

Final Report on Autumn JBC 2022

Summary of event

The Autumn JBC (formerly Southeastern Counties JBC) was held on 22nd and 23rd October 2022. We had 63 sign-ups (not including 7 staff), of which 45 were juniors ranging from 8 to 17 years old. The table below gives the breakdown of local (defined as Surrey, Sussex, and Kent) juniors by gender.

	Local	Non-local	TOTAL
F	7	11	18
M	7	20	27
TOTAL	14	31	45

Buttershaw College, a school from Huddersfield, brought 11 pupils from years 7,8, and 9, financed substantially by EBED and Yorkshire CBA. They had been unable to come to the EBU Summer Camp. Of the other sign-ups 19 were either in or had just graduated out of the U-16 England squad. The remaining 15 were largely brought by parents or grand-parents. There were 4 no-shows, 2 because 1 had tested positive for COVID, and 2 who were unable to get transport, so 41 juniors actually attended.

The event ran smoothly. We ran three classes: Bronze (15) on a slightly more relaxed time-scale and with separate competitions; Silver/Gold (9) ; and the top group of the U-16 and above squad (17). The latter two came together for the competitions and Gold joined the U-16 squad on Sunday. Diane Rogers, Stephen Kennedy, and Richard Croot were the main teachers assisted by Joan Bennett and Jessica Mauve. William Clennell directed. Giorgio Provenza (EBED CEO) came to give the prizes.

Bowles Rocks again proved an excellent venue in many ways. The only minor drawbacks are i) lack of a single room to hold competition ii) the need to walk up quite a steep hill both to get to the buildings and to get to the dining room.

Finances

The event was underwritten by Sussex, sponsored by Surrey and Kent. EBED, Wessex Youth, and Yorkshire BA (not included in this report as paid directly to the college) provided finance to help Buttershaw College. An overview of the finances is given below, but the event made a loss of £1,220 overall:

Costs

Total Fixed Costs	1,730.64
Total variable costs	5,023.44
	<u>6,754.08</u>

Income

Residential	3,208.65
Non-residential	400.00

Sponsorship and subsidies

Kent	500.00
Surrey	500.00
EBED	500.00
Wessex	425.00
	<u>5,533.65</u>

Shortfall (paid by Sussex) -1,220.43

Next year

As ever, the biggest issue we face in running these events is publicity. The event itself runs smoothly, but really needs greater attendance to justify the effort put in (not just myself, but Sussex CCBA, teachers, director, EBED staff). This is primarily a national issue – lack of a single ‘go to’ place to get information on youth events, lower profile of bridge vs chess etc. Some progress is being made largely because of the energy and persistence of a small number of people, but it is still fragile.

The number of local attendees is once again disappointing. As the local schools programmes are still struggling after COVID, it may be worth looking at other routes (e.g other youth organisations, advertising on local event websites) to bring more in.

Both the England U-16 and U-21 squads have new coaches, whose attitude to residential events is at present uncertain. Bowles has in the past been a U-16 training event, but was not this year and might not be in the future.

The Priday Cup is also the first event (GP1) in the Youth Grand Prix, which is designed to encourage younger players to take part in more bridge events, both online and in person, over the season. There are signs that it has caught the enthusiasm at least of some juniors.

Conclusion

This year’s event was like last year’s a happy occasion, and it would seem a pity not to repeat it next year. However, attendance is dependent on a relatively narrow base of established players and this year on the willingness of the bridge world to finance Buttershaw College’s attendance.

I attend the EBED Youth Advisory Group, and the view there was that the Bowles Rocks format works well. On that basis, I am prepared to recommend that, if there is appetite at SCCBA and subject to Bowles Rocks’ availability, which I have not yet confirmed, we repeat the event next year.

William Bourne

9th November 2022