

How Gold was won by the England Seniors in Brazil

THE only team representing England at the 39th World Team Championships in São Paulo were the Seniors. Ross Harper and Paul Hackett, John Holland and Gunnar Hallberg, David Price and Colin Simpson, with Peter Baxter npc, knew that they faced some tough opposition and a punishing schedule if they wanted to achieve a good result.

We had to play three matches per day for seven days to complete a round robin against each of the other twenty-one teams in competition. Our first match against Japan would provide the opportunity for revenge over the team that beat us in the quarter finals in Beijing. The very first hand was a defining moment: it was only a part-score, but we were the only team in the field to be doubled. David Price played it with his customary attention to detail and we gained a game swing. After Board 1 England led the whole field! Would it continue for another 629 hands?

At the end of the round-robin stage things were going very well. We had won 17 of the 21 matches and led by almost a clear match. Each of the knock-out matches would be over 96 boards in 6 stanzas of 16 boards spread over two days. By now some of us hadn't left the hotel and we were beginning to feel as if we were on the set of *The Prisoner*, totally isolated

from civilisation.

Our quarter-final match against Egypt was played at a furious pace and with great intensity. Nearly 500 IMPs changed hands but we managed to squeak through by 1 IMP! Thank goodness for the carry-forward. It must be said that the Egyptians were both wonderfully sportsmanlike and tremendously courteous in defeat. Slightly unexpectedly, our semi-final opponents were Indonesia, who hadn't done so well earlier but were vastly experienced with several former World Championship finalists. The match started poorly for us but slowly we turned it round in our favour. I'm pleased to say that a psyche by your correspondent produced a game swing. Eventually the tide turned and we took a grip on the match and won by 22.5 IMPs.

Poland beat USA 11 in the other semi-final, meaning that for the first time ever the D'Orsi Seniors Bowl would be won by a team other than USA.

Only another two days of total concentration. Could the dream come true and could we become World Champions? I must say that after the first set it looked highly unlikely as we trailed by over 60 IMPs – undoubtedly the worst set the team had had from the beginning. We needed something good to happen quickly. In the second set this deal occurred:



REPORTS

Colin Simpson

Love All. Dealer West.

♠ A Q 10 9 5 3	♠ 7 2
♥ A 4 3	♥ K J 2
♦ 6	♦ A Q J 9 7 5 2
♣ A J 6	♣ 3
♠ K J 6 4	♠ 8
♥ Q 9 7	♥ 10 8 6 5
♦ 10 8 3	♦ K 4
♣ Q 10 4	♣ K 9 8 7 5 2

West	North	East	South
<i>Markowicz</i>	<i>Hackett</i>	<i>Klukowski</i>	<i>Harper</i>
Pass	1♠	3♦	Dble
Pass	4♦	Pass	5♣
Pass	6♣	All Pass	

Ross Harper's negative double was described in the *Daily Bulletin* as 'dubious'; I prefer to call it 'enthusiastic'. The double followed by a new suit showed a stronger hand and not unreasonably Paul Hackett pushed on to slam. The play was the thing. After two rounds of diamonds, declarer played a spade to the queen and ruffed a spade. A club to the jack was followed by another spade ruff, trumps were drawn, and declarer claimed the remaining tricks – a slam swing against only game in the other room.

A few deals later we had gained another slam swing when John Holland and Gunnar Hallberg bid a decent 6♦ missed at the other table. We were back in the match and the momentum had shifted in our direction. The second day went mainly our way. Although we narrowly lost the final set, we had a substantial lead and eventually won by 23 IMPs. World Champions! □



Left to right: John Holland, David Price (unfortunately mostly hidden), Peter Baxter (npc), Ross Harper, Gunnar Hallberg, Paul Hackett and Colin Simpson on the podium.