



Palmerston North Bridge Club October 2011

Editorial

Welcome to another late-in-the-month issue... I hope you get some news and some entertainment from it.

Thanks to Andrew Brodie for all the updates from the Committee. Also to Ray Kemp, who introduces a first as far as I know – a bridge love poem. Who knows where this might end??

Ross Quayle

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Club Results for September

Congratulations to all our winners.

Monday:	Bev Colville & Gail Kirton	59.90%
Junior Teams:	Dorothy Ko, Paul Lyall, Brian Taylor, Helen Hing & Liz Goodman	106VPs
Snr/Snr Res Teams:	Wayne Burrows, Liz Burrows, Ross Quayle & Alister Stuck	117VPs
Intermediate:	Peter Avery & Dianne Hunter	58.51%
Friday:	Susan Parker & Anne Wilkinson	53.56%

Membership

We welcome two Youth Members who have joined the club - Rosalind Cervante and Blake Meehan. Thanks to Wayne Burrows and Amy Thomson who have been teaching these school students this year.

Our club finances are sound but our cashflow is only breaking even. Much of our income comes from table money so it is important for the club that we increase the number of active playing members. One way of doing this is by recruiting new players. Wayne Burrows and Ross Quayle have been running beginners' lessons, and those that attend will shortly

graduate and need to be mentored as they move to become full playing members. We can all help with this – please give our brand new players consideration and a friendly welcome.

Use of Club Carpark

\$640 was received from hiring out the carpark during the two Rugby World Cup games, which will cover the cost of repainting the carpark lines. Thanks to Goff Ashwell for organising the roster and to Jillian Cole, Dan Lynch, Mereana Cullen, Joan Norrie, Patricia Buckley and Ernie Sands who turned up to collect the money and lock/unlock the gates.

For the future, we are considering hiring out car parking space for other events (e.g. stockcars) at a charge of \$5 per park and are investigating how feasible this would be. Anyone interested in organising a roster please contact Goff who will explain what needs to be done.

Presidents Award

The club is to have a President's Award which will be awarded to a club member who has made an outstanding contribution to the Club. It will recognise a person who makes a significant contribution to the running of the club and/or to Club activities in general. Sometimes the contribution cannot be identified by a single action or even a single year. Often the person does what they do quietly, across a number of areas, perhaps without being asked, behind the scenes and without a fuss, or even needing to be recognised. The award will be presented at the AGM and will not necessarily be made every year. The receipt of the award will not preclude future life membership of the Club.

Financial

Donation

The committee really appreciates a very generous anonymous donation that has been received from a Club member towards the running of the Club.

Maintenance

Our club cannot operate without the help of a lot of people who are not on the committee but contribute in various ways. Here are three examples we would like to thank, but there are many more.

- *Weed Spraying*– Wayne Burrows has also been spraying the weeds in various places. Also you may have noticed a lot of lichen in the carpark - Wayne will be spraying this soon.
- *Spraying roof and clearing gutters* – Rudi Schonewille has tidied this up.
- *Honours boards* – These are now up-to-date thanks to the considerable efforts of Jim Esson.

Successes in Tournaments:

Congratulations to Alister Stuck & Jan Whyte who were 3rd and Liz Burrows & Sandra Coleman who were 4th in the PN Open Pairs held in September.

Also Congratulations to Christine Compton & Amy Thomson who were 1st, Bev Colville & Susan Parker who were 2nd and John Ayers & Carolyn Brodie who were 3rd in the PN Intermediate Pairs held on the 8th October. Sponsored by Robert Harris coffee roasters.

Forthcoming Tournaments:

Babich Wines NZ-Wide Pairs (4 November)
Play will start at 7.00 pm with the bar being open from 5.30 pm. You are encouraged to bring fish and chips or other takeaways to eat together beforehand. Entry fee is \$6. Sign up on the notice board by Wednesday 2nd November.

Christmas Cheer (3 December)

This is a very popular tournament so keep your eye on the notice board for details and get your entries in quickly as there are always more entries than can be accepted.

Return of Library Books

Please return ALL library books by November 18 for a stock take. Some books are very, very overdue. A list of overdue books will be put up in the club next week so if you don't want to see your name there you know what to do.

Andrew Brodie

Famous bridge love poems (No. 1)

I think the title may be a little optimistic since there are unlikely to be too many other romantic poems associated with our favourite game. Still, this one is linked to an English pairing not normally associated with bridge. Harold Pinter, the Nobel

Prize winning playwright, and Antonia Fraser, the celebrated biographer, each emerging from failed first marriages, got together in 1975. Both developed a passion for bridge, and, against all odds, were happily united for over thirty years until Pinter's death in 2008. In her recent memoir of their relationship, "Must You Go?", Fraser quotes a poem that she wrote for Pinter in 1983. Do you ever feel this way about your bridge partner?

FOR MY PARTNER by Antonia Fraser

You're my two-hearts-as-one
Doubled into game
You're my Blackwood
You're my Gerber
You're my Grand Slam, vulnerable
Doubled and redoubled
Making all other contracts
Tame.

Ray Kemp

To Seed or not to Seed

A while back our bridge club committee decided that any seeding carried out for competitions at the club should be organised at the start of the month rather than arbitrarily introduced part way through. I believe we should go further and specify that for the major events, such as the end of year championships, there should always be seeding, maybe not from the beginning, but perhaps for the last three or four weeks.

The alternative is to leave things to chance and employ coin tossing throughout, as is used at most sessions at the club. Unfortunately, Lady Luck, can be fickle. I remember my first Statistics lecturer many years ago telling the class about an experiment where a gardener decided to find out which of his two tomato varieties provided a better crop. He had six plants of one variety (let's call it variety A) and six of variety B. He had six spaces at the front of the greenhouse, which received more sun, and six spaces at the back, which was rather darker. To make sure the experiment was valid he decided to toss a coin six times. If it came down heads he would put a pot containing variety A at the front, and if it came down tails he would put variety B at the front. Unfortunately, each time he tossed the coin it came down heads so he ended up with six pots of variety A at the front and six pots of variety B at the back.

The vagaries of random seating may be illustrated by what happened in the Jack Cliff Memorial Cup in May. This is a sought-after trophy, and the winners get their names on the role of honour on one of our boards. Coin tossing was used throughout to determine which direction each pair sat, but it did not ensure an even distribution of skills between North-South and East-West. For example, the two pairs who eventually finished first and second sat the same way for the last four weeks of the five week competition. On two evenings, six grandmasters played the same way with only two in the other direction. On two further occasions, the distribution was 5-2.

Does it matter if the top pairs sit in the same direction? There are arguments for and against. If the leading contenders sit the same way then they are all competing directly against one another. This might be an effective way of sorting out the sheep from the goats.

So, what is the problem, you may ask. Isn't the whole point of the competition that the best pair should win? Well, for a start such an arrangement doesn't necessarily lead to the desired result. Whilst all the top prize fighters are slugging it out in one direction, a less accomplished pair may slip through sitting the opposite way. Also, I would suggest that, for the majority of players, there are other considerations. Basically, most of us just want a good evening's bridge in a fair setting, knowing that if we play well we will probably get a good result and if we play badly then we may end up near the bottom. If the top players all sit in the same direction, it is inequitable for the rest. If you were an average player and sat the same way as six grandmasters you might as well have stayed at home that night. However, if you sat in the opposite direction, you had a good chance of finishing at, or near the top without too much effort. Predictably, these arbitrary seating arrangements produced some anomalous results during the month.

One way to reduce randomness is to seed the competitors. That way, there is an even distribution of talent between North-South and East-West. When I first joined the club in the intermediate room, there was always seeding in the last few weeks of important competitions to ensure some equity between the competitors. However, more recently, it has been little utilized. Seeding doesn't have to be complicated. A simple approach is to place the first, third and fifth

couples in one direction and the second, fourth and sixth in the other. I would be interested in other points of view on this subject. Maybe the committee could revisit the issue, too.

Ray Kemp

Major Events Policy

Firstly, thanks to Ray for raising the subject of seeding, and apologies to everyone for not addressing it myself in the newsletter before this.

The Committee has been giving thought to the matter, and has come up with a Major Events Policy which is as follows:

Format for Major Events

The Club wishes its major events to be serious competitive events, carrying additional prestige to normal club events.

The major events are:

- *Championship Pairs (Senior and Senior Reserve respectively)*
- *Myra Stubbs Teams Trophy*
- *Jack Cliff Memorial Trophy*
- *Maude Nash Tray*
- *Keith Rowland Cup*
- *Intermediate Championship Pairs*
- *Junior Championship Pairs*

The format for major events should be similar to normal tournament format as much as possible.

The decision on format is to be made by the director, subject to this policy and subject to any specific direction from the committee prior to the event.

For pairs events, all playing nights are to count. One substitute per person is allowed, and that person must be eligible to play in the appropriate grade.

For teams events teams of up to six players are allowed. A player who has been a substitute in one team may play for any other team if a substitute is required.

Acceptable Pairs Formats are:

- *Random seating, random draw for direction of seating.*

- *Predetermined draw to optimise partnership mixing (i.e. all pairs play against the greatest possible number of opponents).*

Acceptable Teams formats are:

- *Round robin and double round robin.*
- *Swiss with a minimum of six rounds.*
- *Swiss plus playoff rounds (for example, first plays second; points are carried over to determine first and second place; third and fourth play to determine third and fourth place; etc).*
- *Qualifying, either by Swiss or round robin, plus knockout final; or semi-finals and final. In this case, there will be a consolation event for non-qualifying teams.*

8 September 2011

Editor's Comments

The Committee was concerned that seeding as described by Ray above, and as carried out in the final three rounds of the senior championships last year, might have had some benefits but might also have served to reduce the competition between closely contesting pairs. If you are lying second in a pairs competition then you would prefer to sit the same way as the leaders. This has two effects – one is that you hold the same cards as they do; and the other is that you are playing against them on every single hand. Every good result that you get will affect your rivals score, and vice-versa; so if you manage to have a really good session then you have a good chance of gaining on them. Under the seeding system proposed by Ray, if the ranking of the top two pairs did not alter (as it didn't last year) then they end up playing a different way for three consecutive nights. When you are playing a different way to your close rivals then the two or three hands you play against them effectively count double (a top for you equals a bottom for them), and on all the other hands your play does not affect their score.

Personally I think that the nature of our structure at present means that pre-determined seating is best, but takes a little more work to organise; random seating is OK too. I don't think seeding is the answer. On the junior night some players are brand new, and skill does not necessarily correlate with amount of experience, so seeding is

administratively difficult. On the intermediate night the standard is probably the most even of the three nights, so it is less of an issue anyhow. On the senior night there is again a considerable spread of skill and experience, but the numbers are so relatively low that I do not think seeding is practical.

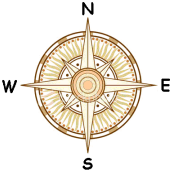
And of course bridge players should not need to be told what random means – it means every possibility is as likely as every other possibility. The gardener in Ray's story was, with the greatest possible respect, an imbecile – a random allocation of plants was not what he wanted, it was a *representational spread* of plants that he wanted and he should have chosen their location accordingly.

If you have any further views on these matters of event format please let us know.

Ross Quayle

How can I tell if I have a good hand?

Here are two hands from Tuesday last week where North had to evaluate hand strength. On the first one, (#13) North dealt and both were vulnerable.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♠ K86 ♥ 9865 ♦ AQJ8 ♣ KQ 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♠ Q74 ♥ AK3 ♦ 763 ♣ A943
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♠ J10932 ♥ J4 ♦ 5 ♣ J10852 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♠ A5 ♥ Q1074 ♦ K10942 ♣ 76

Playing a weak NT, the bidding starts:

North	East	South	West
1D	Pass	1H	Pass
?			

What do you bid? Clearly you will raise partner's hearts, but to two or to three? You have 15 points, which is a bit extra, but it is a very poor fifteen, and partner is only promising six. The doubleton King-Queen is a very poor five points, and your trumps are weak. Therefore a raise to three is too optimistic – partner will happily accept the invitation and the contract really has no play – the right bid is two hearts. Most people agreed with this, because only one pair was in game when I saw it.

Contrast this with hand #16; Dealer West, E-W vul.

	♠ QJ5432		
	♥ AK963		
	♦		
	♣ Q9		
♠ 109		♠ A8	
♥ Q875		♥ 104	
♦ AJ6		♦ K8532	
♣ K1064		♣ J532	

	♠ K76		
	♥ J2		
	♦ Q10974		
	♣ A87		

This time the bidding goes:

West	North	East	South
Pass	1S	Pass	2D
Pass	2H	Pass	2S
?			

So what do you do this time? You have only twelve points, but this is a good hand. Partner has promised ten, and has a preference for spades. At worst, partner has only two spades but there is a good chance of three. Your void in partner's suit counts as a negative factor. (If the void was in clubs instead of diamonds then everything in your hand would be honking and surely it would then be worth a unilateral bid of game).

You have only four quick losers and a legitimate hope that partner will cover some of them; your initially weak trumps have improved once partner has supported them, even though it just by preference; and your heart suit is excellent, offering both control and potential tricks.

My view is that on this sort of hand you throw the point count out the window and try to visualise how the hand will play – in short how many tricks you will take. If there are two club losers then to make game you can lose only one trump – but that is not terribly unlikely; and even though partner has bid diamonds there is no law against his hand having a club honour. I say bid three spades; again partner will happily bid four, but this time it makes easily on the combined 22 points. In fact it can readily make five. One way is to lead the Jack of hearts from dummy, and duck if it is not covered. It is a reasonable way to play the suit.

This time I think most people missed the game, but it was there for the bold and imaginative bidders amongst us to reach.

Ross Quayle

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