

World Championships by Derrick Browne

The Bermuda Bowl World Bridge Championships have been won by the USA (Zia Mahmood, Bob Hamman, Eric Rodwell, Jeff Meckstroth, Nick Nickell, Ralph Katz), who defeated traditional rivals Italy.

Zia is considered one of the world greats, but he made some questionable decisions in the finals against Italy. On the deal below, the first five calls were the same at both tables: East opened 1H, South made the normal takeout double, West bid 3D which was alerted as showing a "mixed raise" of hearts, North ventured 4C, and East pushed on to 4H. What should South do over that?

Dealer East, all vul.

NORTH
S T82
H J
D 854
C AJT854

WEST EAST
S 943 S KJ5
H AQ86 H KT9742
D JT62 D A3
C 97 C K2

SOUTH
S AQ76
H 53
D KQ97
C Q63

| WEST | NORTHEAST | SOUTH | |
|---------------|---------------|----------------|------------|
| <i>Duboin</i> | <i>Hamman</i> | <i>Sementa</i> | <i>Zia</i> |
| | 1H | Dble | |
| 3D* | 4C | 4H | ? |

At the other table, South had no difficulty in passing over 4H and quietly taking it one down. Zia, however, bid 5C, an odd choice given that his takeout double had already suggested three or four clubs and heart shortage. East doubled and led a low spade. This gave away one trick – Hamman played low from dummy and won the S10 – but the contract was still one down, -200 and 7 IMPs to Italy.

In the women's world championship, the Venice Cup, China convincingly defeated USA, On the following deal, both Easts opened a 14-16 1NT (despite two doubletons). The American West stopped in 3C, while the Chinese West blasted 3NT. This looks hopeless but made, in a tale of signals in three suits:

NORTH
S J872
H 9863
D T85
C A3

WEST EAST
S K54 S AQT6
H T74 H Q2
D A D KQ643
C QT8542 C J7

SOUTH
S 93
H AKJ5
D J972
C K96

Against 3NT, South led a top heart. North would encourage with the HQ but with four small, she offered mild encouragement with the H6 (playing standard signals). Unable to read the layout, South switched to a diamond. North contributed the D5 and East false-carded with the D6, concealing the 4-3 of diamonds, to make South think North might have them and was playing the D5 as a high card to encourage.

Declarer cashed the SA then SK. Each opponent kindly gave a count signal, playing high-low to show an even number, so declarer knew to finesse to the S10. She then cashed the SQ.

South had discarded a club but now she fatally discarded a diamond, falling for declarer's trap in thinking North had encouraged diamonds. Declarer now made her 3NT, by a miracle – the sort of miracle you must create to win world championships.