

Rocket Ron by Derrick Browne

For over a decade until 1986, the Bols liquor company sponsored an annual award, the Bols Brilliancy Prize. In 1976, the Brilliancy Prize - the first ever awarded at a World Championship – went to Ron Klinger of Northbridge, Sydney, for the best played hand. Four years later, Klinger again won the prize, but this time as the journalist who had written up the best hand (the hand that year was played by Dick Cummings, also a Sydneysider).

Here is the deal which won Klinger the award for best-played hand, at the 1976 World Team Olympiad in Monte Carlo:

Dealer West, nil vul.

	NORTH	
	S 2	
	H 95	
	D AQT8632	
	C K85	
WEST		EAST
S 74		S AKJT863
H K843		H 7
D K5		D 74
C A7432		C J96
	SOUTH	
	S Q95	
	H AQJT62	
	D J9	
	C QT	

East opened 3S and South overcalled 4H. West led the S7, and East won and returned a trump to cut down on ruffs. Declarer put in the HQ and Klinger, West, ducked – his first necessary play.

Declarer ruffed a spade then played a club to the queen. Klinger won the CA then returned a club, taken by dummy's CK. A club was then ruffed to hand, and the ace and jack of hearts were led.

Klinger won with the HK and then led the only card to beat the contract, in this position:

	NORTH	
	S —	
	H —	
	D AQT86	
	C —	
WEST		EAST
S —		S AJT
H 8		H —
D K5		D 74
C 74		C —
	SOUTH	
	S Q	
	H T6	
	D J9	
	C —	

If West leads a club or a heart, declarer is able to draw the last trump before finessing in diamonds for the rest of the tricks. Even if West leads a low diamond, declarer would run that to the DJ, allowing the last trump to be drawn before running the diamonds.

The only card to beat the contract - and the one that was plucked out by Klinger's deft fingers - was the DK. This was taken of course by dummy's DA, but declarer's communications were wrecked. The only way back to hand was by a diamond to the jack; the last trump could then be drawn, but there was now no diamond left in the South hand to get back to dummy, and the contract was defeated by one trick.