

Win the
Bermuda Bowl
With Me



Jeff Meckstroth
Marc Smith

Win the
Bermuda Bowl
With Me



Jeff Meckstroth
Marc Smith

MASTER POINT PRESS • TORONTO

Copyright © 2001 Jeff Meckstroth and Marc Smith

All rights reserved. It is illegal to reproduce any portion of this material except by special arrangement with the publisher. Reproduction of this material without authorization, by any duplication process whatsoever, is a violation of copyright.

Master Point Press

331 Douglas Ave.
Toronto, Ontario, Canada
M5M 1H2
(416) 781-0351

Websites: <http://www.masterpointpress.com>
 <http://www.masteringbridge.com>
 <http://www.ebooksbridge.com>
 <http://www.bridgeblogging.com>

E-mail: info@masterpointpress.com

Canadian Cataloguing in Publication Data

Meckstroth, Jeff 1956-
Win the bermuda bowl with me

ISBN 978-1-55494-078-3

I. Bermuda Bowl, 2. Contract bridge — Tournaments — Bermuda.
I. Smith, Marc, 1960- .II. Title.

GV 1282.62.B47M42 2001 794.41'58 C00-933102-6

Cover and Interior design: Olena S. Sullivan
Editor: Ray Lee
Interior format and copyediting: Deanna Bourassa

Printed and bound in Canada by Webcom Limited

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

07 06 05 04 03 02 01



Foreword

Jeff and I have been playing bridge together for more than a quarter of a century. In that time, we have discussed thousands of auctions and developed our own theories on how to react to most bidding situations. In this book, Jeff outlines many of the ideas that we have adopted over the years. He also offers numerous insights into our bidding philosophy, although thankfully, the book was not long enough for him to give away all of our secrets. Seriously, though, while you may not always agree with Jeff's views, they have stood us in good stead through a great many victories. I hope you find them both interesting and helpful.

In our years as a partnership, I have been privileged to watch Jeff handle the dummy with incredible skill. His declarer play is as good as that of anyone who has ever played the game. In this book, he explains his thinking on each deal, from his reaction on first seeing dummy through the making of his initial plan and how he adjusts his thinking as the play develops.

The deals here were all played against top quality opposition at the highest level — in the Bermuda Bowl itself. I hope you will find Jeff's observations on the pressures of playing in the world's greatest bridge event interesting. Reading through the manuscript brought back many memories for me — how close we came to missing the cut in the Round Robin at the 1995 Bermuda Bowl and the exciting quarter-final match in Bermuda 2000 are two examples that spring to mind. I also remember many of the deals, and between them the authors have done a wonderful job of recreating the tense atmosphere in which they occurred.

Eric Rodwell

PHOTO CREDITS

ACBL: 134

Chris Cooper: 40

Courtesy Bridge Magazine IMP: 30 41 57 58 73

Ray Lee: 18 19 25 26 31 37 52 85 96 114 128 142 152 158 162 168
174 178 182

Mark Horton: 48

Ron Tacchi: 36 43 47 52 55 64 70 73 77 88 91 93 94 100 102
105 109 110 116 122 131 148 184 186

Sheri Winestock and Joan Eaton: 15 27 32 77 136 137 145 147
156 163 169 188

CONTENTS

Foreword	5
Introduction	9
The Round Robin	13
<i>Match 1</i>	<i>Poland</i> 16
<i>Match 2</i>	<i>New Zealand</i> 20
<i>Match 3</i>	<i>Great Britain</i> 20
<i>Match 4</i>	<i>Canada</i> 27
<i>Match 5</i>	<i>Sweden</i> 28
<i>Match 6</i>	<i>Norway</i> 31
<i>Match 7</i>	<i>Italy</i> 33
<i>Match 8</i>	<i>Poland</i> 37
<i>Match 9</i>	<i>New Zealand</i> 38
<i>Match 10</i>	<i>Great Britain</i> 42
<i>Match 11</i>	<i>Canada</i> 47
<i>Match 12</i>	<i>Sweden</i> 48
<i>Match 13</i>	<i>Norway</i> 49
<i>Match 14</i>	<i>Italy</i> 53
The Quarter-final	63
The Semifinal	101
The Final	139

INTRODUCTION

To any bridge player, the Bermuda Bowl is *the* world championship — the one title above all that is symbolic of world bridge supremacy. As of the time this book is first available, Jeff Meckstroth has participated in six Bermuda Bowls, each at a different venue, and has won four of them. The Bermuda Bowl competition described in these pages is not, in fact, any one of these events, but a fictitious championship made up from deals actually played by Jeff during his twenty years experience of the Bermuda Bowl. In most cases, the real-life opponents were those named in this book, although there are some exceptions. In the chapters describing the knockout stages we had to choose a single opponent for each round in this mythical championship, whereas Jeff has actually played, for example, four finals against four different countries. Jeff chose to stage this ‘amalgamation’ in Beijing, which is his favorite of the six venues.

If you are expecting to find in these pages a series of hands in which Jeff Meckstroth brings home ambitious contracts on esoteric squeezes, you will be disappointed. The problems on the deals included here are very similar to those you are likely to face when you next sit down to play. The difference is that, while reading these hands, you will have the benefit of listening to one of the world’s truly great players explain his thought processes. Why should you switch to a diamond rather than a spade? Why should you play for a 3-3 break rather than take a finesse? What difference does it make to lead a diamond early? What are the clues that should point you to the winning line of play or defense? Jeff’s explanations help to answer these and many other common questions.

Eric Rodwell and Jeff Meckstroth are widely acknowledged as the best partnership bidders ever to have played the game. Does that mean that you are going to see dozens of twenty-bid sequences as they wend their way to a slam on some delicate 4-3 fit? Not at all — the type of bidding problem addressed here is no different from those you face at the table every time you play. Should you overcall or double? When and how high should you preempt? Should you sacrifice? Should you double? To help you to understand why one option will work more often than another, Jeff explains the reasoning that led him to choose a particular action when he held the hand. We will even see a couple of situations in which Eric and Jeff have a misunderstanding; they have now discussed those auctions so that the problem will never recur. Perhaps these are situations that you should ask your regular partner about too. You may be surprised to find that you are on different wavelengths.

You will hear Jeff's views on a wide range of common bidding situations and everyone reading this book, from beginner to World Champion, will pick up some tips from the master. In addition to the tips on bidding, play and defense, Jeff also provides some amusing stories about some of his opponents. He offers us a rare insight into the psychological aspect of playing under pressure, in the spotlight of a World Championship.

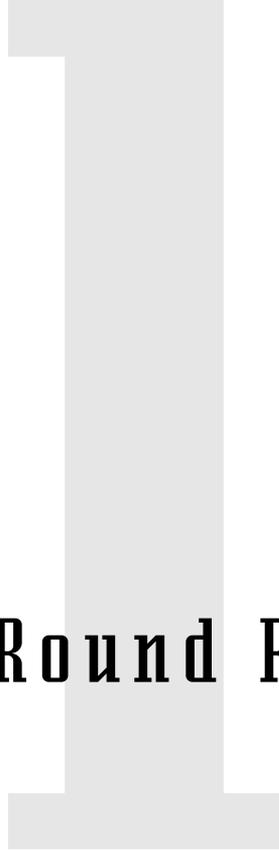
Most of the text of this book is written in the first person plural. The "We" and "Our" in the narrative (as in "We pick up...", "This is our hand...", "What shall we do now..." etc.) should be read as meaning "Jeff and the reader". This enables him to discuss his thinking with you directly as the hand is progressing. The odd notes that appear in a different type and use "I" as the pronoun explain what Jeff actually did at the table and move the hand on to the next stage. This format is also used to introduce the various opponents. We've included pictures of Jeff's opponents, and also of many of his teammates in world competition, especially those who have formed part of the formidable Nickell team.

We hope you enjoy playing the hands in this book, for that is exactly what you will be doing. We wish you luck as you set off to play in your first Bermuda Bowl.

Win the
Bermuda Bowl

With Me





The Round Robin

I have been looking forward to this Bermuda Bowl for some time. China has always been high on the list of places I wanted to visit, and playing a World Championship in Beijing will be quite an experience. I am looking forward to visiting Tiananmen Square and the Great Hall of the People. With luck, we'll also have the time to travel out to see the Great Wall.

My wife, Shirlee, and I set off a full week before the championships are due to begin. We stop over for a few days in Hong Kong, in part to get adjusted to the time change but also to get into a relaxed frame of mind before the serious business gets under way. Then it's onwards to Beijing to join up with my teammates and catch up with the many old friends who will be there. We arrive at Capital International Airport, located some twenty miles northeast of the city. We are met at the gate and whisked away to the venue, the magnificent Continental Grand Hotel, a seventeen-story palace situated in the Asian Games Village. I had expected to be surrounded by historical sites but this region of Beijing, including the hotel, was built in 1990 for the Asian games and it is ultra-modern.

The hotel is huge, with six different restaurants, a host of private VIP dining rooms and more than 1200 rooms. There are even two karaoke bars — I wonder idly if I will find myself singing some familiar ballad with backing from the likes of Helgemo, Robson and Soloway before the event finishes. I hope not, but it wouldn't surprise me!

It's worth mentioning here the overall atmosphere of these events, as it would probably surprise people who have never attended a World Championship. It's all strictly business during the day when play is in progress but, unlike events at home, the bridge finishes in the early evening and then things get very social. The bar gets busy and everyone enjoys a few beers. Most teams go for an excellent meal, often in large groups comprising a couple of teams plus their wives and/or friends. Then it's back to business again the next morning and we do it all over again.



The Great Wall

I meet up with Eric, who arrived yesterday, and together we go to check out the playing areas. Conditions are superb — plenty of space, good lighting and not too hot.

The draw for the Round Robin is tough but we knew it would be. In principle, these are the best sixteen teams in the world. The field is divided into two pools of eight. We will play a double Round Robin of 20-board matches over five days, with four teams from each pool surviving to the knockout stage. The other teams in our group are Italy, Poland, Norway, Sweden, Great Britain, Canada and New Zealand. Of those, only the New Zealanders would be considered to have little chance of qualifying and then only because they are something of an unknown quantity. Not that the other group is much easier — it contains the other USA team, Brazil, France, Pakistan, Indonesia and the hosts, China, along with outsiders Australia and South Africa.

The key to surviving the Round Robin comfortably is to crush the weakest teams. Doing so gives you a margin for error against the stronger teams. Ideally, you also want to win your group, rather than just simply qualifying. Winning gives you the choice of opponents in the knockout stage, which can be a major advantage as there is a carry-forward if you play a team you have met earlier in the event.

We open against Poland. We are to be featured on Vugraph but that will not faze any of the players involved in this match. All are experienced campaigners at this level. Eric leads the way into the Open Room. . . **are you ready to take your seat?**

DAY ONE

1

Match 1 vs. Poland

The Poles are all good guys. It often seems remarkable how similar all of their pairs are — they all play Polish Club and they are all extremely tough opponents: aggressive bidders and excellent card players. This particular Polish team includes the four Poles I know best — Cezary Balicki, Adam Zmudzinski, Marek Szymanowski and Marcin Lesniewski. I've spent many enjoyable evenings playing blackjack with these guys in casinos around the world.

The match is fairly flat in our room but the final deal looks to have potential for a swing. With both sides vulnerable, our hand is:

♠ — ♥ A K J 10 8 5 3 ♦ Q J 9 ♣ A Q 5

We are playing a Strong Club system so we have no problem here — **one club**. Balicki, on our left, overcalls **one spade** and partner bids a natural and positive **one notrump**, promising a spade stopper. As we are in a game-forcing auction, we could bid a simple Two Hearts, but that covers a wide range of hands. Our philosophy is to let partner know we hold a real monster if possible and we can do so here without using too much space — by jumping to **three hearts**. This shows a very strong, one-suited hand with at least a semi-solid suit — something like a game-forcing Two Clubs opening in Standard.

Partner raises us to **four hearts**. **Are you tempted to bid on?**

You should not be — Four Hearts is the weakest bid he had available. With a suitable hand, he would cuebid one of the minors. His initial One Notrump told us that he has spade values and his failure to make a positive move over Three Hearts suggests he will have little else. Indeed, Four Hearts might not be a walk in the park. . .

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
<i>Balicki</i>	<i>Eric</i>	<i>Zmudzinski</i>	<i>Us</i>
1♠	1NT	pass	1♣ ¹
pass	4♥	all pass	3♥

1. Artificial, 16+.

West leads the six of spades and dummy appears with:

	♠ K Q J 10 4									
	♥ 4									
	♦ 7 5 4									
	♣ 10 9 6 2									
	<table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <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									
♠ 6 led										
	♠ —									
	♥ A K J 10 8 5 3									
	♦ Q J 9									
	♣ A Q 5									

Dummy's king wins Trick 1 and we dispose of the low club. That can't be a bad start. We are unlikely to reach dummy again so we must choose which finesse to take. **Any ideas?**

After the unusual low spade lead, presumably away from the ace, we can place West with a tough hand to lead from — very likely, he has an honor in each suit. If this reasoning is correct, there is no point in finessing in either clubs or hearts. Our best chance seems to be to find the ten of diamonds onside.



Cezary Balicki

We therefore lead a low diamond and put in the nine, but that doesn't seem to have worked either — West wins the trick with the ten of diamonds. Balicki continues with the ace of diamonds and a third round of the suit to his partner's king. Zmudzinski then plays a club. What do you make of this?

There is one thing of which we can be certain — East does not hold the king of clubs. He would hardly give us a chance to take a winning finesse that we clearly cannot take for ourselves.

We go up with the ace of clubs and the king falls from West. When we cash the ace-king of hearts, West's queen comes down doubleton and we can claim our contract. Hmmm... It seems that playing on diamonds was the winning line of play after all. Taking a losing finesse in either clubs or hearts would still have left us with three inescapable diamond losers.

This was the full deal:



Marcin Lesniewski

<p>♠ A 9 8 6 5 2 ♥ Q 9 ♦ A 10 8 2 ♣ K</p>	<p>♠ K Q J 10 4 ♥ 4 ♦ 7 5 4 ♣ 10 9 6 2</p>	<p>♠ 7 3 ♥ 7 6 2 ♦ K 6 3 ♣ J 8 7 4 3</p>			
	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 80px; height: 80px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	
N					
W E					
S					
	<p>♠ — ♥ A K J 10 8 5 3 ♦ Q J 9 ♣ A Q 5</p>				

A game swing for us? Not at all. At the other table, our West avoided the low spade lead, choosing the ace instead! Declarer ruffed, laid down the top trumps felling the queen and drew East's last trump. Declarer then led the queen of diamonds, ducked to East's king. A diamond return would have left declarer with no chance but East chose to play a club and declarer played low. West won with the king but now found himself endplayed in a rather unusual fashion — a diamond lead gives away a trick in that suit and a spade allows declarer to pitch his diamonds on dummy's winners. Just another dull flat board!

We win the match but only just, by 3 IMPs, which translates into 16-14 in Victory Points. Still, it's better than a 3-IMP loss.



Adam Zmudzinski

A rare over-the-shoulder look at the thought processes of one of the world's best players as he takes you through the highs and lows of winning the world teams championship. Written in the style of Terence Reese's classic *Play Bridge with Reese*, Jeff Meckstroth's first book gives you a chance to make your own decisions at critical stages in each deal, and compare your results with what actually happened. The tension mounts as every bid and play gets you closer to the ultimate prize - the Bermuda Bowl!



"Unless you've actually done it, it's impossible to understand what it feels like to play in the Bermuda Bowl - that is, until now." — Zia Mahmood

"This is a book people will still want to read many years from now!" — Paul Soloway, World Champion

"Jeff explains the game as well as he plays it. Need I say more?" — Larry Cohen, author of *To Bid or not to Bid*



JEFF MECKSTROTH is a multiple World Champion, and one of only eight players in bridge history who has won the Bermuda Bowl, the Olympiad, and the World Open Pairs. He lives in Tampa, Florida.



MARC SMITH is a bridge journalist whose books include *World Class* and (with Barbara Seagram) the award-winning *25 Bridge Conventions You Should Know*.

