



Blue Ribbon champs Eric Rodwell and Jeff Meckstroth.

Meckwell working on fourth decade as partners

Nearly 34 years after they formed their partnership, Jeff Meckstroth and Eric Rodwell are still going strong, and are arguably the top partnership in the world, certainly one of the longest-standing. Other top-flight partnerships have come and gone since “Meckwell” first sat down at the table in the mid-Seventies. As demonstrated by their showing in Boston so far – two North American championships with a shot at a third – they are as effective as ever, if not more so.

“The partnership is greater than the sum of the parts,” says Eric Kokish, who coaches the Nick Nickell team, which has included Meckstroth and Rodwell for many years. “They each have strengths, and they are not the same strengths.” Rodwell, the bidding theorist in the partnership, says the two have learned over the years to “fix the bridge things and the psychology.” Translation: letting it go when something bad happens. “The key,” says Rodwell, “is to use energy constructively.”

At times, Rodwell acknowledges, he has tinkered too much with the bidding system, dubbed RM Precision. Meckstroth offers, “The thing I’m most happy with is that Eric is through changing (the system).” Each praises the other for his partnership skills. Says Meckstroth, “Eric is the best partner ever.” Rodwell says he is also grateful for the other partnership in his life – the one with his wife, Donna. They will celebrate their 14th wedding anniversary next April. In separate interviews, Meckstroth and Rodwell made nearly identical statements about still learning about bridge whenever they play. Most important, says Rodwell, is learning to “focus on the now” and taking the bad with the good. “You win some and lose many – and that’s if you’re good.”

Eric Rodwell and Jeff Meckstroth zoomed into the lead with a first final session of nearly 67% and went on to win the Kaplan Blue Ribbon Pairs by slightly more than a board on a 25 top. Second place went to Martin De Knijff of Las Vegas and Frederic Wrang of Sweden. In third were Doug Doub and Adam Wildavsky.

The victory was Rodwell’s third in the Blue Ribbon. He won in 1982 with Meckstroth and in 1985 with Walter Johnson. The win was the second for Meckstroth.

The winners started the day in eight place but posted a 66.69% game in the first final session to lead by about 32 matchpoints with one session to go. The victory was the second North American championship the two have won in Boston. Earlier in the tournament, they teamed with Bob Hamman and Zia Mahmood to run away with the Mitchell Open Board-a-Match