

# GCBA NEWSLETTER

Season 2019-20

June 2020

## COVID-19

It looks like face-to-face bridge will not be possible in the near future. Many of you are playing on-line and I would strongly encourage those that haven't yet tried it to give it a go. The EBU, GCBA and CBC all have regular games on BBO. The system is easy to use and there is [plenty of help available](#) if you are unsure how to get started. [Newent BC](#) and [Corinium BC](#) have both started online recently with more planning to.

## GCBA RESULTS

GCBA has organised a number of on-line tournaments – many thanks to Patrick for all his work on this.

The first season of 6 Swiss teams rounds featured a number of strong teams and several players from outside the county. Most of the early running was made by John Arblaster, Mel Barlow, Ben Ritacca and Tim Stanley-Clamp, but they were overtaken in the final match by David Jones, Marc Smith, Peter Shelley, Trevor Ward and John Hassett.

The second season is now underway and the team of Paul Denning, Richard Plackett, Joe Angseesing and Richard Butland lead the way with 2 maximum wins.

After 4 rounds of the 9-high Swiss pairs, Hylary Kingham and John Polhill are in first place, 7 points clear of a tightly packed group of chasers led by Derek Boreham and Moya Jackson.

In the Summer pairs to date, Peter Swales and Lindsay Stewart have been the most consistent pair, being in the top four each time they have played.

## OTHER RESULTS

In the EBU lockdown league, the team of Ashok Kwatra, Jack Armorgie, Patrick Shields and Garry Watson, having gained promotion to division 2, found the going a bit tough and were knocked back down again to division 3, where they are currently mid-table with 2 matches remaining.

## BE A TRICKY DECLARER

♠ 83  
♥ 965  
♦ KJT96  
♣ 743

3NT by S

♠ A72  
♥ AK2  
♦ Q2  
♣ AKQJ

West leads the ♠6 to East's Queen. You duck and the ♠9 is returned - West playing the 5. You win the next spade from East. How do you continue?

It looks like the spades are 5-3 with West having the length.

Clearly you need to find East with the ♦A, but you also need 2 diamond tricks. Since dummy has no entry, the defenders are sure to give true count signals, so your chances of slipping through 2 diamonds are slim. However, don't give up hope.

Lead the ♦Q from hand (let's say West follows with the 3) Overtake with dummy's King and lead the Jack from the table. This gives East a problem as he cannot be sure of West's diamond length. The defence don't know that you only need 2 diamond tricks and East will be wary that West has played the 3 from a doubleton 32. He might well duck the second round from a holding of

♦Axx and now you are home.

## LIGHT RELIEF

Sam, a very poor bridge player, was polishing a lamp when out popped a genie who said, "I will grant you *one* wish."

Sam unfolded a map of the world and said, "Let all of these countries live in peace and harmony."

"You've got to be kidding! I'm only a genie."

Sam thought for a while and then suggested, "OK, then make me into a great bridge player."

"Hmm..." the genie pondered. "Let me see that map again."

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Anne, Betty and Carol would like to play in the Mixed Pairs, so they go to the partnership desk well before game time. The hostess cordially greets them but warns, "We only have *one important rule* here:- No mobile phones!"

Sure enough, before another word could be spoken, Anne's phone rings, and the hostess says, "Sorry, Anne. For that I must pair you with Joe, the worst male bridge player of all time."

A few minutes later Betty's phone rings, and the hostess says, "Too bad, Betty. Your partner will be Sam, who is about as hopeless as they come."

Meanwhile, Carol waits patiently for almost an hour with her phone carefully turned off. Finally, the hostess walks over with Zia Mahmood and says, "Congratulations, Carol Your partner will be the world's number 1 player."

Carol is awestruck as she turns to Zia, "I can't believe it! What could I have done to deserve a partner as great as you?"

"I don't know what happened to you," grumbled Zia, "but my damn phone went off!"

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## THE PART-SCORE BATTLE – Part 2

In a previous newsletter, we considered the importance of accurately competing for part-scores, an area where better teams consistently pick up IMPs. You don't want to concede a large penalty simply to avoid -110 defending against their 2♠ contract, so how do you judge when it is right to compete, and to what level?

You may have heard of 'The Law of Total Tricks' (The Law), a concept employed by top players to assist in this area.

Briefly, in its simplest form, The Law asserts that on most bridge deals the total number of tricks available is equal to the total number of trumps held by each side in their best fit. What this means that if N/S have an 8 card spade fit and E/W have a 9 card diamond fit, then there are 17 total tricks available on the deal. It does not guarantee that N/S make 2♠ and E/W make 3♦. It could be that N/S can only make 7 tricks whilst E/W can come to 10, or that N/S make an overtrick whilst E/W are 1 down, but the key thing is that total tricks still equal 17 (the sum of the cards in each side's best trump fit).

The Law works well at the part-score level when both sides are in the 17-23 combined point range.

### It shouldn't be applied above the 4 level

The Law helps you to decide how high to compete, using this approximation: **bid to the level of the fit** so with 8 partnership trumps, bid to the 2-level, and with 9 trumps bid to the 3 level. Some simple examples when partner opens the bidding: Partner opens 1♠ playing 5 card majors and you hold:

♠Q65 ♥54 ♦T9865 ♣763

You pass the opening bid as it would be a distortion to do anything else, but if opponents balance with say 2♥ then you should be willing to compete to 2♠ when the bidding comes back you as you have an 8 card trump fit. It doesn't mean that 2♠ will make, but if it goes down, then it is likely that 2♥ would be making the other way.

Similarly, responder to 1♠ with:

♠Q653 ♥54 ♦96 ♣K7632

knows his side has 9 trumps. Don't immediately raise to 3♠ since that would be invitational. But, later, if necessary, compete to the 3-level, for example:

1♠-P-2♠-P-P-3♥-3♠.

With 5 trumps responder should raise 1♠ to 4♠.

Similarly, over partner's 2-level pre-empt (6 cards), be willing to compete to the 3-level with 3 card support (9 total trumps) and the 4 level with 4 card support (10 total trumps).

Now consider a typical auction where both sides are bidding and opponents are playing 5 card majors. It starts 1♠-2♥-2♠ and it's your bid with:

♠653 ♥Q54 ♦96 ♣KQ632.

Applying The Law, it looks like the opponents have a minimum of 8 spades whilst you have a minimum of 8 hearts. The total tricks is thus tentatively 16. Hence the opponents are likely to be making 2♠ and you are likely 1 down in 3♥. You should be bidding 3♥ on this hand as this pushes them out of their comfort zone. They are very unlikely to double as they don't hold trumps and conceding 730

is never good, so they will probably pass and you will gain IMPs compared with if you let them play in 2♠. Applying The Law suggests the following possible outcomes:

- They make 2♠ and you are 1 down = a gain of 0-2 IMPs depending on vulnerability
- They make 2♠ and you make 3♥ (it turns out partner has 6 trumps for his overcall) = a gain of 6 IMPs.
- If you happen to go 2 down then opponents can make 3♠ so you lose 2 IMPs vulnerable but still gain 1 IMP non-vul.

Of course, opponents may misjudge and take the push to 3♠ and go down, in which case the gain is could be 4-6 IMPs.

### Balancing

Suppose you hold

♠Q653 ♥54 ♦KJ6 ♣K976

and the bidding starts 1♥-P-2♥-P-P to you. Whilst you weren't strong enough to double on the first round, you can't afford to let opponents play at the 2 level when they have an 8 card fit, so you double this time round and maybe you make a contract your way; maybe you lose less than you would defending 2♥, or maybe they bid one more and go negative.

**The Law is only useful in competitive auctions. It won't help you to decide if a contract will make.**

**The Law is used to determine whether it is worth bidding on, possibly to sacrifice, or whether it would be better to defend.**

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*If anyone has any stunning results or interesting hands from on-line play that they would like to share, please let me know.*