

# The Bermuda Incident

The annual Bermuda Bowl world championship saw Italy and the United States playing in the 1975 final. There, American reporter Bruce Keidan would uncover one of the most infamous cheating scandals ever.

While watching one of the Italian pairs, Gianfranco Facchini and Sergio Zucchelli, Keidan noticed unusual foot actions between the two. The reporter found the players tapping each other's feet under the table in an apparent attempt to relay information about their hands. Cheating is of course illegal and normally grounds for expulsion from any bridge organization. Keidan's discovery, which was confirmed by several witnesses, was eventually presented to the presiding authorities of the event, who "severely reprimanded" Facchini and Zucchelli for their activity but allowed the players to continue competing in the event. Ironically, although the Italians were allowed to stay, the Bermuda Bowl authorities placed blocks underneath the tables to prevent any further foot contact.

American captain Alfred Sheinwold was angered by the Solomonian decision and stated that his team would resign from the match. Only by threats made to Sheinwold by the United States' governing body, the American Contract Bridge League, was his team coerced into finishing the event. (The ACBL did not want a huge public embarrassment that refusing to play would cause.) Italy won the event, 215 - 189 (International Match Points). By all accounts, Facchini and Zucchelli quickly faded from the international bridge circuit thereafter.

# The Buenos Aires Affair

The Bermuda Bowl world championship was held in 1965 in Buenos Aires, site of the infamous finger-signaling scandal. British experts Terence Reese and Boris Schapiro were accused by American players B. Jay Becker and Dorothy Hayden (now Truscott) of holding their cards with different numbers of fingers in accordance with the number of hearts they held. When the allegations leaked out during the event, British captain Ralph Swimer forfeited all his team's matches and withdrew Great Britain from the competition. The degree of correlation between fingers and hearts was very high; however, it is debatable whether or not Reese-Schapiro benefited from the alleged exchange of information. Those who sided with the players argued the latter, suggesting that it was improbable the British pair was cheating if it never gained points on the deals in question.

The British Bridge League eventually found Reese and Schapiro innocent of cheating; however, the World Bridge Federation found them guilty and banned them from WBF events for three years. Bridge writer Alan Truscott wrote a book about the affair entitled *The Great Bridge Scandal*, while Terence Reese wrote his own account, *Story of an Accusation*.

# The Houston Affair

As experienced tournament players may know, the United States uses a playoff system to determine which team gets to play in the annual world championship. These team trials, as they are known, ended scandalously in 1977 when two players, Larry Cohen\* and Richard Katz, abruptly quit in the middle of the final. At the time, event officials were investigating rumors that Katz-Cohen were transmitting information illegally. Before any formal accusations were made, however, Katz and Cohen resigned from their team, which then forfeited due to a lack of players.

But not only did Katz and Cohen quit their team and the event, they resigned their memberships in the American Contract Bridge League, the national body in charge of the team trials. Soon afterward, Katz and Cohen filed a \$44 million lawsuit against the ACBL and three tournament officials for defamation of character, false allegations of misconduct, and forced resignation from the League. The whole affair managed to get settled in court, where the ACBL agreed to readmit Katz and Cohen, who promised in turn to not play with each other again. Monetary compensation was not made to the pair.

\*Not the Larry Cohen famous in tournament bridge circles for his book, *The Law of Total Tricks*.