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GEELONG BRIDGE CLUB NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 15 ISSUE 4

December 2025

From the President

As we come to the close of another remarkable year, I want to express what an honour it is to serve as President of the Geelong Bridge Club. It is a role I take great pride in, but an even greater pride comes from witnessing the dedication, energy, and generosity of our club members, volunteers, and committee. Everything we achieve, we achieve together, and it is your commitment that continues to shape the spirit and success of our club.

This year has been one of growth, renewal, and exciting progress. Our plans for FY26 are already well underway, and one of the most anticipated developments is our move to a new venue for the Geelong Congress. This future home will offer expanded parking, improved facilities, and the space we need to host an event that reflects the size and ambition of our growing bridge community. It is a milestone we can all look forward to and one that positions our club strongly for the years ahead.

We have also seen wonderful momentum in social bridge. More new players have joined us from our classes, bringing enthusiasm, curiosity, and fresh energy into our sessions. Watching learners become confident participants—and eventually valued members of our playing community—is one of the great joys of our club. This growth is no accident; it is the direct result of the instructors, mentors, directors and volunteers who give their time so generously to support others.

Across the club, so many quiet acts of service happen every day: setting up tables, organising sessions, preparing teaching materials, welcoming newcomers, managing administration, and ensuring that everything runs smoothly behind the scenes. These efforts often go unseen, but they are never unappreciated. You make our club not just functional, but vibrant.

As we head into the holiday season, I want to warmly wish every member a happy holiday and a very merry Christmas. May the break bring rest, joy, and time with the people who matter most—and may we see you all back at the table in the new year refreshed and ready for another fantastic year of bridge.

Continued on next page

From the President *continued from previous page*

Finally, thank you. Thank you for your trust in me as President, but more importantly, for the trust you place in the committee that works tirelessly on your behalf. And thank you to each and every player who fills our club with enthusiasm, friendship, and the love of the game. You are what makes the Geelong Bridge Club truly special.

Warmest regards,

Justin Stark



2026 Program

The 2026 Program booklet is now available at the Club. If you haven't already picked up your copy, please do so that you can check your standby dates and see when your favourite events are on in 2026.





www.geelong.bridge-club.org/

Club Results

Open Pairs A Qualifying Mondays 15 & 22 September

1st	J Stark, D Newlands
2nd	P Jain, R Gillard
3rd	A Robbins, G Ridgway

Open Pairs B Qualifying Fridays 12 & 26 September

1st	J Stark, D Newlands
2nd	J Johnstone, D Peacock
3rd	A Robbins, G Ridgway

McManamny Inter Club Teams Sunday 28 September

1st	Geelong 2 (A Robbins, D Newlands, J Skeen, M Ilic)
2nd	Waverley 2 (J Hoff, K Leeton, R Crouch, J Currier)
3rd	Geelong 1 (R Lawrie, V Sercombe, M Scambler, P Scambler)

Open Pairs Barometer Final Wednesdays 1 & 8 October

1st	A Robbins, G Ridgway
2nd	J Stark, D Newlands
3rd	S Duff, G Wilson

Seniors Festival Teams Tuesday 28 October

1st	P Jain, G Temple, M Stokie, S Duff
2nd	M Scambler, P Scambler, R Lawrie, T Johnston
3rd	D Read, J McGonigal, P Smigowski, J Flitton

Western Region Open Pairs, Ballarat Sunday 15 November

1st	P Li, T Ni
2nd	D Read, A Gunst
3rd	J Johnstone, T Frost

Restricted Pairs Thursdays 6 & 13 November

1st	D Melzer, G Foard
2nd	M Ilic, M Kinahan
3rd	G Barfoot, P Carland

Intermediate Teams Mondays 17 & 24 November

1st	C Dodgshun, L Frankenburg, A Feiner, A Gunst
2nd	D Melzer, G Foard, V Sercombe, B O'Dea

Rank Promotions

Congratulations to the following members who have received new Masterpoint rankings.

Graduate	Aileen Ingles Jane Cousins
Club	Brigitte Hazledine Bronwyn Hayat Sue Dunn
Local	Dianne Renshaw Sue Bennett
Regional	Michael Kinahan
State	Rhonda Gude
National	Philip Scambler Marion Scambler
Bronze Life	Kathryn Graham
Silver Life	Margaret Glover

HIGH SCORES

Sep	A Robbins, D Newlands	76.79%
Oct	A Robbins, L Lee	70.13%
Nov	G Foard, D Melzer	69.68%

NEW MEMBERS

The Geelong Bridge Club welcomes the following new and re-joining members:

Diane Davies	Midge Bell
Peter Stuart	Lyndal Robinson
Peter McCarthy	Marty Henzi
Jill Mayo	

Joan Wilson Trophy Winners

Sep	A Robbins
Oct	D Casey
Nov	G Foard

Annual General Meeting



Your New Executive

Anthea Duthie—Treasurer

Marion Scambler—Vice President

Justin Stark—President

David Strong—Secretary

The 2025 Annual General Meeting was held on Thursday 16 October. The Treasurer's Report and Book of Annual Reports were presented and accepted. The outgoing President Marion Scambler, announced the President's Award to Jennifer Blyton and congratulated the incoming President, Justin Stark. Marion will stay on as Vice President, with the current Treasurer and Secretary also continuing for another twelve months. There being no Special Business, the meeting closed and an afternoon of free bridge followed.



Most Improved Player 2025

Geelong Bridge Club has a trophy for the Most Improved Player each year. This is determined by the increase in ABF Masterpoints (MPs) over the past twelve months using the formula:

$$\text{Improvement Score} = 100 \times (\text{new MPs this year}) / (\text{Total MPs} + 50).$$

Several members, especially affiliate members, score many of their MPs at other clubs or congresses, so there is a local rule that members must score MPs at GBC events in at least 4 months of the year to be eligible. The score is set to zero for new members with an incomplete year.

The top-ranked members for 2025 are:

Rank	Name	Score
1 st	Michael Kinahan	31.14
2 nd	Genevieve Burke	27.33
3 rd	Jane Skeen	27.15
4 th	David Melzer	25.65
5 th	Glenn Foard	22.98

Congratulations to the place-getters on their impressive achievement. Detailed results for all members are posted on the GBC Noticeboard.

Mike Stokie

Chair, Match Committee

This event was held at Ballarat on Saturday 15th November. Twenty-six pairs participated and it was a very enjoyable day. Teams from Ballarat, Ocean Grove, Geelong and Warrnambool were represented.

A big thank you to the Ballarat Bridge Club who, as always, puts on an amazing spread of food for morning and afternoon tea, also drinks and nibbles at the end of play.

Results were :

1st: Tony Ni and Ping Li (Ballarat)

2nd: Dot Read and Anne Gunst (Geelong)

3rd: Jenny Johnstone and Trish Frost (Geelong)

Hopefully next year we might get even larger numbers attending which is always the aim of the Western Region.

Jenny Johnstone

(I would like to acknowledge the hard work involved in organising the Western Region events by Jenny Johnstone, Dot Peacock and Terry Passlow for the last six years. Thanks Jenny, Dot and Terry. We look forward to welcoming the incoming President and her team. Editor)



1st: Tony Ni & Ping Li



2nd: Dot Read & Anne Gunst



It was good to see such a large contingent from Geelong travelling up to Ballarat.

Spring at the Club



It's been fairly ordinary Spring weather in Geelong in 2025, but there has been a lot of Bridge. What better thing to do in this changeable and unpredictable weather? Thanks to **Linda Johnston** for the photo on the right.



Open Pairs

After two weeks of qualifying heats, fourteen pairs progressed to the final of the Open Pairs Championship 2025 - the Club's premier pairs event, held on October 1 & 8.

The final consisted of thirteen 4-board matches against each other pair over two weeks, using Match-point scoring. The format was a barometer event, in which all tables play the same boards simultaneously. This allows the scores to be calculated after each 4-board match and the results are shown on a large display ladder on the main whiteboard (expertly managed by Jennifer Blyton). In this way, each pair can watch their names rise and fall on the ladder after each round, depending on whether they have done well or not so well.

The final is always keenly contested and has been decided by the barest of margins in three of the last four years. Kirsten and Gavin Bailey won by 1 match-point in 2022, Denny Newland and Douglas Newlands by 1 match-point (from Kirsten & Gavin) in 2023 and there was a photo-finish again in 2025.

The place-getters were:

1 st Arthur Robbins & Gary Ridgway	359 Match-points
2 nd Justin Stark & Douglas Newlands	358 Match-points
3 rd Sue Duff & Gabby Wilson	354 Match-points.

Restricted Pairs

This event for players under 100 MPs was held on November 6 & 13 with a large field of 21 pairs. The format was a familiar Mitchell movement in week 1 followed by an Interwoven Howell in week 2. The Interwoven Howell is designed so that the NS players from week 1 play each other and likewise for the EW pairs. In this way, each pair plays against all (or nearly all) other pairs over the two weeks of the event.

The place-getters were:

1 st David Melzer & Glenn Foard	602 Match-points
2 nd Mary Ilic & Michael Kinahan	550 Match-points
3 rd Gary Barfoot & Peter Carland	529 Match-points

Continued next page

Intermediate Teams

This event for players under 500 MPs was held on November 17 & 24 with a small field of 7 teams. After a qualifying round in week 1, the top two teams played off against each other in a 28-board final in week 2.

The place-getters were:

1st Chris Dodgshun, Lynn Frankenburg, Alison Feiner & Anne Gunst + 24 IMPs

2nd David Melzer, Glenn Foard, Valerie Sercombe & Bernadette O'Dea - 24 IMPs

Congratulations to the place-getters in each of these Championship events.

Mike Stokie

Coming Up

Individual Championship*	Mondays 15, 22 December
Sunday Duplicate	Sunday 11 January 1.00pm
Pizza Sunday	Sunday 25 January 4.00pm
Mixed Pairs*	Thursday 29 January, 5 February
Sunday Duplicate	Sunday 8 February 1.00pm
Western Region Pairs*	Saturday 14 February
Western Region Teams*	Sunday 15 February
Pizza Sunday	Sunday 22 February 4.00pm
Open Teams A**	Mondays 23 February, 2 March
Open Teams B**	Fridays 27 February, 6 March
Open Teams Semi Final**	Wednesday 11 March 1.00pm (no evening bridge)
Open Teams Final**	Wednesday 25 March 1.00pm (no evening bridge)

*Red Point Event

**Gold Point Event

Seniors Festival Teams



The Seniors Festival Teams event was held on Tuesday 28 October 2025. This annual event is supported financially by the City of Greater Geelong as part of the Geelong Seniors Festival and badged as the Positive Ageing Program.

The event is conducted on a “friendly” basis and players of all abilities and experience are most welcome. The event is open to seniors and non-seniors alike and this year we had players from Ballarat, Ocean Grove, Torquay and Warrnambool as well as many local members from Geelong. Once again, it was pleasing to have several of our less experienced players competing.

With an advertised capacity of 18 teams, entries were closed well ahead of time due to strong demand. In the end, we decided to accept two teams from the wait-list and a total of 20 teams squeezed into the clubrooms for a most rewarding event. Many players commented on how much they had enjoyed the day and the superb lunch drew particular praise. A big thank-you is extended to Valerie Sercombe who co-ordinated the lunch, ably supported by many volunteers who supplied and helped serve a variety of sandwiches, slices, cheeses, dips and drinks. A wonderful time was had by all.

Congratulations to the placegetters:

- 1st Piyush Jain, Mike Stokie, Sue Duff and Geoff Temple
- 2nd Richard Lawrie, Terry Johnston, Marion Scambler and Philip Scambler
- 3rd Dot Read, Jean McGonigal, Pam Smigowski and Janet Flitton
- 4th Janet Attrill, Penny Thomas, Paula Bailey and Linda Picone

Mike Stokie—Convenor

David Melzer and Glenn Foard (pictured) won the annual GBC Restricted Pairs event held over two weeks in November. Mary Ilic and Michael Kinahan were second with Gary Barfoot and Peter Carland third. Congratulations to all 18 pairs who took part in the popular event.



In recent months, David and Glenn managed a top-five finish in the Australia-wide Novice Pairs event and successfully represented GBC at the restricted championships at the Torquay and Ocean Grove clubs, also winning both these events. They are pleased to have managed the 'trifecta' but disappointed they couldn't try for the 'quadrella' as the Western Regional event (at Torquay) was cancelled this year.

Glenn has been playing for three years having decided to take up bridge after he retired. David has been playing for a little longer. Ask him how he came to play bridge when you have a chance - it is an interesting story! While David and Glenn only started playing bridge together this year, they have known each other since university days and played cricket together. "While cricket is my first love, bridge is a very close second," said David.

Having members win three restricted events in the region strongly suggests GBC is doing something right nurturing new players.

Glenn remarked that he had certainly benefited from Dot Read's beginner lessons and David emphasised the help gained from the club's monthly Thursday lessons that expert players such as Douglas Newlands, Denny Newland and Mike Stokie kindly conduct. "It is helpful to have these lessons on more advanced topics," said David.

However, both Glenn and David commented that GBC Gold Grand Master, Arthur Robbins, has assisted the most. "Arthur has been extraordinarily generous with his time, answering our many questions and providing sage advice - that we **sometimes** remember to put into practice!" said Glenn. "While we take responsibility for our many mistakes, Arthur should take the credit for any success we might have," said David.

Both David and Glenn recommended that members wishing to improve their bridge seek out a mentor from among the club's expert players. "And if in doubt, ask Tommy - he is a wizard," they said. Their final comment is a bit cryptic, but you'll work it out.

Glenn Foard

McManamny Teams

The McManamny Inter-Club Teams 2025 was held in Melbourne on Sunday 28 September at the Waverley Bridge Club. This annual event is open to all Victorian bridge clubs, who may submit up to 5 teams to compete for the CROFTS trophy awarded to the club with the highest average VPs of all teams from that club. Clubs must enter at least three teams to be eligible for the CROFTS trophy. A separate STOKES trophy is awarded to the individual best performing team.

The event is co-ordinated by Moonee Valley, Waverley and Geelong Bridge Clubs and is named in honour of a long-time member at Waverley, the late Nicole McManamny. The event is designed to give less experienced players the opportunity to enjoy a teams event playing with more experienced team-mates. To achieve this, the rules constrain each team's composition as follows:

for any Grand Master in the team, there must also be a player below State Master, and

for any Life Master in the team, there must also be a player below National Master.

In each match, the more experienced pairs in each team play against each other.

This year the competing clubs were Geelong (5 teams), Kooyong (5), Moonee Valley (5), Royal South Yarra (4), Waverley (5) and Williamstown (4). Geelong's representatives were:

Richard Lawrie, Val Sercombe, Marion Scambler, Philip Scambler

Arthur Robbins, Douglas Newlands, Jane Skeen, Mary Ilic

Alison Feiner, Anne Gunst, John Prowse, David Casey

Jenny Johnstone, Kathryn Graham, Mark Doyle, Phil Dunlop-Moore

Roger Gillard, Mike Stokie, David Melzer, Glenn Foard.

The Crofts trophy for best club was won by Waverley (67.704 average VPs) just ahead of Geelong (67.284). The Stokes trophy for best team was won by Geelong's Robbins team (79.43 VPs) and the Lawrie team (77.82 VPs) were a close-up 3rd. Congratulations to all successful participants.

My team finished 10th but we did have a hard luck story. The event was using hand-written bidding pads and on one critical board, I misread partner's 4-squiggle bid as 4C instead of his intended 4S. As a result, we ended up in 5D (two down, -200) instead of 4S (+680). A very costly mistake, without which Geelong may well have won the Crofts trophy. Much to be said for bidding boxes.

Mike Stokie

Christmas Party 2025



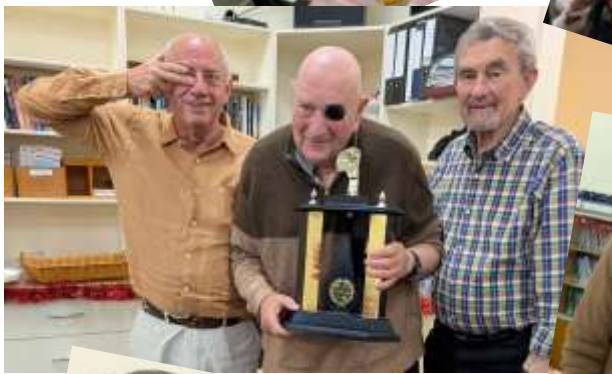
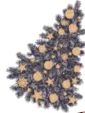
What a fantastic turnout for a fun evening of food, friends, and of course, bridge. **Val Sercombe** and her team did an amazing job of organising the evening and making it an enjoyable event for everyone.

Hands up who's playing bridge.

Trivia quiz MC'd by Val and Jen Lehmann.

So many
awards! So
many
deserving
winners.

And last but not least, the man
behind so much that happens at
the club, Mike Stokie. Thanks
Mike.



Social Bridge on Fridays

When is bridge different to bridge ? When it is social bridge, of course ! The Geelong Bridge Club introduced its first social bridge session in the middle of October as part of an eight week trial. Six weeks into the trial it has been such a resounding success that the club committee has agreed to make it a permanent part of the weekly schedule.

The social bridge session has been running on Friday mornings from 10.00-12.00pm. Unlike the duplicate bridge sessions at other times there is no element of competition. There are no pre-dealt boards, no comparison of scores using the Bridgemates and no structured movements to ensure that each pair plays the other pairs. It is still bridge, just different.

There have been between 24 and 32 players at each session. Some players have come with a regular partner but most simply find someone to partner on arrival. Two or three experienced players have also come along each week to offer advice and support. After four deals the players find another table that have just finished their four deals and swap places to play another four deals. While we do play to the rules (!), most players welcome the opportunity to seek advice either from other players at their table or from one of the more experienced players.

We are aiming for a more casual approach to allow players to develop their skills and increase their confidence. Most players are either new to the game or are returning to the game after an absence. Some players prefer the non-competitive nature of the session. Others see the sessions as a transition between lessons and duplicate bridge on Tuesdays or Thursdays. Most of all we are just having fun making friends and playing bridge.

The social bridge sessions finish on December 5th for the summer holidays and will restart in the new year around the end of January or first week of February. Each session costs \$5 per person which is a reduction on the standard table fee because we do not award masterpoints. Sessions are open to anyone whether you are a member of the Geelong Bridge Club, another bridge club or no bridge club.

I would like to thank each of the 57 players who have come to at least one of the social bridge sessions and to the club's members who have come along to offer their advice and expertise. I am also grateful to the club's committee for recognising people's interest in playing socially and providing an opportunity for this to happen. Finally I would like to give a big shout out to Bernadette O'Dea whose lessons are brilliant and whose commitment is the reason we have so many new players.



Philip Dunlop-Moore

What would you say is the best part of an expert's game? It's not that an expert can pull off an esoteric squeeze. Experts win for three reasons:

1. Their focus lets them keep avoidable errors to a minimum;
2. their judgment is sharp, based on experience; and
3. their fundamental skills are rock-solid.

Give an expert a problem in basic bidding or play, and he will go right. Always. To test your basic bidding, try this quiz

1. You hold: ♠ J76 ♥ A5 ♦ 76 ♣ KJ10853. Your partner opens 1NT (15 -17 HCP). What is your call?
2. You hold ♠ Q5 ♥ 754 ♦ A10632 ♣ K53. Your partner opens 1S, you respond 1NT and he bids 2H. What is your call?
3. You hold: ♠ 74 ♥ AQ ♦ A10764 ♣ AQ76 You open 1D, partner responds 1S, you bid 2C and partner returns to 2D You try 2NT, and he bids 3D. What is your call?
4. You hold : ♠ AQ54 ♥ 4 ♦ AQ762 ♣ KT5. You open 1D. Partner responds 1H, you bid 1S and he rebids 2H. What is your call?
5. You hold: ♠ AQ52 ♥ J63 ♦ 63 ♣ 8532. Your partner opens 1H. What is your call?
6. You hold: ♠ AJ63 ♥ K4 ♦ 53 ♣ AQ432. Your partner opens 1H. What is your call?
7. You hold: ♠ 76 ♥ 10742 ♦ AKJ4 ♣ A104. You open 1D, and your partner responds 1H. RHO overcalls 1S. What is your call?

Answers

- 1 Bid 3NT. Rarely, 3NT will fail when a club contract would have been better, but the nine-trick game is more likely to make. To play at notrump might be essential at matchpoint scoring.
2. Take a "false preference" to 2S. To pass might work if opener has a minimum with 5-5 in the majors, but if he has 5-4, to play at the 5-2 fit will usually be better. Moreover, you have a decent hand, so give partner another chance if he has extra strength
3. Pass. You tried for game, partner rejected. Respect a signoff.
4. Pass. Partner has long hearts but a poor hand. You have no game, and his hand may be worthless unless hearts are trumps. *Don't fight a misfit.*
5. Raise to 2H. You suggest a trump suit and limit your strength promptly. A 1S response would do neither. To raise would still be correct with ♠ AJ432 ♥ Q52 ♦ 65 ♣ 543.
6. Bid 2C. You have the ammunition for several bids, so bid your long suit first. With ♠ AJ64 ♥ K4 ♦ 53 ♣ Q10543, to respond 1S would be correct ; locating a fit in the other major would be a priority.
7. Bid 2H. Your hand is a minimum, but you can't suppress a fit for partner's suit. In some situations, a "free bid" may suggest a sound hand, but a "free raise" has no such implication.

Thanks to **Stephen Lester** for another excellent Frank Stewart article.

Should you hold up?

Most players are familiar with the potential benefits of holding up a stopper. Refusing a trick you could win may have a tactical advantage, often by severing the opponents' communication or preserving yours.

If you play at notrump with S32 in dummy opposite SA54 and the opening lead is a spade, you may do well to hold up your ace at least once. One challenging part of bridge is that "rules" of play have exceptions - and the exceptions have exceptions. For example, you are told to avoid a hold-up play when a shift to a different suit may present a greater danger or when doing so will cost a trick in the suit.

Suppose South declares this 3NT:

Dlr: East

Vul: All

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

West	North	East	South
		1H	1NT
P	3NT	All Pass	

West leads S6, dummy plays the five and East puts up the king. Declarer can assure a second spade trick if he takes the ace, but if he forces out DA next, East will return a spade and West will duck, preserving the defenders' link. South has only eight tricks: two spades, two hearts with a winning finesse, three diamonds and one club. When East gets in with CK, he will lead his last spade, and the defenders will have five tricks.

West is almost sure to hold five spades (having led his own suit instead of his partner's). Declarer can succeed by letting East's SK win and ducking the spade return. West will never score his long spades, and declarer will lose only two spades, a diamond and a club. (If South has a crystal ball, he can make 3NT even if he wins the first trick.)

Sometimes whether to hold up or not may be far from obvious. How should South operate in this deal?

Dlr: North

Vul: NS

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

West	North	East	South
	1C	1S	3NT
All Pass			

See answer on next page

West leads SJ in response to East's overcall, and East follows with the nine. If East has CK, South will make overtricks, but there is danger if West has it. If he gets in and leads another spade, bad things will happen.

If you were South, would you safeguard your contract by ducking the first spade? If West leads another spade, East can take the ace and queen, but dummy's ten will stand up, and if the club finesse loses to West, he will have no more spades.

Stephen Lester

Warrnambool Congress



Justin Stark and Douglas Newlands first in the Pairs and Arthur Robbins and Gary Ridgway second in the Pairs. Then together for second in the Teams. Well done Geelong! Justin, the new GBC President, is wasting no time in successfully representing us at the region, state and national level.



Travellers abroad – desperately seeking bridge

Anne Gunst, Marion and Philip Scambler were spotted recently in Malahide while travelling in Ireland and Iceland. Guess they didn't check the session times.

This hand appeared as the first board in a late match in the GNOT Finals.

Board 1	♠ 986
Vul: Nil	♥ A92
Dlr: N	♦ Q3
	♣ AJ942
♠ KQ10532	♠ AJ7
♥ J754	♥ 3
♦ K62	♦ A108754
♣ -	♣ K53
	♠ 4
	♥ KQ1086
	♦ J9
	♣ Q10876

In one room, the Geelong pair (Arthur+Gary) are sitting NS and the auction proceeds:

West	North	East	South
	P	1D	1H
1S	2D	X	2H
4S	P	P	P

As NS don't manage to get their second suit into the auction, they don't bid beyond 4S. (2D was a cue raise. X was a support double). This looks like a normal sort of outcome.

However, let us look at the auction in the other room where the Geelong pair (Justin+Doug) are sitting EW. This auction is rather more explosive.

West	North	East	South
	P	1D	2NT
3S	4H	4S	P
P	5C	5D	P
5S	6C	6S	P
P	7C	X	AP

Here South gets H and C into the auction immediately (2NT showing the two lowest suits). West bids 3S to get his best suit into the auction. The auction was about to die in 4S but North bid 5C and, after the 5S and 6C bids, East realised his partner had no clubs and bid 6S. North decided to sacrifice in 7C since they were not vulnerable.

The defence was easy and 7Cx went down 4 for 800. In some sense, the sacrifice might be good since 6S can and should make for +980 but, at the event, 6S was bid only once and went off when declarer made what seems like a mechanical error.

Well that was exciting but look what happened two boards later.

Continued on next page

A note from the editor

As the editor, I would like to encourage you all to pass on anything you think will be of interest to the members regarding the Bridge Club. Thanks again to those who contributed information and interesting articles for this edition. Contact the committee or me at jlbyton@gmail.com.

Jennifer Blyton

Exciting Bidding *continued from previous page*

Board 3 ♠ 104
 EW vul ♥ 9542
 Dealer S ♦ Q875
 ♣ 1095

♠ KQJ965	♠ A872
♥ A108	♥ QJ6
♦ KJ106	♦ A42
♣ -	♣ 642

 ♠ 3
 ♥ K73
 ♦ 93
 ♣ AKQJ873

In one room, the Geelong pair (Arthur+Gary) are sitting NS and the auction proceeds:

West	North	East	South
			2C
2S	P	3S	P
4S	P	P	5C
P	P	X	P
P	P		

NS are playing Precision so this shows clubs, 11-15. EW find their spade fit but East has underbid. A cue raise would be better but West bids the game easily anyway. South decides to take the dive and 5Cx is 3 off for -500.

This looks like a normal sort of outcome with the non vulnerable side sacrificing successfully against the vulnerable game the other way.

Again, let us look at the auction in the other room where the Geelong pair (Justin+Doug) are sitting EW. This auction is outrageous!

West	North	East	South
			1C
1S	P	2C	3C
4C	5C	5D	6C
6D	P	6S	7C
P	P	X	P
P	P		

South opens naturally, West overcalls and East makes a cue raise. South emphasises her suit and West cues what is clearly a shortage. North decides to come to life although it is not clear what tricks that hand will provide. East cues the AD and, since he is going to 6S, West cues the KD and East settles in 6S. South looks at the vulnerability and decides to take the dive in 7C which is doubled.

This goes six off for -1400. South hopes this is a good sacrifice against 6S (+1430) and will win 1 imp. No such luck as they are only in game in the other room. 6S was only bid in 8 of 56 tables.

One last thing to note: when South bids 7C, West should double with a club loser to stop partner thinking about 7S. When West passes 7C, it says "I do not have a loser in clubs in case you want to bid on to 7S". There was no danger of that here but it is a useful wrinkle to be aware of: 6S is about 75% (one of the two finesses needs to succeed).

Douglas Newlands

Vale

Alan Casanelia (13/05/1930– 24/10/2025)

The date that Alan joined Geelong Bridge Club is not accurately recorded; however, he was listed as a member in the Club's 21st Birthday history booklet published in 1994. In the thirty plus years since, Alan shared his love and knowledge of the game with many beginning Bridge players - including the undersigned.



Well before the formal pairing of novices with experienced players in the now common practice of mentoring, Alan was happy to pass on what he knew to others less experienced. While occasionally gruff and intimidating following Partner's failures, especially after repeating the same "rookie mistake" for the umpteenth time, Alan always persevered. Eventually the lessons sank in. Under his patient tutelage even Terry finally came to understand limit bids, and the correct way to finesse.

Alan could never be accused of underbidding. Philip recalls how Alan would often conclude a bidding sequence with "You're a good player" as he cheerfully wrote 4S after Philip had opened a tentative 1 Spade. Another oft heard expression in similar circumstances was, "You'll have to box carefully here, young feller". By always pushing for game in marginal contracts, Alan built confidence in the partners he mentored.

Like most long term players in the Club, Alan did his fair share of Directing. His usual session was Monday afternoons. Never one to arrive early for anything, and relying on his assistant to take care of the technical preparations, Alan would often waltz in just in time to take charge.

When Covid crippled club Bridge for a while, we thought that we had seen the last of Alan across the table; he was after all, a bit of a Cyberphobe. But no, Alan became an early adopter of online Bridge, and would happily get his game in at the other end of a computer screen.

Alan was a keen golfer in his day. Well into his seventies when Terry first met him, he was still a formidable opponent off a handicap of 18. Playing on his home course at Barwon Heads, Alan had an accurate short game and his putting was often uncanny.

Alan liked to reminisce about his early years at Melbourne University in the late 1940s; which were actually spent in Mildura, as the first couple of years of the science based courses (engineering, medicine, etc) were taught there. He enjoyed that experience, also playing sport with and against hardened ex-servicemen and local farmers.

Alan became a member of the Melbourne Cricket Club prior to the Olympic Games of 1956. Consequently he enjoyed prestigious "50 year member" status for the last two decades. In the distant past Alan relished watching his Bombers shine in September; however, their mediocrity in the 21st Century was a huge disappointment to him.

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Another great passion of Alan's, apart from his wife Rayleen, and their children and grandchildren, was horse racing. The family syndicate always seemed to have a starter somewhere, and Alan was usually more than happy to share a "hot tip". Not all of the Casanelia stable were winners, but they had one horse a few years back that gave Alan much joy with his frequent wins. Unfortunately, most times when Alan advised us all to bet on London Fog in a particular race, it seemed to be an "off day".

Born in May 1930, Alan died at the grand old age of 95. Rest in peace good friend, you will always be fondly remembered by your Bridge family.

Terry Passlow and Philip Scambler

Weak Two-Suiter Hands

These are probably the most interesting hands, apart from slam investigation. But do you have methods to bid them, without misleading partner? Naturally you have different problems/methods, depending on whether you are opening the bidding, overcalling or responding to partner's opening. Most of the above have methods, eg the Unusual NT, Michael's Cue Bid, etc. So let's discuss the opening bid situation, normally 1st/2nd seat.

1st Seat is usually a good place to pre-empt, so let's look at two hands from 20 October.

Hand 1

♠ QJT83
♥ JT9763
♦ K6
♣ -

7HCP, Rule of 20, only comes to 18, so a pre-emptive method is needed, but what? Do you play Multi-2D, or Tassie 2D? Then you have a bid. Otherwise you must pass.

Hand 2

♠ QJ9653
♥ KQJ76
♦ -
♣ J6

10HCP, so the Rule of 20* applies, and open 1S (or use Multi Methods, if you play them, and think this is the best approach). Many would open 1S anyway, and rebid 2H, etc.

If you want to improve your competitive methods, you need to employ some constructive methods with weak two suiters. Of course, you can be too competitive!!!

Arthur Robbins

(*Rule of 20: this is a guide for deciding whether to open the bidding with a hand that may have fewer than 12 high card points (HCP). To use it, add your high card points to the length of your two longest suits. If the total is 20 or more, open the bidding. If it's less, it's usually best to pass. Editor)

Shuffle Your Cards

Two days ago I received a letter from a talented young bridge player who had recently joined the ranks of the professionals. I was quite surprised that he had written to me, because I only knew him slightly. It was a cry for help from a desperate young man. It read as follows:

Dear Mr van Hoof,

As you probably know, some six months ago I was asked to play for the Bubbles team. I felt flattered. The team was by far the strongest in the country. They had won almost every team-of-four tournament the previous season, giving their sponsor a lot of publicity. Moreover, they made me an offer I couldn't refuse, so I didn't.

Soon afterwards I was invited for a team meeting. I was supposed to come to a rather shabby pub outside town. I arrived at eight sharp but didn't see any familiar faces. So I asked the bartender for the bridge meeting and she directed me to a small room at the back of the establishment. I entered the badly lit room and it took a while before my eyes could pick out three men sitting at a table. They were probably my team-mates, but I couldn't be sure.

The man in the middle told me to sit down and handed me a board. 'Pick up the South cards, but don't sort them,' he said and so I did.

One of the other guys took out the North cards, sorted them and spread them out on the table. It took me a while to get used to looking at an unsorted hand but then in the light of a candle I faced this single-dummy problem:

S AJ94
H 97
D KQ82
C AQ5

S K1083
H A6
D AJ54
C KJ9

'This hand was recently played in the Botahall Tournament,' the man in the middle said. 'You declare Six Spades and the lead is the king of hearts. Plan the play.'

I looked at the hand and saw it was a simple matter of finding the trump queen. I couldn't see any further snags so I quickly responded. 'I win the first trick, cross to the ace of spades and play the jack of spades, finessing East for the queen.'

'Okay, you made the contract. Why did you play that way?' I don't know. I just guessed and I'm usually lucky. 'There is no such thing as luck in bridge,' the third man interferred crossly. 'It's impossible to beat the odds.'

The man in the middle put his hand on my arm reassuringly and asked me: 'What do you think happened at the table?' 'How would I know?'

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'Not so quickly. Look at your cards. After the hand was over, declarer put them back in the board without shuffling or rearranging them first. Players seldom do, you know. I asked you not to sort the hand. Which card is on the top?'

'It's the heart ace.' 'And which cards come next?' 'Spade king, spade ten and heart six.'

Suddenly I understood. By looking at the cards I could see in exactly what order they were played in the tournament. So declarer took the first trick with the ace of hearts, laid down the king of spades and ran the ten. This lost to East's queen and he returned a heart for one down.

'At the other table declarer went one down!' I said, gasping for breath.

'Correct. You're a clever fellow. So in future, when playing for our team and you play the boards that have come from the other table, don't sort your cards unless you're capable of memorizing the order in which you picked them up.'

'But that's cheating!' I cried. 'No it's not,' the man on the left said. 'It's merely a not very well-known expert technique, called reading the opponents' cards. You're allowed to draw conclusions from their bidding and signaling, so this is also allowed. 'This meeting is over,' the man in the middle said. 'Just do as you are told and you'll see that your game will improve.'

I was in a state of shock when I left the pub. In the next weeks I couldn't help testing my newly learned technique, however much I disapproved of it. It was amazing indeed how few bridge players shuffle their cards before putting them back in the board. Sometimes, I was able to follow the play at the other table from trick one to thirteen.

It didn't bring me much real benefit, though, but then, in my first tournament for the Bubbles team, the following hand occurred:

Dlr: South	♠ 74	
Vul: NS	♥ K83	
	♦ KQJ4	
	♣ K753	
	♠ Q10832	♠ K95
	♥ 954	♥ 10762
	♦ A76	♦ 853
	♣ 108	♣ QJ9
	♠ AJ6	
	♥ AQJ	
	♦ 1092	
	♣ A642	

It was the second half of a tense match against a team of good, though rather inexperienced, players. The bidding was 1NT-3NT and I could be sure that it had been the same at the other table. The lead was the two of spades (small from an honour) and East inserted the king. To make the contract I needed three diamond tricks. If East had the ace of diamonds, I should hold up my ace of spades twice to guard against a 5-3 spade split. If West had it, I'd better win the first trick in order to keep another stopper in the spade suit. There I was in a 28 HCP 3NT and I needed to make a right guess to fulfil my contract.

I looked at my unsorted cards: the six of spades on top, then the jack of spades, ace of spades, ten of diamonds, two of clubs and four of clubs. So at the other table, declarer ducked the spade lead. His jack of spades was won by the queen and a third spade cleared the suit.

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South then played the ten of diamonds and apparently this was taken by the ace. The small clubs strongly looked like two discards, so West must have had the ace of diamonds, together with five spades headed by the queen. Feeling kind of guilty, I took the first trick with the ace of spades and laid down the ten of diamonds. I ended up making ten tricks.

'Well done,' my partner said. 'Well done,' my team-mates said later. Thanks to this board we had won by a margin of 12 IMPs.

In the months that followed I was able to apply the card-reading technique on an increasing number of occasions, not only in declarer play but also in defence and even in bidding. It helped me in choosing the right lead against 3NT from KQ9xx and it even kept me out of a 50% slam where I could detect that the king of trumps was offside.

But, Mr van Hoof, it somehow bothers me to win my points (and money) this way. There is no way that I could stop using these dubious techniques; my team-mates would notice immediately. And even if I left the team, I just wouldn't be able to neglect the order of the cards that I pick up.

Therefore, I turn to you for your help. Your column is read by a lot of tournament players. Please write about this phenomenon, of course without mentioning your source, and tell all bridge players all over the world to shuffle their cards before putting them back in the board.

Yours etc

I don't know about you but I was flabbergasted after having read this letter. I agree with the writer that this kind of card-reading comes very close to cheating, but there are no rules against applying it. So I'm happy to publicize the request and I submit the following BOLS Bridge Tip:

Shuffle your cards!

<https://www.haroldschogger.com/VANHOOFF.htm>

(Thank you to Douglas Newlands for providing this fascinating article by Toine Van Hoof. What an eye-opener! If you enjoyed this tip, have a look at the BOLS Bridge Tips website. Editor)

PIZZA SUNDAYS

The next Pizza Sunday is on 25 January at 4.00pm.

Please come along and join in the fun, but be sure to put your name on the list if you wish to attend.

The next beginners lessons will start in March 2026.

Members are encouraged to take a flyer to give to their friends.