

the Bridge Magicians



Mark Horton and Radoslaw Kielbasinski

Spellbinding plays from the Polish stars

MASTER POINT PRESS • TORONTO

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Foreword

My first experience of an International Bridge Championship was the 1979 European Teams that was held in Lausanne, Switzerland. The Polish Open Team participated and although it did not do particularly well, it caused a stir because it travelled with 'minders', a couple of large gentlemen whose task was to ensure that none of the team defected to the West. Over the next few years the minders disappeared as the success of Polish teams and pairs gathered momentum, but it was still not easy. Players were expected to share their prize money with their compatriots so that Poland could have a large representation in international events. The end of each session would see a trestle table brought out from which caviar would be sold in order to generate additional hard currency.

This, therefore, was the harsh forcing ground in which Polish bridge players first developed their skills. Fortunately for all lovers of the game, the coming of democracy to Poland following the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the huge improvement in living standards, has not inhibited Poland's ability to generate a seemingly endless supply of great players. Since 1979, Poland has won more medals in international championships than any other nation on earth. Their successes are so numerous that I only mention the peaks — the Rosenblum Cup in 1979, the Teams Olympiad in 1984, the European Teams Championship in 1989 and 1993 and the World Pairs Championship in 1998. Only the Bermuda Bowl still eludes the Polish team, but surely not for much longer.

Radek Kielbasinski is a successful Polish bridge journalist and administrator who has, over the years, collected the marvelous selection of hands which comprises this book. Radek is the guardian of these hands and we should all be grateful to him for sharing them with us. Mark Horton is an English international and bridge journalist who, amongst his many achievements, is the Editor of *BRIDGE Magazine*; his collaboration with Radek Kielbasinski has been absolutely vital in presenting these superb hands to an English-speaking audience.

Not a single hand in *The Bridge Magicians* is easy; in fact, some of them are awesomely difficult, but all are capable of deduction and solution. I invite all readers to study, deduce and solve, and most of all to enjoy this marvelous book.

*Bill Pencharz, Honorary President, European Bridge League
London, June 2001*

Introduction

In 1989 your authors met at the World Junior Bridge Championships in Nottingham, one as assistant on-site organizer, the other as a young player from Poland who had come to observe, work and learn for the future. By a twist of fate they met again ten years later in Warsaw, one now a member of the European Bridge League Executive Committee and Vice-President of the Polish Bridge Union, the other an Editor of the Daily Bulletins. It was during the European Pairs Championship in Warsaw that we formulated the idea for a book that would provide an insight into the skill that is involved in declarer play, a book based on the exploits of an outstanding group of players from Poland. The bridge heroes featured in this book have all won at least two medals at World and European Championships (Open, Women's or Mixed); that makes them experts of the highest caliber.

Bridge has always been very popular in Poland. Before World War II, there were dozens of bridge clubs across the country, where hundreds of players enjoyed their sport. Playing bridge was a must in some intellectual and political circles, even those including army officers. For example, both the Polish Prime Minister and Ignacy Paderewski, the famous pianist, loved to play bridge and were considered to be very good players.

In the early 1930s the magazine *Brydz* appeared regularly. In association with the magazine, there was a group of players who tried to create a National Bridge Organization to participate in the European Championships. Alas, they failed, mainly because of the different scoring method then in use in Poland. The 'standard' form of Contract Bridge was much less popular than bridge using the Polish way of scoring.

After the War, bridge disappeared completely from official life. The Communist regime regarded bridge as an imperialistic tool, and the game was forbidden. However, bridge, although underground, was still alive and was still played a great deal in private homes. The breakthrough came in 1956, when a journalist who was a party member wrote an article titled 'Better bridge than nothing' that appeared in an official Communist magazine. That was a signal, and it had an immediate positive impact on bridge activities. Right away, a group of players started forming an official organization, and after some struggles, the Contract Bridge Association of Poland officially came into being on March 21, 1957.

In the meantime, regular matches and tournaments were being played. In January 1957, the first Polish team went abroad to play in the Metropa Cup in Vienna. In the same year, Poland was accepted as an official member of the European Bridge League. Early appearances in the European Championship were not successful, but in 1963, Poland won the bronze medal in Baden-Baden.

In the mid 1960s, bridge was accepted as an official sport discipline by the Main Office for Sport and Tourism. That was important, since it meant official state and financial support for bridge. The gateway to the West was open. During Communistic days, traveling to western countries was everybody's dream. The big difference between the official dollar exchange rate and the black market one meant that every dollar brought into Poland was very precious. At that time, an average monthly salary in Poland was equivalent to about US\$20, exchanged at the black market rate. Moreover, Polish currency stores offered a very narrow choice of goods, usually of poor quality. Luxury goods were available only in the special dollar stores.

Being a recognized sportsman had some other important benefits. There was usually no problem in getting both a Polish passport and western visas, and thanks to the same difference in dollar rates, plane and train tickets were very cheap. In addition, buying any goods in Poland and selling them abroad was very profitable, and many of the bridge players financed their trips by exporting caviar and cigars.

From the late 1960s, hundreds of Polish bridge players were regularly participating in all kinds of bridge tournaments, from local bridge clubs up to the largest and most important World and European events. Playing bridge became a way of life for many youngsters: 'If bridge gets in the way of your studies — give up the studies' was a popular expression among students. There were usually a hundred teams participating in the Polish Student Bridge Championships. On the other hand, there was only a small group of top-class players who were studying the game intensely. Still, the standard of bridge in Poland was very high, and the Polish First Division was considered to be the strongest team league in the world. In the 1970s and 1980s, there were dozens of Polish players who could have played on the national team with every chance of collecting a medal in international competition. Since then, Polish players have won medals at almost every major event (see the listing at the back of this book).

At the beginning of the 1990s, Poland changed its economic and political system. As a result consumer goods became more readily available, and there was no advantage any more in exporting anything privately. Polish students have since become very attentive to their grades, knowing that a university degree usually means a good job.

Internationally, victory in the Bermuda Bowl is still a dream for Poland, but on the evidence of the 2000 event in Bermuda and the subsequent Olympiad in Maastricht, that day cannot be far away. There is just one cause for concern: all the major bridge successes of the 1990s were achieved by players who took up the game seriously in the 70s and 80s. Will they have any successors?

In *The Bridge Magicians*, we invite you to meet some of the Polish stars of the last thirty years, and to marvel at some of their best efforts in declarer play. You'll get the chance to follow the thought processes that went on in the player's mind as each of these deals was played through. If you care to work a little harder, then when you see this symbol



take a few moments to think about the situation, and try to come up with your own line of play. We are willing to bet that you will quickly find that the world of eliminations, endplays and squeezes is not as far from your grasp as perhaps you had thought. In fact, by the time you reach the end of the book, we are sure that you'll be getting more of them right than you did at the beginning.

A word on the bidding: many of the auctions in this book involve Polish Club, an aggressive and often quite artificial system. For example, an opening One Club bid is made either on a strong hand or a hand that would qualify as a weak notrump; the subsequent auction clarifies whether opener has the strong or the weak hand. Two-bids can carry a multitude of meanings, some of them quite unusual to non-Polish readers. Where it is important to the play, we have, of course, explained the bidding. However, for those who wish to delve further into the system, we have included at the back of the book a summary of the Polish Club, kindly provided by Krzysztof Jassem who is recognized as a leading authority on the system.

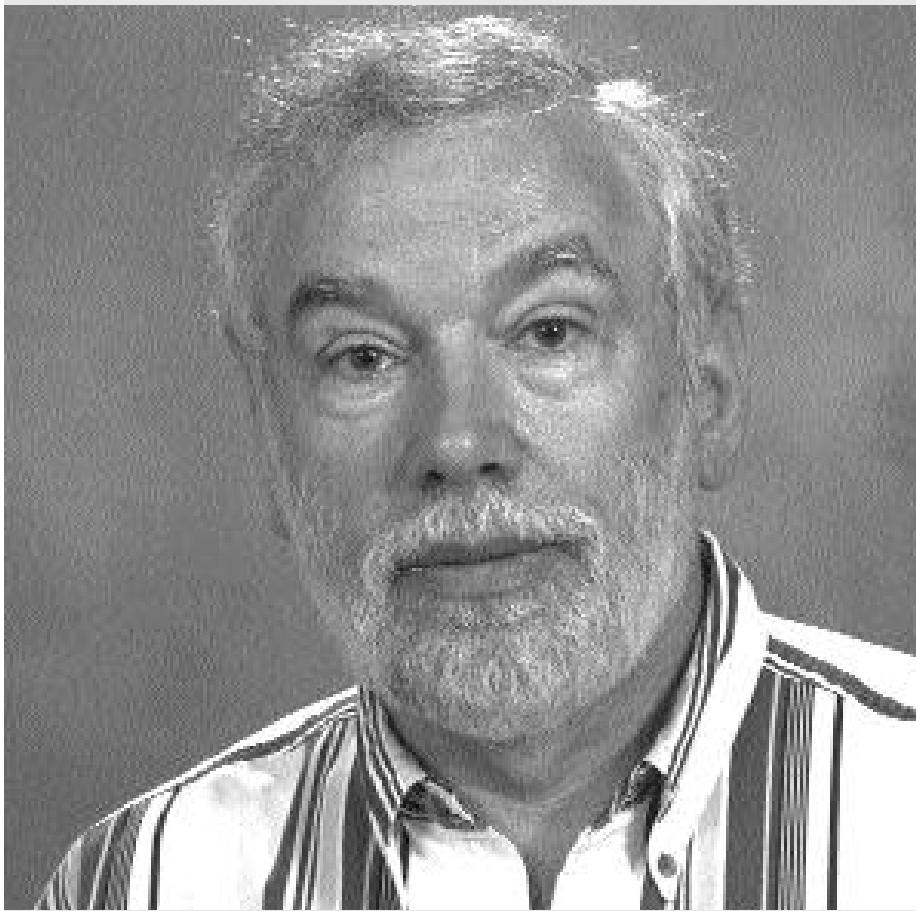
If you derive as much delight from this book in reading it as we did in writing it, then our labors will not have been in vain.

Mark Horton
London
Radoslaw Kielbasinski
Warsaw
April 2001

^{the} Bridge Magicians



Lukasz
Lepioda



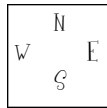
Lukasz Lebioda was born in 1943, and is a scientist specializing in structural biochemistry. Married with three children, he made the decision to move permanently to North America while he was playing in the 1978 Rosenblum Cup in New Orleans. He has a silver medal from the European Teams Championship in 1970 and a bronze from the same event in 1973. In 1978 he left Poland, and now lives and works in South Carolina.

Attention to detail

In the European Teams Championships in Estoril in 1970 the Polish team took the silver medals. In the match against the Italian Blue Team, Lebioda had to play a thin slam against Mondolfo and the legendary Belladonna. A good magician pays attention to every detail: you're going to need to do that on this deal to earn your applause.

North-South vulnerable Dealer South

Q J 10 7
Q 9 2
K Q
A Q 8 6



A
A J 10 5 3
A 7 6 5 4
9 4

| West | North | East | South |
|-----------------|----------------|-------------------|----------------|
| <i>Mondolfo</i> | <i>Wilkosz</i> | <i>Belladonna</i> | <i>Lebioda</i> |
| | | | 1 |
| pass | 1 | pass | 2 |
| pass | 3 | pass | 3 |
| pass | 3 | pass | 3 |
| pass | 4 | pass | 4 |
| pass | 4 | pass | 6 |
| all pass | | | |

When West leads the seven of clubs we can see that although there are no immediate losers, there is an unfortunate shortage of winners. What is your line of play going to be?



The club finesse might be right, but given the lead it must be better to hope that one of the major-suit kings will be well placed. We win with the ace of clubs, come to hand with the ace of spades, cross back to dummy with a diamond and play the queen of spades, discarding our losing club when the king does not appear from East. West produces His Majesty and plays back the two of clubs. We ruff, East following with the jack, enter dummy with a diamond and run the nine of hearts, which holds. Are we out of the woods now?



There is still the possibility that hearts are not breaking. We play the two of hearts to our ten, and when West discards we simply ruff a diamond to dummy and play the jack and ten of spades, catching East in a trump coup.

This line of play was worth 17 IMPs, as the same contract failed at the other table.

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------|---|----------|---|--|---|---|---|--|---|--|-----|
| | Q J 10 7 | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Q 9 2 | | | | | | | | | | |
| | K Q | | | | | | | | | | |
| | A Q 8 6 | | | | | | | | | | |
| K 9 8 6 5 4 | <table style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td style="text-align: center;">♠</td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table> | | N | | W | ♠ | E | | S | | 3 2 |
| | N | | | | | | | | | | |
| W | ♠ | E | | | | | | | | | |
| | S | | | | | | | | | | |
| 7 | | K 8 6 4 | | | | | | | | | |
| J 9 | | 10 8 3 2 | | | | | | | | | |
| 10 7 3 2 | | K J 5 | | | | | | | | | |
| | A | | | | | | | | | | |
| | A J 10 5 3 | | | | | | | | | | |
| | A 7 6 5 4 | | | | | | | | | | |
| | 9 4 | | | | | | | | | | |

If, after taking the king of spades, Mondolfo had played a diamond rather than a club, then, after running the nine of hearts, declarer must ruff a club himself. After that he can ruff a diamond and would arrive at the same ending.

What about declarer's play of the two of hearts? Could we not have played the queen for the same money? On the actual layout, yes. However, suppose you play the queen and the distribution turns out to have been slightly different:

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------|--|---|------|--|---|--|---|--|---|--|-----|
| | J 10 | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Q 2 | | | | | | | | | | |
| | — | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Q 8 | | | | | | | | | | |
| 9 8 | <table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table> | | N | | W | | E | | S | | 6 5 |
| | N | | | | | | | | | | |
| W | | E | | | | | | | | | |
| | S | | | | | | | | | | |
| 8 6 | | | K | | | | | | | | |
| — | | | 10 8 | | | | | | | | |
| 10 7 | | | K | | | | | | | | |
| | — | | | | | | | | | | |
| | A J 10 | | | | | | | | | | |
| | A 7 6 | | | | | | | | | | |
| | — | | | | | | | | | | |

Play the queen of hearts of dummy to the king and the ace. Now try to ruff a diamond.

T*iming is everything*

In 1974 the Portuguese Bridge Federation organized a Top 16 Tournament in Estoril. Against very strong competition, Wilkosz-Lebioda took third place. In an important match against the Italian pair Mosca-Sbarigia, Lebioda had to play a doubled part-score. Time every move correctly, and you may be able to perform as well as he did.

Both vulnerable
Dealer South

| | | | | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|--|---|--|---|--|---|--|
| 10 6 | | | | | | | | | |
| A K 8 3 | | | | | | | | | |
| Q 5 4 | | | | | | | | | |
| J 10 4 3 | | | | | | | | | |
| <table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table> | | N | | W | | E | | S | |
| | N | | | | | | | | |
| W | | E | | | | | | | |
| | S | | | | | | | | |
| 8 4 3 | | | | | | | | | |
| Q 7 | | | | | | | | | |
| K 10 9 3 2 | | | | | | | | | |
| K Q 5 | | | | | | | | | |

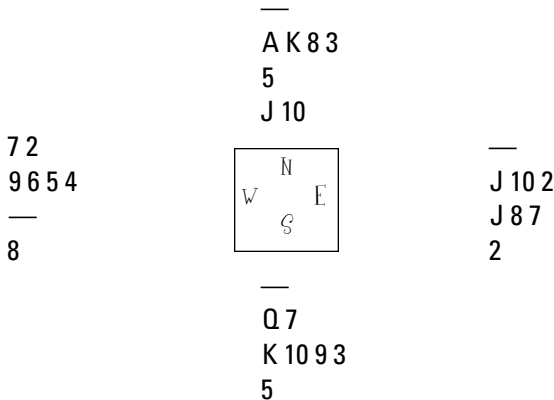
| West | North | East | South |
|--------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|
| <i>Mosca</i> | <i>Wilkosz</i> | <i>Sbarigia</i> | <i>Lebioda</i> |
| pass | 1 ¹ | pass | 1 |
| 1 | 2 | 2 | pass |
| pass | 3 | dbl | all pass |

1. Polish.

When West leads the king of spades, we can see that partner has not held back in the bidding! There are four top losers and East will surely have four diamonds, so there is plenty of work to do; minus 200 will obviously be a bottom. After winning the first trick, West continues with the queen of spades and East overtakes with the ace and switches to the ace of clubs followed by a low one. How shall we proceed?



We want to preserve entries to the dummy, so we play the queen of clubs under the ace and take the next club trick with the king, followed by a low diamond to the queen. East wins with the ace and plays a spade. We ruff in dummy, which leaves this seven-card ending:



We play a diamond to the ten, cash two top hearts, ruff a heart and return to dummy with the jack of clubs to play either card, finishing the trump coup to record plus 670.

| | | | | | | |
|-----------|---|---------|----------|---|-------|--|
| | 10 6 | | | | | |
| | A K 8 3 | | | | | |
| | Q 5 4 | | | | | |
| | J 10 4 3 | | | | | |
| K Q J 7 2 | <table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">♣</td></tr> </table> | N | W E | ♣ | A 9 5 | |
| N | | | | | | |
| W E | | | | | | |
| ♣ | | | | | | |
| 9 6 5 4 | | J 10 2 | | | | |
| 6 | | A J 8 7 | | | | |
| 8 7 6 | | A 9 2 | | | | |
| | 8 4 3 | | | | | |
| | Q 7 | | | | | |
| | K 10 9 3 2 | | | | | |
| | K Q 5 | | | | | |

A year later in Crans sur Sierre in Switzerland, Lebioda was playing another doubled diamond partscore, this time one level higher! Can you perform the same trick again, this time with more at stake?

Neither vulnerable
Dealer South

| | | | |
|---|---|----------|---|
| A 10 9 3 | | | |
| A K 7 5 | | | |
| J 8 6 3 | | | |
| J | | | |
| <table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">♣</td></tr> </table> | N | W E | ♣ |
| N | | | |
| W E | | | |
| ♣ | | | |
| K Q 2 | | | |
| J 4 | | | |
| A 7 5 4 2 | | | |
| 6 3 2 | | | |

| West | North <i>Wilkosz</i> | East | South <i>Lebioda</i> |
|------|-------------------------|------|-------------------------|
| pass | 1 | 3 | pass |
| 3 | 4 | pass | 3 |
| dbl | all pass | | pass |

West leads the ten of clubs and East overtakes with the queen and continues with the ace of clubs, forcing dummy to ruff. What do you think of our prospects?



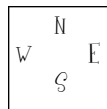
The only possible danger is to find West with all the trumps, rather likely in view of the bidding. To investigate the position, and keep control, after ruffing in dummy we return to hand with the king of spades and play a small diamond. West wins with the queen as East discards a club. After a long huddle, West plays a spade. When we put in the nine, East again discards a club. Now the distribution is clear, and West must be 5-2-4-2 while East has seven clubs, a singleton spade, a diamond void, and therefore five hearts. How are we doing so far?



We have not yet played from hand, and we should check to see if there are any further problems. If we allow dummy to win the trick with the nine of spades, we will have to return to hand with a spade in order to play another low diamond. Suppose West takes his king and returns a spade. We can win and cross to the jack of diamonds and discard a club on the good spade, but there will be no way to get back to hand to draw the last trump and West will end up taking the setting trick with the ten of diamonds.

To avoid this problem, we overtake the nine of spades with the queen and play a diamond. West goes in with the king and returns a spade.

A 10
A K 7 5
J
—



2
J 4
A 7 5
6

Do you see where all this is going?



We win the spade ten in dummy, cash the jack of diamonds, and make the strange-looking play of ruffing the ace of spades. Now we cash the ace of diamonds, drawing West's last trump and squeezing East in hearts and clubs.

This was the full deal:

| | | | | | |
|----------------------|---|---------------|----------------------|---|---|
| | A 10 9 3 | | | | |
| | A K 7 5 | | | | |
| | J 8 6 3 | | | | |
| | J | | | | |
| J 8 7 6 4 | <table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; margin: auto;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">N</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">W E</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">S</td> </tr> </table> | N | W E | S | 5 |
| N | | | | | |
| W E | | | | | |
| S | | | | | |
| Q 9 | | 10 8 6 3 2 | | | |
| K Q 10 9 | | — | | | |
| 10 5 | | A K Q 9 8 7 4 | | | |
| | K Q 2 | | | | |
| | J 4 | | | | |
| | A 7 5 4 2 | | | | |
| | 6 3 2 | | | | |