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Fast Start By Auken

Denmark's Jens Auken is the early leader in the Men's competition after scoring a healthy 64.06% in yesterday's opening session. Auken leads from Ishmael Del'Monte of Australia, who scored 59.72%. Close behind Ishmael come Bob Hamman (USA), Tor Helness (Norway), Luis Lantaron (Spain) and 1994 champion Jon Baldursson (Iceland). The leading home player is Norberto Bocchi in seventh place.



Jens Auken



Ishmael Del'Monte

Today sees the start of the Ladies Championship and may I welcome them all to Verona for this sixth Generali World Masters Individual Championship. The field of 28 includes four of the previous five winners of this event, Maria Erhart (Austria), Nicola Smith (England), Migri Zur-Campanile (Israel) and Benedicte Cronier (France), the missing champion being the 1996 winner, Elizabeth Delor of France.

It is the same story in the Men's Championship, where the field includes four past champions in Piotr Gawrys (Poland), Jon Baldursson (Iceland), Paul Chemla (France) and Antonio Sementa (Italy), missing only Geir Helgemo, who won in 1996.

For those reading this on the internet, the 52 Men are playing 102 boards, 51 two-board rounds over four sessions, while the 28 Ladies are playing 81 boards, 27 three-board rounds over three sessions. Everyone plays the same system which resembles more closely French Standard than anything else, though I doubt that any of the champions playing here actually uses this system in his or her regular partnership.

The system features five-card majors and a 15-17 no trump, opening 1♣ with 3-3 in the minors but 1♦ with a 4-4-3-2 shape. Two Clubs is game-forcing, 2♦ strong with one suit (8 or 9 playing tricks) or 22-23 balanced, and 2♥/♠ are weak, six cards and 6-10 HCP. Leads are top of honour sequences, third and fifth against suit contracts and also in partner's suit in no trump, otherwise fourth best in no trump; also second from four low against any contract. Signals and discards are standard count, with high to encourage as the secondary possibility, while suit preference has third priority. The system includes a number of common conventions such as Lebensohl, Michaels Cuebids, RKCB, Transfers —pretty much what might be considered to be 'standard' for a casual expert pair in an English tournament, I guess.

Men's Session One

For the first round it seemed appropriate to take a look at how the defending champion, Antonio Sementa of Italy would start. However, by the wonders of modern science (the fact that the Bridge Base online table can be watched alongside the regular vugraph table in the vugraph theatre), we get to see two lots of action for the price of one.

Board 1. None Vul. Dealer North.

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

	♠	N		♠
	W		E	
		S		

♠ A Q 9 4	♠ A Q 9 4
♥ 3 2	♥ 3 2
♦ K Q J 6 4	♦ K Q J 6 4

West	North	East	South
Hamman	Sementa	Freeman	Jin
—	1♠	Pass	2♣
Pass	2♠	Pass	3♥
Pass	3NT	All Pass	

Sementa and Jiansheng Jin had a normal auction to a normal contract, but one which requires some work due to the bad club split. Dick Freeman led his fourth-best diamond, as per the standard convention card and Sementa won the queen. He played a club to the king and ace and back came a second diamond which he won with the ace. A club to dummy revealed the bad news so Sementa switched his attention to spades, leading the ten.

Bob Hamman erred, as the cards lay, by going in with the ♠A to play a third diamond. When the ♠Q fell under the ace, declarer could win the diamond and play the ♠J to clear the suit, after which he had the rest; ten tricks for +430 and 19 MPs out of a possible 24.

West	North	East	South
Jason H	Wolff	Baldursson	Chemla
—	1♠	Pass	2♣
Pass	2♠	Pass	3♥
Pass	3NT	All Pass	

An identical auction saw Jon Baldursson also lead a diamond against 3NT. Baldursson, however, chose the four — we will credit him with a deliberate

falsecard rather than lack of familiarity with the convention card, I suppose.

Bobby Wolff won the diamond and played a club for the king and ace, won the diamond return and played a second club. He too played a spade next but chose the eight, and Jason Hackett ducked it to Baldursson's queen. Now Baldursson cleared the clubs rather than the diamonds, Hackett throwing a spade, to follow the heart that had gone on the second club.

Wolff was not prepared to play on spades now, as he could see that he would go down if East held a second spade honour. Instead, he crossed to the ♥K, cashed the third diamond, then played a heart to the jack and ace. With West down to two top spades and ♥108, the contract could now have been made by exiting with a losing spade, forcing West to lead into the heart tenace at the end. However, it was unclear that the ending was as it actually was and Wolff finally decided to cash the ♥Q, so was one down for —50 and just 3 MPs.

Of course, when declarer was trying to read the end position, he may well have been deceived by that fifth-best opening diamond lead into thinking that the suit was dividing four-four, in which case the endplay would not succeed and cashing the heart would be the correct play.

Board 2. N/S Vul. Dealer East.

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

	♠	N		♠
	W		E	
		S		

♠ K 10 7 6	♠ K 10 7 6
♥ Q 8 7 3	♥ Q 8 7 3
♦ A 10	♦ A 10
♣ A 6 3	♣ A 6 3

♠ Q J 8 3	♠ Q J 8 3
♥ 10 6 2	♥ 10 6 2
♦ J 7 6 4 2	♦ J 7 6 4 2
♣ 4	♣ 4

West	North	East	South
Hamman	Sementa	Freeman	Jin
—	—	Pass	Pass
1♣	Pass	1♦	Pass
INT	2♣	Dble	All Pass

I suspect that few of us play that a 2♣ overcall of a

1♣ opening is natural in our regular partnerships and so are used to passing then bidding clubs at our second turn, as did Sementa with the North hand. It looks tough to penalise an immediate 2♣ overcall, but here West could show his handtype and now it was routine for Freeman, who could not be assured of game facing a weak no trump, to double at the prevailing vulnerability.

Freeman led a heart to the queen and ace and Sementa led a spade up. Freeman went in with the ace and played a second spade to Hamman's king. Hamman knew he could give his partner a ruff, but there could be no hurry for that, so he instead returned a heart to declarer's king. Sementa tried the jack of clubs but that ran to Hamman's ace and now he gave the spade ruff. Freeman cashed the ♥J and the contract was soon down two for —500 and all 24 MPs to Hamman/Freeman.

West	North	East	South
Jason H	Wolff	Baldursson	Chemla
—	—	1♦	Pass
1♥	2♣	Dble	Pass
3♣	Pass	3NT	All Pass

Everyone may be obliged to play the same system, but that does not prevent differing styles from being followed. Where Freeman had passed the East cards as dealer, Baldursson opened 1♦. When Wolff came in with 2♣ over the 1♥ response, Baldursson's double merely showed three-card heart support. Jason had no reason to pass the double, of course, instead cuebidding to force to game. 3NT was the obvious call now from East, but it proved to be quite hopeless on the lie of the cards.

Paul Chemla



Chemla led his singleton club and Baldursson won in hand then played a diamond to the ace followed by the ♦10, ducking when Wolff showed out,

ditching a spade. Paul Chemla thought about that for a bit then allowed the ♦10 to hold the trick. Had he taken the diamond, Baldursson would have had eight winners as soon as he regained the lead, but he was now an entry short to establish a fourth diamond trick. Instead, Baldursson tried a heart towards his jack. Wolff went in with the ♥A and cleared the clubs, and now all declarer could do was to cash out for two down; —100 and 19 MPs to N/S.

Board 3. E/W Vul. Dealer South.

♠ 10 6		♠ 7 2
♥ A J 2		♥ 9 6 5
♦ 5 4		♦ 7 6 3 2
♣ Q 9 8 6 3 2		♣ A K 7 5
♠ K 8		
♥ Q 10 7 4 3		
♦ A K Q 9		
♣ J 4		
	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> N W E S </div>	
	♠ A Q J 9 5 4 3	
	♥ K 8	
	♦ J 10 8	
	♣ 10	

West	North	East	South
Martens	Zia	Bocchi	de Falco
—	—	—	4♠
All Pass			

Dano de Falco opened his in-between hand with an aggressive 4♠ rather than the alternative of 1♠ and duly bought the contract. Krzysztof Martens led the ace of diamonds, on which Norberto Bocchi played the three, then continued with the king, Bocchi playing the two, as de Falco followed with the ten and jack. It seemed clear that Bocchi had four diamonds and that he had petered with the bottom two cards to suggest a club switch. Sure enough, Martens switched to a club and now the contract had to fail by a trick; —50 and 5 MPs for N/S.

West	North	East	South
Gitelman	Bompis	Brogeland	Baldursson
—	—	—	1♠
2♥	Pass	3♥	3♠
4♥	Pass	Pass	4♠
Pass	Pass	Dble	All Pass

Baldursson preferred to open at the one level then showed his spade length by repeating the suit at the three level. I confess that I would have chanced a double of 4♥ with the North cards now, and that would have achieved the theoretically best possible result for N/S. However, Marc Bompis passed and now Baldursson saw the possibility of a save against what he imagined to be a making vulnerable game. Boye Brogeland doubled on the way out and, as at

the other table, West cashed a top diamond.

Brogeland played the $\diamond 2$ at trick one, presumably attitude whatever the system may say. But Fred Gitelman had seen his partner support hearts and for him the obvious switch was to a heart, not a club. Gitelman did not attempt to cash the second diamond but switched immediately to the ten of hearts. On this auction it was clear to play for the $\heartsuit Q$ to be onside and Baldursson did so, winning the $\heartsuit K$, finessing the jack and pitching his club loser on the $\heartsuit A$. Now he gave up a diamond and could not be prevented from ruffing his third diamond in dummy, losing just a trump trick for a fine +590 and 23 MPs.

Board 4. All Vul. Dealer West.

\spadesuit A K 3 2	\spadesuit Q J 9 6	\spadesuit 10 8 7 5
\heartsuit J 10 3	\heartsuit K 8 5 4 2	\heartsuit Q 7 6
\diamond A 10 9 6 4	\diamond K 7	\diamond 8 2
\clubsuit K	\clubsuit A 6	\clubsuit 10 7 5 2
	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> N W E S </div>	
	\spadesuit 4	
	\heartsuit A 9	
	\diamond Q J 5 3	
	\clubsuit Q J 9 8 4 3	

West	North	East	South
Martens	Zia	Bocchi	de Falco
1 \diamond	Dble	Pass	3 \clubsuit
All Pass			

Personal style had a big effect on the outcome of this deal as Zia went for a take-out double in hope of finding a major-suit fit, only to hear his partner jump in the unbid minor. He had to pass 3 \clubsuit , of course, and Martens cashed a top spade, getting the eight from Bocchi, then cashed the ace of diamonds

before trying the second spade. De Falco ruffed the spade and led the queen of clubs for the king and ace then led to the $\clubsuit 9$, and shortly afterwards settled for ten tricks and +130, for a complete zero.

There was a trump coup in the ending had declarer gone for it, playing three rounds of trumps to shorten himself then a diamond to the king and winning spades, but that would have salvaged only 2 MPs.

West	North	East	South
Gitelman	Bompis	Brogeland	Baldursson
1 \diamond	1 \heartsuit	Pass	INT
All Pass			

Bompis preferred the 1 \heartsuit overcall, ensuring that the fifth heart would not be lost, and Baldursson responded INT, where he played. Gitelman led a low diamond which ran to declarer's queen and Baldursson, short of entries to hand, elected to give up on $\clubsuit Kx$ onside and led low to the ace, picking up a nice bonus when the king appeared. He played a club back to his nine then a diamond to the king, Gitelman taking the ace and clearing the diamonds. Baldursson had ten tricks now and took them for +180 but only 8 MPs — there were five 630s and a couple of penalties to N/S.

Board 5. N/S Vul. Dealer North.

\spadesuit A Q J	\spadesuit 9 5 3	\spadesuit 7 6 2
\heartsuit K Q 7	\heartsuit A 6 4 2	\heartsuit 10 9 3
\diamond 6 5 4	\diamond A 8 7	\diamond K Q 3
\clubsuit 8 7 6 4	\clubsuit K J 9	\clubsuit A Q 5 2
	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> N W E S </div>	
	\spadesuit K 10 8 4	
	\heartsuit J 8 5	
	\diamond J 10 9 2	
	\clubsuit 10 3	

West	North	East	South
Forrester	Gitelman	Nunes	Multon
Madala	Levy	Helness	Brogeland
—	1 \clubsuit	Pass	1 \spadesuit
Pass	INT	All Pass	

I am sure that this was a common auction around the room.

Against Gitelman the lead was the $\heartsuit 10$ from Claudio Nunes, ducked all round. A second heart to the jack and king was also ducked but now Tony Forrester switched to the $\clubsuit 8$, for the nine and queen. Nunes reverted to hearts, Gitelman winning

HELP!

As I am sure you will all appreciate, this is a one-man Bulletin and I can be at only one table at any given time. Inevitably, that means I will miss most of the best stories so please, if you, your partner, or even an opponent, makes a good play or bid, come and tell me about it. That way we can make these Bulletins the best they can possibly be, not only for those of you playing here to read, but also for the many who will read our Bulletins on the internet.

his ace to play a spade to the ten and jack. A club went to the jack and ace and Nunes, after some thought, played a third round of clubs to establish a trick for the defence. Gitelman won the club and played another spade up so the defence took its black winners before switching to a diamond. Gitelman won the ace and cashed the long heart for down three; —300 and 9 MPs.

It seemed for a moment that Tor Helness had made a worse opening lead the other table as he chose the ♦K. Alain Levy won the ace and played back the suit, ducked, then played a third round to the queen. Helness switched to a spade for Agustin Madala's jack and a club came through to the queen. A second spade went to the king and ace and another club was led through, Helness ducking declarer's jack. It didn't matter, however. At this table there was no time for declarer to get a second heart winner and the opening lead gave only one extra diamond trick, so Levy was the same three down for the same —300 and the same 9 MPs.

Board 6. E/W Vul. Dealer East.

♠ 9 7 6 ♥ K J 8 4 ♦ 10 7 6 2 ♣ Q 10	♠ J 10 8 5 3 ♥ Q 7 5 ♦ 9 5 ♣ 7 6 3 <div>♠ N ♥ W E ♦ S ♣</div> ♠ K Q 4 2 ♥ A ♦ K J 8 4 ♣ K J 8 2	♠ A ♥ 10 9 6 3 2 ♦ A Q 3 ♣ A 9 5 4
West <i>Forrester</i> — 3♥	North <i>Gitelman</i> — Pass	East <i>Nunes</i> 1♥ 4♥
		South <i>Multon</i> Dble All Pass

Nunes' reraise to 4♥ looks very aggressive but, had he not done so, Frank Multon would probably have doubled again on the South cards and that would have worked out worse for E/W. Multon did not double again over 4♥, and Gitelman was unwilling to take a solo shot at 4♠, even at this vulnerability.

Multon led the ace of hearts then switched to the king of spades and Nunes won and played a club towards the queen, Multon going in with the king and playing the ♠Q, ruffed. Declarer continued with a heart to the king then cashed the ♣Q before ruffing the last spade. Nunes next cashed the ♣A for a diamond pitch then played the last club,

ruffing. It didn't matter what Gitelman did as the defence could only take the ♥Q and ♦K from here; down one for —100 but 14 MPs to N/S.

West	North	East	South
Madala	Levy	Helness	Brogeland
—	—	1♥	Dble
3♥	Pass	Pass	Dble
Pass	3♠	All Pass	

Helness did not find the reraise and, sure enough, Brogeland did double for a second time to get his side to 3♠. Helness led a heart for dummy's ace, and a moment later found himself back on lead with the ♠A. He led a second heart and Levy thought before pitching a club from dummy, losing to the ♥K. Madala returned a trump and Levy won the ten, cashed the ♠J and led a diamond to the king then a low diamond back to the nine and ace. He got the club right, of course, because of the bidding, so came to nine tricks for +140 and 18 MPs.

Board 7. All Vul. Dealer South.

♠ J 6 5 4	♠ A Q 10 9	♠ 8 3 2
♥ A 10 8 2	♥ K 9 6	♥ 4
♦ J 10 4	♦ A K 2	♦ Q 6 5
♣ Q 6	♣ J 10 3	♣ A K 9 8 7 5
	<div>W N E S</div>	
	♠ K 7	
	♥ Q J 7 5 3	
	♦ 9 8 7 3	
	♣ 4 2	
West	North	East
<i>Quantin</i>	<i>Del'Monte</i>	<i>Bocchi</i>
<i>Freeman</i>	<i>Lantaron</i>	<i>Jin</i>
—	—	—
Pass	INT	Pass
Pass	2♥	All Pass
		South
		<i>Justin H</i>
		<i>Helness</i>
		Pass
		2♦

Somebody would have to take a bit of a view not to follow the auction seen at both of our tables on this one. And the important part of the play was also identical at the two tables, with East playing three rounds of clubs. Both declarers threw a diamond on the third club. They won the diamond switch, played on trumps and just lost one heart for +140. The defensive diamond trick was lost and West's club ruff was with his second heart trick.

It seems as though this action was repeated several times as +140 scored only 15 MPs and only three different results were achieved.

Board 8. None Vul. Dealer West.**Ranking After Session One
(24 Boards)**

♠ A Q 7	♠ K J 10 9 3	♠ 8 6 4
♥ J 5 2	♥ 9	♥ A K Q 6
♦ Q J 9 8	♦ 7 4	♦ 5 3 2
♣ Q 5 3	♣ A K 9 8 7	♣ J 10 6
	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> N W E S </div>	
	♠ 5 2	
	♥ 10 8 7 4 3	
	♦ A K 10 6	
	♣ 4 2	

West	North	East	South
Quantin	Del'Monte	Bocchi	Justin H
1♦	1♠	Dble	Pass
INT	2♣	Pass	2♠
Pass	Pass	2NT	All Pass

Jean-Christophe Quantin opened 1♦ as West and, with no convenient way to show his two-suiter in one go, Ishmael Del'Monte overcalled 1♠ then showed the clubs at his next turn.

When Justin Hackett gave preference to spades, N/S had reached an excellent spot but Bocchi was not done yet and judged well to compete to 2NT, ending the auction.

It doesn't matter which black suit North leads against a no trump contract. Either gives declarer a sixth trick but allows the defence to establish and cash seven for two down.

Del'Monte chose to lead the jack of spades round to the queen and Quantin cashed some hearts but there was nothing to do;—100 but 16 MPs for E/W.

A nice bid that by Bocchi, and very much one dictated by the form of scoring.

West	North	East	South
Freeman	Lantaron	Jin	Helness
Pass	1♠	Pass	INT
Pass	2♣	Pass	2♠
All Pass			

Freeman did not open as West—very much not my style—and heard his opponents have a free run to 2♠. Jin led a top heart then switched to a trump, which Freeman won with the ace to switch to the ♦Q. Luis Lantaron won the ace and played a spade to the jack, cashed the ♠K, then played out three rounds of clubs and had ten tricks for +170 and 22 MPs.

Place	Player	MPs	%
1	Jens AUKEN	369	64.06
2	Ishmael DEL'MONTE	344	59.72
3	Bob HAMMAN	343	59.55
4	Tor HELNESS	338	58.68
5	Luis LANTARON	337	58.51
6	Jon BALDURSSON	334	57.99
7	Norberto BOCCHI	331	57.47
8	Boye BROGELAND	328	56.94
9	Frank MULTON	327	56.77
10	Hervé MOUIEL	324	56.25
11	Michael CORNELL	321	55.73
12	Andrew ROBSON	317	55.03
13	Giorgio DUBOIN	316	54.86
14	Alain LEVY	316	54.86
15	Henri SZWARC	315	54.69
16	David BIRMAN	310	53.82
17	Yalcin ATABEY	310	53.82
18	Krzysztof MARTENS	307	53.30
19	Gabriel CHAGAS	303	52.60
20	Christo DRUMEV	300	52.08
21	Bobby WOLFF	300	52.08
22	Antonio SEMENTA	299	51.91
23	John MOHAN	298	51.74
24	Fulvio FANTONI	294	51.04
25	Steve HAMAOU	288	50.00
26	Andrej GROMOV	285	49.48
27	J-C QUANTIN	283	49.13
28	Patrick HUANG	282	48.96
29	Subhash GUPTA	280	48.61
30	Christian MARI	279	48.44
31	Eric KOKISH	277	48.09
32	Jan JANSMA	275	47.74
33	Lew STANSBY	272	47.22
34	Rashid UL GHAZI	271	47.05
35	Soldano DE FALCO	270	46.88
36	Alfredo VERSACE	270	46.88
37	Augustin MADALA	270	46.88
38	Tony FORRESTER	270	46.88
39	Fredrik NYSTROM	266	46.18
40	Justin HACKETT	265	46.01
41	Piotr GAWRYS	261	45.31
42	Zia MAHMOOD	260	45.14
43	Apolinary KOWALSKY	254	44.10
44	Dick FREEMAN	253	43.92
45	Walid EL AHMADY	248	43.06
46	Marc BOMPIS	246	42.71
47	Jiansheng JIN	246	42.71
48	Jason HACKETT	239	41.49
49	Paul CHEMLA	234	40.63
50	Claudio NUNES	220	38.19
51	Guido FERRARO	220	38.19
52	Fred GITELMAN	211	36.63