

Forewords by Michael Rosenberg and Zia Mahmood

PLAYING



WITH THE



BRIDGE



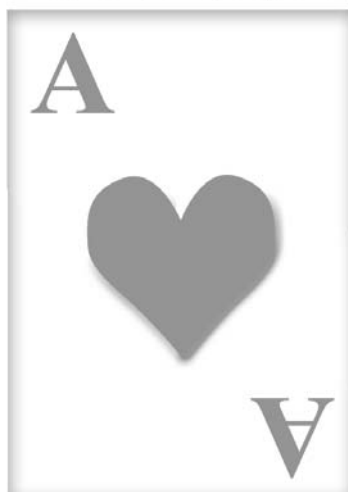
LEGENDS



BARNET SHENKIN

PLAYING WITH THE BRIDGE LEGENDS

BARNET SHENKIN



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Master Point Press

331 Douglas Ave

Toronto, Ontario, Canada

M5M 1H2

(416) 781-0351

Internet: www.masterpointpress.com

www.masteringbridge.com

www.ebooksbridge.com

www.bridgeblogging.com

Email: info@bridgeblogging.com

Canadian Cataloguing in Publication Data

Shenkin, Barnet, 1950-

Playing with the bridge legends

ISBN 978-1-55494-073-8

1. Shenkin, Barnet, 1950- I Title. Bridge players-Biography

GV1282.26 S53A3 2000 795. 41'.5 092 C00-931458-X

Cover design : Olena S. Sullivan

Editor: Ray Lee

Interior formatting and copyediting: Deanna Bourassa

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Foreword by Zia Mahmood

I'm not sure why, but fate has fixed it that I have spent more time discussing bridge with people from Glasgow, Scotland than any other place on earth!

High amongst them are my long-standing (he might say suffering) bridge partner, Michael Rosenberg, and equally long-standing friend, Barnet Shenkin.

I first met Barnet when he was a 'normal' person, a successful businessman with a bridge habit. I would like to think I could take part of the credit for helping him to see the light and convert to being a full-time bridge-bum who left the friendly pastures of Scotland for the savage fields of bridge at the top in America.

As famous for his deep reveries at the table at a crucial moment as for the thoroughness and accuracy of his post-hand analysis, what attracts me about Barnet (and will you here) is his undisguised enthusiasm and passion for the game.

As well as revealing a few of my secrets this book is packed with humorous stories and great hands from the world's best — all in all ideal entertainment for lovers of the expert game.

Zia Mahmood

Foreword by Michael Rosenberg

I have hundreds of memories (mostly good ones) of my partnership with Barnet. Here are a few of them.

In 1974 we played in the Monte Carlo tournament, both pairs and teams. We played on a team with Rob Sheehan and Andrew Thompson. After working our way through a difficult round-robin, we reached the quarterfinals where we played a strong American team that included Al Roth and the late Johnny Crawford. We beat them and went on to play the Blue Team — Avarelli, Belladonna, Forquet and Garozzo. These men were legends to me, and to Barnet also, although he was more experienced than I. We were leading them at the half, but in the end they proved too good for us. Still, it was a thrill just to play them.

In 1975, we represented Great Britain in the Common Market Championships in Vittel. We played short matches (about ten boards) against each country. I remember playing against one of the strongest teams (I think France, but it may have been Italy). After about six hands we had yet to register a plus score, although we had done nothing wrong. Barnet opened a 12-14 notrump vulnerable, and I had a fair 11-count. I decided to pass to try and go plus. Unfortunately, the opponents took eight tricks for -200 (nothing Barnet could do about it). We still hadn't gone plus going into the last deal and we were dealt a hand in the slam zone. We bid gingerly to 6NT and Barnet made a tough hand (which, sadly, I don't recall). Incidentally, the boards were all flat except the slam and one partscore board, so we won the match.

In the Gold Cup final in about 1976 we were playing against the legendary John Collings. Going into the last eight-board segment we had a comfortable lead of more than 40 IMPs. On the first hand the bidding went pass, pass, 1♠ by Collings. Barnet held a strong hand

with five spades and five diamonds. He passed, and it went 3♠ (invitational) pass, pass back to Barnet. Barnet gave Collings a glance. Obviously, if John, who was famous for his 'operations', passed an invitation at this stage in the match, he *must* be psyching. So Barnet doubled. But Collings had his bid — a four-card suit and a twelve-count. In a nail-biting hand, the contract hung in the balance and, at one point, could have been made. But in the end, Collings misguessed and went down one. The match was over.

We represented Great Britain in the European Championships in Copenhagen shortly after that. We were playing with bidding boxes, which were then unfamiliar to me. On one hand it went 'pass' on my right and I opened a 12-14 notrump. Then I looked up a little, and saw the bidding had actually gone 1♦, pass to me! Barnet bid 3♣, and I kept making forcing bids until we reached 6♦. After the auction, Barnet was shaking his head in bewilderment, but he did not allow the unusual circumstances to deflect his concentration. Instead, he played a great hand and made it on a trump coup (see page 26).

Finally, I'd like to say that if Barnet ever tells you 'Four spades is makable' or 'Three notrump can be defeated', I advise you not to argue. In all my years of encountering analysis by players, Barnet has by far the best track record. I pride myself on being an expert analyst, but I know of no-one more accurate than Barnet.

Michael Rosenberg

Author's foreword

The game of bridge and its characters have proved to be a constant fascination to me for some thirty years or more. There has been nothing like the thrill of playing with or against the world's best players, amongst whom I include my wonderful wife Mags, as she and I have walked the tenuous tightrope of bridge partnership and lived to tell the tale.

As well as playing with Mags, I have also enjoyed playing the occasional tournament with my father, who played international bridge before I was born, and my eleven-year-old son Daniel.

The secret to good bridge results is having a good partner and I have been most fortunate to have played with an excellent group of partners on both sides of the Atlantic. This book tells the many stories of my most exciting or amusing bridge experiences; some of them are fond memories but many are disasters. As well, there are stories about the bridge elite of today, as well as the bridge characters of days gone by.

Try the problem hands, all of which actually occurred in tournaments, or if you're not feeling energetic, just read the accounts of the championships they come from. This is not an instructional bridge book, it is meant to be entertaining and occasionally amusing; I hope it works for you, as I certainly had a good time writing it.

I would like to thank those people who took the time to share their stories with me. I would also like to thank my wife and my family for their support and the friends who supported us in our move across the Atlantic.

Barnet Shenkin

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**PLAYING
WITH THE
BRIDGE
LEGENDS**

The Pursuit of Happiness



Dreamland

I was twenty-four years old. Across the table from me, studying his cards, sat Michael Rosenberg — himself barely twenty. On my left sat Italy's Pietro Forquet, fifteen times a world champion and the man many considered the best player of his era. On my right was Forquet's fellow-countryman Walter Avarelli, a mere twelve-time world champion. The room in which we sat was part of the palatial Monte Carlo casino, the favorite playground of the European aristocracy. Our teammates, London experts Rob Sheehan and Andrew Thomson faced perhaps an even more daunting challenge in their opponents: Giorgio Belladonna and Benito Garozzo. The former owned sixteen world titles, having played on every winning Italian team since the world began. Garozzo owned a mere thirteen, but some thought he might be the best player of all time.

This was the quarterfinal of a knockout teams tournament carrying a big money prize — more than \$30,000 to the winners. The year was 1974 and at that time these four players were considered unbeatable — yet after eight boards we led by 31 to 0. A few partscore swings

had gone our way and Belladonna-Garozzo had gone down in a slam. Could this be happening? Was it all a dream? Spectators began to gather as news filtered through that the 'invincibles' were in trouble.

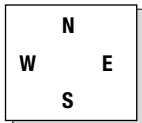
Tension mounted as the room began to fill with kibitzers. The first few boards of the second set were even, and then on Board 12 Avarelli had to play this 3NT contract as South:

Forquet

♠ K J 5 4
♥ K 6
♦ J 8 6 5
♣ Q 10 6

Barnet

♠ 9 8 6 3 2
♥ 7 5 2
♦ A K
♣ K 7 2



Michael

♠ A 7
♥ J 10 8 4 3
♦ 7 3
♣ J 9 5 3

Avarelli

♠ Q 10
♥ A Q 9
♦ Q 10 9 4 2
♣ A 8 4

The ♥5 was led to the ten and ace, and Avarelli led a diamond to my king. Had I played a second heart at that point, he would have had to guess to knock out the ♠A before leading a second diamond. However, as I was uncertain about the position in the red suits, I decided to switch to clubs and tried the effect of the king. Declarer won in hand, and if he had played a second diamond at that point, a second club would have defeated the contract. However, Avarelli chose to play a spade, taking out Michael's entry, and that was that. Perhaps a low club switch by me instead of the king would have been more successful. Assuming declarer ducked, Michael's nine would have forced the ace; now a second low club after I had won the ♦K would have given declarer a nasty guess. As it was, Avarelli's decision to play spades ahead of diamonds put the Italians on the board, and by half-time the gap had narrowed to 34-27.

The World Champions now changed their lineup with Forquet-Garozzo playing against Sheehan-Thompson, while we faced Belladonna-Avarelli. On Board 17 it was Michael's turn to play 3NT on the hand on the right.

Avarelli led the ♦K. Michael won the second round of diamonds, and when he continued with five rounds of clubs, Avarelli threw three spades and a heart before he was squeezed into parting with a diamond. Declarer now simply conceded a spade for his contract. In the other room, Forquet went down on the same defense after misreading the diamond position. We gained 12 IMPs on this deal, and after Board 22 led the match by 53-28.

<p>♠ A 10 6 2 ♥ Q 10 8 6 ♦ K Q J 10 2 ♣ —</p>	<p>♠ Q 9 8 7 3 ♥ 5 3 ♦ 9 7 ♣ A Q 8 5</p>	<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center;"> <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		<p>♠ J 5 ♥ 9 7 2 ♦ 8 6 4 3 ♣ 6 4 3 2</p>
	N											
W		E										
	S											
<p>♠ K 4 ♥ A K J 4 ♦ A 5 ♣ K J 10 9 7</p>												
<p>West Avarelli</p>	<p>North Barnet</p>	<p>East Belladonna</p>	<p>South Michael</p>									
<p>dbl pass</p>	<p>1♠ 3♣</p>	<p>pass pass</p>	<p>1♣ 2♥ 3NT</p>									

What is it like to play with Zia? What makes Rodwell-Meckstroth the best pair in the world? Why are the Polish experts everyone's least favorite opponents? The answers to these and many other bridge questions can be found in these pages. Since winning the 1976 *Sunday Times* Pairs in his early twenties with an even younger Michael Rosenberg, Barnet Shenkin has had the chance to play with and against most of the world's best players. Indeed, he knows most of them personally, and few bridge writers can match his insights into their successes. By recounting his own bridge career to date, with tales of triumph and disaster from world championships to big-money rubber bridge, the author puts you at the table with the greatest players of our time, and lets you find out exactly how it feels to *play with the bridge legends.*



While masquerading for almost thirty years as a rug importer, **BARNET SHENKIN** was in real life one of Scotland's most successful bridge players. Playing with six different partners, he represented Scotland in the Camrose Trophy almost fifty times over three decades, winning on six occasions. He also represented Great Britain in more than 200 matches in major championships with four different partners. His bridge successes include seven Scottish Cups (the premier event in Scotland), three Gold Cups (Britain's most prestigious event), two Portland Pairs (the Mixed Championship of Britain) and two *Sunday Times* Invitationals (at the time, the world's foremost invitational pairs event). He moved to the USA with his wife Maggie in 1998 and has since won a North American championship title. He writes occasionally for various bridge magazines.



MASTER POINT PRESS

ISBN 1-894154-21-5