



# January 2020 NEWSLETTER



## THE RESOLUTIONS ISSUE

Well, it's that time of the year again. We have, not one, but two sets of New Year's Resolutions in this issue. One set by your very own Club Manager, and the other by a club level player named Dar Webb. She plays at the St. Petersburg Bridge Club in Florida. I played there about twice a month for a few years before we moved to Aiken, but I'm pretty sure she wasn't there at that time. Her resolutions are things to do to improve your bridge game, and I think they are right on target. The article was written a few years ago, so I changed the year references to 2020, but the advice remains timely.

In addition, Jay is back with his "Simple Rules for Playing Better Bridge."

**IMPORTANT** --- Make sure you look at the **Holiday Party** article – that's where you will find the link to the video put together by Raj and Lynn.

## NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING

Our By-Laws require an Annual Membership Meeting in January of each year, and it will be held on Wednesday, January 29<sup>th</sup>, 2020. The meeting will start as soon as everyone is seated, so maybe two or three o'clock.

The meeting consists of a State of the Club report from the Manager and Treasurer followed by questions, answers and comments. In lieu of an oral presentation, the February Newsletter will include an article detailing the current financial and operational condition of our Club and will be considered part of the minutes of the Annual Meeting by reference. This should give us a little more time for the Q & A and comments part of the meeting. The February Newsletter will be available prior to the Annual Meeting to enable you to formulate your questions and comments.

## NEW YEAR'S DAY

**GAME?      YEP**  
**CAKE?      NOPE**

## JANUARY SCHEDULE

January is Junior Fund Month in ACBL Land, so all games will award additional masterpoints, just like Charity Games, with the extra fees going to support the ACBL Junior Fund. The purported purpose of the Junior Fund is to attract younger players to our game by supporting programs for junior players (under 26). This seems very worthwhile, but somehow, it turns into a mechanism to pay the expenses of the young professionals and their mentors as they travel for international competition. I'm still waiting to welcome to our club our first junior player influenced by this program. Oh well, so be it.

### Game Schedule - January 2020

Monday 1:30pm	Wednesday 1:30pm	Friday 1:30pm
	1-Jan Open Pairs	3-Jan Open Pairs
6-Jan Open Pairs	8-Jan Open Pairs	10-Jan <b>Dirty Dozen Teams Handicapped</b>
13-Jan Open Pairs	15-Jan Open Pairs	17-Jan Open Pairs
20-Jan Open Pairs	22-Jan Open Pairs	24-Jan Open Pairs
27-Jan Open Pairs	29-Jan Open Pairs	31-Jan Open Pairs

**All Games Junior Fund Games**

## ANNUAL ELECTION

The New Year brings us our annual election. Our voting members will be selecting two of their peers to serve three year terms as members of the Board of Directors. Ballots and voting instructions will be available at the Club on Wednesday, January 8<sup>th</sup>, 2020 and the voting period will end at the conclusion of the Annual Membership Meeting on January 29<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

**Our By-Laws define voting members as those who have paid their 2020 Membership Dues prior to the Annual Membership Meeting and have played at the Croft House six times since the previous annual meeting.** While we try to be very accommodating by allowing folks to sign up late for most of our events, this is not the case with our elections. **We follow our By-Laws, no ifs, ands or buts. If you have not paid your dues and played six times at the Croft House in the last year, your vote will not be counted. End of story.**

As of this writing we have two nominees for the two Board of Director positions. It is not too late to run for these positions. The deadline for being included on the ballot is Friday, January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2020. If interested, contact any member of the Nominating Committee, Phyllis Pellarin, Linda Knox, or Frank Shallo.

Each voting member will be entitled to two votes. While you do not have to use both votes, you may not use your two votes for one nominee. The ballot will also allow write-in voting.

## RON'S NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS

I don't usually do the New Year's Resolution thing, but this year I'm making an exception. However, it's a very limited exception since it only applies to doing my part to help make our Club the nicest club on the planet. So, why am I publishing them? Well, I need your help pointing out when I have strayed from my resolutions. Please read them so you can keep me on the straight and narrow.

Well, here they are, in no particular order other than what occurred to me first.

- After cheerfully and graciously greeting my opponents (we all do this, don't we?) I will refrain from chit chatting until all the boards for the round have been completed. I will remember that there will be time enough for chit chatting when the dealings done.
- I will refrain from giving gratuitous lessons or making gratuitous comments at the table. Interestingly, gratuitous has two meanings. First meaning is unwarranted or unneeded, which they certainly are. Second meaning is at no charge, which in too many cases is exactly what they are worth.
- I will try to meet the other half of our club members. This is pretty easy to do; I will sometimes just sit in the other direction from what I normally do. I think there are some nice people sitting in the other direction, and I want to get to know them.
- If the cell phone in my purse rings during the game, I will fess up and graciously accept the penalty. Hey, if I do the crime, I pay the fine.
- I will never ever start a board after the two minute warning. If I do, and the Director inquires, I will, just like cell phone, fess up and pay the fine.
- I will do my best to not create unauthorized information. This includes bidding and playing in tempo, not asking gratuitous (first definition above) questions or making unnecessary comments during the hand. If I, unfortunately, receive unauthorized information, I will bend way way over backwards to not benefit from it.

- I will never ever raise my voice unless I am making an announcement to the Club, calling a round, or speaking to myself (your hearing challenged manager).
- When the game is over, I will return my chair to its proper upright seating position under the table. Hell, I might even consider putting a few other chairs where they belong. Wow, I'm on a roll – I'm even going to consider throwing all my cups, candy wrappers and other assorted litter in the trash can.
- I will always remember that the person sitting across the table from me is not middle hand opponent. It is partner, the only person in the room who hopes I do well. I will treat that person with the upmost respect, avoid critical comments, and help them have a pleasant afternoon. The same is, of course, true with respect to my real opponents.
- If near the end of a hand I have a few winners and a sure loser, I will not stare at it for three or four minutes hoping it morphs into a winner. I mean, *It's like trying to find gold in a silver mine; It's like trying to drink whiskey from a bottle of wine.* **OK, contest time – the words in italic are lyrics – first to give me the name and artist of the song gets a free play (no googling please).**
- I will continue to bring the very nicest version of myself to the Club. I think that's the one most people prefer.
- If the round is called, I will get up and move, even if I have no place to go because the players ahead of me are behind (I'm sure non bridge players would be puzzled by how the people ahead can be behind – I guess we have our own language).
- If I am behind, I will catch up. Period. Doesn't matter if it's my fault, it is still my responsibility to catch up, or mustard even.
- If I sign up to play in an Individual or Pro – Am Game, I will try to do so before the sign up period ends. If I sign up, that means I will show up. Also, I will do my best to only sign up once for any given game.
- If, for some reason, I am discussing a just played hand at the table, I will do so in a very hushed manner to avoid other nearby tables receiving unauthorized information.

## NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS

*Notes from a Club Player*

**By Dar Webb**

Let's face it, New Year's resolutions can be pretty tiresome. After resolving to eliminate junk food, cut down on drinking, and be nicer to your in-laws, what's left?

**There's always bridge**, and if you are like me, there's a lot you can improve. With that in mind, I began asking the players at my club (the wonderful St. Petersburg Bridge Club) what resolutions they would recommend for typical developing club bridge players. There was a surprising amount of agreement from the good players at my club, as to what the average player (for example, me) should work on. So here goes. In 2020 I resolve to:

**1. Double for penalty more.** Why should I let the opponents push me around, even if they have stratospheric numbers of masterpoints? Good players will take chances on risky contracts if they don't respect your game. Make them pay! If I double their contract and set them, it's probably a top board. If I double them into game and they make it, it's probably a bottom board. But if I don't double, the result is probably going to be average at best. I'm going to take a chance and see if I can burn them a few times. They may just have a little more respect for me the next time I sit down against them.

**2. Take advantage of the situation at the table.** I will be more aggressive in the third and fourth seats and I will balance whenever I can. I won't let the opponents play in two of a fit – ever! No more will I ignore the difference between responses by a passed and an unpassed hand. I promise to be compassionate to my partner when he or she makes a situational bid in the third or fourth seat.

**3. Call the director.** Goodbye meek and accommodating me! No more deferring to the other players at the table. There is only one director for each game, and she's probably not sitting on my right or left. If an opponent tries to claim a hand by throwing in the cards without giving me a look at them, I'm calling the director. And I'm going to hope the director will be on my side, because I'm politely calling, "Director, *Please!*"

**4. Play with a new partner as much as I can.** I developed some bad habits when I played with the same partner every game. If we are both average players, how will we ever learn anything new? For example, I discovered that learning to signal in a disciplined way is really tough when both partners are trying to learn it at the same time. I didn't really learn about signals until I played with a much better player who *demand*ed disciplined signals. I need to get out of my comfort zone and play with people who will challenge me, and in 2020 I'm going to do it.

**5. Be a more aggressive bidder.** One of my mentor partners asks me, "Whose hand is it? Ours or theirs?" I promise that if it is our hand, I'm going to bid. If I find myself wondering if I should go to game, I'm going to go to game. I'm going to support my partner when I have support, even if I am shy on the points. Here's a big one: When I am responder I promise to bid again unless partner calls me off or I have a true stinker. This is not written down in any rule book, but serious players are counting on their partners to bid again.

**6. Be a more conservative bidder.** "Aggressive" doesn't mean "dumb." If my partner opens in third or fourth seat, or balances, I promise to temper my enthusiasm. Full disclosure: I have been overbidding at the three level! So I solemnly swear that I will have extra trumps or some really juicy distribution if I take a bid that high. I also promise not to bid a new suit at the three level unless I have a true big hand with playing values. Do we have a misfit? I'm stopping the bidding as soon as I can. My final "conservative" resolution is the toughest one: I will no longer fall in love with my hand. A long, beautiful suit doesn't justify going to game when my partner keeps putting down the green card. Sigh!

**There you have it: My New Year's Resolutions.** In a few hours I will be playing the first hand of 2020. I doubt that my game will improve today. But if I stick with it, these resolutions may guide me to a better understanding of the game I love. Wouldn't that be great?



## HOLIDAY PARTY

Our annual Holiday Party was held On Monday, December 16<sup>th</sup> at the Woodside Plantation Country Club. We had 24 tables for bridge and 117 members and guests for dinner. Since Woodside is closed on Mondays, we once again had the whole place to ourselves. This has worked out so well that we have reserved Woodside for next year's party on Monday, December 14<sup>th</sup>.

Many, many, and many more thanks to Phoebe for a terrific job putting this event together for us. Thanks also to Cathie for once again serving as the dinner traffic cop. We took a big risk and allowed me to be the Director. Last year, without even being the Director I managed to screw up the game in Section B. Well, this year I just kind of sat there and nothing awful happened. Whew!

We also decided to run this year's game as a stand-alone ST@C and not be included in the district wide awards. The hope was that we could award more silver points to more people by giving up the opportunity for someone to win the 20+ points available to the overall district winner. I am pleased to report that even though one of pairs had a 69.11% game, they still won more points at our stand-alone game. As a matter of fact, not one pair would have won more points had we participated in the district wide event. In total, we awarded 66 silver points, 23% more than had we participated in the district wide game.

***Breaking News ..... Breaking News ..... Breaking News ..... Breaking News .....***

Yeah, I'm going all CNN on you here (minus the despicable liberal bias). So, we have both good news and bad news.

***Bad News.*** Well, it turns out the entire preceding paragraph is fake news. After telling me it was OK to run a stand-alone ST@C, the clowns at the ACBL changed their minds, and, without even bothering to tell me, disallowed the stand-alone game and included us in the District wide event. Numerous emails and phone calls ensued and it seemed only logical to me that they would have to honor their approval. I had momentarily forgotten that logical and ACBL should never be in the same paragraph. So, anyway, they refused to honor their commitment and the masterpoint awards have reverted to what they would have been if I hadn't tried to make it a better paying stand-alone game. To say I find this totally insensitive and outrageous is a gross underbid. To those of you who though you earned more points, all I can say is I'm sorry.

***Good News.*** We once again have a video of our Holiday Party. Thanks to Lynn M for taking many of the photos and to Raj for putting it all together in the video. Raj went the extra mile pulling an all nighter (you remember those, right?) to get this together for us before leaving town for the holidays. Thanks again Lynn and Raj.

Here is the link to the video. Click and enjoy.

[Aiken Bridge Club Holiday Party 2019](#)

## JAY'S SIMPLE RULES FOR PLAYING BETTER BRIDGE

### Bridge is a game of percentages – maximize your outcomes and minimize your risks

- Pay attention to what people do, as well as what they don't do – you can often draw inferences from someone's failure to do something
- If you are not entering the bidding, *or the opponents have already outbid you*, do not ask the meaning of alerts until the bidding is over – questions could help resolve a mix-up by the opponents – if you are on lead, you can then ask your questions – if your partner is on lead, have your partner lead face down before you ask your questions
- Open all 13 point hands, all 12 point hands with 2+ quick tricks, and all 11 point hands with 3 quick tricks – also:
  - Follow the Rule of 20 – add your high card points to the total number of cards in your two longest suits – open if the total is 20 or higher
  - In 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> position, follow the Rule of 15 – add your points to the number of spades – open if the total is 15 or higher
- Responder bids suits up the line – a higher ranking suit denies the same number of cards in any bypassed suit
- Responder should not bypass a 4 card major at the one level to go to the 2 level in a minor, unless you are (a) making a jump shift or (b) playing 2 over 1 game forcing
- An opening bid of 1 diamond generally promises at least 4 diamonds (and denies a 5 card major)
  - Therefore, one club “could be short” (and also denies a 5 card major)
  - But, you can now raise partner's diamonds with only 4 (if you lack a 4+ card major)
- Systems are on after partner's 1 no-trump overcall followed by a pass by the other opponent
- If partner opens 1 no-trump and you have much distribution but few points, get it into a suit contract
- If partner opens, opponent overcalls 1 no-trump, and you have a balanced hand with 8+ points, pass or double, especially if opponents are vulnerable – opponent probably lacks (1) a source of tricks and (2) dummy entries
- In 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> position, generally don't open a weak 2 or weak 3 bid if you also have a 4 card major, but ...
  - Consider vulnerability – when favorable, jump right in
  - It's ok in 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> position after partner has already passed
- When you have a strong, unbalanced two-suited hand, start bidding your suits – if you make bids that show two suits, partner may think you are 4-4 or 5-4
- It is generally better to play in a 5-2 fit than a 4-3 fit
- It is generally better to play in a 4-4 fit than a 5-4 fit (5<sup>th</sup> card provides a discard not available if that suit is trump)
- Do not generally open 1 no-trump with a 5 card major (without complex systems, you may never find a 5-3 fit) but don't assume others have not seen the light (check their convention card – it is not alertable)

- Distribution counts more than points – if your distribution is 6-5, come alive
- Don't bid 4 card majors at the two level for the first time unless (a) answering your partner's double or forcing one no-trump or (b) you are in an obvious game forcing sequence
- Lead your partner's suit against opponents contracts
- Don't lead away from aces as the opening lead against a suit contract without a compelling reason
- Don't lead trump as the opening lead, unless (a) the opponents have an obvious misfit and you want to stop ruffs in the short hand, (b) you have no other reasonable lead, and/or (c) your partner doubled their contract for penalties after otherwise being quiet
- On defense, assume every time you break a new suit, you help declarer
- Declarer should take finesses in such a way as to keep the dangerous hand off lead
- If you have a cross-ruff, cash your outside winners first
- In no-trump, do not cash winners in the opponents suit – if you do, when they get in, they will run the suit
- Don't give defensive signals when it can only help declarer
- If you have an obvious misfit, get out at the lowest possible level and not in no-trump
- If you make a bidding error, don't try to correct it – at best, partner will be confused and not understand
- Force the opponents to make guesses as to suit or level with the least amount of information
- Learn and remember common suit/hand distributions (4-4-3-2, 5-4-2-2, 5-4-3-1; 5-3-3-2; 6-3-2-2; 6-3-3-1, etc)
- Never ask for aces with a void – use cue bids to show controls
- Never ask for kings without all the aces (3 aces and a void is not good enough)
- Learn to count to 13 in as many suits as you can
- When the opponents "fix" you, stay fixed – you can only do worse
- Believe/trust your partner before you believe/trust the opponents

### **It's a bidder's game**

- Once you have described your hand, stop – your partner knows what you have and can make the decision to go on, make you bid again, issue an invitation, or pass
- Respond to partner's opening bid with 5 point hands that include an ace or KQ in the same suit, although there are additional considerations when partner is a 3<sup>rd</sup> position opener
- Raise partner's opening bid or overcall when you have a fit – the fewer points you have, the more important (if you get set in a doubled contract, the opponents generally can make more by bidding)
- A new suit by an unpassed hand is forcing (except after overcalls of opponent's opening bid)
- A cue bid of the opponent's suit is forcing

- Every time you make another free bid (pushing to higher level, introducing a new suit), it implies 3+ more points over the minimum you previously showed
- Do not give invitational raises without 4 trump – to show the same points with only 3 trump, bid something else first and then give the invitational raise
- Captaincy in the partnership belongs to whoever has not limited their hand
- Fast arrival shows no interest in going higher – when you want to investigate game or slam, just keep making on-going / forcing bids
- A raise of an opening 1 or 2 no-trump to 4 or 5 no-trump is invitational whether directly or following Stayman or a transfer – 4 means, go to 6 with a maximum, otherwise pass (or go back to an agreed-upon suit); 5 means, go to 6 with a minimum and 7 with a maximum (or go back to an agreed upon suit) – to ask for aces, use Gerber 4 clubs over the original no-trump (or the Stayman or transfer response)
- If your partner opens a weak two or three bid, the hand likely belongs to the opponents, unless you have a massive fit or a monster hand – once they start bidding, let them play it – double only if you can set it yourself
- In a part-score auction, the 4 level in a minor belongs to the opponents
- If your opponents never make a doubled contract, you're not doubling often enough
- Don't double slams unless you have the setting tricks in your own hand – there's no percentage in the loss if the opponents can make it just to get another 50 or 100 points – normally, setting a slam is a good result since either some others may make it or not everyone bids it (so you have a positive score)
- Remember, some people open 3 clubs (and sometimes 3 diamonds) on a 6 card suit
- If your partner pre-empts (weak 2 or 3) and you have 3 or more in his suit, raise it (the weaker your hand, the more important – if you get set in a doubled contract, the opponents generally can make more by bidding and they otherwise have to make a high-level decision that may put them in the wrong contract)
- Pay attention to vulnerability and use it in your favor
- Follow the law of total tricks (“the Law”)
- If you have freely bid a game in a relatively non-competitive auction (or you opened, were doubled, and partner redoubled), the opponents should not play an un-doubled contract