

PRESS BULLETIN

JACK RECAPTURES WORLD TITLE

Of the seven teams that vied for the 2006 Computer Bridge World Championship in Verona, Italy, June 17th through June 22nd, four emerged from the qualifying round-robin (six 28-board matches). The Dutch program Jack, seeking to regain the crown he had lost to the French program Wbridge5 in 2005 after winning the previous four championships, won all six of his round-robin matches and led the field by a wide victory-point margin. The final standings in the Round Robin:

1.	Jack (Netherlands)	124 VP
2.	Micro Bridge (Japan)	104 VP
3.	WBridge5 (France)	102 VP
4.	Q-Plus Bridge (Germany)	99 VP
5.	Bridge Baron (USA)	82 VP
6.	Blue Chip Bridge (England)	66 VP
7.	Shark Bridge (Denmark)	52 VP

In one 64-board semi-final match, Jack annihilated Q-Plus Bridge, 239 IMPs to only 41. In the other semi-final, Micro Bridge edged defending champion Wbridge5, 141 IMPs to 133. Both programs had improved substantially from last year, but the highly enterprising style of Wbridge did not succeed against the newly-aggressive Micro Bridge, which had switched from last year's four-card major system to five-card majors.

So as in Toronto, Canada, five years ago, Jack faced Micro Bridge in the 64-board final. Jack had won easily enough in 2001, but in Verona he dominated Micro Bridge completely, winning 217 IMPs to 54.

Below are five boards that helped Jack recapture his world championship.
(For more information about Jack, visit www.jackbridge.com.)

1) Jack- Micro Bridge, round-robin

West deals ♠ -
 none vul ♥ AQT654
 ♦ AKQ63
 ♣ QJ

♠ AT74		N		♠ QJ9832
♥ J732	W	E		♥ -
♦ JT2		S		♦ 84
♣ 42				♣ AKT87

♠ K65
 ♥ K98
 ♦ 975
 ♣ 9653

Table 1

West	North	East	South	
MicroB	Jack	MicroB	Jack	
Pass	1♥	2♥*	Dbl**	*spades and clubs
2♠	4♦	4♠	Dbl	**values for a simple three-card raise
Pass	5♥	Pass	Pass	
Pass				

Although South's second double was for penalties, North was sensible to bid on with his exceptional shape, and made five hearts, easily picking up West's jack-fourth of trumps.

Table 2

West	North	East	South	
Jack	MicroB	Jack	MicroB	
Pass	2♣*	2♠	Dbl**	*strong, artificial and forcing
4♠	5♥	5♠	Dbl	**moderate strength
Pass	Pass	Pass		

Here North arrived at five hearts more quickly, but East, with undisclosed extra shape after having received support at the four-level, was pleased to go on to five spades. South doubled but could not beat the contract, as the king of spades was on side and the clubs could be established with just one ruff. The double game swing netted Jack 15 IMPs.

2) Jack-Micro Bridge, round robin

North deals ♠ 43
 both vul ♥ QT64
 ♦ 842
 ♣ KQ95

♠ J875		N		♠ Q962
♥ 87	W		E	♥ K52
♦ KT63			S	♦ 5
♣ A43				♣ JT862

♠ AKT
 ♥ AJ93
 ♦ AQJ97
 ♣ 7

Table 1

	West	North	East	South	
	MicroB	Jack	MicroB	Jack	
-		Pass	Pass	1♦	
Pass		1♥	Pass	4♣*	*splinter raise
Pass		4♥	Pass	Pass	
Pass					

Jack read East's five-of-diamonds lead as a singleton, and so rose with dummy's ace. Two top spades and a spade ruff put him in his hand to pick up trumps via a successful finesse. Then Jack led dummy's singleton club. When West ducked, Jack won the king and reverted to diamonds, winding up with ten tricks: two spades, two diamonds, one club, three hearts, and two ruffing tricks. It wouldn't have helped West to go up with the ace of clubs; he could tap dummy with a fourth spade but then would take only two more tricks, the king and ten of diamonds.

The same auction and opening lead at the other table produced down one when Micro Bridge finessed the diamond queen at Trick 1, and lost the first four tricks as East got two ruffs. Jack's good "card-reading" earned him 12 IMPs.

3) Jack-WB5, round robin

North deals	♠	986532	
E-W vul	♥	A7	
	♦	J632	
	♣	K	
♠ AQ74		N	♠ KJT
♥ 982	W	E	♥ KJ653
♦ A5		S	♦ Q4
♣ 9864			♣ AQ7
	♠	-	
	♥	QT4	
	♦	KT987	
	♣	JT532	

Table 1

West	North	East	South	
WB5	Jack	WB5	Jack	
-	Pass	1NT	Pass	
2♣*	Pass	3♥**	Pass	*Stayman
4♥	Pass	Pass	Pass	**five hearts/

Wbridge5 discovered the 5-3 fit in hearts and sailed into four hearts. South led the club jack, to king and ace. At Trick 2 declarer tried to cross to dummy in spades to play a trump up to his honours. South ruffed and North-South cross-ruffed their way to five tricks: two down.

Table 2

West	North	East	South	
Jack	WB5	Jack	WB5	
-	2♠*	2NT	Pass	*Weak Two-Bid
3NT	Pass	Pass	Pass	

The hyperactive topless Weak Two by Wbridge5 may have kept East-West from discovering their 5-3 heart fit, but it backfired. Only a heart lead beats 3NT double-dummy, but of course South led a club. Declarer won and cashed three spade tricks ending in dummy, forcing South to discard some diamonds. Double-dummy, declarer must cash dummy's fourth spade to put further pressure on South, but instead he led a heart from dummy, giving North a chance to rise with the ace and shift to diamonds. When North ducked, declarer inserted the jack, losing to South's queen of hearts, but now the defence was helpless. South's desperate diamond shift let declarer take eleven tricks for a 13-IMP pickup.

4) Jack-Micro Bridge, final

East deals ♠ 9872
 both vul ♥ 4
 ♦ A9765
 ♣ AK2

♠ 54		N		♠ AKQJ6
♥ Q653	W		E	♥ AK9
♦ J3			S	♦ QT82
♣ QT865				♣ 9

♠ T3
 ♥ JT872
 ♦ K4
 ♣ J743

Table 1

West	North	East	South
MicroB	Jack	MicroB	Jack
-	-	1 ♠	Pass
Pass	Pass		

Jack follows some strict rules for balancing when an opening one heart or one spade is passed around to him. With four trumps and a singleton in the other major, he needs at least 12 HCP to reopen. Hence he passed one spade out. East made three overtricks to score +170.

Table 2

West	North	East	South
Jack	MicroB	Jack	MicroB
-	-	1 ♠	Pass
Pass	2 ♦	Pass	Pass
Dbl	Pass	Pass	Pass

At this table, Micro Bridge balanced with two diamonds. After two passes, West also balanced ... with a takeout double that promised a maximum pass with length in the unbid suits and spade tolerance. East was happy to convert to penalties, and beat the contract two for +500 and an 8-IMP gain.

5) Jack-Micro Bridge, final

North deals		♠ KQ			
E-W vul		♥ KJ643			
		♦ AT73			
		♣ KQ			
♠ 7653		N		♠ 982	
♥ 92	W	E		♥ T8	
♦ 52		S		♦ KQ84	
♣ AJT87				♣ 6543	
		♠ AJT4			
		♥ AQ75			
		♦ J96			
		♣ 92			

Table 1

West	North	East	South	
MicroB	Jack	MicroB	Jack	
-	1♥	Pass	2NT (a)	(a) artificial forcing raise
Pass	3♣ (b)	Pass	3♦ (c)	(b) relay (“tell me more”)
Pass	4♦ (d)	Pass	4NT (e)	(c) nothing special, counter-relay (“you tell me”)
Pass	5♥ (f)	Pass	5♠ (g)	(d) 20-21 points adjusting for fit, no shortness
Pass	6♦ (h)	Pass	6♥	(e) Roman Key-Card Blackwood (for hearts)
Pass	Pass	Pass		(f) two keys, no ♥Q
				(g) <i>quantitative</i> king-ask
				(h) two non-trump kings

After North’s five hearts, South knew a grand slam was out of the question, but some internal mechanism forced him to ask for kings anyway. With nothing else to guide him, East led a normal-seeming king of diamonds. Curtains! North drew trumps, pitched his two clubs on dummy’s spades and conceded a diamond for twelve tricks: +980.

Table 2

West	North	East	South	
Jack	MicroB	Jack	MicroB	
-	1♥	Pass	3NT*	*balanced forcing raise
Pass	4♦**	Pass	4♥***	**cue bid (ace or void)
Pass	5♥	Pass	6♥	***nothing more to say
Pass	Pass	Pass		

North’s four-diamond cue bid deterred East from leading the king of diamonds. When Jack guessed to lead a club instead, West took the ace, and East eventually scored a diamond trick to sink the slam, earning 14 more IMPs for Jack en route to his fifth world title.