



Dear All,

When the 54th European Team Championships were taking place in Ostend in 2018 we would not have imagined that the next qualification for

the Worlds would be three years later, not two and online rather than live!

To the credit of President Jan Kamras and his team a successful qualification to the World Teams Championships has taken place and now teams can look forward to the Worlds.

RealBridge has been instrumental in the success, running an efficient and smooth operation and they certainly deserve much praise. RealBridge opened doors when Covid-19 closed them!

Congratulations to Sweden, current World Champions, who won the qualification. Poland, who were runners up, won the European title in 2018. Russia with only four players came third. The top three will be joined by Turkey, France, Hungary, England and Spain to play Venice Cup in the Worlds.

Mark Horton remarks that some teams were missing, mentioning four time European Champions Austria. The good news is that Austria is active playing EBL Women's Practice matches twice monthly so they will be back!

The EBL Women's Practice matches will start up again in October, both for the top teams and for aspiring teams, so please let us know of your interest.

This edition is in place at this time to give recognition to the eight Women's teams that will represent Europe and compete in the Venice Cup.

President Jan Kamras has a message for players and Chair of EBL Women's Committee, Sevinç Atay has a message also.

Let's follow the Venice Cup in Salsomaggiore Terme, Italy from 27th March to 9th April, 2022. It will be great! Good luck to all.

Mary Kelly Rogers
Editor
EBL Women's Committee

EBL WOMEN'S NEWSLETTER SEPTEMBER 2021

SWEDEN



Louise Hallqvist, Jessica Larsson, Ida Gronkvist, Kathrine Bertheau,
Cecilia Rimstedt, Ylva Johansson
Linnea Edlund (NPC), Carina Wademark (Coach)

WINS EBL QUALIFIER FOR THE WORLDS VENICE CUP



Jan Kamras

MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT JAN KAMRAS

Dear Friends,

My sincere congratulations to all the teams qualifying for the upcoming Venice Cup!

Most, if not all, of you took part in practice matches organized for us by Mary Kelly Rogers, which probably helped, not only your performance, but also meant that you were very comfortable with the RealBridge platform.

Although only eight teams are assured of qualification I suggest that also the ninth and tenth ranked teams keep their calendars open during the WTC period. It is not uncommon that one or more Zones cannot fill their spots and the rules are such that Europe, Zone 1, gets the first and third available reserve spots.

I wish all of you lots of success and that you reach, or surpass, your goals in the WTC!

Best regards,

EBL President

SWEDEN 'S NPC LINNEA EDLUND



In the beginning of 2020 I was asked if I could consider the position as non-playing captain for the Swedish Women's national team. I was very honored - and after some consideration and conversation with Carina Wademark (our fantastic coach for many years), I decided to accept!



Carina Wademark

I was very much looking forward to accompanying our reigning world champions to the European championships in Madeira that summer, but then along comes the Covid situation, affecting not only bridge, but life in general.

As you already know, the European championship was at first postponed one year, only to be cancelled in 2021, and replaced with an online qualification event for the Venice cup.

TEAM SWEDEN

Four of the players are well known stars in the bridge community. Kathrine, Jessica, Cilla and Ida were team members of the 2019 Venice cup team.



Kathrine, Jessica, Cilla and Ida



Our other two team mates for this event were Louise Hallqvist and Ylva Johansson. Louise and Ylva are sisters, and they have actually represented Sweden before. They were part of our national team in Montecatini, 1997.

Sisters
Louise Hallqvist and Ylva Johansson

Of course - playing such an event online is not really the same thing as playing live - but it was great to have the team gathered in the same location - this was my first opportunity to meet up with the whole team!

The players had no difficulties with the technology, the RealBridge platform is really good for



online bridge. It was a bit unfortunate that the sound had to be turned off during play, but totally understandable due to the situation with many people playing in the same room - so the social aspect with actually meeting and talking with the opponents can not really be compared to live bridge. We experienced no technical issues with misclicks or other problems, so the online play experience was very smooth. And for me as a captain I was happy to be able to follow the play at both tables in every match!

SWEDEN ON TOP OF THE WORLD GOLD AT VENICE CUP WUHAN 2019

When Sweden won the Venice Cup in Wuhan in September 2019 they joined the group of only four European nations that had previously won the Venice Cup:

- England 1981, 1985
- Germany 1995, 2001
- Netherlands 1999
- France 2005, 2011, 2015
- Sweden 2019

<div> <div>AK1074</div> <div>Br 12, Giv V</div> <div>6♣= S</div> </div>		<div> <div>AKQJ4</div> <div>Ann Karin Fuglestad</div> <div>♠ 9</div> <div>♥ K108432</div> <div>♦ 10632</div> <div>♣ 82</div> </div>	
<div> <div>AKQJ4</div> <div>987</div> <div>♠ AK1074</div> </div>		<div> <div>AKQJ4</div> <div>Marianne Harding</div> <div>♠ QJ52</div> <div>♥ J975</div> <div>♦ J5</div> <div>♣ 1096</div> </div>	
<div> <div>AKQJ4</div> <div>Ida Gronkvist</div> <div>♠ 863</div> <div>♥ AQ6</div> <div>♦ AKQ4</div> <div>♣ 753</div> </div>		<div> <div>AKQJ4</div> <div>Cecilia Rimstedt</div> <div>♠ 9</div> <div>♥ K108432</div> <div>♦ 10632</div> <div>♣ 82</div> </div>	

- 1♠ - No alert, shows a 5-card suit
- 2♣ - A, Game forcing relay, normally no void or B, Game forcing, with clubs
- 3♦ - 16+ hcp (or good honours), 5 card clubs
- 3♥ - Relay
- 4♦ - Void in hearts
- 4♥ - Keycard with spade as trumps
- 4NT - Odd number of keycards, denies queen of spades
- 5♣ - Asking for king of clubs
- 5♥ - Showing king of clubs, denying king of diamonds
- 6♣ - Suggestion to play

Venice Cup



<http://www.eurobridge.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/INFORMATION-FOR-EBL-WBCS-JAN-2020.pdf>

To join a team of reigning world champions is quite a pressure - anything other than ending up in the first spot would be a setback. I am so very grateful that the team had no difficulties whatsoever to claim the victory in the qualifications, thank you ladies!

And I think I can speak for the whole team when saying that we look forward to the Venice cup, to meet our opponents at the tables - for real! We all miss live bridge, with the social aspects, the psychology at the table and the friendly atmosphere!

Have a look at the second board against Norway. It's beautiful bidding.

<https://kibitz.realbridge.online/#210826128768-200011r1>



Cilla (north) has shown a good hand with 5-5 in spades and clubs. Ida has three-card support in both suits.

When Ida finds out that the queen of spades is missing, she suggests being declarer in 6 clubs. This way her holding of AQ in hearts is protected, and as partner holds the queen of clubs the contract is way safer than the slam in spades.

16 IMP to Sweden! :)



Mark Horton



Mark Horton, editor of BeBridge Magazine, is a regular contributor to this Newsletter.

He helped to produce a series of Bulletins covering all four of the EBL's qualifying events for next year's World Championships.

See Final Bulletin

http://championships.eurobridge.org/QUALIFIER2021/Bul_07.pdf

Mark says ...

'When I wrote to Micke Melander asking if anyone had taken a picture of the EBL winners he replied 'You mean the World Champions'. Of course! Sweden won in Wuhan in 2019 and on this form they will be favourites to retain their title next year'. On next page Mark analyses two deals.

Norway v Sweden
Board 12

England v Russia
Board 20

CHAMPIONS ELECT?



Louise Hallqvist, Jessica Larsson, Ida Gronkvist, Kathrine Bertheau
Cecilia Rimstedt, Ylva Johansson

Over 4 days at the end of August, 20 teams played a complete round robin of 10 board matches to determine who would represent Europe in the Venice Cup next year, along with the host country, Italy.

There were famous names, new names and sadly, some missing names as some countries whose teams are made up of amateur players were unable to field a team, most notably the four time European Champions, Austria.

I'm told that most of the teams played EBL Women's scheduled online Practice/Coaching sessions all summer against one another. Such is the dedication of the Women's teams!

There were surprises, as some of the usual suspects struggled to make an impression. The most dramatic was the collapse of the Netherlands, who led the field from round three to round seven, but could then win only one of their remaining 12 matches. England, with its array of World Champions also found the going heavy, but they managed to come through at the end, securing one of the eight qualifying places.

Sweden were the convincing winners, taking the lead in Round 8 and holding it to the end, moving away from the field to finish more than a match clear of second placed Poland.



This was one of the best deals of the event:

Board 12. Dealer West. N-S Vulnerable.

♠ AKT74		♠ QJ52
♥ -		♥ J975
♦ 987		♦ J5
♣ AKQJ4		♣ T96

♠ 9		♠ QJ52
♥ KT8432		♥ J975
♦ T632		♦ J5
♣ 82		♣ T96

♠ 863		♠ QJ52
♥ AQ6		♥ J975
♦ AKQ4		♦ J5
♣ 753		♣ T96

Open Room

Cont	Decl	Lead	Tricks	NS	EW
12	6♠	N	♥7	11	100

Closed Room

Cont	Decl	Lead	Tricks	NS	EW	NORWAY	SWEDEN
6♠	S	♥3	12	1370			16



Norway 9th

Torild Heskje, Ann Karin Fuglestad, Anne Lill Hellmann (NPC) Marianne Harding, Liv Marit Grude, Bodil Øygarden, and Gunn Tove Vist

NORWAY V SWEDEN

Writing up Round 18 of the Open I mentioned a deal where declarer had a choice of possible 5-3 fits in a grand slam, the options being ♥875 opposite ♥AKQJ4 and ♣AQ975 facing ♣K63. On that occasion both suits broke reasonably enough, but on this deal from Round 8 in the Women's series it was vital to play in the stronger suit. We have already seen the auction from the Closed Room on page 4. Here is what happened at the other table:

Board 12. Dealer West. NS Vul.

Open Room

West	North	East	South
Johansson	Vist	Hallqvist	Heskje
2♦*	4♣*	Pass	4♦*
Pass	4♠	Pass	4NT*
Pass	5NT*	Pass	6♠

All Pass

2♦	Weak major or strong ♦
4♣	Clubs and a major
4♦	Ask for major
4NT	RKCB
5NT	1 or 3 key cards + void

The slam was doomed by the spade break, -100.

Knowing the ♠Q was missing, South gave North a chance to play in what might be a stronger suit. Having avoided the doomed slam in spades, declarer now had to find a route to 12 tricks.

West led the ♦3 for the jack and ace and declarer drew trumps, West pitching the ♥4. When West followed to the ♠A with the nine declarer cashed a club pitching a heart, came to hand with a diamond and played a spade, putting up the king when West discarded the ♥3. Declarer cashed the last trump pitching her remaining spade and West parted with the ♥8.

Board 12. Dealer West. N-S Vulnerable.

♠ AKT74
 ♥ -
 ♦ 987
 ♣ AKQJ4
 ♠ 9
 ♥ KT8432
 ♦ T632
 ♣ 82
 ♠ QJ52
 ♥ J975
 ♦ J5
 ♣ T96
 ♠ 863
 ♥ AQ6
 ♦ AKQ4
 ♣ 753

ENGLAND

RUSSIA

Open	6♠	N	♠Q	12	1430		
Closed	5♠	N	♥A	12	680	13	



Cecilia, Jan Kamras, Jessica



Strong Contenders

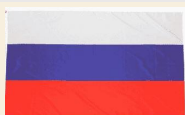
This was the position:

♠	10 7 4	♠	J
♥	—	♥	J 9 5
♦	9	♦	—
♣	—	♣	—
♠	—		
♥	K 10		
♦	10 6		
♣	—		
♠	—		
♥	A Q		
♦	Q 4		
♣	—		

Declarer played a diamond to her queen and exited with the four, forcing West to lead into the ♥AQ for a majestic +1370 and 16 IMPs.

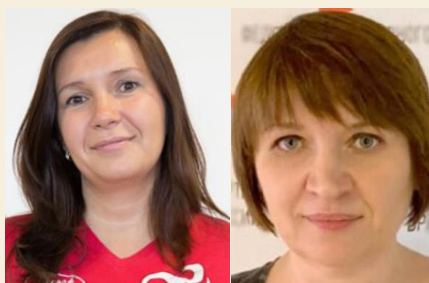
Terrific bidding and flawless play, making it a strong candidate for an IBPA award!

The most recent Venice Cups have been monopolised by Sweden, China and England, these three superpowers having taken all the medals at the last two editions. In 2022 they are sure to face a strong challenge from many countries, including the USA, France & Poland, but you can be sure that once again they will all be strong contenders.



Board 20. Dealer West. All Vulnerable.

♠ 53
 ♥ KQ72
 ♦ KT
 ♣ KT843
 ♠ 876
 ♥ JT94
 ♦ Q8732
 ♣ 6
 ♠ 92
 ♥ 863
 ♦ AJ95
 ♣ QJ97
 ♠ AKQJT4
 ♥ A5
 ♦ 64
 ♣ A52



Elena Khonicheva & Tatiana Ponomareva



Sally Brock & Fiona Brown

ENGLAND				RUSSIA			
Open	6♠	N	♠Q	12	1430		
Closed	5♠	N	♥A	12	680	13	

ENGLAND V RUSSIA

Russia made a good impression, finishing third. They would have been close to a maximum against England had it not been for the last board (someone should write a book about that):

Board 20 Dealer West All Vulnerable

In the other room Russia had reasonably stopped in 5 ♠, scoring +680 when East led the ♦ A.

Open Room

West	North	East	South
Khonicheva	Brock	Ponomareva	Brown
Pass	1NT*	Pass	4 ♥*
Pass	4 ♠	Pass	4NT*
Pass	5 ♣*	Pass	5NT*
Pass	6 ♠	All Pass	

1NT 12-14
4 ♥ Spades

4NT RKC (1430)

5NT 'King ask/grand slam try'

Although there were question marks about the auction (didn't 5 ♣ make it clear a key card was missing?) the slam could not be immediately defeated by a diamond lead with North at the helm. East led the ♣ Q and declarer won in hand and played five rounds of spades discarding three clubs. On the last of these West discarded a heart, so declarer had four tricks in the suit. If she had cashed the last spade at this point East would subsequently have been squeezed in the minors for all the tricks, but +1430 was a vital result, saving several victory points.

West could have made life much tougher by holding on to her hearts. Then declarer must cash the last spade and pitch a heart. She then takes three rounds of hearts catching East in a squeeze without the count. East has to part with a diamond and declarer then ducks a diamond, taking the last two tricks with the ♣ A and the ♦ K.

Mark Horton

Sophia Baldysz



Poland won
the 54th European
Women's Teams in
Ostend 2018

Sophia writes

The EBL qualifier for the World Championships 2021 took place online. Our women's team joined the rest of the Polish players on the open, senior and mixed teams on the third day of the event – we played in Starachowice in Poland, in a hotel which frequently hosts bridge tournaments.

I must say that this experience vastly differed from other championships.



Cathy Baldysz

POLAND 2nd



Danuta Kazmucha, Kasia Dufrat

Joanna Taczewska, Mirek Cichocki (NPC), Anna Sarniak

Cathy and Sophia Baldysz

A Typical Day for Sophia

You arrive at the playing area 15 minutes before playing time, laptop in hand. Walk over to the table at which you're playing at. Try to join your table on the website – the director hasn't started your session yet. Munch on a carrot 5 minutes before playing time. Be reminded by the observer that food is not allowed during play, so you quickly try to finish eating your morning snack.

Then, there's about 1 hour and a half of silence and clicking with only an hotel wall as backdrop scenery. You occasionally hearing a "sorry partner" muttered under someone's nose from a different team at a neighboring table. You leave the playing area, laptop in hand, walk out of the room and bump into your teammates, who are sitting around and kibitzing your second board on RealBridge.

The captain complains that you only played two flat boards and will now spoil the fun by telling them what happened on the following eight, which are usually more interesting. You proceed to do so, casually mentioning that this is the first championship that you have ever played at when after already leaving the playing area you can watch yourself at the bridge table, as if it was in a different time zone.



Playing Area



Players with
NPC Mirek Cichocki

About the third day of the championships, while waiting for your teammates to finish the last board of the match, you overhear some people talking. One is a member of the hotel staff, the other two appear to be interested in booking a conference at the hotel. The staff member is showing them the facilities: “... and here we have a large conference room, it can hold up to 200 people. Right now there’s a bridge event going on in there, so we can’t go in. Our hotel often hosts bridge events, the owner is also a bridge player. Bridge is... (long pause).. well, they basically play cards.”

I think that overall the championship was a success and that RealBridge proved to be a good alternative to playing live. However, I think I may speak on behalf of all the Polish players that we are very much looking forward to live events and hope that we may all see each other at the World Championships at the beginning of next year.

Thanks to my partner, teammates and captain for taking part in this online event. We hope to make an appearance very soon at a live international championship.



Cathy and Sophia Baldysz, Anna Sarniak, Danuta Kazmucha
Joanna Taczewska, Kasia Dufurat, NPC Mirek Cichocki

Olga Pavlushko



Olga writes

Before the EBL online qualifier started, we were hoping for ending up in the cherished first eight, but as we say in Russia, a man proposes, and God disposes.

Our team decided to play the event in two pairs, and there was a certain risk that someone could get ill and then we would be in a big trouble.

Well, God disposed: two of us caught a tough cold just days before.

As a consequence it was a rare tournament when the Russian women's team drank not a glass of wine together while at a tournament. Maybe that was a key to success, who knows?

Russia 3rd



Maria Yakoleva (PC), Elena Khonicheva
Olga Pavlushko, Tatiana Ponomareva

We started from two small wins, then lost 7 imps to Germany, then had 5 wins in a row. Life was great until we met Sweden, who made a lot of winning moves in this match while we made a lot of wrong decisions, including doubling 4♣ in a game. We took only 0.04 IMP.

But that was just a beginning of our troubles, next we lost 1 IMP to Ireland and then came the match with Poland, in which our team made mistakes in half of the boards. Only 1.56 IMP.

Next came Israel who made their best to beat us and we took only 3.41 IMP. A really bad day.

Many years ago I learned the main rule of the game, and it's not about the technique, carding and squeezes. It sounds like "never give up". Besides, discouragement is a sin. My teammates are also aware of these rules, so the team spirit remained strong and healthy and we won the rest of the matches, unexpectedly finishing in 3rd place.

Well, even better than planned.



Venue for EBL Qualification
Conference Hall Volga
In the Centre of Moscow.

This is also the venue of the
Moscow Bridge Club.

Some say that the World Championship 2022 might be cancelled as it happened with European Championships in 2020 and 2021.



Olga Pavlushko and Maria Yakoleva
Winners of Regional Tournament
Moscow, June 2021



Tatiana Ponomareva, Elena Khonicheva
2nd place in Regional Tournament
St. Petersburg 2021

In this tough two years we all faced a lot of limitations for communication and travelling and playing bridge was also impacted by the pandemic.

In 2020 Russia had cancelled many tournaments when regional regulations prohibited meetings for a certain amount of people. In 2020 some were held but deprived of the official status of the Russian championship because people who are in a high-risk group should not be tempted to participate.

During this time online tournaments became quite popular. Now we even have an online premiere league with 6 divisions. In 2021 all Russian championships have official status and we have a lot of live bridge. For example, 136 pairs participated in Russian summer IMP championship. Some will say, that's a small tournament, but the bridge community in Russia is not as big as in many other European countries. In 2021 summer championship had 14 pairs more than in 2019.

We sincerely believe that Venice Cup will take place in 2022 and hope to show our best play.

TUNA ELMAS



Tuna Elmas writes

I am the coach of Turkish Women National Team. I love my team and I am very proud of our result.

First and foremost, my team is composed of "friends".



The Friends!

Serap Kuranoglu
Hatice Ozgur
İrem Ozbay
Dilek Yavaş

TURKEY 4th



Serap Kuranoglu, Dilek Yavas, İrem Ozbay
Tuna Elmas, Hatice Ozgur, Eren Ozan, Ozlem Kandolu

Our Preparation:

In preparation for the EBL World Qualification my pairs have spent many hours on our systems' analysis . By the way, we have had lots of "practice matches" for the further development of our game styles and agreements under the name of "Friendship Matches" with many different countries. (EBL Women's Practice/Coaching matches).

At the end of all those matches, we announced the motto:

"Friendship always wins"

Team Turkey went to Bridge Camp in Çeşme for team building and Fun!

See link: <https://youtu.be/4obJfiNXvnk>

We have mostly competed on BBO with Vugraph, where at times there has been as many as 600 Kibitzers at one of our tables. (We have had a few of our matches on Real Bridge). For each of the BBO matches we have had at least four commentators, explaining in English to the audience. Two commentators at each table with one director. The matches were three sets of 10 boards.

We used What's App Video group calls after these matches and this provided us with an opportunity to discuss as a team our mistakes. Further evaluation on the bidding sequences then followed.

For certain all these activities were both necessary and compulsory for our success. In addition to these studies, we have built a strong groundwork to achieve our deliberate goal. We have aimed to win.

To be honest all of the above strategies on their own would not have been enough to provide a satisfactory result. We were aware that although hard work was important, a vital and valuable factor for success is 'togetherness' and we have worked to achieve this also.

We, as a "team", have spent many hours not only at bridge tables but also on holidays and at facilities where we have discharged all the negative thoughts from ourselves and we have totally felt "happy and attached to each other"



Irem Ozbay, Hatice Ozgur, Dilek Yavas, Ozlem Kandolu, Tuna Elmas

together, have exercised together, have shared together and in the end have won together. The key words for us have been, as you can guess, are that: "we become one, we form empathy with our partners and we trust in ourselves".

My team has done all above!



Serap Kuranoglu, Irem Ozbay, EBL OBSERVER GREGOR
Hatice Ozgur, Dilek Yavas

DAVID HARARI



David Harari

Head of the « Commission de Sélection » (=committee in charge of the high-level players) of the French Bridge Federation.

writes

The Team: can be considered as a mix of experience:



Sylvie Willard is the most titled female French player holding three World titles and six European titles.



Elisabeth Hugon
World champion
(Venice cup) 2015
Runner-up in 2001.

FRANCE 5th



Anne-Frédérique Lévy, Sylvie Willard, Elisabeth Hugon
Donatella Halfon, Danièle Avon, Muriel Clément
Wilfried Libbrecht as non-player captain

French Women's Trials:

The team barely prevailed (6 IMPS after 160 boards !) in the final of the French team trial, and so the online European qualifier was thus considered as a big challenge

EBL World Qualification:

The team succeeded brilliantly in fulfilling their task : indeed, after a rough start (two losses against underdog teams), everything went smoothly with the three pairs playing solid bridge all along.

Qualification for the Venice cup was a sure thing before the last two matches of the qualifier, which was a big relief for all players.

French Women's Team strength:

A big strength of the French squad is the excellent team spirit, with the ability to forget and forgive quickly any bad result. It is also worth noting that the team worked hard before the championship, with a lot of training sessions (some of them organized by Philippe Cronier or by their captain) and practice games versus other national teams (thanks again to EBL and Mary Kelly Rogers for organizing these meetings so efficiently!).



Danièle Avon holds several medals from European Team Championships.



Donatella Halfon First major championship



Muriel Clément Second major championship



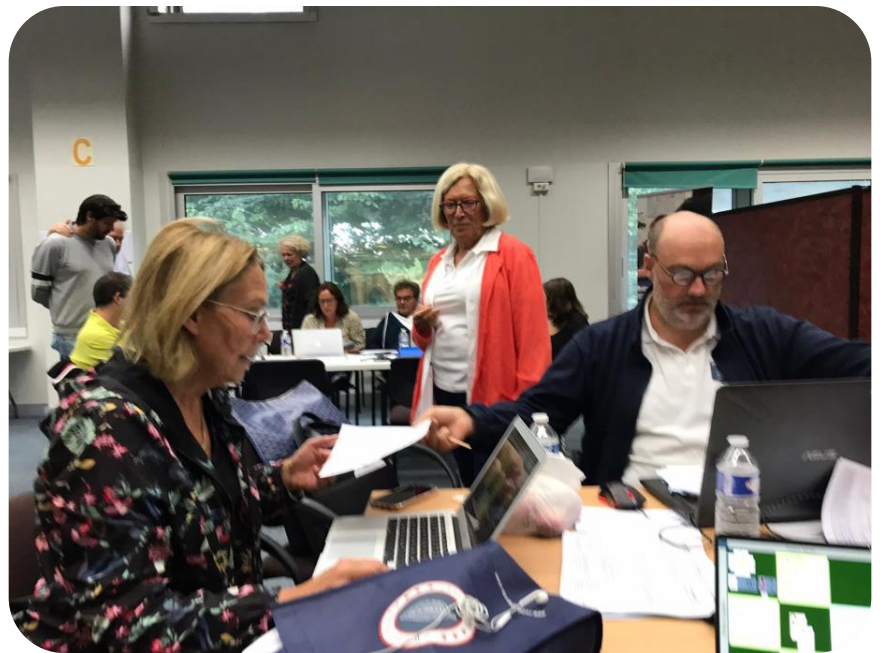
Anne-Frédérique Lévy Second major championship



Wilfried Libbrecht (NPC) Prominent French player, with several national titles (including the Open Pairs Premier League). Wilfried is in charge of the French youth teams.

Expectations:

Now what are their expectations for the Venice Cup ? Well, first of all, everybody hopes that the tournament will be held in Italy as scheduled, and not online (the covid situation is unfortunately still rather unstable around the world). Then, I would say that finishing in the top 8 of the round-robin (that is : qualify for the KO stages) would already be a great result, but who knows ? Maybe they can do even better !



Venue : Building of French Federation (nearby Paris), where most national events take place.

Orsolya Hegedus



writes



Orsolya



Agnes Zalai

HUNGARY 6th



Ágnes Zalai, Orsolya Hegedus (PC), Eszte Tichy, Hanka Lajos, Villő Szucs

Hungary's journey to the qualification for the World Championships - Venice Cup

Two years ago I discussed with my partner, Ágnes Zalai, the formation of a new women's team and register it for the national trials. Both of us had been members of the national women's team on several occasions and mostly in the same partnership. Although we had a few successful runs at international competitions we also had many unsuccessful ones. In spite of this, we still had the hope of reaching a place at the Europeans that was worthy of qualification for the World's.



We invited a promising young pair, Hanka Lajos and Villő Szűcs, who were part of the silver medalist Hungarian Girls' team at the 2019 Oslo European Youth Bridge Teams Championships, and also have a Budapest Teams Champion title from 2019. As there was no challenging team for the national trials, ours became the one entitled to represent Hungary at the 2020 Europeans.





While preparing for the Europeans, our realistic goal was to lay the foundations for a future team capable of competing at an international level in the medium term.

We joined the Online Women's practice series at BBO (thanks again for organising it, Mary!), and due to the frequent other occupations of the 4 team members (2 working mothers and 2 university students), we occasionally invited other women players to these matches.



One of them was Eszter Tichy (a working mother too), my first women partner around 2000 who recently returned to tournament bridge after an omission of more than 10 years, and who became the fifth member of our team, playing in both pairs.

By more or less being locked down for a year and a half, and with the Europeans being postponed twice the team had hardly even met in person. Playing only online and communicating mostly in email or group chat during this whole period, it seemed an exaggeration to expect more from the online qualification tournament than a good practice opportunity.

Despite our modest expectations, we remained in a qualifying position from round 2 of the qualifier that led to a final result none of the Hungarian bridge teams of the non-junior categories could reach in the past decades.

Turning our focus to the upcoming challenge of the World Championships, we are committed to get prepared to the best of our ability and at the moment our expectation is to stand our ground among the best teams in the world.

DAVID BURN



writes

5		♠ KJ842	
N / N-S		♥ T8	
		♦ J9	
		♣ AJ86	
♠ 63			♠ 97
♥ KJ943			♥ Q62
♦ A4			♦ QT862
♣ KQ93			♣ T74
		♠ AQT5	
		♥ A75	
		♦ K753	
		♣ 52	



Nicola Smith and David

ENGLAND 7th



Nicola Smith, Nevena Senior, Catherine Draper
Gillian Fawcett, David Burn (NPC), Sally Brock, Fiona Brown

If there were an ascenders' prize for the second half of qualifying round robins, the English women's team would win it in every major tournament. We always start like snails and are miles off the pace after the first couple of days, then sail serenely through the field to reach the next stage in some comfort.

The trouble with this in the online EBL qualifying event was that the first couple of days were actually half the tournament. So instead of having the best part of a week to recover, we needed to find the accelerator and keep it pressed. In the first match of the third day Sally Brock had to play this. North-South game, dealer North.



Sally Brock (North)

West	North	East	South
	Sally Brock		Fiona Brown
	Pass	Pass	1♦
1♥	1♠	Pass	2♠
Pass	3♣	Pass	4♠
Pass	Pass	Pass	

East led ♥2, ducked to West's ♥K. A second heart went to the ten, queen and ace. Declarer ruffed a third heart in the North hand, drew trumps in two rounds, played a club to West's queen and her ace, and considered the matter. Deciding eventually that East would have raised to 2♥ with ♥Qxx and ♦A, Brock courageously led ♦J and ran it. West won ♦A and declarer claimed, raising an eyebrow when East's diamonds proved to have been ♦Q10862.

Seventh with a match to go and needing about 15 Victory Points out of 20 to guarantee progression, England faced France, who were third and in no danger. This was just as well for them, as England racked up a win by 50 IMPs to 1. Never in doubt, as usual.

Players' say



"It was very exciting for us to participate in this Championship. The team got off to a terrible start, but we knew we had to play our best regardless of the score. We did and managed to obtain a great result! Thank you to the whole team for this tournament, especially to our captain and of course to my partner."
(Margarita Fernández)

SPAIN 8th



Maria Eugenia Hernandez, Margarita Fernandez(Marga), Marina Castells, (Elena Orbegoza, AEB President), Laura Castells, Paula De Lorenzo, Montserrat Mestres (Montse)



"The illusion that makes you win in a competition is almost proportional to the effort involved. Behind the success there is a lot of work, a lot of stamina and a lot of luck that is essential."

(Maria Eugenia Hernández)



"I am especially much more excited than the rest of my team, since in August I turned 79 years of age and this was my last chance to go to the Venice Cup. For this reason I want to encourage everyone, telling them that bridge has no age, but a lot of enthusiasm, desire and effort."

(Montse Mestres)



Venue - Madrid - Eurobridge Club (near NH Eurobuilding Hotel)



Maria Eugenia Hernandez, Margarita Fernandez(Marga), Marina Castells, (Elena Orbegozo, AEB President), Laura Castells, Paula De Lorenzo, Montserrat Mestres (Montse)

VIVIANE VAN CAMP MEIR



Writes....

It was quite a unique experience to take part of the Classificatory Tournament for the Word Cup in Italy next March 2022 as an Observer.

I feel very grateful to have been given this opportunity, especially in such a beautiful city as Porto and under COVID circumstances.

SPANISH OBSERVER IN PORTUGAL REPORTS



Everything went smooth, the atmosphere was great with the warmest welcoming of the management team.

The premises were comfortable with spacious rooms and good facilities. The big size screen was very useful as it allowed us to visualise all the played boards at once after every session.

The local teams and management were extremely helpful. A few technical glitches here and there with the cameras and connectivity but immediately sorted on the spot. Any incident report to the EBL would be handled promptly. Days were long and intense requiring lots of focus, but hey, it is part of the excitement of the event!

Overall a very positive experience, I believe and hope the whole event was a success. Looking forward to the next one!



SHIREEN MOHANDES



Co-founder of RealBridge
Shireen Mohandes

writes on

How did the EBL Qualifier go!

There's no recipe book for an online zonal event spread across 31 venues, with different time zones, different languages, technology that was new to some of the participants, and new procedures, all under pandemic circumstances. But by the time the event was due to start, all the ingredients were ready and prepared to make it all work.

For the RealBridge team the preparations were mostly straightforward. The platform has been used many times before, for events of similar size, so we were confident that it would work. We did make a few enhancements to the system to meet the EBL's particular requirements, but these worked as expected.

We organized a lot of practice sessions for players to get familiar with the system and to iron out any specific problems with using the platform. These were widely attended, and helped a lot to avoid individual problems during the event. In fact, in the women's series, we knew that the players would have few difficulties. Almost all the participants had taken part in previous EBL events on RealBridge, organised by Mary Kelly Rogers and Vigfus Pálsson (see <http://www.eurobridge.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/EBL-WOMENS-NEWSLETTER-APRIL.pdf> and <http://db.eurobridge.org/repository/competitions/21WomenOnline/Results.htm>).

HOW DID IT GO?

A



RealBridge

PERSPECTIVE

Our other major task was in helping the EBL with integration between RealBridge and the EBL's own systems for managing match assignments, lineups and scores. The EBL team prepared carefully for that, and it all worked smoothly.

At the start of each round every player was taken automatically to the right table; nobody got lost, and everybody played the right opponents.

The biggest complexity of this event was with the playing venues. Each NBO had to find somewhere of the right size, arrange internet connectivity, design a room-layout that met the security requirements, sort out crucial details like power sockets, make arrangements for observers, ensure that every player had a suitable playing device, make sure their players understood how it all worked, and then test everything. All 31 NBOs rose to the challenge.

The team – the EBL, NBOs, observers, directors, scorers and RealBridge - worked hard to anticipate risks and mitigate them. Did a few things slip through the net? Yes, but it all ended well. One player, for example, turned up with a 15-year old laptop, not used for some time. Thankfully, one of the women players sorted him out (and I mean that in a friendly way, rather than a Harvey Keitel way of sorting things out).

This is probably the only EBL event where the entire bidding and play at every table was recorded and published. The boards, bidding and play at every table are available forever, on kibitz.realbridge.online (You may be surprised to hear that in 1934, the equivalent of the EBL held an event where all the auctions and opening leads were recorded. There is a book from that event, but only about 15 copies of it are known to exist.)

The video commentators at the kibitz server are to be thanked. It was good to see commentary in so many languages. The FFB ran a Twitch channel too, alongside what we were providing.

The RealBridge team were Graham Hazel, Andy Bowles, and myself.

Shireen Mohandes

The next generation!



Pawel Jassem, bridge-playing son of Krzysztof Jassem (Poland), sent Shireen this lovely photo of his son. Apparently, after seeing his grandfather go down in 3NT, he simply turned over and stopped watching granddad, and played with his own cards.

**Women's Bridge
Thank you to Contributors**



Sophia Baldysz
(Player Poland)

David Burn
(NPC England)

Linnea Edlund
(NPC Sweden)

Tuna Elmas
(Coach Turkey)

Margarita Fernandez
(Player Spain)

David Harari
(France)

Orsolya Hegedus
(PC Hungary)

Mark Horton
(Editor BeBridge & Qualifier
Bulletins)

Shireen Mohandes
(Co-Founder RealBridge)

Olga Pavlushko
(Player Russia)

Viviane Van Camp Meir
(Spanish Observer in Portugal)

45TH WORLD 2021 BRIDGE TEAM CHAMPIONSHIPS
Salsomaggiore Terme, Italy • 27 March - 9 April 2022



SWEDEN



POLAND



RUSSIA



TURKEY



FRANCE



HUNGARY



ENGLAND

**EBL
Women's Teams
Worlds 2022
Venice Cup**



SPAIN

Message from Sevinç Atay, Chair EBL Women's Committee



Congratulations to All and I wish good luck to the players who will attend Venice Cup.