

Meeting of GCBA and Club Representatives : 2 Aug 2020

Present :

- Ian Cooke (Wotton)
- Hugh Tarran (Sheepscombe)
- Chris Hosking (Corinium & Somerford Keynes)
- Sally Lindner (Chipping Campden & Winchcombe)
- Nigel Pitel (Stroud)
- Patrick Shields (GCBA)
- Ian Sidgwick (GCBA & Northleach)

These are notes of useful points for those who missed the meeting, rather than a formal record.

1. Present Online Playing and the future for bridge

- Ian C reported quite a few playing online, with 30 regularly on BCL, an overlapping 63 on BBO, and about half of these in Tudor BC tournaments. Some 30 have no (current) desire to play.
- Chris has a VC running a weekly game for a pair of clubs, and is looking to get Fairford to join them.
- Sally has players playing competitively once a week but sees the EBU Virtual Club as expensive. [Option for Patrick to train TDs might solve that – Sally to put candidates in touch]
- Nigel has had teams games going every week since early April and has now added in a Virtual Club. Stroud has two trained VC TDs, and is opening up its games to everyone in Gloucestershire. Only two of the Stroud regulars are not playing online. The weekly teams games have had a Zoom session before and after. A Sunday “Improvers’ Duplicate” is being planned from September.
- Patrick has set up Swiss Teams, 9-high Swiss Pairs and a Virtual Club for the county. And a Learners’ Duplicate is being considered. He reported that Cheltenham BC was running 8 sessions a week as an EBU Virtual Club, one of which was Gentle Bridge (8 min/board rather than 7) and one was Learner’s Duplicate (running 10 min/board and commentaries).
- Ian S asked about interest in an online equivalent of the Cleverly League, suggesting Swiss Teams as a format to cater for a greater number as travel stops being an issue. Nigel reported Stroud teams are keen to see it continue.

In terms of the coming months the conclusions were that

- Some people won’t ever play online, as many recent starters are more concerned about the social aspects than the bridge.
- The expense associated with safety measures and the reduced footfall will make any face-to-face bridge uneconomic for some time.
- It will be some time before we say face-to-face bridge restart. We did note that
 - Guernsey and the Isle of Man which are COVID-free, only two clubs are known to have re-started.
 - Rugby Village is stryng with 4 tables with Perspex screens, own bidding box, one person touches cards. In a space previously used for 12 tables.
 - Harrogate: all bring tablet and play on-line but in club

2. Teaching in days of Covid

- Patrick reported that Cheltenham had almost completed their courses when lockdown came, and many learners have moved into practicing online. There were plans being made to continue (online) teaching in September but not to new students.
- Ian C reported an expectation that he would not be starting any new classes this year, but will continue with last year’s beginners. Tudor BC are keen to continue with teaching.
- Nigel reported teaching had stalled in Stroud, and suggested that there was more demand from existing players as Improvers than from people starting afresh on the game.

3. Gaps the County/GCBA can fill

- The possibility of a Learners' Duplicate open to all across the county was welcomed.
- No particular support for teaching was identified as required; the English Bridge School (from EBED) is due to launch any day now and might create some demand, but we suffer because promotion of the game in general across the country is poor.

We agreed to meet again in six months' time, but sooner if the pace of change suggests that is needed.

END OF NOTES