

GCBA NEWSLETTER

Season 2018-19

January/February 2018

PROGRAMME

For February & March we have some repeats -

- Mon 4th : Spring Teams
 - Mon 11th : Swiss Pairs
 - Mon 18th : League
- plus
- Mon 25th Feb: County Individual
 - Mon 25th March : Swiss Pairs

IN 2019

On Sunday 17th February we have the COTSWOLD CUP at 1300 hrs at CBC. It is a pairs competition with teams scoring, using a datum score from when the hands were once played in an international match. This is our annual charity event, with proceeds going to the Sue Ryder Foundation. Entry fee is £10 per player.

On Sunday 3rd March, the NEWENT BOWL takes place in Newent. This is a Blue Point Swiss Teams game and the cost of £60 per team includes tea & coffee & cake during the day. See the Newent BC website for more details.

BRIDGE AROUND GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Coming up in the near future ...

- On the 22nd-24th February is the [Barnstaple Congress](#) in North Devon, to which a number of Cheltenham players go.
- On the 2nd-3rd March is the [Wiltshire Congress](#) in Bath. Swiss Pairs one day and Swiss Teams the next.

TD's CORNER

There is much discussion going on these days about the extent to which the Laws of Bridge and the Regulations are so officious that they are discouraging newcomers from getting involved in competitive bridge.

The starting point for any discussion on this is to note that we all play this game for fun, and in order for it to be fun we need a strong sense that the game generates a fair result. There are a multitude of accidents which can occur during a bridge game, and the Laws and Regulations have grown (rather large) over the years in an attempt to give an answer to every possible dispute between parties about how to deal with an accident, while retaining a sense of fairness.

In the early days there were a lot of doubtful practices going on – for example showing a card to gauge an opponent's reaction before playing a different card. Clearly this is underhand, and it is to counter this that there are firm rules about when a card is played. To apply these strict rules in cases where there is no suspicion of being underhand causes friction at the bridge table and does nothing to enhance the game. We – the whole community – need to develop a more relaxed attitude to accidents which happen at the bridge table. If at the table we can agree on a fair continuation, we should be willing to waive an artificial penalty which the Laws would allow us to enforce.

GCBA RESULTS

The Winter Pairs has had its fifth and final session, and this was won by Patrick Shields & Mike Wignall ahead of Roger Jackson & Peter Waggett. These two pairs ended as first and second across the series, off both scratch and handicap. The highest handicap difference was 10%.

In the County League six matches have now taken place. In Division One the lead is tied between Tony Letts' team and Joe Angseesing's team except that the former has now played and won another match. In Division Two the Simons team are still leading from the Pritchard team.

After the first KO round for the County KO, the semi-finals are now (captains name only) Butland – Stanley and Rogers - Shields.

Cheltenham Bridge Club is, on Saturday 24th February running a heat of the EBU Ranked Master competition for those below the rank of Regional Master. This is a 48-board session with a meal break, and will be coordinated with simultaneous play in other parts of the country. Do consider coming along.

TD Roundtables

We continue with discussion sessions for TDs, on occasional Fridays at Cheltenham BC. Anyone is welcome. Next session : 1800 on Friday 8th Feb.

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County Matches

We had good results in both the December and January matches, and the DAWES team is now in second place just 2 VPs behind the leaders, the PORTER team is second by 9 VPs, and the MARKHAM team is leading its division by 3 VPs.

This hand was a success for all our teams in the last match

♠ K		
♥ T8		
♦ QT983		
♣ QT852		
♠ Q62		♠ AT
♥ KQ3	B 6	♥ A97642
♦ J7642	DLR E	♦ AK5
♣ K9	VUL: EW	♣ A3
		♠ J987543
		♥ J5
		♦ --
		♣ J764

Each table started with 1♥ and the outcome now depended a lot on what South chose to do. The majority of Nottinghamshire players bid just 2♠, over which West was often able to show support with 3♥. This allowed East to offer a slam try with 3♠, and West could cue bid with 4♣, and after that there was no stopping East.

The big difference at the other tables was that South overcalled not 2♠ but 3♠, and in one case even bid 4♠. Taking this space away made it impossible for East-West to get their act together and the result was inevitably that they played in game.

The other slam hands in this match proved more problematic. Board 12 was a cold slam nobody bid, but there the opponents opened the bidding first (once at the four level).

The biggest loss we had was also a slam hand, but on this occasion there was no

competition. Try bidding this with your favourite partner ..

♠ T87	B 23	♠ AK53
♥ QJ63	DLR S	♥ AK9854
♦ AT92	VUL: both	♦ J7
♣ AT		♣ 9

At a few tables West opened the bidding and then supported hearts, making East very interested in a slam – indeed it is hard to stop out of slam when that happens.

More commonly East opened 1♥ and West jumped to 2N to show maximum support from a passed hand. After this the issue is diagnosing the spade loser but if we switch the ♥Q to be the ♠Q the slam is excellent and West might feel less confident about the hand. The slam had play, so we don't crime anyone for bidding it.

Pre-empting Style

One aspect in which the game has changed over the past decade is the willingness of people to make more and higher obstructive bids. The rationale for this is sound – the opponents' ability to bid to the best contract has improved, and most have the ability to cope with modest intervention. So you cannot expect a "good result" is the opponents have a free run, and that is why people bid more now than they ever did before.

There is however a tendency to go overboard in the direction of bidding more, and to counter that we need to go back over the rationale for making obstructive bids. There are two criteria which need to be true to make the obstructive bid a Good Thing : there must be a high scoring contract for the opponents to make, and you must be able to withstand a penalty should they choose to defend.

The key consideration in judging that the opponents have a game contract or higher to make is the extent of your defensive values : if you are thinking of pre-empting, you need to register that holding honours in your short suit will create problems for the opponents were they to declare, and the ace (and even the king) of your long suit might turn into a defensive trick.

We need to factor into any decision both the up-sides and the down-sides of bidding. Try this hand

♠AJ8765 ♥-- ♦T943 ♣K32

The up-sides for bidding might be that you are first in hand (that's always a plus) and the vulnerability (if you are non-vulnerable) and that the opponents are likely to have a contract in hearts available.

The down-sides are that you have a sure defensive trick in spades and another potential trick in clubs, and that the hand might play very well in clubs or diamonds, especially if partner has a singleton spade. These factors all combine to say that you don't want to open a weak 2♠ on this hand (or bid 3♠ as was done at the table).

The ideal hand for opening a weak two bid, first in hand non-vulnerable would be a suit like ♠QJT965 where you have sure tricks whatever partner holds, but very few prospects of a defensive trick there. It is on a hand like this which is very pure that we like, these days, to push the boat out and bid one more – so a 3♠ opening in first seat at green would not be unexpected with that spade suit and 331 in the other suits with no honours.