

The Links Bridge Club



December 2023

Summary from the chairwoman



At our last AGM in September 2022, we were deliberating as to how we were going to get face to face bridge back on track and keep both The Links Club and the bridge community at large, alive.

We started the year with great hopes, but I believe it has exceeded our expectations.

To this end we believe The Links has had a very exciting year!

Saturday Afternoons:

We ended 2022 hosting just a single section on Saturdays. But immediately after the club reopened in January, players finally seemed keen to rejoin the club and start playing face-to-face. We had two solid sections for the first few months, before finally breaking into a third section in May. Since then, it's been anywhere between 25-30 tables, with a record 33 tables just a few weeks ago. With a few more tables and we'll be running four sections!

Before Covid, we were averaging 60 tables with five sections.

We have really tried to make this environment friendly and sociable, and I think everyone who comes really enjoys the ambience.

Our two successful Springbok days were well received and supported, with everyone wearing green and gold, and some very innovative outfits.

We also hosted some very successful Sunday events in conjunction with the GBU, as well as a GBU pairs and teams event.

To Deirdre and her team, thank you for all the support and assistance in elevating face to face bridge.

Thursday Morning Supervised:

This is our biggest success story to date, and for me personally think, I think nationally.

At the last AGM I asked Neville and Bernard if they couldn't assist us in getting people back to the club by offering supervised bridge.

They, together with a handful of superstars, agreed, and we've not looked back.

We started the supervised sessions towards the end of 2022, with around 4-6 tables.

Once word started spreading about the invaluable information imparted to players, the attendance ballooned, and we quickly began hosting between ten to twenty tables.

We've hit a peak of around 24 tables, but average around 20 on a typical morning. The players who attend have really good things to say about the value and knowledge they're acquiring from our supervisors' expertise. I know some players plan their entire week around making sure they keep Thursdays open for supervised bridge.

We intend to continue in the new year, as well as expand the experience with a "gentle" tournament on another day, hoping to ease these players into the competitive environment.

To Neville, Bernard, Rob, Val, Tas, Lotte, Hennie, Diana, James, Nicola & Peta, thank you for giving so freely of your time and expertise!

Neville summed it up as saying “It is a labour of love, and very satisfying to be giving back to the community”.

We say, we are forever indebted for what you do.

Wednesday Afternoons:

Helen Kruger reopened her Wednesday afternoons earlier in the year, and has a loyal base of players who average around 7-11 tables each week. There is a mixed level of expertise, but generally in a very friendly and warm atmosphere.

The Links has also been utilized for other bridge events that have taken place nationally.

The Links Online (BBO):

Although online attendances have dropped off significantly since the peak of Covid, The Links’ online tournaments continue to be a major revenue stream for the club, helping to subsidize to some degree the activities at the club. Some sessions are busier than others, and some have been forced to close completely due to a lack of interest. As long as players continue to support the club through these tournaments, we’ll carry on hosting them as frequently as possible.

Looking ahead to 2024:

As mentioned above, a gentle tournament will be initiated on another weekday morning. Any social and currently non-competitive players will be targeted to play in these sessions. A lot of interest was shown by players currently attending the supervised sessions.

We are also looking to start a Friday morning session. Rob has some different ideas for this format, so watch this space.

We are also contemplating a teams event.

There will be some additions to our online tournaments. More information can be found elsewhere in this newsletter.

The Links will continue to host several all day face-to-face Sunday tournaments, as well as other bigger tournaments throughout the year.

All of the above as well as other exciting initiatives will be published on The Links’ website here:

<https://www.bridgewebs.com/links/>

We are very proud of our club and continue to maintain the premises. We have done a lot of work this year to make improvements, much of which is probably unseen to the players.

This is an ongoing project which we will continue to do as and when we can.

Nothing can be done without assistance and so I must give thanks to so many people.

- Firstly, my co-committee members, Lex van Vught, Val Bloom and Rob Stephens.

Committees can sometimes be rather intricate. We are so fortunate to have a group of people who get along well and work hard and amicably in the interests of the club.

- Our Thursday Bridge supervisors – you are an enormous asset to the club.
- To Joan and Richard and Johannes who do so much in the background.
- Thanks to Nicky Stephens for assisting with scoring on a Saturday and doing a whole lot more when called upon to do so.
- The Links and splendid teas are synonymous. For that we need to thank Joan for preparing the sandwiches, and Lotte who always presents a wonderful array of sweet treats. This too is a labour of love for which we are most grateful.

- Once again, a big thank you to Rob for his tremendous efforts, not only with the online bridge, but also as the General Manager of the club. Not everyone realizes what it takes to keep this club running at a high standard, and just how much Rob does, to ensure that.

Behind the scenes Lex and I work very closely with Rob and are very aware of all he does at all hours of day and night.

I can only say thank you.

Nothing is too much trouble for you. You go above and beyond and somehow always seem to take it in your stride.

Our goal for next year is still, to:-

- Keep The Links financially viable.
- Keep bridge alive.
- Ensure the continued maintenance of the premises and that we are able to extend our lease.
- Keep the club legally compliant with all administration up to date.

We have many exciting things planned which we hope will extend our upward trend into the new year.

With thanks

Peta Feinstein

Chairman

The Links Committee:



Peta Feinstein



Lex van Vught



Val Bloom



Rob Stephens

Face-to-Face Re-Opening Dates

Saturday – 13th January 2024

Wednesday – 17th January 2024

Thursday (Supervised) – 18th January 2024

Friday – 19th January 2024

BBO Online

Open throughout, including 25th December & 1st January!

Membership Subs – 2024

Players are required to be members of The Links, Gauteng Bridge Union (GBU), and the South African Bridge Federation (SABF), in order to play in any of The Links' tournaments, either online & face-to-face.

Players may play up to 5 times as a "visitor", without requiring becoming a member, after which visitor fees may be charged for face-to-face sessions, or players may face a temporary block in our online BBO sessions.

Please pay the following into The Links' account, to become a member:

R150 – The Links Membership

R50 – GBU Membership

R250 – SABF Membership

TOTAL: R450

Banking details:

Bridge S A The Links

Bank: Nedbank

Account #: 1756009600

Account type: Current account

Branch code: 198765

Reference: Membership + name/sabf#

International Players' Subs

The Links welcomes all players to join our BBO Tournaments.

If any players are unable to make an EFT payment for subs to The Links, then they can pay \$20 into The Links' BBO Account.

To do this, send BBO an email (accounting@bridgebase.com), requesting a transfer from the respective BBO name, into sabf_3.

♥ Friendship Club ♥

The Links understands that some players may be financially restrained. We would much rather have players involved with our community than not. If anyone wishes to apply to The Links/GBU's friendship club in regard to their membership or playing fees, please contact any of our committee members with the utmost confidentiality.

Playing Fees - 2024

When the club closed during Covid in 2020, the playing fees were R80. Undoubtedly, if Covid hadn't happened, fees would naturally have gone up each year since, and would easily be over R100 by now.

In an effort to encourage players back since the start of 2022, the playing fees have been heavily subsidized by the club. This in no small part thanks to you, the players, for having supported the club with our BBO tournaments.

With the attendance of our online tournaments gradually dropping, the face-to-face tournaments need to carry a bit more of the load. As such, the playing fees for 2024 will return to 2020 levels and will be R80/player.

I'm sure we can all agree that this remains a relative steal, when you consider what all you get for this – Great, reliable organisation. Amazing tea. Prizes. Entertainment for 4 hours!

The Supervised Bridge on Thursdays will be R70/player.

The Online BBO Tournaments will go up to \$2,82/player.

BBO \$'s

The most economical way to purchase BBO \$'s for playing online tournaments, is to purchase directly with BBO. All you need is your credit card, and head to the following link: <https://www.bridgebase.com/purchase/pay.php>

There's even an option to "auto-refill" when you start getting low on \$'s.

NB! Avoid purchasing your \$'s via the app store, either on Apple or Android devices. This works out extremely expensive.

Interesting BBO Statistics in 2023

The Links has hosted 617 BBO Pairs Tournaments in 2023 (as of 22 Dec).

The average player played in 55 of these tournaments.

Merle Modlin played in 360 of them, more than 70 ahead of Sam Trocki.

The highest score achieved was 80.52% by Chris Bosenberg & Neville Eber on 31 July. These 2 also have the 2 highest averages across all their tournaments.

Online Alerting

Almost 4 years of playing regularly online, and some players still fail to alert their bids properly. The procedure is very simple, so there's no excuse anymore! Preannounce your BASIC system, leads & carding.

Eg. "Hi all. We're sayc, 5542, std leads and udca".

Additional conventions which you may add can be Multi 2D, Weak/Dutch 2's, or anything else which opponents may need to know in advance in order to defend against it accordingly.

After this, ALL artificial/conventional bids are to be FULLY alerted when making the bid. Failure to do so is misinformation in some cases, but also a waste of time, when invariably players end up requesting explanations.

Please get into the habit of alerting properly, and if you're not sure if a bid is alertable, alert it anyway! You can never under-alert when playing online, as your partner never sees your alert, but I can assure you that your opponents will appreciate any extra effort.

Saturday Afternoons @ The Links

We're regularly hosting 3 sections at the club. This is typically in 9, 10 or 11 table sections.

We may start playing 6 or 7 table movements, to ensure additional sections, so we'll have 4 or 5 sections, and a bit more movement of players on the ladder.

Congratulations to Neville Eber on achieving the highest face-to-face average at the club. Nev averaged 60.51% over 22 sessions. Val Bloom was close behind with 59.98% over 21 sessions.

The highest attendance for Saturdays was shared between 4 players. Rob Solomon, Michael Salomon, Norman Gelbert & Phillippe Menache all played 41 sessions in 2023.

206 individual players played in at least 5 tournaments this year. That's 51 tables if everyone decided to play at the same time....

Thank you for your support!

For the full list of averages and attendance, go to

<https://www.bridgewebs.com/links/>

Friday Morning @ The Links

Fridays will officially be reopening in 2024!

This session will be under the auspices of The Links, and all revenue generated by this session will be put back into The Links.

Although each session will be walk-in pairs, each of the 4 or 5 weeks of each month will make up a bigger monthly tournament. Prizes will be paid out to the winners of each month-long tournament.

The launch date will be on the 19th January, with the 1st month long tournament starting 2nd February.

Please support this new addition to the face-to-face calendar and let's grow it into a formidably sized club again!

Tuesday Morning Supervised "Gentle" Tournament

The hugely successful Thursday supervised bridge has lead us to starting a "gentle" tournament for some of these players.

This tournament will be hosted on Tuesday mornings at The Links and will be targeted at any players who don't currently play competitive duplicate bridge.

This will essentially be a stepping stone for casual/social players to learn the ropes about duplicate bridge, learn some valuable tips and strategies, and get more comfortable in a more competitive environment.

The 1st of these sessions will start on Tuesday 30th January 2024.

Spread the word and encourage all your casual friends to come try this session. For any further details, contact Rob on 0724316599.

Fundraising “Joker Jackpot Draw”

The Links will initiate a weekly “Joker Jackpot Draw” raffle when the club reopens in January. R10 tickets will be sold each week, for the opportunity to be drawn and then attempt to choose the Joker card amongst 53 cards in a locked cabinet. If the Joker is not chosen, then the jackpot prize will carry over to the following week. The player drawn each week will win a free game.

The Jackpot will start at R1000, with 50% of the ticket sales going towards the Jackpot fund, with the remainder going towards club funds.






BBO Masterpoint Race 2024


BBO awards masterpoints for each paid tournament played. Typically, anywhere from half to the top 3rd of players earn some number of BBO points depending on the size of the tournament, and their position.


The Links will be hosting a Masterpoint Race, which will run throughout the whole of 2024. \$0.02 of each player's entry fee will go towards a prize pool fund, with the top 3 prizes guaranteed \$150, \$100 & \$50 respectively.

There will also be prizes for lower ranked players, according to a player's average score in 2023 (minimum 12 scores).

Players averaging 54% or more, or with BBO “stars”, will qualify for the open/top bracket prizes, labelled  or 

Players averaging 50-54%, qualify for the 2nd bracket prizes, labelled 

Players averaging 46-50%, qualify for the 3rd bracket prizes, labelled 

Players averaging less than 46%, qualify for the last bracket prizes, labelled 

Players who don't have a ranking from 2023, will automatically qualify in the open bracket.

Players' ranking classification will be available from 1st January 2024 on The Links' Website.

BBO Lunchtime Speedballs

The Links will experiment with weekday lunchtime speedballs, starting in January. These will be 12 board tournaments, at 5 minutes/board. They'll start at 13:00 and should finish by 14:00. Entry will be \$1,40/player.

At the start, BBO points earned in these speedballs will not be counted towards the Masterpoint Race. If any particular sessions become popular and established, this may change.

The Links BBO Teams League

The 23rd edition of this Wednesday night online teams event will kick off on the 10th January. We currently have 2 sections competing but would love to get a few more teams. To enter, email Rob at drowzee88@gmail.com or enter a team here: <https://sabfonline.co.za/sabf/gbu/Tournament/Enter/186>

Congratulations to the Bjerregaard, Bloom and Pincus teams for sharing the spoils over various editions in 2023.

BBO Top Averages 2023

From a minimum of 20 Online sessions played, these are the top 10 Individuals with the highest averages in 2023 (As of 23 December):

Full Name	Sessions	Average %
Chris Bosenberg	60	61.26
Neville Eber	139	61.14
Avril Zets	21	60.44
Val Bloom	112	58.72
Craig Gower	104	58.45
Hennie Fick	45	58.37
Pamela Murinik	53	58.10
Laureen Harris	61	57.90
Vanessa Armstrong	69	57.73
Jenny Gautschi	48	57.23

The full list will be updated and published on The Links' website on the 1st Jan.

*Upcoming Tournaments in 2024**

January:

- ♥ BBO Teams League – 10 January
- ♥ GBU/Links All Day Pairs – 28 January

February:

- ♥ SABF National Congress – 25 February – 3 March (Cape Town)

March:

- ♥ The Links All Day Charity Fundraiser – 17 March

April:

- ♥ SABF Open & Women's Trials – 13-20 April

May:

- ♥ SABF Mixed Trials – 4-11 May

June:

- ♥ KZN Mini Congress – 15-17 June

October:

- ♥ Petra Mansell Pairs – 19 & 20 October

November:

- ♥ SABF Interclub – 8-10 November

*Tournaments published were known as of date of publishing. Additional events are very likely to be added over the coming weeks. Please check on the SABF website for a more up to date calendar of events. <https://www.sabf.co.za/>

*Thank you all for your continued support of
The Links Bridge Club!*



All the best over the festive season and have a wonderful 2024!