

IRISH BRIDGE Journal

Spring 2023

Welcome

Welcome to the Spring Journal, the second in the new online format. The response to the inaugural issue has been uniformly positive, which is gratifying for sure.

Once again, I'm indebted to all the contributors who gave of their time and expertise, including a number of first-time contributors. I am also pleased to report further progress against my stated objectives of enhancing gender balance and catering to all player grades. Mary Kelly-Rogers reports on Malahide Congress in the context of a return to face-to-face play post-Covid. Recent learner Maeve Brew shares her early impressions with us. Peter Pigot, international player and noted teacher, begins a series for improvers. And Luca Crone, resident chronicler of Junior events, now also joins the Bidding Panel.

We've had our Trials season, and this issue features reports on the Senior [Teltscher] Trials as well as the Camrose Trials. Congratulations to new caps Paul Delaney, Martin Brady, Michael McAuliffe, Fred Barry and Conor Boland. Special mention for new cap David Dunne, who made both the Camrose and the Teltscher teams!! And Tomás Roche has made the Camrose team a mere 20 years after his last cap! These competitions have recently concluded and reports will be carried in the Summer Journal.



Enda Murphy, Editor

There have been two very significant retirements of late. Nick FitzGibbon has stepped back from international commitments after half a century at the very top. He was first capped at Junior level in 1970, and formed his enduring partnership with Adam Mesbur in 1974. No Irish player can match Nick's achievements, and no international partnership can match the longevity of FitzGibbon-Mesbur. The highlights were a European bronze in Lausanne in 1979, bettered by a silver in Warsaw 2006. Ireland made the semifinals of the World Mindsports Games [formerly Bridge Olympiad] in 2012. Nick and Adam captured the world's premier Invitation Pairs, the Cavendish, in 2015. And let us not forget that in 2006 and 2012 Ireland finished behind teams containing pairs subsequently exposed as cynical cheats. The really good news is that Nick has kindly agreed to document some of his experiences for the Journal - watch this space!

John Comyn has laid down his pen after fifty years as Sunday Independent bridge columnist, most of which I can claim to have read. A principled and crusading journalist, John was never afraid to call it as

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he saw it, and courting popularity was rarely his thing. At one time, he used to indulge his passion for punting by pricing up the participants in Trials in his column and standing any resulting bets. Inevitably, the legal and compliance fraternity rapidly descended!! John's other major contribution to our game was the Rothman's Kings series of challenge matches around the country. The Journal wishes him a long and happy retirement. Thank you, John.

The Winter Journal reported on the "creative tension" between face-to-face and online play. In that context it is noteworthy that ACBL [American Contract Bridge League] will run the Summer national teams championship [the Spingold] using tablets from the round of 16 onwards, on RealBridge software. All the Norths and Easts in one room, with Souths and Wests in another. Players will have a keypad and a stylus, but no keyboard or mouse. Explanations of bids will be written on paper as normal. This has been a controversial development. There are obvious benefits – such as cost savings relating to dealing machines and

physical screen transportation. Tablet play also considerably reduces the scope for cheating as well as the transmission of UI [Unauthorised Information] – the ability to infer improperly from partner's mannerisms or tempo. However a number of the game's heavyweights are strongly opposed – Zia Mahmood, Boye Brogeland, Steve Weinstein and Joe Grue to name a few. They see this as the end of "bridge as we know it", ie cards in your hand and a degree of social interaction. This new format, they contend, obviates the need to be at the venue at all. So if, say, twenty European players enter, they could just fly cheaply to an agreed European venue and play under supervision. Maybe tablets are just the next natural step after bidding boxes and screens, but I'm not so sure. It boils down to how badly you want to make the game safe from cheating / UI, versus how much "collateral damage" you're willing to inflict to achieve it.

World star Boye Brogeland has generously offered a selection of articles he wrote a number of years ago, detailing his fortunes in top-level Bridge.

Back home, it was good to see the Master Pairs and Holmes Wilson numbers back to pre Covid levels, and one hopes this will be mirrored in other "live" events going forward.

Have a good read – and don't forget to have a go at the Bidding and Play Quizzes before June 14th!

Enda Murphy
editor@cbaie.ie

Comyn's Corner

More anecdotes from John Comyn's book "Doubled Up".

John has been playing bridge for over 70 years and has been Bridge Correspondent of the Sunday Independent for 59 years. In 2010 he published a personal memoir "Doubled Up", recounting the funniest episodes he'd encountered. John kindly agreed to let us dip into his treasure trove of funny recollections.

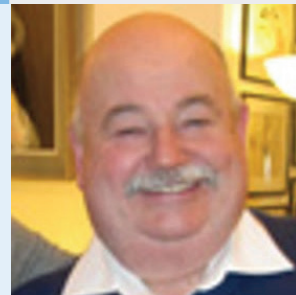
It's thought that this yarn emanated from the late and very much missed Seán Ó'Lubaigh.

It concerns a club game in the pre-bidding box era. An elderly player heard an opening bid on their right, and made a takeout double. However the opening bid had actually been made at the next table, and in fact right-hand opponent had passed. The TD was called, and after some thought ruled that the bidding should continue.

It did – Pass / Double / Redouble / Pass / Pass / Pass! "What do I do now?" asked the erroneous Doubler. "Lead a trump", replied the TD.

Reflections on a Bridge Life

By BJ O'Brien



[Editor's note: I must declare a personal bias here, having played with BJ for over forty years. He's won every National title at least once, plus two Camroses and a Teltscher Trophy [Senior Camrose]. He also has multiple caps at European and World championship level. For me, the most remarkable feature is his ability to win with just about anybody, as his record shows. There are very few top-level players who can do that. EM]

As with many of my generation my bridge life commenced at the dining room table at home making up a fourth when someone could not play in the family's weekly Sunday evening game.

It progressed to the Bankers club in Stephen's Green where in 1972 I played with a then banker, Arthur Lappin. We had no system but finished in the middle of the field and I was asked back to play the next week with Major George Jackson, who took me under his wing along with Gerry Deignan for the next few years. The Bankers club at that time boasted a very strong membership of junior University students, Gráinne Barton, Brian Dolan, Terry Walsh and Pat Walshe to mention a few.

In those days we had no bridgemates or bidding boxes or even computer scoring and my regular partner John Comyn and I used to compete against each other (not just at the bridge table) to find out which of us could score up the quickest by hand.

On one occasion playing against Dave Mulhall, I made a penalty double of his contract of 3♠ and to ensure that John did not read it as a takeout double, I got off my chair and stood on the table and roared DOUBLE! This of course would not be tolerated today, but the best bit was that Dave easily made his contract - much to JC's annoyance.

Foreign Affairs

My first International appearance occurred in 1981 in the Common Market championships in Birmingham with J.H. (Jimmy) Powell. Towards the end of the first session, we sat down against a pair of Italians. On Board 1 we scored well. Our opponents were mildly annoyed and lost no time in blaming each other, speaking in Italian. Jimmy asked that they speak English. On Board 2 we got another good score and our Italian friends were now more than mildly annoyed and screamed at one another. Jimmy again asked that they speak English. He was again ignored and turned to me and said "Leabhar Gaeilge liom". "Ceart go leór", I replied. At this point the Italians demanded that we speak in English!! Board 3 was the final one of the round and brought yet another good score. Seething, our opponents rose to leave, whereupon Jimmy spoke to them in fluent Italian! I have never seen two men blush so much as they now quietly slipped away. I then asked Jimmy what happened and was told that when leaving the table they were saying to each other "how could we get such bad scores against these stupid idiots!!"

Moving on to 1987, Tomás Roche and I qualified to play in the European Championships in Brighton. Although we did not threaten the leaders, we made the Daily Bulletin on two occasions. Playing against Denmark, who were using a forcing pass system [ie pass shows an opening bid], Tomás and I had decided that we would play transfers over their opening bids. When my right-hand opponent opened 3♣, normal pre-empt, and I had a good hand with a six card diamond suit I bid 4♦. Tomás bid 4♥ and I passed as I happened to have four hearts as well as my diamonds. The contract was made with an overtrick and I thought nothing more of it until our opponents asked whether I alerted my 4♦ bid. On the other side of the screen Tomás had alerted 4♦ as a transfer to hearts!

Our second Bulletin mention came against France, with Philippe Cronier on my side of the screen, Tomás dealt and passed as did my RHO. I looked at my balanced 11 count and passed also. Philippe opened 1NT and the bidding came back to me. I then noticed an opening bid of 1♦ from Tomás that I had not seen first time! Having been fortuitously granted a second chance, I decided that my most ethical course was to bid 3NT. I made nine tricks and gained seven imps. However, my partner, teammates and Captain Donal Garvey wanted to know why I did not double and get 500 on the board to gain nine imps. The headline of that bulletin read "The luck of the Irish".



Partnerships

The majority of our International players concentrate on playing with one partner and playing a system that they know and enjoy, and then honing that system in order to compete better at the top level. JP MacHale and Peter Pigot, Monty Rosenberg and Rex Anderson, Pat Walshe and Niall Toibín, Tom Hanlon and Hugh McGann, Micheál and Pádraig O'Briain, Ruth Giddings and Barbara Seligman, and of course our all-time most successful partnership, Nick FitzGibbon and Adam Mesbur, who still take time together practising their bidding on BBO and making alterations to the system. For me, one of the more enjoyable aspects to bridge is playing with a plethora of different partners with different systems and thus learning something new regularly. There are, of course, small problems that can arise, i.e. forgetting that you are playing good two-suited jump overcalls, when you actually have made a weak jump overcall. It has led to many bad results and one has to have a very understanding partner at times.

However, I can say that I have never had a serious falling out with anybody that has played with me over the years. I am fortunate enough to still play with most of my long standing partners- Alan O'Sullivan and Enda Murphy from my early Bank of Ireland days, Terry Walsh, Peter Goodman, Esther Stewart, John Comyn, David Jackson, Mamie MacCormac, Thomas MacCormac and all the other juniors at that time- Sunil Bavalia, Ronan McMaugh, Sarah Gilmartin and Fionnuala McInerney [*BJ's surrogate daughters - Ed.*], plus my International partners Tomás Roche, Michael McDonagh, Peter Pigot and last but not least my current "beau" Ranald Milne with whom I have shared success in both Camrose and Senior Camrose (Teltscher) Trophies. We

also qualified for and played in the World Championships in Wuhan in October 2019. And let's not forget Jill Kulchycky, who was my regular mixed partner and whose untimely death has left an unwanted void in our bridge community. Others that I have had success with include Teresa Rigney, Siobhan Part, Louise Mitchell, Diarmuid Reddan, Dan McIntosh, Derek O'Gorman and Kathleen Vaughan.

Rothmans Kings

John Comyn, with the sponsorship of the cigarette giants Rothmans, formed a squad to tour the country and play bridge against local teams. It was a social but prestigious event nonetheless, and we toured the country from Dublin to Cork, Galway and Belfast, and everywhere in between. I sometimes think I was on the team as I was the only one who did not drink alcohol, and also the only one who smoked. Believe me they needed a sober driver!

We were treated royally wherever we went, with fine food and wine.

I remember vividly one such trip to the West. Our schedule was to play in Galway bridge club at 2pm and to then drive to Clifden for dinner at 7pm followed by the normal 24 board match. Unfortunately, Paul Scannell invited us to lunch and it was so good that we were an hour late for bridge. We left Galway at 6.15 in our powerful Opel car/tank and arrived in Clifden at one minute past 7.00. Pat Walshe was pleading with me to slow down but Niall Toibín was asking to carry on, as we flew over the many bumps on the windy road between the two places. It was terrific and I was sad to see it end. The Kings team had John as its team leader, with Pat Walshe, Niall Toibín, Brian Dolan, Rory Boland, Donal Garvey, Micheál O'Briain and yours truly. I hope I have not left anyone out. My apologies if I have.

Killarney Congress

For many years now I have attended the 10-day long Congress held in the beautiful Lake Hotel in Killarney. Toss and Antoinette McGee organise a really enjoyable few glorious days in May each year where we hire a house, invite house guests, play bridge, and generally have the "craic".

We even have our own "cordon bleu" chef in Tom McCarthy and the band of housemates all help out with other daily chores (if you do not chip in, you will not be invited back). The word spread and one year we had to hire two houses to accommodate the 28 attendees. During the day (morning does not exist as beds are not seen until the early/not so early hours if at all), the guests do the tourist trails, or go shopping while Toss and I make ourselves at home in Murphy's Ice Cream parlour or attend the "speakeasy" directly across the road from Paddy Powers in the town centre.

The bridge used to start when dinner in the hotel was finished, sometime between 7.30 and 8.00. The majority of the players in the main competitions come from overseas. Most of the players are regulars and of a very high standard and many friendships have grown over the years. I cannot think of any congress held in Ireland where three World Champions would have played, never mind in the same year - Michelle Brunner, John Holland and Rhona Goldenfield.

On the Thursday we visit (with bus supplied) the magnificent restaurant Nick's of Killorglin. Normally we have about 14 for dinner, and afterwards there is a sing-song. You have not lived if you have not heard Joe Higgins singing his rendition of My Way. One year shortly after my 50th birthday, I arrived in the hotel to be greeted by Jim Luck and Bernard Goldenfield. Bernard says, "Welcome to Killarney, I have organised a



surprise birthday party for you. Who do you want to come?" All I can say is the Bridge Committee that year were not happy that half their normal amount of players in the mixed were absent. Another year, our chef and I trawled through every shop in Killarney looking for fresh fennel without success. I know where to get it, says Tom, and off we go to the English Market in Cork. I did say he was "cordon bleu," but that was not what I was calling him that day! I turned the air bleu!

On another occasion we had just finished the mixed teams on the Friday night and two of our housemates had to play in the final of "Crockfords", a big UK competition, the following day. I brought Peter Goodman and Adrian Thomas to Limerick to catch a bus at 2.00am going to Dublin Airport for a flight to Manchester at 8.00am to play at noon. I arrived at the appropriate bus stop just in time, but no bus appeared, whereupon I found out that Adrian was using Kavanagh's Bus Coaches, but Peter had booked CIE! Nothing for it but to drive to Dublin Airport and back to Killarney for the teams on Saturday/Sunday. On the way I overtook a CIE bus and asked Peter to look and tell me where it was going. Dublin Airport was the reply and so I let the bus pass me out and followed it to Thurles where it stopped and my passengers loaded themselves on. The bad news was I was not at my best the next day. The good news was Peter and Adrian won Crockfords that year.

The Juniors

Around the turn of the century (does that phrase not conjure thoughts of historical events?) I became involved in Irish Junior Bridge. Hilary Dowling-Long and Thomas MacCormac set up a Junior Bridge Committee and roped me in as the non-playing captain of an Irish University team in Rotterdam. I arrived at Amsterdam train station and was met by Thomas

who brought me to an Irish bar to meet the team - Thomas playing with Manus Burke, Sunil Bavalia playing with Andrew Barton (son of Gráinne) and Sarah Gilmartin playing with Fionnuala McInerney.

I suggested that we have dinner, principally to allow me to get to know the team, and so we found a magnificent Chinese establishment. My first major surprise was how such skinny people (relative to me of course) could eat and drink so much. My second surprise was how efficient the train system was, as we got to Rotterdam without the slightest hitch. My third surprise was when the TD called me after our first match to tell me that he was penalising us three VPs for a blatant breach of the rules by Sarah, who'd left the closed room without permission. I learned there and then that it was not a good idea to play our girls for the first round in the morning. Apparently Sarah and Fionnuala had not eaten breakfast and became peckish. Sarah went to the tuck shop for a chocolate hit and on her return was asked, "Where have you come from?" "Ireland" was her innocent, accurate and expensive reply.

One night after the bridge Thomas, Manus and I decided to wander outside the campus to seek some real food as what we were being fed was far too healthy. On our travels we met the NPC of Latvia, who had managed to obtain a needle and thread for a very important task Thomas had managed to split his trousers]. He asked me if he could join us and of course we agreed. His English was poor. We eventually found an outdoor eatery which served burgers with a fried egg on top and chips. For an hour Thomas regaled us with stories, mostly involving his state of health, and by the time we left, our new found Latvian friend was sore from laughter

We did not do well at the bridge but at the reception afterwards,

the head of the European Bridge League came up to me and said, "You should be very proud of your team. They showed huge respect by dressing up for the occasion and were so friendly and chatty to everyone throughout the tournament." [At the Closing Ceremony the lads wore black tie and the girls evening dresses]. Thereafter I became their regular NPC for The Junior Camrose and other European championships. To this day I still host an annual "Chinese" dinner for the "Rotterdam Six".

"The Tough Years"

In the early 2000s I was diagnosed with PKD (polycystic kidney disease) and spent a considerable time in Tallaght hospital under the care of Dr Catherine Wall (THE most brilliant Renal Doctor). During this time, I had both kidneys removed and was on dialysis four to five times a week, but as an in-patient, I was allowed out to play bridge in the evenings. Esther Stewart would come and collect me, cannula and all, and bring me to the bridge centre and back to the hospital, more often than not with me answering the mobile from panicking hospital nurses on the way back.

I was eventually put on the urgent transplant list as dialysis was becoming more and more difficult. I got the call one Monday evening in 2010 while playing a league match in the Regent, to get to Beaumont Hospital asap, where a transplant was to be performed. Without the help of members of the Irish bridge community, it is doubtful I would be writing these words - Esther Stewart, Mary Kelly Rogers, Fionnuala McInerney, the members of the Templeogue Community Centre Bridge Club and Prof Walshe, consultant nephrologist in Beaumont Hospital, brother of the late, great Pat Walshe. While recovering in hospital, I was watching the final



of the womens' championship of the Bonn Nations Cup where France won by one imp on the very last board, from Germany. I had been due to play in the Irish Open team and Thomas MacCormac took my place. Thomas called from the venue, asked how I was and said that someone important wanted to speak to me.

A few years before, Hilary Dowling-Long had organised an individual contest for Irish and some invited overseas grandmasters in the RDS under the auspices of the CBAI. Thomas and I were given the responsibility of looking after Jens and Sabine Auken, with Thomas the bodyguard and I the chauffeur. We all had a great time and Sabine won the competition.

Now, Sabine was the person on the phone from Germany. I commiserated with her on her unlucky defeat. She replied that she was so happy that my transplant had gone well and that the bridge was not important, and for me to get well quickly. What a kind and gracious gesture from a tip-top player.

Before I left Beaumont, I asked Prof Walshe if he would allow me to compete in the European Championships, which were being held in Ostend one month after being discharged. He said yes only because Pat had told him how important bridge was to those that played the game. I was in dreamland at those championships. I had a form detailing my various medications, and our NPC had to give those details to the organisers, so they could check for banned substances. I think they stopped reading at page seven, because they came back and advised that if Ireland were to win a medal, please make sure BJ is nowhere to be seen!

Toss and Antoinette McGee came out to support, and stayed in our team hotel but could only get one of the two suites on the top floor. The other suite was occupied by Madame Maria Theresa Lavazza, sponsor of the Italian team. Madame

was a person to be reckoned with, to put it mildly. Antoinette decided to hold a small party in their suite. After a few libations, Toss decided to invite his neighbour and so we knocked upon her door. There was no answer but I insisted that I saw her enter earlier and so we decided to sing O Sole Mio to entice her out. Our caterwauling worked and the door reluctantly opened. The housemaid looked at us as if we were mad and shut the door.

The Later Years

Since I was given a new lease of life in 2010 I have travelled extensively to tournaments at home and abroad. In the North I try to play in the congresses and have played in their Premier League with Anne Fitzpatrick and Harold Curran and others, for several years now.

Wales has also been very kind to me. In 2019 we travelled across with Pat Quinn, Peter Goodman and Diarmuid Reddan to Aberaeron. I got sick on the way over, tried to shake it off, but had to be taken to hospital 30 miles away in Aberystwyth. While there, I was seen by a number of doctors, one asking if my wife was with me. When I replied no, he said that perhaps she should be. Dr Jones, who had taken me to the hospital, returned to my hotel, told them what was happening and came back with my clothes etc. In the meantime, Peter drove all the way to Cardiff and collected my wife Colleen the following morning, and drove back to Aberaeron and onwards then to the hospital.

They allowed me to leave two days later if I promised to go to hospital in Dublin.

Diarmuid organised the trip back home on the ferry and Pat, although going home to Ennis, took a short detour via Dublin as I was not allowed to drive. The next morning I reported to Dr Jones and we had breakfast and watched the first half of the semi-final of

the Rugby World Cup between Wales and South Africa. At half time the doctor examined me, said I had sepsis but was well on the way to recovery as a result of the treatment received in Wales, and we all sat down to the second half. A great game but Wales lost. Others who have looked after me in Wales include Maggie Pierce, Gilly Clench, the late Patrick Jourdain, Jim Luck, Tom Reddy and Adrian Thomas.

Other adventures include a return trip to Ostend in 2014, where in the Senior Europeans we finished 4th and earned another opportunity to represent Ireland in the World Championships in India in 2015. I could not travel to India as my doctor advised against going there given my situation. In 2018 in Opatija we again qualified for the World Senior Championships in 2019 and this time I got to go. Mind you travelling to Wuhan, one month before the outbreak of Covid 19, would not seem a good idea in retrospect! Budapest 2016 was another great trip, as NPC of the Irish Womens' team. The most recent highlight was winning the Teltscher trophy with Ranald Milne, Micheál and Pádraig O'Briain, Terry Walsh and Peter Goodman, and our magnificent captain Derek O'Gorman.

Bridge has been my consuming passion for nearly 50 years. I have met so many great people, made many lifelong friends, played with and against the best, and thoroughly enjoyed every moment.

If Enda Murphy was to ask me a question as to my favourite trip away, the answer would be Opatija. The bridge was good, the weather was great, the food was superb and very reasonably priced, the town and environs were beautiful and most importantly of all, my wonderful wife Colleen came for the duration. *[I wasn't going to ask him, but it's good to know anyway. And Colleen is indeed wonderful. Ed.]*

The Paul-ine conversion on the way to Damascus via Templeogue!!

Paul Porteous



[Editor's note. Paul Porteous served thirty years at the helm of the CBAI. He stepped down last year, though he is still Secretary to the European Bridge League. His contribution has been nothing short of immense. Here he recounts the first part of his Bridge journey, with the concluding part to come in the next issue. I personally owe Paul a huge debt for encouraging me to write about the game and more besides].

I started to play bridge while a boarder in St Pats College in Armagh with the encouragement of Fr Brian Magee and the help of Terence Reese (not him, a basic book written by him!).

A group of six or eight of us, neither sport nor musically inclined (possibly forerunners of “nerds”) started to play together after class. Shortly after that, the school secretary, Kathleen Bunting, encouraged us to join in with the Armagh Bridge Club which was held in the Community Centre at the foot of the hill where we boarded. The weekly pairs game was scored with cumulative scoring and very soon the “boys” were all put sitting East/West, (not just because we moved easier!) but we could be restricted to one prize!!

Then to UCD where I made lifelong friends inside and outside bridge – in Dublin and around the other colleges. At that time there was a vibrant college scene with individuals from then still featuring

in Irish bridge. Sadly some, Paddy Walsh and Pat Walshe amongst others, have gone before us but they are not forgotten!

While in college, I met the late Gerry Deignan who was Master Points Secretary of the CBAI at that time, and he taught me how to score pairs events (manually of course!) both single & double (Swedish L) and then I was hooked! I would head off to Athlone on a Sunday with Kay Downes to help the late Marie Gleeson score and recap those three session pairs – that I had not qualified for!

I stayed with bridge administration – committees for UCD and Bankers Bridge clubs and eventually became probably the worst President that Dublin South region ever had – at that time, I had been involved in our own catering equipment company so my off time was very limited - sorry DSR!

Roll it on a bit till the European Championships in Killarney gave me the opportunity to change the direction of my life. I had gotten married to the very understanding Maureen in 1988 and then heard that Ireland was going to host a European Championship in 1991. I contacted Chairman of the Organising Committee, Joe Moran, and volunteered to help!! It all came to pass and we were inundated with volunteers from all over the country who came to Killarney to show Europe how Ireland could run a world class

event. My own role was marshalling a team of ladies to act as caddies bringing predealt boards to and from tables – good fun but tiring! Maureen had the really exciting job of bringing scores board by board from the Closed Room to the Vu-Graph Auditorium, and being asked along the way what had happened – if only she had known anything about bridge at the time!

After the Championships, long term CBAI Treasurer Michael Lynch, decided he would retire leaving the late Noel Hickey and myself to battle it out for the job – I got lucky! The following year, when the discussion came round to maybe hiring someone full-time to work for CBAI, (with an open and transparent competition) I threw my hat into the ring and managed to beat off the opposition to secure the position of General Secretary of CBAI!

Starting on 1 October 1992, I started my 29 years “looking after bridge in Ireland” – enjoying almost every minute. The office was initially in the granny flat attached to our home in Clonskeagh and when we had extended the house, it ended up in what would become the dining room. Starting with a clean slate or a green field, I had ample opportunity to develop services for clubs and players, sourcing club supplies and individual gifts and eventually dealing boards for clubs and competitions.



When the volume of supplies that needed to be housed became too much for our attic, Joe and Moya Murray volunteered their basement in Enniskerry as extra storage space, which meant a weekly run to stock up. It also meant unloading a 20ft container of boards and tables at the roadside and bringing them down the avenue to the house in sheets of rain when Joe wasn't around to lend a hand – did I think it was a good idea that particular day – I surely did not!

Early on in the position, I realised that a 24/7 focus was required – late one Sunday night I think about 11pm, I got a call on the home phone number telling me that “so and so had called me a cheat Paul and what can I do about it?” Half an hour elicited the fact that the word “cheat” hadn't really been used and it was really a misunderstanding! The following day, Telecom Eireann was asked to take the home no out of the Directory and we started a CBAI office number and answering machine. Mind you, Bank Holidays didn't prevent callers to the house with one person calling in late on Christmas Eve for a pack of cards for a present!

Working from home for all that was a wonderful experience for me – how many Dads at that time can say that they had the opportunity to give their son a bottle during work? Cian used to toddle in to me and tell me to “put down the phone, Dad” and we had some bonding time!

Luckily, I have a very patient wife in Maureen, because I would run the annual membership records on continuous paper through a dot matrix printer – overnight, hoping to hear when the print run was interrupted so that I could go downstairs and reload with paper or ribbon. If I missed hearing a stoppage, I'd get an elbow and “its stopped”!!

In the office we had a DOS computer – chasing yellow or green (can't remember which) letters across a screen, and I was helped in the office at different times by a former colleague from PwC Nancy Coogan (now deceased), Anne Ryan (who never wanted to play bridge but was a natural comedienne), Catherine Dowling-Long (who threatened to wash Shane's mouth out with soap) and Geraldine Glynn (who did take up bridge). These wonderful ladies helped me develop and maintain contacts across the country that I cherish to this day (even though retired). I am fortunate to have a good memory for voices and after a while, it would take me half a dozen words to identify the caller (usually correctly!)

With that clean slate referred to earlier, I set out to get round to as many Regional AGMs as I could each year, so that the club representatives could meet the face at the other end of the phone and I could find out what we could do for them. It also served as a bridge to the regional officers and committee assuring them of the support of “Head Office” and ensuring their cooperation in maintaining the information in our membership database.

One of the sadder aspects of the job was attending funerals of bridge administrators and players North and South of the border; it's important that individual contributions to bridge, both at and away from the table, are recognised by their peers. Early in my time with CBAI, Executive member Jim Whymys from Ennis passed away and I went down to pay my respects. My practice would always be to move quietly into the church – as unobtrusively as possible – and tender my condolences at the end of Mass. Not this time! I was buttonholed by a notable member of the legal profession from Ennis and told “You'll carry the coffin Paul!” Honoured but mortified!

Over those few years working from home, I established relationships with my counterparts in the English, Scottish and Welsh Bridge Unions where the English were the only union with full-time employees (up to mid-20s in number, I think). With the help of Joe Moran, we started annual “Friendly” matches with each union which featured Open, Ladies, Juniors and Officials teams for the “Corn Cairdis” Trophy (EBU), “Cupa Cairdeas” Trophy (SBU) and “Cyfeillon Beiriste” Trophy (WBU). With the “Sonya Britton” Trophy at stake in our match with the NIBU we then had four International commitments each year. These were the initial steps that led to our resuming a place for Ireland in the Home International Series for the Camrose (Open), Lady Milne (Ladies), Junior Camrose (under 25s) and Peggy Bayer (Under 20s) that are played annually between CBAI, NIBU, EBU, SBU and WBU. We (Republic of Ireland) had withdrawn from the event in the 1950s in a misunderstanding (fit of pique) about the playing of the National anthem!

As time progressed, planning began for a Bridge Centre that could accommodate four clubs in the Ballyroan, Knocklyon, Templeogue area and CBAI was offered the chance to incorporate a permanent office into the plans. This was done (after a battle to have our own toilet which we won, and not to have our own sun terrace on the 2nd floor which did not face the sun which we lost) with the generosity of clubs around the country and I started to drive to work in 1998 – a whole new episode began.

To be continued.

Declan Byrne Bridge Online

More than 50 of Declan Byrne's online bridge students recently met for the first time to play bridge in-person.

Declan started his online courses in January 2021. This in-person 'Meet-Up' game was held in Dublin with players travelling from all over the country for an afternoon of bridge followed by dinner in a local restaurant. For some it was their first time to hold cards or sit at a bridge table while others have already joined local bridge clubs and are playing regularly. Declan Byrne Bridge provides an online game for his students on completion of courses and encourages all his students to join their local bridge club when they feel ready - **Learn Bridge Online, Play Bridge In Person!**

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Excellent presentation, use of technology & investment of time from Declan. Superb! - **Nora (Kerry).**

I thought the course was brilliant and would highly recommend it to anyone thinking of starting.

I really enjoyed the lessons - **Colette (Wicklow).**

A brilliant teacher, communicator and most of all FUN. I highly recommend Declan's bridge classes for anyone thinking of learning bridge - **Nicola (Meath).**

Really, really impressive teaching style and tutor persona - **Noel (Meath).**

Thanks Declan for the brilliant lessons, a life saver during covid - **Brenda (Cork).**

You are the best! A patient and very communicative teacher - **Mary (Galway).**

You are an amazing teacher and made bridge fun to learn - **Annmarie (Meath).**

Thanks a million for such a wonderful introduction to Bridge. - **Inez (Tipperary).**



One Simple Part Score Hand Yet 7 Ways To Bid It

By Bob Pattinson



It was most enjoyable to be back to live bridge for the President's Prize held in the excellent venue of Cork Marts in Fermoy.

The venue was easy to find just off the motorway, the playing room spacious and well lit, and the food and service of a high standard. Moreover, the bridge hands were challenging, but this article looks at a part score which offered seven different bidding routes to reach the final contract.

Third in hand, green against red, you hold:

♠7 ♥AQ9872 ♦874 ♣943

What do you bid if partner makes each of the following opening bids followed by a pass by the next opponent?

1. 1NT (12-14)
2. 1♠ (4 card majors and 15-17 1NT)
3. 1D (better minor and 15-17 1NT)

1. Over the 12-14 NT you will transfer to hearts and pass.
2. Over 1♠ you will have to bid 1NT to keep the bidding open in case opener is strong. Two variations arise here :
Forcing 1NT whereby opener if minimum will rebid a three card minor and now you can sign off in 2♥.
Non forcing 1NT which opener will pass if holding a balanced minimum.
3. Over 1♦ you will bid 1♥ and when opener rebids 1♠ you can show the weak hand of six+ hearts by rebidding 2♥

So far four common auctions, with three more possibilities when the opening is a minor suit:

Over 1♣/♦ if you play weak major suit jump responses you can provide an accurate picture of the hand with a jump to 2♥.

Playing transfer responses over 1♣ you can respond 1♦ to show four+ hearts: two variations arise here :

- (1) accepting the transfer holding three card major support, opener with only two hearts may now bid 1♠ to confirm four spades, or 1NT to deny three hearts and four spades and show a balanced hand.

In the sample hand opener would rebid 1♠ and responder sign off in 2♥.

- (2) if the transfer can be accepted with just two hearts, responder may now pass knowing no game is on

Of the seven possible sequences let us see what happens when bidding stops in 1NT.

W	N	E	S
1♠	P	1NT	P
P	P		

Lead: ♦9

		♠ 84		
		♥ 65		
		♦ AKJ3		
		♣ QJ107		
♠ KQ103	N	♠ 7		
♥ J10	W	♥ AQ9872		
♦ Q1065	E	♦ 874		
♣ A82	S	♣ 943		
		♠ J9652		
		♥ K43		
		♦ 92		
		♣ K85		

Declarer covers the ♦9 with ♦10, and North wins with the Jack and returns the ♣Q, and when this is ducked, continues with the ♣7 after South encourages with the ♣5. At this point there is little the declarer can do but hope that the heart finesse works.

South ducks the first heart, and winning the second one, continues with diamond and club winners, producing this four card ending:

		♠ A84		
		♥ ----		
		♦ 3		
		♣ ----		
♠ KQ10	N	♠ 7		
♥ ----	W	♥ A98		
♦ Q	E	♦ --		
♣ ----	S	♣ --		
		♠ J985		
		♥ ----		
		♦ ----		
		♣ ----		

Now North end plays dummy with the ♦Q, and then ducks the ♠K, to ensure South wins the Jack whichever spade is exited from the dummy.

Summary

Of the seven different routes to the final contract, 1NT goes three light, 2♥ contracts go two light, and the 1♥ contract is only one down. From the defence viewpoint three cheers for the king of hearts being in the South hand, move it to the North hand and 1♥ and 1NT make, and 2♥ is just light one trick. As the cards lie N/S can make 140 in spades if they can reach that contract (not after a 1♠ opening from West!).

This is just one hand but it does demonstrate that the forcing 1NT has advantages over the non-forcing variety, as it allows the weaker responding hands with long suits to reach better contracts. If continuing to play 1NT as non-forcing there is a case for employing the weak jump major response with weaker six card suits. Finally, if playing four card majors the logic of the blue club system of making the first rebid following the major opening showing a suit of equivalent or longer length as this helps to keep the bidding open for the extra step.



Geraldine Trophy 2023

Gay Keaveney



The men's teams championship was held in January and was won narrowly by Peter Pigot, Ciaran Coyne, Karel De Raemaeker, James Heneghan.

They led for the first time after the last round. There were 26 teams and the leader board changed on numerous occasions during the event. In second were Conor Boland, Adam Mesbur, Mark Moran and John Carroll. Third place went to Martin Brady, David Dunne, Paul Delaney and Tomás Roche.

Hand 1. 1st session Dealer North. Vul None.

	♠ 7	
	♥ 1097	
	♦ A10975	
	♣ A743	
♠ Q9863	N	♠ AK1052
♥ 843	W	♥ KJ52
♦ 82	E	♦ K3
♣ 865	S	♣ Q2
	♠ J4	
	♥ AQ6	
	♦ QJ64	
	♣ KJ109	

This is the first hand of the competition. East will open 1♠ and South will make a takeout double, though not holding four hearts. He has a spade shortage and three hearts. Playing five-card majors West pre-empts 3♣. Not holding four hearts North's best bid is now double because he knows partner will hold at least one four-card minor. It will then revert to South who should bid 4♣ bidding his suits up the line. At many tables North chose to bid 4♦ instead of double and most declarers only made 10 tricks. 5♦ by South can be beaten by a doubleton diamond lead as you will lose a heart, a diamond

and a spade. (East must cover the ♥10 and if necessary the ♥9 also). To make 5♦ by North after a spade lead and continuation, double dummy you must cash two clubs and play Ace and another diamond. Now East must either give a ruff and discard or switch to a heart which can be let around to the 1097, which gives three heart tricks. 5♣ is far easier - you can use the fifth diamond to discard a heart and then finesse in hearts.

Not one of the 26 tables played in Clubs! Just one pair got to 5♦ and they went one down.

Hand 10. 1st session Dealer East. Vul All.

	♠ K1074	
	♥ AQJ53	
	♦ 9	
	♣ KJ5	
♠ 532	N	♠ A986
♥ 10	W	♥ K874
♦ KQJ1054	E	♦ A
♣ 873	S	♣ AQ96
	♠ QJ	
	♥ 962	
	♦ 87632	
	♣ 1042	

This hand illustrates a common error and it happened twice that I saw. East opened 1♣ and West responded 2♦ showing 6-8 hcp. Now North made a takeout double when in fact he should bid his five card heart suit. If West had bid 1♦ he should also bid 1♥ and not double. With a five card Major bid it and do not make a takeout doubles unless you are super strong. Two Souths foolishly turned the takeout double into a penalty double by passing. If you are looking at five diamonds headed by the 8 it means West's six card suit can draw them

without loss. The doubled diamond contract made with overtricks both times. 2♥ is South's best bid in response to that takeout double.

Unbelievably, 15 of the 26 tables saw EW in 3NT going down between two and five!

Hand 14. 2nd session Dealer East. Vul None.

	♠ 953	
	♥ KJ9	
	♦ QJ963	
	♣ 86	
♠ KJ4	N	♠ 10876
♥ 762	W	♥ AQ1043
♦ 742	E	♦ A
♣ K973	S	♣ AQJ
	♠ AQ2	
	♥ 85	
	♦ K1085	
	♣ 10542	

This hand tests your methods for raising partner's Major opening. 4♥ is very good, even though there are "only" 24 HCP and West's shape is flat.

East opens 1♥ and you raise to 2♥. East will now bid 2♠. A useful gadget now is 2NT commanding a bid of 3♣ a bid of 3♥ should now be your weakest bid in hearts showing 5/6. However you have a very good working 7/8hcp with the valuable ♠KJ in partners second suit. You also have two controls [Aces and Kings are much more valuable in suit versus NT contracts], so you will raise 2♠ to 4♥. A bid of 3♥ after a reverse of 2♠ should be your strongest way of raising in hearts (9+hcp). It leaves room for partner to cue bid if he's strong enough.

15 pairs bid and made 4♥, while six languished in partscore.



Hand 19. 2nd session
Dealer South. Vul E/W.

♠ 82			
♥ 105432			
♦ K8			
♣ AK109			
♠ J7	N	♠ KQ96543	
♥ AJ6	W	♥ Q87	
♦ AJ6	E	♦ 107	
♣ QJ543	S	♣ 2	
♠ A10			
♥ K9			
♦ Q95432			
♣ 876			

West opens a 12-14 NT (should always be upper range vulnerable). I reckon many treated it as a 15-17 NT due to the five card club suit. North bid ♥ showing hearts and another suit. It is rock minimum and certainly if vulnerable I would not be bidding. What would you now bid on the East hand? Must admit I would bid 4♠ because it's a vul 1NT opening and my suit is good. One lead that makes it difficult is ♠A followed by the 10. But Declarer can lead a club to the J and North is endplayed in three suits. ♥K being doubleton is a big plus.

4♠ was bid at 17 tables, almost always played by East and it always made.

Comyn's Corner

John Kennedy has returned to the game in the last few years. His nickname is "1700", but I wouldn't advise you to ask him how he got it!

I can tell you that his partner put him in 5♦X and this was the old scoring system, so 1700 was just the nine down. Who was his partner? Wild horses wouldn't persuade me to reveal his name, but our esteemed Editor would have a fair idea!!



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Expert Card Play

The Triple Squeeze

Rory Timlin



In this issue we examine the **Triple Squeeze**, where one defender is squeezed in three suits.

Some useful terms are shown in bold print. Frequently, a Triple Squeeze operates when declarer has all the remaining tricks bar two. Sometimes a Triple Squeeze gains one trick. Sometimes the gain is two tricks, known as a Progressive or Repeating Triple Squeeze. As always, a big thank you to Paul Scannell for his incisive comments on the article.

Questions:

(1) Teams. Dealer South. Vul All.

	♠ KQJ	
	♥ Q32	
	♦ KQ64	
	♣ AJ7	
N		E
W		S
	♠ A109	
	♥ AK65	
	♦ A732	
	♣ 103	

South opens 1NT (15-17) and plays in 6NT. West leads ♠8 (2nd/4th). You duck and East wins ♣Q. You win ♦J switch in dummy (West plays ♦8). You now test hearts, West discarding a spade on the third top heart. What now? If you cash two top spades, East lets go a club on the second round.

(2) Teams. Dealer South. Vul E/W.

	♠ 432	
	♥ AK	
	♦ J9	
	♣ AKQ862	
N		E
W		S
	♠ AQ9	
	♥ J72	
	♦ KQ1085	
	♣ 73	

South plays in 6NT against silent opponents. West leads ♠7 (may be 2nd highest from a poor suit) to East's ♠10. Plan the play.

(3) Pairs. Dealer South. Vul E/W.

	♠ 965	
	♥ J92	
	♦ AQ74	
	♣ A73	
N		E
W		S
	♠ AQ	
	♥ AK107	
	♦ K632	
	♣ J64	

South opens 1NT and North raises to 3NT. ♠10 is led, East's ♣Q winning. ♠J is returned and ♠Q scores. You play a diamond to dummy and run ♥9 which scores, then ♥J is covered by the queen. Proceed.

(4) Pairs. Dealer South. Vul E/W.

	♠ A965	
	♥ 642	
	♦ AKQ1093	
	♣ ---	
N		E
W		S
	♠ Q	
	♥ AJ7	
	♦ 62	
	♣ AKQJ1094	

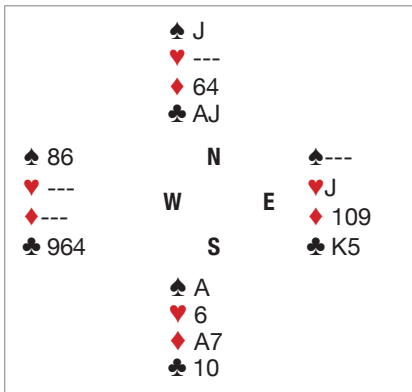
Against silent opponents, you get to 7NT. Opening lead ♥8. Plan the play.

Answers:

(1) The full layout was: (1) Teams. Dealer South. Vul All.

	♠ KQJ	
	♥ Q32	
	♦ KQ64	
	♣ AJ7	
N		E
W		S
♠ 865432		♠ 7
♥ 108		♥ J974
♦ 8		♦ J1095
♣ 9864		♣ KQ52
	♠ A109	
	♥ AK65	
	♦ A732	
	♣ 103	

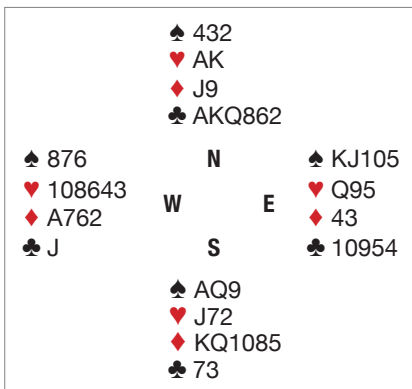
In 6NT, you duck the club lead to the queen, win the diamond return in dummy, test hearts, West letting go a spade on the third round. Now you cash ♠KQ and East plays a club on the second spade. To complete the picture, cash ♦Q. If both follow to ♦Q, then run the diamonds and ♠A to squeeze East in clubs and hearts in the three card ending. But as it happens, West shows out on ♦Q. Now East is ripe for a triple squeeze in this ending:



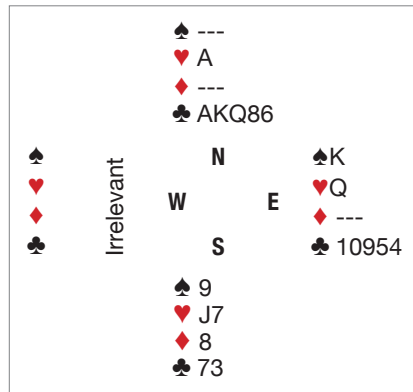
East is known to be 1444. Play a spade to the ace. East is squeezed. Whatever suit he discards, play on that suit to squeeze him again. This is a Progressive Triple Squeeze, as it squeezes East out of two tricks.

Note that the second diamond can be cashed before or after the third spade, but ♦A must be retained for communications.

(2) The full layout was:



Against 6NT, West leads ♠7 to the 10 and queen. There are 11 tricks once ♦A is knocked out. If clubs break, there are 12 easy tricks. Any other chances if clubs don't behave? We can't cash the top hearts early to see if the queen falls, as we would be wide open in hearts after then knocking out ♦A. But there is a chance of a Triple Squeeze if one defender (East, as he seems to have the spades honours) has four clubs and ♥Q along with the spades honours. So play a diamond at trick two. If it wins in dummy, cash one top heart and continue diamonds, overtaking in hand. Say West wins the second diamond and continues ♠8 (best defence) to the jack and ace. Now run the diamonds and East is Triple Squeezed. This is the ending when the last diamond is led:

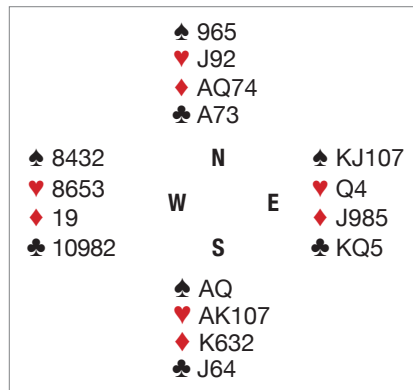


East has already had to bare ♥Q. On the last diamond, dummy's ♥A is discarded and East is squeezed. If he throws a club, dummy is high. Or if he throws a Major suit winner (likely a heart), then the lead of the now established ♥J or ♠9 squeezes him again. 6NT made on a

Progressive Triple Squeeze.

Note that the discard of ♥A never costs the contract, but it may lead to a second undertrick if West holds ♥Q.

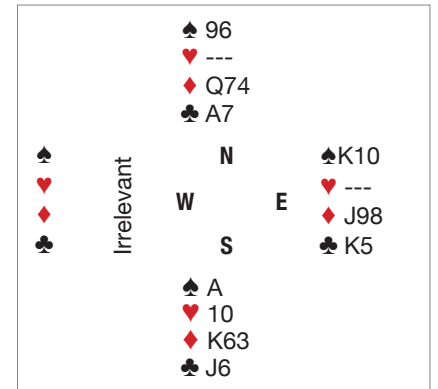
(3) The full layout was:



Contract 3NT at Pairs. ♣10 led to East's queen, ♠J back and ♠Q scores. A diamond to dummy is followed by ♥9 which wins, then ♥J covered by ♥Q, South winning in hand.

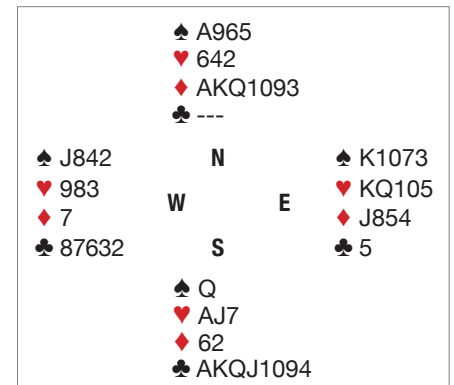
What now? [Note: 10 tricks are now assured, but given that it is Matchpoints, overtricks matter.] It looks like East holds ♣K, as he didn't return a club at trick two. It also looks like he holds ♠K and ♠10. If diamonds break, we are up to 11 tricks and East is ripe for a Criss-Cross Squeeze. But there

is no hurry to test diamonds. It is better to cash the hearts, letting go a diamond from dummy. If East has four diamonds he is now in the grip of a **Progressive Triple Squeeze**. As the last heart is played, this is the ending:



On the last heart, dummy lets go a diamond (or a club) and East is triple squeezed. If he lets go a diamond, then three more rounds of diamonds will catch him in a criss-cross squeeze in the black suits, while if he lets go a black card you play on that black suit to squeeze him again in the other two suits. 12 tricks and a joint top.

(4) The full layout was:



Against 7NT, a heart is led to the queen and ace. This is a good contract, just needing diamonds to behave. What if someone has ♦Jxxx(x)? On any other lead, we could try a top diamond, in case West has vJxxxx, or failing that layout, cash ♠A, enter hand in hearts and run clubs, hoping for a red suit simple squeeze.

But the heart lead means we cannot cash ♠A, because of a lack of other entry to the clubs. So we



must run all the clubs immediately, coming down to a five card ending. Best play is to come down to five diamonds in dummy, discarding ♠A along the way! As the cards lie, East is caught in a Progressive Criss-Cross Triple Squeeze. He has to discard from ♠K ♥K ♦J854 ♣---. If he lets go a diamond, dummy wins the last five tricks. If he lets go a king, it sets up a winner in declarer's hand which is then led to squeeze East again.

Note that you would not discard ♠A if the contract was 6NT. Also note that 7♣ is a safer contract than 7NT (as it is Pairs, N/S opted for the higher scoring 7NT), because on any lead but a spade, trumps can be drawn and diamonds tested while ♠A is still on dummy, picking up all 4/1 and 5/0 diamond breaks (If West has five diamonds, then a ruff at trick one beats 7♣. In this case East may try a Lightner Double and N/S might run to 7NT). On a spade lead in 7♣, come to hand and run five rounds of trumps, test one round of diamonds, come to hand and run the last winner in hand to squeeze East in the red suits.

Even the Best Make Howlers!

Editor

The World Championships were held last year in Wroclaw, Poland. If you go to Youtube and subscribe for free to Traian Chira, you can view all the videos.

I love doing this because you get to see the players "live" and you also see the hands. For anyone looking to improve their game, I'd recommend this for sure.

I tuned in to a World Team Final and I have a hand to share with you. Just to remind those readers who may not be regular teams players, at teams the key is to make your contract – overtricks are largely irrelevant. That means, for example, that in an apparently safe contract declarer should envisage an adverse lie of the cards that would defeat it, and then look for a safe line of play that would still bring the contract home, even if it costs overtricks.

Partner opens a weak 2♦ and you hold: -

♠ AKJ9
♥ K432
♦ K32
♣ A4

Let's assume you bid the pragmatic 3NT. A small club is led.

How do you play?

♠ AKJ9	♠ 432
♥ K432	♥ 7
♦ K32	♦ AQ10954
♣ A4	♣ Q106

Your first decision is which club to play from dummy. Happily it doesn't matter – either the Q or the ten will win. What now?

Remember – your objective is to ensure nine tricks. What could threaten 3NT? A 4-0 diamond split, with J876 on declarer's right [ie over the AQ holding in dummy]. You don't have the entries to pick up the suit and enjoy the diamonds in that case.

Look again. You have two spades and two clubs after the lead. You need five diamond tricks to ensure your contract. Do you now see what declarer should do? Yes – lead the ♦10 from dummy, planning to run it. If it loses to the Jack on your left, no problem. You've still five diamond tricks to come in addition to your four black suit winners, and opponents can only take one heart trick if they switch to them.

At the table, a multiple world champion won the opening lead in dummy with the ♣Q and played the ♦A! You should have seen their face when left hand opponent showed out. Now they only had three diamonds two clubs and two spades on top.

After much agonising came a spade to the Jack, winning. Declarer now cashed ♠A, felling the ten on the left. That allowed dummy to be entered with ♦A for the marked finesse against the ♠Q. 3NT made via four spades three diamonds and two clubs. I hope declarer went straight out and bought a lottery ticket.

So maybe the moral of this story is that it's better to be born lucky than rich!! And there's hope for us all!



Revington Trophy

Micheál O'Brien



The National Men's Pairs Championships (Revington Trophy) was held on 15 January 2023 at the Westgrove hotel, Clane, Co Kildare. There was a field of 37 and the prize winners were:

1st Diarmuid Reddan & John Phelan

2nd Marcin Rudzinski & Ronan McMaugh

3rd Tom Gilligan & Dave Terry

Best Regional Masters:

Tony Ward & Bill O'Hanlon

Best Area Masters:

Kevin Kennedy & Thomas Reilly

1st Session:

Brendan Sheridan & Seamus Costello

2nd Session:

Gay Keaveney & Martin Jones

Diarmuid and John had an emphatic victory, leading after the first session with a score of 67%. Their score at the end of the event was 65%, giving a clear 3% margin over the second place finishers.

My partner [BJ O'Brien] and I had a decent first session, placing 7th, but we could not sustain it and we fell out of contention. We played against the winners halfway through the second session and they were showing no sign of flagging. Diarmuid and John were sitting EW.

Board 5. Dealer North. Vul E/W.

		♠ Q7			
		♥ KJ98			
		♦ 75			
		♣ KQ1042			
♠ AKJ9		N		♠ 8543	
♥ A1072				♥ Q43	
♦ 982	W		E	♦ AK103	
♣ J9		S		♣ 86	
		♠ 1062			
		♥ 65			
		♦ QJ64			
		♣ A753			

The bidding was as follows:

W	N	E	S
	1♣	P	1♦
X	1♥	2♠	3♣
3♠	P	P	P

West's confidence in bidding 3♠ vulnerable was justified by East's declarer play. He played trumps from the top to drop the offside doubleton queen. As North had opened the bidding, he was a favourite to hold ♠Q. As a result declarer lost a heart, a diamond and two clubs, making his contract for a 78% score. If declarer had gone one down in 3♠ he'd have scored 15%.

Board 6. Dealer East. Vul E/W.

		♠ K			
		♥ KQ4			
		♦ KQJ953			
		♣ J75			
♠ AQ86		N		♠ J54	
♥ 10762				♥ A3	
♦ A42	W		E	♦ 6	
♣ K2		S		♣ AQ109864	
		♠ 109732			
		♥ J985			
		♦ 1087			
		♣ 3			

The bidding was as follows:

W	N	E	S
		1♣	P
1♥	2♦	3♣	P
3NT	P	P	P

The ♦K was led by North and ducked twice before the declarer took the third trick. Declarer now cashed seven club tricks and the ♥A leaving the declarer with the ♠AQ8 and dummy with ♠J54 while North held ♠K, ♥King and a diamond. Declarer finessed the spade into the Singleton King. This resulted in nine tricks rather than 11 if he had played spades from the top. This gave the winners a 32% score on the board and average on the two boards against us.

Three pairs made 13 tricks in 3NT and four more made overtricks. One NS pair fetched up in 5♠X, costing just the 1700. Another NS pair did extremely well to play in 4♦X-2, conceding 300 and scoring a well-deserved 81%.



North Kerry Congress

Nicky Fitzgibbon



North Kerry Congress had a very pleasant return to Face to Face Bridge. The congress was held in the Rose Hotel Tralee over the weekend of 25th to 27th of November 2022.

We would like to thank our Congress President Liam Lynch and CBAI President Pat O'Mahony for their professionalism and joviality. A special word of thanks to our tournament director Eamon Galligan.

The Winners of the Mixed Pairs were Peter Goodman and Aoife McHale. 2nd Place went to Tom Hardiman and Pat Fitzgibbon.

The winners of the Bill & Peg Mullins Congress Pairs were Kelan O'Connor and Peter Goodman. In second place were Kate Cussen and Dennis Sheehan.

The Intermediate pairs was won by Mary Lonergan and Bridie O'Reilly

The Congress Teams was won by David O'Brien, Deirdre O'Halloran, Phyllis O'Regan and Horst Rosler. Second place went to John and Kelan O'Connor, Peter Goodman and Aoife McHale. So Peter narrowly missed out on the treble.

**Board 10. Congress Pairs
Dealer East. Vul ALL.**

		♠ 65			
		♥ QJ53			
		♦ Q92			
		♣ A853			
♠ KQ108	N		E	♠ 7432	
♥ 92	W			♥ 10864	
♦ J6				♦ 1073	
♣ K10642	S			♣ Q7	
		♠ AJ9			
		♥ AK7			
		♦ AK854			
		♣ J9			

If the contract is 3NT by South, West is on lead with ♠KQ108. Beginners and Intermediates would probably bang down the King without a second's thought. South ducks of course. What are your agreements about East's card to trick one? Let's say you play that a small spade discourages. That works here. But there are many hands where West isn't interested in partner's attitude to spades – instead he wants count, ie how many spades does partner have?

The normal agreement that experienced players have is "Ace or Queen asks for attitude, King asks for count". On this hand, West needs to know if East likes Spades, i.e. his attitude. So you lead the Queen.

If the contract is 6♦ by South, a club lead presents the only problem, since it's easy to concede a spade and ruff one in dummy otherwise. On a club lead you must duck. Now you cash all your red suit winners and West is squeezed because he can't guard both black suits. This deliberate early concession of a trick when you're one trick short is basic squeeze technique, known as "rectifying the count".

**Board 7. Congress Teams
Dealer North. Vul ALL.**

		♠ A985			
		♥ 105			
		♦ A832			
		♣ AK5			
♠ KQJ72	N		E	♠ 10643	
♥ 3	W			♥ J94	
♦ 104				♦ QJ65	
♣ Q8764	S			♣ 93	
		♠ ---			
		♥ AKQ8762			
		♦ K97			
		♣ J102			

North opens 1NT 15-17. How does South show slam interest in hearts? What would 1NT-2♦-2♥-4NT mean? Is it Blackwood or quantitative? Kelan O'Connor bid 4♦ directly over 1NT, which by agreement showed a slam try in hearts. An alternative agreement could be that 1NT-2♦-2♥-3♥ shows at least six hearts and slam interest.

On a Spade lead to 7♥, you should discard a Diamond. You can then ruff a diamond and you are home if they are 3-3 [a 35% chance]. If they are not 3-3, as here, you can fall back on the club finesse [having first cashed the Ace in case East has the singleton Queen]. This line gives you the 35% chance of 3-3 diamonds, plus the 50% club finesse in the 65% of hands where diamonds are not 3-3. That comes to 67% overall, much better than just taking the club finesse.



Tralee International Bridge Congress 2023 raised €850 Euro for St. Vincent de Paul in a charity fundraiser held in February at the Rose Hotel in Tralee. Pictured left to right are Claire Carmody from The Rose Hotel, Tom Hardiman, Hugh O'Connell President of the Congress, Paddy Kevane SVDP President, Junior Locke SVDP, and Trish Stack.



Cork Congress 2023

Derek O’Gorman



Cork Congress made the decision to hold a live congress this year for the first time in three years. While numbers did not match pre-covid figures, they were very promising for future events.

Full credit to the Cork Congress Committee for this event, and the ongoing work and support of the CBAI to restore numbers attending at all events. A total of 87 pairs participated across both congress and intermediate pairs events, and 22 teams played in the congress/intermediate teams event.

Diarmuid Reddan resumed his role as TD. Diarmuid continues to run these events in his extremely efficient style with his usual good humoured approach. The venue was the excellent Maryborough Hotel, where players and guests were very well looked after as always.

One other significant feature was the arrival of ten of our Irish Junior players for the Saturday pairs’ events. They proved to be a very welcome addition, and certainly added to the overall success of the event.

The main prize winners were:

Mixed Pairs – Anne Dillon & Cian Holland

Congress Pairs - Linda O’Riordan & Nellie White

Intermediate Pairs – Margaret McCarthy & Declan Harte

Congress Teams – Derek O’Gorman, Cian Holland, Pat Quinn, Donal Garvey

Intermediate Teams – Margaret McCarthy, Declan Harte, John & Mary Burke

Open Pairs – Kathleen O’Connor & Mary Hayes; Paddy Byrne & Matt O’Callaghan; Margo Lynch & Eleanor Hipwell; Konstantin Rabkin & Joseph Lupton

My first hand comes from the second session of the congress pairs. Cian Holland was sitting West.

Board 5. Dealer South. Vul N/S.

		♠ A653			
		♥ K832			
		♦ 6			
		♣ 9843			
♠ Q104		N		♠ K	
♥ A6				♥ J9	
♦ AKJ9875	W		E	♦ Q432	
♣ A		S		♣ KQJ1072	
		♠ J9872			
		♥ Q10754			
		♦ 10			
		♣ 65			

W	N	E	S
			P
1♦	P	2♣	P
3♦	P	4♦	P
4♥	P	6♦	P
6NT	P	P	P

2♣ by East was natural and game forcing), 4♦ by East natural and key card in diamonds. 4♥ by West (one or four key cards), then 6♦ by East. Cian then bid 6NT. A Club lead resulted in 6NT+1 for a score of 1010 (94% on the board) This was a very successful pairs bid, but absolutely not one you would make at teams.

My second hand comes from the penultimate match of the Congress Teams. John & Kelan O’Connor were North South at one table, with their teammates Kay Cussen and Denis Sheahan sitting East West at the other table.

Board 12. Dealer West. Vul N/S.

		♠ K10876			
		♥ AK103			
		♦ 6			
		♣ AQ4			
♠ QJ954		N		♠ K	
♥ Q85				♥ J9	
♦ Q742	W		E	♦ Q432	
♣ 6		S		♣ KQJ1072	
		♠ -			
		♥ J9762			
		♦ A8			
		♣ KJ10752			

W	N	E	S
P	1♣	3♦	X
P	4♥	P	4♥
P	P	P	

At John O’Connor’s table 3♦ from East was weak. South (Kelan) made a negative double, showing values and a desire to compete. North now made a good bid of 4♥ natural showing extra values. Kelan judged the situation very well and bid the making contract of 6♥ for a score of +1430.

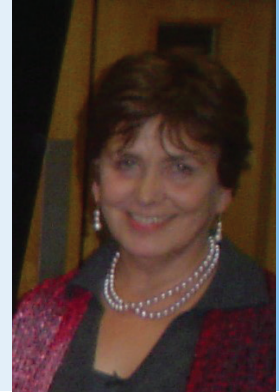
At the other table Kay also bid 3♦ over North’s opening 1♠ bid. Over South’s negative double bid, Denis made the good bid of 5♦ at favourable vulnerability. This was doubled and went down 2 so -300 to East West.

This an excellent hand from a teams perspective, with good bidding by the team at both tables resulting in a 15 imp gain for John O’Connor’s team.

Malahide Bridge Congress

Behind the Scenes

Mary Kelly-Rogers



A 3-stage Drama:

- 50 years of tradition
- Lockdown
- Return to Face to Face.

Malahide Bridge Congress 2020 took place in the days just before Covid-19 occasioned the closure of Clubs. In fact it was the last live Bridge event before lockdown. The 2020 renewal saw it return to its first home - the Grand Hotel, now owned by the Ryan family. Back in the late 60s, Bridge player Yvette McCabe and her husband Luke were the owners and so the Congress was born in the Grand in their time.

The March 2020 Congress saw both function rooms in the Grand Hotel once again filled to capacity, which was the good news. However, we had sanitizers everywhere and it seemed like players' last "live" hurrah, since impending lockdown was looking inevitable. Happily, no one reported Covid from the Congress. Can you imagine the 'Close Contact' scenario that would have ensued if there had been? The Congress Committee was relieved!

It was therefore with no small degree of concern that the Malahide Congress Committee 2023 went about planning its return to Face to Face, three years later. Covid had not exactly gone away fully, and now it had been joined by other, non-Covid, winter viruses. To our delight and may I say relief, the lovely Tara Suite in the Grand Hotel, overlooking the Estuary, was filled to capacity on the Saturday with 75 tables and 50

plus on both the Friday and Sunday. A joy to behold.

CBAI President, Pat O'Mahony, remarked on the smiling faces and the excitement in the room. Dublin North Region President John Kehoe, spoke of his own surprise and thrill at the return of so many to the live Bridge scene. Malahide Regional Bridge Club President Tom Gilligan, echoed those sentiments. An uplifting and emotional moment.

So our story is a good news story. It paves the way for organisers of future live events to be positive and be patient as the Bridge Community grows in confidence about being back at the Bridge table. There is no doubt we had our concerns, in fact concern was the main emotion in the weeks leading to the Congress. Congress Committees will be aware of the overheads, rental of playing rooms, engagement of professional TDs,

hiring of tables and equipment, promotion, insurance and sundry. We wondered could we meet these overheads, was our return to F2F too soon and would it lead to the demise of the Congress. We were also concerned to note that another Congress was taking place two weeks before ours, across the Liffey and 25km away! That Congress [Bankers], a very special one, was certainly a welcome return to the Calendar but the timing was probably not optimal for either Congress. It seems players are choosing one weekend or the other, one day or the other as the slow yet steady return paves its way. Perhaps we worried unnecessarily but we are certainly glad we took the plunge!

Sponsorship is fundamental, Sponsors are a special entity and need to be appreciated. This time we did not want to put our local businesses under pressure to help us at a time when many of them

MALAHIDE BRIDGE CONGRESS
Friday March 3 to Sunday March 5 2023
The Grand Hotel Malahide

Malahide Bridge Congress
A revival after 3 decades
Lockdown
3 years later
A return to Face to Face

Hope you enjoyed your time with us!



faced existential challenges. That said someone, not to be named, twisted the arm of Duffy's Bar and Seabank Restaurant! Dublin North Region Committee sent us a welcome donation. Malahide Regional Bridge Club and Fingal Co Council also provided substantial aid. All are to be thanked. Fingal Councillor for Malahide/Howth, Anthony Lavin, worked tirelessly to gain support for us, aware of the Government's desire for a 'return to normality' for all sorts of reasons, aware that our Congress was working to attain this same aim. Our Congress served as evidence of a return to that normality.

Councillor Lavin, originally from Mayo, spoke to us on Saturday. He mentioned that his father Jim, at 93 years old, is still playing Bridge in Swinford, Co. Mayo. Actually there was a real meeting of Mayomen. Councillor Lavin is from Swinford, Huey Daly hails from Ballina, Malahide President Tom Gilligan although from Roscommon grew up close to the Mayo border and then to our surprise Dr Frank Davey joined the party. Frank, born and bred in Charlestown, served over 30 years as a GP in his home town, which borders Swinford. He knew Anthony's father Jim well, being a member himself of that same Swinford club. We are all part of an amazing extended Bridge family!

The Grand Hotel took some risk with us, and we thank them for it. One participant, a lady from Bray, an organiser of note herself, wrote 'It was so lovely to be back at a real Congress again and in such a lovely setting! The hotel was amazing! I genuinely think the hotel and their staff deserve to be congratulated! We loved everything about yesterday except our bridge! And we'd both travel back to Malahide just to have that lovely meal again! Thanks for a great day!'

Tournament Directors Diarmuid Reddan, Brian Lawlor and Peter Byrne ran a terrific show. Brian was TD for the Malahide Congress from way back when it was run in the Club in the eighties and early nineties, working with the late Derek Stokes. Derek, past President of the CBAI, Chief CBAI TD, was renowned with Jimmy Powell for their book on Bridge movements which no doubt was consulted by software developers of today's Bridge scoring systems.

Lots of heritage and history there! Onwards and upwards for Malahide Congress 2024!

Committee

President of MRBC Tom Gilligan
Maureen Costello
Peter Wilson
Patric Black
Coordinator Mary Kelly Rogers

Main Prizewinners

Congress Pairs: John and Kelan O'Connor

Congress Teams: John & Kelan, Denis Sheehan, Gordon Lessells

Mixed Pairs: Helen and Brendan Sheridan

Gala Intermediate B: Nicola O'Dowd, Ena Souhan

Gala Novice: Sharon Hogan, Lee Kerrigan

Gala Open: Brigid Lavery, Bernadette Warnock

Intermediate Pairs: Sandra Peden & Linda Walsh

Intermediate Teams: Noel Hughes, Anthony McMackin, Catherine Carabine, Deirdre Lonergan



MASTER PAIRS

Business as usual

Editor



A large and deep field of 83 pairs faced the starter for the 2022 renewal, held over three sessions in Templeogue on December 10th and 11th.

The format was Swiss IMP'ed Pairs, twelve seven-board matches. The event was ably directed by Fearghal, Bernard and Máiréad.

Unsurprisingly the cream came to the top. Nick FitzGibbon and Adam Mesbur retained their title in comfort, being almost two matches clear entering the final round. The CBAI states it was their seventh win, in addition to one win each with different partners.

The top placings were:

- 1st** N.K. FitzGibbon & A Mesbur
177.9 VPs

- 2nd** P Cassidy & B Ronan
158.2

- 3rd** K deRaeymaeker & J Heneghan
154.4

- 4th** F Barry & P Porteous
154.0

- 5th** W Gorczyca & M Rudzinski
153.0

The winners won ten of their first eleven matches, which put them almost two matches clear by the last round, in which they were soundly beaten 18-2 by the runners-up. This meant they "only" won by a match. 178 victory points out of a maximum 240 was a 74% haul, which will win you most anything you play in.

Bidding to slam on this hand realised nine IMPs.

Dealer East. Vul E/W.

	♠ Q10		
	♥ AQ10964		
	♦ J		
	♣ A753		
♠ 654	N	♠ J9732	
♥ 852		♥ J3	
♦ KQ643	W	♦ A102	E
♣ 84		♣ 1096	
	S		
	♠ AK8		
	♥ K7		
	♦ 9875		
	♣ KQJ2		

Adam (S)	Nick (N)	
1NT	2D	(14-16, transfer)
2♥	3C	natural
3♠	4♥	3♠ good club fit / 4♥ signoff 6-4, better than immediate 4♥
4♠	4NT	4♠ cuebid / 4NT Keycard Blackwood
6C		to play

Slam was reached at just seven out of 40 tables, six times in hearts and just this once in clubs. The club slam is superior, because if East has ♥Jxxx, 6♥ is down, but in 6♣ you can ruff hearts good.

It wasn't all plain sailing, and 14 IMPs appeared in the out column here:

Dealer East. Vul All.

	♠ Q7		
	♥ Q74		
	♦ J		
	♣ AK7		
♠ AJ10	N	♠ K986542	
♥ AK1093		♥ 82	
♦ 743	W	♦ 2	E
♣ 86		♣ 942	
	S		
	♠ 3		
	♥ J65		
	♦ KQ108		
	♣ QJ1053		

W	N	E	S
		3♠	P
P	3NT	P	P
4♠	X	P	P
P			

I think we can all agree that 3♠ was, shall we say, full-blooded. West must have seen partner's vulnerable first seat pre-empts before, because I'd have bid 4♠ straight away. Nick bid the normal 3NT and now West came to life. 4♠ is cold, and the trump lead conceded an overtrick -990.

The spades are blocked, and ten lucky pairs made 3NT instead of losing the first nine tricks! And that's in spite of five top losers.

The first board of the final round provided some light relief.



Dealer East. Vul E/W.

♠ K2			
♥ J98542			
♦ Q6			
♣ 542			
♠ 106	N		♠ AJ85
♥ AK1073	W	E	♥ Q6
♦ 98			♦ J7532
♣ AKQ6	S		♣ 83
♠ Q9873			
♥ -			
♦ AK104			
♣ J1097			

W	N	E	S
		P	1♠
2♥	P	P	X
P	P	P	P

Nick led the ♠K and the hand rapidly played itself. ♠A, Queen of trumps and four rounds of clubs meant declarer could not be prevented from eventually scoring his ♥10 for his eighth trick [he ruffs a third round of diamonds with the ♥7].

“Sorry partner”, offered Adam. “I was bare minimum for my re-opening double, but I figured you might have good trumps”. “Yes, I’m sorry too”, Nick came back. “I only had six of them!”

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South Eastern Region Teams

Jim Doyle



The South Eastern Regional Teams competition took place in the Wexford Bridge Centre on Sunday January 29th.

There was a small but select entry of three Master Teams, two Inter A teams and one B team. The B team of Martin Buggy, Mairead Lafferty, Valerie Donnelly and Margaret O'Connor deserve to be commended as they are all Novices, with two of the four having only finished their beginners' lessons last March.

The winners of the Masters section were Katherine Lennon, Johanne Powell, Sean Connor and Jim Doyle and they will go forward to represent the Region in the Kelburne Cup in April. The winners of the A competition were Trevor Murphy, Teresa Cowman, Clare Doyle and Mary O'Donoghue, and these along with runners up Tom Bolger, Joan Bolger, Bobby O'Dowd and Eamon Purcell, have qualified for the finals of the Bankers Trophy. The above mentioned Inter B/ Novice team has qualified for the finals of the Tierney Trophy. All three National finals are scheduled for the weekend of April 22nd/23rd.

An interesting feature of the computer dealt hands was that at one table in the Intermediates all six boards in the first match were opened 1♦ and played in 3NT with each player at the table playing at least one of the contracts and all contracts making at least nine tricks. These results were replicated at the other table, except for Board 4 when EW made nine tricks but were only in 1NT.

Looks like there are only eight tricks on top but Double Dummy says EW can make nine tricks. Played by W with a club lead from N, S is going to find it impossible to hold on to spades and diamonds, and can be endplayed in either suit to lead back the other one.

Board 19 was a slam hand.

Dealer East. Vul E/W.

		♠ Q8		
		♥ KJ6543		
		♦ 10		
		♣ AJ108		
♠ 964	N		E	♠ J532
♥ 72	W			♥ 98
♦ Q8543				♦ KJ92
♣ 762	S			♣ Q54
		♠ AK107		
		♥ AQ10		
		♦ A76		
		♣ K93		

W	N	E	S
			2NT
P	3♦	P	3♥
P	4NT	P	5♣
P	6♥	P	P
P			

2NT was 20-22, 3♦ transfer to hearts, 4NT Roman Keycard, 5♣ 0 or 3 of 5 Aces. North could bid 5♦ over 5♣ to ask about the trump Queen, and 5♠ would show that card plus the ♠K. Still not easy to count to 13 tricks.

The grand would need ♠J to come down in three rounds or be finessed against, failing which you need to locate the ♣Q. We've all been in worse.

In the Masters, Johanne Powell/ Katherine Lennon and Mary Campbell/Maurice Brosnan had no problem bidding and making the small slam. Trevor Murphy / Teresa Cowman also bid the slam in the Intermediate. They found the ♣Q to make 6♥+1 and they gained 11 imps when the slam was not bid at the other table.



Galway Bridge Congress

Enda Glynn



The Galway Bridge Congress was founded in 1941. Among its founders were Rd. Michael O'Malley a member of a noted Galway medical family and Peter Daly (father of Patsy Meehan, Fred and George Daly). It is the oldest Bridge Congress in Ireland.

This year it moved from its traditional Easter date to the first weekend in February. The venue was the Ardilaun Hotel and it was great to have face to face Bridge once again at the Congress after a lapse of three years. To ensure the game prospers and grows live bridge should be supported.

There were many interesting slam hands over the weekend and this one was a victory for the West of Ireland weak notrump system.

Pairs 1st Session. Hand 23 Dealer South. Vul All.

♠ 1083			
♥ 92			
♦ A97532			
♣ 42			
♠ AJ5	N	♠ KQ42	
♥ AK10	W	♥ Q763	E
♦ J84		♦ K	
♣ KJ105	S	♣ AQ96	
♠ 976			
♥ J854			
♦ Q106			
♣ 873			

West opened 1♣ and East responded 1♥. West rebid 1NT showing 15 to 17 points. East rebid 2♠ showing exactly four spades and four hearts. West with a maximum hand rebid 3NT. East advanced with 4♣ – Key Card Blackwood in Clubs. West bid 4♥ showing 0 or 3 key cards (obviously three on this auction). East then bid the cold

6♣ which was worth 86% of the match points. Some players have an addiction to open 1♣ with three clubs and four or five diamonds. Bidding suits naturally is the recommended policy. Playing a strong no trump one would need a highly sophisticated system to arrive in the club slam.

Pairs 2nd Session. Hand 7. Dealer South. Vul All.

♠ A10972			
♥ -			
♦ A32			
♣ QJ852			
♠ -	N	♠ K63	
♥ KQJ102	W	♥ 97653	E
♦ Q10976		♦ 54	
♣ 976	S	♣ K104	
♠ QJ854			
♥ A84			
♦ KJ8			
♣ A3			

South opened 1♠ and West overcalled 2♥. North bid 4♥, a splinter bid showing a singleton or a void in hearts and at least four spades. If partner has a suitable hand a slam can be investigated. South duly advanced via 4NT. North responded 6♣ showing 2 [of 5] key cards and a void. 5NT would show one key card and a void. South settled for 6♠. The contract just needs one of the black suit finesses – so is a 75% shot to make. A splinter bid is an essential tool for slam bidding. Bidding and making 6♠ delivered 87% of the match points.

[No, I wouldn't overcall 2♥ as West either!! If you play Ghestem two-suited overcalls, you can bid 3♣. This shows Hearts and Diamonds 5-5 at least, either strong or weak].

Pairs 2nd Session. Hand 14. Dealer East. Vul None.

♠ AQJ10			
♥ K72			
♦ QJ43			
♣ 103			
♠ 542	N	♠ 9863	
♥ 8	W	♥ J	E
♦ K1087		♦ 952	
♣ AKQ87	S	♣ J9654	
♠ K7			
♥ AQ1096543			
♦ A6			
♣ 2			

With modern gadgets of 2♦ showing a weak two in diamonds or both majors, the old-fashioned Acrol 2 bids have become an anomaly. Playing a Multi 2 system the Acrol 2 bids can be accommodated. It is best to reserve the 2♣ opening bid to show 23 plus points. South opens 2♦ which shows either a weak 2 in a major or an Acrol 2 bid in any suit. West overcalls 3♣. North bids 3♥ which shows a willingness to play in either major if opener has a weak two in a major. South bids 4NT which is clearly Roman Key Card in hearts. North will show two key cards and South advances to 6♥ which is an easy make. The South hand is not good enough for a "Traditional Acrol" 2♣ opening and a bit too good for a 4♥ opening. Bidding 6♥ was worth 94% of the match points.


**Congress Pairs. 2nd Session.
Board 11. Dealer South. Vul None.**

	♠ 10	
	♥ J9874	
	♦ KJ10	
	♣ KQJ4	
♠ AK987642	N	♠ QJ5
♥ KQ105	W	♥ 32
♦ -	E	♦ 87543
♣ 9	S	♣ 732
	♠ 3	
	♥ A6	
	♦ AQ962	
	♣ A10865	

At one table Joe Carroll opened 1♦ and West jumped to 4♠. Josephine Brady as North wisely bid 5♦. West was not going to be silenced and came again with a bid of 5♠. South with three Aces decided to double and that concluded the auction. Dummy produced magic cards and 5♠ doubled was an easy make. The score of plus 650 was worth only 31% of the match points because 4♠ was doubled many times making plus one. The best result for North South on the hand is 6♦ doubled minus one. The power of distribution at times over rides high card points, as in this hand even when South has three aces, the winning action is to bid rather than double.

**Teams First Session. Hand 19.
Dealer South. Vul E/W.**

	♠ AK42	
	♥ K842	
	♦ K6	
	♣ 642	
♠ Q763	N	♠ J85
♥ Q76	W	♥ J953
♦ 74	E	♦ J952
♣ K1083	S	♣ Q9
	♠ 109	
	♥ A10	
	♦ AQ1083	
	♣ AJ75	

Gay Keaveney declared 3NT as North and received a heart lead. He won the Ace in dummy and played a diamond to the King and a second diamond to dummy's ten! Once East follows to the second diamond the play of the 10 guarantees the contract as it guards against a five

one diamond break and ensures four diamond tricks. If the ten loses to the Jack declarer still has a guaranteed nine tricks. Such foresight at the table has been the hallmark of Gay Keaveney's declarer play for many years. Improvers should note that at Teams, the priority is to make your contract – overtricks are less important than at Pairs. That means you should be on the lookout to guard against bad layouts – such as 5/1 diamonds here.

**Teams 2nd Session. Hand 3
Dealer South. Vul E/W.**

	♠ J87	
	♥ 632	
	♦ A852	
	♣ AKJ	
♠ 10643	N	♠ AKQ2
♥ QJ107	W	♥ AK54
♦ 6	E	♦ KJ943
♣ Q1098	S	♣ -
	♠ 95	
	♥ 98	
	♦ Q107	
	♣ 765432	

North opened 1C which was alerted as forcing. East-West had wonderful agreements for competing over a forcing 1C opening – so wonderful that a normal double for takeout was not permitted. With a top heavy twenty count East could do no better than overcall 1♦ and that concluded the auction!! The forcing 1 Club opener retired early which was a very wise decision. Playing a natural bidding system East has a classic takeout double. West will in all probability bid 1♥. East will at least advance to game which is an easy make. The heart slam is difficult to bid.

Interestingly 6♥ can make but not 6♠. The quality of the heart suit comes into play as East can cope with a club force. Many partnerships have devised gadgets to interfere with the forcing 1 Club opening. Equally, South was wise not to go jumping in clubs. Old Pat Quinn [the eponymous "Quinnsworth" -Ed.] from

Roscommon told me long ago "You have the wrong idea of the game. You shouldn't be getting involved, Let them at it."

**Teams 2nd Session. Hand 15.
Dealer South. Vul N/S.**

	♠ 854	
	♥ Q653	
	♦ K94	
	♣ 975	
♠ A7	N	♠ QJ10963
♥ AJ82	W	♥ 10
♦ 72	E	♦ AQJ653
♣ AKQJ6	S	♣ -
	♠ K2	
	♥ K974	
	♦ 108	
	♣ 108432	

At our table West opened 1C and East responded 1♠. West made a reverse bid of 2♥ and East bid 3♦. West followed with a bid of 3NT and that concluded the auction. Perhaps over 3NT East might bid 6♦ giving West a choice of slams. Or else go on with 4♦, which makes it clear that 3♦ was a suit and not fourth suit forcing. East has great playing strength and the favourable lie of the cards allows declarer score all thirteen tricks. John and Kelan O'Connor were the only pair to bid 6♠. The power of two six card suits should never be underestimated.

A notable achievement was the wonderful score of 70% in both sessions of the Intermediate Pairs by Kay and Murt Scarry. Martin Kearney of Kearney Oil kindly sponsored the Congress and Inter Pairs events on Saturday. David Walsh of Laptech sponsored the team events on Sunday and captained his team to victory. Another notable winner from an old Galway family was James Ward who won Friday night's Open Pairs with Eugene Gath and the Intermediate teams on Sunday with Patsy Donoghue, Eugene Gath and Gerry McCague. [Enda is too modest to mention that he and Gay Keaveney did the double, winning both the Congress Pairs and Teams – Ed.]



Teltscher Trophy Trials

Fred Barry



The Teltscher Trophy is a teams competition played annually between representative Senior teams from Ireland, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales and England. Scotland are the holders, but Ireland were the winners in 2021.

The trials to pick the Irish team came down to a 64-board match between Team O’Gorman (Derek O’Gorman npc; Michael and Pdraig O’Briain; Terry Walsh and Peter Goodman; BJ O’Brien and Randal Milne) and Team Porteous (Teresa Rigney and Joan Kenny; Michael McAuliffe and David Dunne; Paul Porteous and Fred Barry) , with Brian Lawlor as Tournament Director .

Team Porteous got off to a flying start, and by half-time were 52 imps ahead. However, Team O’Gorman were far from done, and in the third 16-board stanza they reduced the lead to 44 imps.

The comeback started on board 51:

Board 51. Dealer South. Vul E/W.

		♠ A104		
		♥ 1065		
		♦ K732		
		♣ AJ10		
♠ Q6	N		♠ KJ92	
♥ AKQ983	W		♥ 74	E
♦ 98			♦ A5	
♣ 874		S	♣ KQ932	
		♠ 8753		
		♥ J2		
		♦ Q10654		
		♣ 65		

Open Room [O’Gorman N/S]

W	N	E	S
			P
1♥	P	2♣	P
2♥	P	3NT	P
P	P		

Closed Room [Porteous N/S]

W	N	E	S
			P
1♥	P	2♣	P
2♥	P	4♥	P
P	P		

In the Open Room, South led a diamond against 3NT, and declarer had just the seven tricks – down two. 4♥ in the Closed Room is cold on any lead, and in practice the trump lead gave an overtrick. 13 IMPs to O’Gorman.

If East bids 2♠ at his second turn, a responder’s reverse, 3♥ from West may now convince him to bid the heart game.

After 60 boards, the teams were exactly level. Then came this...

Board 61. Dealer North. Vul All.

		♠ KJ107			
		♥ QJ9642			
		♦ 94			
		♣ J			
♠ A8642	N		♠ Q93		
♥ 83	W		♥ AK		
♦ KJ		E	♦ 86		
♣ AK76		S	♣ 1098432		
		♠ 5			
		♥ 1075			
		♦ AQ107532			
		♣ Q5			

Open Room [O’Gorman N/S]

W	N	E	S
	P	P	3♦
3♠	P	4♠	P
P	P		

Closed Room [Porteous N/S]

W	N	E	S
	P	P	3♦
P	P	P	

North has the point range and suit for a weak ♥ opening, but generally opening a weak major in first or second seat is discouraged if four cards are held in the other major.

Had N opened 2♥, E/W would easily have found 3NT, and N/S would have had to decide whether or not to sacrifice in 4♥ (which is two down most likely).

In practice, N and E passed at both tables, and S opened 3♦. In the open room Team Porteous overcalled 3♠, raised to 4♠, which made when North’s trump holding was restricted to two tricks by leading towards the Queen. In the closed room Team O’Gorman passed, and declarer took 8 tricks on a club lead.

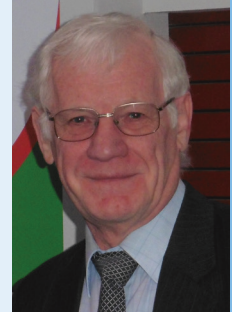
West’s action over 3♦ is far from clear. He’s got 15 points, four of which are in the pre-empted suit. He’s got no source of tricks. That’s a watery suit to be introducing vulnerable at the three-level. Partner rates to have 8-9 points on average. Perhaps 3NT is the longterm winner. 11 imps to Team Porteous with three boards to go.

After another 9 imps traded hands on the last three boards, Team Porteous won by 17 imps.



Bankers Bridge Congress

Tomás Roche



The Bankers Bridge Congress made a welcome return to the bridge calendar over the week-end of 17th to 19th February.

The congress, organised by Philip Robinson, B.J. O'Brien and Sheila Kelly, was held in the Regent Bridge Club, Dublin.

Players competed in three events - Mixed Pairs, Congress Pairs and Congress Teams - which were run smoothly and efficiently by National Tournament Director, John Royds.

The Mixed Pairs on Friday evening attracted an entry of thirty-two pairs, who played twenty-four boards over twelve rounds. In match-pointed pair events, players tend to prefer a no-trump contract to a minor suit contract due to the higher trick scoring aspect, but sometimes the trick score for a minor suit contract maybe higher as happened on board 14.

Mixed Pairs. Board 14. Dealer East. Vul None.

		♠ A982			
		♥ KJ43			
		♦ 87			
		♣ Q92			
♠ KJ	N		♠ Q753		
♥ 8			♥ A652		
♦ KQJ53	W	E	♦ A942		
♣ AJ1053		S	♣ 4		
		♠ 1064			
		♥ Q1097			
		♦ 106			
		♣ K876			

W	N	E	S
		P	P
1♦	P	1♥	P
2♣	P	2♠	P
3♣	P	3♦	P
3NT	P	4♦	P
5♦	P	P	P

If East opens light on their 4-4-4-1 shape, West is likely to contract for a small slam in diamonds once the diamond fit is established. Applying the Rule-of-20, the number of HCP plus the number of cards in the two longest suits in a hand, many East players will not open this seven loser hand and when East responds 1♥ to the third-in-hand 1♦ opening from West, the bidding will often end in 3NT. In the auction above, East's fourth suit bid of 2♣ followed by 3♦ shows a stronger hand than a direct raise to 3♦. When West rebids 3C to show a five card suit and 3NT to show a stop in spades, East with one stop in hearts opposite a known shortage in hearts will remove 3NT to 4♦. West, with a five loser hand and missing 3 Aces, settles for a 5♦ contract.

Of the sixteen results on this board, 3NT was declared nine times with eight declarers making nine tricks. No pair bid the small slam in diamonds, so any pair who reached game in diamonds would achieve a high match point score by making an overtrick. A trump lead is best for the defence, West wins the Jack and plays on cross-ruff lines. Club Ace and a club ruff, heart Ace and a heart ruff, another club ruff and heart ruff is followed with a third club ruffed with diamond Ace and a third heart ruffed with diamond Queen. In hand, declarer cashes the diamond King (drawing the outstanding trumps) and then the established club winner before conceding a trick to the spade Ace. Declarer will be held to eleven tricks if trumps break 3-1 or if the defender with the spade Ace holds five cards in hearts, but then

3NT would have been defeated on a heart lead. The two experienced partnerships, Jim McAndrew & Elva Gannon and Paul & Anne Hanratty, were the only pairs to contract for 5♦ and make the overtrick, scoring 86.66% of the match points on the board.

The mother and son partnership of Mamie & Thomas MacCormac (59.58%) emerged victorious from Colm O'Driscoll & Patricia Kelly (56.81%) in second place, just ahead of Martin & Adrienne Purdy (56.67%) in third place.

The Congress Pairs on Saturday had an entry of 18 pairs who played 51 boards over a single round robin of 17 rounds. Minor suit slam contracts can be challenging (aka difficult) to bid in bridge and no pair managed to reach 6♣ on board 14 in the first session.

Congress Pairs. Board 14. Dealer East. Vul None.

		♠ 1072			
		♥ 109854			
		♦ 86			
		♣ K108			
♠ 43	N		♠ AKQ85		
♥ K2			♥ AQJ3		
♦ A1093	W	E	♦ 5		
♣ AQ762		S	♣ J43		
		♠ J96			
		♥ 76			
		♦ KQJ742			
		♣ 95			

W	N	E	S
		1♠	P
2♣	P	2♥	P
2NT	P	3♣	P
3♦	P	3♥	P
4♦**	P	4NT	P
6♣	P	P	P

** When a minor suit is agreed at the three or four level, if the agreed



trump suit is clubs, a relay bid of “4♦” can ask for key cards; if the agreed trump suit is diamonds, then the relay bid is “4♥”. As the two relay bids of 4♦ and 4♥ represent both red suits, this conventional method of asking for key cards is therefore designated as the Redwood convention, instead of Blackwood.

Using the Redwood convention allows a partnership to sign off in a minor suit game if the reply shows two key cards are missing for slam, which might not be possible if using Blackwood.

The popular contract was 3NT by E-W, with West making twelve tricks on a heart lead and East making 11 tricks on a diamond lead. The E-W partnerships playing 2/1 game force would reach the small slam in clubs on the auction above. West’s rebid of 2NT allows East to show support for clubs, 3♦ is a further enquiry and East rebids 3♥ to show extra values (3NT shows a minimum). West can now bid 4♦ (Redwood) asking for key cards in clubs and conclude the bidding with 6♣ after receiving a reply of 4NT showing two key cards without the club Queen.

North will probably lead a red suit which West can win in hand. Declarer, requiring a 3-2 break or a singleton King in the trump suit to make the contract, cashes the club Ace and plays a low club to the Jack. If the Jack wins, West can discard his three diamond losers on the major suit top tricks, eventually conceding a trump trick to the defence.

Two consistent sessions by Rory Egan & Jason Doyle (58.64%) was just enough to hold off a late surge from Marcin Rudzinski & Wojciech Gorczyca (58.56%) with the first session joint leaders Carol-Ann Cummins & John Noonan (57.20%) in third place. Best first session were Billy Ronan & Pat Cassidy (59.23%), best second session were Frances Kelly & Patricia Kelly (56.51%).

The Congress Teams on Sunday was contested by 20 teams with each team playing eight matches of six boards in a Swiss movement.

Martin Brady & David Dunne made their international debut representing the CBAI in the Camrose Home International in Belfast, last January. On board 12 in the first session, they bid to the excellent 6♦ contract, picking up 13 imps when their opponents stopped in game.

Congress Teams. Board 12.
Dealer West. Vul N/S.

♠ -			
♥ AJ3			
♦ Q7642			
♣ AK973			
♠ 1043	N	♠ KQ652	
♥ 10876	W	♥ K9542	
♦ J10	E	♦ 85	
♣ 8654	S	♣ Q	
♠ AJ987			
♥ Q			
♦ AK93			
♣ J105			

W	N	E	S
P	1♦	1♥	1♠
P	1NT	P	2♣
P	3♣	P	4♦
P	5♣	P	5♥
P	6♣	P	6♦
P	P	P	

Martin’s natural opening of 1♦ showed an unbalanced hand. East decided to overcall 1♥, David responded 1♠ and the 1NT rebid showed 15-17 HCP (sic). The 2♣ enquiry from David elicited 3♣ from Martin, which showed a good club suit and shortage in spades. David next bid 4♦ to ask for key cards in diamonds (4♣ would ask for key cards in clubs) and the 5♣ reply showed two key cards with the diamond Queen. The 5♥ bid, asking for specific Kings, was a grand slam try, informing Martin that the partnership held all the key cards and the ♦Q. Martin showed possession of the ♣K with 6♣ and David ended the auction with 6♦. Martin would have bid the grand

slam in diamonds if he found the ♣Q or the ♥K in his hand. Thirteen tricks were easily made when the ♣Q appeared on the play of the ♠A.

Paul Porteous & Fred Barry will make their international debut for Ireland in the Senior Home International in Newport, Wales in May. Along with Marcin Rudzinski & Michelle Moloney, they were the only N-S partnerships to bid and make 6♣ on the next board from the first session.

Congress Teams. Board 13.
Dealer North. Vul All.

♠ A972			
♥ K985			
♦ 72			
♣ J76			
♠ 1043	N	♠ QJ6	
♥ J103	W	♥ Q7643	
♦ K6542	E	♦ J10	
♣ 85	S	♣ 942	
♠ K85			
♥ A			
♦ AQ98			
♣ AKQ103			

W	N	E	S
	P	P	2♣
P	2NT	P	3♣
P	3♥	P	3NT
P	4♣	P	4♦**
P	4♥	P	4♠
P	5♥	P	6♣
P	P	P	

If South opens 2NT treating their hand as a balanced 21-22 HCP, North with probably subside in 3NT after the search for a four-four major fit via Stayman proves fruitless. If South upgrades their hand by opening 2♣, slam should be reached when North makes a positive response of 2NT. After natural bids at the three level, North shows club support with 4♣ and South uses 4♦ (Redwood) to check for key cards in clubs. When North replies 4♥ showing one key card, the follow-up of 5♦ asks for specific Kings (4♠ would enquire for the club Queen). The 5♥ reply shows the ♥K (denies the ♦K) and South will sign off in 6♣. If North



held four diamonds to the King and a small doubleton heart (i.e. switch the red suits in the North hand) he would bid a natural 3♦ over 3♣. South could then jump to 4♥ (Redwood) asking for key cards in diamonds and after the reply of 5♣ showing two key cards, the grand slam in diamonds will be reached. 6NT also makes on the board as East is dealt the doubleton ♦J10.

Declaring a contract of 6♣, South wins the (probable) opening trump lead in hand, unblocks the ♥A and plays a spade to the Ace to discard the losing spade on the ♥K. A finesse of the ♦Q loses to the King but the appearance of ♦J10 means declarer does not have to ruff diamond losers in dummy, instead he draw trumps and claims 12 tricks.

The team of Martin Brady & David Dunne, Paul Delaney & Tomás Roche (114.97 v.p.) took an early lead which they held thereafter, holding off challenges from the team of Peter Goodman & B.J.O'Brien, Antoinette McGee & Aoife McHale (102.14 v.p.) in second place and the team of Conor Boland & Peter Stewart, Sandra Newell & Michael McAuliffe (92.24 v.p.) in third place. Dermot O'Brien & Gerry McKenna, Anne Keating & Frances Kelly, (60.08 v.p.) were the leading team in the 2nd session.

Congress Results

Mixed Pairs:

1st Mamie & Thomas MacCormac,
59.58%;

2nd Colm O'Driscoll & Patricia
Kelly, 56.81%;

3rd Martin & Adrienne Purdy,
56.67%;

Congress Pairs:

1st Rory Egan & Jason Doyle,
58.64%;

2nd Marcin Rudzinski & Wojciech
Gorczyca, 58.56%;

3rd Carol-Ann Cummins & John
Noonan, 57.20%;

1st Session: Billy Ronan & Pat
Cassidy, 59.23%;

2nd Session: Frances Kelly and
Patricia Kelly, 56.51%;

Congress Teams:

1st Martin Brady & David Dunne,
Paul Delaney & Tomás Roche,
114.97 vp;

2nd Peter Goodman & B.J.O'Brien,
Antoinette McGee & Aoife
McHale, 102.14 vp;

3rd Conor Boland & Peter
Stewart, Sandra Newell &
Michael McAuliffe, 92.24 vp;

2nd Session: Dermot O'Brien,
Gerry McKenna, Anne Keating &
Frances Kelly, 60.08 vp

A Novice's Story

Maeve Brew



My first venture into Bridge was about 10 years ago. I decided that Bridge would be “good for my mind, a mental challenge”!

I joined a night class in the local school and attended for a year, then reluctantly and hesitantly, moved with apprehension, to a bridge club. Not having a regular partner, and unsure whether or not I had mastered this game enough to play in weekly sessions in a club, I decided to take the plunge and rocked up and introduced myself. Looking back, I don't know why I worried, they could not have been more welcoming and encouraging!

A friend of mine then decided to venture into the Bridge world and we attended classes provided by the club, where we met other beginners and felt more at ease and at our own level. As our confidence grew, we met in each other's homes, for practice sessions, revising topics we were unsure of, with the odd glass of vino!

Bridge takes some time to master, even the most basic skills, and due to work and family commitments, unfortunately, I had to give it up, but resolved to return when I had more time to devote to Bridge.

Then, in 2020, along came Covid. The novelty of multiple piece jigsaws was quickly wearing off and I think my legs were getting shorter from walking!

I had retired in November 2019, and decided, once again, to venture into the world of Bridge, this time, online. I renewed my membership of “No Fear Bridge”.

There, I came across the most amazing teacher of Bridge, Kay Cussen, based in Newcastle West, who was giving lessons on Zoom. My routine became, Bridge lesson on Monday, tournament for the participants on Tuesdays and a revision of some of the hands played, later in the week. I joined the Beginners section again, revising the notes provided online, sat at my desk at home with my cuppa, interacted with the other class members, partnered ladies or men from around the country, virtually, and, now that I had time to devote to learning, approached Bridge with renewed vigour and zest.

I loved the weekly tournament on BBO, the opportunity to review hands played, to discuss bidding options, and build on my bridge skills. The classes continued for up to a year before clubs began to meet again in person. A number of my friends had also taken up bridge during Covid and we decided to join a club together.

The rest is now history! I cannot say I love Bridge yet. I've switched from Malahide to Railway Union. This club plays with mixed ability tables, although they have Novice sections from time to time. At times, it can be daunting and frustrating, but I am learning so much, from more experienced players, who encourage and suggest solutions, when reviewing the hands. There is always a partner available via our WhatsApp group. I am certainly learning from my mistakes and my confidence is improving! I have even volunteered to be on the panel for a league!!

My two bulging folders of notes lie on my desk at home, which I take out every Monday to swot before I attend the club! But I have discovered that it is the basics that come up regularly, not the unusual 2NT or Strong 2♣s or Weak Twos etc. It is so important to grasp the basics really well!

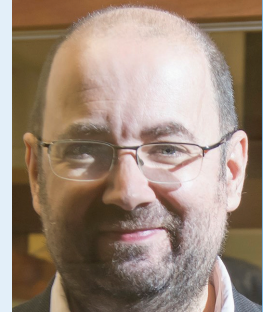
Onwards and upwards for me now! My plan now is to play as much as possible, and to attend Improver classes and build on the knowledge and skills I have mastered so far.

Maybe I will even head off to a Bridge weekend soon!



Camrose Trials for 2023

Martin Brady



Every five years Ireland gets to field two teams in the Camrose, a privilege granted to the hosts of the final weekend. This is one of those years, which makes it a particularly attractive year to enter the Trials since there are twice as many seats on offer.

Nine teams entered in total, including most of the usual suspects. The number of entrants was filled out by two pairs coming through a “pre-qualifier” trials in September, an excellent initiative which gives aspiring players without (yet!) the national point requirements the chance to gain some experience at a high level. The team of Verna Brownlow, Geoff Roberts, Betty Cody and Una O’Gorman qualified via this route, and with the addition of the more experienced Anne Keating and Frances Kelly managed two draws and a win, a very creditable performance for a Trials debut.

The competition took place over the October Bank Holiday weekend. Nine teams entered, and Saturday was devoted to an all-play-all round robin, out of which the top four would emerge to contest a final over the next two days. With matches of six boards, there was some risk that the better teams might succumb to bad luck, and indeed both the eventual winners were still in danger when they started their last match. In the end, though, the top four qualifiers were much as expected:

- Team PIGOT** (Peter Pigot, Karel De Raeymaeker, Ciaran Coyne, David Walsh, Peter Goodman, Dan McIntosh)
- Team O’BRIAIN** (Micheal O’Briain, Padraig O’Briain, Terry Walsh, Derek O’Gorman, BJ O’Brien, Randal Milne)
- Team MORAN** (Mark Moran, John Carroll, Tom Hanlon, Conor Boland, Adam Mesbur, Tommy Garvey)
- Team BRADY** (Martin Brady, David Dunne, Paul Delaney, Tomás Roche)

Special mention also to juniors Luca Crone and Matthew O’Farrell, who (with Hilary Dowling-Long and Peter Stewart) finished best of the rest in fifth place.

The hard work really began on Sunday. Each team was to play two 16-board matches against each other team across two days, with the winners to play in the Camrose as Team Ireland, and the runners-up as Team CBAI. As an example of the standard of play, take a look at this deal from the first match on Sunday:

Board 14. Dealer East. Vul None.

			♠ 8432
			♥ KQ
			♦ 542
			♣ AKQ4
♠ QJ6	N	♠ AKT97	
♥ 9542	W	♥ J83	
♦ QJ86	E	♦ -	
♣ J2	S	♣ 97653	
		♠ 5	
		♥ AT76	
		♦ AKT973	
		♣ T8	

W	N	E	S
<i>D. Dunne</i>	<i>D. McIntosh</i>	<i>M. Brady</i>	<i>P. Goodman</i>
		2♠ ¹	3♦
P	3♠	P	4♥
P	5♦	P	P
P			

¹ 5+ spades, 5+ another suit, 4-10HCP

After the ♠Q lead and a second spade ruffed, South can see an easy 11 tricks until he cashes the top diamond and learns that trumps are 4-0 offside. Many declarers in the club would give up now and settle for one off, but all four Trials declarers looked at their ♦109

and saw a genuine chance of a make. The basic idea is for South to reduce his trumps by ruffing twice to get down to the same number of diamonds as West, reaching this three card ending:

		Immaterial	
	N		
♦ QJ8	W	E	Immaterial
	S		
		♦ KT9	

Now declarer plays the ♦9, which West must win, but he’s endplayed to lead away from his other diamond honour – the sure trump trick has evaporated!

To get to that point, you need to ruff two black cards from the dummy which West can’t overruff. One spade ruff is safe (the one which declarer got at trick two), but for the second ruff, do you play a spade or a club? Two declarers got it right, ruffing a spade, while two declarers chose to ruff the third round of clubs, which West could overruff to return a spade safely and kill the endplay. A flat board in both matches, disguising the potential for a significant swing.

In teams scoring, slam bidding is key, since it has the potential to produce the kind of big swings which decide tight matches. David Dunne and I had practiced our



bidding extensively in the BBO training rooms, and we got our reward in the following board against Mark Moran's team:

Board 15. Dealer South. Vul N/S.

		♠ 2		
		♥ QT94		
		♦ AQ954		
		♣ KT4		
♠ KQJT65	N		♠ 974	
♥ 62	W		♥ K8753	
♦ J63	E		♦ T72	
♣ J2	S		♣ 86	
		♠ A83		
		♥ AJ		
		♦ K8		
		♣ AQ9753		

	N <i>M Brady</i>	S <i>D. Dunne</i>
		2♦ ¹
	2♠ ²	3♣ ³
	3♦ ⁴	3NT ⁵
	4♣ ⁶	4♥ ⁷
	4♠ ⁸	5♦ ⁹
	7♣	

- ¹ Multi – either a weak 2 in a major, or 17-20 with 6+ clubs single suited, or 21-22 balanced
- ² To play opposite a weak 2♠
- ³ The club hand
- ⁴ Artificial, forcing to at least game
- ⁵ Stoppers in both majors
- ⁶ Sets clubs as trumps, and asks for keycards
- ⁷ 0 or 3 keycards – clearly 3 here
- ⁸ Asks for the queen of trumps
- ⁹ Shows the queen, and also the king of diamonds

Every question I asked in this auction got the dream answer. By the end of it I knew David had started with AQ-sixth in clubs, the two major aces, and the ♦K. I could count 13 tricks by way of six clubs, three diamonds, one heart, one spade, and two spade ruffs, with extra chances of length winners in diamonds. The play went exactly as I foresaw in the auction, and 7♣ was worth 13 IMPs when the other table settled in 6 and was key to our 6 IMP win against the favourites.

Undaunted, the Moran team zoomed ahead to qualify with a match to spare, as is their usual habit. Their last match against Team O'Briain was not played by mutual agreement, as Micheal's

squad had no mathematical chance of qualifying, leaving us (second) in a head-to-head shootout against Team Pigot (third), defending a slender lead of 1.34 VPs over them. Essentially, a win by 3 IMPs or more would put them through as the CBAI team, while a lighter defeat or a win would see us home.

The match was as tense as you would expect in the circumstances, with neither team wanting to miss the opportunity of a game or a slam that the other table might reach. Both sides had a chance to show off their slam judgement on board 8:

Board 8. Dealer West. Vul None.

		♠ AT854		
		♥ 4		
		♦ AT5		
		♣ KQJ7		
♠ 92	N		♠ J76	
♥ KQT86	W		♥ J532	
♦ K2	E		♦ J864	
♣ T532	S		♣ 86	
		♠ KQ3		
		♥ A97		
		♦ Q973		
		♣ A94		

W <i>T Roche</i>	N <i>P Pigot</i>	E <i>P Delaney</i>	S <i>K de R</i>
2♥	2♠	3♥	4♣
P	4♦	P	4♥
P	6♣	P	6♠
P	P	P	

¹ 5+ spades, 5+ another suit, 4-10HCP

W <i>P Goodman</i>	N <i>M Brady</i>	E <i>D McIntosh</i>	S <i>D. Dunne</i>
	1♠	P	2NT ¹
P	3NT ²	P	4♣
P	4♦	P	4♥
P	4NT	P	5♦ ³
P	5♥ ⁴	P	6♠
P	P	P	

- ¹ Raise of spades, invitational or stronger
- ² Extra values, heart singleton
- ³ 0 or 3 keycards – must be 3
- ⁴ asks for trump queen

Tomás and Paul made a valiant effort with their pre-emptive barrage but Karel and Peter were able to identify the power of the ♥A opposite shortness and drive to slam regardless. At our table, we were let free to discover the

same information through our system tools and powered through to the same contract of 6♠. Axx opposite a singleton is a powerful holding when a good fit exists since no cards are wasted, the suit is well controlled, and there's the potential for generating extra tricks through ruffs. Both declarers made the contract by following the 75% line of taking a double finesse in diamonds – I played two rounds of trumps from the dummy then played the queen of diamonds, covered by the king, while Peter drew three trumps ending in dummy before playing a diamond to the ten, later returning to the ♣A to run the queen. The result was a flat board, slightly disappointing to both N-S pairs, but better news for the leaders than the chasing team, as a flat board always is.

When the dust settled and we scored up, we emerged with a 16.73 VP win, more comfortable than we had expected and both a relief and a pleasure after a long weekend of highly competitive bridge. The two Irish teams this year are:

IRELAND - Mark Moran, John Carroll, Tom Hanlon, Conor Boland, Adam Mesbur, Tommy Garvey, NPC Gráinne Barton.

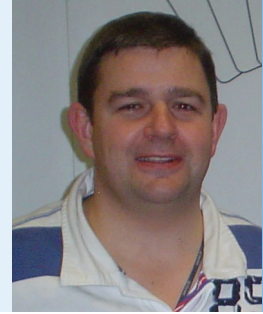
CBAI – Martin Brady, David Dunne, Paul Delaney, Tomás Roche, NPC Derek O'Gorman. The International Committee, in consultation with our team, added a third pair – Ciaran Coyne and David Walsh for the first weekend, Karel de Raeymaecker and Peter Pigot for the second.

Conor Boland on the Ireland team wins his first Camrose cap, as do Paul, David and I on the CBAI team. While neither of the Irish teams was successful in the Camrose, we enjoyed the honour of representing our country immensely, and are very grateful for all your support!



Limerick Congress Teams

Diarmuid Reddan



It was immensely gratifying to stage the Congress “live” once again. Results were carried in the previous Journal.

Our team [Peter Goodman, Louise Mitchell, Dan McIntosh and myself] recorded a win in the Congress Teams. Here are a couple of boards that helped us on our way.

Board 9. Dealer North. Vul E/W.

♠ 1054	N	♠
♥ AJ		
♦ K1073	W	♥
♣ KQ104	E	♦
	S	♣
♠ AKJ7		
♥ 93		
♦ AQJ6		
♣ A65		

It is always important to find the right contract, unfortunately we didn't get there on this board.

You will notice that 6♦ is much the best contract as (assuming diamonds are 3-2) - you can draw trumps and then play on clubs. Now if the ♣J is singleton, doubleton or the clubs are 3-3 you can throw away South's second heart and ruff a heart, which gives you 12 tricks without the need for the spade finesse.

However, Peter Goodman found himself in 6NT after this auction:

	N		S
	1♣		1♥ ¹
	1♠ ²		2♦ ³
	2♠ ⁴		3♣
	3NT		6NT

1C was a hand with either natural clubs or balanced outside of a 1NT opener (so either 12-14 balanced, 18-19 balanced or natural with clubs).

¹ 1♥ was the modern style transfer responses showing a hand that would have bid 1♠ in natural methods.

² 1♠ showed 2 or 3 spades and normally the 12-14 balanced hand type.

³ 2♦ was any game force

⁴ 2♠ was showing 3♠

3C was natural as were 3NT and 6NT. (maybe 3♦ is better than 3C)

Although not as good a contract as 6♦ it was far from hopeless. On a non-heart lead 6NT is still a reasonable contract needing either four spade tricks, four diamond tricks, three clubs and the ♥A or three spade tricks, four diamond tricks, four club tricks and the ♥A.

Unfortunately for Peter he received a heart lead to the Queen. Now a lot of people won the Ace and fell back on the spade finesse.

Peter spotted an extra chance - he ducked the first heart and won the second. He cashed four founds of diamonds ending in hand. He now played ♣K, club to the Ace, the ♠A and a club back to the Queen. The ♣J had fallen so he cashed the fourth club and then took the spade finesse which was right and he chalked up 12 tricks. You might ask what was the extra chance Peter took?

By ducking the first heart he rectified the count for a black suit squeeze on East. Say East's hand had been:

♠ Q982
♥ 876
♦ 84
♣ J732

On the third diamond he can discard his third heart but look what happens on the fourth diamond. East either has to discard his low spade giving Peter four spade tricks to go with four diamonds, three clubs and one heart, or he has to discard a club giving Peter four club tricks, four diamond tricks, one heart and three spades.

Although this is only a small extra chance, over the course of a long event these add up, so when you find yourself in a contract always try to ask yourself what extra chance can I avail of?

Often conceding an early loser builds extra pressure at the end-game stage.

The full deal:

♠ 1054		♠ 1054
♥ AJ		♥ AJ
♦ K1073		♦ K1073
♣ KQ104		♣ KQ104
♠ 963	E	♠ Q82
♥ KQ105		♥ 87642
♦ 952		♦ 84
♣ J98		♣ 732
♠ AKJ7		
♥ 93		
♦ AQJ6		
♣ A65		



Board 20. Vul All.

♠ 753
♥ J
♦ K8643
♣ AKQ6

Dan McIntosh faced a tricky bidding problem when the auction went:

	N		S
1♠	4♥	4♠	P
P	5♥	?	

If we were playing four card majors then after 1♠ (4♥), he would have had no choice but to double. But playing five card majors Dan could justify bidding 4♠ on his first turn as 620 rated to be a better score than 4♥ doubled.

When the hand that bid 4♥ now bid 5♥, Dan was left with a dilemma. Should he attempt to make 5♠ for +650, or pass to let partner [Louise Mitchell] decide, or take the money by doubling 5♥?

The problem is that a forcing pass isn't available as this is what's known as a stretch position. Dan might have had something like:

♠ QJ532
♥ 3
♦ A543
♣ 432

He'd still have had to bid 4♠ over 4♥ as both could have been making. So passing 5♥ wasn't an option. It came down to double or 5♠.

The problem with 5♠ is partner has only promised a five card suit, so attempting to make 11 tricks on a 5-3 fit could be a tall order. Our opponent bid 4♥ followed by 5♥, meaning spades are likely to break badly.

What we do know is we have is a lot of defensive chances to beat 5♥, we have the ♣AKQ and the ♦K opposite an opening bid so on balance given three low spades it must be better to penalise 5♥ than try for 11 tricks in spades.

The full deal:

♠ K		♠ 753
♥ AK1098765		♥ J
♦ A10		♦ K8643
♣ 98		♣ AKQ6
	E	
♠ AQ10986		
♥ Q		
♦ QJ52		
♣ J10		
♠ J42		
♥ 432		
♦ 97		
♣ 75432		

Dan doubled and the defence got one spade trick, two club tricks and a diamond for plus 500. Whilst 5♠ can make in practice, it must be right to take two spade finesses rather than cash the Ace dropping the singleton King.





Seven ways to improve your Hand Evaluation

Peter Pigot



[Peter needs little introduction from me. A seasoned international, he represents a Bridge dynasty. Peter senior was a fixture on the Irish team for many years, mostly in partnership with Joe MacHale. Mother Allie was also a strong player. Peter writes, coaches and teaches extensively, working with Beginners all the way through to Master players. I'm delighted to welcome him as a regular Journal columnist, as well as a member of our Bidding Panel. Ed.]

When you start out in Bridge you are advised that the worth and power of your hand is all about the number of High Card Points (HCP) you hold. Whilst HCP are certainly useful, they are not the be all and end all when it comes to evaluating a hand.

There are many considerations other than the HCP to help one in this plight! Herewith are seven key factors that I believe will quickly deliver improvements to your hand evaluation and thus your results.

Factor 1

When you have some trump support - GOOD is Shortage with trump support, BAD is Balanced with trump support. (Remember shortage in the long trump hand is RARELY extra tricks so it's ONLY the supporter that can upgrade for shortage!)

Examples

♠ AKJ84	♠ Q1093	♠ AKJ84	♠ Q1093
♥ A542	♥ 8	♥ A542	♥ 876
♦ 86	♦ A543	♦ 86	♦ A53
♣ 42	♣ Q875	♣ 42	♣ Q87
4♠ Making [Short Hearts in short trump hand]		4♠ Failing	

Factor 2

When wondering whether to upgrade or downgrade with my six card suit.

GOOD is when I have good cards in my suit... BAD is when my good cards are in my short suits, not my long suit.

Examples

<i>(Good cards with long suits)</i>		<i>(Good cards in short suits)</i>	
♠ AKJ1093	♠ Q54	♠ A97632	♠ Q54
♥ A43	♥ KJ10	♥ J52	♥ K104
♦ QJ4	♦ K732	♦ KQJ	♦ 7654
♣ 4	♣ 1065	♣ A	♣ KJ5
4♠ Making		4♠ Probably failing	
<i>(Good cards with long suits)</i>		<i>(Good cards in short suits)</i>	
♠ AJ6542	♠ KQ	♠ AJ6542	♠ 87
♥ A54	♥ 632	♥ 876	♥ Q432
♦ 65	♦ 1072	♦ A4	♦ KQ
♣ KJ	♣ AQ1098	♣ KJ	♣ A10987
4♠ Making +1		4♠ Probably failing	

Learning Point - Do NOT upgrade for general 'suit length' - only upgrade when you have good cards WITH length or you have good cards to support partner's long suit - be cautious when your good cards are in your short suits.



Factor 3

When deciding to be aggressive or not in NT bidding.

GOOD is when I have clusters of good cards, in particular, in my 4 card suits.

BAD is when I have a flat hand with my HCPs isolated across the hand.

Examples

♠ KQJ10	♠ 954	♠ KJ62	♠ 754
♥ QJ10	♥ A42	♥ AQ2	♥ 652
♦ 52	♦ A743	♦ J63	♦ A754
♣ AQJ9	♣ 1052	♣ KQ2	♣ A63

(As West - with the first hand accept a try for 3NT, with the second, say NO!)

Factor 4

When I'm judging whether my high cards are working, based on the bidding so far.

GOOD is when my high cards are sitting OVER their bidding. **BAD** is when my high cards are UNDER their bidding. So **LISTEN TO THE BIDDING**. – possibly the best tip in Bridge!

RHO Opens 1♦ you over-call 1♠, LHO bids 3♦, Partner 3♠, do I bid on? YES... Because they will nearly certainly be leading a diamond and this HELPS YOU – i.e. my good cards are well placed!

	Partners hand
♠ KQ1054	♠ AJ987
♥ A54	♥ J72
♦ KQ5	♦ 4
♣ 76	♣ J852

I Open 1♥ and the bidding progresses.. 1♥ – 1♠ – 2♥ – 2♠. I am VUL and they are NV. Should I bid on? NO! The king of Spades is nearly certain to be useless and one of the minor suit Kings is also sitting under LHOs probable second Ace...To boot, I have a balanced hand which relies heavily on the HIGH cards to make tricks (see more in Factor 5)

♠ K6
♥ AQ765
♦ K43
♣ K42

Factor 5

HAND SHAPE is massively important when it comes to hand evaluation.

With BALANCED hands, be **conservative** and seriously consider **defending**. Balanced hands play POORLY in suit contracts and when played in NT need the full value of their HCPs to make.

♠ AKJ54
♥ 654
♦ Q65
♣ J62

Game all. RHO opens a strong NT. Sit back and relax! You have an obvious lead and a balanced hand (think defence rather than play). If partner has the cards required to make 2♠ then 1NT is probably going for -200. Overcalling 2♠ is a losing option.

Factor 6

With SINGLE SUITED hands, bid to the limit of the hand and try to PUSH OPPONENTS OVER THE EDGE!

♠ 43
♥ AKJ10654
♦ A54
♣ 42

Nil All. You open 1♥, LHO overcalls 1♠ and RHO raises to 2♠. Simply bid 3♥. This just shows a hand with extra heart length. It does NOT show a hand with extra values! Your objective is to push opponents up a level.

Factor 7

With TWO SUITED hands, try to declare the contract - KEEP BIDDING!

♠ AQ7652
♥ 3
♦ AKQJ2
♣ 4

Nil All. You open 1♠ and LHO overcalls 4♥... P, P, back to you? You have a super two-suiter with little defence to 4♥ but excellent play prospects. BID 4♠!

This is a hand from the recent Camrose international matches. Partner held ♠Kxx and a club honour. RHO held ♠J1094 and ♣AQ so he doubled... contract making for + 590).

There's an old Bridge truism that says "6-5 come alive", and this is a graphic example!

For Classes Schedules, Advanced/Intermediate Seminar dates and general info - BridgeWebs.com/PeterPigotBridge



For Beginners and Novices

Thomas MacCormac



Look at hand numbers 1-4 below and decide what to bid in auction 1 then auction 2. In both cases your options are Pass, Redouble, 2♠, 2NT or 3♠.

Your answer should be different on each Auction. Most beginners or novices do not recognise that when one of a major is opened and your opponent doubles it is now a competitive auction, and the rules for responding change. One key difference is that you can raise partner with lower values than if there had been no double.

Auction 1

The bidding goes...

W	N	E	S
	1♠	P	?

Auction 2

The bidding goes...

W	N	E	S
	1♠	X	?

Hand 1

♠ K7653	9 loser
♥ 82	3 HCP's
♦ 10987	1 for shortness
♣ 98	Total points 4

Hand 3

♠ 102	(12 HCP no fit)
♥ AQ3	
♦ KJ32	
♣ Q432	

Hand 2

♠ Q873	8 loser
♥ 952	8 HCP's
♦ K2	1 for shortness
♣ K1094	9 total points

Hand 4

♠ A765	(11 HCP, good fit)
♥ K2	
♦ KJ72	
♣ 982	

Correct Answers

Hand 1

Auction 1

W	N	E	S
	1♠	P	P

= below values for a response

Auction 2

W	N	E	S
	1♠	P	2♠

= weak hand, very good support (weaker than if no double)

Hand 2

Auction 1

W	N	E	S
	1♠	P	2♠

= 5-10 HCP and trump support

Auction 2

W	N	E	S
	1♠	X	3♠

= 4-8 HCPs and 8 losers (weaker than if no double)

Hand 3

Auction 1

W	N	E	S
	1♠	P	2C

= 9+ HCP, 4+ Clubs

Auction 2

W	N	E	S
	1♠	X	XX

= 10+ HCPs & no fit for spades OR a game going

Hand 4

Auction 1

W	N	E	S
	1♠	P	4♠

= very good hand for game in spades

Auction 2

W	N	E	S
	1♠	X	2NT

= support for Spades 10-12 HCPs & eight losers exactly



Novice to Intermediate

– my Bridge journey continues!

Nicola O'Dowd



[Editor's Note: Nicola wrote in the previous issue about how she took up the game and became hooked. Here she updates us]

In October 2022 I received my new CBAI membership card. I couldn't believe I had progressed from a beginner N2 to an Intermediate B1 in less than two years, however I did play every chance I got, both online and in person so I guess the points from the tournaments I won or got placed in do add up.

I found myself thinking where do I go from here? Having attended many online bridge classes in bidding & play I started reading books, and my partners and I adapted our system based on what we like and dislike from our experience competing and what we had read.

I was advised to get out and play and use the knowledge I had, make my mistakes and learn from them. And that is exactly what I did and will continue to do.

After playing with real cards at bridge tables face to face for 10 months I believe a big part of learning is discussing bids & plays after games. When playing a game online, be it on realbridge or BBO my partners and I would go through each hand afterwards and see where we went wrong or how we could achieve higher scores, and improve and learn. We also try to do this at our face to face games and enjoy the laughs and critique.

Drogheda Congress blew me away. Dara Voyles and I won the Intermediate Pairs on Thursday the 6 October 2022. We took home the Glynis Kay Perpetual Cup and felt like we were on top of the world. Everyone in the room made us feel that way, coming up to us congratulating us. There was only .3% between us and 2nd place Angela Everitt & Sylvia McCann. It was so close.

In fact, our very first opponents were Angela and Sylvia. We missed the boat here:

Board 3. Dealer South. Vul E/W.

		♠ T9753		
		♥ 85		
		♦ 876		
		♣ J87		
♠ QJ82	N		E	♠ AK6
♥ Q3	W			♥ KJ976
♦ J952				♦ AKQ4
♣ K62	S			♣ A
		♠ 4		
		♥ AT42		
		♦ T3		
		♣ QT9543		

W	N	E	S
			P
P	P	2♣	P
2♦	P	2♥	P
2NT	P	3♦	P
3NT	P	4♠	P
P	P		

Dara meant 4♠ as bidding out his shape (which I didn't recognise) and I passed. Dara had to play in 4♠ on a 4-3 fit. He made an overtrick for a joint top – nothing succeeds like success!

This is the way I think we would bid it today if we came across it again...

2C-2♦ (relay) -2♥-2NT-3♦ (natural). Then I go 4NT RKCB. Dara answers 5♣ showing his four keycards and I go 6♦. *[This is very revealing. It shows how improvers improve. Of course better sequences are available but this is a more than reasonable effort. Ed.]*

Having looked up the calendar on the CBAI website, I couldn't wait to go to more congresses and so my Mum, Ena Souhan and I went to Limerick and Donegal.

Everyone seemed genuinely thankful that we made the journey from Meath. I was told by many players that they felt the attendance at congress was not what it used to be pre covid. I had not attended any bridge congress pre covid so personally I could not compare.

It was very entertaining to people that we met that we were Mother & Daughter. I think we are both very lucky to have bridge in common now. Needless to say we have plenty of disagreements about bridge, we also have plenty of laughs too.

There was a notable difference between playing in my local clubs and at the congresses though. Thankfully my Bridge teacher Declan Byrne had taught me etiquette and tips for playing at the table, so I knew that playing in a physical setting is different to playing online. Things like positioning the board as North, and not covering it with bidding box. Also making the lead face down and asking partner "any questions?" before turning the lead card.



Ever since I took I up bridge I had been asking my friend to join me and take the lessons. She told me no way would she ever play bridge, I kept at her for months. Eventually she started online lessons with Declan Byrne Bridge in January 2022, exactly a year after I started myself.

In October 2022 she sent me this message...

"I was saying to my husband tonight I never thought I would be able to play bridge -sure I can't count!! But I can't believe I'm playing and making loads of friends. All thanks to you."

The following month, this friend and I, accompanied by my mother, booked a bridge break in Ennistymon. I had seen the advert in the CBAI newsletter and mentioned it to a few more bridge players and it snowballed from there. We ended up having a lovely few days in Ennistymon. It was different to the congresses, which are competitive - this was much more relaxed and sociable.

For some of us it was actually our first time meeting in person as we had only attended classes online together.

The Falls hotel was fabulous, the staff just could not do enough for us, nothing was a problem. There was a mixture of people and grades. There were optional lessons every morning and bridge every night. The hotel put on tours during the day and plenty of other activities to choose from. A lot of these social bridge breaks are advertised in the CBAI Newsletter with plenty of dates and hotels available.

The Regional Pairs qualifiers took place in early December. Dara and his brother in law Paul Dunne competed in Mid Leinster Region. The Inter A's, B's and Novices were combined as there were only nine pairs. Dara and Paul playing as intermediate B's finished 1st, qualifying for the Nationals in April 2023. I was delighted for them.

My mother and I competed in the same competition in Drogheda Bridge Centre. There were 24 pairs competing, counting Masters, Inter A's & B's. The Inter B competition was won by Sylvia & Angela - well done to them! As the numbers were low Ena and I also qualified for the nationals Inter B.

A number of bridge friends I have made over the last two years qualified in other Regions so I am really looking forward the National pairs championships in Ennistymon on the 1st & 2nd Of April 2023.

[We look forward to hearing about it!! Ed.]

Noting that the entries were low in both Intermediate B & Novice regional competitions, I find myself wondering is it because there are few novices now in the country? Could it be that Novices that learned online through the pandemic are too nervous or otherwise not ready to play in person? Maybe they are afraid of the errors they may make with real cards at a bridge table in person. My daughter Kayleigh once said to me when I was nervous heading out the door to my local club, "Feel the fear and do it anyway". I am so glad I listened to her & my mum and that I made the decision to play both online and in person.

My Mum tells me when she learned to play bridge she learned in person and received 10/15 lessons and then was sent out to play in the local club, no notes just make mistakes and learn from them. Week after week this is what happened.

You have probably noticed I am very passionate about all aspects of Bridge. The learning and the competing are important for sure, but also I think encouraging matters. If you go to the Cinema and it's a good film you will tell your friends about it and encourage them to see it. That's how I feel about bridge. Some people I have

encouraged to learn the game now love it. are so glad they took it up and tell me how much it has changed their lives. The great thing about Bridge you can play as little or as much as you want. Especially now that its online and in person.

The local clubs around me have been fortunate to keep the numbers increasing since the return in September 2022. With help from the CBAI in August 2022 we ran a number of bridge promotions. With the aim of encouraging members to return and new members to start. I am so new to it all, the committee's and the procedures but everyone is so helpful. Each club sharing information, advice and supporting each other to keep the In person tables full.

Monday the 5 December 2022 the saw the CBAI'S first foray into the Celtic nations Simultaneous Pairs. Joining the Welsh, Scottish & Northern Irish Bridge unions in the field. Have a look at my article next time to see how we got on.

As 2022 came to a close I thanked my Mum for encouraging me to take up bridge. "Learn Online and Play in person" is Declan Byrne's slogan. And that is my story. Loving every step along the way.



How would you rule?

Fearghal O'Boyle



Problem 517. Teams. Nil All.

		♠ ---		
		♥ 10		
		♦ 74		
		♣ 85		
♠ 8		N	♠	
♥			♥	
♦ 9832	W		E	♦ KQJ10
♣		S		♣ 9
		♠ ---		
		♥ QJ		
		♦ A65		
		♣ ---		

South is declarer in 4♥ and has made six tricks and lost two tricks. He wins trick eight in hand. He should claim his contract at this point (winning two hearts, a diamond and a diamond ruff and losing one diamond trick). Instead he cashes ♦A from hand and discards a club from dummy. Then he leads a small diamond from hand, notices the revoke and calls the TD.

Which should the TD rule:

A.	4♥ made by South.
B.	4♥-1 by South.
C.	4♥-2 by South.
D.	4♥-3 by South.
E.	Average Minus to N/S. Average Plus to E/W.

Problem 518. Teams. Nil All.

		♠ QJ4		
		♥ QJ2		
		♦ KQJ4		
		♣ 742		
♠ K1065		N	♠ A32	
♥ K10764	W		♥ 9	
♦ 5		S	♦ 963	
♣ QJ8			♣ AK10963	
		♠ 987		
		♥ A853		
		♦ A9872		
		♣ 5		

North opens 1NT (12-14) and E/W complete to 3♣. North bids 3♦ and East takes 30 seconds to pass. West bids 4♣ and declarer makes 10 tricks.

N/S call the TD to complain about East's slow pass and West's subsequent decision to bid 4♣. The result at the other table was the same 4♣ made by East.

The TD establishes that West's decision to bid 4♣ was influenced by his partner's hesitation.

Which should the TD rule:

A.	4♣ made by East (zero imps to both sides).
B.	3♦ made by South (N/S gain 6 imps and E/W lose 6 imps).
C.	N/S score it as 4♣ made by East (N/S score zero imps) and E/W score it as 3♦ made by South (E/W lose 6 imps).
D.	N/S score it as 4♣-1 by East (N/S gain 2 imps) and E/W score it as 3♦ made by South (E/W lose 6 imps).

W	N (Dir)	E	S
	1NT	2♣	2♦
3♣	3♦	P (H)	P
4♣	P	P	P

Problem 519. Teams. Nil All.

		♠ QJ4		
		♥ QJ32		
		♦ KQJ4		
		♣ 742		
♠ K1065		N	♠ A32	
♥ K1076	W		♥ 94	
♦ 53		S	♦ 96	
♣ QJ8			♣ AK10963	
		♠ 987		
		♥ A85		
		♦ A9872		
		♣ 52		

North opens 1NT (12-14) and E/W complete to 3♣. North bids 3♦ and East takes 30 seconds to pass. West bids 4♣ and declarer makes nine tricks.

N/S call the TD to complain about East's slow pass and West's subsequent decision to bid 4♣. The result at the other table was also 4♣-1 by East.

The TD establishes that West's decision to bid 4♣ was influenced by his partner's hesitation.

Which should the TD rule

A.	4♣-1 made by East (zero imps to both sides).
B.	3♦ made by South (N/S gain 2 imps and E/W lose 2 imps).
C.	N/S score it as 4♣-1 made by East (N/S score zero imps) and E/W score it as 3♦ made by South (E/W lose 4 imps).
D.	N/S score it as 4♣-2 by East (N/S gain 2 imps) and E/W score it as 3♦ made by South (E/W lose 4 imps).

W	N (Dir)	E	S
	1NT	2♣	2♦
3♣	3♦	P (H)	P
4♣	P	P	P



Suggested Rulings

Problem 517: (Law 64 - Procedure After the Establishment of a Revoke)

Ruling B 4♥-1 by South

Declarer revokes in dummy and leads a card from hand to the next trick. Law 63A1 says that the revoke is established and so it cannot be corrected.

The Director will ask the players to finish the board - E/W will win two diamond tricks leading to a final result of 4♥-1 by South. Now the Director has to address the question of whether or not to assess a penalty for the revoke.

The footnote to Law 64A1 says that for the purposes of the revoke law, declarer and dummy are treated as two separate players. If any other player had revoked there would be a one trick penalty for the revoke but Law 64B3 tells us that there are no penalty tricks transferred for a revoke by dummy. However the Director is asked to check to make sure that declarer has not profited by the irregularity (Law 64C1).

In this particular case, the declaring side has not gained - in fact declarer has suffered as a result of the revoke. He was going to make 4♥ and now because of his revoke he has gone down.

As an aside, the defenders are not to blame for not noticing that dummy was a card short - they have enough to do looking after their own 13 cards. If we are in the mood to penalise anybody then the culprit is dummy who has infringed Law 41D by not displaying his dummy correctly. Furthermore dummy has infringed Law 42A3 because one of his jobs is to make sure that declarer does not revoke in dummy.

Problem 518: (Law 16 - Authorised and Unauthorised Information)

Ruling B 3♦ made by South [N/S +6IMPs EW -6IMPs]

East takes longer than normal to pass in a competitive auction and West subsequently raises to 4♣. N/S call the TD to investigate.

First of all there is nothing wrong with hesitating - Bridge is a 'thinking' game and we all need time to think at certain key points in the game. As long as we have a bridge reason for thinking then there is nothing wrong with taking an extra few seconds to work things out. We are not robots and we all process our thoughts at different speeds. Some auctions are more difficult than others and some auctions are more surprising than others. The problem is not with the hesitation. The Director's focus will be on the partner of the player who hesitated.

When we hesitate (or equally if we bid or play too quickly) we are giving information to the table. Our opponents are entitled to use this information but our partner is not. Law 16 says that partner is not allowed to make any call or play that is clearly suggested over another logical alternative by the unauthorised information that we have transmitted.

Rather than make a unilateral decision on his own, the recommended practice is for the Director to consult (poll) other players of a similar standard and who play a similar system to West to see what they would call over 3♦ (without the hesitation). The Director will also ask these West peers what they think East's hesitation suggests.

In the present case the Director learns that all of West's peers would pass 3♦ and also learns that East's hesitation suggests bidding 4♣ over 'Pass'. The result of the poll shows that West has used unauthorised information from his partner's slow pass in deciding to choose 4♣ over 'pass' and that this decision has resulted in an advantage for West i.e. he went from losing 6 imps by passing 3♦ to earning a flat board by bidding 4♣. Law 16 instructs the Director to adjust the table result if West has gained an advantage. So the director adjusts the result to 3♦ bid and made by South. N/S gain 6 imps and E/W lose 6 imps.

Problem 519: (Law 16 - Authorised and Unauthorised Information)

Ruling A 4♣-1 by East [no IMPs to either side].

East takes longer than normal to pass in a competitive auction and West subsequently raises to 4♣. N/S call the TD to investigate.

The same preamble to Problem 518 applies here too. In this case, even if the Director finds out that West has used UI (Unauthorised Information) from his partner's slow pass in deciding to bid 4♣, West has not gained any advantage because 3♦ was going one down - West has earned himself a worse score by bidding 4♣ (-3 imps) than he was going to receive had he passed (0 imps). So the table result 4♣-1 stands. If the Director is of the opinion that West has blatantly used UI, he can penalise West and should give him a lecture about his behaviour in any case.

CBAI News

Dermot O'Brien



As we come towards the end of the formal part of the 2022/23 season, it seems a good point to take stock of how well the bridge community has begun its recovery after the trials of the covid period. There is a touch of the “glass half-full, glass half-empty” about things, but on balance I think we can be reasonably satisfied with progress so far.

In many ways, the season has turned out better than we might have expected, if we had been making predictions say at the Association's AGM last July. In particular:

- (1) Our projection at that point was that membership numbers might grow by 10% or so this season; in fact, they will have grown by more than twice that;
- (2) We were concerned that perhaps 100 clubs might close permanently; in fact, the number seems likely to be less than half that – obviously a source of regret, but not as bad as it might have been;
- (3) We worried that our national events would not attract the numbers they had previously for many years; while the picture is a bit mixed, some of our most important events, such as the Master Pairs (83 pairs) and the Holmes Wilson (96 teams), were extremely well-supported. We also had a full house for the National Pairs Championships in Ennistymon, with all regions represented;
- (4) There was a lot of concern that the continuation of online bridge would damage the return to live bridge; while it is

probably too early to state this definitively, there is certainly a good case to be made that the two are coming into a natural equilibrium that will allow both forms of the game to co-exist successfully in the longer term;

- (5) Bridge is clearly thriving in many areas, both urban and rural, with clubs full and lots of classes ongoing.

However, that last point is not the experience everywhere, and we obviously still face significant challenges as an Association. Many clubs, even in some of our major cities, are struggling to revive live bridge, and venues are a major problem in some cases. While most of our congresses are back live, the turnout has been low in several of them. Filling Intermediate and Novice events in particular has been quite a struggle; perhaps these players have less of an “institutional memory” of the calendar than their more experienced counterparts. And while membership growth of more than 20% is certainly positive, the current year number will still be only approximately 75% of the pre-covid figure. It was heartening to see our new Chief Medical Officer recently issue a formal statement encouraging people to return to the hobbies they had enjoyed pre-covid, stating that vaccinations made that safe, and that covid had “stolen enough of our lives”. Hopefully that encouragement will see more people return to the bridge table over the summer.

The only real solution to these issues is the one that I once heard Séamus Dowling memorably

describe as “elbow grease and shoe leather”. All we can do is keep plugging away to encourage existing members to return, to generate new members through beginners' classes, and to provide a better service to our members by training and developing Tournament Directors, scorers, and teachers. The CBAI has been active on all these fronts, and I hope that we are serving you well. We have also invested in some new communications tools to enable us to stay in closer touch with our members. We promise not to inundate you with stuff, so please keep an eye out for our periodic emails (and give us your email address if we don't already have it!).

I'd like to say a special thank you to our Teaching Committee, under convenor Seamus Costello, which has run three new teacher training courses over the past twelve months, and has a fourth planned for Templeogue for the weekend of May 26/27. If you are interested in becoming a bridge teacher and bringing some new players into the game, take a look at the material on our website or give Fran Ronan a call in the office, and she will guide you through what's involved. As well as these new teachers' programmes, the Committee has also undertaken a substantial upgrade of the manuals provided to teachers; thanks in particular to Helen Holman for the work that she contributed to that effort.

One other very obvious challenge for all of us is the rising level of costs within our economy. You don't need me to tell you that all the major components of the bridge weekend away – food/drink, fuel,



and accommodation – are among the items most affected by rising prices. The accommodation issue is compounded by the number of hotels currently occupied by the refugee community, which is adding to the strain on prices. I am currently engaged in negotiations for venues for next season and beyond, and it is fair to say that it is proving quite the trial! I will do my best, and congress organisers are doubtless doing the same, but there is no doubt that the bargain prices of a few years ago are probably gone forever. And we may need to go a bit further off the beaten track than previously, to provide better value for money. But please do whatever you can to attend congresses and national events; as our National President Pat O'Mahony has remarked on many occasions over the course of the season, if we don't, there's a danger that some of them will disappear forever from our lives.

We have had no joy in any of the home internationals held to date, with England victorious in all of them thus far, but we have high hopes for the Teltscher Trophy (seniors' home internationals) in Wales in May. And our Open Team has been practicing hard for their World Championship (Bermuda Bowl) assignment in Marrakech over the summer, while our Women's Team, as first reserves for the Venice Cup, are doing the same and waiting patiently for the phone to ring if one of the other regions fails to take up its full allocation of spots. Hopefully they too will make it to Marrakech.

In comparison with other games, the association of the ordinary bridge player with our international players and teams is very low. There are several obvious reasons for this, some of them not easy to remedy. But I would hope that there are things we could do to bridge that gap, and if anyone has any ideas on that, or any other aspects of the Association's activities, I'd be very happy to hear them.

Thanks to all of you for your support over the season, and good luck to those of you involved in the business end of the national and international competitions over the next few months. We'll be back in touch in the next edition in mid-summer, with full plans for the 2023/24 season. And I hope to see many of you at the AGM in Limerick on 1 July, at which we will inaugurate our new National President, Gordon Lessells from the North Munster Region.

Stop Press: I am delighted to announce that Teresa O'Reilly, from Bailieborough, County Cavan, has been selected as this year's winner of the President's Merit Award. Teresa was involved in setting up Bailieborough Bridge Club more than forty years ago, and since then she has been an enthusiastic advocate of bridge in the area, teaching beginner and improver classes all over Cavan, generally without any payment. The many nominations she received mentioned her tireless work, and also her patience, enthusiasm, and generosity; Aileen Timoney, who knows a LOT of bridge players, commented that she couldn't think of anyone who "had put such love and devotion into bridge" or deserved the award more. We will cover President Pat O'Mahony's presentation to Teresa in more detail in the next edition of the Journal.



Results and Upcoming Fixtures

National Results - Jan to April 2022

Men's & Women's Pairs & Teams 14/15 Jan

Revington Cup (Men's Pairs)
Diarmuid Reddan & John Phelan

Jackson Cup (Women's Pairs)
Margaret Farren & Anna Carr

Geraldine Trophy (Men's Teams)
Ciarán Coyne, James Heneghan,
Karel De Raeymaeker, Peter Pigot

McMenamin Bowl (Women's Teams)
Joan Kenny & Jeannie Fitzgerald,
Teresa Rigney & Siobhan Part

Teltscher Trials - 6 Feb

Joan Kenny, Teresa Rigney, Paul
Porteous,
Fred Barry, David Dunne, Michael
McAuliffe

Holmes Wilson Cup - 11/12 Feb

- 1st Karel De Raeymaeker & Anna
Onishuk, Kelan O'Connor &
Conor Boland
- 2nd Joan Kenny & Jeannie
Fitzgerald, Siobhan Part &
Derek O'Gorman
- 3rd Martin Brady & David Dunne,
Tomás Roche & Paul Delaney
- 4th Gay Keaveney & Enda Glynn,
Ciarán Coyne & David Walsh

Novice & Intermediate Congress 17-19 Feb

Jim Fitzgerald Trophy (Mixed Pairs)
Tony Fitzgerald & Noreen O'Connell

**New Ireland Trophy (Intermediate A
Pairs)**
Carmel Murphy & Jane Ross

Kervick Trophy (Intermediate B Pairs)
Joanna Gill & Theresa Murphy

**Waterford Crystal Trophy (Novice
Pairs)**
Sandra Garvey & Mary Murphy

JJ Kiely Trophy (Intermediate Teams)
Declan Harte & Margaret McCarthy,
John & Mary P Bourke

Junior Home Internationals Manchester, 17/19 February

- Junior Camrose Trophy (Under-26)**
- 1st England
- 4th Ireland (Luca Crone, Matthew
O'Farrell, Isabel Burke, Sheila
Walsh, Denise Walsh, Leah
Finnegan)

Peggy Bayer Trophy (Under-20)

- 1st England
- 3rd Ireland (Adam Murphy, David
Hoyne, Phedra Kingston, Eve
Connell, Klara Flanagan)

Camrose Trophy - Belfast & Dublin, 6/8 January & 3/5 March

- 1st England
- 3rd Ireland (Mark Moran, John Carroll,
Tom Hanlon, Conor Boland, Adam
Mesbur, Tommy Garvey)
- 4th CBAI (Paul Delaney, Tomás Roche,
Martin Brady, David Dunne, Ciarán
Coyne, David Walsh, Karel De
Raeymaeker, Peter Pigot)

IBU Inter-County Teams Championships Cavan, 11-12 March

Burke Trophy (Open)
Dublin City - Peter Goodman & Aoife
MacHale, Teresa Rigney & BJ O'Brien

O'Connor Trophy (Intermediate)
Donegal - Barry & Michael McMenamin,
Carmel Gallinagh & Tony Carr

National Pairs Championships 1/2 April

Davidson Cup (Open)
South Munster: Cian Holland & Derek
O'Gorman

Laird Cup (Intermediate A)
South Munster: Berna Treacy & Noreen
Maloney

Civil Service Cup (Intermediate B)
Eastern: Christine Heath & Kathryn Ryan

National Teams Championships 23/23 April

Kelburne Cup - Masters
Holders: Gay Keaveney & Paul Scannell
Enda Glynn & David Walsh

Bankers Trophy - Intermediate A
Kevin McKeivitt, Angela O'Neill, Helen
Dredge, Ann Hogan

Tierney Trophy - Intermediate B
Melissa Brady & Kathleen McCabe, Mary
Maguire & Brid Campbell-Mcmanus

Moylan Cup - 15/16 April

- 1st Joan Kenny & Jeannie Fitzgerald
- 2nd Tom Hanlon & John Carroll
- 3rd BJ O'Brien & Peter Goodman

IBU Seniors Congress - 18/20 April

Gala Pairs Winners
Helen Hall & Michael McFaul

Congress Pairs Winners
Gay Keaveney & Peter Goodman

Congress Teams Winners
Pat McDevitt, Gay Keaveney, Enda
Glynn, Peter Goodman

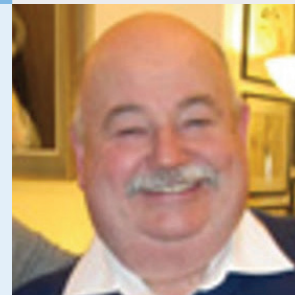
Upcoming Fixtures - Jan to Mid April 2023

Date	Event	Venue
May 2023		
13	IBU Club Pairs - All Grades	Online BBO
19	Teltscher Trophy (Senior Camrose)	WBU
20	National 4FUNTeams Final	Westmonstown
21	BGB Junior Pairs	Online Realbridge
27	Egan Trophy	La Mon Hotel, Belfast
June 2023		
3-17	European Transnational Teams Championships	Strasbourg, France



Play Quiz 2

BJ O'Brien



Hand 1

Contract 4♥ by South on the lead of the ♥2. East has shown Spades and Diamonds. You win in dummy and play a diamond to the 9 and King. A heart is returned, East showing out. Plan the play.

Dummy			
♠ QJ83			
♥ K84			
♦ 2			
♣ A9854			
♠	N	E	♠
♥ 2	W	E	♥
♦	W	E	♦
♣	S	S	♣
♠ 7			
♥ AQJ963			
♦ Q109			
♣ K52			
Declarer			

Hand 2

South deals, opens 4♠ and plays there. West leads ♦K. Plan the play.

Dummy			
♠ 5			
♥ Q94			
♦ AJ7642			
♣ QJ64			
♠ 3	N	E	♠
♥	W	E	♥
♦	W	E	♦
♣	S	S	♣
♠ AQJ98742			
♥ AJ			
♦ 105			
♣ K			
Declarer			

Hand 3

Contract 6♥. Lead ♣Q. You win the Ace and play two top trumps. LHO shows out on the second. What do you discard from dummy and why – and how can you make your contract?

Dummy			
♠ AK84			
♥ 8			
♦ AK76			
♣ A852			
♠ J	N	E	♠
♥	W	E	♥
♦	W	E	♦
♣	S	S	♣
♠ 102			
♥ AKQ10764			
♦ 94			
♣ 63			
Declarer			

Hand 4

Contract 5♦ by South on the ♠Q lead. (East has shown 5-5 in the black suits) West wins and continues a spade. You ruff and cash a top diamond. East shows out. Plan the play.

Dummy			
♠ 8432			
♥ KQ			
♦ 542			
♣ AKQ4			
♠ Q	N	E	♠
♥	W	E	♥
♦	W	E	♦
♣	S	S	♣
♠ 5			
♥ A1076			
♦ AK10973			
♣ 108			
Declarer			

Entries to:

playquiz@cbai.ie

by 14th June 2023

At the end of the fourth issue a €50 CBAI gift voucher will be awarded to the leading contestant in each of the following categories:

- Best Novice/ Intermediate B
- Best Intermediate A
- Best Master (below Life Master)

Please remember to state your grade in your entry



Play Quiz 1 - Solutions and Results

Leading Scores after Competition 1 [of 4]

Hugh McDermott	40
Maria Callinan	36
Martin Carroll	36

Hand 1

Contract 3NT. Teams. Lead ♣3.
You play ♠Q which wins. Proceed.

Dummy			
	♠ 432		
	♥ 3		
	♦ AQ10952		
	♣ Q85		
♠	N	♠	
♥	W	♥	
♦	E	♦	
♣ 3	S	♣	
Declarer			
	♠ AKJ9		
	♥ K642		
	♦ K43		
	♣ A6		

Almost everyone got this right. After the ♣Q holds, run the ♦10 and guarantee nine tricks. The key point is that this is Teams, so your priority is to ensure you make the contract. Running the ♦10 into the North hand does just that. Even if it loses to ♦J, North cannot hurt you by switching to hearts. This hand features elsewhere in this Journal, and you'll be interested to learn that a multiple World Champion got this wrong!

Hand 3

Contract 3NT. Teams. Lead ♠J

Dummy			
	♠ 832		
	♥ 10973		
	♦ 954		
	♣ AK9		
♠ J	N	♠	
♥	W	♥	
♦	E	♦	
♣	S	♣	
Declarer			
	♠ AKQ		
	♥ AQ		
	♦ AK73		
	♣ 7532		

The only winning line is to win and lead ♥AQ. You need two heart tricks for your contract. When the ♥K wins trick three there is nothing the defence can do to stop you making your second heart trick. You enter dummy on a Club and concede a trick to ♥J. You then have a second Club entry to dummy to cash that vital fourth round of Hearts.

Hand 2

Contract 3NT. Teams. Lead ♠3

Dummy			
	♠ KQ		
	♥ KQJ74		
	♦ AQ874		
	♣ 3		
♠ 3	N	♠	
♥	W	♥	
♦	E	♦	
♣	S	♣	
Declarer			
	♠ A872		
	♥ A3		
	♦ 63		
	♣ Q8762		

This hand featured in Ireland's historic silver medal performance at the European Championships of 2006. Once again, at Teams you must guard against bad breaks, seeking to ensure you make your contract even if you miss an overtrick. The trap for the unwary is to play on autopilot – cash ♠K and Q, come to hand with ♥A, cash ♠A and “enjoy the hearts”. Tragically, you now go down because hearts are 5-1.

In the white heat of competition, Ireland's John Carroll found the winning line. Cash ♠KQ and ♥K before playing a heart to the Ace. Now you learn that hearts are 5-1. The good news is that you are in hand to cash ♠A and finesse ♦Q for your contract. It wins.

Only Hugh McDermott got this one correct – very well done.

Hand 4

Contract 1NT. Teams. Lead ♦5

Dummy			
	♠ J108		
	♥ AJ73		
	♦ K94		
	♣ KJ7		
♠	N	♠	
♥	W	♥	
♦ 5	E	♦	
♣	S	♣	
Declarer			
	♠ 9732		
	♥ K84		
	♦ 1062		
	♣ 1064		

Full marks to everyone as all played on spades at every opportunity. This is a damage limitation hand. Playing on spades creates no extra losers but tackling hearts may do so.



Bidding Quiz 2

By Bob Pattinson



All eight hands are from live pairs events. Entries to biddingquiz@cbaie by May 31st.

Good luck!

Question 1

Dealer East. Vul E/W.

- ♠ 875
- ♥ AJ107
- ♦ 10
- ♣ AQ982

W	N	E	S
		1♠ ¹	2♦
3♠ ²	?		
¹ 1♠ = 5+; ² 3♠ = 4+; 4-8			

Question 2

Dealer North. Vul All.

- ♠ A98
- ♥ AJ10983
- ♦ Q3
- ♣ J9

W	N	E	S
	P	1♥	2♣
2♠	2♣	?	

Question 3

Dealer North. Vul N/S.

- ♠ ---
- ♥ 982
- ♦ AQ10932
- ♣ QJ75

W	N	E	S
	2♠ ¹	2NT ²	P
?			
¹ 2♠ = 6 suit : 6-10; ² 2NT = 16-18 balanced			

Question 4

Dealer North. Vul N/S.

- ♠ 6
- ♥ Q63
- ♦ AK108762
- ♣ A9

W	N	E	S
	P	P	1♣ ¹
?			
¹ 1♣ = 3+			

Question 5

Dealer West. Vul All.

- ♠ 10963
- ♥ 98
- ♦ K43
- ♣ QJ109

W	N	E	S
	1♥	P	4♥
4NT ¹	P	5♣	5♥
P	P	?	
¹ 4NT = 5-5 minors			

Question 6

Dealer South. Vul E/W.

- ♠ 4
- ♥ 109752
- ♦ J10432
- ♣ A4

W	N	E	S
			P
P	2♣ ¹	P	2♦ ²
P	2NT ³	P	3♦ ⁴
P	3♥	P	?
¹ 2♣ = 23+; ² 2♦ waiting; ³ 2NT = 23-24 balanced; ³ 3♦ transfer to ♥			

Question 7

Dealer West. Vul All.

- ♠ AQ6
- ♥ 8763
- ♦ Q105
- ♣ 875

W	N	E	S
1♦	P	1♥	P
1♠	P	1NT	P
2♠ ¹	P	?	
¹ 2♠ = 6-5 diamonds / spades			

Question 8

Dealer South. Vul All.

- ♠ Q1097
- ♥ A9
- ♦ Q104
- ♣ AKQ5

W	N	E	S
			2♠ ¹
P	2NT ²	P	3♦ ³
P	?		
¹ 2♠ = 5431; 5 spades: 6-10 ² 2NT = asks 2nd suit ³ 3♦ = 4 diamonds			

Entries to:

biddingquiz@cbaie
by 14th June 2023

At the end of the fourth issue a €50 CBAI gift voucher will be awarded to the leading contestant in each of the following categories:

- Best Novice/ Intermediate B
- Best Intermediate A
- Best Master (below Life Master)

Please remember to state your grade in your entry



Bidding Quiz System

General Approach:

Five card majors, three+ minors, 2/1 GF,
1NT = 15-17,
2♣ = art GF with 2♦ waiting response

Balanced Hands

4333, 4432, 5332
(with five minor)

12-14 and 18-19 open 1♣/♦

20-22 : 2NT (may include five card major hence play puppet Stayman)

Major Suit Responses

1NT = 5-10 F1:
2♣/♦/♥ = 2/1 GF

3♣/♦/♥ over 1♠ opening and 2♣/3♣/♦ over 1♥ opening = four card+ trump support: 8-11 : first or second round control in bid suit.

3M = 4-7 and 4+ trumps

2NT = Jacoby 16+:
4+ trumps:

Opener bids a singleton at the three level, a second five card suit at the four level, rebids 3M with 17-19, 4M with 12-14, and 3NT with 15-16.

Responses to the forcing 1NT:

example for 1♥: 1NT: 2♣ = Gazzilli : either 11-16 with 5M and 4+ clubs or any 17+ hand

2♦ = 11-16 : 3+ diamonds

2♥ = 11-16 : 6+ hearts

2♠ = 14-16: 6 hearts and 5 spades

2NT = 14-16 : 6 hearts and a 4 card minor : now 3♣ pass/ correct; 3♦ = GF asks for minor; 3♥ - to play

3♣/♦ = 14-16: 5-5

3♥ = 14-16 : 6+ hearts and strong suit

Example of Gazzilli after 1♥:1NT:2♣

2♦ = any 8+ suit

2♥ = 5-7 : 5+ hearts

2♠ = 5-7 : 6+ spades

2NT = 5=7: 3 suiter with short hearts

3♣/♦ = 5-7 : 6+ minor

After responder bids 2D opener rebids 2M with 11-16 and 5 M and 4+ clubs 2NT = 17-19 balanced : other bids game forcing

Responses to 1nt Opening (15-17)

2♣ = non-promissory Stayman

2♦/♥/♠/NT = transfers

3♣/♦/♥/♠ = long suits with slam interest

Two Level Suit Opening Bids

Bid	Meaning	Responses
2♣	23+ or equivalent unbalanced	2♦ = waiting bid
2♦/♥/♠	6-10 : six card suit, using rule of two, three or four depending upon different vulnerability of the two sides	2NT = enquiry: opener signs off with three level rebid of own suit with minimum and bids a new suit to show a feature or 3NT with a feature in the opening suit

Three/Four Level Opening Bids

Bid	Meaning	Responses
3♣/♦/♥/♠	6-10 : six or seven card suit	New suit forcing
3NT	Eight card broken minor suit	4♣ = pass / convert 4♦ = interested in club slam but only part score in diamonds 5♣ = willing to play in game in either minor 4M = asking bid; interest in game in either major: seeks control in bid major 4NT = name suit and quality: 5♣/♦ = confirms suit but denies Ace or King : 5♥/♠ = respective suit and holds Ace or King in that minor
4♣/♦	Namyats: eight card solid major in ♥/♠ : three key cards	Bid of intermediate suits 4♦/♥ asks for shortage and 4M denies any shortage
4♥/♠	Eight card broken suit: less than three key cards	4NT = Roman key card Blackwood : 1430
3NT	Ace asking	5♣ = no ace; 5♦/♥/♠/6C = ace in bid suit; 5NT = two aces

Opening Side Action over Interference

Bid	Meaning
Negative double	Shows values in the remaining two suits
Support Double	Opener confirms three card trump support, so a raise of the suit shows four card support
4th suit	Forcing: asking for more information
Cue bid	Unassuming and forcing: asks for more information
Jump cue	Has a long running suit: seeks NT stop
2NT	Relay to 3♣: this may then be passed or converted to a new long weak suit; thus a direct new suit at the 3 level is GF
Transfers after own 1NT is overcalled	Double /new suit/2NT are all transfers to the next suit (2NT over 2♠); follow up in second suit is game forcing; transfer to intervening suit asks for NT stop, and now accepting the transfer denies a stop and 3NT confirms one

Intervening Bidding

Bid	Meaning
1NT overcall	16-18
Weak jump overcalls	6-10
Two suited overcalls 5-5 : either 6-10 or 15+	Direct cue = two highest suits 2NT = two lowest suits; 3♣ = two remaining suits
Defence to 1NT	Double = minor two suiter or major two suiter: advancer assumes minors first 2♣ = three suiter with clubs; 2♦ = three suiter with diamonds 2♥/♠ = either six card suit or the bid suit plus a minor side suit: 2NT asks for the minor

Slam Bidding

Roman key card Blackwood (1430) and Kickback in the minors (1430)

Non serious 3NT: when a trump fit is found 3NT is artificial confirming a minimum hand still prepared to show controls if partner fails to sign off. By passing 3NT shows a strong hand, bidding 1st or 2nd controls up the line.



Bidding Quiz 1 - Results

Introduction

Firstly many thanks to the members of the expert panel for finding time to return the bids and valuable comments on time.

All the hands are drawn from live pairs events and the full hands are displayed after the expert analysis, along with the three best scoring contracts, so that readers can study the bidding in more detail.

Question 1

Dealer West. Vul All.

- ♠ AJ108
- ♥ J642
- ♦ AJ105
- ♣ 9

W	N	E	S
1♦	P	1♥	P
2♥	P	3♠ ¹	P
?			

¹ 4+ hearts, singleton spade, slam interest

Votes: 4♣ = 13, 4♦ = 1, 3NT = 2, 4♥ = 1, 5♣ = 1

This first hand raises three principles of cue bidding when exploring potential slams :

- (1) Should you cue bid with a minimum hand or sign off in the agreed trump suit ?
- (2) If the answer is yes, then should 1st or 2nd round cue bids be used ?
- (3) Can playing the conventional serious 3NT add value to cue bidding by clarifying weaker or stronger hands with the initial cue bid ?

The initial bidding system did not specify any details on cue bidding, but in the light of the different contributions of the panel these three questions will be answered and the system amended accordingly.

Tom 4♣: Even though I have a complete minimum I am worth cooperating for one bid. Two key cards plus shortage are positives,

poor trumps and some wastage in spades are a negative, but it is still worth cooperating.

George 4♣: You do not need an ace to show a control. You have a very slam worthy hand here. It is easy to cooperate at a low level. A stiff club could be exactly what partner needs along with other values. Give partner x AKxxxx Kx AJxx, 15 hcp and your 11 makes a grand slam almost a laydown.

Karel 4♣: The two AJ10 offer finesse options if required. I'd like a few more points but the hands look like they fit well. This could really come down to how good partner's trumps are. After 4♣ I'll be signing off given the choice.

Micheál 4♣: My hand has improved with partner's bidding. Show the slam interest and singleton club.

Rebecca 4♣: Whilst I am partly reluctant to cue bid (with a minimum 11 count, 8 loser hand), it is one of those cases where you sort of feel obliged to – and you have given partner the information that you are low in points with your 2♥ bid. Cue bidding upwards bid 4♣. Hopefully partner will only go on if they have good hearts.

Tim 4♦: Just the singleton club makes it attractive to cue bid the A♦, despite the shape being 4441.

Roy 3NT: Even if it is not conventional as "non-serious" I would bid 3NT, planning to bid 4♦ over 4♣, then pass 4♥, or bid 4♥ over 4♦, and perhaps partner can try again.

Sabine 3NT: A light slam try if we play non serious 3NT

♠ AJ108		♠ ---
♥ J642		♥ AK10873
♦ AJ105		♦ 84
♣ 9		♣ K10764
	N	
	W	E
	S	
	♠ K962	
	♥ 95	
	♦ 32	
	♣ AQJ53	
	♠ Q7543	
	♥ Q	
	♦ KQ976	
	♣ C 82	

W	N	E	S
1♦	P	1♥	P
2♥	P	3♠ ¹	P
?			

¹ 4+ hearts, singleton spade, slam interest

EW contracts:
4♥=650; 3NT= 630

With a minimum hand East will sign off in 4♥, knowing partner has a minimum hand.

Summary

This hand raised three aspects of making cue bids after a major suit fit has been agreed. All panel members show controls, regardless of the strength of their own hand, in case partner is strong enough to be interested in a slam, and if partner is weak there is still room to sign off in game.

In recent years many expert partnerships have reversed the meaning of the serious 3NT, recalling it the non-serious 3NT convention, whereby weaker hands bid 3NT and stronger hands make the control showing cue bid. Two advantages of this approach are:

- ▶ If both hands have little slam prospects no extra information is given away to the opponents as an immediate sign off in four of the major can be made over the conventional 3NT bid. This avoids giving extra clues to the opening leader.
- ▶ Holding a very strong hand opposite the non-serious 3NT there is still space to invite with a control bids.

Those members of the panel mentioning the 3NT convention all play the non-serious version.

The bidding tips below outline how the bidding system for the quiz will be amended to take into account the ideas raised by the panel.

Marks: 4♣ = 10 ; 4♦ = 10; 3NT = 10; 4♥ = 8; 5♣ = 8



Bidding Tips:

1. Playing 3NT as a non-serious slam try, showing a minimum hand in case partner is interested in a slam, prevents unnecessary information going to the opponents when both hands have little slam interest.
2. Bypassing 3NT to cue bid at the four level shows a stronger hand.
3. First and second round controls are shown up the line. Bypassing a suit denies a control in that suit.
4. A bid of the trump suit at the four level is not a control bid but a sign off.

Question 2

Dealer West. Vul All.

♠ -
♥ 2
♦ AQJ10653
♣ AKQ87

W	N	E	S
P	P	P	?

Votes: 1♦ = 9; 6♦ = 4; 2♣ = 4;
4NT = 1

The responses to this hand brings to mind the ballad of Loch Lomond:

"O ye'll take the high road, and I'll take the low road".

There is a clear split between those taking the high road by going straight to 6♦ and those taking the low road by starting with 1♦ (should be safe not to be passed) or with the game forcing 2♣ opening or the specific ace asking bid of 4NT (not in the bidding system). We shall see if all roads lead to Loch Lomond.

Thomas 6♦: It's a gamble, but a pretty good one I think, as I need to find either ♥A or ♦K in partner's hand to basically claim 12 tricks. I could sometimes even make 6♦ when partner doesn't have any of those two cards with a successful diamond finesse or a wrong lead (Spade for instance).

I also don't want to give room to the opponents to find a sacrifice in 6♥ or 6♠, or for them to give a hint on what to lead.

Anna 6♦: The fear is that if I open 2♣, the bidding would be 4♠ when it came back to me. The opponents may find a cheap sacrifice in 6♠.

Tom 6♦: 6♦ seems a practical choice before the waters become muddy as I expect a bidding war to take off. 6♦ might put an end to that. It might be cold on top or by way of a finesse if I can get to dummy or the opponents make a bad lead. Spade lead and ace in dummy can get rid of my heart loser, they will often lead trumps on the auction. Anyway, I throw science out of the window and bid 6♦.

Sabine 6♦: I don't expect to find out what I need to know by taking this slowly. Maybe they lead the wrong thing now.

Sally 4NT: Presumably asking for specific aces. Helps with my guess some of the time. If we get to slam facing nothing useful I'll have to hope partner has the CJ and the diamond finesse is right.

Ciaran 2C: There is no risk of 1♦ being passed out, but it's hard to convince partner you have 11 tricks in your hand when you open 1♦, so it's 2♣ for me hoping the opponents will continue to pass.

Rebecca 2♣: Three passes ahead of me is slightly strange when missing 24 points and lots of major cards, but it does mean that partner is likely to have some scattered values - though the downside is that they probably have lots of cards in the majors too. While opening 2♣ with a void can often end in some sort of trouble, with 11 tricks likely in my own hand, 2♣ has to be the right opening bid. I would prefer partner to be showing control responses rather than having 2♦ as a holding bid, but we can't have everything.

Irene 1♦: I would bid both suits, in case partner had a singleton diamond and three or four clubs. That's why I open 1♦ (followed by 6♣). I don't, like 4NT because I

want to bid a slam, and if the reply is 5♣ denying an ace, then I have to decide alone if I reach 6♣ or 6♦ (both could be wrong). If I open 1♦ and then bid 6♣, without a fit in clubs, partner will always return to diamonds.

Tim 1♦: This is a little dangerous but it should give me more room to show my hand than the 2♣ opener.

Rory 1♦: This will not be passed out. I can make up ground later.

Peter G 1♦: I will catch up later.

Karel 1♦: Going to go slow. I'm hoping the opponents will bid to give me some indication of where there values are. Note that the three passes would indicate that the hands / points are relatively balanced in the other three hands. If we find a minor fit I'll drive to slam.

Eric 1♦: Picture partner with a singleton diamond and club length to appreciate that our slam may not be in diamonds. However, if this is just a game hand I intend to play in diamonds and I'd rather not open 6♦ or not so cunning 5♦ when both bad guys have passed, and partner will usually have major suit length. I don't really have a 2♣ opening with this two loser hand as we'd have the auction to ourselves almost certainly.

George 1♦: It is impossible for this one to be passed out missing 25 major suit cards. You will show a strong two suiter hand and drive to slam. Opening 2♣ is unwieldy and wastes a level.

Roy 2♣: It's a lot to hope for to get to seven without the ♦K (even if partner has clubs and singleton diamond) so I'll aim for six. Open 2♣, rebid 3♦ then 4♣. If partner raises 4♣, I'll correct to 5♦ and hope for a 5♥ cue. Otherwise hope for CJ and a diamond finesse, or stiff diamond. If partner raises 3♦ to 4♦, I'll gamble 5♠ (exclusion) and have a chance at seven.

Summary

This is an unusual hand after three passes and a two loser two suiter minor. When some people want



to open 1♦ and others 6♦, you know it's an interesting hand! Both Rebecca and Karel point out this implies that the remaining 24 points are reasonably balanced across the other three hands, and the lack of any pre-emptive openings suggests that there is no unbalanced hand lying in wait. George reinforces this by noting that there are 25 major suit cards missing.

The 1♦ openers are confident this bid will not be passed and there will be opportunities to catch up later. Eric and Irene both wish to explore the possibility of playing in clubs if that is the best fit. Eric and George reject 2♣ as the opening bid

However, Roy and Rebecca make detailed cases for 2♣, with Roy not giving up yet on the possibility of a grand slam, identifying some of the key cards required along the lines of the approach of Thomas and Tom of the 6♦ quartet.

Those going directly to 6♦ recognise there is some risk, but envisage the minimum requirements to make the small slam, with some detailed analysis from Thomas and Tom. Perhaps the acid test of the direct 6♦ bid is to match against each of the remaining three hands. 6♦ is cold facing the North and East hands but facing the west hand would lose a diamond and a heart. Two out of three is not bad odds for taking a calculated risk, as 67% is close enough to the recommended 68% for bidding a small slam.

Although the conventional 4NT opening bid is not available in the system it works well on this hand as partner confirms the ♥A. However, as Irene points out if the response is 5♣, denying an ace, then opener still has a guess of whether to still seek a slam or take a chance on 6♣, trusting partner to convert to 6♦ if there is no club fit.

This hand provides an excellent insight into how experts evaluate their hands and plan ahead to either collect vital information before finalising the contract, or to envisage the minimum requirements and go straight to

what seems to be the best contract with the odds in their favour. It seems both the high road and the low road lead to Loch Lomond.

Marks: 6♦ = 10 1♦ = 9 2C = 9
4NT = 8

		♠ 10987652		
		♥ AK85		
		♦ --		
		♣ J9		
♠ KQ		N		♠ AJ43
♥ Q973	W		E	♥ J1064
♦ 984				♦ K72
♣ 6532		S		♣ 104
		♠ --		
		♥ 2		
		♦ AQJ10653		
		♣ AKQ87		

W	N	E	S
P	P	P	?
1 4+ hearts, singleton spade, slam interest			
N/S contracts: 6♦=1370; 3♠=140; 4C=130			

Bidding Tip:

The 4NT opening bid convention can be helpful when looking for specific aces. The 5♣ response denies an ace, and 5♦/H/♠ and 6♣ confirm the ace of that suit.

Question 3

Pairs. Dealer East. Vul All.

♠ -
♥ KJ843
♦ KJ72
♣ J1082

Votes: 3♦ = 7; Pass = 6; 2♥ = 4;
3♥ = 1

This is a difficult hand as opener's range extends from possibly 10-15 points and the shape could be as flat as 5332 to an unbalanced 5-5 or even more distributional hand. As a number of the panel point out this is where the Gazzilli conventional 2♣ rebid can help, showing any 16+ hand [any other bid is then limited].

This time the panel are divided on whether or not to pass or to make a more encouraging move in case opener is at the upper range.

Sabine Pass: I assume we are not playing any form of Gazzilli, which makes this a total guess. Partner could easily have enough for game.

Karel Pass: This is where a Gazzilli structure would shine. 2♣ would indicate a 16+ hand, so any other bid is now limited. Still it would require a maximum hand from partner for any sort of game to make.

I would bid 3♦ if 2♦ guaranteed four+.

Anna Pass: Unfortunately Gazzilli is not in the system, otherwise my partner's hand is limited and I can pass happily. I would hope that my hand is not too good to make game.

Ralph Pass: We might miss a game, and we might not make 2♦ or 2♥.

Rory Pass: ♥ could be right at pairs, particularly opposite 3 hearts, but could be a duck on a misfit.

Rebecca Pass: I am always reluctant to pass in these situations as partner could have 16-17 points and the worry is that you miss out on 3NT on a good day. But with a void in spades my concerns on missing out on 3NT are less. You would typically bid 3♦ without a heart suit as the concern is that the opponents will balance in and find the likely heart fit - but you would be delighted for the opponents to balance in here and hopefully play in 2♥ or 3♣, going two light in each case.

Peter G 3♦: Glad to be out of spades but can't afford to pass. Chances of 2♦ being three are low. Prefer 1NT as semi-forcing here.

Tim 3♦: Passing seems too passive while 2♥ is just a good way to play in a 5-1 fit.

Eric 3♦: Questionable courtesy raise at pairs, where plus scores are so important. Still, as the right East hand makes a decent 5♦ or even 6♦ and some extra-value semi-balanced hands combine for 3NT, I will avoid the probably more intuitive pass.

Roy 3♦: A gentle raise. It's hard to know the value of my hearts, but I have too much to pass, and not enough to bid more.



Tom 3♦: Courtesy raise as partner can still be quite strong. I will be extremely happy if I hear 3♥ from partner's 5341 shape. Game in diamonds is still a possibility so I must keep the auction open.

George 3♦: Game is likely only in diamonds. 2♥ might end the bidding in a 5-1 fit. 3♥ is an over bid, pass is possible but pusillanimous, while 3♦ is just a courtesy raise. If you play a 4-3 fit, partner probably has a decent hand.

Ciaran 2♥: Game could be good if partner has a heart fit, and 2♦ can be more than a minimum, so it's clear to bid.

Peter P 2♥: Partner could be 5431 or the like. If 2♠ is rebid, then I revert back to 3♦. I would be happy that this is showing my hand.

Micheál 2♥: Non-forcing I presume. Most likely making game seems to be hearts so it's time to show the suit.

Thomas 2♥: To me the hardest hand of the quiz. There are pros and cons for both the 2♥ and 3♦ bids, which are the ones I am considering – in France we play that a jump to 3♥ at this stage shows some heart, which is certainly an option with my cards, but it tends to show a much better diamond fit.

By bidding 3♦, I could be playing in a minor 4-3 fit at the 3 level.

Summary

This hand forces a decision on whether to take a safe decision and pass, hoping the a potential 4-3 fit will be enough to gain a plus score, or to risk advancing in case partner has extra strength. One worry about the hand is the void opposite the opening suit which highlights potential wasted values. Those playing Gazzilli 2♣ convention claim this can resolve the problem as the 2♦ rebid would confirm the weaker opening (see bidding tips).

The majority of the panel prefer to keep the bidding open with seven members making a courtesy raise to 3♦, and three confirming five or more hearts with 2♥. This bid does provide useful information on responder's hand, allowing opener

the options of passing with heart support or continuing by showing further shape or extra points.

Marks: 2v = 10 Pass = 9 3♦ = 8

			♠ J843
			♥ 5
			♦ Q984
			♣ 7653
♠ ---	N		♠ KQ1075
♥ KJ843	W	E	♥ AQ7
♦ KJ72			♦ 653
♣ J1082	S		♣ K4
			♠ A962
			♥ 10962
			♦ A10
			♣ AQ9

W	N	E	S
		1♠	P
1NT ¹	P	2♦ ²	P
?			

¹ 6-12: Forcing one round
² 3+ suit (longer ♦ than ♣)
 E/W contracts: 3♥=140; 2NT=120; 2♦=-100

Bidding Tip:

Gazzilli 2♣ Convention: this offers a neat way of handling opener's rebids after a wide ranging forcing 1NT response to a major suit opening. The 2♣ rebid helps to keep the bidding low as all 17+ hands are shown this way, plus just weaker holding of five cards in the opening major and 4 clubs. This allows rebids in suits at the two level to be 4+ if 11-13, and jump bids at the three level cover 14-16 hands of 5-5 shape, leaving 2NT to show 6-4 in the major plus a four card minor. Responder with 8+ responds with an artificial 2♦, and other suit bids show 5-7 with six+ suits, with a return to two of the opening major a signoff.

Question 4

Pairs. Dealer North. Vul All.

- ♠ J
- ♥ 95
- ♦ AQJ6
- ♣ J109754

W	N	E	S
			1♠
2♥	2♠	?	

¹ 6-12: Forcing one round
² 3+ suit (longer ♦ than ♣)
 E/W contracts: 3♥=140; 2NT=120; 2♦=-100

Votes: X = 16; 3♦ = 1; 3♥ = 1

This time the panel are virtually unanimous in agreeing that double offers the best option

Rebecca X: As the opposition have bid and agreed a suit, this makes my double here take-out. I am a passed hand, so my hand is limited anyway and I can't have three hearts or I would have supported hearts directly. However, while I may not have three hearts, I am likely to have at least two, otherwise pass would be safer. If partner has six hearts or a minor suit then all will be good, and if they happen to have four spades they can elect to pass. There appears to be limited downside to competing.

Tom X: Showing the other two suits. I have almost a maximum pass so nothing to be ashamed about. I am also playable in hearts, partner likely to have six, and I have ruffing power.

Peter G X: Feel like I have to get my values described and 3♣/♦ a bit too unilateral.

Irene X: My clubs aren't strong enough to be imposed, and I have two hearts.

Peter P X: My diamond cards are very well placed and I have secondary heart support. I make a negative double to show my minor suit values and if left hand opponent passes and partner bids 3♦ I will bid 3♥.

Ciaran 3♥: Double brings the minors into play but 4♥ is our most likely game.

Sabine 3♦: I like to play this as at least heart tolerance as a passed hand. If the opposition ends up in spades, I would like partner to lead a diamond.



Summary

Rebecca provides a helpful summary of the key features of the advancer's hand, and why double offers the best option to inform partner of the hand and the implicit holding of two hearts in case partner holds six. Several of the panel support this analysis, with Ciaran's 3♥ directly inviting the major game. Sabine's 3♦ bid is interesting in this competitive auction as it confirms heart tolerance and offers a lead should the opponents play in a spade contract.

Marks: X = 10; 3♦ = 9; 3♥ = 9

♠ Q3 ♥ KJ87 ♦ 7542 ♣ Q82			
♠ A9742 ♥ AQ10543 ♦ 9 ♣ A	N W S	♠ J ♥ 96 ♦ AQJ6 ♣ J109754	E S
♠ K10865 ♥ 2 ♦ K1085 ♣ K63			

W	N	E	S
			1♠
2♥	2♠	?	

E/W contracts: 4♥ W=420; 3♥ E=140;

Bidding Tip:

In these competitive auctions select the bid which offers partner the most bidding space to describe the shape and strength of the hand, which in this case was double.

Question 5

Pairs. Dealer North. Vul All.

- ♠ AKJ75
- ♥ A9
- ♦ A43
- ♣ J53

Votes: 2♥ = 18

A united front with all panellists in full agreement.

Anna 2♥: We want to get somewhere between 3NT, 4♠ and 6♦, so I start with the simple 2♥, as my partner can describe his hand

even better. All that I need from partner is KQxxxx and AC to make 6♦.

Micheál 2♥: If we end up in a no trump contract we may want to have partner as declarer. My bid is forcing to game. If partner bids 2NT now, I'll settle for 3NT. Otherwise I support diamonds next.

George 2♥: No hurry to bash anywhere, set up a force. We could have a game or a slam, most likely in diamonds, but possibly in spades. Partner has denied three spades, but now has a chance to immediately show ♠Qx.

Picture Qx xxx KQxxxx Ax. This is a mundane 11 count with 13 tricks in spades, diamonds or no trumps. It is pairs so don't give up and only focus on diamonds.

Tom 2♥: Let's get the ball rolling and create a game force. 3NT will be better from partner's hand (think Qxx with partner) but my hand is super powerful so I am hunting for slam still. Over 2NT I will bid 3♦. Give partner a minimum hand like ♠Qx ♥xxx ♦KQJxxx ♣Ax, 12 points and we are cold for 7NT. So let's create a game force and try to explore our options.

Summary

This hand demonstrates how experts envisage the likely values in partner's hand in order to identify potential contracts, and at the same time, plot future actions based upon partner's next descriptive bid. Gorge and Tom note how a minimum hand with the right honour cards can lead to a grand slam. Also several members of the panel identified the importance of ensuring that no trump contracts are played by the right hand so that the opening lead goes round to minor honours rather than through top honours.

The unassuming cue bid of 2♥ keeps the bidding low, allowing maximum space for further exploration to help gain the best spot.

Marks: Double = 10

♠ 98 ♥ J53 ♦ QJ10976 ♣ AK			
♠ Q43 ♥ Q9 ♦ 82 ♣ Q109762	N W S	♠ 1062 ♥ K108762 ♦ K5 ♣ 84	E S
♠ AKJ75 ♥ A9 ♦ A43 ♣ J53			

W	N	E	S
	1♦	1♥	1♠
P	2♦	P	?

N/S contracts: 6NT=990; 6♦=920; 4♠=450

Bidding Tip:

Unassuming cue bids are game forcing, keep the bidding low, and are very effective in gathering more information from partner.

Question 6

Pairs. Dealer West. Vul All.

- ♠ AQJ107
- ♥ A2
- ♦ K652
- ♣ 75

W	N	E	S
1♥	P	1♠	P
2♣	P	2♦ ¹	P
3♣	P	?	

¹ 4th suit forcing to game

Votes: 3♦ = 7; 3♥ = 7; 3NT = 4

Two strong camps emerge on this hand, divided equally between bidding either 3♦ or 3♥, with a minority voting to go straight to game with 3NT.

Thomas 3♦: Now that partner shows 5+5+ in the rounded suits, the chances to find him with a singleton diamond have increased, and in this case the good contract is likely not to be 3NT, but rather 4♠ in the 5-2 fit, or maybe 4♥ if partner is 6-5. That's why I'd like to take my time before bidding 3NT, and go through 3♦, 4th suit forcing again, over which:

- ▶ Partner can bid 3♠ with two cards in spades, over which I'd raise to 4♠



- ▶ Partner can bid 3NT with a stopper or half a stopper in diamonds, in which case I'll pass(we also might right-side 3NT if he has something like Queen doubleton diamond)
- ▶ Partner can bid 3♥ default, over which I'll bid 3NT. I'm confident that when I go the slow way, he will be aware that he should repeat his hearts with 6-5.

Micheál 3♦: My hand does not seem to suit a no trump contract. I will settle for game in a major suit that partner now bids.

Anna 3♦: I hope my partner can bid 3NT with Queen doubleton diamond or even Jack doubleton diamond. I can always bid 3NT later, but an extra step would not hurt.

Tom 3♦: Like 5th suit forcing! Hoping partner has Queen doubleton diamond and will bid 3NT. If partner bids 3♥ (1525 shape likely) I will bid 3NT, and if partner bids 3♠ (2515 shape) I'll bid 4♠. It is too early to bid 3NT as there is still a lot of information available.

Ciaran 3♦: Now showing my 5+4. I'll pass 3NT or raise 3♥ or 3♠ to game. Partner should not be raising diamonds here since 3♦ does not promise more than four cards.

Roy 3♦: Tough hand. At first I thought 3♥ was right, but maybe it's better to "wait" with 3♦ to see if partner can bid 3♥ or 3♠. I could end in disaster, but in my view there's no perfect solution.

Ralph 3♦: Seems odd, but if partner bid 3♥ or 3♠ raise to game in the bid major, and pass 3NT. If partner raises to 4♦, bid 4♥.

Sally 3♦: 5th suit forcing for me (only natural if partner had bid 2NT over 2♦).

Eric 3H: This is a great problem as it awkward for East to name a strain that describes this hand, although some will feel comfortable with 3NT despite the invisible intermediates in diamonds. 3♠ implies at least six cards and 3♥ normally delivers three card support. Facing at least 5-5, the expected third heart is too great a luxury as hearts will often be the optimum strain on a 5-2 fit, both in establishing clubs and controlling

a diamond force. If asked under duress I will admit to hating 3NT.

Sabine 3♥: partner should know I only have a doubleton heart, and can bid 3♠ with bad hearts and a doubleton spade.

Irene 3♥: It depends on the system, but here I should have already denied the support in hearts. That is why 3♥ is a good bid, letting partner decide whether to play in 4♥ or 3NT. If partner bids 3♠ I'll bid 3NT.

George 3♥: While I am short a heart, this is the best bid. Bidding 3NT with one stopper is too much and can easily go down. If partner should bid 3NT, I will pass. Partner could also be 6-5 or have good hearts.

Tim 3♥: As 3NT looks dubious.

Karel 3♥: A very informative auction. Partner has no diamond stop, not six hearts, and not three spades (arguably doesn't have two). Will have five clubs unless 2524. In 3NT on the obvious diamond lead we will need to have a lot of tricks on top. So I'm going to bid 3♥ which should show a doubleton.

Peter G 3NT: Close between 3♥ and 3NT, but 3♥ would tend to show a good hand with three hearts here, and my hand is not that great.

Rory 3NT: I can't think of anything more clever.

Peter P 3NT: We are now in a forcing to game auction and partner is 5-5 or 6-5. Let us say I bid 3♥ and partner has a moderate 1615 hand, and now bids 4♥, which require a lot of hard work and two decent suits. If partner is 2515 then 3♠ will be bid over 3♥ and 3NT if 1525, when the diamonds are AJ or QJ, which might work.

However, there is a flaw in all this. To make 4♥ when partner has the 6-5 hand we need eight tricks between the club and heart suits because the spade suit is unlikely to be enjoyed due to lack of entries to your hand. In 3NT the spade suit can be enjoyed and probably produce four tricks. These tricks are essential if any game is to be made.

Rebecca 3NT: The 3♣ bid by partner eliminates the possibility of an eight card spade fit, as even with a 3505 hand I would expect them to show me their three card spade suit in preference to a 5th club. This means we are likely to be without any fit, making 3NT the right contract. I would much rather my diamond suit was better, but we can't have everything! If partner happened to start with six hearts and five clubs, then I am expecting them to move over my 3NT bid.

Summary

The two red suit camps are agreed that it is premature to bid an immediate 3NT for two reasons. The first one is that the diamond suit lacks any intermediary cards, so there is a risk 3NT may fail when a better suit contract is available. The second reason is to leave space for partner to provide extra information about the shape of the opening hand. Once this information is known the two red suit camps are willing to sign off in 3NT should this appear to be the best resting place. Of the two red suit bids 3♦ allows maximum bidding space and 3♥ confirms the doubleton support in hearts.

Although all roads lead to Rome on this occasion due to opener's diamond holding, the 3♦ and 3♥ bids would be likely to be more effective if the diamonds were not such a good fit.

Peter P makes a strong argument for 3NT based on various possible misfits which would endanger a 4♥ contract, plus the more useful strength of the strong spade suit in a 3NT contract. However, those making the 3♦ or 3♥ bids still retain the final option of a 3NT contract.

Marks: 3♦=10; 3♥=9; 3NT=8

			♠ K86543
			♥ 97
			♦ Q7
			♣ J102
♠ --	N	♠ AQJ107	
♥ KQJ83	W	♥ A2	
♦ J108	E	♦ K652	
♣ KQ983	S	♣ 75	
		♠ 92	
		♥ 10654	
		♦ A943	
		♣ A64	



W	N	E	S
1♥	P	1♠	P
2♣	P	2♦ ¹	P
3♣	P	?	

¹ 4th suit forcing to game
E/W contracts: 3NT=630; 4♥=620

Bidding Tips:

When unsure of the destination of the final contract make the lowest “waiting” bid to ensure all possible contracts can be explored.

Question 7

Pairs. Dealer South. Vul E/W.

- ♠ AJ105
- ♥ 962
- ♦ 1053
- ♣ AJ2

W	N	E	S
			P
1♦	1♥	1♠	P
3♦	P	?	

Votes: 3♥ = 18

Complete agreement on this hand, with the chosen cue bid reinforcing the bidding tip emerging from hand 6, aiming to keep the bidding low in order to leave partner maximum space to provide further information.

Micheál 3♥: Asking for a stop in hearts. If partner does not show a heart stopper, I will bid 5♦ next.

Peter G 3♥: Suspect we are heading to 3NT or 5♦ here. Lack of 3♥ bid from opponents makes me think partner has Queen doubleton or more in hearts, and we will have too many holes for 5♦ to make.

Thomas 3♥: When partner jumps to 3♦, we have enough values to play in game, so my priority at this stage is to determine whether heart stops are held for 3NT. If not we will play in either 4♦ or 5♦.

Eric 3♥: Can't quite commit to diamonds, although partner is unlikely to have both running diamonds and a heart guard- although AKxxxx would be enough opposite a three card support. If partner lacks a heart guard I will get us to 5♦, perhaps a trick too far.

Roy 3♥: I would bid 3♥ and remove 3NT to 4♦ - I should have enough to make 5♦ and this can help us reach a very possible slam.

Kieran 3♥: Too good to pass, and 3NT seems like the spot if partner can bid it.

Rory 3♥: 6♦ is a long way off at this point. Hoping to hear 3NT.

Irene 3♥: Asking for a stopper. 3♦ should be 6/7 good diamonds but not very strong as partner could have bid 2♥ with a much stronger hand.

Summary

Whilst there is complete agreement on the 3♥ bid seeking a heart stop, the balanced nature of the hand with three small hearts and lack of ruffing values, reveals that there are different views on the overall strength of the hand and the eventual level where a plus score can be achieved.

Irene makes an interesting point that whilst partner has long diamonds, the fact that an earlier cue bid of 2♥ was not used, indicates that the strength of the hand is more focused on long diamonds with limited slam potential.

Several members of the panel mentioned in passing, that they would use a negative double over the 1♥ intervening bid to show four spades, thus allowing a 1♠ bid to confirm at least five cards (1♠ was bid at the table).

Marks: 3♥ = 10

	♠ KQ62		
	♥ AQ854		
	♦ 42		
	♣ 94		
♠ 84	N	♠ AJ105	
♥ K		♥ 962	
♦ AKQJ987	W	♦ 1053	
♣ K53	S	♣ AJ2	
	♠ 973		
	♥ J1073		
	♦ 6		
	♣ Q10876		

W	N	E	S
			P
1♦	1♥	1♠	P
3♦	P	?	

E/W contracts: 5♦=600; 3NT=- 100

Bidding Tip:

When uncertain of the final contract keep the bidding open by cue bidding the opponents' suit, asking partner to show a no trump stop or further shape.

Question 8

Pairs. Dealer North. Vul All.

- ♠ QJ753
- ♥ A53
- ♦ KQ2
- ♣ Q9

W	N	E	S
	P	1♦	P
1♠	P	2♦ ¹	P
?			

¹ 6+ cards

Votes: 2♥ = 16; 3♣ = 2

Almost unanimous agreement on a 2♥ bid this time, and allowing Tim to humbly mention his own convention.

Tim 2♥: As the eponymous “Bourke Relay”: the next new suit up after opener rebids his suit is an artificial game force.

Thomas 2♥: Artificial 3rd suit forcing for one round. Let's find out more about partner's hand, especially whether three cards in spades are held. If not, we probably belong in 3NT, but anything is possible.....let's keep it low for now and see what happens.

Sabine 2♥: I think that should be forcing. Often a good strategy to make the lowest bid to make it easier for partner to describe their hand.

Ciaran 2♥: One round force. Partner knows this can be three card (or even two on a bad day). No need to bid no trump with no club stopper.

Tom 2♥: In modern bridge all 2♥ does is it creates a force, not necessarily hearts. It nicely allows you to find the right contract without the guesswork this hand would have caused in the past.



Irene 2♥: I'm not sure yet if 3NT is the right contract, as my partner could still have three spades, or be 2173 or 2362 without a club stopper. I'm not in a hurry to get no trump by my side. I have all the time to decide the contract with my partner.

Peter G 2♥: Unlikely to get us into trouble here and seems the most flexible bid to keep all options open. 3NT is also a practical bid that might work unless North has five clubs.

Peter P 2♥: 3NT, 5♦ and 4♠ are all options here and I have to find the lie of the land. I assume 2♥ is forcing for one round, and if so, this is my choice. Partner will thus be able to judge their xx in clubs and support spades with Kxx Kx AJ10xxx xx, and the right denomination will be found. With xx Jxx AJ10xxx AJ partner will know to bid 3NT.

Roy 3♣: I think the safest bid is to try 3♣ (since it is clearly forcing) then if partner doesn't raise spades or bid 3♥, bid 3NT. If partner bids 3♥ then I would be concerned about my club holding and raise diamonds.

George 3♣: Game force and see what happens. I'll pass 3NT, bid 4♠ over 3♠, or 5♦ over 3♦ or 3♥.

Summary

It is pleasing to see a convention developed by one of the panel members, Tim, coming to the rescue on this type of difficult hand. With the "Bourke Relay" following opener's non-jump rebid of the original suit, responder's rebid in the cheapest unbid suit is an artificial game forcing relay, asking opener to describe the hand further. This last hand in the quiz is ideal for the use of this convention.

The majority of the panel bid 2♥ for two reasons, firstly to keep the bidding open at a low level, and secondly they were worried about the club suit lacking the stoppers for 3NT. Thus 2♥ allows opener to confirm five spades or bid no trumps with a spade stopper. Peter P provides some helpful insights on planning ahead to the possible play of a hand when considering the next bid.

The 3♣ response still leaves room for exploration but is at a higher level.

Note that the lucky lie of the spade suit produces a grand slam in three ways but this is completely against the odds.

Marks: 2♥ = 10, 3♣ = 8

			♠ K2
			♥ K9742
			♦ 763
			♣ J82
♠ QJ753	N		♠ A10
♥ A53	W	E	♥ 8
♦ KQ2			♦ A109854
♣ Q8	S		♣ A1064
			♠ 9864
			♥ QJ106
			♦ J
			♣ K753

W	N	E	S
	P	1♦	P
1♠	P	2♦ ¹	P
?			
¹ 6+ cards			
E/W contracts: 7NT=2220; 7♠=2210; 7♦= 2140			

Bidding Tips:

The Bourke relay is a useful convention which arises quite frequently, and can be added to any system with cost.

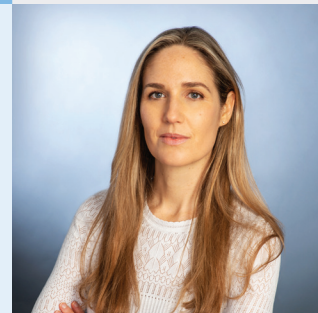
Summary of the Expert Panel Results

The narrow range of total scores highlights the high level of agreement amongst the panel, with hand seven unanimous.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total
Anna Onishuk	10	10	9	10	10	10	10	10	79
Ciaran Coyne	8	9	10	8	10	9	10	10	74
Eric Kokish	8	9	8	10	10	9	10	10	75
George Jacobs	10	9	8	10	10	9	10	8	74
Irene Baroni	10	9	8	10	10	9	10	10	76
Karel De Raeymaker	10	9	9	10	10	9	10	10	77
Micheál O'Briain	10	9	10	10	10	10	10	10	79
Rebecca Brown	10	9	9	10	10	8	10	10	76
Peter Goodman	10	9	8	10	10	8	10	10	75
Peter Pigot	10	9	10	10	10	8	10	10	77
Ralph Katz	10	9	9	10	10	10	10	10	78
Rory Timlin	10	9	9	10	10	8	10	10	76
Roy Welland	10	9	8	10	10	10	10	8	75
Sabine Auken	10	10	8	8	9	10	10	10	75
Sally Brock	10	8	8	10	10	10	10	10	76
Tim Bourke	10	9	8	10	10	9	10	10	76
Thomas Bessis	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	80
Tom Hanlon	10	10	8	10	10	10	10	10	78

The Game: Part 2 of 2

A short story by Sarah Gilmartin



Two couples form a friendship over regular games of bridge but suspicion clouds it

Editor's note: Sarah learned bridge with her great friend Fionnuala McInerney, and represented Ireland at Junior level. These days Sarah plays less frequently but always to a high standard. Journalism is her professional calling, and she has regularly reviewed books for the broadsheets as well as lecturing at third level. Her first novel, "Dinner Party", was published in 2021 to widespread acclaim. This short story, "The Game", came a couple of years earlier and won a prestigious award. Sarah has kindly agreed to have the story carried over two Journal editions, and we are grateful as well as indebted.

[If you missed Part 1, click through to the previous Issue] EM

That evening, after seven hours of bridge, we found a corner table in the residents' bar. The place was packed with players dissecting the hands, white sheets flashing in the air. Rachel and Gareth had come second in the pairs, a fine result in a competitive field. As I sank into the comfortable leather chair, I felt dizzy on a few sips of wine. The weariness of poor play and the constant, low-level bickering with Bill had taken its toll. He was sitting opposite me now, his first pint already gone, the creamy insides of his glass left between us like a rebuke. I was angry too, though I couldn't pinpoint the particular hand or slight, some unknown force guarding the mind, switching off what might hurt or trouble it.

A young brunette from Galway, a college student, stopped at our table on her way to the bar. 'Congratulations,' she said to Rachel. 'Unreal result.' She gave a twisty kind of smile, glossy lips puckering.

'Thank you,' said Rachel.

'Good to see a woman in the money anyway,' the girl said.

The four of us watched her go, the men returning quickly to their sheets, pretending they hadn't noticed the pert bottom in the tight jeans.

'I wonder if they're painted on,' said Rachel.

I guffawed into my wine and felt a hundred years old.

Rachel reached across the table for Bill's roasted peanuts,

unopened beside the pint glass. 'It feels like ages since the Chinese.'

'All that winning play,' I said, 'burns the calories.'

She patted her stomach and groaned. 'I'm big as a house these days.'

I was starting to resent the way she did that, fishing for compliments she didn't need, stealing my lines. 'You are not.' I was going to ask about her cashmere dress when a group from Waterford entered the bar with the tournament director and came straight for us, wielding the bridge sheets like pitchforks.

Their leader was a tall man in his sixties with prominent shoulders and a disarmingly loud voice. 'You didn't fill it in right,' he said, directing his tirade about overtricks and points deducted and daylight robbery solely to Rachel. Gareth slouched in his chair, sipping his beer.

'I don't know what you mean,' Rachel said meekly.

It seemed to deflate the man's ire, or at least to cause doubt, because he looked at the small grey computing box he was holding in his hand and pressed a few buttons before resurfacing. 'The Bridgemates don't lie.' He thrust the box in front of Rachel's face. Quietness crept over the bar, so quiet you could hear the bleep of the card machine.

'Now hold on a second.' Bill stood up. 'Who are you accusing of lying?'

'It's not an accusation.' An older woman in a woollen twinset smiled nervously.

'Yes,' said the tournament director, stepping forward, his short, round stature comical beside the tall accuser. 'Nobody is saying that you lied.' He glanced at Gareth. 'A score was entered incorrectly.'

'Twice!' said the man.

The director looked at me for some reason, his eyes two bright bullets. 'Yes,' he said. 'It was twice, but these things happen.'

'Does it change the result?' said Bill, who always had the endgame in sight.

'Well, no,' said the director. 'That's the thing. The Murrays were second by some margin.'

'So what are you saying?' Rachel said.



'You'll keep your prize,' said the director. 'But we'll need to enter the correct scores now.'

Rachel looked at him as if he'd suggested a lap dance. 'Do whatever you want,' she said, before waving the group away with a flick of her hand.

I woke at eight with a drilling headache and the taste of dirt in my mouth. The extractor fan came on with the bathroom light and I could hear Bill cursing from bed as I looked in the mirror at the aging, grey-faced person who'd snuck into the room in the middle of the night and stolen my identity. My teeth were suspiciously purple for someone who drank white wine. I remembered then the fight I'd had with Bill as he ordered a new round at half two in the morning from the weary bartender despite the fact that Gareth was snoring in the chair and that I myself could barely finish a sentence. I'd left in a huff with the twinset lady and tournament director. A sharp, blasting memory—the persistent red light of the door lock, one of them taking the card from my hand and turning it the right way round. Indeed, I was still in yesterday's outfit, a brown stain from sticky ribs on the lapel of my blouse. After brushing my teeth, I rang room service, pleaded for two bacon sandwiches, crawled back into bed and snuggled close to the fermented smell of my husband.

Later that morning, as the four of us found our table in the function room, only Gareth seemed vaguely like himself, coughing into his handkerchief as usual. Bill struck up a spiritless conversation with a couple at a neighbouring table. Against the bright pink polo shirt that the girls had bought for his birthday, he looked deathly pale, his fourth cup of coffee clattering on the saucer. Rachel propped her head in her hand and gazed into the distance at the tournament director rhythmically dropping boards onto rows of tables.

'Miriam, would you like a Club Milk?' said Gareth.

I smiled at the question and agreed to a Snack Bar upon further entreaty. As he shuffled off, Rachel groaned. She was all in black, layers of silky material, the kind of outfit that would look like rags on someone else. Her dangly emerald earrings gave a brilliant flash of colour. I tugged instinctively at my unadorned lobes.

'We did the dog on it,' I said.

'At least you went to bed when you did.'

'And had half a bottle of red from the minibar.'

Rachel laughed. 'Seriously? What's wrong with us? It's like we're teenagers again.'

She considered me for a second, leaned across the table with her familiar scent.

'Are you ok?' I said.

She dipped her head towards the lustrous black folds.

Gareth returned with four Club Milks. 'There was a run on Snack Bars.'

'The final straw,' I said, somewhat inexplicably, causing myself and Rachel to laugh like schoolgirls, hysterically, infectiously, the quick tears running down my face. Bill turned back to the table and said we looked deranged.

Eventually they announced the movement for the game and we played four rounds without a break. In my hungover haze, I got into a semi-conscious run of luck where the right cards seemed to fall from my hand so that I made every contract I played, even the punts. Bill put his arm around me as we made our way back to the Murrays to score.

'Miriam played a blinder,' he said, sitting down.

'Did you?' Rachel said. 'Thank Christ for that, because we were dire.' She shot Gareth a look. 'Worse than dire.'

Around the room, the noise of eighty tables reconvening to deliver to their partners the morning's news. Five rounds tallied, we were third.

'What did I tell you?' Bill beamed. 'Miriam's on fire.'

'Stop it,' I said. 'You know I'm rubbish under pressure.'

Well, I needn't have worried. For the rest of the day the Murrays played like gods and we ended up winning the competition by a mile, one hundred euro for each of us and some cut crystal glasses that I would give to Bill's mother on our return. We had our photo taken with the Munster president and his heavy brass chain. I slipped our brown envelopes into my handbag and shook hands with the local pairs who crowded around with congratulations. None of the Dublin crew came near us and I wondered if I was the only one to notice until Rachel said under her breath that she wanted to leave. She pointed at the tall man from the bar the previous evening who had a sizeable group around him in the centre of the function room and was pontificating loudly about some anomaly in the hands.

'Let's get out of here,' said Rachel, emeralds flashing.

'Leave these sore losers behind.'

In the months that followed, the whispers about cheating didn't diminish, rather they seemed to spread like fungus through the club. It was making me fall out of love with the game and I decided, for once in my life, to do something about it. The last Friday of November, I invited the Murrays over for an evening of cards. To be clear, Bill thought I was insane. Minutes before they were due to arrive, my paella heating on the aga, he was still protesting.

'Come on,' he said. 'How are you planning to catch them?'

I put a stack of napkins on the table. 'I'm not saying they definitely are.'



'Are what?' Bill swivelled on an island stool and reached for his Guinness.

'Cheats!' I said, blushing at the strangeness of the word, out loud in our kitchen with its homely cream palette and the girls' belongings strewn about the place despite my attempts to tidy.

'But if they are?' he said.

'Well, it will be obvious over four hours of play.'

'Hmm.' Bill tipped his stool. 'How will it be obvious?'

A flash of light came in the front windows.

'I have my theories.' I stirred the paella. 'Now stop it—they're here.'

Bill laughed, smoothed his hair. 'The Agatha Christie of bridge.'

The doorbell rang.

'Not another word,' I said. 'Go and let them in.'

I watched his broad back recede down the hall in the stiff white shirt I'd ironed that morning. Suddenly I felt young again, like we were collaborators, us against the world.

There was a surge of hellos and compliments about the smell of the kitchen, a quick round of drinks, a buffet-style dinner where Rachel and I ate at the island and left the men to have theirs in front of the Leinster match. The girls were watching a movie in the den but every so often one of them would appear and ransack the treats press, taking full advantage of the fact we had visitors. At full-time, Bill returned with empty plates, answering Rachel's question about the rugby in one brief, profane utterance. I wondered where Gareth was until I heard the downstairs bathroom flush, the cough from the hallway. I looked at Bill and saw that he'd heard it too.

After dessert, I lit the scented candle by the picture window and the four of us sat down to play. I was as nervous as my first game, mesmerised by the speed of Rachel's dealing, her shiny nails, the paisley design of the cards sliding into position on the tinted glass surface.

Gareth coughed as he picked up his hand and immediately Bill smirked at me. He was right, of course, that it was a theory of mine, one that seemed obvious the more I thought about it, the innocent infirmity of a cough in a genial fellow like Gareth. But I had other theories too. I had done my research. There were the basic cheats who touched their chests or ring fingers to alert their partners to their suits. More elaborate were the ones who spoke in code—talk of the weather was spades, room temperature meant clubs, that sort of thing. Some people used signals, leaving the cards slightly out of line while placing them on the table, or

the wielding of a simple finger, perhaps, the pinkie resting in a certain way for a second longer than necessary.

To my dismay, I carefully watched all night and none of these patterns emerged. Even the coughing was sporadic and random, often at the end of a hand when there was no discernible advantage. Yes, the Murrays beat us when we counted the rubber at the end, but if I had to put it down to anything, it was my lack of concentration on the cards, too busy with my furtive detective work and upholding resolve when it came to the drinks.

'You've barely had any wine,' Rachel said at one point. And later, as she got drunk, in a way that was mildly catty, at least for her, nodding at my stomach and saying, 'Is there something you're not telling us?'

'What?' I said, the anxiety I'd felt all night releasing into laughter. 'Don't be mad. Bill is fifty next month.'

'Is that right?' said Rachel.

Bill shuffled the cards for the last deal. 'Yes,' he said. 'I'm an old man.'

The candle burnt out in a dark, vanilla-laced wisp.

As Gareth made his running joke about my penchant for septuagenarians, we picked up our cards for the final hand and became lost in the game.

I stopped playing bridge for good in early spring. I'd had the flu for the month of January and hadn't made any games or classes in the club. Bill started to play with one of the older men, a shrewd lawyer from Wicklow who was a better match than me. When they featured in the prizes, which happened more frequently as their partnership developed, Bill stayed late in the bar and I'd usually be asleep by the time he turned in and wouldn't find out the result till morning. I was still interested in the business of the club, in the inherent drama of weekly competition among the same group of people. I wanted to know who had won, lost, fought. I wanted to know who had been in trouble.

In March, an official complaint was made against the Murrays, but it was an opaque kind of accusation about misdirecting their opponents with false information, and nothing came of it in the end.

'They're not cheats,' said Bill, who'd grown closer to Gareth even as myself and Rachel saw each other less and less. I'd called to her gallery a few times and she'd dropped around a present for Ava's birthday at the start of the Easter holidays, but there was something dull and awkward about these meetings, without the parameters and comforts of the bridge world, and perhaps the wine.

Although I didn't miss the hangovers, I missed the game, the singularity of focus, wherein all the suspect anxieties



of a day or lifetime could be funnelled into a limited and therefore relatively solvable problem of thirteen tricks that followed, with friendly regularity, one after the other.

On a Thursday night towards the end of summer, Bill came home earlier than expected. He banged the front door even though he knew the girls were sleeping. I rushed from the living room to tell him to quieten down. In the kitchen, he opened a Guinness and drank quickly from the can.

'What's going on?' I said.

'Another accusation against the Murrays.' He was furious, the tips of his ears pink. 'It's insulting to them. They're not cheats.'

'Who made it?'

'That bloody dentist from Rathgar,' he said. 'He's been out to get Rachel for years.'

'What did he say?'

'Total bollocks,' said Bill. 'About her finessing correctly in all three boards, when the more obvious play was to go the other way.'

'What if she—'

'It's just bollocks,' said Bill, wiping the froth from his mouth.

'What if she doesn't understand the obvious play?' I said, remembering my own style of bridge.

But we both knew that wasn't true. Rachel was a very together kind of a person.

Bill took off his tie, which was already loose to the nape of his neck. He left it on the island like a long blue snake

and started to pace the kitchen, talking about ethics and the benefit of the doubt, in a curse-laden rant that reminded me of the old days.

'What was the outcome?' I said eventually.

'Usual story.' Bill drained his can into the sink, looked out the window at our dark garden. 'Nobody could prove a thing. The Murrays are not cheats.'

The anger seemed to leave him as he said this. He slumped against the granite worktop. In the window, the featureless shape of his reflection, and beyond it, only the night. He looked so sorrowful in the pale yellow of the overhead light that I went to hug him, but like a man waking from a terrible dream, he held out a hand suddenly and pushed me away. A strange thing, to see in the swift jut of my husband's jaw, my own brain switching on, back from the wilderness.

'No,' he said, as I came relentlessly towards him, certain now of something I'd just realised. 'No,' he said, again, but I was there upon him, my arms around his neck, swimming in the musky reality of his shirt.

[Sarah's follow-up to Dinner Party, "Service", launches on 4th May, and I wish her further deserved success. Set in a high-end restaurant at the height of the Celtic Tiger, Service tells a story of power and abuse, victimhood and complicity, from the perspective of three different characters - a waitress, a chef and the chef's wife. It's a novel about the facades that we maintain, the lies that we tell and the courage it takes to face the truth. Ed.]



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Templeogue House,
Templeogue Rd,
Templeogue, D6W F822

Phone: (01) 492 9666
Email: info@cbai.ie

www.cbai.ie