

BRIDGE

Who Was First Sponsor to Win World Team Title?

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Professionals in sports and games usually make money from three possible sources: pay, prize money and sponsorship.

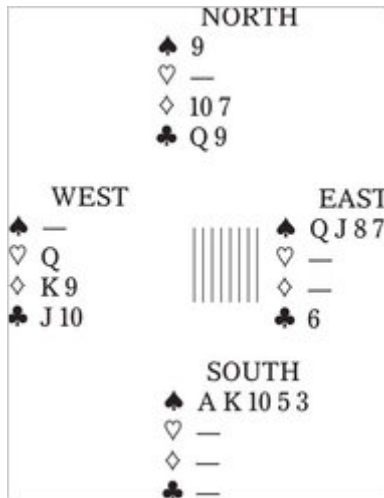
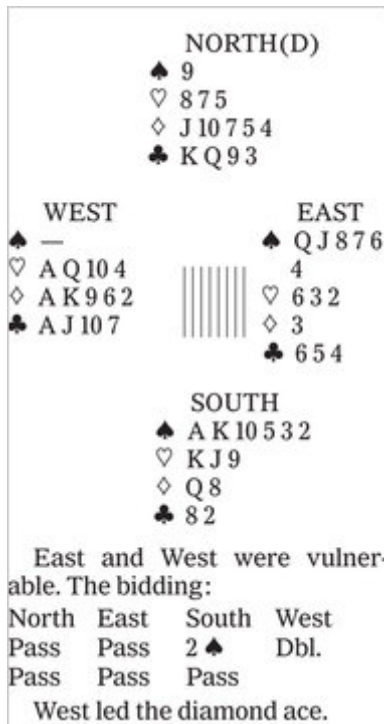


Diagram 1



Players in the [National Football League](#), Major League Baseball, the [National Basketball Association](#) and the National Hockey League are paid, some handsomely. Golf and tennis tournaments, for example, award prize money, often generous. And look at the logos worn by race-car drivers.

Bridge professionals in the United States, though, cannot win prize money, because there isn't any. So to afford to play, they are paid by wealthy sponsors. (This also happens in other countries.) It benefits everyone: The sponsors can win big events, which most of them could not do if playing only with their peers, and the professionals can make a living playing the game they love.

In recent years the three North American championships, in the spring, summer and fall, have become major international events because sponsors are bringing top world stars to play.

Sponsorship started on a small scale many decades ago but became much more prevalent during the '80s. This was initially controversial. In particular, when a sponsor first qualified to represent the United States in a Bermuda Bowl world team championship, there was an outcry that the country was not sending its strongest team.

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The critics were silenced when Malcolm Brachman won the 1979 Bermuda Bowl in Rio de Janeiro with his teammates Mike Passell, Billy Eisenberg, [Eddie Kantar](#), Bobby Goldman and Paul Soloway. In the final they defeated the powerful Italian team of Giorgio Belladonna, Vito Pittalà, Dano de Falco, Arturo Franco, Benito Garozzo and Lorenzo Lauria.

The 96-board match was won by 5 international match points, and that was after the Americans won the second session by 64 imps to 3 with Brachman playing.

The diagramed deal, Board 25, is from that set. At the other table Kantar (South) opened one spade in the third position. De Falco (West) doubled, and Franco (East) passed.

The defense lost its way, letting Kantar escape for down one, minus 100.

In the given auction Garozzo (South) opened two spades to show a six-card suit with 11 to 13 high-card points. Passell (West) doubled, and Brachman (East) contentedly passed.

The defense was perfect.

West led the diamond ace and continued with a low diamond, East ruffing and shifting to the heart six. West won with his ten and shifted to a low club. Declarer won with dummy's king, ruffed the diamond jack in his hand (on which East discarded the heart three) and led the club eight. West went in with his ace, cashed the heart ace and gave his partner a heart ruff to leave this position (See Diagram 1).

Brachman continued the good work by leading his spade jack. Then he had to take two more trump tricks for down three, plus 500 and a gain of 9 imps.

While play for pay exists, so will top-level tournament bridge.