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## MEET MICHAL KLUKOWSKI



By now many of you will be aware that dual World Champion, Michal Klukowski is playing in his first Gold Coast Congress. At the age of 18, (he turns 20 this May) he became the youngest person to win a World Bridge Championship, the 2014 Red Bull World Bridge Series Open Teams in Sanya, China. His team comprised Marcin Mazurkiewicz (C), Piotr Gawrys, Stanislaw Golebiowski, Krzysztof Jassem, Michal Klukowski, Włodzimierz Starkowski. Since then he went on to win the 2015 World Championships in Chennai, India playing for the winning Polish Team. A combination of dual world champion at the age of 19 will certainly prove hard to beat. (*ed*: and people often refer to bridge as an old person's game – go figure). Additionally he holds a number of American National Titles to his name, all of which goes to make him an incredibly accomplished bridge champion, who is still eligible to play in the World Youth Championships for another six years.

We took time out to find some more information about him which we would like to share with our readers. Originally from Wroclaw (venue for the 2016 World Championships), Michal now lives in Krakow (*ed*: a most beautiful city if ever you get the chance).

At the age of ten his parents, very keen bridge players themselves, urged him to take lessons at the local bridge clubs making his fast track from beginner to World Champion in just eight years – quite astonishing. Although much in demand as a national and professional bridge player, he is still a student studying. It is this mix of bridge and studying that forces him to focus mainly on the elite tournaments in bridge and limits his involvement in the game until he completes his studies. The allure of sun, sand and a great

tournament such as the Gold Coast Congress however proved way too tempting for him.

Far from being impressed with his own accomplishments, Klukowski is certain he has a lot to learn about bridge. "Each board I play", he says, "can easily prove that there is a lot of practice still in front of me".

Curiously, Klukowski has never thought about why he likes the game so much, let alone how he developed his skills in such a short period of time.

When asked what other profession he might consider he says "maybe a lawyer", but we are left with the impression that there is in fact no alternative to bridge in his life.

Unlike many of the other players we interview, Michal doesn't read a lot of bridge books – maybe a total of 15-20 in total. His favourite ones are the Krzysztof Martens Collection, which are an amazing series of books that your editors can strongly recommend.

When asked about his favourite hand he says he doesn't necessarily have a favourite hand but this one would be memorable given that it ultimately led to winning in Sanya:

Dealer N	NORTH	
Vul All	♠ 4	
Board 13 Rnd 16	♥ K J 9 8 6 2	
	♦ 4 3	
	♣ J 10 8 2	
♠ A Q 8 7 6		♠ J 10 9 2
♥ 10 7 5 4		♥ ---
♦ ---		♦ 10 8 7 6
♣ A Q 9 7		♣ K 6 5 4 3
	♠ K 6 3	
	♥ A Q 3	
	♦ A K Q J 9 5 2	
	♣ ---	

At one of the tables Gawrys opened 2♦, showing a weak hand with one of the majors. His partner Michal Klukowski concentrated on finding out his partner's suit and in showing his diamond suit. When he found out that his partner had long hearts and short spades, he declared the heart slam. Declarer had no trouble making his contract after repeated spade leads.

At the other table after North's 2♥ opening, South decided to bid 6♦, thinking he had to protect the spade suit. At this table declarer received West's ♠A lead. East played the ♠10 and West switched to a heart, defeating the contract...17 IMPs to Michal's Team.

The Sanya victory didn't come easily. His team finished 26<sup>th</sup> with just 27 teams qualifying (supplemented with 5 teams from the "repechage") through to the knockouts. After winning their first three matches comfortably, the match against Nickell would prove to be pivotal in their making the final and winning. With one board to play Klukowski's team led 50-48. On the last board Levin-Weinstein bid to what appeared to be a par 3♥ contract making nine tricks while Klukowski and Gawrys bid to 4♥. Making would see them through while failing would see them eliminated. Gawrys made the dicey contract on a squeeze. Klukowski said "I knew he was going to make it. As I watched the position became clear at trick seven"!

When asked about partners he says he enjoys playing with Piotr Gawrys but would like to play with other members of the Polish Team especially Stanislaw Golebiowski. But when pressed on who he would really like to partner he coyly admits that he would love a game with his sweetheart girlfriend Justyna. He does note however that many Polish players talk loudly when discussing bridge hands and sometimes they are right and sometimes they are wrong – but Gawrys is ALWAYS right.

Like most people involved in the game he is saddened to see less and less people playing, and strongly believes that the future of the game lies in getting more younger people involved. He notes that Poland has a very vibrant bridge scene in part due to the establishment of a league game where players strive for promotion and to avoid demotion as well as a well organised Polish Bridge Union.

"How to improve your bridge game is a difficult question" he answers "just play as much as you possibly can to expose yourself to as many different situations as you can.

Michal didn't want to be drawn into a discussion about recent bridge cheating allegations and investigations, one of which involves a Polish Pair. But he is passionate that the game be played on a level playing field at all times and that anybody properly convicted of cheating should be taken out of the game.

So if you are fortunate to play against Michal don't show him any mercy and be thankful if you get a good score. He is certainly there to win even if he is smiling at you while he takes the matchpoints or IMPs out of your wallet.

*(ed: The Krzysztof Marten's series of books are highly recommended for advanced players. They comprise 17 books broken into– 7 books on Bidding – 4 books on Declarer Play – 6 books on Defensive Play. Here is an example).*

## HERE IS AN EXTRACT FROM THE THEORY OF OPENING LEAD

By Krzysztof Martens

Winning defence does not require exceptional skills or knowledge. Mistakes in this element of bridge, usually very simple, can most often be attributed to laziness – negligence to count up to 40 HCP, thirteen cards or tricks. Another common cause of defensive disasters is failure to draw conclusions from the bidding, or partner's and declarer's actions.