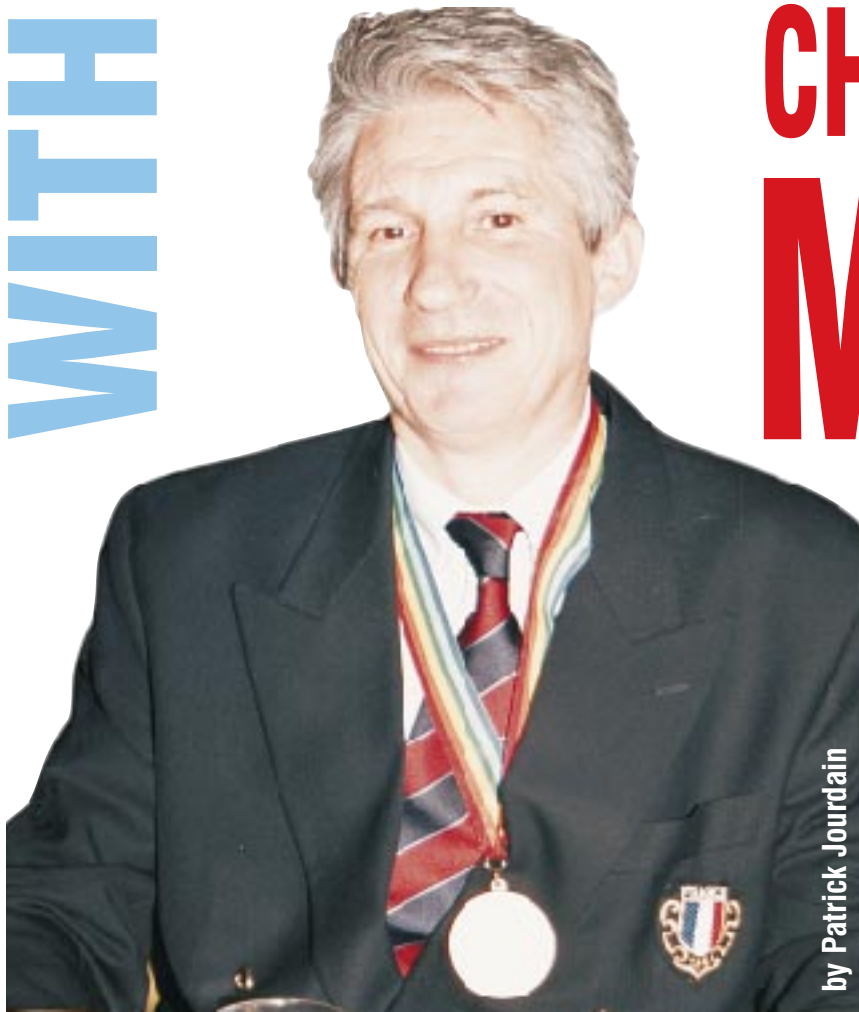


INTERVIEW WITH



CHRISTIAN MARI

by Patrick Jourdain

Christian, please start by telling us something about your family life.

My father lived in Corsica and fought in the war. When France was defeated, he fought for the Resistance for four years in the forests just outside Paris. There he met my mother, a school teacher. My brother was born in 1940 and I was born in 1945.

What was your school life?

We stayed just south of Paris until I was 12 years old when the family moved into Paris. I played my first bridge there at the age of 17, but only a little. I was much keener on football, and then tennis which I played to a good standard. I was a successful student and won the *Concours* to the High School where I studied as a Telecommunications Engineer. I finished my diploma when I was 23 and then had a year in military service. I was a sub-lieutenant, and

this was the only time in my life when I had a regular wage!

What happened after you left the military?

I returned to Paris in 1970 and started playing bridge at the *Bridge Club de Paris*. Two years later **Michel Lebel** and I entered and won the French Trials. We went to the Europeans in *Ostend* where France took the silver medal. Next year in *Herzlia*, Israel, we went one better, taking gold. We went to the 1974 *Bermuda Bowl* in Bermuda itself and came third. But then there was a gap of four years before I played again for France.

What was your family situation?

In 1978 my girl friend, **Dominique Frenove**, and I set up house together, and we are still together now, twenty years later. We have no children, but two large and very beautiful dogs; we love them both very much.

How did your bridge career restart?

I began a partnership in 1976 with **Michel Perron** and in 1978 we played in the *Rosenblum* in New Orleans finishing third. In those days, the *Albarra Bridge Club* in Paris organised a duplicate match every day for a top group of players: *Perron, Chemla, Lebel, Szwarc, Boulenger* and myself, where we drew for partners and played for small stakes. We all had to play the same system and that experience has been the basis of many French national teams over the following 20 years where we are happy to change partners and know we can pick up a system with little problem.

In the 1980 Olympiad I partnered **Chemla**, and we won the famous final with the hand where I raised to 7♦ and **Hamman** led the wrong ace. The next year I partnered **Perron** at the Europeans in Birmingham where we finished third. Only two

- 1945: Born near Paris
- 1972: European Teams silver medal
- 1973: European Teams Champion
- 1974: *Bermuda Bowl* bronze medal
- 1980: Olympiad Champion
- 1981: European Teams bronze medal
- 1989: European Teams silver medal
- 1995: European Teams silver medal
- 1996: Olympiad Champion
- 1997: *Bermuda Bowl* Champion

teams qualified for the *Bermuda Bowl*, so we stayed at home.

There was then a long gap in your career. What happened?

I played money bridge for high stakes almost exclusively for three years, and then had ten years partnering a sponsor. I had one trip with **Jean-Christophe Quantin** in 1989 to Turku where we were second, and this took France to Perth, but we didn't make it through the Round Robin. It was not until 1995 I came back into the

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