

FOR LOVE OR MONEY

The Life of a Bridge Journalist



MARK HORTON ▶ BRIAN SENIOR

FOREWORD BY OMAR SHARIF

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F O R E W O R D



*F*or some, bridge is an all-consuming passion; to be pursued in the same way that others pursue beautiful women and wealth.

Bridge has always been one of my greatest interests, and in this book, you can share in the thrill of the chase as the authors move from country to country in search of new adventures, both at the table and away from it. Mark Horton and Brian Senior are not only established international players with a wealth of victories behind them, they are also recognized as two of Europe's leading bridge journalists. In their continuing work as Bulletin Editors for the World Bridge Federation and the European Bridge League, they are dedicated to providing bridge players all over the world with up-to-the-minute news and stories about all the major championships.

Share in their triumphs and disasters, smile at their remarkable stories, and learn from the wealth of instructive deals within these pages. When you have finished reading this book, I am sure you will want to share in their motto, 'Have cards, will travel.'

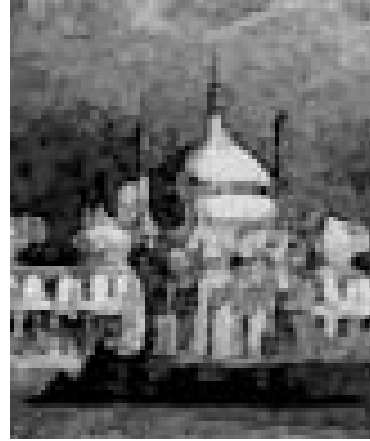
Omar Sharif
Paris, April 2000

FOR LOVE OR MONEY

The Life of a Bridge Journalist



Brighton Belles – Mark



‘Have you met the Bulgarian women yet?’ An innocent enough question from John Williams, the Secretary of the English Bridge Union, but it was to have far-reaching consequences. It was posed during the Brighton Congress, the UK’s largest annual bridge event, in 1991. Every year, a foreign team is invited to play an exhibition match and this year it was Bulgaria. They were providing much-needed practice for the British Women’s team in the build-up to the World Championships that were to be staged later that year in Japan. We were there as Captain (Mark) and Coach (Brian) of the British team. It has to be admitted that our qualifications were obscure, but I had captained the British Juniors to victory in the Alps Cup earlier that year (a job I still think I only got so my (now ex-) wife could pursue an affair with one of the selectors!) and Brian was an acknowledged expert on bidding. Well, his bidding anyway.

We met them. We shook hands, they wandered off and we let out a collective ‘wow’! Without doubt, this was the best-looking team we had ever seen. Naturally, Brian and I immediately declared an interest, fortunately not in the same person! They were only staying a week, not



Marietta



Nevena

very long to get acquainted. Giles Foster, cameraman extraordinaire, suggested we all go to a Chinese restaurant and so we collected both teams and off we went.

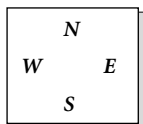
As Brian got on with the serious business of ordering the food, I arranged for two of the Bulgarians to participate in a bidding challenge for *International Popular Bridge Monthly*. We would do it over coffee the next morning.

I sent flowers to the hotel that morning — ‘to Brighton your room’ — and after the traditional delay that accompanies the preparation of all young ladies, Nevena and Marietta appeared.

Because of the short notice involved, I had decided to use eight hands that I had already bid with my regular partner, Richard Winter, over the previous weekend. The ‘contest’ was only decided on the final deal:

Dealer West
Both Vul.

♠ A Q 10 8 3 2
♥ A Q 8 2
♦ A
♣ A 6



♠ K 4
♥ K J 4 3
♦ K 7 3
♣ Q J 8 7

WEST	NORTH Marietta	EAST	SOUTH Nevena
3♦	dbl	pass	4♦
pass	5♦	pass	5♥
pass	7♥	all pass	

After the takeout double, four diamonds promised 11+ points and two four-card suits. The 5♦ bid showed 18+ and Nevena took the view that Marietta was likely to hold both major-suit kings.

Our auction:

WEST	NORTH Richard	EAST	SOUTH Mark
3♦	4♦	pass	4♥
all pass			

The four diamond bid could have been based on a much weaker two-suiter but we both might have done more.

Although Richard and I lost this particular encounter, the British women proved to be too strong for the Bulgarians, but not before they gave us a few anxious moments. The rest of the week passed all too quickly and we were soon saying our farewells as the girls left for Heathrow. A little later, Brian and I started our journey back to Nottingham. Mysteriously, our route took us via a large airport outside London – I think we both had the same idea at the same moment.

Clearly, exciting times lay ahead but soon some serious business would be at hand. Could we possibly guide our team to a World Championship?

Land of the Rising Sun – Mark



Yokohama, Japan proved to be a magnificent venue for the 1991 World Championships. The Japan Contract Bridge League spared no expense to ensure the comfort of the players, and the InterContinental Grand Hotel proved to be an outstanding venue. I was particularly impressed by the huge television set that offered all programs in either English or Japanese. I remember watching a James Bond movie in the latter — I can't say I noticed much difference!

The JCBL had invited Omar Sharif to the Championships and during his visit our hosts took us on a boat trip of Yokohama's magnificent harbor. The weather was poor, the sea was rough and Omar is not at home on the ocean (despite his appearance as the captain of a cruise liner in the film *Juggernaut*). Although he must have been feeling uncomfortable, he showed his acting skills in spades and gave no indication of his unease to the vast army of media people who accompanied him at every juncture.

The British Women's team for this event had an unusual look to it — no Sandra Landy, Sally Horton (now Sally Brock), Nicola Smith or Pat

Davies. This time Vi Mitchell-Jane Preddy, Jill Casey-Kay Preddy and Liz McGowan-Sandra Penfold were flying the flag. They were given little chance by the British bridge press but Brian and I felt we could turn them into an effective fighting unit. They proved to be the most cohesive and committed team I have ever captained and I still recall the event with pleasure.

They made a slow start in the Round Robin however, and were outside the qualifying positions at the end of the first half. Undaunted, we told them that they had no teams ahead of them that they could not beat, and when they made the forgivable mistake of believing us, they breezed through the second half and earned a quarterfinal slot against USA II. There were several players competing here who would win a world championship eventually. Along with her teammates, Liz McGowan displayed the form that would rank her amongst them. The quarterfinal encounter between Austria and Germany featured twelve players of whom nearly all were destined to achieve the highest status.

I approached the German team after they had scored up their final match at the end of the qualifying round — knowing they had just managed to qualify. My idea was to invite one of them to the party that Brian and I had decided to give to celebrate our team's qualification. I boldly went up to the group and popped the question.

'Where is it?' she enquired.

'1708,' I explained.

'What is 1708?' she enquired.

'Our room,' I replied.

That evening almost everyone came to the party — except the pretty German girl! The following morning at breakfast her teammates, doubtless consumed by curiosity, asked her what had happened the previous night.

'Oh,' she said, 'I didn't go'.



Omar also notices pretty girls!

‘Why not?’ they enquired.

‘I forgot the room number’.

They collectively informed her — ‘It was 1708!’

There are many wonderful stories to report from Yokohama. This hand from the Round Robin obviously made quite an impression on Edgar Kaplan since he mentioned it in his *Bridge World* report on the Bermuda Bowl.

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

The outstanding German pairing of Sabine Auken and Daniela von Arnim had overbid the North-South cards to the dubious contract of six spades. West gave nothing away with her opening lead of the five of trumps.

After winning the trump lead in hand with the nine, Sabine continued with the king of spades. She then cashed the ace and king of clubs. West, apparently not anxious to be the heroine of this particular story, kept hold of the queen of clubs. Now Sabine played three rounds of hearts, ruffing her last one in dummy. She exited with a club and West had to win and play a diamond. Declarer had not traveled this far to go wrong now and Sabine went up with dummy’s queen. She drew the outstanding trump with dummy’s ace and was able to discard her losing diamond on the thirteenth club.

As it happened, the match between Germany and Austria turned out to be one of the most sensational in the history of the Venice Cup. Germany was in tremendous form for five of the six sets, winning them 48-45, 36-20, 51-33, 56-37 and 37-8. That adds up to a healthy 85-IMP advantage, more than enough to win any contest. However, in a truly



Daniela von Arnim

Sabine Auken

amazing second set, Austria outscored Germany 105-10(!) to steal the match and move on to the semifinal.

Great Britain's quarterfinal against USA II was a nail-biting affair. We won the first of the six sets 38-22 but lost the next two 16-26 and 35-52 to trail 91-100. Our team was not worried however, and they took the next set 44-33 to lead 133-127. Telegrams were starting to arrive from the UK as the powers-that-be realized something good might be in the offing. In the fifth and final set of the day, we went down 23-49 to leave the overnight score at 156-176.

There were just sixteen boards to go and Brian and I wore out the carpet trying to decide who would be in the lineup. All our players had been outstanding, but eventually I had to make a choice: Vi and Jane would join me to watch the action on VuGraph. They were the first to tell me that I had made the right decision.

Watching is always more difficult than playing when you have an interest in the result. The boards themselves were not very exciting but we were steadily reducing the deficit. Then, near the end, one of the Americans appeared to make a dreadful error and it seemed clear that we had won. I let out a whoop and started to make my way down to find the players. Just as I was about to leave the VuGraph theatre, the commentator announced a correction and the situation was no longer clear. We scored up and had won the set 24-9. Not quite enough. At

this moment Liz McGowan and Sandra Penfold started talking about the boards and realized that they had been the victims of one of the common problems that can arise when screens are in use, that of having different explanations as to the meaning of a bid on each side of the screen.

This was the board in question:

Dealer East Both Vul.	♠ 9 ♥ A 9 3 ♦ Q 10 7 4 2 ♣ A J 5 3											
♠ A Q 10 6 4 ♥ 6 2 ♦ A 9 8 ♣ Q 9 2	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 100px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>	N			W		E		S		♠ J 5 2 ♥ K 5 4 ♦ K J 5 3 ♣ K 8 6	
N												
W		E										
	S											
	♠ K 8 7 3 ♥ Q J 10 8 7 ♦ 6 ♣ 10 7 4											

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
Penfold	Deas	McGowan	Cohen
1♠	dbl	pass	pass
all pass		redbl	3♥

In the Closed Room, the American East-West pair had played in two spades and a friendly defense helped them to record eleven tricks for plus 200. In the Open Room, the defense to three hearts was not optimal. West led a trump and East won with the king and returned a trump. Declarer won in hand and advanced the ten of clubs. When West failed to cover it she was able to escape for two down, minus 200 and a flat board.

South had alerted her three heart bid and explained to West that it tended to be preemptive. North had not alerted, but when asked for an explanation replied that the partnership had no agreement. Liz McGowan's problem was that she and Sandra played very light openings third in hand, a fact that was well documented on their convention card. By way of example, this particular West hand could have been opened without the ace of diamonds. If she had known that South's bid had a tendency to be preemptive she would have been reasonably sure that all

her kings were working and it would have been less likely that partner had a sub-standard opening. Add to that the fact that a double would almost certainly attract a trump lead, it then seemed reasonable to suppose that East would not go quietly.

When these facts were presented to the chief tournament director Bill Schoder, the American pair was doubtlessly confused and initially denied that they had given different explanations. Luckily, they had written their answers down and the notepads were still on the table. Once the facts had been established, he ruled there had been an infraction — the different explanations of the same bid — and that East might have been affected. He adjusted the score to three hearts doubled down two, minus 500. That gave us 7 IMPs and now we had won by 2 IMPs. Inevitably, USA II appealed.

Because the appeal involved USA and Great Britain, three regular members of the committee were unable to serve — Bobby Wolff, Billy Eisenberg and Grattan Endicott. The American NPC, Kathy Wei, made an impassioned plea to the Committee that it would be awful if her team were to lose on a technicality. On the advice of Grattan, I kept my council — after all, the facts surely spoke for themselves. It seemed clear to take some action with the East hand; I knew for instance, that after an identical auction, Great Britain's Graham Kirby had bid 3NT and made it. In due course, a decision was announced. Yes, there had been an infraction but East had not been damaged. The score reverted to three hearts undoubled minus two; USA II was fined 3 IMPs for the infraction. I later discovered the voting was 4-3.

This was a bitter pill to swallow and, although I myself have served on many appeal committees since, it is decisions like this that make me feel the process is flawed. It would be far better to let the director be the sole arbiter, saving everyone a lot of time and money. (We do not agree on this. In my view, very few directors are sufficiently good players to make judgement decisions at this level of the game. While appeals committees get some decisions wrong, I would still have more confidence in them than in the director — *Brian*.)

USA II won their next two matches easily to claim the Venice Cup. I resolved that if I got the job again I would make sure we got a medal. It turned out that I didn't have to wait long.