

2009 Vanderbilt Finals

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In the semi-finals neither of the top seeds, the Nickell & Cayne teams, were able to keep pace with their opponents in the third quarter. Katz added 47 to a 2 imp halftime lead against Cayne. Diamond, who had a 59 imp lead against Nickell at the half, picked up another 29 to lead by 88! With no 4th quarter heroics, we would be treated to a final between the #6 and #12 seeds:

Ralph **Katz** - George Jacobs, Walid Elahmady - Tarek Sadek, Robert Levin- Steve Weinstein

John **Diamond**-Brian Platnick, Eric Greco-Geoff Hampson, Fred Gitelman-Brad Moss

A well-played final it was. George played the first half, leaving his "horses" in for the second half trailing by 1 imp while his opposing captain had a quarter yet to play. The match stayed close into the fourth quarter. Here are a few noteworthy hands:

Bd.8 ♠ K 6
Dealer W ♥ Q T 5 3
Vul none ♦ A K 8 7
 ♣ K 5 4

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

♠ 9 3 2
♥ 8 7 2
♦ J 9 5 4 3
♣ 8 7

Closed Room:

W	N	E	S
1C	P	2D	P
4S	P	P	P

Open Room:

W	N	E	S
1C	1N	2C	P
2S	P	P	P

In the Closed Room North (Levin) passed and Gitelman's 2D showed 5-4 major suit shape in a limited hand (less than invitational values). Moss, with good fitting major suit cards, and extras quickly bid the making game.

In the Open Room Greco ventured a 1N overcall. Jacobs' 2C bid was probably stayman, based on Katz' 2S reply. The notrump overcall kept the pair out of the making game. I'm fond of Cappelletti by responder after opener's 1 minor is overcalled by 1N. I'm not sure a game CAN be reached once that overcall is made.

European-style two bids have gained a lot of favor among top players and two of them popped up early in the third quarter:

Bd.33 ♠ K J T 9 7 2
Dealer N ♥ K 9 7 5 3
Vul none ♦ 2
 ♣ 3

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

♠ 3
♥ J 2
♦ J 8 6 5 3
♣ Q T 9 6 4

Closed Room:

N	E	S	W
2H*	3N	P	4C
P	4N	P	5N
6N			

*Hearts and a second suit, less than opening hand

Open Room:

N	E	S	W
2S	X	P	3D
P	3H	P	3N

Gitelman jumped to 3N over 2H. Moss offered an invitation after looking for a spade fit which was accepted. A very small tinkering of the layout could have made the contract cold. However, the lack of a 5th card (think trick source) in either minor and holding only 1 heart makes the Moss push a little suspect from my, limited?, perspective.

Diamond had a chance for a pickup just a few boards later:

Bd.37 ♠ Q J T 9 7
 Dealer N ♥ A K 8 7 3
 Vul N-S ♦ 9
 ♣ 9 4

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

Closed Room:

N	E	S	W
2H*	P	3C*	P
3H*	P	4S	P
P	P		

*hearts and a second suit, less than opening values

*3C ?

*3H evidently denied D and showed Spades

Open Room:

N	E	S	W
1S	P	3N*	P
4S	4N	P	5C
5S	P	P	P

*unknown splinter raise (I think)

Bidding style approaches can have a dramatic affect: the Egyptians preempted the auction, discovered their spade fit, and had an uncontested auction. Diamond's partner opened a shapely 1S. Levin (East), at favorable vulnerability looked for a cheap save with 4N.

There were a number of hands over the course of the day where the mantra: "the five level belongs to the opponents" could have won a bunch ofimps". This was one of them. Had Diamond doubled 4N, they would have picked up a double digit swing instead of a push.

If these two boards are any indication, you might want to study defenses to the European-style where weak 2 bids showing an anchor suit and another suit in a limited hand. They worked to great effect here.

The Katz team earned 13imps when Levin showed a heart control leading to a good slam and Gitelman didn't:

Bd.36 ♠ 2
 Dealer W ♥ K Q J 5 4
 Vul both ♦ 8 4 2
 ♣ A 8 5 2

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

Closed Room:

W	N	E	S
1D	1H	1S	2H
3S	P	4S	P

Open Room:

W	N	E	S
1D	1H	1S	P
3S	P	4H	P
5C	P	5D	P
6S	P	P	P

I'm not sure why South's raise to 2H would affect East's rebid after the jump raise to 3S. A momentary pause in concentration can be really costly (don't know if that was it or not), but in my regular partnerships a 4H cuebid is almost mandatory with a hand this good after a strong raise.

The next hand was one of the most entertaining of the day:

Board 52 ♠ A Q T 7
 Dealer W ♥ 9 8
 Vul both ♦ K J 8 5
 ♣ J 8 2

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

Before looking at the next page: what is your fourth chair opening bid with the South hand?

Closed Room:

E	S	W	N
P	1D	P	1H
P	1S	P	2C
P	2N	P	4H
P	P	P	

The world class Egyptian pair bid to a fairly normal 4H contract that could have been, but wasn't, defeated on a diamond lead.

I wonder how many of you, reading this article, will make the same opening bid that Moss found. You know that you are down at least one game swing. Your partner is a passed hand, as are both of your opponents, so you presume that your partner has his share of the 2/3 of the deck you don't have.

Moss opened 2N, and **denied!** a 4 card major by bidding 3D over stayman. I'm sure he wasn't overjoyed to hear Gitelman invite slam with 4N (he did have good fitting cards for his partner's presumed minor suit length).

After Weinstein led the D3, and Levin took the Q there was a looonnng break. Levin was trying to figure out why his partner didn't lead from his presumed 7-bagger in hearts! Was Moss really 3=3=2=5. What honor holding could he have in hearts anyway after the 2N opener. After the deliberation came the HJ for a push. The Vugraph crowd had a lot to chew on while waiting.

Note that, double dummy, Moss was on target aiming for 3N.

The third quarter ended with Katz ahead of Diamond 96-80. Here is a wonderful hand, my favorite of the day, at the end of the third quarter. Diamond earned 14 imps to close the gap to just a "game swing & a bit":

Bd.47	♠ Q J 9 8 7 4	
Dealer S	♥ K 9	
Vul N-S	♦ 7	
	♣ Q T 8 7	
♠ K		♠ A T 6 5
♥ 6 2		♥ A Q 7 4
♦ A K 9 4 3		♦ Q 6 2
♣ A K 6 5 2		♣ J 9
	♠ 3 2	
	♥ J T 8 5 3	
	♦ J T 8 5	
	♣ 4 3	

Closed Room:

W	N	E	S
1D	1S	X	P
3C	P	6D	P

Moss and Gitelman bid this hand in two rounds. It took Weinstein and Levin 5 rounds, but the final contract, opening lead, and play to the first four tricks were the same: SQ to the K, the top 2 clubs and a club ruff.

The Egyptian, Sadek, after overruffing the third club, eventually produced the DJ. Moss then proceeded to play double-dummy, establishing a trump coup taking the diamond in hand, leading to the HQ, pitching a club on the SA, ruffing a spade, leading to HA, and claiming (major suit ruff, club ruff with diamond Q at trick 11, and a trump coup)!

Could/would Moss have inserted the D9 had Sadek switched to the D5 after the overruff? We'll never know.

In the Open room, Diamond (South) after the overruff, spent minutes considering his lead, and then, irrevocably killed the contract with a heart. The timing was now destroyed for the trump coup with that extra dummy entry lost.

Wow!! A memorable hand worth the price of admission. A VERY nice play that you'll be reading about again, I'm sure, from a player that we'll also be hearing about again.

Katz prevailed with a well-deserved win. They were very stingy in the fourth quarter, yielding but 6 imps, and won 124-86.