

IRISH BRIDGE Journal

Summer 2026

Editorial

Welcome all to the
Super Soaraway
Summer 2026 Journal.



Enda Murphy, Editor

Since the last edition, the Journal has come in for honourable mention in both the Sunday Independent [Justin Corfield] and the Irish Times [Séamus Dowling]. This is most gratifying, but it's only right that I should in turn acknowledge both Justin and Séamus. Justin had the challenging task of taking over from the legendary John Comyn, but has with easy assurance carved out his own niche, and his pieces are always instructive and humorous. As for Séamus, he consistently demonstrates his mastery of the relevant history and context when he reports on the most recent results. He is a wonderful historian, custodian and raconteur of the Irish game. We are lucky to have him.

If you've been paying close attention to my Editorials [and why should you?], you may recall my previous references to the

peregrinations of the intrepid bridge billionaire, Pierre ["Marco Polo"] Zimmermann. France to Monaco to Switzerland, accompanied by a troupe of highly-paid team members, some of whom were outed as outrageous cheats. Well, not long ago it was announced that World Athletics had intervened to prevent the "transfer" of eleven elite athletes to Turkish representation. The athletes had been offered substantial sums of money to adopt a flag of convenience. Sound familiar? Will we ever see the day when the WBO or the EBL act to block the elastication of national boundaries?

I followed the American [ACBL] Open and Mixed trials, via Rob Brady's Youtube channel. Whilst Brady's delivery is – ahem – somewhat arch, there's always the mute button.

What's Inside

Test Your Declarer Play <i>Tomás Roche</i>	4
Bidding Quiz 14 <i>Bob Pattinson</i>	5
CBAI News and Fixtures	7
Bric-A-Brock <i>Sally Brock</i>	10
New Book from Sarah Gilmartin <i>Editor</i>	11
GM Hilary (DL) McDonagh <i>Dermot O'Brien</i>	12
Bricks From Straw <i>Editor</i>	13
Paul Porteous EBL Gold Medal	14
O'Connor Trophy <i>Maura King</i>	15
Mixed Trials Weekend 2 <i>Isabel Burke</i>	18
Quelle Dommage – a 28-IMP swing! <i>Editor</i>	19
A Family Legacy <i>Rebecca O'Keeffe</i>	20
Master Declarer Play 3 <i>Rory Timlin</i>	24
When I was a Boye <i>Boye Brogeland</i>	26
Comme C'est Formidable!! <i>Editor</i>	27
Do you use the STOP card? <i>Jim Doyle</i>	28
My Journey Continues <i>Nicola O'Dowd</i>	29
Making My Way <i>Melissa Brady</i>	32
Junior Bridge Focus <i>Luca Crone</i>	34
Teltscher Trophy 2026 <i>Ranald Milne</i>	36
Tralee Bridge Congress 2026 <i>Nicky Fitzgibbon</i>	39
Michael Byrne Interview <i>Editor</i>	42
Answers to Test Your Declarer Play <i>Tomás Roche</i>	43
Bidding Quiz 13 - Results <i>Bob Pattinson</i>	45

You make the news!

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 enda1612@gmail.com



The final match to decide the USA1 team featured a comeback from a 100-IMP deficit by the Shourie team. [Shourie, Wolpert, Kranyak, Demuy, Hurd, Bathurst]. Matches were played using tablets, which allowed accurate time monitoring.

Each player has a time clock, which only runs when it is their turn to bid or play. Penalties for infractions were strictly enforced, which was refreshing to see. Our domestic game is beset by unpenalised slow play, and it needs to be tackled purposefully.

The notion that I found most interesting in the general chat was – are we headed in the direction of transfer openings? We now have transfer responses to 1♣, and transfers in competition, as commonplace bidding tenets at expert level. Transfer pre-empt openings have long been with us. So is it a mere hop skip and jump to general transfer openings? We shall see.

Huge congratulations to Deirdre O'Halloran, winner in April of the WBF Women's Online Bridge Festival, a bona fide world title.



*Jim Doyle
winning the
President's
Award 2026*

Well done also to Jim Doyle, my former classmate, current teammate and Journal columnist, on winning the President's Award. He's an indefatigable worker for the development of the game, and the award was very well deserved.

Slán go foill to Melissa Brady, whose "Making My Way" column has been a feature for three years now. Melissa is taking a sabbatical, after which she plans to resume her narratives. I'm greatly in her debt.

This issue carries a report on the Dublin South team's victory in the IBU O'Connor Cup [National Intermediate Teams] in March, and I'm delighted to announce that team members Maura King and Russell Down will contribute a regular column going forward.

You may recall a previous issue which featured a fine intra-finesse brought off by Maura's daughter, Phedra Kingston, at Junior international level.

Finally, save the date! The Spring Journal introduced you to the intrepid Emily Deavy, who last year secured the services of Andrew Robson for her Galway-based club. This year she has topped it by signing up the GOAT himself, Zia Mahmood! Zia is also planning to deliver a teaching day in Dublin - play, analysis, Q&A. The date for your diary is November 10th.

Enda Murphy
enda1612@gmail.com



Irish Open Team won the Camrose Trophy for the first time since 2017

Mark Moran, John Carroll, Adam Mesbur, Nick FitzGibbon, Anna Onishuk, Karel De Raeymaeker, Tom Hanlon, and Conor Boland with NPC Gráinne Barton

Stop Press

My good pal and co-author Tom Hanlon, was very recently inducted into the European Bridge League Hall of Fame. A well-merited accolade for sure. Tom represents the very best of Irish bridge and of Irish people. I'll get a few comments from the Sage of Rochfortbridge for the next edition.



Tom Hanlon admitted to EBL Hall of Fame



I create tailor made holidays...

with the dedicated support and peace of mind you deserve.



Brian Bloomer

TRAVEL COUNSELLOR

☎ (01) 513 3788

✉ brian.bloomer@travelcounsellors.com
travelcounsellors.ie/brian.bloomer

Travel Designed Around You

From Australia and New Zealand to African safaris, cruises, rail journeys and multi-centre adventures, every itinerary is carefully designed around your interests, travel style and budget.

Personal Service

One dedicated Travel Counsellor with 24/7 support and fully protected bookings from start to finish.

For You and Your Family

Perfect for your own long haul adventures and ideal for children or grandchildren planning honeymoons, safaris or once in a lifetime trips.

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 N/S.

♠ K6	N	♠ 7
♥ KJ1087	W	♥ AQ94
♦ J963	E	♦ AQ5
♣ A5	S	♣ KQ843

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

¹ 3♠ = Splinter in spades

² 4NT = RKCB (for hearts)

³ 5♠ = Two Key Cards plus trump Queen

The Play

North leads the ♦4. How do you plan the play?

Board 3 Dealer South. Vul All.

♠ 87	N	♠ AQJ94
♥ 107642	W	♥ Q853
♦ AK75	E	♦ -
♣ A9	S	♣ K632

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

¹ 1NT = 12-14 HCP

² 2♣ = Landy, both Majors

The Play

North leads the ♦10. How do you plan the play?

Board 2 Dealer East. Vul E/W.

♠ AK6	N	♠ Q7
♥ AKQ853	W	♥ J104
♦ -	E	♦ 963
♣ KQ84	S	♣ A10652

W	N	E	S
		P	P
2♣	3♦	X ¹	P
3♥ ²	P	4♥	P
4♠ ³	P	5♣ ⁴	P
7♥	All Pass		

¹ X = Negative

² 3♥ = Forcing

³ 4♠ = Cue-Bid

⁴ 5♣ = Cue-Bid

The Play

North leads the ♥2. At trick two, both defenders follow to a second round of trumps. How do you plan the play?

Board 4 Dealer West. Vul None.

♠ 9	N	♠ J104
♥ 1032	W	♥ AQJ
♦ AK5	E	♦ J973
♣ AKJ963	S	♣ Q105

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

¹ 3♠ = Enquiry for guard in spade suit

The Play

North leads the ♠2. South wins ♠K and continues with ♠A. How do you plan the play?

Answers on page 43



Bidding Quiz 14

By Bob Pattinson



All eight hands are from teams events. Entries to bobpattinsonymail.com@yahoo.com by 17th August 2026. Good luck!

Question 1

Dealer East. Vul None. Teams.

♠ QJ73
♥ AK106542
♦ -
♣ 95

W	N	E	S
		1♦	1♠
2♥	P	3♣	P
?			

Question 2

Dealer South. Vul All. Teams.

♠ A94
♥ QJ
♦ KJ10753
♣ T3

W	N	E	S
			1♥
P	1NT ¹	P	2♥ ²
P	?		
¹ 1NT=6-11 ² 2♥=6+			

Question 3

Dealer East. Vul None. Teams.

♠ A95432
♥ KJ984
♦ -
♣ Q4

W	N	E	S
		1♦	?

Question 4

Dealer North. Vul N/S. Teams.

♠ QJ63
♥ AJ63
♦ 9
♣ AK93

W	N	E	S
	P	1♦ ¹	X
1♥	1♠ ¹	2♦	?
¹ 1♦=4+ ² 1♠=4+			

Question 5

Dealer East. Vul N/S. Teams.

♠ AJ10742
♥ 2
♦ KJ632
♣ J

W	N	E	S
		1♣ ¹	P
1♠	P	2♥ ²	P
3♦	P	3♠	P
?			
¹ 1♠=2+ ² 2♥=4 and 17+			

Question 6

Dealer East. Vul E/W. Teams

♠ A1074
♥ KQ96
♦ Q5
♣ 972

W	N	E	S
		2♣	P
2♦	P	3♣	P
3♥	P	3♠	P
?			
¹ 2♣=23+ ² 2♦=waiting bid ³ 3♠=5+			

Question 7

Dealer West. Vul All. Teams.

♠ A92
♥ QJ98542
♦ A7
♣ A

W	N	E	S
1♦ ¹	?		
¹ 1♦=4+			

Question 8

Dealer West. Vul All. Teams

♠ A7
♥ AK92
♦ KQ98
♣ 843

W	N	E	S
P	P	1♠	X
P	2♣	P	?

Entries to:

bobpattinsonymail.com@yahoo.com
by 17th August 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

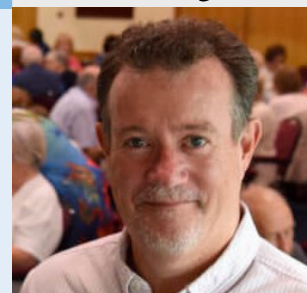
Slam Bidding

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.

CBAI News

Dermot O'Brien



As we come to the end of another season, I am pleased to report another good year for bridge in Ireland.

- ▶ Our **membership numbers are up by almost 4.5%**, maintaining the recent growth trend, with all but one of our thirteen regions recording increases;
- ▶ Our **national competitions have all been very well supported, with aggregate numbers up around 8%** on the previous year's already solid figures. We had record numbers for our two flagships events, the Master Pairs and the Holmes Wilson Teams, and we have reached the point where we are beginning to outgrow some of our venues, which is a nice problem to have;
- ▶ Very pleasingly, **our congresses too have seen their numbers grow strongly**; with one new congress (the Trim Bash) and one returning for the first time since covid (Carlow), aggregate attendances were up 30% on the previous year;
- ▶ We have **lots of teachers giving classes to new students**; the year saw 19 new teachers accredited, and more than 1,250 students registered – hopefully this activity will create a strong pipeline of new club members all across the country in the next couple of years;
- ▶ We continue to be in good shape financially, and **have the funds to invest in projects which will help bridge to grow**.

As I trust you already know, the CBAI offices stay open all summer. Generally, the work in that period is the collection and application of masterpoints in preparation for the new season in September. This year, we have a couple of extra items to keep us busy.

Our recent AGM voted in favour of a proposal to amalgamate with our equivalent body in Northern Ireland, the Northern Ireland Bridge Union, to create a new 32-county for bridge across the entire island of Ireland; the NIBU, at its AGM the same day, also voted in favour, subject to seeing some final legal documentation. So we're not quite there yet, but we hope to conclude everything shortly, with a view to amalgamating on 1 September or as soon as possible thereafter. This will create quite a bit of work as we reorganise to give effect to the new body. At club level, it is planned that very little will change, so things should be pretty seamless. But there will be changes to the legal structure and governance, and the expectation is that the changes will create a body better able to promote and develop the game in Ireland in the longer term.

Secondly, the revamp of our member database, which has taken long than expected, is now reaching its conclusion. Again, we hope to roll out the new model on 1 September or shortly thereafter. So please watch this space.

We had a reasonably good year in the various international competitions this season, without any major successes apart from our Open Team winning the Camrose Trophy for the first time since 2017. Our Women's, Seniors, Under-26, and Under-21 teams all performed creditably in the home internationals, finishing either second behind an English team or third behind two English teams. As I joked at the AGM, the glass half-full analysis is that if it hadn't been for England, we'd have had a clean sweep! Unfortunately, none of the IBU teams in the recent European Championships in Riga qualified for next year's World Championships. But we did not come home from Riga empty-handed! Firstly, we

had the great news at the Opening Ceremony that Rochfortbridge's favourite son, Tom Hanlon, was elected to the European Bridge League (EBL) Hall of Fame, a sign of the esteem he is held in by his peers and the European authorities. And later in the week, Paul Porteous was awarded the EBL Gold Medal for his extraordinary contribution to European bridge. Many congratulations to Tom and Paul on two fantastic achievements, a first for an Irish representative in each case.

Many thanks to all the club and regional committees for all their hard work during the season. Thanks also to the CBAI's officers and the members of the various sub-committees and governance bodies; all our volunteers are always ready with their time and advice whenever the need arises. The same is true of our Tournament Director cohort, without whose hard work and expertise our events would not be anything like as successful as they are, so my thanks to all our TDs too. Finally, particular thanks to all who were involved in the amalgamation discussions. As is always the case in such matters, there was a lot of work to be done, much of it of the dry legal variety. The work of our volunteers meant that external costs could be kept to a minimum.

We look forward now to season 2026/27, hopefully the first under the new badge of "Bridge Ireland". The office and staff will continue unchanged, and I hope that we will be able to serve you even better than before, and that we will have some exciting new developments to report, and projects to work on, in the seasons ahead. The calendar for next season is pretty much complete and is available on our website: www.cbai.ie/cbai-events/

Have a lovely summer, and I'll hope to see you at some of our events next season.

Results and Upcoming Fixtures

National Results

IBU Senior Trials

(Templeogue, 27 Feb - March 1)

1st Michael McAuliffe, David Dunne, Paul Porteous, Fred Barry

Camrose Trophy

(Wales, 6-8 March)

1st Ireland Mark Moran, John Carroll, Adam Mesbur, Nick FitzGibbon, Anna Onishuk, Karel De Raeymaeker, Tom Hanlon, and Conor Boland with NPC Gráinne Barton

IBU Inter-County Teams Championships

(Knightsbrook, 21-22 March)

Burke Trophy (Open) Winners

Paul Delaney, Tomás Roche, David Dunne, Martin Brady (Dublin City)

O'Connor Trophy (Intermediate) Winners

Russell Down, Maura King, Mary Cox, Ian Kingston (Dublin South)

Novice & Intermediate Congress (Waterford, 10-12 April)

Jim Fitzgerald Trophy (Mixed Pairs)

Paddy & Patricia Drennan

Intermediate A Pairs: Kervick Trophy

Una Cunningham & Kate Hogan

Intermediate B Pairs: New Ireland Trophy

Louise Webb & Mick Stuart

Novice Pairs: Waterford Crystal Trophy

Laetitia McMahon & Mary Brennan

Novice & Intermediate Teams: JJ Kiely Trophy

Deirdre French, Brendan Ward, Mary Ryan, Richard Lister

Moylan Cup

(Malahide, 11-12 April)

Winners

Peter Goodman & Terry Walsh

Lady Milne Trophy

(Belfast, 17-19 April)

1st England
2nd Ireland (Hilary (D-L) McDonagh, Ann-Marie Horan, Rebecca O'Keeffe, Gilda Pender, Joan Kenny, Jeannie Fitzgerald)

National Teams Championships (Portlaoise, 18-19 April)

Kelburne Cup - Master Winners

Dublin South (Holders): Paul Delaney, David Ryan, Tomás Roche, David Dunne

Bankers Trophy - Intermediate A Winners

Eastern Region: Liz Murphy, Margaret Haughey, Yvonne Sheerin, Jean Hennebery

Tierney Trophy - Intermediate B Winners

Dublin South: John Hogan, Sarah Hogan, Marian Nugent, Pat O'Hanlon

IBU Seniors Congress (Cavan, 22-24 April)

Gala Pairs Winners

Harold Curran & Anne Fitzpatrick

Congress Pairs Winners

Paul (PB) Barrett & Enda Glynn

Congress Teams Winners

Paul (PB) Barrett, Enda Glynn, Justin Spratt, Gordon Lessells



Jim Fitzgerald Trophy (Mixed Pairs) winners: Paddy & Patricia Drennan with CBAI President John Phelan

Upcoming Fixtures

Date	Event	Venue
Sept 12-13	Trials Pre-Qualifier	Templeogue
Sept 19-20	Duais An Uachtarain	Mount Wolseley
Oct 9-11	Lady Milne Trials	TBC
Oct 17	Spiro Mixed Pairs	Templeogue
Oct 18	Coen Mixed Teams	Templeogue
Oct 23-26	Camrose Trials	TBC
Nov 2	Autumn Sims Week	
Nov 28-29	IBU Interprovincials	Knightsbrook
Dec 6-7	Regional Pairs Qualifiers	Various
Dec 12-13	Master Pairs	Mullingar

IBU Club Pairs Championships (Templeogue, 9 May)

Master Pairs Winners

Marcin Rudzinski & Wojciech Gorczyca

Intermediate Pairs Winners

Dorothy Nolan & Maeve Pelly

Teltscher Trophy

(Cambridge, 15-17 May)

1st England
3rd Ireland Peter Goodman, Terry Walsh, BJ O'Brien, Ranald Milne, Donal Garvey, Pat Quinn NPC, Derek O'Gorman

Confined Events Weekend (Loughrea, 16-17 May)

Lambert Cup (Pairs) Winners

Kyrle Allen & Paul Hogan

Cooper Cup (Teams) Winners

Giles Murnin, David Connolly, Mia Delaney, Jeremy James

JJ Murphy Trophy (Novice Pairs) Winners

Manus Cannon & Anne McGettigan

4Fun Inter-County Teams Championships (Westmanstown, 23 May)

Winners

1st Cork: Noel Bradfield, Donie Cahill, Rosaleen Fitzgerald, Breeda Cahill

Egan Trophy All-Ireland Teams Championships (Belfast 23-24 May)

Winners

Matthew O'Farrell, Wayne Somerville, Rex Anderson, David Greenwood

CANTOR
Fitzgerald



Your Wealth, Your Vision, Our Expertise

We create bespoke wealth solutions designed for your ambitions. Secure your legacy with expert guidance from Cantor Fitzgerald Ireland.

Talk to us today on **01 633 3800**
CANTORFITZGERALD.IE

Dublin | Cork | Limerick

Cantor Fitzgerald Ireland Ltd is regulated by the Central Bank of Ireland
This is a marketing communication

Bric-A-Brock

Sally Brock



This deal from the Parliamentary bridge match features a play that is easy to miss at the table.

Cover up the East and West hands and have a go yourself before reading on.

Dealer East. Vul N/S.

♠ KJ97 ♥ 7653 ♦ Q9 ♣ KQ4			
♠ 83	N	♠ 42	
♥ K9		♥ J1082	
♦ AK106	W	♦ 87542	
♣ 109863		♣ J7	
	S		
♠ AQ1065 ♥ AQ4 ♦ J3 ♣ A52			

W	N	E	S
		P	1♠
P	3♠	P	4♠
All Pass			

West leads the ♦A and ♦K before switching to the ♣10. The careless 'normal' line of play is simply to draw trumps and take the heart finesse. Unlucky.

Can you see an improvement?

The thing to realise here is that you always have at least one heart loser. That being the case, there is no reason to take a standard finesse. Try this instead: win the club switch, draw trumps, cash the ♥A followed by your club winners ending in the dummy. Now play a second heart, intending to play the Queen if East plays low. That way, if East has the ♥K you will make the same ten tricks as you would have done had you taken a more straightforward finesse.

However, where you gain is when West has King doubleton, as here. West will win his ♥K but will now be endplayed into giving you a ruff and discard. When he plays a minor suit you will ruff in the dummy, discarding a heart from your hand and you have no more losers.

Try this one.

Dealer South.

♠ 853 ♥ QJ4 ♦ QJ94 ♣ A76			
♠ KJ106	N	♠ AQ42	
♥ 97		♥ 32	
♦ AK7	W	♦ 10852	
♣ Q543		♣ 1098	
	S		
♠ 97 ♥ AK10865 ♦ 63 ♣ KJ2			

W	N	E	S
			1♥
X	XX	2♠	3♥
All Pass			

Plan the defence as East after West leads the ♠J.

Eventually declarer will come to six hearts, one club and two diamonds, so you must switch to a club now. If you win the ♠A and switch to the ♣10, when partner gets in he may play you for the ♣K rather than the ♠Q. The way to put him on the right track is to play the ♠Q at trick one.

Out and About...



Kervick Trophy Inter A Winners 2026:
Una Cunningham & Kate Hogan with CBAI President John Phelan



Waterford Crystal Trophy Novice winners 2026: Laetitia McMahon & Mary Brennan with CBAI President John Phelan



New Ireland Trophy Inter B Winners 2026:
Louise Webb & Mick Stuart with CBAI President John Phelan

New Book from Sarah Gilmartin

Editor



In May, Sarah brought out her third novel, *Little Vanities*. An accomplished bridge player and former Junior international, Sarah kindly gave the Journal an interview.

Set in Dublin, *Little Vanities* is a story about the perilous thrill of stepping outside the roles we've been given – and the distance between the lives we imagined and the ones we find ourselves living.



Sarah, congrats on your third novel. Where did the idea come from?

The book tells the story of two couples and their messy, interconnected relationships over decades from college into early

midlife. I was interested in the slow, often unnoticed erosion of youthful desires over time. The four characters are all in pain in some form or other: physical, emotional, existential, the pain of failed ambition. I wanted to write about pain in a way that hopefully feels funny and vibrant, looking at all the things people go through in life and yet somehow survive.

How would you classify the genre of your books? Which novelists do you most admire or try to model yourself on?

Literary fiction. The writers I return to time and again are Claire Keegan, Anne Enright, Maeve Brennan and John McGahern.

Do you get to play much bridge these days?

Sadly no, though ever hopeful to get back to it. I'm still a member of the Bankers Bridge Club.

Any early thoughts about a fourth book? Do your writing ambitions extend to screenplays?

The fourth book might be my first set in Limerick. It's too early to say much more about it. The dramatic rights to my second novel *Service* were acquired by a UK production company a while ago. If anything happens with it, I'm happy to leave it to the professionals.



Affordable Live-in Homecare
Night and/or Daytime Care available
For less than the Cost of a Nursing Home
or Private Visiting Care Service
Nationwide Enquiry Line
087 744 0729

Carer Duties:

- ▶ Housekeeping
- ▶ Meal Preparation
- ▶ Companionship
- ▶ Personal Care (if required)
- ▶ Night only care also available
- ▶ Three week trial period
- ▶ Nationwide Service

All our carers are Garda vetted and provided with ongoing training and support.

www.alhomecare.ie

Grand Master Hilary (DL) McDonagh

Dermot O'Brien

The CBAI recently welcomed another member to the most exclusive group in Irish bridge – those who have earned more than 1,000 National Points, and are thus elevated to the rank of Grand Master. Hilary (Dowling-Long) McDonagh became the 37th member of that club, and was presented with her Grand Master's salver at the Holmes Wilson by CBAI President John Phelan.



Hilary learned bridge during her time in UCD, and was part of a group many of whom went on to become serious bridge players. One of her very first partners was the late Colm O'Driscoll, who sadly passed away so young recently.

It's fair to say that Hilary showed great flair for the game very quickly, as she progressed from Novice to Master within the space of a year! On a visit to the Bankers, she met Helen Carroll, and soon developed a partnership with Helen's son John, with whom she won several Novice and Intermediate events. As with many things, there was an element of serendipity involved – her first game with John was as a stand-in because his partner did not show up. Hilary also played junior international bridge at this point, creating an affinity for junior bridge that was to be a feature of her later career. She is very grateful to the expert players, particularly Pat Walshe and Rory Boland, who gave so freely of their time and advice when she was an aspiring player.

Once she established herself at the top level, Hilary has had a very consistent track record of achievement, even though at some stages both family and career (including researching for a PhD as part of her job as Lecturer in Psychology at Sligo Institute of Further Education & Training) took precedence. She has won

all the major titles – the Spiro twice, the Coen, the Holmes Wilson, the Jackson twice, and the McMenemy five times, including a hat-trick between 1996 and 1998 with Rebecca O'Keeffe, Helen Carroll, and Jill Kulchysky. Other regular partners include Gilda Pender, Ann-Marie Horan, and Thomas MacCormac in mixed events. She also has the distinction of having won the Interprovincial Championship with two provinces – first Leinster, and then Connacht after she moved West when she got married.

Hilary was capped at junior level, and also served as junior NPC, including for Ireland's first ever Junior Camrose team in Dublin in 1999, and has played in three World Championships, six European Championships, and eight Lady Milnes, including one for the CBAI team. She also played with her good friend Peter Stewart in the inaugural British Isles Trophy (online mixed home internationals) last year, and was delighted to help him win his first "cap".

She has also been a tireless worker for bridge, right since the start of her bridge life. Her first job was dealing boards for the CBAI back in the days before the Templeogue office, when her place of work was a room in Paul Porteous's house. She subsequently worked with the CBAI on the creation of a transition year schools' programme, which

(remarkably in these days when it is so hard to get into schools) saw bridge taught in 10% of all Irish schools with transition year programmes.

She was also part of the very first set of bridge teachers accredited by the CBAI and the CDVEC in 1997, under an initiative created by Seamus Dowling and Máire O'Keeffe. Subsequently, with support from the late Sean O Lubaigh, Hilary set up the Irish Bridge Institute and established herself as an outstanding and very popular teacher. She also organised the "Clash of the Bridge Masters" in the RDS, an invitational tournament which attracted a world-class field and created great publicity for bridge in Ireland. The word is that Hilary plans to return more seriously to teaching in the next few years, which will be very welcome.

Within bridge, Hilary is well-known for her bubbly, enthusiastic, and friendly (though always competitive) demeanour. Aside from her various honours, she also has the distinction of winning the title "Miss Bridge 2002" at the Women's European Championships in Salsomaggiore in that year – apparently, she still has the sash. There is a bit of a story behind the award. This was the first championships to use online line-up entry, a fact to which the Irish Women's team was

oblivious on arrival. When the technology proved beyond the capability of NPC Mary Trench, Hilary was elected to cajole the organisers into printing copies of the opponents' convention cards for every single round of the tournament. To achieve this, Hilary charmed the relevant organizer, a young Spanish TD named Juan. The voting was by paper ballot and none other than the Welsh legend Maggie Pierce reported afterwards that she had

observed Juan enter Hilary's name in the poll several times every day of the tournament, ensuring she got a very healthy vote ... not that she didn't fully deserve the title, of course! (We were also struck by how incongruous this award seems, just twenty-odd years later; we can only imagine the reaction if the CBAI had run a poll to select Miss Holmes Wilson at this year's tournament of that name.)

Many congratulations to Hilary on a wonderful achievement, one that takes a lot of effort and dedication as well as a lot of talent.

Our sources tell us that, having successfully completed her PhD, Hilary may have time to return to bridge teaching at this point. That would be a very welcome development.

Bricks From Straw

Editor

A mere twenty years ago, dear readers, your correspondent inflicted a book on an unsuspecting Bridge public. "Silver for Ireland" recounted the "Cinderella Story" of Ireland's silver medal in the 2006 European Championships in Warsaw.

Distance lends enchantment, as well as perspective. Our "conquerors" were Italy, whose line-up was Lauria-Versace, Bocchi-Duboin and Fantoni-Nunes. Forgive the inverted commas, but it rankled then and it rankles now to have been deprived of a gold by those last-named gentlemen.

In course of researching the book, Ireland's legendary NPC, David "Banzaï" Jackson afforded me generous time. At one point, discussing Tom Hanlon, Jacko shook his head and grinned. "I've never in my life seen any declarer to compare with Tom when it comes to making bricks out of straw. It's uncanny".

He wasn't whistling Dixie, that's for sure. My memory was jogged recently when I happened across a video of Ireland's match against Norway ten years later, again at the Europeans. See the screenshot below.

To quote the great Victor Mollo's "menagerie" opus, the bidding may require some explanation. Two boards previously, Hanlon-McGann had stopped in 6♠ with 7♠ making and bid in the other room. On the previous board, Hoftaniska and Charlesen for Norway had bid to a fortuitous 3NT with a nine-card

heart fit, which made with 4♥ going down in the replay. On the board shown, Tom was in the classic light opening position as East, third in hand at green. He opened 1NT 14-16! Charlesen doubled and at this point the viewgraph operator failed to notice that Hugh McGann had redoubled! Tom rescued himself to 2♣, doubled again and left in.

♥A led. South switched to ♠Q, won by dummy's King. Heart to the Q and K. South now continued ♠J, ruffed by North, who then played ♦A! Tom ruffed, entered dummy with ♥J and pitched a spade on ♦K. One down. Minus 100 with 6♦ vulnerable cold the other way.

Jacko was right. Bricks from straw.



Paul Porteous awarded EBL Gold Medal

Editor

Hot on the heels of Tom Hanlon's induction last week into the European Bridge League (EBL) Hall of Fame, we are delighted to report further recognition for Irish bridge at European level, with former CBAI Chief Executive Paul Porteous being awarded a gold medal by the EBL for his extraordinary contribution to European bridge.

As well as being the leading figure within the CBAI for thirty years, Paul served for more than ten years on the EBL's Executive Committee, and as Secretary of the Executive for most of that period. He first came to prominence within the European sphere when he spearheaded the successful Irish hosting of the 2012 European Championships, taking over at short notice from Greece, who had to withdraw due to their economic crisis (and notwithstanding that we were going through an economic crisis of our own!).

Subsequently, in the 2015-2020 period, Paul as Secretary of the Executive, and the only native English-speaker on the EBL's top team, played a prominent role in coordinating the prosecution of the cheats who blighted the game at the top-level for so long, and the drawing up of enhanced regulations to try to ensure that it could never happen again. All the while, Paul was running Irish bridge, and playing to a standard which has seen him win Senior caps for Ireland (including on the current team in Riga) and also acting as non-playing captain of many Irish international teams.

We congratulate Paul on this wonderful and well merited achievement. He is pictured with his wife Maureen receiving the gold medal from EBL President Eric Laurent.



EBL Gold Medal award to Paul Porteous: Maureen Porteous, EBL President Eric Laurent and Paul Porteous on his award of the EBL Gold medal



Irish Seniors Teams at the European Championships in Riga July 2026: Michael McAuliffe, David Dunne, Fred Barry, Paul Porteous, Donal Garvey and Pat Quinn.

O'Connor Trophy

Maura King



Overcoming altitude sickness to end a nose ahead in a photo finish

After 75 boards the O'Connor Trophy held in the Knightsbrook Hotel, Trim on the 21st and 22nd March finished with less than 1 VP between the top two teams, and less than 4 VPS between the top three. Our Dublin team [Russell Down, Maura King, Mary Cox, Ian Kingston] edged Westmeath [Jonathan Williams, Joan Peppard, Dillon Murtagh, Kevin Woulfe] by 190.1 VPs to 189.3.

With that photo finish, accepting to write a few words on behalf of the winning team has an air more of "well, someone's got to do it" than valediction. So here we go.

Firstly, there was a great buzz throughout the event. The room was full with 40 teams, of which 16 were competing for the O'Connor (Intermediate) Trophy. It seems everyone expects there will be a larger room and more teams next year, which will be terrific. Sincere appreciation is due to the IBU and the TDs.

As for the bridge itself, we all know, whether precisely or intuitively, that a certain proportion of our good results are not wholly due to our prowess, just as a certain proportion of our bad results are not wholly due to our own unforced errors. Divine intervention was balanced in our favour, and it will remain a closely guarded secret which team members claimed responsibility for that.

We certainly benefited from the way we and opponents bid a couple of "Weak 2" shape hands. Once when our 2♣ weak jump overcall did, for once, stop the opponents exploring further and missing game.



O'Connor Trophy Winners: Mary Cox, Russell Down, Maura King, Ian Kingston (Dublin South) with IBU President Gordon Lessells.

And again, when our opponents opened 2♥ with ten points but quite within their system, but with a hand and in a position where our style is to open 1♥ and rebid 2♥ if needed (our pair bid and made game).

The first day's play covered 10 rounds. For most of the day we were in the middle, then after round nine we were more surprised than anyone to see ourselves in 2nd position. Round 10 was not a success, due to an excess of bidding bravado immediately followed by an over-correcting excess of caution. Neither bidding sequence had any basis in our system, or plain common sense. What is it about suddenly seeing yourself performing better than expected that makes you bid a hopeless sacrifice at adverse vulnerability? We put this question that evening to a most experienced and successful player from the other (master) competition taking place in the same room. He explained that we had suffered altitude sickness, and that if we had any hopes of winning, a necessary but far from sufficient condition would be to get over ourselves.

So that is what we did over the final five rounds the next day. With bidding that was mostly on-piste, and play that was mostly thoughtful, we climbed back to second place and, in the end, just managed to convert this to the top spot.

It is day two, session three. I am sitting South in front of the ceaselessly distracting, endlessly moving results screen. I can see that we have been rising through the ranks not meteorically but steadily like slowly leavening bread, hovering somewhere between second and fourth. Coming to Trim each pair on our team had played together on two previous occasions. The disadvantage is we do not know each other's bridge style and sometimes system leading to some frenzied internal dialogue such as is that bid, I have alerted a splinter, what on earth does partner mean to convey by leading a 9 in No Trumps? The advantage is that being new pairs we had no expectations and none of us has felt a scintilla of pressure. Coming into the last two rounds we agree in the brief pause between matches that we have done better than we hoped and our aim is to place. We decide that our strategy



will be to be steady Eddies so no off-piste bidding, no risky bids, no gambling, no stretching too much for an upside if there might be a downside, cautious hand evaluation, safe play and safety play. It is one thing to have a strategy but if that strategy is alien to your personality entirely another thing to implement it. I am a mouthy, opinionated person. I almost always have something to say. Placing the pass card on the table on the first round of bidding thereby telling the table I have nothing to say does not come easily to me. Mary Cox playing E/W for us is a bird of a feather. During Covid as a novice, I had online lessons with Sally Brock. Sally had a great word for timid bidding. Timid bidding was "pusillanimous". Who wants to be called pusillanimous? Certainly not me.

My partner, Russell sitting North opened 2NT on this hand.

Board 8. Session 3

Dealer West. Vul None.

			♠ K952		
			♥ AJ		
			♦ KQ74		
			♣ AK6		
♠ A6		N	♠ J843		
♥ 532			♥ KQ94		
♦ 63	W	E	♦ A985		
♣ QJ8743			♣ 2		
			S		
			♠ Q107		
			♥ 10876		
			♦ J102		
			♣ 1095		

We are playing 2NT as 20 to a bad 22 but I figure that even after the team talk Russell who like me is a bit of a brassy bidder would upgrade a 22-point hand to 2♣. Hence more than likely he has 20 or 21 points. I look at my hand. I have 3 points. I remember another Sally Brock lesson – Sally saying understatedly that not everyone with 3 points will pass 2NT. Then Sally saying to decide consider one's Intermediates. I examine my Intermediates. Poor old me – the bridge Gods have thrown me into the horns of a dilemma. There I am, an Intermediate player with good intermediates, playing the

penultimate round of the IBU Intermediate teams. To pass or not to pass that is the question. These are my scrambled thought processes.

1. I do not want to be pusillanimous.
2. Russell reached the quarter final of the Funbridge tournament - no mean feat for an Intermediate. If anyone could make 3NT on the clippings of tin, he could.
3. It is not about me – there is no I in team. We agreed a strategy and my team-mates will not thank me if we are one down and the other team makes 2NT.
4. I would bid 3NT in a heartbeat on day 1 but we are in the closing stages of day 2.
5. We are not vulnerable so not so much of an upside to make 3NT.
6. Will our opponents bid 3NT? Probably not. It is not a Swiss. Intermediates tend to bid more cautiously than Masters and the energy to push the boat out is a bit diminished by the dying rounds of session three.
7. I consider the shape of my hand. It is a 4/3/3/3 hand - not a shape despite my four hearts for doing stayman and not a good shape in NT for building tricks. My two-point Queen is not in a long suit. What if my partner has ♠AK doubleton? There is no guarantee that the diamonds will provide an entry. What if the Queen falls to the opponents?

By this time everyone including Russell is wriggling in their seats wishing I would get on with things. I suck it up for the team and grudgingly place the bland, loathsome pass card on the table. My hand goes down. Russell peruses dummy. He is an accountant, so quickly counts his tricks. There is a warmth in his thank you partner which makes me sure that I have done the right thing. Then the ♦J takes the first trick, and I sink back in my seat as

Russell runs off nine tricks. I was right that the opponents did not bid 3NT so in that sense caution did not cost. Was my decision correct in all the circumstances? Maybe, maybe not. While 2NT was the marginally more popular bid with eight teams playing in 2NT, seven teams played in 3NT. I applaud the five courageous teams that bid and made 3NT. Had we bid 3NT it would have gained us 7 IMPs. Ruefully I realise that it is not just in fishing that there is one that got away.

Russell and I are what I think of as Generation X bridge players. We both played as children. Russell semi-seriously and voluntarily in school bridge competitions in England. Me not at all seriously and under duress when a fourth was needed for a house bridge. When we separately returned to bridge many decades later family commitments meant that much of our play was online solo play. Inevitably we have been influenced by robot bidding and online play. This is one such hand.

Board 13. Session 2

Dealer North. Vul All.

			♠ KJ3		
			♥ K7		
			♦ 862		
			♣ A10654		
♠ A8		N	♠ Q		
♥ AQ82			♥ J103		
♦ QJ95	W	E	♦ AK74		
♣ K82			♣ QJ973		
			S		
			♠ 10976542		
			♥ 9654		
			♦ 103		
			♣ -		

My partner sitting North opened 1♣ with 11 points. Rule of 19 is the new Rule of 20. It is a Rule of 19 opening. East passed. I was void in my partner's suit, had no card higher than a ten but had seven spades to the ten. We were playing that a jump response of 2♠ showed a 6-card suit with less than ten points intended mainly for a hand that would have opened a weak 2 so partner is kind of expecting 5-9 points. My options were pass, bid 1♠ or bid 2♠. I am a big fan of the bridge writing of England's Michael

Byrne (whose surname confirms his Irish ancestry) mostly because it is crystal clear and eminently practical for Improvers. Michael advocates straining to get spades into the auction but not overstraining in making a spade bid because spades being the boss suit will often buy the part-score. I figured the opponents had the points. I opted to make the bid that truthfully showed partner my length even if it was a tad less truthful in relation to points, took up the most space and was not a

forcing bid. I bid 2♠. West doubled; Russell having opened light ran for cover. East holding five clubs with 11 points excluding a lost Queen had a difficult bid. East did not have a stop in spades to bid NT, and I sensed did not want to make a bid that deprived partner of the chance of bidding 3NT. East bid 3♦. West perhaps fearful of us getting in and running spades and a hand that looked too flat to bid 5♦ passed. Russell's lightish opening and the 2♠ bid did the job of making the East West game hard

to find - a gain of 10 IMPs to us. Seven pairs made 3NT from the West seat. One N/S pair found the good sacrifice in 4♠X-1. I have always liked Nick Sandqvist's bridge advice: "The quicker you are, and the more space you take up, the harder you will be to play against - and your results will improve. And if you get caught? Take it on the chin. If you never go for a large penalty, you're not doing enough bidding".

Here is to the bidders among us with bruised chins!

Out and About...



Burke Cup Winners: Tomás Roche, Paul Delaney, Martin Brady, David Dunne with IBU President Gordon Lessells



Moylan Cup Winners: Terry Walsh and Peter Goodman with Harold Curran



4FUN Teams Winners: Noel Bradfield, Donie Cahill, Rosaleen Fitzgerald, Breeda Cahill (Cork) with CBAI President John Phelan



Egan Trophy 2026 Winners: Matthew O'Farrell, Wayne Somerville, Rex Anderson and David Greenwood

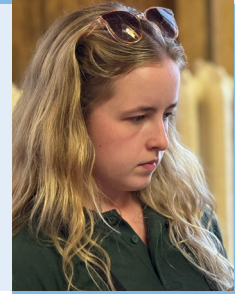


IBU Senior Trial Winners: Donal Garvey, Pat Quinn, Michael McAuliffe, David Dunne, Paul Porteous, Fred Barry



JJ Kiely Trophy Novice & Intermediate Teams Winners: Deirdre French, Brendan Ward, Mary Ryan, Richard Lister

Isabel Burke



♠ KJ109
♥ AK10
♦ 93
♣ AJ72

The diamond lead is ducked around to the 9 hoping West has the $\spadesuit 10$ but East wins the $\spadesuit 10$ and returns the $\spadesuit Q$. This is ducked to exhaust East of their diamonds and East continues the third round which clears the suit (pitching a spade from hand on the third diamond). A club is then played from dummy which was rightly ducked to cater for East holding $\clubsuit Kx$ and trying to create an entry for their partner. East then switches to a heart which was won by the $\heartsuit A$, then dummy is entered via the $\spadesuit A$ and club is played towards the $\clubsuit AJx$ with the $\clubsuit Q$ fortuitously appearing. After cashing the $\clubsuit AJ$, the $\heartsuit K$ should be cashed to unblock the hearts for a squeeze. Dummy is entered with the fourth club and the fifth clubs squeezes East. They have to keep

the $\heartsuit Q$ to cover the J in dummy, so they are forced to bare the $\spadesuit Q$, meaning declarer doesn't have to guess to take the finesse for the over trick. Well done Kelan!

Here is the squeeze position at trick 10:

		$\spadesuit 7$		
		$\heartsuit J$		
		$\diamond$		
		$\clubsuit 8$		
$\spadesuit 86$				$\spadesuit Q5$
$\heartsuit$				$\heartsuit Q$
$\diamond K$				$\diamond$
$\clubsuit$				$\clubsuit$
		$\spadesuit KJ$		
		$\heartsuit 10$		
		$\diamond$		
		$\clubsuit$		

Full hand:

Dealer South. Vul E/W.

		$\spadesuit A7$		
		$\heartsuit J65$		
		$\diamond AJ5$		
		$\clubsuit 98643$		
$\spadesuit 8642$				$\spadesuit Q53$
$\heartsuit 42$				$\heartsuit Q9873$
$\diamond K8742$				$\diamond Q106$
$\clubsuit 105$				$\clubsuit KQ$
		$\spadesuit KJ109$		
		$\heartsuit AK10$		
		$\diamond 93$		
		$\clubsuit AJ72$		

It was a great competition to play in. Thanks to my partner and teammates for an enjoyable and memorable weekend.

Quelle Dommage – a 28-IMP swing!!

Editor

Journal readers will be familiar with French star Thomas Bessis, a valued member of our Bidding Panel.

Recently I came across this cruelly unlucky deal for Thomas and his partner, Frederic Volcker. It comes from the 2017 Vanderbilt US Teams.

You might want to try bidding these hands with your partner. 7NT is surely where you'd want to play. The lead was $\clubsuit 10$. Thomas won in dummy, cashed $\diamond J$, came to hand with a spade and cashed $\diamond A$, getting the bad news that East had five diamonds. Thomas now cashed his spade winners, noting that West had 7. Next came $\heartsuit K$ and a heart, all following.



Thomas Bessis



Frederic Volcker

Dealer South. Vul N/S.

North - Bessis

$\spadesuit AKQx$
$\heartsuit Kx$
$\diamond AKQxxx$
$\clubsuit X$

South - Volcker

$\spadesuit 10$
$\heartsuit AJ10xxx$
$\diamond J$
$\clubsuit AKJxx$

W	N	E	S
		$1\heartsuit$	
$2\diamond$		$3\clubsuit$	
$3\diamond$		$3\heartsuit$	
$3\spadesuit$		$4\clubsuit$	
$4\spadesuit$		$6\clubsuit$	
7NT			

This was the position:

		$\spadesuit X$		
		$\heartsuit Kx$		
		$\diamond Xx$		
		$\clubsuit \text{None}$		
$\spadesuit \text{None}$				$\spadesuit J$
$\heartsuit ??$				$\heartsuit ???$
$\diamond 10$				$\diamond \text{None}$
$\clubsuit ?$				$\clubsuit ?$
		$\spadesuit \text{None}$		
		$\heartsuit AJ10x$		
		$\diamond \text{None}$		
		$\clubsuit K$		

We assume the opening lead was from $10x$, so LHO has three hearts and RHO two, and the odds favour the finesse. [if it was from $109x$, then LHO has two hearts and RHO has Qxx , so you're down].

Thomas finessed into RHO's doubleton $\heartsuit Q$ and that was down two. A loss of 17 IMPs since the other room played 6NT making. Had 7NT made, that would have been a gain of 11 IMPs, so it was a most unlucky outcome.

For balance and redress, see Bessis-Volcker in grand slam action again on page 26.

A Family Legacy

Rebecca O'Keeffe



Bridge is in my blood – with both my parents John and Aileen O'Keeffe not only being bridge players and teachers, but also the children of bridge players.

My grandparents, Owen and Nancy Rowe (parents of Aileen and John Rowe) taught the game and ran the New Deal club back in the 1960s, which was a huge success. My other grandparents, Billy and May O'Keeffe, played two or three times a week in Blackrock and Dun Laoghaire Bridge Clubs and absolutely adored the game. Sadly, Owen and Nancy died too young, but I have very fond memories of playing with Blue Granny and Grandad (their blue front door was how we differentiated them from Owen and Nancy – Red Granny and Grandad!).

Aileen took bridge classes with her Mum and Dad, Owen and Nancy. She took to it like a duck to water and after a year of lessons had progressed to being a helper for their new beginner's class. My father was lucky enough to start classes that year and romance blossomed. They married a couple of years later in 1969 and I was

born the following year, with Vanessa arriving a year later and David a year after that! People tell me I am obviously the oldest child – and I am not sure that is a compliment – but with two younger siblings by the time I was 2 and a quarter, it was a role I was born into, both literally and figuratively....

We played cards from a very young age, with Old Maid and Black Maria being firm favourites. As a family we would often go on holiday with the Hand family – the wonderful Valerie, the late great Damian, and their two fab children Karen and Stephen. These holidays hold a special place in my memory, and I can remember the nine of us would play cards way past our usual bedtimes. Once the kids were tucked up, bridge was often next on the agenda for the adults.

In common with many other players of the game, having bridge in the family and starting young seriously helped! I was eight before I started to become interested in bridge. And it was because Aileen and Ann Montwill (a wonderful person and player – who made

incredibly good meringues too!) had become stalwarts of the Irish team and John and Alex Montwill (Physics Professor at UCD with one of the finest minds and kindest demeanour) were also a formidable pairing, playing for Ireland on one occasion and winning the International Press Pairs trophy on another.

They would come over for practice sessions at our house every week and I would kibbitz their games. My spot was watching my Mum and whilst I didn't really have a clue what was going on, watching her play for three years before I started taking lessons paid off later.

Aged eleven, I took bridge lessons as part of my Dad's classes. John had started teaching a couple of years previously and the classes were so successful that Aileen joined in too. John Rowe, Mum's brother, also taught bridge and was a lovely, gentle teacher who people still talk to me about. Mum and Dad made bridge teaching their full-time careers and continued teaching for the following 40+ years, with huge numbers of players in South Dublin having attended their classes at some point in time. My parents recognised that doing lessons was just one part of teaching, and you also needed to create clubs to give your recent pupils the opportunity to play, without the initial intimidation of joining a more established club. Here John's parents Billy and May joined the action, running the Ace of clubs bridge club for newly taught players (and those who just wanted a very friendly game) on a Tuesday night.

This club was a roaring success. Everyone was extremely well mannered and there to have fun – apart from the Christmas



L-R: Owen Rowe, May O'Keeffe, John O'Keeffe, Aileen O'Keeffe, Nancy Rowe, Billy O'Keeffe. May 1969



party! May would make a dozen Christmas cakes and the same number of Christmas puddings, and they would be the prizes for the night... They were so delicious and so in demand, that elbows were sharpened and undos rejected as players vied to get their hands on one!

Back to my bridge story, I raced through the Beginners, Improvers and Improvers Plus classes and continued to kibitz Mum and Dad playing. But apart from having my bridge teachers as parents, I also had another advantage in my back pocket – bridge books! Dad was the bridge columnist for the Irish Press, and one of the advantages of that position was that he was on the press list for all new bridge books that were published at the time. This was a golden age for bridge books, with David Bird, Victor Mollo and Ron Klinger among the many authors who were publishing new books at the time. At least ten new bridge books would arrive at the house every month – and I read and reread every single one. I even started writing the reviews of the books for my Dad!

I was obsessed with the game. If it was a book on squeezes and I didn't get it, I would lay out 52 cards and play the hand trick by trick until I figured out how it worked. If the Rueful Rabbit (Victor Mollo) or The Abbott (David Bird) had a complicated endplay, I would do the same. I loved seeing the hands play out and working out what I could do at the table with enough practice.

At this stage I started taking bridge quite seriously. I joined Dun Laoghaire bridge club and was fortunate enough to have a range of fabulous players to play with. The Hands, Montwills, parents, grandparents and uncle John all stepped up, I also started playing with the lovely Clare Montwill – who became my first junior partner. I would also help my grandparents run the Ace of clubs club. I would head to their house on a Tuesday after school to do a piano lesson with my Auntie Patricia who lived

on the same road as them (I was a grave disappointment to her...) and then headed to Billy and May for a roast dinner before heading to the club. As an aside, I thought it was perfectly normal for me to be sitting in the back seat telling Grandad what colours the traffic lights were! In retrospect, it perhaps wasn't the safest way to travel.

Learning bridge and playing every opportunity I could was amazing. I loved every minute of it and obviously thought I was invincible. But, as Sally Brock wrote in her bio, as you improve, so you begin to realise how much you don't know!

Playing with Mum was a real treat, and it was here where sitting and watching her practise with Ann for years came into its own. I hadn't had much of a clue initially but continued kibitzing when I was learning and reading and this obviously paid off, because I was fully in tune with Mum when it came to the bidding. Mum was a highly aggressive bidder, which back then was very unusual in women's bridge and obviously rubbed off on me too. Now, everyone bids the backs off the cards, but back then we were often the only pair who would reach certain contracts – not always successfully! And Aileen also had a 'tell'... I would know instantly when my dummy was not what she was expecting, as she would lean forward and sit up straight – always with a 'thank you partner'. It typically meant that we had gone over the top in the bidding, though her card play often brought home the contract!

Mum and I played one Master/Novice competition, and it was one of the few times that I ever saw my Mum get cross at the bridge table. We were going along nicely and we came to a table where the first board was opened 1NT by the novice opponent, with their partner bidding a weak take out. So far, so normal. On the second board however, the master player opened 1NT and their partner transferred! I was completely oblivious, but Mum started bristling and asked about

the auction. The novice player was very quick to say that they were playing transfers if the Master player would end up playing the hand, but not if they wouldn't! Cue a quick Director call and a fall from grace for that particular Master.

It also brings back memories of playing school bridge in Galway where one enterprising pair had come up with a unique differential between starting the bidding '1' of a suit, or 'a' suit. So, if the bidding started with them saying "a club", that was a hand with 12-15 points, whereas if they started the bidding with "1 club", that meant 16-19 points. They weren't trying to cheat as they were happy to explain the bid to anyone that asked. They genuinely thought that they had invented a new and brilliant system – until someone had a word!

I didn't spend all of my time playing with Mum; I also had the opportunity to play with my Dad and can remember him being so proud when we won the Kilkenny Congress teams playing together. Playing with family can be stressful, but I was extremely lucky.

My first foray into International Bridge was with Clare Montwill when I was 16 and we went to the Netherlands to play in a tournament. It was eye-opening to realise that there were so many brilliant juniors, and how far you could go with the game. It was a reasonably short-lived partnership as Clare wanted to become a doctor (and is a highly successful one), so prioritised study over bridge. I tried to play with my brother David – but it wasn't a great success... older sister and younger brother etc.

A few years later I was lucky enough that Mum started playing with me with a view to competing in senior trials for the Irish Ladies team when Ireland was to host the European Championships in Killarney. We were practising at home an awful lot and although I was playing regularly in Dun Laoghaire, I was a relatively unknown player in the wider bridge world.

At the time, a well-known bridge player was running a book on the trials - my Mum and I were rank outsiders. Damien Hand and my Dad decided to take a piece of the action, betting a substantial amount each on Mum and me to win. The bet was taken, but halfway through the trials, the book was suddenly rescinded, and all bets returned (apparently it was to do with it being challenged by persons unknown, rather than the fact that we were miles in front at the time...). We made the team and I had the very great honour of representing Ireland in Greece in April and Killarney in June alongside Aileen, Barbara Seligman, Maria Barry, Diane Greenwood and Evelyn Bourke. Whilst we didn't do particularly well, it fuelled my enthusiasm for the game even more.

I graduated university that summer and started looking for a job. I was extremely fortunate that the head actuary who interviewed me for a role happened to play bridge. I was warned in advance that this person didn't do a lot of talking and I should not be surprised if the interview only lasted a few minutes. Two hours later, I think most of his colleagues thought I had jumped out of the window - but we were happily discussing bridge hands that I had recently played in Killarney!

I was fortunate enough to get the job but didn't let it get in the way of my love of the game and I was by then a regular at the Regent Bridge club, where I met and started playing with the wonderful Hilary Dowling-Long. This was a great time for Irish junior bridge, as John Carroll, Tommy Garvey, Tom Hanlon, Hugh McGann, Derek O'Gorman, Declan Byrne, Ann-Marie Horan, and many others were all playing too - apologies to all the people who aren't mentioned! I was completely addicted to the game and would play four nights a week and 40 weekends of the year for the next few years. When I bought my first flat in Dublin, I didn't have much of my salary left over at the end



L-R: Kay Downes, Barbara Seligman, Rebecca O'Keeffe, Aileen O'Keeffe, Maria Barry, Diane Greenwood & Evelyn Bourke. Killarney 1991

of the month, which meant that I needed to win to be able to afford my weekends away. It was a good incentive.

I played Irish senior and junior bridge with Hilary for several years and we had a great time representing Ireland and trying to play good bridge. We also had great success nationally, winning all the major titles. But inevitably, life gets in the way - and an enticing job offer in London took me to the UK.

For eighteen months after moving to the UK I continued to play bridge, playing with Aileen in Montecatini in 1997, the Lady Milne in 1998 and in the European Union Team Championships in Salsomaggiore in 1998, on a team with Maria Barry and Ann Montwill - where we finished second. At that point I bowed out because by then I had

met Nic (my gorgeous hubby) and our wedding, two kids and a tough job meant that bridge took a back seat for years.

I was lulled out of my bridge retirement for a very brief foray down to Brighton in 2007 by the inimitable Ciara Burns, who lived life to the full, before her very untimely and incredibly sad and sudden death in 2017. English bridge congresses are relatively quiet affairs, but quiet isn't a word you would have associated with Ciara. On one hand, I found a nice duck and when declarer finessed again, dummy was cut off, the slam they were in tanked, and Ciara stood up and clapped!! It caught the attention of most of the players there, including Andrew Robson, who subsequently wrote up the defence in his regular Times column, much to our delight.



L- R: Aileen & Rebecca O'Keeffe 1997

But that one trip to the EBU Summer Congress aside, my bridge was constrained to playing at the kitchen table with Nic and our boys – Sam and Jack, who were brought up playing cards and eventually bridge. We have a no-technology rule in the kitchen and tried hard to eat together as often as two city jobs allowed. After dinner we would play an hour of cards or a board game. Whilst the boys have both fledged, we still play board games and cards, including bridge, whenever they are back home.

Whilst I had received various approaches to come back and play over the years of my sabbatical, none of the timings worked until I got a call from Gilda Pender in April 2019. By that time, Nic had retired, Sam was at university, Jack was doing A-levels in subjects his father was much more help with, and I was ready to give it a go.

Gilda and I took our new partnership seriously. The trials were in September and were pairs trials, so we didn't have to worry about letting anyone else down. We got together a basic system and started practising three to four times a week, having hours-long conversations and refining our system continuously. We would discuss every board we played. When it came to the trials, we won every match and scored 75% to top the leaderboard. All that practice had been worth it!

Covid delayed the European Championship and forced bridge online – and that proved interesting for all of us, including my brother and sister, who are both bridge teachers. I was asked by them to help move the content and structure from face to face teaching to online and it worked out rather well – and has now revolutionised how they teach bridge. Teaching online allowed them to see what aspects of the game students found easy and difficult, and it has also given them a huge opportunity to realise what works and what doesn't as a teacher. Handing notes out on the night is now a thing of the past, and students get notes sent in

advance, copies of the boards they played on the night to go over, and a video summary of each lecture they receive face to face. My parents and grandparents all taught the game, but the ability to be able to provide all these additional services is fantastic.

Over the last seven years, I have played most years with Gilda, representing Ireland and playing in national competitions. The only slight problem for me is that holidays occasionally get in the way of bridge tournaments...

Gilda is a sensational partner. She is super-smart, considerate and we have a joint approach where, if something goes wrong or we have a difficult decision to make, we just circle the board number and discuss it in detail later so that everything at the table is calm and relaxed. We have a lot of fun playing, that's part of our bridge philosophy – and we still go through every board we play in every competition.

We were lucky enough to take part in the CBAI Ladies Coaching in July 2025 with the excellent Joyjit Sensarma. We continue to do coaching with him every week and have refined our system even more. The "I am not going to change your system" comments from Joyjit have not quite gone to plan and our system has changed

beyond recognition over the past ten months! I've also started reading bridge books again and am making my way through several books currently as well as practicing on BBO.

Gilda and I were fortunate enough to be selected for the Irish Lady Milne team this April. With the four brilliant team-mates Ann Marie Horan and Hilary Dowling-Long, Joan Kenny and Jeannie FitzGerald we sadly finished second – we will keep trying to get a long-sought victory for Ireland eventually!

Gilda and I are also playing in the European Championships in Riga this summer, with Joan and Jeannie and the equally brilliant Teresa Rigney and Siobhan Part. Our aim here is finally to make it to the Venice Cup – as our 9th place finish last time left us agonisingly close, but one place short.

Bridge has been in my blood my whole life and I am extremely fortunate to have had opportunities to play with some wonderful players in the past, and to have a great partner and team now. But much like my early bridge book reading, you can never master the game, all you can do is try and improve, whilst still having fun. I will continue to strive to get better and enjoy the game for as long as I can.



L-R: Paul Porteous, Jeannie FitzGerald, Gilda Pender, Ann-Marie Horan, Rebecca O'Keeffe, Joan Kenny, Hilary Dowling-Long, Joyjit Sensarma. Belfast 2026

Master Declarer Play 3

Rory Timlin



This is the third article on Declarer Play in a new series on Defence and Declarer Play.

It is aimed at aspiring Master players and existing Masters who want to keep sharp. We present here six play problems. In each case, South is declarer. Assume it is IMPs.

Questions:

(1) Dealer West. Vul N/S.

West opens 4♠ and South bids 5♥ and plays there. West leads ♣Q, East plays ♣K. West has three trumps.

Take it from here.

North (Dummy)

♠ 84
♥ 75
♦ AK963
♣ 8543

South

♠ A6
♥ AKQJ108
♦ 54
♣ A72

West leads ♠Q. Declarer wins in dummy and leads ♥5. Plan the defence

(2) Dealer North. Vul E/W.

No opposition bidding. South plays in 5♦. West leads a trump. How do you proceed? (Trumps break 3/2.)

North (Dummy)

♠ K62
♥ 8643
♦ 975
♣ 632

South

♠ A94
♥ 5
♦ AKQJ10
♣ AKQ4

(3) Dealer North. Vul E/W.

East opens 4♥, South bids 4♠ and plays there. West leads ♥8 to the Ace and West ruffs the ♥Q return and exits in trumps, all following suit. Plan the play.

North (Dummy)

♠ A532
♥ 94
♦ 754
♣ 10652

South

♠ KQJ1097
♥ K6
♦ AK
♣ A74

(4) Dealer South. Vul All.

South opens 2NT and is raised to 3NT. West leads ♠4 and East plays ♠A and returns ♠7. Plan the play.

North (Dummy)

♠ J105
♥ Q73
♦ J986
♣ 1093

South

♠ K93
♥ AKJ9
♦ Q10
♣ AQJ4

(5) East South. Vul E/W.

You play in 6♠ and West leads ♥Q. East wins ♥A and returns ♥2, West playing ♥4. Plan the play.

North (Dummy)

♠ J5
♥ 975
♦ 6
♣ AK98653

South

♠ AKQ972
♥ K8
♦ AK4
♣ 74

(6) Dealer South. Vul None.

South opens 1♠, West doubles and South plays in 4♠. West leads a trump. You win in hand. Plan the play. (Trumps are 2/2.)

North (Dummy)

♠ Q752
♥ 943
♦ Q42
♣ QJ6

South

♠ AKJ108
♥ K7
♦ K5
♣ K1094



Answers:

(1) The full layout was:

♠84 ♥75 ♦AK963 ♣8543		
♠KJ1097532	N	♠Q
♥962	W	♥43
♦8	E	♦QJ1072
♣Q	S	♣KJ1096
♠A6 ♥AKQJ108 ♦54 ♣A72		

Win the club lead, as it is likely to be a singleton. Draw trumps. West has three trumps and East discards a club. West is likely to be 8311. We have ten top tricks and **East can be squeezed in the minors**. So cash a diamond, West following. Now cash ♠A, East following. Exit with a spade, East discarding. On the enforced spade return, discard a club from hand to **rectify the count**. Ruff the next spade and run the trumps. In this three-card ending East is squeezed in the minors. Of course you have counted East's discards in the minors:

♠ ♥ ♦K9 ♣8		
Irrelevant	N	♠
W	E	♥
S		♦QJ
		♣J
♠ ♥8 ♦5 ♣7		

(2) The full layout was:

♠K62 ♥8643 ♦975 ♣632		
♠Q1075	N	♠J83
♥QJ9	W	♥AK1072
♦42	E	♦863
♣J985	S	♣107
♠A94 ♥5 ♦AKQJ10 ♣AKQ4		

This is an exercise in **Timing**. Draw two rounds of trumps, all following. Now cash two top clubs and lead a spade to the King. A club from dummy leaves East with no good answer. If East ruffs, then declarer plays a low club and later discards a spade on the ♣Q and ruffs a spade for trick 11. And if East doesn't ruff the third club, then South wins and ruffs the fourth club for 11 tricks.

Note that a Double Dummy spade lead (or heart lead and spade switch) spoils the timing and beats the contract.

(3) The full layout was:

♠A532 ♥94 ♦754 ♣10652		
♠84	N	♠6
♥8	W	♥AQJ107532
♦QJ963	E	♦1082
♣KQ983	S	♣J
♠KQJ1097 ♥K6 ♦AK ♣A74		

The only hope here is an **Endplay**. Win the trump at trick three in hand. East has started with one spade and eight hearts. Cash the top diamonds, play a trump to the Ace and ruff a diamond to eliminate the suit and to get a count on the minors. If East has a third diamond, then lead a low club from hand, hoping East has a singleton honour in clubs. If East had shown out on the third diamond, then play Ace and another club, hoping East has KQ or KJ or QJ (or that East doesn't unblock with Kx or Qx or Jx and ends up winning the second club trick).

(4) The full layout was:

♠J105 ♥Q73 ♦J986 ♣1093		
♠Q8642	N	♠A7
♥1062	W	♥854
♦A42	E	♦K753
♣75	S	♣K862
♠K93 ♥AKJ9 ♦Q10 ♣AQJ4		

West is favourite to hold ♠Q. We are looking for four club tricks along with four hearts and a spade. The key play is to unblock ♠K at trick one. This creates an extra entry to dummy and allows the clubs to be picked up for four tricks if East hold ♣Kxxx(x)(x).

(5) The full layout was:

♠J5 ♥975 ♦6 ♣AK98653		
♠-	N	♠108643
♥QJ104	W	♥A632
♦Q109732	E	♦J85
♣Q102	S	♣J
♠AKQ972 ♥K8 ♦AK4 ♣74		

It looks like a diamond ruff will be the 12th trick. It is best to test trumps first. So lead a spade to the jack. When West shows out, **the diamond ruff has to be abandoned**. Continue trumps with a finesse and draw all of East's trumps. Now cash ♦AK and the long trump. You are home if clubs are 2/2 or via a **Squeeze** if West hold three (or four) clubs along with ♥J10.

(6) The full layout was:

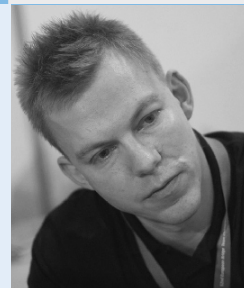
♠Q752 ♥943 ♦Q42 ♣QJ6		
♠94	N	♠63
♥AJ106	W	♥Q852
♦AJ97	E	♦10863
♣A73	S	♣852
♠AKJ108 ♥K7 ♦K5 ♣K1094		

Win the trump lead in hand and cash a second trump, all following. Then play on clubs. West will win the 2nd club and exit in clubs, all following. Win in hand and now comes the key play. Knowing that West is likely on the bidding to hold ♦A, lead a low diamond from hand. West is caught in a **Morton's Fork** (look it up, re Cardinal Morton). If West wins the first diamond, a heart can later be discarded on ♦Q while if he ducks the first diamond, win ♦Q in dummy, come to hand in trumps, cash the long club discarding a diamond from dummy and exit in diamonds to endplay West. Either way, contract made.

Note that the long club must not be cashed before playing on diamonds.

When I was a Boye

Boye Brogeland, Flekkefjord



I will, I dare, I can. Are you familiar with the concepts of positive and negative thinking and the "fight or flight" response. Or how about "the inner dialogue"? I certainly wasn't until I read *Best When It Counts* by Willi Railo in 1993. That book made me a better bridge player.

Willi Railo was a Norwegian sports psychologist and his classic book from 1983 focused on the power of thought. He writes that by thinking correctly we can have a positive influence on our achievements. Positive thoughts like "I will, I dare, I can," instead of negative ones such as "I have to" and "I should," make us capable of performing at our best. Follow these principles and I guarantee you that you will take more tricks at the table.

It was my coach in the Junior national team (and later the open squad), Sten Bjertnes who encouraged me to read Railo's book. I had recently played in my first Nordic pairs Final and finished well below average with Erik Sælensminde. This was very disappointing for two ambitious players.

However, I was left with a feeling that it was something other than our professional knowledge of bridge that was lacking.

There is one event in particular during the pairs final in Hamar in 1993 that is etched in my memory. We were to meet Geir Helgemo and Ulf Tundal, perhaps the clear favourites for the Norwegian championships. The table was surrounded by spectators. My heart was beating furiously.

I was declarer. I had memorised all the probabilities of 1-1, 2-2, 3-2, 4-1 breaks, and yes, also the 4-3 and 5-2 breaks which were relevant for the deal at hand. But I was so nervous that I failed to retrieve the relevant figures from my memory and I underestimated the risk of a 5-2 break (31%). Helgemo was happy to ruff the third round of my side-suit and I went off in a game which was costly. After the hand I wished for the round to finish quickly and to get as far away as possible from the table, something which only led to yet another poor board.

(Three years later Silla and I had a winning score in the pairs final in Ulvik, but it turned out not be good enough to beat Geir Helgemo and Lasse Aaseng who repeated their gold performance from the year before. Helgemo had won his first Norwegian Pairs championship in 1993 when he and Tundal edged past Johnny Rasmussen and Jon Sveindal.)

The reason these thoughts have surfaced again is an email that the new national team coach, Christain Vennerød has sent us in advance of the European Championships this summer. He has brought up the importance of concentration and mental energy to achieve our goals. Vennerød writes as follows: "The first to put this subject into words wrote about Zen and archery. The wise monk said that to hit the bullseye, you had to let go of your ego and your desire to hit the bullseye. Instead you must become the arrow. You, the bow and the arrow are one, and it is natural for the arrow to hit the bullseye."

On the penultimate hand of this year's premier league match I forgot to become the arrow and completely missed the target.

		Øberg	
N		♠AK986	
W	E	♥Q53	
		♦963	
S		♣93	
Boye			
♠7543			
♥J10			
♦J54			
♣K875			

W Hogstad	N Nybo	E Øberg	S Boye
	1♦	1♠	P
3NT	All Pass		

Before scoring up in the match against Telemark, who could not avoid relegation, we (North-Trøndelag) were in second place 8 VP behind Mid-Trøndelag. The leaders were playing Hordaland who were also in contention for a medal, so we still had a chance of gold.

However, the Telemark team put up greater resistance than we had expected and as we approached the finish my partner and I knew that gold was out of our reach. So, instead of the positive thinking at the start of the match, I was full of negative thoughts and gloomy inner dialogue – I had up until then visualised that we would thrash Grøtheim and co. this year.

Against 3NT, Frode Cantona Nybo led a small heart (attitude). Small from dummy, my ten and declarer's King, not exactly a flying start for the defence. Sondre Labraathen Hogstad continued with the ♠J from hand, covered by partner's Queen and Ace from dummy. Looking at my four small we weren't going to make any tricks here. Are you just as pessimistic as I am, or do you see a chance of beating the contract when Hogstad continues with a small club from dummy?

If I had been concentrating and motivated, and not affected by the thought that it would be another year until I'd have a shot at winning the premier division, I'd have been thinking: I have five points and partner opened the bidding so the opponents are in a thin game. Hogstad has probably punted game on the basis of a spade fit, a good diamond holding and about 13-14 high card points. Even if we perhaps did not get off to best start, there may still a way of beating the contract. How?

Since declarer has already established six tricks and only needs another three, there must be a chance for me to get in early and lead a diamond through. My only opportunity of an entry is the ♠K. Yes – then play that card!

Dealer North. Vul N/S.

♠ Q ♥ A982 ♦ K10872 ♣ A104			
♠ J102	N	♠ AK986	
♥ K764		♥ Q53	
♦ AQ	W	♦ 963	
♣ QJ62	S	♣ 93	
♠ 7543 ♥ J10 ♦ J54 ♣ K875			

On lead with the ♠K I would lead the ♦4 and declarer would have to cash out for seven tricks. Down two.

Instead of rising with the ♠K, I followed with a small card. When declarer played the Queen and partner after a few seconds' thought took the Ace, I quickly realised what I should have done. I slumped even further down in my chair.

I can't remember which red card partner returned, but that's irrelevant; declarer in either case makes a second trick in the suit led and has time to set up a club for his ninth trick. (Of course, Nybo can beat the contract by returning a club to my King which is then followed by a diamond through, but this looks wrong and also assumes that I misdefended).

On the last hand of the match Øberg - Hogstad bid a good grand in clubs for 2140. We lost the match 9-21 and had to make do with fourth place. A result which was even more depressing than usual because I had failed to follow Railos' recipe for success that I had learned 17 years earlier.

Tip: The old saying, "Focus on the task at hand," is also valid for the game of bridge. Keep your concentration, think positive and don't be bothered by the opponents or what happened on the last board. There is nothing you can do about that, but the opportunities are already waiting for you on the next hand!

[first published in Australian Bridge Magazine]

Comme C'est Formidable!!

Editor

Browsing the videos on Traian Chira's excellent Youtube channel, I spotted this gem from the 2016 France-Norway clash in the 2016 European Championships. Would you have had the nerve of France's Freddie Volcker?

Board 5 of 16

Dealer North. Vul N/S.

Bessis ♠ A ♥ 53 ♦ A10 ♣ AKJ109654			
Charleses	N	Hoftaniska	
♠ J9752		♠ KQ1083	
♥ A764	W	♥ 982	
♦ 7432	E	♦ 865	
♣ -	S	♣ 32	
Volcker ♠ 64 ♥ KQJ10 ♦ KQJ9 ♣ Q87			

W	N	E	S
	2♣	3♠	X
5♠	6♣	P	P
6♠	P	P	7♣
X	P	P	XX!!
All Pass			

Would you have found 7♣ on Volcker's Aceless hand? Or would North's pass over 6S have encouraged you? And what about the Redouble?? Check out the video – it came like a shot.

OK now move seats to East, Thor-Erik Hoftaniska. West's double of 7♣ is clearly demanding a non-spade lead, but which red suit? Hoftaniska chose a diamond. Thomas Bessis tabled his hand. Just the 2300 to N/S. A gain of 14 IMPs versus 6C+1 at the other table. Had the heart lead been found, E/W would have gained 16 IMPs.

And you know what? They instantly moved to the next board without a word, a glance or a gesture. These Nordic types are uber-cool! But with Norwegian luck running like that, you won't be surprised to hear that France won by 65-4 IMPs, or 19.3 to 0.7 VPs.

A final thought – what if West bids 5♥ or 6♥ at his first/second turn? That should ensure a final outcome of 6♣ making [for a 1 IMP gain] or 6♠ doubled minus 5 for plus 7 IMPs.

To quote the line from Good Will Hunting – "How do ya like dem apples?"

Do you use the STOP card?

Jim Doyle



Most bridge clubs in the country now use bidding boxes. Each of those boxes should have a red STOP card in it. Are they used correctly by members or sometimes used by members or are they just taking up space in the box?

Current CBAI regulations concerning the use of the STOP card are as follows

"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.

Any opening bid not made at the 1-level should be accompanied by a stop card."

Here is a hand played in a US competition back in 2009 when the US regulations on the use of the STOP card were similar to the current CBAI regulations and the STOP card was not used when it should have been.

Dealer South. Vul E/W.

♠ 103		
♥ QJ10		
♦ 985		
♣ KQJ109		
♠ Q9865	N	♠ K72
♥ A4	W	♥ 5
♦ K72	E	♦ QJ1064
♣ A52	S	♣ 8743
♠ AJ4		
♥ K987632		
♦ A3		
♣ 6		

The stop card was not used by South prior to bidding 4♥. Result; E/W +620

The director was called after the 4♠ bid and again after the play of the hand when 4♠ had made. N/S felt that the break in tempo (BIT) by West before doubling had given East Unauthorised Information (UI).

South thought the BIT was 15 seconds but, when asked to demonstrate took 10 seconds. East and West agreed that there was a pause. West said he was thinking about what to do.

The Ruling: Law 85A requires the director to collect facts in the case of a dispute and "base his view on the balance of probabilities, which

is to say in accordance of the weight of evidence he is able to collect." Regulations require a player to "wait for a suitable interval (about ten seconds)," irrespective of whether a stop card is used. Since West did wait about ten seconds, it was not considered UI and the table result was allowed to stand.

The Appeal:

N/S appealed the director's ruling. South, East, and West attended. In the appeal, South maintained that he counted a fifteen second break in tempo by West. West acknowledged that he was thinking but was not timing himself. East thought West took approximately the time expected for a jump bid, in any case no more than twelve seconds. The Decision: The panel felt that West's break in tempo was exactly what the Skip Bid regulation requires. As such, there was no unmistakable hesitation and no infraction. The table result was allowed to stand.

Experts who reviewed the appeal ruling were in agreement that it was a technically correct ruling and decision and that South caused a big part of the problem by failing to use the Stop Card.

My Journey Continues

Nicola O'Dowd



"The biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place."

– George Bernard Shaw

We are very lucky in the North Eastern Region. Across the season we have a busy calendar of Sunday competitions. When you really stop and think about it, that is a huge amount of bridge. Not every region around the country is fortunate enough to have that.

But competitions only continue if players support them. They do not just happen automatically every year. Behind every event there is a club organising the hall, committees taking on the work, TDs giving up their Sundays, people helping with food and tea, and volunteers doing all the jobs that most players never even see.

I think sometimes people underestimate how important local support actually is. It is easy to wait for the bigger national competitions, but the regional Saturday/Sunday competitions are just as important. If players stop supporting them, numbers begin to drop and eventually competitions disappear altogether. Once that happens, it is very difficult to bring them back.

Local competitions are also so important because they encourage people to travel and play outside their own club. For a lot of players, especially novices and intermediates, a nearby Sunday competition is often the first step into playing more bridge. The atmosphere is usually friendly, familiar, and much less intimidating than walking into a huge bridge congress or national competition for the first time.

I also think clubs should encourage members to support these events more. Sometimes all it takes is one

person saying, "We'll go together," for somebody to give it a try. Once people start travelling to competitions, they usually enjoy it far more than they expected.

The reality is that strong regional competitions help keep bridge active in an area. They keep clubs connected, they give people more opportunities to play, and they create a real sense of support throughout the season.

One thing I've noticed since writing my last article is the number of calls and messages I've received from clubs and players looking for information. Sometimes it's about competitions. Sometimes it's about grant advice/info, equipment, websites, lessons, movements or simply who to contact about something.

What struck me wasn't the questions themselves. It was how often people simply didn't know where to find the information. Many of these players are enthusiastic and want to get involved. They're not looking for someone to do it for them. They just need to know where to start.

But I think there is another issue too - finding the information in the first place. So many newer players have said to me that they simply do not know where to look to find out what competitions are coming up, or what they are eligible to play in. I tell them to check out the CBAI website and or their regional website but sometimes they just can't see it or know where to look on the sites.

It is essential that regional and club websites are kept updated, relevant and most importantly, easy to find. Yes, many club secretaries do send out the information when they receive it, but people are busy and emails/messages get lost. Players

often need another reminder nearer the actual event. Sometimes that one reminder is the difference between somebody going and somebody forgetting about it altogether.

I think we probably underestimate how confusing it can feel for newer players. Experienced players know where to look. They know the regional websites, they know the people involved, and they hear about events through word of mouth. Newer players often do not have those connections yet. If the information is hard to find, many simply will not travel.

Even small things help keeping regional websites updated, resharing flyers the week before an event, mentioning competitions at club nights, or encouraging members to travel together. The easier we make it for people to hear about competitions, the more likely they are to support them.

The opportunities are there. The competitions are there. The lessons are there. The challenge is making sure people know about them. Because if players can't find the information, they can't take part. And if they can't take part, we all lose out.

Sometimes the biggest difference isn't creating something new. It's making it easier for people to find what already exists.

The Holmes Wilson is one of the biggest national competitions in the country and this year there were 123 teams playing. That's a huge entry and when you walk into the room you really feel it straight away.

There's a great atmosphere around it. A bit of excitement, a bit of tension, plenty of noise and conversation before play starts. Three long sessions, full Swiss movement and no easy matches anywhere.



One thing that really struck me this year was the amount of work going on behind the scenes before anybody even sits down to play. With over 100 teams there are boards everywhere, movements to sort out, equipment to check and tables to lay out. If something goes wrong it affects a lot of people very quickly, so there's a huge amount of preparation involved. The TDs were excellent all weekend. In a room that size there are always calls and questions, but everything just seemed to run smoothly.

Three sessions of Swiss is tough going as well. You can't really switch off at any stage because every match matters. One bad match won't finish you, but at the same time you can't afford to drift for too long either.

We actually got off to a great start. First match, first board.

Board 1. Dealer North. Vul All.

♠AKQJ974 ♥J ♦A ♣A953			
♠T862	N	♠3	
♥976	W	♥KQ82	
♦KQ94	E	♦J1083	
♣J7	S	♣10642	
♠5 ♥A10543 ♦7652 ♣KQ8			

W	N	E	S
	2♣ ¹	P	2♥
P	2♠	P	3♦
P	3♠	P	4♠
P	4NT ²	P	5♦ ³
P	7♠	All Pass	

¹ 2♣=Benji strong two in a suit.

² 4NT=RKCB 0314

³ 5♦=one keycard

Declan, sitting North, opened 2♣. We play Benji so that showed a strong two in a suit. I had an Ace and a King with Queen (9 HCP) and broke the relay with 2♥. He bid 2♠ so we already knew we were heading for game. I showed my shape with 3♦ and he bid 3♠. At that point I could have bid 3NT because I had club stoppers, but I knew he wouldn't have opened 2♣ without at

least eight playing tricks. Knowing I had two tricks in my own hand I decided to support spades and bid 4♠ instead. He then bid 4NT, Roman Keycard, and once I answered one keycard he had enough information. Because I had broken the relay, he already knew I had some values. He bid 7♠.

Only seven tables in the whole room reached the grand slam. One table was in 7NT and that made too. Bidding and making a grand slam on the very first board of the weekend gave us a big swing straight away and was a lovely way to start. *[There are only 12 top tricks, but on the run of the trump suit East cannot guard both hearts and clubs. Ed]*

We were playing as Area Masters this year. Our team was Declan Byrne, Dara Voyles, Paul Dunne and myself. One of the things about Swiss is you always know roughly where you stand, so we were keeping an eye on the other Area Master teams as the weekend went on.

Over the last couple of years, our friendly rivals were Paul Clinch, John Coulter, Vicky Pigot and Simon Burrell. We've played and competed in plenty of competitions, so it was great fun watching one team pass the other out on the leaderboard and then swap back again a round later. In the end we just missed out on the Area Master prize in the final match. Huge congratulations to Paul, John, Vicky and Simon on winning the Best Area Master prize. At one stage they were sitting 12th overall which is a fantastic result in a field of 123 teams.

And honestly, for anyone who hasn't played in the Holmes Wilson before, I'd really encourage you to try it. When I first started playing I used to hear people saying you got loads of points just for turning up. You don't!! You only get points by winning matches. If you don't win, you don't get points. Simple as that.

A few months later we were back in another national event, this time the Lambert. Playing in the Lambert this year, the CBAI's National Confined Pairs Championship. There were 61 pairs competing and Declan and I got off to a great start, finishing the first session in second place. The second session wasn't as good. We finished 15th in the afternoon session, but our morning score was enough to leave us third overall. The best way I can describe the result is as someone said to me "congratulations and commiserations". Still, we were delighted to finish third in a national championship. Sitting second at the halfway stage, it's hard not to wonder if a board or two might have made the difference. Congratulations to Kyrle Allen and Paul Hogan on winning the Lambert, and to Breda Scanlan and Phill Harnett who were runners-up.

On Sunday we were back in action in the Cooper Teams with Brendan Doyle and Mags Kelly. We just missed out on the prizes, finishing fifth overall, but one hand certainly gave us something to talk about afterwards. The round had gone slowly and the TD told us we had 3½ mins to finish. Declan was sitting North holding 20 points. I was South and dealer. I started the bidding with 1♦ to say Declan was surprised would be an understatement. In fact, I think he nearly fell off his chair. The auction started 1♦ from me, 1♥ from Declan. After that we quickly established a heart fit and started cue bidding controls. Once I showed two key cards, Declan knew I held the ♥K and ♥A, which gave him all the information he needed. He confidently bid 7♥ and after a couple of tricks were played he claimed all 13 tricks. We still had a minute to spare.

Board 2. Dealer South. Vul N/S.

♠AQ9 ♥AQ743 ♦K105 ♣AJ			
♠K108643	N	♠J72	
♥10	W	♥965	
♦943	E	♦J7	
♣865	S	♣109743	
♠5 ♥KJ82 ♦AQ862 ♣KQ2			

It's one of those hands that reminds you why bridge is such a fascinating game. Congratulations to the winners, Giles Murnin, David Connolly, Jeremy James and Mia Delaney. Jeremy and Mia were runners-up in the Cooper last year, so it was nice to see them go one better this time.

Sligo was one of the final congresses of the season for us. One board from the Sligo Congress Teams produced one of those auctions where I found myself staring across the table wondering what my partner was doing.

Board 3. Dealer South. Vul N/S.

♠ 76 ♥ QJ107432 ♦ 105 ♣ 103			
♠ 10	N	♠ A9852	
♥ 986	W	♥ 5	
♦ KQJ984	E	♦ A632	
♣ AQ9	S	♣ K85	
♠ KQJ43 ♥ AK ♦ 7 ♣ J7642			

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

When Declan bid 5♦, I couldn't believe it. When the opponents doubled, I was even less convinced. Sitting there looking at my cards, I honestly couldn't see how this was going to end well.

As it turned out, he knew exactly what he was doing. Not only did 5♦ make, but it made with an overtrick for +650. I suppose that's why bridge is a partnership game. You have to trust your partner, even when you're not entirely sure what they're up to!

We finished the Sligo congress winning the Peggy Murray Salver. It's the Area Master Prize for the congress teams. This is the second consecutive year winning with Anna Shalvey and Melissa Brady. It might be our last as they will be upgraded to Regional Masters very soon.



Winners of the Peggy Murray Salver Area Master at the Sligo Congress:

L-r: Anna Shalvey, Melissa Brady, Nicola O'Dowd and Declan Byrne with John Phelan, CBAI President

Looking back over the season, one thing has become very clear to me. The competitions are there. The opportunities are there. The people willing to help are there. Sometimes all that is missing is the confidence to take that first step and enter.

Whether it's a local Sunday competition, a congress, a national event or even just visiting another club, bridge becomes far more enjoyable once we start getting out and taking part. I've seen so many players this year surprise themselves simply by giving something a go.

As another bridge season begins to come to an end, I'll meet many of you at a bridge table somewhere along the way during the summer.

And speaking of summer bridge, the two-day Bridge Bash event that people seem to have been hearing about for months is finally almost here.

At this stage, I'm not entirely sure whether people are turning up for the bridge or just waiting for the next song!

We're also delighted that it will be one of George Ryan's first official outings as CBAI President.

For anyone who still hasn't heard "The Bridge Bash Song", yes, it is a real thing!

You can listen to it [here](#):

Entries are now open for the Bridge Bash in Trim. We have added a second day this year with teams competitions and, numbers permitting, we will have sections for every grade, so players will be competing within their own grade throughout the event. Hopefully that will make it enjoyable for everyone, from novices right through to experienced players.

My only tip is don't delay. Get your entry in as soon as possible!

For details and entry information visit: www.bridgewebs.com/boynevalleytd/

BOYNE VALLEY BRIDGE

2026 BRIDGE BASH

PRE-ENTRY ONLY

SATURDAY & SUNDAY
AUGUST 22 & 23, 2026

FRI & SAT

€159 BB SINGLE PN
€179 BB DOUBLE PN

SUNDAY

€149 BB SINGLE
€169 BB DOUBLE

KNIGHTSBROOK HOTEL & GOLF RESORT
TRIM, COUNTY MEATH

PRE ENTRY ONLY

Please Contact Nicola O'Dowd

nicolaodowdbridge@gmail.com

www.bridgewebs.com/boynevalleytd

(086)8577118

SCAN HERE

SATURDAY 22ND AUG
EVENT SCHEDULE

11:00	Supreme Pairs Masters 2 Sessions
11:00	Area Master 2 Sessions
11:00	Intermediate A 2 Sessions
11:00	Intermediate B 2 Sessions
11:00	Novice Pairs 2 Sessions
11:15	Open Pairs (all grades) 1 Session only
4:00	All Pairs 2nd Session
4:00	1 Session only Open Pairs (all grades)

SUNDAY 23RD AUG
EVENT SCHEDULE

11:00	Supreme Teams Masters 2 Sessions
11:00	Intermediate & Novice Teams 2 Sessions
3pm	Open Pairs (all grades) 1 Session only
3pm	All Teams 2nd Session

CASH PRIZES

DOUBLE SESSIONS

€25.00

OPEN PAIRS

€12.50

TD Huey Daly & Team

All sessions including open pairs are pre entry

Separate sections will run subject to sufficient entries

Making My Way

Melissa Brady



The IBU Seniors Congress was held in the Cavan Crystal Hotel, right in my own county, so it would have been rude not to turn up for the Open Pairs on Wednesday night. Any excuse!

Anna and I were the only pair to reach 6NT on this board. After partner opened 1♦, I sat up straight with my 18 points. I responded 2♣, and when partner rebid 2♦, the auction continued:

Seniors Congress

Open Pairs - Board 22

Dealer East. Vul E/W.

		♠AQ7	
		♥Q83	
		♦A54	
		♣AQ105	
♠KJ1052	N	♠9864	
♥A104	W	♥J9752	
♦76	E	♦82	
♣K82	S	♣76	
		♠3	
		♥K6	
		♦KQJ1093	
		♣J943	

When partner showed just one key card, I reasoned that two of her opening-bid values were likely the ♥A and ♥K, or perhaps the ♦K and ♥K. Either way, I felt comfortable as a spade lead wouldn't cause any problems, so I placed the contract in 6NT.

The opening lead was the ♥2. I played low from dummy, West rose with the Ace and switched to the ♠J. I won with the Ace, cashed the diamonds, and closely watched the discards. East pitched a club on the first diamond and another club on the second, which told me exactly what I needed to know.

After running the remaining diamonds, I played the ♥K from dummy, then led the ♣J and let it run. I followed with another club,

winning with the ♣10 in hand, and drew the remaining clubs. The ♥Q provided the final trick, and the slam rolled home for a well-earned +990.

Anna and I made the trip to Galway for our second and final Confined competition outing — the Lambert and Cooper — before we move up to Regional Masters in September. Yet another competition, yet another slam... this time a grand slam, and one that only five of the 34 teams managed to bid.

Cooper Cup

Session 2 - Board 15

Dealer South. Vul N/S.

		♠AQ9	
		♥AQ743	
		♦K105	
		♣AJ	
♠K108643	N	♠J72	
♥10	W	♥965	
♦943	E	♦J7	
♣865	S	♣109743	
		♠5	
		♥KJ82	
		♦AQ862	
		♣KQ2	

In the second session of the Cooper Cup, sitting North, I was dealt a 20-point hand. With a five-loser hand I decided I'd open it 2NT instead of 2♣. I got ahead of myself as I could hardly believe it when my partner opened 1♦. I responded 1♥, and my partner jumped to 3♥ — showing 15–17 points and an unbalanced hand, since with a balanced hand she'd have opened no trumps. I asked for key cards bidding 4NT, getting a 5♥ reply, showing two without the Queen of trumps. There was really only one place to go: 7♥.

East led the ♦J, I drew trumps and ran off the remaining tricks with little difficulty — earning us 17 IMPs, as our teammates' opponents at the other table had only reached

4♥. One particularly bold player did venture 7NT, but with a 5–4 fit and ruffing power available, call me chicken if you like but I was never tempted by those extra 10 points!!

As the season at Cavan Bridge Club came to a close, I was delighted to finish on a personal high by winning both the Gorta Trophy with Julie Lynch and the Scanlon Trophy with Paddy McDermott.

There's a nice story behind the Gorta win. I played with Julie who is a novice. I was the last novice Paddy taught from scratch before Julie, so when he found himself unable to play on the night of the competition, he paired the two of us together — a shrewd decision, knowing I'd keep things simple and not bombard Julie with conventions. We didn't even need the handicaps, winning on gross, which always feels that bit more satisfying.

The Gorta win also proved decisive in the race for the Scanlon Tray — Cavan Bridge Club's Player of the Year award. Paddy and I had played together throughout the season, accumulating identical scores heading into the final stretch. The Gorta result tipped the balance just enough in my favour. A narrow margin, but a wonderful way to close out the year - a fitting end to what had been a challenging year, both personally and at the bridge table.

The Yeats Country Congress drew bridge players from far and wide to Sligo, and it was wonderful to see such an impressive turnout again this year.

For Anna and me, however, it proved to be a weekend to forget. We seemed incapable of getting anything right — our bidding was off, our play was off, and we doubled contracts that had no business being doubled. If there was a way to go wrong, we found it.

Thankfully, Sunday's teams event offered us the chance to redeem ourselves. Joining forces with Nicola O'Dowd and Declan Byrne, we successfully defended our title and retained the Peig Murray Salver, presented to the top Area Masters team.

At the end of last season, our incoming North Eastern Region President, Nicola O'Dowd, called to ask if I would serve as her Vice President. I was delighted to accept, and this year I have the honour of taking on the role of President of the region.

We are exceptionally fortunate in the North Eastern Region to have such a vibrant bridge community, with 43 affiliated clubs and a packed calendar spanning 36 weekends throughout the season. As you can imagine, it promises to be a busy year, and I am committed to giving the role my full energy, enthusiasm, and dedication.

After much deliberation, I have decided to step back from most national competitions and congresses this year in order to focus on my responsibilities as Regional President. It was not a decision I took lightly – it required considerable reflection before I arrived at a conclusion. As a result this will be my final article for the foreseeable future.

When I think back to the first article I wrote as an Intermediate B player just three years ago, and compare it to where I am today, both as a bridge player and as a contributor, I can't help but feel pleased with the progress I've made.

When I sat down to write that first article, I had one simple goal: to appeal to players at my own level. Looking back, I feel I achieved that. In the days and weeks after each Journal was published, I would often receive text messages from

players I had come up through the ranks with, as well as from others whose standard was far beyond mine, saying things like, "Another great article" or "Great work in the Journal."

Those comments always meant a lot, not only because they showed that people were reading my articles, but because they suggested I was succeeding in making bridge accessible for a wide range of players.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Enda for the opportunity to contribute to the Journal, and to commend him, the other contributors, and the graphic designer for the tremendous effort they invest in producing the IBJ for all our enjoyment. I look forward to reading future editions and, who knows, perhaps one day you may hear from me again.

Out and About...



Cooper Cup 2026 Winners: Giles Murnin, David Connolly, Mia Delaney and Jeremy James with CBAI President John Phelan



Lambert Cup 2026 Winners: Kyrle Allen and Paul Hogan with CBAI President John Phelan



JJ Murphy 2026 Winners: Manus Cannon and Anne McGettigan with CBAI President John Phelan

Junior Bridge Focus

Luca Crone



I intended to write this article on defensive techniques however, that will have to wait as I recently travelled to Bristol with Matthew O'Farrell, Peter Pigot and Thomas MacCormac and want to bring you on our journey.

Why Bristol, you ask? The Spring Foursomes, the premier teams event in the English calendar. Sponsors cough up big money to pimp out their team, this year attracting players from 21 countries. Which internationally famous team are the holders, you may ask? Only our own team Moran, Conor Boland, John Carroll, Nick FitzGibbon, Tom Hanlon, Adam Mesbur and Mark Moran, with Grainne Barton as NPC. Unfortunately, the name Moran was already taken, so they were team Barton for the weekend.

The Spring Fours is a double knock-out event of 32 board matches in four segments. There are numerous side events if your weekend ends on Saturday; however, our team said from the outset that we were not interested in them. To decide the first match, the EBU (English Bridge Union) seeds the top 32 teams based on the average Gold Points holdings and randomly allocate the rest. We were seeded 53rd out of 64 and drew team Green, seeded 12th. Combined, they have won the Spring Fours only 10 times previously, so we knew we had gotten a nice match to ease ourselves into while getting over the jetlag. We started quite well and were up going into the last segment. One of our pivotal gains came from this bidding problem. See whether you can understand 3♥.

W	N	E	S
	1♥	P	1♠
X	XX ¹	P	2♠
3♥			

¹ XX=three spades

Could it be natural? Generally, if the opponents have shown a four-card suit, it is still reasonable to play in that suit. However, five cards are usually too rough a trump break to want the ability to play there. If you didn't pass, well done, you are doing better than the long-time English international Neil Rosen. Is it a cuebid? But why wasn't 3m bid showing a power double hand with a long minor? It feels as if the hand is angling for 3NT, but what could he need to know from his partner?

We are getting there. In truth, West is trying to show stoppers for NT, and perhaps doesn't have both hearts and spades covered. If the opponents show one suit and you cuebid angling for 3NT, you are asking for a stop. Conversely, when the opponents show two suits, instead of asking for stops, you show them. Armed with that, 3♥ was showing a stopper in hearts and asking partner to bid 3NT with a spade stopper. Here was his hand:

♠ -
♥ AKx
♦ xx
♣ AKQ10xxxx

Needless to say, there wasn't much to the play. Why not just bid 3♣ or 5♣? 3NT could be the right spot; in fact, East had ♠Axxxx. The problem with 3♣ is that partner doesn't know what to do over that with a bunch of hands without stopper in both majors. Are you even sure 3♣ is forcing? While 3♥ makes it very easy for partner with a something in spades. Unfortunately, the

last segment didn't go our way, resulting in our first loss. One more and we were goners. In the next match, we drew the Fegartys, a family that runs a dog kennel in Cambridgeshire. I know them well, having played with one of the sons at the Swedish Bridge Festival. The two sons play on the English junior team and somehow keep things amicable away from the bridge table. Some nail-biting boards, but this match came down to mindset. The most common hindrance for young players is getting "tilted" easily. We all hate it when we have a bad board. Maybe you miscounted trumps or forgot part of the system you have worked hard to learn. To get tilted means this board enervates you, subsequently affecting the rest of your session. This usually results in players bidding off the walls, maybe trying a risky preempt or doubling a contract, needing a few tricks from partner and turning one bad board into a series of them. This ensued after the two sons went down in a tight slam at the start of the last segment. We were up marginally going in, and they proceeded to throw the match. In fact, Matthew and I had left some room for gains in that segment, but getting tilted gave them no chance. Phew, we weren't out after the first two matches. Next, we came up against team Small, comprised of a regular English Camrose pair around 20 years ago and a top Canadian pair. They were seeded 27th, yet we won this match comfortably, even with the lunacy they threw at us in the last segment. They were down considerably, so they were trying to make back the deficit and succeeded when they made a slam that was less than 5%. Alas, it wasn't enough as we continued into Sunday, still in the main event. Although now we drew Nettleton, featuring powerhouses such as David Gold, Tom Paske and Matt Brown. There



is nothing like playing the best players in the world. All you can ever do is try to play your best bridge, no matter who is sitting at your table. Matthew and I were stationed against Gold and Paske. I won't say we were perfect, but we weren't worse than our opponents, as we came out victorious. There was nothing dramatic in any of the sets, at least on our side. We just played as close to double dummy as possible and let our opponents make more mistakes. Our big wins came in the slam zone, where, surprisingly, we consistently judged better. It goes to show that even the best are beatable. Nettleton were disheartened but congratulated us nonetheless. After being knocked out, they proceeded to win the runners-up cup, the Punchbowl. After David Gold told me it was only the second time he had ever played in the Punchbowl, having played every year since he was 15. The other time was his first year, when, surprise, surprise, he won it as well.

We were now into the round of 16. Green were still going strong, having suffered their first loss in the last round. Barton were also fighting but had lost in the first round to a team of English and Dutch juniors. Don't let the age fool you, though, as the Dutch pair on the team have won the World Youth team and pairs championships and almost knocked out Bermuda Bowl winners Zimmerman at the European Winter Games last year. At this stage, we were starting to get worried that we might have to change flights. I was worried I wouldn't be able to get any studying done on this trip or that I would miss my exam if we got much further. Next up were Lupo Veloce, an Austrian team. They were Bermuda Bowl finalists in the 80s and have since turned their attention to the D'Orsi Trophy (World Seniors), where they got fourth last year. Their system was not like anything I had played against before, I imagine, given that it is strongly influenced by 80s bridge theory. I will say there were 200 imps on the scoreboard

after 32 boards, but refrain from commenting on the quality of the bridge. This was the match I remember the most and feel there were the most decisions. This is probably the effect of hindsight; nevertheless, let's have a look at one particularly interesting board. Sit in Matthew's shoes, you are favourable and hold:

♠ 82
♥ 83
♦ 652
♣ Q98765

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

¹ 2NT=Jacoby

You decide not to offer yourself up on a platter immediately and pass 1♠. Now partner bids 3NT, presumably showing the minors. You should have a big club fit, but who is making what? They sound confident that they are making 6♠. Do you bid 7♣ or P? Will you be pushing them into 7♠=? We are non-vulnerable while they are vulnerable, so we can afford to go down six before it is too costly if they are making. Matthew correctly judged to sacrifice in 7♣. Here is the full hand:

♠ AK10753			
♥ KQJ9			
♦ 87			
♣ 2			
♠ 4	N	♠ 82	
♥ 107		♥ 83	
♦ KQJ43	W	♦ 652	
♣ AJ1043	E	♣ Q98765	
	S		
♠ QJ96			
♥ A6542			
♦ A109			
♣ K			

That was worth 12 imps as 7♣_x was only off four for 800 vs 6♠= for 1430 at the other table. Sometimes, the worst hand at the table is the one with the most difficult decision. As usual, we were leading going into the last segment, but ultimately lost by a painful 4 IMPs with 55 IMPs exchanged in the last segment. It was a tough

loss to take as each one of us could have saved those 4 IMPs in the last eight boards. Both Green and Lupo Veloce eventually advanced to the semi-final, while Barton advanced to the final but lost their title.

Alas, we had a good run, but we will have more chances in time to come. Last summer, the four of us narrowly missed the round of 16 in the European Open Teams Championships in Poznan, Poland, so we have improved on that performance. To look on the bright side, it gave me an extra day to study, as we chose not to play the Monday side event. We also got to beat our idols and learned a lot in doing so. Nevertheless, it wouldn't have been made possible without Peter Pigot and Thomas MacCormac's junior fundraising efforts during the year. Thank you to everyone who contributed.

Teltscher Trophy 2026

Ranald Milne



Ireland was lying second with just the match against the leader, England, left to play and needing 20 IMP win against them to overtake them. As it was, we failed to take our chances and finished third. Well done to the English team and to the EBU who had a 20-0 win in the last set to take second.

But Ireland had one major success: one of our team had the best score of any pair in the event: Donal Garvey and Pat Quinn, with a combined age of 160, averaged 1.09 IMPS plus over 112 boards. No-one else came close to that. I'll be show-casing a couple of examples of their class later.

Hand 1

(Board 24, Session 2 vs EBU)

♠ A98
♥ K107
♦ KQ84
♣ KQ84

The hand on my right was the dealer and, at nil all, opened 1NT (12-14). I doubled to show 16 plus and all passed.

I led the ♦4 and this dummy came down

	♠ 732	
	♥ A93	
	♦ J953	
	♣ 1098	
♠ A98	N	
♥ K107	W	
♦ KQ84		
♣ KQ5	S	

Declarer played the 5 from dummy, partner [BJ O'Brien] played the 6 and declarer won with the 10. We show standard count when not trying to win the trick and my partner knows, by using the Rule of 7, how many higher cards declarer

holds. So, holding 7 6 2 he will play the two as they're all equal value because declarer must hold two higher cards than the 7. And by playing the 6 I know he has a doubleton or a singleton and that declarer has false-carded and is holding the 7. This section is worth studying if you're new to showing count.

Declarer follows with the ♠J. I played the Queen and partner the 2. We play standard count here too, so he's showing an odd number of clubs. Now what do you play?

I decided on the ♥7. This went ♥3, ♥J, ♥Q. Now declarer played a small heart to the Ace and another to my King leaving me back on lead. Partner had followed showing just three hearts.

So, now I try the ♠8 and that goes, 2, J, K.

Declarer now plays their fourth heart and I must discard.

But I now have a complete picture of declarer's original hand:

♠ K10
♥ Q854
♦ A107
♣ AJxx

I'm down to these cards, having to find a discard on declarer's final heart.

	♠ 73	
	♥	
	♦ J93	
	♣ 109	
♠ A8	N	
♥	W	E
♦ KQ8		
♣ K5	S	
	♠ 10	
	♥	
	♦ A7	
	♣ Axx	

So, I unblocked the ♠A in order to get partner in to cash four spade tricks and squeeze declarer before me.

Clever eh!

Not so. Declarer's hand was actually

♠ KQ108
♥ Q854
♦ A107
♣ J7

And, instead of going one down, declarer wrapped up two overtricks!

I'd fallen for one of the oldest tricks in the book; that is, if you have no suit you wish to attack, then consider faking interest in your weakest suit.

Should I have fallen for it? No, I should not. What I should have done is discard a diamond and wait for partner to tell me what to do. But I had developed a fixed idea and that's always a mistake.

I hope you did better.

Well played Rob Lawy of the EBU team.

Hand 2

(Board 8, Session 1 vs Wales)

As dealer you hold:

♠ 1032
♥ 1075
♦ AQ73
♣ AQ8

Playing a 12-14 no-trump, you open 1NT. Partner bids 2♥ as a transfer to spades, you bid 2♠ and partner bids 3♥ which shows precisely five spades and four hearts. There are two methods for differentiating between 5-4 and 5-5 majors:

- When using transfers, transfer into hearts and follow that with a jump to 3♠ (shows 5-5). Note that this is safer than transferring



to spades and then bidding 4♥ as partner will sometimes open 1NT with doubleton in both majors and 5-4 in the minors

OR

- b. Adopt a convention called Smolen. With 5-4 hands one starts with Stayman then jumps in the 4-card major. e.g. 1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 3M. Obviously, if opener shows a major then the other major can stay hidden. With 5-5 you transfer into spades then bid hearts. The latter is marginally better for strong no-trumpers

Your choices are now between bidding:

- ▶ 3♠ which shows three-card support and a 12-14 hand suitable for slam should partner be strong
- ▶ 3NT which suggests this might be the best spot
- ▶ 4♠ showing three-card support and a 12-14 hand unsuitable for slam should partner be strong

Which bid would you choose?

BJ elected to bid 3♠ which I raised to game.

These were the two hands:

♠ 1032	N	♠ AKQ98
♥ 1075		♥ K862
♦ AQ73	W	♦ 92
♣ AQ8	S	♣ 54

Even after receiving a favourable diamond lead and the spades breaking 3-2, this contract floated down two.

In the other room the bidding goes, nil all:

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

¹ 1NT=9-12

² 2♣=Stayman

³ 2♦=No major

⁴ 2♥= 4 hearts

⁵ 3♣=Described, when asked, as showing a maximum

⁶ 3♠=Not alerted as West was uncertain what it meant (why do people play these complex systems that they can't remember?) but suggested it might be 5-4 in hearts and spades. This seems totally illogical but explains why she bid the better contract of 3NT

These were the four hands:

♠ 764				♠ AKQ98
♥ 93				♥ K862
♦ J1064				♦ 92
♣ K1072				♣ 54
♠ 1032	N			
♥ 1075		W	E	
♦ AQ73				
♣ AQ8				
		S		
♠ J5				
♥ AQJ4				
♦ K85				
♣ J963				

North led a diamond against 3NT and South contributed the King, won by declarer who then ran the spades. South has to find three discards. One diamond was easy but then he had to work out declarer's shape. She clearly didn't have four hearts but was she 3-3 or 2-4?

What would you have chosen?

The fact she didn't raise partner's suggested five-card heart suit and that she had not said that 3♣ was artificial and so didn't necessarily show four clubs persuaded our man to part with two hearts, thus allowing the opponents to set up a heart trick as their ninth.

The result was appealed based on the lack of accurate explanations but the appeal was rejected, ironically, without explanation.

3NT was bid and made twice. All others bid and went off in 4♠.

The moral of the story is: if you have eight quick tricks in no-trumps there's often a ninth to be found.

Hand 3

(Board 22, Session 5 vs England)

I've shown you two poor results for Ireland, so now I'm going to show you two good ones.

North (Dummy)

♠ Q3
♥ Q732
♦ Q986
♣ AK10

South

♠ A7
♥ K104
♦ A1053
♣ Q987

The contract was 3NT and the hand on lead had shown 5-5 in the majors and their partner had jumped to 3♠.

The lead was ♠6. The Queen from dummy held. Phew!

Peter Goodman could see just six quick tricks. The club suit could provide an extra trick if the jack fell or was onside and was finessed. One more could be created in hearts but then the spade suit would be set up and the loss of another trick would be fatal. No, the extra tricks had to come from diamonds and the question is how best to play the suit?

The percentage line is the double-finesse i.e. finesse against RHO twice. If that hand holds either honour then you have your three tricks. Playing to the Ace and up to the Queen only makes three tricks about 60% of the time, whereas playing the double finesse does the job three times out of four. What many don't realise is that this holding can sometimes provide four tricks. This happens if RHO has the singleton King or LHO has the singleton Jack and declarer guesses who is short.

Peter very reasonably decided to play LHO for shortage and so led the ♦Q off dummy. This was covered by the King. The jack didn't fall but nevertheless Peter was home, provided he took care of his entries. Dummy's top clubs had to be unblocked now and the ♣10 finessed [West having shown out on the second club] before a top diamond was played from dummy. The defence was now helpless as these were the four hands:

♠ Q3				♠ 1092
♥ Q732				♥ A
♦ Q986				♦ KJ72
♣ AK10				♣ J5432
♠ KJ8654	N			
♥ J9865		W	E	
♦ 4				
♣ 2				
		S		
♠ A7				
♥ K104				
♦ A1053				
♣ Q987				

Peter was the only player to make 3NT.



This was the auction in the other room:

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

¹ 1♣=Maybe 2
² X=3-card support
³ 2♠=General force, initially looking for a spade stopper

Pat, despite Donal showing him three-card support for spades, made the contract impossible by leading a heart.

Unfortunately, the RealBridge records don't show what others led or how the hands were played.

Hand 4

(Board 1, Session 2 vs EBU)

Pat and Donal had an excellent sequence to get them to this 28 point slam.

♠ K82	N	♠ A4
♥ AQ876	W	♥ K1053
♦ A862	E	♦ K543
♣ J	S	♣ A42

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

¹ 2♦=Game forcing

² 4♣=Splinter, showing either a singleton or void in clubs

³ 4♦=Cue bid. In modern methods, when below game, this typically shows either first or second round control in the suit bid

⁴ 4♠= Another cue bid, this time because it's above game, is showing first round control. Donal quite rightly assessed that holding 6 controls (an Ace being 2 and a King 1) when partner had opened, a double fit has been found and partner had shown shortage opposite his ♣Axx was worth one try for slam. Pat agreed!

Only three E/Ws bid this slam and as it wasn't bid in the other room that was an 11 IMP gain

Somewhat surprisingly though, none of the pairs that bid slam bid the superior 6♦. It's a safer contract because it will make as often as 6♥ but also when East holds three spades and two clubs because the third spade can be discarded on West's fifth heart.

Tralee International Bridge Congress 2026

Nicky Fitzgibbon



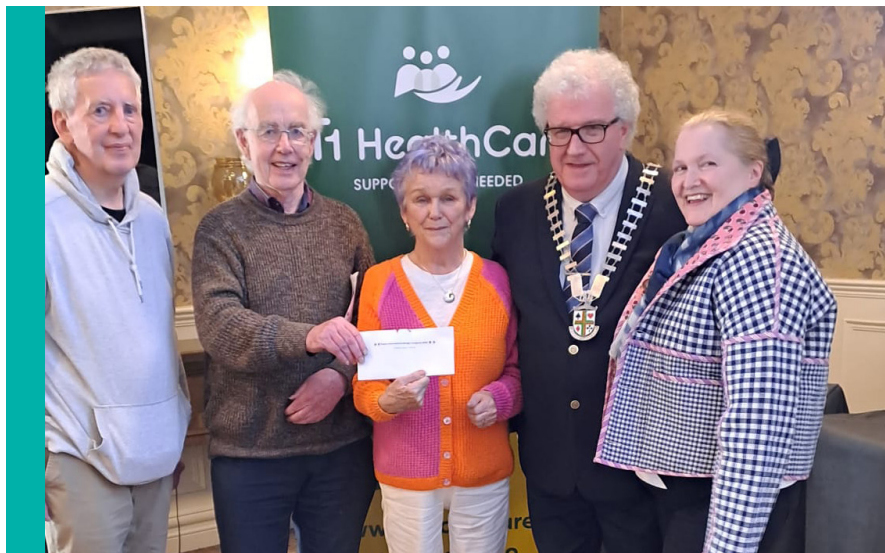
Competition, Learning and Community at The Rose Hotel

The Tralee International Bridge Congress 2026 was held at The Rose Hotel, Tralee, from Friday 24th to Sunday 26th April, and once again proved a thoroughly enjoyable weekend of bridge, friendship and community.

Players travelled from near and far to take part in a full programme of Open, Congress, Intermediate, Intermediate B and Novice events. The atmosphere throughout the weekend was competitive but warm, with the Congress continuing to offer something for players of all grades.

We were delighted to welcome CBAI National President John Phelan, North Munster President Kay Cussen, and Tralee Congress President Pat Fitzgibbon. Their presence added greatly to the occasion, and their continued support for congress bridge is very much appreciated.

We are also deeply grateful to our sponsors and supporters, especially T1 Healthcare, The Rose Hotel, and Kerry County Council, whose support through the Community Support Fund was invaluable. Our thanks also go to Bridge With Trish, Harbour House Bed and Breakfast, Tralee Community Bridge Club, and all who contributed in so many practical ways to the success of the weekend.



CBAI President, John Phelan, Lucy Phelan, Mark Burke and Gordon Lessells, Winners of the Congress Teams Competition, pictured with North Munster CBAI President, Kay Cussen, at Tralee International Bridge Congress

Friday Evening: A Flying Start

The Congress opened on Friday evening with the Gala Pairs and the Intermediate B & Novice Pairs, setting a lively tone for the weekend.

In the Gala Pairs, Eugene Gath and Phyllis O'Regan produced an excellent winning score of 67.71%. They were followed very closely by Maura Foley and Kelan O'Connor on 66.41%, with Donal Garvey and Nicky Fitzgibbon taking third place on 61.56%.

The Intermediate B & Novice Pairs produced one of the standout scores of the entire weekend, with Ursula Daly and Ciarán Broadbery winning on a remarkable 85.22%. Laetitia Mac Mahon and Fiona Kelly finished second on 67.16%, while Catherine McManus and Andrew Campbell were third on 61.40%.

It was a particularly encouraging start to see such strong participation across the grades, especially among newer and developing players.

Saturday: Congress Pairs and a Morning of Learning

Saturday began with a special hand-analysis session led by Grand Master Donal Garvey, who discussed selected hands from the previous evening's play. Donal's contribution was a real highlight of the Congress. His ability to combine top-level technical insight with clear, accessible explanation made the session valuable for players of every standard.

The Congress has always tried to balance competitive bridge with opportunities to learn and improve, and Donal's session captured that spirit perfectly.

The main Saturday event was the Congress Pairs, played over two sessions for the Marie Fleming Cup. Donal Garvey and Pat Quinn topped both sessions and were worthy overall winners with 60.49%. Derek O'Gorman and Rory Boland finished second on 58.39%, with John Phelan and Lucy Phelan third on 57.62%.



There was strong competition throughout the field, with Nicky Fitzgibbon and Trish Stack finishing fourth, followed by Cian Holland and John Russell in fifth and Kay Cussen and Denis Sheehan in sixth.

The Intermediate Pairs was won by Ger Crowley and Kieron O'Connor on 58.91%. Anne Looney and Marie Moloney were close behind in second place on 58.28%, while Paddy Macken and Margaret Duffy took third on 58.17%. With the top three separated by less than one percentage point, this was one of the closest contests of the weekend.

In the Saturday afternoon Novice Pairs, Laetitia MacMahon and Fiona Kelly continued their excellent weekend by winning on 66.11%. Ena Harty and Nora Flynn were second on 57.87%, with Megs McHenry and Karen O'Driscoll third on 57.47%.

The Open Pairs on Saturday afternoon was won by William Enright and Dymna Smyth on 56.94%, ahead of Rita and Garry Leahy on 55.56%, with Maria O'Gorman and Carmel Pierse third on 54.17%.

Sunday: Teams and Final Events

Sunday brought the Congress Teams, always one of the most keenly contested events of the weekend. The winners were John Phelan, Lucy Phelan, Gordon Lessells and Mark Burke, who finished on 129.60 VPs after a strong and consistent performance.

Second place went to Joe Higgins, Tom McCarthy, Cian Holland and John Russell on 117.16 VPs. Third place was taken by John O'Connor, Kelan O'Connor, Denis Sheehan and Kay Cussen on 112.08 VPs.

The Sunday Inter B & Novice Pairs was won by Helen O'Connor and Jim O'Connor on 65.63%. Liam and Elizabeth Lynch were second on 64.58%, with Michael Horgan and Joni Murphy third on 57.78%.

The Sunday evening charity element of the Congress once again reflected the strong community spirit around the event, with support for Meals on Wheels Kerry. Bridge is at its best

when it brings people together, and the charity dimension of the weekend remains an important part of what makes Tralee special.

A somewhat unusual hand from the Teams second session was reported by John Phelan. You are sitting in the South position and pick up this hand:

♠ -
♥ KQ1097432
♦ KQJ73
♣ -

So you start thinking – How am I going to bid this hand? – All I care about in partners hand is the two red Aces. If he has one we have small slam and if he has both we have the grand.

But before you get a chance to do anything – your pesky Right Hand Opponent (RHO) – East – Opens 3♣ as dealer – Blackguard!!

So you start thinking harder – the hand is much too promising to just jump to 4♥ – so you come up with a bid of 5♥ – which surely must be asking partner to bid slam if he has anything.

Then LHO bids 6♣ – partner thinks for a moment and bids 6♥ – back to you which you pass. Now LHO bids 7♣ – this is passed back to you – So what do you do now?

Auction so Far:

W	N	E	S
		3♣	5♥
6♣	6♥	P	P
7♣	P	P	?

Let's consider your options –

- 1) You could Pass – Letting the pre-empting side play at the 7-level unmolested, this seems totally daft, since our side was willing to play in 6♥.
- 2) You could Double – But you have no defensive values – your hand is ALL about shape but if partner can bid 6♥ they can hardly make 7♣ – Can they?
- 3) You could bid 7♥ – But this could end in disaster if partner does not have both red Aces.

So what do we do?

We can't ask the audience OR phone a friend. If we take away one wrong answer (No. 1), we are still left with two possible solutions.

Solution:

We need to consider the dog that didn't bark in the night. The question we have to ask ourselves is why did partner – who was willing to go 6♥ – NOT take any action over 7♣?

The most likely reason is that partner was not sure whether to double 7♣ or bid on to 7♥.

In other words – partner's pass here is clearly forcing. He is passing the decision back to you whether to bid on or to settle for a double of 7♣. Most likely he is worried about a club loser.

With your fantastic shape and club void – you have an answer to that question – So 7♥ it is! This reasoning is not 100% foolproof – but it's all we have to go on.

So simple principle – When you are not sure what to do in an auction – BUT it is evident the hand belongs to your side – then a pass of the opponents' high level (sacrifice) bid has to be forcing and leaving the decision up to partner how to proceed.

Full hand hereunder:

Session 2 - Board 10 Dealer East. Vul All.

♠ AJ95 ♥ A8 ♦ A109852 ♣ 2			
♠ KQ10862	N	♠ 743	
♥ 6		♥ J5	
♦ 4	W	♦ 6	
♣ K9763	S	♣ AQJ10854	
♠ - ♥ KQ1097432 ♦ KQJ73 ♣ -			

A Congress for All Grades

One of the most pleasing features of the 2026 Congress was the breadth of participation. The programme allowed experienced Congress players, Intermediate players, Intermediate B players and Novices all to take part in suitable competitions.

This is central to the purpose of the Tralee Congress. While we are proud to welcome many of Ireland's leading players, we are equally committed to making newer players feel welcome and confident in a congress setting. The strong Novice and Intermediate B entries were very encouraging, and we hope many of those players will return in future years.

North Munster President Kay Cussen has been a strong advocate for encouraging newer players into congress bridge, and that emphasis was very visible throughout the weekend.

Thanks and Appreciation

A Congress of this size depends on the work and goodwill of many people.

Our sincere thanks go to Tournament Director Huey Daly, whose experience and steady direction helped ensure the smooth running of a busy weekend programme. We are also very grateful to Nicola O'Dowd for her excellent support with directing and scoring across the weekend.

Thanks also to the staff and management of The Rose Hotel, who once again provided a warm welcome and excellent support throughout the weekend.

We are especially grateful to our sponsors and supporters. T1 Healthcare's support was greatly appreciated, as was the continuing backing of The Rose Hotel.

We also acknowledge with gratitude the support of Kerry County Council through the Community Support Fund, which helps make events like this possible in the local community.

Thanks also to Bridge With Trish, Harbour House Bed and Breakfast, Tralee Community Bridge Club, and all local supporters who contributed prizes, time, help and encouragement.

Finally, a sincere thank you to every player who travelled to Tralee and supported the Congress. Your participation, good humour and sporting spirit made the weekend what it was.

The Tralee International Bridge Congress continues to be about more than results alone. It is about competition, learning, welcome and friendship. We were delighted to see all of those qualities on display again in 2026, and we look forward to welcoming everyone back to Tralee in 2027.


WWW.DECLANBYRNE.IE

Learn Bridge Online

Learnbridgeonline@gmail.com

Beginner Course

Improver Course(s)

Online Bridge Club

**Private Tuition
available for
groups**

Courses start
September &
January




Michael Byrne Interview

Editor



Michael Byrne was born in Manchester and after a few brief years living in the South as a teenager he has lived there his whole life.

He remains a permanent part of the set up in Manchester and teaches and plays bridge full time, as well as writing his regular column "Traps for the Unwary" in the English Bridge Union magazine.

He was England's youngest Grandmaster. After a successful career as a Junior International he took over running the England Under 20 Squad and captained the team to two Bronze medals at the European Championships and two Silver medals at the World Championships, still the only ever World Medals an England junior team has won. He subsequently became squad leader for the U26s who he has taken to the World Championships.

In 2024 he was presented with the EBU Silver award in recognition of his many years devotion to the junior squad and successes with them.

As a player he has won nearly every major tournament in England, with the most prestigious being the Premier League, back to victories in the Lederer Trophy and the Brighton 4 Stars Teams Championships which he has won four times.

Internationally he has represented the England open team in the Camrose many times, winning as part of the EBU team in 2009 and 2024 and then as part of the England team in 2011, 2018 and 2020.

He has also represented England at the online European Championships and qualified for the Bermuda Bowl, where he reached the Quarter finals.

Michael has won many international tournaments including the Chairman's Cup in Sweden in 2014, and the Yeh Brothers Pairs in Shanghai in 2015.

Michael, thanks for talking to the Irish Bridge Journal.

You're very welcome, thank you for asking me

We have to start with your surname. Do you have Irish roots?

Of course! My Great Grandfather Sylvester Aloysius Byrne was the first member of the family born in Liverpool, before that the O'Byrnes were Irish, and based in Naas in Kildare.

The other obvious question for a Mancunian is – City, United or Salford FC?

I get asked this a lot - but the Liverpool connection means I support Everton.

How did you first learn the game and at what point did you decide to make it your fulltime occupation?

I learnt Whist as a child (I started playing aged about 4 or 5) so the step up to bridge wasn't that big. I picked up a book at home, and occasionally played with my grandparents, before starting to play in the 6th form with a friend. We then went to play at the local duplicate club with two of our Maths teachers, then we partnered each other.

You have an impressive record as NPC of England's Under 20s – two European Bronzes and two World Silvers. To what do you attribute this, and what is it about your own approach that has done most to facilitate team success?

Well both times we won the Silver medal we had very strong teams who performed well, on both occasions we dominated the round robin and won by a mile. Some of the players sadly don't play anymore but others have gone on to be professionals and win medals at European and World Open level.

In terms of my own approach I made it pretty clear early on that the team was picked on merit, and that I was prepared to play the better pairs for more sets if I felt it was in the team's best interest. I always tell players directly and in as straight forward fashion as I can. I think people would ultimately rather sit out and win than play and lose.

You've also coached Ireland's Women. How did you find that and how do you rate their prospects?

I hugely enjoyed working with the Irish Women's team, they are a fantastic bunch with great spirit and personality, we had a lot of fun times. I think they've got an excellent chance of qualifying for the Venice Cup in a few weeks and I wish them every success.

What are your major international ambitions as a player?

I recently won my first European Gold Medal and I'd like to win a World Championship as well. It's an incredible dream but it's always possible if you work hard enough and have enough hungry young players coming through.

If Irish players want to sign up for your coaching services, how do they do so and what do you offer?

They should contact me by email: abbot_hugo@hotmail.com

I offer coaching at all levels, from professionals partnering, to partnership coaching, to system advice and everything.

Thanks Michael

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 N/S.

♠ AQ1042 ♥ 532 ♦ 1084 ♣ 107			
♠ K6	N	♠ 7	
♥ KJ1087	W	♥ AQ94	E
♦ J963		♦ AQ5	
♣ A5	S	♣ KQ843	
♠ J9853 ♥ 6 ♦ K72 ♣ J962			

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

¹ 3♠ = Splinter in spades
² 4NT = RKCB (for hearts)
³ 5♠ = Two Key Cards plus trump Queen

Lead:

North leads the ♦4. How do you plan the play?

The Play

You could let the diamond lead run around to your Jack but if South has the King, a spade switch will mean a quick one down. It is best to win with the ♦A and play two top trumps followed by ♣A, ♣K and a low club ruffed in hand. Return to dummy with a trump and discard your two spade losers on the ♣Q and thirteenth club. Your only loser will be the ♦K. If either opponent shows out on the first round of trumps, you will need a 3-3 break in the clubs.

Board 2 Dealer East. Vul E/W.

♠ J542 ♥ 92 ♦ AQ108742 ♣ -			
♠ AK6	N	♠ Q7	
♥ AKQ853	W	♥ J104	E
♦ -		♦ 963	
♣ KQ84	S	♣ A10652	
♠ 8642 ♥ 76 ♦ KJ5 ♣ J973			

W	N	E	S
		P	P
2♣	3♦	X ¹	P
3♥ ²	P	3♥	P
4♠ ³	P	5♣ ⁴	P
7♥	All Pass		

¹ X = Negative
² 3♥ = Forcing
³ 4♠ = Cue-Bid
⁴ 5♣ = Cue-Bid

Lead:

North leads the ♥2. At trick two, both defenders follow to a second round of trumps. How do you plan the play?

The Play

The only danger is a 4-0 break in the club suit. It is tempting to lead the ♣K and if South discards, you can finesse the ♣10. After North's pre-empt in diamonds, it is more likely that South holds length in the club suit. To confirm, first play three rounds of spades. If North has two or more spades he is unlikely to have four cards in clubs. Play a low club to the Ace, holding ♣KQ8 you can pick up ♣J973 in the South hand using dummy's third trump as an entry.

**Board 3** Dealer South. Vul All.

				♠ 1052			
				♥ A			
				♦ 109643			
				♣ 10875			
♠ 87		N		♠ AQJ94			
♥ 107642	W		E	♥ Q853			
♦ AK75				♦ -			
♣ A9		S		♣ K632			
				♠ K63			
				♥ KJ9			
				♦ QJ82			
				♣ QJ4			

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

¹ 1NT = 12-14 HCP
² 2♣ = Landy, both Majors

Lead

North leads the ♦10. How do you plan the play?

The Play

You could win the diamond lead in hand and finesse the ♠Q. If it loses and South returns a spade, you could run into a spade ruff by North when trumps are 2-2. As South has opened 1NT, the ♠K is likely to be offside, so declarer has to confine his trump losers to two. This is no problem when they split 2-2 but suppose the trumps break 3-1. Then, try leading the ♥Q from dummy, if South holds ♥AJ9 or ♥KJ9 and covers the Queen, your three trump losers will reduce to two. And if South has all three trump honours, you have the spade finesse in reserve.

Board 4 Dealer West. Vul None.

				♠ Q752			
				♥ 8654			
				♦ 864			
				♣ 72			
♠ 9		N		♠ J104			
♥ 1032	W		E	♥ AQJ			
♦ AK5				♦ J973			
♣ AKJ963		S		♣ Q105			
				♠ AK863			
				♥ K97			
				♦ Q102			
				♣ 84			

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

¹ 3♠ = Enquiry for guard in spade suit

Lead

North leads the ♠2. South wins ♠K and continues with ♠A. How do you plan the play?

The Play

It seems the contract depends on the heart finesse and even if the finesse loses, the ♦Q may fall in two rounds. You ruff the second spade and draw two rounds of trumps ending in dummy. If the trumps break 2-2, ruff the third spade in hand before playing Ace, King and a third diamond. As it happens when South wins the ♦Q, he is end-played. A spade continuation allows you to discard a heart from hand and ruff in dummy, your other heart is discarded on the ♦J. And if North wins with the ♦Q, you hope for a winning heart finesse.



Bidding Quiz 13 - Results - Bob Pattinson

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+			

The IBJ bidding system includes support doubles by opener whereby a raise of responder's major shows four-card support and a double confirms three-card support.

East has four-card support and 7.5 losers, with a singleton in opponents' suit. ♣AQ and ♠Q look to be well placed behind the takeout double. Playing competitive doubles would work well here. When the opponents have bid and raised a suit, a double shows extra values but needs help from partner to find the best spot. In this case West can remove the double to 3♠ with a minimum hand or advance with more values.

Votes: 3♠=5; X=5; Pass=3

Roy 3♠: Tough decision: it's possible that partner has decent hearts in which case I should be defending, but they could also have few points in hearts, which might mean 4♠ is possible.

Diane 3♠: An invitational hand, so make an invitational bid.

Anna 3♠: My clubs positioned well, and expect diamonds to be OK too. If they bid 4♥ I'll double.

George 3♠: A Goldilocks hand. Too good to pass, not good enough for game on my own. Partner has another bid coming and knows I have short hearts.

Sally 3♠: Seems enough.

Peter P X: Partner may hold AJxx Jxx, AQxx xx, or even JTxx, KJT8, AQxx, x.

Holding closer to the first, then 4♠ is an excellent contract as the ♦K and ♠K are probably well placed. However, with the second option 3♥ could go for 800 when 4♠ is not making. I'm therefore going to cover both horses and make a game try double that partner might pass with the second option.

Ciaran X: Game try

Karel X: Playing support doubles to show three-card trump support helps clarify the raise to 2♠ as confirming four-card support. The opening hand is definitely limited to 13 or so. South's free 2♥ bid has to have some values and promise 5+, so the opponents have at least an eight-card trump fit. I initially thought of bidding 4♠ but the doubler is likely to have four spades, and certainly three. Playing in 4♠ needs partner to hold some decent honours in spades. I like the hand in general, so I double suggesting 4♠ if partner has no wastage. They may even pass.

Tom X: My only game try and definitely worth it. The club honours are well placed and game will depend on trumps quality. I am happy if partner has good hearts and passes and leads a club.

Luca X: The vulnerability makes me very greedy. We could end up in a mathematically bad game, but if partner has reasonable diamonds and a spade honour we could be good. I am willing to pay a minus 200 penalty this time for the possibility of plus 620.

Ian Pass: We seem to have an eight-card fit (although it could be a Moysian three-card raise). If we were playing support doubles we would know for sure. The opponents seem to have located a nine-card fit and are playing at the level the Law of Total Tricks suggests is safe, whereas we shouldn't advance to the three-level with only eight trumps. At love all it might be worth going on

in the boss suit, but the risk of a penalty seems too high to me, potentially losing 100s, not 50s.

Matt Pass: I am not a big believer in competing for part scores at teams when game is not likely for our side.

Peter G Pass: I suspect most of us would make a "tempo bid" of 3♠ but partner figures to be 4351 shape most of the time, and defence is looking the better option.

Dealer West. Vul All. Teams.

						♠K84						
						♥AK42						
						♦4						
						♣K10874						
♠A953						N	♠Q1076					
♥J106							♥5					
♦AKJ3						W	♦1072					
♣J6						S	♣AQ952					
						♠J2						
						♥Q9873						
						♦Q9654						
						♣3						
N		♠	♥	♦	♣	NT						
S			2									
E					4							
W				4								

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

Summary

Opponents' bidding helps us evaluate the potential of the East hand. Following North's takeout double, the two black suit Queens look to be well placed, and West is unlikely to have wasted values in hearts. Bidding 3♠ shows the four-card support but does it reflect the overall value of the hand? Over which option is West more likely to advance to game, 3♠ or double? Very likely over the stronger bid of a double. Note how a support double earlier in the bidding would clarify that partner has only three trumps, with a direct raise showing four.

Marks: Double=10; 3♠=9; Pass=8



Bidding Tips

1. Listening to the bidding of the opponents provides key clues on the relative positioning of your hand's evaluation. On this hand North's takeout double improved the black suit holding.
2. Support doubles confirm three-card trump support, allowing a single raise in trumps to signify four-card support.
3. Competitive doubles play a similar role to 4th suit forcing and cue bids by showing extra values and asking partner to describe their hand further. The advantage of competitive doubles is that they deliver the same result but minimise use of bidding space.

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

The 2NT overcall reduces the value of your minor suit honours making your hand minimum so a forcing pass may be best, as partner can still take further action. However, partner may have ♠A and two top hearts with shortage in diamonds, so the ♥K is a key asset and showing it at this stage in the auction may help partner make the final decision.

Votes: Pass=8; 5♥=2; X=2; 5♠=1

Peter G Pass: Expect partner to double and then I will pass again.

Luca Pass: Partner could be quite strong so I won't unilaterally double. I am not offensive enough to bid given my minor suits, so I will pass to allow partner to make a decision. Since we are in a game forcing position pass is forcing.

Sally Pass: I have no idea of what we should be doing, but maybe partner has.

George Pass: I have no idea if any of my minor cards are worth anything and no Aces. So even though we have a great double fit, I really have no place to go at the five-level. The old bromide of "the opponents own the 5-level" is true again. Partner may not be done, however.

Anna Pass: Nobody knows who is making what.

Ciaran Pass: This is tough as I have defensive values, no shape, an undisclosed fit for partner and a self-sufficient suit. I want to bid but I'll pass and respect whatever partner does.

Roy Pass: I am not liking my defensive prospects, but I hate to bid 5 over 5 unless it's clear. So assuming pass is not clearly penalty oriented, I would like my partner to choose, and I will pass whatever they bid including double.

Tom Pass: Assuming this is a forcing pass situation double from me would express no interest in going on. I have a decent hand but too many possible losers to bid on myself unilaterally.

Ian 5♥: Either side could be potentially too high already, but there is no way of knowing for sure. The lack of Aces is a concern for both offence and defence. I'm taking the push to avoid a possible opposing double game swing.

Karel 5♥: I don't see any point in a forcing pass as if I pull partner's response my hand may appear to be much stronger and a slam try with a first round control. Also I don't think the opponents are going off more than three. It appears partner has a singleton or void diamond and two to three Aces. Slam is possible, so 5♥ is the bid. I'm very tempted to try 5♠ to protect my ♦K, but if I deny heart support we may miss a slam.

Some play unusual over unusual 2NT here with 3♣ a good raise, 3♦ game forcing in the 4th suit, trump raise to play, and 4th suit to play.

Diane 5♠: No defence to 5♦ and I want to protect my ♦K.

Peter P X: 5♥ looks too far off as I have a balanced version of a six-card holding, and I prefer to defend. I am not assured of beating 5♦ but pass would be forcing (3♥ was game forcing) and suggesting I have some shape and an interest in playing.

Matt X: If pass is forcing I don't want to encourage partner to bid on.

Dealer North. Vul None. Teams.

		♠ KQJ1093	
		♥ K76	
		♦ K93	
		♣ Q6	
♠ 752	N	♠ 6	
♥ Q9		♥ 2	
♦ AJ10972	W	♦ Q6543	
♣ J7	S	♣ A105432	
		♠ A84	
		♥ AJ108543	
		♦ -	
		♣ K98	

W	N	E	S
	1♠	2NT ¹	3♥ ²
5♦	?		

¹ 2NT= 5-5: Minors 6-10
² 3♥=game forcing: 5+ suit

Summary

Hard hand to bid, as demonstrated by the range of panel responses. What is the difference between pass, double and 5♥? If pass leaves it open for partner to decide the next move, and double suggests you lack interest in going on further, the question is whether there is any better bid to help partner make the final decision? 5♥ shows the key asset in your hand which may encourage partner to bid the slam. Over pass or double partner is less likely to bid it. 5♠ will probably force partner to bid slam in a major.

Marks: 5♥=10; Pass=9; X=9; 5♠=9

Bidding Tip

Clarify the different inferences between the forcing pass, double, and bidding either trumps or a new suit, as these competitive auctions arise reasonably often.



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			

With 12 points and 5-4 in the minors a simple takeout double looks an easy bid as it leaves all options open, including the possibility that partner may be able to bid 3NT with a spade stop. At pairs 3NT might be worth a risk, but at teams could be a step too far. Let's hear from the panel.

Votes: X=7; 3NT=6

Sally X: 3NT may be right but this needs nine tricks off the top.

Ian X: A classic takeout showing the other two suits. Expect partner to bid the cheaper suit if equal length so we find the best fit. Partner also has the option of passing for penalties or bid 3NT or 4♥, any of which suits this hand.

Roy X: I could try 3NT but if partner has nothing in spades I will need nine tricks without knocking out an Ace, so I am hoping that partner has a spade stop and bids 3NT. If partner bids a non-forcing 4♣/♦ I will pass, but if four of a minor is forcing I will bid 4♥.

Tom X: Seems like the normal action. 3NT might work well but I will need nine running tricks.

Diane X: For takeout.

Peter G X: Seems to describe my hand well and partner can judge the final contract. As I am not a fan of the offensive value we can contribute to the ♠K.

Matt X: Feels like it keeps the most auctions in the picture.

Anna 3NT: Not ideal, but our last chance to be there.

George 3NT: Could get crushed but if partner has an Ace or two, or a late spade stopper, we will be OK.

Peter P 3NT: Bid what I think I can make...last ditch saloon. Can't negative double as partner is unlikely to also have a spade stop.

Karel 3NT: Either 3NT or double could be right here. If I double we can never get to 3NT, so 3NT it is.

Ciaran 3NT: Double would be great if partner continued with 3NT, but if they don't I may have missed our only making game.

Luca 3NT: I want to double, but it could go wrong if partner doesn't bid 3NT. We could be killed immediately on a small spade lead in 3NT. However, if partner's hearts are good enough to make 4♥, this suit should help a lot in 3NT.

Also, giving partner the Ace of either minor gets our tally of tricks pretty high quickly.

Dealer South. Vul All. Teams.

				♠K10																																			
				♥72																																			
				♦KJ83																																			
				♣KQ875																																			
♠QJ96432				N	♠A85																																		
♥83					♥QJ6																																		
♦107				W	♦54																																		
♣A9					♣J652																																		
				S																																			
				♠7																																			
				♥AK10954																																			
				♦AQ962																																			
				♣10																																			
<table><tr><td></td><td>♠</td><td>♥</td><td>♦</td><td>♣</td><td>NT</td></tr><tr><td>N</td><td></td><td>5</td><td>5</td><td></td><td>3</td></tr><tr><td>S</td><td></td><td>5</td><td>5</td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>E</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>1</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>1</td><td></td></tr></table>							♠	♥	♦	♣	NT	N		5	5		3	S		5	5			E				1		W				1					
	♠	♥	♦	♣	NT																																		
N		5	5		3																																		
S		5	5																																				
E				1																																			
W				1																																			
W		N		E		S																																	
						1♥ ¹																																	
3♠ ²		?																																					
¹ 1♥ = 5+																																							
² 3♠ = 7: 6-10																																							

Summary

3NT by North may be made on a spade lead, if declarer double finesses in hearts to collect one spade, five diamonds and six hearts. However, on a club lead and ♠Q switch the defence take the first eight tricks. Whilst most South players will bid diamonds over 3NT an initial double is the safer of the two bids.

Marks: X=10; 3NT=9

Bidding Tip

Often best to double to show shape and only bid 3NT with secure stoppers and the chance to run nine tricks.

Question 4

Dealer South. Vul All. Teams.

♠ A876
♥ J62
♦ AK
♣ AKJ7

W	N	E	S
			3♠ ¹
?			
¹ 3♠ = 7: 6-10			

20 points, a balanced hand, a spade stop but only three hearts. Is there any better bid than 3NT?

Votes: 3NT=13

Tom 3NT: Unanimous?

Ian 3NT: Yes, it's decidedly heavy, and stuffed with controls, but we may not have much opposite with which to build tricks. If we miss a slam I'll apologise. Doubling for penalties would perhaps be ideal (but would be takeout in the system).

Roy 3NT: We could easily miss a slam in any suit but we might not be even making anything. It all depends on partner's hand. I have too much to pass, and not enough to forego 3NT.

Anna 3NT: Not ideal but if I double and partner bids 4♥ or 4♦ where do I go?

Peter P 3NT: My only practical bid. Partner will know that I could be this strong and will raise in no trumps if holding an opening hand.

Sally 3NT: May be wrong as it seems so easy.

Luca 3NT: That's where we should be.

Karel 3NT: Hoping partner will re-open is too much pressure and if dummy comes up with one trick might only go for 500.

Peter G 3NT: Surely no other option here.

Diane 3NT: Confirming a strong balanced hand.

Ciaran 3NT: I have too much to expect partner to get involved when we might have an easy game.

Matt 3NT: Maybe the best making contract.

George 3NT: It would be fair for Bob to drop me from this column if I took any other action, not that I can think of any other. You are allowed to play your partner for a 7(ish) count.

Dealer South. Vul All. Teams.

♠ A
 ♥ AK1084
 ♦ 1076
 ♣ 10863

♠ A976
 ♥ J52
 ♦ AK
 ♣ AKJ7

N
 W E
 S

♠ 5
 ♥ Q975
 ♦ 9853
 ♣ Q542

♠ KQJ10832
 ♥ 3
 ♦ QJ42
 ♣ 9

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

W	N	E	S
			3♠ ¹
?			

¹ 3♠=7: 6-10

Summary

Balanced nature of the hand has only one best description and full agreement by the panel. The ♥9 produces the ninth trick.

Marks: 3NT=10

Bidding Tip

Over pre-emptive openings bid no trumps with balanced hands with at least one full stopper.

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

Combined points range of 34-36 - where is the best landing point and how can you enquire further if you wish?

Votes: 4♦=5; 6NT=4; 5NT=4

Karel 6NT: I'm going for the practical 6NT. 7♦ or even 7M in a 4-3 fit with magic cards maybe there. Too hard for me.

Peter P 6NT: 34-36 between us ...
I don't think I'm worth 5NT asking
partner to pick a slam.

Anna 6NT: Total misfit.

Ian 6NT: With 34-36 high card points slam should be there. It could be that 7♦ is there, but I'm reluctant to bid such a poor suit, and partner's longer minor could be clubs. 6NT should make, with investigating further (how?) risky.

Ciaran 4♦: Natural and forcing. If partner shows enthusiasm 7♦ might be our spot, and 6NT is always there as a landing spot.

Matt 4♦: A bit of a lie but seems the only way to get someone to bid key card.

Roy 4♦: Assuming it is natural and forcing, I would exaggerate my length in the hope that partner can bid 4♥, and then over my 4♠ use Key Card Blackwood, which might allow us a chance to reach 7♦. If partner doesn't do that I'll signoff in 6NT.

George 4♦: We have plenty of time for slam. Let us first see if we have a diamond fit. Partner has some kind of a 5-4 minor suit, most likely clubs, but you never know. So 4♦, if not raised, followed by 6NT. I'm certain that this will not be a popular choice, but it is free.

Luca 4♦: Natural and giving a try for a minor slam first before 6NT. I would love to have five diamonds but hey bridge is a game of imperfections.

Sally 5NT: Pick a slam. Suggests partner bids a minor suit. If 6♦ is bid I'll bid 6♠ as a grand slam try.

Peter G 5NT: Pick a slam.

Diane 5NT: If partner bids 6♣ I would then convert to 6♦.

Tom 5NT: Pick a slam.

Dealer North. Vul None. Teams.

♠ 32
♥ AQJ
♦ AK8
♣ AQ1032

N

W E

S

♠ Q9854
♥ 743
♦ 762
♣ 94

♠ AK76
♥ K986
♦ J543
♣ K

	♠	♥	♦	♣	NT
N	6	5	7	4	6
S	6	5	7	4	6
E					
W					

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

Summary

As George comments there is no rush to jump to slam without exploring a potential grand slam in diamonds as opener has denied a four-card major. Here the only making grand is in the 4-3 heart fit, so all bids will eventually end in 6NT. However, at least 4♦ tries to find the grand. 5NT will produce 6♣ and this can be converted to 6NT, perhaps after 6♦ as suggested by Diane.

6NT is fast arrival but with small changes to the opening hand might have missed a minor suit slam.

Marks: 4♦=10; 5NT=10; 6NT=9

Bidding Tip

On the rare occasions when 6NT looks to be solid it is still worth exploring a grand slam in a potential suit contract first.



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

A minimum hand with 5431 shape, three-card spade support, and six losers. If you bid 3♠ this confirms three-card support and highlights the singleton club. Or do you continue to explore a diamond contract?

Votes: 3♠=11; 3♥=1; Pass=1

Ian 3♠: I don't believe this to be a cue bid but simply showing my shape. Partner should then be best placed to make the next move.

Luca 3♠: Showing my shape. Now partner will know down to one card my shape: 3541 or 3550.

Karel 3♠: To show 5431 shape.

Matt 3♠: Keeping alternative strains in the picture.

Roy 3♠: I might have raised 1♠ to 2♠. Not having done that, I can't see not bidding 3♠ now, partner should have a perfect picture, except I would like to be a little stronger for the bidding.

Anna 3♠: Describing my hand, partner may or may not have five spades.

Sally 3♠: I would have raised immediately with such a minimum hand. For me this sequence would show 15 points, and 3♦ would not be forcing.

George 3♠: I would not play 3♦ as forcing, but if partner does then 3♠ shows my shape.

Tom 3♠: Bidding out my shape (surprised 3♦ is forcing).

Diane 3♠: Simply bidding out my shape.

Ciaran 3♠: Useful treatment when I have this hand.

Peter P 3♥: A cue bid in support of the diamond fit, as would be 3♠ if I lacked the ♥A. If partner holds five spades I expect a 3♣ rebid rather than 3♦, showing 4th suit forcing, and now my 3♠ shows three-3 card support and 5431 shape.

Peter G Pass: If ♥Q was the ♠Q I would be more interested in moving with 3♠.

Dealer East. Vul E/W. Teams

		♠ 98 ♥ K102 ♦ 9872 ♣ J1093	
♠ AK52 ♥ J ♦ KJ64 ♣ KQ82	N	E	♠ 1053 ♥ AQ743 ♦ AQ103 ♣ 6
	W	S	
		♠ QJ74 ♥ 9865 ♦ 5 ♣ A754	

W	N	E	S
		1♥	P
1♠	P	2♦	P
3♦ ¹	P	?	

¹ 3♦=forcing with diamonds

Summary

3♦ is non-forcing for some, but stated as forcing here. Other options here then would be 3♣ as 4th suit forcing, or 2NT as an artificial waiting bid. These last two options allow partner to describe their hand further, whereas 3♦ does the opposite by describing the responding hand.

Over 3♦ game forcing the majority of the panel rebid 3♠ to show the shape of the hand, as Luca states as either 3541 or 3550. This gives partner a choice of games between the 4-3 spade or the 4-4 diamond contracts.

Marks: 3♠=10; 3♥=9; Pass=7

Bidding Tip

Agree with partner which types of forcing bids you wish to play, as you can observe from this hand that there are several options.

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

A 14 point hand with five clubs but only three spades. A takeout double with only three spades slightly misleads partner, whereas 3NT with the double stops in hearts looks good, with the other option of a cue bid of 3♥? Partner only promises two clubs at this stage.

Votes: 3NT=12; X=1

Roy 3NT: We could have trouble in diamonds, but most of the time, 3NT will be the right spot. I could gamble 3♥, but would hate myself if partner went beyond 3NT, and since half my points are in their suit, I'm ok going a little low.

Sally 3NT: Implies minor suit length and a double heart stopper, which is more or less that what I have here.

George 3NT: I like to bid what is in front of my face. If there is a club slam one or two things will happen, partner will bid again, or you will report you found the ♣K on the floor after the bidding.

Karel 3NT: Again magic cards and 6♣ maybe cold, but hard to agree clubs as game forcing and stay low.

Peter P 3NT: If I bid 3♥ to show a good hand and club support we may have to bypass 3NT. Partner probably has a weak 1NT hand so simply bidding 3NT shows my decent hand with heart stoppers, and that's where we will play. If partner has AKxx, xx, AKx, Axxx then I expect a move over 3NT.

Ian 3NT: What everyone would bid in the local bridge club. Of course this might work badly, badly missing a club slam, or the opponents running diamonds or spades. However, it rates to be best most of the time.



Matt 3NT: A good hand but don't want to bid 3♥ showing a good club raise and risk going beyond 3NT with a flat hand.

Anna 3NT: Not searching for a possible club slam.

Tom 3NT: Seems to be a pretty descriptive bid.

Peter G 3NT: Everything else would create doubt about 3NT being the best spot.

Diane 3NT: Partner may advance if strong.

Ciaran 3NT: Bidding 3♥ to show my club support risks giving partner a needless problem.

Luca X: This is the most flexible. It shouldn't guarantee four spades here. If I bid 3NT we could easily miss 6♣. Over 2♠ I may bid 3NT and hopefully partner may get the message that I have too many clubs and are not completely flat for 3NT the first time. This may murky the auction a bit however. Worst comes to worst I can come back to 3NT later.

Dealer North. Vul None. Teams.

		♠ AKJ	
		♥ 5	
		♦ AQJ5	
		♣ A8432	
♠ 107432	N	♠ 95	
♥ 9872		♥ KJ10863	
♦ 843	W	♦ K102	
♣ 5	S	♣ 109	
		♠ Q86	
		♥ AQ	
		♦ 976	
		♣ KQJ76	

W	N	E	S
	1♣ ¹	2♥ ²	?

¹ 1♣=2+: 11-19
² 2♥= 6 hearts: 6-10

Summary

The strength of the opening hand is such that the response of either 3NT or double will both produce a slam going response, which could be a reverse of 4♦ to show strength and shape, or a direct raise to 6NT. The advantage of 3NT is that opener is more likely to finish in 6NT, and over double probably 6♣.

Marks: 3NT=10; X=9

Question 8

Dealer North. Vul None. Teams

♠ A8

♥ 7

♦ AQ1097

♣ J9854

W	N	E	S
	1♣ ¹	3♥	?
?			

¹ 1♣=2+

A six-loser hand with 5-5 in the minors and a singleton heart. A 4♥ cue bid implies 5-5 shape and a strong hand. Holding only two spades may discourage a double, but this is still a flexible bid allowing partner the chance to convert to a penalty double, bid 3NT or show spades. Over the latter you can now bid 4♣ implying the minors.

Votes: 4♥=6; X=6; 5♣=1

Anna 4♥: My hand is great. I don't expect my partner on this hand to have only two clubs or even three.

Sally 4♥: Could be wrong going past 3NT, but they've taken all my room. I guess to bid high.

Karel 4♥: Big potential for a slam in clubs.

Diane 4♥: Hopefully partner will take it as club support with diamonds.

Peter P 4♥: A heart cue with clubs. Please note that best practice against three-level pre-empts is to play all bids over double as forcing. This is more flexible and allows all hand types to be shown. With this hand I would like to double, searching for 3NT. (IBJ double is negative showing two remaining suits).

Matt 4♥: Showing a good club raise with good controls and a source of tricks for slam. A poor club fit is the main worry but 5♣ should be safe.

Roy X: I would hope partner can bid 3NT, and if not, remove any spade bid to clubs at the next higher level.

Tom X: Not pretty but playing 1♣ as 2+ I am a bit stuck and can't give up on 3NT. Partner may have only two or three clubs when 3NT or 3♥ doubled are our best spots. If partner bids spades (our worst fear) well then I have to revert to clubs.

Ciaran X: If I double does pulling 3♠ to 4♣ show both minors? Raising clubs directly won't work well when partner is 4432. I'll double planning to pass 3NT or convert 3♠ to 4♣.

George X: Sometimes partner can take a joke. If partner bids 3NT that is good, and if instead 3♠ is bid you can correct to 4♣, but pass if spades are repeated. Double is the best of all evils.

Ian X: We could support clubs directly as partner is unlikely to have a doubleton. However, double is more flexible as it caters for 3NT or a penalty pass. Over a 3♠ response remove to 4♣ and partner should get the message.

Luca X: Hopefully partner will not bid 4♠, although I will bid 5♣ then. Ideally I will get a 3NT response.

Peter G 5♣: Obviously the concern is that partner may have only two clubs but the 3♥ jump overcall reduces that likelihood. 4♣ may be an equally good bid if this was a pairs event.

Dealer North. Vul None. Teams

		♠ Q63	
		♥ A5	
		♦ KJ6	
		♣ K10632	
♠ KJ1054	N	♠ 872	
♥ KJ9		♥ Q1086432	
♦ 8542	W	♦ 3	
♣ Q	S	♣ A7	
		♠ A8	
		♥ 7	
		♦ AQ1097	
		♣ J9854	

W	N	E	S
	1♣ ¹	3♥	?
?			

¹ 1♣=2+



Summary

All target destination a club game if 3NT is not on. The doublers still wish to leave the prospects of 3NT open, whereas the 4♥ bidders prefer to show the 5-5 minor suits shape directly. Over the double North holding the ♥A may bid the doomed 3NT contract. 4♥ is superior to 5♣ as it offers a choice of either minor should opener have two clubs and three diamonds (which might then play well in 3NT).

Marks: 4♥=10; X=9; 5♣=9

Bidding Tip

Tempting as it is to seek 3NT sometimes showing shape works best.

Summary of the Expert Panel Results

Karel wins by a nose with 79. Top readers' scores were Dolores Walsh [70], Raj Gupta [63] and Niamh Quinn [62]. Keep those entries coming in!

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



C O N T R A C T
 B R I D G E
 A S S O C I A T I O N
 O F I R E L A N D
 S I N C E • 1 9 3 2

Templeogue House,
 Templeogue Rd,
 Templeogue, D6W F822

Phone: (01) 492 9666

Email: info@cbai.ie

www.cbai.ie