

The Kibitzer



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Above. Kokish and the Nickell team celebrate after winning the USBC to represent the USA at the Bermuda Bowl in Monte Carlo, 2003 (Nick Nickell, Jeff Meckstroth, Paul Soloway, Bob Hamman, Dick Freeman, Coach K, Eric Rodwell).



Above. Kokish made the introduction speech for a former Kibitzer Editor upon his being inducted into the Bridge Hall of Fame at the Summer NABC in Toronto.



Above. Producing a 40-page Daily Bulletin every day at the NEC Festival in Yokohama is obviously wearing Kokish down. Richard Colker (background) does the work while EOK has the fun. Kyoko Ohno assists in the fun.

Below. The pressure of trying to win the 2000 Forbo International Teams in Holland was evidently not too great for Kokish to bear. The Canadian Team was lauded for congeniality while winning!



The World's Best Bridge Coach: Eric Kokish

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Eric Kokish

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"Coach K" in a More Serious Moment

To be considered the best in the world at anything is an incredible accomplishment. Toronto's Eric Kokish is acknowledged by most experts as the best bridge coach in the world today. While such judgments often have a measure of subjectivity about them, there can be no doubt that his record of success is unparalleled: Kokish-coached teams and pairs have won medals in the all major World Bridge Federation Championship events: the Bermuda Bowl, the Olympiad Teams, the Venice Cup and the Rosenblum Cup. The list of Kokish-coached countries failing to win a medal in World Championship play is shorter than the list of those which have won a medal.

In the early 1970s, having just finished a degree at McGill University, Kokish

was beginning to make a name for himself playing with an equally-young group of players from Montréal: Joe Silver, George Mittelman, Peter Nagy, Henry Cukoff. The group came under the tutelage of Sam Gold, one of the most-revered of Canada's early bridge stars. It was not long before Kokish had great success: he and Silver won the 1974 Vanderbilt in Vancouver and he and Nagy garnered the World Open Pairs silver medal in New Orleans in 1978. He was barely 30.

After returning to McGill in the 1980s to take a law degree and finally realising that what he wanted to do was bridge, not law, Kokish went into bridge full-time. He moved from Montréal to Toronto a few years ago, where he has lived ever since, except for a brief stay in Indonesia as their full-time bridge coach (the Indonesian team have been salaried professionals for years, paid by their government). The unsettled political situation in Djakarta mandated an early return to Canada.

It is now no surprise when a Kokish-coached team wins a World Championship; all this success did not escape the attention of Nick Nickell, the architect of arguably the current world's-most-successful bridge team. The Nickell team now employs Kokish as a coach/consultant to prepare them for major North American and World Championship events. He prepares system summaries, defences and partnership profiles for them.

Kokish's duties as a coach still allow him to play occasionally, and in addition to winning five CNTCs, he took time out to play on the Canadian teams which won a silver medal in the 1995 Bermuda Bowl and bronze medals in the 1982 and 1990 Rosenblums. He

has also won prestigious invitational events in Japan and the Netherlands: the Epsom Teams and the Forbo International Teams, respectively.

But what does Eric want to do when he grows up? He wants to write a book. You see, Kokish has another skill at which he is one of the best in the world and that is as a writer/editor. He is probably the bridge writer with more pages to his credit than any other without ever having written a book.

Nevertheless, Kokish's writing output is prodigious: he is the editor of the WBF News, the official newsletter of the World Bridge Federation; he is an associate editor of The Bridge World; and he is the editor of daily bulletins from various bridge tournament around the world, the premier examples of which are those of the NEC Bridge Festival held in Yokohama each February. These are without a doubt the best of their kind. See for yourself at www.jcbl.or.jp. Kokish has also been the bridge columnist for both the Montréal Gazette and the Toronto Star.

We hope that this failure to author a book will be remedied soon, but we have no idea how he will find the time to do it!

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BOB MCPHEE

Tel: 613-968-7124

e-mail: bobmcphee@hotmail.com

Audrey Grant Wins Inaugural Audrey Grant Award



Unit 166 has created a new award, to be named after the most famous bridge teacher in the world today, Audrey Grant, and awarded annually to a top teacher in the area. With decades of innovative teaching in Toronto high schools and the world of bridge, Grant has brought more students to the game of bridge than any other teacher since Charles Goren.

Grant's textbooks, co-authored with husband David Lindop, have long been the ACBL standard for teaching beginners how to play. She has written more than two dozen books on bridge and is the editor of a monthly bridge magazine for beginners, Better Bridge.

Grant was honoured at the Toronto Easter Regional in a presentation at the Royal York Hotel.