

GCBA NEWSLETTER

Season 2016-17

February 2017

Programme

This month we have -

- Feb 6th : Winter Teams 5
- Feb 13th : Winter Pairs 6
- Feb 20th : League 7
- Feb 27th : Spring Teams 1

The Spring Teams is a four session event, all-play-all, and in each session the top four teams are awarded points to determine the overall winner.

GCBA WEEKENDS

You might be reading this just before or just after the Cotswold Cup (held on Sunday 5th February) but it will be too late for entries by now. In March there are two weekend events:

- Newent is hosting the 39th running of the Newent Bowl, with a 1400 hrs start on Sunday 5th March. Space is limited so you need to get your team entry in early – see [the Newent BC web site](#) for the form.
- CBC hosts the final of the County Pairs on Sunday 26th March. You should know if you have qualified but can always check with the [CTD](#) in cases of doubt. If you have qualified and are not coming, please do ensure someone knows.

Hubert Philips Bowl

This is the EBU Mixed Teams championship, uniquely (these days) played with aggregate scoring. The County had just three teams entered last year. Lesley Harrison's team didn't do well, but Mark Rogers' team had won two matches when it lost to the Constable team (with Phair & Simons) who then lost in the fourth round to a team who have all played recently for England. Entries close around April each year – so now is the time to start gathering your team. Entries via [EBU web site](#).

GCBA History

The records of the Cheltenham Congress are scant. We can tell it ran in the 1940s after the war, but it seems to have disappeared in that decade and first appears again in 1962. Those current players who were around in the 1960s can remember when it was played at the Plough Hotel in the High Street (now the site of the Regent Arcade) and entries closed, full, with 6 weeks to go.

After that it moved to the Carlton Hotel in Parabola Road and a variety of other locations before today's venue. Ian Constable has played every year since 1964 and in the early days famous players like Joe Amsbury & Terence Reese played here.

Please say if you know more!

Strong Openers

There has been some vocal controversy recently about what is needed for an Acol Two opener (usually as part of Benji Acol). Interpretations of "Acol Two" and of "strong" vary widely and the EBU has produced definitions of these as part of the convention licensing regulations. The EBU wording is not perfect (it is being reviewed) but to knowingly go outside it is to give yourself an advantage over a competitor who does follow the rules. So please do not do that, and be prepared, if you do, for a call to the Director and a possible score adjustment.

The key restrictions ([see page 20 of the EBU's Blue Book](#)) on "strong" openings are

- at least 16 hcp, or
- matches rule of 25, or
- at least 10 hcp and 8 "clear cut" tricks

GCBA Results

No change in the Swiss Teams - final sessions in February and March.

The County Individual had a nice five tables and was won by Mike Wignall, just 3 match points ahead of Paul Denning and then Patrick Shields.

The fifth session of the Winter Pairs saw a win for Paul Denning & Roger Schofield ahead of Roger Jackson & Peter Waggett. Across the series (one session left) Joe Angseesing & Keith Stanley retain the lead, followed by Norah Allen & Suzanne Griffiths and then this month's winners.

After seven matches in the League the Wearmouth team is now well clear in Division One (by 34 VPs but the second placed team has a match in hand), while Wendy's team has regained the lead in Division Two from Jim Simons' team. Division One now splits into two parts and crunch time comes for the Rogers team whose delayed match will determine the placings.

In the County-run qualifying heat of the County Pairs, the winners were Roy Collard & Pam Pearce followed by Tony Hill & Alan Wearmouth. The top 7 pairs from this heat can play in the final on Sunday 26 March, along with those who qualified in club heats across the county.

In the Rank Xerox teams, the winners were Natalie Davenport & John Polhill, Angelos Agathangelou & John Cuncer, Nicky Ferguson & Keith Patterson, Mark Harrison & Michele Lazarus playing for Thrabb. There were six teams-of-8 present this year.

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County Individual

The event was great fun and playing a minimal system caused no problems. This hand offered a chance for applying match-point logic, but few did.

♠ AKQ	♠ 8654
♥ A52	♥ QJT74
♦ K4	♦ AT
♣ KQJ53	♣ A4

The default was a 2N opener as West, although a good case can be made for upgrading this to a 23-count, as it lacks any stray jacks and includes a strong five card suit. After any strong opener the East hand is clearly thinking about slam and the question is where.

There is potential in both majors but both have dangers. There might be a spade fit but two losing spades, while the other suits provide plenty of tricks. Identifying losers in trumps is very difficult as AJT9 works fine but AJ97 won't.

Playing in hearts is an option, but a 5-3 heart fit as a trump suit is only occasionally going to deliver more tricks than in no-trumps, so that seems of poor value. The time a heart fit is more likely to deliver is with a 5-4 fit.

Unless missing both top hearts, the heart suit will deliver at least four tricks, and along with two aces outside, the chances for 6N are really quite good.

So the recommended action on this hand is for East to invoke Stayman, and bid either 6♥ or 6N depending on whether or not West shows four hearts. If a heart fit is found, there is room to investigate; by agreeing hearts first (3♠, not needed for spades, if partner bids 3♥) there is time for some cue bids and for a Key Card ask before getting too high.

This path gets you to 6N making +1 for a top, while those who found 6♥ on the day made no overtrick when South turned up with K963 of trumps.

Midlands League

The January match against Oxford produced three wins for the county teams, with the Markham team winning 15-5, the Porter 14-6 and the Dawes 13-7. This leaves the Markham team leading its division, while the other two are both second to Warwickshire. This example of an active pre-empting style gained the county a lot of points in this match.

♠ QJ98653	
♥ 8632	
♦ T8	
♣ --	
♠ A2	♠ T74
♥ K5	♥ T4
♦ J73	♦ AQ942
♣ AKQT32	♣ 976
♠ K	
♥ AQJ97	
♦ K65	
♣ J854	

The North hand is ideal from a pre-empting perspective, having shape and a good enough suit and no defence. The downside here is the vulnerability. Any 74xx hand deserves to be a bid a level higher than a 7222 hand, and the hand would surely be opened 4♠ if non-vulnerable; this reasoning led to two GCBA players to open 3♠.

Now the big decision fell to their partners, and both Alan Wearmouth and David Simons produced the winning bid of 4♠. This silenced the opposition and the game rolled home.

Were South to pass, West should clearly be bidding the excellent 3N (and four tables played 3N by West all making 9 tricks). When a third GCBA pair – who passed initially – stole the hand in 3♠ making +1, our bidding had helped the county to gain 50 imps in one match and 28 imps in another.

Well done to Stan Powell, winner of the EBU Christmas Quiz.

On the Internet

Facilities for playing bridge online have existed since the early 1990s, starting in those days with [OKBRIDGE](#) which had a text-based interface running under DOS. Today OKB offers unlimited bridge for \$99 per year and an interesting ranking system, and the means to allow players of similar rankings to play together.

Around the start of the 2000s along came [BBO \(Bridge Base Online\)](#) which offered free bridge and a vugraph facility for spectating at big events. It has quickly build up an enormous following and regularly shows over ten thousand live participants when you log in. It also runs some pay-for-play competitions at which ACBL matchpoints can be earned, BBO also offers a facility for bidding practice which is enormously useful.

Also since 2003 there has been [Bridge Club Live](#), a smaller UK-based offering (£69 pa full membership) which seems not as dominated as the others by the “strong and 5cd majors” community, and offers EBU master-points. We have county players who regularly participate here.

Finally worth noting – but this is more a discussion and a learning forum – there is the [Bridgewinners web site](#), which supports and gets a very active discussion on all sorts of issues related to duplicate bridge. As well as the latest in gossip around the international events, you will find bidding problems (and many offered answers) plus the marvellous “Kit’s Korner” set of hands where Kit Woolsey takes you step by step through a hand he has played recently. Well worth a browse.