



AUGUST 2020 NEWSLETTER



THE NOTHING ISSUE

This issue of our newsletter has pretty much nothing in it. Our contributing bridge writers, didn't, so nothing there. It's too soon to do rank changes again, so nothing there. I am under a PC Police imposed gag order regarding political commentary, so nothing there. I really don't have anything to say, so nothing there.

There is, however, a report summarizing our Board of Directors July meeting and yet another report about our Virtual Game Thingy

Speaking of not having anything to say, that reminds me of one of the best and most abused rules in bridge. It has to do with bidding. Try it, you may like it.

*"If you have nothing to say,
say nothing."*

AUGUST SCHEDULE

The ACBL once again pleasantly surprised us by adding a week of Silver Point games to the July schedule. In August, there will be another surprise (well, not really, since we know about it), the Virtual Vacation from August 27th through the 30th. This will be a regionally rated event and will probably be similar to the one held at the end of June.

We will just plod on with our usual three games a week awarding black points at 150% of the normal club rate.



**WHY DO EGGS COME
IN FLIMSY STYROFOAM
CARTONS AND
BATTERIES COME IN A
PACKAGE ONLY A
CHAINSAW CAN OPEN?**

Game Schedule - August 2020

Monday 1:30pm	Wednesday 1:30pm	Friday 1:30pm
3-Aug Open Pairs	5-Aug Open Pairs	7-Aug Open Pairs
10-Aug Open Pairs	12-Aug Open Pairs	14-Aug Open Pairs
17-Aug Open Pairs	19-Aug Open Pairs	21-Aug Open Pairs
24-Aug Open Pairs	26-Aug Open Pairs	28-Aug Open Pairs
31-Aug Open Pairs		

BOARD MEETING REPORT

Your Board of Directors met on July 24th using the Zoom platform. Seven of the eight Board members were present as were four club members. Following is a very brief summary of the meeting.

Operational and Financial Results – For the six months ending in June, out table count is down by about 6.5%. Considering we missed a month of bridge before getting our virtual games going, I think this is really, really good. While we certainly miss our friends who have chosen not to participate, the overall response to our online program has been very gratifying.

Financially we continue to be in excellent shape. Net assets have increased by nearly \$5,000 during the last six months. Why so much? First, we are not allowed to charge less than \$3.00 for our online games, and we don't have to feed you. Our normal expense for soft drinks, coffee, and our various snack foods is nearly \$1.00 per person per game, excluding special parties and events. So, what are we going to do with this money? Well, if we are lucky enough to have our Holiday Party, that will take care of a bunch of it. When we know more near the end of the year, if funds are available, I will probably suggest to the Board that we compensate our Game Directors retroactively. Without them, we would have no virtual bridge club.

Holiday Party – Our Holiday Party is scheduled for Monday, December 14th at the Woodside Plantation Country Club. Obviously, we have no idea if this is going to happen. And, if it does, it's very unlikely that we would have anyway near the 100+ attendees we normally do. With this much uncertainty, Phoebe has been asked to contact Woodside and ascertain what our obligations are regarding cancellation dates, guaranteed attendance, and the like.

Sectional Tournament – Our Sectional, scheduled for the end of September, like all ACBL Tournaments for the remainder of the year, has been cancelled. We have requested and already received the return of our deposit for the Weeks Center rental. We will probably try again in 2021, but it's way too early to even think about it.

Cheating on BBO – We had a general discussion of this issue. There is no doubt that there is a significant amount of collaborative cheating happening in online bridge. At our club? Maybe, maybe not. It is the plague that haunts online bridge. In next month's newsletter there will be a separate article about this topic.

What's Next – A discussion of what happens to the Aiken Bridge Club going forward was the main purpose of this meeting. We did not expect to, nor did we, come to any conclusion regarding what will happen. It was an open discussion with the purpose of getting us thinking about our post virus future. Here are a few takeaways from the discussion.

- While online bridge is OK, it is not as enjoyable as F2F (face to face) bridge. Mainly because we miss the social aspects of interacting with our fellow club members. *Personal Opinion: I think this is very true for our club (Nicest Club on the Planet) but there are many bridge players who prefer online bridge because they find being social an unnecessary distraction.*
- Online bridge is not going away once we can play F2F again. The convenience of online bridge is enormous. No driving, no getting dressed up, just so easy. Perhaps this means that for us, a hybrid model is in our future. Some combination of F2F games and online games.
- When we return to F2F bridge, will our club members who chose not to participate in our online games all be back? Highly unlikely. Some may have become philatelists, numismatics, chess players or even ironman triathletes. Some may even wonder why they played the silly game in the first place, and won't miss it at all. Still others will be very reluctant to gather closely in large groups. How many will we lose? No idea, but we need to consider that it will be more than a few.

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- When will we return to F2F bridge? I think it is safe to say not any time soon. If an effective vaccine is found and readily available, that would be a good first step. When will that happen? I leave that guessing game up to you.
- Where will we play? Will Croft House allow us to renew our lease for 2021? Over the years, we have had a wonderful, mutually beneficial, relationship with Croft House. Will the pandemic cause them to reassess our relationship? Their first responsibility is to ensure the welfare of their residents, so, it may very well.

Remember a few years ago there was an April Fools spoof about “Bridge in the Stables” that appeared in our newsletter? Well, maybe not so funny anymore. I think there is a real possibility that we may not be allowed to return to Croft House. In that case, there will be a lot of work to be done, and a lot of money to be spent. So, that’s where this year’s profit plus our reserves may be going. Since everything is an unknown at this point, it’s too early to do anything about this except recognize we need to be prepared for this possibility.

So, there you have it! What’s Next? I’m pretty sure nobody knows, but if you do, please let the rest of us in on your secret.

Final Note: If you change your mind and want to start playing bridge in on our online games, Sherry Buck is here for you. Just give her a call and she will you get registered and teach you how to play on BBO.

VIRTUAL CLUB THINGY REPORT

July was our fourth month playing on BBO. In addition to our usual 3 games per week, we added two games for the Silver Linings week. The extra games were held on Tuesday and Thursday morning in an attempt to respond to those members advocating for morning games. They were not as well attended as the afternoon games. So, where were you advocates? Therefore, it seems our membership is content to have our normal Monday, Wednesday, and Friday afternoon schedule.

The turnout for our games continues to be quite good. Our average table count for July was 13.2, a smidgen more than June. As I mentioned last month, I think this is about as high as it will go. But, quite frankly, if we can maintain this level of participation, I am more than a happy camper.

Ok, let’s talk about some other BBO related stuff.

Who Can Play – this thing is a moving target and it has, alas, moved yet again. The games were originally limited to players who had played at our club during the last 365 days, plus those people authorized by the ACBL through a “poaching” protocol. The list of eligible players is produced and maintained by the ACBL. We are now on our third iteration of this rule. The latest is that anyone can play anywhere with the approval of the sponsoring club. The new rule is that a club is limited to 15% guests averaged over time. So, while you can now play with anyone you want, please try not to abuse this program else we will have to refuse entry to some not on our eligible list if we exceed the 15% limit. Also, it is now allowable for two guests to play together in our games. Our policy is to not allow pairs with no affiliation with our club to play in our games.

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Common Game Hands – is this a repeat? Well, actually it's a threepeat. As long as I continue to get questions about where you can see the hand records and results I will continue to put this in your newsletter. You can expect a fourpeat next month. You can review all the results and hand records on the Common Game web site. By clicking on player names in the board by board recaps, you can see their auction as well as the play of the hand. The link is in the email Common Game sends you. It is also here,

[The Common Game ClubWebResults Page](#)

Self Alerting – we continue to stink at this. On BBO, you should **self alert** any bid or announcement you would make playing F2F (face to face). To do this, press the "Alert" box in your bidding box, enter the description and then make the bid. If you forget to do this, simply click on your bid in the bidding diagram and you can enter the explanation. The alert will be seen only by your opponents, your partner, as usual, remains in the dark. **Do not alert by chatting to the table or your opponents.** That kind of defeats the purpose of the self alert – that the opponents know what your bid means even if your partner doesn't.

NOTE: remember our house rule for those of you playing Montreal Relay, Kennedy Club, etc., you must alert that 1 club could be short, that a one diamond response denies a five card major (and if it shows a 4 card major or not), and that a one heart or one spade response shows a five card suit.

In addition, we now have another house rule. It is no longer necessary to self alert a no trump range that falls within 15 to 18 high card points. There is also no need to alert Stayman or major suit transfers over no trump bids.

Game Stratification – we have had some folks express their disfavor at how BBO stratifies the games. They don't like being placed in a higher strat than usual. I have looked at the stratification in a number of our games, and it is not very good. In theory, BBO puts the top third (by highest point holder of the pair) in A, the second third in B and the bottom third in C. That seems fair enough. Right? I emailed the ACBL for an explanation, and, as usual, received no response. Here's what I think is happening. The math BBO is using is a trifle shoddy. It divides the total number of tables by 3 and truncates the result instead of rounding it and then puts that number of pairs in both strat B and C. The rest are put in A. Example, for 8 tables, $8/3 = 2.67$ truncated to 2, so B and C get 2 pairs each and the rest (4) are assigned to A. So, only when total tables is evenly divisible 3 will there be 1/3 of the pairs in each strat. So now we know what's going on, but we can't do anything about it except hope BBO fixes it.

If you wish to play more often, there are ABCL sponsored Support Your Club games every day at 10:00 am, 5:10 pm and 7:30 pm. These games are open to all players and cost \$6.00. The lion's share of the entry fee goes back to support your home club or clubs. That would be us.

If you got this far,
there's just a little bit more.

CIVILITY

I think we can all agree that we could use a little more civility in our world today. Following are a number of quotes from people you may have heard of. Their language is oh so civil even if their message, well, not so much.

A member of Parliament to Disraeli: "Sir, you will either die on the gallows or of some unspeakable disease."

"That depends, Sir, " said Disraeli, "whether I embrace your policies or your mistress."

"He had delusions of adequacy ."

Walter Kerr

"He has all the virtues I dislike and none of the vices I admire."

Winston Churchill

"I have never killed a man, but I have read many obituaries with great pleasure."

Clarence Darrow

"He has never been known to use a word that might send a reader to the dictionary."

William Faulkner (about Ernest Hemingway)

"Thank you for sending me a copy of your book; I'll waste no time reading it."

Moses Hadas

"I didn't attend the funeral, but I sent a nice letter saying I approved of it."

Mark Twain

"He has no enemies, but is intensely disliked by his friends."

Oscar Wilde

"I am enclosing two tickets to the first night of my new play; bring a friend, if you have one. "

George Bernard Shaw to Winston Churchill

"Cannot possibly attend first night, will attend second... if there is one."

Winston Churchill, in response

"I feel so miserable without you; it's almost like having you here."

Stephen Bishop

"He is a self-made man and worships his creator."

John Bright

"I've just learned about his illness. Let's hope it's nothing trivial."

Irvin S. Cobb

"He is not only dull himself; he is the cause of dullness in others."

Samuel Johnson

"In order to avoid being called a flirt, she always yielded easily."

Charles, Count Talleyrand

"He loves nature in spite of what it did to him."

Forrest Tucker

"His mother should have thrown him away and kept the stork."

Mae West

"Some cause happiness wherever they go; others, whenever they go."

Oscar Wilde

"He has Van Gogh's ear for music."

Billy Wilder

"I've had a perfectly wonderful evening. But I'm afraid this wasn't it."

Groucho Marx



**You said everything
would be back to
normal after June.
JULYED!**