



Playing Bridge online in the world of COVID-19 • it's easy to learn • play against friends and others across the globe

**Play
Bridge
Online**

The ABF has partnered with BBO to enable clubs to play online while earning masterpoints and revenue during the COVID-19 shutdown. Read the full story on page 4.



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Front cover image: see pages 4 and 12 for details of online bridge games run by clubs around Australia.

Main photographer: Anne Russell.

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IMPROVE YOUR DEFENCE

with **Ron Klinger**

Solution on page 23



Butler ♠ J 9 8 7
 S/Nil ♥ 3
 ♦ 10 7 5 4 3
 ♣ A Q J

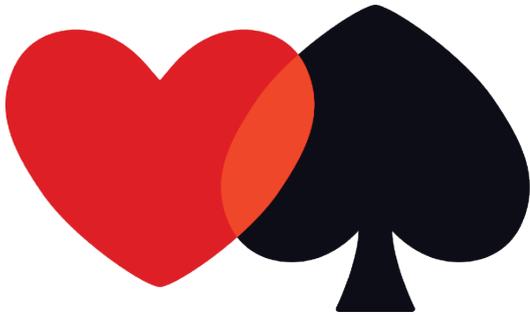
♠ Q 3
 ♥ A K Q 8 6
 ♦ K 9
 ♣ 7 5 4 3



WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♠ ¹
2♥	4♠	all pass	

1. Five-card majors.

You lead the ♥A: three - seven - nine. Your agreements are to play low-encouraging on partner's lead. How do you continue?



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MARKETING REPORT

with Peter Cox



Online Bridge has been a saviour for thousands of bridge players in Australia whilst the clubs are closed by the coronavirus. There are a number of ways Australian bridge players have continued to play bridge.

BRIDGE BASE ONLINE, the international giant of online bridge offers several different ways of playing.

1. ABF Club Games

Support Your local club by playing with your friends on BBO.

- Australia's two leading International Directors, Matthew McManus and Laurie Kelso, have organised with BBO for clubs to run ABF Virtual Club games.
- These are just like your normal club Pairs games, the online technology is very simple to use and can be restricted to club members and friends.
- The games cost A\$3-\$5 to enter, a share of the table money returns to the club and the top half of each field wins ABF MP.
- Over 30 clubs from Tasmania to Townsville and from the East Coast to Mandurah in Perth are already running games with over 500 tables a week.
- Get your club to apply to host ABF Club Games online games or join up with other clubs in your region to enjoy a good, fun game with many people you know.
- Over 2,000 players have now joined up to be able to play in ABF Club Games.

2. Competition

There are nearly 50 competitions run around Australia each week on BBO with over 1200 tables. Nick Fahrer and Michael Prescott have led the way for the biggest bridge club in Australia, the North Shore Bridge Club, with three games a day and 350 tables a week. See bottom of page 12 for a list of clubs holding online games.

3. Private Games

Hundreds of players from beginners to experts play with their friends in private games each day for free. You can either join your friends or organise your own game. Further you can watch or kibitz matches such as the Australian Open team competing in a test series with New Zealand, the top senior players against the leading women players or you may even catch the famous Zia Mahmood playing rubber bridge. You can choose to play boards from past World Championship such as the Bermuda Bowl and see how well you bid and played compared to the international stars.

STEPBRIDGE, the Australian not-for-profit bridge platform has gone from one session a day before COVID-19 to eight sessions a day during social isolation and adding 2,000 new players in one month. Stepbridge has grown from awarding around 80 masterpoints a month to an estimated nearly 2,000 MPs in May.

The games currently cost \$3 a session, or even less with a bulk discount, for 24 boards and the opportunity to win ABF masterpoints. Games are scheduled from about 10.00am to late at night, every day.

Sign up to play in ABF club games online with BBO

If you want to register for ABF BBO games, please sign up at

www.abfevents.com.au/forms/signup

If you are already registered and receive SMS notifications at tournaments, the Marketing Bulletins or the ABF Newsletter but need to add your BBO username to play in ABF club games online then contact the secretariat@abf.com.au or myself at marketing@abf.com.au and we will update it for you.

How to sign up to Bridge Base Online

- Before you play in an ABF club game online, you must first be registered with BBO and have a BBO username.
- BBO started 30 years ago in the USA and commenced online games in 2000 so it is well proven and a simple process to sign up and place BB\$ in your BBO account.
- You can deposit a minimum of \$10 and pay with a credit card (you do not have to permanently leave your credit card details) or use PayPal. However, we suggest not using your iPad or mobile account with Apple because they charge a higher fee.
- The entry fee for 16-20 boards is usually about BB\$2 (or about AU\$3) and about BB\$3 (or AU\$5) for 24 boards.

How to join an ABF club game on BBO

- Once you have a BBO username and \$BB in your account, and are ready to play a game, log in to BBO.
- You must be within two hours of the start time of the game.
- Go to Featured Areas in the green strip, press Virtual Clubs, then ABF - Australia.
- Now look for and press the name of your club in the list and the correct starting time.
- Finally, enter your partner's BBO username and Invite (they must be on BBO at the same time) and you are entered.
- All very simple and fast, go away and come back 10 minutes before the start and wait for the first board to appear.

Suggestion for new BBO players

- Once you have a BBO username, log in and play some hands on your own on Solitaire, or play with a friend against robots, for free, to become comfortable with the process.
- When you start playing in a BBO game you need to self-alert your own bids, not your partner's bids and practice using the messaging function to the table, the director or friends.

ABF club games on BBO Update

The number of clubs participating has grown to over 40 in only a few weeks with another 40 submitting an Expression Of Interest. The numbers playing are increasing with already more than 500 tables a week.

We also have a number of exciting new announcements:

1. Matthew McManus and Peter Busch have produced a process for converting BBO results into a format suitable for scoring with Compscore2 as already used in many clubs.
2. In the process BBO usernames are changed into real names.
3. You can then upload the results to your club's website as you would for a real life session. If your club uses Pianola, it will also generate the necessary files. Full details are available at

www.altosoft.com.au/faqs.asp

4. Matt is also working on masterpointing online sessions. These will be sent to the ABF Masterpoint Centre at the end of each month. Clubs will be invoiced for masterpoints each quarter, just as they normally would. There is nothing else the club needs to do.
5. The first major ABF tournament will be a national one. Laurie will be running it on Sunday May 31 at 2.30 AEST. Anyone wanting to play must have registered their BBO username on the ABF Mailing List by 6.00 pm Saturday May 30.
6. Clubs are now able to run **Red Masterpoint** sessions using their club's annual B4c allocation. The usual rules will apply; it is only for club members and regular players at their club. David Anderson is going to do the masterpointing and handle the interactions with the State Masterpoint Secretaries and the ABF Masterpoint Centre.
7. Howell movements are now available for ABF club accounts.
8. It is important to promptly provide your club's bank details, because the first payments from BBO have commenced with clubs getting back 55% of fees paid by players, at least until the start of September.
9. The ABF has decided to not take out any expenses and will rely on the Masterpoint payments, to enable the clubs to maximise their returns while the clubs are closed.

Important steps in growing your club's online players

We are all very conscious that the average bridge player is over 70 and that some may be hesitant to play online because of the technological challenge, the financial costs with fixed income in retirement and concern for the security of online payments.

Here are Five Major Steps to allay these concerns and grow your club:

1. Communicate regularly with your members to encourage them to continue to enjoy bridge and their friendships – so email and call your members regularly to maintain social contact and involvement in bridge.
2. Older people have discovered how to use the internet to follow their children and grandchildren all over the world on Facebook, Instagram and other social media. Using online services to play bridge is just as easy for all ages and once they try it they will greatly enjoy it.
3. Zoom, the video conferencing app, has gone from 10 million participants to over 300 million in a few months and Skype (Microsoft) and Google have boomed during the corona virus. Not only corporations but families are using video conferencing to see each other online and share religious occasions, birthdays, weddings and even funerals. It is the perfect medium for you to teach your players how to play on BBO and to play with their friends in club or private games.
4. Clubs need to reduce the fear of paying by credit card or PayPal, particularly overseas, by emphasising that one only needs to make small payments that are secured by the credit card companies and banks. Consider your club offering to buy bridge tokens in bulk from BBO and provide them to their players in local payment. Increasingly the largest clubs are now taking credit card payments for vouchers for games rather than handling cash.
5. One of the difficulties in bridge is finding suitable partners. Why not set up a WhatsApp group for your club members so they can chat with their friends, discuss bridge and find partners to play with. Finally you can play on your own in online bridge clubs, or play with robots who are the perfect partners by giving you no angst.



Rebooting Bridge Clubs

The literally million-dollar question is when will bridge clubs be opening again? The next couple of months will be critical for the Government's three-step roadmap to creating a COVID Safe Australia or will we get a second wave as the restrictions are progressively lifted. Bridge has its own special issues with a vulnerable aging cohort, maintaining physical distancing, density requirements of 4sqm a person and hygiene with the use of cards, boards and bridgemates.

The ABF has agreed with Dr Andrew Slutzkin, a member of the Moonee Valley Bridge Club, to develop minimum hygiene standards guidelines for clubs, state organisations and the ABF. The national event Tournament Organisers, in consultation with State and Federal bodies and the ABF will determine the feasibility of holding each tournament.



Just Say No to Cheating

The latest ACBL Member Update highlights that bridge of all sorts is based on **active ethics**.

"The information transmitted during a hand must be done through calls and plays only. To gain an edge via outside means (instant message, phone, etc.) is unethical and subject to the Code of Disciplinary Regulations. The actively ethical player contributes to the enjoyment of all players by continuously striving to maintain a courteous attitude towards both his opponent and his partner and by avoiding any behaviour that would make anyone uncomfortable."

As the ABF President says there should be ZERO TOLERANCE for unacceptable behaviour. This also applies to online bridge where the temptations may be greater and active ethics even more essential.

MEET THE INCOMING MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE



ABF MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE 2020-2022

The ABF recently held an abbreviated virtual Annual General Meeting. With the retirement of long-time treasurer Roy Nixon, and MC members Dallas Cooper & Richard Wallis, some new faces have been elected to the ABF Management Committee (MC) for a two-year term.

Re-elected to the MC were the President Alison Stralow (WA) and the Secretary Kim Frazer (Vic). They are joined on the MC by Ian Thomson (ACT) as Treasurer, and new members Adel Abdelhamid (SA) and Rob Ward (NSW). Also attending MC meeting are Geoff Chettle (Legal Counsel) and Jane Rasmussen (ABF Secretariat).

In normal circumstances we would have taken a group photo to introduce the MC but COVID-19 has brought new ways of doing things to everyone, the MC

included. Our MC members are spread around the country representing a broad cross section of states/territories and players. Hence instead of a group shot – we have individual photos from our files and an introduction to our three new members is outlined below.

Ian Thomson (above) is a long-time bridge player, who has had over 38 years of professional financial, accounting and commercial experience, including around 20 years' experience as a consultant providing business and financial management advice to the public sector. In his voluntary roles he is Vice President (Finance) of a Football Club and he has served as a member of the executive committee, responsible for financial matters, of a large community organisation. In his bridge life he has enjoyed success in various national events, most recently as a member of the

winning teams in both the Seniors and Open Teams events at the 2019 Spring Nationals. He has represented Australia on the Open Team in 2008, 2009 and 2013 and was non-playing captain of the Seniors team in 2019. Ian has also been the non-playing captain of Youth teams in 2011, 2016 and 2019.

Adel Abdelhamid (pictured right) has also enjoyed bridge for an extensive period. He has been actively involved in a variety of bridge administration positions in addition to playing regularly at his club and at various national events. He is currently the President of the South Australian Bridge Association (SABA), and he also held the position of President of the SABF from 2018 to 2019. Adel is also the tournament organiser of what was to be the 2020 ANC in Adelaide which has now been postponed to 2022. Outside bridge, Adel is a qualified Electronics

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Allison Stralow



The ABF is committed to supporting our players, clubs and organisations through these unprecedented and challenging times. There are no tournament regulations for this situation, and we are reconfiguring and readjusting our response in real time as events evolve rapidly. I take this opportunity to thank the outgoing and incoming ABF Management Committees who have gone above and beyond the call of duty to put in place measures to ensure the health and safety of all players, officials and volunteers. As volunteers themselves we could not afford to pay them what they are worth.

A Steering Committee has been formed to provide governance of the ABF Technology System Build and to report back to the Management Committee. The members of this committee are all key stakeholders in Australian Bridge technology, with several years of service to the ABF. I thank John Grosvenor, Geoff Schaller, Stephen Fischer, Peter Reynolds, Ian McKinnon, Matthew McManus, Neil Williams and Peter Busch for accepting the invitation to join Mark Guthrie and Julian Foster on this committee and donating their expertise.

The ABF Technology Strategy is progressing well. Engagement with key stakeholders has commenced and the first deliverable, event management, is expected by the end of the year.

The COVID-19 crisis has made us more dependent than ever before on the digital world. While we stay at home, we need

digital technology to access important government and health information, and of course to play bridge. This rapid move to online services has highlighted the digital divide between players who have computer knowledge and those who don't. The ABF has established an agreement with BBO to deliver online bridge on a revenue sharing arrangement, which will return some much needed funds to clubs whose players use this service. The ABF Secretariat, Head of Marketing and National Event Coordinators have spent endless hours supporting the setup of players on this facility by creating usernames and passwords and buying BBO\$ to enable players to use this service. Of course, BBO is not the only online option available and some players and clubs are utilising other online options to play regular games and keep connected.

These are many amazing examples of bridge communities connecting and coping during the acute phase of this pandemic. A connected community is a resilient community, one that can withstand the impacts of the changing climate and has the ability to bounce back at the end. The ABF and New Zealand Bridge have forged strong connections across "the ditch" as we have compared how we will respond in the aftermath of the lockdown when revenue will have suffered a significant downturn. A number of people in our bridge communities have suffered a loss in income as clubs are closed and events are cancelled. Directors and other staff are also on reduced hours until we can return to a semblance of normality, hopefully in the near future. This is one reason why it is important to build from the grass roots up when we return to face-to-face bridge.

More than ever, it is important to look after ourselves and each other. Take care and stay connected.

If you have any issues you would like to raise with the ABF Management Committee, please email:

abf.pres@gmail.com



CSF). In his other voluntary roles he has held various positions within his Rotary Club for over 20 years.

Rob Ward (right) is a relative newcomer to bridge, having taken up the game in 2011. In his professional life Rob was a Managing Partner with PriceWaterhouseCoopers and is a chartered accountant by profession. After retiring from PWC he remained involved with Chartered Accountants Australia & NZ and several pro-bono boards as a strategic consultant and advocacy leader. He was President of the Institution of Chartered Accountants in 1998. With a home club of Bowral, since taking up bridge Rob has become involved in bridge administration as a NSW state councillor and organiser of various events in NSW. He is the Tournament Organiser of what is to be our first regional ANC, in Orange NSW in 2021. Rob describes himself as working



on being a credible bridge player as he moves through the ranks of restricted and intermediate events where he has achieved a modicum of success. He is now looking forward to the challenge of open events!



ZOOMing towards a new world...

The closure of bridge clubs has sparked a great entrepreneurial spirit among bridge teachers, so much so that in order to exhibit the way they are managing, I've started a Zoom Teachers meeting/seminar on some Tuesdays at 5pm to 5:30pm.

So far, I've limited it to ABF teachers who are either accredited or on the road to accreditation. But if you want to join to receive emails, go to

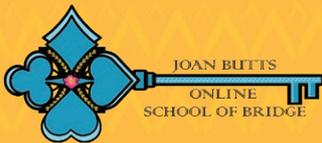
<http://www.abf.com.au/education/>

Some teachers say they are working harder than ever and have regular programmes online.

Some are using the BBO Teaching page, and are Zooming to students.

My Online School is also available for teachers to use via a share screen Zoom scenario, and the Teacher Portal (Teach Bridge Online) gives teachers all the resources and tips they could possibly ever need based on a curriculum from beginner to advanced. The ABF are supporting teachers with this initiative for a certain period of time. I am doing Zoom walkthroughs to show teachers how to use it.

If you are Zooming, the STEAM principles should still apply for the most effective results. These are the teaching principles as advocated in the ABF and ACBL Teaching programmes.



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The STEAM Principles

S = Student Safety

Be careful not to ask individuals questions; let them 'put their hands up'. Don't tell them their answers are categorically 'right' or 'wrong'. Be careful of praising an individual – others may disconnect!

T = Timing

As the online technology is mentally tiring, sessions should not be longer than 45 min to 1 hour. (There is a time limit anyway). The biggest challenge is to break up the class online into different parts. In the real life classroom, you could have students playing hands at regular intervals. Still break the activities up online by playing through, and carefully reviewing, a hand, then having time for questions. Talking for too long is just as bad online as in real life, and just plain boring. One big area needed for controlling time is not letting too many students talk at once, and 'muting' the group when you need to talk, and opening it up to them later. All this requires good control of the classroom.



Joan's teaching seminar on Zoom, held on some Tuesdays from 5pm to 5:30pm

E = Energy

Your efforts to engage the students online is essential. Regularly asking questions and controlling answers will stimulate interaction. With my Online School, you can play the hands in a lesson and then direct them to play the hands and watch the video reviews immediately after the lesson by themselves.

A = Attitude

Nothing new here. The fact that you are making this effort will help your class realise you are trying hard for them. Keep in touch by sending notes and/or quizzes after the class via email. Your preparation will show positively too. Teachers have commented how excited the group is to Zoom and be able to see their teacher and the rest of the class (ditto for teachers).

M = Methods and Materials

Using the best available online materials will improve your online classes. Using hands which have been carefully constructed to show the points is easiest for you. You don't have to create hands yourself, and try to upload them.

Good luck with online teaching, be it lessons or help with play. I have not talked about online tournaments because this is not the teaching area, but perhaps you could go through some hands after a game. I know some (eg. Peter Gill) running regular weekly games, who go to the trouble of writing up interesting hands, and analysing them for everyone.

If there is any way I can offer support, please contact me:

teaching@abf.com.au

Joan Butts, ABF National Teaching Coordinator

All upcoming ABF Accreditation workshops may be viewed at

<https://www.abf.com.au/education/>

SILICON VS CARBON: IS BRIDGE NEXT?

In 2017, Ke Jie, the world's undisputed best Go player, lost 3-0 in his match against a revolutionary new AI from Google. What could this mean for bridge players? MANNY RAYNER tries to draw a line from the past to the future...



May 25, 2017. Ke Jie, visibly shaken after losing the challenge match to AlphaGo.

People started thinking about chess computers very early on – Alan Turing, the father of computing, wrote a paper about the idea in 1953 – but it was a while before the computers started playing well. This resulted in some unfortunate predictions. The philosopher Hubert Dreyfus published a book in 1972 called *What Computers Can't Do*, where he argued that grandmaster-level chess was an example of a task that was impossible for a computer, even in principle. Dreyfus's reasoning wasn't as silly as it seems now. He looked at what human chess players did, and said that it wasn't a matter of following rules, but of using judgement and understanding: since computer programs can only follow rules and had no judgement or understanding, they can't play high level chess.

In fact, Dreyfus turned out to be wrong about chess requiring judgement and understanding. People play chess that way, because our brains are wired much better for judgement and understanding than for deep calculation, but as computer hardware got faster it turned out deep calculation was also a

perfectly good way to play chess. The programmers found that every time the machine's hardware speed doubled, the program's Elo rating went up about 50 points. So for a while, they concentrated on building hardware that could calculate moves as quickly as possible.

The culmination of this line of work was Deep Blue, the machine which won the famous match against Garry Kasparov in 1997. Some people said Deep Blue played "just by brute force", which wasn't really fair. The programmers put in some clever ideas. The *evaluation function* (the program's rough estimation of position quality in a position with no immediate tactics) was learned from looking at tens of thousands of master games. Also, when the machine was following its opening book, it thought about how good the players were whose moves it was copying, and was allowed to vary from them if it thought it had calculat-

ed a better line. But in the end, Deep Blue was the machine that first beat the World Chess Champion because it could calculate more quickly than any of the others, so "brute force" wasn't totally unreasonable either.

ALPHAGO VERSUS LEE SEDOL AND KE JIE, 2016-2017

Strategy game players hated to feel that they were inferior to computers, so they quickly switched over to explaining that chess was the wrong test. It just happened to be the case that chess was simple enough that it could be done by doing a large search. But other games, like Go, wouldn't crack that easily. Things happen much more slowly in Go, there are far more possible moves at each turn, and the Dreyfus arguments about judgement and understanding got wheeled out again in a slightly different form. Here, Dreyfus seemed to have been right, at least up to a point: you

couldn't play Go just by calculating, there was too much to calculate.

But in fact, Dreyfus was wrong, and in a much more interesting and fundamental way than had first appeared. As neural net programming made progress and the Deep Learning revolution started in the early years of the 21st century, it turned out that computers could in fact develop judgement and understanding. They didn't need to have their rules painstakingly programmed by human beings: a deep learning neural net in effect develops its own set of rules, by looking at data. The AlphaGo program learned to play by watching master games, then by playing more games against itself and learning from them. Deep Blue had only learned to optimize an evaluation function which had been constructed by people, but AlphaGo went much further. It learned both the evaluation function, this time more or less on its own, and also the *move generation function*, the rules it uses to choose the next move. So AlphaGo thinks in quite a human-like way. It looks at the position, and using its accumulated experience (you might as well call it 'judgement') it immediately sees that one of a small number of moves is likely to be the right one. It calculates out a small number of continuations, and at

the end of each one it uses its evaluation function (more 'judgement') to estimate how well it will be doing if it reaches that position. Then based on those carefully focussed calculations, it makes its choice.

The hard part is putting in the judgement, which comes from the deep learning. The Deep Mind team, who are world leaders in neural net technology, were able to solve this extremely difficult problem and advance computer Go from weak master level to World Champion level. In 2016, AlphaGo beat Lee Sedol, one of the world's top three players, by a decisive 4-1 score. In 2017, it beat Ke Jie, the undisputed top player, by a clean sweep.

THE NEXT CHALLENGE

Well... is bridge next? We can of course take the Dreyfus line and say that bridge is different because, unlike chess and Go, it requires real human judgement and understanding. But given what's happened so far, this seems optimistic. From the point of view of the AI engineer, the thing that makes bridge hard is that each player has only partial information, so the search space includes all the possible distributions of the unknown cards. That means a lot more to think about. But as we saw with Go, a very large search space doesn't mean that machines can't do it.

There have been a couple of false starts. GIB (the robot used on the Bridge Base platform) was supposed to become the world's best bridge player a little after the Deep Blue breakthrough. GIB can basically do double-dummy analysis perfectly. It handles partial information by generating a hundred or so layouts that fit what it already knows, doing double-dummy analysis on all of them, and then picking the choice which works in the largest number of layouts. It does bidding by using rules that tell it what the allowed bids are in a given situation, generating layouts that fit the bidding, then again making the choice that works in most layouts.

As GIB's inventor Matthew Ginsberg discovered, this doesn't give you more than a strong amateur player. But if you applied deep learning methods and the same kind of hardware as AlphaGo uses (it runs on a network containing hundreds of processors), I think you would see a huge increase in strength. There are plenty of online hand records to train the neural nets. The move generation function would be one net, which looks at the current situation and gives you the plausible candidates for next bid or play. The evaluation function would be another net, which looks at a layout and estimates how likely each contract is

Manny Rayner, pictured (left) in Geneva with three-time world chess champion Vladimir Kramnik, is an AI and language technology expert. He has a strong interest in games: FIDE master at chess, fair Go player – “I thought I was good at Go until I started playing against Asians” – and is a very occasional bridge player.



with single-dummy play – basing everything on artificial double-dummy play is one of the reasons why GIB's judgement has never been that great. If you have enough processors to use, you wouldn't just be limited to creating a hundred layouts to model what you don't know. You could create more layouts to model the other players' uncertainties too, and in effect think about what they are thinking.

Of course, this sketch is simplistic. Building a world-class bridge AI would probably be a big software project that required dozens of person-years of expert effort. But all the pieces now seem to be there. It took 54 years to get from Turing's initial paper on computer chess to Deep Blue, and it took another 20 years to get from Deep Blue to AlphaGo. My guess is that it will take significantly less than 20 years to get to the point where a deep learning system will beat the best human bridge players. It's mainly a question of finding someone who has a strong enough desire to make it happen and enough money to pay for the work. Well, it isn't hard to think of a person who's very rich, has access to hundreds of highly talented AI experts, and likes bridge. I'm starting to wonder why this hasn't already happened.

What might happen to the bridge world, if a world-class bridge AI emerges? Looking at what's happened in chess, it probably would be more good than bad. Since everyone who can afford a basic laptop now has access to a world-

class chess player, chess has taken off in many countries where the game was hardly played before. All grandmaster chess tournaments are now broadcast online with reliable real-time computer commentary, so amateurs can follow what's going on. And, a development that might interest bridge players, chess AIs are good at unmasking cheats. Since the machines know what the right move is in most positions, they can spot when someone is playing too well and give statistically significant evidence that something funny is going on. The US chess master and computer expert Ken Regan has been a pioneer in this field.

In fact, when you think more about it, a strong AI might be exactly what bridge needs...

MORE ABOUT NEURAL NETS AND DEEP LEARNING

We were going to say that neural nets and deep learning are a highly technical subject that's impossible to explain in a few sentences. Luckily we have Randall Munroe's xkcd comic strip. He's pretty much nailed it.

Neural nets have been around for a long time. An early success, back in the 90s, was Neurogammon, a neural net backgammon program that became a world-class player. But other things didn't immediately work so well, and neural nets went out of fashion for a while, except in the field of image analysis. About 15 years ago, people found solutions to

some technical problems that had been holding up progress, and then things really took off. Google played a large part in making this happen, and they now use neural nets with deep learning for most of their core business. In particular, it's given them very strong performance in machine translation (Google Translate), speech recognition (voice search) and image recognition (Google inverse image search). AlphaGo shows that they're still just starting to exploit this new technology. Another recent success is lip reading. A few years ago, most AI experts were saying that the famous scene from 2001 would be science-fiction for the foreseeable future. It turned out that they were too pessimistic.



Article and photos previously published in the SABF Bulletin in 2017

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OTHER REGULAR ONLINE EVENTS

Queensland

Arana, Brisbane Bridge Centre, Beenleigh-Logan / Broadwater, Mt Tamborine / Helensvale, Caboolture / Bribie Island, Gold Coast, Hervey Bay / Maryborough, Kenmore, Northern Suburbs, Qld Contract Bridge Club, Sunnybank/Redlands, Toowoomba (inc Goondiwindi), Wynnum Manly, Qld Wide event every Saturday, North Queensland Club Games

Victoria

Ballarat, Bendigo, BridgeVid, Waverley, Werribee, Williamstown

New South Wales

Grand Slam, Hunters Hill, MasterBridge, North Shore, Sydney Bridge Centre

HOW WOULD YOU PLAY?

with
Barbara
Travis



Solutions on page 19

QUESTION 1

♠ Q 8 6 3 2
♥ J 6
♦ 10 4
♣ K J 4 2

♠ A
♥ A K 7 4 2
♦ A 3
♣ A Q 7 5 3

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			2♣
pass	2♦	pass	2♥
pass	2♠	pass	3♣
pass	4♣	pass	4NT
pass	5♦	pass	6♣
all pass			

West leads a low diamond, to the king and ace. How would you play?

QUESTION 2

♠ 8 3
♥ A Q 8 4 3
♦ K Q 10 7 2
♣ 7

♠ K 10 4 2
♥ K 10 6
♦ A 4 3
♣ A K Q

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♣
pass (19)	1♥	2♠	3NT (18-)
pass	4♦	pass	4♥
pass	5♦	pass	6NT
all pass			

West leads the ♠5, East winning and returning the queen. How would you play?

QUESTION 3

♠ K 6 5 2
♥ 8 7 3 2
♦ 7 3
♣ K J 4

♠ A 7
♥ A K Q 10 6
♦ 9 8 4
♣ A 6 2

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♥
2♦	2♥	pass	4♥
all pass			

You are playing a teams match, where making the contract is the most important thing, not overtricks. West cashes the ♦A, ♦K, then leads the ♦Q. How would you play?



YOUTH BRIDGE NEWS with Leigh and Bianca Gold

AUSTRALIAN ONLINE YOUTH TOURNAMENT

With face to face bridge on a hiatus and the ANC cancelled, youth nights have migrated online. Over the last 2 months I have seen junior bridge nights and Pro-am's being played on BBO and a good time had by many.

What has been lacking is something big and meaningful, an event to look forward to, where there are prizes, masterpoints and a trophy to win. After talking with our junior player base and looking at the WBF model for their online championships, we are pleased to announce the Australian Online Youth Tournament or AOYT.

Details are being sent out to all state associations in the next few days but here is a snippet of what to expect.

It is state based. Rules on who you can play for are the same as the ANC. It can be your home state or where you are currently living now. One Team per state.

All systems can be played except Yellow systems. If you are unsure of what colour your system is, all the information is here:

www.abf.com.au/member-services/system-cards/

The event will run between June 26th and July 26th.

It will be a double round robin. Non-playing captains will organise the scheduling of matches with opposing team. The first round robin must be completed by July 10th.

There will be a 48 board Final played in 12 board segments. This can be played over one or two sittings.

Entries close 22nd June. And lastly it is FREE.

There will either be 10 or 12 matches per team (depending on entry numbers) and each qualifying match will be 16 boards.

So what do you get if you play and play well?

Firstly the event is a **red** point event, and you will get points for every win. For those making the finals the rewards get even better – book prizes for everyone in the finals, as well as ABF medallions.

For the winners, you will get a game (one session) with an Australian top player. You may even get someone who's playing on the Australian Open team.

So start getting excited, and organise a partner. More details will be posted in coming weeks by the ABF and your state association.



Australian Bridge Federation » System Cards

Systems must be classified as either Green Blue, Red or Yellow. Green – Natural. Blue – Strong Club systems. Red – Artificial systems. Yellow – Highly unusual systems (HUM). If using a brown sticker convention, you must also show that on your card. To correctly colour code your system card, please refer to the ABF System Regulations at www.abf.com.au.

RECOGNITION OF VOLUNTEERS INITIATIVE

The ABF would like to thank the clubs who participated in our Recognition of Volunteers initiative, by nominating their members for the contributions they make to their bridge club.

We recognise all volunteers who give up their valuable time to assist in running the clubs at so many levels, and we would not survive without them.

We will send the certificates to the clubs to distribute to their nominated volunteers, once the bridge world is back operating.



WORKSHOPS WITH WILL

with William Jenner-O'Shea

PLANNING THE PLAY AT NOTRUMPS

This workshop covered a lot of elements of notrump bidding, play and defence. Newer players often struggle when they are declaring notrumps, and many players panic, with no real plan. The right approach will help you play the hand well, and it only takes a few seconds if you get in the habit of planning the hand at trick one every time you are the declarer.

Let's see how to plan these hands, on the first one, you open 1NT (15-17) and partner bids straight to 3NT.

PLAY

♠ K 3
♥ J 10
♦ A Q 10 9 6
♣ 9 8 6 3

Lead: ♠Q

♠ A 4
♥ K Q 7
♦ K J 5
♣ Q J 10 7 5

At first glance, the diamonds are all winners, and many players would play them straight away. Other players would tackle the clubs immediately "losing their losers" because that is what they have been taught. So which suit should declarer play first on this hand?

The best approach on this hand is to count your immediate winners. You have two spade winners and five diamond winners for seven definite tricks. Then look for potential tricks, up to three clubs can be established, and also two hearts can be established. To establish the clubs, declarer will need to lose the lead twice (to the ♣A and ♣K) but the defenders will take too many spade tricks before the clubs are established. The best play on this hand is to play the hearts immediately. With two heart tricks established more quickly, the contract

can be made. The diamonds can be played first on this hand, but there is usually no rush to play a solid winning suit like this one.

Let's take a look at another hand. Again you open 1NT and partner bids 3NT.

PLAY

♠ A 6 5
♥ 9 6
♦ J 8 4
♣ A Q J 9 6

Lead: ♠3

♠ K 4
♥ A K 8 4
♦ K Q 9
♣ 10 7 4 2

Counting your definite, immediate tricks, you have two spades, two hearts, and the ♣A. You potentially have two diamond tricks, and three or four club tricks (depending on the finesse).

If the club finesse works, then declarer has nine easy tricks without losing the lead. If the club finesse loses, then East will return a spade and declarer only has eight tricks, and no more stoppers.

Best play is to lead a diamond early in the play to establish the two diamond tricks. That way, even if the club finesse loses, declarer will have at least nine tricks. The other very important part of the play here is that one round of spades must be ducked (either the first round or the second round). When the club finesse is finally taken, and lost, North will have no more spades to lead back.

If the club finesse loses, then this becomes an incredibly tricky hand. If you manage to make this hand, you deserve your excellent score!





A GAME AT THE CLUB

with
**Barbara
Travis**

"7¼ times world champion" (don't ask about the quarter) Kate McCallum and I have known each other for more than 30 years, but this was our first game together.

Let me start with a board where I "fell asleep" during the auction. Sitting South, North-South vulnerable, I held:

♠ 8 6 ♥ A J 5 ♦ 7 6 5 4 ♣ A 10 8 5

WEST	NORTH McCallum	EAST	SOUTH Travis
		1♥	pass
1♠	dbl	2♥	3♣ ¹
pass	pass	3♥	pass
all pass			

1. I could have doubled 2♥ – a responsive double, asking partner to bid her longer minor.

The pass of 3♥ was where I fell asleep. I should have doubled 3♥. Partner had made a takeout double, and I held what looked like three sure tricks. Furthermore, if we were making 3♣ the score is worth 110, so I have to double to score as much as possible. We took 3♥ down two tricks, worth 100, but the double would have secured 300 for an equal top. This follows on perfectly from Brad's article in the April issue about Matchpoints and the need to double.

<p>♠ J 9 7 5 4 3 ♥ 7 2 ♦ Q ♣ K Q 7 6</p>	<p>♠ A K 2 ♥ 6 ♦ K J 9 3 2 ♣ J 9 4 3</p>
<p>♠ 8 6 ♥ A J 5 ♦ 7 6 5 4 ♣ A 10 8 5</p>	<p>♠ Q 10 ♥ K Q 10 9 8 4 3 ♦ A 10 8 ♣ 2</p>

It's worth looking at the defence, since several people did not defend as accurately as we did. I wasn't really sure what to lead, given I felt I already had two trump tricks, but I chose my doubleton spade.

The ♠8 went to partner's ♠K, and she cashed the ♠A. I was a little disappointed that we didn't get to cash our club winner

Paul Lavings
Bridgegear

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now, but our communications were severed. Kate led another spade, declarer discarded his club loser and I ruffed with the ♥5.

Accepting that I had already secured my second trump trick, I exited by cashing the ♥A and leading my ♥J. This ensured that declarer could no longer trump diamonds in dummy. Once he finished drawing trumps, he had to give partner two diamond tricks. He did try to endplay her by cashing some more trumps before leading a small diamond to the queen and North's king, but Kate had kept a club exit. He could ruff that, but now he still had a second diamond loser with the A-10 to Kate's J-9.

It was surprising how many declarers managed to take eight or nine tricks, either on a diamond lead or being allowed to trump two diamonds. Our defence held declarer to seven tricks, but the lack of double was expensive. (I call these doubles "Pairs Doubles" because you must recover or better the score you could have achieved if you had played the contract. Mind you, this one was just 'bridge', given the quality of my hand!)

Here's another hand. The auction has been:

WEST	NORTH McCallum	EAST	SOUTH Travis
pass	1♥	pass	pass
pass	2♣	all pass	1♠

It's your lead:

♠ 10 6 2 ♥ K J 10 6 ♦ J 9 4 ♣ A K 2

This auction marks South with heart shortage, given they have already denied hearts then dropped declarer in the second suit. A trump lead is marked, and it's even more obvious when holding such good hearts (declarer's first suit). Our opponent led the ♣AK and a third club, ensuring two off and giving us an equal bottom.

♠ K 9 7	♥ A Q 9 8 4	♠ 10 6 2
♥ 7 5 3 2	♦ A 6	♥ K J 10 6
♦ K Q 10	♣ 8 6 5 4	♦ J 9 4
♣ 10 9 7		♣ A K 2
	♠ Q J 8 5 4	
	♥ —	
	♦ 8 7 5 3 2	
	♣ Q J 3	

After the three rounds of clubs, Kate could only make two spade tricks (via the finesse), two club tricks and the red suit aces. On the other hand, someone made nine tricks on a diamond lead – you win the ♦A, ♥A, heart ruff, ♠Q – finessing, a spade to the ace, heart ruff, spade ruff, heart ruff. That is already eight tricks and somehow another trick was garnered somewhere!

I'll keep saying it – listen to the auction and think about what it has told you before making your opening lead.

Partner opened 1NT, showing 14-16 HCP, and I held:

♠ K Q J 9 7 ♥ 4 ♦ 5 3 ♣ J 10 8 4 2

My first action was easy enough, transferring to spades. Having done that, and received the uninspiring response of 2♣ (no super-accept), the issue was whether to bid again or not. After some thought, I chose to pass. My reason: Matchpoint Pairs is all about ensuring you get a 'plus' score, and pushing for close games is not winning bridge.

Kate held a maximum 1NT opening opposite my hand:

Kate	Me
♠ 8 3	♠ K Q J 9 7
♥ K Q 2	♥ 4
♦ A 10 9 2	♦ 5 3
♣ A K 7 5	♣ J 10 8 4 2

Even with the maximum opposite, on a diamond lead, the 10 tricks required for 4♠ needed a decent spade break (3-3 or 10-doubleton) and to pick up the clubs for no loser. As it happened, on a singleton club lead, we made 11 tricks and still scored above average!

At Teams, on the other hand, I'd have looked for game at this vulnerability. Vulnerable game swings are significant.

My final offering:

♠ —	♠ 9 4	♠ A K Q 3
♥ J 10 8 7 3	♥ A 6 5	♥ 9 4 2
♦ Q 8 3 2	♦ K J 6 5	♦ A 10 9 7 4
♣ Q 10 8 6	♣ A J 4 3	♣ 7
	♠ J 10 8 7 6 5 2	
	♥ K Q	
	♦ —	
	♣ K 9 5 2	

WEST	NORTH McCallum	EAST	SOUTH Travis
pass	1♦	pass	1♠
dbl (!)	1NT	pass	4♠
pass	pass	pass (!)	

My 4♠ was a bit of an overbid. The shape compensated to some extent, but partner's opening bid in my void was not favourable for me. However, what still has me in shock is East's final pass. Clearly, she trusted our bidding more than her partner's! Wow... perhaps she's seen some random takeout doubles before?

I was shocked when she held all the spades and hadn't doubled, but when she later produced the ♦A as well, I was gobsmacked. I also decided I was flattered that she trusted my bidding and play to such an extent. 4♠ undoubled didn't score all that well for us, given that many Easts did double (and presumably without a call from partner).



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BRIDGE INTO THE 21st CENTURY

by Paul Lavings



RESPONDER'S REBID

What would you call on the following hands, nil vulnerable:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♣	(Pass)	1♥	(Pass)
1♠	(Pass)	?	

- ♠ Q 6 5 ♥ A Q 6 3 ♦ 8 7 4 ♣ 10 8 7
- ♠ A 8 6 ♥ A 10 8 7 2 ♦ 4 3 ♣ 7 6 3
- ♠ K 8 2 ♥ J 10 7 6 ♦ K Q 10 2 ♣ Q 10
- ♠ A J 9 7 ♥ A 9 8 7 6 4 ♦ J 4 ♣ 5
- ♠ A Q 8 7 ♥ A 8 7 6 4 ♦ 8 4 ♣ K 3
- ♠ A 4 ♥ A K 8 3 2 ♦ K 3 ♣ J 10 7 6

SOLUTIONS

1. 1NT. Assuming you play better minor my practice is to always show the spades unless 4-3-3-3. This way opener will always have at least four clubs when they rebid 1♠. I wouldn't want to play in a 4-3 club fit so I hope for the best and bid 1NT.

You may not like to bid 1NT without a stopper in the unbid suit. In essence if you are forced to bid then 1NT may not have a stopper. If your bid is voluntary such as:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♣	(pass)	1♥	(1♠)
1NT			

then you are showing a stopper. You could happily pass their 1♠ and the bidding is still open for partner.

2. 1NT. Even less appetizing than in Question 1, with only a doubleton diamond. A preference to 2♣ would be a close second choice while 2♥, repeating your five-card suit would not be on my radar. Partner could well have a singleton or void in hearts and will pass 2♥ "knowing" you have at least six of them.

3. 2NT. A natural invitational bid showing 11-12 HCP. Looks an obvious choice with such a strong diamond holding.

4. 4♠. You don't really know how you will go in 4♠ but you do have great shape. Your strong spades indicate a cross-ruff might score you at least ten tricks with two aces and four ruffs in each hand.

5. 2♦. Fourth suit forcing to game. You are too good to jump to 4♠, your ♣K is a valuable card. Opener could have a hand such as

♠ K 9 6 2 ♥ 3 ♦ A 9 7 ♣ A Q J 10 5

if spades break 3-2 you have 12 top tricks in 6♠ despite only 27 HCP between the partnership. Your plan is to support spades on your next turn at the two- or three-level. You can then exchange cue bids and hopefully follow up with Keycard Blackwood.

6. 2♦. Again fourth suit forcing to game. There are various possible contracts, 3NT, 4♥, 5♣ or maybe 6♣ opposite only a 12-count such as

♠ K 6 5 4 ♥ 6 5 ♦ A 8 ♣ K Q 9 8 4 .

If opener continues over 2♦ with 2NT then show your clubs with 3♣.

PART TWO: THE XYZ CONVENTION

One convention I strongly recommend is XYZ. Many partnerships play Two-Way Checkback, but XYZ goes one step further in that it applies after any three bids by your side at the one-level:

- 1♣ 1♥
 1♠ 2♣ = forcing partner to bid 2♦, either to play or with some invitational hand
- 1♣ 1♥
 1♠ 2♦ = artificial game force

In the hands below you will see that this helps considerably. Using the same auction:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♣	(pass)	1♥	(pass)
1♠	(pass)	?	
7. ♠ A 3 ♥ Q J 7 6 ♦ 10 9 8 6 4 3 ♣ 3			
8. ♠ A 8 2 ♥ K Q J 7 6 ♦ 4 2 ♣ J 3 2			
9. ♠ A 8 4 3 ♥ A 10 6 3 ♦ Q 10 8 ♣ J 3			
10. ♠ K 8 ♥ J 10 7 6 ♦ K Q 2 ♣ Q 10 6 3			

SOLUTIONS

7. 2♣. If not playing XYZ, there is no way you could get to play in 2♦, or even 3♦ for that matter. With XYZ you continue with 2♣ and when opener dutifully bids 2♦ you pass. As easy as that!

8. 2♣. Without XYZ there is no way to show an invitation with five hearts. You simply bid 2♣ and when opener bids 2♦ you bid 2♥. If opener has a singleton heart they take 2♥ out to 2NT.

9. 2♣. Without XYZ you would bid 3♠, an invitation with four spades. With XYZ you bid 2♣ and when opener bids 2♦ you bid 2♠ as a limit raise and invitational. Now if all your finesses fail or trumps break poorly, or both, you are only in 2♠ instead of 3♠.

10. 2♣. With a club fit you would like to invite game in no-trumps but bail out in 3♣ if partner rejects your invite. You bid 2♣ and over 2♦ you bid 2NT. You could have bid 2NT directly over 1♠, so why did you take this route? It is called a "slow-show": by going slowly you are showing club support, so that the partnership has the option of playing in 3♣ rather than 2NT and perhaps scoring 110 rather than -200.

paul@bridgegear.com

HOW WOULD YOU PLAY?

with Barbara Travis



Solutions to problems on page 13

HAND 1

♠ Q 8 6 3 2
♥ J 6
♦ 10 4
♣ K J 4 2

♠ 10 5 4
♥ Q 9 5 3
♦ Q 9 8 6 2
♣ 8

♠ K J 9 7
♥ 10 8
♦ K J 7 5
♣ 10 9 6

♠ A
♥ A K 7 4 2
♦ A 3
♣ A Q 7 5 3

Against 6♣, West leads a low diamond, to the king and ace. How will you play?

Win the diamond, then cash the ♣A and ♣K, finding a 3-1 break. You need to develop heart winners, so now you should cash the ♥A and ♥K, then ruff a heart in dummy with the ♣J. When East discards on the third heart, you have a problem, though it can be overcome. Return to your hand with the ♠A to lead another heart, but discard your diamond loser, allowing West to win the trick.

Now you trump the losing diamond in dummy, then draw trumps, losing just one heart trick.

HAND 2

♠ 8 3
♥ A Q 8 4 3
♦ K Q 10 7 2
♣ 7

♠ 5
♥ J 9 7 5
♦ 9
♣ J 9 8 5 4 3 2

♠ A Q J 9 7 6
♥ 2
♦ J 8 6 5
♣ 10 6

♠ K 10 4 2
♥ K 10 6
♦ A 4 3
♣ A K Q

Against 6NT, West leads the ♠5, East winning and returning the queen. How will you play?

You win the ♠K and realise that you have 12 tricks as long as you can take five tricks in either hearts or diamonds.

You should start by playing a diamond to the king, then a diamond back to the ace, so that you can finesse diamonds should West hold J-x-x-x. West's discard is an unpleasant sight, but it does mean that you have a good count of the East and West hands. East started with six spades and four diamonds.

You could go with the odds and cash the ♥K then lead the ♥10, planning to run it if it is not covered, but that might lead to an embarrassing situation if East started with ♥J-x.

It is better to complete the count of the hand by cashing your three club winners, discarding dummy's diamonds. When East discards a spade on the third round of clubs, you know he was originally 6-1-4-2. You can't now lead the ♥K then plan to finesse, because you have no more entries to hand, so West just covers. Instead, you now lead the ♥10, intending to run it if West plays low. When West covers the ♥10, you win with dummy's queen, then return to your ♥K and finesse again. (You may lose to a singleton ♥J with East, but the odds are 4-1 in your favour once you know there is a singleton heart in the East hand.)

On the other hand, if East has only one club, then you know hearts are breaking 3-2, guaranteeing five tricks in the suit.

HAND 3

♠ K 6 5 2
♥ 8 7 3 2
♦ 7 3
♣ K J 4

♠ 10 9
♥ 5
♦ A K Q J 5 2
♣ 9 7 5 3

♠ Q J 8 4 3
♥ J 9 4
♦ 10 6
♣ Q 10 8

♠ A 7
♥ A K Q 10 6
♦ 9 8 4
♣ A 6 2

You are playing a Teams match, where making the contract is the most important thing, not overtricks.

Against your 4♥ contract, West cashes the ♦A, ♦K, then leads the ♦Q. How will you play?

If you trump the diamond in dummy, East will over-ruff and now your contract hinges on the club finesse.

Instead of relying on the finesse, you should swap your losers around. On the ♦Q, discard a club from dummy. Now you can win any continuation and start drawing trumps. Once trumps prove not to be 4-0, your contract is safe. You draw all the trumps, then you can trump your small club in dummy: five trumps, two spades, two clubs, one club ruff.

Bridge Vid

with
Peter Hollands



CUE BIDDING TO SLAM

In this month's lesson I want to talk about cue bidding towards slam.

Some people just show first-round controls when they cue bid, but in this article I will try to show why I think showing first- and second-round controls is actually better. (First-round controls are aces and voids; second round controls are kings and singletons.)

First, we need to talk about slam bidding philosophy: cue bidding vs. some of the alternative approaches, such as long-suit trials or help-suit trials. Then we'll talk about how to set up a forcing auction where you can use cue bidding.

To bid towards slam, there are a few steps that you need to do. Most people, when they think of slam, think "Let's go, Blackwood", but Blackwood should be your final step in a slam auction. The first thing you want to do is set up a forcing auction, telling your partner that you need more information. You'll also need to tell partner what the trump suit is; you might know, but your partner doesn't necessarily know yet. So we want to set up a forcing auction with a confirmed trump suit.

Then we progress into cue bidding (first- or second-round controls), and then finally, if necessary, Blackwood. So, why first or second round controls? Well, if we're interested in slam there are two hurdles that we need to get past. If we're in the slam zone, one thing we want to do is make sure we're not missing two aces, and this is why we have Blackwood. But there's another hurdle, which is we have to make sure we don't lose two tricks in any one suit. It's really disappointing when the opponents go ace-king and we lose those first two tricks.

If you just show first-round controls, that doesn't solve the problem (at least, not as quickly); we may find an ace is missing, but we still don't know if we control the second round of the suit.

WHERE DO CUE BIDS APPLY

Before we start, let's look at the difference between cue bids and *help-suit bids*. Take the following auction:

WEST	EAST
1♥	3♥
3♠	

In this auction, we know we're playing in hearts, so if someone bids a new suit we will always go back to hearts. So why bid a new suit? A new suit, such as 3♠, 4♣ or 4♦, is a cue bid, showing first- or second-round control in the suit bid.

This auction is different:

WEST	EAST
1♥	2♥
2♠	

On the first auction, we were already committed to game, and our target was slam, so we needed to know about controls. In the second auction, we are not committed to game yet, and our first priority is to decide whether to bid game, or stop in 3♥. For this decision, we need to know how well our values are working, so a new suit should be a long-suit trial. Cue bids apply once you have passed three of your major, and can no longer stop below game.

In both cases, the new suit is simply saying, "Can we go to the next stage?" in the progression from partscore, to game, to slam, to grand slam.

Similarly, if your trump suit is a minor, then once you have passed 3NT, you'll

be cue bidding. You never intend to stop in four of your minor in a constructive auction; with very rare exceptions, four of a minor should be forcing (encouraging partner to make a cue bid). When we have a minor suit fit, the most likely game that we're going to play is 3NT, so if we're already at the four-level we are now deciding between five of the minor and six of the minor.

There is one exception to that rule: the competitive auction. If you're bidding to four of a minor just to outbid the opponents, then of course you can stop there.

So, cue bidding applies when we can no longer stop in a partscore. If we start bidding in new suit, we are inviting partner to bid slam.

FORCING AUCTIONS

Let's look at some ways to set up a forcing auction in preparation for cue bidding.

WEST	EAST
1NT	2♣
2♠	?

In this auction, what do we do now if we're interested in slam? Many people would just jump to 4NT, but that consumes a lot of space, and doesn't give partner a chance to express an opinion. We want to slow the auction down and say, "Partner, I need more information. We want to (a) set up a forcing auction, (b) tell partner what the trump suit is, and (c) move into cue bidding, and ultimately Blackwood. This is the approach that we want to try and use as often as possible; it won't work on all hands, but if you can adopt this process you'll find your slam bidding a lot better.

In this auction, the way to set up a forcing auction is to bid the other major, as discussed in my Stayman article in the previous issue (April 2020, page 9, final paragraph). 3♥ cannot be a natural bid in this auction, because opener has denied four hearts and the Stayman bidder will not have five.

WEST	EAST
1NT	2♣
2♠	3♥

3♥ here sets spades as trumps, and says we are interested in slam. This accomplishes both of our first two goals, and the next step is cue bidding. This is a fantastic tool which many partnerships will not have discussed, which is why I chose to start with this example.

More commonly, these auctions will begin with a major-suit raise:

WEST	EAST
1♥	?

Another example is when you open a game-forcing 2♣. This sets up a forcing auction immediately:

WEST	EAST
2♣	2♦
2♠	3♠

2♣ sets up the game force, and 3♠ sets trumps.

Let's look at a competitive auction:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	(2♠)	3♠	

The immediate cue of the opponent's overcalled suit here is known as a *cue raise* (not the same thing as *cue bidding*, although it has a similar name). A cue raise is a good hand with trump support – just a forcing way of setting the trump suit. As we can no longer stop in 3♥, we will now move into a cue bidding auction.

How does cue bidding actually work?

For the sake of simplicity, let's assume you are playing a very simple system where 1♥-3♥ is an invitational raise:

WEST	EAST
1♥	3♥

This 3♥ is not forcing, so we are not committed to game yet, but a new suit by opener will commit us to game and put us in a slam try auction. This achieves our first two steps in reverse order (setting trumps first and then establishing a forcing auction) but the result is the same.

A cue bid is a bid of a new suit beyond three of your major (or above 3NT if your trump suit is a minor).

WEST	EAST
1♥	3♥
3♠	4♣

3♠ says, "I have first- or second-round control in spades" and asks partner to start showing their own controls. Responder's 4♣ shows first- or second-round control in clubs.

Using this method, it doesn't matter if you've got the ♦A and the ♣K, you always bid the cheaper one first. You don't give preference to bidding your aces first – we want to just bid the cheapest one up the line to let partner know we have a control there.

This means that if partner bypasses a suit, they don't have a control there. If instead of 4♣, partner had bid 4♦, this would show a control in diamonds, but deny a control in clubs. This would allow us to stop at the four-level if neither partner controls the club suit, even if we have a very strong hand. Even if we have 33 HCP, we don't want to be in 5♥ with no club control – we might lose ♣AK and a club ruff.

Let's go back and see what happens if opener bids 4♣ instead of 3♠:

WEST	EAST
1♥	3♥
4♣	

This shows first- or second-round control in clubs, but denies a control in spades, because 3♠ would have been cheaper than 4♣. Responder must now immediately sign off in 4♥ with no spade control.

Those are the basics of cue bidding. You cue your own cheapest control, and this asks partner to cooperate by cueing their cheapest control. As soon as you know you have an uncontrolled suit, you give up.

Does a cue bid force partner to cooperate, even if they have a bad hand? No. Unlike Blackwood, a cue bid asks for partner's opinion about bidding slam. If partner really doesn't like their hand at all, they are free to abandon cue bidding and sign off in game at any time. But usually when your partner cues, if you have just a normal hand for your previous bidding, then you should cooperate with a cue of your own.

Looking at our current example (1♥ opening, 3♥ invitational raise) this does not mean that you should sign off just because you have a minimum invitation. A minimum hand is not necessarily bad for slam. A bad hand is one where

most of your cards are queens and jacks, generally with no keycards.

EXAMPLES

♠ A 4 ♥ A K Q 9 4 ♦ Q 6 3 ♣ K 8 6

We have 18 HCP and a five-card heart suit so we open 1♥, and partner bids 3NT, which we play as a balanced heart raise with 13-15 HCP.

WEST	EAST
1♥	3NT
?	

We're now interested in slam, but we may be missing the ace-king of diamonds. We do have a club control, so we start with 4♣, showing the ace or king of clubs. Note that in this case we have not bypassed spades; unlike in the earlier example, we had no opportunity to bid 3♠, so 4♣ does not deny a spade control. 4♣ is our cheapest cue bid.

If responder now bids 4♥, they probably don't have control of diamonds, so we expect to lose at least two diamond tricks and can stop without getting the five-level. If instead partner bid 4♦, now we know that both clubs and diamonds are covered, and we can see the ♠A in our own hand. Now is the time to move into Blackwood.

WEST	EAST
1♥	3NT
4♣	4♦
4NT	5♥
6♥	

Partner shows two aces, so we are missing one of the minor-suit aces. However, we know that there are not two losers in that suit, so we can bid the slam.

♠ A 4	♠ K Q 2
♥ A K Q 9 4	♥ J 6 5
♦ Q 6 3	♦ A 9 8
♣ K 8 6	♣ A 7 5 2

Not a bad slam. The 12th trick can come from a 3-3 club break, and if that doesn't work we can play a diamond to the queen and hope the king is inside. We are lucky that partner had the ♥J, otherwise we would also have needed a 3-2 heart break – cue bidding can't help to find the jack of trumps.

We'll look at some more examples next month.

<https://bridgevid.com>

Click [here](#) for the video version of this article. Peter uploads new videos to his Bridge Vid channel almost daily.

KEEPING COOL

by
Dennis Zines



In a non-regular partnership, partner (South) held the following hand:

♠ 6 4 3 2
♥ A K Q J 8 3
♦ Q 5 4
♣ —

With East-West vulnerable, partner opened 1♥ and West overcalled 2♣, and I as North doubled. Partner was convinced that my double showed four spades, so jumped to 4♠ which ended the auction. West led the ♣K and shock set in when my dummy was revealed. See below:

♠ A K 5
♥ 9 4
♦ A 9 7 6
♣ 8 7 6 4

♠ 6 4 3 2
♥ A K Q J 8 3
♦ Q 5 4
♣ —

This deal was used in Australian Bridge Magazine's *Bidding Forum* column (Problem Two in the April 2020 issue). Seven expert South players favoured bids in spades (2♠ or 3♠), while nine favoured hearts (4♥, 3♥ or 2♥). It is worth reading the magazine to see how the expert panellists' evaluate the South hand. It is also worth examining how the contract can be made.

I intended my double to show competitive values, and if partner had known this, he would have simply bid 4♥. However, traditionally the double would indicate spades. You should discuss this situation with your partners. Meanwhile, how do we deal with the problem at hand?

There are a number of ways to succeed, but the following approach will demonstrate the general principles.

You must ruff the first club (with East playing the ♣A) and despite the paucity of trumps, you play the ♠A and ♠K with West playing the ♠7 and ♠Q and East the ♠8 and ♠9. Hopefully, East has the two outstanding high trumps.

While in dummy, you ruff a club with your remaining trump to strip East of his second club (since you also hope that West overcalled on seven clubs). Now you run the hearts, with East having four and West one. Dummy pitches two diamonds and one club. East ruffs the fifth heart but is now endplayed as shown in the full deal:

♠ A K 6
♥ 9 4
♦ A 9 7 6
♣ 8 7 6 4

♠ Q 7
♥ 7
♦ J 8 3
♣ K Q J 10 9 5 2

♠ J 10 9 8
♥ 10 6 5 2
♦ K 10 2
♣ A 3

♠ 5 4 3 2
♥ A K Q J 8 3
♦ Q 5 4
♣ —

East can draw the last trump, but then has to give declarer two diamond tricks. In fact, the ♦Q becomes an entry to cash the sixth heart, so in the end declarer loses only two trumps and makes an unexpected overtrick (winning the ♠AK, two club ruffs, two diamonds and five heart tricks).

The contract involved a Moysian fit, ruffing in the long trump hand, elimination of East's club suit, using the heart suit as alternative trumps, and a throw-in in diamonds.

Partner takes the opportunity to point out that he introduced spades at the four level with the weakest four-card trump suit possible while holding a very solid heart side-suit, and all the players marvel at just how amazing some bridge hands are.

As North, I congratulate partner on keeping his cool and taking his chances in what looked like a hopeless cause. This sort of hand is why we all love bridge.

Of course, 4♥ is a much easier contract, but then there wouldn't be anything to write about!



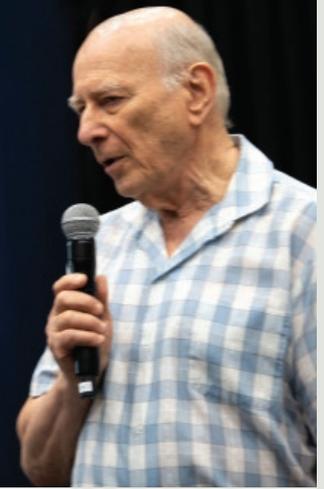
cup2go

For those bridge players who care about the environment, the ABF's sponsor, PENLINE, makes Reusable Coffee cups and Water Bottles, as part of its "War on Waste". If you are interested in more information, please contact Maryo Derofo by email: maryo@penline.com.au

IMPROVE YOUR DEFENCE

with Ron Klinger

Solution to problem on page 2



THE ART OF NOT SACRIFICING

From a Butler Trials:

S/Nil	♠ J 9 8 7	
	♥ 3	
	♦ 10 7 5 4 3	
	♣ A Q J	
♠ Q 3		♠ 6 5
♥ A K Q 8 6		♥ 10 7 5 4 2
♦ K 9		♦ A J 8 2
♣ 7 5 4 3		♣ 10 8
	♠ A K 10 4 2	
	♥ J 9	
	♦ Q 6	
	♣ K 9 6 2	

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
2♥	4♠	all pass	1♠

You lead the ♥A: three - seven - nine. You play low-encouraging on partner's lead. How do you continue?

You are clearly scoring no more than one trick in hearts, and it is unlikely that you will have a natural spade winner. That means you need three tricks from the minors. If South has a normal opening of 12+ HCP, partner has 6 HCP at most. Partner could have the ♣K and ♦Q, but that probably gives you two more tricks at most.

As long as declarer has 2-3 diamonds, you need just one card in partner's hand, the ♦A. Switch to the ♦K, continue to the ♦A and the third diamond promotes your ♠Q. A club switch could work if declarer was 5-2-3-3 and partner had ♦Q-J-x and the ♣K, but in that case the ♦K works just as well.

Partner might have been more helpful by playing the ♥10 as a suit-preference signal on your ♥A, since low-encourage or high-discourage is not relevant here. Datum on the deal was NS 110. If you defeated 4♠, take +4 imps. If you did not, you lose 7 imps. If you failed to find the ♦K at trick two, it would have been better for partner to sacrifice in 5♥ doubled for -300 and only -5 imps.



ABF COMMITTEE OF HONOUR

At the 2020 Annual General Meeting, the ABF Council unanimously elected Mr Roy Nixon to the Committee of Honour. In moving this motion, Allison Stralow, the ABF President noted the following:

Mr Roy Nixon was the President of the Bridge Federation of the Australian Capital Territory from 2006 to 2017. In 2007 he became an Ordinary Member of the ABF Management Committee and in April 2008 he was elected as the Treasurer of the ABF, a position he held for 12 years. Roy worked diligently to always make sure the budget balanced and to stay up-to-date on accounting standards and tax laws. This resulted in the ABF implementing new standards that ensured a smooth audit at the fiscal year-end.

A brief statement cannot do justice to his efforts on behalf of the ABF and bridge in Australia.

Letters to the editor



HELPING HANDS

When bridge clubs were closed due to the coronavirus pandemic, they largely lost touch with their players. Many sought ways to reconnect, even if there was no income involved; but the leading online platform BBO was inundated and refused to issue new hosting rights for clubs to run their own games.

Our club, Trumps, was one of those struggling to find a way to run online duplicates. Then there came a glimmer of hope: we heard that Charles Page of Queensland and his colleague Paul Brake had BBO hosting rights and might be willing to give other clubs a piggyback to be able to run bridge sessions on BBO. Sure enough, they let us run games and they even did work to set them up, and offered helpful advice where needed. And they asked for nothing in return.

This letter is mainly to express our gratitude to them for that assistance, but mention should also be made of Peter Cox, Matthew McManus and others at the ABF who negotiated for Aussie clubs to be able to run masterpointed sessions on BBO at minimal charge, allowing us to better serve our players and stop pestering our Queensland saviours!

Finally, this is a chance to thank staff and volunteers who also help clubs through a crisis such as this. In the case of Trumps, invaluable work was done by volunteer Mark Hetherington (a consultant with expertise in setting up online systems) assisted by his bridge partner Bryan Meagher.

To all of these people, and unnamed others who have helped bridge clubs get through this crisis better than they otherwise would have done, a giant thank you.

*Derrick Browne
Trumps Bridge Centre, Sydney*

THINK ABOUT THOSE PIPS

I am an avid reader of your ABF Newsletter, and regularly learn a lot from it.

However, I am concerned that the article "Think about those pips", by Steve Hurley, No. 202, April 2020, may be misleading.

♠ A 6	♠ K Q 10 9 8 5 3 2
♥ K	♥ —
♦ Q 9 7 5 4	♦ A J 10 6 2
♣ K J 7 3 2	♣ —
♠ J 4	♠ 7
♥ A Q J 10 9 8 7 6	♥ 5 4 3 2
♦ —	♦ K 8 3
♣ 10 6 5	♣ A Q 9 8 4

An unusual distribution is revealed by the bidding and early play. The contract is 5♣ doubled. After drawing trumps, a low diamond is played from dummy (North) through RHO who is known to hold four or five diamonds. RHO holds AJ1062, and plays the two!

In my humble opinion, the vast majority of defenders holding this would play ♦10, thus ensuring two more tricks for the defence and taking the contract light.

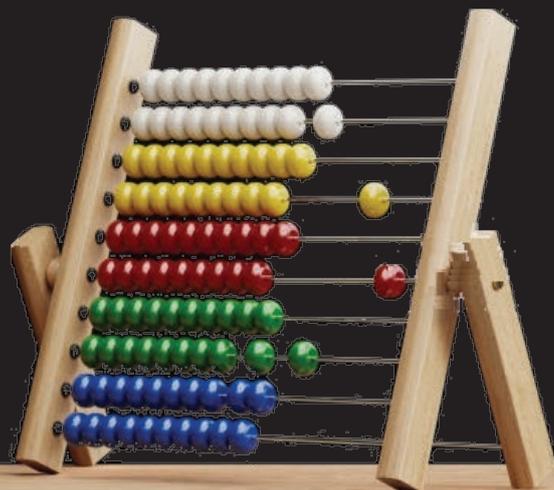
I appreciate the basic premises of the article, the importance of counting opponents' hands and "watching the pips". I also enjoyed the observation that 6♠ can be made by East (but not West), and that 4♥ by East goes light.

I do believe, however, that meaningful lessons are those which can withstand reasonable scrutiny.

*Hugh McAlister
Townsville*

BEHIND THE MATCHPOINTS

with Brad Coles



As the long-time convenor of the Australia-Wide Pairs events, I spend a lot of time talking to players about Matchpoint scoring. The results booklets from those events are designed to encourage people to think about how their scores are calculated, which leads to interesting emails and phone calls.

This article is the fourth in a series of short articles addressing some of the common questions and misconceptions that have crossed my path. Today's article will discuss ...

CALCULATING THE MATCHPOINTS

GETTING A TOP BOARD

"I had eight top boards, so how could I score only 48%?" This is one of the most common questions I am asked.

It's easy to feel invincible after getting four or five tops in a row. But players don't often appreciate the effect of the bottom boards.

If you play a session of 26 boards, and get 13 tops and 13 bottoms, that only averages to 50%. So if you're looking for a 60% score, you won't get it by having one top for every bottom.

For a winning score, you'll need to have significantly more tops than bottoms. (Or even better, avoid the tops and bottoms completely and just get a whole lot of good solid scores).

BOARDS NOT PLAYED

A very unhappy player came to my table once, having been told she had to skip a board due to slow play.

"We were doing so well, and now that board is going to ruin our entire score."

She thought that not playing the board meant she would score a bottom. Maybe that's why many players get so upset when the director tells them to skip a board.

The truth is, when you don't play a board, it is recorded as either Not Played or Average. If it is recorded as Not Played, it will have no effect on your score. If you were on 60% before the board, you will remain on 60% after the board.

While I personally think that this would be a fair outcome, the Laws do require a score to be entered. That score will usually be an "average" (50% to both sides), but the director may choose 60%-40%, awarding 60% to a pair who clearly had no control over the slow play. Not Played is reserved for external interference, such as an electricity blackout.

When you are awarded an Average, it will have a slight effect on your score. If you are on 60% before the board, an Average will drop you to about 59.6%. If you are on 40% before the board, an average will raise your score to 40.4%. There is no reason to feel aggrieved if your score drops due to an averaged board. You may think, "We are good players; if we had played it, we probably would have scored 70% on the board." If you are that good, then it shouldn't have taken you 20 minutes to play two boards. Also, you should have no trouble making up the 0.4% elsewhere – shake it off and score 70% on the next board.

TOTAL BOARDS PLAYED

In the Australia-Wide events, particularly the Novice event, people ask is it fair that some clubs play 21 boards and others play 27 (and some actually play 36).

It makes little difference. If you play 27 boards and score 60% on each one, then your total score is 60%. If somehow you only get through ten boards, and score 60% on each one, then your total score is still 60%. (But the more boards you play, the harder it will be to maintain an extreme score, such as 75%.)

PASSED IN BOARDS

"I had to say something, I was the last person to bid".

I used to see this in my supervised sessions. When the bidding began Pass-Pass-Pass, some players felt they were obliged to bid, as if there were some kind of penalty for passing the hand in.

Passing, in any position, is a matter of judgement. Any time you decide to pass, the accuracy of your decision will determine your score. In fact, if all four players pass, one of them must be wrong. By passing in the hand, you are betting that the contract belongs to the other side.

Note that a passed in board is not the same as a "Not Played" board. While a "Not Played" board has no impact on your score, passing out a board is "playing" it – you've looked at your cards and bid your hand. The scoresheet will judge your score (zero) against all the plus and minus scores from other tables.

In the 1990s, you'd always find someone wanting to redeal a board if it was passed out on the first round of the day. Today, with computer-generated hand records at every session, no one would consider such a thing, but even in the old pre-computer days it was against the laws of bridge. Just because you have passed in a board at your table, that does not mean the other tables will do the same.

2020 MIXED TEAMS PLAYOFF

Julian Foster reports on the selection event that chose the team who would have been sent to the now-cancelled World Championships in Italy in August: Leone Fuller, Stephen Fischer, Trevor Fuller and Pele Rankin.



The following is an excerpt from Julian Foster's article in the June issue of Australian Bridge Magazine. Subscriptions to Australian Bridge are available for \$59 per year – contact Brad at mail@australianbridge.com.

The second playoffs for the Australian Mixed Team took place in Sydney in January 2020. 17 teams plus a House team played an 8-round 14-board swiss to decide four semi-finalists.

Foster (Julian Foster, Giselle Mundell, David Fryda, Rena Kaplan, Sebastian Yuen, Christy Geromboux) won the qualifying and were able to choose their opponents, Wilkinson (Michael Wilkinson, Jane Beeby, Les Grewcock, Liz Sylvester). This left second-placed Ware (Peter Hollands, Laura Ginnan, Nye Griffiths, Ella Jacob) to play third-placed Fuller (Trevor Fuller, Leone Fuller, Stephen Fischer, Pele Rankin).

THE SEMI-FINAL

Both semi-finals ended up with a margin of around 100 imps so are not that interesting to report. An early board did give rise to a fairly comical result:

Board 3 ♠ J
S/EW ♥ —
 ♦ Q 10 8 7 6 2
 ♣ K 8 6 5 3 2

♠ A K 10 4 2 ♠ 7 6
♥ A 10 8 4 ♥ J 9 7 6 5 2
♦ A 9 4 ♦ 3
♣ 9 ♣ A Q J 7

♠ Q 9 8 5 3
♥ K Q 3
♦ K J 5
♣ 10 4

Beginners are normally taught that notrump bids in uncontested auctions show balanced hands. However there is one major exception. A 1NT response to a one-major opening bid does not promise a balanced hand; merely a hand not strong enough to respond at the two-level. This hand was an extreme example.

Our bidding went:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
Foster	Wilkinson	Mundell	Beeby
pass	1NT	all pass	1♠

Note that North has to respond 1NT, even though he is 6-6 shape, as he doesn't have anywhere close to the values for a two-level response. He is obviously intending to bid again if he gets another chance. We proceeded to hold declarer to one trick for six off and +300. A poor score, since we could make 6♥! Undeservedly, it gained imps when the same auction took place at the other table, where 1NT only went three off.

My action as West was pretty ridiculous. I have an easy double of 1NT to show a good hand with spades that couldn't bid the first time. That will probably cause us to reach 4♥, although with North's extreme shape they will probably continue

to five of a minor. In the other semi-final, both EW pairs reached 5♥ making, one of them doubled.

THE FINAL

The final was between Foster and Fuller, both teams having won their semi-final comfortably.

Board 11 from the final was unusual, with 27 HCP but no making game:

Board 11	♠ A Q J 9 8		
S/Nil	♥ 6 4		
	♦ 9 7		
	♣ 10 9 4 3		
♠ 7 5 4		♠ 10 3 2	
♥ A K Q 3		♥ 10 5	
♦ 8 6 2		♦ A K J 10 3	
♣ K Q 6		♣ A J 7	
	♠ K 6		
	♥ J 9 8 7 2		
	♦ Q 5 4		
	♣ 8 5 2		

The Fullers managed to stop in a making partscore after this auction:

WEST Fuller	NORTH Fryda	EAST Fuller	SOUTH Kaplan
1♦	1♠	dbl	pass
1NT	pass	2♦	pass
2♠	pass	3♦	all pass

Giselle and I were in 5♦, each hoping the other had only two spades, losing 5 imps. The next board had only 25 HCP, but much more playing strength:

Board 12	♠ J 6 4 2		
W/NS	♥ 8		
	♦ A 10 8 6 5 4 3		
	♣ A		
♠ 9 7		♠ K Q 8 5 3	
♥ K 9		♥ J 10 7 5 4	
♦ K 9 7 2		♦ —	
♣ 9 6 5 3 2		♣ J 8 4	
	♠ A 10		
	♥ A Q 6 3 2		
	♦ Q J		
	♣ K Q 10 7		

WEST Foster	NORTH Fischer	EAST Mundell	SOUTH Rankin
pass	1♦	2♦	4NT
pass	5♥	pass	6NT
all pass			

This one felt unlucky for our side. Opponents had a bidding accident at our table and landed up in 6NT, which had basically no chance. Teammates got to the far better 6♦:

WEST Fuller	NORTH Fryda	EAST Fuller	SOUTH Kaplan
pass	pass	2♥	2NT
pass	4♦	pass	4♠
pass	6♦	all pass	

After a spade lead, declarer took a winning diamond finesse, but then discovered he still had a diamond loser. 6♦ can still be made at that point, if you can discard three spades from the North hand. The ♣KQ provide two discards. There are two ways to provide the third: heart finesse, or the ♣J to drop and for West to have to follow to the ♣10. East had shown 5-5 in the majors in the bidding, so declarer took a heart finesse, which is much better odds than East having precisely ♣Jxx. Sadly, the better line failed today – flat board in two off. Note that even if the heart finesse had worked and the ♣J had dropped, 6NT still had no play.

Board 40 gave East-West a signalling problem, defending 4♠ by South:

Board 40	♠ Q 10 6 3		
W/Nil	♥ Q 5		
	♦ Q 7 4 2		
	♣ K Q 6		
♠ 7 5		♠ J 2	
♥ 10 9 3		♥ A 8 4	
♦ K J 10 3		♦ A 6 5	
♣ J 10 8 2		♣ A 9 7 4 3	
	♠ A K 9 8 4		
	♥ K J 7 6 2		
	♦ 9 8		
	♣ 5		

Some pairs prefer attitude signals, others count. There is of course no right answer – either can be essential on a particular hand. Partnerships that refuse to play attitude and only give count would struggle to get the defence to this hand right.

At both tables West led the ♣J to the queen, ace and five, leaving East in the hot seat. At one table he cashed ♥A, partner playing the 10 (discouraging). Next he tried the ♦A, and this time partner played the three (encouraging) so the defence cashed their four tricks. At the other table East returned a club at trick two, allowing a diamond to be discarded and 4♠ to be made. Without an attitude signal, East is basically guessing. It's not often that going for a 1400 penalty gains you a lot of imps, but that's what happened to me in the second quarter!

Board 47	♠ 6		
S/NS	♥ A 10 5 3		
	♦ A J 6		
	♣ A K Q 9 5		
♠ 10 9 8 7 4 3		♠ 2	
♥ Q J 9		♥ 8 7 4 2	
♦ 10 9		♦ Q 7 5 4 3 2	
♣ 3 2		♣ J 8	
	♠ A K Q J 5		
	♥ K 6		
	♦ K 8		
	♣ 10 7 6 4		

WEST Foster	NORTH Fuller	EAST Mundell	SOUTH Fuller
			1♣
2♠	dbl	all pass	

South opened a strong club. With the vulnerability in my favour, I got in the way with 2♠, to hear double-pass-pass-back to me. The sight of such a terrible dummy was, perversely, good news! While I only made two tricks for -1400 it meant the opponents were making both 7♣ and 7NT. Sure enough Christy and Sebastian bid 7♣ for 2140:

WEST Rankin	NORTH Geromboux	EAST Fischer	SOUTH Yuen
pass	2NT	pass	1NT
pass	3♥	pass	3♣
pass	4♦	pass	4♣
pass	4NT	pass	5NT
pass	7♣	all pass	

This was worth 12 imps! Despite this, the Fuller team prevailed by 89 imps to 64.1. Congratulations to Trevor and Leone Fuller, Stephen Fischer and Pele Rankin, who played very solidly throughout the event and had been unlucky not to win the Swiss qualifying and have choice of semi-final opponents.

Thanks also to my own team, Giselle Mundell, Christy Geromboux & Sebastian Yuen, Rena Kaplan & David Fryda. Christy and Sebastian were definitely our best pair and repeated their equally excellent performance in this event in 2019.

After the playoffs Hugh Grosvenor and Tania Lloyd were augmented as the third pair in the team, and I was delighted to be asked to act as non-playing captain. Of course, the COVID-19 developments have now meant the 2020 World Championships, originally due to take place in Italy in August, have been postponed – at the time of writing to February-March 2021. It remains to be seen whether these championships ever actually do take place, but the team will keep practicing and look forward to hopefully representing Australia in 2021!



Members of the 2nd-placed team, Julian Foster and Giselle Mundell

POETRY CORNER

TIME FOR US GIRLS

by Pam Ayres

*I'm normally a social girl
I love to meet my mates.
But lately with the virus here
We can't go out the gates.*

*You see, we are the 'oldies' now
We need to stay inside
If they haven't seen us for a while
They'll think we've upped and died.*

*They'll never know the things we did
Before we got this old
There wasn't any Facebook
So not everything was told.*

*We may seem sweet old ladies
Who would never be uncouth
But we grew up in the 60s –
If you only knew the truth!*

*There was sex and drugs and rock 'n' roll
The pill and miniskirts
We smoked, we drank, we partied
And were quite outrageous flirts.*

*Then we settled down, got married
And turned into someone's mum,
Somebody's wife, then nana,
Who on earth did we become?*

*We didn't mind the change of pace
Because our lives were full
But to bury us before we're dead
Is like a red rag to a bull!*

*So here you find me stuck inside
For four weeks, maybe more...
I finally found myself again
Then I had to close the door!*

*It didn't really bother me
I'd while away the hour
I'd bake for all the family
But I've got no bloody flour!*

*Now Netflix is just wonderful
I like a gutsy thriller
I'm swooning over Idris
Or some random sexy killer.*

*At least I've got a stash of booze
For when I'm being idle
There's wine and whiskey, even gin
If I'm feeling suicidal!*

*So let's all drink to lockdown
To recovery and health
And hope this bloody virus
Doesn't decimate our wealth.*

*We'll all get through the crisis
And be back to join our mates
Just hoping I'm not far too wide
To fit through the flaming gates.*