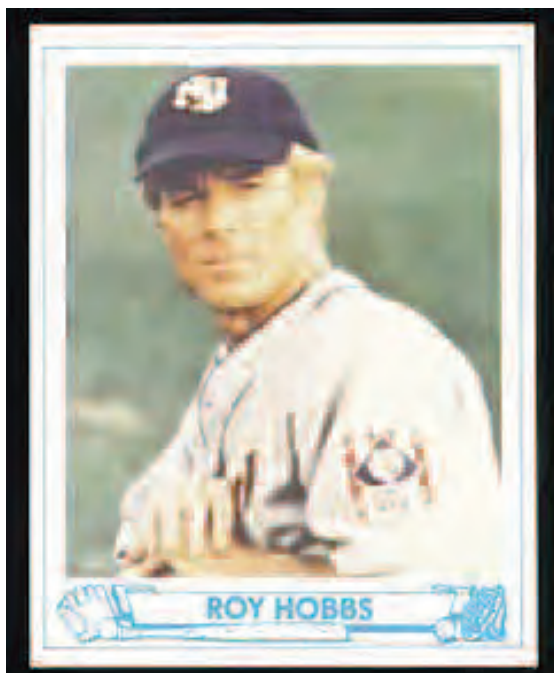


The Natural

By Mark Horton

The Natural is a 1984 film adaptation of Bernard Malamud's 1952 baseball novel of the same name, directed by Barry Levinson and starring Robert Redford, Glenn Close, and Robert Duvall. The film, like the book, recounts the experiences of Roy Hobbs, an individual with great 'natural' baseball talent, spanning decades of Roy's eventual success and his suffering.



In an early scene Roy is asked what he hopes to achieve in Baseball and he says he hopes that when he walks down the street people would look, see him and say, 'There goes Roy Hobbs, the best there ever was'.

I cannot tell you that what people will say about the bridge champions of the present era, but if you stay with me until the end of this article I will offer an opinion about one of them.

MONACO started the second set of their Rosenblum round of 16 match with a 4IMP lead.

Board 2. Dealer East. NS Vul.

♠ K 10 5 2 ♥ K 9 6 3 ♦ A 9 2 ♣ 10 2	<table style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ J 8 7 6 3 ♥ A 10 7 ♦ K J 10 8 ♣ K	♠ Q 4 ♥ 5 4 2 ♦ 7 6 4 3 ♣ 8 6 4 3
	N											
W		E										
	S											
	♠ A 9 ♥ Q J 8 ♦ Q 5 ♣ A Q J 9 7 5											

Open Room

West	North	East	South
King	Fantoni	Black	Nunes
3♣*	Pass	1♠ 4♠	2♣ All Pass
3♣ Good raise in spades			

South led the queen of hearts and declarer won with the ace and played the six of spades. South going up with the ace and returning a spade to dummy's king. Declarer played dummy's ten of spades, overtook it with the jack and played the seven of hearts for the jack and king. A heart to the ten was followed by the jack of diamonds to the ace, a club went on the master heart and declarer came to hand with the ace of diamonds, +480 when the queen appeared

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
Helgemo	Hallberg	Helness	Bertheau
3♣*	Pass	1♠ 3♠	2♣ All Pass
3♣ Spade raise			

Here too, South started with the queen of hearts and declarer won with the ace and played a spade. South took the ace and returned the eight of hearts. Not wanting to risk a heart ruff declarer put up dummy's king and played a club to the king and ace. South cashed the jack of hearts and continued with the queen of clubs. Declarer ruffed, played a spade to the king, cashed the ace of diamonds and played a diamond to the jack and queen, +140 and 8 IMPs to BLACK handing them the lead.

Board 5. Dealer North. NS Vul.

♠ J 8 3 2 ♥ 10 6 5 ♦ A K Q ♣ K 8 7	<table style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ A 10 9 6 5 ♥ A 4 ♦ 9 6 ♣ Q 10 4 2	♠ K 4 ♥ K J 8 2 ♦ J 8 ♣ A J 6 5 3
	N											
W		E										
	S											
	♠ Q 7 ♥ Q 9 7 3 ♦ 10 7 5 4 3 2 ♣ 9											

Open Room

West	North	East	South
King	Fantoni	Black	Nunes
4♠	INT* All Pass	2♠	Pass
INT 12-14 any balanced, 5332, 5422, (no54 Ms), 4411, 6m332			

I'm not sure if 2♠ promised spades and a minor, but West was always going to game whatever it meant.

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
Helgemo	Hallberg	Helness	Bertheau
	1♣	1♠	Pass
2♣	Pass	2♠	Pass
2NT	Pass	3NT	All Pass

South led the nine of clubs and North won with the ace and returned the jack. South ruffed and switched to the nine of hearts for the five, king and ace. Declarer cashed the ace of spades and then played dummy's diamonds, throwing a heart from hand. That was +420.

Board 9. Dealer North. EW Vul.

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

Open Room

West	North	East	South
King	Fantoni	Black	Nunes
	Pass	1♣	1♦
2♦*	4♦	Pass	Pass
5♣	All Pass		



Fulvio Fantoni

North's jump to 4♦ took away a lot of space, but even so West might have done more than bid 5♣.

Declarer won the diamond lead with dummy's ace, ruffed a diamond, drew trumps and claimed twelve tricks, +620.

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
Helgemo	Hallberg	Helness	Bertheau
	Pass	1♣	1♦
2♠*	4♦	Pass	Pass
6♣	All Pass		

That simple auction gave MONACO 13 IMPs.

Board 10. Dealer East. All Vul.

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

Open Room

West	North	East	South
King	Fantoni	Black	Nunes
		Pass	1♦*
Pass	2♣*	Pass	2♠
Pass	2NT	Pass	3♣
Pass	3♦	Pass	3♥
Pass	3NT	Pass	4♦
Pass	5♣*	Pass	6♦
	All Pass		

- 1♦ 14+ (good 12/13) 4+ diamonds
- 2♣ Game forcing, clubs or balanced or diamond support
- 5♣ Cue bid

West led the two of clubs for the ace, five and three. Declarer played a spade for the six, ace and two and the six of hearts. West put up the king and exited with the seven of hearts for the jack and ace. Declarer played four rounds of trumps and when West discarded the four of hearts declarer knew he was home, +1370.

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
Helgemo	Hallberg	Helness	Bertheau
		Pass	1♦
Pass	1♥	Pass	1♠
Pass	1NT	Pass	3♥
Pass	3NT	All Pass	

North knew his partner had a very good hand, but with so much in clubs it was tough to go beyond 3NT. East led the nine of clubs and declarer won with dummy's ten, cashed the top clubs and claimed eleven tricks, +460 but 12 IMPs to Monaco.

Board 13. Dealer North. All Vul.

♠ A Q 8 7 6 ♥ 10 7 5 4 ♦ – ♣ A Q 9 7	<table style="border: 1px solid black; width: 80px; height: 80px; margin: auto;"> <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 10 9 2 ♥ – ♦ 10 8 7 6 ♣ K 6 5 4 3
N					
W E					
S					
	♠ K 5 3 ♥ A Q 3 ♦ A K Q J 9 5 2 ♣ –				

Open Room

West	North	East	South
King	Fantoni	Black	Nunes
	Pass	Pass	1♦*
Dble	1♥	1♠	Dble*
2♠	3♥	Pass	4♥
4♠	4NT	Pass	5♦
5♠	Pass	Pass	6♦
6♠	Pass	Pass	Dble
All Pass			

1♦ 14+ (good 12/13) 4+ diamonds

I'm not sure about the meaning of South's first double - it might have shown heart support.

Thereafter both sides bid a lot.



If West had passed 6♦ East would have doubled for a heart lead, but as you will read elsewhere that is no guarantee that the slam will be defeated.

South led the ace of diamonds and declarer ruffed in dummy, ruffed a heart with the nine of spades and played a club. South did not make the mistake of ruffing (that allows 6♠ to make!) and discarded the ace of hearts. Declarer won with dummy's queen, ruffed a heart with the two of spades and played a club. Playing safe, South pitched the two of diamonds and declarer won with dummy's ace, and ruffed a heart with the jack of spades. South overruffed and returned a trump. Declarer won with dummy's ace and the defenders had a heart and club to come, two down, -500.

Declarer missed a neat possibility.

If he wins the spade exit in hand he can play a diamond, throwing a club from dummy. South wins and exits with a spade, but declarer wins in dummy and cashes two more trumps, squeezing North in hearts and clubs for one down.

Closed Room

West	North	East	South
Helgemo	Hallberg	Helness	Bertheau
	2♦*	Pass	2NT*
Pass	3♦	Pass	6♥
?			
2♦	Multi		
2NT	Relay		
3♦	Minimum, hearts		

N/S can make 6♥ but only if South is declarer.

When I presented the auction up to the point where South had bid 6♥ to my colleagues, to a man (and woman) they said they would not double and were thinking about what to lead.

Now came one of the most remarkable (and courageous) bids you will ever see - indeed, I am almost at a loss to find the words to describe it.

The bid of the century perhaps?

Or the bid heard round the world?

This is how the auction concluded:

6♠!! Dble All Pass

North led the nine of hearts and declarer ruffed and played a club, winning with the queen when South pitched a diamond. He ruffed a heart and played another club, putting in the nine when South threw the ace of hearts. North won with the ten and made the slight mistake of returning a diamond. Declarer ruffed and ruffed a heart and although South could overruff that was the last trick for the defence, one down and 7 IMPs for Monaco.

It is unusual for a single bid to win an award, but it is not without precedent so Geir's stupendous effort must surely be a candidate for 2015.

There goes Geir Helgemo, the best there ever was.