



# Tournament Focus

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## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Welcome	1
Tournament Committee	1
Floor Show at the Ladies Trials	2
Ranked Masters Pairs	3
Brighton	3
Future Events, and more	4
Diary Changes	4
Your Say	4

## Welcome

Welcome to the first Tournament Focus, our e-newsletter, written especially for you, the tournament player.

In each edition, we hope to provide you with information on our future events, updates from the Tournament Committee, and articles of interest to our many tournament players.

We look forward to your feedback and ideas for future contributions and articles in our next newsletter which will be hitting your inboxes in July.

Until then, happy reading.

**Matt Betts**

## Tournament Committee Update

I thought I would take this opportunity to explain some of the activities that we are doing to find out what you, our Tournament players, want from us, your Tournament Committee and how your views have already affected the decisions we are making at a national level.

Our Tournament Survey attracted slightly more than 400 responses, which is a good return for a survey of this nature. It gives us an excellent bank of information to help with our decision making and planning. The full results will be published on the EBU Website in May and there will be an article about the survey in the June edition of English Bridge. Please read these carefully, as they highlight why we have made certain decisions, like discontinuing drinks receptions.

We also have a rating system that we undertake for all our events, which takes into account all the responses we get from our tournament survey returns you complete for us before the last session. We also look at the financial contribution the event makes to the EBU along with other aspects including entry trends, location and the playing level of the entrants.

I'm not sure how widely known it is, but the EBU competitions portfolio is required to make a net surplus to help fund activities such as Youth Development, Education and International representation.

At our recent Tournament Committee meeting in March the general consensus was that basically we have too many events compared to the number of people who want to enter them. We discussed the need to trim the calendar and also the need to develop new events that appeal particularly to the typical club player – more about this later.

In terms of trimming the calendar, the Tournament Committee has long had the opinion that it is a mistake to have back-to-back events at Hinckley in January - Men's & Ladies Pairs and the National Swiss Teams Congress. The Men's and Ladies Pairs scores very badly on our overall rating system and, therefore, we have decided to cancel the event.

We also have severe concerns about the National Women's Teams, for which we only received 13 entries in 2008. We are reluctant to cancel this unique event and have decided to give it a last chance. To this end we will make it a 2-day event, meaning competitors will only have to stay over one night. This has an effect on the entry which will be a maximum of 24, so if you want to enter we recommend you register early.

We also agreed changes to the Year End Congress in London:

- The pre-Congress pairs will be discontinued
- The first session of the Swiss Pairs will start at 3:30 pm and be increased from 3 to 4 matches
- The Men's and Women's pairs will be amalgamated with the Open pairs.

Looking to the future and the introduction of Universal Membership, we are considering two major changes:

- a revised Master Point system
- the introduction of a number of new events specifically targeted at the typical club player

From May to July we will be consulting widely on these proposals.

**Andrew Petrie**

# Floor Show at the Ladies Trials

Just back from the Dubrovnik Congress, I logged onto the EBU website. A front-page item invited applications to play in the 'Ladies Trials' to represent England internationally. The phrasing was remarkable. Here's a chance to play against members of our wonderful English team who'd just won in Beijing, it said: you don't have to be a star - just come and join in.

In what other sport do ordinarily competent folk get a chance to play with the best in an arena of a top competition? Two days playing football with Beckham and Walcott...? Dream on! Would this invitation be repeated in future years? Better take the chance now, I thought. And so I persuaded my Dubrovnik partner, Sonia Griffiths, to give it a go.

We are not a regular partnership. Practising in clubs over the intervening two weeks, with dire results, we both regretted having entered and decided we were going to make complete and very public fools of ourselves. But it seemed that if we withdrew, the EBU would send in the marines. No going back.

My email got clogged with fearsome documentation on Brown Sticker conventions, HUM systems and penalties for almost everything or nothing: legally necessary but 99% irrelevant. And then there were the pages of rules for the 'screens' that separate you from your partner - and the 'trays' that transport the board and bids to and fro across the table under the screens. More penalties if you get *them* wrong! My imagination flew back to the first time I saw bidding boxes and the number of times I knocked them over with nervousness in my early days of bridge.

The Great Day Dawned. We arrived at the venue (Young Chelsea BC) in good time for a kindly Director to give us some practice in handling screens and trays. Armed with our ordinary 'Benjy Acol' EBU standard convention cards, we sat down.

First up were two doyennes of international bridge. They were kindness personified, gently nudging us to our screen and tray duties. Fourteen boards and a

lot of luck later we had won the match and were second overall! We could get a taste for this...

Fifteen minutes to recuperate and then another fourteen boards. This time it was two of Britain's youngest stars and the eventual winners of this Trial. Again, kindness. We lost, but still stood third or fourth.

Inevitably, the only way was down. After ninety eight boards and fourteen hours of play, we ended up sixth out of eight pairs. Not winners - but not shamed either.

There were embarrassments of course: as when I put my cards on the table to note down the contract (I was North) and the tray skidded back under the screen and scattered them all over the floor. Luckily I was about to be dummy. But there was another twist. As my partner finished playing the hand, she found she still held five cards but dummy had only three - two were still hiding under my chair. Lucky again: dummy hadn't revoked and the opponents decided it made no difference to the outcome. So the Director didn't have to consult the runes about penalties when dummy has fewer than thirteen cards because of an over-exuberant tray - and neither N/S nor E/W notice till the end of play. Fortunately too, two players at their table five feet away found the hubbub funny rather than irritating...



Is this for you? Well, probably not for everybody. First, you have to have a little 'form' (bridge form, not criminal form). As part of the application process, you list your best results and the EBU Selection Committee checks that you are acceptable. Between us, Sonia and I had acquired the odd gold point at

EBU competitions: but so have a couple of thousand other EBU members. And proof of 'form' doesn't have to be gold points. Even if you're not accepted, it may leak out that you applied - and you may get some ribbing or chat behind our back for behaving 'above your station'.

Second, you do need to take pleasure in two hours of intense non-stop concentration (fourteen boards without a break, with time penalties and no talking). You also need the stamina to play for two days at the top of your game. However, the scoring is teams-style, not pairs, so the focus is bidding and making games and slams (or defeating them) rather than overtricks or extra undertricks. It isn't as relentlessly demanding as the pairs game and many of the hands are pretty standard.

Third, although not on video, the competition is computer-broadcast live on Bridge Base Online. If your table is 'on air' (they cover two matches at once) and you commit a real horror, you are doing it on a worldwide stage with expert commentary. I didn't know this until the second day, having assumed that the complicated computers at the far end of the room were all to do with the scoring... But it does work both ways: my partner is now famous for her seven spade bid that a couple of the internationals missed. Her contract was cold - the on-air pundits criticized her for not 'claiming' fast enough.

Competitive though we both are, we had never expected to win these Trials. But we might have done better if we'd understood the biases in the scoring system properly from the off. It was 'cross imps', i.e. lots of mischievous little people trying to find ways to trip you up - and then luring you to your doom if you get behind. Steady bidding and careful play, plus partnership understanding on bidding that avoids big mistakes, seem to be the main secret to *winning*. But the whole event can be *lost* on a very few boards.

(continued on page 3)

# Ranked Masters Pairs for Ann Staveley Trophy

I had the pleasure of playing in the ranked masters pairs over the weekend of 7-8 March at the Hinckley Island Hotel. We had entered for the masters cup for players below regional master. On offer were the (extremely attractive) Ann Staveley trophy as well as generous numbers of national points and prize money. With Butler scoring the premium was on solid play. The hand below helped us to a good win in this set and eventually to an overall win.

On the board I've selected, my partner (West) was the star by passing throughout! At our table North opened One No-Trump, which I was happy to double, followed by Two Spades from South and a bold Pass from partner. I was glad to double again and this was passed out. Two Spades doubled was three off and 800 to us, and we might have even taken another trick. But this was still a good score against the typical game in clubs, hearts or no-trumps at other tables.


Looking at the hands later I saw that Six Clubs is on and also Six Hearts, although these are not very good slams to be in. Six Clubs is easy, but Six

Hearts requires careful play against best defence. Win the heart lead in dummy (best defence with North withholding the king). Another trump to the ten is followed by ace of clubs, ace of spades, spade ruff, discard a diamond and a spade on the top clubs and then finesse the queen of diamonds. Now cash the ace of hearts and concede a spade to north. This comes to five trumps, three clubs, two diamonds, a spade and a spade ruff. On a spade lead declarer can take three ruffs in dummy, establish the jack of spades and just lose to the king of hearts, making four hearts, three ruffs, two diamonds, two spades and one club. A similar line on a club lead is successful.

Hand 7. Session 3. Game All. Dealer South.

Bidding

W	N	E	S
			Pass
Pass	1NT	Dble	2♣
Pass	Pass	Dble	All Pass

	♠ KQ2	
	♥ K54	
	♦ K74	
	♣ J954	
♠ 3		♠ AJ86
♥ J98		♥ AQ1076
♦ 95		♦ AQ2
♣ KQ108762		♣ A
	♠ 109754	
	♥ 32	
	♦ J10863	
	♣ 3	

The entrants to the masters level event included players with varying bridge experience, but everyone seemed to be enjoying themselves, and you had the chance to engage with all the other pairs over eleven boards. I thought the competition was extremely good value, and well run, with the players we encountered providing a friendly and sporting approach at all the tables. Some of us felt that the numbers of entrants in each category should be taken into account so that the masters and regional master might be grouped with prizes according to rank. In any case, I would certainly encourage more people to try out this event next year.

Paul Chapman

## Floor Show at the Ladies Trials

(continued from page 2)

We ended up minus 23.5 'cross imps' overall: but 12 of them were a single catastrophic bidding misunderstanding on the first day.

Are we glad we did it? Absolutely! For keen bridge players, *not* doing it is like going to Africa without seeing Victoria Falls. Would we recommend others to have a go? Absolutely! The key point was the extraordinary kindness, help and welcome that the EBU officials and other players gave us. We both liked the screens – they seem to make for a much better game. The adrenalin somehow keeps flowing. The satisfaction of playing at that level of competition, with a great prize if you play well and chance favours you, beats any Congress I've ever attended.

Mandie Campbell

### Focal Point

We are pleased to announce that the EBU has arranged a special deal with Barcelo Hotels to enhance the value of EBU prizes!

Winners may now exchange their winnings for Barcelo benefits, as below.

Agreed prize values:

£50 prize money = A one night Bed & Breakfast stay for two people.

£80 prize money = A one night Dinner, Bed & Breakfast stay for two people.

£100 prize money = A two night Bed & Breakfast stay for two people.

£150 prize money = A two night Dinner, Bed & Breakfast stay for two people

## OVERSEAS CONGRESS ANDALUSIA, 8 - 13 October

The Iberostar Islantilla Suites Hotel, Huelva is the chosen venue for the 2009 Autumn Overseas Congress sponsored by Bridge Overseas.

Accommodation needs to be booked with Bridge Overseas. If people book before 1 June, they will receive free half board upgrade (worth £65 per week!). Bridge fee is £110 and needs to be booked with the EBU.

Please visit: [www.ebu.co.uk/competitions/overseas.htm](http://www.ebu.co.uk/competitions/overseas.htm) for more information!



# Future Events, and more..

The English Bridge Union has some very exciting competitions coming up over the Summer - why not give them a go?

## Seniors Knockout for the Gerard Faulkner Salver 2009 - 2010

Introduced in 2002, the Senior Knockout has proved a very popular event. It is open to teams consisting of four to six players, all of whom are EBU members born in 1951 or earlier.

## Spring Bank Holiday Congress 23 - 25 May 2009, Bournemouth

The Spring Bank Holiday Congress will be held at the Carrington House Hotel in Bournemouth, and is a full weekend of bridge.

## English Riviera Congress 26 - 28 June 2009, Torquay

A summer congress at the fabulous Riviera Centre which overlooks the bay in Torquay, featuring a one-day Swiss Teams event on the Friday, followed by

a two-day Swiss Pairs event on the Saturday and Sunday.

## Summer Seniors Congress 10-12 July 2009, Eastbourne

A long weekend of bridge in the popular seaside resort of Eastbourne, incorporating the Edith Kaplan Memorial Award. There will be special category prizes for veterans pairs and teams (all members of the pair/team must be at least 70 years of age on the first day of play).

## Northern Summer Congress 23 - 26 July 2009, Scarborough

The congress is held at the spa, providing a splendid venue right on the sea front with a relaxed holiday atmosphere, ideal for players new to national bridge competitions. Players are advised to book the congress before booking their accommodation.

To book these and more, please contact the Competitions Department on: 01296 317 203/219 or [comps@ebu.co.uk](mailto:comps@ebu.co.uk)

## Diary Changes

### 10 - 12 July 2009 Summer Seniors Congress (p46)

This event has been relocated from Birmingham back to Eastbourne and will be held at the Winter Gardens, Compton Road, Eastbourne, East Sussex, BN21 4BP. Tel: 01323 415500

This is a change of both date and venue from 3 - 5 July 2009, Birmingham. It is also confirmed that there will be no Northern Seniors event in 2009.

### 23 - 25 October 2009 Autumn Congress

This event is on this date, not the date shown in the diary (30/10 - 1/11).

PS, Don't forget that the venue is at the Hilton Birmingham for the first time this year!

## Your Say

Remember this is your newsletter, and so it is your chance to have a say! The Tournament Committee and Tournament Focus will appreciate all your feedback.

Do you have any good ideas for the Tournament Committee? Do you want to comment on anything? Do you want to write about your experiences in the next Tournament Focus? We welcome all articles, correspondence, thoughts, feedback and much more - please just let us know.

You can contact us via:  
**TournamentFocus@ebu.co.uk**,  
or by writing to: Tournament Focus,  
English Bridge Union, Broadfields,  
Bicester Road, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire, HP19 8AZ

## Brighton Summer Meeting 2009

The Brighton Summer Meeting will be taking place for the 43rd year from 14 until 23 August.

The event is Europe's largest annual bridge tournament and will attract over 2,000 players over the ten day duration.

Events range from a Seniors Tournament to a Really Easy Congress for beginners.

The ten days are well known for the international bridge stars it attracts and in the past it has attracted bridge greats like, Zia Mahmood and Andrew Robson.

This year will be no different.

Brighton is also full of hotels and accommodation, and we have provided two on-line booking tools on our website - one for the Hilton and one for the many other hotels and B&Bs in the city.

For more details on Brighton and for the hotel on-line booking tools, please visit: [www.ebu.co.uk/competitions/august/brighton/](http://www.ebu.co.uk/competitions/august/brighton/)

PS, throughout the ten days around 1,000,000 cards will be played by over 2,000 players on 250 tables at any one time.