

Another AGM bites the dust. It was hoped that a different venue and a Sunday might encourage more members to attend but this did not transpire with only 48 present.

It was mainly routine stuff, the exception being the introduction of the revised Constitution. The emotive question of reverting to the system of club delegates used for many years from the recently introduced vote for each member attending was discussed and voted on. The delegate system was the option agreed by those present following a vote but a point of detail was raised regarding the problem of dealing with any further business at the meeting when clubs had not nominated delegates. An EGM is to be convened later in the year to confirm the vote. This introduces some interesting factors but perhaps we should consider John Bergin's quotation (in his Chairman's Address) from Thomas Jefferson – *On every question of construction, let us carry ourselves back to the time when the Constitution was adopted, recollect the spirit manifested in the debates, and instead of trying what meaning may be squeezed out of the text, or invented against it, conform to the probable one in which it was passed.*

The question of "one man one vote" is a very emotive one and there are strong feelings on both sides. It could be said that, in the same way that constituencies elect their own MP, each club is able to elect their own delegates if they wish. The delegates are then answerable to their club for matters that are agreed at Council meetings and presumably take advice from club committees on how to vote. The dangers of block voting are obvious, particularly if members have not been given all the relevant facts on any issue being raised. I would suggest that most members are content to leave such things to their club committee

and just want to have a pleasant game of bridge. And why not?

The minutes are on the NIBU website but for those who don't read it, the following comprise our new Council:

President – **Ian Lindsay**, Chair – **Anne Hassan**, Hon. Treasurer – **Anne Fitzpatrick**, Hon. Secretary – **Michael McFaul**, Hon. Competitions Secretary – **Liz Scott**, Hon. Masterpoints Secretary – **Robin Burns**.

Members of Council are: **Pat Coull, Harold Curran, Ken Hammond, Heather Hill, Pat Johnston, Rosemary Kilpatrick, Michael McIlroy, Eric McNicholl, Sandie Millership, Toni Sproule and Valerie Von Hoff.**

Full details of the meeting together with all the reports are on the website so please do have a look at them.

It can be readily seen that several pages of this issue are re-prints of articles from the EBU and IBU magazines – which leaves very little left from our own members. One of the relevant items in the AGM report is the note that we have nearly 1,800 members. I am indebted to those who did contribute, to the few that have made suggestions and to those who sent in some amusing jokes that I couldn't find space for but which kept me entertained greatly. The other 1,793 or so that did not, might like to have a think about either contributing or contacting us with comments – both positive and negative – we don't take offence easily. Honest!

As usual, contact me, Derek Cannell, at 1 Cranley Road, Bangor, Co Down BT19 7HE or [derekcannell@gmail.com](mailto:derekcannell@gmail.com). Telephone 02891469203.

Or Michael McFaul at [mjmcfaul@gmail.com](mailto:mjmcfaul@gmail.com)

## Cherchez la Femme

By Simon Cochemé

*Simon looks at the perennial problem of finding the queen, missing queen to five.*

You (South) and dummy hold the following in the heart suit:

A J 8 7

K 10 6 5

How do you find the queen? First of all you should remember the saying 'Eight ever, nine never' and plan to take a finesse rather than play for the drop. The only decision is choosing which way to finesse; cashing the HK and finessing the jack, or crossing to the HA and playing East for the queen.

Should you always take a finesse? No. EENN is a fine maxim, but sometimes it should be over-ruled. There are deals where you should be combining your chances; playing against the odds for the drop in one suit, such as the heart suit shown here, and then, if the HxQ hasn't appeared in two rounds, taking a finesse in another suit.

But assuming you are going to take a finesse, should you play East or West for the queen?

The great Eddie Kantar says 'Hungry players finesse toward the kitchen, romantic players finesse toward the bedroom and practical players finesse toward the bathroom', but I don't think he is being serious. Fortunately I have found lots of other bits of advice to help you.

You could invoke Bentley's Law: cashing a top honour and finessing through the person you like less; that way you won't feel so bad if the finesse loses. All things being equal, this strategy is the least harmful to your emotional well-being.

Alternatively, you could follow the Norwegian rule and play for the defender with the longer nose to hold the queen. I got this independently from two Norwegians, one a world champion, so it is definitely worth considering.

Some think it is best to play for the queen to be sitting over the jack, but that is an old rubber bridge adage followed by old rubber bridge addicts, and it doesn't apply in duplicate. In rubber bridge the cards are played together in the middle of the table and the queen might well have been put on top of the jack. Imperfect shuffling means there is a good chance that it is still there the next time cards are dealt. If you don't believe me, get out a pack of cards and do a little experiment.

In India they have a saying that the queen and the nine of a suit will be in the same hand, so you should wait until the H9 appears and play for that hand to hold the queen. As a statement of statistical fact it is dubious. As a strategy it is unlikely to work, especially against someone who knows it to be a favourite superstition of yours. If you were to start by playing small towards dummy, then you would feel obliged to take an immediate finesse if West played the H9, and he will be happy to false-card with H9-x, H9-x-x or H9-x-x-x.

I found this one on the internet. Have a look at the eyes of the king of the suit in question and play for him to be looking at the queen. In this example, with hearts as the key suit, you should play West for the missing queen.



The HK, DK and CK all look to their right (your left); the SK looks to his left. With no other clues it's as good a strategy as any. But don't just rely on what I say about who looks where; you will have to double check when you play bridge abroad. The dastardly French kings all look the opposite way; no doubt something to do with Napoleon insisting that

the French shouldn't do anything the same way as the English – they drive on the right, for example, they use kilometres instead of miles, and they don't have small side-plates on which to put their bread.



Barry Crane was a top American bridge player (and also a TV producer and director of programmes like *Mission Impossible* and *Hawaii Five-0*). He had a rule which said that the queen would be sitting over the jack in a minor suit, and under the jack in a major suit. He would have played West for the queen.

One third of the Belgians I polled said he always played for the queen to be on his left. 'And if it isn't,' he told me, 'I am sitting in the wrong seat.'

So, which of those seven strategies should you adopt to locate the missing HQ? (I know, you would rather have one technique that really works, and not have to pick from a menu of dubious alternatives. Alas, life is not like that and neither is bridge.)

The answer is none, at least not until you have recalled the bidding and analysed the play to date. If East opened a weak two bid then, in the absence of other information, the *Theory of Empty Spaces* makes West a strong favourite to hold the missing queen. On the other hand, if West failed to open the bidding and has already shown up with 10 points, he is very unlikely to hold the HQ.

If you do have to resort to one of the seven, then my advice is to ignore the Indian saying and pick one of the others – and remember its origins. That way, if the finesse fails, you will be able to recover some kudos by saying something like 'I thought I'd try the Norwegian method.' or 'Sorry, Crane's Rule didn't work this time.'

## Would You Believe It?

By Jeff Millership

♠ K95  
♥ AQ1075432  
-  
♣ A7

♠ A108742  
♥ 98  
♦ K107  
♣ K10

♠ J  
♥ 6  
♦ QJ86532  
♣ J832

♠ Q63  
♥ KJ  
♦ A94  
♣ Q9654

Early June I had been working in the garden getting ready for a BBQ with a few friends when I felt I deserved a coffee so I made one and went to sit in the garden. I decided to look at BBO on the iPad and quickly checked on the Norwegian Club Teams Championship Final and I found the deal above and the bidding below!!!

W	N	E	S
			1C
1S	2D*	P	2H
P	5D	P	P
P			

There was no commentary either verbal or written so I am assuming that the alerted 2D was a transfer to hearts and that the 5D bid was possibly a splinter bid, however, south did not seem to quite understand. Just to confirm this was the Norwegian Club Teams Championship Final and South's name was AA.

*Note: This article was first printed in the EBU Magazine.*

## I HAVE HEARD THAT...

I am sure that most will have read of the illegal gambling racket in Thailand that turned out to be a group of British pensioners playing bridge. There were 12 British players among 31 westerners who were carted off by 50 police in order to be interrogated about their link to organised crime. What amused me most was the fact that they seized back packs of confiscated cards and began playing even while they were being interrogated until the cards were forcibly removed.

I suppose there must have been reports that there were dealers on the premises.

I was reminiscing recently, as one does when one reaches a certain age, and mentioned the time that I partnered a novice in a learning session at a local club. I had told him that Dummy must not comment or interfere with the play and so on. On one hand he landed in a hopeless 3NT contract which just required his opponents to lead out their six Hearts from the top to defeat him. After A K and Q he then told them that the rules forbid leading the same suit more than three times so they changed suit and he got in, making an overtrick. I said nothing until later!

One night at KM we discovered that the lights would not switch off. We were playing more boards than usual the next day so we just ignored it, knowing that it would fix itself. Sure enough, when we tried them they were fine. Just shows the truth in the old saying "*many hands make light work.*"

Rumour has it that in some states of the USA a strong "No Trump" bid is very popular and in others it is banned. Must be very confusing!

I am told that at a recent congress a player who was opposing a renowned husband and wife team passed wind rather loudly. The husband, I suppose keen to demonstrate to his wife how he cared for her, remonstrated with the

offender by announcing "How dare you do that in front of my wife!"

The culprit, duly chastened, replied "I apologise, I didn't know it was her turn."

Oh dear!

### *Ten Commandments*

1. Remember that you and your partner are on the same side and they want to win as much as you.
2. Say unto partner as you would have said unto you.
3. Criticize not your partner.
4. Sympathise with partner if they make a mistake.
5. If you feel the urge to be nasty, sarcastic or critical, excuse yourself and take a walk.
6. Do not give lessons unless paid to do so.
7. It really is fine to be pleasant to partner with whom you also happen to live.
8. Try to see things from partner's point of view.
9. Trust partner and do not assume that they have made a mistake.
10. If you think that you are too good for your partner and do not enjoy playing with them, do everyone a favour and play with someone else in future.

Some random thoughts to fill a space.

If you want to lose a partner, when they make a mistake just say: *Foolproof systems do not take into account the ingenuity of fools.*

Of course, the reply could well be: *I can only please one person per day and today is not your day. Tomorrow is not looking too good either.*

You could possibly resort to computer bridge, but then I have heard of one internet buff who remarked: *A computer once beat me at bridge but it was no match for my kick boxing!*

## Beginner's Blog 3

By Orla Quigley

I ate my own weight in soda bread.

It was a Bridge charity event. The evening had – save the moment I put my partner (to his... um... *acute* surprise) into 6NT – been otherwise unremarkable up to that point. The goodies served at ‘half time’ were, oh my, remarkably good. The fresh homemade bread was – trust me - quite heavenly! Why don't I stick to what I'm good at? (i.e. eating) I mused – before going on to commit hari-kari in the second section of play.

Bridge can be hard! Very hard. I thought when I started I'd be a good little student and just learn ‘The Rules’ by rote (forget all that insight and understanding malarkey), and all would be well. Hmm... not so much.

Bridge can be lonely! Very lonely. I've often found myself opening the bidding with 1NT (weak). Heavens, all I was doing was dipping my toe in the water. Then everyone else ‘runs away’. I've lost weight on these ‘damage limitation’ exercises. And all for a ‘measly’ 90 pts! When I get elected ‘Supreme Ruler’ of the global Bridge world (relax, not imminent) that's gonna get changed!

In this year of elections – and aren't there lots?! - the following might sound as if indeed I am running for ‘high office’. Be at peace, I'm not.

The mantra within the Bridge community is that succession planning should take place. And it does - as a novice I've been afforded much opportunity and help. But the return on this investment is undetermined and at best sporadic. (Me, I'm a lost cause – unless there is a sudden demand for bread eating champions!). It often comes at a price to the seniors in the club who give freely of their time to support and encourage. There is no direct benefit for them, other than altruistic enhancement of the game. What else do I get as a novice? I get a club that is run ‘for me’. Dear heavens – what could I possibly contribute to the admin side of things? Remember those nodding dogs in the backs of

cars? That's me. Seniors have a need to have their game developed and supported too. Thus, it is incumbent on me to also turn up on the ‘difficult’ nights – Open Cups, NIBU simultaneous pairs etc – and look and learn.

I am conscious that the work at club level to promote and develop the game is underpinned by those who serve on the NIBU Council and Committees. I try to follow proceedings from the side lines by reading the papers published on the NIBU website and I note the lorry load of work that is being done (on my behalf). Whilst we are dwarfed by our near - neighbour unions in membership numbers, each member has a relatively bigger say in the collective decision making process. We retain full autonomy and have a ‘seat at the table’ with the ‘bigger boys’. What's not to like? ‘Decisions are made by those who show up’. Thus, I am minded to attend the AGMs.

Looking round the room at any Bridge event, I note the disparate participants and become acutely aware of the inclusive nature of the game. Truly wonderful that we have this unifying platform! I recognise (and indeed welcome) the ‘indulgence’ of getting into a ‘bit of a spin’ over Bridge. In truth, like any pastime, it's just transient escapism from the very real stressful life events that we all encounter and *didn't* invite on to our Radar. Play with unbridled enthusiasm? – Always! Source of stress and divisive in nature? – Never!

Meantime, I really should stick to the stuff I'm good at... um, anybody got an easy recipe for soda bread? ☺

### Did You Know

That there are 635,013,559,600 different 13 card hands that can be dealt from a pack of cards, and that's before dealing the other three hands. There are about 24,000 genes in a human body so bearing in mind how rarely you see two truly identical people it's no wonder we don't get bridge hands that we have had before.

## Trump Coup in Defence

By Ian Hamilton

If you have executed a Trump Coup my guess is you are rightly proud, it being a pretty rare beast. However, managing one in defence must rate as a rarity.

I played in the EBU Easter Tournament in Bloomsbury, London, recently, partnering Howard Kent-Webster, and we managed to pull off this rare coup against dummy.

Love all Dealer West

♠ 976  
♥ K65  
♦ J86  
♣ 10964

♠ AK  
♥ A743  
♦ 97543  
♣ 83

♠ Q102  
♥ J1082  
♦ Q  
♣ AQJ52

♠ J8543  
♥ Q9  
♦ AK102  
♣ K7

East declared 4♥, after opening 1♣, and subsequently finding the heart fit. South led the diamond Ace, then switched to a spade, won in dummy. Double dummy declarer can make by a variety of routes, but the elected line was to ruff a diamond at trick 3, cross to another to dummy's other spade and ruff another diamond.

Dummy pitched a club on the spade Queen, and declarer proceeded by cashing the club ace and ruffing one in dummy, bringing down south's King.

A fourth diamond left north in a quandary, he eventually pitching a club, as declarer ruffed with the ♥10.

A sneaky ♣J followed, but South was not taken in, ruffing with the ♥9, dummy over-ruffing with the Ace.

This left:-

♠ void  
♥ K65  
♦ void  
♣ void

♠ void  
♥ 73  
♦ 9  
♣ void

♠ void  
♥ J  
♦ void  
♣ Q5

♠ J8  
♥ Q  
♦ void  
♣ void

Dummy's last diamond saw North ruffing with 5 and declarer's Knave over-ruffed with the Queen. South's spade executed a Trump Coup on dummy, the King and 6 being good for the last two tricks. Note that if north ruffs in with the King ahead of declarer dummy's trump 7 grows up, and declarer gets home.

We failed to seriously trouble the scorers over the weekend, but this hand proved be a rare positive, almost as good as the occasion when the opponents elected for 7NT with Howard on lead with spade Ace amongst his collection. And yes, he did double.

We also helped the winners on their way by inflicting a <2% board on the eventual runners-up, albeit it was self-inflicted. They would have won with an average.

Love all Dealer South

♠ 643  
♥ 64  
♦ AQ109872  
♣ 5

♠ A1082  
♥ AKQ7  
♦ 3  
♣ AK86

♠ K975  
♥ 85  
♦ KJ64  
♣ QJ9

♠ QJ  
♥ J10932  
♦ 5  
♣ 107432

S      W      N      E  
P    1♣\*    4♦    P<sup>1</sup>  
P    dble    all pass

\* playing 5 card majors

<sup>1</sup> Double would have been for takeout

Top on the board was a very fortuitous 6NT doubled, scoring 1260, making only because the spade QJ were doubleton. Several other were in 6NT or 6♠ undoubled, but they only scored 980 or 990.

At our table the defence were not pressed to hold declarer to just five trump tricks, scoring 1100, remembering to lead a diamond at some point to stop a spade ruff. Maybe Michael Byrne of Manchester will be more circumspect next time.

Can I recommend this Congress to anyone at a loose end at Easter. The hotel can be obtained at a very competitive rate, the bridge finishes at 8pm and there are lots of decent eateries within easy walking distance.

### Camrose 2016 By Ian Hamilton

The Home Countries met in Dublin in January. The Northern Ireland team of Rex Anderson/David Greenwood, Ian Lindsay/Robin Burns, Helen Cole/Tyrone Currie had a difficult start to the weekend, losing heavily to England, Scotland and the RoI. However, they emerged rejuvenated on Sunday, sneaking a narrow win over Wales and trouncing the Welsh B team, the WBU. They arrived in Llandrindod Wells, Mid Wales, for the second weekend in early March lying 5<sup>th</sup>, just ahead of Scotland. A 3 hour drive from Birmingham, arriving in driving snow, did not help, though everyone else was similarly affected, some even having had planes cancelled. One of the English team bemoaned his inability to come in his helicopter, due to the weather.

Sadly, Friday night was a disaster, a heavy loss to RoI. Saturday was a little better, a heavy loss to WBU being followed by a tie with Wales, the two halves being mirror images, 36:32 IMPs then 32:36 IMPs. These two results did at least mean that we emerged with the Causeway Trophy, awarded for the direct match over the two weekends.

The match against England on Sunday was an eventual loss, but not before some great hands were displayed. The Hackett twins, Jason and Justin, showed their class on the exhibit below, though were helped by their system of 5 card majors, with a strong no trump.

<p>Dealer E</p> <p>♠K82 ♥Q8 ♦AKJ ♣AK964</p>	<p>None Vul</p> <p>♠107654 ♥10952 ♦62 ♣Q</p> <p>♠J9 ♥K64 ♦8543 ♣J1085</p>	<p>♠AQ3 ♥AJ73 ♦Q1097 ♣72</p>
<p>E      S      W      N</p> <p>1♦    P      2♣    P</p> <p>2NT* P      3♦    P</p> <p>3NT    P      5NT<sup>1</sup> P</p> <p>6♦ all Pass</p>		
	<p>* 12-14      <sup>1</sup> Pick a slam</p>	

Jason Hackett was not tested by any lead, in practice winning the trump in dummy and passing the heart Queen. South won and led another trump. Declarer won, cashed a heart, then ruffed one in dummy, before re-entering hand to pull trumps and claim.

Ian Lindsay declared 6NT after bidding 1NT – 4NT – 6NT. He received the knave of clubs lead. When the Queen does not fall the 5:1 and 6:0 breaks are excluded, a 3:3 break now about 43%. Ian went for this, but sadly was unsuccessful.

An alternative is to lead a heart towards the Queen. 50% of the time this will lose. There is still hope that a club/heart squeeze eventuates, or that the 10/9 of hearts fall in 3 rounds.

Declarer is in better shape where south has the heart king. If played on air declarer is home. Should the queen score declarer has the choice of playing for south to have club length, he now subject to a club/heart endplay. Alternatively, declarer can duck a heart, hoping that the king is doubleton or tripleton.

I make the heart play at well over 50%, with either choice of later plays successful at the table.

When declaring or defending careful attention to watching the pips is vital to success, as illustrated by the following, also against England.

Dealer E	♠96	
Both Vul	♥972	
	♦AJ10953	
	♣96	
♠Q743		♠J10852
♥K1085		♥Q4
♦8762		♦Q4
♣8		♣QJ72
	♠AK	
	♥AJ63	
	♦K	
	♣AK10543	

3NT was declared at both tables. The English west led the heart 5 to the Queen and ace. Declarer played three rounds of clubs. East returned the heart 4. Tyrone Currie, for Northern Ireland, played the 3, and west won the 10. Without apparent thought west cashed the King, setting up declarer's Knave. He should not have. He should know the whereabouts of the 6. East has denied the Knave by his play of the Queen, and had he had the 6/4 remaining his correct play would have been the 6. So west can save the day by

winning the heart 10, and switching to a spade. Declarer must lose the lead twice more to garner nine tricks, and goes light.

The initial play was the same at the other table, except that Ian Lindsay, for Northern Ireland, returned the spade Knave when first on lead in clubs, declarer winning, and playing another club, won again by Ian. Only now did he return his remaining heart, the 4. Here the English declarer, Colin Simpson, muddled matters by contributing his heart 6, leaving the position of the 3 unclear, as east could have had Q43 initially.

Robin Burns won his heart 10, then replicated the English defender by cashing his King, ceding declarer's 9<sup>th</sup> trick. Here the inferences are more subtle. With an initial Q43 in hearts would partner have played back a spade at his first lead? Surely, the answer to this question is NO. So Robin could have save the day by winning his 10 and switching back to spades. Not at all easy.

At least the weekend ended on a winning note, Scotland being dispatched, but sides being guilty of a lot of errors in a poor quality match. Unfortunately, this win was not enough to save Northern Ireland from the wooden spoon, just behind Scotland.

Battle will re-commence in England the first weekend of January 2017. NIBU members can follow the play on Bridgebase Online, or of course travel and support the team.

## The Constitution

By Rex Anderson

(With apologies to Lewis Carroll)

“You’ve odd rules Northern Council,” the member said  
“And some of them give me a fright  
You change them each two years, or so I have read  
Do you think that this time you’ll be right?”

“The first change,” Northern Council replied  
“When done  
We feared it might injure the brain  
But, now that we’re perfectly sure we have none.  
Why, we do it again and again”

“You’ve odd rules Northern Council, as I mentioned before  
That have grown prescriptive and long  
More precise, more exact than rules were of yore  
Pray, is that the reason they’re wrong?”

“In the past” said the Council shaking their grey locks  
“We kept all our rules short and sweet  
Though transparent and open is now orthodox  
We still keep our minutes discreet.”

“You’ve odd rules” said the member “Your rules are too weak  
No one can ensure they’re obeyed  
If Council does err, to whom does one speak -  
The Council can’t fairly decide I’m afraid”

“In my youth” said the Council “we took to the law  
And argued each case on its facts  
We know what is right; and wrong sticks in our craw  
We’ll ensure each critic retracts.”

“You’ve odd rules” said the member “One would hardly suppose  
That new rules could not last forever

Yet why you chop and you change you do not disclose  
What made Council so awfully clever?”

“We have answered three questions and that is enough”  
Said Council “Don’t give yourself airs.  
Do you think we can listen all day to such stuff?  
Be off, or we’ll kick you downstairs.”

Reminds me of a recent Council meeting that I attended:

*“But I don’t want to go among mad people,” Alice remarked.*  
*“Oh, you can’t help that,” said the Cat: “we’re all mad here. I’m mad. You’re mad.”*  
*“How do you know I’m mad?” said Alice.*  
*“You must be,” said the Cat, “or you wouldn’t have come here.”*  
Ed.

## Crossword 22 Solution

	1	R	E	2	B	I	3	D	S		4	P	5	O	M	6	P	7	O	N	
		E		O		U		8	O			B		A		O					
9	E	V	E	N		10	R	I	N	D	E	R	P	E	S	T					
		E		E		R		O		A		E		E							
11	B	R	I	D	G	E		12	M	A	H	A	R	A	J	A					
		S				L		A		S		C		O							
13	P	E	R	14	C	O	L	A	T	E		15	C	L	U	B					
				O				O						I							
	16	H	A	N	D		17	S	P	A	18	R	E	P	A	19	R	T			
		O		T		20	M		O		E						E				
21	E	N	E	R	V	A	T	E		22	V	A	23	L	I	S	E				
		O		A		N		T		O		U		U							
24	Q	U	I	C	K	T	R	I	C	K		25	C	A	L	L					
		R		T		L		C		E		R		T							
	26	S	I	S	T	E	R		27	A	S	S	E	T	S						

Correct solutions were received from:  
Norma Burns, Seamus Donaghy, Charles Foster,  
Marie Ferguson, Gerry Henry, Edward  
McQuilken, Ronnie Morrow, and Joan Stewart.

Congratulations to **Norma Burns** whose entry was drawn from the above.

## I'M TAKING IT AS .....

*By Alan Hill*

Do you ever use the above statement during an auction? It seems reasonable to think you are helping opponents, however you are giving information to your partner in a manner that is against the rules.

You open 1NT, LHO bids 2 Clubs – showing the majors – and your partner bids 2 Spades. You are asked what this means.

1. If you have no agreement say no agreement.
2. If it shows spades or a spade stop, if it denies a spade stop, if it is a transfer to a minor, or an 11 point hand, or whatever, you tell your opponents.
3. If you have forgotten you say so.

In case 1 if you are in a regular partnership, the TD will assume you know your partner's style and that you are likely to have met it before. Therefore you can at least make a good guess and will not be happy if you get it right. Don't be surprised (or upset) if the TD awards an adjusted score in favour of your opponents.

In case 2 obviously you tell your opponents but a full explanation is expected. E.g. it might ask for a spade stop and also deny 4 Hearts and be game forcing etc.

In case 3 the TD should ask you to leave the table so that your partner can explain what the bid means. Further bids/alerts may cause problems for you (and the TD) but the opponents should not be damaged because they did not know the system.

What if the opponents do not ask? So long as you have properly alerted your partner's bid then that is their problem. You should NEVER make any statement with an alertable bid. Is up to your opponents to ask.

Never say I don't know, but I am taking it as..

## THE BEAST FROM THE EAST

*by Michael McFaul*

The new bridge season was about to start and I was eagerly looking forward to playing with my new Russian partner. After a successful career in Athletics, Yuri had taken up Bridge and quickly made a name for himself on the Siberian tournament circuit with a string of amazing results. Having met him playing online, I was delighted to hear he was coming to Ireland for a few months to set up a branch of his delicatessen business.

Having disembarked and passed through airport customs, he emerged, a bearded colossus wearing a fur coat. I was greeted with a hearty bear hug and we made our way to the car park.

"How was your journey" I enquired as we drove to Yuri's hotel. The gruff response – more a growl – made it obvious that he was not interested in small talk. He only wanted to discuss Bridge.

At the hotel we made our way to the bar. Yuri ordered double vodkas while I spread a few papers on the table.

"I thought we could start off with a few bidding competitions", I said, feeling pleased with myself at having anticipated the need to get down to business immediately.

Yuri sniffed contemptuously "I hate bidding competitions," he sneered, 'such joyless academic exercises. They allow no room whatsoever for creative thinking'.

I was startled. What on earth did he mean? Surely bidding competitions were the ideal way for a new partnership to practice how they would tackle difficult hands?

Yuri looked furtively round the room and leaned forward in his chair as if about to announce the name of his next 'hit' victim.

"We need to discuss our system in detail" he said in a low voice.

"Ah, yes," I replied, somewhat relieved 'Well I thought we would play 5 card Majors, Strong No-trump and.....'

"NO, NO, NO" interrupted Yuri impatiently, 'I don't mean our bidding system – we already

have that from playing online. I mean our system for conveying additional information’.

I was taken aback: “You mean cheating?”

Yuri looked somewhat crestfallen. “I don’t like to use the word cheating. Now I assume you are familiar with the acronym HUM – it stands for Highly Unusual Methods,” he declared in a patronising tone, ‘Using HUM players can legitimately bamboozle their opponents with system understandings that give themselves a clear advantage. Well let us just say I think of my system simply as employing ‘Even More Highly Unusual Methods’’. He was grinning now, satisfied that the logic of his argument had convinced me.

“But it is still cheating?” I queried, feeling distinctly uncomfortable now.

Yuri thumped the table, downed another vodka and for a moment he appeared to consider throwing the glass over his shoulder in an evocation of a scene from ‘War and Peace’.

“Nonsense”, he snorted, ‘You in the West are so behind the times. Back in Petropavlovsk everyone ‘cheats’; in fact we have a competition every year in which a prize is awarded to the pair who can develop the most undetectable and imaginative methods. Besides, it’s obvious that all the world’s top players have been cheating for years.’

As I listened in disbelief Yuri went on to outline his proposed methods for playing in duplicate events where screens were not employed.

“Much of the fun has gone out of the game since bidding boxes were invented,” he said wistfully, ‘In the old days, things were so much simpler. One could convey much useful information through intonation of the voice, whether one said Pass or No Bid and so on. Partner always knew when doubles were for penalties while smokers could always employ the old trick of making a bid and immediately lighting a cigarette thus clearly sending a signal to partner that under no circumstances should they bid again.’

More vodka was ordered.

“Nowadays one has to be more imaginative,” he sighed ‘We must all move with the times.

Now I propose that we use the system with which I won the Kamchatka Invitation Pairs recently.’

‘First of all, we take full advantage of the STOP card when employed by an opponent.’ He began ‘We all know that players are supposed to wait about 10 seconds before they bid or pass once the card is produced. In practice no-one ever waits and indeed most players more or less ignore it. This tendency can be exploited with little fear of arousing suspicion. We always wait at least 2 seconds and every second after that shows a preference for the suits in ascending order assuming you wish to defend. Any delay beyond that suggests you were almost worth a bid. Naturally you wait the full ten seconds if you intend to bid.’

“But. But...” I stuttered

“Our doubles are always clear-cut”, Yuri continued, gazing at me expectantly as if he expected some acknowledgment that I was following his line of thought. I felt I should say something.

“Don’t tell me - the faster we double the more penalty-oriented it is” I ventured.

Yuri looked irritated:

“That would be far too obvious” he said impatiently, “No, quite the reverse. An immediate double is always for takeout. A genuine penalty double will only be made after some consideration.”

I was about to suggest that not ‘bidding in tempo’ might cause some difficulties but Yuri, now having fully warmed to his theme, continued to outline his proposed approach to signalling and discarding. The play of a ‘high card’ or a ‘low card’ added an extra dimension to the defence when it referred to the trajectory and distance covered from either bidding box or hand to table.

Eventually the ‘system’ briefing was completed and Yuri leant back in his chair having ordered another double vodka.

“Next week we play in our first competition and I expect to win of course”, he said. His tone sounded vaguely threatening. ‘Here are

your system notes. Study them carefully before then’.

I gathered my papers, made my exit and headed home wondering how I could extricate myself from the situation. At the same time I had to admit to feeling vaguely curious about the merits of what he was proposing.....maybe I could go along with it....after all, what harm could come of it....just this once.....

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Things had gone swimmingly. Yuri and I had triumphed at every club in the area, invariably winning every game with a 70%+ score. Local congresses had also gone well with several trophies and cash prizes in the bag. Of course we only played in Pairs events, not wishing to be saddled with another partnership who might ask awkward questions during the post-mortem sessions.

In truth it had been difficult and tiring at times. Not only had I to master Yuri’s Kamchatka Club bidding system but being alert to all the subtle nuances of our ‘Very Highly Unusual Methods’ was taxing at the best of times. At least once I misjudged the trajectory of Yuri’s opening lead hitting the table, thinking he was indicating values in a higher suit instead of a lower one. On another occasion I forgot to count the length of his ‘Stop’ after his RHO had opened 3D and felt unable to ask for a recap of the bidding to include details of the duration of his STOP. But in general all had gone according to plan and Yuri seemed well satisfied.

‘It’s time we tried our methods in more esteemed company,’ he told me one evening on our return from another big win in a County Pairs Championship, ‘Fortunately there is a major new tournament taking place in a few weeks which we can enter. The Iona Pairs has attracted considerable sponsorship so there will be big cash prizes to be won and all the top players from these islands will be there.’ Handing me the tournament brochure, he leaned across and stated in a low voice ‘Of course they will be using screens.’

‘Well, that’s that’ I said ‘Your methods just won’t work then’.

‘Ah, that is where you are wrong my friend’, Yuri retorted, ‘You see I have been anticipating this moment and I have spent months preparing for it.’

From the pocket of his fur coat, Yuri produced a large spectacle case and opened it.

‘I contacted an old scientist friend back in Irkutsk. Doctor Fekkov used to work in surveillance and he was an expert at designing gadgets for spies that made their activity undetectable. He made these for me.’

‘What on earth....’I queried as he handed me the contents of the spectacle case.

‘Prism glasses’ he announced with an air of triumph. ‘They look like ordinary spectacles but the varifocal lens is shaped so that you can see at right angles. The opponents’ cards will be an open book for us!’

I thought I had spotted the flaw in his weaponry. ‘Interesting, but don’t forget we will be using screens so you will only be able to see one opponents cards.’ I responded.

‘Not so my friend’ said Yuri, reaching back into the case. ‘These are the de-luxe X-ray version of the prism glasses. They enable you to see through solid objects as well.’

I had to admit Yuri had thought of everything. What looked like ordinary glasses would be our ticket to the top prize and the big money. I couldn’t wait.

On the morning the tournament was due to start I woke in my hotel room with a sore throat and a streaming cold. Just my luck. I met Yuri at breakfast and he too complained about feeling under the weather having just returned from the local pharmacy and stocked up on cold remedies to see him through the playing sessions ahead. He looked very concerned.

‘I have very bad news for you my friend.’ he said, shaking his head. ‘I have just found out they are using CCTV at every table in this competition. We cannot possibly use our new gadgets or even our ‘Very Highly Unusual Methods’. It is simply far too risky.’

‘But why not’, I ventured, ‘surely low-tech CCTV will not be up to detecting your prism or X ray glasses?’

Yuri looked exasperated. ‘On the contrary’, he said ‘this CCTV is the latest state-of the art brought in from Russia. I have examined it closely and discovered that it was invented by none other than my friend Dr. Fekkov.’

The irony of the situation eluded Yuri; He was miserable. We would just have to play without assistance and do the best we could.

We started off reasonably well and before long seemed to be on a roll. Every decision worked out well, every guess was the right one. In complete contrast, our opponents could get nothing right. We were handed top after top.

Here is one example of our good fortune:

After a straightforward auction I found myself in 6H on this hand:

J52  
AQ974  
A104  
AJ

AQ3  
KJ1052  
KQ5  
KQ

West led a low heart and when dummy sent down it was obvious there were 12 tricks there for the taking. Unfortunately it was also obvious that the same 12 tricks were available in 6NT and that just making 6H would earn very few match-points. I would face Yuri’s wrath if I didn’t make all 13 tricks and that would require East to have started with specifically Kx in Spades. No matter how unlikely, it seemed the only chance of achieving a decent score but suddenly that remote possibility turned to zero. East had discarded a low spade at trick 1!

The spade discard ruled out any chance that East had started with Kxx and it now seemed to me that the only chance of an overtrick was

to find West with a singleton King. I drew the remaining trumps, cashed the minor suit winners, placed the Ace of Spades on the table and waited with bated breath. As if by divine intervention, the Spade King appeared on my left. I claimed 13 tricks and almost all the match-points. Surely Yuri would be fulsome in his praise for my brilliant play?

‘You do realise,’ he said once the opponents had left the table, ‘that they are one of the strongest pairs in the room, regular members of a winning International team but very seldom seen at Pairs events. Did you appreciate the fact that West actually held Kx in Spades but realised he would be end-played if he did not ditch his King under the Ace. After winning the second spade he would have to concede a ruff and discard, thus handing you 12 tricks.’

‘But I always have 12 top tricks’ I countered. ‘He handed me a complete top’

Yuri was losing his patience. ‘Yes, but West doesn’t know you have 12 top tricks and he can see a chance of defeating the contract if he can engineer a defence that will give his side 2 spade tricks. When you rejected the finesse he naturally assumed you held Axx and his partner Q10xx. His play was correct at Teams but disastrous at Pairs. Anyway apparently he is spreading the word that you are either a genius or an idiot.’

The finish was tight but at the end of the weekend we emerged as winners by a narrow margin. It was an amazing result and one we had achieved without having to resort to unorthodox tactics. Having proved our worth we would never have to cheat again.

We collected the trophy and our cash prize at the grand post-event banquet. There was some applause but in general the reception from the other players was strangely muted. It was all very puzzling.

A week or so later I was surprised to receive a letter from the tournament organisers. There had been a number of complaints about our tactics at the event and we were being

summoned to a meeting the following Monday.

We duly turned up feeling confident that any accusations could easily be refuted as symptomatic of sour grapes on behalf of the other players.

We were interviewed by a panel of three Bridge Administrators, the Chairman explaining that, having received numerous complaints they had examined CCTV footage and were convinced we were guilty of cheating.

The Chairman outlined the case against us:

‘It’s quite clear from the video evidence that you were both using a range of illegal signals to communicate with each other,’ he said adopting the demeanour of a high-court judge, ‘The key sequences we have identified are as follows:

‘When you cough once you hold two top honours in a minor suit and if followed by throat clearing that suit is diamonds. Two coughs shows a major on the same basis. A sneeze – obviously brought on by a substance in your handkerchief – shows a hand that has at least 3 likely defensive tricks with a preference to defend and double any further bidding by the opponents. When you take a throat pastille, you are showing a void in a side suit and when you take a whiff of your menthol inhaler, you are telling partner it’s safe to bid over an opponent’s opening pre-empt.’

The Chairman looked up from his script. ‘Do I really need to go on?’ he said, not expecting an answer, ‘I’m afraid the evidence is incontrovertible. We are unanimous in finding you guilty. You are required to return the trophy and the prize money. That is all.’

We were both stunned. ‘This is pure supposition’ shouted Yuri, ‘Mere coincidence, I refuse to listen to such nonsense. We won fair and square’. He stormed out of the room and I followed meekly behind.

And that was that. Yuri returned to Siberia after it was clear that his Russian deli business

was not going to be a success in Ireland. We still had the odd game online...well that was my only option after being declared *persona non grata* by the local Bridge playing community.

We did appeal the decision of course and a few weeks after our disciplinary hearing another letter arrived. It was post-marked Strasbourg and came from an official of the European Commission. It read;

*“Dear Sir*

*Your appeal in respect of a judgment by the Iona Bridge Organisers has been rejected by the European Court. Furthermore I refer you to Section 63, Sub-section 29, Clause 6.2.4, and Paragraph 19 of the new Contract Bridge Regulations. You are hereby banned from playing Bridge in any of the 47 EC countries for a period not exceeding ten years.”*

No serious Bridge for 10 years!! It was more than I could bear. There was only one thing for it. I decided to check on the Ryanair website for the time of the next flight to Kamchatka...

*Note: This article first appeared in the IBU Journal.*

## **GALA PAIRS** **Sunday August 7<sup>th</sup>** **La Mon House Hotel**

This event is specifically for Inter A, Inter B and Novice players and each will have its own section and prizes.

There are two sessions, starting at 12.00 and the cost is £15 per person.

For entry please email Pat Johnston at:  
[patmjohnston@hotmail.com](mailto:patmjohnston@hotmail.com)  
or 07815840315

A lot of work has gone into organising this event so please do give it your support

## To Delegate Or Not To Delegate – That Is The Question

*By Rex Anderson*

Prior to 2012, when the delegate system was last used, very few of the 100 delegates attended General Meetings although only delegates were members of the Executive Council. If there had been a reasonable quorum set then, the meetings would rarely have been quorate. The 2012 Constitution aimed to involve more members by replacing the Executive Council with a Council limited to 12 members selected from delegates nominated by clubs.

Under the 2012 Sharp Constitution, the 2014 Burns Constitution and the 2016 Cannell Constitution the principle of permitting each member of the Union who attends a general meeting of the Union to have a vote is clearly recognized – in each Constitution where any change to the Constitution is proposed at a meeting each member attending that meeting is entitled to a vote. This right was granted to members in the Constitution which was in force prior to 2012.

Under the provisions of the 2012 Sharp Constitution there was a radical change - each member of the Union who attended a general meeting of the Union was enfranchised to have a vote on any resolution.

The proposal now being made for the autumn EGM in the delegate clause is to take away the right of a member of the Union to vote at a general meeting of the Union.

One member one vote is to be replaced by only delegates appointed by clubs being entitled to vote at an AGM or EGM – [clause 4.1.7].

If members can be trusted to deal with votes to change the Constitution that is acceptance by the Union of the principle of one member one vote.

Votes by appointed delegates only would be a breach of that recognized principle of one member one vote.

There is no sensible reason for the enfranchised members to give up the right to vote. The history of democracy is a history of a struggle to obtain a vote for every person – each being treated as an equal. Here we have the Union trying to move away from democracy.

The Union has been trying to get as many members as possible involved in the running of bridge in Northern Ireland. The increase in the numbers of members on Council from 12 to 18 and the creation of committees on which members of Council are not permitted to sit both show that this principle is recognized in the new Constitution. Delegate only votes at a general meeting contradicts the principle of involvement of members in running bridge.

If members of the Union have no vote surely they are much less likely to attend a general meeting.

If the members of the Union attending, agree to the delegates clause it seems to me they are agreeing :

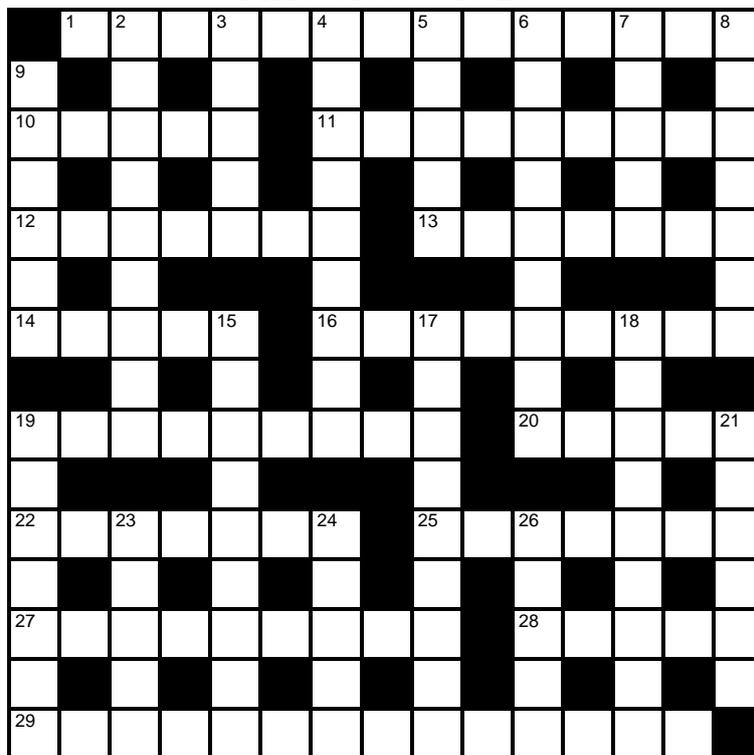
[1] they are untrustworthy and will be swayed by emotion into making silly decisions at a general meeting;

[2] they are incapable of knowing what is right and voting appropriately;

[3] they are more likely to act irrationally than to act sensibly;

[4] the establishment knows best – certainly better than the uneducated and ignorant members.

## Prize Crossword 23



### Across

- 1 Call for vet - mice all over the place in coop (10,4)
- 10 Gastric influx involves poison (5)
- 11 Bids generally about around South (9)
- 12 Painting Bob Brahe he leaves (7)
- 13 General chases revolutionary South and draws blood (7)
- 14 Run over (5)
- 16 Journalist in the money abroad increases his bid (9)
- 19 Trifle mixture suggestion for the end of Gasper (6,3)
- 20 Troubled bride proposed again (5)
- 22 Went back and sowed soundly (7)
- 25 King's daughter has fizzy drink at home (7)
- 27 An exam the making of a rash (9)
- 28 Positive verse heard (5)
- 29 Primeval cellos play for a bid (6,8)

### Down

- 2 Head case from club with political letters (9)
- 3 Major request also held by vacant lady (5)
- 4 Bird in pain when South jumps asking for range (9)
- 5 One put out hands for text book (5)
- 6 Old King holds the money for the treasurer (9)
- 7 God everyone asks help first for (5)
- 8 Girl heard to hold sheep badly (7)
- 9 On the fiddle in game (6)
- 15 Story told about act on deal (9)
- 17 To deal with fool holding back Sri Lankan (9)
- 18 He rang no bells making a conventional bid (9)
- 19 Pincers for press private secretary (7)
- 21 Wood the Queen hands out (6)
- 23 Allege Clubs said to be disadvantaged (5)
- 24 The reason in residue today (3,2)
- 26 Asking for money upfront (5)

Solutions to Derek Cannell, 1 Cranley Road, Bangor, Co Down, BT19 7HE or [derekcannell@gmail.com](mailto:derekcannell@gmail.com) by October 1st

