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ALLEGRA MERRILY ON HIGH AGAIN



The FIGB Press Conference

Just over halfway the Round Robin, the defending champions, GS Allegra from "next door" Turin are top of the rankings, five more matches away from their primary target, a semifinal berth. At present, exactly three other teams are looking the most probable candidates for the other three berths: Bamberger Reiter, Schaltz and Ruch AZS. The Bamberger Reiter are marginally behind Allegra but the other two, Schaltz and Ruch AZS, are 7 and 10 V.P. behind the Germans. After the 4th placed team, there is a

gap of about 11 V.P. before we find Norway's Heimdal in 5th spot. On the other hand, there are only about 6 V.P. between Heimdal and 11th placed Lavec Smile so, taking into account there are still 50 boards to be played today, the position of all these seven teams in the current rankings is in fact by no means as hopeless as one might think at first glance, looking at the table positions only.

So everything to play for, today as well!



RESULTS

ROUND 1

	Home Team	Visiting Team	IMPs	VPs
1	G.S.ALLEGRA ITA	ASD PESCARA BRIDGE ITA	17 - 14	11.14 - 8.86
2	BK LAVEC SMILE SWE	TITAN BUL	20 - 10	13.43 - 6.57
3	HEIMDAL BK NOR	MONACO FMB	16 - 10	12.18 - 7.82
4	ZALESKI FRA	ALLFREY ENG	20 - 35	5.2 - 14.8
5	SCHALTZ DEN	RUCH SA WROCLAW POL	7 - 20	5.72 - 14.28
6	BAREKET ISR	BAMBERGER REITER GER	20 - 34	5.46 - 14.54

ROUND 2

	Home Team	Visiting Team	IMPs	VPs
1	ZALESKI FRA	BK LAVEC SMILE SWE	29 - 18	13.72 - 6.28
2	MONACO FMB	ALLFREY ENG	19 - 18	10.39 - 9.61
3	BAREKET ISR	SCHALTZ DEN	30 - 29	10.39 - 9.61
4	ASD PESCARA BRIDGE ITA	RUCH SA WROCLAW POL	18 - 51	1.7 - 18.3
5	HEIMDAL BK NOR	BAMBERGER REITER GER	26 - 28	9.23 - 10.77
6	G.S.ALLEGRA ITA	TITAN BUL	38 - 25	14.28 - 5.72

ROUND 3

	Home Team	Visiting Team	IMPs	VPs
1	BAMBERGER REITER GER	RUCH SA WROCLAW POL	14 - 4	13.43 - 6.57
2	SCHALTZ DEN	MONACO FMB	17 - 9	12.83 - 7.17
3	TITAN BUL	BAREKET ISR	20 - 22	9.23 - 10.77
4	BK LAVEC SMILE SWE	ALLFREY ENG	10 - 2	12.83 - 7.17
5	ZALESKI FRA	ASD PESCARA BRIDGE ITA	12 - 16	8.5 - 11.5
6	HEIMDAL BK NOR	G.S.ALLEGRA ITA	14 - 35	3.82 - 16.18

ROUND 4

	Home Team	Visiting Team	IMPs	VPs
1	SCHALTZ DEN	G.S.ALLEGRA ITA	7 - 2	11.85 - 8.15
2	BAMBERGER REITER GER	MONACO FMB	25 - 26	9.61 - 10.39
3	BAREKET ISR	RUCH SA WROCLAW POL	33 - 24	13.14 - 6.86
4	TITAN BUL	ALLFREY ENG	34 - 21	14.28 - 5.72
5	BK LAVEC SMILE SWE	ASD PESCARA BRIDGE ITA	24 - 32	7.17 - 12.83
6	ZALESKI FRA	HEIMDAL BK NOR	24 - 0	16.78 - 3.22

ROUND 5

Home Team	Visiting Team	IMPs	VPs
1 RUCH SA WROCLAW POL	ZALESKI FRA	20 - 11	13.14 - 6.86
2 MONACO FMB	G.S.ALLEGRA ITA	1 - 20	4.25 - 15.75
3 ALLFREY ENG	HEIMDAL BK NOR	20 - 20	10 - 10
4 BAREKET ISR	ASD PESCARA BRIDGE ITA	46 - 33	14.28 - 5.72
5 TITAN BUL	SCHALTZ DEN	11 - 15	8.5 - 11.5
6 BAMBERGER REITER GER	BK LAVEC SMILE SWE	30 - 12	15.52 - 4.48

ROUND 6

Home Team	Visiting Team	IMPs	VPs
1 G.S.ALLEGRA ITA	ZALESKI FRA	30 - 21	13.14 - 6.86
2 BAREKET ISR	HEIMDAL BK NOR	6 - 43	1.16 - 18.84
3 MONACO FMB	BK LAVEC SMILE SWE	24 - 15	13.14 - 6.86
4 ASD PESCARA BRIDGE ITA	SCHALTZ DEN	4 - 62	0 - 20
5 ALLFREY ENG	BAMBERGER REITER GER	16 - 30	5.46 - 14.54
6 RUCH SA WROCLAW POL	TITAN BUL	6 - 7	9.61 - 10.39

RANKING

1	G.S.ALLEGRA ITA	78.64
2	BAMBERGER REITER GER	78.41
3	SCHALTZ DEN	71.51
4	RUCH SA WROCLAW POL	68.76
5	ZALESKI FRA	57.92
6	HEIMDAL BK NOR	57.29
7	BAREKET ISR	55.2
8	TITAN BUL	54.69
9	MONACO FMB	53.16
10	ALLFREY ENG	52.76
11	BK LAVEC SMILE SWE	51.05
12	ASD PESCARA BRIDGE ITA	40.61

**OPENING SPEECH
by the EBL President**

Mr Gianarrigo Rona – WBF President
Mr Gianni Medugno - President of the Italian Bridge Federation
Dear Friends,

I am pleased to welcome all of you to Milan, players, officers, journalists, operators and guests to participate in the 13th European Bridge Champions' Cup.

I am confident that you will enjoy discovering Milan with its historical places and typical food.

We are proud to also welcome Gianarrigo Rona, President of the WBF and EBL President Emeritus.

I would like to congratulate the Italian Bridge Federation, its President Gianni Medugno, and all the organising committee led by Francesco Conforti on the great job they have accomplished.

It gives me great pleasure to officially declare open the 13th European Bridge Champions' Cup.

Enjoy your play and your stay in Milan.

Yves Aubry
EBL President

QUALIFICATION

Round 1

In any strong teams' event, it is difficult to predict which 1st round match will be the most interesting one to report on. That's why you will find just a hand or two in the report below.

Board 3 was a matter of systems and responses.

Board 3. Dealer South. E-W Vulnerable.

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

After two passes, Di Franco (GS Allegra) could open 2♦ and rebid 2NT to show a balanced 18-19, making it pretty

impossible for the other Italy's East to find a killing lead. On a low spade lead, Di Franco even made an overtrick.

At the other table, Di Eusanio, North for Italy, opened 1♦ and South responded INT which North raised to three. Duboin as West now found the spade lead, which was good enough to beat the contract. 10 IMPs to GS Allegra, the defending champions.

The outcome of the Lavec-Titan match was decided on board 8 when placing the declaration of a 3NT contract in the wrong hand caused the Bulgarians' undoing.

Board 8. Dealer West. None Vulnerable.

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

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Stamatov</i>	<i>Fredin</i>	<i>Danailov</i>	<i>Røn</i>
1♣	1♥	DbI	2♥
Pass	Pass	DbI	Pass
2♠	Pass	2NT	Pass
3NT	All Pass		

When Fredin made an innocent enough overcall, the Bulgarians suddenly ran into trouble. South led a heart, declarer won the third round of the suit and simply tried the diamond finesse for a quick one down.

In the Closed Room, Nikolov did not overcall:

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Michielsen</i>	<i>Nikolov</i>	<i>Upmark</i>	<i>Hristov</i>
1♣	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♦	Pass	2♥	Pass
2NT	Pass	3NT	All Pass

North led a heart to declarer's king but now, the diamond finesse was safe. North won his queen but declarer had his contract when North next exited in spades. 10 IMPs to Lavec Smile.



QUALIFICATION

Round 2

Here are a few hands from round 2. The match between Baraket (Israel) and Schaltz (Denmark) started in lively fashion. This was the first board:

Board 11. Dealer South. None Vulnerable.

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

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>P. Schaltz</i>	<i>O. Herbst</i>	<i>D. Schaltz</i>	<i>I. Herbst</i>
Pass	1♠	Pass	1♦
3♦	3♠	Pass	2♠
All Pass			4♠

For easily understandable systemic reasons Ilan had to open 1♦ on his 4-4 majors, but this did not deter Peter Schaltz from showing his suit later on. Not that it mattered very much, as for once the play was the thing.

East led a diamond to West's king and West continued the suit, declarer ruffing. Having a lot of things to ruff in his hand, declarer just drew one round of trumps and then went after the hearts, finessing dummy's queen and then cashing the ♥A. When West was able to ruff this, the contract suddenly was one down. To declarer's comfort it should be said that he was not the only one to find this unlucky line of play.

At the other table, Lars Blakset followed a different line when he got a trump lead:

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Lengy</i>	<i>Blakset</i>	<i>Bareket</i>	<i>Schaltz</i>
1♦	1♠	Pass	1♣
3♦	3♠	Pass	2♠
All Pass			4♠

He won the trump lead and played off another top trump. When both defenders followed, he was home. Schaltz +10 IMPs.

On the next board, the Israelis got a quick revenge:

Board 12. Dealer West. N-S Vulnerable.

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

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>P. Schaltz</i>	<i>O. Herbst</i>	<i>D. Schaltz</i>	<i>I. Herbst</i>
INT	Pass	Pass	Dbf
All Pass			

North led a spade to the queen and ace. When South exited in diamonds rather than clubs after cashing the last spade, declarer was down just three. This might well have been a fair enough result for the Danes but the damage for them was done at the other table:

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Lengy</i>	<i>Blakset</i>	<i>Bareket</i>	<i>Schaltz</i>
1♦	Dbf	Pass	2♦
Pass	2♥	Pass	2♠
Pass	3♠	Pass	4NT
Pass	5♣	Pass	5♦
Pass	5♥	Pass	5♠
All Pass			

This final contract was a bit optimistic but had Martin Schaltz guessed the trump queen, all would have been well after all for the Danes. When he misguessed instead, Bareket had 12 IMPs back.

Two successful slams, bid at just one or two tables make up my next two boards:



On board 15, some West players had to open 1♠, only to find out that nobody had anything to say.

Board 15. Dealer South. N-S Vulnerable.

♠ A J 9 7 3 ♥ A Q 10 7 ♦ A ♣ A K 5	<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠ K 6 ♥ J 9 8 6 2 ♦ 8 6 5 3 ♣ 10 3	♠ 10 8 5 4 2 ♥ 5 4 ♦ K 10 9 ♣ 9 7 2
N						
W E						
S						

In the Monaco-Allfrey match, there was more life in the auction:

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Gold</i>	<i>Helgemo</i>	<i>Forrester</i>	<i>Helness</i>
2♣	Pass	2♦	Pass
2♠	Pass	3♥	Pass
5♥	All Pass		

When the English failed to exploit the combined values of the EW hands in full, they had to be content with +480 only.

The Italian Monegasques did much better:



Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Nunes</i>	<i>Mcintosh</i>	<i>Fantoni</i>	<i>Bakhshi</i>
1♠	Pass	1NT	Pass
2♣	Pass	2♥	Pass
2NT	Pass	3NT	Pass
4♣	Pass	4♠	Pass
6♥	All pass		

2♣ was ambiguous and 2♥ showed the suit. 2NT then confirmed an 18+ hand and 3NT showed a balanced type of hand. 4♣ was a cuebid implying hearts and so was 4♠. The ♠K was all Nunes needed to have a confident enough shot at six. Monaco +11 IMPs.

Apart from Fantunes, only Klukowski-Gawrys for Ruch AZS Wrocław managed to reach slam and make it.

Two boards later, the French pair Zaleski-Cronier reached a slightly odds-against slam:

Board 17. Dealer North. None Vulnerable.

♠ J 4 ♥ - ♦ A K 7 6 5 3 ♣ Q J 8 4 3	<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠ A 8 5 3 ♥ A J 9 8 6 ♦ - ♣ A K 7 5	♠ K 10 9 ♥ 10 7 4 3 ♦ J 10 8 2 ♣ 10 6
N						
W E						
S						

Open Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Bilde</i>	<i>Zaleski</i>	<i>Røn</i>	<i>Cronier</i>
	1♥	Pass	2NT
3NT	4♣	5♦	Pass
Pass	6♥	All Pass	

Because the spades behaved quite well, the contract rolled home.

Once again, a Polish pair were the only other ones to get to six. This time, Gołbiowski-Starkowski for Ruch AZS Wrocław were the lucky ones.

The board would have been a sizeable swing to the French anyway as this is what happened at the other table:

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
<i>Toffier</i>	<i>Fredin</i>	<i>Pilon</i>	<i>Upmark</i>
	1♥	Pass	2♥
3♦	3♠	4♦	Pass
Pass	4♥	Pass	Pass
5♣	Dbf	5♦	Pass
Pass	Dbf	All Pass	

When North cashed a top club followed by the ♠A, declarer had no trouble in coming to 10 tricks for just one down and a 13-IMP swing.

In the Bareket-Schaltz match, the Israelis stopped in 4♥ just making but the Schaltzes found the save in diamonds for just one down and 8 IMPs back to them as well.

The last board of the round looked like probably the most exciting board of the tournament so far. No surprise therefore that we saw a few remarkable results.

Board 20. Dealer West. All Vulnerable.

	♠ -						
	♥ K J 10 2						
	♦ 9 7 2						
	♣ K Q 7 6 4 3						
♠ A 9 5 4	<table style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> </table>	N	W	S	E	♠ K 10 8 6 3	
N							
W							
S							
E							
♥ Q 6 4		♥ 8 7 5 3					
♦ 8 5 4		♦ K Q 10 3					
♣ A 10 9		♣ -					
	♠ Q J 7 2						
	♥ A 9						
	♦ A J 6						
	♣ J 8 5 2						

Once again, Gołebiowski-Starkowski for Ruch AZS Wrocław registered one of the more spectacular results, this time by scoring +1,000 in Five Clubs redoubled.

In the Monaco-Allfrey match, there was drama at both tables:

Open Room

West	North	East	South
Gold	Helgemo	Forrester	Helness
Pass	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♦	3♣	Pass	3NT
Dbl	Pass	4♣	Dbl
4♠	Pass	Pass	Dbl
All Pass			

As you can probably imagine, this contract was not a great success. Monaco +1,100.

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
Nunes	Mcintosh	Fantoni	Bakhshi
Pass	Pass	2♠	Pass
2NT	3♣	Pass	3NT
Dbl	All Pass		

Fantoni, by opening 2♠, had already suggested slightly less than a normal opening bid but when Nunes, holding two aces, doubled the final contract, he had nowhere to go. With South the declarer, nine tricks were always there. Scoring +750 here still meant an 8-IMP loss for the English.

An Unexpected Swing

This was board 8 from Round 4. In only two out of our six matches, they were in 4♥ at both tables. In both these two matches, the contract was made only once. Also, in both these two matches, the contract was doubled at one of the tables. Still, these two matches produced four different results: 590, 420, -50 and -100 and thus double-figure swings in both matches. What is more: I think the contract should always go down, provided North leads a trump – which he did at none of our four tables.

Let's have a closer look at what happened in the match between Monaco and the Bamberger Reiter.

Board 8. Dealer West. None Vulnerable.

	♠ 9 8 6						
	♥ J 8 7 4 3						
	♦ 6 3 2						
	♣ A 4						
♠ A K 7 3	<table style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> </table>	N	W	S	E	♠ 5 2	
N							
W							
S							
E							
♥ K Q 10 9 6 5		♥ A 2					
♦ A J		♦ 10 9 5 4					
♣ K		♣ J 8 7 5 3					
	♠ Q J 10 4						
	♥ -						
	♦ K Q 8 7						
	♣ Q 10 9 6 2						

Open Room

West	North	East	South
Nunes	Piekarek	Fantoni	Smirnov
1♥	Pass	INT	Pass
2♠	Pass	4♥	All Pass

Piekarek led a diamond to the queen and declarer's ace, and the ♦J was fired back immediately. Smirnov took his king and now, two rounds of clubs followed. Nunes ruffed, cashed the ♠AK, crossed to dummy's ♥A, threw a spade on the ♦10 and ruffed a club in hand, intending to ruff his last spade next. Piekarek overruffed and returned a trump...one down.

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
Häusler	Helgemo	Kirmse	Helness
1♥	Pass	Pass	2♠
3♥	3♠	4♥	Pass
Pass	Dbl	All Pass	

Helgemo led a spade rather than the recommended trump, declarer playing three rounds of the suit, ruffing with dummy's ♥2. A diamond then went to the queen and ace. Declarer's ♦J went to South's king and South could do no better than lead a club to the king and ace. With dummy's ♦10 now a safe parking place for declarer's last spade, all Häusler could lose more was a trump trick.

This was the first of two late swings to the Germans, enabling them to draw their match v. Monaco.

QUALIFICATION

Round 4

In this round, I noticed quite a few instances of 3NT being made at one table and going down at the other table of the same match. I am not intending to bother you with misdefences or lucky/unlucky blind leads so I can skip boards 1 and 3. Board 6 was more interesting, I think;

Board 6. Dealer East. E-W Vulnerable.

	♠ A K 7 5				
	♥ 8 4				
	♦ Q 7 6				
	♣ A Q 8 7				
♠ Q 10 9 3	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; height: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠ J 4
N					
W E					
S					
♥ 9 5		♥ A J 10 6 3 2			
♦ A J 3 2		♦ 10 9 5 4			
♣ 9 6 3		♣ K			
	♠ 8 6 2				
	♥ K Q 7				
	♦ K 8				
	♣ J 10 5 4 2				

In the Ruch AZS v. Bareket match, this was a straightforward hand. Both Easts opened a Multi, both Norths doubled West's 2♥ relay and both Souths then responded 3♣. Now, Bareket settled for 3NT by bidding 3♥ but Gromov introduced his spades and was raised to game in the suit for down two.

The defence against 3NT was not flawless, as we shall see: heart lead to East's ace, heart back, losing club finesse and...another heart. Bareket +430. Thus, 11 more IMPs had gone Bareket's way.

In the match between Germany's Bamberger Reiter and Monaco, both Fantoni and Helness did very well:

Open Room

West	North	East	South
Nunes	Piekarek	Fantoni	Smirnov
Pass	1NT	Pass	Pass
Pass	3NT	Pass	2♠
		All Pass	

No Multi or overcall by Fantoni, who led the ♥J. Dummy won and declarer immediately took a losing club finesse. Fantoni then had little trouble in finding the diamond return, thus ensuring the defeat of the contract. At the other table, Helness as declarer showed he was fully aware of the diamond danger.

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
Häusler	Helgemo	Kirmse	Helness
		2♦	Pass
2♥	Dbl	Pass	3NT
All Pass			

West's ♥9 ran to Helness' queen and next came a club to dummy's ace. Helness simply led a heart from dummy next. East took his ace but when the ♦A proved to be with West,

the eventual result was two overtricks for this fine play. At this point, Monaco led 26-1.

Elsewhere in this issue, I reported about board 8 which produced a 12-IMP swing to the Germans.

To finish this report, here is the last board of the set.

Board 10. Dealer East. All Vulnerable.

	♠ 6				
	♥ K 7 5 4 3 2				
	♦ Q 2				
	♣ J 6 4 3				
♠ J 4 3 2	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; height: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠ K Q 10 8 7
N					
W E					
S					
♥ J 8		♥ 10 9 6			
♦ 8		♦ 10 6 3			
♣ A K 10 9 8 5		♣ Q 2			
	♠ A 9 5				
	♥ A Q				
	♦ A K J 9 7 5 4				
	♣ 7				

Open Room

West	North	East	South
Nunes	Piekarek	Fantoni	Smirnov
Pass	1♦	Pass	1♣
4♠	5♦	1♠	3♦
All Pass		Pass	6♦

Strong Club, 1♦ negative but North's 5♦ clearly showing some useful values. Smirnov then bid the slam only to find out that he was not to be the declarer...

Not that it mattered very much, as on a spade lead, Piekarek ruffed two spades in hand, using dummy's ♥AQ as the entries to get back to dummy for the second ruff and then to draw trumps.

This line is by no means 100% as it requires 3-2 in hearts and 3-1 in diamonds but I cannot yet think of anything better. A trump lead would have been interesting as it would need a double dummy approach now to get to 12 tricks. ♦Q, ♥AQ, ♠A, ♠ ruff, ♥K which survives...

In the other room, NS were less ambitious, for a change:

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
Häusler	Helgemo	Kirmse	Helness
Pass	1♥	Pass	1♦
Pass	3♦	Pass	2♠
Pass	3NT	Pass	3♠
		All Pass	

On a spade lead, Helgemo made all the tricks for another 12-IMP loss. The Monaco winning margin had been effectively reduced to the odd IMP.

Bulgaria's Hristov-Nikolov were the only other pair who managed to bid and make 6♦.