦	2♣	2♥	2♠
3♠	4♠	Pass	Pass
Dble	All Pass		

Bianchedi opened 1♣ and Madala responded with a transfer to hearts. Van den Bos showed a spade/diamond two-suiter and Bianchedi showed his minimum with heart support. When van Lankveld could bid spades freely, van den Bos tried 4♠ as a two-way shot over Madala's cuebid. Bianchedi left the decision up to Madala but, having a lot of potential side-suit losers, Madala judged to take whatever money was available on defence and doubled.

Madala cashed a top heart then switched to the ten of clubs to Bianchedi's king. Bianchedi switched to the four of spades and the defence took two of those but that was all; down one for –200.

Ritmeijer opened INT and Ticha used her version of Texas to transfer to hearts at game level. That left room for Bocchi to cuebid to show spades and a minor and Bilde duly responded 4♠. When Ticha left that around to Ritmeijer, he had not yet shown any heart support and, with no idea which side could make what, took the push to 5♥, which Bocchi doubled with very little justification unless he thought Bilde's pass was forcing – I don't think it should be in this auction.

There was nothing to the play. Ritmeijer won the spade

lead, drew trumps and could ruff a diamond in hand to come to 11 painless tricks for +650 and 10 IMPs to Onstein, who led by 10-7 after two boards.

Board 3 was flat in 4♥-1 by E/W, but we didn't have to wait long for the next swing.

Board 4. Dealer West. All Vul.

<p>♠ J 8 5 ♥ A K 7 5 ♦ Q 9 ♣ 8 7 4 2</p>	<p>♠ A 7 4 ♥ J 9 3 ♦ J 6 5 3 ♣ 10 9 5</p>	<p>♠ 10 3 2 ♥ Q 10 4 2 ♦ A K 8 4 ♣ A J</p>
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<p>♠ K Q 9 6 ♥ 8 6 ♦ 10 7 2 ♣ K Q 6 3</p>		<p>♠ K 10 8 7 6 3 2 ♥ 3 ♦ Q 6 4 ♣ J 6</p>
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West	North	East	South
<i>Ticha</i>	<i>Bocchi</i>	<i>Ritmeijer</i>	<i>Bilde</i>
Pass	Pass	1♣	Pass
1♥	Pass	2♥	Dble
Rdbl	Pass	Pass	2♠
Pass	Pass	3♦	Pass
3♥	Pass	4♥	All Pass

West	North	East	South
<i>Madala</i>	<i>v d Bos</i>	<i>Bianchedi</i>	<i>v Lankveld</i>
Pass	Pass	1NT	Pass
2♣	Pass	2♥	Pass
4♥	All Pass		

Bianchedi/Madala quickly got to the heart game via a 1NT opening and Stayman response. Unfortunately for them, that put van Lankveld on lead and he made the aggressive choice of the king of spades. Van den Bos played an encouraging four so van Lankveld continued with a low spade to his partner's ace and back came a third round to the queen. With three tricks in the bank, van Lankveld went passive, switching to a trump. there was nowhere for Bianchedi to park his losing club so he was down one for -100.

Ritmeijer's 1♣ opening got the same contract played from the other side of the table after ticha's natural 1♥ response, and Bocchi kicked off with the ten of clubs. There was still work to be done, but Ticha won the ace of clubs and played four rounds of diamonds, discarding two spades from hand while Bilde discarded the queen of clubs. Bocchi won the fourth diamond and led the three of hearts to the eight and king. Ticha played a club to the jack and king and Bilde returned a spade to the ace. When Bocchi now played the nine of clubs, Ticha could ruff with the ten, draw trumps and claim, winning the last trick with the eight of clubs. That was +620 and 12 IMPs to Onstein, who led by 22-7.

Had Bilde thrown a spade instead of a club, then returned a trump when in with the club, it looks as though the con-

tract should have been a trick short as the defence could then have played a third round of trumps when declarer had to give up a spade to open her communications.

Board 5. Dealer North. N/S Vul.

<p>♠ - ♥ J 9 ♦ J 9 8 5 3 ♣ K 10 8 5 4 2</p>	<p>♠ Q J 4 ♥ K 10 8 6 5 4 ♦ A 2 ♣ 9 7</p>	<p>♠ K 10 8 7 6 3 2 ♥ 3 ♦ Q 6 4 ♣ J 6</p>
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<p>♠ A 9 5 ♥ A Q 7 2 ♦ K 10 7 ♣ A Q 3</p>		<p>♠ K 10 8 7 6 3 2 ♥ 3 ♦ Q 6 4 ♣ J 6</p>
---	--	---

West	North	East	South
<i>Ticha</i>	<i>Bocchi</i>	<i>Ritmeijer</i>	<i>Bilde</i>
-	2♥	2♠	3♠
Pass	3NT	Pass	4♣
pass	4♦	Pass	4NT
Pass	5♦	Pass	6♥
Dble	Pass	Pass	6NT
All Pass			

West	North	East	South
<i>Madala</i>	<i>v d Bos</i>	<i>Bianchedi</i>	<i>v Lankveld</i>
-	2♥	2♠	3♠
Pass	3NT	Pass	4♥
All Pass			

The lively set continued here. Van den Bos opened with a weak 2♥ and Bianchedi overcalled 2♠ on his long suit but weak hand. Van Lankveld cuebid then converted 3NT to 4♥ as a mild slam try but van den Bos wasn't interested.

Bianchedi led the jack of clubs to the queen and king and Madala returned the ten of clubs to dummy's ace. Van den Bos rattled off his winners but had to concede the last trick; +650.


Bocchi too opened a weak two, though his was a more constructive style so Bilde firstly cuebid 3♠ then moved on over 3NT with 4♣ rather than 4♥. That caught a cuebid from Bocchi and Bilde used RKCB then jumped to the heart slam. However, Ticha now doubled and Bilde realised that this was surely Lightner, looking for a spade ruff, so converted to 6NT and hoped for the best.

Played by South so that the club position is protected, 6NT must have chances, as the defence will have to be very careful indeed. Say that West leads a diamond, for example. That goes to the queen and king and West can eventually be endplayed to lead into the club ace-queen if declarer can read the position.

Alas, Bocchi was playing 6NT and Ritmeijer found the lead of the jack of clubs. Bocchi tried the queen more in hope than expectation, and it lost to the king. Ticha wasn't about

to risk that lead being a singleton. She switched to the nine of hearts and sat back to watch dummy's discards on the run of the hearts. At the end Bocchi had to concede a trick and was one down for -100; 13 IMPs to Onstein, whose lead was up to 35-7. Onstein gained 2 overtrick IMPs on Board 6, then came yet another major swing.

Board 7. Dealer South. All Vul.

♠ A 8 6 5 4 ♥ A 10 9 8 6 4 ♦ K 4 ♣ -			
♠ K 9 ♥ Q J 3 ♦ A J 9 2 ♣ Q J 7 4		♠ 10 3 ♥ 7 5 2 ♦ 10 8 6 5 ♣ 9 6 5 3	
West	North	East	South
<i>Ticha</i>	<i>Bocchi</i>	<i>Ritmeijer</i>	<i>Bilde</i>
-	-	-	1NT
Pass	2♣	Pass	2♠
Pass	6♠	All Pass	
West	North	East	South
<i>Madala</i>	<i>v d Bos</i>	<i>Bianchedi</i>	<i>v Lankveld</i>
-	-	-	1♣
Pass	1♥	Pass	1♠
Pass	2♦	Pass	2NT
Pass	3♠	Pass	3NT
Pass	5♣	Pass	5♦
Pass	5♠	All Pass	


Van Lankveld opened 1♣ and rebid 1♠ so, with the sky apparently being the limit, van den Bos went through fourth-suit to set up a spade force. Five Clubs was Exclusion Key-card and the 5♦ response was not what he wanted to see so he signed off in 5♠, knowing that there were two key cards missing.

Madala led the jack of hearts so van Lankveld could win the king and discard both of dummy's diamonds on the top clubs. Next he played a low spade to the ace followed by a second round to queen and king. He ruffed the club return and played ace then ruffed a heart and the fall of the queen meant a quick claim for +680.

Bilde opened an off-centre NT. Bocchi used Stayman then just blasted 6♠ to give his opponents a blind lead. On another day the slam might have had no play. As it was, a diamond lead would leave declarer needing trumps two-two with the king onside - as they were. Ticha duly led ace and another diamond but it was to no avail; +1430 and 13 IMPs to Allegra, who now trailed by 20-37.

A series of minor swings moved the score onto 37-29 in favour of Onstein, then came the final board of the set, and what a climax to a set that was.

Board 16. Dealer West. E/W Vul.

♠ J 4 2 ♥ A Q 10 8 4 ♦ A 3 ♣ A K 8			
♠ 9 5 3 ♥ 7 6 3 ♦ J 2 ♣ J 10 6 4 2		♠ 8 ♥ K J 9 2 ♦ Q 8 7 5 ♣ Q 9 7 3	
West	North	East	South
<i>Ticha</i>	<i>Bocchi</i>	<i>Ritmeijer</i>	<i>Bilde</i>
Pass	1♥	Pass	2♠
Pass	2NT	Pass	3♦
Pass	3♠	Pass	4♣
Pass	4♦	Pass	4NT
Pass	5♦	Pass	6♣
Pass	7♠	All Pass	
West	North	East	South
<i>Madala</i>	<i>v d Bos</i>	<i>Bianchedi</i>	<i>v Lankveld</i>
Pass	1♥	Pass	1♠
Pass	2♣	Pass	2♦
Pass	2NT	Pass	3♠
Pass	4♣	Pass	4NT
Pass	5♦	Pass	6♦
Pass	7♠	All Pass	

Van den Bos rebid 2♣, natural or any 16+, over 1♠. Two Diamonds showed game values facing the 16+ and 3♠ showed good spades. When van den Bos cuebid over 3♠, van Lankveld asked for key cards then for third-round diamond control and van den Bos duly bid the grand. Bilde started with a strong jump shift then showed his second suit. Bocchi agreed spades so Bilde cuebid, asked for key cards and made his own grand slam try, accepted by Bocchi.

Madala led the three of spades. Van Lankveld won in hand with the ten and cashed the ace of spades then led a heart to the ace and ruffed a heart, a diamond to the ace and a diamond back to his king then ruffed a diamond. He ruffed a heart now then cashed his trumps, pitching the last two hearts from the table. There was no squeeze so he had to concede the third round of clubs at trick 13 for one down and -50.

Ticha too led the three of spades to the eight and queen. Bilde cashed the ace of spades and led a heart to the ace then ruffed a heart. He continued with a diamond to the ace and ruffed another heart low, played king of diamonds then ruffed a diamond with the jack of spades. A third heart ruff established the queen and he now drew the missing trump, throwing dummy's club loser, and claimed the last three tricks with the ace and king of clubs and queen of hearts; +1510 and 17 IMPs to Allegra, who had taken the lead right at the end of the half by 46-38 IMPs.

FINAL

Round 2



Allegra (Italy) v Onstein BC't (Netherlands)



A massive swing on the last board of the first half had seen Allegra move into a 46-38 IMP lead in their final against the Dutch Onstein BC't squad. There were 16 boards to play in the 2015 European Champions Cup.

Board 17 was flat in 3NT+3 by N/S and Board 18 was also flat, though rather more interesting.

Board 18. Dealer East. N/S Vul.

♠ 10 8 4 ♥ 6 5 4 ♦ 10 7 4 ♣ 10 7 6 4	♠ A K 6 ♥ A K 8 7 2 ♦ 8 5 2 ♣ K 9	♠ Q J 7 5 3 2 ♥ Q 10 ♦ J 9 ♣ 8 5 2
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♠ 9 ♥ J 9 3 ♦ A K Q 6 3 ♣ A Q J 3	N W E S	♠ 9 ♥ J 9 3 ♦ A K Q 6 3 ♣ A Q J 3
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West	North	East	South
<i>Madala</i>	<i>v d Bos</i>	<i>Bocchi</i>	<i>v Lankveld</i>
–	–	Pass	1♦
Pass	1♥	1♠	Dble
Pass	2♠	Pass	3♣
Pass	3♥	Pass	3♠
Pass	3NT	Pass	4♠
Pass	5♣	Pass	5♦
Pass	5♥	Pass	6♥
All Pass			

West	North	East	South
<i>Verhees</i>	<i>Bilde</i>	<i>v Prooijen</i>	<i>Duboin</i>
–	–	2♠	Dble
4♠	Dble	Pass	4NT
Pass	6♥	All Pass	

Bocchi passed the East hand so the Dutch N/S pair had a virtually free run at the board. Van Lankveld made a support double and van den Bos cuebid to force to game. After that it was van Lankveld's turn to cuebid the opposition's suit a couple of times and, eventually, he was also the one to bid the small slam. The fall of the heart honours meant all 13 tricks for +1460.

Ricco van Prooijen opened with a weak two bid and Louk Verhees pre-empted two more levels on his 3-3-3-4 nought-count. It wasn't enough – Bilde made a responsive double then leaped to slam over Duboin's two-places to play 4NT. Again, 13 tricks were made for +1460 and a flat

board.

There was an overtrick IMP to Allegra on Board 19 to increase their lead to 47-38, then...

Board 20. Dealer West. All Vul.

♠ J 10 ♥ J 9 8 5 ♦ A K 10 3 ♣ J 5 2	♠ K 8 4 2 ♥ A K Q ♦ J 8 6 4 ♣ 9 7	♠ A Q 7 3 ♥ 10 7 6 4 ♦ Q 7 5 2 ♣ 3
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♠ 9 6 5 ♥ 3 2 ♦ 9 ♣ A K Q 10 8 6 4	N W E S	♠ A Q 7 3 ♥ 10 7 6 4 ♦ Q 7 5 2 ♣ 3
---	-------------------	---

West	North	East	South
<i>Madala</i>	<i>v d Bos</i>	<i>Bocchi</i>	<i>v Lankveld</i>
Pass	1♣	Pass	2♣
Pass	2♦	Pass	3♦
Pass	3♥	Pass	3♠
Pass	4♣	Pass	5♣
All Pass			

West	North	East	South
<i>Verhees</i>	<i>Bilde</i>	<i>v Prooijen</i>	<i>Duboin</i>
Pass	1♣	Pass	1♠
Pass	INT	Pass	3NT
All Pass			

Bilde opened a short 1♣ and rebid INT over Duboin's response which denied a major. Duboin simply raised to 3NT and, given a blind lead, van Prooijen picked a heart; ten tricks for +630. Only a diamond lead and spade switch defeats 3NT.

Van den Bos also opened a short club and his 2♦ rebid over the inverted raise said that he had no shortage (usually a weak no trump type). Three Diamonds showed the diamond shortage, 3♥ showed a concentration of strength, and 3♠ was because van Lankveld didn't want to bid 3NT with three low spades so wanted to give his partner another chance to do so. However, van den Bos's concern was with the diamond situation and he felt that he could not bid no trump so instead bid 4♣ and van Lankveld raised him to game.

Bocchi led a diamond, pretty well marked on the auction, and Madala won and switched to the jack of spades. Van den Bos covered but three rounds of the suit gave Bocchi

two tricks and Madala a ruff for down two and -200; 13 IMPs to Allegra, who led by 60-38.

Board 21. Dealer North. N/S Vul.

♠ A J 2 ♥ Q 10 7 ♦ A K 10 4 3 ♣ 8 3	<table style="margin: auto; border: 1px solid black; background-color: #336633; color: white; padding: 5px;"> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠ 9 8 7 ♥ J 9 8 6 5 3 ♦ - ♣ J 10 9 4	♠ Q 5 4 3 ♥ A ♦ 7 6 5 2 ♣ A K Q 7
N						
W E						
S						

West	North	East	South
<i>Madala</i>	<i>v d Bos</i>	<i>Bocchi</i>	<i>v Lankveld</i>
-	INT	Pass	3♥
Pass	4♦	Pass	4♥
Pass	4♠	Pass	4NT
Pass	5♦	Pass	5♥
Pass	6♦	All Pass	

West	North	East	South
<i>Verhees</i>	<i>Bilde</i>	<i>v Prooijen</i>	<i>Duboin</i>
-	INT	2♦	Pass
3♥	Pass	Pass	Dble
Pass	3NT	All Pass	

Bilde opened INT and van Prooijen overcalled to show a single-suited major – an aggressive action even at favourable vulnerability. Duboin had to pass for now but could double for take-out when Verhees's jump to 3♥, pass or correct, came back to him. Bilde bid 3NT, won the heart lead with the bare ace and led the seven of diamonds to the eight and ten, an avoidance play to keep the dangerous hand off lead. When the diamond position came to light Bilde crossed to dummy with a club to lead a spade to the jack and, when that too held, could cash out for nine tricks and +600.

Van den Bos also opened INT and the 3♥ response showed a 4-1-4-4 game force. Van den Bos showed his diamonds so van Lankveld cuebid then checked on key cards, followed by a grand slam try, asking for the queen of trumps. Van den Bos signed off in 6♦, against which Bocchi led the jack of clubs. Van den Bos won the ace and led a diamond to his ace, getting the bad news. He continued with a heart to the ace and second diamond, ducking Madala's jack. Madala returned the nine of diamonds so declarer put in the ten, ruffed a heart and led a spade to the jack. Meanwhile, forced to hang on to his club holding, Bocchi had come down to two hearts and one spade. van den Bos cashed the king of diamonds, Bocchi throwing a heart and dummy a spade, then cashed the ace of spades followed by the last diamond. Had East held the king of hearts with his

club stopper, he would now have been squeezed, but with West holding the two kings it was not to be; down one for -100 and another 12 IMPs to Allegra. The lead was up to an ominous 72-38 from Onstein's point of view.

There was a winning line at the end. Declarer must cash the last diamond without cashing the ace of spades. Seeing one more discard from East should help as he will have to throw his last spade or come down to a singleton heart. Cashing the three club winners now operates a positional squeeze against West and brings home the slam.

Madala should have returned a club when in with the jack of diamonds. If West returns a club to break up the squeeze instead of a diamond to prevent a ruff, that allows declarer to ruff his last heart in the dummy if he so wishes but he cannot shorten his own trump holding down to the same length as West and end up in dummy so there is no trump coup and he has to lose a diamond at the end.

Another 3 IMPs went the way of Allegra on Board 22 for 3♥+2 against 2♥ just making; 75-38. Board 23 was flat in 3♦-2 and Onstein was running out of time. there were still nine boards to go but the deficit was 37 and they needed to start to turn things around very soon.

Board 24. Dealer West. None Vul.

♠ 10 7 6 5 4 ♥ J 6 4 2 ♦ 10 7 ♣ j 8	<table style="margin: auto; border: 1px solid black; background-color: #336633; color: white; padding: 5px;"> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠ A K 9 2 ♥ A 7 ♦ A J 6 5 2 ♣ A 3	♠ Q 8 ♥ K Q 10 8 3 ♦ 9 4 3 ♣ Q 6 4
N						
W E						
S						

West	North	East	South
<i>Madala</i>	<i>v d Bos</i>	<i>Bocchi</i>	<i>v Lankveld</i>
Pass	Pass	2NT	Pass
4♥	Pass	4♠	Pass
5♣	Pass	6♣	All Pass

West	North	East	South
<i>Verhees</i>	<i>Bilde</i>	<i>v Prooijen</i>	<i>Duboin</i>
Pass	Pass	1♣	1♥
2♦	3♥	Pass	Pass
Dble	Pass	3NT	Pass
4♣	Pass	4♦	Pass
5♣	All Pass		

Van Prooijen opened a strong club and Verhees showed a club positive. The auction never really got to grips with the hand and they subsided in 5♣ without having explored it to the full. On the lead of the king of hearts, van Prooijen won the ace and played ace of clubs then a club to the ten, the safety play for one loser in the suit. That meant that he lost

a heart trick so just made his contract for +400.

Bocchi opened 2NT and Madala showed one minor with slam interest. When he next showed that the minor was clubs Bocchi raised to slam on the strength of his excellent controls. Here the lead was a spade so Bocchi too took the club safety play but here there was no heart to lose and he had 12 tricks for +920 and 11 IMPs to Allegra, who now led by an imposing 86-38 with only eight boards to play.

Had the opening lead against 6♣ been a heart, Bocchi would not have taken the safety play. Instead, he would have cashed the top clubs then played on diamonds. When the hand with the trump winner had to follow to three rounds of diamonds, a fourth diamond allows declarer to dispose of the heart loser and the slam is made.

Board 26. Dealer East. All Vul.

	♠ 4		
	♥ J 5 2		
	♦ A 9 5 2		
	♣ K 10 5 3 2		
♠ K 10 3		♠ A 8 6	
♥ AKQ987		♥ 4	
♦ 8 4 3		♦ J 10	
♣ J		♣ A Q 9 8 7 6 4	
	♠ Q J 9 7 5 2		
	♥ 10 6 3		
	♦ K Q 7 6		
	♣ -		

West	North	East	South
Madala	v d Bos	Bocchi	v Lankveld
-	-	1♣	1♠
2♦	Pass	3♣	Pass
3♥	Pass	3♠	Pass
3NT	All Pass		



West	North	East	South
Verhees	Bilde	v Prooijen	Duboin
-	-	Pass	Pass
4♥	All Pass		

When it rains, it pours. Verhees opened 4♥ in third seat, giving Bilde a blind lead. No problem – Bilde led the three of clubs and Duboin ruffed them after two rounds of diamonds, a second club ruffed with the ten promoted a trump trick for down one; -100.

Bocchi opened the East hand, as would most of us, I'm sure, and Madala transferred to hearts over the interference from van Lankveld. At his next turn he repeated the hearts, showing a strong hand by doing so, and admitted to a spade stopper when asked by Bocchi. Diamonds were four-four and hearts three-three, so there were nine tricks after van den Bos had led a low diamond; +600 and 12 more IMPs in the Onstein coffin.

Board 27. Dealer South. None Vul.

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

West	North	East	South
Madala	v d Bos	Bocchi	v Lankveld
-	-	-	2NT
Pass	3♣	Pass	3♦
Pass	3♥	Pass	3NT
Pass	5NT	Pass	6♣
All Pass			

West	North	East	South
Verhees	Bilde	v Prooijen	Duboin
-	-	-	2NT
Pass	3♣	Pass	3♦
Pass	3♥	Pass	3NT
Pass	4♣	Pass	4♠
Pass	6♣	All Pass	

Both Souths opened 2NT and North used Puppet Stayman. By slightly different routes, both pairs bid to the excellent slam for a flat board at +920 so that was one more possible swing deal done and dusted with no effect on the Italian lead. With only five boards to play and Allegra ahead by 60 IMPs, I think we can safely leave this match now. The final score was 114-41 in favour of Allegra, who were champions for the fifth consecutive year.

Congratulations to Alejandro Bianchedi, Dennis Bilde, Norberto Bocchi, Massimiliano De Franco, Giorgio Duboin and Agustin Madala.