

To Venture or not to Venture? That is the Question.

With apologies to the Bard!

How tough a task is this,
That I should spend my morn
Wrapp'd round a screen that's flat
Instead of feed the cat?



Miaow Miaow.....I'm hungry!!!!

Why challenge me so hard
To answer in this space?
'Tis both a tad bizarre
And yes - a Bridge too far.

When I told your Management and Tournament Committees that I would try to explain our different types of “starter” events, I did not realise it would throw up so many questions and clarify some misconceptions, mine included. For me it has been a useful exercise. It has made me realise there are many possible reasons why you play in a less combative situation than a full “all guns blazing” event. After much research, (yielding, it has to be said, little of true guidance), and the blessing of all the Lawmakers in the SCCBA, here is your definitive guide to Welcome, Venture and Basic Pairs.

Welcome, as the name suggests, is for those definitely at the start of their Bridge career. This will be a gentle competition, designed to get you out there and see how you do. You will be playing fewer hands than in a normal competition - somewhere between 16 and 20 as opposed to a normal 24 to 27. This enables you to have more thinking time for both the bidding and the play. You may play with your equally inexperienced partner or you may play with someone of greater experience. As regards systems and conventions, the primary object is to encourage players to use what they have been taught within the rules of EBU level 2*. Please tell your Director on the day if you are using a system other than Standard English. He or she will be happy to explain your bidding to the opponents. This way everyone around the table can have an equal understanding of the bidding. Help will be on hand from the Organiser and / or Table Monitor and you are encouraged to ask for it. It's designed as a live coaching session (supervised play) but in a competitive setting. At the end, time permitting, there will be a question and answer session for you to ask about how the bidding and play could or should have gone. This event will have no pressure on its participants and is meant to be for you to not only enjoy but also to learn. Hands will be pre-selected for tuition purposes. Master Points are not awarded.

***This has provoked heated debate in the Tournament Committee. PLEASE read the accompanying article “Level 2 and its use in Basic Bridge Systems”. Makes interesting reading!**

Venture Pairs are slightly more advanced and here we actively encourage you to bring along your mentor or teacher to partner you. So this will be ideal for those out of their 1st year classes or, for older generations getting the youngsters on board. You may also find that you and your new partner have progressed well in the classroom and want to have a try-out around the County without becoming threatened by some of the bigger fish out there. As with Welcome Pairs, you may play whatever system you have been taught. Hands will be between 20 and 24, reflecting the slightly faster speed at which we hope you will have started to think and play. Again, there will be formal time for questions and answers. The County will aim to provide an expert to lead the discussion after the event to encourage you to ask about hands** that you found difficult. This event can be stratified and Master Points awarded accordingly.

In **Basic** Pairs we move up a level. You may play a variety of standard Systems, and you may play some Conventions. In this country our base system is Acol (4 card Majors and a weak No Trump). Much of the rest of the world plays a 5 card Major, strong no-trump system, and a good number also play a “strong Club” system. All of these systems are permitted, but your level of Conventions must not exceed those published under EBU Level 2. We have prepared a specific list which you can download from our web-site or you can ask for it to be emailed to you. In Basic Bridge we allow all-comers to play. So here you will find a whole range of experience of players. Some of you have played for a very long time but do not wish to dip your toes into the Deepest Ocean of tournament familiar with the play. Whilst you will be movements from your Club duplicate sessions, here we do not allow any complex systems that put so many people off. It’s a wonderful way of playing against your peers and spreading your wings county wide but in a relaxed atmosphere. Intentional psyching will be discouraged. Normal Master Points to an appropriate scale are awarded and the event can be stratified.



No Sharks Allowed at This Table!

**In a recent National Teams event, I was playing against a Bermuda Bowl semi-finalist from 2015. For the uninitiated this is the World Cup of Bridge. He had a particularly difficult hand in which he held 8 rather good looking Clubs and, crucially, 2 Spades, the King and Jack. The spade suit had been twice bid by his partner. In their system she was highly likely to have therefore shown a minimum of 6 of them. After a protracted time thinking of the best thing to do, in the end he decided to support his partner and they played in 4 Spades. As he put his hand down in dummy, he said “I really am not sure if my spades will be working well for you or not” and shrugged his shoulders. At the other table, a several times Lady World Champion was faced with the same cards and the same dilemma. She opted for a 5 Clubs contract. It mattered not one jot as both contracts went 1 off for a level score. The point of this story is that even the best players in the world do not agree nor do they find it always clear or easy to reach a decision.

Whatever your bridge level, perceived or actual, there will be a good game for you at County level and we will be there to help you along the way.

Ros Wolfarth
SCCBA Tournament Manager

Ouch! Too much thinking



my brain’s hurting.