



## History of Bridge Systems

Those of us old enough remember that the Italians won every world championship from 1955 to 1968. The "Squazzra Azurra" played two systems for most of that period. The Neopolitan Club system, now known as the Blue team club system, was a strong club system using four card majors and canape bidding by responder (shorter suit first). This system was played by Garozzo and Forquet. The other two pairs on those teams played a system developed by Belladonna based on distributional opening bids. The better known of these two is the Roman club system of distributional bidding. A second similar version was called Little Roman.

When CC Wei developed the Precision system he used many ideas from Neopolitan. In 1969? an unheralded team from Taiwan playing Precision lost the world championship final to Italy. Subsequently Mr Wei convinced the Italians to play his system and they had continuing success playing a version of Precision also developed by Belladonna known as Super Precision, using control asking bids which were part of the Blue Team system. The Brazilian team headed by Chagas started using Roman about that time and had success at the world level also.

Meanwhile, in North America the ACBL in its infinite wisdom essentially barred the use of the Roman Club system, despite the fact that the system was in essence more natural than any standard system with the possible exception of the original Acol. In 1957 two systems developed by leading American players (Kaplan-Sheinwold and Roth-Stone) advocated the principle of 5 card majors (then considered a convention). Kaplans approach was to use weak no trumps, so when a minor was opened on a short suit it was only because the hand had at least 15 HCP, and could therefore rebid 1NT. This was an important step in trying to separate minimum balanced hands from those with more trick taking potential. Although he never said so, I believe Kaplan took this idea from Roman, which opened all minimum balanced hands with 1 club. Richard Walsh developed a system known then as Walsh which was similar to KS except for the use of a 15-17 no trump. Walsh retired from tournament play in 1971. At that time a little known director called Max Hardy, a student and partner of Barry Crane, created his own publishing company and wrote a book called "Five Card Majors-Western Style" and followed with an even more popular book "Two over one game force". These books evolved and simplified the expert systems of the day into something that average players could understand, and now 2/1 is a world wide standard. The fatal flaw in the 2/1 approach is that since this type of response creates a game force neither opener or responder is likely to be able to show extra values conveniently.