

The Flashy Leghorn Diamond

By Charles Goren

*Did you know that the national magazine **Sports Illustrated** used to run a regular bridge column? It was authored by none other than "Mr. Bridge" himself, Charles Goren. This is Goren's column from the February 6, 1967 issue. The cover that week featured a young Cassius Clay.*

Late last month one of the most esteemed members of Italy's World Championship Blue Team, Benito Garozzo, disclosed that the team may not defend its title this spring because its boss, Carlo Alberto Perroux, the czar of Italian bridge, wants to replace two of his six men (SI, Jan. 23). Perroux's determination to do this has led Garozzo and Pietro Forquet, two of Italy's best players, to say they will not compete unless the team is kept intact.

One of the more interesting sidelights of this situation is that if Perroux does get his way and manages to quell any rebellion by his aces, the opponents of the Italian team are going to be facing an even wilder bidding system than the ones they have seen-and been unable to cope with-in the past.

What Perroux proposes to do is banish the oldest member of the Blue Team, Walter Avarelli, and Mimmo D'Alelio, the player he has most often kept on the bench when the pressure was high. He would use their respective partners, Giorgio Belladonna and Camillo Pabis Ticci, as a pair, leave Forquet and Garozzo intact and complete the team with two newcomers from Leghorn, Benito Bianchi and Giuseppe Messina.

Both Bianchi and Messina are in their early 40s. They have had considerable international experience and have played for Italy in several European Championships. Among the advantages they would bring to the team is the fact that they would force their opponents to learn yet another very artificial Italian system: the Leghorn Diamond.

The Neapolitan Club already provides an exchange of information about high cards. The Roman Club emphasizes distributional information. The Leghorn Diamond is designed to add a further way to elicit information about both high-card strength and distribution, employing an artificial one-diamond opening, as well as an artificial one club. When the right hand comes along for the system, there is no doubt that it gleams information that no other method can provide with the same accuracy. The deal shown, from the 1965 European Championships, was perfect for Leghorn.

Board 17
North Deals
None Vul

	♠ 2		
	♥ 9 8 7 5 3		
	♦ Q J 4 3 2		
	♣ 10 3		
♠ K 8	♠ Q 6 4 3		
♥ Q J 6	♥ 4		
♦ 10 9 5	♦ K 8 7 6		
♣ Q J 8 7 5	♣ 9 6 4 2		
	♠ A J 10 9 7 5		
	♥ A K 10 2		
	♦ A		
	♣ A K		

West	North	East	South
	Pass	Pass	1 ♦
Pass	1 ♥	Pass	1 ♠
Pass	1 NT	Pass	2 ♥
Pass	3 ♣	Pass	6 ♥
All pass			

When Britain held the North-South cards, South opened with an artificial forcing bid of two clubs, and the British stopped at five hearts.

The Leghorn Diamond let the Italians get to the slam with ease. The opening bid was artificial and forcing. Messina's heart response did not show a suit, but simply denied any ace or king. Bianchi's spade bid was

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asking, and Messina's one no trump revealed that he had either one spade or none. Bianchi's two hearts was still another asking bid, and Messina's answer, three clubs, showed either four or five hearts without any of the three top honors.

Bianchi's leap to six hearts was the first natural bid of the auction. He had learned that his partner could ruff the second round of spades, had enough trumps to make the suit playable for only one loser, and that was all he needed to know. Messina, the declarer, had to concede a trump trick to West's queen-jack-6, but he was able to ruff three leads of spades and set up that suit to bring home the slam.