

# the Bridge Magicians

A hand with fingers painted in various colors (red, yellow, green, blue) holds a clear crystal ball. Inside the crystal ball is a white playing card with three red hearts. The background is a soft, colorful gradient of purple, blue, and green.

Spellbinding plays from the Polish stars

Mark Horton and Radoslaw Kielbasinski

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# Foreword

My first experience of an International Bridge Championship was the 1979 European Teams that was held in Lausanne, Switzerland. The Polish Open Team participated and although it did not do particularly well, it caused a stir because it travelled with 'minders', a couple of large gentlemen whose task was to ensure that none of the team defected to the West. Over the next few years the minders disappeared as the success of Polish teams and pairs gathered momentum, but it was still not easy. Players were expected to share their prize money with their compatriots so that Poland could have a large representation in international events. The end of each session would see a trestle table brought out from which caviar would be sold in order to generate additional hard currency.

This, therefore, was the harsh forcing ground in which Polish bridge players first developed their skills. Fortunately for all lovers of the game, the coming of democracy to Poland following the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the huge improvement in living standards, has not inhibited Poland's ability to generate a seemingly endless supply of great players. Since 1979, Poland has won more medals in international championships than any other nation on earth. Their successes are so numerous that I only mention the peaks — the Rosenblum Cup in 1979, the Teams Olympiad in 1984, the European Teams Championship in 1989 and 1993 and the World Pairs Championship in 1998. Only the Bermuda Bowl still eludes the Polish team, but surely not for much longer.

Radek Kielbasinski is a successful Polish bridge journalist and administrator who has, over the years, collected the marvelous selection of hands which comprises this book. Radek is the guardian of these hands and we should all be grateful to him for sharing them with us. Mark Horton is an English international and bridge journalist who, amongst his many achievements, is the Editor of *BRIDGE Magazine*; his collaboration with Radek Kielbasinski has been absolutely vital in presenting these superb hands to an English-speaking audience.

Not a single hand in *The Bridge Magicians* is easy; in fact, some of them are awesomely difficult, but all are capable of deduction and solution. I invite all readers to study, deduce and solve, and most of all to enjoy this marvelous book.

*Bill Pencharz, Honorary President, European Bridge League  
London, June 2001*

# Introduction

In 1989 your authors met at the World Junior Bridge Championships in Nottingham, one as assistant on-site organizer, the other as a young player from Poland who had come to observe, work and learn for the future. By a twist of fate they met again ten years later in Warsaw, one now a member of the European Bridge League Executive Committee and Vice-President of the Polish Bridge Union, the other an Editor of the Daily Bulletins. It was during the European Pairs Championship in Warsaw that we formulated the idea for a book that would provide an insight into the skill that is involved in declarer play, a book based on the exploits of an outstanding group of players from Poland. The bridge heroes featured in this book have all won at least two medals at World and European Championships (Open, Women's or Mixed); that makes them experts of the highest caliber.

Bridge has always been very popular in Poland. Before World War II, there were dozens of bridge clubs across the country, where hundreds of players enjoyed their sport. Playing bridge was a must in some intellectual and political circles, even those including army officers. For example, both the Polish Prime Minister and Ignacy Paderewski, the famous pianist, loved to play bridge and were considered to be very good players.

In the early 1930s the magazine *Brydz* appeared regularly. In association with the magazine, there was a group of players who tried to create a National Bridge Organization to participate in the European Championships. Alas, they failed, mainly because of the different scoring method then in use in Poland. The 'standard' form of Contract Bridge was much less popular than bridge using the Polish way of scoring.

After the War, bridge disappeared completely from official life. The Communist regime regarded bridge as an imperialistic tool, and the game was forbidden. However, bridge, although underground, was still alive and was still played a great deal in private homes. The breakthrough came in 1956, when a journalist who was a party member wrote an article titled 'Better bridge than nothing' that appeared in an official Communist magazine. That was a signal, and it had an immediate positive impact on bridge activities. Right away, a group of players started forming an official organization, and after some struggles, the Contract Bridge

Association of Poland officially came into being on March 21, 1957.

In the meantime, regular matches and tournaments were being played. In January 1957, the first Polish team went abroad to play in the Metropa Cup in Vienna. In the same year, Poland was accepted as an official member of the European Bridge League. Early appearances in the European Championship were not successful, but in 1963, Poland won the bronze medal in Baden-Baden.

In the mid 1960s, bridge was accepted as an official sport discipline by the Main Office for Sport and Tourism. That was important, since it meant official state and financial support for bridge. The gateway to the West was open. During Communistic days, traveling to western countries was everybody's dream. The big difference between the official dollar exchange rate and the black market one meant that every dollar brought into Poland was very precious. At that time, an average monthly salary in Poland was equivalent to about US\$20, exchanged at the black market rate. Moreover, Polish currency stores offered a very narrow choice of goods, usually of poor quality. Luxury goods were available only in the special dollar stores.

Being a recognized sportsman had some other important benefits. There was usually no problem in getting both a Polish passport and western visas, and thanks to the same difference in dollar rates, plane and train tickets were very cheap. In addition, buying any goods in Poland and selling them abroad was very profitable, and many of the bridge players financed their trips by exporting caviar and cigars.

From the late 1960s, hundreds of Polish bridge players were regularly participating in all kinds of bridge tournaments, from local bridge clubs up to the largest and most important World and European events. Playing bridge became a way of life for many youngsters: 'If bridge gets in the way of your studies — give up the studies' was a popular expression among students. There were usually a hundred teams participating in the Polish Student Bridge Championships. On the other hand, there was only a small group of top-class players who were studying the game intensely. Still, the standard of bridge in Poland was very high, and the Polish First Division was considered to be the strongest team league in the world. In the 1970s and 1980s, there were dozens of Polish players who could have played on the national team with every chance of collecting a medal in international competition. Since then, Polish players have won medals at almost every major event (see the listing at the back of this book).

At the beginning of the 1990s, Poland changed its economic and political system. As a result consumer goods became more readily available, and there was no advantage any more in exporting anything privately. Polish students have since become very attentive to their

grades, knowing that a university degree usually means a good job. Internationally, victory in the Bermuda Bowl is still a dream for Poland, but on the evidence of the 2000 event in Bermuda and the subsequent Olympiad in Maastricht, that day cannot be far away. There is just one cause for concern: all the major bridge successes of the 1990s were achieved by players who took up the game seriously in the 70s and 80s. Will they have any successors?

In *The Bridge Magicians*, we invite you to meet some of the Polish stars of the last thirty years, and to marvel at some of their best efforts in declarer play. You'll get the chance to follow the thought processes that went on in the player's mind as each of these deals was played through. If you care to work a little harder, then when you see this symbol



take a few moments to think about the situation, and try to come up with your own line of play. We are willing to bet that you will quickly find that the world of eliminations, endplays and squeezes is not as far from your grasp as perhaps you had thought. In fact, by the time you reach the end of the book, we are sure that you'll be getting more of them right than you did at the beginning.

A word on the bidding: many of the auctions in this book involve Polish Club, an aggressive and often quite artificial system. For example, an opening One Club bid is made either on a strong hand or a hand that would qualify as a weak notrump; the subsequent auction clarifies whether opener has the strong or the weak hand. Two-bids can carry a multitude of meanings, some of them quite unusual to non-Polish readers. Where it is important to the play, we have, of course, explained the bidding. However, for those who wish to delve further into the system, we have included at the back of the book a summary of the Polish Club, kindly provided by Krzysztof Jassem who is recognized as a leading authority on the system.

If you derive as much delight from this book in reading it as we did in writing it, then our labors will not have been in vain.

*Mark Horton*  
*London*  
*Radoslaw Kielbasinski*  
*Warsaw*  
*April 2001*



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the  
Bridge Magicians





# Cezary Balicki



*Our first prestidigitator, Cezary Balicki, was born in 1958, and like so many bridge stars was a talented chess player who has now become a professional bridge player. He was chief editor and publisher of the Polish bridge magazine Forum for a couple of years.*

*Balicki's list of international championship medals is impressive. He started with a bronze in the World Pairs Championship in Geneva in 1990. That was followed by silver in the 1991 Bermuda Bowl in Yokohama, and again in the Rosenblum in Albuquerque in 1994. He finally got his hands on a World title by taking the gold medal in the 2nd Transnational World Teams in Bermuda 2000.*

*He is a regular on the North American scene and captured the 1997 Spingold and 2001 Vanderbilt trophies, as well as losing the 1998 Spingold final to Nick Nickell's team by only 1 IMP. He has been no less successful in Europe, with two gold medals in the European Teams Championships, in Turku in 1989 and Menton in 1993. His European set is completed by a silver medal in Montecatini in 1997 and a bronze in Killarney in 1991. He won the prestigious Macallan Pairs in London in 1994 and finished third in the same event a year later.*

*Cezary has a fine sense of humor and readily sees the funny side of the game. He likes to tell the story of when he was playing in the prestigious Dunhill Cup in Bonn. During a vital last round match with Finland he was declarer in 6NT, and after the opening lead he had eleven tricks and two possible chances for a twelfth. He could finesse in diamonds or play a club from two small towards the king, ten, small. He decided on the latter plan for two reasons: first, the club ace might be onside, but second, even if the king lost to the ace there was a chance that if the defender did not also hold the queen of clubs, he would switch, allowing Balicki the chance to take the diamond finesse anyway. Alas, the defender held ♣AQJ75 and the slam went four down. Needless to say, the diamond finesse was right!*

# Conjuring up an entry

For our first deal, we go to Cezary's 1994 triumph in the Macallan. That year Balicki-Zmudzinski were appearing in this famous event for the second time. Here you can take your seat alongside Balicki as he tackles a contract of five diamonds; can you play it as well as he did?

**Neither vulnerable**  
**Dealer South**

♠ Q 6 3  
 ♥ K 10 7 3 2  
 ♦ 7 6  
 ♣ A Q 4

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ A 10 8 5  
 ♥ 8 5  
 ♦ A K Q 9 5 4 3  
 ♣ —

West	North <i>Zmudzinski</i>	East	South <i>Balicki</i>
2♣	dbl <sup>1</sup>	3♣	1♦
pass	5♦	all pass	5♣ <sup>2</sup>

1. Negative.
2. Void-showing splinter.

West leads the jack of clubs. In view of West's overcall the natural play from dummy is the queen, and when that holds the trick we can discard one of the losing hearts from hand. Assuming the diamonds are not 4-0 there are now ten tricks on top, and it is tempting to cash the ace of clubs and get rid of our second heart right away, hoping to negotiate the spade suit for only two losers. The problem is that there is no certain entry to the dummy, making it harder to negotiate the spade suit successfully. If we have to play spades from our hand, how are we going to do it?



The two critical cards that are missing are the ace of hearts and the king of spades, and unless East has bid three clubs with nothing but a few low clubs he must have one of them. If East has the ace of hearts, then West will have the king of spades and the contract will be easy. If West has the ace of hearts, then the defenders are going to have to give us the entries we need, or play the spade suit for us.

Resisting temptation, then, we decide not to cash the ace of clubs but to draw trumps in two rounds and play our remaining heart from hand, intending to play the king. However, West jumps in with the ace of hearts and plays a low spade. We play low from the table, and when East produces the jack of spades we simply duck, playing East for the king of spades. Now any non-spade return from East provides us with an entry to table, enabling dummy's king of hearts and the ace of clubs to take care of declarer's losing spades.

This was the full deal:

	♠ Q 6 3										
	♥ K 10 7 3 2										
	♦ 7 6										
	♣ A Q 4										
♠ 4 2		♠ K J 9 7									
♥ A Q 6		♥ J 9 4									
♦ 8 2		♦ J 10									
♣ K J 10 8 6 5		♣ 9 7 3 2									
	<table border="1"><tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr></table>		N		W		E		S		
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ A 10 8 5										
	♥ 8 5										
	♦ A K Q 9 5 4 3										
	♣ —										

One special point to note in our line of play is that if declarer takes the jack of spades with the ace, and then plays a low spade to the queen, we will have a problem. East will win with the king and play the seven of spades, leaving us to guess what to play from hand; we must play the ten if spades are 3-3, or the eight if they are 4-2. Another key to the play was the realization that if the ace of clubs were left in dummy, sooner or later the defenders would have to make a move to declarer's advantage.

# Sleight of hand

As you will discover during the course of this book, Polish players were very successful at the World Bridge Championships in Albuquerque in 1994. Balicki lived up to the title of our book, playing some hands there in a magical fashion and establishing a reputation as one of the world's best declarers. This deal occurred in a qualifying round of the Rosenblum Cup.

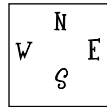
**East-West vulnerable**  
**Dealer North**

♠ A Q 8 6 3

♥ A

♦ A K 9 2

♣ J 6 2



♠ 5 2

♥ Q 10 7 2

♦ 5 3

♣ A K 8 7 5

**West**

**North**

**East**

**South**

*Zmudzinski*

*Balicki*

1♠

pass

1NT

pass

3NT

all pass

West leads the queen of diamonds.

Despite the combined point count, there is no sure route to nine tricks. The obvious line is to collect four club tricks and hope that the spade finesse is right. There is clearly no point in ducking the opening lead, so we win with the ace and must broach the clubs. What is the correct way to play the club suit?



The right approach is to lead the jack of clubs from dummy. Apart from the fact that East may make the mistake of not covering, this also caters for a singleton nine or ten in the West hand. East puts on the



queen, so we win with the ace as West follows with the three. Unless East's queen was a singleton, four club tricks are now certain, so we play a low club to dummy's six. West follows with the four, and East wins with the nine. He makes the obvious return of a heart, playing the nine to dummy's ace as West follows with the five. For the moment there is nothing to do but cash the clubs. West discards a diamond and a heart and East a spade. These cards remain:

♠ A Q 8 6

♥ —

♦ K 9 2

♣ —

	N	
W		E
	♠	

♠ 5 2

♥ Q 10 7

♦ 5

♣ 7

When we play the last club, West discards a diamond, dummy a spade, and East a spade. If the spade finesse is right our problems are over and it looks as if we have to take it now. Is that true, or is there some sleight of hand that will allow us to avoid risking everything on a 50-50 chance?



We have only lost one trick so far, and West's lead of the queen of diamonds suggests he started with ♦QJ10, as without the ten he might well have led a low diamond. With that in mind, we play our remaining diamond, and when West produces the ten, we duck in dummy, as East discards a spade. If West now plays a heart, he will either be making us a present of the queen or endplaying East, so he returns the jack of spades. Now do we finesse the spade queen?



At this point we can be sure that West started with six diamonds and two clubs, and only five cards in the majors. It is now clear that the spade finesse is likely to be wrong, but if West started with a singleton spade we have a neat counter. We go up with the ace, cash the king of diamonds and throw West in with dummy's last diamond. West wins and cashes the king of hearts, but finally has to surrender the game-going trick to the queen of hearts. Incredible!

It's interesting to follow the play through looking at all four hands. This was the full deal:

<p>♠ J ♥ K J 6 5 ♦ Q J 10 8 6 4 ♣ 4 3</p>	<p>♠ A Q 8 6 3 ♥ A ♦ A K 9 2 ♣ J 6 2</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 80px; height: 80px; margin: 0 auto; display: flex; flex-direction: column; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> <span>N</span> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> <span>W</span> <span>E</span> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: center; width: 100%;"> <span>S</span> </div> </div> <p>♠ 5 2 ♥ Q 10 7 2 ♦ 5 3 ♣ A K 8 7 5</p>	<p>♠ K 10 9 7 4 ♥ 9 8 4 3 ♦ 7 ♣ Q 10 9</p>
---	--	--

This is the position when declarer plays the last club:

<p>♠ J ♥ K J ♦ J 10 8 6 ♣ —</p>	<p>♠ A Q 8 6 ♥ — ♦ K 9 2 ♣ —</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 80px; height: 80px; margin: 0 auto; display: flex; flex-direction: column; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> <span>N</span> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> <span>W</span> <span>E</span> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: center; width: 100%;"> <span>S</span> </div> </div> <p>♠ 5 2 ♥ Q 10 7 ♦ 5 ♣ 7</p>	<p>♠ K 10 9 7 ♥ 8 4 3 ♦ — ♣ —</p>
---	--	---

On the play of the club seven, West finds himself in trouble. If he discards a heart, declarer discards a diamond from the table and plays the queen of hearts from hand discarding another diamond. After any return, South can then cash the ace of spades and the king of diamonds and play a small spade from the table. East takes the trick and he may cash the king of spades, but finally he must give up the ninth trick to the queen of spades or the ten of hearts.

A final analytical point: when East covered the jack of clubs at Trick 2, it was natural enough for declarer to win and then duck a club. However, if East had returned his third club instead of a heart at that point, declarer's timing would have been disrupted. If declarer gives up on the faint chance of picking up ♣109 with West and simply ducks the first round of clubs when East plays the queen, the contract cannot be defeated.

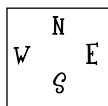
# P

*lick a card — any black card*

Our next deal occurred in the same event, the 1994 Rosenblum Cup. The Rosenblum is an Open World Team Championship, held every four years. The difference between this event and an Olympiad is that a country is allowed to enter several different teams in the Rosenblum.

**Neither vulnerable**  
**Dealer South.**

♠ Q  
♥ A 10 7 6  
♦ K J 10  
♣ A J 10 8 6



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

West	North <i>Zmudzinski</i>	East	South <i>Balicki</i>
2♥	pass	pass	1♠
pass	3♥ <sup>1</sup>	pass	2♠
all pass			3NT

1. 'I was going to pass your reopening double, partner'.

When West leads the nine of diamonds prospects appear poor, as the spades are unlikely to break. However, when we inspect the opponents' convention card it reveals that the lead of a nine promises zero or two higher cards, and dummy's ten takes the trick as East plays the six. West appears to have length in both red suits, so it is clearly best to keep the spade suit in reserve and try to develop some extra tricks in clubs. If clubs are 3-3 or 4-2 with either player having a doubleton honor, it is best to start with a low card from dummy. East follows with the five and West wins with the king.

West now cashes the ace of diamonds, and plays a third round, East discarding the three of hearts; that confirms that West is at least 5-5 in the

red suits. How do you rate our chances of pulling a rabbit out of this particular hat? What would you do now?



We have a threatening position in both black suits, and East is surely going to be under some pressure as the hand develops further. Assuming West did not start with ♣KQ alone, East has the club queen as well as the spade length that prevents our running the suit.

We now cash the ace of clubs and West discards a heart, marking him with a 2-5-5-1 distribution and making East 4-2-2-5. Now we cash the ace of hearts to remove East's last exit card and play out the jack of clubs. East is helpless. If he ducks the club jack, we play four rounds of spades, throwing him in to give us a ninth trick in clubs. If East takes the jack of clubs with the queen, he will be thrown in later with a spade, and he will have to lead from his ♣9-7 into the ♣10-8 on the table.

The full deal:

	♠ Q ♥ A 10 7 6 ♦ K J 10 ♣ A J 10 8 6				
♠ 4 2 ♥ K J 9 8 5 ♦ A Q 9 8 4 ♣ K	<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">W      E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W      E	S	♠ 10 9 6 5 ♥ 4 3 ♦ 7 6 ♣ Q 9 7 5 2
N					
W      E					
S					
	♠ A K J 8 7 3 ♥ Q 2 ♦ 5 3 2 ♣ 4 3				

This is the position when West exits with a diamond to dummy's king:

	♠ Q ♥ A 10 7 6 ♦ K ♣ A J 10 8				
♠ 4 2 ♥ K J 9 8 5 ♦ Q 8 4 ♣ —	<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">W      E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W      E	S	♠ 10 9 6 5 ♥ 4 3 ♦ — ♣ Q 9 7 2
N					
W      E					
S					
	♠ A K J 8 7 3 ♥ Q 2 ♦ 5 ♣ 4				

East cannot discard a club since South then gets three club tricks. Equally, he cannot discard a spade since South will then overtake the queen of spades with the ace and take six spade tricks.

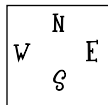
In hindsight, perhaps this line of play appears easy and obvious. However, in the Closed Room the German declarer went three down in the same contract on the same lead.

## Seeing the future

The World Championships in Geneva in 1990 were not especially successful for Polish players, the only medal they were able to bring home being a bronze in the Open Pairs. As usual, though, there was plenty of interesting bridge. On the following deal we join Balicki who is the declarer in a contract of four spades.

**North-South vulnerable**  
**Dealer North**

♠ Q 10 9 6  
♥ A Q J 10 7 5  
♦ Q 9  
♣ K



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

West	North	East	South
	1♥	2♣	2♠
pass	3♠	pass	4♠
all pass			

When West leads the two of clubs East takes the ace and returns the jack of clubs, which we ruff in dummy. How do you like our chances?



Good players do not generally overcall at the two-level on five-card suits, so we are inclined to place East with six clubs. East's return of a club rather than a diamond switch strongly suggests that the diamond

honors are split with West having the ace, and if the jack of clubs is a true card then West must have the queen of that suit. Holding the king of hearts in addition to the club queen and a diamond card, West would certainly have raised to three clubs. So we can be sure that East has the heart king, and the ruffing finesse is going to be successful. Is this hand as easy as it looks? Look into your crystal ball and see if you can spot any ominous clouds on the horizon...

The only outstanding problem surrounds the trump suit. If the trumps are 2-2 there will be no problem, but they may well be 3-1, which will create potential dummy entry problems. How are we going to make sure of our contract in that case?



As East is unlikely to have five hearts as well as six clubs, we can afford to broach the heart suit before touching trumps, and in any event it is usually sound technique to tackle the side suit first. So, after ruffing the second club in dummy, we play the ace and then the queen of hearts. When the king does not appear from East we discard a club. On the jack of hearts East puts up the king and to be safe we have to ruff with a spade honor, the ace being the appropriate card to impress the kibitzers. When West discards a diamond on this trick it is long odds that the trumps are 3-1, so we decide to play West for the jack of spades. We are rewarded: we cash the spade king and play a spade to the ten, and East shows out. After we draw the last trump, the hearts provide the game-going tricks.

<p>♠ J 5 3 ♥ 6 2 ♦ A 10 7 5 2 ♣ Q 7 2</p>	<p>♠ Q 10 9 6 ♥ A Q J 10 7 5 ♦ Q 9 ♣ K</p> <table border="1" style="margin: 0 auto; border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table> <p>♠ A K 8 7 2 ♥ 3 ♦ J 8 4 3 ♣ 6 5 3</p>		N		W		E		S		<p>♠ 4 ♥ K 9 8 4 ♦ K 6 ♣ A J 10 9 8 4</p>
	N										
W		E									
	S										

Like so many deals, this one resembles a jigsaw puzzle. All declarer has to do is put the pieces together in the right order.

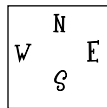
Suppose that East had found a switch to the king of diamonds at Trick 2? Declarer has to ruff the third round of diamonds low in dummy and then take an immediate ruffing finesse in hearts.

# A *n optical illusion*

Our final Balicki conjuring trick was performed near the end of 2000 at a Pairs event in Slawa.

**North-South vulnerable**  
**Dealer West.**

♠ K Q 10  
♥ K 10 9 5 2  
♦ 5 4 2  
♣ K 6



♠ J 9 7 5 3  
♥ Q 7  
♦ A Q J  
♣ A 9 2

West	North <i>Golebiowski</i>	East	South <i>Balicki</i>
pass	2♦ <sup>1</sup>	pass	1NT
pass	3NT	pass	2♥
pass		all pass	

1. Transfer.

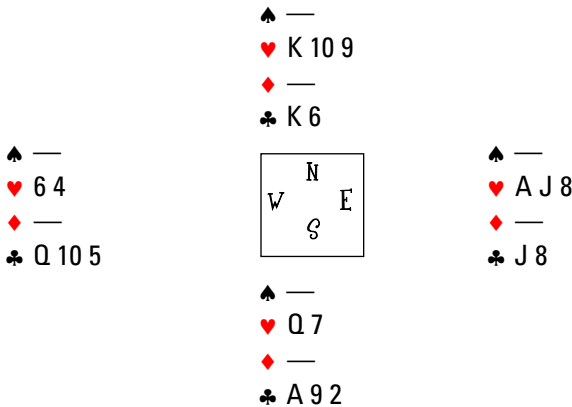
It is not necessarily wrong to ignore a weak five-card major in favor of notrump, but when West leads the ten of diamonds and the dummy is revealed we can see that it may not have been so clever this time. We have missed our 5-3 spade fit, and a spade contract would have produced at least ten easy tricks. Meanwhile, back in 3NT, East contributes the seven of diamonds to the first trick, so it is safe to assume that West has the king. That is likely to mean that ten tricks will be the limit in spades, so we must concentrate on trying to take ten in notrump in order to get any matchpoints.

Winning Trick 1 with the jack of diamonds, we play a spade to the king. East takes the ace and returns the three of diamonds to the queen and king. West plays another diamond as East discards the two of spades. What now?



We have to assume that East has the ace of hearts, and we need to locate the jack to arrive at the ten tricks we need. As West started with five diamonds, East is a slight favorite to hold the jack of hearts, but we can obtain some further information before committing ourselves.

Our next move is to cash our spade tricks and observe the defenders' discards. West discards a club on the second spade and a diamond on the third one, confirming that he does not have the ace of hearts. He discards another diamond on the fourth spade while East discards a club, but only with a degree of reluctance. Neither defender has parted with a heart, which suggests the suit is 3-3. However, the discards have been revealing in so far as West's early release of a club suggests that he started with four to the queen, while East's play suggests he began with four clubs to the jack. When we play the last spade West finally discards a heart and East another club. These cards remain:



West may be discarding cleverly from ♥Jxx but East's reluctance to part with a heart is a strong indicator of his possession of the vital card — the jack of hearts. Looking at all four hands, can you see a sure route to the four tricks we need?



We have already taken six tricks but it looks as if it will be difficult to get four more. For example, we can cross to the king of clubs and run the ten of hearts but then the heart suit will be blocked. However, this is an optical illusion as we can disentangle the situation at that point by cashing the ace of clubs and then playing the queen of hearts, forcing East to surrender the last trick to dummy.



Just as we are about to embark on this line a warning note sounds. East can disrupt our plan by going up with the ace of hearts when we lead the ten off dummy, and returning a club. We will be able to win and cash the queen of hearts, but we will be stuck in the South hand and will have to give a club trick to West at the end. Is this the end of the line, or is there one more twist to this ending?



Yes, there is - we first cash the ace of clubs and play a club to the king, and only then lead the ten of hearts. North and East have only hearts left, and if East ducks, we shall win this trick with the ten and get one of the last two as well. Of course, East has had time to think about this and so puts up the ace, intending to play back a low heart and lock us in hand. However, when we contribute the queen of hearts to this trick, East is left on lead and has to play a heart into the K-10 tenace on the table. Bravo!

Here's the whole layout:

	♠ K Q 10											
	♥ K 10 9 5 2											
	♦ 5 4 2											
	♣ K 6											
♠ 6 ♥ 6 4 3 ♦ K 10 9 8 6 ♣ Q 10 5 4	<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ A 8 4 2 ♥ A J 8 ♦ 7 3 ♣ J 8 7 3	
	N											
W		E										
	S											
	♠ J 9 7 5 3											
	♥ Q 7											
	♦ A Q J											
	♣ A 9 2											

In an attempt to deflect declarer from the winning line, West might have done better to part with a low heart rather than a club on the fourth spade but the club was an easy discard of the type we have all made.

This book was put together with a dual purpose in mind, and the result is the finest collection of deals since Pietro Forquet's *Bridge With The Blue Team*. First, you can read *Bridge Magicians* as a text that will provide insight into the skill that is involved in expert-level declarer play; you'll get the chance to follow declarer's reasoning, and make your own decision at the critical points on each deal. Perhaps some of the brilliant flights of imagination in these pages will inspire you to greater heights yourself! Second, you can approach this book simply as a feast of great bridge: sit back and marvel at the incredible virtuosity that the Polish stars display on these deals. By the time you have finished, you will surely agree, that the title is no exaggeration: these players truly are 'bridge magicians'!



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