

## **The New Belladonna?**

When **Lorenzo Lauria** lifts the trophy on Saturday (and I'm surely not tempting fate in writing this so early) it will be his seventh European team title. That will bring him in to sole second place on the all-time leaderboard, behind that giant, Giorgio Belladonna, who won this same title ten times. But should we not rate his performance even higher than Giorgio's?

Let's make some comparisons:

- In the 28 years between Italy's first title (1951) and Belladonna's last (1979), there were 23 European championships. Italy won 12 of those (52%). Belladonna was not yet in the team in 1951, nor was he in 1975. In the 27 years between 1979 and now, there were only 14 championships, and Italy won 8 of them (57%). Lauria was not on the winning team in 1999.

- In the 17 years of Blue team dominance (1956-1973) Italy, with Belladonna, failed to win the championships 5 times (in 1961, 1963 to Great Britain, 1962, 1966, 1970 to France). In the recent 11 years of dominance (1995-2006) Italy, with Lauria, did not falter or even come close.

- Giorgio Belladonna earned silver medals in the Europeans in 1962, 1977 and 1983. Italy also won the silver in 1963 and 1974, Lorenzo Lauria participated in the silver of 1983.

- Between 1957 and 1969, Giorgio helped Italy to 10 consecutive Bermuda Bowl victories. He added 3 golds and 3 silvers between 1973 and 1983. Lorenzo joined Giorgio on the silver platform in 1979, 1983, and he "earned" a third silver in 2003, finally managing a Bermuda Bowl in 2005.

- Belladonna also won the Olympiad in 1964, 1968, 1972, with a silver in 1976. That makes a total of 16 world titles and 20 medals. Lauria played on 7 Italian Olympiad teams, winning that title twice. Lauria further played in the Rosenblum 4 times, winning that title in 1998 and 2002. That makes 5 World Championships and a total of 8 medals.

So, while Belladonna's record is impressive, it is probably more a reflection upon the relative dominance of the Europeans on the World scene in the 1960's, and of Italy's dominance within Europe around the turn of the millennium. And it certainly also shows that the current stars of the game need not be regarded any less than the stars of the golden age.

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