



England Expects

by Michael Byrne

English players' successes at World Championship level

IN this anniversary year, it is only fair that we look back through the last 75 years at the great achievements in world championships where our players have fought together to win as a country.

The Bermuda Bowl

The most prestigious of the World Championships is the Bermuda Bowl for Open teams. Originating in 1950, it was at first a challenge match between Europe, North America and Great Britain, but it metamorphosed into a huge competition with qualifiers coming from all of the zones. England competed (until 1999) as Great Britain, and won it in 1955, when the great Terence Reese, Boris Schapiro, Kenneth Konstam, Leslie Dodds, Adam 'Plum' Meredith and Jordanis Pavlides beat the USA by a substantial margin.

Since they have changed the format it has been very difficult for England to qualify, as the European Championships is an incredibly tough competition, and a bridge nation has to finish in the top six to make the Bermuda Bowl. In 1987 England finished 2nd in the European Championships to Sweden, and qualified for the Bermuda Bowl being held in Ocho Rios, a beautiful town on the North Coast of Jamaica.

In the initial round robin there were eight teams and team GB finished second to Chinese Taipei; holders USA and European champions Sweden were exempt to the semi-final. The conditions of contest stated that the two European teams would have to meet. Great Britain took an early lead which they never relinquished and won by 47 IMPs. Almost half of this margin came from one deal where Sweden had a misunderstanding about a redouble and conceded a penalty of 2800 – which long

stood as the record for the largest penalty ever conceded in a World Championship. (This record was broken in the 2005 Bermuda Bowl where there were two 3400 penalties!)

In the final GB didn't quite manage to overcome the USA, although this was a high spot:

Game All. Dealer East.		
	♠ 8 7 5 4	
	♥ 5 4	
	♦ A K Q J 7 6	
	♣ K	
♠ Q J 10 2		♠ K
♥ K		♥ 10 7 6 3
♦ 8 4		♦ 5 3 2
♣ A J 10 9 6 3		♣ 8 7 5 4 2
	♠ A 9 6 3	
	♥ A Q J 9 8 2	
	♦ 10 9	
	♣ Q	

Both sides bid to 4♥ after South opened the bidding (Jeremy Flint for GB with 1♥ and Bobby Wolf for the USA with a canapé 1♠) which gave them a chance to make game – 4♠ has no chance on the actual lie given that the trumps break badly. Sitting West for us was the late Raymond Brock, who made a good start of leading the ace of clubs and switching to a diamond, attacking declarer's communication. Declarer then finessed in hearts and Brock played another diamond cutting declarer off from the table completely. He had no chance now and attempted to draw trumps, losing three spades and another heart for three down.

In the other room the American West led the queen of spades overtaken by the king and Jeremy Flint looked deeper into the

position. West had suggested a six-card club suit by overcalling vulnerable, and it looked like spades could well be 4-1. Was it too much to hope that West had one heart and two diamonds? In that case declarer could cash the ace of trumps and then three diamonds throwing his club. Then a heart to the nine and he would lose only one heart and two spades – the nine and eight being good cards to force out the jack and ten. Things didn't quite go to plan as under the ace of trumps the king fell, and declarer crossed to dummy to draw trumps and then run the diamonds; that was thirteen tricks and +710, 14 IMPs to Great Britain. It is rare that one table makes thirteen tricks and the other only seven, especially when they are in the same contract!

Sadly three of our players who were on that team have since left us: John Armstrong, Raymond Brock and Jeremy Flint. The other members of the team are still among our top players today: Graham Kirby, Tony Forrester, and Robert Sheehan (who came out of retirement long enough to win the Gold Cup last year) along with NPC Tony Priday.

We have subsequently played in the Bermuda Bowl twice more, in 1991 (Forrester, Andrew Robson, Kirby, Armstrong, Roman Smolski, Tony Sowter, with David Burn as coach and Sandra Landy NPC), where we lost a tight quarter-final match to Poland, and in 2005 where we didn't make the knock out stages.

The Venice Cup

The women's equivalent is called the 'Venice Cup' and started in 1974, the first tournament being held in Venice. England has had some success in this event, winning in 1981 and 1985, beating strong American teams both times in the final.

This deal from the 1985 final showed declarer having to work hard for her game:

E/W Game. Dealer West.		
♠ A J 6 3		♠ K Q
♥ A J 4		♥ Q 7 5 2
♦ A J 10 5		♦ K Q 9 6
♣ K 6		♣ 8 5 2
♠ 10 7 4 2		
♥ 10 8 3		
♦ 8 3		
♣ Q 9 7 3		
	♠ 9 8 5	
	♥ K 9 6	
	♦ 7 4 2	
	♣ A J 10 4	

For Great Britain, the declarer was Michelle Brunner as South, playing in 3NT on the lead of a low club. She took the natural line of taking a diamond finesse, and then won the club return on the table. If declarer now plays a heart to hand and takes another diamond finesse she will go down, as with the diamonds lying badly she has only seven tricks. Instead, Brunner played a low spade off the dummy, seeking further chances. East won and played a third club, and she was back in her hand to take a diamond finesse. East could win and exit with the nine of diamonds pinning declarer's seven, but she won and played a diamond back giving the lead to East once more. East elected to get off lead with a heart, giving



The England team, winners of the Women's Series at the 2008 Beijing World Bridge Games. From the left: Martin Jones (NPC), Heather Dhondy, Nicola Smith, Catherine Draper, Sally Brock, Sandra Penfold (Coach), Anne Rosen and Nevena Senior.

declarer an eighth trick, and Brunner cashed three hearts ending in her hand. At this point West was squeezed: she had to guard the spades and the queen of clubs. When she let go a spade, declarer had a complete count, and played a spade to the ace dropping the king as if by magic. This is known as a 'show-up squeeze' as West's spades weren't technically winners, but they 'showed up' her partner's bare K-Q.

Unlike the Open team, our gold-winning women's teams feature many of the stars

who are still going strong today. Sally Brock and Sandra Landy were on the team both times, along with Nicola Smith and Pat Davies who retired when the home nations devolved in 1999. The team was completed in 1981 by Maureen Dennison and Diana Williams, and in 1985 by Michelle Brunner and Gill Scott-Jones.

The Bridge Teams Olympiads

The other world championships where English players have done well are the World Teams Olympiads, which have taken place every four years since 1960. The event changed its name to World Bridge Games (and, slightly, its format) in 2008, when it became part of the World Mind Sports Games.

In the Open series England won a silver in 1960 (Terence Reese, Boris Schapiro, Nico Gardener, Albert Rose, Jeremy Flint, Ralph Swimer, NPC Louis Tarlo), and bronze in 1964 (Terence Reese, Boris Schapiro, Joel Tarlo, Jeremy Flint, Kenneth Konstam, Maurice Harrison-Gray, NPC Louis Tarlo) and 1976 (Tony Priday, Claude Rodrigue, Willie Coyle, Robert Sheehan, Jeremy Flint, Irving Rose, NPC Terence Reese), before a magnificent run in 2008 where they proved that they were still one of the strongest nations in the world. England reached the final, beating tough Bulgaria and Romania in the early knock-out rounds before shredding Germany in the semi-final despite being down overnight. In the final they just fell short, losing to Italy, whose players have won plenty of

ENGLISH WOMEN'S SUCCESSES AT THE WORLD TEAMS OLYMPIADS

YEAR	VENUE	POS.	TEAM
1964	New York	1st	Rixi Markus, Fritzi Gordon, Dorothy Shanahan, Dimmie Fleming, Jane Juan, Mary Moss, NPC Harold Franklin
1976	Monte Carlo	2nd	Fritzi Gordon, Rixi Markus, Nicola Gardener (Smith), Sandra Landy, Charlie Esterson, Rita Oldroyd, NPC Graham Cooke
1980	Valkenburg	3rd	Sally Sowter (Brock), Sandra Landy, Pat Davies, Nicola Gardener (Smith), Rita Oldroyd, Michelle Brunner, NPC Raymond Brock
1984	Seattle	2nd	Sally Horton (Brock), Sandra Landy, Pat Davies, Nicola Smith, Gillian Scott-Jones, Sarah Scarborough, NPC Hugh Kelsey, Coach Gus Calderwood
1988	Venice	2nd	Michelle Brunner, Sandra Landy, Pat Davies, Nicola Smith, Liz McGowan (Scotland), Sandra Penfold, NPC Graham Endicott, Coach Richard Fleet
1992	Salsomaggiore	2nd	Pat Davies, Nicola Smith, Michele Handley (Barker), Sandra Landy, Liz McGowan (Scotland), Sandra Penfold, NPC Mark Horton, Coach Brian Senior
2004	Istanbul	3rd	Sally Brock, Kitty Teltscher, Heather Dhondy, Nicola Smith, Michelle Brunner, Rhona Goldenfield, NPC Alan Mould, Coach Christine Duckworth

world championships on past and recent occasions. The team was Jason and Justin Hackett, the mainstay of the Open team over the last decade, David Gold and Tom Townsend, and Artur Malinowski and Nick Sandqvist, with Phil King as NPC and Simon Cope as Coach.

In the Women's series, England have dominated, with medals in nearly every championship – starting with a gold medal in 1964, continuing with silver in 1976, bronze in 1980, silver in 1984, 1988 and 1992, and bronze in 2004 (*see table on previous page*). 2008 again proved to be England's glory year as the Women's team prevailed in a hard-fought final against home nation China at the World Bridge Games. Some of the names on the team were old hands, with Nicola Smith (playing an amazing ninth consecutive Olympiad) partnering her perennial team-mate Sally Brock, and Heather Dhondy (who also holds a gold medal from the 1996 World Mixed Teams) partnering Nevena Senior. Anne Rosen and Catherine Draper completed the team, together with Martin Jones as NPC and Sandra Penfold as Coach.

The Seniors

A world competition for Senior teams was first introduced in 2001, and England have recently come to the party by winning two back-to-back World Championships. In the Seniors Bowl in São Paulo in 2009 Paul Hackett, Ross Harper, David Price, Colin Simpson, John Holland, Gunnar Hallberg came back from a huge margin down to beat Poland in the final, and the following year, in the World Series championships in



Left to right: John Holland, David Price, Peter Baxter (NPC), Colin Simpson, Paul Hackett, Gunnar Hallberg and Ross Harper, 2009 World Seniors Champions.

Philadelphia, Paul, John and Gunnar won again, this time playing with Americans Reese Milner and Gary Hayden.

The Juniors

In the Junior game England has had two notable successes in the 1980s and 1990s when Raymond Brock ran the youth squad and was the non-playing captain. The first English players to win the World Junior Teams Championship for the Ortiz-Patino Trophy, in 1989, were John Hobson, Derek Patterson, Andrew Robson, John Pottage, and twin brothers Gerald and Stuart Tredinnick. John Hobson and John Pottage have retired completely from bridge, but the other four have gone on to make their mark on the national and international scene.

The team was nearly handicapped severely when Andrew Robson, no doubt lost in a world of finessing and trump coups, cycled into a parked truck en route to the championships in Nottingham. Fortunately a pile of woodcuttings broke his fall, and he emerged with only scratches and bruises.

Six years later, in 1995, it was a different team that was representing us: Justin and Jason Hackett, along with Tom Townsend and Jeffrey Allerton, and Danny Davies partnering Phil Souter. Again Raymond Brock was NPC, with Phil King as Coach.

A recurring theme throughout my research was to discover that many of the players in one category would become administrators in another, so captains for one event were players for another. All of them give their time for free and it's good to think that they are giving back as captains what they received as players.

Youth Bridge

Finally, the World Championships for the Under 21s only started in 2006, but England have already chalked up two silver medals – in 2008 at the World Bridge Games in Beijing (Ben Paske, Ed Jones, Tom Paske, Adam Hickman, Daniel McIntosh, Robert Myers, Coach Alan Shillitoe, NPC Michael Byrne), and at the World Series in 2010 in Philadelphia (Tom Paske, Graeme Robertson, James Paul, Daniel McIntosh, Shivam Shah, Tom Rainforth, Coach and Captain as above).

Will we be seeing these rising stars featuring in World Championships in the future? Only time will tell – and I hope that you will all be supporting them through it. □



The British 1989 Junior World Champions team. From the left: Sandra Landy (Coach), John Pottage, Gerald Tredinnick, Andrew Robson, Raymond Brock (NPC), Derek Patterson, Stuart Tredinnick and John Hobson.