

GCBA NEWSLETTER

Season 2019-20

January-February 2020

PROGRAMME

January retains a similar pattern to previous months -

- First Monday of the month is (Spring) Teams.
- Second Monday is the (Winter) Swiss Pairs
- Third Monday is the County League

The fourth Monday in January is the (GCBA) qualifying round for the County Pairs, running alongside the Rank Xerox Trophy (inter-club team-of-8).

COMING COUNTY EVENTS

Our next event is the Cotswold Cup, our annual charity event (for the Sue Ryder Hospice). It is a pairs competition with teams scoring, and your team-mates will be successful international players from years gone by. There are multiple prizes donated by local businesses, and a raffle. Entries to ctd@gcba.org.uk or on the notice board at CBC.

BRIDGE AROUND GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Don't forget

- The East Wales Congress at Newport takes place on 15th-16th February.
- The Newent Bowl takes place this year on Sunday 23rd February and is a Swiss Pairs event.
- The National Ranked Masters pairs is on 29th Feb and 1st March.
- The Wiltshire Green Point weekend in Bath comes with Swiss Pairs on Sat 7th March and Swiss Teams on the 8th.

INNOVATION

Bridge today has a lot more competition for our time than it used to have, and if the game we play remains the same game we played fifty years ago, it is bound to atrophy. Innovation can come from (at least) these two directions – technology and organisation.

On the technology front a lot of clubs are now using mechanical dealing machines and Bridgemates (or tablets) for capturing results – but more options are on the horizon. The latest Bridge+More table-top dealing machines from Denmark are now in use in this country. There are some drawbacks for regular use in duplicate games, but they are proving, in Cardiff Bridge Club, an ideal tool for teaching (it is very easy to have all your students see the same hand) and for matches (so pre-dealt boards are no longer needed). You can read about them at

www.bridgeplusmore.com

The other avenue (and this one has no ££ costs) is the form of duplicate game we play. Teams games as well as pairs games is one option, but have you even considered

- Speedball games, where the playing rate is five minutes/board; it forces you to concentrate hard and allows you to play 36 or more boards in one session.
- Single session Swiss Pairs or Swiss Teams, which do need multiple sets of boards, but are easily enough handled on EBUScore.

If you want help with any new ideas for game formats, ask Patrick via ctd@gcba.org.uk.

GCBA RESULTS

After the fourth and final Swiss Teams round the clear winners were Tony Hill & Alan Wearmouth, Mark Rogers & Peter Waggett, undefeated across six matches.

In the Autumn Pairs the winners off both scratch and (NGS) handicap were John Councer & Mark Rogers. On scratch they were 5% clear of Patrick Phair & Mike Wignall, but on handicap behind by only 0.3% was Nicky Ferguson & Nigel Pitel.

The Open Handicap Pairs on 30th December was won by Elizabeth Freeman & Peggy Phillips with Ralph Brooks & Jean Whiting in second place.

In the Stanley Swiss Teams the winning team was Roy Collard & Pam Pearce, Ben Ritacca & Mike Wignall. Second place was the sponsor's team (led by Keith Stanley) and in third place came Paul Archer & Sarah Watson, David Curnow & Tim Russell. There were 14 clubs from all across the county represented in the 26 teams at the event

AND FROM OUTSIDE

In the Midlands Counties League, Gloucestershire lies second by 5 VPs in the first division (the DAWES, behind Leicestershire), lies fourth in division two (the PORTER), and is leading the third division (the MARKHAM) by 8 VPs from Warwickshire.

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MIDLANDS COUNTIES LEAGUE

The last inter-County league match threw up quite a few slam-ish hands. Try bidding these with yourself as partner, and ask your favourite partner to do the same and then compare your sequences. Ideally they would be identical.

♠ Q32 ♥ AKJT9873 ♦ Q ♣ K	B 23 DLR:W	♠ AKJT4 ♥ 65 ♦ AK9654 ♣ --
♠ KQ873 ♥ A8 ♦ 7 ♣ AKQJ2	B14 DLR:W	♠ AT5 ♥ KT97532 ♦ K2 ♣ 6
♠ AK9532 ♥ KJ8 ♦ 3 ♣ Q63	B 3 DLR:W	♠ Q8 ♥ A432 ♦ AKQ962 ♣ A

THE ANSWERS

On B23 every table got to a slam, but only 4/12 reached the grand slam. One successful sequence was 1♥-2♦-3♥-5♣ (Exclusion RKC)-5N(two+Q)-7♥. We gained points on this hand in two matches, flat in the other.

On B14 there were six tables reached slam, but you have to be in spades not hearts, so two tables went minus. The best path looks to be 1♠-2♥-3♣-3♠(forcing)-4N(RKC)-5♣(1)-6♠. We lost points in two matches on this hand, heavily in Division One when Notts bid the slam twice and we didn't bid it at all.

On B3 only four of the six Gloucestershire pairs got to the reasonable (but not certain) grand slam in spades. One sequence is 1♠ - 2♦ (game forcing) - 2♠(promising 6 spades) - 3♠ - cue bid - 4N (RKC) and so to slam. We lost points enormously on this in all three matches because all the Notts tables bid the grand slam.

EBU AFFILIATION

The County Association is conscious of about 30 (duplicate) bridge clubs spread across the county, and about half of them are EBU Affiliated clubs and half are not. Since the biggest clubs are affiliated, and because many people are members of more than one club, a clear majority of the duplicate bridge played in the county is by EBU members. But why are only some clubs affiliated? When this question is asked, there are two answers much more common than anything else.

This first answer is the cost - the EBU asks for about 40p per person per session, to help fund the national body. The EBU is open that this is the cost of running a National Bridge Organisation (NBO). To justify this we need to ask ourselves where we would be without the EBU as our NBO, to organise the Laws & Regulations and help keep the game going in the 21st century, and to represent England on the world stage. Think of the equivalent with golf or tennis - any game would be much poorer with no national governance. We should be please to contribute to our NBO (and at about 1.5p per board it's cheap).

The second issue is unfriendliness, and this criticism has been valid at times in the past when the atmosphere has become over-competitive. But both the EBU and its affiliated clubs are now very conscious of this and are working hard to be friendly clubs - they strive to follow regulations because without these you will have difficulties, but to do this gently.

Do encourage your clubs to affiliate.

VACANT SPACES

Have a look at this hand and decide how you will play 3NT on the lead of the ♥2 (fourth best). The bidding was not revealing - just 1N-3N.

♠ A76 ♥ K98 ♦ AJT9 ♣ 876	3N DLR:W	♠ K98 ♥ A76 ♦ K432 ♣ A32
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You have a very certain five tricks outside diamonds and no chance of extra tricks there - so the hand comes down to finding the queen of diamonds. Of course you cannot know, but who is more likely to hold it?

Decades ago, David Burn was preaching that the opening leader was more likely than not to have the missing queen, and I could believe it but I never heard the reason why. Here's the logic.

The key concept that factors into such choices is who has more unknown cards - these are called vacant spaces. You might think that all we know is that North has four hearts and South has three but there is more than that to notice.

The key fact is that North did not lead a five card suit, and surely with a five card suit they would. If North doesn't have five spades, then South has at least three, and the same applies to clubs. And if North has no five card suit, they have at least one spade, diamond and club. If we add that to the known shape in hearts, we find that North has 6 vacant spades, while South has only 4. The odds are therefore 6-4 in favour of North holding the missing queen and we should finesse accordingly.