

SYSTEMS CHINA/USA

China would be spearheaded by the fierce Ming Sun, who formed a successful partnership with Yan Lu less than a year before the Venice Cup final. Ling Gu and Yalan Zhang, partners for seventeen years, brought to the table not only all those years of experience but excellent demeanour and a partnership harmony. Both pairs would play Precision Club with some relays, different no trump ranges (variable for Sun/Lu, 13-15 throughout for Gu/Zhang) and different approaches to constructive bidding (Sun/Lu favouring a more artificial arsenal - Multi 2D, 2S for majors or minors).

Wenfei Wang/Yu Zhang are much newer to the game, but they have done extremely well together in their partnership of two years. They prefer natural methods not unlike Standard American - strong no trump, five-card majors. They play Multi 2D, with 2H and 2S reserved for weak major/minor two-suiters. None of the pairs could be characterised as conservative bidders.

All three pairs use fairly standard carding methods - fourth-best leads, an attitude-first signalling style, Smith signals.

For USA 1, Marinesa Letizia/Lisa Berkowitz (Precision) Jill Meyers/Randi Montin (Standard) both use a mini no trump (10-12 HCP) non-vulnerable, the former in first second position, (14-16 otherwise, the latter in first, second, and third seat (15-17 otherwise). Mildred Breed/Tobi Sokolow (Standard) are 14-16 no trumps throughout. Letizia/Berkowitz prefer weak two bids, although 2D Precision, three suited, in first and second seat.

The other two pairs use a Multi 2D to start their weak bids, and use 2H to introduce a weak major two suiter, 2S to describe a bad pre-empt (which must be minor for Meyers/Montin), and 2NT to show a weak minor two-suiter (however, Breed/Sokolow switched to a natural, strong 2NT opening before the final, and also dropped the strong, balanced option in their 2D opening). All three pairs play an active, fairly scientific game with many special agreements.

The team opening lead style is third/low vs suits, fourth vs no trump. Breed/Sokolow favour primary standard attitude signals while Meyers/Montin are also attitude players, but they use reverse signals. Letizia/Berkowitz play suit preference at trick one against suit contracts, except on the lead of an ace, in which case they give an attitude signal. Against no trump, however, their first card tends toward standard count. All three pairs employ Smith Signals.