

Palmerston North Bridge Club Newsletter

April 2022

President's Welcome

Welcome to the first newsletter following the Annual General Meeting held in March. And, yes, I am President again in the absence of any other victim – I mean volunteer! I am happy to continue in this role for one more year: many thanks to those of you who have offered your congratulations and support. I am also pleased to confirm that Grant Elliott remains as our treasurer and Gayle Leader as our secretary. We are still without a Vice-President – a position that can be filled by co-option through the year. Please do consider if you would relish the challenge of stepping up to this role during 2022 and/or as President in 2023. Without people volunteering for the Committee positions, our Club cannot function and, if you enjoy playing bridge at the Club, it is a great way to give back.

Harking back to the Annual General Meeting again, I want to thank Ken Bateman, Craig Killington and Claire Veltman for putting on a fantastic quiz night to follow the formal AGM – we had 6 teams and a lot of fun! I would like to congratulate Susan Baty on becoming a Life Member of the Club and Michele Kay on being awarded “The Bryan Northcott Award for Member of the Year” (pictured receiving the award from Bryan) – both very well deserved and well received.



The inaugural member of the year last year was Jack James. Part of the reason why he won that award was his meteoric rise up through the masterpoint rankings: Jack achieved Grandmaster-y in early March – an amazing achievement in one so young! Fellow grandmaster, Bob Hurley, writes an acknowledgment of Jack’s achievement later in this newsletter which I want to echo wholeheartedly.

At our first Committee meeting in late March, we were pleased to welcome Bob Hurley as an ordinary member and to welcome back Morgan Booker, Tony Fayerman and Angela Harper as our graded room reps. Our meeting focussed on a work programme for this year, and we agreed to continue with the Venue Hire and Building sub-committees and to create a new sub-committee to be concerned broadly with Membership: recruitment and retention of members (including the annual lessons programmes), developing the playing programme for 2023 and also to support our members to grow their bridge technique through a more formal mentoring programme and improvers classes. These sub-committees are open to all members – if you would be interested to be involved in any or all of these sub-committees, please do shout out. Your participation will be very welcome.

On that note, I would very much like to welcome the following new members to our Club: Geoff Jameson, Patricia Henaghan, Pat Nisbet and Sam Nisbet. You will be familiar with all these members since they have been at playing sessions recently – it is lovely to have you on board officially! Also, to welcome back John Seator who played at the Club some years ago and has been playing regularly at Feilding Club for the past few years. We also look forward to welcoming the current crop of beginners (who are undergoing their lessons at the moment) to the playing sessions in due course. Thanks to Ken Bateman and Anne Gordon for teaching the two 10-week courses (Monday evening and Wednesday afternoon respectively) and to Maxine Keay for organising everyone!.

Finally, in looking back on events since the last newsletter, we held the official and grand opening of the Jubilee Courtyard in late February. The City Mayor, Grant Smith, and special guest, Mitre 10 Mega Director, Vicky Stewart attended with their good wishes to cut the ribbon – oh! what a moment for my phone to fail! If anyone has pictures from this event to share for our archives, I would be very grateful. The Courtyard has been well used as the Summer turns to Autumn and it gives the building such a welcoming vista. Well done everyone for your donations and hard work.

And now looking forward – our five playing sessions have been augmented temporarily with a 6th online social session running concurrently with the Thursday Multigrade evening session. Table numbers are holding up well as we pass (hopefully) through the peak of the Omicron outbreak. I know several members have been affected by the virus - please do keep yourself and others safe and remember to reach out to me or your room rep if you have any concerns or if there is anything that we may be able to help you with in the event that you need to isolate at home.

Upcoming events for the Club include our annual three-way interclub tournament with Wanganui and Hawera Clubs (date to be decided) and a new handicap multigrade tournament on 26th June. This latter event is new for us: the idea is to be able to award the top prizes to mixed grade pairs providing everyone with a chance to win. More information on both these events as our planning progresses.

This newsletter is, as always, full of information. My thanks to all contributors and to everyone who does so much to support the smooth running of our Club. You are a great team!

Denise Servante
President

Jack James – Grandmaster!

The club is very proud of our newest grandmaster, Jack James. An article was published on Stuff 27/3/22 and is recommended reading. Most notable was the speed in which Jack reached the milestone at the age of 24 years. It would have been earlier had Covid not intervened.

Jack has won a number of tournaments on his way to grandmaster but I rate his teams 2nd in the recent NZ teams (our premier event) as the most noteworthy. It was a marathon event played over 5 consecutive days. As well as all NZs top players there were many top Australian players competing with the event being held on Realbridge.

Here are some tips about how to beat Jack next time you meet. If you bid or play normally he will probably beat you, so, if you have the choice of opening 1S or 4S, open 4S. Make him guess whether he should bid or not. Pre-emptively open at the 3 level with any reasonable six card suit when not vulnerable. If you play leading 4ths try the 2 from your five card suit as a deceptive play.

Bob Hurley



Denise takes a selfie with Jack

Club and Tournaments Results



What a pretty picture! Laura, Tony, Maxine and Malcolm celebrating their success at the Wanganui Junior/Intermediate Tournament

Hastings Open Teams	Bob Hurley Grant Jarvis Gary Chen John Wang	3 rd
Taranaki Congress Swiss Pairs	Bob Hurley Grant Jarvis	3 rd
Auckland St Vincent Pairs	Bob Hurley Grant Jarvis	2 nd
Taranaki Congress Open Teams	Jack James Jeremy Fraser-Hoskins Jane Lennon Max Morrison	3 rd
Tauranga Congress Teams	Jack James Jeremy Fraser-Hoskins Rachel Pelkman Murray Wood	2 nd
Taupo Intermediate Pairs	Anne Gordon Julie Bunnell	2 nd
NZ Congress Intermediate Swiss Pairs	Anne Gordon Zheng Zhang	2 nd
Taranaki Congress Intermediate Teams	Tony Clear Laura Griffin Debbie Marcroft Garry Hodge	2 nd
Palmerston North Intermediate Pairs	Michael Hardman Gayle Leader	2 nd
	Julie Bunnell Hans van Bunnik	3 rd
Wanganui Junior/Intermediate Tournament	Laura Griffin Tony Clear	1 st
	Maxine Keay Malcolm Loudon	5 th

Congratulations to the following pairs who attained 70% or more in our club since the last newsletter

Bryan Northcott & Bev Colville	71.67%
Elizabeth & Ray Kemp	71.58%
Caroline Brodie & Geoff Jameson	71.25%
Tammy & Sean Lynch	71.08%

Gayle Leader

Fun with Jack

I do not regularly play with Jack James but have done so in the past on “special occasions” – the Babich NZ-wide Pairs in November 2021 was one such event. We agreed to play a pretty simple ACOL system – to suit me - without too many fancy conventions. But I suppose what I consider a fancy convention and what Jack considers to be one wildly varies. In this hand, that served us well.

Board 21

North Deals
N-S Vul

♠ A Q J 6	♠ 8 7	♠ K 10 9 4 3
♥ Q 10 9 8 6 4	♥ A J	♥ K 7 3 2
♦ A 6 3	♦ J 10 4	♦ K 8 7
♣ —	♣ K J 8 6 5 2	♣ 7

♠ 5 2
♥ 5
♦ Q 9 5 2
♣ A Q 10 9 4 3

West	North	East	South
	Pass	Pass	Pass
1 ♥	2 ♣	4 ♣	Pass
4 NT	Pass	5 ♣	Pass
5 ♦	Pass	6 ♥	Pass
Pass	Pass		

Here’s the interpretation of the bidding from my perspective – three passed hands and a standard 1H opener with a safe 2H rebid if needed. Jack’s 4C cannot be genuine so must be Ace asking. We were using Roman Keycard for both Gerber and Blackwood so my bid is 4NT showing 2A and the Q trumps. Jack’s 5C must be asking for K so my response 5D shows no K. Jack signs off in 6H.

Here’s Jack’s interpretation of the bidding – 4C is a splinter bid showing shortage in Clubs. 4NT therefore is RKC so Jack bids 5C showing no A. My 5D shows the Q of trumps so Jack risks me having fewer than 3A and bids the slam.

As Jack puts down his hand, he says “So, who was ace asking?” but as you can see the slam is cold. Only 10 pairs in the Babich field of 750 bid the slam – I cannot say how many of them stumbled into it like we did (and there were other hands where the stumbling gave us the opposite result). Maybe it is another example of Jack’s instinct to push for top boards – alluded to in Ray’s analysis of hands from our playing sessions.

Denise Servante

The Beer Card

If you saw the article on Jack James in 'Stuff' last month you may have noticed that in one photograph he is holding up $\spadesuit 7$ which is apparently his favourite card. Among bridge cognoscenti $\spadesuit 7$ is known as the 'beer card'. There is a rather strange tradition associated with this card, presumably invented by folks who like their beer and fancy adding a little frisson to their game. Why $\spadesuit 7$? Who knows? However, the story goes that if you are in any contract (other than in the diamond suit) and you win the last trick of your contract with $\spadesuit 7$ then your partner owes you a beer. An extra condition is that you must make the contract.

As you might imagine, it can take a lot of skill and luck to win the last trick with such a modest card. In one of the hands in March Monday afternoon pairs $\spadesuit 7$ proved to be crucial. Fate offered me the chance to win the last trick in a game contract with this beer card but I was so relieved to make the contract at all that I missed the opportunity. Here are our hands and bidding. I am sitting East.

Board 2

East Deals
N-S Vul

\spadesuit K 9 8 3 \heartsuit Q J 7 \diamondsuit 9 8 \clubsuit A J 9 7		\spadesuit Q J 5 4 \heartsuit A K \diamondsuit J 7 3 2 \clubsuit K 4 3
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West	North	East	South
		1 NT	Pass
2 \clubsuit	Pass	2 \spadesuit	Pass
3 \spadesuit	Pass	4 \spadesuit	All Pass

A pretty straight forward bidding sequence and final contract, but after South has led off the king and ace of diamonds the situation doesn't look so rosy. We are bound to lose at least one trump and appear to be relying on the club finesse to work and to find a way to avoid another diamond loser.

One glimmer of hope with the diamonds is that I notice North playing the ten of diamonds on the second trick. South may have noticed it as well since he switches to the safe heart lead at trick three.

I take out trumps driving out $\spadesuit A$ from North who returns another heart. I take out South's last trump and this leaves me on lead in the East hand. I need to make the rest of the tricks.

\spadesuit 9 \heartsuit Q \diamondsuit \clubsuit A J 9 7		\spadesuit Q \heartsuit \diamondsuit J 7 \clubsuit K 4 3
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So I now have the choice of taking the club finesse or trying to set up a diamond trick. I have the impression that South has initially led from the ace-king-queen of diamonds. If this is correct then I can try a ruffing finesse on $\spadesuit Q$ since all the other honours and the ten-nine-eight of the suit have already been played.

So here is the moment of truth. I play $\spadesuit J$ and South smoothly plays a low diamond. This throws me a little. On the one hand, beginners are told to cover an honour with an honour. However, South is a grand master so I couldn't really take too much notice of that. He will realize that if he plays $\spadesuit Q$ and I ruff then I may have the winning $\spadesuit 7$. The other possibility is that South doesn't have the queen at all but that North started with QTx of the suit. It feels like a 50-50 call but I reckon that South would have continued with diamonds at trick three if he had had the queen. I cross my fingers and ruff the jack of diamonds. With some relief the queen comes tumbling down from North.

Now there is no problem. I ditch a club from hand on the queen of hearts, play a low club to my king in hand followed by the winning $\spadesuit 7$, a club back to the ace in dummy and the last trump. Only after claiming the last trick do I realize that all I had to do was switch around the order in which I played the cards to claim the last trick with $\spadesuit 7$.

Well, I'll just have to wait patiently for another chance to win a drink with the beer card. The trick then will be to convince my partner that this is a well-known tradition. At least I was relieved to find out that the club finesse would have failed. Here are all four hands.

Board 2

East Deals
N-S Vul

\spadesuit K 9 8 3 \heartsuit Q J 7 \diamondsuit 9 8 \clubsuit A J 9 7		\spadesuit Q J 5 4 \heartsuit A K \diamondsuit J 7 3 2 \clubsuit K 4 3
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\spadesuit 10 7 2 \heartsuit 6 4 3 2 \diamondsuit A K 6 5 \clubsuit 8 2
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So look out for that elusive beer card when you play your next round of bridge. And if you are playing with a new partner check out your system but don't forget to tell them about the importance of $\spadesuit 7$. Play your cards right and it might get you a free drink.

Ray Kemp

Strip Bridge

OK, I'm not proposing a novel way of bringing in the punters, or suggesting a method of trying to distract opponents. I am talking about stripping cards not clothes. When the opponents are not obliging enough to lead your preferred suit then sometimes you can strip them of their other suits and then put them on lead. They may have no alternative but to make the lead you are looking for. An opportunity to carry out this strip and throw-in occurred on a Monday afternoon hand in March.

Board 10	♠ 10 8 5		
East Deals	♥ 3		
Both Vul	♦ 8 5 4		
	♣ K Q 10 9 7 2		
	♠ Q 9 4	♠ A J	
	♥ 9 5 4	♥ A Q 10 7 6 2	
	♦ K Q J 6	♦ A 7 3 2	
	♣ A J 5	♣ 3	
		♠ K 7 6 3 2	
		♥ K J 8	
		♦ 10 9	
		♣ 8 6 4	

This is an easy hand to bid and at every table but one (more of that later) the final contract was four hearts by East. Again, it looks like a pretty straightforward hand to play. There are three possible losers – one spade and two hearts. I win the lead of ♦10 in dummy and play a heart up to the queen which loses to the king. I win the second diamond return and play off ♥A. When North shows out, I am doomed to lose another heart. I now go over to dummy and take the spade finesse, hoping that at least one card is in the right place. However, again South turns up with the goods so I make my four which turns out to be a very poor result. Most players either had an initial spade lead by South away from their king or South led spades when they got in with a trump. Our South was not so accommodating.

So after cursing my bad luck at playing against a cautious South I checked the 'should-make' results to find that I can always take eleven tricks however South defends. I didn't get chance to check this at the time but later ran 'Deep Finesse' to see what the story was. And the ingenious strategy is to strip South of his exit cards so that he has to play a spade.

The hand can go various ways but assuming South leads a club or diamond to the contract it is important for East to also play clubs and diamonds. South may ruff in on the third diamond and lead a club which East can ruff. Eventually East will be on lead with the cards distributed as follows:

	♠ 10 8 5		
	♥ 3		
	♦ -		
	♣ K 10 9		
♠ Q 9 4		♠ A J	
♥ 9 5 4		♥ A Q 10 7	
♦ Q		♦ 2	
♣ -		♣ -	
		♠ K 7 6 3 2	
		♥ K J	
		♦ -	
		♣ -	

At this point, East must play ♥A followed by another heart and South is scuppered. He wins ♥K but has nothing but spades left so must give East a second trick in the suit.

So Deep Finesse finds a way of playing the contract perfectly if the whereabouts of all 52 cards are known. Whether any real player who can only see half the deal might play it this way is another matter.

All the players who had a spade lead from South were lucky to make the undeserved overtrick – all except one. A recent entrant into the halls of grandmastership (no names, no pack drill) got into a pushy contract of six hearts, but even with the spade lead was unable to generate that twelfth trick.

Ray Kemp

You must be joking

The last word – as seen in the "chat" part of the screen during a match on BBO. After a rather disjointed bidding sequence resulting in a scoring disaster, the exchange between partners went like this:

Declarer: Sorry Partner. I was seriously dumb ... 3 times!
We should have been in hearts!

Responder: Say that again – did not understand bid.

Declarer: What part of "I was dumb" don't you understand?

Responder: Was.

Tony Fayerman