

April 2016

# eDeclarer

ACBL UNIT 499 NEWSLETTER

## President's Message



Hello, Fellow Bridge Players,

I just returned from the Spring NABC in Reno. What a big turnout! Everywhere I turned, I saw lots of players from our unit there. We were fortunate this event was in our "neck of the woods" and provided an opportunity for many of us to attend one of the the "big tourneys." It worked out well that the three hotels for the events were close together, so for the most part you could walk from one to the other for the games. In checking the results, there were lots of platinum, gold, and red points awarded to members of our unit. For the newer players, I hope you enjoyed the chance to compete at an NABC and meet players literally from all over the world. Our unit's own Jackie Zayac was the Prize Chair for this NABC, and I know she appreciated all of you who volunteered to help hand out prizes to winners. I had a chance to meet some of the best players in the world at the prize desk - names I had only read about in the Bridge Bulletin, so that was a thrill for me.

Our unit's Spring Sectional is April 16-17 at the San Ramon Valley High School in Danville. Sectional Chair, Wayne Miller, has done an excellent job of organizing this event. If you haven't already done so, line up a favorite partner and come and play!

See you at the tables,  
Anne

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## from the editor

Two big events coming up: On April 3, there will be a special game at DVBC - a gala with special party fare to aid in the fundraising for our new Contra Costa Bridge Center. Check out the flyer in this issue, and give your support to our new venture.

The other event is our Spring Sectional later in April. This is always a popular event, so check details on the flyer herein, and plan to be there.

Judy Keilin,  
Editor



### Unit 499 eDeclarer

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Editor: Judy Keilin  
Publisher: Mary Krouse  
Submit articles to [jkeilin@pacbell.net](mailto:jkeilin@pacbell.net)  
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April 2016  
**Deadline for May is April 15**

To submit a letter to the editor,  
send it to Judy Keilin at  
[jkeilin@pacbell.net](mailto:jkeilin@pacbell.net)

Be sure to visit the unit website for more information on our clubs and events, as well as archives of our newsletters.

[diablolvalleybridge.com](http://diablolvalleybridge.com)

Mary Krouse, Publisher



# Unit 499 Milestones

## New Junior Masters

Dennis Corburn  
Kenneth Derr  
Marlene Farrell  
Christine Gee  
Wing Gee  
Carol Irwin  
Harriett Mayne  
William Seroy  
Pat Silverstein  
Russell Silverstein  
Judy Smith  
Terry Wassman  
Ann Wyatt

## New Club Masters

John Boyan  
Ben Bryce  
Dolly Wilson

## New Sectional Masters

Jean Kitchens  
Kenneth Luekens  
Cal Lutrin  
Joan Pierce  
James Slattery  
Kerry Smith

## New Regional Masters

John Schelling  
Mary Schelling

## New NABC Masters

Bob Barnes  
Marilyn Chaplin  
Mel Chaplin  
Gary Hargrove  
Barbara Smith



# ***Diablo Valley Spring Sectional***



**April 16 - 17, 2016**

***San Ramon Valley High School  
501 Danville Blvd., Danville, CA 94526***

***Presented by Diablo Valley Unit 499 (<http://diablolvalleybridge.com>)***

**Saturday, April 16<sup>th</sup>**

**10:00 AM**

**Two Session Stratified Open Pairs (session 1)**  
(0-750/750-2000/2000+)

**Single Session Stratified Pairs\*:**

**Open** (0-750/750-2000/2000+)  
**299er** (0-50/50-100/100-300)  
**99er** (0-20/20-50/50-100)

**Two Session Stratified Open Pairs (session 2)**  
(0-750/750-2000/2000+)

**Single Session Stratified Pairs\*:**

**Open** (0-750/750-2000/2000+)  
**299er** (0-50/50-100/100-300)  
**99er** (0-20/20-50/50-100)

**3:00 PM**

\* Games and strats will be adjusted based on attendance.

**Sunday, April 17<sup>th</sup>**

**10:00 AM & TBD: Bracketed Swiss Teams.** Brackets posted at tournament. **Teams must play both sessions.** 7 rounds/7 boards (lowest bracket plays 7 rounds/6 boards). 20 VP Scale for all brackets. Brackets based on team masterpoint average. Teams may elect to play in top bracket.

**Table fees:** \$12 per session (Non-ACBL or unpaid members \$15).

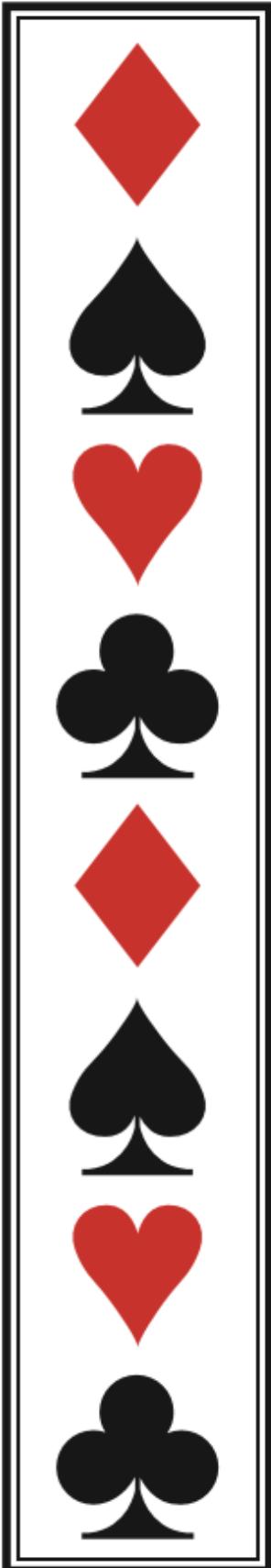
**Tournament Director:** Lynn Yokel (ACBL Sanction) #1604074

**Tournament Chair:** Wayne Miller 707-746-6169 email [doblevem@yahoo.com](mailto:doblevem@yahoo.com)

**Partnerships:** Partnership desk available at tournament. Also, use Unit 499's Google Group to find a partner: <http://groups.google.com/group/bridgepartner499>

**Food:** Refreshments. Lunch available for purchase Saturday and Sunday.

**Directions:** Take I-680 and exit onto El Cerro Blvd., turn west on El Cerro approx. 0.4 miles to Danville Blvd. Turn left onto Danville Blvd and drive 0.2 miles. San Ramon Valley High School is on the right. Enter San Ramon Valley High School at the 3rd driveway on your right. Follow parking signs.



YOU ARE INVITED TO ATTEND  
**A Benefit Celebration**  
FOR THE  
**Contra Costa  
Bridge Center**

**Sunday, April 3**

DVBC, Walnut Creek  
2920 Camino Diablo, Suite 100

**12-1PM CHAMPAGNE & HORS D'OEUVRES**

**1-4:30PM INAUGURAL GAME**

**OPEN AND 299ER, STRATIFIED**

Donation \$150/pair \*501(c)(3) pending  
Pre-paid reservations by March 31 are a must!

**CAN'T ATTEND THE PARTY?**

Donations are happily accepted.  
Donations of \$250 or more will be memorialized  
on a sponsor plaque in the new location.

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For donations and game reservations,  
please send check made out to CCBC to  
Mark Humphrey  
4 Merrill Drive, Moraga, CA 94556

-OR-

For reservations contact  
Grant Robinson at [GrantMRobinson@gmail.com](mailto:GrantMRobinson@gmail.com)  
-OR-  
sign up at DVBC

\*We currently have an application for exemption under 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code filed with the IRS. If this exemption is granted, this contribution will be tax-deductible.

# Play a Hand with me

North

S K83

H 86

D KQ853

C 752

West

S Q972

H J1072

D J107

C 108

East

S A1065

H A54

D 942

C A96



South

S J4

H KQ93

D A6

C KQJ43

We are going to call this hand “3<sup>rd</sup> hand real high”.

The bidding went 1N by South, P, 2N, P, 3N.

You are East and your partner leads the 2 of Spades. With your 12 points you can see that partner has very little, 3 or 4. From that you know that your partner will not be able to lead spades again so you have to visualize that they have the Queen of Spades and you must play your Ace and return the suit, partners Queen covers the J and you will now take 3 Spades and your 2 aces.

If you play the 10 of Spades at trick one declarer will win the J and knock out your ace of clubs and then they could then take 4 Clubs plus 5 Diamonds and 1 Spade making their contract.

This position comes up rarely but it is worth remembering it when it does.

Jerry Weitzner

# Interesting Hand

This hand came up in a side game at the Reno Nationals:

I held:  
S KQJ1086  
H 987532  
D ---  
C 8

My partner opened 1S. What to do??? After thinking it over, I bid 4S, and it made 6. Most people were in that contract, but some small number found the slam.

Later, after much thought and discussion, we decided the correct bid was 2NT to which partner would respond 3H, showing shortness. I could then bid 4D. Cue-bidding or ace-asking next would lead to the 6S slam.

Next time!!

Judy Keilin



# Improve Your Bridge Play



## IMPROVE YOUR BRIDGE PLAY

By David Terris

### ON DEFENSE: THE SURROUND PLAY

Here is a defensive situation that requires careful play. Both sides are vulnerable, and North is the dealer. Sitting East you hold

S AJ9632 H 8 D J54 C AJ9, and the auction is:

N      E      S      W  
1D     1S     2H     2S  
4H     All Pass

Partner (West) leads the spade 4.

|   |       |   |
|---|-------|---|
| S | 10    |   |
| H | KQ93  |   |
| D | AK832 |   |
| C | 1083  |   |
| N |       |   |
| W |       | E |
| S |       |   |

S      AJ9632  
H      8  
D      J54  
C      AJ9

After seeing this dummy, you play your ace and Declarer follows with the 7. It appears that the only source of tricks is in clubs, so you aimlessly lead the 9. Declarer plays the 6, partner the king and dummy the 3. Partner returns the 2 of clubs, dummy plays low, and you take your ace. Now Declarer wins the third round of the suit with his queen and makes 4H.

In order to possibly get three tricks in clubs and defeat the contract it is important that you lead the JACK, not the 9. With this lead you will get all 3 tricks in the suit if Declarer has the queen and partner the king. If Declarer covers with the queen, partner will win the king and now you hold A9 over dummy's 10. If Declarer ducks your jack, you then play your ace and then the 9 to partner's king.

David Terris

All four hands:

|          |  |   |        |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |
|----------|--|---|--------|--|---|--|---|--|---|--|--|--|
| S        | 10   | S | AJ9632 |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |
| H        | KQ93   | H | 8      |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |
| D        | AK832  | D | J54    |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |
| C        | 1083   | C | AJ9    |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |
| S Q854   |  | S | AJ9632 |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |
| H 72     |  | H | 8      |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |
| D 764    |  | D | J54    |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |
| C K542   |  | C | AJ9    |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |
|          | <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  |   |        |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |
| S K7     |  | S | K7     |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |
| H AJ1065 |  | H | AJ1065 |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |
| D Q109   |  | D | Q109   |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |
| C Q76    |  | C | Q76    |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |

This defensive maneuver is called a surround play. You must make sure that on the second round of the suit you "surround" dummy's 10, in this case with the A9. The same situation exists if you hold the king and partner the ace. Also, notice that if West initially leads clubs, there is no way to get three tricks in that suit.

# Club News

This section is for club owners and managers who wish to submit news about their games. Please go to our website for information about all our clubs, game times, and to check on the latest results.

[Diablovalleybridge.com](http://Diablovalleybridge.com)

## ROSSMOOR DUPLICATE BRIDGE CLUB

### Swiss Team Game at Rossmoor

There will be a Swiss Team Game at Rossmoor on Saturday, April 2, at 12:30pm. Prior registration is required and can be done at any Rossmoor duplicate game. Two of the four team members must be Rossmoor residents.

### Rossmoor Duplicate Bridge Club Offering Two Classes

#### BEGINNING BRIDGE

A class in beginning bridge will be offered by the Rossmoor Duplicate Bridge Club (RDBC) on Mondays from **9:30 to 11:30am**. Classes will run for eight weeks beginning April 11.



Pat Taylor and Kathleen Young will be co-teaching the class. The text will be "Bridge Basics 1, An Introduction," by Audrey Grant, and will be available from the instructors.

This class is for people who do not play bridge, but want to learn this fun, mind-challenging game.

#### DECLARER PLAY

The RDBC is offering a class in declarer play for intermediate bridge players on Tuesdays from **9:30 to 11:30am**. Classes will run for eight weeks beginning April 12.

Michael Gosnell, Club Manager, will be teaching this class. The text will be the Diamond Series book, "Declarer Play" and will be available from the instructor. The class will cover the following:

- making a plan for playing no trump and trump contracts
- developing tricks through promotion and finesse
- ruffing and discarding losers
- handling entries
- trump suit play

A review will be made of Standard American bidding including Stayman, strong two club openers, slam bidding and preempts. Each class will include instructions and practice deals, which reinforce the material taught.

#### REGISTRATION

The cost of each class is \$40 for members of the RDBC, \$50 for resident nonmembers (\$10 of which will cover dues in RDBC for 2016); and \$80 for nonresidents. Checks should be made payable to the Rossmoor Duplicate Bridge Club. Classes will be held in the Oak Room at the Gateway Center. To enroll call Barbara V. Smith at 256-4430.

#### No Game April 23

There will not be a game at Rossmoor on Saturday, April 23. There will be a flea market in the Oak Room.

Kit Miller

# The 24 / 680 Bridge Club

We thank the many players who have been participating in our games for helping us to promote the friendly atmosphere and the pleasant social interaction we have while playing bridge competitively in our Sanctioned Open Games.

Our Wednesday games run from 10am to about wpm with lunch included. We host a Swiss Team Game on the third Saturday of most months during the year.

Recently the CEO and COO for "Wounded Warriors" were in the news for purported unacceptable conduct and mismanagement. We have NOT raised any money for this named charity. Our game contributions have gone to the Wounded Warriors Family Support, which is a separate organization and earned the highest possible rating from Charity Navigator. We research the various charities which have been suggested by our players as candidates for our financial support through our ACBL sanctioned bridge game in Moraga, and we have only forwarded monies to what appear to be worthy charities.

We have supported Wounded Warriors Family Support, Contra Costa Food Bank, Tona LaRussa's Animal Rescue Foundation (ARF), as well as the approved ACBL charities. We will continue to have charity games, which enable us to award extra points to our players.

Please remember that reservations are required in advance for these games. If we have enough notice we can usually arrange for partnerships. You may reserve games in advance when you know your schedule.

April 2016: (The Swiss Team Game originally scheduled for April 16 has been cancelled as it conflicts with our local Diablo Valley Sectional Tournament.)

Wed. 4/6; ACBL Charity Pair Game \$9

Wed. 4/13: ACBL Charity Pair Game \$9

Wed. 2/20: ACBL Charity Pair Game \$9

Wed. 4/27: ACBL Charity Pair Game \$9

May 2016:

Wed. 5/4 STaC Pair Game \$9

Sat. 5/7 STaC Pair Game \$9

Wed. 5/11 Grass Roots Charity Pair Game \$9

Wed. 5/18 Grass Roots Charity Pair Game \$9

Sat. 5/21 Grass Roots Charity Swiss Team Unit Game \$9

Wed. 5/25 Grass Roots Charity Pair Game \$9

Jerry Chamberlain & Winnie Jasper

[Winnie@wjasper.com](mailto:Winnie@wjasper.com); 925-376-1125



## The 24/ 680 Club

The location is our home:  
183 Corliss Drive , Moraga 94556  
(on the corner of Corliss and Crossbrook Drives at  
the stop sign)  
On-street parking  
[925-376-1125](tel:925-376-1125)

Reservations required:  
Winnie: [Winnie@wjasper.com](mailto:Winnie@wjasper.com) or [925-376-1125](tel:925-376-1125) (home)

Jerry: [925-766-5228](tel:925-766-5228) (cell)

## The Moraga Evening Duplicate Bridge Club

The Moraga Country Club duplicate bridge is every Tuesday evening at 7pm at the Moraga Country Club. Reservations are required with David Geary, dsgeary@comcast.net. Fee is \$3. ACBL open club, stratified, hand records.

Recent results:

2/23 - 2 tables

- 1 - Lois & Dick Halliday
- 2 - Sue & Shyam Rungta
- 3 - Art Donaldson & David Geary

3/1 - 2 tables

- 1 - Art Donaldson & David Geary
- 2 - Maxine Winer & George Bazgan
- 3 - Mary Stuart & Al Dessayer

3/8 - no game, not enough players

3/15 - no game, not enough players

Regards, David Geary



## **Bridge on the Lake-Discovery Bay**

Discovery Bay Community Center  
1601 Discovery Bay Blvd  
Discovery Bay



The Discover Bay *Bridge on the Lake* Club has had some really nice games in the past month. Carmen Meuter and Alan Jarvie scored a 71.4% game, Katie Love and Don Smith a 64.3% game, Jackie Henke and Joyce Hayward, 63%, Nancy & Steve Blasingame had two 63+% games, Arlene & Benny Mahlberg a 62.9% game, and Wayne Vondera and Diane Simpson, a 62% game.

A calendar update: No games in Discovery Bay on April 23rd and 30th. The Community Center is not available those two Saturdays. May 7th will be the STaC game of course. Come and join us.

Arlene Mahlberg

Below are some very interesting articles you might want to read regarding cheating at bridge, and how one young player persevered to gather enough evidence to nail the perpetrators. It's fascinating to read about the scams that exist - well worth the time it takes!

## Is the Competitive Bridge World Rife with Cheaters?

BY  
JOHN COLAPINTO

For years, allegations and innuendo swirled around the high-stakes world of tournament bridge, but no one dared to speak out. Last summer, a Norwegian player broke the code of silence. Then came the bigger challenge: proving it.

On August 22, 2015, seven days after his loss at the Spingold, an annual week-long bridge championship held last year at the Chicago Hilton, Boye Brogeland posted a teasing comment to the Web site Bridgewinners.com. "Very soon there will come out mind boggling stuff that would even make a Hollywood movie surreal," wrote Brogeland, a 43-year-old Norwegian bridge player who is ranked 77th in the world. "It will give us a tremendous momentum to clean the game up, from the bottom to the very top." He followed this, two days later, with another comment advising players what to do if they have cheaters on their team, and announced that he and his teammates Richie Schwartz, Allan Graves, and Espen Lindqvist were relinquishing all the titles they had won in the previous two years. He made no mention of the pair with whom the six-man team had won those titles, Lotan Fisher and Ron Schwartz (no relation to Richie)—a deliberate omission, Brogeland says, to spare Bridge Winners any potential legal liability.

But two days later, Brogeland launched his own Web site, Bridgecheaters.com. The welcome page featured a huge photo of Fisher and Schwartz, a young Israeli duo who, since breaking into the international ranks in 2011, while still in their early 20s, had stunned the bridge world by snapping up the game's top trophies. Grinning, arms around each other's shoulders, they appeared under the tagline THE GREATEST SCAM IN THE HISTORY OF BRIDGE! Brogeland described an altercation he'd had with Fisher at the Spingold over a phantom trick (Fisher claimed 11 tricks in one hand when, in fact, he'd held the cards for 10), and posted examples of what he claimed to be suspiciously illogical hands played by the pair. He also included a "Cheating History"—information he had dug up from the Israel Bridge Federation and had translated from the original Hebrew. Brogeland said it laid out a pattern of alleged cheating and bad sportsmanship going back to when Fisher and Schwartz were in their mid-teens: in 2003, Fisher was suspended for a year for forging results and for unsportsmanlike conduct in the final of the Israeli championships; at the 2004 Tel Aviv International Bridge Festival, he was suspended for a month for calling another player a "faggot"; in July 2004, he and Schwartz were investigated for suspicious hands after winning the three-day Shaufel Cup; a year later, Schwartz was suspended for forging match results.

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**"IT'S AN UNWRITTEN RULE THAT YOU NOT PUBLICLY ACCUSE ANYONE— EVEN IF YOU'RE SURE."**

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The site, in its first 24 hours, received more than 100,000 hits. For the game of contract bridge, the technical name for a 91-year-old pastime that also happens to be a multi-million-dollar business, it was an earthquake equal to the jolt that shook international cycling when Lance Armstrong was banned from competition for doping. Before going public

with his accusations, Brogeland, aware that he was taking on powerful interests (at the professional level, the game runs on the sponsorships of C.E.O.'s and multi-millionaires), consulted the Norwegian police, who, Brogeland says, advised, "When you blow the whistle, do not be at your home address." Fisher and Schwartz, denying all wrongdoing, hired lawyers, who dispatched a letter to Brogeland threatening a lawsuit and offering to settle if he paid them \$1 million. Last fall Brogeland received a text that had originated with a teammate of Fulvio Fantoni and Claudio Nunes, the Italian pair who, for more than a decade, have reigned as the game's No. 1 and No. 2 players. Brogeland had also publicly accused them, along with two other top-ranking bridge pairs, of cheating. The message read, "Tell your friend Boye that whenever he needs a wheelchair we have plenty of those in the south." Fisher posted to his Facebook page a comment that Brogeland took as a message directed at him: "Jealousy made you sick. Get ready for a meeting with the devil." (Fisher denies that this message was intended for Brogeland.)

When I asked Jeff Meckstroth, widely recognized as one of the best bridge players in the world, about Brogeland, he answered me bluntly. "The guy has the biggest balls of anyone I've ever known."

Brogeland is a boyish, athletically built man whose blond hair, blue eyes, and easygoing smile mask a ferocious competitiveness.

The son of a butcher father and teacher mother, he was born and raised in the tiny, isolated town of Moi (population 1,977), in southern Norway. Today he lives in Flekkefjord, a short drive from where he grew up, in a house he shares with his wife, Tonje, and their two young children. “I come from a place where everybody knows everybody,” he says. “Integrity is part of what makes you in such a community.” Early tragedy also had a decisive effect on his character, he says. He was 11 years old when his mother committed suicide. “When those things happen, I think it makes you think a lot about big questions in life,” he says, “fairness and justice.”

Having learned bridge at age eight from his grandparents, he fell in love with the game, and turned pro at 28. He has won several international tournaments, runs a successful Norwegian bridge magazine, and in 2013 was recruited by his current sponsor, Richie Schwartz, a Bronx-born bridge addict, mathematician, and program analyst, who made a fortune at the racetrack in the 1970s. When choosing bridge players for his teams, Schwartz often hires undervalued European players who cost less than Americans. “I always fought to get the best deals,” says Schwartz—who nevertheless admits that he will pay up to \$200,000 to play in three annual U.S. nationals with a given pair. “Some pay \$500,000 or more, though,” he adds. Brogeland says Schwartz pays him travel expenses and a base yearly salary of \$50,000—with big bonuses for strong showings in tournaments.

Not long after Brogeland joined Schwartz’s team, he learned that Schwartz was hiring Lotan Fisher and Ron Schwartz. Brogeland had heard the rumors: in 2012, Fisher and Schwartz won the Cavendish, one of bridge’s most coveted titles, but under circumstances suspicious enough that other top players refused to play in the tournament the following year if Fisher and Schwartz played. (They did not.) But because Brogeland had never played against them and did not know them personally, he reserved judgment. “I try to base my opinion of people on what I experience myself,” he says, adding that he did, however, warn his new teammates. “I told them, ‘I’ve heard the rumors. Whatever you do, play straight.’”

Over the next two years, the team of Brogeland, Lindqvist, Fisher, Schwartz, Graves, and Schwartz won a string of championships: the 2014 Spingold, the 2014 Reisinger, the 2015 Jacoby Swiss. During that time, says Brogeland, he regularly checked Bridge Base Online, a Web site that archives tournament hands, so he could monitor how his new teammates were behaving when playing at the table adjacent to him. He saw “maybe five or six” suspicious-looking hands, he says, “but nowhere near enough to say, ‘You’re cheating.’” Nevertheless, he says he was relieved when, in the summer of 2015, the pair was lured away by the deep-pocketed sponsor Jimmy Cayne, former C.E.O. of the defunct investment house Bear Stearns. “When they changed teams,” Brogeland says, “I didn’t have to be faced with this kind of environment where you’re not sure—you feel something is strange but you can’t really tell.”

Fisher, meanwhile, was enjoying his position at the top of the game, where the lives of many successful young pros more closely resemble those of well-heeled, globe-hopping rock musicians than what might be conjured by the term “bridge player.” Convening nightly at a hotel bar in whatever city is holding the competition—Biarritz, Chennai, Chicago—they drink until the small hours, rising late the next day, since tournament organizers mercifully schedule the first matches for one in the afternoon. Fisher, hailed as the “wonder boy of Israeli bridge,” was a fixture of the bar scene. Charismatic, and darkly handsome, with a widow’s peak and heavy brows, he posted Instagram photos of himself posing in well-cut suits in five-star hotels, behind the wheel of luxury cars, or partying with an array of young people—spoils of his status in a game where, for three years, he had been drawing an almost unbroken string of wins that brought bonuses amounting to six figures. There was only one problem: the persistent rumors that he was a cheater. Many people were whispering about it, according to Steve Weinstein, a top American player who writes for the Web site Bridgewinners.com. “But it’s an unwritten rule that you not publicly accuse anyone—even if you’re sure,” Weinstein says. It was a Catch-22 that Fisher seemed to delight in flaunting, shrugging off questions about his suspicious play as if daring anyone to openly accuse him. “He had the Nietzschean superman personality,” says Fred Gitelman, a former champion and co-founder of Bridge Base Online. “He just thought he was in a different league.”



## CHAMPS AND CHEATS

Contract bridge is built on the rules of the 18th-century British game whist: a deck of cards is dealt to four people, who play in two-person partnerships, sitting opposite each other at a table. The player to the left of the dealer leads with a card of any suit—heart, diamond, club, or spade—and each player in succession plays a card of the suit led; the highest card wins the trick. It's a deceptively simple game only slightly complicated by the existence of the trump: a card in a suit that overrules all others. In whist, trump is determined randomly, before the start of each hand. In auction bridge, a game popularized in England in 1904, trump is determined in each hand's opening "auction," when the teams, communicating solely by way of spoken bids ("Three spades," "Two hearts," "Three no trump"), establish which (if any) suit will be trump and how many tricks they think they can take. Pairs who take more tricks than contracted for are awarded extra points for those tricks. The pair with the most points, after all 13 tricks are played, wins the hand.

Contract bridge emerged from devilish refinements introduced, in 1925, by the American railroad magnate Harold S. Vanderbilt. While on a cruise through the Panama Canal, he sought to goose up a game of dull auction bridge by awarding escalating bonus points to pairs who took the greatest risk in the opening auction, and imposed steep point deductions on pairs who failed to make the tricks contracted for. Thus did a polite and mannerly British parlor game take on some of the brash, hypercompetitive, sweaty-palmed excitement of the big-money trading Vanderbilt was familiar with from Wall Street.

The game became a craze during the Great Depression, when an evening's entertainment for two couples could be had for the price of a deck of cards. How-to manuals, written by actual bridge celebrities, like the publicity genius and Romanian immigrant Ely Culbertson, sat atop best-seller lists; bridge hands were analyzed on the radio; millions of bridge fans nationwide followed the 1931 murder trial of Kansas City housewife Myrtle Bennett, who gunned down her husband after a spat in which she called him "a bum bridge player." (She was acquitted.) After the Second World War, bridge took on a new sheen of glamour and exclusivity, joining baccarat and casino poker in the array of upper-class pastimes enjoyed by that emblem of postwar suavity, James Bond. In the 1955 novel *Moonraker*, Bond (in one of the most thrilling scenes Ian Fleming ever wrote) faces off, at M's club, in a game of high-stakes bridge against arch-villain Sir Hugo Drax, whom Bond coolly unmasks as a cheater. ("And don't forget that cheating at cards can still smash a man," M tells Bond.)

In the 1960s, international tournament bridge took on some of the swashbuckling heroics associated with downhill skiing and Grand Prix racing, with legends like the powerhouse Italian "Blue Team" winning 16 world titles between 1957 and 1975 and heartthrob Egyptian actor Omar Sharif (a professional player who ranked in the game's top 50) telling an interviewer, "The real question is why I spend so much time making movies when I could be playing bridge." Meanwhile, the game, which draws on innate gifts of logic, problem solving, planning, and risk assessment, became particularly popular among Wall Street traders (who rely on those skills professionally) and, to this day, counts as its most devoted fans many highly successful C.E.O.'s and entrepreneurs, including Bill Gates and Warren Buffett.

In the popular imagination, however, bridge has all but vanished. Last year, *The New York Times* dropped its long-running bridge column, and today the American Contract Bridge League (A.C.B.L.), the game's governing body in North America, lists only 168,000 members, with a median age, despite the hotel-bar set, of 71. Yet the professional, tournament game has only increased as a serious, moneymaking pursuit, with rich bridge addicts assembling stables of top players, paying them ever rising retainers and bonuses—all for the privilege of playing hands with the pros in important tournaments. (The first American "dream team," the Dallas Aces, was put together in 1968 by businessman Ira Corn to challenge Italy's Blue Team.) "It's like paying to play a few games of doubles at Wimbledon with Federer or Djokovic," says Christopher Rivera, a game director at Manhattan's Honors Bridge Club.

# Dirty Hands

## *A cheating scandal in the world of professional bridge.*

2010, Lotan Fisher and

Ron Schwartz—Israeli bridge players in their early twenties—were members of the team that won the World Junior Teams Championship. The following year, their team won the European Youth Bridge Team Championships and they were invited to compete in a number of tournaments that included most of the world’s top players. During the next few years, they finished at or near the top in a remarkable number of those tournaments.

Bridge is a card game for four people. Like doubles tennis, it’s played two on two—although at a bridge table the partners sit opposite each other. (The seats are designated by compass points: North-South versus East-West.) There are many millions of players worldwide, and major tournaments attract thousands of entrants, but the arrival of new talent is a cause for celebration, because older players often worry that the game is aging into extinction. Successful young players stand out for another reason, too: bridge, unlike chess, has never been dominated by prodigies. “The game is hugely experience-based,” Gavin Wolpert, a top professional and a co-founder of an influential Web site, Bridgewinners.com, told me recently. He’s thirty-three years old—an age that, in the bridge world, counts as something like late adolescence. “The longer you play, the better you get at making good decisions, because you’ve seen it before. When you’re young, you don’t walk in and suddenly start winning every event.”

Yet Fisher and Schwartz were more than holding their own against some of the best partnerships in the world. They often made the kinds of plays that are fun to read about later, in bridge publications, because the intuition and reasoning can seem almost Sherlockian. The best players are able to deduce the presence of particular cards in opponents’ hands long before those cards have been exposed in play, based on what’s happened so far, and they think like oddsmakers. One of the longest chapters in the American Contract Bridge League’s “Encyclopedia of Bridge” lists precise probabilities for alternative approaches to playing hundreds of specific combinations of cards. No one would try to memorize all the percentages, but every skilled player acquires an increasingly comprehensive sense of what’s likely to work and what isn’t.

Last summer, at an international event in Chicago, Boye Brogeland, a Norwegian player, became convinced that Fisher and Schwartz had made prescient bids and plays that they couldn’t have found with skillful sleuthing alone. “Bridge is such a logical game,” he told me. “When you do a lot of strange things in a very short period of time, and those strange things are successful—it just doesn’t happen.” He spent hours studying records of hands that he and his partner had played against Fisher and Schwartz, and concluded that they had been cheating. “I just didn’t know how they were doing it,” he said. (Fisher and Schwartz have denied all the allegations.)

Brogeland is in his early forties. He has blond hair, much of which often seems to be sticking straight up, and a more athletic build than most of the world’s best bridge players. (At major tournaments, the relatively few players who look as though they’ve spent much time outside tend to be the smokers.) Brogeland had been a teammate of Fisher and Schwartz during the two previous tournament cycles, on a six-player team sponsored by a retired American businessman. (Tournament teams typically consist of three pairs.) On several occasions during that period, he told me, he had questioned them about their results on certain hands, which he felt they had played with uncanny precision. “I asked them, ‘What was your logic on this hand?’” he recalled later. “They always had a quick answer, but their responses still kept me on my toes.” Now that he had competed against them, he was convinced that they were secretly exchanging information about their cards. He shared his suspicions with several other players. “Boye was steaming,” Wolpert said. “But I told him to do this the right way. Don’t go around saying they’re cheating—you need to get the evidence.”

All the major bridge organizations have protocols for dealing with allegations of unethical behavior, but the organizations have often been ineffective in the past, and Brogeland feared they’d do nothing. Instead, he posted a comment in a thread on Bridgewinners.com in which he said that he and three of his teammates from the previous two years had decided to give up everything they had won together—something that he said all players should do if they believe their team includes “a cheating pair.” This wasn’t a veiled accusation, since Fisher and Schwartz were the only teammates he didn’t name. Jeff Meckstroth—an American bridge superstar for almost four decades—told me, “Boye had balls as big as church bells to be doing what he was doing.” And Brogeland wasn’t finished. Within a few weeks, what began as a single accusation had grown into a major scandal, involving the highest levels of international play.

Bridge evolved from whist, a similar but simpler game, which dates to at least the early seventeen-hundreds. In both, a card is played from each of the four hands in succession, and the resulting four-card “trick” is won either by the highest card in the suit that was led or by the highest card in the “trump” suit—a designated supersuit, which defeats all others. This sounds straightforward until you try it. One of the reasons bridge continues to fascinate players all over the world is that, in order to become even sort of good at it, you have to be willing to be bad at it for a long time.

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In whist, the trump suit is determined by exposing the last card in the deck; in bridge, the trump suit is decided by an auction, which the four players conduct before revealing any of their cards. The auction also establishes how many tricks the auction's winner will have to take in order to earn a positive score—a target known as the contract. (Some auctions result in a "no-trump" contract, meaning that the hand will be played without a supersuit.) The game's modern version, called contract bridge, is usually attributed to Harold S. Vanderbilt, who, during an ocean cruise in 1925, devised several transformative improvements to the scoring system of the previous version, auction bridge. His ideas caught on with extraordinary speed, and within a few years auction bridge had all but disappeared.

In tournaments and at bridge clubs, identical hands are played at all tables, and each pair's or team's score is based on how well

it does relative to others playing the same cards—a form of the game known as duplicate, one of whose purposes is to reduce the role of luck. At each table, the player whose bid initiates the final contract is called the declarer. His opponents are called the defenders, and the play begins when the defender sitting to the left of the declarer turns one of his cards face up on the table—a potentially momentous play, called the opening lead. The declarer's partner now lays all his own cards on the table, also face up (and, optionally, excuses himself to go outside for a cigarette); his hand, called the dummy, is played not by him but by the declarer, in addition to his own.

There are many legitimate ways in which players exchange information about their hands, during both bidding and play. Some bidding sequences, known as bidding conventions, have artificial meanings. One of the most widely used is Blackwood (named for the man who invented it), in which a bid of “four no-trump” asks the bidder’s partner to reveal how many aces he holds: a response of “five clubs” means no aces (or all four), “five diamonds” means one ace, “five hearts” means two aces, “five spades” means three. Over the decades, Blackwood has spawned many variations, some of them quite complicated. My regular bridge partners and I occasionally allow beginning players to use a simple version, which we call Friedman Blackwood, after our late friend John Friedman, who was always forgetting the responses. (You answer by holding up fingers.)

For the defenders, the play of the hand is governed by conventions known as carding agreements. The oldest, which dates to the early days of whist, is to lead the fourth-highest card when playing from a long suit. If you know that that’s what your partner’s doing, you can apply the so-called Rule of Eleven: subtract the rank of the led card from eleven, and the result is the number of higher cards in that suit which are contained in the other three hands. Since you can see two of those hands (your own and the dummy), you now know the exact distribution of all the higher cards. One reason this isn’t cheating is that the declarer can read and exploit the signal, too, since he can also see two of the four hands. In bridge, all agreements must be transparent; secret understandings between partners are not allowed. Tournament players reveal their agreements on a printed form, which their opponents can examine, and if an opponent is confused by something, during either the bidding or the play, he can ask for an explanation at his next turn.

Expert poker players often take advantage of a skill they call table feel: an ability to read the facial expressions and other unconscious “tells” exhibited by their opponents. Bridge players rely on table feel, too, but in bridge not all tells can be exploited legally by all players. If one of my opponents hesitates during the bidding or the play, I’m allowed to draw conclusions from the hesitation—but if my partner hesitates I’m not. What’s more, if I seem to have taken advantage of information that I wasn’t authorized to know, my opponents can summon the tournament director and seek an adjusted result for the hand we just played. Principled players do their best to ignore their partner and play at a consistent tempo, in order to avoid exchanging unauthorized information—and, if they do end up noticing something they shouldn’t have noticed, they go out of their way not to exploit it. Unprincipled players consciously take advantage of such information. And, occasionally, they go a great deal further than that.

If you attend the spring North American Bridge Championships, which will be held in Reno in March, you won’t hear any mention of prize money, because there is none. The world’s best players earn hundreds of thousands of dollars a year, but the money is in salaries and other fees paid by wealthy team sponsors and “clients,” whose only goal is glory. Steve Weinstein, who is fifty-two and has been one of the highest-ranked players in the world for more than a decade, told me that, because rich bridge addicts outnumber great players, competition for the services of the top pros can be intense. Weinstein worked as an options trader on Wall Street before switching, after 9/11, to bridge and poker full time. The team that he plays for is financed by Frank T. (Nick) Nickell, the chairman of Kelso & Company, a private-equity firm in Manhattan. (Nickell himself plays on his team, and was inducted into the American Contract Bridge League’s Hall of Fame in 2008.)

The first American full-time professional bridge team, called the Dallas Aces, was formed in 1968 by Ira G. Corn, Jr., a Texas businessman. The pay wasn’t spectacular: a thousand dollars a month for married players, somewhat less for bachelors, plus travel and tournament expenses. Corn assembled his team because he was upset that, for more than a decade, the game had been dominated by a group of Italian players known as the Blue Team. The Dallas Aces won the World Teams Championship in 1970, and again the following year. Those victories were all the more impressive because the Aces were convinced that the Blue Team was cheating, although no members of the team were ever formally charged. Bob Hamman, who played on the Aces and now, in his late seventies, is universally considered to have been one of the best bridge players ever, told me, “The Blue Team had two outstanding players and one very good player, but the other three were essentially from central casting.” He conjectured that the Italians used a number of illicit signals, involving things like hand gestures and the positioning of their cigarettes. In 1975, two members of a later version of the Blue Team were caught signalling under the table with their feet; they’ve been known ever since as the Italian Foot Soldiers.

An American player told me that the Blue Team’s cheating might be considered an inevitable consequence of Italy’s unusual card-playing culture. In briscola, a popular trick-taking game, one of the objects is to surreptitiously pass information to your partner, without being observed by an opponent. (In one signalling system, tightening the lips over the teeth shows an ace, glancing upward shows a king, and shrugging one shoulder shows a jack.) But, over the years, plenty of non-Italians have been caught cheating, too. One notorious incident took place in Buenos Aires in 1965, at a major international tournament

called the Bermuda Bowl, and involved Terence Reese, who is still widely regarded as perhaps the best English player in the history of the game. Dorothy Hayden—a great player herself, who was later married to Alan Truscott, the *Times*' bridge columnist for forty-one years—determined, by watching them play, that Reese and his partner were showing each other how many hearts they held by positioning their fingers in particular ways when they fanned their cards.

In 1970, Henry Itkin and Kenny Rhodes, a relatively unknown American pair, suddenly began achieving results that better players believed were beyond their capabilities. Their code was cracked by Steve Robinson, a well-known tournament player, who realized that, when Rhodes sorted his hand after picking it up, he moved the cards in a way that telegraphed his entire holding to Itkin. Robinson told me that he had observed them during a tournament without being able to decipher what they were doing, but as he drove home afterward he reviewed a hand in his mind, and the system suddenly came to him. "If he took cards from the right and put them back in the right side of the hand, that represented one," he said. "Right to the center was two, right to the left was three. Center to the right was four." The signaller would give counts on three suits—first spades, then hearts, then diamonds—and then use similar movements to show strength. The code was so complex that the pair usually used it in just one direction (only Itkin could reliably read it). In 1979, two other American partners, Steve Sion and Alan Cokin, were caught signalling to each other with their scoring pencils, and were expelled from the American Contract Bridge League. "Steve Sion was one of the best declarers in the game," Paul Linxwiler, the executive editor of *Bridge Bulletin*, the A.C.B.L.'s monthly magazine, told me. "But he hated the idea that a less talented player might beat him." Sion and Cokin were reinstated after five years, and Cokin never got into trouble again. But Sion was thrown out permanently in 1997, after being caught doing the equivalent of stacking the deck with a tournament's pre-dealt hands.

Cheating scandals lead, inevitably, to enhancements in security. Even in games at local bridge clubs nowadays, bids are made not by speaking them (and possibly imparting unauthorized information through inflection) but by silently displaying pre-printed bidding cards. Hands at big tournaments are dealt not by people but by machines, and each deal is recorded, making tampering virtually impossible. For top matches at important tournaments, each table is fitted with a single diagonal screen, which prevents partners from seeing each other during the bidding and makes changes in tempo harder to interpret. And, because of the Italian Foot Soldiers, in big matches dividers are placed under tables as well as on top of them.

In 2014, two German physicians, who had won a World Pairs Championship, were banned for ten years by the World Bridge Federation for using an auditory signalling system. (They're now known as the Coughing Doctors.) Their method was so crude that they were relatively easy to catch, but, in general, as security measures have become more sophisticated, methods of evading them have become more sophisticated, too—like the arms race between e-mailers and spammers.

When Brogeland made his first announcement, his evidence against Fisher and Schwartz consisted solely of what he believed to be a collection of suspicious hands; he still didn't know how they might be exchanging information. A few days later, he created a new Web site, called Bridgecheaters.com, and posted three YouTube videos from the 2014 European Team Championships, which Fisher and Schwartz's team had won. Each video had been shot from a camera mounted near the table. It showed all four players, as well as the table paraphernalia of modern tournament bridge: four bidding boxes (containing each player's pre-printed bidding cards); a felt-covered bidding tray (on which the players place bidding cards before sliding it back under the screen); and a plastic duplicate board (a flat, rectangular box in which four pre-dealt hands have been delivered to the table). Brogeland asked for help from other players, and the search for evidence immediately became a collaborative international project.

Not long after his Web site went up, Brogeland received a tip that Fisher and Schwartz had been in trouble before, when they were teen-agers. With aid from several players, he obtained documents showing that, beginning in 2003, the Israeli Bridge Federation had disciplined Fisher and Schwartz more than once for ethical violations in junior events. In 2005, Fisher was caught with a slip of paper containing information about a hand his table hadn't played yet, and the I.B.F. suspended him for two years, forbade him to represent Israel in bridge for an additional eighteen months, and placed him on probation for five years beyond that. Schwartz was also suspended and placed on probation in 2005, for a different offense. Yet, even before their probations were over, they had reemerged as a pair.

As Brogeland had requested, players around the world studied the videos of Fisher and Schwartz—at first, without success. "I thought it must be something electronic, because I couldn't figure it out," Jeff Meckstroth told me. But Per-Ola Cullin, a young Swedish player, noticed something strange. I spoke with him on the phone recently, after his children had gone to bed. He said, "I actually thought that Boye knew what they were doing, and was just trying to find out if others could see it as well. It turns out that he didn't know, but when I watched the video I kind of saw it right away." The tactic that Cullin identified involved the opening lead, one of the most difficult plays in bridge, because it usually has to be made with no knowledge of the other hands except what has been deduced from the auction. A bridge player who somehow found the ideal opening lead on every hand would be like a tennis pro who never missed a first serve.

One day last month, I asked Weinstein to show me the code that Cullin had broken. He and his wife live in a big house on the outskirts of Andes, New York, a tiny town not far from where he grew up, but I visited him at a smaller house, in a suburban neighborhood in New Jersey, which they recently began renting, mainly to shorten Weinstein's many trips to and from the airport. The furnishings consisted of little more than a couch, a coffeemaker, and a big round table. I'd brought a bidding tray and a duplicate board to use as props. "When the bidding is over, you have to get these things out of the way," Weinstein said, demonstrating. "The pair sitting North-South almost always handles that—and Fisher and Schwartz always wanted to sit North-South." Usually, North moves the bidding tray to the floor or to a nearby chair, and puts the duplicate board in the center of the table, directly under the screen.

On deals in which Fisher and Schwartz ended up as declarer and dummy, they cleared away the tray and the board in the usual manner. But when they were defending—meaning that one of them would make the opening lead—they were wildly inconsistent. Sometimes Fisher would remove the tray, and sometimes Schwartz would, and sometimes they would leave it on the table. Furthermore, they placed the duplicate board in a number of different positions—each of which, it turns out, conveyed a particular meaning. "If Lotan wanted a spade lead, he put the board in the middle and pushed it all the way to the other side," Weinstein said. If he wanted a heart, he put it to the right. Diamond, over here. Club, here. No preference, here." Using that key, a leading professional stayed up all night studying the hands, then published a detailed synopsis of the crucial plays in a post on Bridgewinners. A British Web designer, who plays recreationally, used that analysis to assemble an explanatory highlight reel, and uploaded it to YouTube.

The team on which Fisher and Schwartz played last summer was sponsored by Jimmy Cayne, the former head of Bear Stearns. (Cayne was criticized in the press during the global financial crisis for seeming to care more about bridge than about Bear Stearns. He stepped down shortly before the firm's collapse, and since then he's had fewer distractions.) After studying the videotapes, Cayne announced that he would drop Fisher and Schwartz from his team unless they were vindicated, and that he would willingly forfeit everything he had won while they were employed by him.

As the scandal involving the Israelis was unfolding, Brogeland received an e-mail from Maaike Mevius, a physicist in the Netherlands, whose specialty is astronomy. She said that the revelations about Fisher and Schwartz had got her wondering about other partnerships, and that she had studied other tournament videos available on YouTube. She was especially interested in Fulvio Fantoni and Claudio Nunes, who were then ranked No. 1 and No. 2 by the World Bridge Federation. Both players are Italian, but in 2010 they moved to Monaco after being hired to play on the Monegasque national team, which is led and financed by a wealthy Swiss businessman. Rumors about them had been circulating among bridge players for several years, and Mevius thought that her scientific training might enable her to spot something that others had missed. She told Brogeland that she had indeed seen something, although she wasn't an accomplished enough player to be sure of its significance. What she had noticed was that, when either Fantoni or Nunes made an opening lead, he sometimes placed the card on the table horizontally, and sometimes vertically.

Brogeland followed up, with help from a number of other top players. Meckstroth told me that he had been convinced since 2014 that Fantoni and Nunes were cheating. He said that he had been trying for a year, without success, to persuade the A.C.B.L. to investigate them, and had spent many hours studying tapes himself, but without spotting the opening-lead pattern. With Mevius's clue, though, the cheat became obvious: in eighty-two of eighty-five videotaped hands, Fantoni or Nunes led a card vertically when his remaining holding in the same suit contained an ace, a king, or a queen, and horizontally when it didn't. Weinstein asked a bridge-playing math professor at the University of Chicago to calculate the probability of such a precise correlation's occurring by chance. The professor, in an e-mail, said that the number was "so small it is not worth working out exactly," but that it would be roughly ".0000 . . . where at least the first eighteen digits are zeros." (Fantoni denied all allegations of cheating by him and Nunes.)

A few days after the accusations concerning Fantoni and Nunes, another leading pair, Josef Piekarek and Alex Smirnov, of Germany, confessed that they had been cheating. They said they were "aware of the 'whispers'" about their "ethical conduct," and that these whispers contained "some truth." In fact, there was more than some truth, and their confession wasn't entirely voluntary. Brogeland had compiled evidence—one of their signals involved placing their bidding cards in unusual positions on the bidding trays—and he and Weinstein had given them an opportunity to step forward before being outed. Their entire team withdrew from the World Bridge Championships, which were to begin a week later, in Chennai, India. I've watched, also on YouTube, a remarkable video in which Piekarek and Smirnov are playing Fisher and Schwartz in a tournament match, and Fisher appears to catch Smirnov trying to cheat. Smirnov places a bidding card on the bidding tray in an unusual position, and Fisher apparently obliterates the signal by shaking the tray as he slides it to the other side of the screen. Fisher smirks, then writes something on a piece of paper and shows it to Smirnov. Smirnov shrugs, glances at the video camera, and looks around the room.

The damage that Lance Armstrong did to the careers of other competitive cyclists, and to cycling itself, is incalculable, and it seems conceivable that the sport will never fully recover. The recent alleged cheating incidents in bridge are in some

ways just as egregious. “The thing about Fantoni and Nunes that’s so upsetting,” Weinstein told me, “is that they fucked up the game since 2002, when they won the World Open Pairs, so for a decade and a half, almost, they have ruined the records of bridge.” Yet virtually every player I’ve talked to, Weinstein among them, views the recent incidents as highly positive events. Effectively pursuing bridge cheaters used to be difficult, partly because the governing bodies were fearful of being sued, and partly because cheating could be extremely difficult to prove. Older players often exhibited what now seems like a fatalistic attitude about dishonest opponents, even in cases they believed to be obvious. But YouTube changed that, and Bridgewinners has given top-level players a global discussion-and-support forum—two empowering developments for honest players. In January, the American Contract Bridge League gave Brogeland its annual sportsmanship award. The charges against Fisher, Schwartz, Fantoni, and Nunes are still officially only allegations: no national bridge organization has ruled on any of the current cases, and the four players have hired lawyers and prepared defenses. (Fisher and Schwartz told Brogeland that they wouldn’t sue him if he retracted his accusations and paid them a million dollars; Brogeland has said that he would welcome a lawsuit.) A number of hearings have been scheduled, but even if no organization ultimately takes action, it’s unlikely that any of the players will compete again—certainly not as partners. “They’re done,” one pro told me.

In the future, catching cheaters will presumably be more difficult. Several players I spoke with said that Fisher and Schwartz might have evaded detection indefinitely if they had been less brazen, and that the reason so many incidents were exposed all at once is that, until very recently, tournament videotapes weren’t readily available, and dishonest players didn’t understand their power. Now that they do understand, cheaters will become craftier in their deceptions, and the main tool for catching them will almost certainly be statistical analysis of suspicious results. It’s also likely that major bridge organizations will adopt binding-arbitration requirements, thereby eliminating the intimidation presented by lawsuits. Team sponsors could take that idea a step further, by adding ethics clauses to all of their player contracts.

Several players have proposed technological fixes, such as a computerized tournament table, at which players wouldn’t use actual cards at all, and would bid and play roughly the way they do online. But tournament players I talked to said they would be reluctant to move the game so far from its analog origins. Brogeland told me that what he thinks the game really needs is a firmer cultural commitment to ethical play. “I think we should be more focussed on that,” he said. “If you’re always trying things to make cheating more difficult, it’s like biting your tail.” Bridge, in other words, should try to be more like golf, the only major sport in which players call penalties on themselves, and not at all like football, in which a running back would be considered almost negligent if he didn’t try to shove the ball a few inches farther forward after being tackled.

No matter what eventually happens, players today seem less resigned to unethical behavior by opponents than players of the past sometimes did—no doubt partly because, for the time being, they have the tools to fight it. Brogeland has set a powerful example, but the attitude he represents had been building for some time. Two years ago, after the World Bridge Federation banned the Coughing Doctors from competition, the overwhelming majority of responders to a poll on Bridgewinners said that, in proven cases of cheating, titles should be stripped from the cheaters’ teammates as well as from the cheaters themselves—a position that players and governing bodies in the past haven’t always embraced. And Weinstein told me that, at a tournament two or three years ago, Fisher approached him and said he understood that Weinstein had been telling people behind his back that he and Schwartz were cheating. “I said, ‘No, I’ll tell you to your face,’ ” Weinstein continued. “I said I could show him fourteen hands on which I know he had cheated. He said, ‘Well, we don’t cheat—but what would you do if you were in my position?’ And I said, ‘I don’t know, Lotan. I really can’t relate to that, because I would never be in your position.’ ” ♦