

Bobby Levin learned bridge from his mom, Sheila, when he was 12. Obviously, she taught him well: he won the first tournament event he ever entered when he was 13 – the Men's Pairs at a New York sectional. He was the youngest winner in the history of the event. "Tough field back then," he concedes.

Levin moved from New York to Florida when he was 14. In March 1973, he became the ACBL's youngest Life Master at the age of 15 years and 4 months old – a record he held until 1975. He was crowned ACBL's King of Bridge upon graduating from high school in 1975.

By the age of 17, Levin was playing professionally on teams with Russ Arnold, Miami bridge legend and ACBL Hall of Famer. In 1981, his team (Arnold, Bud Reinhold, John Solodar, Jeff Meckstroth and Eric Rodwell) defeated Zia Mahmood-led Pakistan for the Bermuda Bowl. The win made Levin, at 23 years old, the youngest world champion at the time.

"Russ was the man," says Levin of his first mentor. "I was playing against him when I was 15, and within a couple years, he was ready to play with me. I taught him how to bid and he showed me how to play cards."

Levin gives credit to his partners over the years for his continued growth – "especially Peter Weichsel." A world champion five times over and ACBL Hall of Famer, Weichsel recalls playing against Levin. "In his 20s, Bobby was an outstanding card player, but someone who had not experienced the refinements of being in a truly sophisticated partnership."

In 1986, Weichsel invited Levin to join him on a team with Mike Becker and Ron Rubin. "We went to work on creating a modern high-level partnership. We spent thousands of hours working on partnership bidding, judgment and high-level competitive bidding. Over the course of a dozen years, we became one of the very best partnerships in the U.S.A., and Bobby had developed into one of America's finest players. In 1998, Bobby moved on to play with Steve Weinstein, and they continued that devotion to hard work on all facets of their game."

Levin added another gold medal to his collection when he and Weinstein won the Open Pairs in 2010. He won two silver medals at the Verona World Championships in 2006: one playing with his wife, Jill, in the World Mixed Pairs and one playing with Weinstein in the Open Pairs.

Levin and Weinstein topped the Cavendish Invitational Pairs a record five times (1999, 2002, 2007, 2009 and 2010). Levin has 30 North American championships, including six victories in the Vanderbilt, and one each in the Spingold and Reisinger. He has won the Kay Platinum Pairs twice, the von Zedtwitz LM Pairs three times and the Kaplan Blue Ribbon Pairs once. He headed the list of platinum point winners in 2014 to claim the Player of the Year title.

Weinstein calls it an honor and a privilege to sit across the table from the Hall of Famer. "Bobby Levin is what happens when you mix extraordinary natural talent with a tireless work ethic," says Weinstein. "I've never met anyone who works harder or who has a more intuitive feel for the game."

"I am often humbled," Levin says. "The more you play, the more you see how bad you are, so practice is necessary to improve."

Levin and Weinstein have played alongside Hall of Famers Nick Nickell, Ralph Katz, Meckstroth and Rodwell on the blockbuster Nickell squad since 2011. The team recently

won the U.S. Bridge Championship and with it, the USA1 berth in the 2019 Bermuda Bowl. "Of all the exciting things that have happened to me in my career, getting to play on the Nickell team is at the top," Levin says. "We have great teammates, and there is nobody nicer or smarter than Nick."

When he isn't playing or practicing, Levin enjoys simply being at home, playing tennis with Jill, going to the gym, swimming – "and a lotta dog time at the pool!" Married 20 years, Jill and Bobby have three sons: Andrew Levin, Shane Blanchard and Justin Blanchard.

"What grabs me about the game is that I still love to win," Levin says. "I never stop learning."