



SHARK'S POINTERS ONLINE

Session #30

Remembering Victor King

**Mark Aquino
11-6-20**



VICTOR KING (1955-2020)

- Victor King, 64, was found brutally murdered in his apartment in Hartford, CT on July 26, 2020.
- Travelers Insurance retiree. He had recently spent several months bicycling across Europe.
- Victor had amassed over 15,000 masterpoints during his tragically abbreviated lifetime.
- Brilliant player. Charismatic and cheerful individual. Victor was always fun to be around—at and away from the bridge table.

VICTOR AND SHEILA



Paul Lewis, Sheila Gabay, Linda Lewis and Victor King

**Freeman Mixed BAM North
American Bridge Champs
Washington, DC July, 2016**

Victor King achieved great success with a number of wonderful players over the past 4 decades.

The long list of his bridge partners that come to my mind include, but is not limited to Josh Parker, Margaret Williams, John Stiefel, Karen McCallum, and many others.

For the past several years, his partnership with Sheila Gabay of Newton, MA has been second to none. Together they have won almost every major bridge event in New England. They advanced all the way to the National Finals of the Grand National Teams in 2008.

Upon their winning the Freeman Mixed Board-a-Match Teams in 2016, Victor became a Grand Life Master.



VICTOR AND SHEILA

One of the things we will always remember is Victor's great sense of humor.

On Sunday, February 9, 2020, Victor dyed his hair red and drove the 100 miles from Hartford to the Westwood Duplicate Bridge Club to honor Sheila at a special celebration for her having achieved the 30,000 masterpoint milestone.

**“Orange you going to ask me
about my hair?”**

NORTH AMERICAN OPEN PAIRS FLIGHT A NEW ENGLAND DISTRICT FINALS 11/9-10/2020

New England has long prided itself in the tremendous turnout across all flights in the various grass roots events – especially Flight C GNT.

Last year, the District 25 North American Pairs Flight A Finals were held in conjunction with our Fall Harvest Regional in Mansfield, MA.

The 29 Pairs, vying for 3 qualifiers in the 2019 Flight A NAP D25 Finals was one of the largest and strongest fields in the entire ACBL!

NAP & GNT – THE “GRASS ROOTS EVENTS”

- The North American Pairs (NAP) and the Grand National Teams (GNT) are the ACBL's premiere pair and team grass roots championships.
- The format may vary, depending upon location, but the general idea is the same. Starting as low as the club level, and qualifying along the way possibly at the unit and district levels, pairs or teams of players compete against players of their own broad skill area. Their goal is to attempt to eventually qualify for the ultimate right to represent their home districts in the Finals at North American Championships.
- There are 3 flights for the NAP and 4 different flights for the GNT.

SHOW ME THE MONEY!!

**NAP IS NOT ONLY ABOUT
MASTERPOINTS
AND BRAGGING RIGHTS!!**

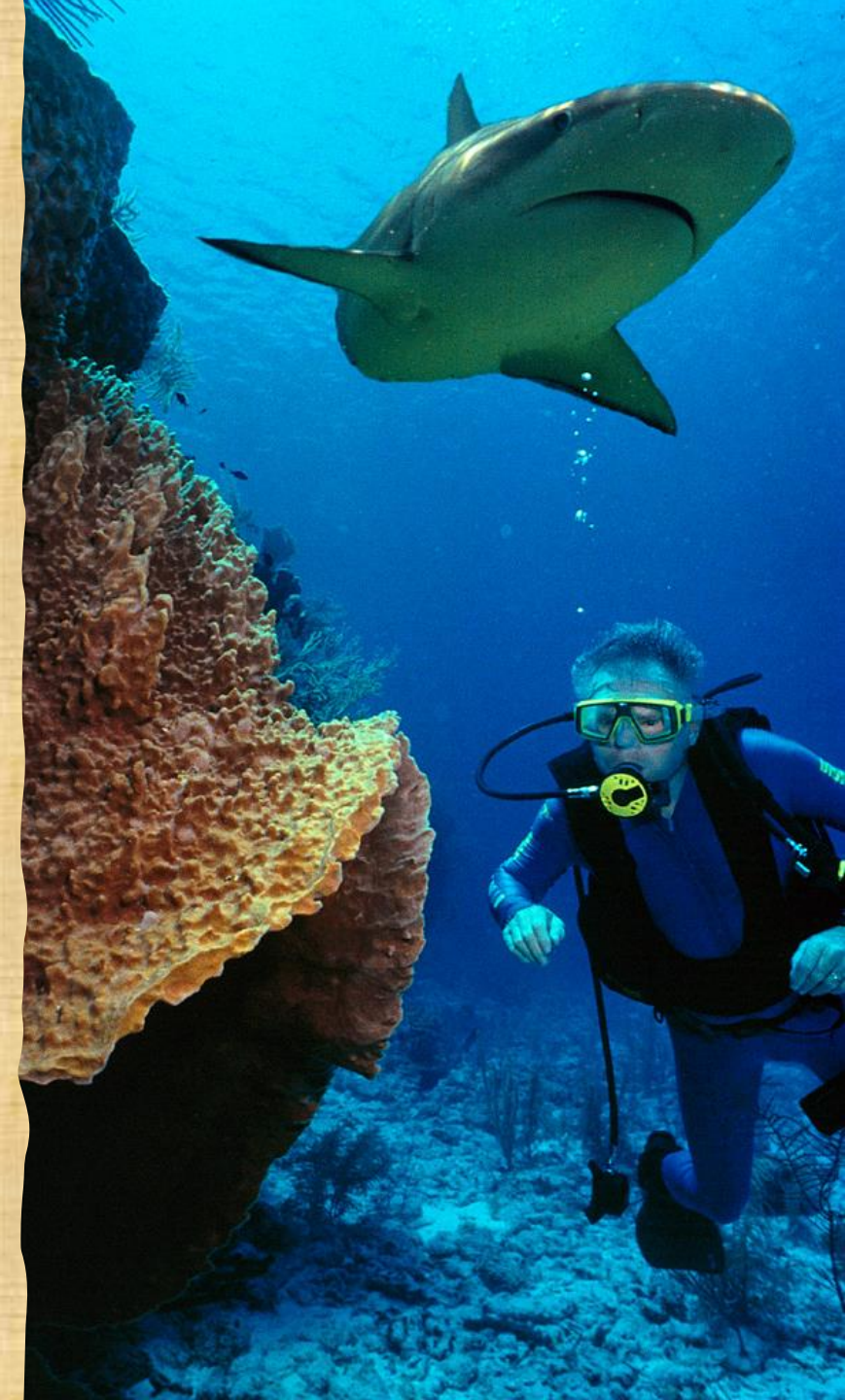
**TOP 3 OR 4 PAIRS FROM
EACH DISTRICT QUALIFY
FOR THE NATIONAL FINALS**

**WINNING PLAYERS IN EACH
FLIGHT EARN UP TO \$700
EACH TO HELP OFFSET
EXPENSES TO THE
NATIONAL FINALS**



NAP IS MY FAVORITE EVENT EXTENSIVE INVOLVEMENT WITH NAP & GNT BACK TO THE 70'S!

- 1st in NABC+ National Finals A in 2015 with Shome Mukherjee in New Orleans
- Frequently represented NE in Flt B, A & Open
- NAP/GNT Coordinator for 11 years
- Initiated ACBL-wide Coordinators Forum
- Chairman of BOD Special Events- initiated new funding and extra incentives



VICTOR AND SHEILA



**Victor and Sheila after
“another routine victory”
Warwick, RI 2017**

The one and only major New England bridge accomplishment that they had never been able to achieve together as a partnership was to earn a berth to the National Finals representing New England (D25) in the Flight A North American Pairs.

Today we are going to review the hands that my partner, Andrew Chesterton, and I played against Victor and Sheila in the NAP Flight A that was held in Mansfield, MA almost exactly a year ago.

Let's look at the 1st session results....

D25 NAP A TOP 14/29 PAIRS AFTER 1ST SESSION 11-9-2020

- **1 William Braucher Rick Binder**
221.00 65.38 %
- **2 Mark Aquino Andrew Chesterton**
194.46 57.53 %
- **3 Dean Panagopoulos Stephen Gladyszak**
193.92 57.37 %
- **4 Philippe Galaski Roger Webb**
193.92 57.37 %
- **5 Franklin Merblum Douglas Doub**
190.67 56.41 %
- **6 Anton Tsyarkin Alan Watson**
190.50 56.36 %
- **7 Sheila Gabay Victor King**
188.50 55.77 %
- **8 Bob Gorse Carole Weinstein**
186.00 55.03 %
- **9 Gregory Woods Jeff Horowitz**
183.50 54.29 %
- **10 Walter Lee James Streisand**
182.50 53.99 %
- **11 John Stiefel Pat McDevitt**
180.50 53.40 %
- **12 Michael Schrage Cecilla Borrás**
176.04 52.08 %
- **13 Lew Gamerman Harrison Luba**
172.50 51.04 %
- **14 Paul Wacks David Dobrin**
172.25 50.96 %

NORTH AMERICAN OPEN PAIRS FLIGHT A NEW ENGLAND DISTRICT FINALS 11/9-10/2020

As you can see, Andrew and I got off to a great start – probably because we didn't have to play Sheila and Victor at all until the 2nd qualifying session.

Neither side made the most of their cards, but both hands had some valuable lessons.

Here was the first hand in which Victor and Sheila had a very difficult bidding challenge...

WHAT WOULD YOU BID?

♠ A K 9

♥ A K Q 9

♦ 10

♣ K Q J 8 6

NORTH

Sheila Gabay

♠ A K 9

♥ A K Q 9

♦ 10

♣ K Q J 8 6

Bd 11 2nd Session D25 NAP A, 11/9/19

Neither Vul Dlr S

Mark Aquino WEST

♠ 7 4

♥ 7 5 4 2

♦ Q 5 4 3 2

♣ 10 2

SOUTH

Victor King

♠ J 8 3 2

♥ J 8

♦ J 9 7 6

♣ A 5 4

Andrew Chesterton EAST

♠ Q 10 6 5

♥ 10 6 3

♦ A K 8

♣ 9 7 3

4 ♠ by South

Making 4

+420 3/13 matchpoints

NORTH AMERICAN OPEN PAIRS FLIGHT A NEW ENGLAND DISTRICT FINALS 11/9-10/2020

This is a very tough hand to bid. Those who got to 3NT scored at least 10 tricks and scored above average. Double dummy, 4S by *North* is actually best, as EW can't make an opening spade lead that holds it to 10 tricks played from the other side. +450 would have been worth 10/13 matchpoints.

4S by South actually got a spade lead and were held to +420 for a very bad score. (only 3/13 matchpoints).

The next board demonstrates why, when I die, my bridge partners will probably just say, "he finally passed!" ...

W N E S

1NT P 2H P

2S P 2N P

3N All pass

Mark Aquino WEST

♠ K
♥ J 10 8 4
♦ Q 5 4
♣ A K 7 6 5

NORTH

Sheila Gabay

SOUTH

Victor King

♠ Q J 8 3 2

♥ K 7 3

♦ J 7 3 2

♣ 9

♠ 9 6

♥ A 6 5

♦ A 10 8

♣ J 10 8 3 2

Bd 12 2nd Session D25 NAP A, 11/9/19

NS Vul Dlr W

Andrew Chesterton EAST

♠ A 10 7 5 4

♥ Q 9 2

♦ K 9 6

♣ Q 4

3NT by West

Down 1

- 50 2/13 matchpoints

NORTH AMERICAN OPEN PAIRS FLIGHT A NEW ENGLAND DISTRICT FINALS 11/9-10/2020

My 1NT opener was weak, showing 12-14 HCP. Andrew transferred to spades and invited with a bid of 2NT

3NT down 1 on a combined misfitting 24 high card points earned us only 2/13 matchpoints.

Sheila led her fourth best diamond and there wasn't much to the play, once Victor inserted the diamond 10 at trick 1.

Here were the results after the 2nd Qualifying session that reduced the field from 29 to 14 pairs....

D25 NAP A TOP 14/29 PAIRS AFTER 2ND SESSION 11-9-2020

1 William Braucher Rick Binder	410.5
2 John Stiefel Pat McDevitt	388.5 3
3 Sheila Gabay Victor King	385.04
4 Mark Aquino Andrew Chesterton	376.46
5 Philippe Galaski Roger Webb	372.92
6 Anton Tsyarkin Alan Watson	372.5
7 Gregory Woods Jeff Horowitz	367.67

8 Dean Panagopoulos Stephen Gladyszak	358.92
9 Michael Schrage Cecilla Borrás	354.04
10 John Hrones, Jr. Robert Virgile	354
11 Franklin Merblum Douglas Doub	353.17
12 Lew Gamerman Harrison Luba	348.
13 Walter Lee James Streisand	340.13
14 Steve Becker Larry Bausher	340.04

NORTH AMERICAN OPEN PAIRS FLIGHT A NEW ENGLAND DISTRICT FINALS 11/9-10/2020

As you can see, we both qualified quite comfortably and going into the final day, we were both right on the bubble to be one of the top 3 pairs to qualify for the National Finals.

In fact, had I passed 2NT on the previous hand like I should have, we would have been in 3rd and Victor and Sheila in 4th

The second round of the second day proved to be pivotal...

“THE SOMINEX COUP”

1S-2C-2S-X- 3S long, long, long delay – 4C back to you

♠ 10 7 5

♥ 5 2

♦ 10 6 5 3

♣ A K 3 2

Neither vul at matchpoints

Partner deals and opens 1S, Victor overcalls 2C.

You raise to 2S, and Sheila makes a responsive double to show cards and imply 4 hearts and good diamonds.

Partner's 3S may imply, but not promise 6 spades. promise 6. It is strictly competitive, not a game try.

After an excruciatingly long hesitation, Victor now bids 4C.

What do you bid?

THE “SOMINEX COUP”

After Andrew bid 3S, Victor stopped and took a sip of coffee. He thought for what seemed to be an eternity, then reached for his coffee cup, and took another sip. He did this 4 times, and finally bid 4C!

Normally, I would pass, hoping Sheila would bid 5C, but I was concerned that she would be barred by this long hesitation.

So, I doubled, hoping for +300 at matchpoints

+ 510 was an intergalactic top for Sheila and Victor!

N E S W

1S 2C

NORTH

♠ 10 7 5

Bd 11 3rd Session D25 NAP A, 11/10/19 Neither Vul Dlr S

2S X 3S 4C

Mark Aquino

♥ 5 2

X All pass

♦ 10 6 5 3

Victor King WEST

♣ A K 3 2

Sheila Gabay EAST

♠ A K

♠ 9 6

♥ 10 8

♥ K Q 4 3

♦ Q J 7

♦ A K 8 4 2

♣ Q J 10 6 5 4

SOUTH

♠ Q J 8 4 3 2

♣ 8 7

Andrew Chesterton

♥ A J 9 7 6

♦ 9

♣ 9

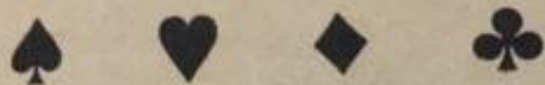
4C X by West

Making 4

- 510 0/13 matchpoints

SHARK'S POINTERS

Mark "the Shark" Aquino



CAN COUNT ON YOUR ENEMIES

If you hope to become an expert declarer, then start getting the habit of counting out. By "the count" is meant the original distribution of the hands' holdings in the various suits. Quite often, getting the count on the hand will provide the only sure-fire method of finding the correct line of play. In the most common situation in bridge, locating a particular card which can be finessed

YOU CAN COUNT ON YOUR ENEMIES

- Those of you who have been following my Shark's Pointers presentations for a while may recall my sharing one of my earliest "Shark's Pointers" columns that appeared in Boston's Waterfront ERA small community newspaper way back in 1975 entitled, "You Can Count On Your Enemies"
- I should have followed my advice on the very next board we played against Victor and Sheila....

W N E S

1C 1NT P 3NT

1NT P 3NT All Pass

Victor King WEST

♠ 8 6 3 2

♥ Q J 10 3

♦ A

♣ K J 8 2

NORTH

Mark Aquino

♠ A K Q 9 4

♥ 9 6 4

♦ 6 3 2

♣ A Q

SOUTH

Andrew Chesterton

♠ J 10

♥ K 7 5

♦ K Q J 8 7

♣ 10 5 3

3rd Session Bd 12 D25 NAP A, 11/10/19 NS Vul Dlr W

Sheila Gabay EAST

♠ 7 5

♥ A 8 2

♦ 10 9 5 4

♣ 9 7 6 4

Opening Lead 4 of clubs

3NT by North

Making 3

+ 600 3/6 matchpoints

YOU CAN COUNT ON YOUR ENEMIES

Victor made the winning play of ducking the opening club lead to my Queen. I played a diamond to Sheila's 5, dummy's J, and was somewhat surprised to see Victor not hold off with his Ace. This looked like a textbook holdup situation. Back came a club to my Ace. I now have 5 spades, 2 clubs, and 2 sure diamonds for a total of 9.

I returned a diamond and Sheila played the 4, giving standard count. It looked clear to finesse the 8, for + 660 and a very good score, but I just settled for +600.

Shark's Pointer – Avoid allowing your recent disaster to shroud your judgment on the current hand.

D25 NAP A TOP 14 PAIRS AFTER 3RD SESSION 11-10-2020

1 John Stiefel Pat McDevitt	100.97	8 Philippe Galaski Roger Webb	83.77
2 John Hrones, Jr. Robert Virgile	97.37	9 Mark Aquino Andrew Chesterton	82.00
3 Sheila Gabay Victor King	97.27	10 Franklin Merblum Douglas Doub	78.70
4 Walter Lee James Streisand	86.52	11 Gregory Woods Jeff Horowitz	75.69
5 Lew Gamerman Harrison Luba	86.25	12 Dean Panagopoulos Stephen Gladyszak	73.89
6 William Braucher Rick Binder	84.50	13 Anton Tsypkin Alan Watson	69.18
7 Steve Becker Larry Bausher	84.00	14 Michael Schrage Cecilla Borrás	66.38

ALMOST THE SPOILERS

Andrew Chesterton and I were fading fast.

We played two more boards against Victor and Shiela late in the final session when we had no chance whatsoever of qualifying, and Victor and Sheila were way up there.

As it turns out, we almost were the spoilers!

Let's take a look at those two hands...

S W N E

1D P 1N P

3NT All Pass

Victor King WEST

♠ J 5 3 2

♥ J 3 2

♦ 9 5 2

♣ 9 7 4

NORTH

Mark Aquino

♠ Q 6

♥ Q 9

♦ K J 7 6 3

♣ 10 5 3 2

SOUTH

Andrew Chesterton

♠ A K 7 4

♥ A 10 6 4

♦ Q 10 9

♣ K 6

4th Session Bd 3 D25 NAP A, 11/10/19 EW Vul Dlr S

Sheila Gabay EAST

♠ 10 9 8

♥ K 8 7 5

♦ A 4

♣ A Q J 8

Opening Lead 10 of ♠

3NT by North

Making 4

+ 630 5.5/6 matchpoints

W N E S

1S P 1N 2D

3S P 3N All Pass

Victor King WEST

♠ 7 4 2

♥ 9 8 3 2

♦ 10

♣ K 10 7 6 3

NORTH

Mark Aquino

♠ 9 3

♥ 10 7 6 4

♦ A J 9 8

♣ J 9 2

SOUTH

Andrew Chesterton

♠ A Q J 10 8 6

♥ K 5

♦ K 2

♣ A Q 8

4th Session Bd 4 D25 NAP A, 11/10/19 EW Vul Dlr S

Sheila Gabay EAST

♠ K 5

♥ A Q J

♦ Q 7 6 5 4 3

♣ 5 4

Opening Lead 5 of ♦

3NT by North

Making 5

+ 660 4.5/6 matchpoints

RIGHT DOWN TO THE WIRE!!

We ended up in great matchpoint contracts and got lucky in the play – resulting in 92% and 75% scores our way!

These boards actually knocked Victor and Sheila out of the money temporarily with just a couple rounds to play.

But Victor and Sheila were true champions, and as true champions so often do, they didn't think twice about these bad results. They hung in there, stayed focused, and got 3 good boards out of 4 in their last two rounds – to squeak back into 3rd! Here were the final results...

FINAL STANDINGS D25 NAP A 11-10-2020

1 John Hrones, Jr. Robert Virgile 185.37

2 Dean Panagopoulos Stephen Gladyszak 178.39

3 Sheila Gabay Victor King 175.75

4 Walter Lee James Streisand 172.52

5 Franklin Merblum Douglas Doub 166.70

6 John Stiefel Pat McDevitt 164.97

7 Lew Gamerman Harrison Luba 164.25

8 Philippe Galaski Roger Webb 163.77

9 Steve Becker Larry Bausher 162.50

10 Mark Aquino Andrew Chesterton 159.50

11 Anton Tsyarkin Alan Watson 152.68

12 William Braucher Rick Binder 151.00

13 Gregory Woods Jeff Horowitz 135.19

14 Michael Schrage Cecilla Borrás 125.88

A HUGE ACCOMPLISHMENT – BUT NOT THEIR ULTIMATE GOAL

They finally did it!

They had never qualified together until this past year.

Sheila had previously qualified with Pat McDevitt for the North American Championship finals.

Victor, playing with John Stiefel finished 2nd in the nation 20 years ago.

Their 3rd place finish qualified them to represent D25 at the National finals scheduled for Columbus, OH in March of this year.

Due to COVID, the NABC in Columbus was cancelled, however.

They never got to play in the national finals of this event together.

ONE MORE NABC WIN!

I'm hoping that we'll be able to enjoy face-to-face bridge again by July, 2021 - the 1st anniversary of Victor's death.

The next Summer NABC is scheduled to be held in Providence, RI July 15th-25th

Let's plan a fitting face-to-face memorial tribute during this tournament!

Give Victor 1 more NABC win!



The background is a deep blue gradient with a bright, circular light source in the upper center, creating a lens flare effect. Several dark silhouettes of sharks are visible, swimming in various directions. A large shark is in the foreground, its head and dorsal fin prominent. Other smaller sharks are visible in the background, some swimming away and others towards the viewer.

**RIP, Victor
I'll Catch You Later**