

Semi final part 2 European Winter Games

February 2020

The first stanza ended with a flat board, after a series of fireworks, and a 9 imp fine served to RUSSIA for slow play. Then the Great Dealer was straight back into action. The trailing teams did not get to the best spot that was reached by their counterparts, but received a huge gift thanks to a weird distribution.

Board 21	♠ 10 9 8 7 3		
North Deals	♥ 8 4 2		
None Vul	♦ —		
	♣ A K 9 3 2		
♠ K 4		N	♠ Q 5
♥ J 9 6		W	♥ A K Q 10 7 3
♦ 9 2		E	♦ A K Q J 8
♣ J 10 8 6 5 4		S	♣ —
	♠ A J 6 2		
	♥ 5		
	♦ 10 7 6 5 4 3		
	♣ Q 7		

West	North	East	South	West	North	East	South
BRINK	BILDE	DRIJVER	DUBOIN	SEMENTA	MULTON	BOCCHI	ZIMMERMANN
	Pass	2 ♣	Pass		2 ♠	4 ♦!	4 ♠
2 ♦	Pass	2 ♥	Pass	Pass	Pass	4 NT	Pass
2 ♠	Pass	2 NT	Pass	5 ♥	All pass		
3 ♣	Dbl	3 ♦	Pass				
4 ♥	Pass	5 ♣	Pass				
5 ♠	Pass	6 ♥	Pass				
Pass	Dbl	All pass					

In theory, Multon-Zimmermann had the right tool: Multon's weak two suiter opening bid made it impossible for Bocchi-Sementa to get to the excellent slam, but Multon failed to extract the maximum benefit when, unlike Meckstroth in the other match, he did not double 5♥. Zimmermann knew there were at least five diamonds on his right, but because his partner had not doubled, did not find the killing lead. Perhaps there's something in the pair's agreements that I'm not aware of (eg that a double would have suggested defending).

Given free rein, Brink-Drijver had no problem reaching the top spot, and Bilde doubled. Duboin duly led a diamond but, strangely enough, North switched to a trump at trick two. Drijver could have tried to make his contract, winning and cashing diamonds to pitch dummy's spades, but he correctly reasoned that Bilde would not have played a heart without having the situation under control, so drew trumps and conceded down one, losing 11 IMPs in the process (two down would have produced 2 IMPs more).

In the other match Meckstroth's final double made it impossible for EW to get to slam: Zia found the killing diamond lead, and after a spade switch at trick two he gave his partner a second, fatal ruff. +100. Not enough: Helgemo-Lorenzini reached the top spot, after Lorenzini had bet on a spade control in his partner's hand, and Khokhlov doubled. The defence was merciless: the resulting 300 brought 5 IMPs to Russia. Another amazing deal came next.

West	North	East	South	West	North	East	South
KHIUPPENEN	MECKSTROTH	KHOLOMEEV	ZIA	HELGEMO	KHOKHLOV	LORENZINI	DUBININ
	Pass	1 ♥	Pass		Pass	2 ♣	Pass
1 NT ¹	2 ♥	2 ♠	4 ♠	2 ♦	Pass	2 ♥	Pass
Pass	Pass	4 NT	Pass	3 ♥	Pass	5 ♣	Pass
5 ♣	Dbl	5 ♦	Pass	5 ♦	Pass	6 ♥	Pass
5 ♥	Dbl	All pass		Pass	Dbl	All pass	

Board 22

East Deals

N-S Vul

♠ K Q J 8 5 4
♥ 5
♦ Q 9 7
♣ K 8 6

♠ 10 2
♥ Q 8 7 6
♦ A 6
♣ Q J 10 5 3

N
W E
S

♠ A 9 3
♥ A K 2
♦ K 5 3 2
♣ A 9 4

♠ 7 6
♥ J 10 9 4 3
♦ J 10 8 4
♣ 7 2

West	North	East	South	West	North	East	South
BRINK	BILDE	DRIJVER	DUBOIN	SEMENTA	MULTON	BOCCHI	ZIMMERMANN
		1 ♣	Pass			2 ♣	Pass
1 ♠	Pass	2 ♦	Pass	2 ♥	Pass	2 ♠	Pass
3 ♠	Pass	4 ♣	Pass	3 ♣	Dbl	3 ♥	Pass
4 ♦	Pass	4 NT	Pass	4 ♦	Pass	4 ♥	Pass
5 ♣	Pass	6 ♠	All pass	4 NT	Pass	5 ♦ ¹	Pass
				6 ♠	All pass		

West	North	East	South	West	North	East	South
KHIUPPENEN	MECKSTROTH	KHOLOMEEV	ZIA	HELGEMO	KHOKHLOV	LORENZINI	DUBININ
		2 ♦	Pass			1 ♦	Pass
3 ♦ ¹	Pass	3 ♠	Pass	1 ♠	Pass	2 NT	Pass
4 ♥	Pass	4 ♠	All pass	4 ♥ ¹	Pass	4 ♠	All pass

Both teams stopped in game in GUPTA vs RUSSIA, while both bid slam in the other match. Basically, where EW stopped, West was able to splinter in hearts, and East was not enthusiastic about it. In the other match, the two Wests showed slam interest and East cooperated. The four declarers scored the same tricks, so the hand was flat all around, but Bocchi had a tiny, realistic chance to bring his slam home, because he had a piece of information Brink lacked: he knew Multon held at least five clubs, because of the double of 3♣, and Zimmermann's ♣7 lead.

In the other room, Brink won the club lead in hand, cashed the ♠K, went to dummy with the ♥K, then played a diamond towards his queen. Had the ♦Q held, he would have gone to dummy with a spade, then ducked a diamond, so banking on either diamond splitting 3-3, or South holding the doubleton ace. No luck, down one.

Bocchi won the club lead in hand, cashed the ♠A, then the ♠K, came back to hand with the ♥K and cashed the ♥A pitching a club, before seeing South following suit. At that point, declarer could read two spades and at most two clubs in South, but he also knew something that is not shown on BBO, which I discovered when I interviewed him: South had taken more than two minutes before leading.

For that reason, Bocchi decided to credit him with a doubleton club and a likely very strong heart holding, such as QJ10xxx. In other words, he played for the following layout: North holding a 2335 with the ♦A. Accordingly, he continued by cashing two spade winners ending in hand, then ♥A and heart ruff, then the next to last spade, hoping to come to the following ending:

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

On the last trump, North would have been fatally squeezed: had he pitched a diamond, declarer would have played on diamonds ducking the second round; had he thrown a club instead, he would have cashed the ♣K before playing a diamond. However, North originally held four hearts, and when declarer played a diamond he was able to win it and cash the ♥Q.

Bocchi's line is brilliant, and comes from dynamics at the table that a spectator online cannot appreciate. Obviously, he could have played for the actual layout: had he done so, his team would have scored 14 IMPs. One more board, and another swing for both trailing teams, LAVAZZA overtaking the lead.

Board 23

South Deals

E-W Vul

♠ Q 4 2
♥ J 10 6
♦ Q J 6 4
♣ A K J

♠ J 9 6
♥ 9 3 2
♦ 10 9 7 2
♣ 9 7 3

N
W E
S

♠ A K 10 3
♥ K 7 5 4
♦ A 8 3
♣ Q 2

♠ 8 7 5
♥ A Q 8
♦ K 5
♣ 10 8 6 5 4

West	North	East	South	West	North	East	South
BRINK	BILDE	DRIJVER	DUBOIN	SEMENTA	MULTON	BOCCHI	ZIMMERMANN
-	-	-	Pass	-	-	-	1 NT!
Pass	1 NT	Double	All pass	Pass	2 NT	Dbl	3 ♣
				All pass			

West	North	East	South	West	North	East	South
KHIUPPENEN	MECKSTROTH	KHOLOMEEV	ZIA	HELGEMO	KHOKHLOV	LORENZINI	DUBININ
-	-	-	Pass	-	-	-	Pass
Pass	1 ♦	Dbl	Rdbl	Pass	1 ♣ ¹	Dbl	1 NT
Pass	Pass	1 ♥	1 NT	Pass	Pass	Dbl	Pass
All pass				2 ♦ All pass			

Drijver's double was passed all around - Brink, at adverse vulnerability, just hoped for limiting the damage, and right he proved to be - Bilde scored two overtricks after the ♠A lead and heart switch: he finessed dummy's queen (nine from Brink and ten from his hand), cashed the ♣A, went to dummy with the ♦K and finessed the ♠J. Drijver won and continued with the ♠K and another spade. +380. In the other room, Zimmermann took the odd looking decision to run from 2NTx and scored 130, 6 IMPs to LAVAZZA. However, with West on lead, had Sementa tabled a spade declarer should have guessed clubs to bring home his contract. +490 would have meant 3 IMPs to SWISS TEAM, but on a different lead he could have achieved +590 and 5 IMPs. Even better, had Sementa removed the double, NS would have been in the position to extract a huge penalty: no less than 1100 and 12 IMPs. Had he gone down one, instead, he would have lost 7 more IMPs (10 in total). All considered, passing looks like a fair bet.

In the other match, Zia, a true lover of penalty doubles, missed the chance to penalise Kholomeev's 1♥, which would have gone down 500 in top tricks, and probably 800, and scored +120 in his 1NT. In the other room, Lorenzini played with fire when he doubled 1NT, and had Dubinin found a redouble, or a reopening double over 2♦, East would have paid dearly for his indiscretion. Yet, Helgemo's contract drifted down four, good enough to give 7 IMPs to RUSSIA.

Board 24

West Deals

Both Vul

♠ Q 6
 ♥ A 8 4 3
 ♦ Q 10 8 7 4 2
 ♣ Q

♠ 8 5 4
 ♥ 10 9
 ♦ A J 5
 ♣ 10 9 8 5 4

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

♠ K J 9 3
 ♥ K J 5 2
 ♦ K 3
 ♣ K 6 2

West	North	East	South
BRINK	BILDE	DRIJVER	DUBOIN
2 ♦	Pass	Pass	Dbl
Pass	2 NT	All pass	

West	North	East	South
SEMENTA	MULTON	BOCCHI	ZIMMERMANN
Pass	Pass	Pass	1 ♣
1 ♦	Pass	1 NT	Pass
2 ♦	All pass		

West	North	East	South
KHIUPPENEN	MECKSTROTH	KHOLOMEEV	ZIA
Pass	Pass	1 ♣	Dbl
1 ♦ ¹	Pass	1 ♥ ²	Pass
2 ♣	Pass	2 ♦ ³	All pass

West	North	East	South
HELGEMO	KHOKHLOV	LORENZINI	DUBININ
Pass	Pass	1 ♣	Dbl
1 ♦	Pass	1 NT	Pass
2 ♦	All pass		

Three EW pairs rested in 2♦, where the unfavourable lay of the cards led to down one. The same layout allowed Bilde to make his 2NT and score 1 IMP. Then, something very interesting. You can call a clash of generations: Meckstroth and Bilde were both at the helm of 3NT, after the same lead, but only one was successful.

Board 25	♠ A 7 3		
North Deals	♥ A J 7 5		
N-S Vul	♦ 10 8		
	♣ K 8 7 6		
♠ Q J 6 5 4	N	♠ 8 2	
♥ 2	W E	♥ K 9 8 6 4 3	
♦ A 5 4	S	♦ J 9 6 2	
♣ Q J 10 3		♣ 2	
	♠ K 10 9		
	♥ Q 10		
	♦ K Q 7 3		
	♣ A 9 5 4		

West	North	East	South	West	North	East	South
BRINK	BILDE	DRIJVER	DUBOIN	SEMENTA	MULTON	BOCCHI	ZIMMERMANN
—	1 ♣	3 ♥	Dbl	—	1 ♣	3 ♥	3 ♠!
Pass	3 NT	Pass	Pass	Pass	3 NT	All pass	
Dbl	All pass						
West	North	East	South	West	North	East	South
KHIUPPENEN	MECKSTROTH	KHOLOMEEV	ZIA	HELGEMO	KHOKHLOV	LORENZINI	DUBININ
—	1 ♣	2 ♥	3 ♥	—	1 ♣ ¹	2 ♥	Dbl
Pass	3 NT	All pass		Pass	2 NT	Pass	3 NT
				All pass			

Lorenzini and Bocchi led a small diamond, and both declarers ducked in dummy, eventually coming to eleven and ten tricks respectively, without a single drop of sweat. However, Drijver - guided by his partner's enterprising double - and Kholomeev, by his own initiative, led the ♠8, putting declarer to a test. Both ducked in dummy, winning west's jack with the ace, then played a diamond to dummy's queen, ducked. Here the paths diverged. Meckstroth cashed the ♣A (already fatal) then the ♣K, then played another diamond up, covered in turn. West cashed his club winners, then played a heart. Kholomeev could have set the contract two tricks by playing a spade through, but afraid of finding North with the ♠Q cashed his ♦9, the setting trick.

Bilde, instead, went along the lines suggested by deep finesse itself: at trick three he ran the ♥Q, then won the spade switch in dummy (ducking leads to the same outcome), cashed the ♥10, entered his hand with the ♣K and cashed heart winners to come to:

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

In the above position, West had to find a discard, but had nothing convenient: a club would have turned the whole suit good; a spade would have allowed North to end-play him after two round of clubs, and a diamond - his choice at the table - allowed Bilde to duck a diamond. Unerringly, the Dane tabled the 10♦ and let it run. +750 and 3, very well deserved imps to LAVAZZA.

You might say that Brink's double had given away the layout, however, after the spade lead you know where the ♦A is, and whether West has three or four clubs does not change the principle. This time youth prevailed over experience and kudos to Bilde: not many can tell their grandchildren they have outplayed Jeff Meckstroth.

RUSSIA had scored 24 unanswered IMPs, and LAVAZZA had had a string of 21, but things were about to change.

Board 26

East Deals

E-W Vul

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

West	North	East	South	West	North	East	South
BRINK	BILDE	DRIJVER	DUBOIN	SEMENTA	MULTON	BOCCHI	ZIMMERMANN
—	—	Pass	Pass	—	—	Pass	Pass
1 ♠	Pass	1 NT	Pass	1 ♠	Pass	1 NT	Pass
2 ♣	Pass	2 ♠	Pass	3 ♠	All pass		
3 ♠	Pass	4 ♠	All pass				

West	North	East	South	West	North	East	South
KHIUPPENEN	MECKSTROTH	KHOLOMEEV	ZIA	HELGEMO	KHOKHLOV	LORENZINI	DUBININ
—	—	Pass	Pass	—	—	Pass	Pass
1 ♠	Pass	1 NT	Pass	1 ♠	Pass	1 NT	Pass
3 ♠	All pass			3 ♠	Pass	4 ♠	All pass

After exactly the same auction, Lorenzini raised his partner's 3♠, while Bocchi and Kholomeev did not. Brink had an easier task, since his partner had upgraded his hand. The experts declaring four spades both managed to find that North held the two red aces before touching trumps, so both knew North was very unlikely to hold the ♠A as well, and guessed trumps correctly. However, for Helgemo the inference was essential: at trick two he played a heart up after winning the club lead and his opponent grabbed the ♥A, and returned a club. Then in order to play trumps from dummy, Helgemo played a diamond. Khokhlov took the ace and cashed a club. Drijver was not pressed: Bocchi had led the ♦A before switching to a club, but then he ducked the heart switch. So the trump guess was only worth an overtrick imp. Who knows what would have happened had Khokhlov not hopped in with the ♦A or Bocchi grabbed his ♥A.

Both declarers in 3♠ scored nine tricks: SWISS TEAM won 11 IMPS overtaking the lead, and GUPTA 10.

The players did not have any time to catch their breath: another problematic deal was around the corner. Basically, it's all about the lead, but while two players got a hint, two did not.

You sit North holding ♠J874 ♥AJ76 ♦9 ♣J1083, and in the worst two cases you have seen 1♠ opening on your right, a limit raise on you left (three or four cards), and a jump to game from RHO. In the best cases, RHO has shown diamonds as well, before the same conclusion. What would you lead?

Without extra information, Khokhlov led the ♣J, as did the two players who knew about diamonds, while Meckstroth tabled the ♦9. Bad idea:

Board 27	♠ J 8 7 4	
South Deals	♥ A J 7 6	
Both Vul	♦ 9	
	♣ J 10 8 3	
♠ A 10 9 6 5	N	♠ Q 3 2
♥ 10 8	W E	♥ K 9 5 4
♦ A K J 10	S	♦ 7 2
♣ 9 5		♣ A Q 4 2
	♠ K	
	♥ Q 3 2	
	♦ Q 8 6 5 4 3	
	♣ K 7 6	

West	North	East	South
BRINK	BILDE	DRIJVER	DUBOIN
-	-	-	Pass
1 ♠	Pass	2 NT	Pass
3 ♦	Pass	4 ♠	All pass

West	North	East	South
SEMENTA	MULTON	BOCCHI	ZIMMERMANN
-	-	-	Pass
1 ♠	Pass	2 NT!	Pass
4 ♠	All pass		

West	North	East	South
KHIUPPENEN	MECKSTROTH	KHOLOMEEV	ZIA
-	-	-	Pass
1 ♠	Pass	2 NT ¹	Pass
4 ♠	All pass		

West	North	East	South
HELGEMO	KHOKHLOV	LORENZINI	DUBININ
-	-	-	Pass
1 ♠	Pass	1 NT	Pass
2 ♦	Pass	4 ♠	All pass

After the diamond lead Khiuppenen had no troubles at all: won in hand, banged down the ♠A, ran the 9♠, played a spade to dummy's queen and finessed in diamond before playing a heart towards dummy's king. +620.

The three other declarers either finessed dummy's ♣Q or (Drijver) put up the ace, It didn't matter: to get home they had to eventually finesse twice in diamonds and play spades successfully. Not the percentage play, and they all went down (two tricks Sementa and Helgemo, one trick Drijver). 13 IMPs to RUSSIA, and 3 IMPs to SWISS TEAM.

Board 28 ♠ K 9 3
 West Deals ♥ A K 9 8 3
 None Vul ♦ 6 3
 ♣ K 9 2

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

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

West	North	East	South
BRINK	BILDE	DRIJVER	DUBOIN
Pass	1 ♥	Pass	1 ♠
Pass	2 ♠	All pass	

West	North	East	South
SEMENTA	MULTON	BOCCHI	ZIMMERMANN
Pass	1 ♥	Pass	Pass
Dbl	Pass	1 NT	All pass

West	North	East	South	West	North	East	South
KHIUPPENEN	MECKSTROTH	KHOLOMEEV	ZIA	HELGEMO	KHOKHLOV	LORENZINI	DUBININ
Pass	1 ♥	Pass	Pass	Pass	1 ♥	Pass	Pass
1 NT	All pass			1 NT	All pass		

The string of swings continued: both LAVAZZA and RUSSIA scored 5 IMPs.

To start with, against the same 1NT North led differently at each table: a small heart from Khokhlov, and the ace of hearts from Meckstroth. The latter didn't cause Khiuppenen any trouble, who, after two more rounds of the suit, came to one heart, four diamonds, and a club and two spades in comfort: +120. Helgemo, instead, had to guess whether to duck the lead or put up dummy's queen, and when he decided for the former, the contract was doomed, though North had to be careful. Khokhlov cashed five hearts, then switched to a club, and Helgemo won that and rattled off his four diamond winners ending in dummy. In the four card ending, Khokhlov shed his ♣K to avoid the endplay, and that was that.

In the other match, against Bocchi's 1NT Zimmerman did well not to lead a heart, tabling a diamond instead. Declarer won it and finessed dummy's ♠Q. Multon won and switched to a club. +90. In the other room, Duboin, playing a system where one level opening bids are almost unlimited, was the only South to act over his partner's opening bid, and ended up in 2♠. The contract should have gone down, but not after the defenders' false start: Drijver led the ♠7 and East ducked it! LAVAZZA was just 1 IMP behind.

Board 29		♠ Q 2
North Deals		♥ A Q 9 5 2
E-W Vul		♦ Q J 9
		♣ A 8 3
♠ A 5 4 3	N	♠ K J 10 9 7
♥ 10 6 4	W E	♥ 8 7
♦ 6	S	♦ K 10 5 4 3
♣ Q J 10 5 2		♣ K
		♠ 8 6
		♥ K J 3
		♦ A 8 7 2
		♣ 9 7 6 4

West	North	East	South	West	North	East	South
BRINK	BILDE	DRIJVER	DUBOIN	SEMENTA	MULTON	BOCCHI	ZIMMERMANN
	1 ♥	1 ♠	2 ♥		1 ♥	1 ♠	2 ♥
3 ♥	Pass	3 ♠	All pass	2 NT	Pass	3 ♠	All pass

West	North	East	South	West	North	East	South
KHIUPPENEN	MECKSTROTH	KHOLOMEEV	ZIA	HELGEMO	KHOKHLOV	LORENZINI	DUBININ
	1 NT	2 ♠ ¹	Pass		1 ♥	1 ♠	2 ♦!
4 ♠	All pass			4 ♠	All pass		

1. Spades & a minor

A curious flat board followed: +140 apiece in one match, and -100 apiece in the other. Then another big swing, and again, with a kind of internal symmetry in the matches.

Board 30	♠ Q J 10		
East Deals	♥ A Q 9 8 7 6		
Both Vul	♦ 8 7		
	♣ A Q		
♠ A K 9 8 6	N	♠ 7 2	
♥ K 5 4	W	♥ J	
♦ A Q 6	E	♦ K 10 9 4	
♣ 4 2	S	♣ K J 10 9 6 5	
	♠ 5 4 3		
	♥ 10 3 2		
	♦ J 5 3 2		
	♣ 8 7 3		

West	North	East	South
BRINK	BILDE	DRIJVER	DUBOIN
-	-	3 ♣	Pass
3 ♦	3 ♥	Pass	Pass
Dbl	All pass		

West	North	East	South
SEMENTA	MULTON	BOCCHI	ZIMMERMANN
-	-	3 ♣	Pass
Pass	3 NT	Pass	Pass
Dbl	4 ♥	Pass	Pass
Dbl	All pass		

West	North	East	South
KHIUPPENEN	MECKSTROTH	KHOLOMEEV	ZIA
-	-	Pass	Pass
1 NT	2 ♥	3 ♣	All pass

West	North	East	South
HELGEMO	KHOKHLOV	LORENZINI	DUBININ
-	-	3 ♣	Pass
3 ♦	3 ♥	4 ♥	Pass
5 ♣	All pass		

I have to admit that for me three of the four auctions are odd. In one match, though Bocchi-Sementa are used to rather aggressive preempts, Bocchi was first in hand at game all, so Sementa's pass looks conservative, unless he had hoped for what followed. Nobody can blame Multon for bidding 3NT - the expert choice - but he soon regretted it. Though he wisely converted it to 4♥ when doubled - after a pointed suit lead and a club through, declarer can be held to two tricks in no trumps - the price was still 1100. In the other room you see what, to my eyes, is the only plain bidding sequence. Brink kind of relayed over 3♣, Bilde overcalled, and got doubled. 800 and 7 IMPs to LAVAZZA, who recaptured the lead.

In the other match, after the same start by Brink-Drijver, Lorenzini cue-bid four hearts, and now it's difficult to understand how Helgemo might sign-off (yet, had he bid four spades, Lorenzini would have certainly bid 5♣). To end with, Kholomeev was the only one who passed the East's cards, and took a very pessimistic view when he eventually merely competed over 2♥. GUPTA won 10 IMPs. The next board might teach a lesson: if you're used to opening at the one level on a nine point count hand, you should be able to pull on the brake when responder holds an eleven count and no fit at all.

Board 31 ♠ Q
 South Deals ♥ A Q 10 6 4
 None Vul ♦ 2
 ♣ K J 8 6 5 2

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

♠ K J 10 6
 ♥ 5
 ♦ K Q 10 7 6 5 3
 ♣ 10

West	North	East	South	West	North	East	South
BRINK	BILDE	DRIJVER	DUBOIN	SEMENTA	MULTON	BOCCHI	ZIMMERMANN
—	—	—	1♦	—	—	—	1♦
Pass	2♣	Pass	2♠	Pass	1♥	1♠	2♦
Pass	2 NT	Pass	3♦	2♠	3♣	Pass	3♦
Pass	3 NT	All pass		All pass			

West	North	East	South	West	North	East	South
KHIUPPENEN	MECKSTROTH	KHOLOMEEV	ZIA	HELGEMO	KHOKHLOV	LORENZINI	DUBININ
—	—	—	1♦	—	—	—	1♦
Pass	1♥	Pass	1♠!	Pass	1♥	Pass	1♠
Pass	3♣!	Pass	3♦	Pass	2♦ ¹	Pass	3♦
Pass	3 NT	All pass		Pass	3 NT	All pass	

Everyone opened, but only Multon passed 3♦, the best spot. 5 IMPs to Swiss Team, starting a string of swing in their favour.

Board 32 ♠ 9 7 5 3
 West Deals ♥ 6
 N-S Vul ♦ Q 10
 ♣ K Q J 8 5 3

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

♠ 10
 ♥ A K 10 9 5 4
 ♦ 9 7 4
 ♣ 7 6 2

West	North	East	South	West	North	East	South
BRINK	BILDE	DRIJVER	DUBOIN	SEMENTA	MULTON	BOCCHI	ZIMMERMANN
2 NT	Pass	3 ♣	Pass	2 NT	Pass	3 ♣	Pass
3 ♦	Pass	3 ♥	Dbl	3 ♦!	Pass	3 ♥! ¹	Dbl
Pass	Pass	3 ♠	Pass	3 ♠	Pass	4 ♠	All pass
4 ♠	All pass						

West	North	East	South	West	North	East	South
KHIUPPENEN	MECKSTROTH	KHOLOMEEV	ZIA	HELGEMO	KHOKHLOV	LORENZINI	DUBININ
2 NT	Pass	3 ♣	Pass	2 NT	Pass	3 ♣	Pass
3 ♦	Pass	3 ♥	Dbl	3 NT	Pass	4 ♦	Pass
3 NT	All pass			4 ♠	All pass		

Three Wests ended up in the normal, though poor game in spades, and only Sementa found a way to go down. Khiuppenen, instead, after RHO's double on 3♥ decided to hide his spades and bid 3NT. Doesn't really matter, in principle: provided the defenders find the club switch in time, bot contracts rely on the doubleton ♦Q. However, playing in spades has a disadvantage, as Sementa proved: you can suffer a ruff.

Khiuppenen got the club lead, and eventually ran spades and banged down ♦AK: bingo: +630. The same basically (with only irrelevant variations here and there) happened where Helgemo and Brink were at the helm. After a heart lead and a club switch they won, cashed two trumps ending in dummy, then ♦AK before pulling the last trumps. But Sementa found a way to hang himself. After the same start (he ducked the first club), he cashed just one trump, then the ♦A, before playing a second round of trumps ending in dummy. He was in the position to come to the same ten tricks as everybody else, but he committed an indiscretion: before playing a second round of diamonds played a heart instead, and when Zimmerman won it, Multon was able to shed his ♦Q. A diamond ruff followed, the fatal blow. 10 IMPs to Swiss Team.

The next deal caused two huge swings. Before telling the whole story, I offer you a lead decision. You hold ♠K865 ♥KQ5 ♦Q9642 ♣5. You are in Bocchi's and Lorenzini's shoes, and here is what you have seen:

West	North	East	South	West	North	East	South
SEMENTA	MULTON	BOCCHI	ZIMMERMANN	HELGEMO	KHOKHLOV	LORENZINI	DUBININ
—	1 ♣	1 ♦	Dbl!	—	1 ♣ ¹	1 ♦	Dbl ²
2 ♦	3 NT	All pass		2 ♦	3 NT	All pass	

In both cases, North showed a strong hand with solid clubs. What's your choice?

Board 33 ♠ A 10 4

North Deals ♥ 7 3

Both Vul ♦ K 10

♣ A K Q J 8 6

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

West	North	East	South
BRINK	BILDE	DRIJVER	DUBOIN
-	1 ♣	Dbl	Pass
1 ♥	1 NT	Pass	2 ♣

All pass

West	North	East	South
KHIUPPENEN	MECKSTROTH	KHOLOMEEV	ZIA
-	1 ♣	Pass	1 ♥
Pass	2 NT	Pass	3 NT

All pass

West	North	East	South
SEMENTA	MULTON	BOCCHI	ZIMMERMANN
-	1 ♣	1 ♦	Dbl!
2 ♦	3 NT	All pass	

West	North	East	South
HELGEMO	KHOKHLOV	LORENZINI	DUBININ
-	1 ♣ ¹	1 ♦	Dbl ²
2 ♦	3 NT	All pass	

Two Wests overcalled 1♦, and after South's take out double NS had an easy route to 3NT. One East kept silent, and another one found a third variation, doubling (for what it matters is my choice too). Kholomeev, who had passed, led a diamond, presenting Meckstroth with nine tricks, but on the run of the clubs the defenders threw too many spades, and declarer emerged with a total of eleven. +660.

Bilde's 1NT showed that hand type, so perhaps Duboin was a bit conservative when he simply signed-off in two clubs. Bilde had no reasons to make any step forward, and eventually scored nine tricks: +110.

Lorenzini, reasoning that his RHO sounded well prepared for a diamond lead, opted for the ♥K lead instead: Khokhlov won it, and immediately finessed his ♦10: down one and 13 IMPs to GUPTA.

Bocchi led a pedestrian diamond and his partner won and continued the suit. East discarded carefully on the run of clubs pitching all his hearts. Here is the ending:

		♠ A 10 4	
		♥ 73	
		♦ -	
		♣ -	
♠ J	N	♠ K 8	
♥ J 8 6	W E	♥ -	
♦ 8	S	♦ Q 9 6	
♣ -		♣ -	
		♠ Q 9	
		♥ A 10	
		♦ J	
		♣ -	

Reading the situation perfectly Multon played a heart to dummy's ace, and when he saw Bocchi pitching a diamond, continued the suit thereby end-playing his LHO and coming to ten tricks. +630 and 11 IMPs. Another swing was about to come.

Board 34	♠ Q 10 9 5		
East Deals	♥ 10 8 6 5		
None Vul	♦ K J 7 5 3		
	♣ —		
♠ —		N	♠ K 4 3
♥ Q J 9 7		W	♥ A K
♦ A 8 2		E	♦ Q 10 9 6 4
♣ K J 8 7 4 2		S	♣ Q 9 6
	♠ A J 8 7 6 2		
	♥ 4 3 2		
	♦ —		
	♣ A 10 5 3		

West	North	East	South
BRINK	BILDE	DRIJVER	DUBOIN
—	—	1 NT	2 ♦
2 NT	4 ♣	Pass	4 ♠
5 ♣	5 ♠	Dbl	All pass

West	North	East	South
SEMENTA	MULTON	BOCCHI	ZIMMERMANN
—	—	1 ♣	1 ♠
Dbl	4 ♠	Pass	Pass
5 ♣	Pass	Pass	5 ♠
Dbl	All pass		

West	North	East	South
KHIUPPENEN	MECKSTROTH	KHOLOMEEV	ZIA
—	—	1 NT	2 ♠
2 NT ¹	4 ♠	Pass	Pass
6 ♣	6 ♠	Dbl	All pass

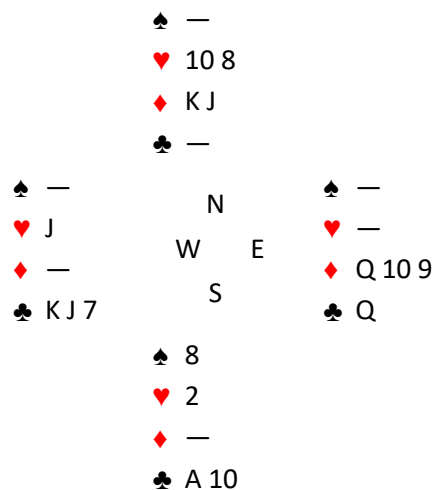
West	North	East	South
HELGEMO	KHOKHLOV	LORENZINI	DUBININ
—	—	1 NT	2 ♦ ¹
Dbl	4 ♦ ²	Pass	4 ♠
5 ♣	Pass	Pass	Dbl

All pass

Both NS pairs reached 5♠x in LAVAZZA vs SWISS TEAM, but the number of tricks scored at the end was different.

Sementa led the ♣4, and Zimmermann ruffed it, then cross-ruffed diamonds and clubs for the first five tricks before running the ♠Q. When it held, ruffed another diamond, then tried to cash the ♣A. Bocchi ruffed it, cashed ♥AK and played the ♠K. Down two, -300.

Where Duboin was at the helm, Drijver led the ♥Q, and Brink overtook, cashed another heart, then switched to a spade. Declarer run it to dummy's five, cross-ruffed diamonds and clubs four times, then played dummy's ♠Q, covered in turn. One more round of trumps followed, coming to the following four card ending:



Duboin tabled his last spade, and the defenders went astray for a reason unknown to me: Drijver pitched the ♣J and Brink the ♣Q. Duboin was not fooled: he tabled his last heart end-playing Drijver. Down one and 5 IMPs to LAVAZZA.

In the other match, Meckstroth had a chance for a bigger pick up, passing Khiuppenen's very optimistic lead to 6♣, but knowing that 6♠ would cheap he didn't want to risk the slam making. After two round of hearts Dubinin switched to a diamond, and when Zia pitched a heart the defenders could not collect any more tricks. -300.

In the other room it's not clear what Dubinin's double was meant to say, but if it was a Lightner double the message was not received: Khokhlov led the ♠Q and that was it. -550 and 6 IMPs to GUPTA. An innocuous looking deal followed, but a strange looking decision from Bilde (or a misunderstanding: I have not found out which yet) brought 13 more IMPs into SWISS TEAM safe.

Board 35

South Deals

N-S Vul

♠ 8 4 3
♥ K 8
♦ 4 2
♣ A 9 7 6 5 4

♠ K 7
♥ A 9 7 6
♦ A Q 7 3
♣ 8 3 2

N
W E
S

♠ Q J 2
♥ J 4
♦ K J 10 9 8 5
♣ J 10

♠ A 10 9 6 5
♥ Q 10 5 3 2
♦ 6
♣ K Q

West	North	East	South
BRINK	BILDE	DRIJVER	DUBOIN
—	—	—	Pass
Pass	1 ♣	1 ♦	3 ♦ ¹
Pass	3 NT	All pass	

West	North	East	South
SEMENTA	MULTON	BOCCHI	ZIMMERMANN
—	—	—	1 ♠
Pass	2 ♣	2 ♦	2 ♥
Pass	4 ♥	All pass	

West	North	East	South
KHIUPPENEN	MECKSTROTH	KHOLOMEEV	ZIA
—	—	—	1 ♠
Pass	2 ♦	Pass	2 ♥
Pass	3 ♥	Pass	3 NT
Pass	4 ♥	All pass	

West	North	East	South
HELGEMO	KHOKHLOV	LORENZINI	DUBININ
—	—	—	1 ♠
Pass	2 ♣ ¹	2 ♦	2 ♥
Pass	4 ♥	All pass	

At three tables the normal four hearts was reached and the obvious eleven tricks were made. However, over Duboin's majors showing three diamonds Bilde, looking at his diamond holding ignored the heart fit and bid 3NT. Unerringly Brink tabled the ♣J, ducked. Declarer played dummy's ♥Q praying for the perfect layout, but the great god of bridge was not listening. Drijver covered, and when Brink won his ♥J continued with the ♣10. Down two.

A totally flat and dull board followed, then another double digit swing.

Board 37

North Deals

None Vul

♠ K Q
♥ 10 8
♦ Q 10 7
♣ Q J 7 6 5 4

♠ J 8 3
♥ A 6 5 3
♦ K J 9 5 4
♣ A

N
W E
S

♠ A 6 5 2
♥ K Q J 7 4
♦ A 3
♣ K 8

♠ 10 9 7 4
♥ 9 2
♦ 8 6 2
♣ 10 9 3 2

West	North	East	South	West	North	East	South
BRINK	BILDE	DRIJVER	DUBOIN	SEMENTA	MULTON	BOCCHI	ZIMMERMANN
—	1♦	Pass	1♥	—	1♦	Pass	1♥
2♣	3♥	Pass	3♠	Pass	2♥	Pass	2 NT!
Pass	4♣	Pass	4♠	Pass	3♦	Pass	3♥
Pass	5♦	Pass	6♥	Pass	4♥	All pass	
All pass							

West	North	East	South	West	North	East	South
KHIUPPENEN	MECKSTROTH	KHOLOMEEV	ZIA	HELGEMO	KHOKHLOV	LORENZINI	DUBININ
—	1♦	Pass	1♥	—	1♦	Pass	1♥
2♣	2♥ ¹	Pass	4♣	2♣	2♥	Pass	2♠
Pass	4 NT	Pass	5♣	Pass	4♥	Pass	4 NT
Pass	5♦	Pass	6♥	Pass	5♥	Pass	6♥
All pass				All pass			

I don't know who is to blame between Multon and Zimmermann, but the bottom line is that they were the only pair to miss the lay-down slam: 11 IMPs to LAVAZZA, who were about to swing another very big blow to the opponents' head. Another question, but this time you are declarer. Sit yourself North, in the shoes of Bilde and Meckstroth and play 6♠ on the following layout after ♥5 lead:

♠ A Q J 8 4
♥ A 7 6 2
♦ 10 5 2
♣ A

♠ 10 7 5 2
♥ K J
♦ A K 8 7 4
♣ Q 5

What you know from the auction, your LHO passed first in hand, and your RHO made a weak jump overcall in spades. Suppose you win the lead in dummy, and finesse your ♠J. LHO wins it and plays another heart. What now?

Here is the full story:

Board 38	♠ A Q J 8 4		
East Deals	♥ A 7 6 2		
N-S Vul	♦ 10 5 2		
	♣ A		
♠ 9 6 3		N	♠ K
♥ Q 10 9 8 3			♥ 5 4
♦ 6	W	E	♦ Q J 9 3
♣ 10 9 8 2		S	♣ K J 7 6 4 3
	♠ 10 7 5 2		
	♥ K J		
	♦ A K 8 7 4		
	♣ Q 5		

West	North	East	South	West	North	East	South
BRINK	BILDE	DRIJVER	DUBOIN	SEMENTA	MULTON	BOCCHI	ZIMMERMANN
—	—	Pass	1 ♦	—	—	Pass	1 ♦
2 ♥	2 ♠	Pass	3 ♠	3 ♥	Dbl	Pass	4 ♠
Pass	4 ♣	Pass	4 ♦	Pass	5 ♣	Pass	6 ♠
Pass	4 ♥	Pass	4 NT	All pass			
Pass	5 ♦	Pass	5 ♥				
Pass	6 ♠	All pass					

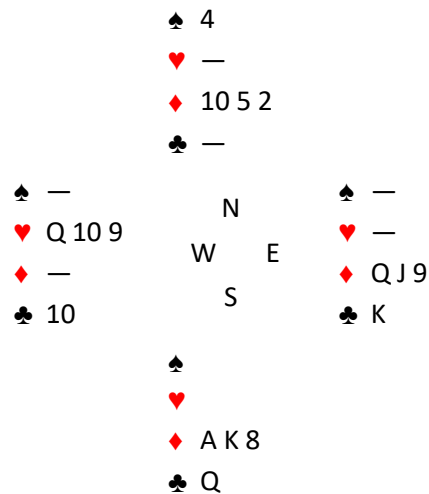
West	North	East	South	West	North	East	South
KHIUPPENEN	MECKSTROTH	KHOLOMEEV	ZIA	HELGEMO	KHOKHLOV	LORENZINI	DUBININ
—	—	Pass	1 ♦	—	—	Pass	1 ♦
2 ♥	2 ♠	Pass	4 ♠	2 ♥	Dbl	Pass	2 ♠
Pass	4 NT	Pass	5 ♦	Pass	3 ♥	Pass	3 NT
Pass	6 ♠	All pass		Pass	4 ♣	Pass	4 ♦
				Pass	4 ♥	Pass	4 ♠
				Pass	4 NT	Pass	5 ♣
				Pass	5 ♠	All pass	

Slam is not a brilliant proposition: if the ♠K behaves, you still need diamonds 3-2, and if they aren't, your chances are small, yet three pairs reached it - Khokhlov-Dubinin the only ones to stay away. Dubinin received the ♦6 lead and cashed the ♠A. Twelve tricks the easiest way.

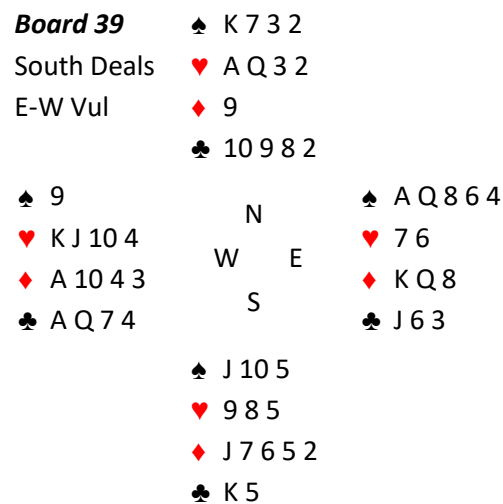
Zimmermann, also playing from South, received the same lead, but in six, the spade finesse is the percentage play: he ran the ♠10 and lost to the spade king and a diamond ruff. -100.

Now let's have a look at the protagonists of our story: both Bilde and Meckstroth started the same way as I outlined for you, but then the paths diverged dramatically. The American pulled trumps and relied on ♦QJ falling: down one and 13 IMPs to Russia instead of - as Bilde proved - +13 to his side.

The Dane did much better: he ruffed a heart, came back to hand with a trump and ruffed another heart. Back to hand with the ♣A he cashed all his trumps but one to come to:



The last spade squeezed Brink in the minors. A magnificent +1430 and an exceptional 17 IMPs to LAVAZZA. The match was even, 93 IMPs apiece. Bilde will have two tales for his grandchildren about having outplayed Jeff Meckstroth



West	North	East	South	West	North	East	South
BRINK	BILDE	DRIJVER	DUBOIN	SEMENTA	MULTON	BOCCHI	ZIMMERMANN
—	—	—	Pass	—	—	—	Pass
1 ♦	Dbl	1 ♠	Pass	1 ♦	Pass	1 ♠	Pass
1 NT	Pass	3 NT	All pass	1 NT	Pass	3 NT	All pass

West	North	East	South
KHIUPPENEN	MECKSTROTH	KHOLOMEEV	ZIA
—	—	—	Pass
1 ♣	Pass	1 ♥ ¹	Pass
1 NT	Pass	3 NT	All pass

Board 39 was uneventful: a dull 3NT, where both SWISS TEAM and GUPTA scored 1 ovetrick IMP each. That was it in LAVAZZA vs SWISS TEAM, the latter leading 94-93, but blood was about to flow in the other match.

Board 40	♠ J 7 2		
West Deals	♥ A K 10 2		
Both Vul	♦ A J 10		
	♣ J 9 2		
♠ K 6		N	♠ A 10 9 5 4 3
♥ 7 5		W	♥ 6 4
♦ Q 7 6 3 2		E	♦ 9 4
♣ A 6 5 3		S	♣ K 10 4
	♠ Q 8		
	♥ Q J 9 8 3		
	♦ K 8 5		
	♣ Q 8 7		

West	North	East	South	West	North	East	South
BRINK	BILDE	DRIJVER	DUBOIN	SEMENTA	MULTON	BOCCHI	ZIMMERMANN
Pass	1 ♣	1 ♠	Dbl	Pass	1 ♣	1 ♠	Dbl
2 ♥	3 ♥	All pass		Rdbl	2 ♥	2 ♠	3 ♥
				All pass			

West	North	East	South
KHIUPPENEN	MECKSTROTHKHOLOMEV	ZIA	
Pass	1 ♣	1 ♠	2 ♥
Dbl	4 ♥	All pass	

The three declarers in 3♥ were not tested, and especially Multon, who declared after the ♦9 lead. Both Bilde and Multon got the ♠A lead and continuation, and both Wests switched to a low club to East's king. Had Drijver and Lorenzini continued spades, declarer would have had to ruff high, thereby having to guess diamonds later to come home, but both defenders continued clubs.

Zia got over optimistic when he opted for a game forcing 2♥. In his hopeless 4♥ he received the ♠K lead and continuation. He ruffed high the third round, and later guessed diamonds but not clubs. Two down sent 8 IMPs to RUSSIA, who trailed by 16 at the end of the second stanza, 101-117.