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MEET THE PLAYERS – PAUL MARSTON



Paul Marston who is closing in on sixty years old has been at the forefront of Australian Bridge since he arrived here from New Zealand in 1981.

Let me digress for just a moment. I certainly would be interested in any theories people have as to why so many top Australian players originated in New Zealand – Andy Braithwaite, Richard Brightling, Seamus Browne, Stephen Burgess, Ish Del'Monte, Bill Haughie, Stephen Lester, Paul Marston and Mike Prescott to name a few.

Anyway back to our personality. Paul is probably best known as the owner of The Grand Slam Bridge Centre in Sydney's classy Double Bay. However classifying Paul as a Bridge Club Owner would be denying him his just rewards.

Together with Ron Klinger, Paul is recognised as one of Australia's foremost teachers of bridge. I can only imagine how many people Paul has taught but certainly the ones I have come across speak glowingly of the experience.

But even combining Paul's skills as a bridge club owner and teacher would be unjust. Paul is also a prolific author of bridge books, general bridge articles and for his sins is the owner and editor of Australian Bridge. For a three year period he also worked hard on the OzBridge concept of better training for Australian players competing in international competition.

Occasionally people have commented to me on how well Paul Marston does out of all his enterprises – often when they see him driving in his Porsche. But let me assure you first hand that there would rarely be a week that Paul does not work more than eighty hours on his various ventures.

Like many players of his vintage he learned bridge at University. Certainly when I attended University in the late 1970's bridge was a popular game in the Student's Union and at people's homes between lectures and on weekends. Sadly this keen interest in bridge at Universities comes and goes depending on who is around to keep the fires burning.

Paul confesses to playing continuously over the past forty years during which he has had a number of partners including Stephen Burgess, George Kozakos, Paul Lavings and Mike Prescott. Most recently he has returned to playing with Stephen Burgess, a most feared partnership in the 1980s and 1990s. Part of their success could be attributed to their use of new and unusual methods – a “fert” 2♣ opening showing any remarkably weak hand as well as Moscito relay which was in its infancy in those times and against which most players had not yet developed a defence.

Paul is a quiet achiever as I found out when I researched his record which includes winning more than fifty national and international titles including six international pairs events in the last few years with four different partners, three PABF pairs, two NZ pairs and the Yeh Bros pairs.

As one would imagine Paul reads many books. His favourite author is Terrence Reese while his most recent read was *The Setting Trick: Practical Problems in Bridge Defence* by Melbourne bridge player and writer Ian McCance.

Paul plays rarely now but is induced to play in tournaments with high standing. He played in last week’s Yeh Bros Cup but regrettably had other commitments in respect of playing at this year’s Gold Coast Congress but he assures us he will be back next year.

It is always interesting to ask top players what they regard as their strengths – in Paul’s case it is bidding judgement. Paul has been strongly influenced in his bridge career by his partnership with Stephen Burgess and together with Stephen he is aiming to see if he can make the 2009 Bermuda Bowl and finally kick a bit of foreign ass ☺.

Any bridge tip from a player of Paul’s calibre is a must:

- play for the pleasure
- make sure you respect your partner and vice versa.
- don’t get bogged down with system gadgets

NICE ENDPLAY – BUT AVOIDABLE

Timing is everything as demonstrated on this hand from the third session of the pairs final. Our star is Arjuna de Livera who has been performing extremely well in Australian Bridge events for the last few years.

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|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|------|-----------|
| Dealer: East | ♠ A 6 2 | West | North | East | South |
| Vul: N/S | ♥ K 9 8 5 | | De Livera | | Melbourne |
| | ♦ A Q 9 4 | Pass | 1♦ | Pass | Pass |
| | ♣ K 7 | 1♥ | 1NT | Pass | 2♠ |
| ♠ J 9 4 | | Pass | 2NT | Pass | 3NT |
| ♥ A Q 7 4 2 | ♠ K 10 7 5 3 | Pass | Pass | Pass | |
| ♦ K 10 | ♥ 6 3 | | | | |
| ♣ A 8 2 | ♦ J 7 5 3 | | | | |
| | ♣ 9 3 | | | | |
| | ♠ Q 8 | | | | |
| | ♥ J 10 | | | | |
| | ♦ 8 6 2 | | | | |
| | ♣ Q J 10 6 5 4 | | | | |

2♠ was a transfer to clubs while 2NT showed a super-acceptance. Again on the theme of partnership understanding it is important to have firm agreements about what constitutes a super-accept. I generally like to have three cards in partner’s suit to prevent the opponents from being able to duck the suit but I can see the temptation to super-accept where the opponents points are all known to be on your right hand side.

Had east led a heart there may be less to the story but on the actual hand east led a low spade – obviously someone that does not subscribe to my mother’s view that “you never have to apologise for leading partner’s suit”. Anyway the low spade lead is quite