



SOMERSET CONTRACT BRIDGE ASSOCIATION



Spring Newsletter

Bridge Player Lockdown Survey

The Somerset Contract Bridge Association Committee would very much like to know the views of its members. We endeavour to provide bridge opportunities for all our members and would like your feedback on what we are presently offering and what we might provide in the coming months. If you could spare five minutes to complete this survey online that would be very helpful.

Please click [here](#) to proceed to the survey which is completely anonymous.

There is also the opportunity to view a breakdown of previous responses which gives participants an insight into how other players view the issues being discussed.

Chairman's Blog from Tony Russ

As we approach the anniversary of our first online game on March 30th the future looks brighter than it has for some time owing to the roll out of the vaccine and we can look forward with more optimism to a return to real rather than virtual bridge. Or should I say real as well as virtual? I do believe that the bridge world has been totally transformed by the lockdown and the amazing way in which online bridge has taken off.

Lockdown forced a huge proportion of our members into online bridge. We have no indications that this will change as lockdown eases. How and where Bridge is played has changed forever.

I recently hosted a ZOOM meeting with representatives of our clubs to discuss if and how clubs were planning for the resumption of normal club activity. Views were expressed and ideas exchanged but I think it fair to say that all were agreed that the new normal would not look the same as the old order.

I believe that the successful bridge clubs of the future will marry the social benefits of regular club meetings to the obvious opportunities to add extra sessions of playing and importantly, teaching using any of the online platforms that are now available. The successful bridge club of the future will have a mixed programme offering games and teaching for different groups at different times of the week.

Our virtual clubs have been very well supported none more so than those clubs that have been formed from an online merger of two (Crewkerne & Ilminster and Castle Cary & Sherborne) or three (Cheddar, Wedmore and Winscombe known collectively as Axe) and this may well be a model for the future with smaller clubs combining for at least the online part of their programme. I know that the Axe group is already in the early stages of planning for life After Covid.

The meeting concluded with my expressed hope that clubs would set about making a plan for the end of lockdown. I have no doubt that table numbers will be reduced when clubs re-open as members may be reluctant to return for a variety of reasons, some will have got out of the habit and others will prefer online bridge to travelling to a cold village hall on a December evening. All our clubs play in community facilities and table numbers must remain at a level to support this not insignificant cost. We are all in this together and the resources of the SCBA will be available to help those clubs who have made a plan and need support in putting it into action. As a county we are conducting a survey to gather the views of our members and these results will be published later.

Finally, may I thank everybody who supported the Michael Coda Cup and helped to raise over £3350 for the Clik Sargent charity. Thank you so much for your generosity.

Upcoming Events

28th March **Free 5 High tournament**

A gentle introduction to tournaments for those with an NGS rating of 5 or lower, this is a perfect first game for those who have not dipped their toes into Somerset games or who have just started playing at a virtual club. Even if you have not tried online bridge before this is an opportunity to acquaint yourself with the workings of a competition. You will need a partner to play but contact secretaryscba7@gmail.com if you would like help finding a partner. There will be experienced players on hand to help and advise on the whole process including bids and leads. 12 boards will be played at 10 minutes a board and there will be no charge for entrants.

Commences at 2pm on BBO

20th March Interclub Teams of Eight £10 per team through your local club.

25th April **Blue pointed** Swiss Pairs 6 x 7 board matches starting at 1pm on RealBridge Cost £5 per player. Entries can be made here:

https://www.bridgewebs.com/cgi-bin/bwx/bw.cgi?club=somerset&pid=display_page39

In addition Lockdown League 8 will commence the third week in March so get in touch with scbachair@icloud.com if you have a team that has not entered yet – always fun and a chance to meet some new friends from different clubs.

The County League will also recommence in March – with 31 teams over 4 divisions this has been a most enjoyable competition over the winter and should prove so again.

Plaudits to **Taunton RS** for winning Division 1, **Wells GD** for topping Division 2, **Yeovil BC** for winning Division 3 and **Winscombe CP** for winning Division 4.

BBO will continue hosting Somerset games on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday (Swiss Pairs) and Fridays (IMPs) at 1pm. Cost is a mere £3 per player and registration can be completed on line after 11am until the games commence.

Western League news

After a fairly sticky start to the season, things appear to have settled down. The second round matches were played on 20 February and all went off without a hitch. Teams for the third round matches, on the 13 March, have been picked. We should be sending out selections for the final round of matches, to be played on 17 April, before the end of this month. You can find out everything about the Western League on the [SCBA website](#). If you were one of the unfortunates who had an unpleasant experience with RealBridge early on, I can reassure you that the platform has improved tremendously and is very stable now.

The format of the Western League for the year 2021-2022 has not been decided. This year was a huge change due to the use of online bridge, and the ability to provide more players with an opportunity to represent Somerset. We are due to have discussions about next year's format once the current season finishes. There's already been some debate about what form it should take. I would like to hear from anyone who has a view about the structure of the Western League, to help with Somerset's input to next year's event. You don't have to have played in the Western League to express a view. Should we continue online, or use that only as a fallback? As many teams as possible, or limited to the traditional teams of eight or four? Length of matches, and number of matches per year? And anything else that you can think of.

We have had one attempt to set up a friendly match with Manchester county. Unfortunately, it clashed with a local event, and Adam and I are now trying to come up with an alternative date. It seems unlikely to be scheduled before the end of April. Thank you to all of you who responded to my request for availability, which allowed us to cancel the match rapidly. I was glad to find that I'm not the only person in the county who finds the idea of bridge at 10:00 disconcerting!

Andy Ridgers (Chairman of Selectors)

Fifty one Tricks in Four hands

East/West had a memorable run of hands in the Axe Virtual Bridge Club Monday night session on February 8th when they were dealt four successive slams. One pair

even made 51 tricks over the four hands losing only one trick to the ace of trumps on the 4th board! On the way, they bid and made three of the four possible slams. No pair bid all 4 slams.

Board 9

W

♠ AKQ
♥ AQJ7
♦ KQJ2
♣ K6

E

♠ J752
♥ K86
♦ A63
♣ A107

This was an easily bid grand slam. As West you are holding a balanced 25 points when partner opens a weak no trump. Since an immediate 4NT would be quantitative, an initial range enquiry (2 spades in my case) reveals a minimum opener but more importantly sets up 4NT now to be Blackwood rather than a quantitative raise. The response shows 2 aces and 5NT reveals 1 king so you know without any doubt that you have all 13 tricks. Despite this, the grand slam was only bid at 7 out of the 10 tables!

Board 10

W

♠ AQ4
♥ AK752
♦ 1094
♣ Q5

E

♠ K7652
♥ J9
♦ 3
♣ AK1063

This was a difficult to bid 6 spade contract which was missed by everyone. Playing 5 card majors, however, which rapidly locates the 5-3 spade fit, the slam may have been reached via the Jacoby 2NT convention (which shows a game going hand in opener's major) since it allows opener to show a singleton or a void on their rebid.

After East opens 1 spade and West bids 2NT Jacoby, then 3D from East shows a singleton or a void in diamonds. West should now realise that, with no wasted values in diamonds, they are effectively playing with a 30 point pack of which they hold between them probably 27+ points and a small slam is a strong possibility.

Computer simulations where West's hand is fixed and East's hands are those which would open 1 spade and rebid 3D over a Jacoby 2NT suggest that 6 spades can be made on 80% of such hands. (This is allowing opening bids on rule of 20 hands with

at least 10 high card points.) I find this result remarkable but it was obtained from 40 deals, 32 of which were slams. A slam is certainly a better than 50% chance and this is without checking for aces. With 2 losers in clubs, West should temporise with 3 hearts. When East cuebids 4 clubs then West can use RKCB to confirm that East has 2 key cards and then bid the slam. In reality, our lucky pair played in 4 spades but made +3 when a club was led allowing them to avoid the diamond loser.

Board 11

W	E
♠ J8	♠ AQ9
♥ K642	♥ A1093
♦ Q732	♦ AK
♣ AQ10	♣ KJ64

This was an easier slam to bid with East holding a balanced 21 points when West opened 1NT. Finding partner was minimum, many Easts subsided in 6 NT which fails on good defence since the king of spades is offside and you have an unavoidable heart loser. The two pairs who decided to play in their 4-4 heart fit were rewarded when they were allowed to make 7. Both declarers led trumps towards the ace but played the nine when North failed to split their honours holding QJ8. This partial safety play against losing 2 heart tricks when North holds QJxx actually yields an overtrick in this instance. Note, however, that if you lose a trick to the queen or jack with South then you must play the king of hearts next time. This will reveal if South is now void and allow a marked finesse against the remaining honour with North. If both opponents follow then the suit has split 3-2 and the ace will take the remaining card. Playing this way only loses two tricks when South holds QJxx. Personally, I would have laid down the king of hearts and then led towards the ace, playing it if an honour appeared or putting in the nine otherwise. This also guards against losing 2 hearts to QJxx with North but is conceptually easier for me.

Board 12

W	E
♠ Q4	♠ AK10985
♥ 753	♥ AK
♦ KJ1084	♦ Q9532
♣ QJ2	♣

This was another distributional hand with only 25 high card points between the two hands but a 10 card diamond fit and an 8 card spade fit easily yielded 12 tricks in

diamonds. Our lucky pair were the only pair to bid the diamond slam. With West as opener, the actual bidding proceeded pass – 1S – 2D – 4C(splinter) – 4D – 6D.

Playing pairs, there is, however, an argument to be made for investigating the possibility of a spade slam. (Indeed, at the only other table to bid a slam, the bidding proceeded pass – 1S – 2D – 6S!) Playing 5 card majors we don't expect partner to have 3 spades but there is a subtle way of finding out if they have 2. By cue bidding 4H over 4D we give partner the chance to bid 4S showing a control in spades. When they don't do this but simply bid 5D we can infer that they don't have a singleton or void in spades and hence must have 2. You might, therefore, decide to gamble 6 spades. This should fail on this particular deal, however, since the hand on lead can lead their singleton diamond to partner's ace and ruff the return. In the event this did not happen. The ace of clubs was led and 6 spades bid and made was the top score.

To the best of my knowledge, in my 60+ years of playing bridge, I have never before seen 51 tricks taken in 4 hands by the same pair.

Thank you to **Geoff Davies** for another great article and now the final word goes to another one of our multi talented players:

BRIDGE PLAY.....by Norman Eve

Playing the game of bridge on-line,
Is necessary at this point in time,
With Covid lockdown restrictions in place,
Players are unable to meet face to face,
Bridge tables are sadly stored away,
For use, one hopes, when comes the day
That the Covid virus is finally beat,
And bridge at the table becomes the treat
That players everywhere anticipate,
After a long and extended wait,
But bridge online may be here to stay,
As the most suitable and convenient way,
For players who find travel hard,
And prefer to play in their own back yard,
Played in the comfort of one's home,
The online game may be best for some.
Many, of course, see the bridge table,
As the means which does enable
Mixing socially with friends once more,
Pleasurable experiences in store,
So the future for bridge looks extremely bright ,
With both table and online bridge in sight!