



November Newsletter

Teacher Training

I am very pleased to tell you that we have arranged for the EBU to hold a Club Teacher Training Course in Somerset. This is a great opportunity for clubs wishing to start or develop a teaching programme to get a teacher trained without having to travel miles and possibly stay away.

The course will be held at [Nailsea Bridge Club](#) on June 1st and 2nd 2020. This course is already listed nationally. To read all about it please go to <https://www.ebedcio.org.uk/club-teacher-training> and to apply for a place please phone Lisa on 01296 317217.

The course costs £175 discounted to £140 for EBU affiliated clubs but EBU clubs are entitled to one FREE place - please read the notes on the web page <https://www.ebedcio.org.uk/club-teacher-training>

It's FREE (for EBU clubs) and it's in SOMERSET so please let's fill the course with potential teachers from our clubs and then we can really progress more of our clubs to become teaching clubs which I consider to be vital for the future of our game.

There are only 10 places on the course so please take action before the course fills from outside the county.

Happenings:

Interclub pairs at Woolavington, Sunday November 10th.

So far this looks like a shootout between Langport, Taunton and an outnumbered Wells and Clevedon & Portishead in the below National Masters category with Taunton and Wells slugging it out in the Open section and Chew Valley and Weston-super-Mare in the non-affiliated category – that is unless you know better....it is never too late to register...

1pm start with a finish expected around 6pm and the honour of your local club at stake.

All the details can be found here: https://www.bridgewebs.com/cgi-bin/bwx/bw.cgi?pid=display_page35&sessid=576028132348358&wd=1&club=somerset

Saturday November 16th - **Seminar by Caroline Macpherson** at Street 10am – 4pm. Venue is the Victoria Social Club on Leigh Road BA16 0HB. A look at how to cope when the opposition interfere by doubling or overcalling. Teaching will be via playing hands rather than a lecture style with notes and hand records available.

There is no charge but please register so that the organisers have an idea of numbers. That can be done here:

https://www.bridgewebs.com/cgi-bin/bwon/bw.cgi?pid=display_page81&wd=1&club=somerset

Swiss teams at Woolavington, Sunday November 24th.

A strong field will contest this event – 1pm start again and all the details can be found here:

https://www.bridgewebs.com/cgi-bin/bwx/bw.cgi?pid=display_page2&sessid=576028132348358&wd=1&club=somerset

Newcomers Congress Sunday 1st December – Cossington Village Hall. Already very popular this event should take place between 10.30am and 5pm. Full details and registration can be found here: https://www.bridgewebs.com/cgi-bin/bwon/bw.cgi?pid=display_page80&sessid=714146914627124&wd=1&club=somerset

Men's and Ladies Pairs – Saturday 7th December Woolavington. Start time is 1pm. Open to all and a great opportunity to try an event if you have not had the chance to compete before.

https://www.bridgewebs.com/cgi-bin/bwon/bw.cgi?pid=display_page4&sessid=714146914627124&wd=1&club=somerset
https://www.bridgewebs.com/cgi-bin/bwon/bw.cgi?pid=display_page8&sessid=714146914627124&wd=1&club=somerset

November 25th **Seminar** at **Normandy Bridge Club**, Unity Hall, Yeovil.
A presentation on Unblocking and Overtaking followed by prepared hands. Starting at 7.15pm the cost is £5 to include refreshments and notes. Please contact normandybridgeclub@hotmail.co.uk to book.

Lessons are still available at Winscombe, Frome and with Lou Hobhouse at West Camel, Charlton Musgrove and Lamyatt. The details are all on the SCBA website and can be accessed via the home page here:

<https://www.bridgewebs.com/somerset/>

A new course will be starting in **Cheddar** at the Catholic Church Hall on Tuesday 14th January.

Ten two hour lessons will cost £100 including a course book that normally retails for £26. The first session is a free taster (but be warned bridge is like chocolate – a minute on the lips and then a lifetime of addiction). More details on https://www.bridgewebs.com/cgi-bin/bwon/bw.cgi?club=cheddar&pid=display_page4

DIARY DATE

MEMBERS' OPEN MEETING at the **VICTORIA CLUB, STREET** on Thursday January 9th 2020 at 10am

An opportunity for the bridge playing community in Somerset to meet and discuss the SCBA's plans for the development of bridge in the county and for the county committee to hear feedback on its activities from members and committee members of all clubs whether affiliated to the EBU or not.

Results:

County League A – October saw wins for Taunton RS, Wells AR and Langport LH and CH full scores are here: https://www.bridgewebs.com/cgi-bin/bwon/bw.cgi?pid=display_rank&event=20191011_1&club=somerset

County League B – wins were recorded by Winscombe, both Street teams and Nailsea full scores are here: https://www.bridgewebs.com/cgi-bin/bwon/bw.cgi?pid=display_rank&event=20191011_2&club=somerset

County league C – Castle Cary, Wells, Yeovil and Cossington were all successful. Full scores are here: https://www.bridgewebs.com/cgi-bin/bwon/bw.cgi?pid=display_rank&event=20191011_3&club=somerset

In the Somerset matches against Wiltshire both the A and B teams lost 4 - 16 while the C team triumphed 18 – 2.

Honours Board – congratulations to Geoff Davies and Ray Beach for a cracking **71%** at Cheddar Bridge club on 30th October. (Please send in any worthy scores for inclusion in the newsletter. Grand slams with hand records would be particularly appreciated)

Andrew Robson at Street – 18th October 2019 – A Masterclass

“How to Improve Your Score at Pairs without Doing Anything Complicated” was the very seductive title of one of Andrew’s topics for the day. It certainly drew the crowds with 28 tables creating a very cosy atmosphere at the home of Street Bridge Club. The other topics for the day were “Three Weak Twos”, and “Preference”. Andrew’s clarity, good humour and gentle wit made it a most enjoyable and educative day.

Well as far as improving your score at pairs was concerned it all looked pretty straightforward. Don’t risk close games, prefer a 4–4 fit to no trumps, don’t risk close slams, do risk lead-directing bids, do risk passing partner’s double, be bold in the ‘cheat-seat’. A few days later at Cheddar armed with all this advice my partner decided to pass my double confident we could defeat declarer’s contract. Well as Andrew says “a bottom’s only a bottom”!

Each teaching point was preceded by dealing and bidding a hand from Andrew’s special pack. After Andrew had gone through how it should have been bid participants then had a go at playing the contract, followed by Andrew running through how best to play it. All very logical when explained. Now why didn’t we think of that? The final contract of the afternoon appeared to be unmakeable until the master got to work on it. We went home with a sense of awe and wonder to reflect on how much we still had to learn, and to unwind with a glass or two of wine. The good news is that Andrew returns to Somerset on 23rd October 2020.

A very nice report thanks to **Alan Rodgman**. Other articles about bridge events enjoyed by readers would be gratefully received.

EBU TOOLS

EBUScore – a bridge scoring programme supplied and maintained by the EBU this is based on the Jeff Smith programmes and is free for affiliated clubs. The SCBA offers on-site support for anyone using this programme and those interested in tuition can contact Andy on andyridgers@gmail.com.

The EBU website has a number of interesting articles with advice on promoting your club. A couple of examples can be found here:

<https://ebumemberdevelop.org.uk/index.php/2019/10/18/tips-for-marketing-your-bridge-club/>

<https://ebumemberdevelop.org.uk/index.php/2019/09/20/two-stories-show-why-a-welcoming-atmosphere-is-the-key-to-a-growing-bridge-club/>

The Law of Vacant Places

Recent discussions with a number of bridge players have revealed that many club players do not know about the '**Law of Vacant Places**'. This is a useful method of assessing the probability of where a particular card lies. The bidding and play often gives you clues as to the suit lengths in the various hands. If someone pre-empted at the three level, for example, they probably have seven cards in the suit. If they overcall an unusual two no trumps then they probably have ten cards in the two lowest unbid suits and so on. This leaves much less space in their hand for the cards from the other suits or fewer '**vacant places**' as this law calls them. Counting the **vacant places** in a hand is the key to determining probability of finding a particular card there.

Let's look at a specific example: As North you hold: **S AJ, H AQJT92, D K32 C J7** and you are playing in **four hearts** after opening **one heart**, East overcalling **two no trumps** and partner bidding **three hearts**. East leads the **king of clubs** and partner puts down: **S 75, H 87543, D A654, C A4**

At first sight your contract appears to depend upon the location of the **King of hearts** since you have a spade, a club and a diamond to lose. You win with the **Ace of clubs**, lead a heart and West plays the **six of hearts**. So, should you take the finesse? Considering the heart suit alone you may think that the probability of the finesse succeeding is 50% since the king could be either side. This takes no account of East's Two No-Trumps overcall, however. Let's count the **vacant places** assuming East is five – five in the minors. Here's what we know with **x** being a single card and **?** an unknown number of cards:

	AJ	
	AQJT92	
	K32	
	J7	
?		?
6?		?
x		xxxxx
xxxx		KQxxx
	75	
	87543	
	A654	
	A4	

With ten known cards East has only 3 **vacant places**, i.e. cards which as far as you know could be the king of hearts. Looking at our own hands we can deduce that West has four clubs and one diamond. We have also seen the **six of hearts** so we know six cards that cannot be the King of hearts and hence West has seven **vacant places** giving a probability of $7/(7+3)$ or 70% that the King of hearts is with West and the finesse will succeed. If East is 6:5 in the minors then he has one less **vacant space** and West has one more making it even more likely that the finesse will succeed - $(8/(8+2))$ or 80%.

This hand was constructed to give a simple example of how to use the **Law of Vacant Spaces** to calculate the probability of a finesse succeeding. If you analyse it more carefully, however, you will see that you should not take the finesse! You have a much better line of play. You lay down the **Ace of hearts**, hopefully dropping the king, but if the king does not drop you play to eliminate clubs and spades from your hands, remove West's presumed singleton diamond and throw him in with the **King of hearts** when he has to return a black suit giving you a ruff and discard.

You must be careful to ensure that West does not get the lead until his diamond exit card has been removed and you have eliminated the black suits from your two hands. Luckily, leading the **Jack of clubs** from dummy will force East to win with his presumed queen (he led the King from at least five clubs). You win a diamond return in the South hand, lead a spade towards the Ace and return the Jack. If West wins the trick, he is thrown in. If East wins then he must return a Diamond to avoid giving you a ruff and discard. West can ruff but he is thrown in and must still give you the all-important ruff and discard. If East returns a spade after taking his **Queen of clubs** you win with the Ace, take a diamond trick and play a spade.

The moral of this story is always look for a better line of play than taking every finesse in sight. Also note how much information a two suited overcall gives to your opponents! (Hence the phrase "committing Michaels" Ed).

A great article by **Geoff Davies** – thank you to him and we will be delighted to receive similar (or dissimilar) pieces from all (or any) of our readers.