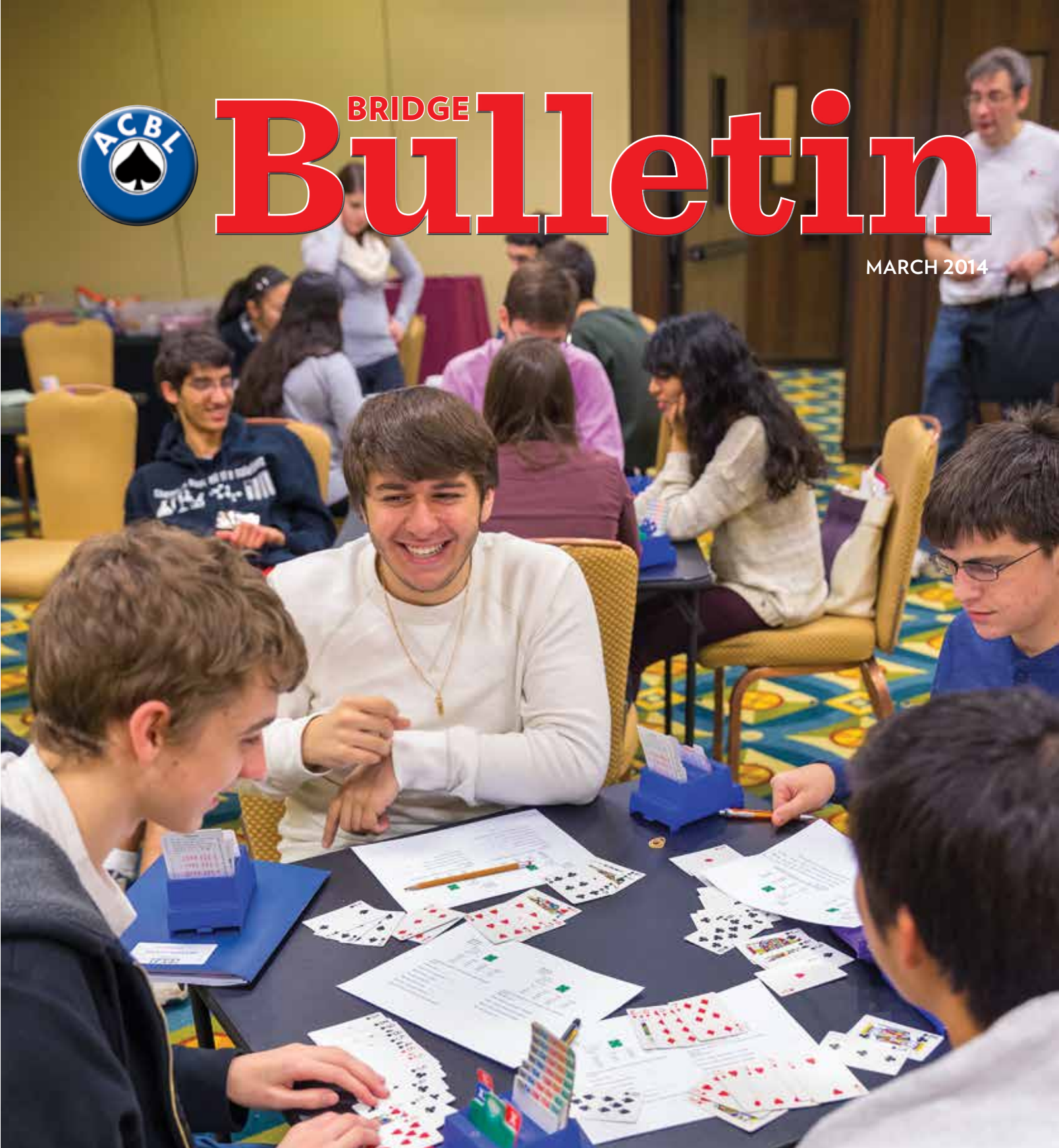




BRIDGE Bulletin

MARCH 2014



Bridge School

U.S. Juniors Train for World Championships



Chip Martel,
Zach Brescoll and
Adam Kaplan



Karen McCallum,
Anam Tebha and
Greg Herman

BRIDGE SCHOOL

USBF hosts Junior training and
U.S. Bridge Championships

BY SUE MUNDAY

Photos by Chris Hamilton Photography

Forty-three Junior players spent Dec. 28–Jan. 2 — nearly a week of their winter holidays — in Atlanta, training and competing for the Junior U.S. Bridge Championships. Five teams were selected to attend the World Youth Team Championships, which will be held in Istanbul, Turkey, in August.

While the United States Bridge Federation normally conducts the qualifying games that determine the U.S. teams for international championship play, the three-day bridge school that preceded the 2013 Junior trials was a remarkable first. More than teaching bridge, the experience built partnerships, strengthened squads and forged a supportive bond — a good first step toward making Team USA a formidable opponent in the future.

The training

The architects of the training segment were Michael and Debbie Rosenberg and Barry Goren. USBF Junior Coordinator Joe Stokes says, “The high esteem with which Michael and Debbie and Barry are held attracted a number of world-class players to come to Atlanta and mentor the young players. They invited their peers to get involved and the response was unbelievable.”

In addition to the Rosenbergs and Goren, the all-star volunteer faculty included Chip and Jan Martel, Karen McCallum, Howard Weinstein, Marty Fleisher, Patty Tucker and Kevin Collins.

Funding support was critical, as well. One anonymous donor posed a \$25,000 match. Stokes says, “Michael Rosenberg made the calls and was able to secure the matching funds within weeks.”

A complete list of sponsors appears on the USBF’s website at usbf.org. Stokes says, “Because of these generous supporters of youth bridge — the ACBL among them — the USBF covered travel and hotel expenses and some meals for the Juniors, in addition to the costs of running the trials.”

The training regimen ran from 10 a.m. to 10 or 11 p.m. During the day, workshops and small-group talks were broken up by eight-, 10- or 12-board matches. Coaches also used morning and afternoon hours to work with each partnership. After dinner, there were informal vugraph discussions of the deals played that day. The evening postmortem extended through the competition, as well. If players were bridged out, there were other fun group games and activities available.

There were contests: Michael Rosenberg’s suit-combination quiz (Adam Grossack scored a perfect score to win a Bridge Winners hoodie); a Match Game-style bidding quiz (the winning partnerships earned a berth in the Bridge Bulletin’s monthly feature,

The Bidding Box) and a get-acquainted mixer styled after *The Newlywed Game* in which players tried to guess answers given by one of their teammates (e.g., “Would you rather have \$50,000 or win the Platinum Pairs?”). Prizes included CDs and books donated by Larry Cohen, Eddie Kantar and others. The Bridge World gave each of the participants a six-month subscription.

Doing things the right way

The importance of partnerships working together, being a good teammate, ethics and good sportsmanship were the underlying themes for most every discussion.

Michael Rosenberg prefaced his talk about procedures by introducing four elements that he points out “are as true for life as they are for bridge”:

- 1 Follow proper procedures (do things the right way).
- 2 Be ethical (be a fair person).
- 3 Be a good partner/good teammate (be a person who’s easy and enjoyable to interact with).
- 4 Be a tough opponent (in life, where there is competition, think of yourself/your family/your team/your company first).

His discussion included the proper use of screens and bidding trays. While most Americans are unfamiliar with these tools (unless they are playing in high-level championships), virtually everyone else in the competitive bridge world uses them regularly, and it’s important for the Juniors to feel comfortable with them.

Weinstein took on ethics and proprieties — tempo, partnership understandings

William Zhu and Edmund Wu



Michael Rosenberg

and full disclosure, unauthorized information and misinformation. Noting the disparity of experience level among the competitors, Weinstein appreciated the “social energy” of the Atlanta event. “It’s important for young people to play a lot of hands. The more they play, the inferences they are able to draw and the way they look at hands constantly improve.”

Goren, a longtime supporter of Junior programs, impressed upon the players the strength of the international competition. In his talk about winning tactics, he says, “Players don’t win bridge tournaments. Their opponents lose them.” He advises, “Avoid more than one disaster per session and you’ll be OK.”

McCallum has worked with Juniors in Australia and Turkey over the years. Her training topics ranged from trick-one thinking and

“Beat the Clock” (tips for slow players), to how to be a winner and how to be a good partner and teammate.

“What’s most important,” McCallum emphasizes, “is making sure our players feel confident — making them know they’re important.”

Chip Martel has coached a number of Junior teams, including the 1991 team that won the gold medal in Ann Arbor MI (which included Debbie Rosenberg). He tackled how to be a good partner/teammate, plus developing and practicing partnership agreements.



From bottom left:
Ruth Ng, Asya Ladyzhensky,
Hakan Berk, Barry Goren,
Ryan Miller and Mili Raina.



Patty Tucker and
Marianna Linz



“Make Your Own Luck”

The players especially enjoyed Debbie Rosenberg’s presentation, “Make Your Own Luck,” in which she revisited a deal from the Bermuda Bowl in Bali.

Dlr: East ♠ Q 7 6
 Vul: Both ♥ 7 5
 ♦ K Q 8 6 4
 ♣ 10 4 3

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

♠ 8
 ♥ 10 9 6 2
 ♦ A 3
 ♣ K J 9 8 7 2

West declared 4♠ at most every table. When the defense leads a high diamond, there isn’t much to the play: South overtakes with the ace, leads a diamond back, gets the diamond ruff, and eventually North scores the ♠Q. At many tables, however, South was able to make a lead-directing 3♣ call. A low club lead gives declarer an opening.

“Give your opponents a chance to go wrong,” Debbie says. After playing the ♠A K, declarer leads ♥A, ♥K and low to the ♥J. Is North going to use his boss trump to ruff what may be partner’s ♥Q? If not, West ruffs a club back to hand, plays the ♥Q, discarding a diamond loser, and makes the vulnerable game.

While the mentors continually emphasized counting, Debbie said that a key element of being a winning card player and tough opponent is remembering that the opponents can’t see your hand. She suggests playing the ♥A, ♥K and then a low heart to the jack “not because it’s a particularly cunning deceptive play, but rather as routine policy to avoid making life easy for the defender.”

At the end of the lesson, Debbie challenged the players to come up with their own deceptive play on this deal.



Debbie Rosenberg

Zach Grossack proposed what she calls “a truly brilliant deceptive play,” a trick-two “finesse” of the ♥Q.

“While this sort of foresight might qualify for a brilliancy prize, the main point was that only the declarers who made no attempt whatsoever to disguise their holding failed.”

At one table, a vugraph commentator remarked that declarer was “unlucky” that the hand with the master trump didn’t have to follow to three rounds of hearts. Yet, at the other table, Kerri Sanborn made the contract on the same layout by playing the ♥A, ♥K and then a low heart to the jack. “That’s how I found the title for my lesson,” Debbie said.

The teachers get straight A’s

The meticulous planning and organization and enormous expense and volunteer commitment underlying the training and trials were not lost on the players.

“The main thing I took away is how bright the future is for the USA’s bridge youth,” says Matthew Weingarten. “Thanks to the Rosenbergs, Barry and other mentors, we have so many chances to advance our game.”

“It’s always great to be so immersed in bridge,” says Becca Wernis, “that you totally lose track of the time and date. One player even told me at the end of the trials that they had a ‘one-in-seven chance’ of correctly guessing which day it was! That’s how you know you love bridge.”

Oren Kriegel called “the social connections” the best part of the trials. “The mentors were available all the time and very generous with

information and guidance. The post-match discussions were always very helpful, especially when everyone would gather to review the day’s vugraph. Hearing a room full of experts bounce ideas off of each other was exhilarating — it felt like sitting in on a meeting of the Master Solvers Club.”

The work is far from over says Debbie Rosenberg. There is an intensive online training program planned for the teams that qualified. “We hope, too, to find the resources to do one more live training session,” she adds. “Tax-deductible donations to the USBF Junior Fund can be earmarked for the live training program.”

Goren’s summary of the three-day training experience was echoed by all of the other coaches: “Boy! I wish we’d had this when I was a kid!”

The trials

With significant assistance from Bridge Base Online, the quest to qualify for the Junior program in Atlanta began in October. Eight teams entered the under-26 division, four advanced to the Atlanta trials and two made the final cut. Six teams in the under-21 division vied for four slots where, again,



Jan Martel



Joe Stokes

two teams were selected to go to the world championships. The starting field of three young women’s teams was reduced to two for in-person competition; one team was left standing.

This was the first live, stand-alone contest to determine which Junior teams would attend the world championships. Qualifying trials in the past have been held

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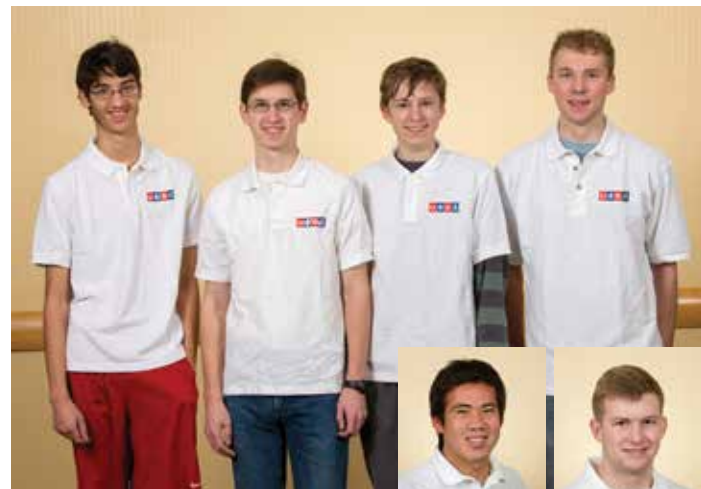


Under-26 USA1:
Adam Kaplan,
Zach Brescoll,
Adam Grossack,
Zach Grossack,
Owen Lien and
Marius Agica.

The non-playing
captain is
Michael Rosenberg.



Under-26 USA2: William Zhu, Edmund Wu, Erli Zhou and Jimmy Wang, plus (insets) Greg Herman and Alex Hudson. The non-playing captain is Curtis Cheek.



Under-21 USA1: Kevin Rosenberg, Oren Kriegel, Ben Kristensen and Chris Huber, plus (insets) Nolan Chang and Cole Spencer. The non-playing captain is Barry Goren.



Under-21 USA2: Arjun Dhir, Christian Jolly, Allison Hunt and Burke Snowden, plus (insets) Hakan Berk and David Soukup. The non-playing captain is Tom Carmichael.



Rona Cup team: Julie Arbit, Isha Thapa, Rebecca Wernis and Marianna Linz, plus (insets) Asya Ladyzhensky and Anam Tebha. The non-playing captain is Karen McCallum.

online and in conjunction with NABCs. The trials — as well as all of the underlying logistics for the training — were managed by Jan Martel and Stokes. Vugraph maven Jan saw that all of the matches were broadcast online. ACBL director Jay Bates presided.

In the under-26 division, **Kaplan** (Adam Kaplan–Zach Brescoll, Adam Grossack–Zach Grossack, Marius Agica–Owen Lien) defeated the **Wang** team 97–74 to claim the USA1 slot.

Wang (Zhou “Jimmy” Wang–Erli Zhou, Edmund Wu–William Zhu) secured the USA 2 slot with a 124–99 victory over **Herman** (Greg Herman–Anam Tebha, Alex Hudson–Drew Cavalier). Because the USBF requires six-person teams for the grueling 11-day championship, the Wang team added a third pair — Greg Herman and Alex Hudson — for Patiño Cup play in Istanbul.

The **Kriegel** team (Oren Kriegel–Chris Huber, Ben Kristensen–Kevin Rosenberg) put together a solid second half to beat **Harper** (Brandon Harper–Ryan Miller, Hakan Berk–David Soukup) in the under-21 final. Nolan Chang and Cole Spencer have been added for Damiani Cup play when the team travels to Turkey.

In the playoff for the USA2 position, **Dhir** (Arjun Dhir–Christian Jolly, Allison Hunt–Burke Snowden) triumphed over Harper, 127–74. Dhir has added Hakan Berk and David Soukup to the lineup.

Mentoring and training program

The USBF promotes Junior bridge through an online mentoring and training program. Participants meet weekly or more often on BBO to practice and learn from their mentors. Juniors interested in getting more information may visit www.usbf.org or contact Joe Stokes at jstokes@uci.edu.



From top left: Mili Raina, Ruth Ng, Asya Ladyzhensky, Hakan Berk and Ryan Miller examine a deal.

Thapa (Isha Thapa–Julie Arbit, Marianna Linz–Rebecca Wernis) and **Goyal** (Rachna Goyal–Alice Kaye, Asya Ladyzhensky–Ruth Ng–Mili Raina) battled for the sole Rona Cup young women’s U.S. slot. Thapa won, 244–188, over two days of play. The team bolstered its roster for Rona Cup competition by adding Asya Ladyzhensky and Anam Tebha.

Bd: 11 ♠ A Q 10 9 8 7 6
 Dlr: South ♥ 10
 Vul: None ♦ —
 ♣ A Q J 7 6

♠ K 4
 ♥ J 9 5 4 3
 ♦ Q 10 7 6 5
 ♣ 3

♠ 3 2
 ♥ A Q 8 7 6 2
 ♦ J 4 2
 ♣ K 8

♠ J 5
 ♥ K
 ♦ A K 9 8 3
 ♣ 10 9 5 4 2

Swings

Chip Martel calls attention to two deals that might have changed the winners of the under-26 final and the playoff for the USA2 spot in the under-21 division:

“In the final for the first under-26 team, Kaplan defeated Wang 97–74 in a 48-board match. Because 25 IMPs could have been swung to Wang by a different lie of the cards or play choice on board 11, Wang might have won (other things staying the same).

West <i>Zhu</i>	North <i>Kaplan</i>	East <i>Wu</i>	South <i>Brescoll</i>
			1♥
Pass	1♠	Pass	2♥
Pass	2♠	Pass	2NT
Pass	3♠	Pass	4♠
Pass	5♣	Pass	5♥
Pass	5NT	Pass	6♣
Pass	6♦	Pass	6♥
Pass	7♠	All Pass	

“In the closed room, South reasonably treated his hand as a weak two-bid. North just bid 4♠, and missed a good slam.



Nolan Chang



Rachna Goyal



Isha Thapa and Julie Arbit



Kevin Rosenberg,
Oren Kriegel and
Julie Arbit

“In the Kaplan-Brescoll auction, the first three bids were normal. 2♠ was game forcing. 5♣ and 5♥ were cuebids and 5NT was a general grand slam try. Responder’s 6♦ was rather pushy, since with the ♠K, ♥A and ♣K opener should cuebid on the way to 4♠. The final 7♠ bid was a strong case of youthful optimism.

“With the singleton ♥K onside and the spades coming in, there were 13 tricks, giving 14 IMPs to Kaplan. Note that after the diamond lead (ruffed), heart to dummy, spade to the queen, East might have falsecarded with the jack. Now if declarer goes to the ♣K to repeat the spade finesse, he will lose a club at the end.

“However, West’s forced ♥K play at trick two should give declarer some doubts about the ♠J: Did East really have two major-suit stiff? If not, which honor was the falsecard? Also, if East is 1-1 in the majors, clubs are unlikely to split. So it is by no means clear what would have happened. Of course, if we change the ♠J to the ♠K, we do know what would have happened to 7♠. A swing of 11 IMPs to Wang versus 14 to Kaplan is net 25 IMPs, which would have just covered Wang’s losing margin. The Wang team

went on to win the playoff for the USA2 spot.

“In the under-21 playoff to determine which team would continue forward to play for the second under-21 team spot, Dhir defeated Weingarten 100-92 in a 48-board match. Board 19 might have changed the match winner:

Bd: 19 ♠ 7 6 3
 Dlr: South ♥ 4 2
 Vul: E-W ♦ K 3 2
 ♣ A Q 7 6 5

♠ Q 10 9 8 2 ♥ J ♦ Q J 10 7 ♣ 10 9 8		♠ A J 5 4 ♥ 7 5 ♦ A 6 ♣ K J 4 3 2	♠ K ♥ A K Q 10 9 8 6 3 ♦ 9 8 5 4 ♣ —
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West <i>Weingarten</i>	North <i>Dhir</i>	East <i>Chang</i>	South <i>Jolly</i>
Pass	Pass	Db1	Pass
4♠	5♥	Db1	All Pass

“East made the good decision to reopen with a double, and got to 4♠, which would make. North then took a good save in 5♥ (though perhaps South would bid on even if North

didn’t). The ♦Q was led and the ♦J continued. Figuring that partner rated to have the ♠K, and declarer didn’t rate to make the contract even if he won the ♠K (who has eight hearts for a favorable preempt?), East made the greedy but reasonable gamble of underleading his ♠A to reach partner for a diamond ruff. South was happy to win his king and claim 11 tricks for plus 650.

“At the other table, Cole Spencer, sitting South, opened 1♥ and rebid 4♥ over 1NT (East passed). The first three tricks were the same. Because the defenders needed two more tricks to beat 4♥, East, Allison Hunt, had a clear underlead at trick three. That was 450 and 5 IMPs to the Dhir team. If East cashed the ♠A against 5♥ doubled, it would have been 11 IMPs to Weingarten. Those 16 IMPs could have turned the 8-IMP match loss into an 8-IMP victory. The Dhir squad then went on to win their next match to become the second under-21 team.”

OMG, we pushed the board!

This deal came up in the next-to-last session of the USBC:

Bd: 28 ♠ A 9 5
 Dlr: West ♥ A 10
 Vul: N-S ♦ J 10 8 6 5 2
 ♣ A 6

♠ Q J 6 3 ♥ K 9 5 2 ♦ 4 3 ♣ K J 4		♠ K 7 4 ♥ 8 7 6 4 ♦ K ♣ Q 10 7 5 2	♠ 10 8 2 ♥ Q J 3 ♦ A Q 9 7 ♣ 9 8 3
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3♦ by North was played by both tables in the Thapa-Goyal contest — a rare push in the Rona Cup young women’s match. Whether immediately over 1NT or balancing over 2♦, West’s double was understood to be takeout.

West <i>Thapa</i>	North <i>Ladyzhenski</i>	East <i>Arbit</i>	South <i>Ng</i>
Pass	1♦	Pass	1NT
Db1	2♦	3♣	3♦
All Pass			

West <i>Kaye</i>	North <i>Wernis</i>	East <i>Goyal</i>	South <i>Linz</i>
Pass	1♦	Pass	1NT
Pass	2♦	Pass	Pass
Db1	Pass	3♣	3♦
All Pass			

Here’s how the auction proceeded at both tables in the under-21 fight for the USA2 slot:

West <i>Dhir</i>	North <i>Berk</i>	East <i>Jolly</i>	South <i>Soukup</i>
Pass	1♦	Pass	1NT
Pass	2♦	Pass	Pass
Db1	All Pass		

Both East-West pairs were astonished to learn that minus 780 was a push. Michael Rosenberg points out that either defense could have picked up 5 IMPs. “Following basic technique — not covering the ♥Q would have

been only minus 580!”

Michael sees this deal as a teaching opportunity. “This auction is a classic example of why it’s necessary to have clear agreements. First you start with this principle: ‘Doubles are not penalty.’ Then you make a list of specific exceptions where double *is* penalty. When partner doubles, you go through the list of exceptions; if it’s not covered in the exceptions, then *bingo*, it’s not penalty. The ‘perfect’ agreements are unimportant. What’s important is being on the same wavelength as partner.”

Defending 2♦ doubled making five — at IMPs — with an international berth on the line and teammates at the other table — could not have been comfortable.

As the players put their cards in the board, dummy (Allison Hunt) used the scratch paper provided for players to explain their Alerted calls. “You were very composed,” she wrote to her defender screenmate. “Proud of you.” ■

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