



Inside the ABF Teacher Accreditation Program

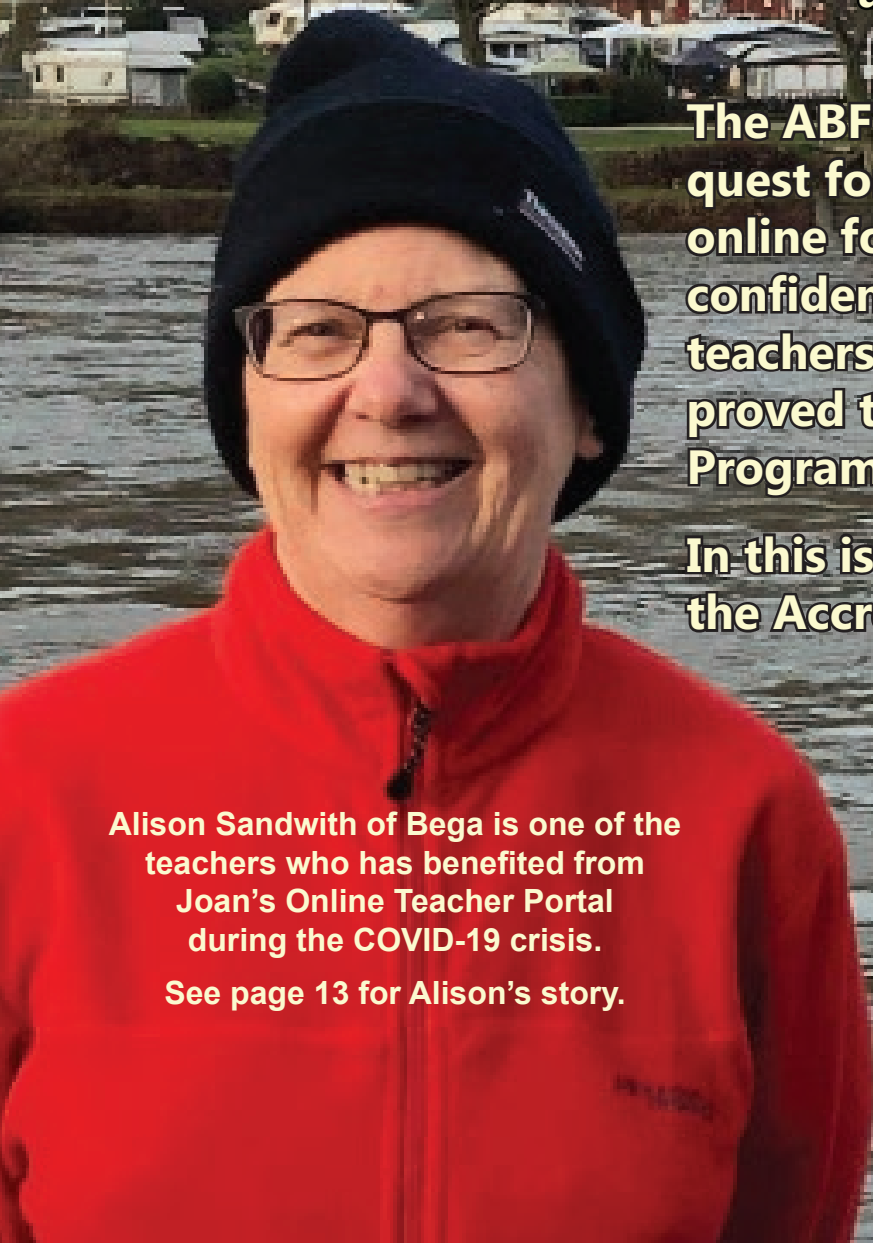
It has been nothing short of remarkable to see how teachers have managed during the past six months, and how they've "got on with the job" in a professional manner despite clubs being closed, and students not there.

The ABF has supported them in their quest for materials and methods online for their students, and the confidence which many accredited teachers gained during this period has proved the worth of the Accreditation Programme from the outset.

In this issue, Joan Butts tells us how the Accreditation Program started.

Alison Sandwith of Bega is one of the teachers who has benefited from Joan's Online Teacher Portal during the COVID-19 crisis.

See page 13 for Alison's story.





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Front cover article: see pages 10-13 for news about the ABF Teacher Accreditation Program

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IMPROVE YOUR DEFENCE
 with
Ron Klinger
Solution on page 22

S/All

♠ J 5
 ♥ K Q 10 5
 ♦ K Q J 8 3
 ♣ K J

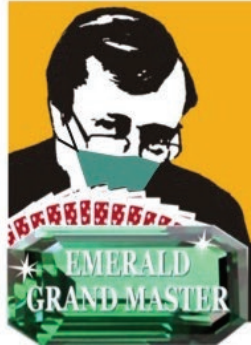


♠ 10 4 2
 ♥ A 9 8 6
 ♦ A
 ♣ A Q 9 6 5

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	1♣ ¹	dbl ²	pass
pass	2♦	pass	1♠
pass	4♠	all pass	3♠

1. Artificial, 15+ points.
 2. Shows hearts and clubs.

West leads the ♥J, and East takes the ♥K with the ace. What should East play next?



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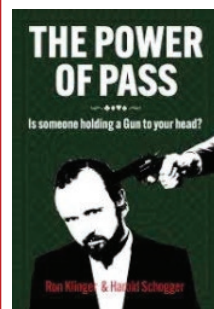
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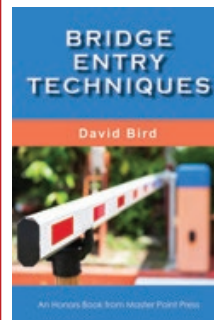


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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Allison Stralow



The main objective of the Australian Bridge Federation is to foster interest in and promote the game of bridge. It has been very pleasing to see the bridge community band together to promote the game during these unprecedented times, offering lessons, bridge columns and organising online games and congresses to those who are not able to play face-to-face bridge.

More clubs are now taking advantage of the Virtual Club facility provided by the ABF to organise club sessions and congresses on BBO. All of the money sent to the ABF is distributed to the online clubs to reflect the table numbers they have in their sessions. This month we will be distributing \$91,941.85 to these clubs. The ABF is also running Friday night and Sunday afternoon sessions for Novice, Restricted and Open players and on October 4th a Sunday afternoon Youth category will be added. If you feel like a game, grab your partner and register. Details can be found at

<https://www.abf.com.au/abf-online-games-on-bbo/>

The ABF Tournament Committee is an integral part of the administration of bridge in Australia. Thank you to retiring committee member, Sheila Bird for her service to the ABF as Chair of the International Task Force. Barbara Travis has agreed to join the committee as the new Chair of the International Task Force and Liam Milne and Stephen Fischer will also become new members of the Tournament Committee. These new additions will add a range of skills and expertise to this hard working committee.

Like the Australian Government, the ABF Management Committee is monitoring the restrictions currently in place regarding travel and public gatherings. It is with heavy hearts that we have made the decision to cancel the 2020 Summer Festival of Bridge and Youth Week due to the on-going restrictions that will impede the viability of the events.

The COVID-19 virus has introduced new risks to the ABF as an organisation. Management Committee

member Adel Abdelhamid will facilitate the development of a Risk Management Plan for the ABF that will identify the risks and develop strategies to manage these risks.

Miriam Winter, a member of the Melville Bridge Club, celebrated her 100th birthday during the COVID-19 lockdown in Western Australia. Face-to-face bridge has now resumed and I was invited to attend Miriam's belated birthday party and give a speech. In my speech, I quoted a 93-year-old's message to me when I played with her many years ago and we won the session: "These days my basement is shot, but the attic is still intact!" This is true of Miriam, as she has trouble with her eyesight and hearing, but is as sharp as a tack and still plays a good game of bridge. Congratulations to Miriam for reaching this milestone, and to the Melville Bridge Club for making sure she celebrated in style.



The social aspect of bridge is as important as the competition to many people. The COVID-19 crisis has taken a psychological toll on people of all ages and many players who are unable to play face-to-face bridge are missing the social component of our game. It is important to stay connected and check-in to make sure your friends and bridge partners are OK.

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

abf.pres@gmail.com

HOW WOULD YOU PLAY?

with
Barbara
Travis



Solutions on page 23

QUESTION 1

♠ A Q 9 3
♥ Q J 8
♦ A K 8 5
♣ Q 6

♠ 8 6
♥ A K 10 9 2
♦ J
♣ A 10 9 8 3

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♥
pass	1♠	pass	2♣
pass	2♦ ¹	pass	3♣ ²
pass	3♥ ³	pass	4♣ ⁴
pass	4NT	pass	5♦ ⁵
pass	5NT	pass	6♥ ⁶
	all pass		

1. Fourth suit game forcing.
2. Showing a 5-5.
3. Setting hearts, showing a very good hand (better than 4♥ now too).
4. 1st or 2nd round cue bid.
5. 3 (or 0) key cards.
6. No outside Kings.

West leads the ♠10. What is your plan?

QUESTION 2

♠ 10 7
♥ A 5
♦ A Q 7 5 4
♣ A 9 5 4

♠ A Q J 9
♥ 6 2
♦ 3
♣ J 8 7 6 3 2

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			pass
1♦	pass	1♥	dbl ¹
2♥	3♥ ²	pass	4♣
pass	5♣	all pass	

1. Happy to make a takeout double as a passed hand – showing at least 4-4 in the black suits.
2. Forcing.

West leads the ♥4. What is your plan?

QUESTION 3

♠ J 7
♥ A 10 9 8 5
♦ 7 3
♣ Q J 9 2

♠ A K Q 3
♥ Q 4
♦ K 9 6 2
♣ A 7 5

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♦
pass	1♥	pass	2NT
pass	3♣	pass	3NT
	all pass		

West leads the ♠6. What is your plan?



MARKETING REPORT

with Peter Cox



The Tyranny Of Distance

As the theme of this ABF Newsletter is Teaching, I am going to look at the performance of our clubs, as they are the heart of our bridge life.

Bridge in the USA has been in decline, with the number of clubs falling from about 3,500 in 2000 to 2,500 today. The number of tables played in clubs has fallen 10% in the last 10 years, but tables on the Internet have grown in the same period to now be about one third of all club tables played. COVID-19 has changed the balance, with now obviously more tables being played in 2020 on the internet than in the clubs.

International Bridge Comparisons

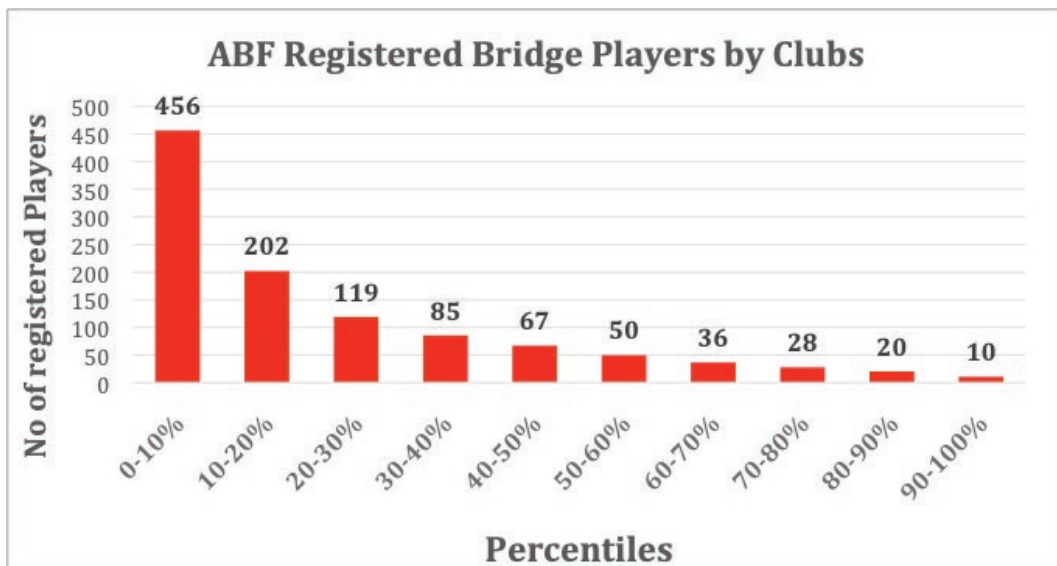
	US	UK	Aus	NZ
No Of Members	165,000	54,000	34,000	14,000
Bridge Clubs	2490	620	330	119
Members per Club	66	87	103	118
Members Per 10,000 pop	5.0	9.6	13.6	28.6

Bridge in Australia has a higher market penetration per head of population than the USA and the UK, but is significantly lower than New Zealand. Though Australia has a large land mass, the population is largely concentrated in the coastal regions, and is well serviced with about 330 playing bridge clubs. As a result we have a higher average number of members per club. However, if you look at a map of the location of clubs, they tend to be concentrated in the more affluent suburbs, such as the eastern suburbs of Sydney

and Melbourne. This leads to a very high concentration of players in a small number of clubs; as you can see in the chart, the numbers of players per club are heavily skewed with only 10% of clubs having an average of 456 members, and 70% of clubs having less than 100 members each, and 50% having less than 50 members.

The problem is that for many clubs, particularly in the country, with few members, is how to have good experienced teachers and enough beginners to make a class and play supervised bridge. Fortunately, the volunteer ethic is still often strong in Australia, certainly in the older bridge playing generations, and many teachers have been able to gain the benefit of Joan Butts' teaching skills and her very substantial library of lessons and videos.

Further, COVID-19 has closed bridge clubs large and small across Australia, and many of our players are hesitant to return to f2f bridge in clubs.



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Paul Marston's Free Beginners Lessons

As a result of the loss of most bridge teaching this year due to COVID-19, and a drop in club memberships, Paul offered to include ABF introductions into his four week free Zoom beginners lessons online. As many would know, Paul is a champion player with over 50 national and international titles, has written a weekly bridge column for 40 years which is in the Australian every Saturday, has sold over 500,000 copies of his bridge books, and loves teaching bridge.

ABF marketing gave it promotion, and between his reputation and contacts and our members recommendations to friends, the first course was sold out in hours and about 1,000 people applied.

Over the last month I have been able to observe the four free lessons that Paul has provided on Zoom. He has put in a huge amount of work teaching hundreds of people to use Zoom, to be able to play on BBO let alone teach bridge. He and Nevena have built a web page for every participant and created videos for every lesson, produced notes and conducted practice sessions on BBO plus an extra session each week for players to practice with a team providing online supervision.

The first series had 320 starters and he is limiting the next course, already underway, to 500 people. Paul is providing the list of all the participants that came through the ABF to be able to continue their online lessons with ABF clubs and teachers. In South Australia and WA they will be able to go to clubs and continue their lessons and supervised play.

Online Teachers Wanted

However, with Victoria in lockdown and few clubs in NSW open for f2f bridge, there is a need for teachers to provide national online teaching. Paul is providing continuing online lessons for a fee, and Joan Butts has her subscriber online bridge club that offers a wide variety of videos and lessons.

Now the reason I raise this, is that after all his hard work creating highly motivated students, he does not want them to be lost. Paul has set the bar very high with the people he has taught, who will have similar expectations in a future teacher. If you are an experienced, technology savvy teacher prepared to provide high standards of live and video presentations on Zoom and BBO, then please contact me before this great opportunity is lost.

The Future

I have over 40 years' experience lecturing senior executives in seminars and international conferences on the future for the media, communications and leisure industries. COVID-19 has changed many aspects of our working, studying, learning and life-styles.

I believe that teaching bridge online to beginners en masse by great teachers is THE FUTURE. Then they can go and play in their local clubs and congresses, with sound learning and supervised practice, even when we all go back to playing in clubs. This will help overcome the tyranny of distance in Australia, and hopefully introduce new generations to the wonderful game of bridge.

Bridge Lounge Online

Hi Peter
Welcome to your personal web page with

Notes Videos Links

Home

Introduction to Bridge

- Lesson 1 play hands
- Lesson 4 videos
- Lesson 1 notes
- Zoom before BBO practice 3
- Lesson 3 videos
- Lesson 3 notes
- Zoom before BBO practice 2
- Lesson 2 videos

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Submit

Contact us at Bridge Lounge - Introduction to Bridge



MARKETING REPORT

with Peter Cox



THE COVID EFFECT ON CLUBS

We are all in this together

COVID-19 and the closure of bridge clubs has raised concern about whether bridge will return to normal or will it be a NEW NORMAL. However, there were concerns before the pandemic. The chart below shows that 70% of the top 10 clubs by number of members were down in 2019. Even half the clubs had fewer members in 2019 than they had in 2012. Of course, there has been a further fall in the year to August, due to a clean out of membership lists in March, and from the pandemic since. The decline in number of tables played is far more severe despite all the efforts to get people playing online through the ABF Club games, Nationwide events and the use of BBO and Stepbridge.

It seems that about one third of ABF registered players have played Online but that leaves about 20,000 who have not been playing in club or online. The question is how many may not return?

The experience of clubs reopening in SA, WA and some in Qld and NSW attendances have been down on pre-virus times with a few exceptions. Some old-

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er people have felt technology-challenged to play online and health-wise have been particularly hesitant to return to f2f bridge. ABF Marketing has been working with some clubs and providing workshops, and on the next page are some of those experiences.

The Way Back: Bathurst Bridge Club, Regional NSW

Over the last year I have worked with the President and Committee after they had a lost a number of members to a non-affiliated club. I provided artwork, a Facebook Advertising campaign, photos, teleconferencing to the committee, an online Zoom Marketing Workshop and an ABF Marketing Grant. Here are some of their comments:

Top 10 Ranked Clubs by ABF Registered Players 2012-2020

Rank	No	Club	Number of ABF Registered Players							Chge		Chg %		Aug-20			
			2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2018-19	2012-2019	No	Chge	%		
1	2120	North Shore Bridge Club Inc	1473	1509	1585	1505	1512	1565	1663	1651	-12	-1%	178	12%	1578	-73	-4%
2	5701	South Australian Bridge Association	832	971	1098	1183	1203	1233	1295	1179	-116	-9%	347	42%	992	-187	-16%
3	6795	West Australian Bridge Club	983	993	979	957	965	977	998	958	-40	-4%	-25	-3%	922	-36	-4%
4	2001	NSWBA/Sydney Bridge Centre	688	742	746	804	843	786	794	850	56	7%	162	24%	686	-164	-19%
5	3480	Waverley Bridge Club Inc	794	823	838	846	843	844	879	787	-92	-10%	-7	-1%	679	-108	-14%
6	2259	Trumps Bridge Centre	861	897	871	857	826	757	715	743	28	4%	-118	-14%	642	-101	-14%
7	4572	Toowong Bridge Club Inc	809	753	736	766	737	726	729	708	-21	-3%	-101	-12%	655	-53	-7%
8	1851	Canberra Bridge Club Inc	605	608	618	660	660	687	687	684	-3	0%	79	13%	604	-80	-12%
9	2210	Peninsula Bridge Club	360	396	443	508	522	557	552	588	36	7%	228	63%	545	-43	-7%
10	4545	Northern Suburbs Bridge Club Inc	630	665	672	615	611	590	579	563	-16	-3%	-67	-11%	512	-51	-9%
			10047	10370	10600	10716	10738	10739	10909	8711	-180	-2%	676	7%	7815	-896	-10%

Over the 18+ months since December 2018 we have used a range of promotional tools. They have included newspaper advertisements, newspaper editorial, Facebook advertisements, Facebook posts, a redesigned website, a banner, attending functions for new arrivals to Bathurst, flyers distributed around the CBD, radio interviews, demonstration bridge games in shopping centres with an advertising placard, promotional stalls in farmers markets, and asking existing members to invite friends and associates.

Overwhelmingly, the most successful tool has been to use existing members to promote the club. However the other methods of promotion still need to be employed as they reach potential members outside the club's family. They promise growth in attracting members, exponentially, from other groups in the region.

The workshop you presented to our club was excellent in showing us what needed to be done, and what was available to us to achieve a stronger club. It focussed our minds on the issues and demonstrated to the active attending members the importance of marketing and membership growth.

Bill Kierath, Teacher

We had a very successful marketing campaign for our beginner's lessons, resulting in 18 new beginners attending [after 2-7 people starting in earlier campaigns].

Alan Sims, President

Thanks for your time and expertise today for Bathurst. We met quickly and are moving ahead with some ideas immediately.

Barb Woolfe, Teacher

The Way Forward: Mackay Bridge Club, North Queensland

I worked with the President, Secretary and committee over a substantial period, providing marketing advice, a Facebook campaign, artwork, New Player survey and an ABF Marketing Grant.

In the second half of 2019, Mackay Club began to build a new marketing strategy for the 2020 Beginners intake and the good news is that of our initial intake

What's on your Bucket List?

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of 30 students, we have welcomed 14 new financial members into the club from the 2020 intake. This number has not only exceeded all new enrolment conversions, by number or on a percentage basis, from Beginner Lessons in living memory, but it has yielded an enthusiastic burst of energy into the Club. Anecdotally, we know that were it not for COVID-19, the numbers of new members would have been even greater, and we are hopeful that a few more can be re-recruited in coming years.

Lorna Shuttlewood, President

Last year, when times were considered normal and no one had heard of COVID-19, we submitted an ABF Marketing Grant application. You acknowledged receipt a day later. That initiated our most successful campaign to encourage new members, with 14 of the original 30 beginners now being gradually merged into club play. We are very pleased with the outcome of our efforts and thank you for your encouragement and support in our endeavours.

Vic Mason, Secretary

Peter is conducting Marketing Workshops around Australia on Zoom to help Clubs grow members, and would like to do one with your club members.

Please fill in the [Expression Of Interest](#) form to make your booking.

If you have any further questions contact Peter at petercox@ozemail.com.au or on his mobile on 0413 676 326.

INSIDE THE ABF TEACHER ACCREDITATION PROGRAM

by Joan Butts

In January 2011, I was appointed the National Teaching Coordinator, and together with Sandra Mulcahy (National Marketing Officer), we had some great brain-storming sessions to design training for Aussie teachers.

Audrey Grant (ACBL) gave me her Teacher Accreditation Programme (TAP), which is used with US teachers. So, we were off and running. Down the track it became apparent that teachers needed more courses after completing the first Teacher Training Programme, so the ABF came to the party, paying for everything to do with Accreditation.

Once the Teacher training was up and running, I thought that the next stage was providing ready-to-use material for the teachers to use, and this led to the development of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) days in about 2013. The CPD days are now self-contained modules which the teachers can use with their own students.

Here's a summary of the current programme.

ABF Teacher Training Programme (TTP)

This, the first step, focuses on how to teach (anything), and explores the fundamentals which are the building blocks for later success.

Professional Development Days (CPD)

The Next Steps: These days concentrate on content as well as method: what to teach. I use the Online School of Bridge and Teacher Portal to present these days:

- CPD 1: Competitive Bidding
- CPD 2: Defence
- CPD 3: Two Over One Game Force
- CPD 4: Declarer Play
- CPD 5: Slam Bidding
- CPD 6: Help With Play

For several years, I would spend time in various states conducting both TTP and CPD days which were supported by the ABF and the various state as-

sociations. There are now more than 140 Accredited Teachers in Australia. Special thanks to Cath Whid- don, who is an ABF Teacher Trainer and has worked closely with me to put programmes together.

With the onset of the coronavirus, the challenge has been to continue to provide support and material to our teacher network and transitioning to an online learning environment via:

Zoom Education Days

For the past six months, all ABF days have been conducted online. There are decided plusses as this has allowed teachers from all over Australia to attend, rather than from a single area (as occurs in the face-to-face classroom setting). Thus, Zoom has facilitated a broader range of experiences and discussions.

These sessions are offered approximately once per month, and details of the upcoming programs can be found here:

<https://www.abf.com.au/abf-education-programmes-on-zoom/>

Accreditation to be Relaxed... Join the Zooms!

With online training now in full swing, the ABF is encouraging more people with an interest in becoming a teacher to consider attending the (free) Zoom ABF days (four hours per day). Teachers will also receive the accreditation points from these sessions. If you are not already teaching, but would like to get started, please contact me for further information at

joan.butts@abf.com.au

Who knows, you may become enthused about teaching bridge! It doesn't have to be in bridge clubs... it may be that you want to teach your family or friends online, and this is now possible. My Online School of Bridge and Teacher Portal provides all the resources a teacher could need, with 140 lessons and 500 videos and hand reviews. It's so easy – just share your screen via Zoom.

Success stories though the pandemic

It has been quite amazing to hear teachers' stories, and I am overwhelmed at the resilience and courage teachers are exhibiting with planning lessons in



real life as well as keeping their online classes going. The stories by Anne Russell of Kenmore Bridge Club and Alison Sandwith of Bega (page 12) showcase how teachers are using the online environment encompassing the online teacher portal and BBO to continue to grow their club despite the current adversity.

It's impossible to name all the teachers who have shown true grit, but here are a few quotes which highlight the experience of online teaching:

KATHY DUKE, PARRAMATTA:

I started using the portal for quick 30-minute lessons once a week via Zoom as a "Winter Bridge Challenge". 16 people from our Parramatta Bridge Club (including some new beginners) signed up, and they really enjoyed them and learned a lot. They are also happy to keep in touch with other club members and the game.



BARB WOLFE, BATHURST:

There was time at the end of the lesson for everyone to comment and/or make suggestions for future lessons, and everyone loved it.

SUE LEVY, PERTH:

My teaching topic has been Declarer Play: first formulating a plan, and now managing entries and other skills such as Loser on Loser and Ruffing Finesse. The most amazing thing is how much better my own play is, now that I've become so aware of all these issues.

SUE PASCOE, TORONTO BRIDGE CLUB:

Toronto Bridge Club has reopened for three modified club sessions per week (restricted numbers, table screens, temperature checking etc). Players are adapting, but this environment is not ideal for beginner sessions, so we are running Play Bridge 1 and Help With Play via Zoom for the 12 beginners who started in February.



LINDA JOHNSTON, GEELONG:

The Teacher Portal has allowed me to share lessons with fellow members of the Geelong Bridge Club during this COVID-19 pandemic. Without this we would not play as regularly, as BBO is our only other resource to participate together.

We are able to facilitate the 'social aspect' of the game as well, whilst learning and updating our skill levels.

MIKE LE VOI & KATHLEEN FAHY, ARANA:

The learners got to know each other quite well on the Zoom sessions which were held weekly. We built in a 'tea break' where learners just hung out and chatted. We encouraged learners to find new partners within the group. This was important so that they could practise their developing skills. Most learners have teamed up with each other, some even winning Queensland-wide online tournaments for players with fewer than 100 Masterpoints. All express increased clarity and confidence when bidding.

DOROTHY READ, GEELONG:

I have also got a lot out of the teachers' Zoom meetings and am now a lot more confident teaching online.



I believe that even when all this is over, I shall be able to do practice sessions online with students who need that bit of extra support. I am finding people love it when I set up a table of four for a lesson or just for practice.

STEVE ENGLISH, BLUE MOUNTAINS:

We've given five lessons to Beginners combining a 15-minute presentation via Zoom followed by supervised hands on BBO. Not without problems, but well received and this has given us the confidence to expand lessons to other members of the club.

BERNADETTE DWYER, SUNNYBANK:

I don't believe that Joan could have predicted how important her online school would become in the year 2020. I find it invaluable assistance to keep my students motivated during these challenging times. Being able to go through the lessons online via Zoom where so much information is available for me as a teacher and also for the students as they can then work online by themselves at home.

How have I found teaching online? I have to say that I love it, as do my students. We are all playing a lot more bridge than we would have been just going to the club. I have online classes nearly every afternoon. Monday mornings and afternoon are mainly the teaching sessions using the Teachers Portal. Then other days we mostly play on BBO where I do a teaching table. This allows me to comment on their bidding as I can see all their hands and then when play is over we discuss the hand. The students tell me that they have learned so much more than they would have at a once a week lesson at the club.

TEACHING ONLINE: CASE STUDIES

CASE STUDY #1, by Anne Russell

The online environment has enabled us to grow our club with new players who found time during this period to learn bridge.

All our beginning students are required to purchase Joan Butts' *Play Bridge 1: A Workbook for the Absolute Beginner*, in addition to *Play Bridge: A guide by your side*. Each week we address one chapter. Prior to the online lesson the students read the chapter, do the exercises, go through the hands and also watch the appropriate Joan Butts video from the ABF Education website.

Students join together in Zoom and also play on BBO. Joan always says how important it is for students to actually play hands.

At the beginning of each class we go through a quiz related to the content from the previous week, as revision and reinforcement. If there is a quiz for the current lesson within Joan's Teacher Portal, I will put those frames up for the students to discuss their answers before we commence playing pre-dealt hands in BBO.

If I am teaching a topic for students who have completed their Beginners' Lessons, I am always delighted



to use Joan's student handout, which is clear and straightforward – there is no need to reinvent the wheel. I email the handout with some exercises to complete before the lesson. Starting the lesson with the exercises sharing screen on Zoom, is a good opportunity to see how much the students already understand and teach misunderstandings.

I find or create suitable hands for each teaching topic and use Bridge Composer to create the hands with a commentary, which I send to the students after they have played the hands in the lesson. I put these hands into BBO and they are played by the students.

The joy of using BBO is it enables the students to play the boards as they would if sitting around a bridge table. I always hope to have at least one extra student kibitzing to see all the hands, and recognise how they would or would not play each card. The next hand the kibitzer changes place with the previous declarer.

When the students move onto supervised Bridge, they play in the Casual area of BBO, still using Zoom to enable free conversation, questioning and learning. While they are playing, I might take a snapshot of the board – usually at a point where there is a teachable moment. After the hand is complete, I share my screen with the



hand at a point during the play and we discuss how different play of the cards may result in a different outcome. We can go into History and see the hands, and also go to Bridge Solver to see what contracts could be possible with Double Dummy, and which leads or play of the cards will enable one to defeat a contract.

Teaching online using BBO in conjunction with Zoom provides, in many ways, a more personal interaction with students. With all teachers in our club using Joan Butts excellent resources, we know our students will be comfortable partnering another member of the club, and they will understand the same basic conventions.

I was disappointed not to be able to attend Joan Butts' full day Teaching sessions as my commitment to keeping the club operating online is full-time. However, I have appreciated having access to Joan's Teaching Portal to provide appropriate and succinct teaching inspiration.

Anne Russell, Kenmore Bridge Club

CASE STUDY #2, by Alison Sandwith

The ABF support for teachers by providing free access to the Joan Butts Teacher Portal and Online School has been invaluable to me and the Bega Valley Bridge Club Inc. Without it, I would not be providing lessons during COVID. For the Bega Valley Bridge Club, many of our members would have lost contact with the game.

I work full-time and was half way through running my first course of beginner lessons when COVID-19 arrived. There is a vast amount of work putting together lessons: identifying topics, finding suitable hands and developing notes for students. As someone who works full-time and volunteers to run lessons at our club, the thought of somehow translating what I had in the physical world to the online world was daunting. I couldn't do it – there is no way I had the time. The sponsorship by the ABF changed all that. The lessons are already prepared, along with the notes and hands. When I saw the portal, I thought "I can run lessons with that".

Since gaining access to the teacher portal, I've run one lesson a week for 10 weeks. We have had 10-15 people each week attend the lessons and a total of 18 individual members. With a small membership base of 50, we are getting more than 20% of our members to a weekly lesson, and more than 35% have attended at least one lesson. The lessons have been aimed at improvers/intermediate players. We have been working on playing hands in notrumps,

defending against notrumps and are now looking at bidding conventions used with or against notrumps.

For our club members, the lessons have provided weekly contact with the game and each other. Our membership and community is generally in the vulnerable category and have been affected not only by the Black Summer fires, but the 2018 bushfires in Tathra. We had been doing it tough before COVID! For many of our membership, bridge is a major social activity. Providing lessons has enabled people to see each other, chat and catch up. We open our lessons 10 minutes before the start time to allow people to do this. We currently have members that are staying outside the Valley: one is in Bombala on the Monaro, the other is in Tasmania. Both regularly attend the lessons and so keep in touch with the club. Feedback from the lessons includes statements like, "Without the lessons, I would have forgotten about Bridge", and "I've learnt how important planning the play is, instead of using my usual 'hope and pray method'". As a side benefit, by providing the lessons we have also helped more than a dozen people learn to use Zoom.

I value the ABF and your support greatly. Without it, my life in COVID would have been less rich. As someone with very limited spare time due to full-time work, I've been able to continue to volunteer to provide lessons to our members. This would not have happened otherwise.

Alison Sandwith, Bega Bridge Club



Why Isn't Bridge More Popular?

In February 2019, Bendigo Bridge Club ordered 40 books for their beginner lessons. I thought this was pretty amazing, since Bendigo is a mining city in Victoria, with a population of under 100,000 at the time. I emailed the teacher, Sue Napier, asking how the club attracted so many pupils. She emailed me back this newspaper clipping with the comment, "This did the trick." Ads for bridge lessons are normally bland and colourless, and attract the expected results. Why not jazz it up a little? Local newspapers are keen to print interesting snippets. A little creativity would attract much more interest.



When bridge was in its infancy, the game was often headline news – even reaching the front cover of the New York Times. PAUL LAVINGS looks back on how things were done in the Culbertson era.

When bridge was in its infancy in the 1920s and 30s, virtually everyone played. Bridge was often headline news. When Oswald Jacoby had a swipe at one of his opponents between sessions at a major bridge tournament in 1929, it made the front page of the New York Times – centre column.

A big reason bridge approached its true potential in the 1930s was the impact of Ely Culbertson. Culbertson had an American father and a Russian mother. He arrived in the USA in 1921, aged 30, and for many years made his living playing rubber bridge. By 1928 Contract Bridge was overtaking Auction – Ely decided he and Contract were made for each other, and he began to build an empire.

"Oswald Jacoby had a swipe at one of his opponents in 1929 and it made the front page of the New York Times."

By 1932 he had sold half a million bridge books, and his magazine "Bridge World" had a monthly circulation of 80,000. He had made six movie featurettes, 4,000 teachers taught his methods under his banner, and his bridge columns ran in 200 newspapers across America.



Card players aim to bridge the player gap

HOW many of us have spent lonely mornings with the newspaper, clutching a crossword dictionary in a desperate effort to keep the neural pathways if not zapping along, at least open?

The Bendigo Bridge Club Inc is inviting people to enjoy the gentle challenge of learning bridge and at the same time participate in a wonderful social outlet.

"If you're looking for some brain exercise, bridge is perfect as well as a social activity," Rod Smyth said.

And while some may feel apprehensive about learning bridge,

Mr Smyth and president Jennifer Goddard would like to reassure beginners that bridge is essentially an engaging and pleasurable activity.

Ms Goddard said their free come and try sessions will be held at the Bendigo Library activity room on Tuesday, February 12 and Tuesday, February 19.

Both sessions run from 6.30pm to 8.45pm.

If these sessions pique your interest the BBC is running a series of six introductory bridge lessons on Tuesday nights starting March 12 from 7.30pm to 9.30pm.

These lessons are \$60 for the se-

ries and will be held at the Quarry Hill Croquet Club rooms on the corner of Mitchell and Olinda streets.

Ms Goddard said that newcomers can be introduced to a mentor to guide them along.

According to Mrs Goddard the Bridge Club started in 1980 with 70 members and currently has 140 members.

Other incentives to join BBC are the cost of the membership – a mere \$25 a year, the afternoon tea and of course the companionship.

"There have been a few marriages as well," Mrs Goodard said

with a twinkle in her eye.

"Our youngest member is in her 30s, the eldest are in their 90s and most would be in their 70s.

"We play Standard American but there are more sophisticated systems.

"Once you've acquired the skills you can simply enjoy the game and build on that.

"Wednesday afternoons are casual and Tuesday nights are supervised and relaxed."

For more information go to www.bendigobridge.org.au or phone/text 0419 378 709.

- Dianne Dempsey



The population of the USA at the time was 125 million, and according to government figures 20 million people were keen bridge players. There were countless millions who wanted to learn. Bridge was indeed bigger than baseball. I always thought that one in ten people would enjoy playing bridge; nowadays it is something like one in 700 that play. Culbertson achieved one in six people!

Just recently, well into COVID-19 lockdown, Barbara Woolfe, the bridge teacher at Bathurst Bridge Club called me to ask if there was some way she could look after her batch of 20 new players online. They had learned the game but never played. "Wow," I enthused, "how did you get so many new players?"

Bathurst has a population of 44,000 and the bridge club has less than 100 members. Barbara responded without thought, "Hard work. Giving out pamphlets on street corners and in malls, mail-drops, advertisements".

Often I come across people who show some interest in learning to play bridge. I try to engage them in conversation, and one thing I notice is that they do not

understand how bridge works. How could they, with so many other things competing for their time and attention? Many think bridge is a gambling game; once it was. Others think it is a sedate game for older folk. I reckon a short description of how bridge is played might well convince people bridge is well worth trying:

HOW IS BRIDGE PLAYED

Bridge is a partnership game in which you normally play 26 or 27 hands in a three-hour session.

You can play online, or at one of Australia's 350 bridge clubs, many with over 100 members.

Bridge is a very social game: inexpensive, a great mental exercise and no gambling is involved.

If any teacher or club would like the above description typed six times on a page allowing hand-outs, please email me and I will email you an attachment that

you can print out (and change if you wish):

paul@bridgegear.com

A useful idea is to use the above, or similar, in your ad for lessons, with your contact details added.

Many famous people have played bridge and play it now. Bill Gates and Warren Buffet both declare themselves to be bridge addicts. Also, bridge involves the mind in much creative thinking and is a great mental stimulant.

Computers play most games better than humans, and the best chess program crushes the human world chess champion. Not so in bridge; there are too many imponderables and too much psychology, rather than straight out calculation. Computers so far aren't so good at judgement, intuition, backing a hunch and hoping for the best.

DENNIS YOVICH

1946 - 2020

Dennis fell in love with bridge in 1965, when he learned the game while studying electronic engineering at UWA. That love stayed with him for the rest of his life.

Dennis was a club player first, helping found Greenwood Bridge Club (now Undercroft), and was always a passionate supporter of club bridge. He started playing State bridge when he became President of the Bridge Association of Western Australia in 1988, and continued to play at club, state and national level. He represented WA as a player and NPC several times, and achieved the rank of Australian Grand Master.

In 1989 he helped Joe Greenfeld run the Bermuda Bowl when it was held in Perth (the first and only time the Bowl has been held in Australia). He was BAWA President until 1995, convening the Far East Championships in Perth in that year before stepping down. However, he continued to contribute to the administration of the game, including as secretary of the Australian Bridge Federation Management Committee between 1997 and 2006.



At the 1990 World Championships in Geneva, Dennis first encountered Per Jannersten and his bridge dealing machine, and it immediately interested him. He was soon to become instrumental in introducing electronics and computers into bridge in Australia. In 1994 Dennis and Martin Wilcox formed a business to market a range of innovative electronic and other accessories for duplicate bridge players, bridge clubs and National Bridge Organisations

across Australia, starting in Perth. Hands could now be pre-dealt by machine, and hand records generated for players. Dennis continued to provide this service until his death on 26 September 2020. His innovations helped make the game more enjoyable for players, and more manageable for tournament directors and administrators.

Dennis is survived by his wife Hilary, whom he met learning bridge at university. For 55 years they had a devoted partnership, both in the game and its administration and in their lives together.

Dennis also leaves behind his devoted children Paul, Matthew and Sarah, and three adoring grandchildren.

Playing with and against bridge robots on BBO can sometimes reveal auctions that simply could never happen when playing only with our fellow human beings.

As the dealer South, playing IMPs at favourable vulnerability, you hold:

♠ A J 2 ♥ A J 10 7 ♦ 6 3 ♣ A Q 10 6

While I'd prefer 1♣ if I was playing with a human, I chose 1NT with a robot. Robots can deal only with quantities not qualities. The auction proceeded:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1NT
2♣	2♦	dbl	2♥
pass	pass	3♦	3♥
pass	pass	dbl	pass
3♠	pass	4♦	dbl
4♠	pass	pass	dbl
pass	pass	5♦	dbl
5♠	pass	pass	dbl
pass	pass	pass	

A ROBOT CURIOSITY

by Kevin Hume

The final contract was 5♠ doubled, going down three for 800.

2♣ was the Cappelletti defence to 1NT, showing any single-suited hand. 2♦ was a transfer to hearts, after which all bids were natural and non-forcing, and all doubles were for penalties.

This auction features eight rounds of bidding and 32 bids, where every suit and notrump was bid at least once – a record, surely. There were six penalty doubles – another possible record – as well as 15 passes!

Of all the bids, partner bid only once, and then passed seven times.

West held ♠KQ107643, while East held seven solid diamonds and the ♣K. At the other table, in a BBO Star Challenge, the first 16 bids were identical, with the auction ending at 4♠, two off.



FACE TO FACE ON THE INTERNET

Over the past few weeks, U26 players from Australia, New Zealand, England, Scotland and Ireland have played a series of friendly challenge matches using the new online bridge platform, RealBridge.



RealBridge, developed by a team based in the UK, has integrated audio and video, so the participants can see and hear each other, just like in face-to-face bridge.

This environment provides an opportunity for the players to join in analysis, exchange opinions, and – perhaps most important – socialise. Leigh Gold and Bec O'Reilly liaised with the overseas organisers and contacted the players.

Have there been any complaints? Well, just one, from a parent in NSW. After the scheduled 16 boards had finished, the players asked if they could do it again, so the organiser dealt them another 8. That provoked a plaintive email: "You do realise it is a school day coming up, and it's getting close to midnight here?"

Apparently someone hadn't risked asking for a late pass, in case it was denied.

TOURNAMENT COMMITTEE NEWS with Peter Reynolds

The contribution of David Morgan and Sheila Bird, who have both resigned from the Tournament Committee for personal reasons, to the committee and tournament bridge organisation, will be sorely missed. The Tournament Committee now comprises Peter Reynolds (Chair), Marcia Scudder, Matthew McManus, Laurie Kelso, Warren Lazer, Barbara Travis, Liam Milne, and Stephen Fischer.

We are always looking for player feedback, so please feel free to contact any of the members. The committee would be especially appreciative of feedback on the Playoff Discussion Paper, published on the ABF website

<https://www.abf.com.au/australian-playoff-discussion-paper-february-2020/>

The closing date for feedback has been extended to 31 March 2021. Any changes to the Playoffs will be instituted in the 2022 Playoffs for the 2023 representative year.

The Tournament Committee has had a quiet 2020 with the COVID-19 related cancellation of a year of Australian Tournament Bridge (March 2020 to March 2021). Hopefully we will be able to meet and play face to face from April 2021. This will depend on the degree of allowable Interstate travel and if Tournament Organisers can get the level of certainty they need in these uncertain times to make advance commitments. The Tournament Committee is looking at how we might come out of this hiatus stronger and if it is possible to add variety, and transition, to a more vibrant tournament calendar. We will commence discussion with Tournament Organisers shortly.

The 2021 Playoff format, for the 2022 representative year, will be finalised as soon as possible. The format will be similar to the Teams format in 2019 or the Pairs Format from 2018 and will depend on a WBF decision on the 2022 international tournament structures.

Playoff Qualifying Points (PQPs) earned for the cancelled 2020 Playoffs will have currency for the 2021 playoff. The detail of how the 2020 and 2021 PQPs might be combined is yet to be determined, and will to a large extent depend on the resumption of PQP events next year.

Bridge Vid

with
Peter Hollands



Today I'd like to talk about tips for playing your first competitive bridge: your first duplicate, or your first day-long congress, or even your first national competition. What to expect, what to bring... basically how you should actually prepare yourself for playing in these different events.

Playing your first duplicate game

The leap from Supervised to Duplicate play is probably the biggest leap in levels that you'll make during any of your competitive bridge life. After this, it becomes a lot easier, but the first thing that you'll actually notice playing your first duplicate bridge is the time pressure. When you're playing Supervised, or just casually, you've got all the time in the world, and you can take as long as you want. When you're playing duplicate bridge, usually you're limited to seven minutes a hand. This means you could use ten minutes on one hand and then four on the next, but usually you want to stay around seven minutes for each. You'll feel some pressure, but you'll notice after playing these a few times, you'll just naturally get in tune with this time period.

My recommendation: ask if your club has any mentors for you and your partner, so that the very first time you play, you can actually play with a mentor (and your partner plays with a mentor) just so you can get used to this time pressure and it's not so daunting. Lots of different bridge clubs would be able to help you out with this, and then after that first time you'll be a bit more comfortable, and you can go back to playing with your regular partner.

Another thing that I would recommend is sitting East-West for your very first duplicate. This is because North-South has a lot more to do with the scoring and board movements, whereas all East-West has to do is work out what table to move to. Just make sure you check the score before you leave the table.

You should introduce yourself when you move to a new table – the best thing I find about playing bridge is developing the sense of community, knowing the other players, meeting friends. This all starts with introducing yourself and starting to talk to them. You don't just want to play bridge and then leave; see if you can find a group

of people that you can discuss the hands with afterwards. Make sure whenever you play a set of hands that you actually discuss them, learn from them, and get some feedback. This means getting a group together: not necessarily just you and your partner, but people that you can discuss the boards with. If it's just you and your partner that's okay, but try to be increasing your group where you can get more varied ideas. Find a few other players that are interested in doing this after a session of bridge.



The final thing about moving into duplicate bridge is you'll find that people actually will start doubling you more. If you're playing just social bridge, or supervised bridge, people don't double you when you get to your silly contracts. In duplicate bridge, this is competition, so they're going to try to maximize their score. That's okay, but just be aware that if you keep over-bidding, you can expect to be doubled.

Day-long congresses

This is where you might play a whole day of bridge, such as a Sunday congress. First, give yourself plenty of time to get there early, especially if the event is in an unfamiliar location. Wear warm layers of clothing – this is really important, because when you're going to a new club you don't know if it's going to be hot or cold in the club room. Wear something that you can either take off or put on. Even if you think it's warm outside, the air conditioning in some clubs can get very cold.

Some congresses provide lunch, and some don't – the advertising brochure will tell you if you need to bring your own lunch, so check before you leave home. Also

you'll have to register to play in a congress; you can't just turn up unannounced.

At these congresses you'll find out that the director gets called a lot more than at duplicate level. This is completely normal. You don't need to feel worried when the director has been called; you're not being accused of cheating or anything like that. Even if some people call the director really aggressively, don't worry about it. Also, if you feel like you have some questions, don't feel afraid to call the director yourself – it is not an insult to your opponents.

Scoring in a day-long congress is usually Swiss Pairs or Swiss Teams. This means that your first match will probably be against someone from the top half of the field, and you might suffer a heavy loss. But every now and then you will beat them, and that would be a fantastic story! Many of the other pairs in the bottom half of the field will be in the same boat as you, with a difficult first match.

The good news is that after the first match, you will be paired against someone who is on the same score as you. So if you lose your first match very badly, your next opponents will be a pair who also lost badly. The more you lose, the weaker your next opponents will be – and the more you win, the stronger your next opponents will be. For most of the day, you should be playing a pair who has roughly the same level of experience that you do.

Whenever you do find yourself playing a much stronger pair, enjoy the experience. Bridge is one of the only sports where average players get to play face-to-face against experts. This means you get to meet them, discuss the hands, and ask questions about how you could have done better.

Don't get starstruck. You might have heard some players' names, but don't worry. Experts makes mistakes. They probably make fewer mistakes, but they do make mistakes. You want to go in there and try to beat them if you can. At the very least, try and learn from them. Don't try and change your gameplay because you're scared of them – I get the biggest edge when people are afraid to double me because of who I am, which now means I can just bid whatever I want and not get doubled. You should stay aggressive – if you give up, then you've already lost.

Finally: bring a pen. Often they're provided, but if you're anything like me you are going to lose it the first time you move tables!

National events

Now let's look at playing your first national competition. This has quite a few of the same recommendations as playing your first Congress. The warm clothes advice is even more important, as you may be in a large heavily air-conditioned hall for long matches.

The biggest difference is that you might get tired from playing several long days in a row. I find that after you've moved to a higher level, then when you go back to the previous level it will seem a lot easier, because you've experienced the tougher events. You want to try and stretch yourself – maybe you play a two-day competition, then try and do a five-day competition, and then try a week-long competition. At first you will get tired, but experience in national events will improve your



stamina for shorter events like a weekend congress, so it's a good idea to push your limits.

Try to get some rest and allow lots of time after a national event. For me, when I play really long events, it takes me a couple of days to recover, so don't try and do too much afterwards. Don't just go, "It's done, I'm back to work," because then you'll be really exhausted. Give yourself a day off, then go from there.

There are also smaller Nationals you can play for a weekend, or for three days. Find one that suits the amount of bridge that you actually want to play.

Just like with a Congress, the best thing about Nationals is the people you can meet. Introduce yourself. There's usually socializing, a cafe where people go for breakfast, or a bar where people have drinks at night and talk about the hands. Just go in and meet a group of people where you can discuss hands, or go for lunch with them. Find a group of people that are like-minded. Don't just go there, play, and leave. Make sure you hang around and talk, it is the absolutely best thing about national bridge. Most players are really welcoming to new people who come up and just introduce themselves.

The final thing I'd like to mention is that the larger Nationals have daily talks by expert players or teachers, discussing a different topic each day. There will be an entry fee, which is typically between \$1 and \$5, but you can often learn quite a lot.



I hope you enjoyed these tips on playing your first competitive bridge events. Enjoy yourself, and I'll see you 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.

WORKSHOPS WITH WILL with William Jenner-O'Shea

SAFE HAND. DANGER HAND.

One of the biggest techniques that we all learn early is that you often must lose the lead to establish tricks, especially in notrumps. 'Lose your losers' gets drummed into new players.



However, all bridge players have experienced losing control of a hand and going down.

This article should help you decide when and how to lose the lead in situations where you have some control over it. Often there is a safe or dangerous defender. Let's take a look at some examples.

Deal 1

♠	8 6 3
♥	A 4 3
♦	Q 10 9
♣	A K J 10

♥ K

♠	A K J 10
♥	6 5 2
♦	A K J
♣	8 6 3

After an uncontested auction, you reach 3NT and West leads the ♥K, and you hold up your ace. West leads another heart, and you choose to win the second round, and East discards a diamond. If you lose the lead to West, she will play hearts, and take you down. If East wins the lead, she is out of hearts and can't hurt you. West is the danger hand, and East is the safe hand.

Deal 2

♠	9 4 2
♥	K 7
♦	A K J 10 9
♣	7 3 2

♠ 5

♠	A K J
♥	4 3 2
♦	3 2
♣	A K J 10 9

West leads a low spade against your uncontested 3NT. West probably has longer spades, but spades is not your weakness. Your heart suit is poor, and dummy's king is fragile. Is there a Safe or Danger hand

here? If West gains the lead somehow and leads a heart, then your king is at risk of losing (if East has the ace). Instead, if East leads a heart, then regardless where the ♥A is, your king will be a stopper. East is the safe hand, and West is the danger hand.

Working out that one defender is safer or more dangerous is a big step, but how can you use that information? Often, you can't. You can't control which defender was dealt the ace of trumps. On these two hands, though, you have some flexibility in the play.

On Deal 1, there are identical finesses available in spades and clubs, and either finesse could win, but you should consider what happens if the finesses lose. To keep West off lead, do not try the spade finesse. Instead, try the club finesse, which might lose, but even if it does, East has no hearts to return.

On Deal 2, there are two similar finesses and many players would tackle clubs first, since they have more clubs. A better plan is to consider the outcomes of the finesses. To keep the ♥K protected you should finesse the diamonds. Even if it loses, East – the safe hand – can't profitably return a heart and you will make your contract.

Deal 3

♠	K 10 8 6
♥	6 5
♦	A K Q J
♣	9 8 2

♥ Q

♠	Q J 9 7 5 4
♥	A 10
♦	7 6 3
♣	K 5

Let's look at one more hand: a much more realistic, and complicated example hand. West leads the ♥Q against your 4♠ contract. You potentially have a loser in hearts, the ♠A, and depending on the clubs, maybe two losers there. The first thing that you will notice is that East is the danger hand, since she can lead a club through your king. You can't control which defender was dealt the ace of trumps, sadly, so you must hope that it was West. If West does have the ace of trumps, and midgame leads a heart, East can win her ♥K and play a club, potentially taking you down. Is there anything you can do to reduce the risk? There is! You can duck the opening lead, a play rarely used in a suit contract. West will win the first trick, but East will not be able to win a heart trick later in the play. After drawing trumps, a diamond can discard a potential heart or club loser. Ducking an early trick when you have a doubleton ace opposite two or three low cards is great technique to keep opponents off lead later in the game.

BRIDGE INTO THE 21st CENTURY

by Paul Lavings



YOUR RHO OPENS 3♥

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

WEST	NORTH	EAST 3♥	SOUTH ?
1. ♠ K 10	♥ A J 3	♦ K 10 9 4	♣ A 10 8 7
2. ♠ A 10	♥ A K 4 3	♦ A K Q 3	♣ Q 6 3
3. ♠ 7 5	♥ A 9	♦ A K J 10 8 7 3 2	♣ 5
4. ♠ K Q 10 9 2	♥ 5	♦ A 4	♣ A K 10 9 2
5. ♠ A K 8 7 4	♥ 8	♦ K 10 7 3 2	♣ 7 6
6. ♠ K 2	♥ 7 4	♦ A K Q 7 6 4	♣ 10 8 7
7. ♠ Q 8 7	♥ A 6 4	♦ K 9 8 2	♣ A J 6
8. ♠ A K Q 9 8 7 4	♥ 8	♦ K 10 7 3	♣ 7
9. ♠ 2	♥ 10 6	♦ A K Q 8 2	♣ A Q 10 6 3
10. ♠ A K J 10 7 6 2	♥ —	♦ A K 9 5	♣ A 8

SOLUTIONS

1. 3NT. If the hand that sits over you has lots of HCP you could run into a heavy penalty, but if you pass you will lose much more in the long run. Give the 3♥ opener a seven-card suit and 7 HCP, then with your 15 HCP the other two players will have 18 HCP between them. If partner has their share with 9 HCP you will have excellent chances of making 3NT, since your opponents will have communication problems. The 3♥ bidder's partner will have only one or two hearts and the preemptor will often be short in any promising suit in partner's hand.

Nor to be missed is the value of ♥J. Whichever way the heart honours are divided, the ♥J will surely provide a second stopper in hearts, if not a second trick.

2. 3NT. How is it that you can make the same bid with 22 HCP as 15 HCP? When opponents preempt they take away your space, and you must suffer some losses. With a good opening bid of 13-15 HCP partner could issue an invitation over your 3NT with 4NT, but then you will miss slam when you have 12 HCP opposite 22. And if you bid 4NT with 12 HCP you might find the 3NT bidder with 15 HCP and have trouble making 10 tricks.

3. 3NT. Maybe 5♦ is a safer bid, as if you fail you will fail by fewer tricks. However nine tricks is easier than eleven, and the defence doesn't always get off to the best lead. Bob Hamman's maxim is "If you have a choice of reasonable bids and one of them is 3NT, then bid it."

Note that 3NT over their three-bid could well be an unusual shape. If partner holds

♠ Q 10 9 8 6 4 ♥ 7 5 ♦ 9 4 ♣ K Q 3

you will no doubt make 3NT but not 4♠.

4. 4♣. A modern treatment is to play 4♣ and 4♦ here as non-leaping Michaels, 5+ in the minor you bid and five in the other major. Non-leaping Michaels is deemed to be more frequent than 4♣ or 4♦ as a natural bid. In theory it is forcing to game, so you need to have a strong hand, five losers at most. Clearly partnerships should discuss this situation.

5. 3♠. This time your hand is not nearly as good, and the best you can do is get your spades in the picture with 3♠. With your singleton heart, it is important to bid if possible.

6. Pass. You can't bid 4♦ since that is non-leaping Michaels. Your choices therefore are pass and 5♦, and your hand is a long way short of being worth 5♦. But don't give up, when you pass partner is still there.

7. Pass. The main feature of a takeout double is shortness (0-2) in the opponent's suit. A doubleton is OK, but a tripleton is a major indication that you are better off defending 3♥.

8. 4♠. The jump to 4♠ means that you think you will make 4♠. You may not have a lot of HCP, as here, but you will have too much playing strength to simply bid 3♠. Note that if partner has no more than ♦QJ you figure to make 4♠.

9. 4NT. With non-leaping Michaels showing the minor bid plus the other major, 4NT is left to show both minors 5-5 or better. You could be going down 800 or 1100, but more often than not you will be making 5♣ or 5♦ or pushing the opponents to the five-level.

10. 6♠. On a similar hand in the 2019 playoffs for the Australian Women's and Senior Teams (the opening bid was 3♣ and the strong suit was hearts) the two players from the winning teams bid 6♥ while the players from the losing teams bid 4♥.

There is no scientific way to decide if partner has the few critical cards you need, so the best shot is to make the percentage bid and give nothing away. Let's say opener has 7 HCP, so with your 19 HCP the other two players share 14 HCP. In fact, partner had 7 HCP with

♠ 9 3 ♥ A 10 9 7 2 ♥ 3 2 ♣ K 10 7 6 .

One diamond went on ♥A and another was ruffed with ♠9, losing only one trick to the queen of trumps.

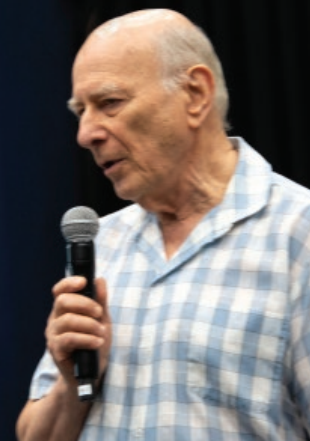
Matt Smith put the hand into Dealmaster Pro and created 10,000 simulations. 6♥ made 73% of the time, 4♥ made virtually every time and 7♥ made 35% of the time.

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IMPROVE YOUR DEFENCE

with Ron Klinger

Solution to problem on page 2



TUNE IN, WORK OUT

From a Butler Trials:

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

At one table it went:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			2♠ ¹
pass	pass	dbl	pass
2NT ²	pass	3♣	pass
3♦ ³	dbl	3♥	pass
4♣	all pass		

1. An offbeat weak two.
2. Beginning of a weak takeout.
3. Weak with a diamond suit.

The optimal defence was not found, and declarer escaped for -200, a gain of 4 imps against the datum of NS 350. Both North and South might have doubled 4♣ for penalties.

At several tables South played in 4♠, and West led the ♥J. Many Easts took the ♥A and returned the ♥8. West ruffed and read the ♥8 as asking for a diamond, likely void. Declarer ruffed away East's ♦A, drew trumps and made 4♠ for +620 and +7 imps.

After the given auction on Page 2, East should return the ♥6, asking for a club return. West might not be able to read that (especially if South follows with ♥2 and ♥7), but that is your best chance to show your re-entry. Then club, heart ruff, club takes the contract two down.

Why should East ask for a club and not a diamond? South is marked with six spades for the jump to 3♠. That gives West two spades at most. If the ♥J is a singleton, as East hopes, West has ten cards in the minors. As East has shown hearts and clubs, West might have bid clubs over 1♠ with 4+ clubs. With six clubs, West would certainly have made a jump bid in clubs. If South is void in a minor, it will not be in clubs. Hence East should ask for a club return.

LIMERICKS IN LOCKDOWN

In the last issue, we published 17 limericks from Wellington Bridge Club, and asked readers to vote for their favourite. The top-voted author will receive a free one-year subscription to *Australian Bridge Magazine*. *Australian Bridge* is a family of publications available by subscription, including a hard copy magazine for tournament players, and an online magazine for club players. For more information, please email Brad at mail@australianbridge.com.

The winning limerick, after votes from the readers, was written by Nyasa Holmes. This will be a popular winner, as Nyasa was actually the person who came up with the idea of the limerick project in the first place.

*A cheerful card player is Callie,
She never cares less for her tally.
But she has us in fits,
She gives me the splits,
'Til the director gets cross cos we dally.*

The following two limericks also received a large number of votes:

*George and Mick have dispensed
with convention,
So their bidding is mostly invention.
When they get into trouble,
Mick throws in a double
Which is designed to grab your attention.*

*The club has a member called Kevin.
Playing with him is sheer heaven.
If you get in a mess,
He couldn't care less.
With Kev all is forgiven.*

HOW WOULD YOU PLAY?

with Barbara Travis

Solutions to problems on page 5

HAND 1

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

West leads the ♠10 against South's 6♥.

There is no need to take the spade finesse, since you can use the top two diamonds to discard your second spade. Win the ♠A, then use the diamonds immediately. Now you should work on the club suit. There is no need to rely on club finesses when you can trump your club losers in dummy instead. You don't want to lead even one round of trumps, because if clubs break 4-2 you may need to ruff twice in dummy, and your opponent may return a second trump when they win the club.

You don't have enough trumps in dummy to deal with any 5-1 club break, so you may as well lead the ♣Q now, finessing. If East covers, you can draw trumps and then make the clubs into winners. At the table, the ♣Q runs around to your LHO's ♣K.

Whatever LHO returns, you win, cash the ♣A and trump a club in dummy. LHO's ♣J falls on this round, and you have 12 tricks now. Just draw trumps and cash your clubs.

Only two pairs who bid 6♥ made their contract.

HAND 2

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

West leads the ♥4 against South's 5♣. With a certain club loser and several possibilities for getting rid of the heart loser, you should win the first trick with the ♥A, and RHO contributes the ♥Q (showing the jack).

You wonder whether to take the spade finesse, given West's opening bid. You could, instead, discard the second

heart from your hand by taking the diamond finesse.

However, before you do any of these things, you should check that clubs are breaking 2-1. You should cash the ♣A at trick 2.

When you discover clubs are 3-0 (East having a void), you have two club losers. Now you NEED the spade finesse. That also means that you can discard the heart from dummy on the spades. (By the way, once you place East with the ♥Q-J and ♠K, West has most of the other kings – so the diamond finesse will work too.)

After the ♣A at trick 2, lead the ♠10, finessing. Repeat the finesse, then discard dummy's heart loser on your ♠A. Now you can ruff a heart in dummy, cash the ♦A, ruff a diamond, ruff the losing spade (the ♠K hasn't appeared) and lose only two trumps.

It was a straightforward hand after all – one where you needed to work on trumps first!

HAND 3

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

West leads the ♠6 against South's 3NT.

You should plan to win the first spade in your hand, for two reasons. Firstly, the ♠J is a valuable entry to dummy; secondly, wanting to develop tricks with hearts, the correct play with this combination is to lead the queen first, planning to finesse twice.

Therefore, win the spade in hand with the ♠K (which is also slightly deceptive and may encourage spade continuations). Lead the ♥Q – if West covers, you win and establish your heart winners, with the ♠J as your entry. Then you can finesse clubs, making three tricks in the suit with the doubleton king onside (you can finesse the ♣9 next time). That is 11 tricks. Lead the ♥Q – if West ducks, you duck, then continue the suit. You still have the ♠J as your re-entry and make 11 tricks.

The heart suit is the key. Knowing how to play various suit combinations is critical to successful bridge.





A GAME AT THE (virtual) CLUB

with Barbara Travis

Being online means that I can watch people bid, play or defend hands and provide feedback. Today's hands come from an on-line game and were, in general, mangled (I'm not feeling kind!)

♠ K Q J 4
♥ —
♦ A K 10 9 4 3
♣ 10 7 2

♠ A 10 7 6
♥ 9 7 3
♦ 6 5
♣ A K Q 3

♠ —
♥ A J 10 8 6 2
♦ J 7 2
♣ J 9 6 4

♠ 9 8 5 3 2
♥ K Q 5 4
♦ Q 8
♣ 8 5

Here's one auction:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			pass
1♣	1♦	1♥	1♠
1NT	2♠	3♥	pass
4♥	4♠	pass	pass
dbl	all pass		

North offered to settle in 2♠, then, opposite a silent partner, bid 4♠ all on her own. That just asks for a double!

You lead the ♣A, ♣K and ♣Q, declarer ruffing. When declarer leads a trump, you play low. When East shows out, declarer realises that they need to lead trumps towards dummy, so they cross back to hand with the ♦Q to lead the ♠9. Firstly, you know they plan to run the ♠9 if you play low. Secondly, you

should realise that, to defeat the contract, you need partner to hold the ♥A, and you simply need to force dummy to trump once – then your ♠10 will grow up anyway.

Just rise with the ♠A now and switch to a heart. Declarer does best to discard, accepting that they are down one trick. If they ruff, you will take the contract down two tricks instead.

Keep thinking about how you can defeat a contract, and defend accordingly.

You are sitting North with this hand:

♠ A Q 8 6 5 ♥ 4 2 ♦ K 9 3 ♣ Q J 5

The auction:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	1♠	2♥	3♣
pass	?		

What's your best bid? The right bid is to cue bid the opponent's suit – by bidding 3♥. This allows partner to rebid 3NT if they have hearts held. You certainly do NOT want to rebid 3♠, making it sound like you have six spades, nor do you want to head beyond 3NT.

However, if I had been South, over 2♥ I would have responded 3NT, to play:

♠ K 2 ♥ K J 10 ♦ 8 6 5 ♣ A K 7 3 2

Though you would respond 2♣ to 1♠, after the intervention, it is better to make a practical bid, rather than possibly leaving partner without a rebid. The most likely contract is 3NT, with your good heart stoppers, so it is definitely 'practical' to make the bid immediately. It is also what you would rebid over a 3♥ preemptive overcall – unless you opted to look for penalties.

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

♠ A Q 8 6 5
♥ 4 2
♦ K 9 3
♣ Q J 5

♠ J 10 9 3
♥ 9 8 5
♦ 10 4 2
♣ 10 9 8

♠ 7 4
♥ A Q 7 6 3
♦ A Q J 7
♣ 6 4

♠ K 2
♥ K J 10
♦ 8 6 5
♣ A K 7 3 2

3NT will only fail if West leads the ♦10. If any Wests had done that online, with the suit unbid, I would be wondering about their ethics! (And, by the way, East's 2♥ overcall is borderline, given the lack of texture in the heart suit itself. You can often go for a big penalty, though this time the vulnerability was favourable. Just because you have opening points, you do NOT have to overcall at the two-level with a poor suit.)

Another hand:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		pass	pass
1♣	pass	1♥	pass
2NT	pass	3♦ ¹	pass
4♥	all pass		

1. 3♦ was a transfer, confirming the fifth heart – over 3♥, East planned to show their four-card spade suit.

You are on lead with:

♠ 10 7 5 ♥ 10 6 4 ♦ 9 7 5 4 ♣ K Q 3

Only one person led the ♣K. The defence is given the opening lead in order to balance the equation a little – given declarer can work both their side's hands. Some hands call for defensive leads, but not this sort of hand, especially when you are leading through the strong hand. I think leading the ♣K is marked, in order to create a quick trick for your side.

That person held 4♥ to 10 tricks. All other Easts made 11 or 12 tricks on either a diamond or spade lead:

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

The diamond lead, despite the finesse losing, gave declarer a discard for the club loser, for 11 tricks.

The spade lead, on the other hand, picked up the whole spade suit. One declarer failed to appreciate the strength of her own

spade holding, with the ♠9 giving extra oomph to the suit; she tried the ♠Q at trick 1, only making 11 tricks instead of 12 (with declarer able to try the diamond suit, and getting the club discard).

Though the ♣K won't always work as the lead, leading these honour sequences against suit contracts will pay off more often than not.

Next, a card play problem:

♠ K Q J 4
♥ J
♦ J 7 5
♣ K J 8 6 2

♠ 9 8 7 2
♥ A K Q 7 2
♦ 8 6
♣ 9 3

You are North and playing in a spade partscore after East has overcalled diamonds. East leads the ♥6. Don't run this around to your jack; you have no quick re-entry to dummy. Grab the ♥A at trick 1, then take two diamond discards on dummy's hearts.

Then there was a hand where your heart suit was:

♥ J 9 7 5
♥ A 6 4

When West led a heart, inserting the nine drew East's queen. Win the ace. Don't duck! You can now lead back towards dummy's jack and create an additional winner – and, on this hand, generate an entry to dummy that you didn't have.

Remember to think about whether to duck or whether to win. There are plenty of times when you should win the trick, based on the spot cards that you can see (either in dummy or with the opponents).

Sitting North, you hold:

♠ A 10 4	♥ A K 9 8 5 2	♦ K 9 4	♣ A
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♥	pass	2♦ ^{10+ HCP}
pass	3♥ ^{GF}	pass	3NT
pass	4♥	all pass	

4♥ is an extremely naughty bid. You have already shown a good 6+ card heart suit, and partner has said they aren't interested in hearts. You should expect 0-1 hearts in partner's hand.

However, if you want to explore going further, a really good bid is 4♦. That should imply six hearts and three diamonds, with slam interest, otherwise you would have (should have) passed 3NT. Partner may now cooperate with her six-card diamond suit!

♠ K 6 5 ♥ – ♦ Q J 8 7 3 2 ♣ K J 9 6

4♥ was delivered its just reward when hearts broke 5-2, going down. How would you feel with 6♦ cold (let alone 3NT making 11 or 12 tricks)?

www.bridgewithbarbara.com

REAL DEAL BRIDGE

by Laura Ginnan

Trials for turbulent times

Where were you when you realised just how much COVID-19 would impact your life? For me, this was when the calls and emails started flooding in with enquiries from players and fellow bridge teachers about how to run sessions online. Peter Hollands and I have been conducting online lessons through Bridge Vid for over five years, and had infrastructure in place to get started immediately with online duplicates and provide an avenue for the face-to-face Sale Bridge Club beginners' class to move online.

Online bridge is a different game. It was a grueling but very rewarding task moving players online, and one that required their determination and persistence. I found that many players were out of their comfort zone, not only because of new bridge rules such as alerting their own bids, rather than their partner's bids, but due to technology hurdles. I provided tech support to players who had only ever used their computers for emails and had no idea how to open up an internet browser. The experience has certainly shaped my view on trying new things and moving out of my comfort zone.

After the initial novelty of online play wore off, it was clear just how much people missed the social



Max, after the home internet failed and he had to start playing on his phone

interaction and the feel of face to face bridge. Pete and I found ways to revive this: for a bit of fun we asked players to send in photos of themselves playing online, and my inbox was soon full of photos. Many were from Gippsland players who have the most pristine views as they play away on their tablets and computers. Melbournites sent through photos of their beards, and I was seeing plenty of pets who were learning bridge over the shoulder.

As games became more competitive I felt out of control when directing sessions because it is hard to ascertain what has happened due to the slow flow of information, with typed chat and the limitations of director tools. One time I practically had to beg a player to allow an undo because their opponent, who held a game force opening, had accidentally clicked pass when they were trying to click alert and met the reaction of, "I don't allow undos; if I misclick I own my mistakes, you should too."

As players themselves became more confident with online play, many developed large social groups and started making enquiries about running their own games. The conversation often started with "What Australian options are available?" Australia is a world leader when it comes to our scoring technology and the way that we run tournaments. Take a look at this article from Bridge Winners from a US player's experience at the Gold Coast Congress:

<http://bridgewinners.com/article/view/the-wonder-of-bridge-down-under/>

When it comes to online play though, the rest of the world has leapt ahead of us, mostly because there wasn't the interest from players, which I have always thought was a shame as a country as vast as ours could really benefit from it. Even at a club level there has been a resurgence for night time play which has struggled in real life as many players feel that it finishes too late or don't want to drive at night.

Players were regularly throwing around the idea that Pete and I would be the perfect people to work on creating an Australian playing option. It was easy enough to dismiss the idea at first. As time went on, players were continuing to tell us how they missed sitting at the table and talking to their friends. It was clear that the playing options at the time weren't providing players with what they wanted most. My new outlook on trying new things, and not saying no because something seemed hard, led me to look further into what would be needed to create an online bridge platform. After all, if a 95-year-old who didn't have a computer before COVID-19 was willing to learn the ropes to playing online bridge, I had no excuse.

The right people soon became involved, the company Real Deal Bridge (RDB) was formed, and the project build began in conjunction with the Australian games designers from No Moss Studios.

Real Deal Bridge had now come to life, and there were clear goals. The program would need to bring back the social interaction, simulate the real table as much as possible, provide avenues for groups and clubs to set up a virtual home, facilitate supervised and teaching sessions, and solve the frustrations that I had experienced as an online director.

The most obvious thing that was needed was voice at the table. Originally everyone had their microphones turned on permanently on during play. This felt like the implementation choice that would keep things flowing as naturally as possible; in reality though, it didn't work. It's wonderful to be able to say hi to your opponents at the start of a round and have a chat at the end if there is some time. However, in-game it should be used as though you were at the table (asking about bids, thank you partner, good luck etc). At a computer it's easy for players to forget that others can hear them. Many players were caught out counting points, some were making comments to themselves during play and there was a variety of background sounds that impacted the game such as dogs barking or telephones ringing. Eventually we moved to a push-to-talk system which has been a far better implementation for the purpose.

Another purposeful decision was to not rearrange players' cards with trumps on the left after the bidding concluded. After all, not many people do this at the table. Overwhelmingly our test players were telling us that they really wanted trumps on the left and suits mirroring dummy. The change to reflect player preferences was made, and this is clearly an area where technology provides an appealing option. I wonder if when we return to the real table people will start to do this in person?

One of the biggest differences with RDB compared to other bridge playing platforms is that players alert their partner's bids, not their own. For players with online experience, this seemed to be a shock!

With a few games under their belt, people really like it. As a bridge director and the lead on the project, I am often asked about how RDB handles unauthorised information. It's simple: just like at the real table, the director gets to the bottom of it. It's obvious when an alert has woken someone up as they have already made the bid. This implementation makes it much easier to clear things up earlier, because problems can be identified in the bidding or at the end of the auction rather than at the end of the hand or session.

After months of trials and tribulations 'she' is now built! The Australian-made and owned Real Deal Bridge (RDB) is available for clubs and private groups to set up their online home. Any user can also access the Real Deal Bridge Club games and lessons which provide an avenue for people to play in if their club doesn't have an online home, or if they are after a game at a different time.

One of the most frustrating hurdles was convincing Apple that RDB wasn't a gambling site; I bet you didn't see that coming! With that out of the way, Real Deal Bridge can now be accessed through realdealbridge.com or downloaded from the Apple and Play stores. By the time this article is published, a stand alone build should also be available for computer users to save to their computer, which will also provide much better computer performance than playing on the web.

I'm so excited to have been involved in getting the development to where it is now, and being able to welcome players, clubs and groups on board. I have been working away on the project with the team from No Moss for months, and it feels like an exciting chapter of my life has closed. In reality though, this is really just the beginning for Real Deal Bridge. Many real Aussie players have been involved in the development from very early on (debatably too early). The Real Deal and No Moss teams can't thank our early testers enough for their ideas and patience (especially those from the Beenleigh Logan Bridge Club). We are now looking forward to Aussie clubs, groups and players enjoying the program and shaping its future direction.



To find out more head to realdealbridge.com or email info@realdealbridge.com.

FITNESS BIDS

by
Bob Levey



Bob Levey is a retired columnist for The Washington Post. He has written about bridge for more than 45 years. He is a Diamond Life Master, and he won the Bean Red Ribbon Pairs in 2010.

Exercise to firm up your bridge game

Bridge and exercise, in the same sentence? A sedentary card game that could and should be interrupted by regular aerobics?

Before you start scoffing, or donning that T-shirt that says, "My idea of exercise is sitting East-West," please listen to a renowned neuroscientist who believes that bridge players who exercise regularly can not only ward off dementia, but can perform better at the table.

The scientist is Dr. Wendy Suzuki, a professor at New York University. Although she has never played bridge ("but I've always been meaning to learn!"), Dr. Suzuki has done decades of research into how physical exercise also exercises the brain. Her chief conclusion: there's a clear link and a clear gain.



If bridge players ramped up their heart rates and took regular walks – both during bridge sessions and on days when they don't play, "there would be immediate benefits," she said.

While exercise will not help you execute a strip squeeze, you will improve right away "in terms of focus and mood," Suzuki said. "Bridge players who focus better and stay out of the dumps should be more successful."

Suzuki has been a leading scholar of brain fitness throughout her 22-year career at NYU. She is also an exercise therapist, and she is known for her bold approaches to classroom teaching. She once hired a male burlesque dancer in gold briefs to prove to her students that the brain retains information better when it's surprising.

Like many members of the bridge community, Suzuki has read medical studies that report the positive effects that playing games has on warding off dementia. She believes that combining bridge playing with regular aerobic exercise can do a better job against dementia than just playing bridge.

"There is good evidence that engaging in a broad range of mental activity provides neuro-protective effects on the brain," she said. However, it's not as if bridge has any direct medical effect. "It's more indirect." She said there's no silver bullet in the battle against dementia and Alzheimer's.

Exercise, she explained, "helps brain cells actually grow," in somewhat the same way that doing 20 crunches a day develops core strength. She described the result as an

increase in long-term memory functions, and for bridge players, a better chance at increased stamina and increased mental acuity.

What kind of exercise would be best for bridge players? About halfway through any 3½-hour session, "get up, go take a walk, climb the stairs, get a good power walk going," she suggested. Ten minutes should be plenty, she said – or about as long as the typical hospitality break during major tournaments.

Suzuki also believes that exercising with and around others will help reluctant players get out of their chairs and head out the door.

"If a bridge player is sitting in a ballroom at the Hilton, and the director says it's time for everyone to get up and take a walk, no one will want to be the only player who doesn't go along," she said.

But social pressure alone won't inspire bridge players to exercise. Suzuki says her research has shown that reluctant exercisers – regardless of age, race, gender or any other demographic factor – stick with it when they are doing something they enjoy, and when they're not doing it alone. The social nature of bridge should make it easier to find an exercise buddy, she said.

Another often-overlooked way that bridge players can combat dementia is to get enough sleep. "Better sleep will always make your brain work better," she said.

If bridge players close down the hotel bar after an evening session and think that they will sleep better with three drinks inside them, they are mistaken, Suzuki said. "Alcohol disrupts sleep," so bridge players should avoid overindulging.

As for food, Suzuki has become an avid student of intermittent fasting. That can take several forms – eating only between 10am and 5pm, for example, or picking one day a week when you don't eat anything. She said there's good scientific evidence that this approach to food "has benefits for your brain," and recommends that bridge players try some form of intermittent fasting for better brain performance.

There's also some evidence that stressing the brain – as bridge certainly does – will help it perform better, both during the stress and afterward. "The brain is like any other muscle in that sense," according to Suzuki. If you use it regularly, and demand more of it, the muscle grows.

"Exercise can help anybody at any age with mental capacity," she said. "It's the best way to improve deep brain function, and improve your bridge game."

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