

IRISH BRIDGE Journal

Spring 2026

Welcome

Hi everyone. Welcome along to the Spring Journal.



Enda Murphy, Editor

What's Inside

Test Your Declarer Play - Tomás Roche	3
Bidding Quiz 12 - Bob Pattinson	4
"At the Double" Xmas Quiz results!	6
Results and upcoming Fixtures	7
Men's and Women's championships Highlights - BJ O'Brien	8
Lady Milne Trials - Hilary McDonagh	9
IBU Mixed Teams Trials 2026 - Weekend 1 - Isabel Burke	10
Sponsor Profile Cantor Fitzgerald Ireland	12
Sponsor Profile Brian Bloomer Travel	13
Horses for Courses! - Editor	14
Inaugural Irish Individual Knockout Championship! - Dermot O'Brien	16
Peggy Bayer / Junior Camrose 2026 Luca Crone	18
The Rule of 11 still works! - Jim Doyle	18
Bric-A-Brock - Sally Brock	21
Master Pairs 2025 - Editor	22
When I was a Boye! - Boye Brogeland	23
Robson at Renvyle! - Editor	24
Making My Way - Melissa Brady	25
Teltscher Trials - Enda Glynn	28
Master Declarer Play - Rory Timlin	28
Laws and Ethics - Jim Doyle	32
Tralee International Bridge Congress 2026 - Nicky Fitzgibbon	33
My Life in Bridge - Derek O'Gorman	20
My Bridge Journey Continues Nicola O'Dowd	39
Answers to Test Your Declarer Play Tomás Roche	43
Bidding Quiz 12 - Results Bob Pattinson	45

Ah springtime, when a young man's fancy turns to...
Simonetta Paoluzi.



Simonetta Paoluzi

Don't get me started. I fell for her very bigly indeed at the 2012 European Championships in Citywest. Having hastily boned up on my Italian, I made her an

offer she couldn't refuse. Sadly, it turned out to be one she couldn't understand. What might have been...

Pride of place this issue goes without a doubt to Nora Moloney, just the 100 years young and an active club player. Nora participated in her first ever Congress in Cork in January. Her partner was CBAI President, John Phelan. Congrats Nora!

A big shout out to Peter Goodman for his excellent commentaries on the Camrose trials, and the Camrose itself [with yours truly riding shotgun for the second weekend].

Search for Peter on Youtube and subscribe for free. No overtalking, everything presented at the right time. It's entertaining and instructive. I hope Peter keeps doing it.



Click here view and subscribe to Peter's channel



Nora Moloney with CBAI President John Phelan.

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The Journal wants to hear from your Club!!

Send a photo and caption of a noteworthy event. Be the next Club to be profiled in our "Club Focus" feature.

Contact editor@cbaie.ie





Speaking of the Camrose, a huge well done to Team Ireland on their superb win. Particular kudos to Anna Onishuk and Karel de Raeymaeker, who joined the team for the second weekend when Tom Hanlon was committed elsewhere. England featured a much stronger team than on the first weekend, including the legendary Tony Forrester. The pivotal head-on clash provided a late twist in our direction. With two boards of the 36 remaining, we were looking at a 15-5 defeat. A precious 18 IMPs came our way on those boards, meaning we “only” lost 12-8. This effective swing of 6 VPs proved crucial as the win was wrapped up.

Honourable mention also for our Junior Camrose and Peggy Bayer teams, both of whom placed second. Well done – the future of Irish bridge is in good hands!

The big news in world bridge is that the powerful Sjoert Brink – Bas Drijver pair has left the “Swiss” Zimmermann team. My sources tell me they’re joining the US-based Street squad. They’re being replaced by another Polish player plus a former team member, Franck Multon. Franck was born French, then became Monegasque and has now fetched up in the land of the cuckoo clock. So Pierre’s team now has four Poles, one Frenchman and his good self. It would surely be easier if he and Franck were instead to become Polish.

Brink recently gave a wide-ranging interview, carried on Bridgewinners. He also pitched an interesting suggestion for the scoring of team matches played over segments. If you win the first segment by 46 IMPs and lose the next three by 15 IMPs each, you win by one. Brink suggests using football-style 2 points for a win and 1 for a draw for each segment, only invoking the IMPs total if the teams are tied. In the example given, the score would be 6-2 in favour of the “losing” IMPs team. Whilst I think this has much to commend it, I think some refinement would be needed if it is to attract wide support.

Maybe an amalgam, whereby segment wins earn separate VPs and thus total VPs comprise the existing total IMP conversion plus the segment VPs. We shall see.

I’m indebted to Derek O’Gorman for penning his “Bridge Bio”, and I’m pleased to advise that next up will be Rebecca [O’Keeffe] Brown – watch this space. I also want to congratulate my good friend Hilary McDonagh on attaining GM status, a milestone which will be marked in the next issue.

Look out in this issue for the picture accompanying Boye Brogeland’s article. It shows Boye in his Junior days beside Geir Helgemo. And yes, looking over their shoulders is the Regent’s own Declan Byrne!

I sent Boye the pic and remarked that he bore more than a passing resemblance to Matt Damon. He told me his wife often says the same. Happy wife, happy life Boye!!

CANTOR
Fitzgerald

 **travel
counsellors**

Lastly but very importantly, you’ll find interviews with the CBAI’s two newest sponsors – **Suzie Berkery [Cantor Fitzgerald and Brian Bloomer [Travel Counsellors].**

Please give them your custom and commend them to friends and family – successful sponsorships require both give and take. Let’s do some giving.

Enda Murphy
editor@cbai.ie

[PS: This just in!! See "Robson at Renvyle", p24]. Emily Deavy just called to say she's only gone and booked the GOAT himself, Zia Mahmoud, for Renvyle this coming November! What a coup. Way to go, Emily!]



Test Your Declarer Play

Tomás Roche



You are West as declarer, playing teams. What is your play strategy on each board?

Board 1 Dealer North. Vul None.

♠ K83	N	♠ A106	
♥ AJ9		♥ 1052	
♦ A952	W	E	♦ QJ743
♣ KJ9		♣ Q10	
	S		

W	N	E	S
	P	P	P
1♦ ¹	P	3♦ ²	P
3NT	All Pass		

¹ 1♦ = E/W play weak-notrump
² 3♦ = 10-11 HCP, four+ card support for diamonds

The Play

North leads the ♣6 against 3NT. South wins with the Ace and returns the suit. How do you plan the play?

Board 3 Dealer South. Vul E/W.

♠ QJ3	N	♠ A742	
♥ KQ84		♥ AJ1072	
♦ K87	W	E	♦ A1092
♣ KJ3		♣ -	
	S		

W	N	E	S
1♥	P	4♣ ¹	P
4♥ ²	P	6♥ ³	All Pass

¹ 4♣ = Splinter in clubs, values for game
² 4♥ = Denies interest in slam
³ 6♥ = Small slam should have good play, despite no cue bid from opener

The Play

North leads the ♥3 against 6♥. At trick two, both defenders follow to a second round of trumps. How do you plan the play?

Board 2 Dealer East. Vul N/S.

♠ AKJ82	N	♠ Q1064	
♥ 64		♥ AQ75	
♦ AJ5	W	E	♦ K
♣ Q103		♣ 9742	
	S		

W	N	E	S
		P	P
1♠	2♥	3♥ ¹	P
4♠	All Pass		

¹ 3♥ = Unassuming cue -bid, 10+ HCP, four+ card support for spades

The Play

Against 4♠, North leads the ♣K followed by the ♣A and a low club. South ruffs the third round of clubs and exits with a trump. How do you plan the play?

Board 4 Dealer West. Vul All.

♠ 1085	N	♠ J6	
♥ AKJ82		♥ Q65	
♦ J752	W	E	♦ AK1094
♣ 3		♣ A92	
	S		

W	N	E	S
			P
2♥ ¹	P	4♥	All Pass

¹ 2♥ = 'Muiderburg' showing 6 to 10 HCP with five+ card (bid) major and a four+ card minor.

The Play

North leads the ♦8 against 4♥ which you win in dummy with the King. How do you plan the play?

Answers on page 43



Bidding Quiz 13

By Bob Pattinson



All eight hands are from teams events. Entries to bobpattinsonmail.com@yahoo.com by 7th May 2026. Good luck!

Question 1

Dealer West. Vul All. Teams.

- ♠ Q1075
- ♥ 5
- ♦ 1072
- ♣ AQ952

W	N	E	S
1♦ ¹	x	1♠	2♥
2♠	3♥	?	
¹ 1♦=4+			

Question 2

Dealer North. Vul None. Teams.

- ♠ KQJ1093
- ♥ K76
- ♦ K8
- ♣ Q6

W	N	E	S
	1♠	2NT ¹	3♥ ²
5♦	?		
¹ 2NT= 5-5: Minors 6-10 ² 3♥=game forcing: 5+ suit			

Question 3

Dealer South. Vul All. Teams.

- ♠ K10
- ♥ 72
- ♦ KJ83
- ♣ KQ875

W	N	E	S
			1♥ ¹
3♠ ²	?		
¹ 1♥= 5+ ² 3♠=7: 6-10			

Question 4

Dealer South. Vul All. Teams.

- ♠ A876
- ♥ J62
- ♦ AK
- ♣ AKJ7

W	N	E	S
			3♠ ¹
?			
¹ 3♠=7: 6-10			

Question 5

Dealer North. Vul None. Teams.

- ♠ AK76
- ♥ K986
- ♦ J543
- ♣ K

W	N	E	S
	2NT ¹	P	3♣ ²
P	3NT ³	P	?
¹ 2NT= 20-22 ² 3♣=Puppet Stayman ³ 3NT= No 4 or 5 card major			

Question 6

Dealer East. Vul E/W. Teams

- ♠ 1053
- ♥ AQ742
- ♦ AQ103
- ♣ 8

W	N	E	S
		1♥	P
1♠	P	2♦	P
3♦ ¹	P	?	
¹ 3♦=forcing with diamonds			

Question 7

Dealer North. Vul None. Teams.

- ♠ Q86
- ♥ AQ
- ♦ 976
- ♣ KQJ76

W	N	E	S
	1♣ ¹	2♥ ²	?
¹ 1♣=2+: 11-19 ² 2♥= 6 hearts: 6-10			

Question 8

Dealer North. Vul None. Teams

- ♠ A8
- ♥ 7
- ♦ AQ1097
- ♣ J9854

W	N	E	S
	1♣ ¹	3♥	?
?			
¹ 1♣=2+			

Entries to:

bobpattinsonmail.com@yahoo.com
by 7th May 2026

Please remember to state your grade in your entry

- Novice/Intermediate
- Master (below Life Master)



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 2♦ opener rebids 2M with 11-16 and 5M 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	Direct cue = two highest suits 2NT = two lowest suits; 3♣ = two remaining suits
5-5 : either 6-10 or 15+	
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.



Irish Bridge Journal spectacular At the Double Xmas Quiz!



QUIZ Answers

- 1 What was the full name of the Hideous Hog's arch-enemy in Victor Mollo's "Menagerie" books?
Answer: Themistocles Papadopolous

- 2 Who was Nick FitzGibbon's first partner at Open international level?
Answer: Ristead de Barra [Dick Barry]

- 3 Which player has won the most Bermuda Bowl titles?
Answer: Giorgio Belladonna [13] and Benito Garozzo [13]. Accept either or both

- 4 As of December 2024, who was the top-ranked woman player in the world, based on Master Points?
Answer: Katherine Bertheau

- 5 In David Bird's books on the monks of St. Titus, who was the monastery's best resident [English] player?
Answer: Bro Lucius [Paolo is Italian]

- 6 Which female Irish player has won the most National titles?
Answer: Ruth Giddings, 54

- 7 According to the late David "Banzai" Jackson, how many points is an Ace worth in a balanced hand?
Answer: 5

- 8 In which year did the Journal Editor first partner BJ O'Brien?
a) 1976 b) 1978 c) 1980 d) Too painful to remember
Answer: 1978

- 9 Solve these anagrams. One is a Journal contributor, the other is a Bridge Convention [may or may not be in that order]:
a) Backroom Cowardly Naked **Answer: Roman Keycard Blackwood**
b) Bonbon Pittas **Answer: Bob Pattinson**

- 10 Which current Irish Congress is the longest-running?
Answer: Galway [formerly West of Ireland], first held in the 1939/40 season

Thanks to everyone who entered. There were 80 points available for the General Knowledge Quiz and also for the Bidding Quiz.

And the winners are....

Overall Winner:
Jim Doyle €150
[80 in General Knowledge Quiz and 71 in Bidding Quiz]

General Knowledge Quiz Winner:
Niamh Quinn €50
[71 points]

Bidding Quiz Winners [Joint]:
Rajnish Gupta and Dolores Walsh €75 each
Both scored an excellent 71 points and both are Novices - well done!



Results and Upcoming Fixtures

National Results

Master Pairs (Templeogue, 13-14 December)

- 1st Anna Onishuk & Karel De Raeymaeker
- 2nd Tom Hanlon & Conor Boland
- 3rd Tommy Garvey & Gráinne Barton
- 4th Terry Walsh & James Heneghan

Men's & Women's Pairs & Teams (Clane, 17-18 January)

Revington Cup (Men's Pairs)
Adam Mesbur & Tommy Garvey

Jackson Cup (Women's Pairs)
Joan Kenny & Jeannie Fitzgerald

Geraldine Trophy (Men's Teams)
Mark Moran, John Carroll, Tom Hanlon, Conor Boland

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

Confined Regional Masters Pairs (Templeogue, 1 February)

- 1st Brendan Rushe & Rosemary O'Brien

Confined Regional Masters Teams (Templeogue 2 February)

- 1st Elizabeth O'Reilly, Helen O'Reilly, Sean Galligan, Brid Galligan



Confined Regional Masters Pairs Winners: Brendan Rushe & Rosemary O'Brien

Holmes Wilson Cup (Mount Wolseley, 8-9 February)

- 1st Tom Hanlon, Mark Moran, Adam Mesbur, Nick FitzGibbon
- 2nd Anna Onishuk, Karel De Raeymaeker, Kelan O'Connor, Conor Boland
- 3rd Dan McIntosh, Peter Goodman, Tommy Garvey, Kevin Castner
- 4th Martin Brady, David Dunne, Paul Delaney, Tomás Roche

National Pairs Competition (Ennistymon, 24-25 February) Winners

Davidson Trophy (Open Pairs)
Cian Holland & Derek O'Gorman

Laird Trophy (Inter A Pairs)
David Breslin & Anne Farragher

Civil Service Cup (Inter B Pairs)
John O'Leary & Colm O'Neill



Civil Service Cup (Inter B Pairs) Winners John O'Leary & Colm O'Neill



Laird Trophy (Inter A Pairs) Winners Anne Farragher & David Breslin



Confined Regional Masters Teams Winners: Elizabeth O'Reilly, Helen O'Reilly, Sean Galligan, Brid Galligan

Upcoming Fixtures

Date	Event	Venue
2026		
April 10-12	CBAI Novice & Intermediate Congress	Tower Hotel, Waterford
April 11-12	Moylan Cup	Malahide Bridge Centre
April 17-19	Lady Milne Trophy	LaMon Hotel, Belfast
April 18-19	National Teams Championships	Midlands Park Hotel, Portlaoise
April 21-23	IBU Seniors' Congress	Cavan Crystal Hotel
April 23-24	Greystones Bridge Centre Open Week	Greystones Bridge Centre
April 24-26	Tralee International Congress	Rose Hotel, Tralee
May 09	IBU Pairs - All Grades	Templeogue Bridge Centre 12 Noon Start
May 10	Muldoon Cup Open Pairs	Dun Laoghaire Bridge Club
May 11-15	Celtic Nations Simultaneous Pairs Week	
May 15-17	Teltscher Trophy	Cambridge
May 16	JJ Murphy Trophy	Loughrea Hotel & Spa
May 16	Lambert Cup	Loughrea Hotel & Spa
May 17	Cooper Cup	Loughrea Hotel & Spa
May 23	National 4Fun Teams Final	Westmanstown
May 23-24	Egan Trophy	La Mon Hotel, Belfast
June 05-07	Yeats Country (Sligo) Congress	The Clayton Hotel
June 12-14	Killarney Congress	Castlerosse Park Resort



Men's and Women's Championships Highlights

BJ O'Brien



The Jackson and Revington Cups for Women's and Men's Pairs and The McMenamini bowl and Geraldine Trophy for Women's and Men's Teams were held in the Westgrove Hotel in Clane over the weekend of 18th/19th January.

In the Women's event Joan Kenny and Jeannie Fitzgerald won the pairs and then completed a perfect weekend by winning the team event, prompting Séamus Dowling to opine in his Irish Times column that they are our premier female pair right now. I agree.

Board 11 of the 1st session saw Bríd Kemple and Paula Heaphy declare a somewhat inelegant 3NT by East [Paula] on the lead of ♠2 (fourth highest) from South after North doubled Bríd's opening 1♥ bid.

West	East
♠ 104	♠ Q86
♥ AJ9874	♥ 6
♦ -	♦ AKQ10754
♣ KQ842	♣ J10

North won ♠A and continued with ♠3. Paula correctly played the Queen which held and made her contract when the ♦J appeared on the third round., This was worth 84%, She reasoned that if North held the Jack she would have played it to smother the ♠10 in dummy. A good deceptive effort by North, but no cigar this time.

The Men's pairs was handsomely won by Tommy Garvey and Adam Mesbur, who won both sessions. Not a regular partnership, but solid gold. The teams was won by the unstoppable Mark Moran. John Carroll. Tom Hanlon and Conor Boland. Although the youngest and most recent addition to the squad, Conor was given the responsibility of making the winning speech. He is becoming quite accustomed to the role!

**Teams 2nd session
Board 8. Dealer West. Vul None.**

		♠ 5		
		♥ AQJ6		
		♦ 32		
		♣ AQ9765		
♠ KJ83	N		E	♠ Q10642
♥ -	W		S	♥ 984
♦ QJ10954				♦ K76
♣ 1083				♣ 42
		♠ A97		
		♥ K107532		
		♦ A8		
		♣ KJ		

W	N	E	S
P	1♣	P	1♥
X	3♥	4♠	?

Pass from LHO. 1♣ [natural] from partner, Pass, 1♥ by you, Double. 3♥ from partner. 4♠ on your right. Your bid?

If you went slamming you were spot on. Partner responds 5♠ to your 4NT Keycard enquiry, showing two keycards plus ♥Q. So Partner has longer clubs than hearts, and got excited by your 1♥ response. How to explore for a grand? Maybe 6♦. Partner held ♠5, ♥AQJ6, ♦2, ♣AQ9765, and 13 tricks were there. Six pairs bid 7♥, 12 pairs bid 6♥ and 10 pairs failed to bid the slam.



Revington Cup (Men's Pairs) Winners: Adam Mesbur and Tommy Garvey



Jackson Cup (Women's Pairs) Winners: Joan Kenny and Jeannie Fitzgerald

Lady Milne Trials

Hilary McDonagh



There were nine teams [a good turnout] for these trials in January. Our team [Pender, McDonagh, Brown, Carroll] managed a narrow enough win over Kenny [Fitzgerald, Part, Rigney]. The direct match in Round 4 was inconclusive [just a 2-IMP difference], so the outcome really turned on the other matches.

Our team-mates, Rebecca Brown [O'Keefe] and Gilda Pender, topped the Butler rankings with an average gain of 1.143 IMPs per board over 128 boards. This well-bid hand from the final round showed why:

Dealer North. Vul None.

N <i>Gilda</i>	
♠	A874
♥	KJ964
♦	97
♣	AK

S <i>Rebecca</i>	
♠	J
♥	AQ85
♦	KQ1065
♣	965

2NT was a Jacoby enquiry, showing a heart fit and game values at least. In their system a splinter response shows less than opening values, so 2NT includes stronger splinter hands. 3♥ showed a non-minimum 5422 shape. Rebecca now cuebid 3♠, which improved Gilda's hand immensely. 5♣ showed one keycard and 6♦ showed ♦K as well as ♥Q. Gilda could bid 6♥ with some confidence. Even though trumps were 4-0, spades were 4-4 and ♦A was onside. Only one other pair bid the slam.

N <i>Gilda</i>	S <i>Rebecca</i>
1♥	2NT
3♥	3♠
4NT	5♣
5♦	6♦
3♥	P



Lady Milne Trial Winners: L-R Hilary, Rebecca, Gilda, Ann-Marie with John Carroll



IBU Mixed Teams Trials 2026 – Weekend 1

Isabel Burke



This year in the IBU Mixed Trials, Wojciech Gorczyca and I teamed up with Sheila Walsh/Marcin Rudzinski and Denise Walsh/Kelan O'Connor.

Weekend 1 was won by team Onishuk (Karel DeRaeymaeker, Anna Onishuk, Zrinka Kokot, Pat McDaid, John Phelan, Lucy Phelan) and we finished behind them in 2nd position, qualifying for weekend number 2 at the end of February. The top four teams will play off and the winner will represent Ireland in the Mixed European Championships in Riga over the summer. Here are a few boards that stood out:

You land in 3NT here after your RHO opened 1♠ and you get a spade lead. How do you continue?

Dummy:
♠ J1086
♥ K32
♦ J97
♣ A85

Your hand:
♠ A5
♥ 654
♦ AKQ65
♣ QJ3

Looks fairly standard right? I played the ♠J, it was covered and I won my Ace. I finessed the ♣Q first which was covered and won on the table. Then played a small diamond to the ♦A and alas! RHO shows out. I then played a diamond to the 9 and cashed my ♦J and used my established ♣J to come back to my hand and cash my remaining two diamond winners. Eight tricks in the bag, just need one more. Current position after cashing my final diamond trick: (note: RHO pitches a club on the diamond and is now void)

Dummy:
♠ 1086
♥ K3
♦
♣

Your hand:
♠ 5
♥ 654
♦
♣ 3

I threw RHO in with a spade. They can take two spades and a heart but have to give me my ♥K at the end for nine tricks. Note that if the ♦A was cashed at the beginning and then the club finesse was taken, there would be a lack of entries. You don't have the communications to play towards ♦J9 and also get back to your winners.

If LHO hadn't covered ♣Q, you were down. Also note that a heart lead knocks the contract. RHO [North] knows that a heart lead is potentially better than a spade. Would Double say this? It is not overly clear. Half of the partnerships found a heart lead while the other half led a spade.

Full hand:

Dealer North. Vul All.

		♠ KQ972		
		♥ AQ1087		
		♦ -		
		♣ 942		
♠ J1086	N		E	♠ A5
♥ K32				♥ 654
♦ J97	W			♦ AKQ65
♣ A85			S	♣ QJ3
		♠ 43		
		♥ J9		
		♦ 108432		
		♣ K1076		

My team-mates Denise and Kelan earned a very well deserved 12 imps for superb defence during the second last match of the weekend.

Your RHO is declaring 4♥ with no bidding from partner so you choose a spade lead with this hand:

Dummy:
♠ 83
♥ K43
♦ J73
♣ AJ1076

Dummy comes down and you see this:

Your hand:
♠ Q104
♥ Q7
♦ A10652
♣ K93

A spade is won by declarer and they play a small heart. You decide to jump up with your ♥K and continue a spade which is won by declarer again. They draw another round of hearts and your partner shows up with the ♥A and gives you a spade ruff. You get your ♣A later for -1. Playing the ♥K at trick two maintains communication via the ♥A instead of using it before the spade ruff is established. Well done guys!

Sheila and Marcin got into 6♣ on this board.

Dealer South. Vul None.

		♠ 74		
		♥ AK6		
		♦ K9875		
		♣ A106		
♠ -	N		E	♠ K9852
♥ J10875				♥ 932
♦ AQJ432	W			♦ 106
♣ 83			S	♣ J54
		♠ AQJ1063		
		♥ Q4		
		♦ -		
		♣ KQ972		



The auction was as follows: South opened 1♠, a 3♣ overcall came in which showed a 2-suiter. However, it was alerted to North as a WJO! North happily bids 3NT and South bids 6♣. North is unsure at this point as you can imagine! She decided to bid 6♠ after a bit of thought and Marcin played it brilliantly.

After West led the ♦A and he ruffed, he cashed the ♥Q and played a small heart to the King. The bad news was discovered after a small spade was played to the Queen. He then cashed ♣KQ and a small one to the Ace. ♥A and ♦K allowed for two club discards. He then played ♠7 followed by the 8 and covered with the Jack. He then threw East in by playing the ♠10.

If it's ducked, he takes ♠A for his 12th trick and if its beaten by the ♠K then they have to lead from 95 through Marcin's A6. Throwing E in with the ♠6 would achieve the same ending.

Overall it was a great weekend, with plenty of interesting boards. Here's to weekend 2!

[Editor's Note - as result of weekend 2 the team for Riga is Anna, Karel, Zrinka, Pat, Lucy and John - we wish them the best of luck].



IBU Mixed Teams Trials: 2026 Kelan O'Connor, Sheila Walsh, Denise Walsh, Marcin Rudzinski, Isabel Burke, and Wojciech Gorczyca



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Sponsor Profile

Cantor Fitzgerald Ireland

Suzie Berkery – Senior Portfolio Manager,
Cantor Fitzgerald Ireland



The recent renewal of the Holmes Wilson, our flagship Teams event, brought with it a welcome new supporter this season: Cantor Fitzgerald, specialists in Financial Planning and Wealth and Asset Management.



The partnership was sparked by Suzie Berkery who explained,

“I grew up in a card playing family. My parents were dedicated bridge club regulars and my sister and I learned the game from Peter Pigot just before Covid. Peter is a wonderful teacher and we both fell in love with bridge very quickly.”

So how did the sponsorship itself come about? As Suzie tells it,

“During Covid we played a huge amount of online bridge, probably more than we should have, through Fearghal O’Boyle’s online club. It certainly beat baking banana bread. Last year Fearghal held his in person Congress in Sligo and because he had been so supportive of us we felt we should return that support. While we were there I bumped into Dermot O’Brien, we got chatting and the rest is history.”

For Suzie the link between bridge and Financial Planning is self evident.

“Both rely on strategy, judgement, long term thinking and strong partnership, so the values align naturally. Sponsoring bridge allows Cantor Fitzgerald to support something that promotes mental agility, social connection and lifelong learning while also building a relationship with a community whose approach to problem solving matches our own.”

The Holmes Wilson was the first major outing under the new sponsorship and Suzie was delighted with how it unfolded.

“I think it helped that I was playing in the event for the first time but what truly stood out was how warm and welcoming everyone was. So many players came over for a chat and several commented on the strong potential for alignment with Cantor Fitzgerald’s services.”

It must also be said that Suzie’s team lifted the Best Intermediate prize, a result she attributes in no small part to her teammates and the mentorship of Huey Daly.

What next for the partnership?

“These are still early days but we’re very open to deepening and broadening the link. We’ve set up a dedicated contact address for CBAI members, holmeswilson@cantor.com, for anyone seeking guidance on Financial Planning or Wealth Management. We’re also offering complimentary financial wellbeing consultations and will be running short, practical programmes throughout the year. Topics will include retirement planning, active versus passive investing, the value of professional advice and how best to navigate key financial decisions. We look forward to engaging with bridge players nationwide whether online or in our regional offices.”

A positive start and a promising sponsorship. A two way street and a win win. Long may it continue.

Sponsor Profile

Brian Bloomer Travel

Brian Bloomer - Travel Counsellors



Brian operates as one of 80 Irish franchisees for Travel Counsellors, a large Manchester-based outfit with turnover in excess of £1 billion, who pride themselves on expertise, value, support while travelling and the highest levels of financial protection.



He's a new and very enthusiastic sponsor of Irish bridge. He kindly sat for an interview with the Journal.

Some history and context. "My family business is a horse-riding school. As a matter of fact, I know Nicola FitzGibbon [daughter of Nick] very well! Small world!" Brian did plenty of back-packing in his youth and saw a lot of the world, which got him interested in the travel business. He spent over ten years at senior management level at a well-known competing company that specialises in arranging bespoke long haul trips, before heading up his own business under the Travel Counsellors umbrella.

"In the main, my team and I cater to long-haul trips, which can be somewhat complex to arrange. For example, we arrange fly-drives in places like Canada, Australia, South Africa and New Zealand. Escorted and Private Touring in the likes of India, Sri Lanka, South East Asia, The Far East and South America. Also safaris in Tanzania, Botswana and Kenya. And we cater to cruises all over the world including expedition cruises to the likes of Antarctica and Galapagos."

Brian also manages business travel for SME clients, saving them time and hassle and providing 24/7 support while travelling.

The USP in Brian's eyes is "the personal touch. My team and I are in the business of delighting our clients, who will then hopefully re-book with us and recommend us to others. A good example of this is seen in the increasing volumes of honeymoons that we are being entrusted to organise – frequently on referral from a family member who's an existing client"

How did the sponsorship opportunity with the bridge community come about? "Quite by chance, really. I had a stand at the RDS for the Horse Show, which went well in and of itself. I bumped into a tennis acquaintance there and they happened to be a bridge player. A conversation started and I had a lightbulb moment of sorts. There seemed to be a good "fit" that was worth exploring. By that I mean that the single most important segment for my business is the 50+ age group. So I got talking to Dermot O'Brien and I'm very excited about the possibilities from the sponsorship deal we concluded".

Brian has a number of ideas for CBAI members. "We can assist with setting up group trips abroad, and host online or in person events where they can hear from experts on specific topics. I'm starting with a **special online event exclusively for CBAI members starting at 7.30pm on Thursday 16th April**, focusing on two of the

most enjoyable ways to explore the world – ocean cruising and river cruising. I will be joined by guest speakers from Celebrity Cruises and Uniworld River Cruises, who will give a fascinating behind-the-scenes look at what it's really like to travel with their cruise lines. They'll share insights into the onboard experience, destinations, dining, excursions and the little details that make these holidays so special. There will also be some exclusive offers available for those attending the event. So whether you're curious about cruising for the first time or already a fan looking for your next trip, it should be a really enjoyable and informative evening. You can register for the event using this [link](#)."

Specifically, Brian is sponsoring both the Spiro and the Coen [National Mixed Pairs & Teams Championships] this coming October. He'll have a stand there, and you're all encouraged to seek him out. We must actively support our sponsors – they don't grow on trees.

The sponsorship may be in its infancy, but Brian is happy to look to the longer term. "We have initially concluded a one-year agreement, but I would very much like to think it can endure. With best endeavours on all sides, I believe it will".

Brian can be found at www.travelcounsellors.ie

Horses for Courses!

Bank Holiday Monday, February 2nd. Your Editor is viewing the Dublin Racing Festival on RTE. The opening race, the Grade 1 Novice Hurdle, is won in style by the favourite, Doctor Steinberg, trained by Willie Mullins and ridden by Paul Townend. No surprise there.

Winning connections are interviewed, and the owner's daughter explains his absence by saying "he's playing bridge in Templeogue".

It wasn't hard to trace this to the Teltcher [Senior Camrose] Trials being played that same weekend. Your correspondent follows the horses [and his horses follow the other horses]. So it was easy to identify the winning owner as Tom Gilligan. Tom kindly gave an interview to the Journal.

"I've been involved in racehorse ownership for thirty years, and the first time I have a Grade 1 winner it clashes with bridge! Other Trials contestants were telling me I had my priorities wrong!"

What's the Doctor Steinberg story in brief? "He was bought in the Derby sales as an unbroken three-year-old. On his Bumper debut in 2024 at Fairyhouse he finished third to Kopek Des Bordes, an absolute top-notch with Willie Mullins. So we were hopeful, but to be honest he was a bit disappointing after that. However since then, Willie and [jockey] Paul Townend say he's been improving all the time, and surprising them into the bargain. The game-changers have been the switch to hurdles and the step up to longer trips [2 miles five furlongs and above]".

The horse has firmly put himself in the Cheltenham picture – but for which race? "The options are the Albert Bartlett over three miles or the Turner's over two miles five furlongs. In the winner's enclosure at Leopardstown, a racing pal of mine opined to Willie that I'd probably favour the Albert Bartlett. A not unrelated fact being that he'd backed Doctor Steinberg for it ante-post! Your Journal readers are refined and genteel, so I'll simply

tell you that Willie's reply left no room for doubt as to who'd be making that decision – and it won't be me!"

Tom recalled other good horses he's owned over the years. "Seabank Bistro finished an excellent fourth in the Bumper at Cheltenham. Loughlynn was another good performer. Euro Leader won us a Kerry National, and Shakerville picked up a couple of Grade 2's. [and became the owner's BBO name! Ed]. But my favourite was Dooneys Gate, who sadly suffered a fatal injury at Becher's Brook in the 2011 Grand National. He was a first National ride for Willie's son Patrick. Afterwards Patrick won a noteworthy prize for young writers on racing when he documented this experience. Patrick went on to be crowned Racing Writer of the Year in 2024 for his excellent vignettes in the Racing Post".

Tom has been playing bridge for thirty years. His most noteworthy achievement so far is a Mens' Pairs [Revington] win with Dave Terry.

Tom was out of luck at Cheltenham.

But in both disciplines, he has higher hopes!





InterProvincials

Ciaran Coyne



The Irish Bridge Union interprovincials were held in the Knightsbrook Hotel Trim on November 29th and 30th.

In the Open competition, each province fields three teams of four players, and those teams play a total of nine matches against each of the three teams fielded by the other provinces. Two parallel events are run restricted to players in the Area Master and Intermediate grades with the same structure.

After the first session in the open event, with three rounds played, Munster led on 105 victory points (VPs) from Leinster on 97, Connacht on 94, with Ulster bringing up the rear on 63. With 60 VPs available in each round, the lead can change quickly. After round 6, Connacht had taken the lead with a total of 212 VPs from Leinster on 206, with Munster on 160, and Ulster on 140. In round 7, Leinster beat Munster 38-22, while Ulster beat Connacht 36-24, giving the holders Leinster the lead.

Leinster played Connacht in round 8, and a decisive win either way would go a long way to deciding the winner with Munster and Ulster both more than 55 VPs behind.

East deals. You're dealt as North:

North:
♠ 4
♥ QJ954
♦ AK1094
♣ 83

Partner opens 1♠ second in hand after the dealer passes. West also passes. Playing 2/1 game forcing, do you bid 1NT or 2♥? If you choose 2♥ you may end up too high when this is the full deal:

Dealer East. Vul N/S.

		♠ 4		
		♥ QJ954		
		♦ AK1094		
		♣ 83		
♠ 1065	N		E	♠ J87
♥ 8	W			♥ K1032
♦ 87652				♦ J3
♣ A1097	S			♣ J654
		♠ AKQ932		
		♥ A76		
		♦ Q		
		♣ KQ2		

Two Connacht pairs reached 5♥ stopping out of slam when they found they were missing two keycards. It was normal to play ♥A followed by a heart towards the Queen, but that led to going off when hearts broke badly. This was a 13 IMP gain for Leinster in each of those two matches contributing to their aggregate 43-17 win over the three matches, leaving them 35 VPs clear going into the last round.

There were plenty of opportunities for large swings in the last 10 board match. The first board had an easy 13 tricks in no trump, but it wasn't always clear how to reach 7NT:

Dealer North. Vul N/S.

		♠ J985		
		♥ J65		
		♦ 62		
		♣ 10654		
♠ AK6	N		E	♠ 1073
♥ AK74	W			♥ Q
♦ AK10				♦ QJ98754
♣ 873	S			♣ AQ
		♠ Q42		
		♥ 109832		
		♦ 3		
		♣ KJ92		

If East opened 1♦ and showed their diamond length, there was a good chance that E/W bid the grand. If they evaluated the East hand as too weak for a one-level opening, it was less clear to reach the grand. Four of the twelve pairs reached grand. One

failed when they finessed on a club lead, not accurately counting their tricks. Leinster gained 16 IMPs for 7NT-1 when they bid and made 7♦ at the other table, and another 11 IMPs for bidding 7♦ against 6♦ to extend their lead. In the Connacht Munster matches, one Connacht pair bid the grand gaining 13 IMPs while all other pairs played a small slam.

Board 29 also generated multiple slam swings:

Dealer North. Vul All.

		♠ Q632		
		♥ AJ73		
		♦ 743		
		♣ 109		
♠ -	N		E	♠ AJ5
♥ K9842	W			♥ Q6
♦ KQJ10986				♦ A52
♣ 7	S			♣ AKJ83
		♠ K109874		
		♥ 105		
		♦ -		
		♣ Q6542		

6♦ is a great slam, with 11 top tricks, and good prospects of a heart ruff for the twelfth trick. It was bid and made at six of the twelve tables. After a 1♣ opening, if responder shows their hearts in preference to diamonds, it may be hard land in a diamond contract. Two pairs landed in 6♥ which is a poor prospect requiring exactly ♥J10 in either North or South, and those pairs lost 13 and 14 IMPs.

Leinster stretched their lead in the final round when they beat Ulster 37-23, and with Connacht winning 34-26 against Munster, they finished a distant second. Full results of the Open, Master, and Intermediate competitions can be found here. Munster were the winners of both the Master and Intermediate events.

Thanks to the IBU for organizing the event, and to the Tournament Directors - Fearghal O'Boyle, Brian Lawlor, and Mairead Basquille.



Inaugural Irish Individual Knockout Championship

Dermot O'Brien, Chief Executive, CBAI



The CBAI recently ran its first ever online knockout championship, on the Funbridge platform. If you're not familiar with how an online knockout works, each entrant is drawn against a direct opponent, and they have a limited time to play a set of boards (12 per round, in our case), using IMPs scoring, with a robot partner against robot opponents.



Funbridge is a very good platform for this kind of event, and we chose it partly for that reason, and also to see if we could get our members a bit more familiar with the Funbridge platform. For many reasons, including in all likelihood a degree of inertia, BBO has remained the dominant online platform for Irish players since the forced online activity during the pandemic. Only a small number of Irish players use Funbridge, whereas in countries like France and the Netherlands it appears to be every bit as popular for individual games as BBO. You can programme your robot partner to bid using your favourite system, as many players did during our tournament, and Funbridge devotees maintain steadfastly that it provides a better gameplay experience than BBO.

Certainly as a Funbridge newbie myself, I found I got used to the interface very quickly, and I liked

the variety of game-types available. You can even set up a team with three or more others and play in a teams' league, with promotion and relegation. Like BBO, Funbridge has a double dummy feature. In fact, if you take out a premium subscription on Funbridge, for a relatively small monthly charge, you can track each hand played or defended double dummy, and see exactly where you went astray, more easily than you can on BBO.

We offered masterpoints and some decent prizes for our tournament, and to add a bit of fun, persuaded four of our top players, Tom Hanlon, Peter Goodman, Joan Kenny, and Paul Delaney, to offer their services as seeded players with a bounty of €100 on their head for any non-seed who defeated them. Spoiler alert – none of the seeded players made it to the final.

Interest was slow to start with, but after a bit of promotion, we eventually attracted a healthy entry of 113. And whatever it may have lacked in quantity, it certainly did not in quality. By our count we had no fewer than seven Grand Masters, plus eleven senior internationals and seven junior internationals, in our total field of 113. So almost a quarter of the field was of international calibre, which means that anyone who finished amongst the prizes fully deserves their reward.

There were very tricky matches, and a few upsets, right from the start. In the first round, Grand Master and Irish junior coach Karel De Raeymaeker lost out to one of his former students, Arran Bolger, making a welcome return to bridge. A really strong

clash of internationals saw Marcin Rudzinski defeat Diarmuid Reddan, while erstwhile partners Dolores Gilliland and Maria Whelan played out a draw, with Dolores going through on countback (the rule is that in case of a draw, the person to finish the set of boards first goes through).

Round 2 saw the fall of the first seed, as, in a battle of Grand Masters, Thomas MacCormac got the better of Joan Kenny after an extraordinarily tight and well-played match; 11 of the 12 boards were flat, with Thomas gaining 6 IMPs (and the €100 bounty) on the other board by bidding to 4♥ on a combined 23-count whereas Joan stopped in 2♥. In the same round, another high-class matchup saw Irish Open Team star Conor Boland defeat Grand Master Lucy Phelan.

The most nail-biting progress to the last 32 belonged to Tom Craig, who tied his first match but won on countback and then won his second match by the narrow margin of 3-1. Tom totalled just 9 IMPs in his first two matches; by way of contrast Jeannie Fitzgerald amassed 102 IMPs on her way to the last 32.

The last 32 threw up some more very exciting matches. Thomas MacCormac's reward for defeating Joan Kenny was a matchup against his US expert partner and mentor Jade Barrett, who emerged victorious, while Jeannie Fitzgerald got the better of Marcin Rudzinski. Seed Peter Goodman won by the narrowest of margins against junior international Matthew O'Farrell, going through after a 3-3 tie. Another seed departed the competition though, as Paul Delaney lost to John Flavin.



Your correspondent also bit the dust in this round losing to former junior international Richard Boyd. A feature of the knockout is that the scoring is known as each board is finished, so the person playing the boards last has the advantage of knowing what's required. That's why a tie goes to the first finisher, and it often leads to a bit of a Mexican standoff as neither player wants to finish first, and the deadline looms. Anyway, Richard had finished first and I was behind when on the last board 2♠ was opened on my left and raised to 3♠ on my right, with partner silent. With a 13-count and a stopper (♠K4/♥QJ4/♦AT654/♣A53) and needing a swing, I punted the fairly obvious 3NT and hoped for the best. As it turned out, nine tricks were straightforward. Mission accomplished? Not quite; my robot partner assumed I had the goods and raised to 4NT, inviting a slam. The tenth trick was impossible, and I was thwarted of an undeserved victory.

John Flavin continued his giant-killing act in the Round of 16, adding the prized scalp of Tom Hanlon to that of Paul Delaney from the previous round and raising his bounty earnings to €200. Elsewhere in that round, Peter Goodman squeaked past Conor Boland 7-6, while Northern Ireland international Wayne Somerville ended Jeannie Fitzgerald's run.

And so we reached the quarter-finals. Jade Barrett defeated Russell Down, junior international Luca Crone saw off Richard Boyd, while Peter Goodman ended John Flavin's giant-killing, and the quest for a third bounty, but only by recording a 13 IMP recovery over the final three boards. Wayne Somerville came through the swingiest quarter-final, beating Willem Mevius, with six swings of 9 IMPs or more in the 12-board set (readers who remember Willem from his Irish playing days may not be entirely surprised at this!).

The semi-finals saw another mentor/mentee battle, as Luca Crone took on Jade Barrett. Since he moved to America to complete his studies, Luca has been working in Jade's coaching programme when time permits. The young Turk emerged victorious this time, with the decisive board seeing Jade's super-aggressive bidding style meet a somewhat unfortunate fate. In first seat, at favourable vulnerability, he opened 3♣ with ♠A97/♥J7/♦K4/♣QJ8654, was doubled for takeout on his left, found partner with a single point, and went for 1,100 when the double was left in. Luca opened a more prosaic 1♣, and the opponents duly found their 3NT game, for a 9 IMP gain for Luca. In the other semi-final, the last seed was eliminated, as Wayne Somerville accounted for Peter Goodman.

The final represented a battle of the younger generation, with Wayne, a current Northern Ireland international who graduated from the junior ranks in 2014, taking on current Irish junior international Luca. It was a very close-run thing, which was decided in dramatic fashion on the final board. After five scoreless boards, Luca gained 7 IMPs by making a somewhat fortuitous 3NT (dropping the doubleton ♦QJ missing five cards in the suit) while Wayne played in a club partscore. Luca extended his lead by 9 IMPs when collecting an 800-point penalty in 2♠ doubled versus Wayne's non-vulnerable 3NT.

So with just two boards to play, Luca led by 18 IMPs and it looked as if the trophy would be heading west to Chicago rather than north to Bangor. However, Wayne clawed back half the deficit on Board 11, making a cold 6♦ slam while Luca played in 3NT. And the final board provided a decisive swing to Wayne, as Luca elected to double a first-seat 1♦ opening holding ♠AKJ/♥9/♦AK8742/♣A42 (vulnerable against non), and watched his robot partner subsequently pull 3NT to 4♥, which went four off on a bad trump split.

Wayne on the other hand chose to pass the 1♦ opening, perhaps hoping to hear a double from partner at some stage. But there was no further bidding, and 1♦ drifted three off, for an 11 IMP gain to Wayne, and a final score of 21-19 in his favour.



Many congratulations to Wayne on becoming the inaugural Irish Individual Knockout Champion.

He wins a free weekend's accommodation at an Irish Congress of his choice in 2026, plus €100 spending money for beating a seed. For second place, Luca's prize was a free weekend at the Mount Wolseley Hotel, but not surprisingly, given his current geography, he has opted to take the cash instead. The other prize-winners were Jade Barrett and Peter Goodman (€125 each as beaten semi-finalists), and John Flavin and Thomas MacCormac (€200 and €100 respectively in bounties). There was also a plate competition for those knocked out in the first round of the main event, which was won by Seamus Bradley, with Pam Harrington runner-up.

Our thanks to Michael Donnelly and to Funbridge for their assistance in setting up and promoting this competition. We hope that everyone enjoyed it, and would welcome feedback from participants and non-participants alike on events of this kind. A lot of Irish players continue to play extensively online, and we'd like to offer them competitions they would like to play in, and to ensure that where possible the (modest) revenue accruing to the organisers from the online platform goes to the CBAI rather than elsewhere.



Peggy Bayer / Junior Camrose 2026

Luca Crone



This year, our teams travelled to Adamton Country House Hotel near Prestwick, Scotland, for the Peggy Bayer and Junior Camrose Trophies.

It was a double round robin involving Ireland, England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland, and the Scottish Bridge Union (SBU). Scotland, as the host nation, fielded two teams. Our teams were as follows:

Junior Camrose: Luca Crone & Matthew O'Farrell, Denise Walsh & Leah Finnegan, Isabel Burke & Tom Gorey

NPC: Conor Boland

Peggy Bayer: Eve Connell & Klara Flanagan, Bence Orosz & Sam Connolly, Grace Gissing & Paul Luo

NPC: Margaret Murphy

Margaret conscripted some international help this year to try and give the English a run for their money. It must be a first that an Aussie and a Hong Kong national have played together on the Home Internationals scene; it was up to Grace and Paul to show that this makes a force to be reckoned with. Having gained experience playing with Tom Hanlon and under Gráinne Barton on the open team, Conor was ready to share his pearls of wisdom and try to bring Ireland its first Junior Camrose win in many years.

One of my favourite parts of the game is defence. Some call it the most difficult part. I don't agree; however, it provides some of the best problems to solve at the table. There are different styles of defence. I like to split them

into the Peters. Which Peter you are determines your style. If you are in the Peter Goodman camp, you minimise the meaning of your cards in defence. It then becomes a matter of simple counting and sheer brainpower. If you fall into the Peter Pigot faction, you believe every card matters and sends a message. Of course, both have their advantages and disadvantages. Mr Goodman believes that if you are constantly signalling, you are, on average, helping the declarer more. This can leave you stranded sometimes in quite a predicament. However, it also makes declarer's life more difficult when working out the hand. Those in the Peter Pigot camp seldom switch incorrectly but are easier targets for the prying declarer. Before delving too far into these styles, follow my footsteps through the matches and see how sharp your defence is currently.

So you arrive on the Friday afternoon and, having received a pep talk from Conor, are ready to start the first match with a bang. To ease you in is Northern Ireland. While dusting off the cobwebs and waking up from your nap on the plane, you score almost 20-0. Next is Scotland. Step in my shoes for a second and sit North with this hand:

North:
♠ A8653
♥ J
♦ KQJ4
♣ Q32

The bidding has been

W	N	E	S
		P	P
1♣	1♠	1NT	P
3NT	All Pass		

Partner leads the ♠2, which is 3/5 in this situation and dummy plays the ♠7, your play.

Dealer North. Vul All.

	♠ A8653		
	♥ J		
	♦ KQJ4		
	♣ Q32		
♠ K7		N	
♥ AK87		W	E
♦ A3			
♣ AKJ83			S

It sounds like spades are 5332 around the table. So, where is the setting trick coming from? We need four more. Since partner has three spades, they are likely a bust given they couldn't find a raise. This leaves us with most of the defensive points. Fairly quickly, you see that you need diamond tricks in order to beat the contract. Thus, you must rise with the ♠A and switch to the ♦K. Playing attitude leads (low from interest, high without) here would have made life easier, as it is unclear whether you have more than one spade trick. Even so, you won't have enough entries to untangle the spade suit for three tricks and two more. Your only hope is for declarer to get the ♣Q wrong and cash three diamonds, the ♣Q and the ♠A. Otherwise, declarer will walk home with two spades, two hearts, one diamond, five clubs - or four clubs and three hearts. Switching to a diamond is the only way to put him under pressure.



Dealer East. Vul All.

♠ A8653			
♥ J			
♦ KQJ4			
♣ Q32			
♠ K7	N	♠ QJ10	
♥ AK87		♥ Q96	
♦ A3	W	♦ 752	E
♣ A8764		♣ K1095	
♠ 942			
♥ 105432			
♦ 10986			
♣ J			

Here is the full hand, and you can see if declarer guesses clubs incorrectly, they are off on the diamond switch at trick 2. How are you doing so far? 1/1? They will get more difficult, don't worry.

You won adequately against Scotland, putting you in the lead going into the second day. England had only beaten Wales marginally, giving a small buffer. That being said, you were far from comfortable, as the stronger teams were still to be played in the first round robin. The excitement kept some up on Friday night, but Saturday is always when the Peggy Bayer and Junior Camrose are won. Conor had his eyes on the prize as we got seated. Alas, the morning didn't go as intended, as we lost to Wales. That led Wales to start catching us as England popped into 1st place. Then came the match I had been looking forward to, that ripped me from my books here in the Windy City, the match against our arch rivals, the English. I'll put it to fate and say it wasn't meant to be, as we got slaughtered, resulting in virtually a 20-0 loss to England, ouch! We were now lying in 3rd as Wales beat SBU by a healthy margin. We finished off the day with a win against SBU, but lying in 3rd. It was time to let off some steam, and what's better than a bit of Speedball? Conor finally got to show us what real bridge looks like, but failed to hold back Matthew from clutching the Speedball Trophy. At least that was one trophy we could claim.

Now, for our next problem. Let's make it a bit more tricky. Join me again in the North seat. This time, your opponents are Scotland.

♠ -			
♥ J1093			
♦ Q43			
♣ J109864			
♠ KQ10	N		
♥ 875			
♦ K1087	W	E	
♣ AK2		S	

W	N	E	S
1NT	3♣	4♠	P
4NT	P	5♣	P
5♦	P	5♠	X
All Pass			

Non Vul vs Vul, you decide to cause some chaos and bid 3♣ over West's 1NT. It seemed to work spectacularly as the auction got out of control. East intended 4♠ to play, and West wasn't sure, so bid 4NT. East took this as keycard while 5♦ was "to play" as West thought 4♠ was showing diamonds. Partner finally ends the auction with my favourite card, the double! I will shamefully admit, some of my partners believe I like it too much. Partner leads the ♣Q and declarer takes a minute or two to scope out the play. Use these wisely. Take a few minutes to decide how you expect the play to go and what you will play.

Declarer wins with the ♣A, next comes a low diamond.

Did you find the play of the queen? Congratulations if you did. If not, you have unfortunately let 5♠ make. Thankfully, I had done my homework at trick one and was able to ask declarer, a good friend of mine, if he thought I was that naïve while playing the queen. He let out a sigh. Let's go through the reasoning. Declarer has only one keycard since he bid 5♠, so partner likely has four spades and two aces. Declarer almost certainly has six spades and three clubs, given the lead of the ♣Q. If declarer has two diamonds and two hearts, then the ♦Q only costs if he has AJD, giving partner has ♥AKQ, which he would have led. If his shape is three diamonds, one heart with

the ♦AJ, then he may get the ♦Q right anyway, or without the jack, he may duck and finesse me for the ♦J later, thinking I have ♦QJ. If he, however, has one diamond and three hearts, it will matter a lot what I play. If he has the stiff ♦A, then it doesn't matter, but if it is the stiff ♦J, do you see the issue? It will immediately knock out partner's ace and the ♦K will discard the club loser. I will not bore you with any more case-by-case analysis here. This one was not as easy as the last and is certainly harder at the table than posed as a problem.

Here was the full hand, with the ♦Q worth 14 imps.

Dealer East. Vul All.

♠ -			
♥ J1093			
♦ Q43			
♣ 109864			
♠ KQ10	N	♠ J97652	
♥ 875		♥ AK4	
♦ K1087	W	♦ J	E
♣ AK2		♣ 753	
♠ A843			
♥ Q62			
♦ A9652			
♣ JQ			

This resulted in a 15.19-4.81 win over Scotland. The last match was against England, who were runaway winners at this point. However, bragging rights were still on the line. One big swing of the match on theme came in defence. What better way to get a defence right than to get off to the right lead? What do you lead from this North hand given the auction?

North:
♠ J43
♥ KQ1072
♦ QJ5
♣ 52

W	N	E	S
		P	1♦
1NT	X	2♦	P
2♥	P	P	X
All Pass			

I guess you feel pretty happy about having them doubled in 2♥. Could it have gone any better? Now let's



make sure we lead the right card. Might it seem innocent to lead partner's suit? At least that means I can't be to blame if anything goes wrong, right? He bid them, for God's sake. That argument does not stand up here, sadly. You need to lead a spade to beat it. If you led a diamond, you mimicked the English defender. If you choose a low diamond, you are too generous. This was the English player's choice. I'm not sure if he knew it is costly to give your opponents overtricks in doubled contracts.

Here is the full hand:

Dealer East. Vul None.

		♠ J43		
		♥ KQ1072		
		♦ QJ5		
		♣ 52		
♠ 1085	N	♠ 976		
♥ A9		♥ J8654		
♦ AK1093	W	♦ 6		
♣ AQ7	S	♣ 10963		
		♠ AKQ2		
		♥ 3		
		♦ 8742		
		♣ KJ84		

The overtricks didn't stop at one for Denise, who made the English pay for sloppy defence and came out with two overtricks and +670. In fact, Denise and Leah had a streak with doubled contracts over the weekend. They kept on showing the opponents who they were messing with. There is nothing better than teaching the opponents the lesson of doubling you the hard way. A hint that something had gone wrong is the four-trick difference between the two declarers. At my table, Matthew was able to lead a top spade, and we even convinced the declarer to go an extra one off for +300 and a 14 imp swing. Unfortunately, that wasn't enough to beat England, but it was enough to secure 2nd place, keeping us in front of Wales.

On the Peggy Bayer side, they also secured second, albeit by a slightly larger margin than we did. Overall, it was a pleasant, friendly weekend full of learning. Next year, we are the hosts, meaning we will have two teams and double the chances to win. I hope I have gotten you in the defensive mood. I hope to come back and give you a better flavour of what is possible in the next edition.

The Rule of 11 still works!

Jim Doyle

An interesting hand came up in a club game recently. The hands were as shown above.

After my initial Pass as West, North decided to open 1NT showing 15-17 points despite the fact that they had a five-card heart suit. After East passing, South raised to 3NT.

One can argue for and against the benefits of opening 1NT with a five-card Major, particularly when the hand has 16 points but this declarer along with four of the other five declarers ended up in 3NT.

My partner led the ♦4. I beat the ♦J with the ♦A while declarer followed with the ♦5.

Using the rule of 11, 11-4 = 7, there are seven higher diamond cards than the four between dummy, declarer and my hand. Dummy had two of them, I had three, so declarer had two. So declarer has one diamond card left higher than the ♦4.

Do I play back the ♦10 or the ♦8?

If Declarer has ♦K and a small diamond (lower than 4), Declarer always has two diamond tricks anyway no matter what I play.

If Declarer has only ♦K left I must play ♦10 to avoid blocking the diamond suit

If Declarer has only ♦9 left, my ♦8 is blocking the suit anyway.

If Declarer has only the ♦6 or ♦7 left, Partner has the ♦K and ♦9 so then I must play the ♦10.

So using the rule of 11 the correct card to play back is the ♦10. Bingo - partner has the ♦K,9,7,4, 3,2 and we take the first six tricks, 3NT-2. Of the other four declarers in 3NT one made all the tricks on the lead of the ♠3. The other three made 3NT +1 on the lead of a diamond (♦4 twice and ♦7 once) so everyone else blocked the diamonds.

PS - I would like to be able to say I got the decision correct at the table because of the above reasoning but no I confess it was just a gut feeling. On the way home I realised that my gut must know about the rule of 11 as well.

Dealer North. Vul N/S.

		♠ A97		
		♥ AKJ106		
		♦ 65		
		♣ A97		
♠ Q10862	N	♠ J43		
♥ Q42		♥ 93		
♦ A108	W	♦ K97432		
♣ J4	S	♣ 53		
		♠ K5		
		♥ 875		
		♦ QJ		
		♣ KQ10862		



Bric-A-Brock

Sally Brock



The annual Parliamentary bridge match between the House of Lords and House of Commons took place in 2009 at Crockford's Club.

Sponsored by the club and the London Export Company, the event was won by the House of Commons, closing the gap in the overall table to 18-17 to the Lords. Each year the hands are selected by Paul Bowyer, and reproduced in a booklet. He does a fine job and there are always several interesting deals. Try this as a defensive problem sitting in the East seat:

Dealer East. Vul N/S.

		♠ J76			
		♥ J3			
		♦ KQJ1098			
		♣ Q9			
♠ 10954	N	♠ 832			
♥ 109864	W	♥ AK5			
♦ 3	E	♦ A742			
♣ 853	S	♣ KJ10			
		♠ AKQ			
		♥ Q72			
		♦ 65			
		♣ A7642			

W	N	E	S
		1♦	X
P	P	XX	P
1♥	3♦	P	3NT
All Pass			

I have to admit that this is a fictitious, but rational, bidding sequence. At the table I watched East pass out 1♦ doubled and be held to three tricks!

Plan the defence to three no-trumps after partner leads the ♥10. First, suppose you go for the 'normal' defence and play off three rounds of hearts. A competent declarer should now find his way home. He will discard a diamond from dummy, play off three top spades and then play diamonds. At some stage you will win the ♦A but have no option other than to play a club which will run around to dummy's queen and now the diamond suit will provide plenty of winners for declarer.

Can you see a way to avoid this ignominy? You must win the first heart and exit immediately with a low diamond. Now when declarer plays off

his spades and leads another diamond (what else could he do?) you win, cash your ♥A and exit with a heart. Declarer must now play clubs himself and go down.

Here is a Play Problem:

		♠ AJ82			
		♥ Q43			
		♦ K4			
		♣ AKJ7			
♠ 94	N	♠ 73			
♥ 9865	W	♥ K107			
♦ Q10532	E	♦ J987			
♣ 98	S	♣ Q1064			
		♠ KQ1065			
		♥ AJ2			
		♦ A6			
		♣ 532			

West leads the ♥8 against your 6♠. Plan the play.

Answer: Win the lead with the jack, draw trumps and cash the ♦AK. Now play ace and another heart. East will win but have to lead a club into Dummy's tenace.

The final deal in this year's Parliamentary match was quite exciting, at least for the North players. How often have you held 30 high-card points?!

Dealer South. Vul E/W.

		♠ AKQ			
		♥ AKQ			
		♦ AJ52			
		♣ AK6			
♠ 73	N	♠ J109642			
♥ 986432	W	♥ 10			
♦ KQ7	E	♦ -			
♣ 73	S	♣ QJ10985			
		♠ 85			
		♥ J75			
		♦ 1098643			
		♣ 42			

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

I thought North, Michael Mates, did rather well in the bidding. First he chose to rebid his only four-card suit rather than leap to some number of no-trumps. Then he did even better to realise that his partner must have quite serious diamond support to bypass 3NT and not introduce a major suit. 5♦ denied the ♦K.

Now the spotlight turned to South, Robin Squire, who received a heart lead. Best is to immediately play a low diamond from the dummy. If the suit breaks 2-1 the hand is over, but if, as here, East shows out declarer can later hope to reach his hand with a black-suit ruff in order to finesse through West.

In the event Squire came up with a second-best line that worked this time. He played the ♣AK and ruffed a club high in his hand. Now West could have beaten the slam by overruffing and playing a major suit to put declarer in the dummy. Then West must come to another trump trick. However, West tried to be a little too clever by refusing to overruff, instead discarding a spade. Declarer now played a trump and when West split his honours the hand was over.

Have you spotted the double-dummy line of play that would have succeeded against best defence?

Declarer must win the lead, and play off three hearts, two spades and two clubs before ruffing a club (or a spade). West can overruff, but whatever he plays now allows declarer to finesse in trumps.



Master Pairs 2025

Editor



A bumper field of 130 pairs fetched up at the splendidly appointed O'Reilly Hall in UCD on December 13th/14th last. The venue is excellent, and there surely cannot be much wrong with Irish bridge right now given this attendance. The event was directed by the always excellent Fearghal and Máiréad.

A slight change in format saw the matches being contested over six boards, five matches per session for three sessions [formerly four matches per session over seven boards]. Anyone I spoke to was happy with this.

Over 90 boards and 15 matches you'd expect the cream to come to the top, and it pretty much did. Leading scores:

1st	Anna Onishuk & Karel DeRaeymaeker	222.06
2nd	Tom Hanlon & Conor Boland	188.51
3rd	Gráinne Barton & Tommy Garvey	186.20

Best Regional Master:

Neil Breheny & Rosaleen Glasheen (8th)

Best National Master:

Ann Moylan-Cleary & Brian Cleary (13th)
Michael Rowan & Phil Harnett (20th)

Best Area Master:

Gráinne Courtney & Philip Dowling

The winners took the lead after three rounds and never relinquished it, winning 18 of their matches and posting a 74% score. Less than 10 VPs covered the 6th to 17th finishers.

Tom Hanlon was on top declaring form on this deal from the final session.

Tom	Conor
♠ A972	♠ 10
♥ -	♥ QJ963
♦ AK9	♦ J432
♣ AKJ1054	♣ 962

Bidding:

Tom	Conor
2♣	2♦
3♣	3♦
4♦	5♣
6♣	P

Lead: 6♦ [2nd and 4th, low from an honour].

Happy to have escaped a trump lead, Tom played small and beat RHO's ♦10 with ♦A. He now cashed ♣A and ruffed a spade, then led a low heart from dummy. RHO rose with ♥A, ruffed. A second spade ruff was followed by ♥Q from dummy, RHO following low. Tom ruffed this, then ruffed his third spade. Another heart ruff came next, then a ruff of his fourth and last spade, opponents

following throughout. Tom now led a trump to his Ace, leaving these cards having taken the first nine tricks -

Tom	Conor
♠ -	♠ -
♥ -	♥ J
♦ K9	♦ J43
♣ KJ	♣ -

He now cashed ♦K, LHO following with ♦7 and RHO with ♦6. What now?

The answer is to exit on ♦9. If LHO wins, KJ of trumps take the last two tricks. If RHO wins ♦Q, they must return a heart or a trump. Since RHO is marked with ♥K, his last card is a trump. So ♦9 is the 100% line.

The full deal:

Dealer South. Vul N/S.

♠ A972			
♥ -			
♦ AK9			
♣ AKJ1054			
	N	E	
♠ Q864			♠ KJ53
♥ A542	W		♥ K1087
♦ 1085			♦ Q76
♣ 73		S	♣ Q8
			♠ 10
			♥ QJ963
			♦ J432
			♣ 962

63 of 64 N/S pairs went plus [we'll draw the veil of charity over 5♥-3]. Only three pairs got to 6♣ and all made it for a 14-IMP gain. On the other hand, three pairs languished in 1♣!!



Master Pairs 2025 Winners:
Anna Onishuk and Karel DeRaeymaeker



When I was a Boye

Boye Brogeland, Flekkefjord



Imagine all the opportunities we miss at the table for making a play that would make it into a bridge column in a national paper, all the beautiful subtleties we continually miss.

Perhaps we weren't paying attention? Perhaps we hadn't seen the position before? Perhaps our opponents didn't challenge us enough to make it necessary for us to perform at our best?

Sometimes, luckily, everything appears crystal clear.

Just back from an American national, I had such a moment of clarity during a Team game in Lyngdal. I'll allow my elderly mentor from the Moi bridge club, Knut Erik Ljung, to describe the developments:

"Boye Brogeland was looking at:

Dealer West. Vul All.

North:
♠ A97
♥ 3
♦ 754
♣ QJ7653

South:
♠ J10
♥ AQ7
♦ KJ98
♣ A1094

Considering the bidding, how would you have played 3NT after the lead of the ♥5 East's king?

W Svend Kr Torkildsen	N Tonje Aa Brogeland	E Frank Lindland	S Boye Brogeland
P	P	P	1NT
2♣ ¹	3♣ ²	3♥	3NT
All Pass			

¹ Both majors ² Natural

Boye won the first trick with the ace. The club suit was clearly pivotal in this contract: play it for no loser and you have nine tricks, lose a club and the opponents have at least five tricks. A priori the finesse is with the odds.

Trying to get a better picture of the honour distribution, Boye played the ♦K from hand at trick two. East won and played another heart. Boye ducked and another heart was played to his queen.

East was now marked with seven points. If he'd had either the king or queen of spades in addition to the ♣K, he would surely have opened the bidding. Holding five hearts to the king, the ♦A and the ♣K he would probably have opened third in hand.

He wasn't completely sure, but the evidence suggested the ♣K was in the West hand. Boye therefore tabled the ♣A, dropping the singleton king."

The full deal:

Board 11. Dealer South. Vul None.

		♠ A97		
		♥ 3		
		♦ 754		
		♣ QJ7653		
♠ KQ62		N		♠ 8543
♥ J854		W	E	♥ K10962
♦ 10632				♦ AQ
♣ K		S		♣ 82
		♠ J10		
		♥ AQ7		
		♦ KJ98		
		♣ A1094		

On any other day this hand would have been forgotten as "one down".

I would have thought that I'd played with the odds and it was unlucky that the club finesse lost. Perhaps I would have been irritated by a kibitzer asking if I hadn't heard that "the king of clubs is always singleton".

This particular afternoon I was awake enough, focussed, and happy to be able to analyse the situation accurately and get myself material for a good newspaper column!

[first published in Australian Bridge Magazine]



Declan Byrne (centre), Regent Bridge Club manager, during his Junior International Career with Boye Brogeland and Geir Helgemo

Robson at Renvyle

Editor

As Al Pacino said in *Scent of a Woman* - "I've been around, you know?" I'm not easily impressed, but this story is most assuredly an exception.

It started with an email from Olwyn Comer, telling me that Andrew Robson had, at the invitation of XD Ocean Bridge Club, spent two days with 40 of their members last October at Renvyle House Hotel. He delivered seven lessons as well as supervised play. Olwyn attached the accompanying group photo.

To say that my curiosity was piqued would be to understate the position considerably. Andrew Robson OBE is a megastar. Youth world champion in 1989, European Champion at Open level in 1991. Legendary partnership with Tony Forrester yielding, inter alia, seven UK Gold Cups and two US Reisinger wins. How does such a personage fetch up at Renvyle?

I followed up with Olwyn, who rapidly passed me on to her mother, **Emily Deavy**, whose brainchild the whole thing was. The



resulting phone conversation was one of the more invigorating 45 minutes of my life.

I began by asking Emily about the location of XD Ocean club and the provenance of the strange

name. "We were based in the Salthill Hotel in Galway, and the Ocean Club was the name of the spa there. We moved to Clybaun Hotel. XD takes the X as 'Double' in bridge. Double D refers to the joint founders of the club - Deavy and Dooley. 'Double D' is also a bra cup size" Emily paused here to enquire whether I understood cup sizes, and I summoned what remained of my composure to reply in the affirmative.

Thusly reassured, Emily resumed the narrative. "We don't give prizemoney for our club games. The same people tend to win, and winning a tenner or so is neither here nor there. So we retain all the entry fees and organise two or three subsidised outings a year for all members. Our first venture was Ashford Castle. A four-course lunch, a game of bridge and a coach there and back, quoted us €79 for a trip with an overnight stay and we booked them out, bar three rooms! We also did Ballynahinch and the Cashel House Hotel. We don't really go to the hotels that advertise Bridge breaks". I put it to Emily at this point that she appeared to be working her way through the Blue Book, and she did not demur. "We may return to Renvyle in 2027, we're looking at Ashford or Dromoland this year".



So how did she secure Robson's services? "It was easy! I often bulk order and sell Andrew's books. I called Martin Jones, from whom I source them, and he contacted Andrew. The answer was that he'd love to come, but the only available dates were October 18th and 19th. So we took those, and the cost was funded by charging €120 per attendee. For anyone staying at Renvyle, the all-in quote was €320 for two days, full board". Emily reckons that Robson would have been aware of the book sales, and this may have impacted his availability. She also revealed that some attendees travelled from down the country - the club was open online during Covid, and a few people have stayed on.

Robson flew to Shannon and rented a car, accompanied by wife Laura. "It was nine hours door to door for him, quite a trek. Laura proved an excellent organiser"

I simply had to ask Emily what she was going to do for an encore. "I'm thinking of Mike Lawrence, the US-based expert, but it's early days". Unable to restrain myself further, I ventured to suggest that she might try the absolute pinnacle - a certain Mr. Zia Mahmoud! He's been to Ireland a couple of times [last year at the Regent Centenary Congress], and his recent book "Bridge - A Love Story" was also sold via Martin Jones [and favourably reviewed in the Journal]. He's pally with Tom Hanlon. And the trump card - he's a golf nut. Emily was intrigued, and I for one would not care to bet against the great man showing up.

Such originality and enterprise. Hats off to Emily and all at XD. Eminently replicable, and potentially scalable. What's not to love?





Making My Way

Melissa Brady



November is a month I eagerly anticipate, as it marks the return of my favourite Congress of the entire season in Donegal. There's something truly exceptional about this event—every detail, from the bridge programme to the entertainment and social activities, is flawlessly organised.

Credit is due to the dedicated Congress committee, who continue to raise the bar year after year. Their hard work shows in every aspect of the weekend. What really sets this Congress apart for me, however, is the people. Nowhere else have I encountered such consistently friendly, welcoming, and engaging attendees. At every turn, a warm smile and a kind greeting await.

It is undoubtedly the most social Congress of the year, people really let their hair down here. For those who have yet to venture to a national Congress, there is, in my view, no better place to begin than Donegal. I can assure you, Jim O'Sullivan did not tell me to say that!

Donegal Congress Pairs

Board 22

Dealer East. Vul N/S.

		♠AQ5			
		♥QJ1063			
		♦10642			
		♣3			
♠J872	N	♠964			
♥874	W	♥K952			
♦AKJ9	E	♦3			
♣A7	S	♣KQJ106			
		♠K103			
		♥A			
		♦Q875			
		♣98542			

This board in the Congress Pairs should have earned us an absolute top but instead it was a shared bottom. On the final

board of the evening, we were the only pair to reach the optimum contract of 3NT after an auction of 1♦[W] - 1♥ overcalled - 2♣ - P - 2♠ - P - 3NT. South led the ♣9. I looked at the dummy and my own hand, counted my tricks, and—far too early—counted my chickens before they hatched. In my head, I confidently claimed nine tricks from the opening lead. I won it in dummy with the Ace, and that's where everything went wrong. Call it complacency, fatigue, or simple stupidity, but what I did next was unforgivable. The correct play after winning the first trick with the ♠A was to reassess the hearts by combining my holding with dummy's. Realistically, South had maximum of one heart. I should have led a small heart toward my hand and been prepared to lose it to South before squeezing myself on the clubs while I still had the spade stopper, putting her back on lead, which would have guaranteed my King as a winner later because if South had a heart for the first lead, she would not have one left for the second, allowing a heart from dummy to establish my King. I never even considered that South held the ♥A as in my mind it was in North's hand all day long. As the saying goes, never assume—doing so can turn simple plans into major errors. Another valuable lesson learned.

November also means it's Interregionals time. After winning the Intermediate section the previous year, we decided to take the step up and try our hand at the Masters. We were delighted to be selected when the teams were announced, joining forces once again with our regular teammates, Frances Daly and Josephine Brady.

For the first time since I began playing bridge, the Interpros were not held in our home county

of Cavan but moved to the Knightsbrook Hotel in Trim, Co. Meath. While Ulster struggled overall, Anna and I were pleased with our contribution, finishing as the top Ulster pair on the Butler and forming part of the highest-placed Ulster team in our first season at Masters level finishing as the 3rd best ranked team overall.

I had to squeeze every trick available to land this contract.

IBU Interregionals

Round 2 - Board 15

Dealer South. Vul N/S.

		♠AJ43			
		♥KJ8			
		♦AJ9			
		♣AK3			
♠8	N	♠KQ92			
♥A96	W	♥754			
♦875	E	♦Q1062			
♣Q98542	S	♣J6			
		♠10765			
		♥Q1032			
		♦K43			
		♣107			

W	N	E	S
			P
P	2♦ ¹	P	2♥ ²
P	2NT ³	XX	3♣ ⁴
P	3♦	P	4♦
P	4♠	All Pass	

¹ 2♦ = multi
² 2♥ = relay
³ 2NT = 21-22
⁴ 3♣ = puppet

Dummy came down, and it was immediately apparent that we were missing the KQ of trumps—hardly an ideal situation when playing in a vulnerable game. The opening lead was the ♣J. I played the 7 from dummy, West followed with the 5, and I won the trick with the Ace. Knowing I couldn't afford to lose the ♦K too early—my only sure entry to dummy—I led the ♥8 to the 10 and held. Next, I led the



♠5. West produced the 8, I had no choice but to finesse the ♠J into East, who duly won the trick with the Queen.

East returned the ♣6. I played the 10, West covered with the Queen, and I won with the King. By trick five, I had reached a critical point and needed a clear plan. Playing against standard count and attitude, and given the opening club lead that strongly suggested a doubleton, I was left with no choice but to force East to ruff a club. If he held the King, he would be forced to play it, as my 10 would beat the 9. Sure enough, when I led the ♣3, East had to rise with the King, allowing me to discard my losing diamond from dummy. East then switched to the ♥4. I played low, West went up with the Ace, and I followed with the Jack. Instead of shifting suits, West returned the ♥9, which I won with the King.

From there, the rest was straightforward. I led the ♠3 to dummy's 10, followed by the ♠6 back to my Ace, drawing East's last trump. A diamond to the King, the ♥Q winner, and finally the ♦A allowed me to claim ten tricks and go for, in my opinion, a well deserved cup of tea! At the other table our teammates managed to defeat the same contract.

The calendar turned to January with the Lady Milne Trials marking the opening event of 2026. Our Lady Milne Trial debut proved to be a true baptism of fire. After sitting out the opening match, our two encounters on Day One were against Team Kenny and Team Pender. Whether we started in the frying pan and ended up in the fire, or the other way around, is hard to say—but what is certain is that we never really got out of the blocks.

I must have been muttering to myself about a board or some mistake I made when Martin Brady, who was in kibitzing, said, "Melissa, remember that this is exactly what you fought so hard for back in August." Reflecting on it now, the honest truth is, we didn't fight hard back in August. We just went in

and played exactly as we had been for the past year and a half, letting the game take its course and accepting whatever came while hoping we managed to do enough to not embarrass ourselves. In January, that approach was impossible. We couldn't settle; we never did.

One particular board caused problems for many pairs, ourselves included. Only two pairs found themselves in the right contract.

Lady Milne Trials

Match 3 - Board 14 Dealer East. Vul None.

			♠9753
			♥J954
			♦-
			♣K10753
♠10	N	♠AKQ842	
♥AKQ73		♥-	
♦KJ3	W	E	♦AQ10965
♣QJ98			♣4
	S		
			♠J6
			♥10862
			♦8742
			♣A62

I picked up a magnificent hand as East: 6-6-1-0 with just three losers. I briefly considered opening 2♣, but opted instead for 1♠. Partner responded with 2♥. Rightly or wrongly, I chose to ignore my six diamonds and made a forcing bid of 3♠, intending—so I thought—to introduce the diamonds later. Partner rebid 3NT, music to my ears. She surely had ♦Kx or ♦Jxx to justify that call.

At that point, I was confident we were heading towards a slam in diamonds. I began looking for aces and partner showed one with a bid of 5♦. I then bid 6♦ showing what I thought was a two suited hand (I'd have to have six diamonds as my partner only promised two with her 3NT bid), and saying "Pick your slam, partner." but Anna took us out to 6NT, which only went one down on a club lead. In hindsight, I may have been better to bite the bullet and bid 6♦ directly over her 3NT - a possibility I did consider, but feared it might cost us a potential grand slam.

I've since discussed the bidding on this board with several of the ladies there that weekend, and their views make for interesting reading.

Two agreed on the following bidding:

W	N	E	S
		1♠	P
2♥	P	3♦	P
3NT	P	4♦	P
4♥	P	6♦	All Pass

One pair bid:

W	N	E	S
		1♦	P
1♥	P	2♠	P
4♦ ¹	P	4NT ²	P
6♦	All Pass		

¹ 4♦ = Minorwood
² 4NT = two keycards no queen

Another pair bid it:

W	N	E	S
		1♣ ¹	P
1♥	P	2♠	P
3NT	P	6♦	All Pass

¹ 1♣ = Forcing

I could only get in touch with one of the pairs that actually bid the correct slam and they bid it like this:

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

² 2♥ = 2/1
² 4NT = RKCB

Amazing how one board can spark so many different bidding options!

Is it wrong to say that, despite taking a thorough mauling all weekend, I thrived on the sheer adrenaline of it? It was an absolutely wonderful experience to compete against some of the finest women players in the country for such an extended period of time. We were delighted to win two matches and thoroughly enjoyed the entire experience, made even better by our teammates Rachel Connellan and Fiona O'Gorman,



who were a real pleasure to play with. Rachel brought a positive, uplifting vibe, while Fiona brought a sense of calmness that we truly needed.

What we didn't realise about the pre-trials was that those fortunate enough to progress to the trials would receive coaching afterwards. Dermot O'Brien got in touch and provided a list of potential coaches to choose from. Anna and I discussed it, but neither of us really knew who to select. Dermot also mentioned that if we had an alternative suggestion, he would see if it could be arranged. One evening, while chatting on the phone with a friend, she asked whether we'd made any progress in choosing a coach. I said we hadn't, but then I suddenly blurted out a name and asked if she thought he might agree. She immediately replied that it was a fantastic idea and was sure he would. I put the suggestion to Anna, and she was completely on board. The man in question is none other than the backbone of bridge in this country and everyone's favourite TD, Fearghal O'Boyle. We've warned Fearghal that he has his work cut out for him, but we're really looking forward to seeing whether he can help us take our game to the next level.



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Teltscher Trials [Senior Camrose] 2026

Enda Glynn



Exhibit A

Dealer North. Vul N/S.

♠ K764			
♥ KJ4			
♦ QJ6			
♣ Q62			
♠ Q83	N	♠ A952	
♥ AQ5	W	♥ 863	
♦ A982	E	♦ K75	
♣ J73	S	♣ AK10	
		♠ J10	
		♥ 10972	
		♦ 1043	
		♣ 9853	

My partner Gay Keaveney playing North dodged a bullet on this hand. Playing a weak notrump and holding twelve high card points he chose to pass. His policy is to pass all flat 12 point hands when vulnerable. If North opens a weak notrump and E/W find a double they will score plus 1100 on best defence. Disciplined and sensible bidding will avoid disaster.

Tip: Playing a weak notrump when vulnerable it is recommended to pass if holding twelve points and a flat hand.

Exhibit B

Dealer North. Vul N/S.

♠ J3			
♥ Q10762			
♦ J5			
♣ QJ85			
♠ 872	N	♠ AKQ105	
♥ K953	W	♥ -	
♦ 1094	E	♦ AKQ872	
♣ K73	S	♣ A9	
		♠ 964	
		♥ AJ84	
		♦ 63	
		♣ 10642	

W	N	E	S
	P	2♣	P
2♦	P	3♦	P
3NT	P	7♦	All Pass

Donal Garvey as East judged wisely on this hand. After a 2♣ opening and a 2♦ holding response Donal bid 3♦. After partner's 3NT response he chose to bid 7♦. He believed 3NT showed some useful cards and accordingly punted 7♦. There is nothing to the play. Bidding and making 7♦ was worth a lot of imps.

Exhibit C

Dealer East. Vul None.

♠ 4			
♥ J942			
♦ Q653			
♣ 9852			
♠ AQ86	N	♠ K1098	
♥ 853	W	♥ AKQ1076	
♦ A1098	E	♦ 7	
♣ A7	S	♣ Q4	
		♠ J732	
		♥ -	
		♦ KJ42	
		♣ KJ1073	

This was an interesting slam or grand slam hand. At our table East opened 2♣ and eventually became declarer in 7♠. South was on lead and has a difficult choice. The best lead for the defence is a diamond and declarer must be at his best to bring home thirteen tricks. A diamond ruff is required at trick two and declarer needs to finesse correctly in spades to pick up South's four to the jack. A heart finesse is subsequently required - all of which is an unlikely play. 7♠ played by West will go down on a heart lead. Bidding and making six of a major on this hand will be a good day's work.

Exhibit D

Dealer West. Vul All.

♠ K10			
♥ KJ52			
♦ 542			
♣ 10764			
♠ A75	N	♠ J543	
♥ 97	W	♥ Q1086	
♦ AJ76	E	♦ K	
♣ Q953	S	♣ AKJ8	
		♠ Q986	
		♥ A43	
		♦ Q10983	
		♣ 2	

West declares 3NT after North leads a low heart. South wins the ♥A and switches to a low spade. North wins the King and declarer wins the spade return with the Ace. Declarer continues with a heart and after North plays low the ♥10 in dummy wins the trick. Declarer now cashes the ♦K [key play] followed by four winning clubs ending in dummy. South has to find three discards and is in difficulty. Declarer exits on a spade and South is without recourse. A diamond finesse will secure the 9th trick for declarer. In our match both declarers found the winning play.

Exhibit E

Dealer North. Vul N/S.

♠ A103			
♥ Q3			
♦ KQ82			
♣ KJ84			
♠ QJ	N	♠ 987652	
♥ J10742	W	♥ K985	
♦ J107	E	♦ -	
♣ 1063	S	♣ A95	
		♠ K4	
		♥ A6	
		♦ A96543	
		♣ Q62	

W	N	E	S
	1♣	P	1♦
P	2♦	P	2♠
P	2NT	P	3NT
All Pass			



Frequently in a NT contract the lead should be coming round to the player who holds the Queen rather than the lead going through the Queen. South's 2♠ rebid paves the way for North to declare a NT contract. Because of the favourable spade position there are ten top tricks in NT, twelve played by North. 6♦ is a lucky make as the ♥J lead will put it under pressure. Bidding and making 6♦ was worth a lot of imps in practice.

Exhibit F

Dealer North. Vul N/S.

			♠ K93
			♥ A7652
			♦ K7
			♣ Q63
♠ AQJ106	N	♠ 8	
♥ Q8	W	♥ KJ109	
♦ 1097	E	♦ 10842	
♣ 953	S	♣ 8542	
		♠ 7542	
		♥ 43	
		♦ AQJ6	
		♣ AKJ	

W	N	E	S
	1♥	P	2♦
P	2♥	P	2NT
P	3NT	All Pass	

This was a vital board towards the end of the competition. N/S were playing the 1♠ response over 1♥ as showing four or less spades and a maximum of eleven points. South therefore made a game forcing bid of 2♦. North's rebid of 2♥ could possibly be made on a five-card suit. South's next bid of 2NT showed two hearts. North raised to 3NT. The bidding worked out unfortunately for N/S as North became declarer in 3NT at all the other tables.

West led the ♠Q. To make the contract declarer must rise with the ♠K on the first or second round [West will continue ♠J at trick 2]. South failed to do so and N/S lost twelve imps on the board. When North is declarer there are only eight top tricks but a spade to the King will yield the 9th. Sometimes too much science can be a hindrance.

The winning team was Ranald Milne, B.J.O'Brien, Peter Goodman and Terry Walsh with 41.1 VPs. Paul Porteous' outfit scored 35.6 and we had 35.4.



Teltscher Trials Winners: Peter Goodman, Ranald Milne, Terry Walsh and BJ O'Brien.



Master Declarer Play

Rory Timlin



This is the second article in a new series on Defence and Declarer Play. It is aimed at aspiring Master players and Masters who want to keep sharp.

We present here six Play Problems. In each case, South is declarer. Assume it is IMPs scoring.

Questions:

(1) West dealer, Game All. You play in 4♥ after West opens 1♠.

West leads ♠K, then ♠A, then ♠J. East play ♠3, ♠2, ♥6. Plan the play.

North	
♠ 975	
♥ AQ73	
♦ K74	
♣ AQ2	
South	
♠ Q4	
♥ J10542	
♦ A106	
♣ K94	

(2) North dealer, E/W Vul, no opposition bidding.

North opens 1♦ and you play in 4♠. West leads ♣Q. How do you proceed?

North	
♠ A102	
♥ 754	
♦ AJ873	
♣ A3	
South	
♠ KQJ863	
♥ A86	
♦ 65	
♣ 84	

(3) North dealer, N/S Vul. After East overcalls 1♥, you get overboard to 6♠.

West leads ♥2. Plan the play.

North	
♠ 3	
♥ A76	
♦ J3	
♣ AK98432	
South	
♠ AKQJ109	
♥ 9543	
♦ KQ7	
♣ -	

(4) South dealer, Nil All. With no opposition bidding, it goes 1♠-2♣-3♣-4♠.

West leads ♥6. (They lead 4th highest). Plan the play. Trumps are 2/2. East has four clubs.

North	
♠ AJ75	
♥ 103	
♦ K84	
♣ A632	
South	
♠ KQ1042	
♥ A4	
♦ 652	
♣ KQ4	

(5) West dealer, E/W Vul.

W	N	E	S
1♠	2♣	2♦	4♥
4♣	X	5♦	5♥
All Pass			

West leads ♣7. Plan the play.

North	
♠ K7653	
♥ 4	
♦ 106	
♣ AKQ109	
South	
♠ -	
♥ KQJ98765	
♦ 5	
♣ J532	

(6) East dealer, Nil All. South opens 1♦, West doubles and N/S get all the way to an ambitious 6♦.

West leads ♣A, then ♣K. Plan the play. (Trumps are 2/2.).

North	
♠ 652	
♥ AQ73	
♦ K72	
♣ J62	
South	
♠ AQ8	
♥ K65	
♦ AQJ1065	
♣ 9	

Answers:

(1) The full layout was:

♠ 975					
♥ AQ73					
♦ K74					
♣ AQ2					
♠ AKJ1086	N			♠ 32	
♥ K98				♥ 6	
♦ QJ9	W	E		♦ 8532	
♣ J		S		♣ 1087653	
♠ Q4					
♥ J10542					
♦ A106					
♣ K94					

The winning line is to discard a losing diamond. Then the trumps can be picked up without loss. If declarer errs by overruffing at trick 3, then a trump and a diamond will be lost later, thus flooring the contract.



Answers:

(2) The full layout was:

		♠A102		
		♥754		
		♦AJ873		
		♣A3		
♠975	N		E	♠4
♥K103	W			♥QJ92
♦42				♦KQ109
♣QJ1076	S			♣K952
		♠KQJ863		
		♥A86		
		♦65		
		♣84		

The best line is to win in dummy and duck a diamond. Say East wins and cashes ♣K and exits in hearts. Win ♥A, cash ♠K, all following, and play a diamond to the ace and ruff a diamond high. Play a trump to dummy. Ruff another diamond high and play a trump to dummy and cash the fifth diamond. Contract made.

Some traps to avoid:

- (a) Don't duck the opening lead, as a heart switch is fatal,
- (b) Don't play ace and another diamond, you will end up an entry short when diamonds are 4/2,
- (c) Don't come to hand with a trump in order to duck a diamond, as another trump now by the defence upsets the entries.

(3) The full layout was:

		♠3		
		♥A76		
		♦J3		
		♣AK98432		
♠7654	N		E	♠82
♥2	W			♥KQJ108
♦A10852				♦964
♣1065	S			♣QJ7
		♠AKQJ109		
		♥9543		
		♦KQ7		
		♣-		

To make 12 tricks, you need clubs 3/3 and West to hold ♦A. Win ♥A, cash ♠AK, discarding ♦KQ. Then ruff a club, draw trumps and lead ♦7. The best West can do is play ♦A and surrender. Lucky you.

(4) The full layout was:

		♠AJ75		
		♥103		
		♦K84		
		♣A632		
♠63	N		E	♠98
♥Q9762	W			♥KJ85
♦Q1073				♦AJ9
♣108	S			♣J975
		♠KQ1042		
		♥A4		
		♦652		
		♣KQ4		

Play ♥10 from dummy. When East covers, let it win. Say a heart is returned. Win the heart, draw trumps and play on clubs. If clubs are 3/3 you are home, but East has four clubs. Play a fourth round of clubs, discarding a diamond from hand. Now East is endplayed to concede the 10th trick. A nice avoidance play.

Note that it would be careless to play low from dummy at trick one, as East may apply the Rule of Eleven and duck. Now West may find a switch to ♦Q or ♦10 to beat the contract. Also note that if West has four clubs, then it is best to ruff the fourth club and lead a diamond, hoping West plays low, in which case playing ♦8 from dummy will again endplay East.

(5) The full layout was:

		♠K7653		
		♥4		
		♦106		
		♣AKQ109		
♠AQJ1084	N		E	♠92
♥A32	W			♥10
♦Q43				♦AKJ9872
♣7	S			♣864
		♠-		
		♥KQJ98765		
		♦5		
		♣J532		

The lead is probably a singleton. Win in dummy. Lead ♠K and discard ♦5, a Scissors Coup, severing the defenders' communications and preventing the club ruff. Contract made.

(6) The full layout was:

		♠652		
		♥AQ73		
		♦K72		
		♣J62		
♠KJ7	N		E	♠10943
♥J1092	W			♥84
♦83				♦94
♣AKQ10	S			♣87543
		♠AQ8		
		♥K65		
		♦AQJ1065		
		♣9		

There are just 10 top tricks, with one more if hearts are 3/3, and a likely squeeze on West in the black suits to follow for the 12th trick, as West will hold all or almost all of the high cards (for his double). What if West holds four hearts? Now a triple squeeze (in spades, hearts and clubs) comes into the picture. So ruff at trick 2, draw trumps (they break 2/2), cash two more trumps, cash ♥Q and ♥K, and play the last trump, discarding two spades from dummy.

When the last trump is led, this is the likely layout:

		♠65		
		♥A7		
		♦-		
		♣J		
♠KJ	N		E	Irrelevant
♥J10	W			
♦-				
♣Q	S			
		♠AQ8		
		♥5		
		♦6		
		♣-		

On the lead of ♦6, West is squeezed in three suits and will be squeezed again shortly in two suits. 12 tricks made.

Can anything go wrong with the squeeze? Yes, you may have to decide which Major suit West has unguarded. If West started with four spades and three hearts, he does best to keep a heart and ♠Kx in the five card ending, having discarded ♠J along the way. Now the triple squeeze falls apart if you try to fell the spade king.

Note that declarer cannot misread the ending if anyone has discarded a heart. And the contract will fail in the unlikely event (on the bidding) that East holds four hearts or ♠Q.



Laws and Ethics

Jim Doyle



Can you bid after your partner has made an obvious hesitation?

The issue of bidding after a hesitation by partner is not well understood by many bridge players. Some take partner's break in tempo as an encouragement to bid again with their reasoning being "I was always going to bid again with my hand". Some of my previous articles dealt with instances of this common occurrence. As a rule, the bid made by the hesitator's partner was not allowed to stand.

Some players who have a slight knowledge of the rules will sometimes, after an opponent hesitates, be quite quick to tell their opponent's partner that they can't bid again. This is not necessarily the case.

If there is an issue at the table, the best option is always to call the director.

This hand came up recently in a Congress. North, playing five-card Majors and Strong NT, opened 1♥. East overcalled 1♠. South, with a known 10-card fit immediately bid STOP 4♥.

[Reminder: The STOP card should be placed on the table before you make any jump bid and should stay there for about ten seconds. The next player may not bid until it is removed].

Even if a player forgets to use the stop card, the next player should still wait about ten seconds after their right hand opponent has made a jump bid.

Dealer North. Vul N/S.

		♠ 75		
		♥ AKQ73		
		♦ KJ6		
		♣ KJ3		
♠ Q8	N		♠ AKJ10963	
♥ 102			♥ 6	
♦ A1043	W	E	♦ 75	
♣ Q9642			♣ A87	
	S			
		♠ 42		
		♥ J9854		
		♦ Q982		
		♣ 105		

After the mandatory 10 seconds the West player still but did not know what to do. Eventually they passed. North passed and East bid 4♠.

What should happen next? Reserve your rights as North-South!

NOTE: A player is entitled to "reserve his rights" to summon the Director later when he suspects unauthorised information may have been made available by his opponents. The opponents should summon the Director immediately if they dispute the claim. It is better to summon the Director anyway if he is non-playing. This reserving of rights is primarily to establish that the unauthorised information occurred, ie that there was a break in tempo during the bidding.

So Director was called, facts were established, no disagreement over the hesitation by West. Director told us to play on and he would look at the hand. East had no problem making 4♠.

Part of the relevant rule states that a player may not choose a call or play that is demonstrably suggested over another by unauthorised information if the other call or play is a logical alternative. A logical alternative is an action that a significant proportion of the class of players in question, using the methods of the partnership, would seriously consider, and some might select.

By the time play had concluded the director was back and confirmed that, after consultation with the other director present, the 4♠ bid was being allowed to stand, i.e. both directors (two of Ireland's finest TDs and incidentally both of a higher standard than any of the four players at the table) were in agreement that a significant proportion of players of East's standard would bid 4♠ without any hesitation by partner.

Having seen East's hand by this stage, no one was inclined to dispute that. East can see that if 4♥ is making then 4♠ will be a good sacrifice. In other words, Pass was not deemed to be a Logical Alternative for East. If it had been, he would have been obliged to Pass.

Tralee International Bridge Congress 2026

Nicky Fitzgibbon



Bridge, Learning and Community at the Heart of Kerry

It is with great pleasure that I invite bridge players from across Ireland to the Tralee International Bridge Congress 2026, taking place at The Rose Hotel, Tralee, from Friday 24th to Sunday 26th April 2026.

The Congress once again promises a weekend that blends competitive bridge, learning, and community, welcoming players of all grades in a relaxed and friendly setting.

A Congress Built Around Learning and Participation

The Tralee Congress has always placed strong emphasis on creating an environment where players can both compete and learn, and this year's programme reflects that philosophy throughout. A full schedule of Open, Intermediate and Novice events runs across the weekend, ensuring that every player can take part at a level that suits their experience.

A key highlight of the weekend will be the involvement of Grand Master Donal Garvey, who will lead a hand discussion session on Saturday morning, analysing hands from the previous evening's play. Donal's ability to illuminate the game – not just through results, but through thoughtful reflection on bidding, play and decision-making – has made him one of the most respected and approachable figures in Irish bridge.

Many readers will have enjoyed Donal's personal journey, published in the Winter 2025 Bridge Journal, which traced his lifelong engagement with the game – from early exposure at the kitchen table in Millstreet, through national

and international success, to his enduring belief in bridge as a game of learning, discipline and enjoyment. That same perspective informs his contribution in Tralee, where his focus is as much on understanding and improvement as it is on technical excellence.

Encouraging the Next Generation of Players

A strong and deliberate emphasis has again been placed on novice bridge development, reflecting a wider North Munster initiative to support newer players and encourage progression within congress bridge. Dedicated novice competitions will run alongside events for more experienced players, allowing novices to compete in a supportive and confidence-building environment.

This initiative is being actively promoted by North Munster President Kay Cussen, whose aim is to ensure that players new to the game feel welcome, supported, and encouraged to remain involved. By providing clear pathways and appropriate competitions, the Tralee Congress continues to play an important role in nurturing the next generation of bridge players in the region.

Bridge and Community

Community involvement remains central to bridge in North Munster and beyond. As part of wider regional activities, Kay Cussen will also host the North Munster President's Charity Bridge Event on Sunday 10th May at 2.30pm, in the Desmond Complex, Newcastle West, Co. Limerick. Proceeds from the event will support Milford Hospice Limerick and also the Friends of St Ita's Hospital in Newcastle West, combining an

enjoyable afternoon of bridge with meaningful fundraising for two much-valued charities.

Within the Tralee Congress itself, a Charity Open Pairs event in aid of Meals on Wheels Kerry will take place on Sunday evening, further underlining the Congress's strong connection to the local community.

Part of a Vibrant National Bridge Calendar

The Tralee International Bridge Congress forms part of a thriving national bridge calendar, and players are encouraged to support congresses throughout the country. Notable events in 2026 include the Clonmel Congress, taking place from 27th to 29th March at the Talbot Hotel (Clonmel Park), and the Killarney Bridge Congress, scheduled for 12th to 14th June at the Castlerosse Park Resort.

Together, these events highlight the continued strength, enthusiasm, and sense of community within Irish bridge.

Join Us in Tralee

Set in the heart of Tralee, The Rose Hotel once again provides an excellent venue, offering comfort, accessibility and a warm welcome to players and guests alike. With a balanced programme of competition, learning opportunities led by one of Ireland's most respected bridge figures, and a strong commitment to inclusivity and community, the Tralee International Bridge Congress 2026 promises an enjoyable and rewarding weekend for all.

Full programme details and entry information are available via Bridgelreland.com, or by contacting us at tralee@bridgeireland.com.

We look forward to welcoming you to Tralee Friday 24th to Sunday 26th April 2026.



Bridgeland.com

TRALEE INTERNATIONAL BRIDGE CONGRESS 2026

Dates: April 24th – 26th 2026 (Fri-Sun)

Venue: The Rose Hotel Tralee, Co. Kerry

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All competitions are subject to sufficient entries. The Congress Committee reserves the right to amend the schedule, rules, or format of any event at its absolute discretion.

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Tralee, Co. Kerry, Ireland.



Club & Group Offers Available for BRIDGE

0872126040 (Nicky Fitzgibbon)

My Life in Bridge

Derek O’Gorman



My bridge playing life started in 1984 following about six months on crutches; I discovered that yes motorbikes are very dangerous. Little did I know how much a part of my life bridge would become.

Introduction/Cork Bridge Club

I started playing in Cork with Ger MacSweeney. We joined Cork Bridge Club and played in the Beginners section. After a few months we graduated to the main club which included many very accomplished senior players.

The following year I met Denis McGrath who was the most influential person in Cork at the time in terms of developing young players. Denis generously gave freely of his time. He had about six of us under his wing, and proved to be a great teacher and mentor. Denis was the one that helped develop my interest in the game, notwithstanding my very competitive streak which remains to this day. I was hooked at this stage!

There was also a very active bridge club in UCC in the mid 80s. I gave one set of lessons there and managed to get a few interested in the game. That proved to be my only venture in teaching bridge. I was also Tournament Director one year for the Inter Varsities in Cork; my only venture as TD.

Friday night was the open night for Cork Bridge Club, and 10+ tables was a weekly event. At the time there would be somewhere between 20 and 30 players under the age of 30. The Friday night was likely to finish at anytime on the Saturday morning with keenly contested games of rubber bridge (and some heated bridge discussions) continuing for hours.

A great training ground. This continued to the late 80s, when some of the ‘students’ left to start their careers. The takings in the Cork Bridge Club bar also suffered significantly.

Around 1985, I started playing with Hugh McGann. We quickly established a very competitive partnership, and enjoyed much success at local and national level. We won national intermediate A and B events before progressing to the senior level. We won the Master Senior pairs in 1990. We played in the Open Trials together in 1989, 1990 and 1991. The Trials in 1990 were played on a pairs basis. Donal Garvey and Micheál O Briain won, we were second, with Pat Barry and the late David Jackson in third place. We represented Ireland and played in the World Pairs in Geneva (which I will return to), followed by the Rosenblum with Donal and Micheál. By 1990 I was overage for Junior bridge. Hugh continued to play Junior with Tom Hanlon and proceeded to enjoy incredible success both nationally and internationally.

Congresses/National Competitions

One year Hugh McGann and I had booked a guest house in Athlone for an event. We arrived at the guest house to discover our room had already been given to two other Cork men by mistake, so we had to make alternative arrangements. It transpired one of the two Cork men was none other than Monty Rosenberg, who happily told us yes he had said he was from Cork. It didn’t say much for the owner in terms of recognising a Cork accent!

Over the years I have won 23 national senior competitions with various different partners. As part of these successes Terry Walsh and I won several national competitions, an Open Trials and two Camrose Trials.

One success I particularly enjoyed was winning the Holmes Wilson in 2011. I was a very late addition to play with Mark Moran, along with teammates Thomas MacCormac and Peter Pigot. We had a great game from start to finish.



Congress Teams Winners: Donal Garvey, Cian Holland, Pat Quinn, and Derek O’Gorman, with prizes presented by North Munster CBAI President Maureen Pattinson and Congress President Pat Fitzgibbon.



Winners of Duais an Úachtaráin 2022
BJ O'Brien & Derek O'Gorman

I have been on the winning Kelburne team on four occasions. My teammates have all been members of Cork BC so that has really added to the thrill of winning. Past and present teammates (victims) have included Rory Boland, the late Anne and Denis Dillon, Cian Holland, Ciaran Coyne, Tom McCarthy and John Russell.

The Interpros event every November is a very enjoyable event. Having played for Munster on many occasions over the years, I am very fortunate to have won it as a playing captain and also as a player. In more recent years, the addition of two additional categories (Master and Intermediate) means far more players get to enjoy the atmosphere. On a general note, I think the change to Trim as a venue was a success. It is the one event where there is no prize money, yet everybody wants to play and earn the bragging rights.

In 2020 during Covid there were two online swiss teams events organised by Diarmuid Reddan which attracted a lot of interest with a very high standard. I won one and was second in the other playing with Louise Mitchell; competing directly with the Moran team. Our teammates across both events were Dan Macintosh, Donal MacAonghusa, Tommy Garvey, Pat Quinn, Donal Garvey, Pádraig and Micheál O Briain.

Junior Bridge

I played in Junior Trials in 1987, 1988 and 1989. I qualified on the team in 88 and 89, playing with Hugh McGann. We finished 9th of 21 countries in the Junior Europeans in Bulgaria in 1988. Brian Senior was our NPC and did a great job. Brian's approach was that if we won a match, then the pair sitting out bought a drink. If we lost a match, the four players who played bought a drink. If we drew, Brian bought the drinks. Not too many draws in junior bridge! The event was held in Plovdiv, and we spent a few days in Varna on the Black Sea before the event to acclimatise. A most enjoyable trip for all.

The following year we played in Belgium. Again very enjoyable, but the results were not quite as good.

In 1990 I was overage so I travelled with the team to Neumunster in Northern Germany as Coach. Gay Keaveney was NPC. In our wisdom,

we got the ferry from Dublin to Holyhead, then drove to the South of England, ferry to Belgium, and then drove to Germany. Not the best preparation, but again a most enjoyable trip. I drew the short straw so I was the designated driver for the entire return trip.

International competitions

Having come second with Hugh in the Open Trials (Pairs) in 1990, we played in the World Pairs in Geneva later that year. We played 14 sessions over seven days, comprising a five session qualifier, a four session semi final and a five session final. Hugh and I finished in 51st position overall from an original entry of 538 pairs. We met Rixi Markus during the event, and played against some very well known players including Benito Garozzo and Zia Mahmood.

Hugh had to return to Ireland for one day during the event, so I was allowed play two sessions of the semi final with Pat Barry. This was a first time partnership. We scored well against the eventual winners Branco and Chagas from Brazil. We had a great game, and finished over average for the two sessions against some world class pairs.

I played with Terry, BJ and Peter Pigot in the Open Trials in 2010. We narrowly won an 80 board final. Thomas MacCormac played some of the boards during the final as a sub for BJ, and later travelled with the team to Belgium as NPC. Pádraig and Micheál O Briain joined the team as the third pair for the Europeans. We started very well in the main event in Belgium, but unfortunately did not keep up the momentum.

I have played in three Camrose Trophy events, which included winning the Trials twice. I played with Terry Walsh for these events, and teammates included BJ O'Brien, Ranald Milne, Pádraig and Micheál O Briain, the late Pat Walshe, Adam Mesbur, Tommy Garvey, John Carroll, James Heneghan, the late Michael McDonagh, Gay Keaveney and Enda Glynn. We finished second in the Camrose in 2021.



CBAI President Gordon Lessells with Limerick Congress Teams winners (L-R):
Derek O'Gorman, Dan MacIntosh, Louise Mitchell and B.J. O'Brien.



Terry and I won the then three session European Pairs qualifier in 1997, and went to The Hague in the Netherlands. I also played in the European Transnational event in Strasbourg two years ago, and missed qualification to the knock out stages by two imps. I played with Peter Pigot, Ciaran Coyne and David Walsh. This type of event is a great opportunity if you are looking for international experience. Other events I played over the years included the Bonn Teams in Germany and the Chairman's Cup in Sweden. These types of events are a great opportunity if you are looking for international experience.

In more recent years, I have played Open/Camrose Trials with BJ, Ciaran Coyne and Peter Pigot.

I am playing in the final of the Mixed Trials next week with Aoife Machale, Carol-Ann Cummins and John Noonan so fingers crossed. The prize being the Europeans in Riga in June this year,

NPC

My journey as an NPC started with a phone call one evening from the late Michael McDonagh where he asked if I would act as NPC for the Irish Senior Team in for the European Senior Bridge Championship in Opatija, Croatia in 2014. It was a seven-day event, where we were fourth after six days. We lost two of three matches on the last day,

so we finished seventh (top six qualify automatically for the World Seniors, the D'Orsi Bowl). 26 countries competed in this event. A few weeks before the world championships in Chennai India, we got the call to offer us a place in the event in 2015. We played in a seven day round robin against the other 21 countries, where we finished third. The top eight teams then proceeded to a knock out event. We played a 96 board quarter final over two days against USA2 and lost by 25 imps. A very narrow defeat, and the end of a really successful tournament. We had a 30 minute taxi ride from our hotel to the bridge venue every day, where I quickly learnt that a three lane road could accommodate eight lanes of traffic at any time. A most enjoyable experience overall.

I was NPC for subsequent European Senior Championships in 2018, 2021 (online) and 2022 (Madeira). We finished fourth in Ostende, Belgium in 2018 which meant qualification for the D'Orsi Bowl in Wuhan, China in 2019. In Belgium we played 21 matches and finished 4 VPs behind 3rd and 9 VPs behind 2nd. Fine margins!!

We didn't start particularly well in 2021 or 2022, and never got any real momentum going so we did not feature in these events. Nonetheless, always an honour to be part of an Irish team playing in an international event.

The trip to Wuhan was a great experience. Our hotel also had one floor dedicated as a maternity unit. While I was not aware of the existence of Wuhan before the event, the whole world knew about Wuhan by early the following year!!

I have been NPC for six Teltscher [Senior Camrose] events, which included one win. We were in pole position last year in City North Hotel with one match remaining. A poor last match ended our chances of winning. A disappointing outcome, but always an enjoyable event played in a great spirit.

One of these fine days I will get to play in this event. The World Bridge Federation seem to have settled on age 65 for Senior bridge. I always thought it a strange decision to reduce the number of eligible players in an event, but there you go.

I have been NPC for two Camrose events, one of which I shared with the late Michael McGloughlin.

This equates to NPC for four Europeans, two World Championships, six Teltscher Trophies and two Camrose Trophies (so far!)

Conclusion

What started out as an interest in playing cards has developed a life of its own. It has been a magnificent journey, with hopefully many more turns to take. I have met so many fantastic people, and made so many great friends. Here's to more of the same.



Congress Pairs Winners: Rory Boland and Derek O'Gorman, presented with the Marie Fleming Trophy by CBAI President Catherine Byrne and Congress President Pat Fitzgibbon.



Davidson Cup 2026 Winners: Cian Holland and Derek O'Gorman.



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My Bridge Journey Continues

Nicola O'Dowd



“Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I learn.” - Benjamin Franklin

In my role this season as President of the North Eastern Region and County Development Officer for Meath, I've tried to visit and play in as many clubs as I can. Every club is different, but the one thing they all have in common is that they care about keeping the game going. And what I've noticed is that a lot of clubs are doing great things, but some are doing it quietly and they might not realise how much another club could learn from it. The more we talk, the more we all pick up.

We are not in competition with each other. Strong clubs lift up the clubs around them. We're all trying to keep bridge alive and well. Sometimes the best thing you can do is pick up the phone and say, "Here's what worked for us, do you think it would be an advantage in your club?"

When I was starting out, I was very lucky to have some help. Declan Byrne didn't just teach me how to play bridge he also helped me with the admin side of things. Things like setting up basic movements, moving from paper scoring to Bridgemates, and in the other club from paper to tablets. It was all completely new to me at the time, and having someone show me the ropes made those early steps a lot less daunting. It makes such a difference just having someone to ask. When someone takes the time to show you a few things, it makes everything feel that bit less overwhelming.

Declan's favourite saying to me was "Give a man a fish, and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish, and you feed him for a lifetime" it's one of the reasons I

try to do the same for others now. It's not just about giving advice. It's about showing people how things work so they feel confident doing it themselves. Whether it's showing someone how to run a session, letting them watch while the movement is being set up, or having a folder with clear instructions how to turn on the computer, load the boards, where the bidding boxes are kept all of that matters. The more people who know how things work, the less pressure there is on the same few doing everything

Support can be shared in different forms, it is not always hands on, sometimes it's just a chat with a secretary, sometimes it's giving a bit of advice, and other times it's about putting people in touch with the right help. Sharing information helps clubs grow.

There are loads of examples of this in my own region. I started using a clock at my games when I started tournament directing. I wasn't sure how players would take to it, but I explained not only does it help the slow players move on, but it stops the fast, experienced players from finishing early and rushing players at the next table. I find people actually liked it. It helps keep things moving and avoids delays between rounds, now I've noticed more clubs have introduced it too.

It's the same with things like NBIDs. I brought them into my own club so that players would just have one number for results and masterpoints. At the start, a few weren't happy about having to remember a five-digit number instead of the usual two or three, but they got used to it fairly quick. When I suggested it might be worth encouraging more widely, I was told, "It's up to each club." That was that. It was a bit disappointing,

to be honest, but I didn't push it. And now, a year or two later, other clubs around us have started doing the same and it's made a big difference. Players are delighted they only have to remember one number no matter where they go.

Another way clubs support each other is by helping players feel confident especially around table etiquette. We're seeing more and more newer players joining clubs straight from lessons or smaller social games, which is great. But often, they just haven't been shown some of the basic etiquette. It's not that they're rude, they just don't know. I always compare it to golf (even though I don't play it!) - if no one tells you not to walk on someone's line, you'll keep doing it. Bridge is the same. People learn by being shown, not by being given out to. When players know what's expected, they walk into the next club or congress with confidence. That makes all the difference.

But it's not just about etiquette. Helping players feel confident at the table also means giving them chances to learn and improve. The members want lessons to improve their own game, and the committees want lessons to help grow the club. Clubs need somewhere to send their members or someone to come in and teach. I've seen that first-hand this year from visiting clubs around the region. In Trim, I approached the local school and arranged to get a teacher in to run beginners' classes at the adult education evenings. In a couple of other clubs, we brought teachers down to do improver lessons. It doesn't have to be complicated sometimes it's just about making a phone call and finding a time that suits. Reach out to local teachers and try to work around their schedule. And



for rural clubs who mightn't have a teacher nearby, we're lucky in Ireland to have great online options for both beginners and improvers, getting lessons online and then playing in their local clubs in person. Between the two, there's nearly always something that can work. It's one of the best ways to support new players and bring new life into a club.

And the same goes for the clubs themselves. Just like individual players, some clubs need support to build confidence. They might be managing small numbers or suddenly dealing with a packed room and not sure how to handle it. In smaller clubs, a two-winner movement just isn't realistic financially or practically. Thanks to the TD training I've done, and the advice I've picked up along the way, I've been able to suggest different types of movements that suit the size of the club. On the other hand, I've had clubs get in touch when they're growing looking for help splitting the room, adjusting movements, or figuring out how to seat 13 tables instead of 9. Those kinds of small changes can be the difference between a smooth night and a stressful one. Or even between a profit and a loss.

That's why sharing knowledge matters so much. The CBAI run tournament director courses, and now some regions are offering their own too, which is brilliant. But even with that, it's often not the official training that clubs struggle with, it's the everyday stuff. Things like the Wi-Fi not working. Someone walking in just after you've started the movement. The server dropping out of the laptop. The laptop powering off mid-game. All the things that go wrong on the night and throw you off. That's the kind of stuff you only learn by doing it or by picking up the phone to someone who's dealt with it before.

The truth is, the CBAI can't be expected to go into every club and walk them through the ins and outs of running a weekly game. That's where the rest of us come in and

it only works if people are willing to help each other. You don't have to know everything. But it makes a big difference if people feel comfortable asking you something. That kind of openness builds trust between clubs. It leads to clubs backing each other's events and offering advice without it feeling like criticism.

I've also seen the opposite - clubs in the same town not speaking to each other, ignoring charity nights, not turning up to support one another. And honestly, that does nobody any favours. Because in the end, we're all trying to do the same thing, run a good game, make people feel welcome, and keep bridge going strong. That's why it makes a difference when someone puts in the effort to keep clubs connected. Seamus Costello, our regional secretary, has been great for that sending out flyers, passing on updates, and making sure clubs know what's going on across the region. It might not seem like much, but it makes it easier for clubs to support each other. And that's really what matters having people in roles who actually do the work. There's no point in putting people on a committee just for the sake of it. It needs to be a working committee.

That kind of communication matters in other ways too, especially when it comes to funding.

A lot of clubs don't even realise there are grant schemes out there, or they hear about them and think, "Sure we wouldn't know where to start." But before you even fill in an application, you have to decide what you're applying for and that's usually where the real debate begins. Bridgemates? Tablets? A dealing machine? A new laptop? It's hard to know what makes sense until you look at your own setup; how many tables you run, and who's going to manage it on the night.

That's where talking to other clubs really helps. Hearing what worked for them and what didn't can save a lot of guesswork.

The County Development Officer can also help by pointing clubs in the direction of community, council or government funding that might be available, and letting them know about closing dates and criteria. But the real value is in clubs comparing notes and thinking it through before they apply. There's no one right answer. What suits one club mightn't suit another. But once the conversations start, it usually becomes much clearer.

Don't get me wrong, I certainly don't think I have all the answers, far from it. I've picked up bits here and there, and I've tried things that worked well in some places and not at all in others. That's just the way it goes. What I've really come to see is how important it is to have a mix of people involved. Newer members might bring energy or fresh ideas, but the people who've been there a long time have the kind of knowledge you can't replace. They know what's been tried before, what worked, and what didn't and that's every bit as valuable.

So just to finish where I started we are not in competition with each other. The more we talk, help each other, and pass things on, the stronger we all become. I think most clubs want the same thing, a good game, a full room, and players who come back next week. And the more we support each other with tips, equipment, advice, or even just listening the more likely we are to get there. If you've tried something that worked, tell someone. If you're stuck on something, ask. That's how we move forward. Bridge doesn't grow by chance it grows when we back each other. One club at a time.

P.S. I ended up sitting beside Tommy Garvey recently, someone who's played for Ireland, won international titles like the Camrose, the Lederer, and even a European Championship silver medal. He'd just won the Revington Cup Men's Pairs in Clane, and we got chatting at the end of the night I didn't even



realise who he was at first, I told him to excuse my ignorance that I was still fairly new to the scene and he said he reads my articles, that he enjoys my bridge journey. I nearly fell off the chair. Of course I told him about the Bridge Bash (how could I not?). We weren't swapping tips or sharing ideas or talking about clubs. But still, it reminded me, bridge really is a language of its own. You sit down, you play, you chat and it doesn't matter who you are. If you're in the world of bridge, you get it.

Oh and if you're wondering whether I twisted his arm about the Bridge Bash... you'll just have to come along and see for yourself.





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Answers to Test your Declarer Play

You are West as declarer, playing teams. What is your play strategy on each board?

Board 1 Dealer North. Vul All.

		♠ Q4		
		♥ K7		
		♦ K1086		
		♣ 96543		
♠ K83	N		♠ A106	
♥ AJ9	W	E	♥ 1052	
♦ A952			♦ QJ743	
♣ KJ9	S		♣ Q10	
		♠ J9752		
		♥ Q8643		
		♦ -		
		♣ A87		

W	N	E	S
	P	P	P
1♦ ¹	P	3♦ ²	P
3NT	All Pass		

¹ 1♦ = E/W play weak-notrump
² 3♦ = 10-11 HCP, four+ card support for diamonds

Opening Lead:

North leads the ♣6 against 3NT. South wins with the Ace and returns the suit. How do you plan the play?

The Play

Declarer should win in hand with the ♣K and lead a low diamond towards dummy. Regardless of which defender holding four cards in diamonds, this safety play will guarantee four tricks in the suit. If declarer had won trick two in dummy with the ♣Q in order to finesse the ♦Q, then on the above layout, North would win two diamond tricks and establish two more club winners to defeat the contract.

Board 2 Dealer East. Vul E/W

		♠ 7		
		♥ J109832		
		♦ 93		
		♣ AKJ6		
♠ AKJ82	N		♠ Q1064	
♥ 64	W	E	♥ AQ75	
♦ AJ5			♦ K	
♣ Q103	S		♣ 9742	
		♠ 953		
		♥ K		
		♦ Q1087642		
		♣ 85		

W	N	E	S
		P	P
1♠	2♥	3♥ ¹	P
4♠	All Pass		

¹ 3♥ = Unassuming cue-bid, 10+ HCP, four+ card support for spades

Opening Lead:

Against 4♠, North leads the ♠K followed by the ♣A and a low club. South ruffs the third round of clubs and exits with a trump. How do you plan the play?

The Play

Winning the trump switch in either hand, declarer should first unblock the ♦K, then return to hand with a trump to ruff the ♦J high in dummy. Declarer draws the outstanding trump(s) and cashes the ♦A before continuing trumps. When the last trump is played by declarer on trick eleven, North will have to keep the winning ♣J, and declarer will then discard the ♠9. On trick twelve, declarer will play a heart which North covers with the Jack. As North's last card in his hand is known to be the ♣J, declarer rises with the ♥A, dropping the singleton King in South's hand, the ♥Q is now declarer's tenth trick. This play is known as a 'Show-Up Squeeze'.



Board 3 Dealer South. Vul E/W.

		♠ 98		
		♥ 93		
		♦ J64		
		♣ A97542		
♠ QJ3	N		♠ A742	
♥ KQ84	W	E	♥ AJ1072	
♦ K87			♦ A1092	
♣ KJ3	S		♣ -	
		♠ K1065		
		♥ 65		
		♦ Q53		
		♣ Q1086		

W	N	E	S
1♥	P	4♣ ¹	P
4♥ ²	P	6♥ ³	All Pass

¹ 4♣ = Splinter in clubs, values for game
² 4♥ = Denies interest in slam
³ 6♥ = Small slam should have good play, despite no cue bid from opener

Opening Lead:

North leads the ♥3 against 6♥. At trick two, both defenders follow to a second round of trumps. How do you plan the play?

The Play

This hand (rotated for convenience) occurred in the second match of the third session in the recent Holmes Wilson competition, emphatically won by the team captained by Mark Moran. The 2-2 break in trumps allows declarer to take care of his three losing clubs, but how best does declarer avoid two losers in the pointed suits. One line of play for declarer is to finesse the ♠Q at trick four. Even if it loses to South, a 3-3 break in spades will enable declarer to discard a losing diamond from his hand. An alternative line of play after drawing trumps, is to lead a low spade from dummy towards the QJ3 in hand. If the ♠Q wins, declarer re-enters dummy with a club ruff to lead a spade towards the ♠J3. Whenever South takes the ♠K, declarer will unblock ♠J on the next trick and discard his losing diamond in hand on the ♠A. This alternative line wins whenever spades are 3-3 and also when South holds K10xx, K10xxx and K10xxxx. An opening spade lead from North, ducked in dummy, leads to a similar outcome.

Board 4 Dealer West. Vul All.

		♠ AQ742		
		♥ 1097		
		♦ 8		
		♣ Q765		
♠ 1085	N		♠ J6	
♥ AKJ82	W	E	♥ Q65	
♦ J752			♦ AK1094	
♣ 3	S		♣ A92	
		♠ K93		
		♥ 43		
		♦ Q63		
		♣ KJ1084		

W	N	E	S
			P
2♥ ¹	P	4♥	All Pass

¹ 2♥ = 'Muiderburg' showing 6 to 10 HCP with five+ card (bid) major and a four+ card minor.

Opening Lead:

North leads the ♦8 against 4♥ which you win in dummy with the King. How do you plan the play?

The Play

Counting your winners, you have five trumps, four diamonds and the club ace. What is the problem?

The opening diamond lead has all the hallmarks of a singleton. After winning the opening lead in dummy, declarer should draw two rounds of trumps ending in hand and lead a diamond towards dummy. If North ruffs with the outstanding trump, declarer just concedes two spade tricks. And if North discards on this trick, declarer wins in dummy with the Ace and concedes a trick to South with the ♦Q. On winning any return from South, declarer draws North's outstanding trump and claims ten tricks as originally counted. If declarer, instead of drawing two rounds of trumps, decided to lead spades from dummy, South may had had two entries in the spade suit to give North two diamond ruffs and defeat the contract. Also, if declarer switched to spades at trick four, the defence will play a third round of trumps to establish three spade winners along with the ♦Q to defeat the contract.



Bidding Quiz 12 - Results - Bob Pattinson

Question 1

Dealer West. Vul N/S. Teams.

- ♠ 73
- ♥ AKJ73
- ♦ Q53
- ♣ KQJ

W	N	E	S
1♦	P	1♥	P
2♦	P	2♠ ¹	P
3♣	P	?	

¹ 2♠=Bourke Relay: ART game force

West implies a 6-4 shape in the minors and you have useful support for both of these suits. Now 3♦ agrees trumps and initiates cue bids, whereas 4♦ is kickback asking for key cards with diamonds as trumps.

Which is the best way to advance?

Votes: 3♦=11

George 3♦: Set trumps and keep the level low. Keeps 3NT and all slams in the picture.

Anna 3♦: We are already in a game forcing situation.

Luca 3♦: We have all the time in the world. A spade cue from partner will see us on our way to 6♦.

Ciaran 3♦: As 2♠ was game forcing, I can show my fit and see what happens next.

Roy 3♦: As long as 2♠ was game forcing, I see no reason not to show diamond support, and maybe partner will get excited. Even if partner may have a difficult rebid I have confirmed I have a strong hand with trump support and slam interest.

Ian 3♦: Showing a strong hand with diamond support, and it is now up to partner to proceed.

Peter P 3♦: With x xx AKJzzz Axxx 6♦ is laydown, so a game forcing 3♦ hoping to hear a 3♣ cue bid.

Sally 3♦: Can't really think of an alternative.

Karel 3♦: Well let's show some diamond support with a fairly routine 3♦. Sounds like we may have two spade losers.

Diane 3♦: As the 2♠ is artificial showing extra values it is now time to support diamonds.

Matt 3♦: Setting the suit, sounds like partner maybe 6-4 minimum for not rebidding 2♠ directly. Ax spades maybe fine, spade with a singleton heart we have a quick pitch for the spade loser. Slam needs a lot of aces from partner, but 3♦ leaves a lot of room.

Summary

Unanimous start by the panel with 3♦ being the best bid for showing trump support and leaving plenty of bidding space for cue bidding

Dealer West. Vul N/S. Teams.

			♠A10852
			♥10852
			♦K
			♣1085
♠KJ	N		♠73
♥8			♥AKJ73
♦AJ10987	W	E	♦Q53
♣A643			♣KQJ
			♠Q964
			♥Q94
			♦642
			♣972

W	N	E	S
1♦	P	1♥	P
2♦	P	2♠ ¹	P
3♣	P	?	

¹ 2♠=Bourke Relay: ARF game force

Marks: 3D 10

Bidding Tip

- ▶ After a 4th suit forcing bid it is important to confirm any trump support directly so potential slam prospects can be explored starting at a relatively low level, thus allowing plenty of space for cue bidding.

Question 2

Dealer North. Vul None. Teams.

- ♠ Q1075
- ♥ QJ
- ♦ Q842
- ♣ 982

W	N	E	S
	1♦ ¹	P	1♠
P	1NT ²	P	?

¹ 1♦=4+
² 1NT=12-14

With seven soft points, including doubleton ♥QJ, do you pass or go via Gazzilli 2♣ forcing to 2♦, in order to stop in a potentially safer diamond part score?

Votes: Pass=7; 2♦=3; 2♣=1

George Pass: I was not invited to this party. So what if there is a diamond fit, it will probably be only four.

Roy Pass: Aiming for 2♦ is reasonable, but with no Aces or Kings I think it might be more prudent to aim at seven tricks instead of eight.

Luca Pass: All my tricks are slow, for example will the ♥QJ be useful? Opponents may have nine hearts and with half the points are likely to find a fit.

Karel Pass: Good hand. If vulnerable I bid 2♦ all the time as seven tricks will be hard, and maybe the opponents will find 2♥. Non-vulnerable we are talking 50s, so making 5/6 tricks is a reasonable goal with the opponents almost certainly having a compensating contract. Will be much harder for them to balance over 1NT.

Diane Pass: Frightened a bid of 2♦ would be more likely to tempt the opponents to compete with 2♥.

Peter P Pass: Could use a Gazzilli 2♣ with the automatic transfer to 2♦, and the lack of Aces or Kings to compete to 3♦ suggests Pass is best.



Ciaran Pass: If I tell them about our diamond fit the opponents might find their heart fit.

Sally 2♣: Gazzilli transfer to 2♦ which I will then pass.

Ian 2♦: Partner may have heart values, or even a suit, in which case our QJ will fit the bill nicely. However, this may not be the case, so it looks wiser to retreat to a safer part score in a 4-4 diamond fit. Of course the downside is that the opponents may compete for a part score.

Anna 2♦: Don't like my hearts and I would expect to make 2♦.

Matt 2♦: Hoping this is to play, and 2♣ would be check-back

Summary

Expectations of the opponents balancing over 2♦ with 2♥ was a factor influencing those opting to settle for 1NT rather than taking the safer route of going for the known 4-4 diamond fit. At teams, as against pairs, is it best to go for the known known rather than the known unknown?

Dealer North. Vul None. Teams.

			♠ K2
			♥ A1086
			♦ AJ973
			♣ 107
♠ A943		N	♠ J85
♥ K72			♥ 9543
♦ K108	W	E	♦ 5
♣ Q54		S	♣ AKJ82
			♠ Q1076
			♥ QJ
			♦ Q842
			♣ 983

W	N	E	S
	1♦ ¹	P	1♠
P	1NT ²	P	?

¹ 1♦=4+
² 1NT=12-14

Marks: 2♣/♦=10; Pass=9

Bidding Tip

▶ Whilst it is useful to try to anticipate the future actions of opponents it is often safer to go for known suit fits held by your side, especially playing teams.

Question 3

Dealer East. Vul All. Teams.

- ♠ A732
- ♥ K10853
- ♦ J54
- ♣ A

W	N	E	S
		1♠	P
?			

With seven losers, 12 points, four card trump support including ace of trumps, and a singleton club, this hand has slam potential if partner has the right cards. Is a game forcing 2♥ showing an admittedly poor quality five-card heart suit superior to cue-bidding the singleton club, especially as it is a singleton ace? Or is a game forcing 2NT a better option?

Votes: 2NT=6; 2♥=4; 4♣=1

Karel 2♥: Too strong for a splinter. A simple 2♥ and then agree spades next round.

Diane 2♥: Don't like to splinter with a singleton Ace, and my heart suit isn't great, but the fact I have only seven losers makes a slam possibility more likely.

Matt 2♥: Game forcing with five+ hearts. Although the suit is broken it would be nice to help partner to evaluate ♥QJ doubleton or so on as golden. If partner rebids 2♠ I might splinter with 4♣, but 3♣ could do the job as well.

Anna 2♥: Always time to investigate before I support my partner.

George 2NT: If partner holds ♣KQ10x a splinter will discourage any potential slam exploration. However, should a shortage in diamonds be found then prospects look much brighter.

Sally 2NT: For me a splinter is less than opening values (and in this case is less than perfect with a singleton Ace)

Roy 2NT: I would just show game forcing support, splintering with a singleton Ace isn't so bad, but I'd rather not take up all that room with an impure bid.

Ciaran: 2NT: The system seems to have a gap between showing support between 8-11 and 16+. Going with a slight overbid here as the hand is close to 16 with the good spade support.

Luca 2NT: I think I can find out all the information I need this way. 2♥ could work but I want to make sure partner knows the length of our fit.

Ian: 2NT Jacoby: This may reveal a suitable diamond shortage (good) or heart one (bad). Second choice 2♥, which may prove more or less helpful. I dislike splinters with a bare Ace, as partner may downgrade the King of that suit.

Peter P 4♣: Splinter with four trumps, 8-12, and one suit outside the splinter covered.

Summary

The key decision is whether to ask for partner to describe the features of the opening bid or to tell partner about your own hand. Both the conventional 2NT jump bid and the cue bid tend to cover both the asking and the telling roles with regard to confirming four+ trump support and a game going hand. Whilst the cue bid provides specific information on the short suit this is seen as less effective when the shortage is an ace. The advantage of 2NT is that it identifies any shortage or second five-card suit held by opener and this offers better guidance on responder's next best move. The 2♥ response keeps the bidding low and begins to show the shape of the hand, but as a strong major suit fit has been established already is this the best of the options available?



Dealer East. Vul All. Teams.

	♠A10852 ♥10852 ♦K ♣1085		
♠KJ ♥8 ♦AJ10987 ♣A643	N W E S	♠73 ♥AKJ73 ♦Q53 ♣KQJ	
		♠Q964 ♥Q94 ♦642 ♣972	

W	N	E	S
		1♠	P
?			

Slam is very poor. It is unlikely that panellists would proceed to slam missing the two key cards of ♠K and ♦A.

Marks: 2NT=10; 2♥=9; 4♣=9

Bidding Tip

- ▶ The Jacoby 2NT convention helps in identifying the strength and shape of opener's major suit opening, allowing for opener to bid a shortage at the three-level, jump to a new five-card suit at the four-level (which shows 5-5 and a further shortage in one of the remaining two suits), or to jump to game to sign off with a minimum opening hand

Question 4

Dealer North. Vul E/W. Teams.

♠ 10765
♥ AJ10
♦ QJ832
♣ 10

W	N	E	S
	1♠	P	?

Only eight points but AJT is a good holding as is the singleton club, and you have four trumps. A simple single raise looks rather feeble, and the hand looks to be too strong for a jump raises to 3♠, which leaves 3♣ showing the singleton club the best description of your hand?

IBJ system has 3M as four+ trumps and 4-7 points, and 3♣/♦/♥ as 8-11, four+ trumps, with first or second round control in the bid suit.

Votes: 4♠=4; 4♣=2; 3♠=3; 3♥=1
3♠=1

Peter 3H: As per the IBJ system with 8-11, four trumps and first control in hearts. This hand is not as strong as hand 3 and needs too much from partner to push towards slam.

Ciaran 3♣: Showing four trumps, 8-11 and the lowest second round control available.

Anna 3♣: As per system support with first or second round control and four trumps.

Matt 3♣: The system bid of 8-11, four trumps and first or second round control in the bid suit.

Karel 4♣: A splinter of 4♣ is a tad light, so just going to bid 4♣. Good chance of setting up diamonds or getting ruffs if opener is short in this suit. 75% chance of two tricks in hearts with this holding.

Diane 4♣: Must have chances and takes up bidding space from opponents.

Roy 4♣: It might not make but I wouldn't be very happy playing in a part score. My left hand opponent may have a nice hand which might make for a difficult decision at the five-level.

Ian 4♣: Normally this denies values remotely suitable for slam. We are a bit good for this, but a 4♣ splinter or lower level action may let the vulnerable opponents in cheaply. Of course, we may have two useful heart tricks in defence, so if they do intervene they may regret it.

George 3♣: A limit raise. Show what you have as quickly as possible and let partner make the decision.

Sally 4♣: In truth a little light but I like my hand with three good features: no spade honours, ♥AJT, and a playable diamond suit.

Luca 4♣: Go big, or go home. If we have a mini splinter (we do: see Peter P and Ciaran), I will choose that AKxxxx and a side King could be enough for game.

Summary

Invitational major suit raises with four trumps can be strengthened by providing more precise information about the other values within the responding hand. This allows opener with a weak opening bid to signoff in a part score if the extra feature within responder's hand is of little value, or if opener's hand is now stronger, bid on to game.

Dealer North. Vul E/W. Teams.

	♠AQ942 ♥74 ♦AK6 ♣985		
♠83 ♥K853 ♦1094 ♣AQ42	N W E S	♠KJ ♥Q962 ♦65 ♣KJ763	
		♠10765 ♥AJ10 ♦QJ832 ♣10	

W	N	E	S
	1♠	P	?

Marks: 3♣=10; 3♥=10; 3♠=9
4♣=8; 4♠=8

Bidding Tip

- ▶ It is well worth agreeing with partner on the best meaning of major suit raises as these occur frequently in most bridge sessions. The more precise the information conveyed the easier partner can judge the best next move.



Summary

A divide between the optimistic and pessimistic perspectives, with the former bidding 3♥ as a step towards some game going contract. A split in the 3♦ bidders, with two seeing this as non-forcing and two as forcing, with possible slam prospects. It does seem more logical for 3♦ to be forcing the same as 3♥, for if it is weak why bid the suit again at the three-level? Pass has some logic with the club misfit, but the hand offers part score or game opportunities which could be costly to miss.

Dealer North. Vul All. Teams.

		♠A73			
		♥QJ10			
		♦6			
		♣AKQ432			
♠Q1082	N		E		♠KJ6
♥A432	W		S		♥96
♦J10					♦Q854
♣965					♣J1087
		♠954			
		♥K875			
		♦AK9732			
		♣-			

W	N	E	S
	1♠	P	?

Marks: 3♥=10; 3♦=10; Pass=8

Bidding Tip

- ▶ A three-level bid in a new suit is best played as forcing.

Question 7

Dealer South. Vul All. Teams.

- ♠ AQ3
- ♥ 105
- ♦ 765
- ♣ AK862

W	N	E	S
			3♣
4♥	?		

A seven-loser hand, 13 points with strong controls in the black suits. Although partner may only hold two clubs with a minimum balanced hand, your side holds at least 25 combined points. Is double the best way forward at this point to express your values?

Votes: X=8; 5♣=3

Roy X: I plan to pass 4♠ from partner and not be happy about it (spades are usually 5-1 when I do that), but 5♣ is a bit unilateral and I can't pass – so what else?

Ciaran X: Not enough strength for 5♣. Takeout, but partner should be passing with a balanced minimum.

Peter P X: Takeout orientated but interested in penalty if partner has the usual weak 1NT with two hearts, with or without an honour.

Karel X: Yuk! No guarantee anything makes. Maybe partner passes the double.

Luca X: This is the most flexible. I have all the time in the world to bid clubs. A 4-3 fit might be the right place to play.

Sally X: Partner will expect 4♠. Will remove 4♠ to 5♣. Hopefully showing some high cards.

Anna X: No better option.

Ian 5♣: Pre-empts are designed to make life difficult for the opposition and may succeed here, we may be missing a cold slam. Against that, poor breaks are likely, and vulnerable West may well have a card or two outside of hearts, so we might even be too high. There is no room to find out, so anything else is ill advised. Any 4NT RKCB is not sensible when we could have two losers in hearts.

Diane 5♣: Don't like my two small hearts.

George 5♣: There is no penalty double here and hoping for partner for partner to re-open is futile. Bid the game and hope to make it.

Matt 5C: Pass/convert.

Summary

This hand has enough points to force a bid in one of the black suits, with each one having a potential risk, with only three spades and five clubs facing possibly only two clubs in partner's hand. On balance, double offers more flexibility, but only just, so that staying at the four-level wins this time as the cards lie.

Dealer South. Vul All. Teams.

		♠KJ85			
		♥84			
		♦AQ8			
		♣Q974			
♠1097	N		E		♠842
♥AKQJ763	W		S		♥93
♦J2					♦K10943
♣5					♣J103
		♠AQ3			
		♥105			
		♦765			
		♣AK862			

W	N	E	S
	1♠	P	?

Marks: X=10; 5♣=9

Bidding Tip

- ▶ With good values but no clear bid to make often double works well because it invites partner to the party in making the final decision.

Question 8

Dealer South. Vul All. Teams

- ♠ AK9
- ♥ A109432
- ♦ 75
- ♣ J5

W	N	E	S
			3NT ¹
?			

¹ 3NT=solid 7 card minor no outside control

The presence of the ♣J informs you that the 3NT opening is based on seven solid diamonds. With 12 points and a six-card heart suit and three decent spades do you bid 4♥, double or pass?

Votes: Pass=6; X=3; 4♥=2

George Pass: We would like to bid 4♥ but that could be suicidal. We don't have enough tickets. If it goes all pass and you see Q10x in dummy after you lead ♠A now continue low. Maybe partner may awaken from slumber with a double and then you will know what to do.

Anna Pass: Will lead ♠A to see the dummy. We can potentially collect most of the tricks. No need for heroism.



Ciaran Pass: Too flat to take action.

Sally Pass. A bit rich to bid vulnerable. I'm happy to lead a top spade.

Roy Pass: I plan to bid 4♥ over 4♦ and two passes, and if it goes all pass lead the ♠A against 3NT (left hand opponent can't pass without some values when vulnerable). My distribution and suit quality make it pretty risky to bid at the four-level.

Karel Pass: Would you bid over an opening 4♣/♦? Could get murdered.

Ian X: Anything could be right. 4♥ could get mangled if north is stacked. Pass may well see north chickening out to 4♣ (who surely will if doubled). Partner will at least know we have some values. If 3NT is taken out to 4♣/♦ I'll try 4♥.

Peter P X: When they run to 4♣/♦ partner will double or bid if holding some decent cards. I think double first rather than putting all my eggs in the one basket with a 4♥ bid or even pass.

Matt: X: Partner should be passing with most minimum balanced hands.

Luca 4♥: The most difficult one of the set, either could work, it couldn't go that badly. I'll take out insurance and bid an aggressive 4♥ in case it makes. I don't need much from partner, even if we don't have the balance of points. Defence against 3NT could be too difficult if we don't get off to the right lead. Who knows, 4♥ might even be a sacrifice or we might be cold for a slam.

Diane 4♥: Too good to pass.

Summary

As Luca comments this is a difficult hand as confirmed by the range of different bids suggested by the panel. The majority go for pass as the least risky option, and Roy makes a good point that responder with few values will likely takeout into 4♦ and now 4♥ can be bid in the knowledge that partner has some values.

Peter, Matt and Ian counter this approach by doubling on the grounds that this offers greater flexibility and allows partner a

chance to contribute to the party. Certainly on this hand double will produce the making of game in 4♠, with 4♥ going one off.

Dealer South. Vul All. Teams.

		♠J107	
		♥Q8	
		♦98	
		♣AQ10983	
♠AK9	N	♣Q85432	
♥A109432	W	♥K5	
♦75	E	♦32	
♣J5	S	♣K64	
		♠6	
		♥J76	
		♦AKQJ1064	
		♣72	

W	N	E	S
			3NT ¹
?			

¹ 3NT=solid 7 card minor no outside control

Marks: X=10; Pass=9; 4H=8

Bidding Tip

- ▶ Showing values allows partner to get involved with the selection of the final contract.

Summary of the Expert Panel Results

Matthew and Anna were joint top-scorers on 79. Well done to the readers who won prizes in the Double Quiz! Keep your entries coming in.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total
Sally Brock	10	10	10	8	10	10	10	9	77
Ciaran Coyne	10	9	10	10	10	10	10	9	78
Luca Crone	10	9	10	8	10	10	10	8	75
Karel De Raeymaeker	10	9	9	8	10	10	10	9	75
Diane Greenwood	10	9	9	8	10	10	9	8	73
Ian Hamilton	10	10	10	8	10	10	9	10	77
George Jacobs	10	9	10	9	10	10	9	9	76
Matt O'Farrell	10	10	9	10	10	10	10	10	79
Anna Onishuk	10	10	9	10	10	10	10	9	79
Peter Pigot	10	9	9	10	10	10	10	10	78
Roy Welland	10	9	10	8	10	8	10	9	74



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