

American team because of the foot-tapping incident involving our third pair. As the match wore on, it seemed more and more likely that we would lose. We were more than 70 IMPs down at the half-way point, but in the second half we really ground away at them. I personally played very, very well in that match and I'll always remember it as one of my best games.

In fact, I think I was playing some of the best bridge of my career in those mid-70s years. Another of my favorite hands occurred just before we went to Bermuda. I was playing with Belladonna in the 1975 Italian Open Teams, and we reached a fairly hopeless contract. The theme is one that comes up more often than you might think (and is a variation on the theme of Jeff Meckstroth's award-winning hand from the 1997 Bermuda Bowl).

	NORTH					
	♠ K 9 5					
	♥ K 6 4					
	♦ 5 4 3					
	♣ K Q 8 5					
WEST	<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <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	EAST	
N						
W E						
S						
♠ 7		♠ 4 3				
♥ Q J 9 3 2		♥ 10 8 7				
♦ A K J 9		♦ 10 7 2				
♣ 9 6 4		♣ A J 10 3 2				
	SOUTH					
	♠ A Q J 10 8 6 2					
	♥ A 5					
	♦ Q 8 6					
	♣ 7					

E-W vul., IMPS

WEST	NORTH <i>Giorgio</i>	EAST	SOUTH <i>Me</i>
pass	pass	pass	1♠
pass	2♣	pass	4♠
all pass			

West led the king of diamonds and switched to the queen of hearts. Since West had passed as dealer, and had already shown up with the ace-king of diamonds and the queen-jack of hearts, there was no doubt that East held the ace of clubs. Clearly, East would be able to get in with the ace of clubs to play a diamond through my queen before I could establish a discard on dummy's clubs.

My solution was to duck the queen of hearts in both hands — and quickly. Of course, West could have switched to a club at Trick 3, and beaten the contract by two, but is that really likely to happen? Not in reality. West, of course, imagined that his partner had the ace of hearts, so he continued the suit. I won the ace, drew trumps in two rounds ending in dummy, and pitched my club on the king of hearts. Now the ruffing finesse against the ace of clubs allowed me to dispose of a diamond loser. All I lost was two diamonds and one heart.

My worst memory is actually of the Par Contest in Lille in 1998. I got very frustrated because I just could not see the solution to one of the hands. In the end, I spent so long on that hand that I ran out of time on the last one of the three hands for that session. I got very emotional and very bad-tempered with myself. When the next session got under way, I started hitting the keyboard before I had thought the hand through properly. Needless to say, that wasn't right either!

Systems

The Blue Club system that we played years ago just is not good enough for top-level play today. Lea du Pont and I have improved on it a lot, and it's now ten times better than the old one. The old system was based on controls, and it has taken me many years to realize that was wrong. The distribution is the most important thing and you should gear your bidding to concentrate on that first. When we played with C. C. Wei and the Precision Team, we developed Super Precision. That was a fairly good system, but still at that time we were focusing too much on controls and not enough on the shape of the hands. First it should be distribution, and only when you know enough about partner's shape should you worry about controls.

In pairs competitions, you can effectively forget all about slam bidding. You need to concentrate on declarer play and defense — that is where most of the points are lost. At teams, you need to have more system, particularly for competitive bidding. More than 70% of the auctions nowadays are competitive, and you have to know what you are doing. Even when we were winning regularly, our slam bidding was not good enough. We didn't study enough. You should never stop studying, no matter how many times you win. There are always new things you can learn, and ways for you to improve your performance. I accept that there are those people who love to study, and those who hate it. I do not love to study, but of course it is much easier when you create the system yourself. In my early days though, I had to learn what someone else had created. I forced myself to do it because I wanted to be a winner.

I have done some coaching since my retirement from serious bridge, particularly with the Italian Juniors. I remember that the first thing I told them was



to make a list of all the
and to define what each
are and you can work o
Their reaction was that
Part of my system file w
sible sequence. It is a
become the best.

I have enjoyed my t
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team, will do well but h
not remember it, or he
the kind of player who
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Of course, I would like
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even better. Bidding fa
better ways to use the l
er, you can always find