

Waiting for the weighty woman

by Phillip Alder

Whatever your nationality, you probably have an expression for the sentiment that a contest is not over "until the fat lady sings," a reference to the final aria of an opera, typically performed by an overweight soprano. Until she sings, do not assume everything is decided. Baseball great Yogi Berra's maxim is also useful: "It's not over 'til it's over."

The fat lady and Yogi would have appreciated the last board of the D'Orsi Senior Bowl match between France and Poland on Wednesday.

After 95 boards, the score was Poland 196.67 France 191. This was the final deal:

Board 32. Dealer West. E/W Vul.

<p>♠ 10 4 ♥ Q J 6 5 4 ♦ 6 5 2 ♣ Q J 4</p>	<p>♠ A J 7 5 ♥ K 8 7 3 2 ♦ J ♣ A 10 7</p>	<table style="width: 100%; text-align: center; border: 1px solid black; background-color: #004a99; color: white;"> <tr><td>N</td></tr> <tr><td>W E</td></tr> <tr><td>S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	<p>♠ 9 8 6 2 ♥ A 10 ♦ A Q 10 8 3 ♣ K 3</p>
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	<p>♠ K Q 3 ♥ 9 ♦ K 9 7 4 ♣ 9 8 6 5 2</p>					

In the Closed Room, this was the auction:

West	North	East	South
Lasserre	Kowalski	Poizat	Romanski
Pass	1♥	Dble	Pass
INT	Pass	Pass	Dble
Pass	2♣	2♦	3♣
All Pass			

Apolinary Kowalski would have done best to pass out his partner's double of INT. That contract would surely have failed by one trick.

It is hard to argue with Jacek Romanski's raise to 3♣ with five-card support. But as we will see in a moment, he had a more successful choice.

East led the spade eight. North took the trick with his jack and played his diamond, East winning with his ace and leading a second spade. What next?

It looked natural to declarer to ruff a diamond, cash the club ace, and play another trump. However, East won and gave his partner a spade ruff. Guy Lasserre switched to the heart queen, and a second round of hearts stranded declarer in the dummy, forced to concede the last trick to East's diamond queen. The defenders had taken one heart, two diamonds and two clubs for down one.

At trick four, declarer would have done better to duck a heart (he can even play his king). Then he would have had



Guy Lasserre, France

the communications to arrive at nine tricks one way or another.

To win the match, the French North-South had to be at least plus 170.

This was the bidding sequence:

West	North	East	South
Russyan	Leenhardt	Lasocki	Piganeau
Pass	1♥	2♦	Pass
Pass	Dble	All Pass	

With a singleton in his partner's suit, four reasonable trumps, and vulnerable opponents, it was sensible for Patrice Piganeau to go for a penalty.

South led his heart, probably disappointed to see Krzysztof Lasocki take the trick with his ten.

Declarer led his club king, South signaling an odd number with his two. So North, Francois Leenhardt, ducked the first club, took the second, and pushed through the diamond jack, covered by the queen and king.

I was expecting South to continue with the diamond nine or seven to keep declarer out of the dummy. Instead, after a lot of thought, he led a low spade. North won with his ace and gave his partner a heart ruff. South then exited with a trump.

East won and played a spade, but South took that trick and led his last trump. Declarer won and played another spade. After South won, he had to lead a club to dummy's queen, on which East's last spade evaporated, but the contract had gone down one, the defenders taking three spades, one diamond, one club and one heart ruff.

Plus 50 and plus 200 was worth 6 IMPs to France and victory by 0.33.

Strains of a woman singing "La Marseillaise" could be heard in the background.