

Hamilton Contract Bridge Club



Newsletter Special Edition - September 2007

HAMILTON CLUB MOVES INTO FUTURE WITH A NZ FIRST

This special edition of the newsletter is because I wanted you to know about some really exciting news for the Club. And I would prefer you to hear it from us first rather than through the grapevine.

The Club Committee has unanimously made the momentous decision that we should purchase the BridgeMate system. The Hamilton Club will be the first in New Zealand to move to BridgeMate.

The BridgeMate system uses wireless devices at each table to capture electronically the contract and result for each board. This information is relayed to the scoring computer. At the completion of the session the complete information is loaded into the scoring package and the results can be printed immediately.

This provides a number of benefits including:

- The requirement to key in the scores is completely eliminated - a potential source of errors and a task for a volunteer.
- The results should be available within a few minutes of the end of the session rather than some time the next day.
- Scoring errors will be eliminated. Almost every session the director is called a number of times to fix scoring errors. With BridgeMate provided the contract and the result are entered correctly, the score will be correct.
- Players can get instant feedback on their result compared to others from previous rounds.

The BridgeMate system is easy to use and well proven. Although we will be the first in NZ to have it, it has been around for 10 years and over 1000 systems are in use. One ex-member now living in London

and one recently returned from Holland both raved about BridgeMate.

The purchase of BridgeMate is enabled by using the very generous anonymous donation I spoke about in our February newsletter. I mentioned then some criteria for using the donation - namely something meaningful and of benefit to the members rather than subsidising our normal operations or maintenance. The latter is something we should plan for out of our routine income. We should be using the donation for something special that we could not afford otherwise. BridgeMate fits these criteria beautifully unlike any other suggestions we received. I realise that not everyone may be happy with this decision but I hope in time you come to appreciate it. And speaking of time, Allan Barclay of Thames mentioned to me earlier in the year that he believes it is only a matter of time before BridgeMate and bidding boxes are commonplace.

It has taken some months for us to make this decision. Initially BridgeMate appealed to us but it was not an option. It was not compatible with the NZ scoring packages. However the developer of the widely-used and highly regarded Compass package has worked wonders to build in BridgeMate support. So as part of this project we will be changing our scoring over to Compass. A bonus is that the Compass package has many additional features which are not present in our current NZCBA Scorer software. The developer is responsive and it has decent documentation.

Some senior players in the Club have mentioned some problems at tournaments hosted by clubs running Compass. We have investigated all of these cases and I am pleased to report that without exception the problems were due to human problems not defects in Compass.

As to the timing of this initiative, at this stage we are unsure how long it will take us to get the system and become familiar with it. We will begin with parallel running of the old and new. But rest assured we are told the system is very easy to use.

I have run out of space to show you the devices. Go to www.bridgemate.com for more information.

Don Wilson
President