SABF Open and Women's Trials – Bulletin Number 5

After 5 gruelling days of bridge, the Open teams was won by the Eber team. Well done to Neville Eber, Hennie Fick, Robert Stephens, Noah Apteker, Craig Gower and Alon Apteker. The losing team, Imtiaz Kaprey, Martin Grunder, Saul Burman and Andrew Cruise, put up a sterling fight. Better luck next time.

♠♥♣♦ SABF Open Teams Trials 2025 ♠♥♣♦

Final (16 board segments) 26 - 27 February

Team #:	Name	Total IMPs	Carry-over	Pos.	Seg 1 IMPs	Seg 2 IMPs	Seg 3 IMPs	Seg 4 IMPs	Seg 5 IMPs	Seg 6 IMPs
1	Eber	236.1	16.1	1	37	53	42	51	37	X
2	Cruise	118	0	2	54	27	16	21	0	X

FINAL RESULT

1	Eber	Neville Eber - Hennie Fick - Robert Stephens - Noah Apteker - Craig Gower - Alon Apteker
2	Cruise	Andrew Cruise - Saul Burman - Imtiaz Kaprey - Martin Grunder

You can click on the imps to see the full match reports for each segment

Congratulations to the Nestoridis Team (Tas Nestoridis, Lotte Sorensen, Vanessa Armstrong and Carol Stanton) who played well to beat the strong Bernstein team, Roz Bernstein, Sharon Lang, Diana Balkin, Sharon Izerel, Val Bloom and Nicola Bateman.

The winning team will need, in the next few days, to pick a third pair from the losing finalist or semi-finalists.

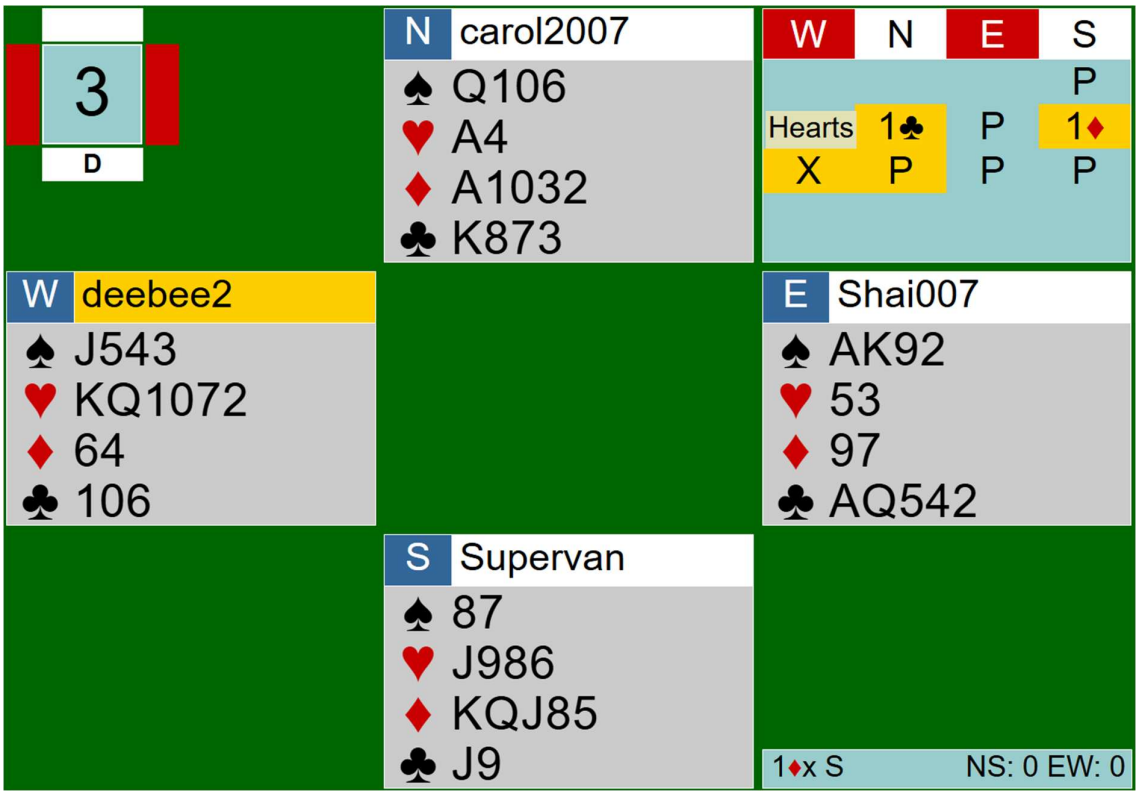
The SABF congratulates all the winners and wishes them luck in the upcoming international events. The Open and Women's teams will represent South Africa in the African Zonal championship that will be held online from 3 May 2025. Should they qualify, they will be eligible to play in the World Bridge Federation event in Denmark in August 2025. Good luck to both teams.

A special thanks to all the monitors who gave up their free time in order to make this event a success. In Johannesburg, there were Robert Stephens, Deirdre Ingersent, Norman Gelbart, Ian Lowdon, Patsi Shafer and Jude Apteker. In Cape Town, Shirley Kaminer, Duncan Keet, Shirley Phillips, Harold Bernstein, Janette Schewitz, Jocelyn Ashberg, Nadine Pincus, Lindsay Stern, and Kitty Cruise. In KZN, Mark Oliff, Frank Chemaly, and Kitty Phillips. Thanks to Jocelyn and Robert for organising the venues and keeping me informed of all problems that arose during the course of the trials.

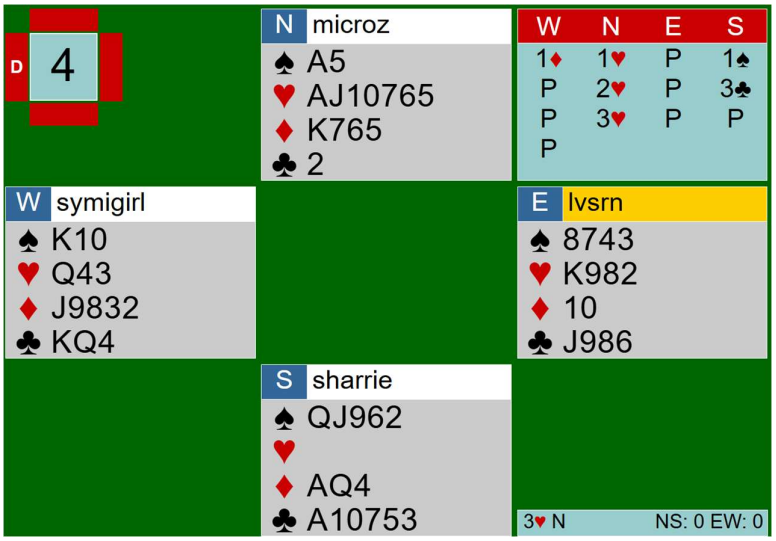
Women's Trials

The scores were fairly close going into the 4th segment of the trials with Nestoridis leading by a small margin. The imps started flying from board 2

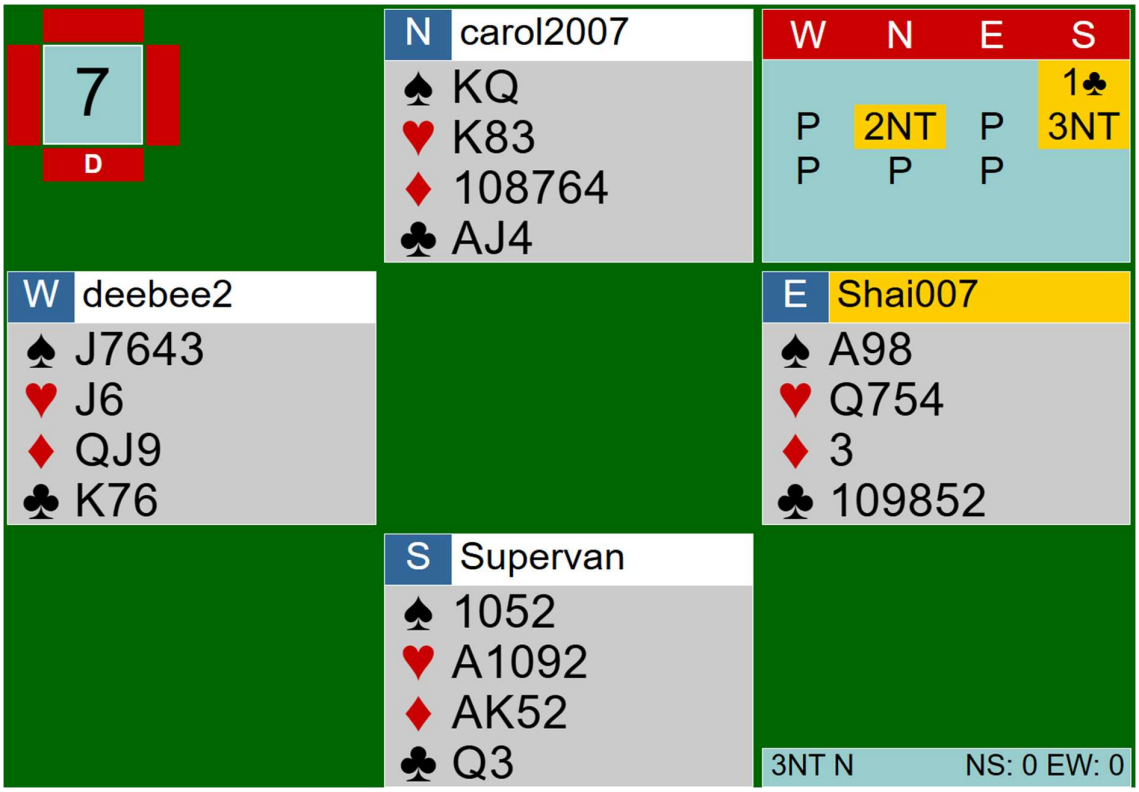
The full-blooded 4♥ opening by Lotte Sorensen (East) won the board. Over 3♥ it was easy for South to make a takeout double with the South hand. Perhaps South should have made the double over the 4♥ opening but this was more difficult. I approve of the 4 level pre-empt (Seven-Four bid more). The vulnerability also was highly in favour of a more aggressive action.



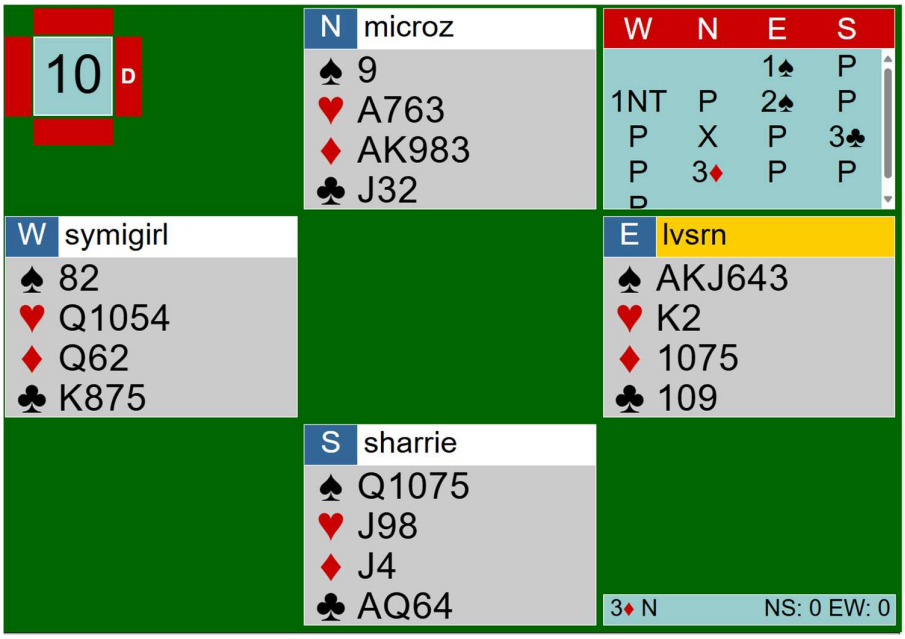
Lack of familiarity with opponent's methods led to a small loss on this board. The 1♣ opening by North showed either clubs or a balanced hand with no 5-card major. 1♦ showed hearts and North's pass over West's double that showed hearts denied 3 hearts. East did not realise that South may have diamonds on this auction making it dangerous to pass.1♦X made with 2 overtricks and a 6-imp gain to the Nestoridis team. It does not seem sound to play the double of a transfer as showing the transfer suit. What is partner supposed to do and why warn opponents that you have their suit? The more normal interpretation of that double is that it shows that suit.

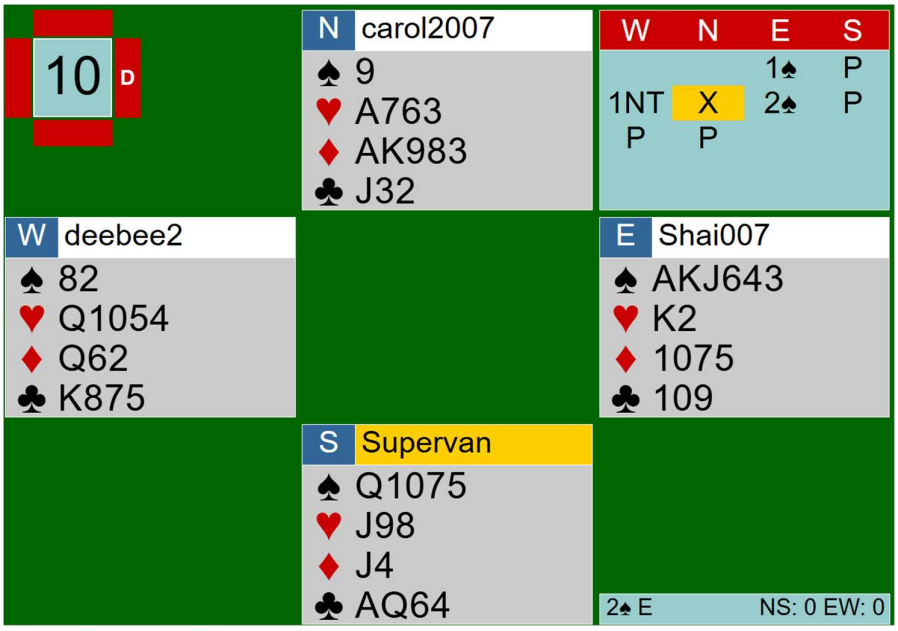


The Bernstein team missed this reasonable game when North was reluctant to bid 3NT over 3♣ with only 1 diamond stopper. South did not appreciate that when partner overcalls and repeats her suit, this tends to show an opening hand as why did partner not make a weak jump overcall with a 6-card suit? 10 imps flowed to Nestoridis team.

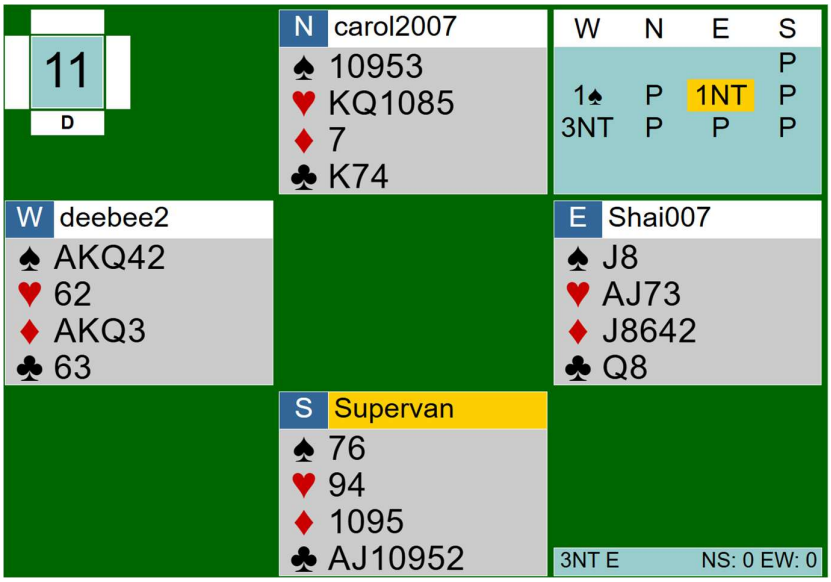


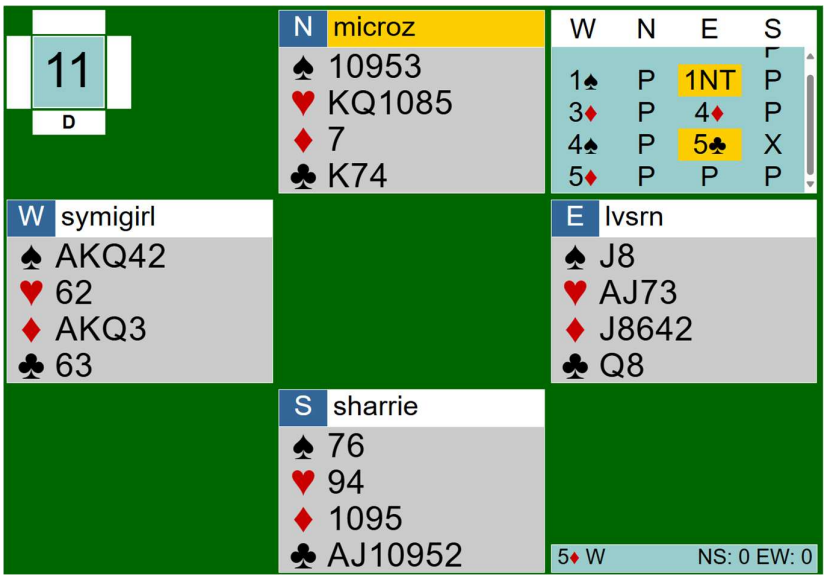
Board 7 was a unlucky for the Bernstein team as the methods played by N/S dictated that North should bid 2NT showing 13+ HCP with no major. This put East on lead who had to find a spade lead to beat the contract. In the other room, a standard auction led to South being declarer in 3NT and the killing spade lead was easily found. That was another 13 imps to the Nestoridis team.





A 6-imp swing went to the Nestoridis team on this board when Roz Bernstein failed to make an immediate takeout double with the North hand. She then made a risky a balancing double when opponents subsided in 2♠. It is not clear why 3♣ was removed to 3♦ as partner could easily have 5 clubs and a singleton diamond. Both 3♦ and 2♠ went 1 down.





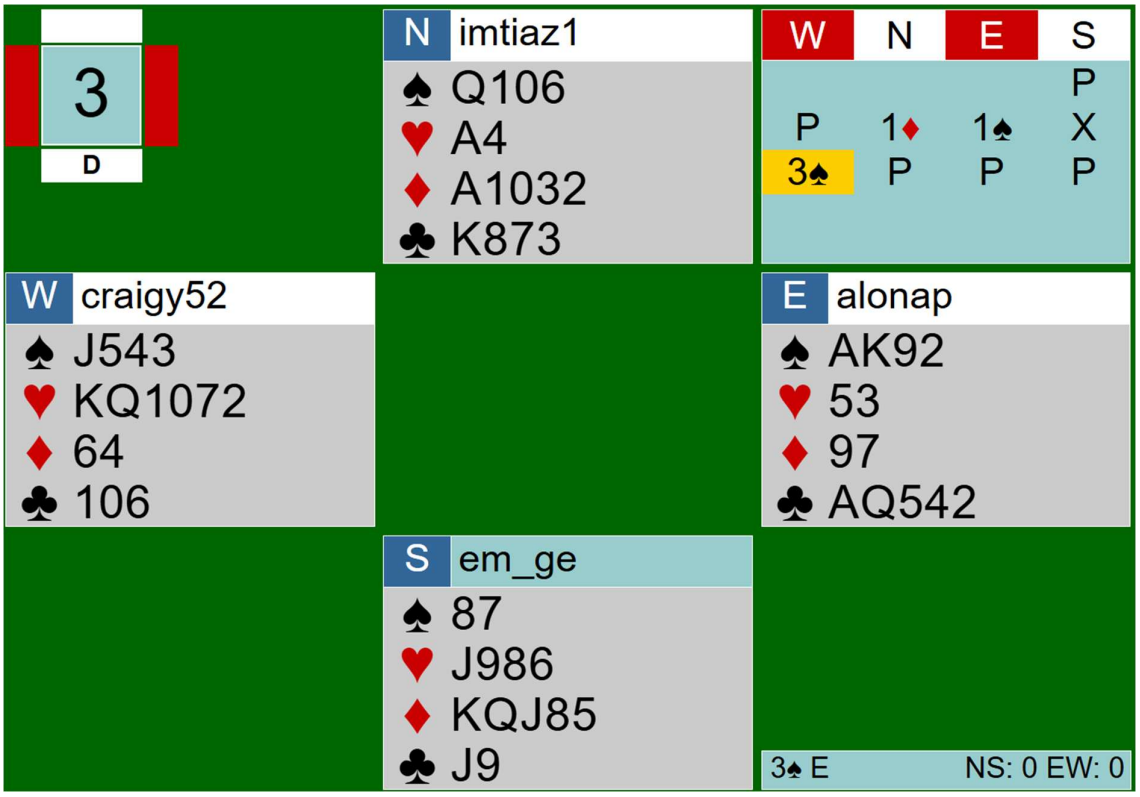
The carnage continued on board 11 when Tas Nestoridis and Lotte Sorensen conducted a much more scientific auction to reach the far superior 5♦ contract. 3NT was reached in the other room which lost the first 6 tricks on a club lead from South. I believe that the 3NT bid by West after partner's 1NT response should show a long spade suit in a fairly balanced hand. 2NT is available to show a balanced hand 18-19. With 2 suits unstopped, and a very suit orientated hand, I think it is wrong to insist on playing in NT.

The Nestoridis team had won 56 imps to 1 at this stage. During the last 5 boards of the session, the Bernstein team clawed back 13 imps in small swings but this left Nestoridis up 42 imps. This gave them a healthy lead and seemed to

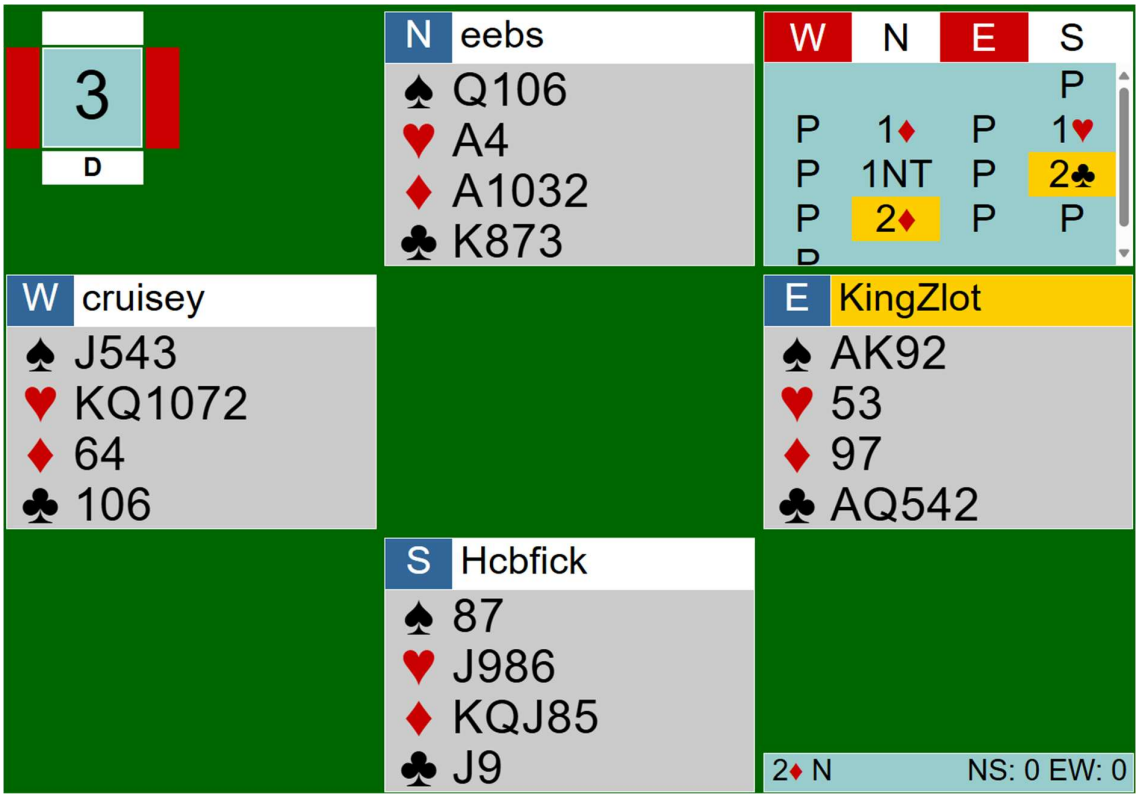
demoralize the Bernstein team. They never recovered and the Nestoridis team went on to with the finals by over 100 imps. Very well done, a convincing performance all round.

The Open Trials

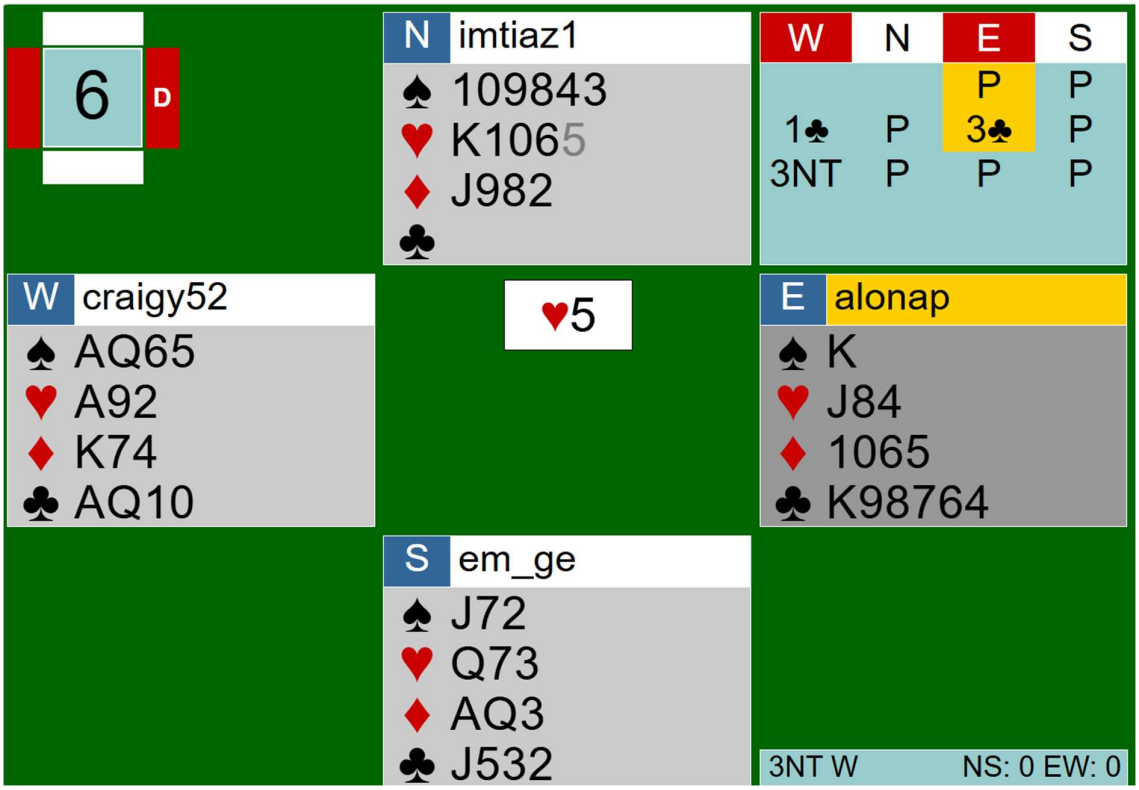
Going into the second half of the final, the Eber team had a sizeable lead of 51 imps.

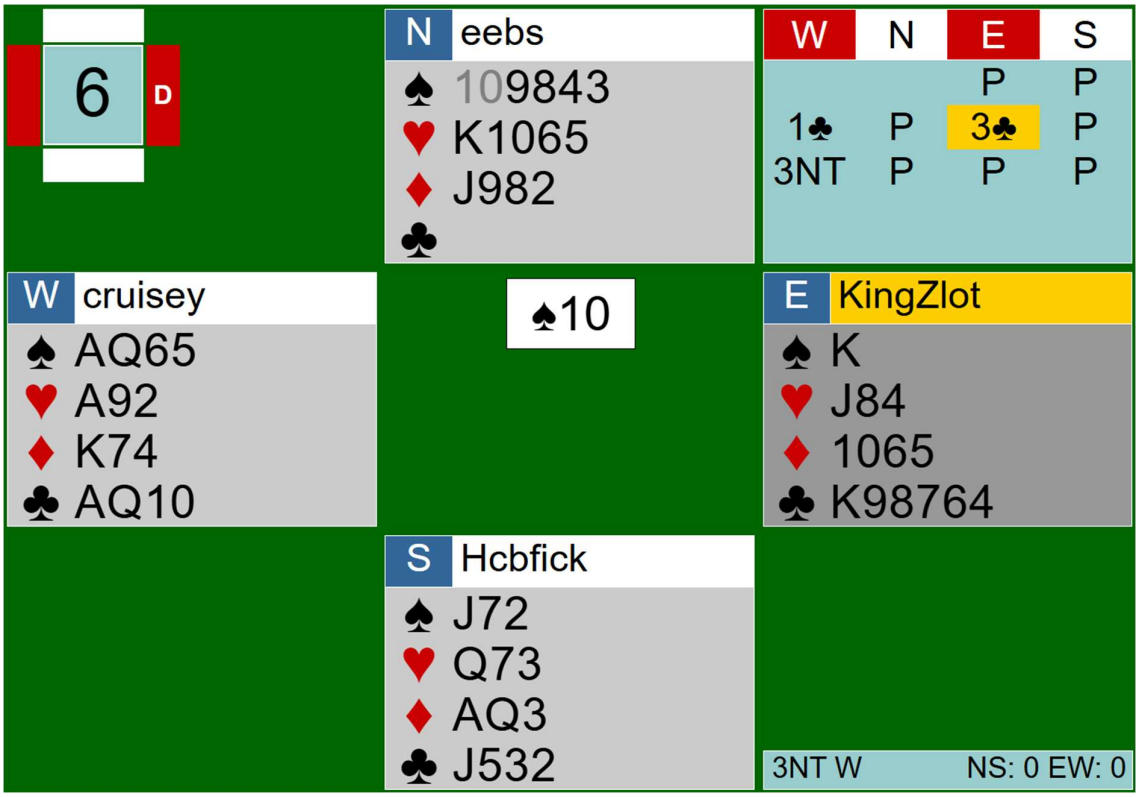


On Board 3, Alon Apteker (East) made a good decision to overcall a 4 card spade suit. This led to an unbeatable 3♠ contract.



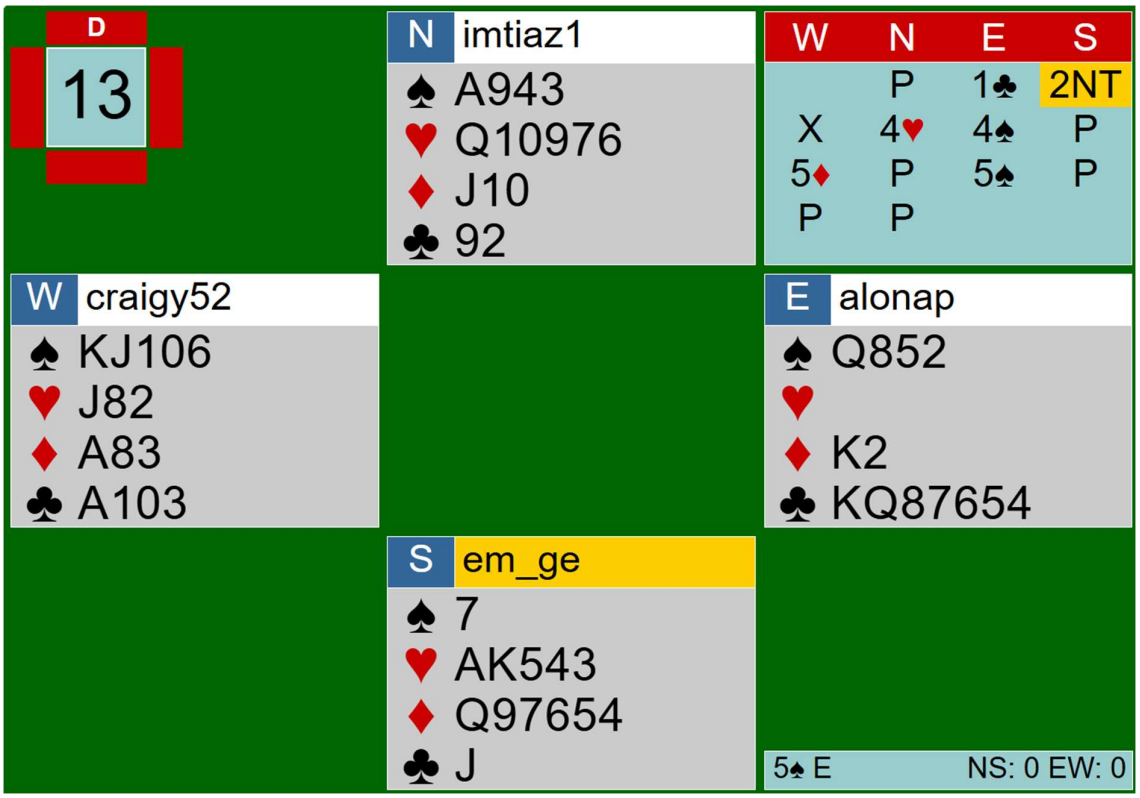
In the other room, Saul Burman did not overcall with the East hand and it was now very difficult to come into the auction after South bid a non-forcing checkback Stayman and passed partner's forced 2♦ response. Double of the artificial 2♦ bid would have shown diamonds and it was very dangerous for Saul to now to bid anything as opponents were likely to have invitational values or better.



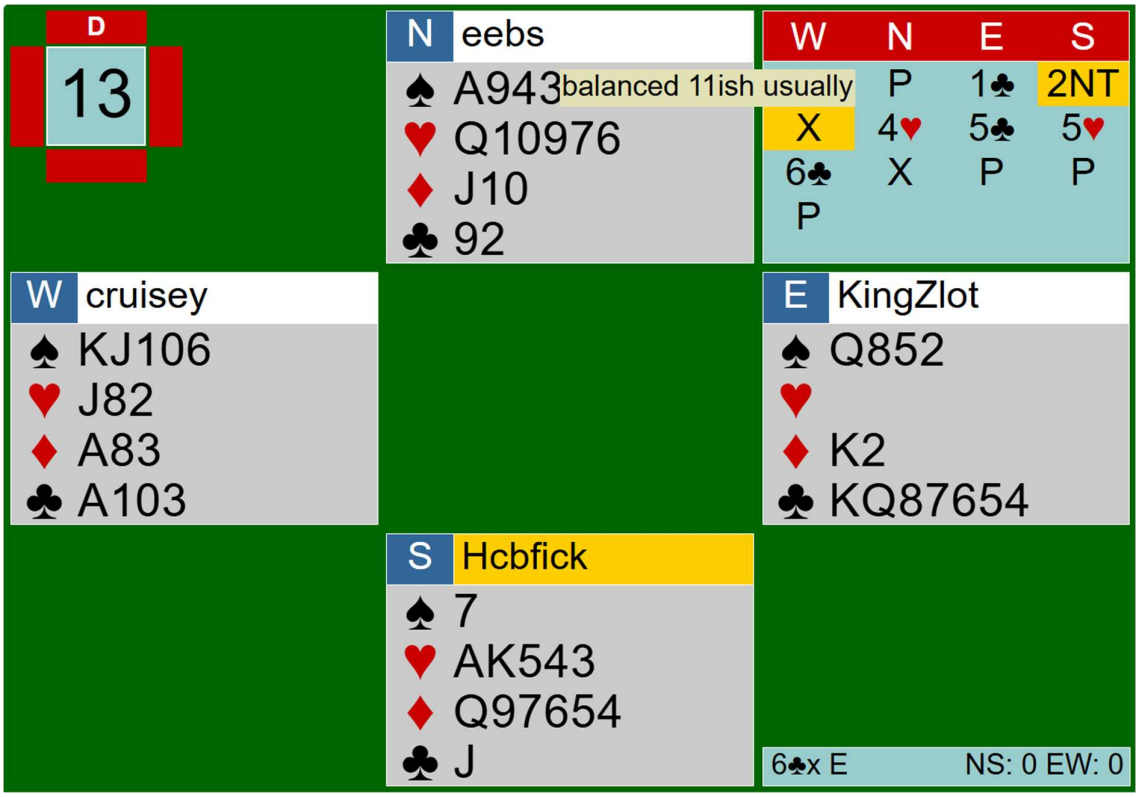


A difference of opinion regarding opening lead made all the difference on this hand. The spade lead removed a vital entry to dummy which was required when

clubs failed to break. Declarer could only come to 8 tricks. The heart lead in the other room, gave declarer a second heart stopper and an entry to dummy. There were still communication problems but when the ace of diamonds was onside, declarer emerged with 11 tricks. To an extent this was just a bit of random bad luck but in the long run, leading a 5-card suit (particularly when you have a sequence) is far superior to leading a broken 4 card. 13 imps to Eber.



Board 13 gave the Cruise team a much-needed double digit swing. Alon and Craig reached 5♠ on the above auction and this proved to be unmakeable with the bad break.



Saul Burman and Andrew Cruise got to the superior 6♣ contract which made when Hennie Fick did not lead his singleton. The situation is not 100% clear but you could argue that North's double of 6♣ is warning partner not to lead a heart or suggesting that another lead might be effective. It looks like opponents are bidding 6♣ to make once West has shown a balanced 11+ count and therefore partner's double strongly suggest defensive values outside of hearts making the singleton lead more attractive. The outcome was a whopping 17 imps to the Burman team when the superior 6♣ contract made doubled.

Despite this big gain, the Eber team won the segment by 30 imps and were now leading by 81 imps. The Cruise team continued to play the 5th segment but were unable to recover and lost the segment by 37 to 0 imps. At this point they conceded the match.

The trials were over but hopefully we will see many of the unsuccessful players in both the Open and Women's entering the Mixed and Senior team's trials that will be held from 16 March. A bumper entry to both these events will ensure that the SABF continues to support sending these teams to world bridge events in the future.