

The Winning Finesse

Vol. 27, No. 1

February 2017



President's Column by Rebecca Brown. For many years, the Board believed that we needed to amass a lot of money in order to be considered as a host of a national tournament. We managed to accumulate approximately \$100,000. When Austin recently was named the host city for the 2021 NABCs, it appeared that we weren't in the running for the foreseeable future. So, I set about to test the theory that we needed to keep a certain dollar reserve in order to be considered at some future date. After my investigation, I informed the Board that no such dollar reserve is necessary!

We met for a Strategic Planning session on January 4 (the first such meeting in anybody's memory) and, among other things, discussed how to best use our financial resources in support of our bridge community. The good news is that the Unit Board decided to make all Unit games FREE (except for the NAPs and GNTs). That's for starters. We will also spend more money for education programs, hospitality, and other items that benefit the member experience. If you have ideas about other opportunities the Board should consider, please let us know. Other topics we considered at our planning meeting included fiscal and non-fiscal goals for the board, membership growth, the number and kinds of tournaments we should host, the purpose of tournament events (which prompts the excellent article by Ed Rawlinson, which follows), and using technology better.

We would really welcome your input at our meetings. Please come! SEE YOU AT THE TABLE!

Upcoming Events

- Feb. 11 U172 GNT Finals (Fiesta BC)
- Mar. 4-5 Unit Game (3-session KO and Open Pairs)
- Mar. 23-26 Kerrville Sectional (Inn of the Hills)
- Apr. 27-30 Fiesta Sectional (Fiesta BC)
- May 13 Awards Day (Fiesta BC)

Monthly Board Meetings

The SABL Board of Directors usually meets at 3pm on the second Monday of the month at Fiesta Bridge Club. Please check our web site for exceptions. Members are welcome to attend.

Care & Comfort

Carmeline Squires sends get well or sympathy cards for illness or death of members. Please notify her at 210-658-0249.

Kudos

To **Roxie Tom** for winning the Texas Star Award for outstanding service to Unit 172. See the upcoming Scorecard for feature coverage. To **Jo Ann Robertson** and **Penny Smith** for winning the Goodwill Member of the Year Awards (who exhibit courtesy, kindness, and tactfulness and for being ambassadors of goodwill). To **Anyemarie Weaver** and **Dorothy Rippstein** for their multiple wins in the Winter Sectional. To **Ira Hessel** for placing second in the recent District 16 Finals of the North American Pairs and thereby qualifying to play in the National Finals in Kansas City.



From left to right, top to bottom: Ira Hessel, Dorothy Rippstein, Jo Ann Robertson, Penny Smith, Roxie Tom, Anyemarie Weaver

Unit Game Results

Thirty-seven tables showed up for the annual Holiday Party Dec. 11 at Fiesta BC. Thanks to hosts **Jan Wingate, Beth Gale, Kathy Sinkin-Amor** and **Ed Rawlinson** and to Santa's elves **Jo Ann Robertson, Mary Harrington** and **Debbie Schweiss** for the outstanding hospitality. Winners included **Carolyn & Terry Riely** (A1), **Laurie & Larry Levin** (A2, B1), **Jim Roff-Irene White** (A3, B2, C1), **Kay Laird-Rich Curtin** (B3), **Christine Collier-Eliza Sonneland** (C2), and **Valerie Katz-Luann Cohen** (C3). In the 499er game, winners included **Susan Peterson-Peggy Baker** (1), **Mary Lou Daugherty-Doris Salley** (2) and **Bob Craig-Coleman Driver** (3). **Roxie Tom** and **Todd Walker** won prizes for the best holiday outfits.

Upcoming Unit Games

The Grand National Teams is a "grass-roots" event. In Flights B and C, teams compete first at the local (Unit) level. About half the field qualifies to play at the District level. The Unit event will be held Feb. 11 at Fiesta BC. It's a two-session Swiss Team event (10am & TBA). There will also be a regular club game at 11am for the Flight A players and those who don't choose the GNT. There will be appetizers and desserts for both groups and a meal for the GNT participants. GNT qualifiers will be eligible to play in the District Finals in Houston on Apr. 8-9. The top team in each flight at the District Finals will be eligible to compete in the National Finals in Toronto in August.

The Unit will hold a three-session Knockout Team event Mar. 4-5 at Fiesta BC. It will be bracketed and handicapped. The masterpoint awards will be the same as for a sectional tournament. The first two rounds will be at 10am & TBA on Saturday, Mar. 4. The final round will be at 1:30pm on Sunday, Mar. 5. There will also be a unit-sponsored Open Pairs game at 2:30pm on Mar. 4 for those who were knocked out of the team game and everyone else. There will not be a regular club game that day. Appetizers and desserts will be served for both groups and a light lunch for the KO participants, and ... it's all FREE!

Membership Matters

We welcome the following new members and transfers: **Joan Brestal, Norman Caruthers, Grace Clouse, Charles Crawford, Lenice Daudt, Rebecca Evans, Delores Francis, Sharon Gee, Joan Guerra, Toni Hayes, S.C. Hultquist, Christine King, Leona Laughman, Melba Lindberg, Richard McDonnell, Judy O'Neill, Anni Pack, Blanche Roddick, Samuel Samolsky** and **Bill Stillwell**.

Congratulations to all those who received higher ACBL ratings: new Junior Masters: **Jerri Abrams, Barbara Bolton, Shirley Boswell, Oak DeBerg, Blanche Roddick**; new Club Masters: **Gina Binovi**; new Sectional Masters: **Jack Cassidy, Gerald Irion, Bob Kadanka, Carol Ramberg, Jim Roff, Betty Lou Sheerin**; new Regional Masters: **Dean Groussman, Tony Quiles, Frank Schwakhofer**; new NABC Masters: **James Cuccia, Irene White**; new Life Masters: **Georgia Baron, Janice Fletcher**; new Bronze Life Masters: **Georgia Baron, Carol Ellis**.

So Many Choices A Primer and Some Advice

by Ed Rawlinson

In bridge, you face a variety of choices: do you play party bridge or duplicate? Do you play Standard American or Two over One or Strong Club? Weak or strong NT? Gadgets? How many? Do you play standard signals or upside-down? Do you play with one partner...3 or 4...or the more the merrier? Club games or tournaments? 299er/499er games or the "big game"? IMP games or matchpoint games?

My impression is that most newcomers to duplicate bridge prefer not to "bite off more than they can chew". So they start with Standard American bidding, standard signals (if any), club games, 299er games if available, and a limited number of partners (maybe one). As they become more comfortable with their bridge experiences, they are more willing to learn a new convention, play with more partners, take a class to get better, or play in the big game or a tournament. When it comes to choosing a level of "complexity", bridge players cover the entire spectrum. And that's OK. I've certainly known many excellent bridge players who use standard methods and few gadgets. I've also known players who embrace complex systems with modest results. Even enthusiasts can sometimes bite off more than they can chew.

Another aspect of choice in the bridge world involves the choice of events: Stratified Events, Stratiflighted Events, Bracketed Swiss, Bracketed Knockouts, Fast Pairs, A/X/Y Pairs, Gold Rush Pairs, IMP Pairs, Board-a-Match Teams, Side Game Series, Individual. Many of these events are totally unfamiliar to less experienced players. Some of these events have been introduced in recent sectional tournaments, and more will be included in the Regional coming up in July. The purpose of this article is to describe these events, who plays in them, and why you might consider playing in them.

Stratified Events. These may be either pair games or team games. Most club games are stratified pair games. There are typically 3 stratifications (might be 4 in a Regional): A/B/C. All stratifications play against each other, but, in addition to the overall awards, scores within each stratification are ranked and the top scorers in each stratification win masterpoints. In San Antonio tournaments the strats are based on the average masterpoints of the pair or team (A=2500+; B=750-2500; C=0-750).

So Many Choices (continued)

Stratiflighted Events. These may be either pairs games or team games. Sectional Tournaments are usually not big enough to hold stratiflighted events, but they are common in Regionals. In stratiflighted events, there are typically two flights (sometimes 3). They play separately. The top flight typically includes 2 or 3 strats. Our Regional will have daily Stratiflighted Pair Games. The top flight (called the **A/X/Y Pairs**) will have 3 strats (A=4000+; X=2500-4000; Y=750-2500). The second flight is called the **Gold Rush Pairs** and will have 2 strats (B=300-750; C=0-300). Each flight has separate overall rankings, and each strat awards masterpoints within the strat.

299er Stratified Pairs. This is limited to players with fewer than 300 masterpoints. The Regional will include two single session pair games daily except Friday, which will be a two-session pair game, and Sunday (299ers may play in the Bracketed Swiss). Gold points are not awarded for 299er games.

Side Game Series. The Regional will include a Side Game each session except Sunday. It's a Stratified Pair Game. All the morning side games constitute a side game series. Ditto for the afternoon side games and for the evening side games. You can play in as many of these as you wish. If you play in at least two side games in the same series, you are eligible for "overall masterpoint awards" for that series. If you play in more than two games in a particular series, your two best scores are counted for the overall competition. First place overall in each series awards gold points.

IMP Pairs. This operates like a Stratified Pair Game, except that the scoring is by IMPs (like team games) rather than matchpoints.

Fast Pairs. This is just like a regular pair game except the time allotted for each board is only 5 minutes instead of the usual 7 minutes. The purpose of the event is to finish the game quicker. Fast Pair events are usually scheduled in the evening session. The Kerrville sectional tournament usually schedules Fast Pair games. The game starts at 7:30, and the goal is to finish by 10.

Bracketed Swiss Teams. The teams are ranked based on the average masterpoints of its members. The teams are then divided into brackets based on the ranking. The brackets typically include 7 or more teams. The exact number depends on the number of entries. Teams will play six matches against teams in their own bracket. Typically, the top 3 or 4 teams in each bracket win masterpoints. The Regional will include 5 Two-Session Bracketed Swiss Team Events. One of these (on Sunday) will be limited to players under 2000 masterpoints.

Knockout Teams. The teams are ranked based on the average masterpoints of its members and are divided into brackets (typically 9-16 teams) based on the rankings. The event typically includes four sessions. In the first session, teams play a 24-board match against another team from their bracket (or play 12 board matches against two other teams in a round robin match). Winners move on to the next round; losers are out. The top 2, 3, or 4 teams in each bracket win masterpoints (based on the number of entries).

So Many Choices (continued)

Board-a-Match Teams. The Regional includes one Single Session Board-a-Match Team Game. The movement is similar to a Pair Game. North-South team members stay seated; East-West team members move from table to table (sometimes skipping 2 or 3 tables). The movement ensures that (for example) NS1 and EW1 play the same boards against NS5 and EW5. The scoring is completely different. At the end of the game, each team compares their scores on each board. If the team won the board, they get a 1; if they tied, they get $\frac{1}{2}$; if they lost, they get 0. If they played 26 boards, average would be 13. The strategy is just like in a pair game: you want the best score possible.

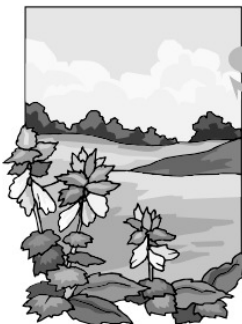
Individual. These rarely occur, but the Unit has had an Individual Unit Game in the past. You show up without a partner. It's much like party bridge. You play with a lot of different partners. It's scored like a pair game (matchpoints).

The Advice. Some experts prefer pair games to team games; some have the opposite preference; most are comfortable with either. Less experienced players have a definite preference for pair games, primarily because that is what they are familiar with. It is rare for a team game to be scheduled in clubs. Many less experienced players have never played in a team game. When a recent sectional schedule included a Bracketed Swiss Teams event, many less experienced players expressed their displeasure (not because it was a team game, but because it was a Bracketed Swiss). This was a shock to me, since the Bracketed Team structure has major benefits for less experienced players. Proof of this is evident from what happens in Regional tournaments, where the Bracketed Swiss events are the most popular events on the schedule, particularly among less experienced players. If you have a team of inexperienced players, you are playing all your matches against 6 teams with similar masterpoint holdings. In a regular Stratified Team event (like you normally encounter in sectional tournaments), an inexperienced team might well encounter one or more teams with substantially higher masterpoint holdings. One of the reasons the Bracketed Swiss event was included in the sectional schedule was to give the less experienced players an opportunity to become familiar (and ultimately more comfortable) with the format before the Regional this summer. A second reason is that the masterpoint awards are generally higher for a Bracketed Swiss than for a Stratified Swiss. A third reason is that, in larger tournaments such as Regionals, there are more winners in a Bracketed Swiss (4 or more brackets) than in a Stratified Swiss (only 3 strats).

Recent sectional tournaments also included a one-session IMP Pair game. The first of these reflected the same lack of comfort and the associated complaints from less experienced players. I'll take the blame for some of the lack of comfort. I had given a lecture prior to the game on IMPs strategy (bid close vulnerable games, play safe for your contract, etc.), but I didn't think to tell the audience what the scoresheet would look like. So when most of the less experienced players had negative scores (e.g., -8 or -36), it was quite a shock. IMP Pair games are similar to stratified pair games in that they award masterpoints to each strat (A, B, and C). In stratified pair games it's quite common for below-average scores to win masterpoints in Flight C. The same is true in IMP Pairs. A score of -8 might well win some points. I would encourage less experienced pairs to give the IMP Pairs a try. One advantage is that you can practice your IMP strategy without having teammates and thus no worries about disappointing them.

The Winning Finesse
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KERRVILLE SPRING IN THE HILLS

March 23 –
March 26, 2017
Inn of the Hills
1001 Junction Hwy
1-800-292-5690

Bridge Rate \$95 if booked by 2/23/2017

Thursday, March 23

Stratified Pairs

Stratified Swiss Teams

10:00 am

3:00 pm

Friday, March 24

Stratified Pairs

Wildflower KO Teams (3 sessions)

Fast Pairs (24 boards)

10:00 am & 3:00 pm

10:00 am, 3:00 & 7:30 pm

7:30 pm finished by 10 pm (approx.)

Saturday, March 25

Stratified Pairs

Mesquite KO Teams (3 sessions)

Fast Pairs (24 boards)

10:00 am & 3:00 pm

10:00 am, 3:00 & 7:30 pm

7:30 pm finished by 10 pm (approx.)

Sunday, March 26

Margaret Higgins Stratified Swiss

10:00 am & TBA

499er pairs with 3 table min.
Card Fees: \$11/person/session
\$120/team/Sunday Swiss (includes lunch)
Non or unpaid ACBL member add \$3
Stratifications:
A: 2500+, B: 750-2500, C: 0-750
All events average MP's
KO Events are Handicapped

Host Hotel: Inn of the Hills
\$95 for singles/doubles
\$7.95 full breakfast/booked in advance

Tournament Chair: Rebecca Brown

210-885-4550 rebeccabrown@att.net

Partnership Chair: Richard Hamm

830-895-2085 rithhamm@hotmail.com

Director in Charge: Tom Marsh

499er Games:
Thursday 10, Friday & Saturday 10 & 3:00
(3 table min.)

