

GCBA NEWSLETTER

Season 2017-18

Dec 2017

PROGRAMME

For this month we have -

- Dec 4th : Winter Teams 4
- Dec 11th : Winter Pairs 4
- Dec 18th : League 5
- Dec 25th : Closed
- Jan 1st : County Individual

The game on New Year's Day is our annual individual event – all are welcome and the bidding will be restricted to a simply (supplied) system. It's a different game of bridge!

GCBA WINTER PROGRAMME

Our next weekend event is the Cotswold Cup on Sunday 4th February at CBC. This is a pairs competition with teams scoring, and your team-mates will be some well known internationals from years gone by. The event starts at 1100 and will include a nice lunch and a break for tea in the afternoon, with a finish around 1730. The cost is £10 per person. The profits from the event and any extra collected will go to the Sue Ryder Foundation. Please try to come along; sign up at Cheltenham Bridge Club, or by email to allansanis@aol.com.

BRIDGE OUTSIDE GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Forthcoming events in neighbouring counties include these that are worth considering -

- Midlands Congress, 5-7 January at the WMBC in Solihull, details on the Warwickshire web site.
- East Wales hosts a 2-day Swiss Teams in Newport on the weekend of 10-11 February.

DIRECTORS' THOUGHTS

There has been some discussion recently about the use of the stop card and the alert card during the bidding. It has emerged that rigid adherence to the procedures we have for using these, and criticism of those who fail to comply, is proving a significant turn-off for players new to the competitive world.

We need to go back and think about the reason we have these processes. They are not part of the game itself (you won't find the regulations about these in the Laws of Bridge) but they are there to alleviate two specific problems.

In the case of the STOP card, it is to cut the frequency of a bidding break-in-tempo when the next hand is surprised by the bid just made. Not all jump bids are surprises, and some not-jumps provide surprises. This means the process is only partially successful. When someone forgets to STOP or to pause, we might have some unauthorised information as a result, but we play on and there are rules to cope with any UI. [But deliberately giving UI by not pausing is an offence]

In the case of the ALERT (and the Announcement) process, the problem being tackled is that of provision of Full Disclosure. Failures can be remedied at later points in the auction, and newcomers to the process should not be pilloried when they miss a step of an unfamiliar process.

The bottom line is that these are useful, but not vital, processes, and we should be gentle in our application of them.

GCBA RESULTS

The Winter Swiss Teams (now 12 teams) has had three rounds and the leading team is now Wendy Angseesing & Mike Wignall, Joe A and Roger Jackson. There are two teams 5 VPs behind, and two more just 1 VP behind that.

The Winter Pairs had one session, the winners of which were Roy Collard & Pam Pearce from Keith Sharp & Judy Sanis. The Constables lead the series ahead of Aleksandar Lishkov & Diana Nettleton.

The County League has had four matches now and in Division One the best average is the Denning team with 57 VPs from three matches. Leading Division Two is now Mike Lewis' team (Malcolm Green, Powells) with an average 14 VPs per match.

In the County Mixed Pairs the winners were Ashok Kwatra & Laura Polito, with a massive 68% score, ahead of Tricia Gilham & Richard Harris, and in third place were Joe & Wendy Angseesing who collect the Flitch trophy as the top married couple.

The County team ended third in their group in the Tollemache qualifying round in Birmingham, just one place out of qualifying. This is better than the 4th place of the previous two years. Commiserations to Judy Sanis (npc) and her squad of eight.

The third County match of the season was against Worcestershire, and we were happy to win all three matches this month too, with scores of 15-5 for the Dawes and Porter teams, and 11-9 for the Markham.

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County Championship Tollemache Cup

The County team had this hand to sort out against the number one seeds in the Tollemache qualifying round in November.

♠ A3		♠ K98
♥ AKQJ85	DLR W	♥ 942
♦ --		♦ T653
♣ AKJT5		♣ 974

North dealt on this hand and at our first table it was three passes to West. West opened a strong 2♣ and East responded with a negative/ neutral 2♦. Here the next hand doubled showing diamonds and over West's 2♥ bid, the opposition leapt to 5♦. They were non-vul against vul, and taking a penalty was an option but not an attractive one, as East could tell that partner was void in diamonds. So East passed encouragingly, and the bidding proceeded 5♦-P-P-6♦ (grand slam interest)-P-6♥-end. That clocked up 12 tricks when the ♣Q was an inevitable loser.

At another table there was a weak 2♠ opener in third seat in front of the big hand, who now bid 4♣ showing clubs and hearts. Despite discouragement (the weak hand doubled 4♠) the big hand insisted on a slam and stopped in 6♥.

At the third table the third hand opened 1♠, so that West could only double to show a decent hand. It proceeded 1♠-X-2♠-P-P and at this point West leapt to 6♥ – a reasonable option as partner will often cover one of the two losers.

Never a peaceful moment !

Across the field, two pairs played only in game, two pairs played in clubs going down, and 12 pairs played in 6♥ making.

Bridge Gadgets

Many bridge clubs these days make use of Duplimated boards and computer scoring using Bridgemate devices. These have proven to be very attractive to bridge players, but are expensive for small clubs to procure.

A number of alternatives have recently appeared. The Duplimate machine from Jannersten now has an equivalent piece of hardware called PlayBridgeDealer4 which has some unique features. More interesting perhaps are hand-held (but computer-connected) options – one is the Handidup machine and the other is a promised mobile phone app. Both will support manual dealing of computer dealt hands. They scan the bar codes on cards (held face down) and tell you (by one of four lights) whether the card belongs to N,S,E or W. Dealing is at roughly the same speed as hand dealing.

On the scoring front, there are a number of alternatives based on tablets (commercial, mostly Android) as an alternative to Bridgemates. Being powerful computers in their own right, these are very flexible – the only downside seems to be that they do need recharging, every 3-4 sessions.

One of the offerings for scoring is called BRIANBRIDGE, and it seems to be popular in the Cafe Bridge as it can score easily simultaneously across multiple sites. Another offering is BRIDGETABS, and there is a club in Somerset using that technology very happily. Another is ARCSCORER.

If you do ever try these out, please let me know and I will advertise your findings.

Best Conventions (3)

Last month we moved on from takeout doubles to Stayman & Transfers. Number three on my list is Fourth Suit Forcing (FSF).

For many years it has been recognised that after bidding three suits naturally, it is unlikely that the fourth suit is where the partnership belongs, and that defining a bid of the fourth suit as an artificial force makes the bid much more frequent and much more valuable.

Most partnerships play today that FSF is game forcing, and this is a compromise, but one which gives up the ability to stop in a part-score (rarely anything other than 2N) in order to avoid awkward jumps on stronger hands.

Responses to the fourth suit are basically natural, but there are a small number of special cases

- the sequence 1♣-1♦-1♥-1♠ is treated as forcing but natural, and without spades, to create a force, the last bid would be 2♠.
- a raise of the fourth suit, unless partner has specifically denied the suit (eg 1♣-1♦-1♠ would deny hearts), will show that suit and allows you to play in the fourth suit if required.
- sometimes you will have no good bid over the fourth suit, and rather than tell a different lie each time, many have agreed that the lowest suit bid over the fourth suit is completely neutral, and lets the other hand now make a descriptive bid. It would make 2♠ the choice with ♠AQ32 ♥543 ♦K ♣KJ432 after 1♣-1♦-1♠-2♥.