



# Daily Bulletin



59th Spring North American Bridge Championships

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## WBF President: policing the game 'not a simple thing'

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The turmoil over the explosion of cheating allegations in the bridge world last year may have ebbed to an extent, but World Bridge Federation President Gianarrigo Rona knows the issue is far from settled.

For starters, there are still hearings on three pairs who are either suspected of cheating or have confessed to doing so. The hearings, to be conducted by the European Bridge League, are scheduled for April and May.

Leading up to those hearings and beyond, Rona will be traveling the world to try to recruit the 124 member countries of the WBF to join the war on unethical behavior at the bridge table. The plans include revealing new methods for safeguarding the game. One of his first trips will be to South America, where he will conduct a seminar on WBF President: policing the game 'not a simple thing' methods now in development to prevent, detect and prove wrongdoing at the bridge table.

For example, Rona foresees a time when every playing card will have a chip embedded to allow for a complete record of every play. Every bid and play will be captured on video. The WBF and many national bridge organizations have for years used only "symmetrical" playing cards, designed to look the same no matter how they are positioned.

What the WBF and national bridge organizations need the most to combat unethical behavior is evidence, Rona says.

The WBF has set up a hotline on its website to take reports of wrongdoing, actual or suspected. Anyone who wishes to report such activity can visit the home page ([www.worldbridge.org](http://www.worldbridge.org)) and click on the link to the High-Level Players Commission. Rona pledges that all reports will be investigated and taken seriously, especially those that are accompanied by evidence.

"If you think someone is cheating, Rona says, "it is your duty to provide information, not rumors." One of Rona's goals as WBF chief is to work toward enhancing technological resources to make the game more secure. At the world championships in Chennai, India, last fall, 12 of the tables in the main teams event were surrounded by cameras recording every bid and play. In this year's big tournament – the World Bridge Games in Wroclaw, Poland – 24 tables will be monitored.

"Step by step," Rona says, "we will arrive at more technology. We are the coordinators."

The WBF is committed to cleaning up the game, but Rona views the landscape realistically. "We can't believe we are living in paradise. Humans are corruptible and it is dreaming to believe that at a certain moment all cheaters will disappear."

That's not to say that those who are caught breaking the rules will not be dealt with harshly, Rona says, but prosecutions must be based on evidence. While he is dealing with the cheating issue, Rona is also focusing on the 2016 World Youth Teams Championships in Salsomaggiore, Italy, scheduled for Aug. 3 to 13. Rona believes a record turnout is possible this year. For information about that tournament, visit the WBF website.

Once that competition is completed, the World Bridge Games in Wroclaw will be the WBF president's focus. The tournament was once known as the World Bridge Olympiad. Each member country of the WBF can send four teams, one each to play in the Open, Women's, Seniors and Mixed Teams (a new event).

The tournament also features National Pairs Championships: Open, Women's, Seniors and Mixed.

**Note:** there are no transnational events in Wroclaw. All pairs and teams must be made up of players from the same country. Wroclaw, the largest city in western Poland, is easy to reach for most travelers from North America, says Rona. For 2016, the city has been designated by the European Union as the European Capital of Culture. During the year, the city organizes a series of cultural events with a strong European dimension. "There will be a lot of activities in Wroclaw," says Rona