

CLUB FOCUS

Volume III, Issue I

February 2010



ENGLISH BRIDGE UNION

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Editorial

Welcome to our penultimate Club Focus. Our next edition (out third week of April) will be our last Club Focus in the current form as our future focus will be towards club managers and secretaries, rather than the club player. English Bridge will pick up the baton for our club player, but please do make sure you read our last and special bumper edition in April. In the next edition, our editorial will be about Universal Membership and the new EBU, so we thought we'd take this opportunity to briefly reminisce about past editions of Club Focus.

Club Focus was first established in January 2008 with only four pages, but since then we have had thirteen more issues and lots of articles from our many read-

ers, normally bringing them to five or six pages. There have been some great highlights, including our Limerick Competition and our Down Our Club, but one particular highlight has always been our Bridge Tails with many a cat, one goat and one turkey. We've included a picture below of Treacle the cat who received the most responses from cat lovers.

Thank you to everyone who has helped, proof read, written an article, sent us photos and been a part of all the many Club Focus newsletters that we've produced. We look forward to receiving your limericks, bridge tails and more for our last edition, and please send us your items by 29 March 2010.

Thank you for being a part of the Club Focus world.

Matt Betts and Krys Kazmierczak



Treacle the cat becomes annoyed by the Ace of Diamonds and pretends it doesn't exist. (May 2008)

Limerick Competition

Congratulations to Richard Sills from Oxford, the winner of the Gloucestershire-themed Limerick competition we set in the Christmas issue of *Club Focus*. Richard put together the following entertaining lines:

*A very deaf lady from Stroud
Whose voice was exceedingly loud
Would announce what she'd scored
On every board
To an avidly listening crowd.
(Is there one in every club??)*

Richard's prize, a copy of *The Bridge Player's Supper Book* by Nicola Cox, will be on its way to him shortly. Many thanks to him and everyone else who sent in entries for the competition. Limericks for our next competition must have a Bridge theme and include the name of a place in the (Bridge) County of Hampshire and Isle of Wight. Why not put your rhyming skills into practice with such wonderful place names as Badger, Aldershot, Cowes, Basingstoke, Fleet and Shanklin. Entries should be in to the address on page five by 29 March 2010. The winner will receive a copy of *Moments of Truth at the Bridge Table*, by R. Jayaram

*Visit the EBU Shop (www.ebu.co.uk/shop) for many useful bridge books!

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Beginner's Pluck

I have previously written in Club Focus about how I came to take up bridge three years ago, the fun I have had taking lessons and how I came to start my own Mini Bridge After-School Club at a local state primary school. In the meantime I have also been trying to improve my own bidding and play so that I can hold my own at the local bridge club.

I am not sure that many long-standing players realise how daunting it can be for beginners to start playing in club duplicate sessions and how important it is to be welcoming and to make allowances for small lapses and hesitations. It has been easier for me than most, perhaps, because I have my own supply of competent partners who are prepared to tolerate me while I learn. I think it is always helpful to know that if something went wrong it was my fault!

First, I have dragged my Father, Keith, out of retirement. Having been referred to as "The Devil Incarnate" at a Whist Drive in 1947, he has had a few years since then to fine-tune his card-playing ability and was runner-up in the County Pairs in the year I was born. I have learnt a lot from our post-session-post-mortems and he (almost) never gets cross about my mistakes.

Down Our Club

The Thorpe Bay Bridge Club is situated in a listed building located to the east of Southend on Sea. In 1976 a number of keen bridge players clubbed together to buy the building that had been a school house and which had been part of the historic Trinity Church, which is next door. The result is that the members actually own the delightful building, and annual membership is just £10 a year whilst table money (which includes tea or coffee) is just £1-50 per session. The building is kept in a high state of repair and can seat as many as twenty tables in comfort. We have a membership of over 200.

The club runs seven duplicate sessions each week. Evening sessions are from Monday to Thursday, with an afternoon session on Fridays for members and visitors. About a year ago we started an afternoon session on Mondays where you could come along and be guaranteed a partner. It was intended to be for players who were not very experienced and need not be members of the club. They could ask more experienced players any questions they might have on the bidding or the play, and fewer boards were played in a session. This has proved very popular. In addition we have now started a session

Second, I have lured a former work colleague and experienced bridge player from North London to play with me. I hope that Adam and I have been friends for too long to fall out over bridge.

As you can see, I am blessed with my partners. I hope you can all say the same! But what about the other people who have been through the teaching programme at the bridge club?

I have to say that our teacher, Giorgio, along with the management and committee of the club have put a great deal of thought and effort into this. There are regular "Novice Evenings" and several supervised play sessions every week. In addition to this there is the club's "Mentoring Programme" of which I cannot speak too highly. Under the mentoring programme, four or five of the club's more experienced players have nobly agreed to play with the beginners at the Thursday evening simple systems session. The first time that I played with a mentor on a Thursday evening I was so terrified that my jaw locked solid and my hands shook uncontrollably so that I could neither speak nor pick up my bidding cards for the first hour of the session. We came top! I was so pleased that I spent the whole of the next day skipping every-

where and singing until my children told me to be quiet and behave myself!

I would like to thank Robert, Mike and Ben for mentoring me and also the other mentors who I haven't had the opportunity to partner yet. Mike and I now play together regularly and he has introduced me to all sorts of weird and wonderful conventions. I am allowed to go wrong once and once only with each new convention - twice with the forcing pass!

Obviously I've had a few ups and downs in my bridge career to date. But fortunately as fast as I lose my EBU pens another one seems to arrive in the post.

One thing that concerns me as I look around the club is the question of who will there be for me to play duplicate bridge with in 30 years time? May I urge you all to be nice to your beginners and welcoming to new members. The future of your club and of the game may depend on it.

Elizabeth Bingham

Bridge Tales

Some years ago, in the days when there were still such things, I took part in a heat of the Ranked Masters being held at one of the country's prime universities. My partner and I sat down against a pair of students who had obviously just formed a scratch partnership. South appeared to have been playing for some years, while North was a polite but slightly inscrutable young overseas student.

On the very first board North opened one spade. His partner carefully put down the stop card as he raised to three spades. This was passed out, and North proceeded to make eleven tricks. At that point South gently enquired of his partner why he had not bid on to game, to which a puzzled North replied "Well, you told me to stop!"

Krys Kazmierczak

on Wednesday afternoons which is meant for improvers. There is a period of tuition on bidding or play and this is followed by a short duplicate session. Absolute beginners can contact the club about lessons, and one of our members offers tuition in small groups.

The Ladies Social committee also runs half a dozen teas or dinners in the course of the year. These are sessions of rubber bridge (Chicago style) and there are modest prizes and raffles. They are very popular and usually attract 14 or 15 tables.

It can be seen that the club offers a great deal to its members and is thriving. New members are always welcome as are occasional visitors to the town.

Allan Greenstein (Chairman)



Bidding Tools: Checkback

We have looked at many ways of locating suit fits after opening 1NT. In this issue we look at doing so after a 1NT rebid. If you hold a balanced hand outside of your opening no-trump range (15-19 points, assuming you play the Weak No-trump), you would open a suit and normally rebid no-trumps next time round. By then, most of the time, if you haven't already identified a major-suit fit, you probably haven't got one! But it's not always the case...

Consider the sequence 1♣ - 1♥ - 1NT. You as responder hold ♠742 ♥AQ1043 ♦A6 ♣1093. You have the values for game, but which one? Partner could have three hearts. What do you bid next? 2♥ would be a sign-off, but would 3♥ be invitational or forcing?

Now suppose you hold ♠Q742 ♥A1043 ♦A6 ♣1093. Might opener hold four spades? If you play 'Standard English', then this sequence categorically denies a four-card spade suit, but in other systems, including many five-card major systems, opener may yet have four. So how do you find out? A 2♠ bid, or even 3♠, would surely imply a five-card heart suit.

But before we worry about finding a fit, let's just check what strength partner is showing. In Standard English, the 1NT rebid shows 15-16 HCP (while 2NT and 3NT would show 17-18 and 19 respectively). Many players choose to vary this so that 1NT shows 15-17, 2NT 18-19, releasing the 3NT rebid to show an unusual hand (usually a long running minor suit). Other partnerships agree a 'wide-ranging' 1NT rebid showing 12-16 points (and possibly a not-quite-balanced hand). And let's not forget, of course, all those 'Strong No-trumpers', for whom the 1NT rebid shows a weak balanced hand, somewhere in the range 11-15 HCP.

It doesn't really matter which of these you play, but let's assume for this article that the 1NT rebid does not necessarily deny four cards in an unbid major, and shows 15-17 HCP. The following can be tailored to whatever range you do play:

Checkback

Sometimes called 'Checkback Stayman', a 2♣ rebid by responder kills two birds with one stone, asking opener about both his strength and shape.

In reply opener bids a major suit in which he has undisclosed length (three-card support for responder's suit; four cards in an unbid suit; or five cards in his own suit). He bids the suit at the two level if minimum (2♦ if he has no major suit to show), or at the three level if maximum (2NT if no suit):

e.g. after the sequence 1♣ - 1♥ - 1NT - 2♣, opener replies:

- 2♦ = minimum (15 or poor 16 HCP) without three hearts or four spades
- 2♥ = minimum with three hearts (may also have four spades)
- 2♠ = minimum without three hearts but with four spades
- 2NT = maximum (good 16 or 17) without three hearts or four spades
- 3♥ = maximum with three hearts (may also have four spades)
- 3♠ = maximum without three hearts but with four spades

After 1♣ - 1♠ - 1NT - 2♣, responses are similar, except that heart bids show four cards, and spade bids show three cards. After 1♥ - 1♠ - 1NT - 2♣, a heart bid would show a 5-card suit.

Note that, just as in normal Stayman, a heart response does not deny spades, but a spade response does deny hearts. However, if you prefer, there are many variations on the responses that you could agree to suit your partnership, but I suggest that you stick with the above to begin with.

When to use Checkback

You need to have at least the values to invite game (c. 8-9 HCP opposite a 15-17 rebid), and some interest yet in playing in a major suit, i.e. (at least) one of the following:

- a. Five cards in the (major) suit you first bid,
- b. Four cards in an unbid major that your partner has not denied,
- c. Three-card support for the major that partner opened.

If you have 8-9 HCP with no further interest in the majors, you can simply invite game by bidding 2NT.

Some examples:
partner opens 1♣, and after your response bids 1NT.

A: ♠742 ♥AQ1043 ♦A6 ♣1093

You have enough for game. Respond 1♥ and rebid 2♣ after partner's 1NT. If partner then bids 2♥ or 3♥, you can confidently bid 4. After any other reply, bid 3NT

B: ♠Q87 ♥AQ1042 ♦1093 ♣94

You are a bit weaker, but you can still explore with 2♣. If partner bids 2♥, you should just pass; 3♥, you can raise to 4. 2♦ or 2♠, you should sign off in 2NT; after 2NT or 3♠, you should bid 3NT.

C: ♠QJ107 ♥AQ104 ♦K6 ♣1093

Respond 1♥ and rebid 2♣ after partner's 1NT. If partner replies with a spade bid, raise to 4♠; if 2D or 2NT (denying 4 spades), then bid 3NT. If he replies in hearts (showing three-card support, but not denying four spades), you may yet have a spade fit, so you should bid spades yourself, just to check.

D: ♠1087 ♥A1074 ♦3 ♣Q9764

When partner rebids 1NT after your 1♥ response, you may feel that you'd rather play in clubs. But you can't bid 2♣ if you are playing Checkback, so you'll just have to pass!

E: partner opens 1♥, and after your 1♠ response bids 1NT.

♠K10742 ♥AQ4 ♦32 ♣J94

Although you have a balanced hand, you might have an 8-card fit in either one of the majors. Rebid 2♣. If partner replies with either of the majors, raise to four. Otherwise bid 3NT.

Checkback after a 2NT rebid

A similar system can be used after a 2NT rebid by opener, whether this is after a two-level response, or as a jump rebid. 3♣ again asks for undisclosed length, but this time there's no room to enquire about strength, so I assume that you play a narrow point range for the bid!

e.g. after 1♥ - 2♦ - 2NT - 3♣, opener rebids 3♥ with a 5-card suit, or 3♠ with 4-4 in the majors. After 1♣ - 1♠ - 2NT - 3♣, opener replies 3♥ with a 4-card suit, 3♠ with 3-card support.

As always with any new convention, you should discuss and practise it thoroughly with your partner and make sure you put it on your convention card before using it at the club.

A Bridge Too Far

In 2008, I was lucky enough to be offered a flat on the Promenade des Anglais in Nice, in exchange for my house in Carlisle. A friend gave me an introduction to a French lady who lived near the docks, and who turned out to have an Italian husband who played bridge. Naturally, I asked if he would have a game with me. Now, the lady spoke fluent English, but her husband Enrico did not, so when she translated my request, he darted me a somewhat suspicious look. After all, I am by no means in the first flush of youth, and his wife had explained that he was a very good player. I thought I had better say that I had played for West Australian country teams in two national competitions, and he then graciously consented to play with me.

My directions were to take a taxi to numéro 8, Rue des Salles, go through a gate into a little alley, and up the stairs of the first house on the left. I found myself in a kind of hallway fitted with a bar where people of all ages were sitting drinking while waiting for the session to begin. One young lady seemed about to give birth at any moment.

Finding my partner Enrico, I went over our system with him, or at least I thought I did. I also learned that Clubs were Trèfles; Diamonds – Carreaux; Hearts – Coeurs; and Spades – Piques.

Thoroughly prepared for anything (?), we went into a room which held five tables. There was also another room with five

tables, and the paid director (non-playing) flitted from room to room.

Our opponents took their seats. Nearly everybody was exceedingly polite, acknowledging each new opponent with a friendly "Bonjour". Before play started, we put our table fees into a strong plastic envelope, together with our names and the equivalent of our EBU numbers. This was a good idea, as each envelope contained the exact amount, together with the names of those at the table. I could not give a number, obviously, but I was quite surprised to find that the other three only paid one euro, whereas my fee as a visitor was eight euros. (Together with my taxi fares, the afternoon cost me 36 pounds).

The boards were brought in, and three placed on each table. The other three players each took a board, sorted the cards into suits, and proceeded to make up the hands we were to play from the travellers provided.

It was then that I discovered that Kings were Rois, with a capital R at their corners, Queens were Dames (with a D) and Jacks were Valets (with a V). Not only that, but the Jacks reminded me of our Kings.

Play began at 2pm and went on until 6.30pm. (I expect the presence of a bar had something to do with the slowness of the changes.) Most of the players played American Standard, so I had no qualms.

Unfortunately, our system started to unravel early. On the second hand, I held six Diamonds to the nine, the bare Valet of Coeurs and three rags each of Piques and Trèfles. My partner opened 1NT. We had agreed – I thought – to transfer in the red suits, and I decided that anything I bid would be misleading. If I bid 2D, Enrico would bid 2H. Then I could bid 3D, and he would think I was 5-5 in both suits. No, better to pass and hope for the best. When my hand went down, Enrico gave a wry smile. Everyone else was in Diamonds. Apparently the Stayman I thought I had established, is not used in Nice – a bid of two Trèfles over partner's 1NT is a command to transfer to Carreaux.

When twice I put a Valet on a Dame, thinking it was a Roi, and thus allowing opponents to make a game contract they should not have made, Enrico's wry smile was accompanied by a Gallic shrug of the shoulders. "N'importe", he said gallantly, but our 48% result obviously grieved him.

For me, the experience was worth the pain, but Enrico was no doubt glad that I did not ask him to play with me again.

Peggy Millidge, Carlisle

NOTICE

Please note that the Great Northern Swiss Pairs is taking place on 2/3 October at the Hilton Hotel, Leeds. Entries will be to the Yorkshire Contract Bridge Association. Details will follow on the EBU website soon.

Life's Trilogy

Pessimism

We have happy dreams.....
....but wake up to a harsh reality

We have high hopes.....
....but nearly all turn to dust

We have wonderful kids.....
....but they become rebellious youths

We bid an excellent Grand Slam.....
....but trumps always break badly

Optimism

We have happy dreams.....
....and wake up to a beautiful day

We have high hopes.....
....and get a thrill when some are realised

We have wonderful kids.....
....and they exceed our expectations

We bid an excellent Grand Slam.....
....and all the finesses work

Realism

We have happy dreams.....
....and wake up to an uncertain future

We have high hopes.....
....and sometimes get lucky

We have wonderful kids....
....and they occasionally surprise us

We bid an excellent Grand Slam....
....but so does everyone else

Paul Littlewood



Haikus

Reader Pyers Pennant wrote in to suggest that haikus might make an entertaining alternative to limericks. He continued: As you probably know, a haiku is a classical and rather sensitive Japanese poetic style, three lines containing respectively five, seven and five syllables. Modern Western imitations may ignore the delicacy and go for the metre. Here are two examples:

*I opened one Heart
Air thick with concentration
Snow falling outside.*

*He bid six no trumps
I doubled, led a Diamond
Plus fourteen hundred!*

Have you got a Haiku you can send us?
Send to the usual address.

The Tangerine Book

The Laws and Ethics Committee has produced a simplified version of the Orange Book which it hopes will be more readily accessible to members. The Tangerine Book has some useful information about how to behave at the table and what to do when things go wrong. The main part is a straightforward list of what can be played at the various competition levels 2, 3 and 4. For most club and tournament players this will be all they ever need.

There is also an appendix giving more details of what is permitted at each level. For those who need a complete reference work the Orange Book is still available.

The new Tangerine Book runs to just 14 pages with the appendix being 10 pages. It is available in electronic form from the EBU website in the Laws and Ethics section.

John Pain

Training

Club Director Training courses*

New concessions for affiliated clubs

Under the Universal Membership scheme affiliated clubs are invited to send a second club member to a TD course FREE OF CHARGE where the club sends a full paying member to any of the club TD

courses. The offer is on a 'like for like' basis – so when a club books a place (from 1 to 4 courses) it receives the equivalent free for another member of the same club. To take advantage of the scheme both the paying member and the free member must be booked at the same time and the booking must be made by the registered secretary of the club. The scheme applies to all course series that commence after April 1st 2010 (that is the date of the essentials course).

Club Teacher Training Courses*

New courses for affiliated clubs

Advance Notice

Under the Universal Membership scheme affiliated clubs are invited to nominate one club member in any two-year period to be trained as a Club Teacher. The course content will include how to teach bridge, what to teach and a short teaching practice.

These courses which will be FREE OF CHARGE may only be booked by the registered secretary of the affiliated club. Watch for details of these courses which will be held regionally probably starting in May / June 2010.

***All above are subject to availability and conditions will apply.**

Forthcoming EBU Events

Ranked Masters Pairs, Daventry, 6 - 7 March 2010
Baker Tilly Easter Festival, Buxton, 2 - 4 April 2010
Baker Tilly Easter Festival, London, 2 - 5 April 2010

For more information and future events, please email comps@ebu.co.uk or see the EBU website.



Summertown BC raffled this cake for Children in Need.

Contact us

We hope you have enjoyed reading this issue of Club Focus. Are you interested in writing for the next and last newsletter?

If you would like to contact us or send us your articles, feedback or comments, please email: clubfocus@ebu.co.uk or post to: **Club Focus, English Bridge Union, Broadfields, Aylesbury, HP19 8AZ.** Deadline for submissions is 29 March 2010. **Next edition - April 2010**



Gill Cowan is frustrated as she has missed 7 duplicate sessions so far (in East Sussex) and has decided to play a hand in the snow on her own!

Information contained in this edition is correct at time of going to press. Production schedules mean that entries listed or reviewed may change between going to press and publication.

 If this newsletter is printed, please don't forget to recycle it afterwards.