

Mr Bridge
AT
THEOBALDS
PARK



25-27 January

Improvers*

Take Out Doubles
Ned Paul

29 Feb-2 March

Losing Trick Count

11-13 April

Thinking Defence
Alex Davoud

5-7 September

Overcalls

Alex Davoud

3-5 October

Leads and Defence
Alison Nicolson

17-19 October

Sacrificing
Ned Paul

14-16 November

Signals and Discards
Alan Lamb

**Improvers' Weekends are aimed at the novice player and/or those picking up the game after a long break.*

£199

per person
full board

No Single
Supplement

PROGRAMME

This is the format for all duplicate weekends and rarely varies.

FRIDAY

1500 **Mr Bridge**
Welcome Desk open
Afternoon Tea

1745 to 1830
Welcome drinks
reception

1830 to 2000
DINNER

2015 **BRIDGE**
SESSION 1
DUPLICATE PAIRS

SATURDAY

0800 to 0930
BREAKFAST

1000 to 1230
SEMINAR &
SUPERVISED PLAY
of SET HANDS 1
(tea & coffee at 1100)

1230 to 1330
COLD BUFFET
LUNCH

1400 to 1645
BRIDGE
SESSION 2
TEAMS of FOUR

1815 to 2000
DINNER

2015 **BRIDGE**
SESSION 3
DUPLICATE PAIRS

SUNDAY

0800 to 0930
BREAKFAST

1000 to 1230
SEMINAR &
SUPERVISED PLAY
of SET HANDS 2
(tea & coffee at 1100)

1230 to 1400
CARVERY LUNCH

1400 to 1645
BRIDGE
SESSION 4
DUPLICATE PAIRS

Mr Bridge

AT THEOBALDS PARK

Bulls Cross Ride, Cheshunt, Hertfordshire, EN7 5HW

- ◆ Full-board Friday to Sunday
- ◆ All rooms with en-suite facilities
- ◆ No single supplement
- ◆ Most bedrooms non-smoking
- ◆ Use of jacuzzi, sauna and fitness suite
- ◆ Bidding quiz and two seminars
- ◆ The bridge room, the guest accommodation and the restaurant are all located in a modern annexe

BOOKING FORM

Please book me for places,

Single Double Twin

for the Theobalds Park weekend(s) of

Mr/Mrs/Miss

Address.....

Postcode ☎

Special requirements (these cannot be guaranteed, but we will do our best to oblige)

Please give the name(s) of all those covered by this booking

Please send a non-returnable deposit of £50 per person per place by cheque, payable to Mr Bridge. An invoice will be sent with your booking confirmation. On receipt of your final payment, 28 days before the event, a programme and full details will be sent together with a map. Cancellations are not refundable. Should you require insurance, you should contact your own insurance broker.

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Expiry: CVV..... Issue No.....

(CVV is the last 3 numbers on the signature strip)

Mr Bridge, Ryden Grange, Bisley, Surrey GU21 2TH

☎ 01483 489961 Fax 01483 797302

e-mail: leanora@mrbridge.co.uk

website: www.holidaybridge.com

Mr Bridge

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- ◆ All rooms with en-suite facilities
- ◆ No single supplement
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- ◆ Bidding quiz & two seminars (on duplicate weekends only)

BOOKING FORM

Please book me for places,

Single Double

at Milton Hill House weekend(s) of

.....

Mr/Mrs/Miss

Address.....

.....

Postcode

☎

Special requirements (these cannot be guaranteed, but we will do our best to oblige)

.....

Please give the name(s) of all those covered by this booking

.....

Please send a non-returnable deposit of £50 per person per place by cheque, payable to Mr Bridge. An invoice will be sent with your booking confirmation. On receipt of your final payment, 28 days before the event, a programme and full details will be sent together with a map. Cancellations are not refundable. Should you require insurance, you should contact your own insurance broker.

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COLD BUFFET LUNCH
- 1400 to 1645
BRIDGE SESSION 2
TEAMS of FOUR
- 1815 to 2000
DINNER
- 2015 **BRIDGE SESSION 3**
DUPLICATE PAIRS

SUNDAY

- 0800 to 0930
BREAKFAST
- 1000 to 1230
SEMINAR & SUPERVISED PLAY of SET HANDS 2 (tea & coffee at 1100)
- 1230 to 1400
CARVERY LUNCH
- 1400 to 1645
BRIDGE SESSION 4
DUPLICATE PAIRS

Mr Bridge AT MILTON HILL HOUSE



9-11 May 2008 (£199)

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Chris Barrable

16-18 May (£199)

Leads and Defence
Alan Lamb

12-14 Sept (£199)

Further into the Auction
Derek Monk

19-21 Sept (£209)

Landy & Dealing with INT
Bernard Magee

26-28 Sept (£199)

Weak Twos
Chris Barrable

10-12 Oct (£209)

Signals & Discards
Bernard Magee

31 Oct-2 Nov (£199)

Stayman & Transfers
Improvers – Sandy Bell

7-9 Nov (£209)

Splinters & Cue-bids
Bernard Magee

28-30 Nov (£209)

Thinking Defence
Bernard Magee

No Single Supplement

Manor house rooms are available at a supplement.

The remaining bedrooms are housed in a block about 25 yards away from the main hotel reached via a covered walkway.



Where to Place a Board During Play

Q When I am the declarer, I like to move the card trays towards me to a position about six inches from the edge of the table. This leaves enough room to place the played cards between the boards and the edge of the table.

The other day, the opening card was led and I dragged the boards towards me. The lady on my right, sitting North, took the boards and placed them back in the centre of the table. I stated my wish to have the boards nearer to me thus making good space for the dummy hand but she insisted that the boards stay in the centre of the table. Not wishing to be unpleasant, I did nothing further. I suspect she was correct, albeit pedantic, but surely if the boards are to remain in the centre of the table then is it likely that dummy will be laid in a restricted area, especially if there is a long suit. I wonder what constitutes the centre of the table.

Bryan C. Stephens,
East Preston, West Sussex.

A Whatever the theory, in practice players often move the board around, and generally compromise. Some do it because they like dummy closer to be able to see it better. Some do it so they can reach dummy to play the cards, though of course they should not touch the cards.

However, while most players are tolerant, there is intolerance in the game and it is growing slightly. If someone demands it should be in the exact centre, then that is what the Law says, so I am afraid you should just accept it.

[Law 7a: When a board is to be played it is placed in the centre of the table until play is completed.]

Q Playing duplicate as declarer, I had won a round of hearts in dummy and asked for 'the queen please'. Dummy selected the queen of clubs instead of the queen of hearts. As soon as I realised, I explained that it was an error. I have two associated questions:

Is a card wrongly selected by dummy in this way deemed to have been played? Had I been more precise about the card that I wanted and dummy had then selected a card incorrectly, would this card be deemed to have been played? If not, what would happen if the next player had played a card before the correction could be made?
Derek Gittins, Farnham, Surrey.

A The Laws say that if dummy has won the previous trick, you call for the queen and dummy has the queen of the suit previously played, that is the card you have called for. In your case, the heart queen was called for.

There is a Law covering what to do when dummy plays the wrong card, so the Director should have read this out. Briefly, dummy changes the card to the correct card. Then the defenders may withdraw their cards without penalty, but these cards are unauthorised information to declarer.



Q I have just been reminded that, many years ago, we used to play a convention called the Mollo (or Comic?) No-trump.

As well as its usual meaning, a 1NT overcall could be on a weak hand with a 6-card suit. If doubled, one could simply escape into the long suit. If 1NT

was passed out, the penalty conceded was often cheaper than the value of the opponents' normal contract.

If partner wished to find out which type of hand one held, they bid 2♣. When the overcaller was 'comic', they bid their 'escape' suit or when genuine, 2NT (3NT if maximum).

I seem to remember both triumphs and disasters using this convention but invariably a lot of fun. However, I am told it is now 'illegal'. Do you agree?
Arthur Field, Chichester, West Sussex.

A Certainly not! You can check legality in the EBU Orange book, and 'Mollo' appears in the index.

In truth, the answer is more complex than that. First, you are confusing two conventions. The Gardener or Comic no-trump was, as you describe, either a weak hand with a long suit, or a normal 1NT overcall. The Mollo no-trump was always weak, so in effect 1NT said you had a weak jump overcall. This would fit well with playing Intermediate Jump overcalls.

Both conventions are legal at Level 4, so you can play them in events run by the EBU or WBU, and in most events run by Counties or Areas. Since clubs and their events are usually Level 3, you could not play them there.

If you want to play them in a club, check with the club: some clubs allow Level 4 agreements, especially clubs with more than one night: they usually allow Level 4 on some nights at least. ▶

David Stevenson answers all queries based on the facts supplied by the letter writer. Neither Mr Bridge nor David Stevenson has any way of knowing whether those facts are correct or complete.

Q At my club recently, I was East (dealer West, love all) and the hands were:

♠ Q 10 ♥ K J 8 4 ♦ K J 10 7 6 ♣ A 6	♠ A 6 5 3 ♥ Q 9 3 ♦ 8 ♣ K Q 10 8 4	<table style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">W</td></tr> <tr><td style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">S</td></tr> <tr><td style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">E</td></tr> </table>	N	W	S	E	♠ K J 7 2 ♥ A 10 6 5 2 ♦ 5 4 2 ♣ 2
N							
W							
S							
E							
♠ 9 8 4 ♥ 7 ♦ A Q 9 3 ♣ J 9 7 5 3							

West passed, North opened 1NT. I hesitated, went to get a card from the box, changed my mind and passed. After South passed, my partner West bid 2♣ (5-4 in the majors).

The Director was summoned, who ruled that partner had fielded my hesitation and should not bid. 1NT by North was played and made, the only 1NT contract played by N/S in the whole room. The usual bid was either 2♣ or 3♣ to E/W. We got a bottom. Yes I was in error, but did the punishment fit the crime?

Len Freeman, Kilmarnock.

A West must avoid taking any advantage from your hesitation, which provided him with the unauthorised information that you were close to a bid. This is just a bridge judgement. A good Director will poll some similar standard players to see what they would do. So long as at least three in ten of them would pass, it is reasonable to adjust it back to 1NT.



Q Last night, I played pairs at a local bridge club where two directors share the Director's duties. Neither of them ever produces the Laws of Duplicate Bridge book.

On this occasion, my LHO opened the bidding with 1♠. After my partner passed, my RHO put her fingers into the front section of her bidding box

and left them there whilst considering her next bid. This involved a transfer of her fingers to the rear section of the box followed by a suit bid.

I said nothing until play was completed and then said to the nice lady that what she had done was possibly illegal and would she mind if I called the Director. He was playing a hand at another table but eventually arrived. I described what had happened and invited his comments.

He said nothing to the lady and required us to continue without offering any comment. I quietly objected but he simply returned to his table.

At no time did I suggest a penalty because I was expecting the Director to inform my lady opponent that wandering from one section of the box to the other section is undesirable as it may give unwitting information to her partner, or mislead her opponents etc.

Perhaps you would comment.
Keith Barton, Uplyme, Devon.

A You did the right thing: you did not lecture your opponent, which is not your job; you merely reported the facts to the Director.

At first sight it looks as though the Director could have handled it better. He may have had a reason not to lecture your opponent. For instance, he may have judged not to do so because of the lady's inexperience. If that was the reason, I feel at least he should have explained his reasons to you.



Q A couple of weeks ago at the club, the following situation arose. North /South, both very experienced players, were vulnerable. The bidding went as follows:

South	West	North	East
1♥	Pass	2♦	2♠
3♦	3♠	4♦	4♠
Pass	Pass	5♦	5♠

At this point, South took the double card from the bidding box, clearly seen by West and East. After hesitating ever so slightly, he replaced it and pulled out a pass. West passed and North doubled.

East felt that North's bid was illegal, as he had received extra information. South said he was only removing the double card to get at the pass card, as the cards in the front of the box were all mixed up. This seems unlikely to me, as the pass cards have the tab in the middle and the double card has the tab off to one side.

North said he thought his partner was going to bid 6♦. I think this unlikely, as South did not touch the bidding cards at the back of the box. He also said that he was going to double anyway, regardless of his partner's action.

We called the Director, who was as it happens new to directing. He consulted another player, who is an experienced Director. This Director said that, as long as the player changed the double card quickly enough, there was no illegal information passed. The double was left in and East reserved his rights.

As it turned out, three off doubled, non-vulnerable, gave us an average. 6♦ vulnerable made at some tables and at others 4♠ undoubled went two off.

Whilst none of us thought that South had deliberately tried to pass information, should North not have passed? Was East wrong to reserve his rights? What should the director have ruled?
Anne May, Gourock.

A If you receive unauthorised information from partner you must bend over backwards not to take advantage. However, that does not mean that you may not double if you have a hand clearly worth a double. To suggest North's double was illegal before seeing his hand was just wrong.

Players make mistakes all the time when they pull their cards out, and if the error is a mechanical error, i.e. they pulled the wrong card out by mistake, they can change them without penalty. Are you sure that this is not what happened here?

If it did not happen that way, South may not change her double. Once the card is out of the box, she has made the call. If she has not made it inadvertently, she may not change it. So you should have called the Director at that point. ■

David Stevenson is on the Laws and Ethics Committee of both the EBU and WBU. He is also an EBU panel Tournament Director.



DEFENCE QUIZ

by **Julian Pottage**

(Answers on page 57)

You are East in the defensive positions below. Each 1NT opening by South shows 12-14 points and 2♣ in response asks for 4-card majors (Stayman). It is your turn to play.

1. ♠ K 10 6 2
♥ 8
♦ K J 6 3
♣ K J 4 2

	♠	Q 8 7 4
N	♥	A K 3
E	♦	10 7 4
W	♣	7 6 3
S		

West	North	East	South
			1NT
Pass	2♣	Pass	2♥
Pass	3NT	End	

Partner leads the five of hearts and you win with the king. Which card do you return?

2. ♠ K J 6
♥ 8 4
♦ A J 6
♣ K J 8 3 2

	♠	A 10 7 5 4
N	♥	A 7 3
E	♦	10 7 4
W	♣	7 6
S		

West	North	East	South
			1NT
Pass	3NT	End	

Partner leads the five of hearts and you win with the ace. Which card do you return?

3. ♠ 10 9 4
♥ 4
♦ K Q 5 4
♣ A K 8 6 3

	♠	7 5
N	♥	K 10 7 3
E	♦	A 7
W	♣	Q 10 7 4 2
S		

West	North	East	South
			1♠
Pass	2♣	Pass	2♥
Pass	4♣	End	

Partner leads the jack of diamonds and you capture the king with the ace. What do you return?

4. ♠ Q 7 6 4
♥ K Q 10 4
♦ 9
♣ A Q 10 3

	♠	K J 9 2
N	♥	J 9 3 2
E	♦	A 7 5 2
W	♣	7
S		

West	North	East	South
			1NT
Pass	2♣	Pass	2♦
Pass	3NT	End	

Partner leads the ♦6 and your ace wins. Which card do you return?

Mr Bridge

AT HARBEN HOUSE

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**£209 per person full-board
with Bernard Magee**

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- 13-15 June Game Tries (New Topic)
- 11-13 July Stayman & Transfers
- 8-10 August Suit Establishment (New Topic)

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- ♦ Tuition with Supervised Play, bidding quiz and two seminars
- ♦ All rooms with en-suite facilities
- ♦ Venue non-smoking
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Please book me for places,

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at the Harben House weekend(s) of

Mr/Mrs/Miss

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Postcode

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website: www.holidaybridge.com

The 'Pay-to-Play' proposals from the English Bridge Union (EBU) have now been in the public domain for fully six months. Much discussion has taken place, not least in BRIDGE, and decision time is fast drawing near. Mr Bridge has asked me to do some 'blue sky thinking'. My guess is that the EBU Board will go ahead with the changes, yet that a good number of bridge clubs throughout England will be unhappy. Some of these clubs may decide not to continue affiliation. What might the future hold for such unaffiliated clubs?

The Proposals

Let me start by summing up the present state of the proposals:

- Individual members will no longer pay a subscription to the EBU.
- In its place, all affiliated clubs will pay a levy, on every session of duplicate bridge, known as 'Pay-to-Play'.
- Club subscription to the EBU will continue. The proposed club affiliation fee is now £30 p.a. per club, irrespective of size. (The EBU has dropped the idea of different fees for clubs of different sizes.)
- Affiliated clubs will be required to report electronically to the EBU so that the latter can calculate and invoice the Pay-to-Play fee.
- The Pay-to-Play fee will be in the order of 40p per player in all club duplicates. The EBU has spent the last two months gathering data from clubs to find out just how many playing sessions take place, so that they can decide on the right figure for the Pay-to-Play levy.
- Only Pay-to-Play duplicates will be eligible for Masterpoints. Affiliated clubs may choose not to issue Masterpoints but will still pay the Pay-to-Play fee, at a rate of roughly 10p per player less than for Masterpoint duplicates.
- Masterpoints will all be electronic and paper Masterpoints will be no more.
- All players in Pay-to-Play games will become 'members' of the EBU and will receive copies of English Bridge and other benefits. There will be no registration fee. The EBU has scrapped its original idea of a one-off administration fee of £5.

EBU Pay-to-Play. What

Long-Standing Mr Bridge writer N

- The EBU expects county associations to follow suit, dropping the annual fees their members pay and setting their own Pay-to-Play fee. The EBU will collect this fee with the National Pay-to-Play fee and pay it to the counties.

The Timetable

Over the last couple of months, the EBU has asked counties to canvass clubs to see whether they broadly support the proposals or not. The counties have also gathered details on how many playing sessions the clubs organise, how many people attend, and hence the number of Pay-to-Play payments that will be due. The EBU will use this data to set the first Pay-to-Play fee.

The draft final proposals from the EBU's 'Membership Development Action Group' are due in January this year (2008), and a meeting of the MDAG in February will finalise those proposals. From there they will go to the EBU Board for approval in March. The approved final proposals will then go to the 'shareholders' of the EBU (county delegates) in May and an extraordinary general meeting of the county delegates will take place on 4th June 2008. This meeting will either accept or scrap the plan. If accepted, it will take effect from April 2010.

What's the Point

By proposing these changes, the EBU hopes to bring into membership the many club bridge players who do not currently join the EBU. They will make administrative savings by having electronic-only Masterpoints and smoother revenue collection throughout the year. The circulation of English Bridge will go up with the hope of increased advertising revenue. Finally, the EBU hopes that higher membership figures will make the organisation 'more compelling in approaches to government, the media, and potential sponsors'.

What is not so Good

The scheme brings with it extreme central control, invading the autonomy of clubs. There is an element of compulsion about the scheme. One county, Leicestershire, on its website, describes this as 'undemocratic and unsavoury'. The list of benefits that the EBU says that it will offer to clubs (see BRIDGE 85) is overstated.

The realistic chance that bridge will have much impact on government is zero. Any move to have 'mind sports' recognised by the Sports Council and hence the National Lottery, died four years ago. At that time, the International Olympic Committee dismissed the applications of bridge and chess to be in the Olympic programme and asked them not to re-apply. The 1937 Education Act, which bars the recognition of non-physical activity as sport, remains unaltered. Bridge is a specialised activity and any hope of its appearance in the National Curriculum, as suggested in BRIDGE 86 by Sally Bugden, Vice-Chairman of the EBU, must surely be a complete pipedream. Personally, I would rather see a greater focus for schools on basic literacy!

The EBU, if it goes ahead with the Pay-to-Play scheme, will be taking a huge risk. The current membership model, while in decline, is by no means broken: membership fees, including county dues, currently generate some £375,000 of income for the EBU. Masterpoints produce another £235,000 out of a total EBU income of £1.6m. (Competition fees raise the bulk of the rest – some £619,000 in the year to March 2007). The Pay-to-Play fee will have to replace all the revenue from membership fees and Masterpoints from the outset.

The EBU claims they do not intend to raise more money with the new structure but, if it works, there will be a large number of new members to service with magazines and so on. Indeed, with 'free' membership it is likely that there will be many new members whether they come in through Pay-to-Play or not. Counties will also

Where Do You Stand?

ED PAUL is finding it hard to decide

need extra resources to service new members, many of whom have yet to show any desire to play outside their clubs. The scheme does not hold out any prospect of enhanced democracy – the EBU does not intend to give individual members a vote over its affairs.

Best Case Scenario

The best case for the EBU is that bridge players in England come to accept the proposals and that criticism of the strategy will turn out to have been natural resistance to change. There will be a bit of residual muttering but we will all pay up and swallow our doubts. The EBU intends to ask each club to sign a contract, which amongst other things will specify the regulations for Pay-to-Play. The calls for more democracy will have no more effect than calls for a referendum on Europe do on our national politicians.

With its higher membership base, we may suppose that the EBU can gain commercial sponsors for an enlarged competition programme and can make some impact on bridge in education. Any clubs who opt out will quickly realise the error of their ways and rejoin the new EBU.

Clubs Assert Themselves

A different scenario comes when clubs realise it is they who deliver bridge to their members and not the EBU. Nothing much will change for the clubs that adopt Pay-to-Play, except that they will have to account to the EBU at between three and four times the current rate for Masterpoints. Signing the EBU contract will also put the clubs in a Master-Servant relationship with the EBU. This will be with the EBU as master, when I believe it should be the other way round. Its proponents present Pay-to-Play as a levy on individuals – but the players do not analyse their table money – they just grumble when it goes up.

In practice, Pay-to-Play is a tax on clubs and organisers. Some clubs might decide it is unfair, not only to collect the money but account for it as well. Maybe

the members would prefer tea, coffee and biscuits, and an independent club rather than pay the Pay-to-Play charge.

A decision by a club to affiliate or not affiliate could cause schism. A club that votes to leave will no longer issue Masterpoints, thereby upsetting those members who are keen collectors. On the other hand, a vote to stay in will mean higher table money for all, and inclusion willy-nilly in the Masterpoint scheme of everyone in the club. Up to now, a majority of players in most clubs have not bothered with nor sought to collect them.

The one-size-fits-all nature of the proposals does not fit easily into the bridge landscape. Clubs exist for all sorts of reasons. Some are purely social, some for learning, only a minority are flat-out competitive. The EBU seems to take no account of Chicago or rubber bridge, both still important in many bridge clubs. They also overlook that many people play bridge in their homes rather than at clubs. Marketing people classify the likes of bridge as ‘Long Tail’ activities; only a small part of bridge is visibly organised; the rest is just a long tail of social and occasional bridge. The EBU needs to find ways of encouraging the long tail, not cutting it off because it produces little income.

Life Outside the EBU

Let us imagine then the scheme goes ahead and some (many?) clubs choose to withdraw from the EBU. What are their prospects? Clubs do not need the EBU for publicity. Any prospective player these days is likely to start with an internet web search. You have moved to Little Dunting? Just put ‘Little Dunting Bridge Club’ into Google (or ask the local librarian to do so) and you will soon be up and playing. The services that clubs need are all available from commercial suppliers. Dealing software, scoring software, tables, boards, cards, other equipment, stationery, website software, and so on are all easily obtained from non-EBU sources.

If a number of clubs in a county

withdraw, it would be natural for them to form some kind of information exchange, and maybe even form local leagues for inter-club play. Indeed county organisations may have to decide whether to recognise unaffiliated clubs in some way simply to maintain an overview of bridge in their area. Which will be the first county to break ranks and go down this route?

Unaffiliated clubs will not have access to EBU Masterpoints. A well-organised club with a good social ambience may find that Masterpoints are not necessary. Maybe even a non-EBU scheme will emerge. The Pay-to-Play fee of 40p per session per player is quite a chunk of cash. Paid to an alternative Loyalty Card type of supplier this amount of money might easily generate a new kind of ‘Masterpoint’. Not only would you get your promotions, but also ‘Masterpoints’ would be worth something. Imagine being able to claim money off bridge books and software, discounts on bridge holidays, and even special offers from outside commercial partners. The EBU could do these things of course, but centralised organisations are not good at creating initiatives like this. If the opportunity is there, an entrepreneur with an eye to the main chance is likely to move in first.

Where Do I Stand?

So where do I stand on all this? I organise and instruct bridge for a living and one of my clubs is currently in membership of the EBU. I am self-employed and although I write for Mr Bridge and host weekends, I do this on a fee basis and it is just part of the mix that keeps me going. I like to think that all that I do is good for bridge and helps sustain the game in my area.

I have been a member of the EBU since the days of Dimmie Fleming, Harry Scully and Harold Franklin (remember the old EBU Quarterly?). I feel very loyal to bridge and passionate about the success of a strong national organisation. I know and respect many of the EBU staff and officers. However, I feel ill at ease with the Pay-to-Play proposals. I want to defend my club’s independence and the right of choice for my players. As I wrote before, it is hard for instinctive centralisers to understand these doubts.

I have not yet decided what to do. I suspect that I will be guided by ‘market forces’, whatever produces the best outcome for my clubs. Am I wrong? ■



Mr Magee and Me . . .

A Passionate Affair

by Linda Saunders

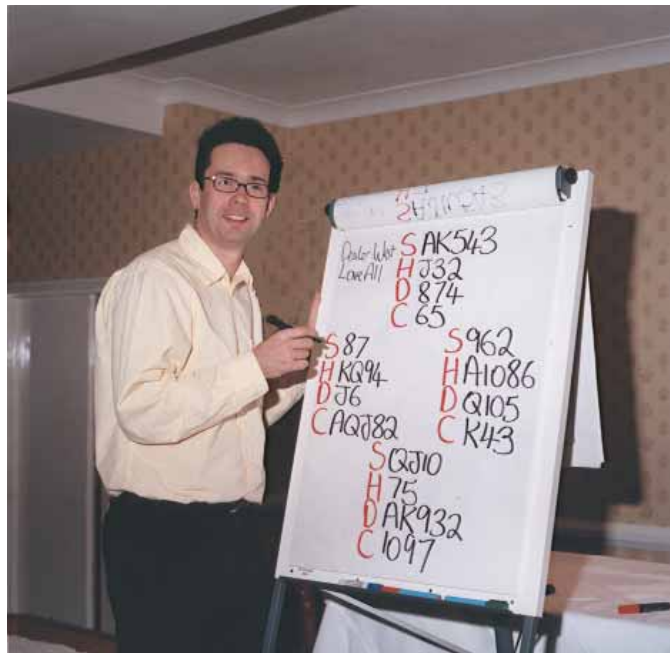
As far as bridge is concerned, I have just had my first birthday. It was last autumn when I caught the bug and I doubt if I shall ever recover my former state of mind. I was fortunate enough to find my way into a beginners' class run by an accredited EBU teacher: this was invaluable to me as it laid firm foundations. Sadly, when the course ended last spring, I was the only one in the class who had the time and inclination to continue so I was left out on a limb. We had covered the basics so I plucked up courage to wander into some local clubs where I was given a warm welcome. At that time, I was so nervous I could hardly hold the cards; my hands shook alarmingly. I quickly realized just how pathetic my play was. I searched on-line for an Improvers' class and did drive many miles to attend one memorable session. Leaving home at 6.00 p.m. and returning near to midnight was a small price to pay for the excellent tuition I received that evening, but the class was ending for the summer and realistically, it was too far for me to go on a regular basis. I was well and truly stuck and quite disheartened.

I persevered locally and one afternoon, I was given the

address of the Mr Bridge magazine. Immediately I sent off the slip asking to be included on the mailing list. Already I had collected a number of useful books on bridge but more than anything else, I needed practice in bidding and playing the cards. I telephoned the Mr Bridge

way and at £59.95 would cost round about a pound a week. I had to wait several days ... because of a postal strike, but within a week, the program came. This was the start of my affair with Mr Magee.

I had failed to find a teacher in the flesh, but this was



mail order line to ask for advice on bridge software and was given excellent advice. It was suggested that I tried the free download of five games from Bernard Magee's Acrol Bidding. WOW! This was exactly what I needed. In July I placed a telephone order and breathed a sigh of relief. The teaching I needed was on its

even better. This brilliant man would come at my bidding (excuse the pun) at midnight or in the early hours of the morning. I started a notebook to record my progress and have completed 190 of the 200 hands, many of them several times. His patience is inexhaustible. 'Try another bid' he will say

encouragingly. In the early days, it is true, he would sometimes say: "There are no points for that bid and there is no comment." For some reason, this would make me chuckle with glee but try as I might these days, I cannot prompt that response. Usually, he says: 'Excellent' or 'Fantastic' and I feel greatly encouraged! Clear explanations are given at the end of each hand.

I have to confess I simply cannot get enough of him. I have just bought the second in the Bidding series: 'More Acrol Bidding' as well as the newly released 'Declarer Play'. Every morning, I spend about half an hour in his company, systematically working through the programs. Of course, most people would not want to give up this amount of time but I am an addict. Realistically, ten to fifteen minutes each day would be sufficient to improve one's game.

It occurs to me that these programs are not aimed just at the beginner. There are many people playing in bridge clubs who have been playing for years but do not have the foggiest idea about the lethal weapons available such as transfers, fourth suit forcing, bidding the opponents' suit, cue bidding, splinters, and Key-card Blackwood. ►

Mr Magee and Me . . .

A Passionate Affair

continued

Doubtless they enjoy the game but they are missing so much. I know that I have so much still to learn about bridge, but I am working very slowly through the second program hoping to improve my game. It's such a brilliant game. And the beauty of the computer software is that I can work through a hand, many times if necessary, in order to grasp a point.

These days, I find I enjoy playing either on *Bridge Club Live* which is affiliated to the EBU, or teaching myself with the help of Mr Magee, as well as playing at local bridge clubs. Within *Bridge Club Live*, I have played with people from all over the world: these include life masters and absolute beginners. The coaching corner sessions are wonderful, hosted by experienced players who give freely of their time.

I have not yet found a regular face-to-face partner. When I play, I usually find out pretty quickly that my partner for the session has not met Mr Magee. I recommend him constantly and four friends have bought the first program so I have high hopes that together we shall improve at the bridge table.

Recently, I played in a competition for bridge students. It mattered little to me where we came in the rating, but the fact is that I would never have had the courage to enter had it not been for Mr Magee. My

partner for the day had not met Mr Magee so our bidding was limited. I am the first to admit that I make the most foolish mistakes at the bridge table but I try to learn from them and not to fret. I absolutely loathe inquests, preferring to concentrate on the game in hand and I will never argue with a partner. Bridge is a game and should be an enjoyable experience.

When I do play locally and I get stuck . . . I don't panic. I think to myself: "What would Mr Magee say?" And because I have heard his comments and advice so many many times, I can almost feel him looking over my shoulder, prompting me to make the right move. The only thing is . . . I cannot put his advice into practice if my partner is not aware of the signals. So if there is anyone out there in Kent, who shares my passion for Mr Magee, perhaps they will be good enough to contact me. There may be a fruitful partnership in the making.

Of course, Mr Magee is doubtless spoken for in real life so my passion for him remains one-sided, but if ever I get to meet him, I shall have to give him a hug. Now where did I put that Mr Bridge magazine? I'm sure I saw a weekend away with Mr Magee advertised! But then that's absurd . . . he and I are not even on first-name terms. He need have no fear because, actually, I am a very respectable woman and old enough to be his mother. ■

DECLARER PLAY QUIZ



by David Huggett

(Answers on page 55)

You are South as declarer playing teams or rubber bridge. In each case, what is your play strategy?

1.

♠ K Q 6
♥ 7 6 2
♦ K J 10 5
♣ A 6 2



♠ A 4 2
♥ K J 3
♦ A 8 3
♣ K 8 4 3

You are declarer in 3NT. West leads the ♥5 and East plays the ten. How do you plan the play?

3.

♠ K 8 4
♥ 6 5
♦ A K J 10 6
♣ 7 3 2



♠ A 3 2
♥ K Q 3
♦ 8 5 3
♣ A K 8 6

You are declarer in 3NT. West leads the ♥4 and East plays the jack. How do you plan the play?

2.

♠ J 10 9 6
♥ 7 5 4
♦ 6 3
♣ K Q 8 3



♠ A K Q 7 2
♥ K 8
♦ A 10 2
♣ J 10 7

You are declarer in 4♠ and West leads the ♦Q. How do you plan the play?

4.

♠ K 8 6 2
♥ A
♦ 7 6 4
♣ K Q 7 6 5



♠ A J 10 9 3
♥ J 2
♦ Q 8 5
♣ A J 2

You are declarer in 4♠. West leads the ♦A and switches to the ♣4. How do you plan the play?



Do Not Bid a New Suit at the Two Level with Only Eight Points

Your partner opens the bidding with 1♥. How many points do you need to respond?

There has always been a consensus that with six points you shouldn't pass. The logic is obvious. Opener can hold up to nineteen points and you need twenty-five points for game, which means that passing with six points risks missing game. People also recognise that, if you have shape and a good fit then you might make game on far fewer points.

Hand A	Hand B
♠ K J 9 8 5 4	♠ 6 3
♥ 7	♥ 10 9 2
♦ 10 8 7 5	♦ 9 8
♣ 3 2	♣ A K J 10 3 2

Most experienced players would respond 1♠ to 1♥ with hand A. Not only might 4♠ be possible, it might make even with 1♥ due to go off! Responding 1♠ could gain in some other way, such as improving the part-score. For example, the auction might proceed: 1♥-1♠-1NT-2♠-End.

There has never been quite the same consensus about what you need to change suit at the two level, e.g. 1♥-2♣. This is partly because factors other than the desire to avoid missing game come into the equation. You need to respond with six points, yes, but what to respond is open to discussion, and there are several possible criteria.

One possible yardstick is the traditional Acoll requirement of nine points (counting one length point for a five-card suit). The idea behind this is that you need an extra trick for a two level contract, so it might be a good idea to have an extra king (marginally under one thirteenth of the high card points in the pack). I have never found this logic

totally convincing because it is very rare for the bidding to die at the one level anyway. A better explanation is that, with a weak hand you should strive hard to keep the bidding low. Nowadays, tactical factors have pushed standards up, to the extent that, in many countries (though not the UK) it is quite common to play a two-over-one response as game forcing.

When the English Bridge Union started the *Bridge for All* teaching scheme, it decided that, for anyone learning the game in England, it might be sensible if they learnt the same system so they would feel at ease walking into a new club and playing with a stranger. I would thus like to refer to *Standard English*, the version of the Acoll bidding system associated with *Bridge for All*. This gives the criteria as follows: *You can bid at the two level with ten (high card) points or even nine if you have a very long suit.* In practice, nobody would object to responding 2♣ to 1♥ if you held hand B. Your club suit has trick-taking potential far in excess of its eight high-card points. Moreover, your three-card heart support makes your next action easy. If partner rebids 2♥, you can happily pass; if partner rebids 2♦, you can happily give preference to 2♥. I can conveniently express these criteria in the Rule of Fourteen: *add together your high-card points and the number of cards in your longest suit and if the total comes to at least fourteen you can change suit at the two level.*

It is not necessarily sensible to apply the Rule of Fourteen indiscriminately. Partner opens 1♥ and you hold:

♠ Q 8 4
♥ 2
♦ J 7 6 5 3 2
♣ A J 7

This hand meets the Rule of Fourteen, but it would be blinkered to respond to 1♥ with 2♦. You are forcing partner to find a rebid and he is quite likely to have to rebid 2♥. You could only pass this, but your side would be in a very silly contract if he has had to rebid 2♥ with five poor hearts. It is far more sensible to respond to 1♥ with 1NT – keeping the bidding low with a poor hand and a misfit and giving opener the opportunity to pass. Certainly, he should pass rather than sign off in 2♥ if he has five hearts. Remember, unlike other no-trump bids that occur early in the auction, your 1NT response does not promise a balanced hand. I call it a 'dustbin bid' because you throw into the dustbin all the rubbish that doesn't fit anywhere else.

It is worth considering just how unbalanced a 1NT response might be. If partner opens 1♠, what should you respond with hands C or D?

Hand C	Hand D
♠ Void	♠ 7 4
♥ 9 6	♥ 6
♦ Q J 7 6 5 4	♦ A J 7 6 5
♣ K 8 4 3 2	♣ Q 10 6 4 3

Look at it this way. If partner opens 1♠, there are only two bids available to you if you have six, seven or a poor, misfitting eight points: 2♠ or 1NT. You can rule out 2♠, so it has to be 1NT. Of course, you could turn your nose up at these hands and pass, but it is quite possible that 3NT or five-of-a-minor is easy for you, while 1♠ is going off! Bidding is so much easier if you are prepared not to be too squeamish about responding 1NT on hands like these. Treat it as a dustbin bid, and you will end up in far more playable low-level contracts. ■

Bridge Etiquette

On Arrival

- Check whether you need to sign in.
- Check whether a particular table is reserved for the TD.

General

- Turn off your mobile phone. (If it is absolutely vital you have it on, leave it on 'vibrate'.)
- It is necessary to play quite quickly. The aim is to be able to play at least 21-24 boards in a session.

Each New Round

- Greet your new opponents as they arrive at your table.
- Explain your system clearly and simply, if asked. Answer any questions clearly.
- Sort and count your cards quickly, so that you can bid promptly when it is your turn.
- Do not sort through your cards again when it is your turn to bid.
- Do not ask what a bid means unless you are intending to bid. Ask any questions when the auction is over.

The Play

- Do not put your bidding cards away until the initial lead has been made.
- When you are making the initial lead, play your card before you write down the contract or enter the details in the Bridgemate. (Three people are waiting!)
- Place this card face down on the table first, to check whether partner has any questions about the auction.
- As dummy, lay out the cards before you write down the contract or enter the details in the Bridgemate. And lay out the cards as quickly as possible. (Three people are waiting!)
- As declarer, plan your campaign before you select a card from dummy.
- As dummy, do not play the first card (even if it is a singleton) until declarer has worked out his plan and called for it.
- As declarer, always call for the card you wish dummy to play (unless dummy is away from the table or has a disability, making the play of cards difficult).
- As declarer, when you lead to a trick, wait for LHO to play his card before calling a card from dummy.
- When making a claim, explain your intended line of play clearly.
- When the hand has been completed, North should fill in the score on the traveller or Bridgemate quickly. East confirms it is correct.

On Completion of the Play

- Do not hold long post-mortems unless you are clearly well ahead of the other tables.
- Do not touch other players' cards – ask them to show you.
- North handles new boards.
- Thank your opponents at the end of the round and move quickly to your new table.

Compiled by a new club member and sent to BRIDGE by the secretary.

Mr Bridge

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