



# Daily Bulletin



82nd Fall North American Bridge Championships

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## Larry Cohen: missing and missed

For the first time since the Seventies, an NABC is in progress without one of the most well known and popular players. Despite having a shot at his second Player of the Year award (he won it in 2002), Larry Cohen is at home in Boca Raton FL preparing to run the first ACBL Regional at Sea, starting on Sunday on Royal Caribbean's Liberty of the Seas. "It's a little weird," he said in a telephone interview from Boca Raton, "but I'm not totally away from the tournament. I've been reading the Daily Bulletins online."

Cohen's last NABC was supposed to be Houston in the spring, but he was called in as a last-minute replacement for Geir Helgemo on the Rose Meltzer squad in the Spingold Knockout Teams at the summer tournament in Washington DC (his team lost in the final). Cohen had been talking about dropping out of high-level bridge play for about five years, but didn't want to leave regular partner David Berkowitz in the lurch. Berkowitz, now playing regularly with Alan Sontag, joked, "I've driven Larry from the Blue Ribbon Pairs to the golf course." More seriously, Berkowitz said playing without Cohen for the first time in many years "is different," but that he is enjoying his new partnership. "Alan doesn't understand my carding," Berkowitz said, "and I don't understand his bidding. Otherwise, we're doing fine."

Besides keeping in touch with bridge through the Internet and with his regular contribution to the Bridge Bulletin – Cohen writes the monthly Real Deal column – he is involved through teaching and other writing.

Although he has been one of the most talented and successful players in ACBL history – with former partner Marty Bergen and with Berkowitz – Cohen gradually found the grind of high-level play taking away from his enjoyment of bridge. "I found that it was not fun to sit down and knock brains with the best," he said. At the NABCs, he said, he didn't eat well and had trouble sleeping. "I was constantly thinking about the hands." At this point, he said, "I love teaching and writing more than playing. Bridge is better for me at the level I teach."

Although justifiably proud of his 26 North American championships, Cohen said more isn't necessarily better: "It's not going to change my life when I die if I have 36 wins instead of 26." Instead of pursuing platinum points and playing for sponsors, Cohen will be teaching and doing six cruises next year, including three sectionals at sea, "and I love giving daily lessons." He and Bergen will have a "reunion" seminar in Las Vegas next June.

Cohen's wife, Maria, approves of the schedule that has him home more often. So, was board 64 of the Spingold final his last at an NABC? Well, said Cohen, "Ever heard of Brett Favre?"