

Youngest Ever Zonal Champion

This tournament has attracted the greatest array of Junior talent even seen. However, there is one phenomenal star who has not been able to make this trip, but who will be making an important one later this year.

A 14-year-old schoolboy now reigns as the youngest Zonal champion in the history of world bridge. **Agustin Madala** of Argentina, who reached the quarter-finals of last year's OKbridge Internet World Bridge Championship and who finished second in the South American Open Pairs championship at the age of 12, was a member of the Argentine team that won the South American championship in Cochabamba, Bolivia, recently.

He will represent Argentina in the Bermuda Bowl World Championships in Bali, Indonesia, in October. This will be another record - he'll be the youngest player ever to compete in the Bermuda Bowl.



Agustin Madala is on the Road to Bali

In the South American final, Argentina defeated Brazil, which featured many-times world champion Gabriel Chagas, one of the greatest players in the history of the game. Brazil had a 16 IMP carryover entering the 64-board final, but Argentina won each quarter, eventually

scoring a 48 IMP victory. Playing with Madala were Ernesto Muzzio (44), Marcelo Villegas (48), Christobal Aguirre (48) Jorge Estavarena (42) and Pablo Ravenna (25). The non-playing captain was Alexis Pejacsevich. Only Muzzio and Villegas had played in the South American Championships before.

Ravenna, still eligible for Junior events at the age of 25, and Madala are both members of one of the Argentine teams in this year's third annual OKbridge International World Bridge Championship. Ravenna has competed in three World Junior Team Championships and currently is South American champion in both the Junior and the Open Teams. He and Madala will be members of the Argentinian team that will compete in the World Juniors in Brazil as well as the Bermuda Bowl.

Playing for Brazil with Chagas, one of the few players who has won all three major open world championships (World Team Olympiad, Bermuda Bowl and World Open Pairs), were Diego Brenner, Joao Campos, Miguel Vilas Boas and Mauricio Figueiredo. Both Argentina and Brazil qualified to compete in the Bermuda Bowl.

The biggest problem for both teams was the 'soroche' - altitude sickness - Cochabamba is 2,400m (1.5 miles) high. Young Madala is a fine bridge player, as his record attests. His excellent play in the World Junior Championships in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, in 1999, got the attention of the players, the officials and the press. He was only 12 at the time. He is in his second year of middle school, which means he has three more years to go before going to university. He is an excellent student. According to his father, Adolfo Madala, Agustin has a wonderful

relationship with his fellow students and the school authorities. Agustin is especially strong in mathematics and language. 'He always has an A qualification,' says his father. 'Once my wife asked Agustin's maths teacher why Agustin never had any homework. The teacher said, "Because by the time I finish writing the homework on the blackboard, Agustin has finished it."'

Agustin's present goal is to be an architect, but his father thinks he's still too young to be sure about his future. However, it's already quite apparent that Agustin has the tools to be successful at whatever he decides to try.

Bridge is not Agustin's only interest - far from it. He plays on his school soccer team where he is a very good forward. He also likes music - he's learning to play the electronic organ and the flute. His father noted that Agustin 'likes to change the song's lyrics and make new ones, talking about his friends and teachers and school life.' 'He enjoys almost all sports, but soccer is his first love. He plays every day with his schoolmates and friends. Give him a soccer ball and it will never touch the floor - he can make more than a hundred contacts using his feet, heels, knees, shoulders and head. Well, soccer is our national sport, you know.' Agustin plays bridge two or three times a week, mostly on OKbridge. Playing in local tournaments does not cause too much of a problem for Agustin because the games usually take place late at night. The following day Agustin has to wake up at 7am but he manages this just fine, according to his father. When he plays in international events, like the South Americans or the World Junior Championship, he sometimes loses a week or two of classes, but he recovers the study rhythm with no difficulty. His

teachers think that bridge playing has increased his comprehension ability, especially in logic problems.

Here's an example of Agustin in action in the South American Championships.

Dealer North. All Vul

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

West	North	East	South
	1♦	Pass	1♠
Pass	2NT	Pass	3♥
Pass	3♠	Pass	4♠
All Pass			

Agustin let the heart king hold but won the second heart. He led a club to the queen, losing to the king. A trump came back, won in dummy. Agustin cashed the diamond ace and ruffed a diamond, crossed to the club ace and ruffed another diamond. He cashed the club jack, pitching dummy's last heart. Next he ruffed a heart with dummy's ace, East discarding a spade perforce. Agustin called for another diamond, and East was done. He played the seven of spades, but Agustin overruffed with the nine. He led his last heart and ruffed with dummy's queen. East was able to overruff with the king, but that made Agustin's trump ten good for the game-going trick. He lost only one heart, one club and one trump despite the 5-0 trump break.



Lambardi wonders if he was so good at 14!

'Never before had I met a player of Agustin's skill at his age,' said Pablo Lambardi, captain of last year's IWBC team. What most impressed Lambardi was the fact that Agustin played with a player from the old school - 82-year-old Carlos Cabanne - and came in second in the South American Pairs championship. After last year's IWBC event, Lambardi said, 'Agustin's biggest problem was that his mother wouldn't let him play late on weekdays. He had to wait until she went to sleep before he could sneak in to play OKbridge.' Now Agustin has proved he can handle late-night bridge and still keep up with all his other activities.

Look at this deal. It's only a part-score hand, but successful ones add up fast.

Dealer West. All Vul

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

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	Pass	1♦
Pass	1♠	Pass	Pass
2♥	Pass	Pass	2♠
All Pass			

This looks like a make, doesn't it? It appears that declarer will lose only two trumps and one trick in each side suit. But Madala/Ravenna found the defence to beat it.

Madala was allowed to hold the trick when he led the heart king, and he switched to the nine of diamonds. Ravenna put in the jack, and declarer won with the king. He led a club to the eight, driving out Ravenna's king, and Ravenna switched back to a heart, declarer winning his ace.

He ruffed his last heart (*a second club finesse would have been a better play at this point. Ed*) and led a diamond, Ravenna rising with the ace and dropping declarer's ten.

Ravenna then deliberately offered declarer a sluff-ruff, leading the heart ten. Declarer pitched a club as he ruffed in dummy with the nine. Madala got rid of his last diamond on this trick. Declarer cashed dummy's trump ace and led the queen of diamonds. Too late - Madala was able to ruff this. He led the club queen, to dummy's ace. Declarer continued with a diamond which Madala ruffed with his ten. He shot back a club, which Ravenna ruffed with the jack, forcing declarer to use the king for the overruff.

That set up Madala's queen for the setting trick. The defence took a club, a heart, a diamond and three spades. Little things mean a lot. That's the name of a love song, but it certainly can be applied to bridge as well.

Dealer West. N/S Vul

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

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	Pass	INT
Pass	3NT	All Pass	

The contract was the same at both tables - 3NT by South. Aguirre thought about leading the eight of spades, but then decided that the king might be better considering his holding. Declarer won the second spade, went to the board with a club and led a heart. Estevearena, figuring that partner must have five spades to lead the king, missing the jack, quickly rose with the ace and led his last spade - down one. At the other table West led his fourth best spade, the eight, and Madala took his ace immediately. As in the other room, he crossed to dummy with a club and led a heart. East, thinking declarer must have a second stopper to have taken the first spade, ducked. That was all Madala needed. He rose with the king and cashed out his nine tricks for a 12 IMP pickup.

Teach Bridge and Make Important Friends

As a teacher Ron Klinger claims that has met people from all walks of life. Although he knew several policemen who played, he had only taught one who happened to be one of the best students in his beginner class. Klinger says, "Some time after the player had graduated Ron was caught in a traffic snarl near Kings Cross. We were chatting about bridge hands when the traffic started to flow again. I was quick on the accelerator, but the traffic cop at the approaching intersection was even quicker with his 'Stop sign.' Our combined precipitous actions meant that I banged heavily into the car in front, which had managed to stop in time.

"With a grim expression, the policeman strode over to my car and bent down to me at the driver's window. I was ready for a stern lecture when I recognized him as my bridge pupil.

Simultaneously he recognized me and his expression quickly changed to a smile."

"Why, Mr. Klinger. How are you? I'll be back in a moment. I just have to book the guy who reversed into you."