



March 2020 NEWSLETTER



THE FIRST RULES ISSUE

In this issue we have the first (and maybe last) article in a series about the rules of Duplicate Bridge. Why? Well, the more players that are familiar with and adhere to the rules, the fairer the game is for all. And, of course, the nicest bridge club on the planet needs to be the fairest of them all.

RANK CHANGES

Following is our thirderly report of members who have achieved new ACBL Ranks during the last four months.

Life Master: Mike McComb
 NABC Master: Sherry Buck
 Miles Hall
 Sectional Master: Gil Greytak
 Betty May
 Denise Winston
 Club Master: Doris Toole

Congratulations to all!

Hey Folks, this is a pretty sparse list. About time for the rest of you to kick it up a notch or two.

MARCH SCHEDULE

March is one of the four slow months in ACBL Land. We have to search far and wide for special games, but we have found them all. In addition to our three allowed Charity Games we will have three Quarterly Club Championships and the following special games:

ACBL – Wide Senior Game – Monday, March 2nd
 – Pairs Matchpoint Game scored across all participating clubs in the ACBL. There will be hand records with written analysis by Barry Rigal. There is a catch, however. You must have been born, or otherwise created, prior to January 1, 1960.

I know this will exclude so so many of you, and I'm sorry, but think of it as a service to our senior citizens.

Grand National Teams Qualification Game – Friday, March 13th – This is an Open Team Game with **no handicaps**. No Perfect Ten, Dirty Dozen or any other restrictions since the rules and strats are set by the ACBL. Masterpoint awards are **half red/half black**. Red point awards at the club level are not all that usual, so, this is a good chance to earn some. In my opinion, the Grand National Teams event is a great opportunity for lower flighted players to earn pigmented points. See the article in this newsletter for more information about this event.

Unit Championship Game – Monday, March 30th – This is just another way to get you more masterpoints.

Game Schedule - March 2020

Monday 1:30pm	Wednesday 1:30pm	Friday 1:30pm
2-Mar ACBL - Wide Senior Pairs	4-Mar Charity Game	6-Mar Charity Game
9-Mar Charity Game	11-Mar Club Championship	13-Mar GNT Qualifier
16-Mar Regular Game	18-Mar Regular Game	20-Mar Regular Game
23-Mar Club Championship	25-Mar Regular Game	27-Mar Club Championship
30-Mar Unit Championship		

ALERTS, ANNOUNCEMENTS AND A HOUSE RULE

Well folks, this article is an experiment. The two or three of you who read this monthly newsletter may have noticed that I have a tendency to digress to irrelevant topics mid article, and then have to fight to get back on track. I have been fighting this issue for four years now, but have not been able to conquer it. So, I'm going to try starting with the digression and work back to the topic. I hope it works.

A few years back, the World Bridge Federation started a campaign to define the game of bridge as a sport and began lobbying the International Olympic Committee to include it in the Olympic Games. This effort was not, ultimately, successful. I can't imagine why not. Perhaps the image of a bunch of 75+ year old bald guys with pot bellies waddling up to the awards podium was a tad more than the IOC members could handle, although they all kind of look just like that.

Let's compare bridge to other sports to decide if bridge is, in fact, a sport. Following is a fairly exhaustive list of reasons why bridge is a sport. 1) People play it; 2) there are professionals and amateurs.

Now we move on to reasons it is not a sport.

- Nobody knows who is winning or what the score is until the game is over. How weird is that?
- Playing bridge (at least at our club) produces an excess of caloric intake over caloric use. I'm pretty sure this is the reverse of what happens in "real" sports.
- The spirit and laws of Bridge require that you fully disclose what your agreements and plays mean. So, if we apply those rules to, say football, it would look like this. After the huddle, the quarterback announces to the other team what the play is (something like "running back off tackle", "wide receiver right go route, left receiver slant", "end around" or any other common plays known to most all players). However, if the play is more complex, an alert would be required. If asked by the defense, the quarterback would be required to explain, in detail, what the play entails.

If baseball were played by our rules, the Astros, instead of going through that elaborate scheme to steal signs, would only have had to ask.

I've been admonished for writing about non bridge stuff in our newsletter, so let's get right back on track and talk about that full disclosure thingy.

Remember and understand:

- ♠ Bridge is not a game of secret messages; the auction belongs to everyone at the table.
- ♠ The opponents are entitled to know the agreed meaning of all calls. Purposely using a system to circumvent announcements or alerts violates the spirit of fair play.
- ♠ When asked, the bidding side must give a full explanation of the agreement. Stating the common or popular name of the convention is not sufficient.
- ♠ Players who remember that a call requires an Alert but cannot remember the meaning must still Alert.
- ♠ Adjustments for violations are not automatic.

The ACBL has established laws and procedures for ensuring full disclosure which it calls the Alert System. The system consists of two elements, announcements and alerts. Announcements are used to verbally inform your

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opponents of the meaning of commonly known bids. Examples include 1) partner opens 1NT – you announce point range (11-14, 15-17 or whatever your agreement is). 2) responses of 2 diamonds or two hearts to partner's 1NT, you announce "transfer" (Note – transfers to three of a minor after a 1NT opening are not announced, they are alerted).

Alerts are used to inform your opponents that partner's bid is not a natural bid and has a meaning different from what might be expected. Examples include 1) Bergen raises, where 3 clubs or three diamonds over a major suit opening show support for the major but say nothing about the suit bid. 2) Jacoby 2NT over a one level major suit opening bid to show a four card game forcing raise. 3) A simple raise of one minor to two of the minor is a forcing bid (Inverted Minors). There are, of course, many others. The guiding principles are if the bid sounds like something that it is not, you owe your opponents an alert, or, if the bid has a specific meaning that they would not be expected to know, they are due an alert.

Announcements and alerts are, unfortunately, double edged swords. They properly give the opponents the information required by bridge law. On the other hand, they may awaken a sleepy or forgetful partner to the meaning you assigned to their bid. Using partner's alert to help your side avoid a bidding mix up is a MAJOR NO NO. Basically, if your partner makes an announcement or alert, you are to pretend you are in another room and neither saw nor heard the alert and/or the explanation. You must continue to bid your hand based on what you thought your bid meant, not on what the alert told you partner thought it meant.

Well, that's the Cliffs Notes version of the ACBL Alert System.

Back to our little ole bridge club. We have a significant number of players who play something akin to Montreal Relay or Kennedy Club. The methods vary substantially between pairs who claim they are playing these methods. Some people alert the one club opening as forcing; some announce "could be short." Some alert the one diamond response to one club as showing a four card major, others say nothing. Nobody announces that a major suit response to a one club opening shows five or more, which is consistent with ACBL regulations.

The following are excerpts from the ACBL FAQ section regarding **alerting/announcing 1♣/1♦ opening bids**. Please familiarize yourself with these requirements so you know when an alert or announcement is due your opponents.

The issue of whether or not an alert is required relates to whether the bid is considered forcing or non-forcing per partnership agreement and understanding.

1♣: Alert if playing Montreal Relay, Kennedy Method, or similar system AND partner is expected to respond ("forcing"). Partner should state something like "Could be as short as 1 or 0 clubs, promises only opening values, and I'm expected to make a response." Announce "could be short" if responder could pass with a hand as bad as xxx, Qxxx, xxxx, xx. (When quizzing players who use the Montreal Relay system you'll find that many of them really do consider the bid to be forcing except in the rare case where they hold practically a bust hand with long clubs. You'll find that many of them will respond 1♦ with the example hand above. That in itself should make the 1♣ be considered artificial and forcing. In this case the opponents are due an Alert, not an Announcement.)

1♣/1♦: Alert if playing Montreal Relay or similar system where these two bids distinguish the size of the opening hand. For instance, 1♣ shows a hand with no five card major and a range of 10-13 HCP, and 1♦ shows the very same hand but with 14 or more HCP. In each of these cases players may have zero cards in the minor suit bid and hold five or more cards in the unbid minor suit. Again, when quizzing players who play these systems you'll find that most will scrape together any bid possible (by implication, "forcing") for fear that opener may actually be void in the first suit bid.

1♣/1♦: Announce "may be short" if they could be shorter than three cards and are 100% non-forcing.

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Responses to 1♣

A forcing, artificial 1♦ response where responder is denying a five card major and where he could easily not hold three diamonds must be Alerted.

1♣-P- 1♥ or 1♣ -P-1♠: no Alert required for natural bids (four card+ major suits) even if the response promises a five card suit or longer as in the Montreal Relay system.

AIKEN BRIDGE CLUB HOUSE RULE

At the last Game Director meeting we decided to add the following house rule to further amplify the ACBL requirements. This action was taken to make it easier for players not familiar with Montreal Relay or Kennedy Club or various home grown methods to receive the information to which they are entitled. The rule will take effect March 2nd.

If a response of one of a major to a one club or one diamond opening bid shows five or more cards in that major, you must announce “five or more” or something to that effect.

So, to summarize:

If a response of one diamond to one club does not require four or more diamonds and/or implies/requires four cards in either or both majors, you must alert. If a bid of one no trump over one club denies any four card major (regardless of the number of clubs or diamonds held), you must alert.

The **HOUSE RULE** supplements but does not otherwise change the existing ACBL requirements stated above, which are still in effect. Thus, if there is an expectation that partner may not pass an opening bid of either one club or one diamond, that bid must still be alerted as forcing. Likewise, if a one diamond response to one club may be artificial (i.e., may contain less than three diamonds) or is considered forcing, that bid must be alerted. Opening bids of one club or one diamond that may be less than three cards must still be announced as “may be short” and/or alerted as forcing if there is an expectation that partner will not pass.

Note: Announcing that the major suit response shows five or more is an Aiken Bridge Club rule that is not required elsewhere.

NOT MINE -- YOURS

Every now and then someone makes a comment to me about our Newsletter. Sometimes they say I enjoy **your** Newsletter, sometimes they say **your** Newsletter sucks, and often they just say I didn't know **you** wrote a Newsletter. The opinions are what they are, however, we have an issue with ownership. It is not **my** Newsletter, it is **YOURS**. So, why not consider contributing to it? If you have any comments, criticisms, suggestions, interesting bridge hands or stories, or anything else you would like to share with your fellow members, just write it up and send it to me. I don't do censorship and if the grammar meets the publishing criteria of the *Aiken Standard* (at least half of the sentences have a verb and a noun, two thirds of the words are spelled correctly and, while not mandatory, misplaced modifiers and dangling participles are strongly encouraged) your submission will appear in our Newsletter. Hey, give it a go, we all want to know what you think or if you do.

GRAND NATIONAL TEAMS

The Grand National Teams is one of the ACBL's two "grass roots" events. This means that the event starts at the club level, with qualifiers advancing to the district level and, if successful, moving on to the national level.

The Grand National Teams qualifying process is underway with club games possible through April 30. At the club level, players qualify as individuals: those who place in the top half or score at least 50% may play at the district competition. You can play at the district level with any District 7 members who have qualified for your flight. However, your team qualifies as a team to move on to the national level.

The District finals are May 2-3 (Championship and Flight B) in Spartanburg or May 16-17 (Flights A and C) in Columbia. The National Finals will be in Montreal starting July 15, 2020.

All stages are flighted based on the highest masterpoint holder on the team. The flights are:

Championship (Open)

A (0-6000)

B (0-2500)

C (0-500 and Non Life Master)

Flight eligibility is determined by the number of points listed in your September 2019 Bridge Bulletin. If you go over a limit after that, it does impact your eligibility.

Masterpoints Awards: Club qualifying games award 50/50 red and black at 81.8% sectional rating. District finals award gold for section firsts and overalls. Flight C is 25%

gold for overalls. Other masterpoint awards in all flights are red.

Prize Money: \$900 per member of the winning teams in each flight as well as some additional amounts for others that are awarded trips, most likely for second place teams in flights A, B, and C who agree play in the Mini-Spingold.

Complete conditions of contest can be found at district7bridge.org.

For those of you looking for ways to meet your pigmented point requirements (or are just MPP's), this is a great opportunity. Note that after qualifying at the club level, you will be playing against other teams in your flight at the district and national levels.

Our March team game is our last scheduled Grand National Teams qualifier for this cycle. If any of you are interested in taking advantage of this great opportunity, I could easily be persuaded to have another in April.

Really guys, if you are interested in the points and/or would like a subsidized trip to Montreal for the Summer Nationals, this is the way to go.

BOARD MEETING REPORT

The first meeting of the 2020 edition of your Board was held on February 19th, 2020. The first meeting of each year is basically a housekeeping session, where we assign responsibility for various club functions as well as clear up any deferred activity from the prior year. Following is a very brief summary of the meeting.

The first order of business was welcoming our newest members, Sherry Buck and Christine Gasperini, to the Board

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Assigned Responsibilities – Lauren will continue to serve as Assistant Manager and Phoebe as Assistant Treasurer. Lauren and Sedley will continue to Co-Chair our Party Program. Christine was selected to be the Board Secretary.

Sectional Tournament – The Board confirmed that we will once again hold our annual Sectional Tournament. This year's dates are September 25th through the 27th. Greg Roberts has agreed to re up as Tournament Chair. The event will be held, as usual, at the Odell Weeks Center because, well, there's really no other place in Aiken to have it.

Holiday Party – Yep, we are already on this. Phoebe is yet again in charge of our Holiday Party. She has already reserved Woodside Plantation Country Club for Monday, December 14th. We will, once again, have the whole place to ourselves.

Team Games – The Board decided to drop the artificial constraints on team make-up. No more 8 is enough, Perfect Ten, or Dirty Dozen. All team games will be open, but handicaps will continue to be used (unless it is an ACBL sponsored event like the Grand National Teams). The reason for the change is that the quite generous handicaps are sufficient to level the playing field. In addition, as member's masterpoint totals increase they creep into higher brackets, which has the unintended effect of breaking up established teams for no apparent reason. As with everything we try, if we don't like it, we will change it.

Pro – Am and Individual Games – While members keep saying they like these games, our attendance at them is less than at our regular games. We decided to do yet another survey to get your current opinion on these games. Sherry and Ron will put the survey together. If you bother to participate in the survey, please respond with your real opinions so we know where to go from here. We really do try to do what you want, but are not, alas, mind readers.

MEAD HALL VISIT

On January 24th the young adults from Mead Hall visited our game. This lowered the average age of people in the Croft House cafeteria to a tad over 50, which is surely a Croft House record.

Congratulations to all

*Pictures by Donna Dugan
Thanks*

