

What's On



In these pictures taken on Aug 22, 2017, people ski and snowboard at the Wanda Harbin Ice and Snow Park in Harbin. (AFP)

'A 'hip' new pastime'

Chinese skiers cool off at indoor ski park

HARBIN, China, Sept 18, (AFP): It was a hot summer afternoon in Harbin and tourists strolled cobblestone streets with the Chinese city's famous milk popsicles in hand. But indoors, it was perfect weather for skiing.

At the city's new Ice and Snow Park, chilly winds blew snowflakes around skiers zipping down the manmade slopes of the world's largest indoor ski park, a potent symbol of China's ambitions to turn itself into a winter sports powerhouse ahead of the 2022 Winter Olympics in Beijing.

Kept at a chilly -5 degrees Celsius (41 Fahrenheit) by fans and an underground cooling system, the sprawling 80,000-square metre (861,000 square feet) facility boasts six runs, the longest stretching 500 metres (0.31 miles).

"Skiing here is just like skiing in a big refrigerator," ten-year-old Kane Li grinned beneath his neon goggles, who has his hopes pinned on competing at the games.

A student at a private ski academy in the capital, Kane and his fellow young Olympic aspirants used to spend their summers training in New Zealand, but the opening of Dalian Wanda Group's indoor ski park this summer means they can now stay closer to home.

"China's skiing is still not so great (compared to other countries)," Kane said, adding: "We must train hard every day. Train more."

Not long ago, skiing was considered a luxury activity in China, inaccessible to the average person.

Success

The country is currently home to roughly six million skiers, but President Xi Jinping hopes that number will rise to 300 million in the coming years.

China has had great success at the Summer Olympics, but its few Winter Olympic victories have been centred on speed skating. The country has won just six skiing medals – all in freestyle – including one gold.

There are currently about 200 ski resorts in China. Chinese officials are aiming to increase that number fivefold by 2030.

"We didn't have anywhere to ski when I was growing up," said Yi Li, the general manager of Wanda's indoor park.

The Beijing native first tried the sport 11 years ago while working at a ski resort in northern Hebei province's Zhangjiakou, which will host the Olympic alpine skiing events.

He picked up the sport quickly, becoming an instructor and even training in Switzerland. Now he says China is ready to make skiing a national pastime.

"Skiing is hip," Yi said. "From the apparel to the equipment, there's a lot of freedom."

He recalled that when he first discovered the sport, most Chinese people were unwilling to try it because the gear was expensive, and they needed a car to reach the mountains.

But after the country's economic reforms, people had more disposable income and more time to take vacations, he said. They bought cars and stopped viewing skiing as "dangerous."

Despite the fact that school has started, it's still ice cream season for Frog and Toad (and most of us)!



Yarmouk Storytime
Wednesday, Sept 20 at 4 pm
Yarmouk Cultural Centre

No registration is necessary.
We will start promptly at 4 pm, so please arrive a bit early.

A flyer of the event

There were about 40 people on Ice and Snow Park's slopes on a recent Tuesday. Some carved through the firm and "sticky" snow with ease, while others struggled to get their skis on. An agile snowboarder helped a stumbling skier to the bottom.

The slopes are equipped with a chairlift, a sledding area and a bunny hill, not to mention a ski lodge bedecked with faux wood.

For average visitors, the cost to ski for an entire day, including all rental equipment, is 488 yuan (\$74). The most popular package is a three-hour visit at 300 yuan (\$45).

The average disposable income in China was 23,821 yuan (\$3,619) last year.

According to Yi, 13 professional teams from across the country have also been coming to train in the mornings since the slopes opened.

contract bridge

By Steve Becker

Bidding quiz

You are the dealer and open One Diamond. Partner responds Three Diamonds (forcing). What would you bid now with each of the following four hands?

- ♠AQ6 ♥KJ4 ♦KQ732 ♣KJ
- ♠K8 ♥84 ♦A9863 ♣AJ105
- ♠K3 ♥1075 ♦AJ92 ♣KQ86
- ♠AQ8 ♥10 ♦J86542 ♣AK3

1. Four notrump. Partner will normally have 13 to 15 points in high cards and distribution, which puts you in the vicinity of the 33 points generally required to make 12 tricks. A small slam is virtually certain, and a grand slam is possible.

Blackwood is by far the best way of estimating how many tricks you can take. If partner shows two aces by bidding five hearts, you sign off at six diamonds. If he shows three aces by bidding five spades, you bid five notrump next, asking for kings. If he responds six diamonds, showing one king, you bid seven.

2. Four diamonds. After partner's forcing raise, the four-diamond bid shows no extra values. If partner next bids five diamonds, you pass.

But if partner evinces slam interest by cue-bidding four hearts or spades, you will next bid five clubs. This cannot be regarded as a strong bid, as you have already limited your resources by bidding four diamonds.

Tomorrow: Sitting in the driver's seat.

Over five clubs, the rest is up to partner.

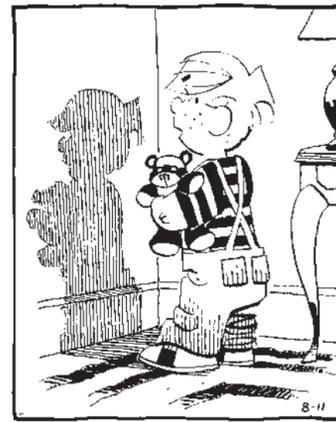
3. Three notrump. This is not a pleasant rebid, considering your heart holding, but it offers the best chance for game, and that is the main consideration.

Five diamonds could be a better contract, but there is no sensible way of finding out. If you were to bid four clubs, you would go past three notrump. Your 4-4-3-2 distribution strongly suggests notrump despite the danger in hearts. If partner passes three notrump, the odds strongly favor making it.

4. Four clubs. With your excellent controls in the side suits, a slam is possible despite your minimum high-card values. Partner may have something like ♠72 ♥AJ4 ♦AK93 ♣Q875, which would give you roughly a 90 percent chance for six.

If partner's response to four clubs is four diamonds, you are entitled to make another slam try by bidding four spades. If partner then bids five diamonds, declining both of your invitations, you would have to respect his wishes and throw in the towel.

Note that Blackwood is not employed here. Learning whether partner has one or two aces does not resolve the question of whether there will be a good play for 12 tricks.



"HMMM...MAYBE I SHOULD TRY BEHAVIN'?"

click

Alcoholics Anonymous: If you know someone who can't stop drinking and would like to help them please check us out and we promise to try to help at www.aarabia.org. There are no fees. This is a genuine public service.

Drinking problem?: Friends of Bill W. are available to help. Totally confidential. Email: rohsecretary@gmail.com

Narcotics Anonymous: NA can help with addiction problems. Totally confidential: 94087800 English/Arabic.

Continued on Page 20

NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD

- ACROSS**
- Doofus
 - Campus bigwig
 - Leave standing at the altar
 - Greek counterpart to Mars
 - "Tickle Me" doll
 - Walks in water up to one's ankles, say
 - Early radio transmitter
 - Download for a Kindle
 - Deep-frying need
 - "The Farmer in the ..."
 - Letter after "ar"
 - Apply gently, as cream
 - Part of "business," phonetically
 - "Raiders of the Lost Ark" star
- DOWN**
- 102, in ancient Rome
 - Common Market letters
 - A sensible sort
 - Like a sorry-looking dog
 - Tiny
 - Very thin, as clouds
 - How some ground balls are fielded
 - Longtime news inits.
 - "... whillikers!"
 - One-cent coin since 1909
 - Ballet footwear
 - Email address ending for a student
 - Busy bee in Apr.
 - Oil cartel
 - Useful item for finding a lost pet
 - Brief brawl

32 102, in ancient Rome

34 Common Market letters

35 A sensible sort

36 Like a sorry-looking dog

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40 Very thin, as clouds

41 How some ground balls are fielded

43 Longtime news inits.

45 "... whillikers!"

46 One-cent coin since 1909

49 Ballet footwear

50 Email address ending for a student

51 Busy bee in Apr.

54 Oil cartel

56 Useful item for finding a lost pet

58 Brief brawl

62 Common game in a school gym

64 Soothing succulents

65 U2's lead singer

66 ... brother with a birthright

67 Bad thing to blow ... or what each of the circled letters in this puzzle represents

68 Greek H's

69 Some whistle blowers

DOWN

- 1 Wash oneself
- 2 Stackable cookies
- 3 Citrus peels
- 4 Norway's capital
- 5 Announce
- 6 "Xanadu" band, for short
- 7 In the thick of
- 8 At least
- 9 The "one" in a one-two
- 10 Vow from a bride or groom
- 11 Sign between Cancer and Virgo
- 12 "Shame on you!"
- 15 "Ver-r-ry interesting!"
- 17 Elton John/Tim Rice Broadway musical
- 21 11-Down symbol
- 24 Prepare as tea

PUZZLE BY PAUL COULTER

- Dummy at a protest march
- Blade in a sporting match
- Alka-Seltzer sound
- Blue hues
- As required, after "if"
- Classic art subject
- Pursue, as in tag
- Rice dish
- Highest possible grade
- Geezer
- Trucker on a radio
- Never left the bench, say
- Inventor Whitney
- Craggy peak
- Letter after 22-Across
- Paternity identifier

Scratch pad

Conceptis Sudoku

The grid must be so completed that every row, column and 3x3 box has every digit from 1 to 9 inclusive

By Dave Green

			8					
	6			2				
7		5	9					1
	8	3	6	7				
1								2
	4	2	1	6				
9		7	2					3
	1			9				
			9					

Difficulty Level ★★★

Answer to yesterday's puzzle

1	4	5	2	6	9	8	3	7
6	8	9	4	3	7	5	2	1
2	3	7	8	5	1	4	9	6
5	7	8	3	1	6	9	4	2
4	1	3	9	7	2	6	5	8
9	6	2	5	8	4	7	1	3
3	9	4	7	2	8	1	6	5
7	5	6	1	4	3	2	8	9
8	2	1	6	9	5	3	7	4

Difficulty Level ★★★

Challenger

DIRECTIONS:

Fill each square with a number, one through nine. Horizontal squares should add to totals on right. Vertical squares should add to totals on bottom. Diagonal squares through center should add to total in upper and lower right.

THERE MAY BE MORE THAN ONE SOLUTION.

Today's Challenge
Time 7 Minutes
49 Seconds
Your Working Time ___ Minutes ___ Seconds

				28
8				19
			7	29
	8			26
		4		25
35	27	12	25	25

Yesterday's solution

				8
7	6	1	1	15
3	3	1	2	9
2	3	2	1	8
3	7	1	3	14
15	19	5	7	15

Word by Word

Own (نفسه) Nafseh

Every man is the architecture of his own fortunes. Kul emreyen yasnai qadaraha benafseh.

Numbers كل امرئ يصنع قدره بنفسه.

7661 Seven thousand six hundred sixty one

٧٦٦١ Sabat alaf wa seto maah wa wahed wa setoon.