



## The IBPA Personality of the Year 2003

### **GIANARRIGO RONA (Italy)**



To bear the role of President of a Zonal organisation as large as Europe at the same time as presiding over the Italian Bridge Federation, its most successful NBO in terms of medals in the world's leading bridge tournaments, is in itself a remarkable achievement. Our nominee has done that for four years.

This year the EBL inaugurated a major addition to the international calendar, a European championship that was open to all the world's players whether European or not. From a bridge point of view this event this concept was a major success, with an exceptionally high quality field in all eight events where a new European title was at stake. In future years when medallists look back at past winners, they will see worthy champions in 2003.

Our candidate has such influence in high places that one might have expected him also to arrange for the weather to suit the playing area's lack of air conditioning. That he did not proves merely that he is human. But human in a way that is a compliment for a person attaining high office: a warm personality, a generosity of spirit, and an ability to remain good-tempered even under pressure.

Gianarrigo Rona, 63, lives in Milan with his wife Cippi. He has two sons from a previous marriage. He retired as a fourth-generation lawyer two years ago, handing over to a son and two nephews. In his youth he was a fine basketball player competing in the Italian top league. His interest in powerboat racing led to a post on the Italian Federation for that sport from 1981 to 1983.

He learned bridge in the sixties, later achieving the status of WBF International Master. He was non-playing captain of the Italian Open team in 1984 and 1985. He joined the board of the Italian Bridge Federation (FIGB) in 1978 and became its President in 1986, a post he still holds. Under his Presidency FIGB was recognised as a National Sport Federation by the Italian National Olympic Committee, and Rona is now a member of its National Council. Italian bridge players are the current holders of the world title for the Rosenblum, the Olympiad, the World pairs, and the World Junior teams, and here in Monte Carlo could still add the Bermuda Bowl to their list of credits. Junior bridge in Italy is so healthy that the country has numerous candidates waiting to take a spot on their illustrious Open team.

Rona joined the board of the European Bridge League in 1995 and became its President in 1999, being re-elected this year for a 4-year term. The EBL has modernised its regulations, improved the training and grading of Tournament Directors, provided courses and seminars for bridge teachers, and implemented major changes to the bridge calendar.

The EBL has an excellent relationship with the bridge Press, witness this year's Clippings Competition. This was mutually beneficial to both organisations, or, to be more precise in the case of IBPA, to those members who were prepared to send in clippings, as all the money was dispensed in prizes.

We ask you to welcome the IBPA Personality of the Year 2003: **Gianarrigo Rona**.