

GCBA NEWSLETTER

Season 2018-19

November/December 2018

PROGRAMME

For coming weeks we have -

- Mon 17th : League 5
- Mon 24th : <no bridge>
- Mon 31st : <no bridge>
- Mon 7th : Spring Teams
- Mon 14th : Winter Pairs

For any of these Mondays apart from the League, you need only turn up as a pair if it is a pairs event, and as a foursome if a teams event.

IN 2019

The RANK XEROX competition is on Monday 29th January at CBC (1900 hrs); all clubs are welcome to enter up to three teams-of-8 for this restricted event (at most two National Masters per team).

On Sunday 17th February we have the COTSWOLD CUP at 1300 hrs at CBC. It is a pairs competition with teams scoring, using a datum score from when the hands were once played in an international match. This is our annual charity event, with proceeds going to the Sue Ryder Hospice. Entry fee is £10 per player.

BRIDGE AROUND GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Coming up in the near future ...

- On the 4th-6th January at [WMBC in Solihull](#) is the Midlands Congress.
- On the 8th-9th February in Newport is the [East Wales Swiss Teams](#) congress.
- On the 22nd-24th February is the [Barnstaple Congress](#) in North Devon.
- On the 2nd-3rd March is the [Wiltshire Congress](#) in Bath.

TD's CORNER

Our Tournament Directors – almost all unpaid volunteer effort – are one of our most precious resources, and we all need to recognise that and say “THANK YOU, DIRECTOR” more often. The most important role of the TD is to ensure that everyone enjoys the bridge game, and they will apply the Laws and Regulations as best they can to ensure that a fair bridge result is obtained whenever possible. Please accept their judgements with good grace.

There are a number of TD resources provided by the EBU which are useful to TDs and the players, viz

> The TD and scoring discussion forums found at www.ebu.co.uk/forum.

> The instructional videos at <https://www.ebu.co.uk/laws-and-ethics/td-videos>

> The booklet of appeals from 2015 with commentaries from the L&E committee.

In the three most recent Midlands Counties League matches (against Worcestershire & Oxfordshire & Derbyshire), the DAWES team won all matches with 19+17+16 VPs, the PORTER won one collecting 10+17+8 VPs, and the MARKHAM team won two, collecting 6+20+16 VPs.

In the Tollemache (Counties Championship) Gloucestershire came third in its group and failed to qualify for the finals. It had been 3rd, 4th and 4th in their group in previous years.

In the EBU Mixed Teams trial, the team with John Atthey & Claire Robinson won their semifinal but lost the last match.

GCBA RESULTS

The Winter Swiss Teams had three more sessions, after which the winners are the only undefeated team – Richard Butland & Garry Watson, Aleksandar Lishkov & Diana Nettleton – and Joe Angseesing's team second.

The Winter Pairs also had three sessions, which were won by Butland & Watson and then Cuncer & Rogers and then Atthey & Pritchard. Across the series, Patrick Shields & Mike Wignall lead.

In the County League three more matches have taken place. In Division One the lead is tied between Tony Lett's teams and Joe Angseesing's team. In Division Two the Simons team are leading from the Pritchard team.

In the qualifying round for the County KO, there were 10 teams from which two were eliminated and the others seeded for the next round. The website has the full draw.

The Mixed Pairs had a turnout of 10 tables and the winners – only decided on the last two boards – was the pair of John Cuncer & Suzy Lawson (of Bristol), with Paul Archer & Sarah Watson coming third to win the Flitch trophy.

The Bredon Vale saw 11 teams from 8 different clubs took part, and the winners were THRIBB, staffed by Angelos Agathangelou & John Cuncer, Natalie Davenport & John Polhill. Next place went to the team from EDF Energy.

National online KO plate : John Atthey & Claire Robinson, Tony Hill & Alan Wearmouth were winners!

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County Match

We played Worcestershire away in the November match. This was the last board and it produced massive swings.

| | | |
|----------|---------|----------|
| ♠ 6432 | | |
| ♥ KQ4 | | |
| ♦ 97 | | |
| ♣ J542 | | |
| ♠ 987 | | ♠ AKQJT5 |
| ♥ 93 | B 32 | ♥ AJ |
| ♦ Q8 | DLR W | ♦ AT5 |
| ♣ KT9876 | VUL: EW | ♣ AQ |
| ♠ -- | | |
| ♥ T87652 | | |
| ♦ KJ6432 | | |
| ♣ 3 | | |

Each table started with P-P-2♣ but then things varied. South was looking at massive shape and little defence and favourable vulnerability. It is no surprise therefore that some bid 3♥, which North then raised to game. What could East do but bid 4♠, and that finished the auction.

When South kept quiet (keeping a later surprise for declarer?) West could respond 2♦ and hear 2♠ from partner. Three trumps and two doubletons is enough now to support spades, but how East continues isn't clear. A 4♣ cue bid is going to get a negative response from West, and East might get discouraged. Some were, but others thought that the 4♠ response implied that West's honour (surely one is shown by a 3♠ raise) had to be ♣K and now there were 11 tricks in sight, making a chance of 6♠ worthwhile.

The small slam was bid by exactly one pair in each match, and it was a Gloucestershire pair in each case. The (this time) impossible grand slam was bid once by Worcestershire.

But even after you bid the slam, there is the question of how to play it. It looks like spades and clubs will provide lots of tricks, but the 4-0 spade break will emerge quickly and stop that plan. On a heart lead, there is no question of playing a diamond, and declarer – after one spade – must test the clubs. When South shows out on the second club it is clear that you have three and exactly three club tricks. That takes care of the heart loser and you have to judge correctly to get yourself a second diamond trick to make the contract. Whew!

Weak and 4? Strong and 5?

There have always been debates between the camps which favour the Acrol treatment of four card majors and weak no-trumps, and the rest of the world which tends to favour five card majors and strong no-trumps. Which is best?

First let's consider newcomers to the game; when learning there is no doubt that the Acrol approach, in which you never need to open a 3-card suit is simpler. So that is where everyone starts.

A survey of top internationals' system cards, however, will show that strong NT dominates. Does that mean it has to be a better approach? It's not as simple as that, for the top players agenda is strongly geared to teams games, while most of the bridge played in the county is matchpoints.

In teams games, being able to avoid disasters, and being able to bid the big hands well, are the dominant concerns. At matchpoints, it's all about frequency of swings, not size.

The key plus points for a weak NT and four card majors are

- Simplicity, including the bidding over a 1m opener.
- The obstructive effect of the more common weak NT.

The key plus points for a strong NT and five card majors are

- 1N-doubled is not a concern.
- Promising 5cnds for a 1M opener makes it easier for partner to compete.
- Combined with 2-over-1 game forcing, the bidding of game forcing hands is much improved.

Each option comes with some hand types which are awkward. For the "Weak&4" case the most awkward is a balanced 15-16 hand which is forced to open a bad four card major because if you opened a minor and partner bids your major, you would be too good for a raise to the 2-level, but not good enough for a raise to the 3-level.

For the "Strong&5" the most awkward case is supporting the minor suit opening. One situation which can work in either direction is finding a major suit fit after a 1♣ or 1♦ opener. Where the other side find the fit, the 1m opener loses out, but when that side finds the fit, the 1m opener gains.

Where does the balance fall? The answer is that it is close enough that in any one session the winner could be either, and having experience of both is good for any bridge player. If you only play matchpoints then either will work, but if you are interested in teams games, then the "Strong&5" option will do better.