

# Goodmorning Bridge

## Pula Bridge Festival Online Bulletin

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Dear Pula Players,

Welcome to the 64th edition of the International Pula Bridge Festival!

I am genuinely happy — and grateful — that you have decided to spend these days with us in Pula. The entire Pula Bridge Festival crew will do our best to justify your trust and make the festival enjoyable, competitive and, hopefully, memorable for all the right reasons.

And it seems the weather has decided to cooperate. We are expecting plenty of sunshine throughout the festival, with daytime temperatures of around 26°C. The sea is still a very pleasant 23–24°C, so swimming before playing is definitely still an option.

We have about 500 registered players from all over the world. At the moment, we expect close to 200 pairs in the Main Pairs and somewhere between 60 and 70 teams in the Main Teams — certainly enough for a highly competitive tournament and some decent prizes.

Yesterday, 54 pairs played the Welcome Tournament, with Serbian mixed pair Mironovi celebrating first place. For today's afternoon IMP tournament, more than XXX pairs are already registered. If you haven't done so yet, please do it now.

As always, our home for the festival is the Congress Hall of Hotel Histria. The playing area is in the left wing when facing the hotel. From Tuesday onwards, we can expand the space if necessary :) as we will also have the Casino at our disposal.

Registration is available online only, through [pula-bridgefestival.com](http://pula-bridgefestival.com). Registration will close six hours before the start of pairs tournaments and approximately one hour before the start of team tournaments. Pairs or teams registering after the deadline will be accepted only if it is convenient for the organisers. Please help us make the sections, movements and playing areas work smoothly by registering in advance.

And equally importantly: if you register and later decide not to play, please tell us immediately at [pula-bridge@gmail.com](mailto:pula-bridge@gmail.com).

If you are missing a partner or looking for team-mates, let us know. We will try to help.

As usual, Madhatter is inviting you to his Triathlon Challenge and Karaoke Party, on Monday at Boschetto (Boškarin), starting slowly at 9.30 p.m. Boschetto is less than 500 metres from the venue — see the map on the last page — and we have arranged for them to stay open (very) late. This means we can have a properly loud party without disturbing other hotel guests.

For the fourth time, we will also have our PuBridge Quiz, on Thursday at 9.30 p.m. in Kuglana. The format is similar to a regular pub quiz, except that everything somehow connects to bridge, Pula, cards, play and related topics. There will be two sets with 55 questions altogether, which we hope will be fun, interesting and occasionally educational. Teams can have 4–8 players.

Almost thirty people are involved in running the Pula Bridge Festival: tournament directors, the computing and hand-preparation team, registration and prize-giving officials, event managers, the bulletin desk, the BBO team, social-media and web editors, technical support and international caddy crew.

If you have a question, if something goes wrong, if you are lost, confused or simply need some help, please don't hesitate to approach any member of the festival crew. We are all here for the same reason: to make sure you have the best possible experience in Pula.

This is also a good opportunity to thank the people who have been particularly involved in preparing this year's festival: Kristian and Jurica, Adam, Ogi, Superson, Anneke & Rob, and many others whose work may be less visible but is just as important.

Our thanks also go to the Croatian Bridge Federation, Zagreb Bridge Association, Opatija Bridge Club, Slovenian Bridge Federation, Hungarian Bridge Federation and Polish Bridge Federation for their help with equipment, organisation and promotion.

So find your table, find your friends, have a drink, enjoy Pula — and

**let's make some memories!**

## WELCOME PAIRS

|    |                                                      |        |
|----|------------------------------------------------------|--------|
| 1  | Anastasia Mironova (SRB) – Sergei Mironov (SRB)      | 66.04% |
| 2  | Krzysztof Świątkowski (POL) – Oliwia Żmuda (POL)     | 64.75% |
| 3  | Adam Pyszek (CZE) – Karolína Rečičárová (CZE)        | 62.42% |
| 4  | Stanisław Pająk (POL) – Bogdan Szulejewski (POL)     | 61.68% |
| 5  | marshall lewis (CRO) – Renata Muller (CRO)           | 61.32% |
| 6  | Tony Olech (ENG) – Prof John Philip Dakin (ENG)      | 60.95% |
| 7  | Alex Cimr (POL) – Paweł Skrzypek (POL)               | 59.16% |
| 8  | Aleks Swiatkowska (POL) – Giorgi Zedginidze (POL)    | 58.91% |
| 9  | Caroline van Valen (NED) – Eric van Valen (NED)      | 57.68% |
| 10 | Andrzej Lubojemski (POL) – Andrzej Dudzik (POL)      | 57.00% |
| 11 | Jack Kranenburg (NED) – Yke Smit (NED)               | 56.31% |
| 12 | Mate Meštrić (CRO) – Olgu Seker (TUR)                | 55.48% |
| 13 | OLEG SIROTIN (EST) – Marko Tenn (EST)                | 55.44% |
| 14 | Gorana Mitić (SRB) – Sanja Vištica (CRO)             | 55.28% |
| 15 | Jarosław Grabek (POL) – Mariusz Ilnicki (POL)        | 55.26% |
| 16 | Hannes Sigurdsson (ISL) – Olafur Johansson (ISL)     | 54.81% |
| 17 | MILICA MARIN (SLO) – Stane Medved (SLO)              | 54.79% |
| 18 | László Földesy (HUN) – Máté Mráz (HUN)               | 53.37% |
| 19 | Michał Dembinski (POL) – Jerzy Mscisz (POL)          | 53.04% |
| 20 | Lachezar Peychev (BUL) – Маринчо Маринов (BUL)       | 52.51% |
| 21 | Magdalena Kapała (POL) – Natalia Frechowicz (POL)    | 51.86% |
| 22 | Branko Jovović (CRO) – Jagoda Jovović (CRO)          | 51.77% |
| 23 | Sanja Lazic (SRB) – Mirjana Barisic (SRB)            | 51.58% |
| 24 | Justyna Graniczny (POL) – Mariusz Grabowski (POL)    | 51.53% |
| 25 | Marion Rundal (EST) – Jyri Aava (EST)                | 51.38% |
| 26 | Bronisław Schiff (GER) – Michael Branik (GER)        | 51.01% |
| 27 | Jagoda Kurosad (POL) – Marta Kreis (POL)             | 50.86% |
| 28 | Vanja Grahek (CRO) – milica radenkovic (SRB)         | 50.58% |
| 29 | Marju Leppik (EST) – Mikk Mirme (EST)                | 50.53% |
| 30 | Iwona Puczyłowska (POL) – Marek Nasilowski (POL)     | 50.45% |
| 31 | Ivan Mladenov (BUL) – Kiril Smirnov (BUL)            | 50.34% |
| 32 | Jakub Bździuch (POL) – Jan Luber (POL)               | 50.10% |
| 33 | Basar doga Seker (CZE) – Andrea Stanković (CRO)      | 50.04% |
| 34 | Katarzyna Tomanik (POL) – Grzegorz Superson (POL)    | 50.03% |
| 35 | IZTOK PACEK (SLO) – Bojana Pukl Praček (SLO)         | 49.50% |
| 36 | Rob Jagroop (NED) – Anneke van der Meer (NED)        | 48.31% |
| 37 | Fulvio Milic (CRO) – Igor Mandalinić (CRO)           | 48.17% |
| 38 | Wojciech Strzemecki (POL) – Marek Jaworski (POL)     | 47.20% |
| 39 | Vlatko Angelov (AUT) – alison Pritchard (ENG)        | 46.18% |
| 40 | Filip Smuđ (CRO) – Jurica Špoljar (CRO)              | 45.13% |
| 41 | Talat demirel (TUR) – Patrick Bor (NED)              | 45.01% |
| 42 | Otto van Schravendijk (NED) – Arie Teeuw (NED)       | 44.94% |
| 43 | Tin Dumić (CRO) – Saša Dumić (CRO)                   | 44.85% |
| 44 | Djordje Poljak (SRB) – Ivica Kikic (SRB)             | 44.15% |
| 45 | sabina sesko (SLO) – zoran majcen (SLO)              | 42.79% |
| 46 | Maja Żabierak (POL) – Hubert Urban (POL)             | 40.78% |
| 47 | Inga Hollerer (CRO) – Stelio Vorić (CRO)             | 40.75% |
| 48 | Leo Huvers (NED) – Filip Cetina (CRO)                | 38.69% |
| 49 | Birgir Olafsson (ISL) – Kristinn Kristinsson (ISL)   | 38.21% |
| 50 | Jakub Lenkiewicz (POL) – Sylwester Cieślak (POL)     | 37.75% |
| 51 | Irena Komnenović (CRO) – Aleks Đorić-Kosanović (CRO) | 35.25% |
| 52 | Dragana Muftić (BIH) – Edin Muftić (BIH)             | 34.20% |
| 53 | DENIS ČRČEK (SLO) – Mateja Gantar Ksela (SLO)        | 32.17% |
| 54 | Eliza Fućak (CRO) – Nevenka Fućak (CRO)              | 27.70% |

# UPCOMING EVENTS

## IMP PAIRS

Saturday, 4 p.m.

We are officially starting today, with IMP tournament. We are expecting a bit over 100 pairs. We are starting at 8 p.m. Please keep in mind that you should register for every pairs tournament at least 6 hours earlier. Registration is possible only [online](#). If you are late, as you usually are, and you still would like to join, please send us email to [pu-labridge@gmail.com](mailto:pu-labridge@gmail.com). And we will try to squeeze you in. So you will learn nothing, and you will be late again. **Please do not forget to unregister if you decide not to play.** If you cancel within 24 hours before the start of the tournament, also inform us by e-mail.

For all the tournaments you will pay at the table. Please prepare exact amount of money. For IMP pairs entry is 30 euro/player (20 per U26). If you have a junior package that covers accommodation+entries, don't pay anything at the table just write your name at the envelope and we will sort it out.

Really very important, nothing new, but to remind you: You are responsible for entering the correct result into BridgeMate. If you, however, somehow miss -score, there is only very short time available to make corrections: one hour after the tournament. We cannot accept later complains so please, just check the result after every board. Soon after the tournament the unofficial results will be published and you will have one hour to report an error. You have to do it by sending email to [pu-labridge@gmail.com](mailto:pu-labridge@gmail.com).

Once you have registered, there is nothing much you should do before the tournament except arrive to the playing room 15 minutes before the start (3.45 p.m. for this tournament) and find your table. Positions will be displayed online one hour before the start (3 p.m.), again, at [pulabridgefestival.com](http://pulabridgefestival.com).

We will play 13-15 rounds, 2 hands per round. One round is 15 minutes and there is 1 minute break between rounds, so we expect to finish around eight, a bit earlier. Please do not go smoking, unless you really can't help yourself. But even if you go out, do not come near other players, and don't use smartphone. Automatic penalties will apply, and you will ask "Why me?".

It is the best to leave your mobile phone in your room, but if you take it with you it should be shut

down, and left in a visible place near you. Be warned that having a mobile phone that is not openly displayed at the table is illegal, and so is looking at it at any point. Tournament directors will not be happy if they see you looking at your phone, and it could again cost you, guess what: IMPs. If there is a real need for you to use a phone during the tournament you should ask TD and he/she will help.

The goal of today's tournament is to have lot of fun and lot of IMPs. During the pandemic crisis in 2022 modest 68 imps were enough to win the tournament, and in 2023 winners had only 52 imps! In 2024 Ben and Meggie collected 84 imps which gave us some hope in recovering, but last year, again 67 was enough to win the tournament. So it seems that with about 2.5 imps per board you will have a good chance of winning the event? And what is 2,5 imps - an overtick here and there!

Winners in 2025 were Gruev and Bochev of Bulgaria, followed by Doga and Marshall, Czech - Croatian combination and Superson - Zedginidze from Poland.



- |                                          |       |
|------------------------------------------|-------|
| 1. T. Gruev (BUL) - V. Bochev (BUL)      | 67.00 |
| 2. D. Seker (CZE) - M. Lewis (CRO)       | 62.00 |
| 3. G. Superson (POL) - Zedginidze (POL)  | 62.00 |
| 4. K. Stachowiak (POL) - Dembinski (POL) | 55.00 |
| 5. T. Sprinkhuizen (NED) - Sibrand (NED) | 54.00 |

It seems that Slavic nations dominated IMP pairs in 2025. Unfortunately, unlike previous years we had no women in the top five. We hope that this year ladies will stop throwing away presents and find their place in the top of the list like they did, for instance, in 2024.

## MIXED AND NON-MIXED TEAMS

### Sunday, noon

Sunday is reserved for two parallel events: Mixed and Non-Mixed Teams. The format and the schedule is the same, only composition of teams differs.

If you have any problem finding a team/pair/partner to play with, please post a message at the tournament registration page or just e-mail Tihana at [tihana@pilar.hr](mailto:tihana@pilar.hr).

In both mixed and non-mixed teams, we will play 6 rounds, 8 boards per round. In this, as in all other teams tournaments, there will be two sessions with short (approximately one hour) break between them. Please be careful to check results in BridgeMates and to report any errors immediately.

Entries will be collected at the table, during the first round. You would make us a great favour if you would collect money as a team and put it all in one envelope. For Mixed or Non-Mixed teams is 120 euro per team. If a team consists of juniors only (U26), entry is 60, if one adult, entry is 75, two adults 90, three adults 105, more adults 120 (let them pay :))

First tables will play with screens, and one (not necessarily the first table) match in Mixed will be broadcasted on BBO.

#### **Orientation timetable:**

1<sup>st</sup> round: 12.00 – 13.05

2<sup>nd</sup> round: 13.15-14.20

3<sup>rd</sup> round: 14.30-15.35

#### **Short break**

4<sup>th</sup> round: 16.30-17.35

5<sup>th</sup> round: 17.45-18.50

6<sup>th</sup> round: 19.00-20.05

“Mixed Team” is a squad of 4-6 players (minimum two men and minimum two women). In every round each man must play with a woman, while each woman must play with a man. If your team doesn't fit mixed team description, then you are Non-mixed. You must be one or the other! If for any reason a Mixed team wants to play in the Non-mixed field, this is allowed but not recommended. In mixed events, we are old-fashioned so ladies decide if they want to be E or W, N or S. But, we let men take care of bridge-mates, boards and drinks. For non-mixed we don't have any rules of this type, they are on their own.

#### **Mixed Teams Winners 2025:**

|                                                                                            |       |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| <b>Stanicic Software</b> Zoric, Šver, Havliček, Diklić, Pilipović. Staničić (all CRO)      | 89.22 |
| <b>Dutchies</b> L. Molle, M. Thiele, M. ter Laare, R. Verdegaal (all NED)                  | 84.73 |
| <b>Palačinka</b> G. Rus (SLO) H. Rus (SLO) R. de Koster (NED) E. Poppe (NED)               | 82.26 |
| <b>Kuglana</b> Unlimited T. Brkljačić (CRO) M. Meštrić (CRO) O. Seker (TUR) D. Seker (CZE) | 79.55 |
| <b>Mixed Snics</b> J. Fritsche S. Kriftner, C. Froehner, P. Nehmert (all GER)              | 76.05 |

#### **Non-Mixed Teams Winners 2025:**

|                                                                                        |       |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| 1. <b>Intercity</b> M. Šipuš (CRO) B. Ambrož (SLO) K. Marinovski (CRO) S. Ivanov (BUL) | 88.05 |
| 2. <b>Addictives</b> Lipman (USA) Lund Madsen (DEN) Haugstad (NOR) Johansen (NOR)      | 82.29 |
| 3. <b>Wessex lads</b> C. Jones O. Leigh T. Olech J. P. Dakin (all ENG)                 | 77.85 |
| 4. <b>Bulgaria 1P3A</b> J. Stefanov I. Nanev Z. Draganov M. Andonov (all BUL)          | 77.47 |
| 5. <b>We made it</b> T. Šašek (CRO) J. H. Herland (NOR) J. Våge (NOR) E. Eide (NOR)    | 75.13 |

In 2025, players from six countries managed to squeeze into the top five teams in the mixed and from seven countries into the top five teams in the non-mixed. Croatians finally won Mixed teams, and CRO-SLO-BUL combination won non-mixed. Something really strange happened with Poles at this tournament since there is none in first five which I honestly can't remember happening before. So, we expect them to fully recover and shine in both mixed and non-mixed teams this year!

Remember, the partnership desk is open online, right under the tournament registrations. Check out who's looking for partners or teammates, sign up yourself and wait for offers, or just drop me an email – like you always do.

# Guide to a local cuisine - part 1

Let's start with cold appetisers!

Sooner or later, somebody is going to suggest pršut. Let them.

If you know Italian prosciutto or Spanish jamón, you already know the general idea: a whole pork leg, salted and slowly cured until time, air and patience turn it into something considerably more interesting than ham.

But they are not quite the same. Istrian pršut is not smoked. The skin and much of the fat are removed before curing, and the meat is traditionally seasoned with salt and spices, particularly pepper, then left to mature in the dry Istrian air, helped by the bura, the cold, dry wind from the northeast. The result is relatively lean, firm and intensely savoury. Italian prosciutto crudo is generally milder, sweeter and softer, while Spanish jamón, especially jamón ibérico, is usually cured much longer and is richer, nuttier and considerably fattier. Istrian pršut is sliced very thinly and usually served with local cheese, olives and bread.

This is technically a starter. It is also perfectly possible to continue eating it until you no longer require a main course.

Where there is pršut, cheese is rarely far away.

Istria does not have one famous cheese dominating the region in the way Parmesan does in Emilia-Romagna or Manchego in La Mancha. Instead, you will find many small-producer cheeses made from sheep's, cow's or goat's milk, or mixtures of them.

The most characteristically local choice is Istrian sheep's cheese (istarski ovčji sir) — firm and full-flavoured, becoming sharper and more complex as it ages. You may also encounter goat's cheese and cheeses flavoured with local favourites such as truffles, herbs, pepper or olives.

And then there is skuta, a fresh, soft whey cheese related to Italian ricotta, mild enough to appear in both savoury and sweet dishes.

A plate of pršut and local cheese may look suspiciously like something to share while you decide what to order. Do not be deceived. With enough bread and olives, you may discover that you have already had dinner.

And speaking of olives, Istria takes them seriously.

Olive trees have been part of the Istrian landscape

for more than two thousand years. Marinated olives are a common appetiser, but the real local obsession is extra-virgin olive oil.



Istria produces exceptional oils from indigenous varieties such as Buža, Istarska bjelica and Rosinjola. If you think olive oil is simply something neutral to pour over a salad, a good Istrian oil may surprise you. It can be grassy, fruity, bitter, peppery and intensely green, and a particularly fresh one may even catch in your throat and make you cough slightly. That is not a defect. If somebody offers you several local oils to taste, try them properly — on their own or with a little bread. You may arrive in Pula believing that olive oil is olive oil and leave ten days later having discovered that dipping good bread in good olive oil may be one of the best appetisers of all — or, if you keep going, a full meal.

And if you prefer your appetisers from the sea, try the oysters.

The Lim Bay (Limski kanal), between Rovinj and Vrsar, is one of Istria's best-known shellfish-growing areas, particularly known for oysters and mussels.

Istrian oysters need very little assistance. They usually arrive raw and freshly opened, with a slice of lemon — although purists may suggest trying the first one without even that.

They taste of the Adriatic: salty, mineral, fresh and slightly sweet.

And if you have always believed you don't like oysters, Pula is a reasonable place to check whether you were right.

There is, however, no dignified way to discover that you still don't like an oyster once it is already in your mouth. Well, it will certainly make a memory!

# Remembering Pula 2025

The 63rd International Pula Bridge Festival was held from 12 to 22 September 2025. As always, the programme featured four pairs and four teams tournaments, together with smaller events before and after the main festival. The highlights of the second half were the two most prestigious and competitive events on the programme: the Open Teams and the Brk Open Pairs.

1. The 2025 festival attracted 527 players from more than 30 countries. With such an extraordinarily international field, Pula can probably claim to be one of the most multinational bridge festivals in Europe. Alongside the familiar European contingent, players travelled to Pula from America, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Apart from the Croatian hosts, the largest groups came from the Netherlands, Poland, Hungary and Serbia.

2. And Pula, of course, has never been only about bridge. The festival programme also included several social events, among them Madhatter's Challenge, the Karaoke Party and PuBridge Quiz. These events have become increasingly popular over the years, giving players a chance to meet away from the bridge table in a rather more relaxed atmosphere. The weather also played its part in 2025: exceptionally warm and sunny days meant that almost every free moment could be spent on the beach, swimming or simply enjoying the September sun.

3. The opening tournament, played on Friday afternoon, attracted 50 pairs. It produced a very Pula-like story: the winners were a Dutch-Polish partnership who had met only a few minutes before the tournament began! Spontaneous partnerships of this kind are not unusual in Pula, where international pairs and teams have always been part of the festival's character.

## 4. Welcome Pairs (50 pairs)

1. J. Kranenburg (NED) - K. Świątkowski (POL) 72.23%



2. F. Milić (CRO) - I. Mandalinić (CRO) 65.38%  
 3. L. Molle (NED) - M. ter Laare (NED) 63.96%  
 4. Imsa (LAT) - S. Van Oosten (NED) 60.89%  
 5. M. Leppik (EST) - M. Mirme (EST) 60.36%

The IMP (Butler) Pairs attracted an impressive 119 pairs. The tournament went to Bulgaria, with a Czech-Croatian partnership sharing second place with a Polish pair.

## Butler (119 pairs)

1. T. Gruev (BUL) - V. Bochev (BUL) 67.00  
 2. D. Seker (CZE) - M. Lewis (CRO) 62.00  
 3. G. Superson (POL) - Zedginidze (POL) 62.00  
 4. K. Stachowiak (POL) - Dembinski (POL) 55.00  
 5. T. Sprinkhuizen (NED) - Sibrand (NED) 54.00

Sunday in Pula traditionally belongs to the Mixed Teams, played alongside a parallel Non-Mixed Teams event. In the mixed competition, every partnership at the table must consist of one man and one woman; all other line-ups compete in the non-mixed event. Together, the two tournaments attracted 63 teams.

The Mixed Teams title stayed at home, with Stanicic Software taking first place, while the Non-Mixed Teams was won by the Croatian-Slovenian-Bulgarian combination Intercity.

## Mix tim (36 teams)



1. **Stanicic Software** V. Zoric (CRO) N. Sver (CRO) S. Havlicek (CRO) D. Diklić (CRO) M. Pilipovic (CRO) O. Staničić (CRO) 89.22  
 2. **Dutchies** L. Molle (NED) M. Thiele (NED) M. ter Laare (NED) R. Verdegaal (NED) 84.73  
 3. **Palačinka** G. Rus (SLO) H. Rus (SLO) R. de Koster (NED) E. Poppe (NED) 82.26  
 4. **Kuglana Unlimited** T. Brkljačić (CRO) M. Meštrić (CRO) O. Seker (TUR) D. Seker (CZE) 79.55  
 5. **Mixed Snics** J. Fritsche (GER) S. Kriftner (GER) C. Froehner (GER) P. Nehmert (GER) 76.05

**Non-mix tim (27 teams)**

1. **Intercity** M. Šipuš (CRO) B. Ambrož (SLO) K. Marinovski (CRO) S. Ivanov (BUL) 88.05
2. **Addictives** L. Lipman (USA) C. Lund Madsen (DEN) E. Haugstad (NOR) J. Levngang Johansen (NOR) 82.29
3. **Wessex lads** C. Jones (ENG) O. Leigh (ENG) T. Olech (ENG) J. P. Dakin (ENG) 77.85
4. **Bulgaria 1P3A** J. Stefanov (BUL) I. Nanev (BUL) Z. Draganov (BUL) M. Andonov (BUL) 77.47
5. **We made it** T. Šašek (CRO) J. H. Herland (NOR) J. Våge (NOR) E. Eide (NOR) 75.13

Monday brought the Mini Teams, which is in fact a board-a-match competition played over seven six-board rounds. The Bulgarian team Juls came out on top, ahead of the Slovenian team LOLa and the established Croatian team Stanicic Software.

Monday has traditionally also been the day on which many players choose to take a little time off—and with the beautiful weather in 2025, there was even more temptation than usual to escape to the beach. More importantly, Monday night means the Karaoke Party. In other words, it is usually the least serious—and quite possibly the craziest day in Pula

**Mini tim (55 teams)**

1. **Juls** I. Nanev (BUL) J. Stefanov (BUL) M. Andonov (BUL) Z. Draganov (BUL) 54.00
2. **LOLa** B. Drinovec Drnovšek (SLO) J. Sadar (SLO) B. Rašula (SLO) T. Adamič (SLO) 53.00
3. **Stanicic software** V. Zoric (CRO) N. Sver (CRO) M. Pilipovic (CRO) I. Bilušić (CRO) S. Havliceck (CRO) 53.00
4. **Olgssford** M. Malović (SRB) M. Simic (SRB) A. Z. Brajovic (SRB) O. Simic (SRB) 52.00
5. **Riga** A. Imsa (LAT) T. Straume (LAT) Y. Smit (NED) J. Kranenburg (NED) 52.00

After the Mini Teams—and, for some, an all-night party—Tuesday afternoon brought the Lara Mixed Pairs. This is one of the events closest to the hearts of long-time Pula players, as it is played in memory of our Lara.

There is also a Pula tradition attached to it: in addition to the trophy, the female winner receives a tiara. In 2025, the tiara went to Marina Pilipović playing with Ognjen Staničić. Since Marina was also named Player of the Festival, the crown seemed particularly appropriate.

The parallel Non-Mixed Pairs was won by Polish juniors.

**Lara mix par (104 pairs)**

1. M. Pilipovic (CRO) - V. Zoric (CRO) 66.44%
2. K. Świątkowski (POL) - M. Gryzłó (POL) 66.39%
3. M. Thiele (NED) - R. Verdegaal (NED) 63.25%
4. BHP (CRO) - A. Pritchard (ENG) 62.25%
5. I. Bilušić (CRO) - P. Kovacic (CRO) 60.73%

**Non-mixed Par (61 pairs)**

1. W. Tokarski (POL) - Izwantowski (POL) 68.83%
2. G. Radišić (SRB) - D. Zipovski (SRB) 61.35%
3. T. Denisiuk (POL) - Grochulski (POL) 61.01%
4. Y. Smit (NED) - J. Kranenburg (NED) 60.08%
5. I. Kats (GER) - P. Bobrov (GER) 59.80%

**Open Teams (76 teams)**

The Open Teams marked the beginning of the more serious second half of the festival. Played over three days, the event consisted of three qualifying sessions followed by two sessions of the eight-team final. And it could hardly have produced a closer finish.

After three days of bridge, the title was decided on the very last board. The Hungarian team Angels eventually emerged as the winners, finishing less than one victory point ahead of MATY, with the formidable Dutch Tosca team in third place.



1. **Angels** G. Kemeny (HUN) Peter Trenka (HUN) Zsolt Argay (HUN) Mark Kemeny (HUN) 198.85
2. **MATY** Adrians Imsa (LAT) Toms Straume (LAT) Mark Thiele (NED) Yke Smit (NED) 198.03
3. **Tosca** B. v.d. Bos (NED) Bauke Muller (NED) Jan Jansma (NED) Rob Lindeman (NED) 192.91
4. **Juls** Julian Stefanov (BUL) Ivan Nanev (BUL) Zhivko Draganov (BUL) Mark Andonov (BUL) 181.59
5. **Mr Bumble** Mats Wilhelm Pettersson (SWE) Håkan Tjárnemo (SWE) Lars Kennethsson (SWE) Per Jansson (SWE) 171.04

**BRK Open Pairs (186 pairs)**

And finally came the traditional climax of the festival—and, for many players, its most attractive event—the Brk Open Pairs.

1. M. Pieczka (POL) - R. Grzelak (POL) 63.73%
2. J. Stefanov (BUL) - I. Nanev (BUL) 62.37%
3. Z. Draganov (BUL) - M. Andonov (BUL) 60.94%
4. G. Superson (POL) - Zedginidze (POL) 60.68%
5. K. Marinovski (CRO) - V. Zoric (CRO) 60.43%

Poland's M. Pieczka and R. Grzelak took the title with 63.73%, ahead of two Bulgarian pairs. And with that, after ten days of bridge, sunshine, old friends, new partnerships, karaoke, quizzes and rather little sleep, the 63rd Pula Bridge Festival came to an end.

# Brk Cristal Trophy

The **Brk Open Pairs** is a six mini session tournament played in memory of the late Miljenko Brkljačić – *Brk*, long-time organizer of the Pula Bridge Festival. For more than 30 years, Brk led the festival, guiding it from a small local event to an established international competition, overcoming many challenges along the way. He passed away in 2011, just a few days before 50th Pula bridge festival was held, but among Pula players his presence is still strongly felt, with vivid memories and amusing stories about this picturesque and charismatic figure.

The Brk Open Pairs are held each year in his honor, and alongside the annual event there is also a five-year cycle in which the best overall player is awarded **Brk's Crystal Trophy**.

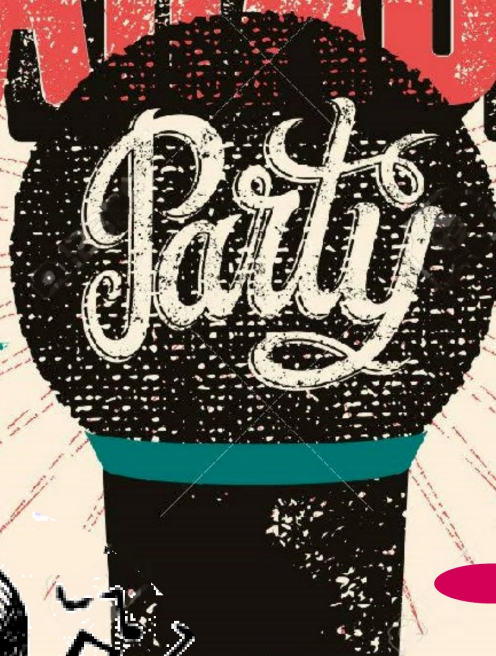
This year marks the fourth year of the third cycle: the first was won by Goran Radišić of Serbia and the second by Steven de Donder of Belgium. In the current cycle, after three years there are over 600 players on the list and the leader is still Tim van de Paverd, better known as Selená's boyfriend.

| Player                       | 2023  | 2024  | 2025  | Total  | Player                         | 2023  | 2024  | 2025  | Total  |
|------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|--------|--------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|--------|
| 1. Tim V. de Paverd (NED)    | 58.70 | 60.84 | 55.77 | 175.31 | 34. Viktor Leskovar (CRO)      | 56.85 | 48.87 | 51.53 | 157.25 |
| 2. Jan Jansma (NED)          | 55.12 | 61.33 | 58.24 | 174.69 | 35. Bogdan Szulejewski (POL)   | 56.00 | 51.84 | 49.08 | 156.92 |
| 3. Péter Gál (HUN)           | 58.70 | 57.02 | 58.64 | 174.36 | 36. Ewa Dziekanska (POL)       | 54.26 | 51.03 | 50.98 | 156.27 |
| 4. Zsolt Argay (HUN)         | 57.44 | 58.56 | 57.20 | 173.20 | 37. Mariusz Ilnicki (POL)      | 49.37 | 58.32 | 47.55 | 155.24 |
| 5. Goran Borevković (CRO)    | 56.83 | 55.17 | 58.02 | 170.02 | 38. Manuela Viezzoli (ITA)     | 52.75 | 47.54 | 54.01 | 154.30 |
| 6. Karlo Brguljan (CRO)      | 56.83 | 55.17 | 58.02 | 170.02 | 39. Roberto Zaleri (ITA)       | 52.75 | 47.54 | 54.01 | 154.30 |
| 7. Gyorgy Kemeny (HUN)       | 58.52 | 54.26 | 56.94 | 169.72 | 40. Gregor Rus (SLO)           | 50.24 | 50.99 | 52.91 | 154.14 |
| 8. Peter Trenka (HUN)        | 58.52 | 54.26 | 56.94 | 169.72 | 41. Tina Drnovšek (SLO)        | 50.24 | 50.99 | 51.58 | 152.81 |
| 9. Grzegorz Superson (POL)   | 53.58 | 55.11 | 60.68 | 169.37 | 42. Alan Arhanić (CRO)         | 47.07 | 55.31 | 50.33 | 152.71 |
| 10. Kiril Marinovski (CRO)   | 54.93 | 53.70 | 60.43 | 169.06 | 43. Igor Novosel (CRO)         | 47.07 | 55.31 | 50.33 | 152.71 |
| 11. Peter Talyigas (HUN)     | 58.41 | 51.49 | 58.64 | 168.54 | 44. Stanisław Pająk (POL)      | 52.10 | 50.65 | 49.08 | 151.83 |
| 12. Sibrand van Oosten (NED) | 55.93 | 53.83 | 58.74 | 168.50 | 45. Barbara Drinovec (SLO)     | 50.58 | 54.63 | 46.22 | 151.43 |
| 13. Rob Jagroop (NED)        | 57.34 | 58.18 | 52.43 | 167.95 | 46. Tomaž Adamič (SLO)         | 50.58 | 54.63 | 46.22 | 151.43 |
| 14. Wim van Luijk (NED)      | 57.34 | 58.18 | 52.43 | 167.95 | 47. Piotr Suchodolski (POL)    | 55.79 | 48.28 | 47.24 | 151.31 |
| 15. Dimitraki Zipovski (SRB) | 55.38 | 57.84 | 54.51 | 167.73 | 48. Davor Ruso (CRO)           | 54.54 | 45.85 | 50.38 | 150.77 |
| 16. Mariusz Kowalski (POL)   | 62.29 | 51.84 | 53.39 | 167.52 | 49. Sanja Vištica (CRO)        | 54.54 | 45.85 | 50.38 | 150.77 |
| 17. Marek Pieczka (POL)      | 51.36 | 52.21 | 63.73 | 167.30 | 50. Selená Pepic (SRB)         | 45.63 | 48.87 | 55.77 | 150.27 |
| 18. Bogdan Rašula (SLO)      | 51.28 | 54.04 | 58.50 | 163.82 | 51. Anke V. den Bergh (BEL)    | 46.66 | 50.75 | 52.76 | 150.17 |
| 19. Jože Sadar (SLO)         | 51.28 | 54.04 | 58.50 | 163.82 | 52. Nic Van Den Bergh (BEL)    | 46.66 | 50.75 | 52.76 | 150.17 |
| 20. Tomislav Šašek (CRO)     | 56.85 | 54.50 | 51.53 | 162.88 | 53. Zbigniew Słaby (POL)       | 49.56 | 51.36 | 48.25 | 149.17 |
| 21. Ana Z. Brajovic (SRB)    | 48.63 | 58.76 | 54.96 | 162.35 | 54. Agnes Zalai (HUN)          | 49.59 | 49.13 | 49.32 | 148.04 |
| 22. Olga Simic (SRB)         | 48.63 | 58.76 | 54.96 | 162.35 | 55. Igor Požar (SLO)           | 49.79 | 38.99 | 58.00 | 146.78 |
| 23. Toni Vidović (CRO)       | 51.88 | 49.87 | 60.08 | 161.83 | 56. Rajko Čeh (SLO)            | 49.79 | 38.99 | 58.00 | 146.78 |
| 24. Marshall Lewis (CRO)     | 54.79 | 50.16 | 56.42 | 161.37 | 58. Pavel Bobrov (GER)         | 45.62 | 50.05 | 50.86 | 146.53 |
| 25. Elżbieta Waniurska (POL) | 53.20 | 57.48 | 50.59 | 161.27 | 59. Arie Teeuw (NED)           | 50.96 | 45.60 | 49.89 | 146.45 |
| 26. Piotr Waniurski (POL)    | 53.20 | 57.48 | 50.59 | 161.27 | 60. Otto v. Schravendijk (NED) | 50.96 | 45.60 | 49.89 | 146.45 |
| 27. Csaba Czimer (HUN)       | 56.65 | 50.21 | 54.37 | 161.23 | 61. Irena Rukavina (CRO)       | 47.77 | 44.41 | 52.53 | 144.71 |
| 28. Levente Kaderjak (HUN)   | 53.50 | 51.29 | 56.18 | 160.97 | 62. Zlatko Unetić (CRO)        | 47.77 | 44.41 | 52.53 | 144.71 |
| 29. Krzysztof Kujawa (POL)   | 51.36 | 52.21 | 55.12 | 158.69 | 63. László Honti (HUN)         | 48.41 | 47.59 | 48.37 | 144.37 |
| 30. Milovan Milovic (ITA)    | 54.18 | 54.17 | 50.29 | 158.64 | 64. László Földesy (HUN)       | 49.08 | 51.84 | 42.63 | 143.55 |
| 31. John Helge Herland (NOR) | 51.74 | 50.33 | 56.44 | 158.51 | 65. Leo Huvers (NED)           | 46.90 | 48.51 | 47.77 | 143.18 |
| 32. John Våge (NOR)          | 51.74 | 50.33 | 56.44 | 158.51 | 66. Igor Mandalinić (CRO)      | 49.70 | 42.78 | 49.52 | 142.00 |
| 33. Srđan Katušić (CRO)      | 50.66 | 51.29 | 55.95 | 157.9  | 67. Guerrino Saina (ITA)       | 44.21 | 49.04 | 46.39 | 139.64 |

# Madhatter's MIDNIGHT



# KARAOKE



Restaurant Boschetto (Boškarin)  
500 meters from the venue

**TEAM UP FOR  
MADHATTER'S  
CHALLENGES!**

MoonDay, September 14, starting 9.30 p.m.

DRESS CODE: Show your respect by wearing a hat

# Madhatter MIDNIGHT TRIATHLON



Madhatter invites brave squads of 4-8 persons for combined challenges in:

— BEER FOR PEACE —

— BALLOON FLIGHT —

— HATS MATTER —



**MoonDay, September 14**

Right after BAM  
before Karaoke Party



Maximum 10 teams!



Entries are free!



**Restaurant Boschetto (Boškarić)**

500 meters from the venue



There are no prizes but there's a lot of pride and even more shame involved.



# PUBridge QUIZ

Teams of 4-8 persons are invited to enter the competition: Find your team, choose a name and register by **Thursday 8 p.m. online**. No entry fees. Maximum 16 teams.

Bridge players and their family members/friends are welcome.  
It would be smart to make international teams.

**Your general and specific knowledge on Bridge, Bridge society, Pula Bridge Festival, Other Events, Cards, Play, and (semi)related concepts will be tested.**

≡ **VENUE:** ≡  
*@ Kuglana*  
— *starting* —  
≡ **9:30 p.m.** ≡

★ **Thursday, 17 Sept.** ★

**TEAM UP FOR  
PUBridge QUIZ!**

➤ **REGISTRATIONS:** [www.pulabridgefestival](http://www.pulabridgefestival) ➤



it will not be possible to book a table,  
so **come earlier** to ensure a good position!



# SmartTable

by LowEnc

*We always lose  
IMPs in the bidding.*

*Actually, we don't*

OVERALL

**+0.37**

Cross-IMP (actual) · 372 boards

Worst: Game -0.08/board

BIDDING VALUE

**+0.42**

Bidding value (vs DD) · 372 boards

Worst: Grand slam -1.41/board

**Stop guessing.  
Start knowing.**



**smarttable.hr**

Bridge analytics, without the setup.



Financira  
Europska unija

# All you need to know

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## Registrations

All players have to be [registered](#) for the festival. If you did not register so far, please do it immediately at [pulabridgefestival.com](#). Once you are on registration list, you get Pula ID (first column on the list), and **this is the number to put in bridgemates**.

For each event, the [registration](#) deadline is 6 hours before the start of that contest. After that time, registrations will be possible only if it is convenient for organization. Starting positions will only be displayed online at [pulabridgefestival.com](#) -- no later than one hour before the start of the event. If you are looking for a partner or teammates, you can post your request online at the specific event, or contact the organizers ([tihana@pilar.hr](mailto:tihana@pilar.hr)).

**IMPORTANT:** If you register for a tournament and later decide not to play – it is crucial to delete your names from the list of registered pairs/teams. If you decide not to play less than 24 hours before the start of the tournament please inform us immediately ([pulabridge@gmail.com](mailto:pulabridge@gmail.com)).

## Venue

The venue is the Congress Center of Park Plaza Histria (same as in previous years). If we reach over 120 pairs or 60 teams, we have additional playing space in Casino.

## Entries/Prizes

The entries are 30 euro/player (20 for U26) for IMP, Mixed and Non-Mixed pairs; 120 euro/team (60 per team if only juniors)\*, for BAM, Mixed and Non-Mixed Teams; 250/team (125 per team if only juniors) \* for main teams (2-3 days), 60 per player for (40 per U26) BRK pairs (2 days). The entries for Friday Welcome tournament is 20 per player (15 per U26) and for the Additional entry is 15 per player (10 per U26).

\* Team consisting of juniors only has 50% discount, but for each adult (over 26) entry is increased for 15 euro/day up to maximum 120/250. We consider U26 all who were born in 2001 or later.

You are kindly requested to put the entries in the envelopes on the tables before the start of the tournament – please prepare exact amount.

Around 60% of the collected entries goes to the prizes for the best 10%-15% overall in a given event, and to the best in “special categories” (e.g. Mixed). Right after the entries are collected, prize amounts will be displayed at [pulabridgefestival.com](#). Prizes should be collected the next day at the venue, right after the end of that day's event – please bring an ID card/passport. Cups will be awarded at the Victory Ceremony on September 19th.

## Rules

We are playing this festival by The Laws of Duplicate

Bridge 2017, as long as they do not interfere with common decency and gentlemanship. Chief TD is Mr. Adam Magyar. Convention card is not obligatory, but it is highly recommended for your protection. Slow play cannot be tolerated since we have to follow a strict timetable – the official tempo allows 15 minutes per two boards at pairs, 65 minutes per 8 boards at teams, 50 minutes per 6 boards in BAM). Mobile phones MUST be switched off during the course of play in all events. You are responsible for all results entered in the Bridgmate at your table.

You should check all your results (online), and report any error, NO LATER THAN one hour after the end of every match (teams) or session (pairs). You can either complain to TD, or send email to [pulabridge@gmail.com](mailto:pulabridge@gmail.com). Later (but NOT more than 12 hours) complaints will be considered only if it was the organizers' fault.

Although Pula Bridge Festival is very proud of its international TD team, we still believe in Appeals Committees composed of players. If you think that a ruling was not right, you are entitled to appeal (you should inform the TD right after the match).

## Systems, Alerts, Styles

HUM and most of Brown stickers are not allowed except in finals A of the Open Teams. Please check with TD if you are in doubt. 1 club opening should be alerted if it doesn't promise at least 2 cards. 1NT needs to be alerted if it is not in the range of 14-18, balanced or semi balanced.

Please use STOP cards for your own protection. Keep in mind this is a very international tournament (30+ countries) and opponents may not be familiar with your methods and “standards” - try to explain as good as possible.

## Dress code

PLEASE do not dress as you go to the beach. Any casual or smart casual will do -- for example T-shirts are perfectly fine. Please don't be barefoot or bare-belly.

## Mission

Please keep in mind that although many competitive, even world-class players gather in Pula, this is primarily a festival, a celebration, and not a battlefield. We nurture Pula as a venue for international, friendly games that every participant will enjoy and feel comfortable even if s/he is just a beginner.

Please do not ruin our effort by placing your killer instinct above a pleasant atmosphere -- we are sure you can win without making others miserable. Here, we are in a business of making memories -- we have been doing so for the last 65 years, and as always, I am expecting and gratefully counting on your full support.

# Interview: Nikica Šver

In the first issue of our bulletin, we talked to Nikica Šver, Croatia's most decorated bridge player, who has just added another medal to her impressive collection — a bronze won with Marina Pilipović at the World Championships in Riga.

*1. Another medal in your pocket — congratulations! How many have you collected so far? Do you know off the top of your head? Which one is your favourite?*

This is my third bronze. I have two with international teams, and now this one with Marina in the pairs. Besides those, I also have a World Championship gold with Marina in the pairs, which is my favourite medal, of course.

*2. After the excellent result in the Women's Pairs, the Mixed Teams was pretty pathetic. What happened? What is the competition like in the Mixed?*

The Mixed Teams was horribly unlucky for us — we were really getting killed. And then you get frustrated, so towards the end we started playing worse as well. Mixed has become very popular. It seems that the best women much prefer playing Mixed these days, so the competition is very strong.

*3. In Katowice you also played in the Women's Teams. How did that go? What are your teammates like? You like playing in Poland, don't you?*

In Katowice, we played the Women's Teams with English player Sally Brock and French Jovi Smederevac. They are both very strong players, but they aren't a regular partnership, so they're not quite as well practised together. We've been good friends for years — I won my two bronze medals with Jovi — so the atmosphere was very pleasant.

We reached the quarterfinals, where we lost to a strong Turkish team. I absolutely love Poland. Their cities are beautiful, everything is very clean, it's not expensive, I feel safe there, the people are nice — and I've won three medals there.

*4. What does Nikica do when she isn't playing bridge? What are your hobbies, what do you particularly enjoy, what makes you happy? Describe your perfect day.*

Ooh, there's a lot — I like all sorts of things. Cooking, reading, listening to music, dancing, going to trance festivals, spending time with friends, skiing, hiking, lying in a hammock by the sea and swimming, playing with my cats — we play chase around the lawn. I have a huge flower garden, and I also grow loads of vegetables.

Quite a few of these things I only started doing after turning 50 and discovered that I really enjoy them. I'm sure I've forgotten plenty of things, and I'm equally sure I'll discover some new ones.

My perfect day starts with a big breakfast and a long cup of tea while reading the news. Although I might drop that last part — the news has been upsetting me a bit lately. :)

*5. What are your plans for the new season, both for Croatian and international events?*

First I'm going to Pula, and after that we'll continue with our Mixed team, the league, club events... As for international events, I'm usually the last one to find out what we're planning. It's not their fault, it's mine, with everything else I enjoy doing, I simply haven't found the time to start worrying about plans yet. :)

*6. Since the spring, we've also been seeing your son Niko at bridge tournaments, and he seems to have caught the bug pretty badly. Any comments?*



Yes. I never pushed bridge on Niko before, although I knew it had to suit him - we'd been playing Preferans since he was four - because I wanted it to be his own decision. When I heard you were running an intensive bridge course for university students, I suggested it to him, and that was it. He's become incredibly enthusiastic. I think he's very talented, he practises and studies a lot, and he likes the people in the bridge community.

He's just played his second tournament, in Zadar, with a very solid result.

I'm playing the Mixed Pairs with him in Pula. I have to admit I'm more nervous about playing with him than I am about any World Championship, because I care about the result for his sake, so I'm afraid I won't play my best. Emotions aren't particularly good for bridge. :)

*7. On that subject, there seem to be more and more young people in bridge. Since the pandemic, it feels as though the average age of a Zagreb club player has dropped by about ten years. What do you think the future holds for Croatian bridge?*

When I started playing bridge in the last century — next year it will be 40 years since I first started playing continuously for the national team — I think there were maybe three of us under 20. I've been playing since I was 14, and I never played in junior competition.

That was partly my own fault, admittedly. At one point we could somehow have scraped together a junior team, but I wasn't particularly interested because I was already playing in the Open team. I perhaps regret that now, because junior competition is the most fun of all — it's where lifelong friendships are made.

Today the situation is completely different. There are loads of juniors, they're winning medals, and by doing that they attract even more juniors. (You deserve quite a lot of the credit for that — well done. :))

I'm sure this will eventually strengthen the other categories as well, and perhaps we'll finally live to see a Croatian Open team fighting for medals.

*8. What advice would you give young players? What would you warn them about or tell them to pay particular attention to?*

Above all, work on your partnership. I think it takes at least two years before you can really see what a partnership is going to become. A bridge partnership is very much like a romantic relationship. After the "honeymoon period", when everything works perfectly, some kind of crisis always comes along.

It takes time and effort to get through it, and a lot of compromise and tolerance. When I was younger, for example, I was — to put it mildly — a bit too temperamental. I feel slightly sorry for some of my former partners now. :)

And you shouldn't take things in bridge quite as tragically as we all sometimes do. And you definitely need to talk to each other — a lot, and honestly.

*9. If you could play one tournament with absolutely anyone, living or dead, who would you choose and why?*

Well, now I'm a little sorry that I never played with my dad. That's just how it happened. He used to get on my nerves with his arguments — "In my many years of experience, it's better to do it this way" — and you always think you have plenty of time.

*10. Give us one interesting board you played recently.*

I think that over the years I've developed a way of conserving my energy: I simply don't think too much about boards I've already played, which also means I don't really remember them. But at least I sleep pretty well. :)

| Board 31. Dealer South. N-S Vulnerable. |  |             |             |
|-----------------------------------------|--|-------------|-------------|
|                                         |  | ♠ 3         |             |
|                                         |  | ♥ A T 7 4 3 |             |
|                                         |  | ♦ K 9       |             |
|                                         |  | ♣ K Q J T 5 |             |
| ♠ A T 9 8                               |  |             | ♠ K Q J 7 6 |
| ♥ 9                                     |  |             | ♥ K 8 5     |
| ♦ T 7 4 2                               |  |             | ♦ A 8 3     |
| ♣ A 6 4 2                               |  |             | ♣ 7 3       |
|                                         |  | ♠ 5 4 2     |             |
|                                         |  | ♥ Q J 6 2   |             |
|                                         |  | ♦ Q J 6 5   |             |
|                                         |  | ♣ 9 8       |             |

I did remember one board, though, where I didn't fall asleep in defence. The opponents were in 4♠, and my partner led the ♥Q. I took the ace and switched to the ♣K. Declarer ducked the first club, won the second, and played a diamond.

Since we could take the ♥A and one club, we would probably need two diamond tricks to beat the contract. The only way we could lose those was if declarer managed to endplay me and force me to play into a double void. So I went up with the ♦K, after which we had no trouble taking our two diamond tricks.

At the other table, N didn't go up with the ♦K, after which Tihana had no trouble making the contract — as happened at many other tables.

By board 150 of a championship, you tend to sleep through boards like this a little more often. :)

## CROATIAN BRIDGE PRO - FINAL MISSION

*By Srđan Srfa Katušić*

The long, hot summer is over, another bridge season has come to an end, and the logical and suitably grand finale of every season should, of course, take place at our glorious Pula Bridge Festival. Here's how it happened to your favourite pro — in a somewhat less-than-grand fashion. :)

Somewhere around the middle of the summer, I got a tempting offer on Funbridge from Ahmed, a Kuwaiti sheikh, to play with him in Pula. Unfortunately, in the end the sheikh decided not to make the trip. A real pity, because for a moment there was a chance I might solve once and for all the problem of filling up my Škoda, which still doesn't run on electricity — and apparently never will, no matter how hard I try to explain to it that electricity would be both greener and cheaper. But the old beast simply refuses to learn anything new.

...and so your favourite pro, Srfa, found himself in Pula this time in a somewhat unexpected arrangement: sharing an apartment with his wife Davorka-Srfeta and their young dog Laki, but without his regular partner. After a few nice and relatively successful years together, Zlatko and I had decided it was time to try something new.

Things started off entertainingly enough, with the Butler, where I played with Meštar, the man who edits this excellent bridge magazine. We had a good time, but failed to bid either of the two slam boards and, as we all know, that is not exactly the formula for a good result in this type of tournament. So in the end we recorded a beautifully round result: a big round zero. :)

I deliberately skipped the Mixed tournament so I could look after my dog Laki and Srfić's Obi while Srfić played the Mixed with Srfeta.

...I've been playing the BAM with Faruk, Dražen and Igor for about a hundred years now, and with quite a bit of success. This year started well too — for a while we were even at table one — but then another home-grown pro franchise, "Staničić Software", did us in. They thrashed us 11–1, wiped out all our chances of a good result and catapulted themselves into second place overall.

Just how well those otherwise fairly aggressive pros judge their bidding decisions in BAM can be illustrated by this example:

| Bibi   | Veki    |
|--------|---------|
| ♠ AKQ9 | ♠ Jxx   |
| ♥ A53  | ♥ Kxxxx |
| ♦ 876  | ♦ Qx    |
| ♣ AKT  | ♣ QJx   |

After my diamond pre-empt, our heroes, with 29 HCP and a major-suit fit, somehow manage to slam on the brakes and stop in 3♥ — the only pair to do so in a 54-table field. It was a good decision, because there isn't anything more to be made: naturally, hearts are 4–1...

And throughout all these warm-up tournaments before the main event — the Big Teams — I was keeping an eye out for an opportunity to sneak into one of our teams as a joker. I offered my services for free, on instalments, with a suitable modest gift/Bajadera chocolates/a swim at the best spot at Zlatne Stijene thrown in... But nothing. Zilch. Apparently nobody needed the services of this professional nuisance.

I kept waiting for my phone to ring with some brilliant last-minute offer, but time went by, and with one hour to go before the start — panic! Still no job!??

Hang on. It makes absolutely no sense to be in Pula and not play the Big Teams, right?

I contact Tihana. She says: "I've got a Turk who doesn't speak English and some Austrians. We can cobble together a team. You in?"

Am I in? Of course I'm in...

And so I meet Ahmed fifteen minutes before the start.

This Ahmed isn't the Kuwaiti sheikh. He's a Turk from Istanbul and, judging by appearances, I'd say his profession is palm reader.

He genuinely doesn't speak a single word of English, so we try to agree on our methods using a phone and a translation app. We don't get much further than opening leads and signals before the phone itself starts overheating...

We agree on third/fifth leads. Then, on the first few boards, he leads first, second, fourth, sixth and seventh - but never, ever third or fifth.

Finally it dawns on me: Ahmed plays inverted third/fifth!

...and then came the legendary board which, in some symbolic way, might serve as both the conclusion and crowning achievement of my eventful professional career:

♠ K94  
♥ KJ74  
♦ A6532  
♣ 7

Ahmed opens 1♣, I respond 1♦, and Ahmed jumps to 2♥! Hmm. To your favourite pro, this smells like a slam.

I don't have all that much, but I do have some nice controls, so something needs to be tried. Cue-bidding has so far failed to emerge as a method over which Ahmed exercises complete mastery, so I decide on Blackwood. That might more or less work... Ahmed shows approximately three aces.

There might even be a grand slam here, but I'm not exactly sure how to ask about the trump queen in Turkish — or whether one is even allowed to — so I settle for 6♥. That should be just about right for Ahmed. He doesn't even stop to think. He promptly pulls it to 6NT!!!

Now, God knows — or Allah knows, or perhaps both of them — what is going on here.

The only explanation I can think of is that Ahmed has invented a reverse into hearts without actually having four hearts because he has some enormous club one-suiter, or perhaps something even more creative. I pass. What else can I do?

Then comes the double, and now I have to think again. I don't know... If Ahmed doesn't have four hearts, he'll have me impaled on a stake if I now pull it back to hearts. So I pass.

The auction was:

| Ahmed — |   | Pro  |              |
|---------|---|------|--------------|
| 1♣*     | — | 1♦   |              |
| 2♥      | — | 4NT  |              |
| 5♣      | — | 6♥   |              |
| 6NT     | — | Pass | X — All Pass |

...and the ♦K is led, revealing that the resources available to me for playing 6NT doubled are these:

♠ AT  
♥ AQ98  
♦ 4  
♣ AJ9543  
  
♠ K94  
♥ KJ74  
♦ A6532  
♣ 7

Your favourite pro did not make 6NT. Not a chance. To tell the truth, he didn't even make 3NT. He crashed heroically four down, doubled, for -1100.

At the other table, and at most tables in the room, they played a relatively normal 4♥ for +680/+710, because finding a slam with 26 HCP between the two hands isn't exactly easy for everybody — especially amateurs.

Ahmed's more-than-light reverse had actually helped us enormously. Six hearts is almost cold, and even seven has decent chances; with the cards lying as they do, it actually makes.

So Ahmed and I had been on our way to winning 13 IMPs. Instead, we managed to lose 18. In other words, Ahmed's retreat from 6♥ to 6NT cost us 31 IMPs. An epic disaster of that magnitude is difficult to digest in silence, so I reach for my phone and order it to translate my question into Turkish:

"Ahmed, old mate, why on earth did you pull 6♥ to 6NT? Is this some kind of revenge because my great-grandfathers defended the fortress of Klis?"

Ahmed reads it, then dictates his answer into the phone. The phone promptly translates his profound thought into Croatian: "Partner, you're the pro. Better that you play the slam than me!"

At that moment all my anger disappears, replaced by a feeling of pure delight that was worth every single one of those 31 lost IMPs. Because that was the one thing I had spent my entire professional career waiting for a client to finally say to me!

By some miracle, we finished the tournament somewhere around the middle of the field, which under the circumstances I consider an outstanding result and one of the greater achievements of my not particularly successful professional career.

## Croatian way of life

If there is one thing you need to understand about Croatians, it is coffee.

The first thing to understand is that when a Croatian says: "Let's have a coffee." This provides almost no information about what is going to happen - except that you should probably keep the next two hours free.

Coffee may indeed be consumed. But "coffee" can mean a meeting, a conversation, a business negotiation, a plan, gossip, therapy, a date, an argument, reconciliation after the argument, or simply sitting somewhere enjoying the view.

Coffee in Croatia is rather like tea in England: it doesn't necessarily solve anything, but somehow it makes everything feel manageable again.

But, Starbucks itself still does not exist in Croatia, which visitors sometimes find surprisingly difficult to believe. Croatians are more traditional. So, at home, many Croatians still drink what we casually call "Turkish coffee" — although depending on whom you ask, calling it Turkish rather than Bosnian or simply *domaća kava* may start a discussion considerably longer than the coffee itself.

It is prepared in a small pot called a *džezva*, and for generations the familiar red Franck Ciglica - literally "little brick", thanks to the shape of its 250-gram packet of finely ground coffee - has been a permanent resident of Croatian kitchen cupboards.

But Ciglica is more than coffee.

It has also traditionally served as a small sign of attention. You bring it when visiting someone, add it to a little thank-you gift, or give it to a neighbour or somebody who has done you a favour.

Coffee is not particularly connected to any time of day. Morning coffee, afternoon coffee, coffee after lunch, coffee after work, coffee at nine in the evening — all perfectly normal. "Isn't it a bit late for coffee?" is not really a Croatian question.

Most of Croatians drink their coffee with milk. This sounds simple until you actually try to order one.

Coffee with milk, *bijela kava*, *veliki macchiato*, *mali macchiato*, cappuccino, warm milk, cold milk, milk on the side, a small coffee in a big cup, double coffee, long coffee but not too long.

If you walk down the streets of almost any Croatian city, it is virtually impossible not to have at least one café in sight. And they are never empty. Even the smallest villages tend to have a coffee bar - a heart of social life.

Many Croatians have "their" café - the place they visit regularly, sometimes for years. After a while, there is no real need to order. The waiter sees you, nods, and already knows exactly which of those six million variations of coffee with milk is yours.

Going for coffee alone is perfectly normal too.

You sit down, order your usual coffee, read the news, scroll through your phone, watch people go by or simply do absolutely nothing. Nobody assumes you have been stood up or have no friends.

And then there is *pomalo*.

If coffee explains a lot about Croatian social life, the word *pomalo* explains quite a lot about our philosophy of life.

You will hear it particularly often in Dalmatia and along the coast. Literally, *pomalo* means something like "slowly", "little by little" or "take it easy". But none of those translations quite captures it.

Croatian has plenty of relatives of *pomalo*: *polako* (slowly, take it easy), *lagano* (easy, gently), *bez žurbe* (no hurry), *natenane* (at your leisure, taking all the time you need), and the wonderfully reassuring Dalmatian *ima vrimena*: "there's time".

They are not perfect synonyms, but they all belong to roughly the same philosophical family: Why rush if you don't absolutely have to?

But perhaps the finest expression of the entire philosophy is the Dalmatian saying: *Vrag odnija prišu*.

Literally: "May the Devil take the hurry."

In other words: forget the rush. Whatever it is, it probably isn't worth getting excited about. The thing you are worrying about will still exist later, so there is no obvious advantage in worrying about it standing up.

*Pomalo* does not necessarily mean that nothing will get done. It means that there is perhaps no reason for everything to get done right now.

Tomorrow exists for a reason. And if tomorrow turns out to be inconvenient, there is also the day after tomorrow.

Don't worry.

Have a coffee.

Pomalo.

You are in Croatia.

Vrag odnija prišu.

Enjoy the festival :)

# 64<sup>TH</sup> PULA BRIDGE FESTIVAL



|                                   |                   |                                                            |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>FRI, SEPT 11<sup>TH</sup></b>  | <b>4 P.M.</b>     | <b>WELCOME PAIRS:</b> single session: 24-26 boards         |
| <b>SAT, SEPT 12<sup>TH</sup></b>  | <b>4 P.M.</b>     | <b>IMP PAIRS:</b> single session: 26-30 boards             |
| <b>SUN, SEPT 13<sup>TH</sup></b>  | <b>12 P.M.</b>    | <b>MIXED &amp; NON-MIXED TEAMS:</b> 3 rounds of 8 boards   |
|                                   | <b>4.30 P.M.</b>  | <b>MIXED &amp; NON-MIXED TEAMS:</b> 3 rounds of 8 boards   |
| <b>MON, SEPT 14<sup>TH</sup></b>  | <b>12 P.M.</b>    | <b>BOARD-A-MATCH TEAMS:</b> 4 rounds of 6 boards           |
|                                   | <b>17.00 P.M.</b> | <b>BOARD-A-MATCH TEAMS:</b> 3 rounds of 6 boards           |
|                                   | <b>9.30 P.M.</b>  | <b>MADHATTER'S KARAOKE PARTY</b> (Boškarin)                |
| <b>TUE, SEPT 15<sup>TH</sup></b>  | <b>4 P.M.</b>     | <b>LARA MIXED &amp; NON-MIXED PAIRS</b> (26-30 boards)     |
| <b>WED, SEPT 16<sup>TH</sup></b>  | <b>12 P.M.</b>    | <b>OPEN TEAMS - QUALIFIER:</b> 3 rounds of 8 boards        |
|                                   | <b>4.30 P.M.</b>  | <b>OPEN TEAMS - A &amp; B GROUPS:</b> 3 rounds of 8 boards |
| <b>THU, SEPT 17<sup>TH</sup></b>  | <b>12 P.M.</b>    | <b>OPEN TEAMS - A &amp; B GROUPS:</b> 3 rounds of 8 boards |
|                                   | <b>4.30 P.M.</b>  | <b>OPEN TEAMS - MORE GROUPS:</b> 3 rounds of 8 boards      |
|                                   | <b>9.30 P.M.</b>  | <b>PUBridge Quiz</b> (Kuglana)                             |
| <b>FRI, SEPT 18<sup>TH</sup></b>  | <b>11 A.M.</b>    | <b>OPEN TEAMS - FINALS GROUP A:</b> 3 rounds of 8 boards   |
| <b>FRI, SEPT 18<sup>TH</sup></b>  | <b>4 P.M.</b>     | <b>BRK OPEN PAIRS - 3 SESSIONS</b> of 10 boards            |
| <b>SAT, SEPT 19<sup>TH</sup></b>  | <b>1 P.M.</b>     | <b>BRK OPEN PAIRS - 3 SESSIONS</b> of 10 boards            |
| <b>SAT, SEPT 19<sup>TH</sup></b>  | <b>9 P.M.</b>     | <b>VICTORY CEREMONY &amp; AFTERPARTY</b>                   |
| <b>SUN, SEPT 20<sup>TH</sup></b>  | <b>4 P.M.</b>     | <b>ADDITIONAL OPEN PAIRS</b>                               |
| <b>MON, SEPT, 21<sup>ST</sup></b> | <b>1 P.M.</b>     | <b>TEAMS: CROATIA AGAINST THE WORLD</b>                    |

REGISTRATION ONLY ONLINE AT: [pulabridgefestival.com](http://pulabridgefestival.com)



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car 15 euro, by mini van 25 euro

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*car is comfortable for four persons, mini van for eight persons*



### Restaurant Boschetto

Very nice, friendly place near the tennis courts, 500 meters from the venue. Decent food and reasonable prices. This restaurant will probably host us for Madhatter's Karaoke Party. They will stay open every day until there are guests (2 a.m.). So this is the place to go after the tournaments for dinner or drinks. Most of other places around close at 11 or 12.

### Restaurant Yacht Club

Only about 100 meters from the venue, down on the sea shore, one of Croatia best fish restaurants with breath-taking views. During the day you can also have a snack or just a cocktail and enjoy.

Reasonably priced for a restaurant of this level. For a bigger groups (especially in the evenings), booking is recommended.

In a higher price range, but absolutely worth it. Also offers snacks at low-moderate prices.



### Restaurant Kuglana

The closest restaurant to the venue, maybe 50 meters, between Histria and Park Plaza Verudela, right across the Histria Wing hotel. Lot of various dishes, from as simple as ham and eggs and pizza to Istrian and Croatian specialities. It is not expensive and you can get a decent meal for 20-25 euro. They usually do not take bookings as it is always crowded anyway. They also serve breakfast.

### Ribarska koliba

This is a famous fish restaurant about 20 minutes walk from the venue, in marina. You can see Ribarska koliba from windows of the main playing room. It is rather expensive and booking is usually required. Michelin Guide's Point Of View: This restaurant in the Ribarska Koliba Resort is situated near the Marina Veruda which can be admired through the large picture windows or from the restaurant's attractive terrace. Delicious Mediterranean cuisine takes pride of place on the menu, ranging from pasta-based starters to fish and seafood dishes made from the freshest ingredients, although a few meat-based specialities also feature. Rather expensive.

### Konoba Volme

This place is a bit further away, in Banjole, but it is worth visiting. It is a very nice restaurant with big terrace, very local and homey. Food is authentic Croatian, delicious and prices are in a lower range. You will need a car/taxi to get there. To make sure you get a place make a reservation +385 (98) 818265.



## Restaurant Batelina (Gaultmillau review)



Restaurant Batelina is actually an old tavern in Banjole, a small town near Pula. It is not particularly decorated, nor does it have any advantages such as a garden, a special view or an interesting interior design, yet it is incredibly popular and it is very difficult to get a reservation. The first reason is the always fresh fish and seafood, but also the reduced working hours. An additional reason is certainly their famous chef David Skoko, a cook that appears almost every day on TV. Although he does not cook at Batelina on a daily basis, he is the one who creates the menu.

The appetizers are varied and they serve 6

or 7 of them in small bowls or little plates: marinated sardines, sardines in savor (fried and marinated) , sea bass ceviche, pickled vegetables, salads... Our favourite was the grancigula, a delicious crab that is harder to find in restaurants these days. All dishes are based on a traditional and simple method of preparation. First of all, there are raw or grilled scampi, as well as various fish, depending on the day's catch, but also traditional cuttlefish brodetto, squid noodles with fried onions, which are definitely to recommend. Batelina is a tavern of "raw passions", basic, simple and traditional. Important notice: in Batelina they don't accept credit cards.

## Sophia, Grand Hotel Brioni

Named after Sophia Loren who was frequent visitor of Brioni islands as a guest of ex-Yu president Josip Broz Tito.

Sophia restaurant is a premium meat specialist. Dine on the highest quality matured cuts of beef, including favourites like classic American steaks and Istrian Boskarin.

The atmosphere of this restaurant quickly puts a spell on their guests. Subdued lighting and darker color scheme create a mood that invites them to lower their guard and simply let the restaurant's specialties sweep them away. Expensive, but worth it.





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Around 20 bidding systems and variations to choose from, and you set your own leads and carding. Polish Club is coming soon.

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## Remembering *Aleksander Późnysz*

When I first met Aleksander, he seemed like a typical Polish bridge player. You know, undefined age, Polish Club, perfect card play, no mercy.

But there is something that regularly happens with Poles once you get to know them better: sooner or later they somehow step out of the stereotype and step right into your heart. Aleksander certainly did.

He had been a brilliant player already in his youth, but somewhere along the way decided that becoming a professional engineer beats professional play. He built a career, a family and a life, while bridge remained something he had chosen to do for pleasure rather than out of necessity. In 2024, he sent me a video of his just-born grandchild. By then we had travelled quite a long way from those first encounters across a bridge table.

I am not quite sure when we became friends. Perhaps Grażyna had helped. She was always around in Pula too, greeting me with that unbeatable Slavic warmth. Slowly, perhaps fifteen years ago, Aleksander and I started exchanging more than a few words at the festival. Then came Christmas greetings, Easter greetings, birthday greetings. Somewhere between all those small messages and all those Septembers in Pula, a familiar bridge player became a friend.

I remember once sitting alone on the terrace in front of the Histria when a message arrived on my phone. It contained a photograph of me, taken at that very moment. I turned around, trying to work out where it had come from, and spotted him sitting some distance away. It might sound a little odd, but once I understood it was from him, the message I got was: you are safe, I am watching over you. He just winked at me.

Mate and Aleksander had their own evolution.

One year, after several tough matches against each other in the Open teams, they had managed to do an excellent job of keeping each other out of the A final. There they were, both stuck in the B league. They looked at each other, smiled, had a beer and decided to play the Sunday additional tournament together.

And that became a tradition.

Even this year, Mate was hoping that the first additional tournament would once again be played with Aleksander.

The last time Aleksander and Grażyna were in Pula, in 2021, they invited us to dinner. Aleksander cooked himself. We stayed for a long time — eating, talking, laughing, completely relaxed, in that particularly cosy atmosphere that cannot really be organised or planned.

We later realised that we were by no means the only ones who knew that side of Aleksander. He had become a good friend to many Pula players. The door of their apartment was always open to someone looking for warm homemade food and a friendly conversation - and sometimes even a song.

That is how I want to remember him. Not only as the formidable Polish player that I called so many times to the stage during the victory ceremonies, although he certainly remained that too. As the engineer who chose his own priorities. As a family man and proud grandfather. As Mate's once-rival-turned-partner. As the man cooking a fish stew in Pula apartment with the door open and friends coming in.

I have only glimpses of moments with Aleksander, but they are an inseparable part of my experience of Pula Festival which is now one beautiful soul shorter.



But perhaps that is the price we eventually have to pay for this unbridled accumulation of memories.

*Frère Jacques, spij spokojnie, przyjacielu.*

## Reminders:

- Please register on time;
- Find your position for every tournament - it will be published online - at the tournament webpage, one hour before the start of the tournament;
- Come to the venue 15 minutes before the start and find your table;
- All entries are paid at the table: Please prepare the exact amount of money or even better put the money for the whole team in one envelope.
- Switch off your mobile phone during the tournaments (you can turn it on between team matches);
- Respect the time (15 minutes per two boards in pairs tournaments, about 60 minutes for 8 boards in teams);
- Carefully check results in bridgemates;
- Once the session/match is over check the results (published online). Report any error immediately at pulabridge@gmail.com (you have one hour after the first results are published);
- Official results will be published approximately 12 hours after the tournament. If you won a prize you should collect it the next day at the venue, right after the end of that day's event;
- If you win a tournament, please either stay at the venue until we find you to take a photo, or take a photo to yourself and send us.

## PULA BRIDGE FESTIVAL DECLARATION

(2019)

Hereby I declare

While it may sound unconventional

That *Pula Bridge Festival*

Turns invitational.

Please accept my apologizes

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