

# Victorian Bridge Association Bulletin

August 2022

Editor: Dee Harley

**VBA PRESIDENT  
CHRISTOPHER LEACH**



After a COVID-induced hiatus of three years, Victoria's national gold point event, the Victor Champion Cup (the VCC), finally took place "live" in Melbourne on the Queen's Birthday weekend, with attendances around 55% of the previous occasion in 2019. Such a number seems pretty consistent for all events across Victoria as the Omicron wave continues to crash upon us and face-to-face bridge remains problematical or unattractive for many of our players at all levels (see my June column).

In anticipation of a reduced attendance and consequent cost control problems, the VCC was held at a somewhat insalubrious, but very spacious and covid-safe venue in Coburg. While few were very enthusiastic about the setting, the quality of the bridge continued unabated and the delight of many interstate participants to be back in Melbourne and

playing F2F was genuine and evident. We hope to move back to a more central and certainly less spartan venue next year. We are delighted our wonderful event organiser, Geoff Schaller, has elected to stay on for next year's event.

As at all interstate congresses this year, Victorians performed very well at the VCC and we appear to be going through something of a renaissance in our playing strength relative to other states. We were also delighted to see many younger participants, reflecting the uptick in numbers we are getting thanks to the great work of our Youth Convenor, Bec O'Reilly, whose Friday sessions at the VBA are attracting a steady trickle of new, young players. Another reflection of this pleasing trend was the excellent performance of our Youth team at the Australian championships in Adelaide in July, joining our Open team in making the national final. The VBA website has detailed accounts of all these very encouraging results by Victorian individuals and teams throughout 2022.

However, sad to say, one aspect that continues to mar all events is the less-than-optimal behaviour of some people at the table. The State Disciplinary and Ethics Committee under Chair Andrew Guy (a retired former eminent lawyer) is being kept increasingly busy dealing with formal complaints as congresses re-appear in "live" form. But, over and above reportable incidents, I never cease to receive stories about undesirable player behaviour. The common issues are always the same ... unpleasant altercations between pairs over system or card play (which never achieves anything except to help the opponents!), rudeness or calculated indifference to opponents and breaches of basic etiquette leading to director calls that, while appropriate and necessary, further add to a bad atmosphere at the table.

I can only reiterate the determination of all at the VBA to firmly deal with all aspects of bad behaviour and to ensure that serial offenders receive full penalty under our disciplinary rules

.... to which end penalties have begun to be handed out after appropriate process, including a ten week "holiday" recently to a repeat offender.

I can only appeal to you all once again to be pleasant and welcoming to your playing competitors, avoid divisive discussion of the hands at the table and to acquaint yourself with the Rules and the etiquette of bridge ... of which there are many good sources on the internet and via your club office-bearers. The smooth running of our events and the enjoyment and growth of the game depends on it!

### ANC RESULTS

It was a real thriller of a finish at the ANC! I was glued to the screen watching the results come through. The Victorian open team performed magnificently but finally lost out to New South Wales in a really close final. The final scores were 122.2 – 118 (New South Wales had had a carry/forward of 2.2 Imps from the qualifying sessions, so the final was extremely close.

Congratulations (and commiserations) to the Vic open team of James Coutts (playing Captain), Justin Mill, Rob Fruewirth, Ben Thompson, Simon Hinge, and Stephen Lester

The Victorian Youth team also reached the final but were outscored by a strong South Australian team.

Other results can be perused [here](#).

New South Wales were champions in Open, Women, and Senior categories.

In the Butler (Pairs) event, James Coutts kept his amazing year going with a clear win, this time partnering Justin Williams

In the restricted Butler, Allan Hardie and Colin Jasper from Victoria took out 1<sup>st</sup> place. Great performance!

### THE USE OF SCREENS LAURIE KELSO

The majority of club directors and players will never have a need to understand the mechanics of screen play. Screens do however engender a certain fascination in the average player; hence this contribution should hopefully satisfy both the studious and the curious.

Screens are devices used in high-level tournaments that visually separate partners at the table from each other. Their purpose is to reduce the accidental exchange of unauthorized information and to otherwise generally limit the amount of extra-curricular interaction within each partnership. A screen usually comprises a panel made of wood, plastic or sometimes canvas placed diagonally across the table in such a fashion so that North/East and South/West are screen mates. The board is placed in the middle of a movable tray. There is a small aperture in the centre and a narrow slit at the base of the barrier. Screens usually also extend under the table to the floor forming a barrier running diagonally between the table legs.

The screen aperture is closed during the bidding and calls are made with the cards from a bidding box. A player places his selected call on the bidding tray, which is visible only on that player's side of the screen. After the two players on the same side of the screen have made their calls, North or South (as the case may be) slides the bidding tray under the barrier so that it becomes visible to the players on the other side. They in turn make their calls and the bidding tray is slid back again. This procedure continues until the auction has been completed.

After the opening lead is faced, the aperture is opened sufficiently such that all the players may see the dummy and the cards played to each trick. The size of the opening is not however large enough to enable anyone to see their partner's face.

An event with screens should be played in virtual silence. The only verbal communication permitted across the screen is when declarer calls for a card from dummy. Otherwise non-

verbal interactions are restricted to those between opponents on the same side of the screen. This means that the normal procedures associated with Alerts and explanations are replaced with a process whereby a player not only alerts and explains the meaning of his partner's calls but he also has to alert and explain his own actions to the opponent on his side of the screen.

A player may at any time during the auction, ask in writing for an explanation of an opponent's call and the screen-mate must respond in writing. Any questions during the play period must also be made with the screen aperture closed; again both the question and the answer must be written. Failure to observe the requirements for written questions and responses constitutes an offence subject to penalty. All communication through the screen as to the meanings and explanations of bids is expressly forbidden until the end of the play.

One of major complaints of players regarding screens is that they reduce the social dimension of the game because they limit all communication to just the cards played - of course that is the very purpose of screens! Screen procedure also slows down the game. The standard rate of play using screens is 8.5-9.0 minutes per board, instead of the more usual 7.0-7.5 minutes.

Screened tables require more floor space and are more difficult to assemble. They can also be expensive to obtain in sufficient quantities to cater for medium to large entry events and for these reasons their use is often limited to National and International events.

Most players however enjoy using screens, since there are fewer distractions and many of the problems normally encountered when playing face-to-face disappear when a screen is placed between the members of a partnership. Many of the laws relating to bidding infractions are no longer operable in a screened environment. Calls out of rotation and insufficient bids (providing they have not been transmitted to the other side of the screen) can simply be removed from the bidding tray and replaced (without penalty) by a legal call. This is because the players on the other side of the screen ultimately receive only

the corrected auction and thus have no knowledge of any prior infraction.

The problems associated with breaks in tempo are also reduced, since it is often quite difficult for a player to know in a contested auction whether it was his partner or the opponent who hesitated. Conversely the likelihood of a player mis-explaining the meaning of a call does increase since every player now has to correctly explain not only their partner's calls, but also their own. This is where the written evidence of the questions asked and the answers given becomes very useful to the Director. In international events when players of different nationalities compete, written documentation becomes almost essential, especially when a dispute arises between those for whom English is only a second language.

Screens have very little relevance to club play, however for anyone who aspires to represent either their State or Country a basic working knowledge of their operation is a necessity. Screens have now been used at important bridge events for more than 40 years, but until someone invents a better method of minimising the transfer of unauthorised information at the table, they will continue to be an integral part of the fabric of higher-level competition.

### SUIT COMBINATION

You(South): AK8753 Partner(North): 96.

What is the best line for 5 tricks?

How do you play? – estimate your chances of success

You have plenty of entries to both hands.

Decide how you would play before peeking at the [Solution](#) on [P8](#)

**MASTER POINT PROMOTIONS**

<b>Gold Life</b>	
David Ware	Yarrowonga
<b>Silver Life</b>	
Chen Ding	VBA
<b>Life</b>	
Leo Saoud	Moonee Valley
<b>Silver National</b>	
Pat West	South Gippsland
<b>National</b>	
Joyce Garton	Berwick
<b>Bronze State</b>	
Doug Davies	Knox
Catherine Ng	Kooyong
<b>State</b>	
Kay Levy	Bayside
Michael Young	Bayside
Di Sayer	Bayside
Alan Campbell	Beaumaris Bridge Association
Martin Strong	Melbourne
Karen Lamaro	Bendigo
Carl Jenkins	Sale
Anne Apedaile	Deniliquin
<b>Bronze Regional</b>	
Merryl Howell	Melbourne
Michele Lasky	Dendy Park
Geoff Dwyer	Ballarat
<b>Regional</b>	
Patricia Hannigan	Yarra Valley
Jennifer Zikos	Ocean Grove
John Royle	OZ
Merrie Harkness	Royal South Yarra

**EDITORIAL  
DEE HARLEY**

What a great game is bridge! I have been greatly entertained (in the wee small hours) watching the Australian competitors playing in the latter stages of the Spingold (North American Bridge Championship). In the round of 32 Sartaj Hans, Peter Gill, Michael Wibley and Nabil Edgtton defeated the number one seeds Nickell. Watching it happen was wonderful! Having reached the round of 16 they came up against another strong team – Bart Bramley, Kit Woolsey, Bob Hamman, Peter Weischel and none other than their countrymen Liam Milne and Andy Hung. This too was a gripping match, and the Bramley team came out on top (just!). Liam and Andy played really well and went on to lose the semi-final against the eventual winners by the smallest of margins. It was epic!

Speaking of epic, I have just finished competing in the teams of three. This competition is a must for newer players who want to extend their experience. A team of three is matched to an "Expert" who plays with each member of the team in turn, coaching and enlightening all the players as the play proceeds.

Mary Elson's team went undefeated for all 5 8 board matches. Congratulations to them, and congratulations to all the players and experts who made the day enjoyable and a really beneficial learning experience.

Husband: One Spade  
 Wife: Two Hearts  
 Husband: Two Spades  
 Wife: Three Hearts  
 Husband: Three Spades  
 Wife (determined): Four Hearts  
 Husband (annoyed): Four Spades!  
 Wife: FIVE HEARTS  
 Husband: SEVEN SPADES!!!  
 Opponent – Double  
 Result One down:  
 Post Mortem:  
 Wife: "Why on earth did you Jump to Seven?"  
 Husband: "To save a round of bidding."

**TO PLAY OR NOT TO PLAY  
BY ANNA ST CLAIR**

There has been much reflection on falling numbers in bridge and consideration of how to expand the player base once again to the heights where there were full playing rooms and people were turned away from events because they were at capacity.

Youth Bridge has been mooted as the saviour of the game and behavioural misdemeanours suggested as one of the causes of falling numbers and then we had Covid.

The membership was in decline even before the pandemic hit but two years of isolation have exacerbated the problem.

So why have I not returned to bridge? I am possibly not representative of those who have chosen to desert the playing rooms but some of the reasons I no longer support the club may be representative of the whole.

The pandemic brought out the best of us in terms of resilience and sticking together, caring for our neighbours and dipping into our own resourcefulness to fill the days. I found I could sew after a fashion and began the creation of a quilt which will take years to complete. I found renewed interest in my garden and created a retaining wall, a vegetable garden and for months, dug out by hand, a huge fishpond.

I perfected my Neinish tarts.

I knitted beanies and posted little ceramic hearts through my neighbours letterboxes.

Best of all I bought Neil, my campervan.

After years and years devoted solely to bridge I found a wealth of other activities to enjoy.

I joined a group of wanabes like me to travel with and we explored Victoria during those brief flashes of freedom which made the next lockdown bearable and found a delight in being at home which had previously not been realised.

And I still played bridge.

I have always been a huge fan of BBO since its inception. BBO allowed me to practice online with a partner miles away, allowed me to keep in touch with playing friends around the globe and is always available for an online game whatever time of day or night.

With Covid came the advent of the Australian online game and I dusted off my Director status and hosted the Saturday VBA session. I spent hours online with players who were

unused to BBO showing them the ropes and felt a profound satisfaction when they finally took the plunge and joined in with a session. I had hilarious Director calls and a return to the game being light-hearted and really enjoyable.

I loved it.

Then came the advent of the new, Real Bridge programme where one can see your opponents in their natural habitats which is really great. You can chat or not as you like, make copious cups of tea and do the odd something in between sets. For those who live even further away from a bridge club than I do it makes for real inclusion in the game.

My husband and I realised a long-held ambition to run a teams league event similar to the one we so enjoyed back in Scotland, and it was a huge success. We ran small events for the inexperienced and Dee wrote endless spreadsheets of the results. It was fun.

And then came the build up to a return to clubrooms and I felt rather sad. The online camaraderie was replaced by onerous rules and suspicion. It was cumbersome for many of us to take part; wearing masks, separate bidding boxes, endless hand sanitising and tables shoved together to ensure distance made for a painful return, and mask to mask was far less fun than face to face.

I felt an overwhelming urge to cough whenever I was in a place with more than five people and couldn't imagine that would be welcome at the bridge club, so I stayed home and played once again with the faceless and real people online.

Much was made on the news of Australia getting back to 'normal', but I didn't want to get 'back' to anything. Getting 'back to normal' mean working long hours, spending every weekend playing bridge and rushing around in between to shop and clean. I had grown used to a gentler pace of life with time for gardening, sewing and baking. I liked not having to drive to the club to play in the same tatty, cold rooms with the same bad-tempered players solely fixated on themselves.

And so, I decided not to.

I love bridge. I have been playing since I was five and will never give it up.

I love playing in events and congresses and I love travelling and playing in new cities and foreign countries.

So how could that excitement be translated into our daily game?

The young people are not going to be the saviours of the old. We have a handful of youth players in Victoria and unless we can establish an inter-school competition that will not change. But how do we establish that when there are so many other demands on young people's attention? There are not many teenagers who would choose to spend their spare time with a group of grumpy pensioners over the myriad of other delights on offer. The recently advertised Youth Week was cancelled due to lack of interest as we older players become ever more self-absorbed.

There have been discussions of joining clubs together to make them more financially viable which makes a lot of sense – one large, luxurious venue in Melbourne offering 3 sessions a day, seven days a week with catering and rooms for visiting players to stay over would be a world first but self-interest will never allow such a reality: the individual clubs preferring a slow, insular demise over the greater good of the whole.

So, my husband asked me, what would it take to make you come back to playing bridge at the club?

And I pondered and pondered.

Our clubrooms are not the most inviting, few clubrooms are to be fair. The level of bridge is fairly average too as is the level of welcome and friendliness. I have to drive 45 minutes to get there and then pay to play. An average night of bridge at the club with my husband, including associated travel, costs us around \$45. A night at home in front of my computer with a roaring fire and a cat on my lap costs me nothing.

And whilst I'm in the fortunate bracket of people who can drop \$45 on a night out without too much thought why spend it on a miserable night out if I can have a better night in?

I could be persuaded back into the congress circuit I think. I enjoy one or two-day events with possible prizes at the end. I had to use up the last of my accumulated travel vouchers this week and booked a trip to Tassie for next March. I co-ordinated the dates to run over their Bridge Festival weekend and if I can be dragged out of MONA might just be persuaded to play a session or two.

Maybe that is the answer then, for me at least.

Give me a congress style event, with prizes. Maybe throw in some cake, I'd do pretty much anything for cake, and give it a funky new format, no more same old same old and I might, just might, be persuaded back.

## COMING CONGRESSES

### Wagga Wagga Congress

Friday 19<sup>th</sup> Aug – Matchpoint Pairs 7:00pm  
Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> Aug - Swiss Pairs 10:30 am  
Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> Aug - Swiss Teams 9:15 am

Venue: Wagga Wagga bridge Club,  
Bolton Street, Wagga Wagga  
Contact: David Brennan, 0428 693 055  
Email: [dcbrennan7@bigpond.com](mailto:dcbrennan7@bigpond.com)

### Traralgon Congress

Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> Aug - Swiss Pairs 11 am  
Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> Aug - Swiss Teams 10 am

Venue: The Italian Australian Club 499-501  
Princess Drive Morwell  
Contact: Greg Nicholson, 0419 365 739  
Email: [nicon1202@bigpond.com](mailto:nicon1202@bigpond.com)

### Knox Congress

is being held at Waverley (on August 6)

### RACV Congress

is being held at RACV Club (on August 28)

## CONGRESS RESULTS

### **Yarrawonga Swiss Pairs**

1. Charles McMahon & John McMahon
2. Mary Prowse & Richard Harman
3. Ken McMahon & Susan McMahon

### **Yarrawonga Swiss Teams**

1. Charles McMahon, John McMahon, Valerie Cook, Jennette Rosetta
2. Nick Walsh, Derek Poulton, Chris Turner, Bryan Fuller
3. Di Barrow, Don Coysh, Tom Hackett, Jan Hackett

**PLAY PROBLEM #31 SOLUTION**

Dlr: South      ♠ Q108  
 Vul: Both      ♥ QJ9  
                   ♦ A542  
                   ♣ Q32

♠ ?	N	♠ ?
♥ ?	W    E	♥ ?
♦ ?		♦ ?
♣ J10?	S	♣ 64?

♠ AK4  
 ♥ AK1087  
 ♦ 8763  
 ♣ 7

Contract 4♥    Lead: ♣J

You play low from dummy on the ♣J lead. East encourages, and West continues clubs.

The crux of the problem is finding your 10<sup>th</sup> trick, which is likely to come from the diamond suit. However if trumps break badly (4-1) you won't be able to cash your spades unless you do so promptly before the hand with long trumps gets to discard a spade on his partner's winning diamond. You must cash exactly one round of hearts before eliminating. Imagine West holding something like:

♠ J97   ♥ 6543   ♦ Q9   ♣ KJ109

After ruffing trick 2, play would proceed ♥Q, ♠A, ♠K, ♠Q, ♣Q ruffed, ♦A, and lead the ♦2

The end position would be: (N/S have 7 tricks)

Dlr: South      ♠  
 Vul: Both      ♥ J9  
                   ♦ 542  
                   ♣

♠	N	♠
♥ 654	W    E	♥
♦ Q		♦ KJ
♣ K	S	♣ A2

♠  
 ♥ AK  
 ♦ 876  
 ♣

Neither opponent can stop a tenth trick.

Notice that if you took 2 rounds of trumps earlier, then West could win the ♦Q and lead a trump to kaibosh your chances.

This solution works if either defender has 4 trumps, and as long as spades are 4-3 and diamonds 3-2 you will scrape home.

An acceptable alternative line would be to duck a diamond at trick 3, then you can draw 2 rounds of trumps and eliminate spades and clubs and then play ♦A and another diamond. The main point being, opponents shouldn't be given the possibility to discard a ♠ from a 3 card ♠ and 2 card ♦ holding.

Note that cashing 3 Spade tricks doesn't really endanger the contract.

Simply stated: if you can't cash your Spade tricks the contract is doomed anyway.

I think this was a very difficult problem.

**PLAY PROBLEM #32**

IMPs

Dlr: West      ♠ 873  
 Vul: N/S      ♥ AK  
                   ♦ 108743  
                   ♣ A52

♠ Q?	N	♠ ?
♥ ?	W    E	♥ ?
♦ ?		♦ ?
♣ ?	S	♣ ?

♠ A9  
 ♥ J842  
 ♦ AQ93  
 ♣ K87

Contract 3NT    Lead: ♠Q

Bidding:

	W	N	E	S
	2♠ <sup>1</sup>	Pass	Pass	Dbl
	Pass	3♦ <sup>2</sup>	Pass	3NT
	All Pass			

1 Weak (6 card suit)

2 Values (Lebensohl)

East plays the ♠K on the first round and when you duck, he continues with the ♠2. What is the best chance to take 9 tricks?

Send [me](#) your solution if you can see one.

**♣♣♣ KNAVE OF CLUBS ♣♣♣**  
**AN UNUSUAL SQUEEZE**

This rather exotic hand turned up in club play. The auction to 3NT by South was simple.

West led the ♠6 to the ♠8, ♠J and ♠Q. Declarer now plays on clubs and East wins the ♣A on the third round and returns the ♠3.

Teams

Dlr: West                    ♠ 5  
 Vul: N/S                    ♥ AK73  
                                   ♦ 1085  
                                   ♣ KJ1064

♠ J1086	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center; width: 60px; height: 60px;"> <tr><td> </td><td>N</td><td> </td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td> </td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td> </td><td>S</td><td> </td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 9732
		N									
W			E								
		S									
♥ QJ2	♥ 1095										
♦ K9764	♦ J3										
♣ 8	♣ A732										

♠ AKQ4  
 ♥ 864  
 ♦ AQ2  
 ♣ Q95

Contract 3NT Lead: ♠6

Declarer can now make twelve tricks despite both defenders guarding both majors. This advanced squeeze is a compound squeeze where it is only necessary to hold a threat behind one opponent, the ♠10 here, which East cannot guard. Declarer crosses to the remaining clubs via the ♥A. On the second last club, South discards the ♠2 and East can discard a club and keep both majors guarded but West is suddenly in trouble. A discard of the ♠K gives the twelfth trick, so a heart or spade must be discarded giving up a guard in that suit. A heart discard leads to the second diagram.

Dlr: West                    ♠ 5  
 Vul: N/S                    ♥ K73  
                                   ♦ 10  
                                   ♣ K

♠ J1086	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center; width: 60px; height: 60px;"> <tr><td> </td><td>N</td><td> </td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td> </td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td> </td><td>S</td><td> </td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 9732
		N									
W			E								
		S									
♥ Q	♥ 109										
♦ K	♦ -										
♣ -	♣ -										

♠ AKQ4  
 ♥ 86  
 ♦ -  
 ♣ -

This is a double squeeze with both opponents guarding spades. The last club now forces East to throw a spade to keep the hearts guarded. South and West both discard a heart but now only West guards the spades and diamonds so cash the ♥K and squeeze West for the twelfth trick.

A spade discard by West leads to a different double squeeze in the third diagram.

Dlr: West                    ♠ 5  
 Vul: N/S                    ♥ K73  
                                   ♦ 10  
                                   ♣ K

♠ J108	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center; width: 60px; height: 60px;"> <tr><td> </td><td>N</td><td> </td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td> </td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td> </td><td>S</td><td> </td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 9732
		N									
W			E								
		S									
♥ Q2	♥ 109										
♦ K	♦ -										
♣ -	♣ -										

♠ AKQ4  
 ♥ 86  
 ♦ -  
 ♣ -

Now the last club, forces East to discard a heart in order to guard the spades.

Now only West guards the hearts and diamonds so cash the ♠AKQ and squeeze him again!

The astute reader will see that East can beat this compound squeeze by returning a spade after the ♣A and retaining his heart guard.

**SOLUTION TO SUIT COMBINATION**

You(South): AK8753 Partner(North): 96.

Needing 5 tricks:

The solution here is to cash the Ace, if one of the Q, J or 10 appears behind South, you can now run the 9, picking up HHxx in the West hand.

There is an 85.47% success rate

I chose this suit combination from my failure to make a slam in the Pairs. In practice the J singleton drops behind AK8753 when you cash an honour, so running the 9 would then have been enough to make the contract.