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OPEN SERIES - 3rd Round

Germany vs Italy

Germany might have been forgiven had they gone into this match against the reigning Olympiad champions with drooping spirits: two super-blitzes earlier in the day at the hands of Poland and Ireland had left them only one v.p. from the table-bottom. Undismayed, the Germans reversed the trend to the extent of actually picking up three v.p.s from their illustrious opponents, who included Giorgio Belladonna, the world's top-ranked bridge player. (The WBF's latest ranking list credited him with 1183 WBF master points, 33 more than Pietro Forquet.)

Belladonna's distinctive style of dummy play has been responsible for innumerable swings in situations where mathematically there seems virtually no difference between two alternate strategies. But in the Germany match the *maestro*, for a change, came off second best on the deal shown, which was handled successfully by the young German player, Goran Mattsson. The problem was the age-old one of locating the damsel:

Board 27

Dir: South S. 4
Vul: None H. ~~X~~ 10 8 8
D. J 4 3 2
C. 7 6 5 3

S. A 9 7 S. K J 10 8 5 3
H. ~~X~~ 7 4 H. ~~X~~ 8 8 2
D. A K 8 D. 9 7
C. K Q 4 2 C. 10

S. Q 6 2
H. 7 8
D. Q 10 6 5
C. A J 9 8

Open Room Bidding:

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
von Gynz	Avarelli	Schroeder	Belladonna
Pass	1 C	Pass	1 S
Pass	1 NT	Pass	2 C
Pass	2 S	Pass	3 H
Pass	4 S	All Pass	

Closed Room Bidding:

D'Alelio	Mattsson	Pabis Ticci	vonDewitz
Pass	1 C	Pass	1 S
Pass	3 NT	Pass	4 S
Pass	Pass	Pass	

In the Open Room, Detlev von Gynz of Munster led the jack of hearts from the South hand against Belladonna's contract of four spades. Dummy played low, North encouraged with the eight, and declarer won with the queen. Belladonna decided to play a trump to the ace and a trump back. When North showed out, declarer tried the effect of leading his club singleton, but von Gynz rose with the ace and cashed the queen of trumps. A heart lead then enabled North to take the setting tricks.

In the Closed Room Massimo D'Alelio also led the jack of hearts against four spades but this time Mattsson, on winning with the queen returned his singleton club before touching trumps. D'Alelio went in with the ace and exited with a heart in approved fashion and Camillo Pabis Ticci took his two winners. Pabis Ticci could tell, of course, that there were no more tricks to be gained in the plain suits, and he could also see that to play a fourth heart would be actively dangerous if declarer had the trump holding he actually had. But if, perchance, East's spades were only K-J-10-x-x --or, more likely, Q-J-10-x-x-x, a fourth heart, forcing dummy to ruff, would ensure a trump trick for South.

Pabis Ticci, therefore, elected to play the fourth heart, the eight spot. This doubtless did not greatly please D'Alelio, who discarded a diamond. Drawing the correct inference, declarer ruffed in dummy, entered his hand with a club ruff, returned a low trump and took a first-round finesse of dummy's nine of trumps to pick up 10 IMPs for Germany.

(In the Britain-South Africa match four spades was played by the short trump hand. Tony Priday, the British North, led a diamond and Rodrigue's queen lost to declarer's ace; A-K of spades came next, then the club singleton from the table. Had Rodrigue known the true position in the red suits, he would have ducked: in this case declarer could still have gotten home by maneuvering a heart ruff, South being unable to gain the lead to draw declarer's last trump. In the actual case Rodrigue had to go in with the ace, solving declarer's problem, since from his angle Priday could have had the king of diamonds.)

Three boards later the duel between Mattsson and Belladonna continued with this

hand:

Board: 30	S. - -	Open Room Bidding:			
Dir: East	H. J 7 6 5 2	EAST	SOUTH	WEST	NORT
Vul: None	D. 10 7 5 4 2	Belladonna	v. Gynz	Avarelli	Schroe
	C. Q 10 3	1 C	2 C	2 NT	Pass
S. J 10 8 3		3 S	Pass	4 H	Pass
H. A 9 3	S. A K Q 6 5 4	4 S	Pass	5 C	Dbl
E. Q 3	H. Q 10 4	Rdbl	Pass	5 H	Pass
C. A 8 5 2	D. A J 9 8	6 S	Pass	Pass	Pass
	C. - -				
	S. 9 7 2	Closed Room Bidding:			
	H. K 8	v. Dewitz	D'Alelio	Mattsson	PabisTic
	D. K 6	2 S	Pass	3 S	Pass
	C. K J 9 7 6 4	4 D	Pass	4 H	Pass
		6 S	Pass	Pass	Pass

The slam, reached in both rooms, was a strong odds-on chance. Theorists may note that in the Roman pair's auction the double of five clubs by Dirk Schroeder, North, gave East-West, in effect, an extra round of bidding: Belladonna was able to redouble to show additional club control, while Avarelli was able to confirm heart control.

Against Belladonna, von Gynz led the seven of clubs. Faced with various possibilities in the red suits, declarer selected a plan that was simple and sound: South had to have the red kings (especially as North had become marked with, probably, two club honors) so after drawing three rounds of trumps Belladonna merely led a low diamond from the closed hand. If South had ducked, declarer would have had eleven certain tricks, with the possibility of bringing down the king of diamonds or establishing a heart for his twelfth trick. In the actual case South, of course went in with the king and Belladonna tabled the cards.

In the Closed Room Mattsson had no competitive bidding to guide him. D'Alelio led a club and declarer elected to ruff it in his own hand. Then he entered dummy with a trump and led the queen of diamonds, losing to South who exited with a trump.

Declarer won in dummy, ruffed a club, reentered dummy with a third trump and cashed the ace of clubs, discarding a heart. Then he put his fortunes to the test by finessing the nine of diamonds! When it held, declarer had a parking place for dummy's two low hearts, a heart ruff in dummy producing the twelfth trick.

After winning South's trump return in dummy at trick four, an interesting alternate possibility would have been to draw a third trump and cash the A-J of diamonds. If the ten fell, declarer would have twelve tricks. In the actual case, he would continue by ruffing the fourth diamond, cashing the ace of clubs, and ruffing a club. When the trumps were run, South would become squeezed in clubs and hearts.

However, the nine-finesse that Mattsson took in diamonds is in all probability a better play, for North had shown void of trumps and was likely to be long in the other suits. (A purist might perhaps have cashed the ace of hearts first.)

So both declarers, in different fashion negotiated the slam in the safest possible way. And Mattsson, the emigre Swede who lives in Cologne, distinguished himself on the two hands by successfully finessing two nine-spots!