



February 2021

NEWSLETTER



YEAR IN REVIEW ISSUE

This issue of our Newsletter contains management's report to the membership for the year 2020, the results of our Board of Directors Election, and a list of members who earned honors as high masterpoint winners.

In addition, there is an article about the new ACBL Alert Procedures effective January 1, 2021, and another attempt at getting us to use the Voice Chat feature on BBO.

NEW LIFE MASTER

Congratulations to **no one** for achieving this milestone. That's OK; we had three in 2020 (about the only good thing about that year). Hopefully, we will have many more in 2021.

We did, however, have a fairly large number of our members achieve new ACBL Ranks during the last four months. Strangely, most of them are in the higher levels. Anyway, here they are.

Diamond Life Master: Alice Moore

Ruby Life Master: Kathy Kimmerling
Genie Johannsen

Bronze Life Master: Marc Carney
Sue Kline
Cathie Lindler
Bill Phillips

Advanced NABC Master: Carol Camino

Regional Master: Melissa Kaufman

Congratulations to all of you

ACE OF CLUBS

This is the time of year when we usually recognize our members winning the most masterpoints at our club. That information is not available under the virtual club model. So, instead, we will recognize our club members who placed in the top ten in our Unit (160) for masterpoints in their category. The categories are based on the number of masterpoints held at the beginning of 2020.

Since our Augusta members are in Unit 202, I have included their Unit 202 rank in our list and highlighted their name in green.

I am amazed at how many of us appear on this list of top performers for 2020. Not to mention eight in first place in their category.

10000+:	8 th Greg Roberts
7500 - 10000:	2 nd Raj Iyer
5000 – 7500:	4 th Joyce Lauterbach
3500 – 5000:	3 rd Alice Moore 6 th Betty Hoopes 10 th Harold Moore
2500 – 3500:	1 st Ron Jaeger 4 th Sedley Roach
1500 – 2500:	1 st Chris Nicholson 2 nd Jay Jacobs 3 rd Jesse Roach 8 th Jane Gerstenberger
1000 – 1500:	1 st Kathy Kimmerling 1 st Genie Johannsen
500 – 1000:	1 st Sue Kline 9 th Steve Banwarth
300 – 500:	1 st Carol Camino 4 th Phoebe Walters 8 th Don Scroggin
200 – 300:	1 st Sherry Buck 9 th Jim Gossage
100 – 200:	1 st George Ward
5 – 20:	8 th Steve Gould

BOARD OF DIRECTORS ELECTION RESULTS

The votes have been counted, recounted, certified and litigated. But still, our newly elected Board members are **Linda Knox and Phoebe Walters**. I could not be more pleased.

Phoebe is entering into her second three year term as a Director. During her first term, in addition to regular Director responsibilities, Phoebe has been in charge of our Annual Holiday Party, has served as Assistant Treasurer, and as Food and Beverage Chair for our Sectional Tournament.

This will be Linda's first term as a Board Member. However, she is far far from new to the responsibilities of the Board. Linda has attended nearly all Board Meetings as a member guest and is totally up to date on the current status of the club. She has also been a volunteer for, I think, the last five years at our Sectional Tournament.

Please welcome our new Board Members and thank them for their continued service to our little old club. These are the kind of people who help make our club the nicest there is.

FEBRUARY SCHEDULE

February is the shortest month of the year. However, it's the busiest month since we started playing on line in April. There are three special events planned by the ACBL for February, two at the club level in which we will participate. They are, in chronological order:

Valentine's Weekend
Saturday, February 13th and Sunday, February 14th @1:30 PM
Double Points ½ Red and ½ Black

Hollywood Magic
Thursday, February 18th thru Sunday, February 21st
ACBL Sponsored Regional Event (not at our club)
[Event Schedule](#)

Educational Foundation Week
Monday, February 22nd thru Saturday, February 27th @ 1:30 PM
Double Black Points

For the rest of the month, we will just plod on with our usual three games a week awarding black points at 150% of the normal club rate.

Public Service Announcement # 1 – The ACBL has cancelled the Spring Nationals in St. Louis as well as all Regional and Sectional Tournaments through April 30th.

Public Service Announcement # 2 – BBO began charging Sales Tax on their service about a month ago. This policy has been rescinded for all but a few states. South Carolina is not one of the few. Don't hold your breath waiting for a refund, but you never know.

ANNUAL MEETING MANAGEMENT REPORT TO MEMBERS

Our By-Laws require an Annual Membership Meeting in January of each year. This year that is quite impossible. The recently ratified temporary By-Law Amendment allows us to substitute an article in our Newsletter whereby Club Management presents to the membership a summation of the "State of the Club." The rest of this article will constitute that summation and is the Annual Meeting by reference. There are two sections in this article, the Club Manager's Report and the Treasurer's Report. If you have any questions, please contact the Club Manager, Ron, or Treasurer, Mike.

CLUB MANAGER'S REPORT

Well, let's start out with a gross underbid. The year 2020 was somewhat unusual. Our last face to face game at Croft House on March 11th and our first virtual club game was exactly four weeks later, April 8th. Our first three or four games were about 8 or 9 tables, but by mid May, our average table count had grown to 12 or 13 tables and has stayed pretty constant at that level. With the help of the folks at Common Game, we were able to get on board very early in the process. I think this helped us not lose too many of our players, since we were not "out of business" very long. A number of our members were familiar with BBO and helped their friends and partners learn to play on BBO. Sherry volunteered to be our Trainer and helped many people get on board. We now have six Game Directors (Alan, Lauren, Jay, Jesse, Steve and Ron) working a generally fixed schedule and things are running quite smoothly. We all should thank them for their service which has allowed us to play bridge with our fellow members and simultaneously ensured the financial viability and continuity of our club.

AND most important to me, we remain on our path to nicest bridge club on the planet. I am convinced that our collective efforts to be kind, understanding and non judgmental of behavior we deem eccentric has made our club a very, very nice place to play, even online. Unfortunately, we broke our streak of four years without a Zero Tolerance complaint. We had one violation of our ZT Policy, which resulted in that player being suspended for one month.

The remainder of this report will detail specific topics of interest (or not).

MEMBERSHIP

Having waived 2021 Membership Dues, I guess we have the same number of members as we did last year at this time.

TABLE COUNT

I am very pleased to report that despite the strange year, our table count increased from 1863 in 2019 to 1979 last year, an increase of 6.2%. While not a huge increase, we are one of not so many stand alone clubs to increase their table count. Comparatives are hard to come by due to all the consortiums that have pooled many clubs together to create mega online clubs. Personally, I think it was a huge mistake on the part of the ACBL to allow these mega clubs to be formed. They pretty much allow anyone to play in their games, thus siphoning off players from the small clubs that are struggling to survive.

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I continue to reject the many overtures I receive concerning joining or creating new consortiums because I believe our membership is best served by having nice sized games predominately populated by our own club members. The ACBL requires (without enforcement, of course) that clubs maintain a guest (any player who has not played face to face in our club since March 2019) percentage of less than 15%. Our guest percentage for 2020 was a tad less than 8%.

SECTIONAL TOURNAMENT

Our Sectional Tournament scheduled for September 25th through the 27th was, like everything else, cancelled.

Our 2021 Sectional is scheduled for sometime at the end of September. I don't know the actual dates, and I don't care because it doesn't really matter since the odds of us holding this event are somewhere between slim and none. Our District management insisted that I schedule the event, so, I basically said, whenever, but strongly emphasized that it was very unlikely to happen.

I don't think the future of Sectionals is very bright. Pre pandemic, many were losing money (we came close, but never did) and attendance was down year after year. The advent of bi-monthly silver point weeks on BBO will probably hasten the demise of the F2F Sectional. I'm not sure this is much of a loss, and have for years thought it was time to give it a rest. It is a tremendous amount of work for sometimes little or no financial reward. But, the tournament is held to enable our members to earn Silver Points locally, so, as long as we didn't lose money we were OK with the financial results.

HOLIDAY PARTY

Our December Holiday Party was, of course, cancelled. The 2021 Party is already scheduled for December 13th at Woodside Country Club. [Save the date](#). Depending on when we are able to return to F2F bridge, we may very well have some kind of special event celebrating our return and our three new 2020 Life Masters.

CROFT HOUSE

For the last nine months I have been in periodic contact with Lynda (Croft House Manager) to let her know that we still exist. She has indicated that she knew of no plans to discontinue our relationship. A few weeks ago, I received some good news from Phyllis Pellarin, longtime club volunteer and advocate for us as a Croft House Board Member. At their recent Zoom Board Meeting the Croft House Board indicated that they were in favor of continuing our relationship when circumstances warranted. Very good news, indeed. Thanks Phyllis.

Thank You – I would like to thank all of our volunteers who have served our club during the past year. First, our Board Members: Christine, Lauren, Phoebe, Sedley, Sherry, Mike, and Steve. Game Directors: Alan, Lauren, Jay, Jesse, and Steve. Our incredibly efficient Set Up Team (although they played a short season): Pat B, Betsy, Shela, Sara, and Marc with assists from many others when needed.

Well, that's all I have to say, so here's Mike.....

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TREASURER'S REPORT

Starting Assets were: \$41,953.74

Ending Assets were: \$49,738.64

Increase in Assets for the year was \$7,784.90

Interest for the year was: \$514.11

Income

Game Fee revenue was: \$ 20,533.69

Membership Fees were: \$ 0.00

Tourney Income was: \$ 0.00

Holiday Party Income was: \$ 0.00

Expenses

ACBL fees were: \$ 5,228.75 (44%)

Appreciation Amounts: \$ 3,980.00 (33%)

Rent was \$ 800.00 (7%)

Charitable Cont. were: \$ 400.00 (3%)

Food was: \$ 279.09 (2%)

Tourney Expenses were: \$ 0.00

All other individual categories were less than 5% of revenues.

Members

We had 141 members who are considered to have paid dues for 2021. Of these, 58 are believed to have never played in our BBO games with any regularity.

ALERT PROCEDURE UPDATE

For the last four months we have been trying to implement Pre-Alerts into our online games. Last month I gave up the ghost due to total non-compliance, but asked that those who value fairness and full disclosure continue to Pre-Alert. Well, they are back! The ACBL has updated their Alert Procedures and Pre-Alerts have been added, sort of. IMHO, the new Pre-Alert procedure is extremely weak and somewhat pointless. But it is now a requirement. I think what we are trying to do is much better, so, if you are currently using our Pre-Alert methods, please continue.

The rest of the changes are fairly minor, but, all and all, I think the new procedures are a step backward from the holy grail of full disclosure. But, that's just my opinion. The new procedures, announced in the first week of January are effective January 1st. Not sure how that works.

Following is the text (reformatted to fit your screen, no, I mean Newsletter) from an article in the February ACBL Bulletin summarizing the changes to the Alert Procedures. The article was written by Danny Sprung and Jeff Ford. Please read it so you are aware of your new alert responsibilities.

In addition, here is a link to a video by David Loeb explaining the new procedures.

[Alert Procedure Video](#)

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The ACBL Board of Directors unanimously approved a comprehensive update to the ACBL Alert Procedure at their November meeting, the first major overhaul in 20 years. The new procedures go into effect Jan. 1, 2021. The full document is available [here](#). *Ron Note: This is a real Sominex read.*

Bridge has never been a game of secret agreements. Your opponents are entitled to know just as much about what your bids mean as you do. Alerts have always been about making that process easier. Whether or not a call requires an Alert, you have an obligation to explain all of your partnership understandings related to that call upon the request of an opponent.

Pre-Alerts

The first changes are at the beginning of the round. As before, you must pre-Alert the opponents if you play canape methods or different systems depending on seat or vulnerability (but not just because you play different ranges for opening 1NT). Additionally you now are required to pre-Alert if you play a system that includes at least one one-level opening bid that is not natural or that is forcing. This can be as simple as saying, “We play a strong club” or “We play 1♣ could be short.” You are no longer required to pre-Alert if you lead low from small doubletons. However, if you play this, it must be included in your answer when a declarer asks about your leads and carding.

Alert changes

The new Alert procedure starts from the principle that natural calls are not Alerted, and that artificial calls are Alerted. It then gives the deviations from that principle, spelling out the natural calls that must be Alerted (for example, a response to a one-level opening bid that is not forcing), and the artificial calls that do not require Alerts (for example, Stayman). The most common calls that have had their Alertability changed are as follows:

- ➡ In an uncontested auction, no natural jumpshift (whether weak, intermediate or strong) requires an Alert.
- ➡ A direct cuebid that is not Michaels (showing both majors over a minor, or a major and an unspecified minor over a major) requires an Alert.
- ➡ Support doubles and redoubles no longer require an Alert.
- ➡ An opening 2♣ bid that does not meet the definition of Very Strong requires an Alert. (This tends to apply to partnerships who agree to open 2♣ on hands with good playing strength, but many fewer high cards than normal. See the Convention Chart for the exact definition to see if it applies to you.)

Announcement changes

There were also a few changes to Announcements, with the biggest change for transfers. Instead of saying the word “transfer,” the Announcement is now the name of the suit being transferred to. For example, in the auction 1NT–2♥, where partner’s 2♥ showed spades, instead of Announcing “transfer,” you will now Announce “spades.”

This Announcement is used in any situation where your partner is showing length in a specific other suit, as well as for doubles or redoubles that show the next suit up. For example, if you play that 2♦ shows clubs in the auction 1NT–2♣, then you would announce “clubs.” However, if you play that 2♦ shows either minor in the auction 1NT–2♣, then you must say “Alert,” even if the 1NT opener is expected to always bid clubs.

An example of the rule for doubles is if you play that after a 1♣ opening is overcalled with 1♦, that a double shows hearts (and says nothing about spades as a traditional negative double would), then you would announce “hearts” when your partner doubled. Traditional negative doubles are never Alerted or Announced.

Instead of saying “could be short” for a non-forcing minor-suit opening that might contain fewer than three cards, you must say the minimum number of cards in the suit, as in “Could be one.”

If you have the agreement to routinely bypass a four-card spade suit to bid a forcing or semi-forcing 1NT over 1♥, then you add “could have four spades” to the “forcing” or “semiforcing” Announcement. This is most likely applicable to pairs playing Flannery.

Delayed Alerts

The rules for delayed Alerts have slightly changed, with the main difference being that at the end of the auction, the declaring side should explain any delayed Alerts and point out any control bids that were made during the auction without a requirement for the defense to ask about them. By having the declaring side explain these calls without prompting, there should be fewer cases of the person not on lead asking about calls before they should.

Learning curve

In any time of change, there will be people who make honest mistakes trying to apply the new rules, and there are no automatic penalties for making a mistake. As with the old rules, be guided by the principle that the goal of the Alert procedure is to let the opponents know what you play.

VOICE CHAT ON BBO

On January 1st we began enabling Voice Chat for all of our online games; with the caveat that we had heard it was not quite ready for prime time. Well, based on our experience to date, that certainly appears to be the case. We have had one report of a player being disconnected after clicking the Voice button. Others have said they click the Voice button and nothing happens. Many others have not tried to use it at all.

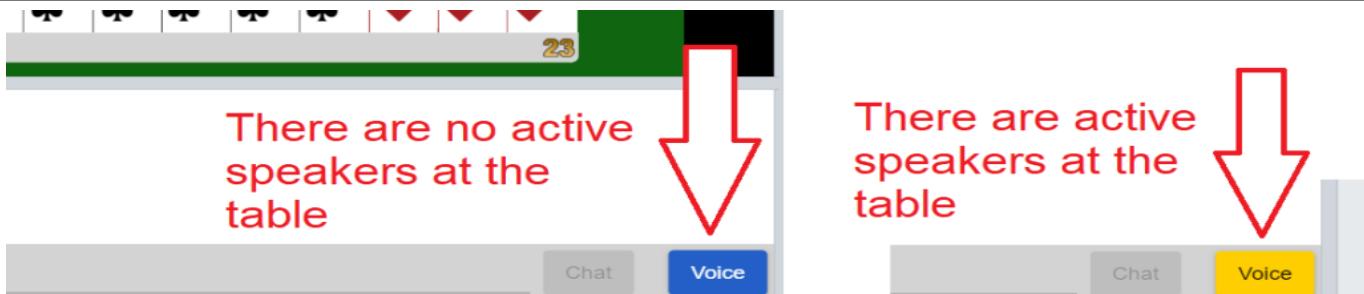
Personally, I have used it quite a few times and like it. The problem I have had is finding someone else who is using voice chat. Of course, they may be there, but don't care to talk to me. Such is life in the big city.

For those of you that have not tried it, or only read our Newsletters under duress, I am repeating the “how to” part of last month's article on voice chat.

OPTING IN

- ➡ Voice chat is not active by default. Each player must click to activate voice. If you do not click the Voice button, you will not hear the other players — even if the others are already chatting.
- ➡ When there are active speakers at your table, the Voice button turns yellow. When there are no players speaking, the Voice button is blue.

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- When you move to the next round, there will no longer be any active speakers. You need to click the Voice button again if you wish to speak to your new opponents.

SPEAKING OR LISTENING

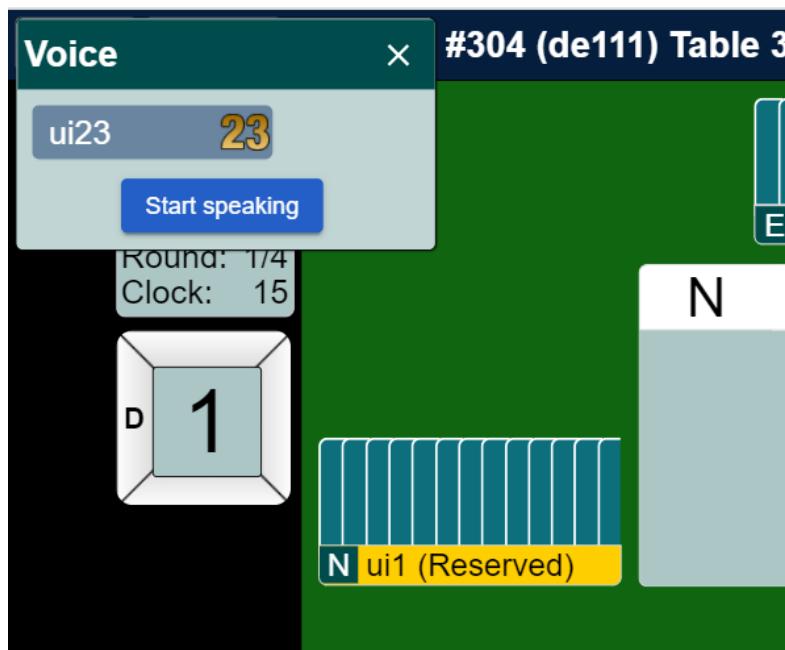
Click the Voice button, which is located at the bottom right corner of the Chat area:



A yellow message will appear, informing you that you may speak, if you wish:

You have been granted permission to speak at this table.

At the top left corner of the screen, you will see a pop-up listing the other players — if any of them have also clicked Voice — with a "Start speaking" button.



Click **Start speaking** to join the voice chat. This will allow you to speak and also to hear the other speakers.

OTHER STUFF ABOUT VOICE CHAT

Totally Optional – You do not have to participate in the voice chat program. It is your choice, and you have the option of making that choice each and every round. You know, this is really kind of cool. In the F2F bridge world, I can certainly think of a few times when I would have preferred not to hear what was going on at the table. So, here is my chance.

Alerting – We will continue to **self alert** as some of us are actually doing. **DO NOT ALERT** your partner's bids using voice chat. Self Alerting is a much fairer and better procedure since your partner doesn't know what you alerted, or even if you alerted at all.

Play First – Chat Later – Please don't delay playing the hands by chatting with your table. Play the hands first and then chat to your hearts' content. Remember, play first – chat later is very different on line than in face to face bridge. While we always had the same request at Croft House, it seems like it ended up being more like Chat First – Play Later. The big difference is that in F2F after starting late because of chit chat, you just kept playing until you were done sometime in the middle of the next round. As you know, online the round ends when the clock strikes zero, not when you are done. Try to avoid those timeouts, nobody likes them.