

Log ON for bridge

Bots battle for world domination

By Al Levy

The 16th World Computer-Bridge Championship, sponsored by the ACBL and WBF, was held alongside the human world championship in Lille, France. The results, along with the history of previous championships and much more, can be found at www.computerbridge.com.

While I organized the annual event, this year I had to coordinate it from afar, as a medical emergency prevented me from actually being in Lille. The contest could not have taken place without the expert on-site efforts of Gérard Joyez.

Eight software developers entered their robots into this year's competition:

- ◆ Bridge Baron (Stephen Smith, USA)
- ◆ Jack (Hans Kuijf, The Netherlands)
- ◆ Micro Bridge (Tomio Uchida, Japan)
- ◆ Moose Bridge (Pete Boton, USA)
- ◆ Q-Plus Bridge (Hans Leber, Germany)
- ◆ RoboBridge (Job Scheffers, The Netherlands)
- ◆ Shark Bridge (defending champion — John Vermehren Norris, Denmark)
- ◆ WBridge5 (Yves Costel, France)

Many of these software developers sell their software (WBridge5 is free) and use their robots and related software to help newcomers learn our game and to entertain many of our more experienced players.

The format is team play, with each team consisting of four identical robots. The event starts with a 32-board round-robin, with the top four robot teams advancing to the 64-board semi-final knockout stage. The round-robin ended with Jack (145 VPs), Micro Bridge (137), WBridge5 (125) and Q-Plus Bridge (111) qualifying for the knockouts.

In the semifinals, WBridge5 squeaked out a victory, 162–161, against Micro Bridge while Jack won comfortably 189–116 against Q-Plus Bridge.

The final was also close, with Jack winning the title, 153–147.

After the event was over, it was noticed that Micro Bridge had 137 VPs in the round-robin, not 135 as originally posted. That meant Micro Bridge was entitled to 2 more IMPs carryover in its semifinal match against WBridge5, which meant it would have won by 1 IMP. A most unfortunate situation!

Micro Bridge developer Tomio Uchida was a good sport about it, reporting that he was encouraged with his program's performance and looked forward to next year's competition. The other competitors expressed their regrets to Uchida and wished him much success in the future. The sportsmanship of all the contestants, along with their dedication to improving robot play, is to be commended.

If there was an award for best declared deal, it would go to WBridge5, making 5♣ doubled on this deal from the final match.

Dlr: South ♠ 4 3 2
 Vul: Both ♥ A
 ♦ J 8 6 3 2
 ♣ 10 9 4 2

♠ — ♥ 10 4 3 ♦ A 10 9 5 4 ♣ A 8 7 5 3	N W E S	♠ K J 10 7 6 5 ♥ Q 7 ♦ K Q ♣ K Q J ♠ A Q 9 8 ♥ K J 9 8 6 5 2 ♦ 7 ♣ 6
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Table 1:

West	North	East	South
Jack	WBridge5	Jack	WBridge5
			1♥
Pass	1NT	2♠	3♥
All Pass			

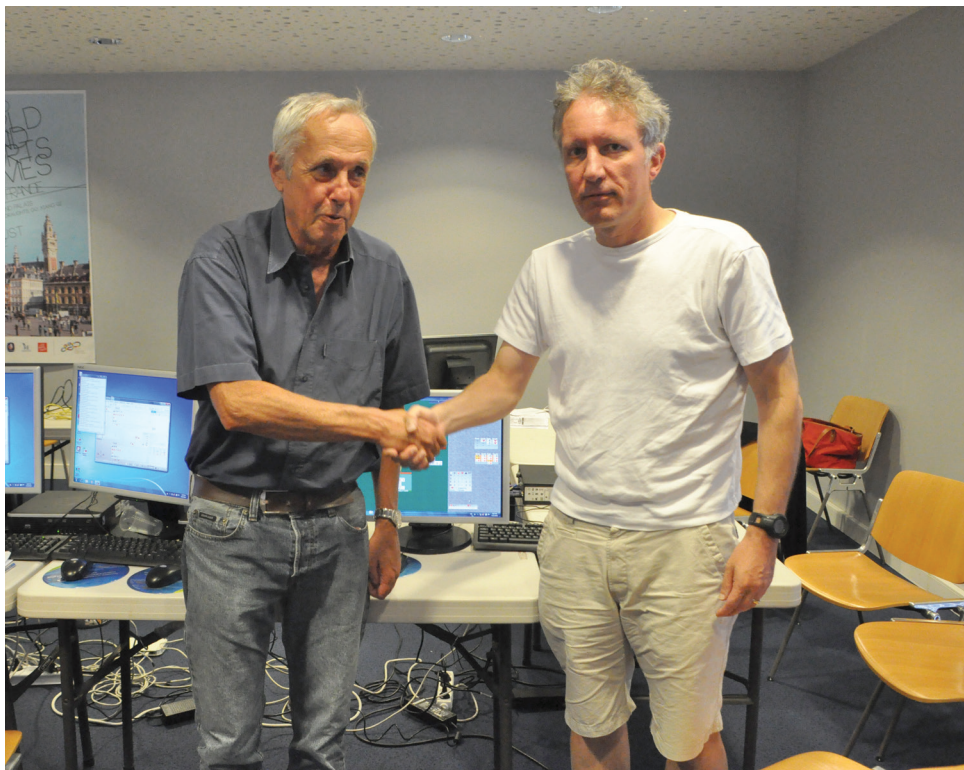
At one table, WBridge5, sitting North–South, played in 3♥ and went down one, losing two minor-suit aces and three spades.

Table 2:

West	North	East	South
WBridge5	Jack	WBridge5	Jack
			1♥
2NT	Pass	5♣	Pass
Pass	Dbl	All Pass	

At the other table, with WBridge5 sitting East–West, West was overly aggressive, vulnerable, overcalling 2NT to show the minors. East, rich in minor-suit honors, jumped to 5♣ and North doubled.

Checking with Deep Finesse, 5♣ is cold on any lead if played perfectly, and WBridge5 played perfectly, find-



WBridgege5 developer Yves Costel congratulates Hans Kuijf, developer of the 2012 world computer championship-winning program, Jack.

Photo by Micke Melander

ing one of a number of sequences of plays to make the contract.

After a diamond lead to the king, East led the ♠J, covered by the queen and ruffed. Back with a trump to the queen, East led ♠10, covered by the ace and ruffed. Back with a trump to the king, East cashed the ♦Q, ♠K (pitching a heart) and ruffed a spade with the ace (dummy's last trump).

North discarded a diamond. It doesn't help the defense if North discards the ♥A.

Declarer came off dummy with a heart. North, in with the ♥A, could do no better than return a trump to East's jack, ruff East's good spade, and lead into West's ♦A 10. A well-deserved 12 IMPs for WBridge5. □

The rest of the story – part 2

An article in the July issue (page 62) and a letter to the editor in October (page 6) touched on two different aspects of computer scoring of bridge games. The article was about ACBLscore, created by Jim Lopushinsky. The letter gave a short history of a bridge program developed in Massachusetts.

Overlooked in both was the contribution to scoring by two Oregon programmers: Merlin Vilhauer of Beaverton and Marvin Hamm of Tualatin.

The two wrote the first bridge scoring program used by the ACBL. It was called Director and was used by the ACBL from 1982 to 1991.

Many of the commands used in ACBLscore — now undergoing a major update — come from Director.

Vilhauer, an active player, represents District 20 on the ACBL Board of Directors. Hamm plays at the Ace of Clubs Bridge Center in Beaverton.

Lura Crossley 1925–2012

Lura Crossley, one of the best-known bridge personalities on the West Coast, died earlier this year at her home in Greenbrae CA after a short illness. She was 87.



Crossley was born in Muskogee OK and grew up in Dixon IL. She earned a degree with honors in journalism from the University of Illinois. She married C.F. Crossley Jr. (Cap Jr.) and they lived in St. Louis, Newfoundland and Salt Lake City before moving to Marin County in Northern California in 1952, when her husband started his medical practice.

The Crossleys were avid bridge players and founded ACBL's Marin Unit in 1954.

At the age of 34, Lura became the first woman in Marin to become a Life Master.

Divorced with four young children, she began a bridge business in her home in Greenbrae, sometimes directing as many as 80 bridge players.

She taught bridge from Mountain View to Santa Rosa and directed bridge tournaments from Tiburon to Novato. Starting in the Sixties, Crossley worked as a bridge lecturer for Travel with Goren, going on numerous bridge cruises, including five world trips.

In the Seventies, Crossley purchased the Greenbrae Rod and Gun Club and moved the Crossley Bridge Center there. Two of her children — Bob and Janet Crossley — still operate the club.

Daughter Janet said her mother "taught thousands of people to play bridge and touched the lives of countless others. She was generous with a kind heart and a keen sense of humor. Of all her many accomplishments, she was proudest of the job she did as a single mother raising her children — who all earned advanced degrees — as well as the accomplishments of her grandchildren."

Other survivors, all bridge players, are sons William (retired) of Brazil, David of Las Vegas and Robert of Corte Madera. She also leaves eight grandchildren and two great grandchildren.