



EUROPEAN BRIDGE LEAGUE

NBO Seminar, Turin October 2002

A MOST PROFITABLE MEETING

Interview with Gianarrigo Rona

14th October 2002

The second NBO Officers' Seminar and first Teaching Seminar for officers of the national European Federations were held by the EBL in the modern venue of Telecittà, in San Giusto Canavese near Turin in Italy. The European Bridge League, while having plans and common objectives shared by the 44 affiliated countries, in recent years has become an increasingly more complex structure managerially. The inclusion of the various federations resulting from the break-up of the Soviet Union has also contributed to the diversity of the federations with very different realities and requirements. The European bridge arena today is very varied and the difficulty faced is not losing sight of the necessities and problems of each single country.

After the successful first seminar in Viserbella in 2000, EBL President, Gianarrigo Rona, planned the second seminar programme and content bearing in mind the diversity of the European Federations.

We spoke to Gianarrigo Rona about the objectives and results of this important initiative.

Due to the different situations of the NBOs we also had to change the work programmes and aims. The first seminar was of a more general type and its content was largely informational. With a series of presentations on a variety of topics, information of a general nature was supplied, which in any case was useful for the activity of each single NBO. This year, however, we wished particularly to address the geo-political situation which for our sport in Europe, as for all other sports, has created a series of management difficulties.

How did you manage to address this requirement?

By creating two different sessions: the traditional informative type, where a series of competent speakers from various countries gave presentations on general subjects, and another where work groups composed of participants from similarly structured NBOs dealt with specific topics.

What were your objectives for the seminar?

In particular we of the EBL wished to gain appreciation of the requirements and problems of the various NBOs, to enable us to plan our future policies taking these into account. We also hoped to develop a direct synergy between the single national realities and the EBL, to prevent the EBL being seen as an abstract entity limiting itself only to co-ordinating general activities and without giving tangible signs of life to the various federations. The idea of the work groups was to create dialogue on specific matters, obviously with reciprocal benefits. By dividing participants into homogeneous groups, based on certain criteria such as organisation, development,

number of members, the real capacities of the NBOs, the participants were given the chance to speak their own language and face common problems.

Only 24 of the 44 member countries of the EBL were represented – a predictable or disappointing result?

I didn't expect much more since there are 7/8 states, the so-called 'enclaves', which having a federation run almost like a club, have little interest in such meetings. Then there are about another ten NBOs with serious financial problems who couldn't even afford the travel expenses (the EBL provided food and accommodation). Taking this into consideration, only two or three of the more important countries did not attend, so I'm satisfied with the attendance.

Your report 'The EBL Planet', dealing with your four years of presidency, focussed mainly on the restructuring of the championship cycle and on the big news for 2003: the first edition of the European Open Championships to take place in Menton next June. This is something completely new in Europe...

For some time the Federations had shown their desire for more calendar space to be able to carry out their own activities better, therefore a rescheduling of the championships and concentrating them into the second fortnight of June became inevitable. However, Menton now is a real challenge, and one I really want to do well in. We haven't invented something totally new since the format is similar to that of the Rosenblum. Having said this, it's important that it's a success to confirm that the choice was right. This championship is in fact the final realisation, after evaluation, of our long-held belief, that of dividing European activity into two areas: the first where national teams will continue to compete and the second, where there is open and unrestricted entry (obviously still with the authorisation of the federations), and where all good players normally excluded from the national teams can also compete together at high level. In addition to this, in Menton non-European pairs and teams can also play in open, women's, mixed and senior events. In my report I also mentioned the situation of the increasing number of weak federations for whom we are studying urgently a Solidarity Programme. Finally, I underlined the importance of Bridge at School, a subject which is fundamental for all the federations since it represents the only means of development for our sport.

José Damiani, recently re-elected President of the WBF, underlined the unfortunate crisis in bridge due to the lack of sponsors...

Unfortunately this isn't something new. Certainly it's something we have to deal with and overcome.

Is this the reason for the uncertainty over the venue for the next World Championships?

The main reason is due to the tragic international political and economic situation which provokes uncertainty and influences in a determining way both the choice of venue and the propensity of sponsors to give financial support to events. For now the only certainty is that the championships will be held in October and the four possible venues are: Bali, Warsaw, Mauritius and Mexico. In any case the WBF and its President are working very hard to find a solution to these problems, obviously paying particular attention to security. However there's good news concerning the next Olympiad in 2004 for which Istanbul has been confirmed as the venue.

One final comment on the seminar.

The standard of the speakers was undoubtedly high and the subdivision of participants into homogeneous work groups was certainly very successful, attendance, as I already mentioned, was satisfactory and the welcome and support from Telecittà Studios was perfect, so all in all a very positive experience.