

GCBA NEWSLETTER

Season 2021-22

September 2021

GCBA RESULTS

Series Eight of the GCBA Swiss ended in a close finish. Paul Denning, Richard Butland, Joe Angseesing, Andrew Kambites, Graham Cornell and Richard Chamberlain just pipped Ben Ritacca, Peter Waggett, Tim Stanley-Clamp, John Wilmott, Ian Panto, Tony Waterlow, and Graham Orsmond by 1 VP.

Series Ten of the 9-high Swiss Pairs was won by Rowan and Michael Lytheer, with Derek Boreham and Moya Jackson tied for second place with Angela Hawley and Belinda George.

Summer Teams winners

2nd: Dan McIntosh, BJ.O'Brien, Patrick Shields, Filip Kurbalija
16th: Harry Anoyrkatis, Stefan Lindfors, Rob Lawy, Jim Grant.

GCBA Individual

- 1st Peter Waggett
- 2nd Patrick Shields
- 3rd Jack Armorgie

FUTURE EVENTS

This Autumn, GCBA continues its Monday on-line events:

- First Monday Swiss teams, turn up as a team on BBO.
- Second & Fourth Mondays Pairs League again on BBO. You need to register in advance.
- Third & Fifth Mondays will be the County League played on RealBridge. The matches will be 24 boards with advanced registration required.

Many clubs are returning to at least a limited programme of face-to-face event. Further details of where and when you can play are to be found on the GCBA website Home page.

A RARE GEM

When some Cheltenham players met in an EBU pairs competition, the following incredible hand arose.

♠ AQT
 ♥ T942
 ♦ AK8
 ♣ AQ4

♠ 853
 ♥ AKJ87653
 ♦ Q4
 ♣

♠ KJ96
 ♥ Q
 ♦ T7
 ♣ KJT987

♠ 742
 ♥
 ♦ J96452
 ♣ 6532

South	West	North	East
	4♥	X	P
5♦	P	P	X
P	P	P	

West leads a top heart. At single dummy, it looks like you need to find the trumps breaking and the club finesse working. Then you should be able to arrange to ruff the fourth club in dummy (if necessary) and endplay East in spades. However, East's double suggests both black Kings are off-side, and a bad club break is quite likely. The double dummy solution involves a dummy reversal, squeeze and double endplay. Ruff the lead and cross to dummy with a trump to ruff another heart. Suppose East reduces to KJxx in both black suits. Now you duck a club around to East who must concede an extra black suit trick on his return. Now the lead of the last heart from dummy squeezes East down to Kx in one of the black suits. Now just play Ace and another in that suit and East is endplayed into conceding an extra trick in the other black suit. I have not seen a hand quite like this in any book and to have it appear at the table is truly incredible. Of course, the hand can't be made on a black suit lead and in any case the timing of the plays has to be just right.

OPENING LEADS

Improving your opening lead technique is something we can all do. At teams, the choice of opening lead can account for around 15% of the IMP exchanges in a typical match, so applying the right thought processes is important if you are to be a long-term winner. In the next few Newsletters we shall look at some guiding principles.

What should West lead with;

♠J752 ♥Q3 ♦KT9 ♣A975

after the following bidding?

North	East	South	West
	Pass	4♥	Pass
Pass	Pass		

When there has been a pre-emptive opening that becomes the final contract, there is no indication of dummy's holding and hence it is usually best to lead an Ace if you have one. This lead lets you have a look at dummy and enables the defenders to find an appropriate switch. This lead of an Ace is quite automatic against a 3NT opening bid but the reasoning behind it is equally valid against an opening of four of a major. If you lead the Ace of Clubs, dummy displays

♠AKQ64 ♥6 ♦J863 ♣T32.

Now what is the best continuation when partner plays the ♣6?

As West holds the trump Queen, declarer likely holds the ♥AK and is therefore unlikely to hold the ♦A. If you switch to the ♦9, you give yourself the best chance of cashing your winners, his hand being;

♠T83 ♥J2 ♦A742 ♣KJ63.

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IMPROVER'S CORNER

Here is a common dilemma. Suppose you need 4 tricks from a suit of AK2 opposite QT43. You play off the Ace and King and lead a third round towards your QT but the Knave does not appear. Should you finesse the ten or rise with the Queen?

Well on some hands you might be influenced by the bidding. If the hand sitting over the QT has announced length in another suit via a pre-empt say, then you would probably place him with a shortage and take the finesse. However, suppose there is nothing obvious to guide you; what is the correct percentage play?

This is an area where people can easily get confused. They may think a finesse is 50% whereas a 3-3 break is 36% so it must be right to finesse, but this is an erroneous application of the probabilities as the 5-1 and 6-0 breaks have been eliminated and in effect, you are comparing the odds of Jxx opposite xxx and xx opposite Jxxx. The actual odds can be calculated as follows:- 3-3 is 36% and the first distribution is half of that so 18%. 4-2 is 48%, so 4 with East is 24%, and Jxxx is two thirds of that so 16%. Therefore the correct play is to play for the drop.

Now doing a series of such calculations is not easy at the table – particularly if you can't remember the exact percentages of relevant breaks. One way to get around this difficulty is to use 'Alders' rule – a method devised by Phillip Alder, who was a prominent player in Britain in the 1970's before moving to America, where he has been the long-time bridge columnist for the New York Times.

Alder's method requires a tiny calculation but no knowledge of any probabilities. Firstly (for the critical suit), divide the number of cards held by the opponents by 2 and round up your answer if necessary – call this answer 'A'. Then compare 'A' to the number of top tricks that you have ('B'). If A is greater than B, finesse, else play for the drop.

So in the example above, opponents hold 6 cards in the suit, so half of that is 3. We have 3 top tricks so both A and B are 3. Hence play for the drop as A is not greater than B.

Changing the layout slightly, if you held Ax opposite KQTx then A would be 7 divided by 2 to give 3.5 which rounds up to 4. B is 3 top tricks. A is greater than B so the correct line is to play the Ace and then finesse the ten on the second round.

HAS ANYTHING CHANGED?

I started playing this game over 50 years ago (so a mere stripling in comparison to some people reading this). I recently received an email from my school chemistry teacher reminding me of a hand from a simultaneous pairs event held just as I was starting to play. The E/W hands were:

♠ AKT2	♠ QJ98
♥ 7542	♥ A963
♦ 8653	♦ A
♣ A	♣ 7532

4441 hands are never nice to bid. In those days the recommended way to handle this shape was to open the suit below the singleton, except where the singleton was in clubs, when you open 1♥. Moreover. Hands of less than 12 points were generally not

considered as suitable for an opening bid at the one level, so not surprising West passed with such a poor heart suit and having no good rebid over a 2♣ response.

Equally, East didn't want to open vulnerable facing a passed hand and as a consequence, the hand was thrown in around the room. As you can see, 4♠ is a laydown contract, even on a trump lead. You have 3 side suit aces and 7 trump tricks on a high cross-ruff – Game on 22 points.

At the time, bidding 4♠ would have scored an outright top across the country. Nowadays, the 'standards' for opening bids have declined somewhat and I would expect most pairs to be the bidding, although there is a strong possibility of finishing in an inferior heart contract. Do you think you and your partner would get to the spade game?

THE WHITFIELD SIX

Here is a famous double dummy problem that was originally set as a whist problem in 1885. At the time of original publication, no-one was able to solve the problem. Play standards have improved tremendously and I am sure it will not trouble that many of you.

South is on lead and needs to take all six tricks with Hearts as trumps.

	♠	
	♥ 87	
	♦ J5	
	♣ A2	
♠ Q7		♠ J6
♥		♥
♦ Q7		♦ T86
♣ J3		♣ 8
	♠ T9	
	♥	
	♦ AK9	
	♣ T	

Solution next time.