



The Kibitzer

Fall 2020

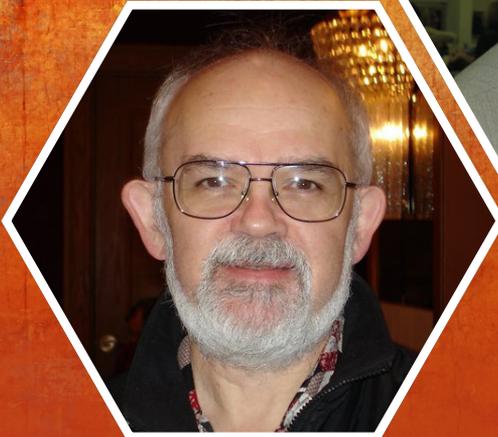
Volume 67, Number 3

Recognition Time For...

Sheri Winestock



David Lindop



Alex Kornel

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Double-sized
Issue!**



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Sep 27 Seward, Alaska
Sep 28 Kodiak, Alaska
Sep 29 Cruising Pacific Ocean
Sep 30 Dutch Harbor
Oct 1 Cruising the Pacific Ocean
Oct 3 Cross the International Date Line
Oct 3 Cruising the Pacific Ocean
Oct 4 Cruising the Pacific Ocean
Oct 5 Petropavlovsk, Russia
Oct 6 Cruising the Pacific Ocean
Oct 7 Cruising the Pacific Ocean
Oct 8 Hakodate, Japan
Oct 9 Sendai, Japan
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Oct 11 Tokyo, Japan
Oct 11-14 Stayover in Tokyo included
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Briars Bridge Weekends

***Unfortunately, we had to cancel both
Briars weekends in 2020.***

***We will keep our players informed as to
what will happen in 2021.***

***The possible dates for 2021 are
April 23-25 and October 29 - 31.***

Stay safe and be well.

***John Rayner, Jill Thompson
& Lee Daugharty***

ANNUAL LAOS FUNDRAISERS

WED., SEPT. 23 & 30, 2020

with Barbara Seagram & Patti Lee on ZOOM

Wed., Sept. 23 @ 3.30 pm: “Preempt Your Way to Success”

Presentation by Patti followed by bridge lecture (2 hrs)
by Barbara Seagram

Zoom Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89756939385>

Wed., Sept. 30 @ 4 pm: “Winning Bridge Techniques” with Barbara

Sign up at www.barbaraseagram.com

Zoom lesson \$20.00 per person minimum but no maximum

Zoom Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83718429153>

Donate a water filter for \$125.00 and you receive a tax receipt
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<https://barbaraseagram.clickfunnels.com/cambodia-laos-donations>

or email transfer to akornel@sympatico.ca SPECIFY LAOS
or by cheque to Barbara Seagram,

220 Lawrence Ave East, Toronto, ON M4N 1T2

Every dime raised for these two lessons will be donated to
“Adopt A Village In Laos”

To donate to either our Cambodia Schools or
our Laos Water filter programme, click on this link

<https://barbaraseagram.clickfunnels.com/cambodia-laos-donations>

or sign up here to attend the classes

<https://barbaraseagram.clickfunnels.com/zoom-class-pass>

Join Barbara on Zoom On Wed., Aug. 19 & 26 @ 4 pm.

Weekly Zoom links always at www.barbaraseagram.com

or subscribe to Barbara’s weekly newsletter free. barbaraseagram@gmail.com

Check out Barbara’s new online store at www.barbaraseagram.com





Photo credit: Sylvia Proaño

Editor's Note

To help boost morale through the time of Covid, and to augment your summer reading, we thought it would be fun to put together the Kib's first ever double-sized issue. Also, we are celebrating our new look. Thanks to Andy Risman, Linda Lord, and Tom Ramsay for giving us the green light to try out "Flipit" technology, which replicates the experience of reading a magazine in real life. Even makes a cool swoosh sound when you flip the page. Starting with the Spring 2021 issue we will be printing in a larger format, so please keep those cards and letters and submissions coming!

We are still looking at no face-to-face bridge for the remainder of 2020, so our Tournament Trail on the back page has been replaced with what could have been the front cover.

Our cover story (p. 48) is about three Ontarians who have helped make bridge better, each in their own way. Chances are you have been assisted in some way by at least one of them, if not all three. I have. So, thanks, Sheri; thanks, Alex; and

thank you, Frodo!

Our other cover story (p. 16), fittingly titled, "BBO Stars," is about seven local players who excel playing on BBO. You will learn a bit about their bridge playing experiences and some tips for playing on BBO.

Thanks to three of our regular contributors for their continued great material this issue: Robert Griffiths, David Turner, and Doug Andrews. And thanks to two first-time contributors: Jim Priebe and Ross Driedger. Good start, guys! Hint, hint.

Our "And Now it Can be Told" section deals with an age-old problem in bridge—cheating—by telling a story that happened over 30 years ago. Maybe more on this topic next issue.

And lastly, our new look brings the intro of two new regular features: interviews of celebrity bridge players and a What I Have Learned column. We kick things off with former radio broadcaster Jerry Howarth (p. 72) and Mike Roche, a world class Canadian player now residing in Victoria, BC (p. 80). Enjoy!

Andy Stark

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To view the following reports and meeting minutes, please click on unit166.ca then click on the appropriate link in the left column.

- Board-approved January 4, 2020 Board of Director minutes.
- Aug 31, 2019 Board of Director Minutes
- Nov 3, 2019 Board of Director Minutes

The next Unit 166 Board meeting is scheduled for 9am on Saturday August 29, 2020 via video conference.

The Kibitzer Information

The Kibitzer is available online at www.unit166.ca, every three months: February, May, August, and November. Readers are invited to share their email addresses with the ACBL so that they may receive notification The Kibitzer is ready for viewing.

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Please send to Andy Stark, andy.kibitzer@gmail.com

KIBITZER ONLINE: <http://unit166.ca>

IMPORTANT KIBITZER DATES:

Issue:	Deadline:	Posted online by:
Winter 2020	Oct. 15	Nov. 15
Spring 2021	Jan. 15	Feb. 15
Summer 2021	Apr. 15	May 15
Fall 2020	July. 15	Aug. 15

Kibitzer Editorial Policy

The Kibitzer is published to promote bridge and to inform members of ACBL Units 166, 238, 246, 249 and 255 about tournaments and special events, as well as to entertain with deals and articles of interest. It is also a forum for the exchange of information and opinion among the members. Opinions expressed in articles or letters to the Editor are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Unit Boards of Directors or the Editor. The Kibitzer reserves the right to edit or exclude submitted material.



I hope everyone is staying healthy during these trying times. Even though being involved in this wonderful game has kept us young at heart, sadly, most of us are in the dangerous age/healthy demographics that is most at risk to Covid.

Our regular source of enjoyment for the game (tournaments and clubs) has been indefinitely put on hold. These avenues of playing bridge might be one of the last areas to be reopened and probably not until a proper vaccine is in place.

There is an inferior substitute available to us – online bridge at BBO. From my experience the games can be broken up into three main areas.

Casual games

This game is set up to play with three other players, maybe prearranged partners/opponents or not, in a casual environment.

Pros: You have total control over the number of boards played. If you have arranged to play with friends, you are less worried about the opposition colluding with their partner in various possible manners. You can actually arrange to play with partners who are halfway across the continent. There is no fee. You set your own start and stop time. There tends to be more interaction using the keyboard to communicate. If you make a typing error, your opponents can allow you to correct.

Cons: There is no director so people can get away with more issues. There are no masterpoints offered for this game. The scoring is based on how other tables play the same board so ZERO field protection. I was in a hand where my partner opened a legitimate 1♦ with 12 HCPs and ♦AQxxxx. I had a bare bones 23 HCPs and stopped in 7NT (no overtricks). Nobody else was in slam (true story). If you are playing against strangers, there is a greater possibility of cheating with no director monitoring the game.

Tournament games

Pros: These games do offer masterpoints. They have a director. The overall skill level is higher than the casual game (but still a wide range like an open tournament). Convention cards are required (although I suspect a lot don't fill one out). There are many game times available.

Cons: They obviously do charge. There is zero interaction during the game. Typing errors aren't correctable. Rounds are called strictly on time so you could be stopped in the middle of the last hand of a round and suddenly you are faced with new opponents.

Virtual games

Pros: You are almost always playing against people you know from your local clubs. There are masterpoints awarded. Because you know almost everyone at the table, there can be a lot of friendly banter. Barometer scoring lets you always know how you are doing after every round (Barometer scoring is when each table plays the same hands at the same time.)

Cons: Typing mistakes aren't correctable. You can basically only play in clubs you have played in from January, 2019 to February, 2020.

For those of who haven't played online yet or haven't tried all the options, I hope I have given you something to think about. STAY HEALTHY!!!

~Andy Risman



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District 2 Website

(Visit www.acbldistrict2.org for details)

- All District 2 tournaments & results
- District 2 business
- NAP/GNT tournament information
- District 2 Director's page for ACBL news & info
- Graham Warren is the District tournament coordinator - gwarren@rogers.com
- Martin Hunter the NAP/GNT coordinator - martinhunter@rogers.com

creemore's bridge etiquette, rule #1

Do not, under any circumstances, do not, and I cannot stress this highly enough, do not ever, ever cheat. Well, maybe if you are being held prisoner by nefarious aliens, okay. But as long as you play this game against other human beings, just don't do it. Gosh, even against bots it's not worth it.



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Unit 246 Items of Interest

(Visit www.unit246.com for details)

- 1st time members of the ACBL can apply to the Unit 246 Board for a \$20 rebate for their 2nd year of ACBL membership
- Bridge teachers can list their services on the Unit 246 website free



2020 – it has a flow to it and sounds like such a lucky number. Surely it was a prediction for a great year ahead. How quickly that expectation was destroyed.

Now, amidst the nightmare Covid 19 has unleashed on us, it's easy to forget how fortunate many of us in the bridge community are. Yes, even with the restrictions imposed on us, the worries about the future, the lack of social occasions, we are much better off than the majority of people stuck at home. Why you ask; because we have BBO!

BBO allows us to continue to enjoy the game we love, to stay in touch and to while away the hours. Of course, there is the initial challenge of learning about BBO and its peculiarities and some of us learn more quickly than others. This is why my BBO handle is my name: complete with capital letters and a space, unlike those quick learners with their fancy monikers!

BBO has allowed our Clubs to continue to operate and pay their overhead in anticipation of the day they can re-open. Some clubs have pooled their resources. For instance, in our Unit, Belleville, Cobourg, and Peterborough operate online games as one entity, which means all their Club players can play in the same Club game online, thereby providing extra tables and the extra masterpoints associated with larger games. Aurora and Richmond Hill Clubs have done the same sharing. Ingenuity has its rewards.

On the negative side, it appears that some 'average' players have raked in high percentage games and on this subject, we want to make it absolutely clear that cheating will not be condoned. The ACBL and BBO can review plays and recognize cheating through algorithms. Also, Clubs have the right to exclude players for any reason as long as it does not breach our laws relative to race, religion etc. If the ACBL deems that cheating has occurred, the results are severe, and the pair can be banned for life – is it really worth it? Come on, let's just have fun and enjoy this wonderful game.

On another note, some of us are looking at the future of bridge in Canada: should we have our own bridge league with our own set of masterpoints (or such)? Can we align with the ACBL in such a way as to limit the large ACBL costs we incur when running Regionals or Sectionals? Is it possible to help restrict ACBL table fee costs imposed on Clubs? In other words, do we love the game enough to come out to Clubs, Sectionals, and Regionals when the reward to winners and players is Canadian masterpoints or a different or new method? Can we improvise and improve our current situation? I'd love to hear your ideas and comments on this issue so please send them along.

I look forward to the day when I'll see you all face to face; in the meantime, please stay safe.

~Linda Lord





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2020 has been quite a year. I trust everyone is following all government guidelines and is staying safe. With all tournaments cancelled for the year what are we doing to promote bridge in Unit 249? Our unit contacted all our clubs and offered assistance in getting members playing in virtual club games on BBO. Several clubs have jumped at the opportunity and I'll just mention a few: the Kitchener, Guelph, and London clubs have substantial rent obligations and would not be able to continue operations without the revenue from BBO games. Kitchener and London are getting about 100 tables/week, Guelph about 60.

It takes a while to get used to playing on BBO, but when the alternative is not playing it's worth the effort. Besides, when's the last time you've gone three months without revoking or leading out of turn? The ACBL in general, and Greg Coles in particular, have done a great job setting up the virtual club games and Greg advises more good stuff is coming. Swiss team events are a few weeks away. And we're looking at interclub championship events, too.

I'd just like to thank all the club managers and directors for their efforts in running the BBO games, and for the players (like me) who have overcome their fear of computer bridge and are keeping the game alive. Until we can meet face-to-face, stay well and we'll see you at the virtual table.

~Tom Ramsay

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Notice to All Clubs & Tournament Managers in Units 166, 246, 249 & 255

If you plan to run a tournament, please check with your Unit Coordinator to see if the date is free. There is an agreement among the four Units in southern Ontario that their tournaments will not compete with one another. This does not apply to those clubs which have an historic tournament weekend - they are set aside for you.

Graham Warren, District 2 Tournament Coordinator



In Memoriam · Nora Robinson



This amazing lady died recently. She would have been 101 in July. She was loved by all and was sharp as a tack until the day she died. Nora was the director of the weekly duplicate game in her condo until she turned 100.

~Barbara Seagram

Nora was my friend for over 20 years – a much shorter time than many of her friends. We met through bridge. I was a rookie and she was a champion – a real champion. When I asked why she would want to play with me she said, “Well you’re not any good yet – but you’re going to be very good. I’m patient.” And that was the start of a wonderful friendship.

As we played and travelled to tournaments I learned so much about her.

She liked to play bridge – but she loved to win. She was very competitive, but always kind - with impeccable manners.

I lost my partner every year from the time the black flies were done until the weather turned chilly. She loved the cottage and the work she did there - everything from repairing roads to chopping logs.

She loved cookies and cakes – but NOT store bought, so I always had a container for her when I’d had a dinner party – I cooked for my guests and added some extras for Nora.

And wherever we were, our activities stopped in time for her to have a tot of rum before dinner. No exceptions.

She was a generous friend – she taught me to love the game that had shaped her life. At tournaments and in clubs she is a legend.

I along, with many others, will remember her as a generous loving courageous woman.

~Sue Jaffe

<https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/thestar/obituary.aspx?n=nora-kathleen-robinson&pid=196083741&fhid=17701>



BBO Stars

Breuer, D'Souza, Khan, McNeely, Meng, Schamehorn, and Thomson

No doubt you've been playing some bridge on BBO lately. Have you noticed the numbers beside the player's names? They'll range anywhere from 2 to 55. You can also see this number right beside their name when you click on their profile. Simply put, the higher the number, the higher the number of BBO points the player has acquired. If you have 50 or more BBO points you're at 5. If you have earned 500 points, you're at 9. But from 9, to get up to a 10, you need a total of 1000 points. It can take a while to get from 9 to 10. After that you increase your number by one for each 100 BBO points you amass. For example, if you see a 30, it means that player has earned 3000 points.

Some players have a letter beside their name: A or K or Q or J. Only one player on BBO gets the A designation and that is the all-time points leader. The next 29 highest ranking spots get a K for King, 31st-100th get a Q for Queen, and the players ranked 101st to 250th get a J for Jack. Whoever is in 251st place has just under 5,575 points, so that player has a 55 beside their name. And then there are players who have a star beside their name—they are given the star by BBO administration, usually for having won a national championship. The player

with the highest lifetime number of BBO points, with just under 32,000, is American Leo LaSota. He has a star beside his name, otherwise he would have the A.

We have a few local stars who perform well online and so I asked them to tell us about their experience. All of them have at least 2000 BBO points. Ladies and gentlemen, I present to you (in alphabetical order), just some of our Ontario BBO Stars: Randy Breuer (*breu383*), Lino D'Souza (*linod*), Rashid Khan (*Rashid_K*), Louise McNeely (*ouizee*), Kole Meng (*mengming*), Danny Schamehorn (*schammy*), and Lesley Thomson, (*lesley20*).

*Our first BBO star is **Randy Breuer**. Mr. B. is a bridge club owner/manager and frequent contributor to the website *Bridgewinners*. Randy is closing in on 3200 BBO points.*

breu383

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One day walking through a parking lot in Sarnia, I saw a sign that read, "Bridge Club." I'd heard of bridge but never played. I grew up playing whist, so thought I should go in and check it out. I was surprised how friendly the club

owner and his son were—they quickly offered to allow me to watch.

When I first saw the game being played, I thought, “Holy crow! It’s just like whist but I can see two hands! How hard can this be?” Then they started bidding and I was again shocked. “They tell you what they have? They tell you how many cards in a suit they have and how strong their hand is? Wha--? Our family whist game is way tougher than this!”

I played in a game about two days later and we didn’t win but I did get .45 masterpoints which excited some of the players but, really, I was clueless. To me there was winning and losing and nothing in between.

Early on I was fortunate in face-to-face (f2f) bridge to partner with Bill Woodcock. He was, and still is, by far the best player in our area. He showed me important parts of technical aspects of the game. I also played a lot with (the late) Bob Charpentier. Bob taught me how to act at a table, how to lose a hand but be gracious. Sadly, I still haven’t mastered Bob’s teaching; I am a poor loser.



Randy Breuer

Starting in the late 90s I played online on OKBridge. I played a lot and got lucky to oppose Grant Baze, who did a lot of teaching and practising there. He liked when I played because I was, and still am, a very fast player. Later on, we had a f2f game together and we both played well—we won. But the highlight for Grant seemed to be that in 13 rounds he had time for 12 smoke breaks! We played almost every Nationals I attended as teammates in a side game and he was amazing taking time to talk bridge and offering advice.

As for blunders, I once passed partner and we played in a o-o fit. After the hand was over, down 9, I said, “Partner, you could have done better if you had drawn a trump or two.” Luckily, he laughed. I once played 3♠ doubled with twelve cards. Only after nine cards had been played did I realize I was missing a card. It was on the floor and it was an ace, which allowed me to make. Blunders are part of the game—well, part of my game, so I try to pick partners who will smile when they happen.

In March, 2007 I moved from OKB to BBO. BBO was a better platform and most good players were going to it. Over the years it has added many features and one of my favourites is the challenges. You play eight hands and then you can challenge a friend, stranger, or a star to play the same eight hands and see who scores best.

I rarely play against the robots or with a robot as a partner. I find the robots do not understand a lot

of important situations in bridge, especially balancing. In chess a robot can be programmed to beat the best but in bridge no robot that I have seen or played against could win a Gold Rush event. Many players have written articles about playing with three robots; I don't think it resembles bridge in any way.

Speedballs are my favourite game on BBO. It is ACBL run and awards masterpoints. You play 12 boards, four rounds of three, and each round is 14 minutes long. It costs \$1.25 USD to play. I like this event as it makes you think quicker and trains you to be ready. Even on leads: once you know you will be on lead a few bids into an unfinished auction you can, and should, start thinking of your lead. Remember, you only have just a little more than 4/5 minutes a board to bid, play, and defend. Under no circumstances is a round extended: there are no late plays so if you only played part of a hand and the round ends, GIB decides the result.

I have many new friends from around the world that I chat with online. One is Craig H. from Chicago. He and I have played for 20 plus years online and f2f; we have also socialized outside of bridge many times. Gordon Parnes, a well-known Detroit area player, and I play every day at 9am. We have known each other from tournaments and the online thing just works for both of us.

My most memorable hand was in Chicago playing a side Swiss with Grant Baze as my teammate at the

other table. My partner and I had a hand where the bidding went 2NT-7NT. The HCPs were divided 20-20 exactly. Grant said he never had seen this. Funny note: at my table my slow partner was still picking up cards when I opened 2NT. Partner bid 3♦, so I accepted the transfer and bid 3♥. Partner then bid 7NT. We all laughed—what was I supposed to do if I liked hearts—bid 8♥?

I'm not going to debate whether masterpoints should or should not be awarded online. I have heard many arguments from both views, and both have some merit. I play both online and f2f and winning in both forms takes skill and luck, just as the game should be.

Bridge is an amazing game and there is room for both online and f2f. I think f2f will always be a preference for a lot of folks as the social aspect is just not there online. Even with all these baby boomers coming along who are computer literate, f2f will be important. People need to interact; it is just human nature, and online it is not even close to the same. You go to a club or tournament and you interact with as many as you like while online you are limited with who you can contact, and games are structured timewise so there is little extra time to chat.

Online offers conveniences—you can log on anytime, play a few hands of your favourite game any time day or night; knowing your favourite pastime is always a click away is really quite amazing. Don't be afraid to start the adventure.

Kib: Thanks, Randy. All the best in getting to 4000 BBO points. Go breu creu!

Next is a frequent Swiss teammate of mine, **Lino D'Souza**. Lino runs a private school in Hamilton and can often be seen in any and every local Sectional and Regional. Lino has won two Canadian Open Pairs Championships (COPCs)—in 2010 with Naveed Ather and in 2012 with Uday Maitra. Although Lino has a 26 indicating he's earned over 2600 BBO points, he should have a star.

linod

26

I grew up watching my dad play rubber bridge with his friends and I was always fascinated by the intense postmortem and arguments that followed. When I moved to Dubai as a teenager, I started playing rubber bridge with friends into the wee hours of the morning. I then graduated into tournament bridge twice a week with team tournaments every month. As a rookie player, I was lucky to have attended the biggest bridge tournament at that time where I got to witness some of the famous stars such as Belladonna, Garozzo, Rixi Marcus, Zia Mahmood, and Omar Sharif. Dubai always had and still holds big money tournaments that draw international star players. I managed to rise to the top of the field in Dubai culminating in our team getting to represent UAE at the Geneva World Championships. My exposure to this event proved invaluable even though we were knocked out early.

Emigrating to Canada was an easy

decision for my family with my children's future of paramount importance. A few months in, I explored the bridge scene here. My involvement in bridge in Canada was enjoyable comparatively. I was particularly impressed by the courtesy and politeness from most players where from the old days this was lacking; back then was intense.



Lino D'Souza

My experience with online play started with OKBridge but once BBO came on board, there was no contest. BBO has become part of my daily routine, not only to play against the robots but also to play with my friends from all over. In addition, I enjoy kibitzing the star players.

BBO can raise the level of your game, where we can kibitz and learn from world champions. I have amassed about 2500 points by playing different games on BBO. I average about three ACBL games a day, in Daylongs, mainly against robots, which I think is one of the very great features of BBO. Now the bots can be tricky little creatures and can be ruthless on defense if you slip up. After years of playing against



Lino in his 20s, giving Omar Sharif some competition

them you tend to get a feel for how they defend and play. You have to alter your game a bit but it's for the good.

Here are a few tips for playing with robots:

- 1) 70% to 80% of the time the robots will lead passively
- 2) 3-card top-of-nothing leads are common.
- 3) If you need to find a missing queen while declaring a hand you have to play your jack early. Most of the time, the robot will cover; if you do it later the bot will know whether to cover or not so it's a pure guess.
- 4) Robots never lead away from a king on the opening lead
- 5) As declarer it is always a good idea to duck the first trick as long as you are safe to do so. Very often the robot will switch to another suit which may turn out to be favourable
- 6) Avoid doubling a part score unless you have them down for

sure. The bot's declarer play is almost double dummy

- 7) Avoid doubling a contract expecting the robot will lead your suit – they never do, sad to say
- 8) Do not overbid your hand; the robot will misunderstand and will invariably make a wrong decision or double the final contract
- 9) Instead of bidding one more, make a takeout double instead.
- 10) Finally, of course, always place your cursor on the bids to see BBO's explanations and possible responses so you bid correctly and understand what their system is

Kib: Thanks, Lino. To your excellent list I would add, "Their 10s are always over your 9s."

Our next featured star is one of Canada's top point earners with nearly 6000 BBO points. At the time of this writing Rashid Khan is ranked 220th on the all-time list. Normally Rashid would have a J beside his name for being in the top 250, but Rashid won a COPC in 2006 partnering Brad Bart. Rashid is a retired McMaster economics professor.

Rashid_K 

I was about 22 when I started playing auction kitchen-bridge at home with my brother-in-law and some neighbourhood friends in Dhaka, Bangladesh around 1971 during the liberation war. There were curfews, gunfire, sirens and lockdowns so the

bridge game was a challenging escape. We did not know any conventions and just bid our suits to land in either NT or suit contracts.

I lived with my parents with three brothers and three sisters in a large house. My father was a scary figure. He weighed over 250 pounds, was over six feet tall with a long beard and no baldness. He had true Afghan features. He was a non-smoker, non-alcoholic and anti-cards. One day, my father screamed and called me and asked me what I was doing, and I replied I was playing cards. My elder brothers and sisters thought that my father would kill me, as in, (“Somebody gonna get hurt real bad,” a line from Russell Peter’s comedy show). I went to my father’s room and I replied: “I am being honest with you and I must tell you that I was playing bridge and bridge is not a low-class-game; it is an “intellectual” game.” He liked my honesty and my reply. My father was an academician and an intellectual and he did not get mad at me for playing bridge: an “intellectual” game.



Rashid Khan

Later on, during my first year of teaching at the Dhaka University during 1973-74, my colleagues at the Faculty Club taught me to play cut-throat threesome bridge for money. In a cut-throat bridge game, four hands are dealt, and each player tries to buy the dummy and play the hand. Penalty doubles are allowed. It’s scary non-intellectual bridge because of psychs, shooting for a dream dummy and high stakes. We outgrew from these threesome mad bridge games and moved on to foursome no-convention rubber bridge for stakes.

From 1975-1981 I was doing graduate studies at McMaster University and I came across Harry Bork and Frank Vine. One evening, I was playing with Harry in an IMP League game at Hamilton Bridge Club (owned by Bill Pollack) and after I placed my hand as dummy, Harry said: “May I ask you a question, Rashid—do you have any money in the bank?” I said, no. Harry replied: “I can see that. You bid your hand to the limit, often overbid and there are no surprises (savings) in the dummy.”

I also recall a hand where I was defending a grand slam and Frank Vine was kibitzing. After the hand was over and the grand slam was made, Frank said: “Rashid, I have a private diary of bad leads and your lead will be on the top of the list.”

I think it was the Summer Nationals in Toronto in 1978, I had about 75 masterpoints. I entered my name at the partnership desk. Several people

approached me, and I asked them how many masterpoints they had, and I refused everyone because they were not Life Masters. A man in his early 60s approached me and asked me whether I would play with him. I asked him how many masterpoints he had. He answered me with a question, "How many masterpoints do you have?" I lied and said I had 100. He then continued, "I have more than 10,000 masterpoints. Is that enough for you, young man?"

That gentleman was Homer Shoop, an ex-banker who was a Grand Master. I asked him why he wanted to play with me, and he replied that he wanted to promote bridge for younger people. I played a few games with Homer in Toronto and there were always kibitzers around us. We also played at the Norfolk Nationals. I recall a hand where I laid down the dummy; the contract was 4♥ doubled and our opponent was Zimmerman. After the dummy came down, Zimmerman said, "I concede making 4♥ doubled plus one." Homer said, "It is plus two." Zimmerman never asked Homer to show his hand and wrote the score 4♥ doubled plus two in the travelling score! For the record, in 1987, Homer formed the American Contract Bridge Education Foundation starting it off with a gift of \$25,000.

The first time I logged into BBO was on October 17, 2011. Before joining BBO, I played OK Bridge a few years and accumulated some on-line ACBL points. On BBO I play all kinds of events. I think I may hold the record

of playing with the most partners in the ACBL Speedball Pairs. I've even offered to be a substitute. The easiest game is the ACBL Instant Game and the hardest one is the ACBL Daylong Tournament.



Rashid, circa 1980

Many of the events I play in, except the ACBL Speedball Pair games, are played with and against robots. Just like human beings, there are good robots, top-rated robots, and poor robots. Defending against robots is tough, because most often there are mix-ups that lead to poor results: robots don't play standard come-on signals. As a result, most often I try to be ultra-offensive to buy the hand by opening NT with off-shape hands. The most awkward robot bridge convention is 1♠ by me and 3♣ or 3♦ by robot partner showing a natural, invitational hand with 10-11 points. I always end up with dreadful results irrespective of what decisions I make after that start to the auction.

As I said, I have played with many players with whom I had never played before. I was paired with someone and my team included Martin Seligman and Mark Lair. We beat Jimmy Cayne's foursome. After this win, we played a few other matches against Jimmy Cayne without success. A month or so ago, I was partnered with a guy from West Bengal and two others to play against Cayne, his partner, and Versace and Laurier—and we won! After this win, I decided to retire playing against Cayne.

I have a very long list of BBO partners, but the most notables are Seligman, Vignirb (Iceland), Chemla (France) and Warren Watson (BC). I played with Warren several times with my Bangladesh Blue Club System and exchanged many emails. You can find Warren's latest Kindle book on "Bidding Systems" (which includes about 40 pages of my Bangladesh Blue System) on Amazon.com. Because of self-isolation and lockdowns, I've been playing many hours daily on BBO.

Here is a grand slam that Warren and I bid on BBO. In our system, an ace is worth two controls and a king one control.



North
 ♠ A 9 4 3
 ♥ A 6 5 4
 ♦ 7
 ♣ A 10 7 3

South
 ♠ K Q 8 7 6
 ♥ K Q J 8
 ♦ A 9 8
 ♣ 4

North
 2♦* any 4441

South
 2NT* (GF) asking for singleton

3♣* singleton ♦

3♦* asking for number of controls

4♣* 6 controls

4NT RKC 1430 enquiry

5♦ 3 Key cards

7♥

Here's another BBO hand from an ACBL Daylong Tournament with robots.

North
 ♠ A Q 5 3
 ♥ A
 ♦ K 9 5 2
 ♣ Q J 10 4

South (Dealer)
 ♠ K 10 2
 ♥ Q 7 4 2
 ♦ A J 10
 ♣ A K 2

North

South

3♥* stiff ♥

1NT

4♥ cuebid showing the A

3♠

4NT RKC 0314 enquiry

4♠

5NT

5♣ 0 or 3

6♠

6♣ ♣K

Pass

When I landed in 6♠ (making 7 as the ♦Q was before the ♦AJ10), it flashed in my mind how Marty Kirr and Katie Thorpe played in 7♣ with a 4-3 fit on the last hand to win the Canadian Senior Team trials.

I recall playing bridge against a world champion and I psyched. The world champion commented: "I thought you

don't psyche against good players." His comment had insulting connotations and I could not resist saying: "How do you know I consider you a good bridge player?" Many years later I apologized to him. I might have offended many players in many years of playing bridge in real life and also on BBO, and I am sorry for those encounters.

Life is beautiful and bridge is a beautiful intellectual game.

Kib: *Thanks, Rashid. I recall fondly our games in the early 90s at the St. FX University Bridge Club, back when you were a professor and I was a student.*

*Our next BBO star is someone who has been there since the beginning of BBO, as she began playing online way back in 2001. **Louise McNeely** now has over 2700 BBO points.*

quizee

27

How I got into bridge...back in the 90s a friend was at a loss of what to do with his time. He had a mathematical brain (as he was a computer-systems engineer) and he'd just come out of a relationship. I suggested that he do something like dance lessons or learn to play bridge. I told him if he chose the latter, I would take lessons with him. This was before Google, so it meant looking in the Mississauga and Toronto classified ads in the newspapers. This led us to the Mississauga Oakville Bridge Centre, owned and managed by John Rayner. My friend and I started with the Club

Series lessons and we played in some supervised games. My friend soon found a girlfriend who played Euchre and he was on his way. I carried on with the lessons and there's been no turning back.

I come from a card playing family. We played many different games that involved having a partner, bidding and trick taking, but we had never played bridge. I soon realized that bridge was not a run of the mill card game. I learned early on that it would be really easy to take a "wrong view" that could make you look stupid. On the other hand, you could make some smart plays that could make you look brilliant.

In the late 90's, with very little bridge experience, I started playing bridge online on The Zone. Later at the 2001 NABC in Toronto, Fred Gitelman was doing a demonstration of Bridge Base Online. I decided to try it. There were not many players on BBO at the time. Players would sometimes be your partner and sometimes your opponent; you were just happy when there were enough players to fill the seats at the table. Some of the BBO players that I met early on were Gerardo, Gitelwoman (Fred's mother), and Diane_302. Over the years I "bump into" those three players online, plus I've made many new online friends.

I attended my first NABC in Boston in 1999. I went with Liz Gallagher and Amelda McGlade. Patti Lee was one of the NABC Tournament Directors

and she took me under her wing. I was nervous even being there and Patti helped me to feel more comfortable. I had arranged to play in the Non-Life Master pairs with someone I had met at a Buffalo Regional. He was from New York City and all of his partners had too many points. My inexperience (or my nerves) showed through on one hand when my partner and I were defending a contract. My partner made the opening lead and I proceeded to put down my hand as dummy. Now there were two dummy hands on the table. Talk about being embarrassed...



Louise working as a BBO vugraph operator
Photo by JS

As for mentors there are many. Most of the players at MOBC were friendly and helpful. So many took the time to answer questions and explain different conventions. John Rayner ran a wonderful club with outstanding teachers and excellent directors. A player who would become a dear friend and bridge partner was Jack Stark. Jack was a nice player with a lot of experience, and he was willing

to play with me. I was not yet a Life Master, but it didn't matter to him. We played about once a week for many years.

A few years afterwards, when ACBL sanctioned games started on BBO, I started playing there. I played my first ACBL sanctioned game which was an individual and I got masterpoints. I can't remember the year, but I think it was in 2004. What I like about online bridge is the ability to play whenever I feel like it. On nights when f2f bridge is not possible, I can log on and find someone to partner with.

Speedballs are my favourite game and where I have earned most of my online masterpoints. I have made many partners on BBO. After meeting them on BBO, I have even met some at tournaments and I can say that many have become friends.

I have standing early morning games on weekends with Doug Rogers, (*rip_* as he's known on BBO). We have become friends, playing every weekend for over ten years. Doug will come to Toronto to play one day with me in Toronto tournaments and I go to Tillsonburg to play in his tournaments. Another player that has become a friend is Tracey Fuhr, (*hot_canuck*), from Thunder Bay. I have teamed with Tracey at the 2017 NABC in Toronto. Whenever she is in Toronto we try to get together for dinner and drinks (and even a Rod Stewart concert).

One of my first partners on The Zone was Terry (*midriver*). We have also

played on BBO. He is an 18-wheel driver from Missouri. He was actually in Toronto during the 2001 NABC so we got to meet f2f. I was a volunteer at the I-N Partnership desk, and I was able to find him a partner. Since that time, he has met me for coffee and a meal when he was “passing through” the GTA. Once, we were even able to play in an evening game at MOBC when he had a layover in Milton.

I am on BBO at least once a day, usually in the evening. In the last few years, I have not been able to play in f2f games due to my work schedule and other evening commitments. It is easy to jump on BBO at night and play a Speedball or two. Since the lockdown due to COVID-19, I have made a point to register as a substitute in ACBL tournaments when I don't have a game. The ACBL directors have thanked me because now that there are so many players online, they have trouble finding substitutes to fill in when a player gets disconnected.



Louise McNeely

I have played with and against many people from around the world. I have made many friends— some of whom I have met in real life and some I have not. One recent highlight was when I noticed that my opponent was Jeff Meckstroth. I didn't make a fool of myself.

Kib: *Thanks, Louise. Remember our annual game—we have to get that in some time.*

*Currently a member of the 6-person Oddy team in the CNTCs, and doing quite well, (looks like they will qualify for the 8-team playoff round), **Kole Meng** is yet another BBO star having earned over 3000 BBO points.*

mengming 30

I first started playing bridge when I was 20 years old in China. I was in college when a friend recommended to me that I learn to play. Ever since I have been hooked on this fascinating and challenging game.

As for early mentors, I would say instead of people several books were my first mentors. “Killing Defense at Bridge” by Hugh Kelsey might be my favourite one. My first bridge partner was one of my classmates at university. One thing about him I can remember: inside his backpack he always carried some bridge books.

I first started playing on BBO in 2006. I probably have amassed the bulk of my BBO points by playing in the

Instant Challenge games. I enjoy playing against the robots—but their declaring is much better than their defending. Nowadays I play once or twice a week on BBO.

I have many friends on BBO and I play with several of them in real life. I have been playing with Terry Du (*ai hao*); as regular partners for several years, we've had some good finishes at national level competitions.

I'd like to share this hand from the 2018 CNTC quarter final. Our team knocked out the Nic L'Ecuyer team, one of the top ranked teams in the tournament.

Bd16
Vul: EW

L'Ecuyer

♠ Q 8 7 6 5

♥ K Q

♦ Q 8 2

♣ J 8 6

Meng

♠ 10 3

♥ A 9 6 5

♦ 9 6 5 4

♣ Q 9 5

Du

♠ A K 2

♥ J 10 3

♦ A J 3

♣ K 7 4 2

Marcinski

♠ J 9 4

♥ 8 7 4 2

♦ K 10 7

♣ A 10 3

Nic (North) opened INT showing 10-12 HCPs. Terry doubled and that was the final contract.

Terry led the ♥J. It went two, five (encouraging as we play upside down

carding), and Nic won the queen in hand.

Declarer played a small spade to the jack and another spade from dummy, and my 10 popped up. Partner won his ♠K. He could not afford to unblock hearts by playing the ♥10, when declarer could have ♥AQ or ♥KQ tight, so he led his ♥3!



Kole Meng (right) with his bridge partner Terry Du

I won my ♥A, dropping declarer's ♥K, and I continued with the ♥6. Terry won his ♥10 and now needed to find a way to get to my hand for cashing the established ♥9. He figured a club switch may have a better chance over diamonds. So, he led the ♣2. The dummy played low and it was time for me to think.

Partner's lead of the ♥J from a three card suit suggests his hand is balanced. His club holding is not that attractive to lead from, which means there is a good chance declarer has either the ♣K or ♣J. I decided to insert the ♣9 here. North won his ♣J. He continued spades. I discarded the ♦6, discouraging in diamonds. Partner, having won the

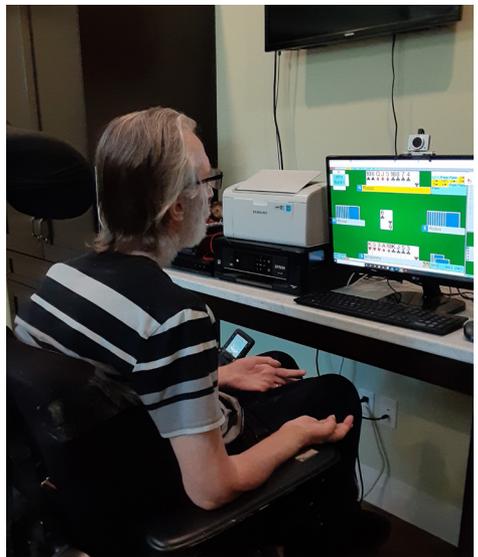
♠A now played another small club which made the rest of the play easy: two down for a sweet +300.

I could have won the ♣Q on the first round of clubs, for down one in the actual layout, but it would fail if partner had the ♣J instead of the ♣K. It was a little surprising that declarer left the doubled contract in to challenge our defense; actually they have a better landing spot in 2♠.

Online bridge is a good tool to practice. You have a chance to play the best players in the world, but expert players can take advantage of their table presence in face to face bridge.

Kib: *Thanks, Kole! Best of luck in the CNTCs (except when you play my team).*

*Next up is the Oracle of Orillia, aka the Wizard of Washago, aka Coach Couchiching – **Danny Schamehorn**. He, too, has over 3000 BBO points.*



Danny Schamehorn playing on BBO in early July, 2020

My first partner, Rick Rathfelder, also my best man, was 19 and a fine mathematician. When I first mentioned duplicate bridge to him, he said, “Oh, I read the column all the time.” We went through a very fast convention card together and played that evening at the Orillia Duplicate Bridge Club. We won. We had quite a streak at the club, winning numerous times. At first, we were popular, but the novelty soon wore off with the older players. In my earlier years I was even more adventurous than now with frequent psychs part of my arsenal. Rick slowed me down somewhat by saying he would rather win with a more predictable game. An example of my early style happened while playing with Jane Chesterfield, and the opponents asked what my one spade bid meant. Jane answered, “Either he has spades, or he doesn’t.”

schammy 31

My bridge career started in 1965 at Lakeshore Teachers College when I was 19. My first mentor, John Armstrong, an instructor there, was always looking for a fourth for rubber bridge, and being from a card playing family I was immediately hooked. I lived in Washago where I returned after retiring. I find both the competitive and social aspects of the game addictive, and there is always something new to learn.

My next partnership was with Harry Venhuis. He was patient with my occasional hotheaded behaviour. We played Precision. Unfortunately, both Harry and Rick passed away at young ages.

My first two mentors were John Armstrong and Gary Edmonds. John had good theoretical ideas and Gary was able to teach me about counting and being a good opponent. My most frequent partners over the years have been Jack Kilby, Jim Coote, Ernie Lambertsen, Marilyn Kalbfleisch, Bill Koski, George Knight, Rob Avery, and the late Dr. Sriharsha. Besides being strong players, they are also helpful and friendly opponents towards the less experienced players. I have had steady partnerships with Marilyn and Jack. Although many of them do not venture far from home, they have proven to be formidable players. Ernie and Jack, for example, came second overall in the only North American championship they played in.

One of my favourite memories at the bridge table was playing with Gary versus Jeff Meckstroth in the finals of a knockout in Sudbury. Unfortunately, even though we had a 30-imp lead at the half we lost by 3—with our partners having bid a grand slam going down one. At one point, Jeff said to his partner, “Be careful, these guys can defend.”

As for online bridge, I played OK Bridge first, then switched to BBO. Since Bridge Base first started, I have played mostly in Speedball and Instant tournaments which are enjoyable because you can play many hands in a short time limit. For example, it takes me about half an hour to complete twelve boards. I play almost every day for up to eight hours.

Playing versus the robots gives a new meaning to “every hand is an adventure.” Generally, humans are much more unpredictable. Most players I know play aggressively by



Danny and Liz on their wedding day. His first bridge partner, Rick Rathfelder, is on Dan's left

bidding thin games, especially notrump, as robots defend poorly. Also, it is important to never try to make saves with them as they will continue to bid beyond your save level. If you bid 5♣ as a non-vulnerable save you might be raised to 6 or even 7.

It is also unfortunate that robots do not give attitude or count signals, and they don't necessarily lead back your suit versus notrump. One of my pet peeves about Bridge Base is the reluctance to allow misclicks to be changed. Being quadriplegic, I use a head mouse which occasionally means, for example, I open 7NT instead of 1NT. Bridge results should be from good play not this kind of luck. Isn't it like accidentally pulling the wrong card from a bidding box?

Since my accident five years ago it is very difficult for me to play evening bridge or tournaments. Dragon and Dragger software enabled me to bid and play on a more flexible schedule and without the use of my hands. Another big advantage of computer bridge is there are no revokes and no leads out of turn. It has allowed me to develop many friendships; I have well over 100 contacts. Some of my regular partners are *RD, Roadrunner, Merry, Ludicrous, Northhunt, Kilby I, Muskokaaol, and Canadaman*. I generally play a 2 over 1 system.

I played professionally with two partners whom I met on BBO, and both became Life Masters during our tournaments in Chicago and San Francisco. Another benefit from playing on Bridge Base is the ability to watch

international players on viewgraph or during team games. You are able to put yourself in a chair and predict how they will bid or play.

Although I can't remember the exact spots, one of my favourite hands was playing with Bill Koski in the CNTC. LHO opened 3♣ and it went Pass-Pass to me. I held 20 high card points and three clubs to the 9. I bid 3NT. In order to make it I had to let the opponents in twice. Neither felt like leading clubs as they did not want to give me my ninth trick. I'm sure there was an interesting conversation later.

On BBO, you can watch some of the stronger players such as the many Canadian professionals. Decide on the auction, do you need to try something unusual? Is there a way to improve our system? My partner and I rarely discuss the hands at the table. If you want a chuckle check the world-class players and see how long it takes them to make ten errors.

Although I have accumulated quite a few points on Bridge Base, I feel these points should not count towards overall ranking changes. An easy solution would be to have the same set of criteria for online advancement such as a Silver online master.

Online bridge allows me to be able to continue with my addiction. Since my accident, darts and snooker have had to be curtailed. I am thankful to my card turners Doreen, Jan, Dougan, and my son James. I am thankful to all the members of the Orillia club for going

out of their way to make my bridge experience enjoyable.

Kib: *Thanks, Danny. Keep at it and before long you'll have a J beside your name.*

*Last but not least is **Lesley Thomson**. Lesley competes often in the Canadian Women's Team Championships, and she was on the winning team in 2012 and 2016. Lesley is one of the fastest players I know. She and Randy should have a game sometime.*

lesley20 **24**

My mother was a Life Master (she partnered with Ted Horning sometimes), so I learned at home (I was in my early 20s) and played casually for a few years – always lots of fun. I stopped playing when I moved away (busy with career, kids), and didn't start playing again until my mid-40s. I hadn't played in 20 years but immediately remembered how much I loved it and started playing competitively.

I never took any lessons. When I took bridge up seriously, my only mentors were books (Root's play of the hand; Kaplan on defense; dozens of others). The one person I'd mention is Steve Foster - we learned together and taught each other in a terrific partnership. I also took every opportunity offered to play with experts and learn from them. Linda Wynston was one of the first, and we still play together.

Looking back, I was hopelessly addicted when I started playing competitively. I would do anything and everything to get in a game – once driving through a blinding snowstorm only to find it had been cancelled lol.



Lesley Thomson

I probably logged onto BBO in 2007. I was on OK Bridge for a couple of years before that. I play mostly Speedballs and Daylongs. That's where I get experience playing with and against the robots. They will play with me at 5:00 am (I'm an early riser) when nobody else is around. I'm still not sure if it is good or bad for my game. Good because I get the hands in; bad because I adapt to them in ways that don't translate into real life. Before robots I used to play with folks from all over North America, (though we never met up in real life), but not anymore. Now I only play with people I know or with robots.

I play often—every day first thing in the morning. It's how I start my day and warm up my brain for work. With COVID, I play in about 4 or 5

tournaments per week.

As for recalling great bridge hands or stories...I tend to remember the disasters more than the great successes. There was that time in the World Championships when the tray came through and Linda had opened 2♥, which was passed out. Then realizing that the tray hadn't been pushed all the way, Linda had actually overcalled 2♥ over 1♥! Nooooooooooooooooooooo!

Here's a good one. The first time I ever psyched. It was the last board of a 6-board overtime after tying a 64-board match in the finals of the "B" flight Sheardowns. We needed a fewimps. My partner opened 1♥, and my RHO overcalled 2♥ (spades and a minor). I jumped to 4♥ with some dreck like ♠xxxx ♥xxxx ♦KQ10x ♣x. My LHO bid 5♣, which could be "pass or correct," or could be clubs (with 4NT

being "pass or correct"). I was careful not to ask, and when it was passed around to me, I doubled! My LHO figured his partner had misunderstood 5♣ and "corrected" to 5♦! I passed this time, and we set 5♦ by one trick when 6♣ was cold. Yay!

If there's one thing bridge has taught me, it's never to question other people's hobbies. To each his own, and I'm forever grateful that I've found a hobby that gives me so much pleasure. Even though I play all the time, I still look forward to every game.

Kib: *Thanks, Lesley! That was a Zia-like coup in the bidding you pulled off. Note to self: review Michaels notes when playing against Lesley.*

And thanks again to our seven BBO Stars who took the time to contribute. Be sure to watch out for them when you're playing on Bridge Base.



For Newer Players

By Robert Griffiths

Garbage? Stay, man!

After two passes, South opened INT. West considered sticking his nose in, then passed. This is North's time to

shine. He could pass, leaving his partner in a hopeless INT contract or hope that the opponents will stick a bid in to rescue him.

But North had a better plan: he bid 2♣, Stayman. I was East and considered doubling 2♣, showing my best suit and suggesting a club lead if South became declarer. But, my hand is flat and I'm afraid that if there are clubs on my left then I will not be happy defending 2♣ redoubled.

After my pass, South bid his major, 2♥ and that became the contract.

Board 2

North Deals
NS Vul

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

My partner led the ♣K and declarer quickly made nine tricks by ruffing four clubs in dummy, crossing to his hand with spades and the ♦A, then making two heart tricks in his hand.

If I had doubled the 2♣ bid, my partner would surely have bid 3♣ over South's 2♥ bid, likely ending the auction, giving us a good score instead of the near bottom we got for defending hearts.

I was surprised looking at the hand results that many North players left their partners in the hopeless INT contract, going down for -200 or -300. I expected that this "Garbage Stayman" was a standard tool used by most players. You need a perfect hand, like North's where South can confidently bid 2♣, knowing that South will bid a suit that he has plenty of. Even if South denies a major with a 2♦ bid, he'll have a dummy with five trumps and a void.

Your odds of success are much better by playing in any of the three other suits. In a NT contract dummy is pretty much entryless, but in a suit contract (other than clubs), there are entries and tricks. Try it next time you have 3 or 4 cards each in the majors and 4 or 5 diamonds. (In short, you have at most one club.) Bid 2♣, and pass whatever your partner bids.

Down 3 on Purpose

Here's a hand that clearly belonged to EW: they had 27 HCPs and good stoppers in all four suits. NS threw in some nuisance bids but EW quickly arrived in 3NT. But this was the one

hand in four when the vulnerability favoured NS.

When 3NT was passed around to North, he thought, "If my partner can win seven tricks in spades, then 4♠ doubled, going down only three will

cost only -500, a gain on the -600 when 3NT makes.” So North bid 4♠, which was doubled and became the final contract.

West	North	East	South
			P
1♦	P	1♥	1♠
2♣	2♠	3NT	P
P	4♠	Dbl	All Pass

Board 19

South Deals

E-WVul

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

West started with the ♥A, then played the ♥6, East winning the queen.

East then switched to the ♦7 and declarer went up with the ♦A, ruffed the ♥10 on the board, and returned the ♠10 which was covered by East’s jack and won with the queen.

Next came the ♥J, again ruffed and another spade through East, holding South’s trump losers to one. In all, declarer made four trump tricks in his hand, two heart ruffs on the board, and the ♦A, making seven tricks.

Holding the doubled contract to three undertricks gave NS a very good score (-500) on the board; the rest of the field played in 3NT by EW, easily making overtricks (600+). Down four would have scored -800 giving the top to EW and the bottom to NS.

As this contract was being played, each of the players at the table knew that whichever side won seven tricks would ‘win’ the hand as South did here. If the vulnerability were changed, the numbers would all change.

An Unnoticed Masterpiece

Playing in an online club game, Mike Peng, West, saw the following auction:

East	South	West	North
P	2NT	P	3♣
P	3♦	P	4♦
P	4♠	P	P
P			

NS are using a Puppet Stayman sequence: 3♣ says, “Tell me about your majors.” 3♦ says, “I have at least one 4-card major.” 4♦ says, “I have both majors” and so South signed off in his suit.

Mike mulled over his lead. He knew there were 20-21 points on his right with more spades than hearts and at least four hearts on his left. He figured

that with more hearts on his left than on his right, maybe the ♥K would be in dummy and he could make declarer misguess. And so, out came his lead: the ♥9.

Board 10

East Deals

Both Vul

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

It is unusual to lead an opponent's side suit unless it is a singleton. A doubleton lead of the opponent's suit usually just serves to finesse partner and help declarer set up the suit. So, the declarer played low, expecting that East would win the ♥Q, possibly the ace, and give her partner a heart ruff.

Now, the ball was in East's court. Some players would automatically play their highest card on the trick, not wanting to give away a cheap trick. But East was an intermediate player who knew that it was 'wrong' to underlead an ace against a suit contract. If Mike did not have the ♥A, then declarer did. How could it benefit the defence to play the queen? Declarer would win his ace and the whole suit would be his. So East didn't play the ♥Q.

The grateful declarer lost just one heart trick instead of the three that could have been lost off the top (♥Q + ♥A + a ♥ ruff) if the queen were played at trick one. What went wrong? Mike's side got a bottom board after Mike found the only lead that could defeat the contract.

Perhaps Mike was expecting too much of his partner to diagnose that he might have been breaking a cardinal rule in an attempt to baffle the declarer on this deal. But that's how intermediate players improve, by getting it wrong and learning. Perhaps, the next time that a thoughtful defender makes an unusual lead, like the 9 of an opponent's suit, he will think it over a bit more.

I'll leave it to Mike to sum up: "You're taught to follow a set of rules in the game (i.e. never underlead an ace vs. trump contracts). But when opponents provide too much information trying to find their 'optimal' contract, it's fair game, (along with the nuances and layers of the game), to break those rules. So, partner might reason, 'Hmm, why this particular lead in the opponents' "bid" suit? Why the 9 of all spots?' Then partner might realize something doesn't add up, and pop the queen.

In short, when your partner makes an 'odd' play, take time to consider the possibilities. What could the ♥9 be? Not a singleton; that would leave declarer with five hearts and he chose spades. At least consider that partner might be trying to pull the wool over the declarer's eyes. Consider the possibility that partner might have

broken a 'rule' in order to bring on a misguess by the declarer. Plus, the ♡ Q in this instance was already a dead duck anyway--may as well play it and

hope for the best.

It may have cost him a bad score, but at least Mike had a good story to tell.

Doing What Your Partner Asks

This hand is from the old days when large groups of old people gathered together to endanger each other at tournaments. I sat West and after three passes I opened INT. North bid 2♦. This bid is Cappelletti, a convention that shows 2-suited hands over the opponents' INT openers. 2♦ here shows the major suits, asking partner to pick a major.

Without the interference, my partner would have transferred me to hearts but the diamond bid on his right changed his mind about that, so he passed, expecting South to bid spades, the major East didn't have.

Board 21

North Deals
N-S Vul

♠ A Q 9 7 6	
♡ 9 8 7 6 4	
◇ —	
♣ K 10 4	
♠ J 4 3 2	♠ 8 5
♡ K Q	♡ A J 10 3 2
◇ K J 10 9	◇ 7 4 2
♣ A Q J	♣ 9 8 5
♠ K 10	
♡ 5	
◇ A Q 8 6 5 3	
♣ 7 6 3 2	

Now South had a problem. His misfit sensor should be on extreme alert mode. His partner has announced at least five cards in each major. His first impulse was to do what he was told: bid 2♠, and hope that the 5-2 fit worked out.

But this time, South decided that his best hope for a plus score, or more likely a smaller minus score was to pass, leaving his surprised partner with six diamonds in the dummy to go with whatever was in her hand. The opponents had settled into my best suit so I also passed; North declared 2♦ with her diamond void and did well to go down only one, likely the same score South would get for playing 2♠.

For all of our fancy bidding tools, it often still comes down to learning as much as you can from a couple of bids and making a sensible decision with the information you have. It's not always the bid your partner was hoping for.

Good partners will usually forgive you.



A Delicate Hand

By Doug Andrews

During the last round of the never-ending online games, after you are well out of contention, this hand arises, which presents some interesting issues. How would you and your favourite partner bid the following hands, starting with 1♣ by West?

West	East
♠10 5 4	♠A K Q 3
♥A K Q 2	♥J
♦7	♦J 10 8 6 5
♣A K 10 9 7	♣Q 8 6

After West's 1♣ opening, East's choices are 1♦ or 1♠. Your 13 HCP should be enough for game so do you bid 1♦, your longest suit, which can be bid cheaply, and let the auction unfold? Or, perhaps you prefer 1♠, thinking: 1) you will seldom want to play game in a minor suit, 2) not want partner to consider a diamond slam unless partner can introduce diamonds, 3) want to conceal information from the opponents who are likely to be defending, and 4) potentially pre-empt a heart overcall?

Yes, I bid 1♠. What should West bid now? It is on the lower edge of a reverse to 2♥. With concentrations of strength in your two suits and three card spade support, 2♥

seems to be the right call.

Now what? Many partnerships play that after a reverse a rebid of 2NT or a simple rebid of Responder's major are weak, and all other auctions are constructive. So here East has an easy 3♣ bid, which shows at least normal support, in this case at least three cards since West has promised at least five clubs. Some play the 3♣ bid creates a game force, others that 3♣ promises that responder will continue to bid until game is reached (i.e., if opener decides to drop the auction later in part-score he or she bears full responsibility).

What should West bid over 3♣? Here the nature of the game will likely affect your choice.

At teams where bidding a good slam is the overriding consideration you would continue the investigation of a club slam. So, a cue-bidding sequence of 3♦ – 3♠ – 4♥ would be followed by a key-card ask by East or a 4♠ cue-bid by East followed by a key-card ask by West, resulting in 6♣ as the final contract.

At matchpoints you also need to consider

whether there is more than one strain in which to play slam and which one is the higher scoring. With three spades it is possible that 6♠ might be the preferred contract if partner has five or more spades. So over 3♣ you would continue with 3♠ and East would respond 3NT. Now 4♦ must be a cuebid and you should be able to get to 6♣ (but that's a lot of bidding by West on a hand considered to be at the lower end for a reverse).

In 6♣, North leads the diamond ace and a diamond to his partner's king, which you ruff. You play the club ace and a club to dummy's queen and get the news. The bad news is that trumps split 4-1. The good news

is that South holds the four trumps to the jack. So, you can draw trumps and claim. But wait—did you cash the jack of hearts before leaving dummy to draw trumps? If not, you can't cash all your winners.

A Grosvenor is a play where the opponents make a deliberate error, but you consider it to be "too obvious an error" and so play for a different lie of the cards. Here by not cashing the jack of hearts before leaving dummy you have Grosvenored the bridge gods. They failed to arrange the cards to punish you for such an obvious error. North has ten major suit cards and is squeezed when you cash your winners: 6♣ bid and made!



The Last Guess Principle

By Ross Driedger

As an intermediate player, you begin to understand that just waiting for aces and kings to come your way, and then bidding only when they do, will not win you many games at your local bridge club (or even online). All the way to the elite level, successful bidding pairs know when to look for a higher-level contract, when to stop, and when to double the opponents.

The most important factor in judging whether to go on or not is the number of

trump cards that you and your partner hold. This applies to:

- Hands where your side hold most of the high cards (Constructive Auctions),
- Hands where the strength is reasonably distributed among the four hands (Competitive Auctions), and
- Hands where your opponents hold most of the high cards (Preemptive and Sacrifice Auctions).

In all these cases, a good general guideline is this: the more cards you hold in your trump suit, the more you can afford to bid.

I do not want to address constructive auctions in this article since that is a vast topic that has been well covered by many authors. The biggest gains to be made as intermediate players are in improving your judgement in competitive, preemptive and sacrifice auctions.

Let's consider the following hand:

Leaving the vulnerability aside for the moment (we will come back to that later), in third seat, you pick up this hand:

♠KJ7 ♥Q96 ♦QJ98 ♣74

Your partner opens the bidding with 2♠, and right-hand opponent passes. What do we know about this deal?

- First, it is clearly their hand. Your mushy 9 HCPs opposite a Weak 2 opening puts them in game territory. Further, your best high cards are in a suit that they are likely to ruff on the first or second round.
- There is a very good chance that they have a heart fit. If you and your partner don't mind opening weak 2 bids in first seat with an outside four card major, then the opponents have at least a nine-card club fit. They have a place to play, and values, likely to give them a game.
- There is almost a zero chance that your left-hand opponent will meekly pass a 2♠ opening. You can expect a balancing overcall or a double.

Let us suppose that you pass and LHO doubles. Partner (who pre-empted) passes as they should and RHO now bids 3♣. Do you keep passing or do you compete? Given this auction, most likely you would bid 3♠.

Unfortunately, you have already not played your cards to your best advantage. If you were willing to compete to 3♠, you should have bid it right away. By passing, you are not applying pressure to your opponents

To see why, let us get out of our present chair and take over Lefty's hand for now:

♠A ♥AJ873 ♦K1073 ♣K63

Your (new) left hand opponent has opened 2♠, followed by two passes. You have a double, or a slightly more courageous balancing overcall of 3♥. You are trying to find your best place to play starting at the 3-level, but it is quite likely that you can survive to find a playable spot.

If instead the auction goes 2♠ - Pass - 3♠ to you what do you do? Anything you do, Pass, Double, or 4♥, will be a guess and when you guess, especially when there are more than two choices, you will likely be incorrect.

Let us go back to our original seat and rearrange the auction slightly. Your partner still opens 2♠ - Pass - Pass - 3♥ - Pass - 4♥ - to you. Now it is you that has the guess. Do you pass, double or bid on to 4♠? Which one will work out? Who knows? You certainly don't and the opponents have now exchanged enough information to double you if you bid, or even redouble if you double.

By using up bidding space as quickly as possible, you are depriving your opponents from exchanging useful information – information they can use to take advantage of their superior high cards to extract the maximum points out of you.

The winning bridge players will try to position themselves in the bidding to avoid guesses and give the guesses to their opponents. You can do that by deciding how high you want to go in your trump suit, and then bidding it right away. By doing so, you are giving your opponents the last guess.

The full deal
Dealer: West

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

North/South can make eleven tricks in hearts, while East/West can take seven tricks in spades.

How High is High Enough?

Vulnerability plays an important part in deciding how high. In the present hand at equal or unfavourable vulnerability, East should follow The Law of Total Tricks, and bid to the level of the number of spade cards the side holds: 3♠. In this particular deal, the penalty of playing in 3♠ doubled will not exceed that of North/South making 4♥, or 5♣.

At favourable vulnerability, East can really push North/South around by bidding 4♠! What is South to do when facing an initial action at the 5-level? Even if North/South double 4♠, it will be down only 3 for -500, when the opponents can make +650 in 4♥.

The Last Guess Principle:

In competitive and preemptive auctions, decide how high you are willing to go with your trump suit, and bid to that level immediately. This prevents the opponents from exchanging enough information to find their best spot. You are giving them the last guess, and nobody guesses correctly all the time.





For Advanced Players

By David Turner

Elimination Play

It's usually a disadvantage when playing a hand to lead a rickety suit for the first time yourself – this is something you'd rather have the defenders do for you. For example, if dummy and you hold any of the following suit combinations, you can be sure of a trick (eventually) if the opponents lead the suit first, but not if you do:

Q 5 3	K 5 4	Q 6 2
J 7 4	J 7 6	10 9 5 3

and so on. In some cases, you can be sure of a trick only if one particular opponent leads the suit, but not the other:

K 5 3	Q J 4
6 4 2	7 5 3

will take a trick for sure if RHO leads the suit, but not necessarily if LHO leads the suit.

A third common situation is that you are only guaranteed multiple tricks if the opponents lead the suit from either side:

K J 3	K Q 4
A 10 2	A 10 9 3

and so on. For the sake of this article, let's call all these suit combinations "positional suits."

Elimination Play is the name given to a play in a suit contract that requires the opponents to either lead a positional suit like those shown above (giving you the trick(s) you need) OR leading another suit where you are void in each hand, allowing you to trump the lead in one hand, and throw away a loser in the positional suit. It is particularly common when you have an abundance of trumps in your two hands.

Let's look at some hands and see how this technique might come into play ...

Novice

♠ A Q 9 5 4 3	♠ K J 10 6
♥ 5 4	♥ 6 3 2
♦ K J 5	♦ A 10 6 3
♣ J 4	♣ A 3

Here you are in 4♠, and they lead ♥A, ♥K, ♥Q, which you trump. You have a club to lose, so it's going to come down to guessing who has the diamond queen – how should you play it?

This is a classic elimination situation: draw as many trumps as you need to (say three rounds), then play ace and another club. At this point the opponents are on lead, and your two hands are:

♠ A Q 9	♠ x
♥ ---	♥ ---
♦ K J 5	♦ A 10 6 3
♣ ---	♣ ---

If either opponent plays a diamond you play second hand low, and you are guaranteed three diamond tricks. If instead they lead another club, you trump the club in dummy and discard the small diamond from your hand, a ruff and a sluff – either way, no diamond loser!

Try playing the hand with *4* small hearts in dummy, and only ♦A 10 4 – how would you play then? ♠Answer is in the Intermediate section below – good for you if you get it!♥

It's not easy to imagine an elimination play, I'd say, but it's a common situation. Keep an eye out for those "positional suits," and try to organize the play so that the opponents have to lead them, not you.

Here's one more hand to try:

♠ 7 2	♠ A K
♥ A K 7 6 5	♥ Q J 8 6 2
♦ A 3 2	♦ K 5 4
♣ A J 7	♣ K 10 6

You're in 6♥ (nice bidding!) and they lead the ♠J. How do you play?

Answer at the end.

Intermediate

Your cards don't always permit an immediate elimination – sometimes you have to do some work to get to the situation you need. Try this hand:

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

You're in 4♠, and they lead ♥AKQ. You ruff the third round. How do you proceed? Well, you've got lots of trumps, and a "positional suit" in diamonds, so an elimination seems called for. But if you draw trumps and exit in clubs, the opponent who wins the club trick may have the ♥J to play – and you'll be forced to ruff in hand and guess diamonds yourself. The way to overcome this is to draw trumps ending in dummy, *ruff dummy's last heart*, THEN play ace and a club. Then the opponents will have to lead diamonds, or give you a ruff and discard. With that example in mind, try to make 3♠ on the hand below, with the ♠8 lead (East follows suit):

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

Answer below

Advanced

Eliminations don't occur only when all the trumps have been drawn (if there's still one or more trumps outstanding,

that's called a partial elimination), and sometimes it matters a lot who wins the exit trick. Try these:

1. Contract 4♠ – opening leader opened 1♦ and leads the ♦K

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

In view of the opening bid, it looks like you have one spade, two hearts and one diamond to lose. You definitely expect most of the high cards with the opening bidder. How do you manage the elimination to take advantage of that?

2. Contract 4♥ – opening leader opened 1♦ and led ♦Q (Q from AKQ), then ♦A (trumps are 2-2)

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

You're in danger of losing one diamond and three spades if you have to lead spades yourself. Can you see how to ensure opening leader has the lead at the critical moment?

3. Contract 5♦ – the opening lead is the ♠8 – you play low, South plays the king as you win the ace.

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

There are lots of chances here to avoid losing one heart, one club, and one diamond. What's the best line?

ANSWERS:

Novice: In 6♥, clubs is the positional suit. Draw trumps, cash the spades, and play ♦A, ♦K, and exit in diamonds. The opponents will have to guess the ♣Q for you, or play diamonds or spades: at which point you'll ruff in dummy and throw your small club away. Well done!

Intermediate: In 3♠, diamonds is the positional suit, but you have to ensure there are no hearts left in your two hands when you exit in clubs. Draw trump and *duck a heart*. If they return a diamond you're assured of only two losers there, so win the heart or club return, play ♥AK, and exit in clubs - holding your losers to one heart, one club, and two diamonds.

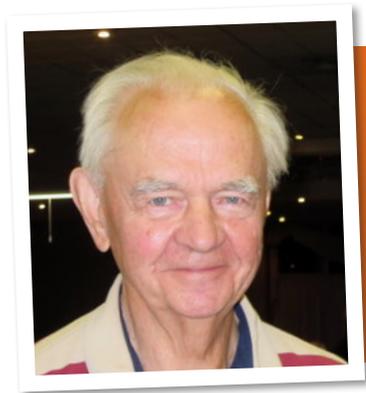
Advanced 1: This is a tricky one ... it's tempting to play ace of spades and a spade exit, but that loses when lefty can exit in spades after cashing his diamond. Instead, play ♣A, ♣K and ruff a club, and then exit in diamonds to the queen on your left. Lefty must exit a low spade to avoid leading hearts, but now you win the spade cheaply and play ace of spades, spade for your second elimination of the hand! Lefty's hand: ♠Kxx ♥Ax ♦KQxxx ♣Jxx

Advanced 2: This time you get your elimination by throwing lefty on lead in diamonds: ruff the second diamond, draw trumps, cash three clubs ending

in dummy, and exit the $\diamond J$, *throwing a small spade* as lefty wins. You lose two diamonds and only one spade. Note you also might make it if LHO has 4144 shape (you don't draw the third trump before exiting in diamonds).

Advanced 3: This is an actual hand I played recently. If the diamond king is offside doubleton, you'll try a heart to the king and then try the club finesse if that loses. If the diamonds are 1-1 you have at most two losers. The fun case is

$\diamond Kx$ onside: you could guess to finesse for it, but, thanks to elimination, if the finesse is onside, you don't need to take it! Watch: $\diamond A$ (lefty shows out), $\spadesuit Q$, spade ruff, diamond exit to RHO. If he plays a heart, you'll pitch your club loser on the $\heartsuit K$; a club return will eliminate your club loser, and a spade return will get rid of your heart loser, and you can try the club finesse for an overtrick! This is the unusual case where there are *two* positional suits!



Two Great Hands

By Jim Priebe

On the first Sunday in July the Great Dealer gave us two exceptional play hands to amuse ourselves, while competing in the Canadian Senior Team Championships. One involved a trump endplay in a doubled contract, and the other a triple squeeze in an aggressive 3NT.

First, take a look at the trump endplay:

Board 11 (rotated for convenience)
Vul: None

Mel Norton

$\spadesuit A 8$
 $\heartsuit Q J 8$
 $\diamond Q 10 9 4 3$
 $\clubsuit A 7 2$

The Shoe

$\spadesuit Q 9 7 4$
 $\heartsuit 9 5 4$
 $\diamond A K 7 6 5$
 $\clubsuit 3$

Harmon Edgar

$\spadesuit 10$
 $\heartsuit 10 7 6 3 2$
 $\diamond J 2$
 $\clubsuit K Q J 10 6$

Jim

$\spadesuit K J 6 5 3 2$
 $\heartsuit A K$
 $\diamond 8$
 $\clubsuit 9 8 5 4$

Mel, North, dealt and opened 1♦. I, South, responded 1♠. Mel rebid 1NT, and Harmon, East, threw in a 2♣ bid. I now jumped to 3♠ to show a sixth spade and invitational values. Mel liked his 13 HCPs and doubleton spade and raised me to the spade game. It went pass-pass to West. Looking at his queen-nine fourth of trumps and two top diamonds, the Shoe raised the ante to 8♠ by clicking on the Double icon.

The Shoe led the ♦A and shifted to the ♣3 at trick two, dummy's ace winning. I then played a low diamond noting the jack on my right. I cashed the ♥AK and led a trump to dummy. The beautiful ♠10 appeared on my right. Dummy's ♥Q was cashed, all following, while I pitched a club from hand. Now I led the ♦Q pitching another club from hand while West won his ♦K.

West now had the pleasure of leading a diamond to the dummy or a spade into declarer's tenace. He chose a diamond, allowing declarer to discard his last club.

Declarer then safely ruffed the last diamond with the ♠5 in this position:

<p>♠ 8 ♥ - - ♦ 9 ♣ 7 2</p> <p>♠ Q 9 7 ♥ - - ♦ 7 ♣ - -</p>	<p>♠ - - ♥ 10 7 ♦ - - ♣ Q J</p>
<p>♠ K J 6 5 ♥ - - ♦ - - ♣ - -</p>	

West, of course, followed suit on the diamond play. Now the play of the ♠6 was won by West who had to lead a trump into declarer's ♠KJ at trick 12. Plus 590! The second deal featured John Gowdy as declarer in 3NT:

Board 15 (rotated for convenience)
Vul: NS

David Turner	
♠ K 8	
♥ J 8	
♦ A 8 7 6 5 2	
♣ 9 7 2	
Bob Zeller	Mark Siegrist
♠ J 10 7 2	♠ A 6
♥ 6 5 4	♥ Q 10 9 3 2
♦ Q 3	♦ 10 4
♣ 8 6 5 4	♣ K Q J 3
John Gowdy	
♠ Q 9 5 4 3	
♥ A K 7	
♦ K J 9	
♣ A 10	

North dealt and passed, so East opened 1♥. South, Gowdy, overcalled 1NT. David Turner, North, bid 2NT, a transfer to diamonds, so Gowdy bid 3♦ to say, "I like diamonds." David then signed off in 3NT.

There is no story on a club lead as the contract must go down, but it is an interesting play hand on a heart lead which is what happened at the table. It went ♥4 - ♥J - ♥Q - ♥A. Gowdy now cashed the king of diamonds and then the jack. Bob, West, played the ♦Q and Gowdy ducked! Bob shifted to a club which Gowdy won with his ace.

Next, declarer played the $\diamond 9$ to dummy and began to run all his diamonds. With one diamond left in dummy, this was the position:

<p> \spadesuit K 8 \heartsuit 8 \diamond 6 \clubsuit 9 7 \spadesuit J 10 7 \heartsuit - - \diamond - - \clubsuit 8 6 5 \spadesuit Q 9 3 \heartsuit K 7 \diamond - - \clubsuit 10 </p>	<p> \spadesuit A \heartsuit 10 9 \diamond - - \clubsuit K Q 3 </p>
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East can surrender in one of three ways on this last diamond: discard the $\spadesuit A$, a heart or a club! At the table East pitched the $\clubsuit 3$ and now declarer could safely set up a spade to make the vulnerable game.

At the other table East opened a canape $2\clubsuit$ to show 4+ in clubs and 5+ hearts. I decided to forego notrump with my doubleton ace of clubs, so I bid $2\spadesuit$. It went all pass and we scored +170 to lose 10 imps. Well played, Gowdy!

What I Have Learned

By Michael Roche



First and foremost, **bridge is a partnership game.**

When declaring or defending, remember the ABCs of good play: **Always. Be. Counting.**

Winning ‘only’ 3 imps on a board is perfect. Do that on every board of the match and you’ll end up with a perfect match.

I’ve been playing for more than 50 years and I started out playing with players with the same skill level as me, which is to say, not very skilled. We would make our mistakes. We’d finish fourth in our section at the Regal and win 0.16 of a masterpoint. We’d get the piece of paper and when they totalled more than one masterpoint, we’d send them in to the ACBL. **So, you can go a long way in this game.**

Back then a top player came up to me at the club championship and told me, “I see you have some talent, but I

must tell you something—you don't to need to psych on every board to get good scores." I remember feeling a bit hurt because...I hadn't psyched on any boards. **These days, as Katie likes to say, "Michael plays down the middle. But it's his middle."**

Every now and again I'm reminded of a bridge moment that seems to go beyond bridge and is just life.

Like the time many years ago during a score comparison when a teammate said, "This isn't bridge!" as he ripped his scorecard into pieces. We still laugh about that today.

You can judge a hand perfectly, decide to stop bidding, and let the opponents play the hand, beat them, and go plus 100, **only to have your teammates come back with a minus 1400** on the same board.

Preparation is all. Even the worst agreement is better than no agreement.

Whenever I'm filling out a convention card with a new partner there are three or four things that I need to discuss. Like 1♦-1♠, 2NT. Do we play Checkback, do we play Wolff, or do we play transfers? Also, it's important to go over leads and signals.

Which brings me to carding. **I like to play a hybrid: standard count and reverse attitude.** It works for me.

Over their notrump I have played DONT. Currently I play Woolsey. I have played Transfers. **There is nothing**

that works all the time. Everything works...sometimes.

You can't just alert a convention and call it by its name. Modified Cappelletti—what's that? Need a little more information.

It's important to lock in a major over Stayman. Say it goes 1NT-2♣, 2♠. How do I say, "Partner, I like your spades and I'm interested in slam"? For some reason there's been a gap there for students learning the game. We use the other major as an artificial raise of Opener's major after Stayman. Works well. So, after 2♠, Responder can bid 3♥. "Okay, partner, happy times. Spades are trumps."

Empathy. You have to be able to understand what your partner thinks you are up to. You can make the best bid, but will your partner understand it? **It's better to make a bid that partner is going to get for sure.**

The cuebid is not the panacea to solving all bidding problems.

I like playing the weak notrump and I like the inferences.

As declarer, planning the play is not just looking two or three tricks ahead, but sometimes nine or ten tricks ahead. As far as defending a hand, it's often easier to defend against good declarers because you can follow the logic of what they're trying to do. Stratified play is the beginning of the end. **If you want to get better in this**

game, you have to play against the better players. In today's ACBL you can become a Life Master but never play against one. That's just ridiculous.

We used to get carved by Murray and Kehela and Bruce Gowdy. **But you didn't mind getting carved if you learned something.**

One of things that makes bridge fun is you can compete with an expert and sometimes win. Golf's not like that. In golf, if I play against Tiger Woods, I might get a 4 on a hole where he gets a 5, but at the end of the day he shoots 64 and I shoot 104.



You can win in bridge as much by underbidding as overbidding. You don't have to bid 6♠ and make it to winimps. You can play in 3♠ and winimps on the board when you make it and they go down in 6♠. That's happened before.

It's important to get your partner's best game. When playing with students and going over the hands I like to show them where they did the right thing. Even if it only led to a 45% board, they're happier knowing they did the right thing.

Winning the CNTCs three times with three different partners has been very satisfying. Thanks to Chris Hough, Jim

Green, and John Rayner, and of course our teammates. **You may laugh but the secret of success is to be the worst player on your team!** I have been very lucky with great partners and teammates such as Nader Hanna. Nader and I have four national wins together.

Winning is what it's all about. But winning when playing with your friends is an even greater feeling. Winning the ACBL's von Zedwitz LM Pairs with John Carruthers was over the top. I was and still am astounded that our names are on a trophy that includes past winners Murray and Kehela. In 1972 I won my first Sectional and I went to watch the Olympiad in Miami. All the great players were there including the Precision Team with C.C. Wei. The Bulletin had an article about how the event had assembled all the best declarers and all the world class defenders. The Bulletin asked, **"What's going to separate them?" And the answer was the bidding. And here we are 50 years later, and nothing has changed.**

The game is all about the bidding.



John Carruthers and Mike after their victory in the von Zedwitz Life Master Pairs, a 3-day, 6-session event against a world class field

Mike's major victories:

Year	Event	Partner
1993	Canadian National Teams	Chris Hough
1996	Canadian National Teams	Jim Green
2011	Canadian National Teams	John Rayner
2012	Freeman Mixed Board-a-Match	Karen Cumpstone
2014	Freeman Mixed Board-a-Match	Karen Cumpstone
2015	Canadian Senior Teams	John Rayner
2018	Canadian Senior Teams	Michael Hargreaves
2018	ACBL Life Master Pairs	John Carruthers

In addition, Mike has over 75 Blue Ribbon qualifications for finishing first or second at an ACBL Regional event.



*Mike and friends at the 2016 Penticton Regional
(wife Barbie Stewart, Mike, Debbie & Mike Hargreaves, Jill Thompson & John Rayner)*



And Now it Can be Told

Thinking of Cheating?

In the late 80s/early 90s the Mississauga-Oakville Bridge Center had a thriving team league; so thriving, there were two: an A and a B. I had about 12 masterpoints to my name, so I played in the B, but I kept a running interest in the results of the A league since that was where all the good players competed. One of the teams I took an interest in had Ron and Eric Sutherland. Ron had 5,000 masterpoints and his son Eric was in Grade 13, soon to be a junior star, representing Canada in international competitions.

While Ron and Eric were solid, it was their teammates who had the bridge world buzzing. Gary Blackhouse played with Darren Hutchinson, a flashy player in his early 30s, who was a phenom at declaring. Their team was beating up on everyone, especially if the cards ran Gary and Darren's way—if Darren was declaring a slam, he would find a way to bring it in, even if it took an exotic line of play.

On team league night, sometime in the winter of 1990, my team finished the first half score comparison and had about a 5-minute break before the second half was to resume. I

sauntered over to the Blackhouse team just in time to catch their score comparison. They were sitting at their home table and there were two or three onlookers. I forget what the score was (doesn't matter); what I could not forget, not even to this day, was what I saw as soon as they had finished tallying up the score: *Darren brought a deck up from underneath the table and proceeded to deal a hand out right there and then!* I thought, "That's weird—shuffling and dealing without the opponents present? What's up with that?"

Darren, after dealing out the cards and placing them into the slots, said, "Okay guys, board 12 is done for you. Gary and I will go sit East-West at the other table; Ron and Eric, you play North-South this half." I had to get back to my match, but I was now curious. So, at the end of my match, I made a beeline for Darren's table just in time to see him pull out his cards for board 12. He and Gary bid up to 6♠. Darren declared and made it on a simple squeeze. I followed them to the team score comparison and saw that board 12 was a push: Ron Groulx also made 6♠ on a squeeze.

Clearly there was something rotten in the state of Denmark, but I didn't have

enough info to approach John Rayner, the owner of the bridge club. If Darren was swapping decks, as I suspected, I needed to observe him doing so.

Two weeks later both our teams were at the club for the semifinals of our respective team leagues. My match was slow to start so I had time to observe Darren. He and Gary were about to sit down at their table. Even though no opponents were with them they were taking cards out of the slots and preparing to shuffle. Well, Gary shuffled his cards, but Darren pulled the ol' switcheroo. So brazen, so smooth—right in front of Gary. Into his jacket went a blue deck, and out popped an orange deck. No cards were shuffled. I took note of the board number. Sure enough it was another slam hand with Darren declaring. I forget the result, but I had enough to inform Rayner.

Turns out, John had been suspicious for months. So had his teammates and other good players in the GTA. To get further proof, John used a type of playing cards called Kem (plasticity and washable, yet slippery) for the finals of the team league. During the first half, one Kem brand deck went missing and in its place was the ordinary ACBL brand with the solid colour. It was a slam hand. Oh, and one or two observers witnessed another switcheroo.

As Mike Roche said when they confronted Darren with the evidence, "I've been playing bridge for 20 years and the plays and coups you are executing just do not come up this often." That effectively sums up the

circumstantial evidence that Darren was cheating. (Darren did not show up for his ethics hearing and to this day is banned for life by the ACBL.) It also sums up how experts suspect cheaters of cheating—statistically not even a world champion can keep playing perfectly, making newspaper slam hands every session they play.

As it turns out Darren was acting alone. Gary Blackhouse had no idea and the Sutherlands also had not suspected anything. However, after mulling over the evidence they all realized how far back the switching of decks was happening.

Darren was not doing it for the money; we can only surmise he was doing it to boost his ego.

In today's BBO game data is collected. If you are cheating, an algorithmic alarm bell will go off. First you will be suspected of cheating and then you will be observed. Whether you are self-kibitzing (BBO-ACBL events do not allow kibitzers, but some online events do) or whether you are colluding with your partner through illicit signals (e.g. phone calls), you will get caught.

I know I am preaching to the choir here as 99.99% of bridge players do not even have a morsel of an inkling of a whisper of a semi-thought of behaving illicitly, but to the 0.001% of you who are thinking of cheating: don't do it. You will get caught. You will lose respect. You will lose bridge. And your story will be told in the Kibitzer.



Recognition Time for Alex Kornel, David Lindop, and Sheri Winestock

Many cities in North America can stake their claim as “most influential” in developing strong bridge players and, in general, promoting bridge. We know Charles Goren was from Philadelphia; we know an uncanny number of excellent, yet seemingly “unknown” bridge players come from Montreal; we know the Aces hunkered down in Dallas back in the day; and, we know the likes of Eddie Kantar, Bob Hamman, and other bridge sharks all lived in Los Angeles back in the heyday of bridge, the late 60s/early 70s. Notice I haven’t even mentioned New York? (Oops just did.) But did you know Toronto might top them all? I’ll give you the names of three Torontonians: Fred Gitelman, Audrey Grant, and Barbara Seagram. That’s three colossal names in the world of bridge, three Hall of Famers, (now or certain to be).

But this article is not about Fred, Audrey, and Barbara. This article, three interviews actually, is all about Alex, David, and Sheri—the folks ‘behind’ the folks listed above. These three have worked tirelessly for our great game and they deserve more recognition: they might even deserve to be in the ACBL Hall of Fame, now or someday. Time now (in alphabetical order) to herald the unheralded.

Alex Kornel

Husband to Barbara Seagram since 1984, and a very fine player in his own right, our first interviewee is Alex Kornel. You may have seen him when he owned, operated, and directed at Kate Buckman’s in the ‘90s and early aughts. In my mind I can still hear Alex’s way of announcing a new round: “Okay everybody, time now for our next progression.” Love it. Or you’ve been to Barbara and Alex’s School of Bridge, or perhaps you’re playing at Lee’s, in person or online. You will see Alex out and about, maybe even on a cruise. Alex and Barbara have only cruised together 125+ times.



Alex at age 10 in Poland

This is no joke: if you google Alex Kornel, the first four entries all first

mention Barbara Seagram. Google gets around to presenting Alex by the fifth entry. Story of his life? Not quite. But as the Kib has learned, Alex not only has an interesting past, but he clearly complements Barbara, making them a great team.

Kib: Take us back to the beginning: how did you get started in the game?

Alex: The very first time I sat down to play was with my parents and a neighbour when their “fourth” did not show up for the regular twice-a-week game of rubber bridge. I was age seven at the time. That was in Warsaw, Poland in the mid-50s. Bridge was frowned upon by the communist

government as a decadent “bourgeois” game and was never played in public.

Kib: Who were your first mentors?

Alex: My mother taught me “Polish” point count: aces were worth 7, kings worth 4, etc., etc, but it was my father who taught me to overbid.

Kib: Do you have any anecdote about learning bridge back in the day that you can share?

Alex: I was introduced to a 2N opening bid convention that asked for specific aces and finally I got dealt a hand (a random 23 in today’s HCPs) and so I opened 2NT and when my

Kib Bridge Movie

What is a Bridge Movie? It’s one of our favourite features of the Bridge World magazine, for one. For two, it’s an opportunity for you, the reader, to get inside the head of an expert and match wits, or rather, bridge acumen.

To get the most out of a bridge movie, think about your bid or play before turning to the next page. The Bridge Movie is about to start. Please turn off your cell phone, but feel free to place your feet wherever you like.

It is Board 1 of a 16-board imp match in the round robin

of the Canadian Mixed Teams Championships. You are South and pick up the following:

♠ —
♥ 10 7 4
♦ A J 9 5
♣ A K Q J 10 3

Your partner, North is the dealer and opens with 1♠. Your RHO, East, overcalls with 2♥. You could make at least two bids here and not be wrong. You could bid 3♣ for the obvious reasons or you could double to show at least four cards in both minors. Or perhaps there is another bid you fancy. *What is your call?*

father bid 3♦, I announced that he is lying since I was looking at the ♦A. He later explained to me that he made his own “Kornel” modification that allowed him to show a void. My mother just rolled her eyes.

Kib: How about now? What’s something you learned recently about bridge—either declarer play or defense or bidding or some other intangible?

Alex: I am in the process of learning 2-way checkback and XYZ. Our friend in Vancouver loves conventions and we play occasionally online. Tougher and tougher at my age to memorize all this stuff.

Kib: When you look back at your learning curve, what do you think caused (or allowed) you to learn bridge the best? Was it a certain person? A player or author? Or a book?

Alex: In my early days in Canada, I discovered the Regal Bridge Studio and started kibitzing rubber bridge games. By that time my English was good enough to understand most of what was being said. Everybody was teaching everybody else—strange. The best players there were Bruce Elliot and Shorty Sheardown. At that time, I was just 17 and fresh off the boat from Poland. Two years later I went to the U of T and stated playing at Hart House – we had at least 15 -20 tables every Tuesday night. I learned a lot from The Shoe, Michael Schoenborn – never played with him but I sure made a lot

of mistakes playing against him.

Kib: Of all the top players nowadays—is there anyone you follow or whom you like to see succeed?

Alex: Barbara and I had a chance to play with two very young players, John Dong and Bruce Zhu (aged 15 and 16) at the Charleston Regional a year and a half ago. Their demeanour at the table was to be admired: friendly, helpful, and respectful but totally concentrated on each hand; they had incredible focus. They conduct a summer “boot camp” for kids – 7 to 10 years old. Giving back to the game is so important. Attracting young players is the future of the game.



I met Alex in 1981. He is my soulmate. We have been partners in business, at the table and in life since then. It has been an amazing journey. He keeps me grounded. I constantly go over hands with him. He is an instinctive bridge player and quick to analyze. He also handles all the finances. I love to earn and spend while he manages what’s left. Alex is a wonderful husband, father, and grandfather and I am so lucky to have him in my life. ~Barbara Seagram

Kib: How did you and Barbara meet?

Alex: The first time I saw Barbara was at the bridge table at Audrey Grant's bridge club in 1981. We were opponents. I remember getting two complete tops and smirking. She says it was her partner's fault. Gotta believe her. We subsequently played on the same team in a midnight Speedball event at the Detroit NABC in March that year. We won the event and then started playing bridge together.

Kib: If you and Barbara didn't build up the business you did together, what do you think your career would have been?

Alex: I was a system analyst at one of the premier, official "Queen's Printers" in Toronto and worked there for 20

years. The job was exciting – new developments of computer typesetting. It was groundbreaking. I guess if I never met Barb I'd be now retired after a 40-year career in systems.

Kib: Can you take us behind the scenes a little—what exactly is your role? What is your typical workday like? If you do a cruise together is it relaxing for you or are you working hard?

Alex: Behind every successful woman there's a surprised man they say. Well, I was never surprised. This woman has so much energy – makes me tired just looking at her run. We ran the Kate Buckman Bridge Studio for many years— hours and hours of work. Never ending. Always something to do at all times of the

Bridge Movie continued

♠ —
♥ 10 7 4
♦ A J 9 5
♣ A K Q J 10 3

The bidding has gone:

West	North	East	South
	1♠	2♥	?

While the negative double might show eight of your cards (at least 4-4 in the minors), you are better placed to bid your hand naturally. By bidding clubs now and rebidding diamonds later you will be showing

at least five clubs and probably four diamonds. You could be 6-4 as you are here, or you could be 6-5 in the minors with longer clubs. Those are pretty good clubs and they are longer. Best is to bid 3♣.

It then goes pass by West, and partner surprises you with a bid of 4♣. We say surprise because you were half expecting to hear 3♠ or 3NT.

East passes and it is your turn. The standout choices are to cuebid diamonds or bid some number of clubs such as 5♣ or 6♣. *What is your call?*

day. We built up the largest bridge club in Canada by working 16 hours a day. Directing, teaching, and doing the boring accounting part of the job. We also started taking groups on cruises all over the world. Bridge on the high seas – an adventure. We have done over 100 of these. We run duplicate games in unbelievable settings...in the middle of the Amazon, on safari with warthogs snorting at our bids and in many airports. One day we will write a book about it. Maybe titled, “25 Ways to be Seasick.”

Currently Barb is teaching on Zoom and the proceeds go to our Cambodia projects. We sustain five schools there and have other outreach programmes also. We also play 4-5 times a week at various clubs on the continent and online at BBO. When life is normal, we play bridge at local bridge clubs wherever we are.



Alex and Barbara getting married in March, 1984 on the morning of the Manulife tourney so that everyone could go play that afternoon.

Kib: Is there anything in which you, or the two of you, would like a do-over?

Alex: If we could go back to 2006 and find a different buyer for our club, that

would be really great. The buyer had a different business ethic... The club was 49 years old and we had just won the ACBL Award for being the top bridge club in North America (out of over 3200 clubs) when we sold it. He did everything wrong and closed the doors 14 months later. It broke our hearts. But hindsight is always perfect.

I also would buy some Amazon and Apple shares in the original IPO.

Kib: What aspect of your work gives you the most satisfaction?

Alex: Having our students email us from some far away tournament and tell us that they've just won 12 gold points and it is all thanks to our teaching.

Kib: Do you and Barbara have plans to retire, ease into retirement, or go full on for a while longer?

Alex: Barbara will work till she drops. I am trying to get her to slow down, but it is a completely wasted effort. I started slowing down, but she kicks my ass and I am once again at her beck and call.

Kib: Do you think you might wish to begin a partnership with someone and compete regularly in Canadian national events such as the Seniors?

Alex: Maybe Dudley Camacho. He is a fine player.

Kib: What is the best part about your bridge game?

Alex: Not making any brilliant plays but exploiting every mistake my opponents make. Also playing my opponents' as well as my hand.

Kib: Example!



Alex and Barbara on a Rhine cruise

Alex: Okay, here's a recent hand from Lee's Virtual Club. (I can only remember the recent ones.) I held: $\spadesuit K52$ $\heartsuit AJ10942$ $\diamondsuit AJ5$ $\clubsuit 4$. RHO opened $1\diamond$, I bid $1\heartsuit$, and LHO bid $1\spadesuit$. Barbara raised me to $2\heartsuit$ and when RHO passed, I bid $4\heartsuit$. Maybe it will make or maybe it will cause the opponents to do the wrong thing. They chose to bid on to $5\clubsuit$, which was the wrong thing. I doubled that and we beat it two tricks for a 95% board. $4\heartsuit$

Bridge Movie continued

\spadesuit —
 \heartsuit 10 7 4
 \diamondsuit A J 9 5
 \clubsuit A K Q J 10 3

The bidding thus far:

West	North	East	South
	$1\spadesuit$	$2\heartsuit$	$3\clubsuit$
Pass	$4\clubsuit$	Pass	?

There are some hands where ten tricks are all you can take—imagine West leading a heart through your partner and East cashing two hearts and then giving West a heart ruff. But this is too pessimistic to worry about. We have to assume we have no more than two heart losers and bid at least to game and maybe a slam.

For that reason jumping to $6\clubsuit$ is too aggressive and requires partner to have the $\heartsuit A$ or $\heartsuit KQ$ or heart void

or heart singleton. Best is to bid $4\diamond$.

Once you have found a fit, here clubs, any new suit bid by you or partner says two things: 1) Partner, I am interested in slam, and 2) I have a control in the suit I just bid.

What is a control? A control is a feature in the suit you bid that prevents the opponents from leading that suit and taking the first two tricks. So here, a control is an ace, king, singleton, or void in diamonds. Since we have the $\diamondsuit A$, bidding $4\diamond$ is a standout bid.

Notice we are bidding under the suit we most want to hear about from partner: hearts. If partner cannot cuebid hearts, we'll take our shot at $5\clubsuit$. If partner can bid $4\heartsuit$, we'll think about bidding higher.

If partner does bid $4\heartsuit$, could it be with a heart holding of $\heartsuit Kx$?

has no play on accurate defense; some are even going down 2.

Kib: What a great bluff. Even the online game has some psychology.

Alex: Some opponents just will not let you play a hand and you can safely overbid knowing they will sacrifice. I remember when I first started at Kate Buckman's in the '60s, Franco Bandoni told me that the 5-level belongs to the opponents. I would like to add that you should also double them. Works 95% of the time.

Kib: What is the best part about Barbara's bridge game?

Alex: I can depend on her bidding 100% within the confines of our system and her support for when I make a mistake. And she tries to find an excuse for my stupidity. Love playing with her.

Kib: What play or bid or defense of yours is one of your favourites?

Alex: I love to double a lot (lead directing, balancing, etc.) For years when we ran our club, I was not allowed to double our customers for penalty. Now I love the red card.

Kib: When not discussing or playing or doing all things bridge, what do you like to do in your spare time?

Alex: Long walks without a mask, riding my bike up steep hills, and working on my numismatic collection.

Kib: Do you have any tips for students who are taking up online bridge?

Alex: Watch what you click on!! Discuss your card before you sit down to play. Yes, online bridge is fun, but it is hard to slap your cards. 😊

Kib: Any final thoughts or something you'd like to say that I haven't asked?

Alex: Ask me again in 20 years and I may have some more to say.

Kib: Thanks, Alex! Good stuff—I now know what numismatic means.



David Lindop

Our next “man behind the woman” is David Lindop, or, as he good-naturedly refers to himself: Mr. Audrey Grant. David is a 3-time Canadian Open Teams Champion, winning in 1991, 2004, and 2011, and he is a North American champ, winning the 2012 Wernher Open Pairs with Robert Lebi. In the past few years David has not been able to focus as much as he'd like on playing; instead he is writing a ton (a tome?) and helping Audrey run their business. They're another great team and an asset to not only Toronto bridge, but bridge on an international scale through the publication of their magazine, “Better Bridge.”

Kib: Where did it all start for you, David?

David: I was born in England and we used to go to the seashore for

holidays. As often as not, it would be raining, so I learnt to play cards fairly young – Snap, Canasta, Memory. When I moved to Canada at age 12, I would watch my grandfather play poker and my grandmother play bridge. However, my first real introduction to bridge didn't come until university.

At the University of Toronto, we would often sit around during lunchtime – and sometimes beyond that – playing bridge. That's where I met such future bridge luminaries as Andy Altay, Katie Thorpe, Freddy Lerner, and Linda Lee. I read one or two books on the game, starting with Alfred Sheinwold's *Five Weeks to Winning Bridge*. There was a weekly bridge club in Hart House, but it wasn't long before we discovered the Wednesday evening masterpoint game at Kate Buckman's – at Yonge and Eglinton. In those days, there were only games for masterpoints a couple of

times a week. There I encountered such players as John Sabino, Gord Chapman, Dianna Gordon, and Mike Schoenborn.



At Audrey's Hall of Fame induction with Eric Rodwell

Kib: Who were your first partners and mentors?

David: Soon after university I worked at Kate Buckman's, managing some of the games and teaching. Andy

Bridge Movie continued

Well, look at that! Partner is able to bid 4♥. What do you make of that?

♠ —
 ♥ 10 7 4
 ♦ A J 9 5
 ♣ A K Q J 10 3

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

Surely the 4♥ cuebid is on more

than ♥Kx. You will be declaring clubs. Everyone at the table, (and by everyone, I mean you, North, East, West, the kibitzers, the kibitzer's mother, and the kibitzer's mother's newspaper delivery guy), knows that a heart lead is coming. Therefore bidding 4♥ on ♥Kx is futile. So you can rely on partner holding the ♥A or a heart void or perhaps a singleton—in short, the opponents cannot take the first two heart tricks. Bank on it.

Back to you. Do you cuebid spades? Sign off in 5♣ or sign off in 6♣?

Altay suggested I apply to Crown Life Insurance. I somehow got the job as a programmer, based on my experience in having written one program in Fortran to track the movement of the moon. So now it was back to playing bridge at lunchtime with Andy, Katie Thorpe, Linda Lee and Alex Kisin. We had the strongest team in the Insurance Bridge League.

Then we started playing at Shorty Sheardown's club where we met strong IMP players such as Eric Murray, Sami Kehela, Gerry Charney, and Bill Crissey. One of my partners in those days was Andy Altay. I do recall our trip to play in a tournament in McAadoo, Pennsylvania. On the way down, we hit some rainy weather and a sharp curve and ended up with the car upside down. After abandoning the car at a local body shop and a brief trip to get some stitches, we still managed to make it to the tournament by game time. Andy always reminds me that "we lost our hair together during our bridge partnership."

Then there was "Mr. Ed" – Ed Bridson. He was the first partner with whom I won the Canadian Team Championships and the right to represent Canada in the world championships that were held in Salsomaggiore, Italy. Our team included Boris Baran, playing with Mark Molson – who sadly passed away at a much too early age – and John Gowdy, playing with Geoff "the pup" Hampson.

Kib: How about your involvement in bridge admin.? You were part of the

group that initiated the CNTCs as we know them today.

David: Yes, I first got involved with Unit 166, then the District, and then with the Canadian Bridge Federation. The most interesting ventures during my time with the CBF was starting up the Canadian National Team Championships which would have and continues to have an impact to this day: representation from every province in the country. This is also the time I met the love of my life: Audrey.



David is a delight to work with; we get a lot done, and it's rewarding. We get letters from all over the world. He's working on new things with OKBridge. He's a mammoth organizer. Years ago, he said to me, "I think I'll organize the world's biggest bridge competition." And he did—there were over 20,000 tables! Nothing to do with me. The guy is brilliant, and he has made an outstanding contribution to the world of bridge. Beside the fact that I adore him, I am in awe of his skill set. Without David, Better Bridge magazine would not exist. ~Audrey Grant

David: Audrey Grant – Audrey Horning at the time – became involved in raising funds for the CNTC. We had hoped to do something by putting flyers on the tables at the Toronto regional. The powers-that-be at the time, would not go for that, so Audrey took a different tack. She negotiated with Honeydew to put a giant booth in the playing area during the

tournament. She then had a group of volunteers collect orders and deliver drinks to the players during the games. All the profits went to the CBF and were used to start up the CNTC. We added the Canadian Women's Team Championship in 1984.

When Audrey and Ted decided to go their separate ways, Audrey and I got

Bridge Movie continued

♠ —

♥ 10 7 4

♦ A J 9 5

♣ A K Q J 10 3

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

There will be some slam hands where your bid of 4♠ will be welcome since you do have a spade control. But bidding spades on a void in this auction is dangerous. It's tricky because partner bid spades naturally way back at their opening bid. If you cuebid spades here, you should have a working honour such as the ace of king. Some top pairs even cuebid a queen in their partner's suit.

But what if—horror of horrors—partner decides to pass 4♠? Partner shouldn't. Partner wouldn't. But... what if? So, don't bid spades. (Advanced readers might bid 5♠

but that has another meaning, to be visited on another day.)

If you can't bid spades, then what? Let's give partner a typical hand with a smidgeon of optimism. Let's visualize partner holding the ♥A, the ♦K and two spade honours—how does that grab us? Well, we still have two hearts we're concerned about, not to mention two little diamonds. Granted, one or two ruffs will take care of them, and maybe one loser can go on a spade honour. But if partner's points are the ♠KJ, ♥AQ, ♦Q then we might be in trouble.

On the other hand, what if partner gives us ♠A, ♥AK, ♦K? Now we might make 7♣!

Can a bid of 4NT solve our problems? Not really. Say you get a response of two keycards. Now what? How are you getting rid of your red-suit losers? You can ask for kings but now you might go beyond a safe contract of 6♣.

Last chance. *What is your call?*

together. Audrey, who was a full-time teacher and consultant with the Board of Education, became involved in the game while helping Ted establish a series of bridge clubs. She realized there was a lot which could be done to improve the way bridge was being taught. She wanted to put together a book on bridge and, since she wasn't well known in the bridge world at the time, asked me who she might work with on the project. I suggested an up-and-coming player named Eric Rodwell.

Kib: Did you and Audrey play together back then?

David: The first time I played with Audrey in a major event was in the Mixed Pairs at the 1986 world championships in Miami. We were playing a very basic system – basically Stayman and nothing else. We came up against Benito Garozzo playing with Lea Dupont. The auction went I ♠ by me, pass, 5♥ from Audrey. Benito turned to me and asked, “What's 5♥?” I replied, “One more than four and one less than six!” Since we gave no information away in the auction, we ended up with a good result.



Robert Lebi and David after their national open pairs win

At the end of the event, we were walking through the lobby and there was a pile of booklets on a table. “Oh, look they've published the results,” I said. “They don't publish them from first to last do they?” “Yes, they do,” I said. We both took one of the booklets. I, of course, started at the beginning and got a little more disappointed each time I turned a page until I found us. Audrey, naturally, started at the back of the booklet and got more excited each time she didn't find us on a page. We met somewhere in the middle, but she had a much better time looking at the results than I did.

Kib: How did Better Bridge begin?

David: Audrey and I started the Better Bridge Magazine in 1984 when we came across an editor/publisher while on one of our cruises. We have been putting it out bi-monthly ever since that time. When Audrey was working as a consultant for the ACBL, we decided to try to attract new players by forming an organization targeting the social players called Bridge America. The ACBL purchased thousands of copies of our magazine and distributed it to its members. It complemented the ACBL Bulletin – which was in a much smaller size in those days and filled mainly with tournament results and high-level articles.

Bridge America brought in over 10,000 new players in one year. However, the ACBL decided not to continue the project. They did, however, like the format of the new 8½ x 11 magazine and Better Bridge appeared as part

of the resized Bulletin for a number of years before going back to an independent publication.

Kib: You two must have many memories meeting top players and celebrities...

David: While I was on assignment for Crown Life in England for a couple of years, Audrey and I worked with Zia Mahmood to produce a set of books for the English market called Breakthrough Bridge. We got invited by Paul Hackett to a celebrity bridge event

in Morocco where we had fun getting to know Omar Sharif. Unfortunately, they also had a performance by some belly dancers. Guess who was invited up on stage to dance with one of them! Not my idea of fun, but Audrey thought it was hilarious.

On a cruise, Audrey and our son Jason met Flip Wilson, and they became good friends. A fond memory of Audrey's is of her father sitting on the front porch with Flip telling him jokes. They were both laughing hysterically. Flip offered to give the speech at

Bridge Movie continued

You decide to bid what you think you can make: 6♣. You might be one level too high or you might be one level too low, but the hedge makes sense. Not having any spade honours to complement partner's spade holding is a weakness of your hand but having great trumps and the red suit aces (based on partner's 4♥ bid) causes you to go for 12 tricks in clubs.

The opening lead is the ♥6 and this is what you see:

♠ J 10 9 6 4 2
♥ A K
♦ K 10
♣ 9 8 4

Lead: ♥6

♠ —
♥ 10 7 4
♦ A J 9 5
♣ A K Q J 10 3

Eek, only 11 HCPs, but check out all those important cards: the ♥AK, the ♦K and the ♣98. Notice there is no wastage in spades. Wastage would be the spade king opposite your void.

You count six trump tricks in hand, the A-Ks in hearts and diamonds (now up to 10 tricks) and perhaps two red suit ruffs in dummy for 12 tricks. Great, you're on track.

Or, another line is to ruff one heart in dummy, come back to hand to draw trumps, then power out the diamond queen. Or you could take a diamond finesse through the heart overcaller.

Now ask yourself, what can go wrong?

What can go wrong?

Jason's school when he graduated, so we helped set that up. This took some of the audience aback as one parent remarked, "Why would they have a Flip Wilson look-alike give the graduation speech?"



David and Doug Baxter have Bob Hamman surrounded!

In 1997, Canada hosted the World Junior Bridge Championships in Hamilton with John Carruthers as the chairman. John asked Audrey and me to help with the entertainment and so we offered to hold an event in Toronto in the park opposite our house, to get them away from the hotel for a change of scenery. Robin Stephens coordinated the food & beverages while Paul O'Hara arranged numerous activities such as soccer, tennis, basketball, and baseball. Some of the older juniors got their exercise by running over to our house where they could enjoy a beer.

At the end of the evening, as the buses arrived to take them back to Hamilton, they started singing some of their national anthems. Watching them pile into the buses, singing away, brought tears to my eyes ... and to most of our neighbours also. Some of the future stars who attended the event, such as Boye Brogeland, Shannon Cappelletti, and Darren Wolpert, still

have fond memories of that evening.

Kib: Can you take us inside the "operation"? What's your role?

David: In our bridge enterprises, Audrey is the big name. My role is basically to provide the material to support Audrey's teaching methods and act as one of the expert advisers. Here's one of my favorite deals which I created for a course on Partnership Defense.

North (Dummy)

♠ J 8 4
♥ K 10 8 2
♦ 7 5 3
♣ K 10 9

West (Partner)

♠ A 9 7 2
♥ 6 5 4
♦ A Q J
♣ 8 6 5

East (Us)

♠ K Q 5
♥ 9 7 3
♦ 9 8 4
♣ J 7 4 2

South (Declarer)

♠ 10 6 3
♥ A Q J
♦ K 10 6 2
♣ A Q 3

Suppose we are East. South opens INT, and everyone passes. West leads the ♠2, and dummy comes down. We play the ♠Q, third hand high – but only as high as necessary – and it wins the trick. What now?

The usual course of action is to simply return partner's suit. However, we know from the opening lead partner has only a four-card spade suit. We

also know partner holds the ♠A. Otherwise, declarer would have won the first trick with the ♠J in dummy as a likely second trick. If we simply return a spade, partner will be on lead after taking the spade winners and there is likely to be nothing attractive to lead from partner's side of the table.

So, at trick two, we should switch to the ♦9, top of nothing, leading through strength and up to the weakness in dummy. Assuming declarer plays low, partner wins the ♦J. From our ♦9, partner can infer we aren't interested in having the suit returned. Since our ♠Q won the first trick, partner can also infer we hold the ♠K. So, partner can continue with another low spade and we win the ♠K. We use this

opportunity to lead another diamond and partner gets two more diamond tricks and can take two spade tricks.

We defeat the contract one trick. If we had simply returned partner's suit at trick one, declarer would get at least seven tricks no matter what partner does next.

In 2012, after developing some Bridge Basics I software with Great Game Products, we started the Daily Interactive Bridge Column where you can actually play and defend the hands against well-trained robots. It also includes quizzes put together by some of the game's best players. It's been challenging having a daily deadline for the last eight years, but the column has

Bridge Movie continued

♠ J 10 9 6 4 2
 ♥ A K
 ♦ K 10
 ♣ 9 8 4

Lead: ♥6

♠ —
 ♥ 10 7 4
 ♦ A J 9 5
 ♣ A K Q J 10 3

Things that can go wrong:

On a bad day that ♥6 is a singleton. While it would mean RHO bid 2♥ on a seven-card suit, is that something you are willing to ignore?

On a bad day, RHO might have a

singleton diamond. If we give RHO six hearts, two trumps, and four spades, that does not leave a lot of room for diamonds. Having the second round of diamonds get ruffed might be of concern.

On another bad day, someone might have four trumps.

But those are bad days. Let's assume it is not a bad day. I mean, really, how can anyone in Canada call a day in July or August a bad day? Play on, McDuff!

After you play the ♥A from dummy and RHO encourages, *what do you play at trick two?*

become popular. It is even translated into Chinese for the large market over there. Audrey and I are continuing to produce new material. We are putting out a series of “Bridge Guides” on various topics. We’re working on having students get together and play the practice deals online with their friends.

Kib: What’s the best part about your game?

David: I enjoy defending with a good partner who is on the same wavelength.

Kib: Audrey’s game?

David: Audrey is very competitive – at times – and also very intuitive. She’ll often just jump to what she thinks she can make.

Kib: On BBO your username is frodo2. I assume you are an LOTR fan? And why frodo2—was frodo taken?

David: I am a big fan of Tolkien’s Lord of the Rings (read it in school and then loved the movie trilogy when it came out). I initially called myself Frodo on BBO, but I think I forgot my password and wasn’t able to recover it, so I came back as Frodo2. I’m actually still Frodo on OKBridge.

Kib: Is there anyone, living or dead, you consider to be your bridge hero for their play and/or comportment at the table?

David: I’ve great respect for Bob Hamman, not only for his play but also for the way he handles himself at the table. I try to follow his advice of focusing on the current deal rather than thinking about what went wrong on the previous deal.

Eric Rodwell is a great theorist, and excellent player. And I always enjoy Zia’s attitude toward the game. From the Canadian perspective, I think Sami Kehela has always been an amazing player...and Eric Murray was fun to play with and against.

Kib: We recently played against you and current partner Doug Baxter in the CNTCs (thanks for the drubbing).

David: Doug and I won the CNTCs a few years ago and are planning to win it again this year – albeit online rather than at the table. I think Doug will soon be eligible for the Seniors event, but I’m still happy to play in the Open event.

Kib: Any final thoughts?

David: I’m not much of a social animal, even though we do hold an annual Christmas Party at which I lead the group in singing my favorite carol, The Lion Sleeps Tonight. However, Audrey does seem to get me involved in things somehow. For our festival this year at Sea Island, Georgia, Audrey decided to produce a musical. If you want to view my acting chops, you can visit https://youtu.be/Tnk1_tFrH6w

Kib: Thanks, David. I know you're a busy man meeting those daily deadlines. Looking forward to you and Doug concentrating on Senior events in the near future to give the rest of us a chance at winning.



Sheri Winestock

Last but not least we come to former Torontonion and now Las Vegan, Sheri Winestock. Dare I call her, "Ms. BBO"? She was right there at the dawn of its creation, working with life partner Fred Gitelman on building Bridge Base Online into the internationally successful program that it is today. I first met Sheri in 1990 at a Sectional in London. It was refreshing to come

up against someone younger than me. She was a good player then, but an even better one now, winning the 1998 Canadian Women's Team Championship, and, 21 years later, the Grand National Teams at last summer's NABC, with Fred, and fellow transplanted Canadians Geoff Hampson, Haig Tchamitch, and Daniel Korbel (plus American Roger Lee). Sheri is not unlike Alex and David: playing an important role seemingly behind the scenes, but really very much part of the operation.

Kib: Sheri, take us back to the beginning. How did you get started in the game?

Sheri: I was about 26 and living in Toronto. I needed to be up early

Bridge Movie continued

♠ J 10 9 6 4 2

♥ A K

♦ K 10

♣ 9 8 4

♠ —

♥ 10 7 4

♦ A J 9 5

♣ A K Q J 10 3

No matter your plan it does not hurt to draw one round of trumps. It seems reasonable that your 12 tricks will be six clubs, two hearts, three diamonds and one heart ruff with that nice high club nine. If West

led a singleton heart you can still recover.

Drawing that one round of trumps (instead of playing on diamonds immediately) will save the day if RHO is 7-4-1-1 with singletons in both red suits. What gall—getting to ruff a diamond with their singleton trump.

When you play a club to your ace both opponents follow. You play a heart to dummy's king and, as expected, West follows low with the ♥3.

Now what?

on Sundays for something, so I was flipping through the channels and saw this black-and-white show with people playing cards. It was called Championship Bridge and I thought it was pretty funny these guys commentating on people playing cards, and there were a lot of sexist remarks. So I started watching it weekly and picking up a few things (coincidentally, my brother was doing the same thing where he lived so we talked about what we thought we knew). I played a lot of cards (and did puzzles) with a friend at University, Gill Sitarenios, and it turned out his father, Nick Starr, was teaching him bridge. So, Nick and his partner, Doug Markovic, took us under their wings and taught us and played with us. I immediately loved the game and couldn't get enough. It took me 7 years to finish my PhD because of bridge.



Sheri
Photo by JS

Kib: Who were your first mentors?

Sheri: Gill and I would go to Kate Buckman's on Tuesday afternoons as we both did not have classes. Fred saw

me there, found out my schedule, and started playing on Tuesdays. We were both shy, but eventually we got to know each other, and he would come with me and Gill after the game to talk about the hands. We learned a ton.

Fred will always be my first and best mentor, but through him I was fortunate to meet the greats of Toronto bridge and everyone was so kind to me. It feels crazy to mention so many names, but all of these people took an interest in helping me and playing with me: Geoff Hampson, John Gowdy, Mark Arbor, Brenda Bryant, Brad Boyle, David and Mark Caplan, Shelagh Paulsson, Ted Horning, Eric Kokish, Beverly Kraft, George Mittelman, Dianna Gordon, Vince Oddy, Barb Clinton, Joan Eaton, Lynda Winston, Stevie Aarons, Alan Graves, Eric Murray, and Sami Kehela. Talk about being one lucky person!

Kib: Do you have any anecdotes about learning bridge back in the day that you can share?

Sheri: Very early on Mark Arbor played with me at the Toronto regional. In a matchpoint game he had overcalled $2\clubsuit$ and the opponents ended in $4\heartsuit$. From my hand and the auction, it sounded like the opponents were short in clubs, so I lead the $\heartsuit J$ from $\heartsuit Jx$. Dummy had $\heartsuit K9xx$ and declarer $\heartsuit A8xxx$. Mark played the $\heartsuit Q$ as declarer won the $\heartsuit A$. Declarer then finessed into Mark's $\heartsuit 10$. He cashed his two top clubs before they went away. After the round, he said to me, "I don't care about anything you do in

error, but when I overcall at the 2-level vulnerable, please, please, please lead my suit.”

Kib: How about now? What’s something you learned recently about bridge—either declarer play or defense or bidding or some other intangible?

Sheri: I was recently playing an online match with Josh Donn and I was in a contract off one on top. I basically gave up, but Josh suggested a play that would have put the opponents to the test. I give experts a lot of credit and should not give up so easily.

A new thing that I have been doing in situations where I’m not sure how to proceed is, not only count, but count some more. That is, I just try to count something else that doesn’t seem relevant, but some small clue seems to appear.

Kib: When you look back at your learning curve, what do you think caused (or allowed) you to learn the best?

Sheri: Well, as you can see from above, I was fortunate to play with a lot of great players. However, this was due to my association with Fred. So, while I learned a lot, I didn’t have to

Bridge Movie continued

♠ J 10 9 6 4 2

♥ A K

♦ K 10

♣ 9 8 4

♠ —

♥ 10 7 4

♦ A J 9 5

♣ A K Q J 10 3

There are three ways back to hand: ruff a spade, play a trump, or play the ♦10 to the ♦A.

We expect any one of those plays to work but is there an advantage of one over the other? If the breaks are friendly you might make an overtrick by ruffing both your ♥10 and a small

diamond in dummy hoping to drop the ♦Q. *Are there any risks?*

Yes and no. Say after ruffing the heart in dummy you play the ♦K and a diamond towards your ace. If West ruffs the second diamond and returns a trump you will have to lose a diamond to East’s queen. (This means East started life with six hearts and five diamonds, but hey—it’s a possibility.)

You elect to ruff a spade in hand and ruff a heart on the table. West pitches a diamond on this play.

Do you now play dummy’s last trump to your hand or do you play on diamonds in an attempt to ruff out the ♦Q and make thirteen tricks?

walk the walk or talk the talk to earn that privilege. I think this made me a bit complacent early on. In my current pursuit to actually become a top-level player, I have learned that it is about putting the time in. I love bridge and enjoy playing it, but I now try to look at myself as an athlete, training and practicing, rather than just playing.

I was also fortunate (and still am) to have Fred as my mentor. Not only does he have a great understanding of the game, but he was (and still is) a consummate teacher. He knew I needed to understand logically what he was telling me, not just rules, etc. The dedication and practice ethic I mention above, I learned from him as well.



Sheri played several key roles in the early development of BBO the computer program and BBO the business. Her various roles consisted of testing, documentation, bookkeeping, customer support...just to name a few. At the very beginning, I wasn't sure, but Sheri was certain that bridge software was what we were meant to do. Without her early inspiration and confidence, there never would have been a Bridge Base Inc., let alone a BBO
~Fred Gitelman

Kib: Of all the top players nowadays—is there anyone you follow or whom you like to see succeed? What is it about that player that draws you as a fan?

Sheri: Most of the top players are professionals and a lot of them are my friends. The ones I particularly root for are the ones that have played with me because we are friends and they wanted to help me improve or just have fun. Here I go again... Geoff Hampson, Josh Donn, Justin Lall, Brad Moss, Joe Grue, Shannon Cappelletti, Jill Levin, Billy Cohen, Gary Cohler, Paul and Linda Lewis, Marc Jacobus and Howard Weinstein. And they are all my besties! Also, Steve Weinstein; he has never played with me, but he showed his great character and was kind to me when I was an absolute beginner. Eric Rodwell and Jeff Meckstroth also took us under their respective wings early on. And always Fred!

Kib: If you didn't help develop BBO, what do you think your career would have been?

Sheri: In 1990, when we started Bridge Base Inc., our first company, I was a graduate student and planned to teach and do research. Once we were making a living from bridge and getting to play, I never looked back.

Kib: Back when you were developing BBO together and running the business, how smooth was the operation—was it a finely tuned machine or were there some tough days?

Sheri: Totally playing it by ear – and I am tone-deaf! Neither of us had much business experience and we were just making it up as we went along. We had some very lean years to start, but our parents were helpful, and we loved being involved with bridge. When Bridge Master became a hit, things got more comfortable.



*Sheri at the 2018 Atlanta NABC after finishing 5/8th in the Spingold; here with Josh Donn.
Photo by JS*

When we first put BBO up on the internet, we had no vision beyond giving people a place to play and watch vugraph for free. We may never have turned it into a profitable business if it were not for Uday Ivatary.

Kib: Fred and Uday's skills were as programmers (among other skills) but is there something that you contributed to today's BBO look and/or design?

Sheri: Fred programmed the initial BBO based largely on our Bridge Master software. We then tweaked it from there to suit online play. It was 20 years ago, so I can't remember anything specific that was my idea. I will give Fred credit for the color-scheme!

When Uday came on board and as

Bridge Movie continued

♠ J 10 9 6 4 2

♥ A K

♦ K 10

♣ 9 8 4

♠ —

♥ 10 7 4

♦ A J 9 5

♣ A K Q J 10 3

You have played five cards and can see you are now cold for 12 tricks. By playing a club to hand (East follows while West pitches a spade), you are in position to draw the last trump and play on diamonds for an

overtrick.

What is the right strategy in team games? Guarantee your contract first—then play for an overtrick. Not drawing trumps might lead to heartache if you play on diamonds and someone ruffs in and plays a trump. Now you will lose to the ♦Q and go down one. Guess what? That's what would happen if you get greedy in this position.

So, play the ♣9 to hand, draw East's last trump, and do what you will in diamonds.

See next page for the whole deal.

BBO evolved, I was much less involved in the creative aspects. I had approval/ veto rights, but we were a pretty symbiotic team.

Kib: Re: your journey with BBO, is there anything in which you would like a do-over?

Sheri: As I mentioned, we were winging it. I was never trained in business and as I was the person who set up all the financial accounts and processes, it would have served us better if I knew what I was doing at the outset. Fortunately, we survived my mistakes.

Kib: Fred mentioned in his Kibitzer interview (Summer 2020) that you learned a lot by playing the bots—how specifically do you feel they helped you? For the newer BBO members who decide to take on the bots, can you offer any advice?

Sheri: It's not that I learned a lot from the bots per se, it's that seeing numerous hands helps one become a better player. The bots allow you to play a lot of hands whenever you wish.

There are ways to “game” the bots, but I play pretty much down the middle with the exception of opening NT on almost every hand! My goal was to train and practice to improve my “real” bridge game, so I don't often do things I would not normally do.

Playing with the bots is a lot like playing rubber bridge. I have fond memories of going to Irving Litvak's rubber bridge club to improve my

game: You can't trust anyone, neither your opps nor your pard, so you have to work hard to figure out everything for yourself.

Kib: Is there a play you made in a face-to-face event that you just know playing the bots helped you make?

Sheri: I can't think of an example off-hand, but the bots have contributed to me thinking deeply about the opening lead, especially when I'm the declarer. As you may know, the bots subscribe to different lead ideas than is mainstream so, as declarer, the inferences one takes are different. The act of doing this has made me more thoughtful in face-to-face bridge.



Sheri and her dog Koda

Kib: When you reflect on your 20ish years of building BBO with Fred, what are your favourite memories and/or accomplishments?

Sheri: I remember the day we went over 10,000 users and crashed because that hadn't been anticipated. That is a favourite and not-so-favourite memory!

It was an honour when BBO was inducted into the ACBL Hall of Fame.

Kib: What are you doing nowadays to keep busy? How has the transition to retirement been?

Bridge Movie continued

The full deal:

<p>♠ J 10 9 6 4 2 ♥ A K ♦ K 10 ♣ 9 8 4</p> <p>♠ K 8 5 3 ♥ 6 3 ♦ Q 8 7 6 3 2 ♣ 2</p> <p>♠ — ♥ 10 7 4 ♦ A J 9 5 ♣ A K Q J 10 3</p>	<p>♠ A Q 7 ♥ Q J 9 8 5 2 ♦ 4 ♣ 7 6 5</p>
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There were numerous ways of making 6♣ on this hand, but here's the point of deals like this: if and when you are playing a team game (IMPs), when you find yourself in position to guarantee your contract, take it. Don't get greedy and try for an overtrick. On a bad day you go minus 10-17 imps if your play goes wrong. On a good day you win one imp. Oh, and then you have to face your partner and teammates. As Desi hollered, "Luu-cyy, you have some explaining tudu."

A bridge lifetime ago I was playing in the Sheardown KOs at the T.O.

regional against a former Canuck who had returned from the US to play with a good friend from Toronto. I was defending and sitting after the dummy. In a contract of 3♥, declarer early on played a club to dummy's ♣AQJx. Partner played low and declarer called for the jack. Holding ♣Kx, I decided to play low—fortunately, smoothly.

At trick 12 dummy's last two cards were the ♣AQ. Declarer played a club to dummy and partner played low. If declarer went up with the ace, she would have made her ninth trick (and contract), but she decided this was a can't-lose proposition. She'd never seen me before and I looked like a baby-faced duck hunter from Napanee. (No offense to Napanians or duck hunters.) So she finessed the ♣Q. The only way she could go down was if I had ducked the king from an original holding of ♣Kx.

I won the king and played at trick 13 a winning diamond. Down one. Declarer was ashen faced. Her partner, not usually a supportive type guy, shrugged his shoulders and said, "Well, that's life in the big city." *Be a big city player and guarantee your contract when playing imps! The End.*

Sheri: I had no trouble with the transition to retirement. I had already lessened my role at BBO and while I still thought of it as partially my creation, I handled the monetary side which was never a passion of mine. I have plenty of hobbies to keep me busy, not the least of which is training for bridge. I also golf, play video poker, do all kinds of puzzles and games. I have not been bored.



*Sheri and Fred at the wedding of Curtis and Phyllis Cheek
Photo by Haig Tchamitch*

Kib: Las Vegas is a hotbed of top players—do you get together often with other bridge players to play or do something else?

Sheri: There is a great community of bridge players in Las Vegas. I walk my dog Koda every morning with Marc Jacobus and Dan Korbel and Dan's dog Bandit (unless they are at a tournament). I often golf with Hampson, Lindsay Pearlman, Wendy Sameroff, and sometimes with Drew Casen and Jerry Weinstein. My video poker buddy is Teri Casen. Brenda and Marc Jacobus host a lot of parties and BBQs. As a group, we don't do many home games, but I play at the club with

Josh Donn (plug for Las Vegas Bridge World—one of the owners is Josh's mom, Jane Rubin, who is also a friend) and I play in the local tournaments with Josh and usually Danny and JoAnn Sprung or Sue and Jerry Weinstein. And then there are the dinners...

Kib: What do you miss about Toronto? About Canada?

Sheri: Definitely family and friends. California sandwiches, Jo-Ann Lang's French onion soup, Gowdy's stories (well, maybe not), walking to the store, greenery. And dinner at Barb and Vince's, nudge nudge wink wink.

Kib: What do you not miss about living in Canada?

Sheri: Winter.

Kib: Re: the ACBL Hall of Fame. I don't want to jinx anything, but I think you should be inducted someday—do you care one way or the other?

Sheri: That's very sweet of you, but I don't think I deserve to be in the Hall of Fame on bridge merit ... yet.

Kib: Are you playing internationally? If so, would you represent Canada or the US?

Sheri: I was on the US Mixed Team at the 2016 World Bridge Games in Poland (with Brad Moss, Michael Seamon, Sylvia Moss, Alex Ornstein, Sue Picus). This was the first time there was a World Championships mixed event. We came in the dubious

4th place. I was also on the US Women's Team at the 2017 Venice Cup. My partner was another ex-Canadian, Bronia Jenkins (with Sylvia Moss, Connie Goldberg, Bernace De Young, Irina Kislitsyna). I have played in a number of US team trials with less success as well. I will always be a Canadian at heart, but the US is my home now.

Kib: Any final thoughts or something you'd like to say that I haven't asked?

Sheri: I have mentioned a gigillion people here, but I apologize if I left anyone out.

Kib: Thanks, Sheri. Keep enjoying retirement. Las Vegas just might be the hottest of bridge hotbeds! And if my mixed team meets your mixed team in the finals of the world mixed, dinner is on me.



*Sheri's photo from a Kibitzer cover
20+ years ago*

Kib: Folks, there you have it— three titans of our game. If you're like me, it's a good feeling knowing they all live in or come from our neck of the woods. Okay, maybe David and Alex grew up elsewhere; okay, maybe Sheri is not currently living in Canada. But David and Alex live in Toronto now, and Sheri was T.O. born and bred!

Maybe it will take more time for people to realize how impactful our three interviewees have been. But given the sheer numbers of bridge players (hundreds of thousands? millions?) who have been influenced by Barbara Seagram, Audrey Grant, and Fred Gitelman, we must give credit where credit is due and recognize the efforts of their life/work partners, respectively: Alex Kornel, David Lindop, and Sheri Winestock.

They are all excellent bridge players, and perhaps even more importantly, Alex, David, and Sheri, each in their own unique way, are all builders, designers, and promoters of bridge. Even in these trying times we can still play bridge online, we can still take bridge lessons online, and we can still read bridge magazines and books. Bottom line: because of their work with their life partners, Alex, David, and Sheri have helped grow and strengthen the wonderful community of bridge.





Celebrity Bridge Player: Jerry Howarth

Starting with this issue we'd like to profile a celebrity bridge player. Our first celebrity is long time Blue Jays radio broadcaster Jerry Howarth. Jerry is now retired from broadcasting and has discovered the wonderful world of duplicate bridge.

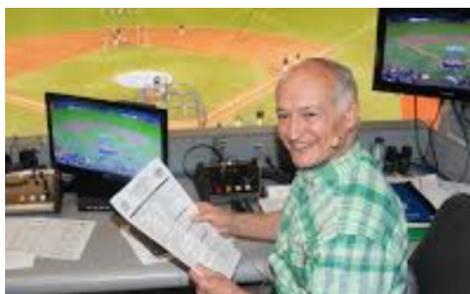
Kib: Jerry, it's a thrill to have you out playing competitive bridge, especially for us diehard Jays fans. Take us back to the beginning—how did you get started in the game?

Jerry: Back in 1979 in Salt Lake City, Utah, I was just finishing my five years broadcasting Triple-A baseball games and decided to take a few bridge lessons to learn about a game I had only heard about. Looking back (and with a smile) I played a handful of games earning exactly 10 masterpoints. I later found out this past year that those 10 points qualify me in the “grandfather clause” to be a life master with only 300 master points needed instead of now the required 500! Who knew? The best 10 masterpoints ever! A year later we moved to Toronto where I began my 36-year career as a Blue Jays radio broadcaster.

Kib: Who were your first teachers/mentors?

Jerry: I purposely put bridge on the shelf for those 36 years as I realized how time consuming it was to learn the game of bridge and play it to the best of my ability. I also wanted to make a difference in young people's lives, so I coached basketball for 25 years in the off season both in middle school for five years and then at Etobicoke Collegiate for 20 years. After I retired from baseball at the end of the 2017 season, I then took up bridge earnestly and joined the Etobicoke Bridge Club and the MOBridge Club in Mississauga. My first two mentors were Steve Overholt who runs the Etobicoke club, and Dave Colbert, who is a member of that club and a former Canadian national champion. Both have become great friends as well as remaining such good mentors for me.

Kib: What are some of the first things you learned when you started that still apply today?



Jerry Howarth

Jerry: I had to learn quickly how to try and focus and concentrate on every card played and that is still and always will be a formidable challenge in this great game. That and to be the best partner I can be at the table, always trying to emphasize the positive in the games played by and with my partners. It is so easy to be negative in bridge, which is truly a game of mistakes, but the more I put mistakes aside and only compliment my partner's play along with my own, the better I play and the better we play as a team.

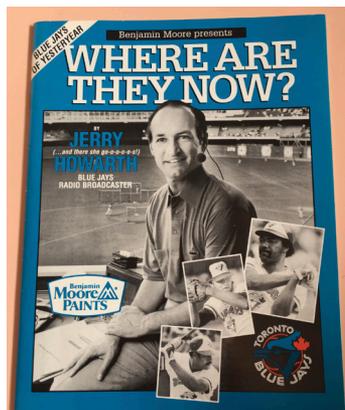
Kib: Do you have any interesting anecdotes about learning bridge back in the day that you can share?

Jerry: When I first took up bridge seriously at the Etobicoke club back a few years ago, I played a game with, Lezlie Cullen, who is an excellent bridge player and a friend to many including myself. In one of our first games we scored 27% with 19 red boards - still a record for me when it comes to being at the very bottom of the heap. I took a deep breath and a few months after that, Lezlie, and I had a 70% game. She taught me how to get past that 27% game and I am forever grateful.

Kib: For many Ontarians the 1993 Blue Jays championship team is one of our favourites, and we fondly remember the top five batters in Cito Gaston's lineup. They were known as WAMCO: which stood for White, Alomar, Molitor, Carter and Olerud. Rumour has it some of those guys

were bridge players. Did you play with them back then?

Jerry: Joe Carter and I were great friends and he loved playing bridge. On many of our Blue Jays flights from 1993 through 1995 when Paul Molitor was on the team, Joe and Paul would play bridge against Ed Sprague and John Olerud. I would watch, loving every minute and their playful dialogue back and forth with each other.

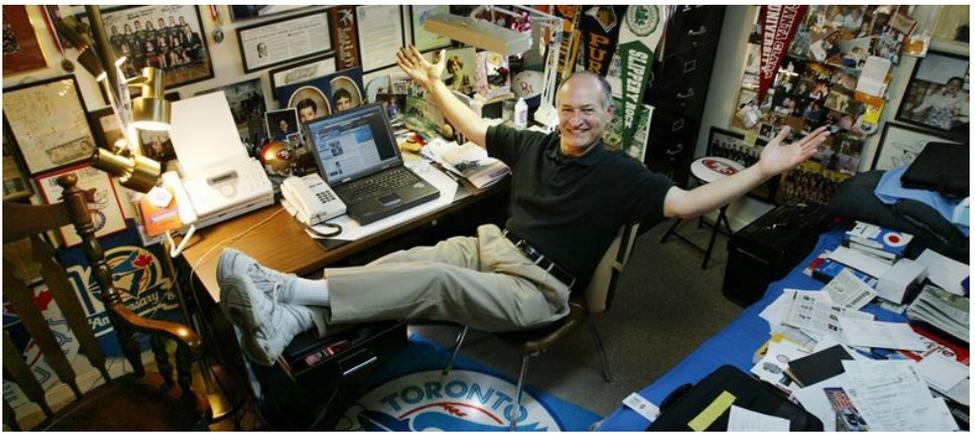


Jerry Howarth

Kib: Are you playing online at all these days? How has that transition been for you?

Jerry: I play online now each day Monday through Sunday thanks to BBO. I love the two hours of competition and playing with partners I had first met in the two clubs. The transition has been an easy one as it always gets back to focus and concentration whether at the club or online.

Kib: What do you find are the pros and cons of playing online?



Jerry relaxing at home in 1986

Jerry: I find only the pros when playing online and with the Covid-19, I am grateful for the chance to play all the time. No cons!

Kib: Do you ever play against the robots? If so, what are your impressions both positive and negative?

Jerry: No, I have not. I just have no interest in doing that.

Kib: Have you made friendships that started with you and your friend(s) meeting at the bridge table?

Jerry: Yes, I have made many new friends playing bridge since I retired who I will now have for the rest of my life. It still is always about people and then the bridge follows.

Kib: Do you get recognized by people at the bridge table or at a bridge lesson series?

Jerry: I was recognized a lot at first playing bridge in the two clubs let alone, of course, out in public. I have always been able to have a good moment or two talking with these fans who have been ardent listeners over the years; I try to give them my undivided attention. I then move on in the conversation and ask them about their lives as I try to keep a low profile. Along those lines, I am so happy I was on radio all those years rather than on TV where the public profile is so much greater. No, thank you. I have had my time in the spotlight, and I am very grateful for all the years, but I am also very happy to move on and let others move into that broadcasting spotlight as I leave it. I loved talking for a living at the microphone and now I love NOT talking playing bridge! Haha... lucky and blessed me.

Kib: What do you think about bridge? Is it just a fun pastime for you or has it become a major part of your life?

Jerry: Bridge has become a major part of my life now in retirement to help me deal with and have fun with the “competitive genes” I was born with, as I like to call them. I still have those genes to this very day, as I am now fulfilled playing bridge! It is more than just a pastime.

Kib: Have you been able to persuade any family members to take up the game?

Jerry: My wife, Mary, plays social bridge and has no desire to compete like her husband so we both enjoy this great game differently which is fine. I purposely did not introduce our two sons (who are now in their early 40s with kids of their own) to bridge because I did not want them to spend their hours learning a complicated game when they have their own careers and families to love and be with as husbands and fathers. Bridge can come later in life for them like it did for me.



Carole Overholt and Jerry

Kib: When you are not playing bridge, what else do you like to do in your spare time?

Jerry: Mary and I will watch a lot of great shows on Apple TV and Netflix as well as spending a lot of time with our boys and their wives and our three young grandsons...all good!

Kib: Sounds like a pretty good retirement. And final thought or observation?

Jerry: “WAG” as Steve Overholt has said and written many times: What a Game!

Kib: Thanks, Jerry. Looking forward to seeing you again at the table, hopefully someday soon!



Jerry (middle) flanked by longtime friend Dave Harris (left) and Steve Overholt (right) at the Etobicoke Bridge Club



An interview with the CBF President

A lot of players are unaware of the Canadian Bridge Federation (CBF), or do not have a clear understanding of its purpose, and how it relates to the ACBL. Neil Kimelman is the current President of the CBF. Hopefully this interview helps readers to better understand this organization.

Kib: Neil, what is the CBF and what are its goals?

Neil: The CBF is the official National Bridge Organization (NBO) of Canada. It is a non-profit association. Every country in the world has a governing body such as ours. The American equivalent is the United States Bridge Federation (USBF).

The mission of the Canadian Bridge Federation is to promote bridge within Canada and protect and advance the national interests of Canadian Bridge, including the selection and support of Canadian bridge teams and players for international bridge competition.

In other words, our mandate is to promote this great game in Canada. Improve participation in bridge, facilitate players improving their skills by providing access to learning and game opportunities.

We are also responsible each year for organizing a process by which to select Canadian players who are most deserving to represent Canada in World Bridge Championships. Finally, we are the official voice of Canada in World Bridge.

Besides the tournaments and special games listed below, we have a **Canadian Bridge Hall of Fame**, a fabulous **Junior development Program**, a critically acclaimed **Bridge Canada** magazine published six times a year, Canadian **Mini-Richmond masterpoint races**, and a **Charitable arm** that annually raises monies from specific games to help targeted members of the community that are in need of support.

Kib: Where does the ACBL fit in?

Neil: The ACBL was formed prior to the concept of NBOs. It provides tournaments to attend, with the main draw being the earning of masterpoints. We work closely with the ACBL, who sanction CBF tournaments so that our members can earn masterpoints at our tournaments. This partnership is unique in the world of bridge, and has benefits, but also a few downsides. We have from time to time looked at whether it would

be better for Canadian players to have a National Bridge Organization independent of the ACBL. This is especially relevant now as the costs for attending tournaments across North America have been rising dramatically.

We have recently reached out to the ACBL Units and Districts officials, to examine ways we can work together to look at ways we can promote Canadian bridge.

Kib: What are the specific programs you have for the 'average' bridge player?

Neil: 52.3% of CBF members have less than 500 Masterpoints, while 67% have less than 1000. As such the CBF has a number of membership features that specifically cater to this group:

- In the bi-monthly CBF online publication, Bridge Canada, there are 3 regular features for less experience players: **The New Players Spot; Bridge Basics, and The Intermediate Spot.**
- During the Canadian Bridge Championships (CBCs) besides the open teams we have two team championships for players not quite ready to play in the Open, the B event is for players who have less than 3500 masterpoints, and the **C event** is for players with less than 1000 points.
- We have **2 Rookie-Master games annually**, the Erin Berry in the fall and the Helen Shields in the spring, to help new players

learn from playing with more experienced members.

- We hold Sectionals at local clubs (**STACs**).
- Every year have **Mini-Richmond** trophies and recognition for the top masterpoint winners for all categories of players.
- Each year we plan on holding **2 CBF regionals** for all levels of players.
- We have a very active and growing **Junior Program**, for players under the age of 26. We fund different junior age levels to represent Canada at World Championships.

Kib: How is the CBF organized? Do you have a lot of employees?

Neil: The CBF has a Board of Directors made up of 6 volunteers, representing 6 geographical regions across Canada. There is 1 full time employee, Ina Demme. Ina is responsible for the day to day operations, scheduling, arranging, and coordinating all games and tournaments. The largest is the Canadian Bridge Championships, held in late spring, to select our teams and have a national tournament for all of our members. A significant part of her time is spent responding to individual member and bridge club enquiries and liaising with ACBL officials.

We also have a few part time positions: a Webmaster and a part time bookkeeper who takes care of all financial interactions, and ensuring we manage our resources to maximize the programs we can offer our members.

Read below about the newest member of the CBF team.

Kib: Speaking of which, how much does it cost to be a CBF member?

Neil: \$20 a year. We have had to raise our fees over the last few years for two reasons:

- Increased costs to hold the Canadian Championships. Hotel rent is increasing dramatically, as is the charge we must pay the ACBL for the Director Staff salaries and travel expenses.
- Increased sanction fees we pay the ACBL to hold events that award masterpoints.

Kib: How many Canadians belong to the CBF and ACBL?

Neil: We have almost **5,000** members, but the ACBL membership includes over **19,000** Canadians! I find the difference in these numbers very frustrating. A large reason for this disparity is that the ACBL, who has traditionally collected one membership fee for the both organizations, separated these fees a number of years ago, and made ours optional.

Unfortunately, a lot of players do not have a good grasp as to the difference between the two organizations, and just pay the ACBL fee. I think that many of these players would not mind paying the extra \$20 if they knew how much we did to promote the game in Canada, and ensuring we were well represented in world competitions.

Just think of the thrill we all get during the **Olympics**, cheering for the Canadian skiers, hockey teams, and other athletes as they compete against the world's best. Bridge is no different.

Kib: Is there anything new the CBF is currently planning in the near future?

Neil: Canadian Bridge faces the same challenges as all bridge organizations across the world: an aging membership. Up to know we have held our own, maintaining our numbers, but we know, with an average member age of 70, we are going to have a large attrition during the next decade.

As a result, we have taken steps in improving our communication with our current membership, with the goal of becoming more relevant. At the same time we are using social media and other methods to reach out to prospective members, making them aware of the advantages of playing this great game: it is very affordable, social in nature, and a highly recommended way to maintain your mental health as you age.

Last year we contracted with a Montreal consulting firm, Atypic, to look for affordable, tangible, and effective steps to meet these goals. We are in process of implementing their recommendations. The first step we took is hiring a Community Manager, Matthieu Dallaire.

Kib: Is there anything else you think our player should know?

Neil: Yes! The CBF is looking for someone to join the CBF Board representing Zone 3 of the CBF (Units 166, 246, 249, 255). The term runs from Jan 1, 2021- Dec 31, 2023. You can make a difference to bridge in Canada! Please email canbridge@rogers.com for more information and details.

We are always looking for feedback and volunteers. For more information on the CBF please contact Ina Demme at canbridge@rogers.com, or Matthieu Dallaire at info@mdallaire.co.



Neil Kimelman, CBF President
Photo by JS

BBO Stars

Rashid Khan



Randy Breuer



Lino D'Souza



Louise McNeely



Kole Meng

Read all
about them on
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