

### From the Editor

As the February issue is a bit late to wish members a Happy New Year, I guess I'll simply acknowledge that we are rushing towards the end of summer.

I really appreciate feedback on the newsletter. Many have told me that they like it, while others have said it is too long or contains items of no interest to them. The club is a very diverse community, and, unsurprisingly, there are different views. The breadth of content is designed to ensure there is something here for everyone. So please don't be daunted, just read what interests you.

Larry Regterschot has generously donated a prize, in memory of his late wife Jill, for the most improved player at the club. Only players who earn the majority of their green points at IBA are eligible. The formula for Most Improved on the ABF Masterpoints Centre is used to select the recipient.

The Christmas Party saw the prize awarded for the first time. Life and founding member Jill MacRae said a few words about Jill and then presented the prize to Paula Corbett.



The team successful in the under-50 Masterpoint section of the ABF Knockout Teams (see December 2025 newsletter) took the opportunity for a group photo.

2025 was, I think, the first time IBA entered this event. Hopefully, we can register more teams in 2026, though dates haven't been published yet.

This issue was delayed to include the results of the IBA Swiss Pairs. Then your editor got caught up in preparing for and attending the Australian Bridge Directors' Association's National Interactive Seminar. My apologies for the tardiness.

## Management Committee

The Management Committee (MC) agreed that, from this year onward, we will use MyABF's membership management capabilities rather than Pianola. This arrangement significantly streamlines the process for the volunteer committee members and eliminates the risk of having unidentifiable deposits. The increasing capabilities of MyABF raise the question of whether we should maintain our Pianola subscription. The President and Treasurer will compare capabilities for consideration by the MC.

The MC considered a report from the Tournament Committee (TC) on the revision of the IBA Tournament Regulations, which includes our ethics and disciplinary regulations. The MC advised the TC that it looks forward to receiving the revised regulations for the MC's consideration.

The MC also discussed player development. We noted that Ian Lisle and Steve Geddes are providing some good lessons. The proposition of a formal mentoring framework was raised, and the MC agreed to consider options further after consultations with members.

### A message from Kaye

*Dear members, our work for charity in 2025 has been very successful and I think that we should be very proud of our efforts last year. We raised over \$3,000 to support the Cancer Council, the Homeless Hub and Healthier Illawarra Men.*

*In addition, IBAND and IBA members have donated over 70 boxes of food and other supplies to the Homeless Hub. I hope that in 2026 we can do even more for these worthwhile charities.*

*Kaye Hart*

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## Promotions

Congratulations to the following members on their recent promotions

### Dec 2025

Grade	Name
Bronze Life	Cathy Ashcroft
Silver National	Malcolm Kerr
	Lynne Soldi
State	Paul Woods
Silver Local	Catherine Power
Graduate	Jo Koschny
	Helen Fahy

### Jan 2026

Grade	Name
Life	Carolyn Githen
National	Maggie Havyatt
Bronze State	Pranati Basu
State	Don Clark
Silver Local	Alison Wiig

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# Results

## Major Events and Congresses

### IBA Swiss Pairs

The **IBA Swiss Pairs** were played on 15 February at the Builders' Club.

#### Open Division

1<sup>st</sup> Barry Dalsto and Freddie Zulfiqar

2<sup>nd</sup> Maeve Doyle and Stuart Schon

3<sup>rd</sup> Stephen Brell and Ruth Neild



#### Intermediate Division (<750 MPs)

1<sup>st</sup> David Rieser and Michael Green



#### Restricted Division (<300 MPs)

1<sup>st</sup> Anka Saundry and Peter Saundry



#### Novice Division (<100 MPs)

1<sup>st</sup> Julie Carbonara and Judy Sheehan



#### Super Novice Division (<20 MPs)

1<sup>st</sup> Kirsten Van Den Berg and Murray Colderick



## Best Local Pair

Paul Lavings and Helen Lavings

## Honourable Mention

Larry Redgterschot and Lily Gulati had 6 wins and 1 loss for the day.

Many thanks to first-time organiser Cath Gregory and the many club members who helped with the set-up and bumping out at the Builders Club/



## Summer Festival of Bridge (SFoB)

*By Marie Pickering*

The SFoB is held in Canberra each January. This year it was held in The Rex Hotel on Northbourne Ave from 14 to 25 January. This Gold Point Masterpoint event is very popular; bridge players come from all over Australia and New Zealand. Australian representative bridge teams are selected at this congress.

Events for all player levels are held, including Rookies, Super Novice, Novice, Restricted, two Intermediate bands (less than 500 and less than 750), as well as Open. This is a great place to start your adventure in bridge outside of your local club. Over the years, large contingents of our players have headed down the Hume Highway to this event.

One of the highlights for us is our dinner get-together on the first Friday of the Congress, this year organised by Ngaire Meehan.

During the Festival, guest speakers talk on a variety of Bridge topics. These are by very experienced and well-respected bridge players and teachers.

Every evening, each player receives a Bulletin that contains results for the day, photos, interesting hands and how they were played, advice on handling bridge situations, and articles on the rules and ethics of bridge play. In these bulletins, Peter Gill wrote a series of articles on Legends of Australian Bridge; in issue eight, the legend was Paul Lavings. That column is reproduced with Peter's permission later in this newsletter.

### IBA Results at SFoB:

Chris Diment Matchpoint Pairs  
3<sup>rd</sup> Liz Hurley – Steve Hurley

TBIB U100 Swiss Pairs  
3<sup>rd</sup> Paula Corbett- Don Clark

National Under 750 All-Rounder IMP Swiss Pairs  
2<sup>nd</sup> Carolyn Githens-Marie Pickering

Congratulations to these players.

## Club Events

For the first time, we played the **66 Club** as a split-field at an ordinary club session on Saturday 31 January. Following the cancellation of the 2025 event, eligible pairs were those who earned 66% or better in any club duplicate session over the last two years. A rather impressive 19 pairs contested.

The placings were:

- 1<sup>st</sup> Steve Szatmary and Phil Barker
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Paul and Helen Lavings
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Martin Bunder and Bill Fotheringham

Congratulations to all these members.

## Upcoming Events

The club **Mixed Pairs Championship** will be held on 7 and 14 March. If we have enough mixed and not-mixed pairs, it will be played as two sections. Pairs do not need to play both weeks to qualify for the State Mixed Pairs final in May.

**Seniors Week** Taster sessions are running again – on 2 and 9 March. Last year, we sourced a table of beginners who progressed to the full beginner's course.

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## Myxomatosis Twos

In the October newsletter, Paul Lavings introduced us to the SWINE convention, named after Paul Woods and his then partner Bob Sebesfi. Bob joined us at the club on 26 November, partnering with Paul Lavings.

At the tea break, he told me he was more proud of his Myxomatosis Twos. Research found an interesting item in Alan Truscott's New York Times Bridge Column from Jan 20, 1983. After describing a player who habitually adorns their clothing with miniature koalas, he wrote:

*These might seem more appropriate for Dr Bob Sebesfi of Hobart, Tasmania. He battles at the bridge table with a pink rabbit tucked under his arm. This dates from an occasion early in his tournament career when an opponent scheduled to play him in a team event unwisely referred to him, in advance, as a rabbit. Sebesfi arrived at the table with the rabbit under his arm, and scored a convincing victory.*

Given the penchant for rabbits, one can see the attraction of the name for the convention.

## Rilla's Member Corner

This month, Rilla received a contribution from siblings Julie Carbonara and John Rankin in the form of verse. We are thrilled to branch out into the field of literary journals. A small piece about each of them follows.

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### Playing at the IBA

Contract Bridge is a bittersweet game,  
One where the boards are never the same.  
There are rules and conventions  
(Insightful inventions)  
Which enable the best  
And baffle the rest.  
A game where you must, so bids can be planned,  
Count the value of honours you have in your hand.

We've icons like Marsden and Lavings and more  
Whose expertise leads us to learn the game's lore.  
But the teachers, directors, and tutors no doubt  
Share many more skills which help us all out.  
To our mentors we give you a huge vote of thanks,  
We welcome your coaching as we rise through the ranks.  
Though it takes a long time for our points to accrue,  
And a heap is a dream that may never come true.

Not only the cards that we hold keep us buoyed,  
But the cards we don't have, as in shortage or void.  
Unless of course the contract's No Trumps....  
In which case it's risky and causes 'speed bumps.'  
But let's get the truth on the table today.  
We speak code to our partner, but no words do we say.  
We bid and we try to make sense of it all....  
And sometimes we struggle to make the right call.

When Two Clubs is not really clubs I imply,  
And Two Diamonds is waiting to hear your reply.  
When Four No Trumps means "how many Aces are yours?"  
If the response does not thrill my plan goes off course.  
But then there are other improbable things....  
Such as Five No Trumps asking "how many Kings?"  
We have doubles and overcalls too in our kit  
As we signal our partner in search of a fit.

There's balanced, unbalanced, two suits, three or four.  
There's Blackwood and Stayman and Michael's and more.  
There's transfers, cue bids and weak twos in the mix.  
No wonder we dummies get ourselves in a fix.  
Speaking of dummies, which role do I play?  
If I make the contract it's incumbent to say  
That my partner's the dummy and her voice must be stalled.  
For if something is said the Director is called.

Still we persist and stay with our dreams  
Of refining our game and stifling our screams.  
The game brings us joy in a quite subtle way  
But these healthy emotions can sometimes give way  
To anxiety, stress, frustration and fear  
Which affect us at times, yet we keep coming here.  
We love it, we hate it, it causes us pain.  
Yet we sit at the table again and again.

So why do we do it, then, day after day?  
There must be a reason that makes us all stay.  
Alerts and announcements keep our minds on the run.  
Ruffing, finessing both add to the fun.  
Is it the challenge of bidding, the thrill of the game?  
Is learning, improving, progressing our aim?  
Are we striving to win, and our skills to assert  
Or to keep our brain active, engaged and alert?

We all have full lives, with plenty to do.  
So why commit time in a quest to pursue  
A game of great focus, attention and thought...  
Of mental resilience and skills we've been taught?  
The real reason we're here, I am happy to say,  
Is much more than simply the cards that we play.  
It's social, it's friendly; no matter the score  
The great people we meet keep us hungry for more.

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### **From Julie:**

I had heard about Bridge when I started working, but I was not curious at that stage. It wasn't until I was going to U3A that I learned to play.

I loved it from the start!

After a while, a few of us went to the Master Builders club to play, then to the supervised sessions at the IBA at Figtree. I wore John down into playing with me, and we started playing with friends at home at first.

We each had the Marsden book, but neither of us attended beginner lessons. We just played, learnt, and had fun.

### **From John:**

As far back as I can remember, I have played cards. Uno, Snap, Go Fish, Gin Rummy, 500, Euchre, Canasta, Poker, and Solo Whist.

And then with my wife, my sister (that is, Julie) and her husband, the French game Belote.

When Julie asked me just before Covid if I would like to learn Bridge, it coincided with my retirement and becoming an orphan after the passing of both of our parents. And I came on board.

Bridge provides a level of mental stimulation and some group activity, which I have no doubt we all need as we age.

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## **Player Development**

### **Lessons**

Club bridge players enjoy bridge for reasons beyond the competitive game; nevertheless, it is more satisfying to bid the right contract, make difficult contracts, or find a good defence.

Our club is very good at providing regular beginner lessons, which help us maintain a healthy membership. The latest set started on Tuesday 10 February – hopefully your friends who are interested in bridge didn't miss out.

We also experimented last term with a social bridge group at U3A. We had a total of nine people join us, but it settled down to seven players interested in pursuing it. A few of them planned to come to the February lessons. Some of the players plan to try to play a social game at the Salvation Army venue after the second talk on Thursdays. See page 8 of <https://wollongong.u3anet.org.au/wp-content/uploads/sites/17/2022/10/1A4-Newsletter-Term-1-2026.pdf>. However, it appears this hasn't eventuated.

More recently, Ian Lisle presented two hand-evaluation sessions on 31 January and 7 February at the club. These were well attended, with over 50 people at each session.



While they were pitched at Rookies, there was something there for everybody. When I first learnt bridge, I was taught to use shortage points: three (3) for a void, two (2) for a singleton, and one (1) for a doubleton. I discovered that at IBA the five-three-one range is used. In his lessons, Ian made an excellent case for using the system with three for a void only if you only have three cards in the proposed trump suit (e.g., as responder to a one-of-a-major opening).

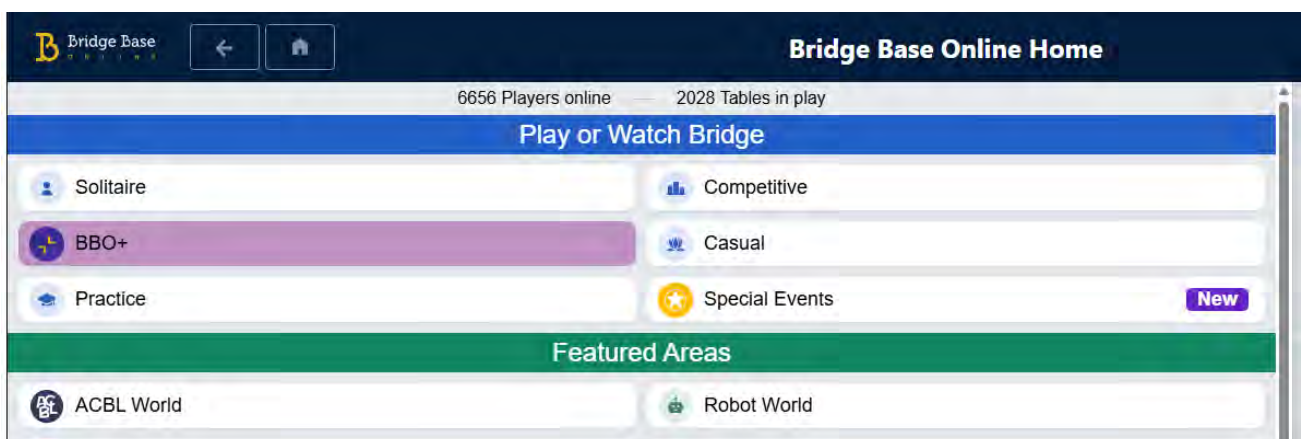
Steve Geddes series of four Improve Your Bridge 'Defence – the Hardest Part of the Game' lessons started on Monday 9 February.

## Resources

The one resource all members of the club should utilise is the senior, experienced players. They are all willing to answer questions about bidding and play. The other major resource is the library.

Bridge is a partnership game, and it is a requirement of the Laws that a partnership make its partnership understandings available to opponents. It is a requirement of the Bridge NSW Tournament Regulations that both members of the partnership must use the same system and conventions. Directors may require a partnership to abandon part of its understanding if the Director finds that the partnership's members are not sufficiently familiar with it.

More importantly, bridge is certainly more enjoyable when you are bidding well. Just like a sport, you can practice outside of actual games. One option for practising bidding is using Bridge Base Online. On the home screen of BBO, in the first panel under Play or Watch bridge, the third item is labelled 'Practice'. Using this, you can set up a table where you and your partner can bid against



a pair of robots or another pair you might invite. You can use random hands or hands dealt by BBO to match constraints.

Another alternative when working on a specific area is to get some hands generated according to specifications. For example, if you want to work on your response to 1NT, you can get a set of hands that gives North a 1NT opening and either random or constrained hands for South to respond, and then North to rebid. The club has a copy of DealMasterPro+ that we can use for these purposes. Once generated, we can print the hand records as usual, or we can print sheets containing only the hands dealt to a single position. Just ask Dave Havyatt if you are interested in us generating one for you.

The other key resource is the hands you've actually played. See the note later in this issue about reviewing hands played on Real Bridge.

## A hand at the club

By Grant Cowen

This newsletter hand inclusion was submitted by your editor, so thanks, Dave, for an interesting hand to discuss with many subtle undertones. It was Board 24 from 10 January.

Bd: 24	♠ KJ8	
Dir.: W	♥ A987	
Vul: None	♦ J63	
	♣ K83	
♠ AQ93		♠ 10742
♥ K5		♥ J6432
♦ Q874		♦ 52
♣ 1075		♣ A4
	♠ 65	
	♥ Q10	
	♦ AK109	
	♣ QJ962	

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT		
N	4	4	2	1	4		12
S	4	4	2	1	4	11	5
E							12
W							

Only five out of 16 NS pairs manage to bid and make game in No Trump with two 12 HCP hands opposite each other.

Firstly W is the dealer with a Bal 11 HCP, Should we open ? in short, there is nothing attractive about this hand, equal vulnerability, poor Suit Quality (I hear Ian Lisle yelling in my ear), no additional length, lack of tens & nines, no sequences - I hear you Ian, best is to pass & perhaps you may get a chance later in the auction.

N should open 1♣. Were S to bid 1♥, W could enter the auction with a double, saying 'I know I'm a passed hand partner, but I do have the other two unbid suits (Spades & Diamonds) and near to opening hand' The double would accurately describe their hand. Alas, not on this occasion; South will not bid a Heart.

If your partnership employs a convention called Inverted Minor showing a hand that contains no four-card Major, 5+ clubs & 12+ HCP, now is the time to use it. In that case, S bids 2♣ and partner alerts the bid.

If, like me, you don't, you could try 1♦ (forcing for one round) to hear partner's rebid. This uses no wasted bidding space as

the final strain & level are uncertain at this time.

Most developed partnerships can now bypass a major and rebid 1NT showing a range of 12-14 HCP & use another convention called Checkback to enquire about Major holdings.\*

Now, has S got sufficient values for game opposite a partner showing 12-14 HCP? Let's count together: 12 HCP, an additional point for the length card in Cubs ( good, I like your thinking), the hand also contains tens & nines (I'm loving this ....Absolutely).

A couple of very good things have occurred. Note, we are not declaring the No Trumps in South – 'I hate playing No Trumps' doesn't count.

The Opponents' lead is likely going to be a Major. We want the lead coming up to North's *tenaces* that he may hold in the Majors (a *tenace* is a holding missing the middle card of a, e.g., AQ or KJx, potentially guaranteeing an additional trick or acting as an additional stopper in that suit).

3NT declared from the N seat is much more desirable and worth extra tricks than the lead coming through the N holdings if S declared 3NT.

The play is straightforward with Declarer playing on the club suit first to develop four tricks in that suit, ultimately three diamond tricks & with a favourable lie of the spade honours sitting under the KJx will allow a further three Tricks in the Majors.

In conclusion, you are not being rewarded for gratuitous defensive errors, a lucky lead, or brilliant declarer play; you are being rewarded for hand evaluation and your awareness of your concentrated Minor

Values. The opponents will lead a Major into partner's preferred holdings.

Keep this thinking process up, and you will not only be in the 66 club next year but will have Steve & Phil (this year's winners) looking a little bit nervous.

#### Footnote:

\* Grant has volunteered, if there is enough interest, to explain various conventions in more detail in a future Newsletter.

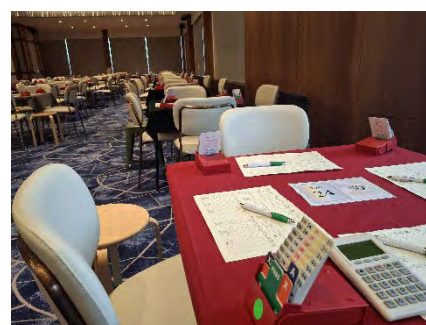
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#### Editor's Note

Please remember the offer Grant has made to review the bidding from a hand that has been played at IBA. It is quite serendipitous that this month's Hand at the Club provided the opportunity to consider some of the elements of Ian Lisle's hand evaluation session.

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### Setting up a Congress



## Legends of Australian Bridge: Paul Lavings

By Peter Gill

When I started playing bridge in the 1970s, I asked lots of top players who would take the mantle from the aging Tim Seres as Australia's greatest player. Everyone replied – Paul Lavings. Some of you might think that never happened, but a strong case can be made that it did happen but nobody noticed!

Why wouldn't we notice? Bridge is a partnership game. We notice success by partnerships, but Paul played for decades almost exclusively with clients as his bridge partners. Another reason is that Paul is quiet and doesn't promote himself.

Continuing on from our Michael Courtney article a couple of days ago (Bulletin 7), Michael Courtney had just arrived in Sydney from Perth because playing bridge for money didn't exist in Perth but did in Sydney. Michael once wrote an almost-true article in which (according to my version from my faulty memory) the then guru of Sydney bridge – Paul Lavings -- sat newly arrived young Michael on his knee and told Michael to tell Paul the three golden rules of Competitive Bidding.

Michael confessed that he didn't know what they were. Paul explained that he couldn't possibly win unless he followed the three golden rules, which were, and still are :

1. Bid your hand.
2. Never bid your hand twice.
3. Always raise as high as possible as soon as possible.

Michael's long lost article then gave examples of how, decades later, many of Australia's top players seem to have forgotten or disregard the three golden rules, to their detriment.

At the US Nationals about 20 years ago, a world class American player said to me that he'd just played a long match against an Aussie player named Paul Lavings who seemed to be one of the world's best players, but he'd only ever heard of Paul as a bridge book seller. I explained to him that he's right - Paul is one of the world's best players, but he doesn't get the credit he deserves. Bridge expertise can be rather anonymous. Tim Seres was truly great but it helped Tim's reputation that Tim's bridge partners Dick Cummings and Denis Howard wrote up Tim's exploits so often. My reputation bloomed when I played with Ron Klinger because Ron wrote up my good hands. *C'est la vie.*

In February 2004, Paul was declaring a 4♥ contract. His trump suit was:

K3

Q98762

Paul led the 2 to dummy's king which won. Paul led the 3 from dummy to the ten. expecting the trumps to be either:

- Ax on his left and J10x on his right, or
- Ajx on his left and 10x on his right.

Paul ducked ♥10, hoping his LHO's ♥A would fall. The same declarer play that all experts including me would have done.

But Paul's LHO discarded! Sheila Thompson on his right had ducked the king from AJ10x, apparently by accident. Paul was suddenly stranded with 3 trump losers instead of 2 trump losers. If Sheila had won ♥K with ♥A, Paul would have later finessed ♥9 as a safety play to hold his trump losers to two.

Paul recovered in the play to lead from dummy at Trick 12 through Sheila's AJ into his Q9, a splendid Trump Coup to make 4♥. Paul sent the hand to Ron Klinger who wrote it up in the Sydney Morning Herald column of 4 February 2004. Paul Lavings had observed and forwarded to Ron the new idea of ducking smoothly with AJ10x over a king or queen in order to gain a trick, when declarer assumes your partner has the ace.

I saw the SMH column. At the time, I was reading a book by Tim Bourke that recommended that when you're defending and declarer stops to think, you should fill in your spare time by guessing declarer's shape and which card declarer will play next.

A few weeks later, Richard Jedrychowski on my left declared 3 NT. He won the opening lead in his hand and stopped to think for two minutes. I had ♦AJ105, which reminded me of the new idea Paul Lavings had discovered.

The clubs were:

Q863

97            AJ105

K42

I filled in the two minutes by guessing declarer's most likely shape (accurately, as it turned out), deducing that Richard would probably play a club to dummy's queen next. I recalled Paul's tip about ducking from my AJ10x holding, but had no idea if this was a good time to duck ♣Q. Just as I had that thought, Richard led club two, Martin Bloom played ♣7 and the queen was played from dummy, I played ♣5 smoothly in tempo, having no idea if it was a good play or bad play. Richard continued with ♣3, ♣10, ♣4 ... Richard was hoping Martin had A7 and I had J1095 in clubs. I cashed three club tricks and we were the only pair to defeat 3NT.

For this play, Martin and I won the 2004 Best Defended Hand in the whole world award. Some people thought I was a genius to invent the play but all I'd done was to copy Paul Lavings, the person who'd discovered the idea that ducking with AJ10x can be a good play. None of this background material has ever been written up anywhere before.

Nowadays I feel a bit like I was AI (Artificial Intelligence), regurgitating or copying the Master. The 2004 article can be found on page 6 of the Nov 2004 ABF Newsletter at <https://abfevents.com.au/newsletter/Nov04.pdf>.

## ***Director's Corner – Dummy's Rights***

Last issue we discussed the Arrangement of Tricks, including the rule that dummy has no right to inspect their own last card once it has been turned face down. This is just one of the limitations on dummy.

Law 42 on Dummy's Rights and the accompanying Law 43 on Dummy's Limitations are very simple but are unfortunately regularly broken (including by the author!). It is worthwhile to remember to follow the rules, as infractions can result in procedural penalties. It would be a pity to lose a close-fought team match (for example) simply because of an infraction under these laws.

Dummy has the absolute right to:

- give information, in the Director's presence, as to fact or law
- keep count of tricks won and lost
- play the cards of the dummy as declarer's agent as directed and ensure that dummy follows suit (but must not suggest a play)

Dummy has additional rights (subject to the qualifications listed in Dummy's Limitations) to:

- ask declarer (but not a defender) when he has failed to follow suit to a trick whether he has a card of the suit led
- may try to prevent any irregularity
- may draw attention to any irregularity, but only after the play of the hand is concluded

The limitations on Dummy are that they must not:

- initiate a call for the Director during play unless another player has drawn attention to an irregularity
- call attention to an irregularity during play
- participate in the play, nor may he communicate anything about the play to declarer
- exchange hands with declarer, leave his seat to watch declarer's play of the hand, or look at the face of a card in either defender's hand

The single most common infraction is to tell declarer that they were on lead after they have called for a specific card from dummy. Once declarer has called for the card, it has been played. Announcing at this point that the lead was in declarer's hand, they are drawing attention to an irregularity, not attempting to prevent an irregularity.

Once declarer has called for the lead from dummy when the last trick was won in declarer's hand, all the rights lie with the defenders. Either defender may accept the lead or require its correction. If the defenders disagree, then the option expressed by the defender next in rotation prevails.

Watching the senior experienced players at the club, I notice that when they are dummy, if declarer incorrectly calls for a lead from dummy, the most they ever do is be very slow to respond. You probably won't be hit with a procedural penalty at a club game, but it is worth getting it right for play at congresses.

## Reviewing your play

The myriad of editors of bridge bulletins and magazines benefit greatly from technologies that capture the bidding and play of each hand in a tournament. For major tournaments, 'Vugraph' operators are employed to capture the action happening at the table.

The term Vugraph is today mostly associated with Bridge Base Online (BBO), which has a tab for games covered by it. It refers to a method of displaying hands originally developed as the Pendergraph in 1991. The term itself and the practice of broadcasting date back to at least 1959. Today in Australia, it is used generically to include hands recorded on Real Bridge.

One of the benefits of playing online bridge is that the details of bidding and play at every table are recorded. This is a feature of RealBridge. Instructions on how to review a hand are available on the RealBridge website at <https://realbridge.online/double-dummy-and-explore-play.html>. You can call up the RealBridge results from a Monday night match by going to the Calendar tab on the IBA website, clicking on the link for the Monday night, then clicking on the 'To play: click here.'

Alternatively, because these details are captured in the Portable Bridge Notation (PBN) format and uploaded to the website, the record of bidding or play can be accessed by pressing the 'M' that appears beside a result in either the traveller or scorecard view. This option, however, initiates the BBO version of review.

Two developments mean that more hands may be recorded in this way during live play without the need for (hard-to-find) Vugraph operators.

### LoveBridge

The first is a platform called Love Bridge (<https://lovebridge.com/home/>). This is a tablet-based system for playing face-to-face, where all bidding and play are done on the tablet.



### *Love Bridge in operation*

Love Bridge was used at the 2025 World Bridge Championships in Herning, Denmark. It was only used for bidding and scoring; cards were still played manually.

I asked two Australian players from this event how they found it, and got very different answers. One player (who thought everybody loved them) liked them as they were intuitive and simple to use, and eliminated common bidding calls (insufficient, out of turn). It also kept a record of the bidding for all tables and was useful for review.

The other player has used the tablets at several tournaments. They found the tablet put strain on their backs and necks because they were constantly looking down rather than forward. They also found the screen layout poor – small fonts, poor use of available real estate.

These tablets are now being used for national finals and Australian team playoffs – but only for bidding. Bridgemates operate in parallel for scoring. One event didn't use them because the Director failed to charge them overnight.

Bot players were horrified at the thought of using the tablets to play the cards at the table. As one said, "It is scary to think about how the game would change if you no longer feel the cards." The other noted recommendations on limiting screen time.

### BridgeOwl

A solution that works for games played with cards and bidding boxes has been developed by Gonzalo Goded, a Spanish professional player. His system, Bridge Owl (<https://bridgeowl.org/>), works with cameras positioned above the table (primarily in play with screens). The American Contract Bridge League (ACBL) has been trialling these. While they can recognise ordinary cards, they have been using special cards in which the minor suits are different colours from the major suits (similar to bidding boxes).

Changing the colours on the minor suits might be a boon to us overall – no more discovering you have a diamond tucked in with your hearts, or the difficulty of distinguishing the ace of spades from the ace of clubs in the decks with symmetrical faces on cards.

I don't expect we'll see either technology introduced at IBA anytime in the near future. However, Bridge Owl (or something like it) certainly has the potential to be used, especially since the required hardware components are becoming increasingly cheap. It would more likely be a configuration with a single camera mounted on one corner of the table.



*Bridge Owl in operation*

There seems to be plenty of opportunity for innovation in the application of technology to the game as it is played in person.

Note: The 2017 Laws of Duplicate Bridge introduced in Law 1 a requirement that the backs of the cards be symmetrical and a provision that the Regulating Authority may require that the face of the cards be symmetrical. The latter requirement is why some cards are now printed with the suit designation cut in half and inverted in the middle of the card.

### Simulations

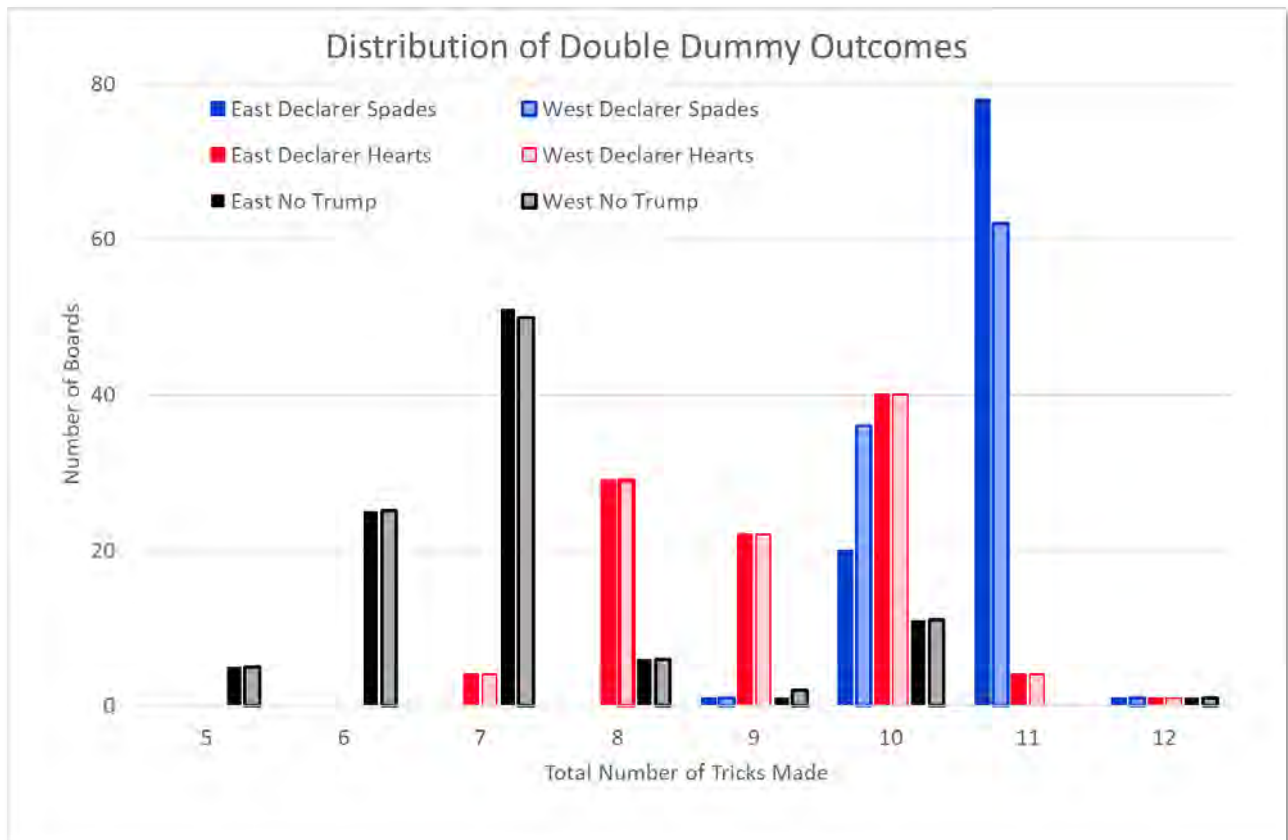
Dealing software and double dummy analysis enables you to conduct your own what-if exercises. One hand from the IBA



Clearly, spades by East is the superior contract. Even that is not a straightforward contract. Play is much the same on the first four rounds, but then lead the diamond from dummy. This either converts the singleton diamond into a winner (if the Ace

is held up) or creates a winner in the king on which a losing heart can be ditched.

This is just an example of the analysis that can be conducted using readily available software.



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Some Christmas photos

