

Victorian Bridge Association Bulletin

June 2020

Editor: Dee Harley

**CHAIRMAN
CHRISTOPHER LEACH**



It is now two months since (following a directive from the ABF) all "live" bridge came to a halt across the country in the space of a few difficult and desperate days.

The VBA Council, like our counterparts across Australia, faced a situation of great unknowns. On the one hand, as with all of society, there was the public health and medical situation, over which of course we had no direct control or input, but, seeing what was unfolding in Italy, enormous apprehension about the fate of many of our own people. Bridge of course has a demographic of predominantly older persons and the signs were very bad. The fact that to date we have averted a potentially horrendous outcome, speaks so much for the amazing efforts of our political class (largely coming together for the common good), our public health authorities and the Australian people.

The second imperative we faced two months ago, was to try to fill the void left by the closure of bridge. We all know how much this amazing game means to us and how much it would derogate from our lives to be faced with the total absence of it. The answer seemed clear - an online bridge programme - but with the whole world clamouring to do the same thing, there were many challenges to establish a programme on one of the available platforms, which were being swamped with

requests. That we had the contacts, the perseverance and the technical prowess to come up quickly with our initial suite of online sessions was a fantastic tribute to our VBA Manager, Andrew Macready-Bryan and the work and assistance provided by certain Council members, most especially Michael Phillips. On your behalf, I would like to offer once again my profound thanks.

Two months on, there are over 500 people registered to play in the 15 (and counting) online sessions the VBA now offers on BBO.

Moreover, there are now many of our constituent clubs which have embraced one or more online sessions each week and the ABF has now come to an arrangement with BBO for Australian masterpoints to be awarded for specific sessions. We have been inundated by your kind comments and even received wonderful donations from many players, as recognition of the viability of the programme and that the sessions are overwhelmingly free-of-charge.

Another great initiative has been the VBA WhatsApp thread which enables participants to exchange views and information and get registered for sessions. There have been many interesting exchanges of views over the weeks on this medium.

There appears little doubt online bridge is here to stay.... the genie is out of the bottle and one of the forward-going tasks of the Council will be to determine the balance between online bridge and the "real" thing. I have loved observing the different nuances online bridge creates, including the presence of some of the old characters of the VBA, who now live overseas or interstate, joining us once again... which, of course, ordinarily they are unable to do.

Finally, I would say that the return of "live" bridge is approaching, subject always of course to the virus behaving itself in our society. To this end, the ABF has set up a panel with medical input to advise on protocols for the re-opening. It is doubtless still several months away, but looming in a way we could not have imagined in March. Until then, keep enjoying our fantastic online offering and my very best wishes to you all.

VBA BULLETIN CUP

The final happened on Thursday 21st May

I would like to thank the two finalists for the sporting manner in which they competed. It was a friendly and very close final.

The **Big Dills** (David Thompson, Robert Fruewirth, Andrew Macready-Bryan and David Beckett) were facing **Get Smart** (Neil Ewart, Simon Henbest, Di Smart and David Morgan)

Bridge was the real winner!

On the very first board we had an example of the spirit in which the game was played when Simon Henbest tried to claim that he was two off in his 5♦ contract, but the opponents would have none of it. You are only one off Simon they said. How sporting is that!

It was a bit of a swingy first 16 boards, which included a bidding misunderstanding by **Get Smart** leading to a vulnerable penalty of -2300 points! (I think that was 20 IMPs away), however they kept cool and ended the first half with a 7 IMP lead! The second 16 boards were much less swingy, but the **Big Dills** were relentless in pursuing their target and judged it very nicely to get them to an overall victory by just one IMP.

I enjoyed the twitch commentary as well as watching both tables simultaneously on BBO. Thanks to Will Jenner-O'Shea, Vanessa Brown and Jamie Thompson for that.

The Plate final was played on the Saturday afternoon. **The Millettes** (Maryanne Bird, Colin Jasper, Diana Middleton and (sub) John Adams) were up against **International** (Thilak Ranasinghe (aka TP), Gordon McRobert, Chen Ding and Ming Zhang)

The rather more experienced **International** team rolled to a smooth victory.

Great experience all round.

ONLINE BRIDGE TRAINING AT THE BRAIN GYM

Visit the Brain Gym at www.kattery.net

WHAT NEXT

The success of the **VBA Bulletin Cup/Plate** has led to thoughts about what to do next. My plan is to initiate the BBO **VBA Bulletin Leagues**.

Let's assume we can get two or three leagues of 8 teams (of up to 6 players). I will adjust the number of teams in a league and the number of leagues depending on the number of teams which enter.

Each week, each team will be allocated a match within their league. They will play the match – pretty much like the format of the VBA Bulletin cup. You fix a date within the allotted week and agree a start time and then play two sets of 12 boards – Each pair must play a different pair in the second 12 boards.

Captains will agree on the IMP total which will be converted to Victory Points. The winning captain will notify me of the result by email copying in the losing Captain.

If there are 8 teams in the league, each team will play the other seven, so the season would last for seven weeks. I will undertake to record the scores and show the league positions each week.

Since a seven-week commitment may be difficult to maintain, I suggest that captains have a pool of up to six players who should be nominated at the beginning of the season.

If a player has played for any team in the current league, that will prevent them from playing for any other team during that season.

You may use players outside of your initial pool if you are unable to fulfill the match otherwise – as long as they haven't played for another team.

Note that you may decide to use all six players in your pool during a match, as you could (for example) play pairs 1 and 2 for the first 12 boards and then pairs 2 and 3 for the second 12 boards.

If you are interested in joining this venture then please email dee.harley@hotmail.com with your team members and your team name by 21st June.

PLAY PROBLEM #7 - SOLUTION

Last month you were in 3NT on the lead of the ♥K.

Dir: East ♠ 92
 Vul: All ♥ 97
 ♦ KJ52
 ♣ AKJ32

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

♠ AQ74
 ♥ A8
 ♦ AQ76
 ♣ 765

Lead: ♥K
 Bidding:

W	N	E	S
-	-	Pass	1NT
Pass	3NT	All Pass	

I thought this was a relatively easy problem. However, I got no totally correct answers. Edna was probably closest to the right answer, but she just failed to fully specify the answer.

Most saw that the best opportunity lies in attempting to crash the ♣Q before then taking the Spade finesse for the 9th trick. However, one small point is that you should start by ducking the heart lead. Its just possible that West will be worrying about a [Bath Coup](#), and may switch to another suit. Any suit will do you! Assuming he continues with Hearts, then you have one heart, four diamonds, and two clubs and one spade for sure. That's 8 tricks – needing one more for your contract.

That vital ninth trick could come from a finesse in Clubs or Spades. Well you are much more likely to drop the ♣Q doubleton than drop the ♠K singleton, so you first try to drop the ♣Q by cashing the ♣AK, when that fails you fall back on the Spade finesse for your 9th trick. Note that if you play the club finesse and it works you are likely to make many more tricks than your nine, but overtricks are not that relevant when the difference is in the game making or not. Play the best percentage!

PLAY PROBLEM #8

IMPs
 Dir: North ♠ J1092
 Vul: None ♥ Q3
 ♦ J1096
 ♣ AKQ

♠ ?	N W E S	♠ ?
♥ 72?		♥ AK?
♦ 32?		♦ A7?
♣ ?		♣ ?

♠ AK874
 ♥ J654
 ♦ KQ
 ♣ 73

Lead: ♥7
 Bidding:

W	N	E	S
-	1♦	1♥	1♠
Pass	2♠	Pass	4♠
All Pass			

This is an IMPs team match. East, having overcalled 1♥ takes the two top hearts and then switches to the ♦A and continues the suit, West following suit. In hand with the ♦K what do you play – and why?

Send me your solution please:
dee_harley@hotmail.com

SUIT COMBINATION

Here is a new slant for you...

You: A1087 Partner: Q3

Normally we ask how many tricks are required from a suit? But this combination arose in a slam and declarer just needed two tricks in the suit.

How would you play for two tricks (you can afford to lose one trick in this suit, but you need two tricks and cannot afford to lose 2 tricks in this suit)

[Solution](#) on P7.

BELTER

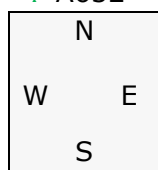
This is a top-class puzzle. The solution so elegant it made me laugh out loud. Give it a go and see if you can solve it. I will publish the solution next month but I will offer a packet of Tim-Tams to the first person to come up with the correct solution.

IMPs

Dlr: South
Vul: None

- ♠ KJ8
- ♥ 743
- ♦ Q75
- ♣ A632

- ♠ ?
- ♥ J2?
- ♦ ?
- ♣ ?



- ♠ ?
- ♥ AK?
- ♦ ?
- ♣ 10?

- ♠ AQ10
- ♥ Q5
- ♦ A8632
- ♣ K54

Lead: ♥J

Bidding:

W	N	E	S
-	-	-	1NT
Pass	3NT	All Pass	

West leads the ♥J. East cashes ♥AK, then kindly switches to the ♣10. It's teams, and opps are world class ... they won't let you get away with anything. Take it from here!

Can you find a way to come to 9 tricks? My Tim-Tams will be eaten!

Send me your solution please:
dee_harley@hotmail.com

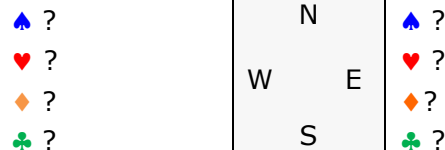
**BIDDING: FIT NON-JUMPS
DEE HARLEY**

I liked this discussion article on BridgeWinners <http://bridgewinners.com/article/view/tolerance-bids-and-fnjs/>.

I followed up the reading of the article with a bidding misunderstanding with my partner.

Match Points:

- Dlr: South ♠ 92
- Vul: N/S ♥ 92
- ♦ K96
- ♣ AQ10862



- ♠ KJ875
- ♥ K43
- ♦ J103
- ♣ J3

Bidding:

W	N	E	S
-	-	-	Pass
Pass	Pass	1♥	1♠
2♥	3♣	Pass	?

So my partner passed initially (as did I) and has now been able to bid 3♣. So how can they bid now when they couldn't open in third seat? – the only answer I think is that my bid has improved their hand – I think partner is willing to bid 3♠ and could have a hand like ♠10xx ♥x ♦xxx ♣AK109xx

This bid has the advantage of suggesting a lead as well as showing tolerance for Spades as well as a hand that has improved with the bidding round the table.

It is particularly important that if we end up defending that I don't lead from my gappy Spade suit, but lead a solid club so that partner can play Spades through declarer's possible ♠AQ (or cash some Clubs if that is a more attractive alternative). Indeed, I can imagine situations where I don't even have such a great club suit but just want clubs to be led. E.g. ♠xxx ♥x ♦109xxx ♣AKQx – if we are defending 4♥ I do not want my partner to lead away from his spade honours – I want a club lead please so I would be likely to bid 3♣. I think that, if you would do that, then you need to decide whether or not your Fit-Non-Jumps are forcing. Amazingly we had not discussed this situation – so I bid 3♠ (rather hesitantly) and went 3 down for a -300 which was a complete zero. Had I passed 3♣ we would have had a good board. Discussion time!

♣♣♣ **KNAVE OF CLUBS** ♣♣♣
Waiting for epiphany

When you pick up a very distributional hand, you expect a difficult, competitive auction. This shapely hand occurred in a club game recently.

Pairs:

Dlr: North ♠ 5
 Vul: E/W ♥ AJ753
 ♦ AKQ9762
 ♣ -

Bidding:

W	N	E	S
-	1♦	1♠	Pass
2NT	3♥	4♠	5♦
5♠	?		

Perhaps you should consider what North should do before reading on. North's opening bid is clear; with 7-5 shape there is no attraction in starting with 1♥. West's 2NT bid showed spade support in a goodish hand.

With 7-5, it must certainly be right for North to bid 3♥ or 4♥ at this point. Note that the extra playing strength comes from the long heart cards and not from the void which takes no tricks that were not already present as long trumps.

South clearly has a weak hand with diamond support but not enough to bid 2♦ on the first round. Can NS make 6♦? It seems we will lose one spade and, at least, one heart. Can they make 5♠? There must be a good chance that we don't have a defensive diamond trick so it seems they will make 5♠. It seems that we should sacrifice in 6♦ expecting to go one or two off but there is a nagging worry that they might feel forced to bid 6♠ which will make if one of them has a diamond void.

Now, at last, an epiphany! South is going to lead a diamond unless we can divert her attention to clubs and then we can look forward to a club ruff at trick one and cashing the ♥A at trick 2. The correct bid at this point is obvious when you think of it. Bid 6♣ which

must be a lead directing effort since we have agreed diamonds. After this, we can sacrifice in 6♦ without worrying about 6♠ making.

Dlr: North ♠ 5
 Vul: E/W ♥ AJ753
 ♦ AKQ9762
 ♣ -

♠ AK94	N	♠ Q8762
♥ K1042	W	♥ Q6
♦ -	E	♦ 103
♣ Q8543	S	♣ AK107

♠ J103
 ♥ 98
 ♦ J854
 ♣ J962

The opponents duly doubled South's correction to 6♦ and it was easy to play for one off.

If you didn't like West's 2NT bid, neither did I! A splinter bid of 4♦ seems clearly correct.

CORONA VIRUS EFFECTS
DEE HARLEY

We have all been affected significantly by Corona Virus. Play in clubs may or may not happen again. It may be in the near future or further into the future. We do not know at this time. So far Australia has been relatively lucky but Winter is coming! It wouldn't take much to have a few super-spreaders spreading this nasty illness around, to cause our country to regress.

There have been other effects also, this bulletin will no longer be printed and distributed to the clubs. It will just be available online (from the VBA Site) or distributed via an email distribution List.

The Bulletin itself no longer needs to have "Recent Promotions" "Coming Congresses" "Congress Results". All of which have become redundant.

I will continue to produce the VBA Bulletin until asked to stop, but I may cut down the content to 6 pages – unless some budding writers out there would like to provide input. If you send me your stories I will edit and print them.

SUIT COMBINATION

Solution to Suit Combination ([page 3](#))

How to make a slam needing two tricks in this suit?

You: A1087 Partner: Q3

I confess I do not know how to find out the correct answer, my usual sources of how to play suits (the Bridge Player's Encyclopaedia and "Suitplay" do not have an option to play a suit for x losers and y winners. However there are two obvious lines to select from.

Line A: Lead low towards the Queen, and if that loses to the king then lead low towards A10 and play the 10 unless the Knave appears.

This line will succeed whenever your LHO has the King, or whenever your RHO has the Knave. It would also succeed if LHO has a singleton Knave (which will not happen very often at all – say about a half of 1%. My home worked figures therefore give you about 75.5% success.

Line B: Lead the Queen and run it if not covered. If the Q loses to the King then lead towards A10 finessing the Knave. If the Queen is covered by the King, then you win the Ace and now play low towards the 1087. If LHO does not play the J then you have a decision to make. Should you play the 8(7) or should you play the 10? If your LHO is likely to hop up with the J if he has it, then you might play the 8(7), but it's a horrible choice. Ostensibly this line will win whenever you LHO holds either the King or the Knave (75%), but you have the extra chance of losing to the 9 if you decide to. This will be balanced by the times where LHO holds the King and the 10. This calculation exceeds my humble abilities.

Overall

Does anyone out there have the ability to come to a definitive answer on this. At the table I would plump for line A unless I can find some reason for doing something else.

EDITORIAL DEE HARLEY

I was very impressed with David and Diana playing in the VBA Bulletin Cup Final when they conceded a 2300 penalty (-8 doubled vulnerable). David remarked that he hadn't gone for such a big penalty since his youth...and they kept cool and went on to win the set by seven IMPs

This incident took me back to a time in my youth when we were playing a Gold Cup match in Scotland. Now my partner and I just had agreed to play 3NT opening as a pre-empt in either minor. I held ♠J9x ♥10x ♦x ♣KQ1098xx and thought to try out our new system. We were at love all so I opened 3NT and LHO and partner both passed.

My RHO now surprised me with a bid of 4♣, I passed looking as unconcerned as I could, and LHO shocked me by raising to 5♣! Don't get too excited – the auction is not yet over! Partner came to the rescue with a 5♦ bid. RHO doubled and I thought...oh no – I will have to run to 6♣ - but wait a minute! We play S.O.S. redoubles (another new convention we had recently agreed to play) – so I redoubled. Sadly for us that was passed out. My partner coolly played out this hand – did very well to make 2 tricks in difficult circumstances. We looked at each other and laughed. Our opponents however were gobsmacked, and did not play so well for the rest of the set.

Coming to score up the first 8 boards, our team mates were incredulous – Minus 4600 I said. Team mate, a red flush rising up from his neck.. blustered "do you mean 460?" No says I, 4600. Well the +400 in 5♦ making that our team mates had achieved didn't make a dent in the scoreboard we were -24 IMPs on that board (almost) whatever happened – but we ended the set of 8 boards with a handsome Net +12 IMPs. We went on to win the match.

Keeping cool under pressure is very much a benefit to a bridge player.