

Daniel Lavee

Daniel has been a mainstay of the Canadian Junior Team for half a dozen years. Daniel and his Junior partner, Samantha Nystrom, came second in this year's Canadian Open Pairs Championship. Most recently, he played on the Junior team in Philadelphia at the World Series of Bridge. The team finished a devastating one-half a Victory Point out of qualifying for the quarterfinals, losing 10 IMPs on the final board to do so. Despite this setback, Daniel joined forces with Connie Goldberg and won the World Transnational Mixed Teams with JoAnn Sprung-Greg Hinze and Lynn and Dale Johannessen, all of the USA.

We caught up with Daniel upon his return from Philadelphia.

Kibitzer: Hi Daniel. Congratulations on your win in the Mixed Transnational Teams in Philadelphia. Tell us how your team came about.

DL: Thanks JC. I went to the World Championships with high hopes for the Canadian Junior Team. Unfortunately, we were short-handed and missed qualifying for the KO stage by half a VP. The round robin ended in the afternoon and I spent the rest of the day in bed. I woke up the next day rested and refreshed and found Connie Goldberg a few minutes before game time. She explained that Fred Gittleman was under the weather after winning the Rosenblum and his partner, Brad Moss recruited nephew Shane Blanchard, with whom Connie was to play the Mixed, to play the



Daniel does his impression of the Gateway Arch in St. Louis. Happy (a two-year-old Golden Doodle) waits obediently to lick his face in congratulation of the gold medal.

World Open Pairs. This chain of events left Connie without a partner so we teamed up.

Kib: What did you do to prepare for the World Championships?

DL: Before the World Championships, I did my best to be prepared. I worked very hard to develop my partnership with Samantha Nystrom and to improve my own skills. Furthermore, I started doing Yoga and I really liked it. I think it keeps me in balance, mentally and physically. I believe I play better bridge because of it. Ironically, my favourite pose is The Bridge (see photo).

Kib: Your partner for the Mixed Teams was Connie Goldberg who has been a prominent player in the USA for about 30 years. How did the partnership work?

DL: We have known each other for a couple of years and I had the good fortune of playing with her. Connie's a fierce competitor and I think our partnership was effective because we

kept things simple and tried to make things easy for each other. More importantly, we played well and had a lot of fun.

Kib: Give us a little of the feel of the Transnational event and the World Bridge Series.

DL: The World Mixed Swiss Teams consisted of 12 rounds with 10-board matches played over the last two and a half days of the two-week tournament. Men sit North/West and the women sit East/South in mixed events. As a result, a man and a woman are on each side of the screen. Some women try to dress provocatively attempting to distract their male screen-mates. I was able to keep my focus despite being lucky enough to be screen-mates with some of the most beautiful women in the bridge world.

Kib: There is apparently some controversy over whether this was a World Championship or not. Can you tell us what this is about?

DL: There seems to be a mix-up with the WBF. The Conditions of Contest stated that the event was a World Championship, just as it was in previous years. I hope the confusion gets resolved shortly.

Kib: Did your win lessen the disappointment over Canada's failure to qualify for the KO round of the World Junior Championship?

DL: Definitely, I think it would cheer anyone up. One of our best juniors was unable to get into the US and that

was tough to stomach. We gave it our best shot without him and it was painful to be half a Victory Point away from qualifying to the KO stage. Winning a gold medal was a complete 180.

Kib: What's in the future for you in terms of bridge? Both in the short term and the long term?

DL: I have two main focuses. Firstly, I want to help create a youth movement in Canada. Secondly, I am developing a new partnership with my former junior teammate, Anton Blagov. We will be playing the 2011 CNTC together and we are looking forward to playing on a team with you JC.

Kib: Many of our brightest stars have moved to the USA for the potential of greener pastures there. Is this a possibility for you?

DL: I am proud to be Canadian and I plan on living in Canada for the rest of my life, but anything is possible.

Kib: We know you've been involved in teaching school children bridge. Can you tell us about that?

DL: Kids are the future of bridge and the game can improve their academic and social skills. One day, I'd like to see thousands of Canadian kids playing bridge and I hope I can help. I'm teaching kids in my Grandparent-Grandchild program that I'm running at Hazel's and Partner's Bridge clubs. Furthermore, the ACBL is sponsoring free school bridge programs all over North America. I'm teaching the

program at a school in Toronto and I'm looking for interested schools in York Region (just north of Toronto).

Kib: Are you a goal-setter? Have you set goals for yourself in bridge? Can you tell us what they are?

DL: I like to set goals for myself, I think most do. In general, I want to improve in all aspects of the game, and this goal will never change. Right now, I am focused on winning the 2011 CNTC. Long term, I want to develop a Canadian partnership that Murray and Kehela would have wanted to be teammates with.

Kib: How about a hand from the TN Teams? Do you have a favourite?

DL: My favourite hand of the event was the last hand of the tournament. My teammate, Greg Hinze, knew we were in the hunt to win and was clutch declaring four spades.

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

West	North	East	South
	<i>Sprung</i>		<i>Hinze</i>
1 ♥	Pass	2 ♥	2 ♠
3 ♥	Pass	Pass	3 ♠
Pass	4 ♠	Pass	Pass
Pass			

West led the queen of clubs and Greg won it in dummy. Next he played the ten of spades, intending to run it, but it was covered by the jack and won with his queen. At trick three, he played the club ten from hand, covered by the jack and king and ruffed by East.

If East returns a diamond, the contract can be defeated. However, a low heart was returned and Greg won his ace and played the spade ace and another spade to East. East now exited with a diamond but it was too late.

Declarer jumped on the diamond return with his Ace and ran all of his trumps. When he played his last trump, this was the position:

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

West was forced to discard the heart king to avoid giving up tricks in diamonds or clubs and was thrown in with a diamond. West was endplayed and had to lead away from the eight of clubs at trick 12.

Kib: We hope you reach those goals, Daniel, especially the one about winning the CNTC. Many thanks for your time.

DL: You're welcome.