

The politician's reply

A politician on the stump was asked about his attitude toward whisky. Being unsure about the temperance feelings of his audience he answered carefully.

"If you mean the demon drink that poisons the mind, pollutes the body, desecrates family life, and inflames sinners, then I'm against it.

But if you mean the elixir of Christmas cheer, the shield against winter chill, the taxable potion that puts needed funds into public coffers to comfort little crippled children, then I'm for it.

This is my position, and I will not compromise."

Agricultural Scientist

A man is driving down a country road when he spots a farmer standing in the middle of a huge field of grass. He pulls the car over to the side of the road and notices that the farmer is just standing there, doing nothing, looking at nothing. The man gets out of the car, walks all the way out to the farmer and asks him, "Ah excuse me mister, but what are you doing?"

The farmer replies, "I'm trying to win a Nobel Prize."

"How?" asks the man, puzzled.

"Well I heard they give the Nobel Prize to people who are out standing in their field."

N e w s l e t t e r

Taieri Bridge Club

Issue Number 114 June 2006



A point tournament

Our annual A point tournament will take place on Saturday 10 June. Since playing in good competition is, by far, the best way to improve your game please consider entering. Not only will you play against some excellent players and, hopefully, learn some new tricks you will also get used to playing in an A point tournament in unthreatening conditions on familiar ground.

If you do decide to enter please remember that you will need a completed convention card for your opponents to consult - and of course you can expect all your opponents also to show you theirs.

But even if you feel you are not quite ready to enter yet you might want to come and watch. Kibitzing is also a good way of improving your game. It is courteous to ask the players if they would mind your watching and almost certainly they will welcome you.

Hints for improving players

Good players count all the time. They count the tricks they need, the cards played in every suit, and the HCP shown by each player. To begin with that is a lot of work and new players might despair that they will ever improve. However, like many things, the ability to count can be learnt provided you are willing to put some work into it and take it one step at a time.

Perhaps the first place to start is the trump suit. As declarer, one of the things you often begin by doing is to draw trumps; count them until they are all accounted for. A very common situation is that your side has 8 trumps in the combined hands. Therefore there are 5 trumps outstanding and if one defender has two then the other has three - so you will need to play three rounds if you wish to draw all their trumps. So watch carefully as you play the second round to check that both defenders follow suit!

If your side has 9 trumps in total then you may only need to play two rounds of trumps (if the defenders' trumps are divided equally between their two hands).

You will find that you have many opportunities to practise this aspect of the game. Keep at it until it becomes automatic. Then you can go on to counting other suits and counting HCPs.

The Newsletter and the editor

As most of you will know I shall be spending the rest of the year in Scotland. However, that will not stop me producing the Newsletter. The only difference will be that, if you wish me to send me anything for the Newsletter, you will have to send it to me by email at

mike@cs.otago.ac.nz

I look forward to hearing from all of you and shall be returning in January.

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How Minnie made her contract.

After the 4 top diamonds, spade ace, heart ace, and 4 top clubs have been played all the players are down to three cards. Weaselly West cannot retain both the K♥ and 3 spades. So Minnie will find that either her Q♥ becomes good or that dummy's spades will run.

Sinclair recognised the play as an example of a "Vienna coup", began whistling a Strauss waltz, swept Minnie to her feet, and danced her around the bridge club. It was an unusual end to her first bridge evening but it ensured that she would return - like all of us, she was now hooked.

A remarkable hand

The most bizarre hand I've seen in a long time occurred at the recent charity night in aid of the Otago-Southland youth team

♠ A Q J x x x x
♥ K x
♦ Q T x
♣ void

♠ void
♥ A Q J x x x
♦ A x
♣ K x x x x

♠ K T x x x
♥ x
♦ K J x x x x
♣ x

I was South. West opened 1♥ and my partner, somewhat idiosyncratically decided to double. East supported hearts strongly and I bid 4♠. Imagine my partner's delight in being able to offer 8 card support! Eventually, East-West climbed to 7♥ which my partner doubled (to stop me bidding 7♠). The contract was defeated by one trick after the A♠ was led - giving a ruff/sluff on the opening lead, something I have never seen before. The score sheet made interesting reading with games in spades and hearts being common.

The Mississippi heart hand

Last month I wrote about a remarkable hand where, despite holding

♠ A K Q; ♥ A K Q J T 9; ♦ void; ♣ A K Q J

it was impossible for the holder to take more than 6 tricks with hearts as trumps. I asked readers where the hand came from and the redoubtable Bert Oskam came to my rescue.

A virtually identical hand was apparently fabricated by card sharks who plied their trade on the riverboats of the Mississippi during the American Civil War period. They would encourage their victim to bet heavily on the outcome and thereby relieve him of his money. Of course, in those days, there was no contract bridge but Whist was played to similar rules.

One victim, whose name survives to this day, Mr Charles M. Schwab lost \$10000 - and remarkably later donated a cup that later, via Ely Culbertson, came to the World Bridge Federation.

The bridge literature has a number of colourful hands and stories like this. If any reader would like me to send me their favourites I'll do my best to write about them. Next month, for example, I plan to reproduce the so-called Duke of Cumberland hand that was later used by Ian Fleming in one of his James Bond books.

Minnie van Driver's first game (concluded)

After an uncomfortable first round against the Weasel and Ferret, Minnie had thoroughly enjoyed her first game. Sinclair had tried to explain to her the complexities of scoring but the only piece of his advice that she retained was that the pairs arriving at their table were not their true opponents - these were all sitting in the same direction as her and would not be encountered. This seemed to be a strange concept but it meant that Minnie was able to welcome and chat with each pair that they played against (or "played with" as she now put it to herself) without feeling that she was consorting with the enemy. So pair after pair were regaled with the story of how her dog had been terrorised by the postman, how her budgie had attacked the neighbour's cat, and how those greedy men from the Council had stolen one of her garden cabbages. All was sweetness and light until the Weasel and Ferret returned for the last round. Determined to be pleasant, Minnie enquired brightly "How have you found those opponents of ours as you went round?". The Weasel sniffed, the Ferret scowled, and a properly competitive atmosphere descended on the table. Sorrowfully aware that these nasty men were not going to respond to her friendly overtures, Minnie's erratic judgement became even more

mercurial. So when Sinclair (North) opened his hand with a rather light 1♠, Minnie propelled the partnership to 3NT. A second later she realised that she would have to play it and a cold panic beset her, which was compounded by a double from the Weasel (West) so vicious that he broke his pencil.

♠ A K Q 5 2	
♥ A 5 2	
♦ T 9 8 7	
♣ 9	
♠ J T 9 8	♠ 4
♥ K J T	♥ 9 7 6 4 3
♦ A K Q J	♦ 6
♣ 7 6	♣ T 8 5 4 3 2
♠ 7 6 3	
♥ Q 8	
♦ 5 4 3 2	
♣ A K Q J	

The defence cashed 4 diamonds and the Weasel switched to J♠. Minnie counted her top tricks. There were 8 only but, in error, she came to a total to 9. So thinking that she only to take her top winners she began to play them out (as her grandmother had taught her years ago in her Victorian parlour). She began by cashing the A♥ and then her 4 top clubs. Careful reader: do you see why she made her contract? See page 7