

Foreword

Some time ago, during an interview, a journalist asked Lorenzo Lauria what would be his advice to a player wanting to improve his game.

About Lorenzo Lauria, people say that whatever kind of hand he is dealt, he had already played it because he has played so many hands and at a very high level, that it seems unrealistic that he could be dealt a hand that he has never seen before.

We are in fact talking not only of one of the strongest players in the world but also of a very experienced one.

Lorenzo's answer to the journalist question was quite immediate: "Study, study and study..."

It seems in fact that even Lorenzo himself, despite his long experience or may be just because of it, even nowadays together with his steady partner Alfredo Versace, keeps on studying, studying and studying... Differences between great players like Lorenzo and ordinary bridge club players are immense, but I think that such differences could be mainly narrowed down to two areas:

Vision. The extreme concentration shown at the green table, allows great players to collect a vast number of information from the bidding, pass included, the lead and the cards played. All these bits of information are assembled in a mosaic that makes possible, within seconds, for the players to see "through" opponents and partner cards and thus re-construct their hands.

In this field, I am afraid that it would be quite unlikely that a "normal" player could get closer to champions ability. Certainly one can improve, but this is not the area where the equation $\text{effort} = \text{results}$ could be maximised.

Be prepared. All great champions are meticulously prepared to handle all kind of hands in an optimal way. Although some solutions could be more brilliant than others, in this area Lorenzo's advice becomes the key factor for improvement.

If we start, together with our steady partner, to gradually add, day after day, a bidding solution for a given type of hand, starting with the more frequent ones, we shall slowly get closer to the champions level.

The larger the number of standardised bidding solutions we include in our bidding arsenal, the more frequent it will become their use.

Our results will improve, as the number of hands that we can handle in an optimal way will get larger and larger.

Although I am afraid that our progress will not scare Lorenzo, but, who

knows? Someone might go that far, certainly our results will constantly improve and we shall have more fun playing Bridge.