

GCBA NEWSLETTER

Season 2019-20

March-April 2020

COVID-19

There will very likely be some disruption to bridge events in weeks to come, and many bridge clubs have already issued guidance to members. I would also refer you to the advice from the EBU Chairman, available on the EBU website.

PROGRAMME

The coming weeks see the following events -

- March 23rd and April 27th see the final two sessions of the Spring Swiss Pairs.
- March 16th and 30th with April 20th are the final County League matches.
- March 28th is the County Pairs Final and March 29th is the Ace of Clubs final.

BRIDGE AROUND GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Don't forget

- The Cheltenham Congress 8th-10th May at The Chase Hotel, Brockworth
- 16th-17th May is the Avon Green Point Weekend at Thornbury Leisure Centre

TOLLEMACHE CUP

Gloucestershire's team reached the final of the Tollemache Cup for the first time since 2014. Whilst the quality of competing teams was high, our performance in the final was somewhat disappointing, and the team finished 6th out of 8.

MIDLAND COUNTIES LEAGUE

With the final match of the MCL against Leicestershire due to be played on April 5th, the Dawes team now leads their division, 2 points clear of Leicestershire, so a draw will be enough. In the Markham, our team leads by 4 VPs. The Gloucestershire Porter team lies third in division two, but still with a mathematical chance of success if they win heavily and other results go in their favour. Best of luck to all

GCBA RESULTS

The Spring Swiss Pairs is now underway. Leading the pack are Val Constable and Roy Collard, with Rod Gass and Peter Jackson 5VPs behind in second place. There are two more sessions to go in that event.

The Newent Bowl's first run as a Swiss Pairs event saw an entry of 34 pairs. The event was won by Pat Jenkins and Sue Munday, with Kanwar Rahim and Ben Britton in second place.

NATIONALLY

In the recent Ranked Pairs Weekend, there were few entries from Gloucestershire Pairs. Our highest placed finish went to Alan Wearmouth and Tony Hill who were 11th in the Grand Masters event.

In Crockfords Cup, the team of Denning, Plackett, Shields, Chamberlain, Atthey and Watson are through to the third Round, and the four more elderly members of the same team have also reached the quarter finals of the Seniors Knock-out.

BATH GREEN POINT WEEKEND

Many congratulations to Jack Armorgie and Ashok Kwatra on finishing 8th out of 108 entries in the pairs event.

2019 MASTERPOINT RANKINGS

The annual Masterpoint Ranking lists have just been published. Congratulations to the leaders in the various categories. They, together with the Gloucestershire clubs at which they played were as follows:

CBC = Cheltenham,
CN = Nomads, CC = Chipping Campden, S = Stroud, N = Northleach, W = Winchcombe, EF = EBU Funbridge

Regional and Premier Regional Master

1. Toby Roberts CBC,CN,S
2. Roger Eaton CBC,CN,W
3. John Whittenbury CBC,S

Star and Tournament Masters

1. John Arblaster CBC,CN
2. Catherine Haydock EF
3. Carole Foulkes CBC,S

Masters, Advanced and County Masters

1. Mel Barlow CBC,CN
2. Ian Sidgwick CBC,N,CC
3. Penny Stanbury CBC

District Masters and below

1. John McCaffrey CBC
2. Malcolm Free CBC,CN
3. Richard Caley CBC,N,CC

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THERE IS HOPE FOR US ALL

Before you berate partner for his inept defence, consider the following suit layout.



A top American pair defended this suit at NT (South had denied a 4 card major).

West led the 2♠ and East inserted the 8 over dummy's 6. Later, West thought South might hold AJ doubleton so led the 3♠. East, thinking his partner had started with K532, ducked the second round, so declarer made 4 tricks in the suit without loss.

THE PART-SCORE BATTLE – Part 1

In the previous newsletter, I suggested that weaker teams often lose a significant number of IMPs against better opponents by failing to score well on competitive part-score deals. This article starts to examine the issue of part-score competition.

We will start by looking at some boring arithmetic. At IMPs, consider the auction

(1♠) 2♦ (2♠) P (P)

Should you bid 3♦? Let's not worry about your actual holding but assume that:

- They can make either seven or eight tricks in 2♠;
- You can make either eight or nine tricks in 3♦

This table shows the possible IMP outcomes at different vulnerability combinations.

We are	V		NV	
They are	V	NV	V	NV
<i>Both make</i>	+6	+6	+6	+6
<i>Neither makes</i>	-5	-4	-4	-3
<i>We go down</i>	0	0	+2	+2
<i>They go down</i>	0	+2	0	+2

The IMPs are calculated by imagining that we bid on to 3♦ while at the other table, our opposite number chooses to defend 2♠. If both contracts make, the score is:

3♦ making = +110 (for us)
 2♠ making = +110 (our side)
 Total = +220 = + 6 IMPs

But what if our opposite number also bids 3♦? In that case, when we bid on to 3♦ we win 0 IMPs but if we had passed 2♠ we would have lost 6 IMPs. Thus, bidding on to 3♦ still improves our team's result by 6 IMPs, regardless of the decision the other pair holding our cards makes.

With both sides Vul

Bidding on is a 6 to 5 favourite because it wins 6 IMPs when both contracts make and it loses 5 IMPs when both contracts fail (we call these 'double swings'). If your part-score fails, the *best* thing that can happen is to break even. If you go down more than one, or the opponents double you, then you will lose 3 to 9 IMPs.

Vul vs NV or NV vs Vul

The odds improve. Now, bidding on is better than a 3-2 favourite. The double swings favour bidding on by 6-4 and in addition you win 2 IMPs half the time that one contract makes and the other fails. If your contract makes only 40% of the time, declaring still shows a profit.

NV vs NV

Bidding on is a *much* better bet. Any time one contract makes and the other goes down, you win 2 IMPs. And the double swings favour bidding on by 2 to 1. Another way to think about it, at NV on NV, is to bid on any time *any contract makes*. If your contract makes, you always show a profit and if your contract goes down, you have to be doubled down two before bidding on has a significant down-side.

Moreover, you are less likely to be doubled when non-vul. This is because the up-side for the defenders is less as they only get 300 for down 2 instead of 500 when you are vul, so they aren't so keen to risk -470.

Another consideration that tilts the balance in favour of bidding is that defence is more difficult than declaring. You may get a friendly lead, and make the contract, while at the other table the defence may err. You also gain when opponents misjudge and bid one more. The conclusion is that passing out a low-level part-score has very few ways to gain, and many ways to lose.

Clearly, competing without a known fit can be dangerous, and going several down is never going to be a winning strategy. Next time, I will look at how you might assess your prospects in the part-score zone.