



South African Trials

Bulletin: 7

IT'S ALL OVER!

All the boards have been played and laptops and i-pads now put away! The Links is wearing its deserted look having been extremely busy for the last 6 days. Congratulations to all participants who made the Top Eight and especial congratulations to the Top Three Pairs in each section who will form the S A team.

OPEN TEAM

Alon Apteker and Craig Gower; Rob Stephens and Noah Apteker; Neville Eber and Hennie Fick

So this team is extremely experienced with five players having represented South Africa previously and Noah Apteker a first time representative. His Dad sent me a message saying "I am super proud of him and excited to be playing with him on the same team. He is 22 years old." Alon himself has represented S A 9 times previously and Rob told me he had played for S A 7 times, the first as a Junior in 2008. I know the others have all played many times too. It is quite an age range with Noah and Rob the youngest and Neville the veteran!

I asked about their systems and found the replies I received were interesting. Rob said he preferred to keep the system as simple as possible which tends to avoid any partnership misunderstandings and unnecessary gifts to the opponents. As Bernard reported in one of our Bulletins this week, a convention which came up twice was 1 NT - 3D showing 5/5 in the majors and invitation or better values. This allowed us to reach a couple of good 4H or 4 S contracts on sub minimum HCP's but good fitting hands. Neville's tip was aimed at more advanced players. He said major suit raises are often dealt with poorly. We play 3 C shows 4 and is about 10. 3 D is the same with 3 triple jumps show an opening hand, 4 plus trumps, and a good 5/6 card suit on the side. 3 NT over the major shows 3 ba and 12/15. All shortages with 4 plus trumps go through 2 NT initially. Alon answered we do have a lot of gadgets in our system notes although we prefer a fairly natural and practical approach.

WOMEN'S TEAM

Nicky Bateman and Val Bloom; Diana Balkin and Sharon Izerel; Di Penlington and Glynis Dornon

This team is composed of one brand new partnership put together for these trials (Nicky and Val), another new paring of Di and Glynis (who have Mark Oliff to thank that they even entered at all!

- he advised them as good standard players they should give the trials a go and they entered at the eleventh hour!) and Diana and Sharon who have been playing together for about 2 1/2 years. There are three new S A representatives in Sharon, Di Penlington and Glynis (although she had represented Botswana way back in her bridge career) are the first ladies ever from the Eastern Cape to represent South Africa. Val Bloom, by her own admission, would be the most senior member of the team with Nicky, and Diana Balkin had represented S A on four previous occasions.

As regards systems, Di and Glynis play Standard American and not even 2 over 1. Sharon said she and Diana had worked really hard on their system and had received help from some big guns along the way. From playing together a lot they had become used to each other's playing style. As I wrote in an earlier Bulletin, Nicky and Val had pages of their system which they had worked on together as had realised they saw things differently with other partners!

Di Penlington told me that she had played since schooldays, having learned with her parents. She has been involved in bridge administration too for many years. Val Bloom talked about that when sanctions were lifted against S A in the early 90's she recalled going to a World Open event in the USA and had left the tournament before the prizegiving not realizing they had won Zonal medals! She played with Maureen Holroyd for 20 years and enjoyed the honour of playing with her and team mates like the late great Petra Mansell, Merle Modlin, Judy Osie and Lorna Ichilchik - qualifying in the Top Eight several times and even reaching SemiFinals in Istanbul rather surprisingly so they had to change their return airtickets for later not ever dreaming they would get that far! More recently Val had played with Tas Nestorides in Turkey and Poland. Clearly an experienced S A representative with many stories to tell!

Well done all of you! We are proud of you all and may you enjoy the Buenos Aires bridge event!

***Submitted by
Deirdre Ingersent***

OPEN FINALS - Results by Round

Players	Rank	TOTAL VPs	C/O		Round 1		Round 2		Round 3		Round 4		Round 5		Round 6		Round 7		Adjustment	
			VPs	IMPS	VPs	IMPS	VPs	IMPS	VPs	IMPS	VPs	IMPS	VPs	IMPS	VPs	IMPS	VPs	Note	VPs	
Alon Apteker & Craig Gower	1	159.59	75.25	9	12.55	10	12.80	10	12.80	16	14.18	8	12.29	-5	8.52	4	11.20			
Noah Apteker & Rob Stephens	2	157.92	80.81	-1	9.69	-10	7.20	16	14.18	8	12.29	17	14.39	-17	5.61	14	13.75			
Neville Eber & Hennie Fick	3	146.44	75.62	4	11.20	-8	7.71	30	16.73	4	11.20	-14	6.25	5	11.48	-14	6.25			
Andrew Cruise & Saul Burman	4	144.98	60.47	4	11.20	8	12.29	36	17.59	12	13.28	-11	6.96	17	14.39	-4	8.80			
Brian Pincus & Diniar Minwalla	5	123.10	46.57	1	10.31	24	15.74	-30	3.27	-16	5.82	11	13.04	18	14.60	14	13.75			
Imtiaz Kaprey & Paul Reynolds	6	115.77	58.88	-4	8.80	-26	3.91	-10	7.20	-4	8.80	-17	5.61	-18	5.40	33	17.17			
Duncan Keet & Jude Apteker	7	103.97	53.53	-9	7.45	-24	4.26	-36	2.41	-8	7.71	14	13.75	7	12.03	-33	2.83			
James Grant & Larry Chemaly	8	98.24	38.88	-4	8.80	26	16.09	-16	5.82	-12	6.72	-8	7.71	-7	7.97	-14	6.25			

WOMEN'S FINALS - Results by Round

Players	Rank	TOTAL VPs	C/O		Round 1		Round 2		Round 3		Round 4		Round 5		Round 6		Round 7		Adjustment	
			VPs	IMPS	VPs	IMPS	VPs	IMPS	VPs	IMPS	VPs	IMPS	VPs	IMPS	VPs	IMPS	VPs	Note	VPs	
Nicola Bateman & Val Bloom	1	159.62	72.32	-3	9.09	40	18.09	-33	2.83	15	13.97	54	19.52	23	15.56	-6	8.24			
Diana Balkin & Sharon Izerel	2	149.89	73.32	8	12.29	15	13.97	6	11.76	-9	7.45	-29	3.42	25	15.92	6	11.76			
Dianne Penlington & Glynis Dornon	3	147.35	62.48	-8	7.71	0	10.00	33	17.17	21	15.19	19	14.80	-10	7.20	10	12.80			
Carol Grunder & Jill Rabie	4	129.43	59.50	-10	7.20	-25	4.08	20	15.00	-15	6.03	29	16.58	10	12.80	-6	8.24			
Sharon Lang & Lotte Sorensen	5	125.73	60.46	3	10.91	25	15.92	-6	8.24	-3	9.09	6	11.76	-38	2.15	-10	7.20			
Peta Balderson & Jennifer Gautschi	6	123.33	64.63	10	12.80	-40	1.91	-6	8.24	3	10.91	-19	5.20	-25	4.08	23	15.56			
Jennifer Foaden & Renee Kenny	7	121.03	46.63	0	10.00	0	10.00	6	11.76	9	12.55	-54	0.48	38	17.85	6	11.76			
Bev Hewitt & Trish Crosse	8	95.63	52.67	0	10.00	-15	6.03	-20	5.00	-21	4.81	-6	8.24	-23	4.44	-23	4.44			



Left: Di Penlington Right: Glynis Dornon

Noah left and Alon on right



*Sharon Izerel, Diana Balkin, Val Bloom, Nicky Bateman.
(These are all Gauteng women and were monitored at The Links Bridge Club in Joburg)*



Rob Stephens, Craig Gower, Hennie Fick and Neville Eber. All Gauteng players

FINAL SAY

The trials were completed after 6 days of grueling bridge where contestants were expected to play 48 boards per day. After a total of 232 boards, the top three pairs in the open and women's events have emerged and will represent South Africa in the upcoming World Bridge Games to be held in Buenos Aires in October this year.

On behalf of the SABF, congratulations to the successful trialists in the Open; Alon Apteker, Craig Gower, Robert Stephens, Noah Apteker, Neville Eber, Hennie Fick and in the Women's; Nicola Bateman, Valerie Bloom, Diana Balkin, Sharon Izerel, Di Penlington and Glynis Dornon. We have 4 new springboks, Noah Apteker, Sharon Izerel, Di Penlington and Glynis Dornon. This is a strong indication that South African bridge representatives are not a closed community and all players have the ability to improve their game and can ultimately represent their country. We wish our successful contestants the best of luck and safe travels.

I enjoyed writing articles for this bulletin enormously and had considerable help from Lotte Sorensen who, even though her home language is not English, was invaluable in correcting my grammar and punctuation and ensured that I got things right.

Bridge is an easy game when you can see all four hands and on occasion, I have been critical of players actions not appreciating the problems experienced when only looking at 1 hand. If I have offended anyone, I apologize. My goal in writing the bulletin articles was to not only present what happened at various tables but also to be educational. I hope I was successful.

The overall standard of play was reasonable but it is clear to me that if South Africa wishes to become competitive internationally, there is a lot of room for improvement. Improvement can only come from playing against better players and in pursuit of this, it is essential that the SABF continues to send teams to international tournaments. I strongly believe that the experience gained at these events filters through to all South African players leading to an overall improvement in the standard of play.

I believe that the trials were run fairly and the best pairs, on the day, were successful. SABF is indebted to the monitors from the Unions who gave up their time without any compensation. I had many consultations with Steve Bunker, tournament director, who besides doing an amazing job in running the tournament, was also very obliging and accommodating whenever I made any requests which I believed would improve the running of this event. There is, unfortunately, an extreme dearth of qualified tournament directors in South African. This shortage has become critical and I therefore, appeal to anyone who is interested in offering their services as a tournament director to contact the SABF secretary. There are director courses available that

will be funded by the SABF.

Important decisions need to be made by the SABF regarding a number of issues that have arisen from these trials. I appeal to SABF members to offer their input regarding some of these which I will list below. Opinions voiced below are my own and not representative of the SABF.

1. Online versus Face-to-Face events

I strongly believe that the future of bridge lies in face-face events. The social aspects of the game cannot be overemphasized. International events are held face-to-face. It does not make sense to hold trials using an online format. The online format has a number of advantages such as reducing cost but contestants are not playing the same game as they will be required to play when they go overseas. One of the most important attributes of an expert bridge player is 'table presence'. Slight hesitations, flickering when playing cards and overall demeanor of opponents are essential clues as to how to bid or play a hand. Online, these inferences are not available. Hesitations may be due to connectivity problems and you cannot see or hear your opponent. Players who have exceptional table presence are unfairly disadvantaged when playing online. Transgressions such as bidding out of turn, making insufficient bids, leading out of turn, playing from the wrong hand are not possible online. These transgressions occur due to loss of concentration at face-to-face events and it is a reality that it is difficult to remain focused all the time. Cheating is a major challenge for online bridge and while I do not believe that there was any cheating over the past week, I have no doubt that cheaters will find ways to overcome whatever measures we put in place to prevent it online.

For the above reasons, my view is that trials should be run face-to-face. Part of the cost considerations can be overcome by local hosting of players who come from far. Bridge players have in the past been very generous in this regard.

2. Miss-clicking in online events

When online events became very popular at the start of the covid epidemic, tournament directors decided that no undo's would be accepted in either the bidding or the play. It became evident that miss-clicking during the bidding could randomly be a disadvantage to the non-offending side. As a concrete example of this, I remember one occasion when my partner mis-clicked and opened 4H. As it happened, this was the correct contract (I held 6 hearts). Our opponents were at an extreme disadvantage as they had no idea what the nature was of either dummy or declarer's hands. The rules were, therefore, modified to allow undo's in the bidding. This added complexity for tournament directors' who had to decide whether there was a genuine miss-click or if it was a change of mind. Issues around

unauthorized information became a problem. Because miss-clicks by declarer during play convey no unauthorized information, it was decided for this tournament that miss-clicks by declarer could be changed PROVIDED that the next player had not played. This caused some dissatisfaction by the players as they felt there was not enough time to request an undo. Unfortunately, once the next player plays to the trick, giving permission to players to change their card opens up a can of worms. Even completely ridiculous plays which seem to be miss-clicks are sometimes just a loss of concentration or a change of mind and it is impossible for a director to determine which. As transgressions, such as insufficient bids, cannot occur in online bridge, the feeling was that the least we can expect from players is to ensure that they do not miss-click.

3. Format of trials

I am convinced, and this is supported by world bridge authorities, that round robin events are inherently unfair. Match throwing and the inherent unfairness of timing when you play a particular opponent (players at the bottom tend to lose interest and it is an advantage to play them later in the event) make this format undesirable. The draw in the current trials was very carefully thought out and as it happened, the open event was very closely contested and the top players all played each other towards the end of the event. As the results were close, match throwing was not an option but, in the past, it has been a serious problem. In the Women's event, the top 3 pairs were far ahead making this issue less important. Cross-imp pairs trials have a severe disadvantage in that players are at the mercy of what I call the field effect. When you sit North/South, you have 1 opponent and all the other East/West pairs are your 'team-mates'. I described in detail in a match report in a previous bulletin where it was clear that one pair had been let down by their 'team-mates'. This is a completely random effect that was present throughout the trials. If playing a large number of boards (more than 232 played in these trials), this effect will even out but it adds a randomness that can obscure the skills and expertise of 'unlucky' players. I strongly believe that the only fair way to run trials is to have a knockout team's event. With a knockout event, none of the above is a consideration.

Enough from me. I would really like to hear from you so that the SABF can serve you well. Please send comments to **bdonde101@gmail.com** or the SABF secretary at **andrew@cruisey.com**

***Submitted by
Bernard Donde***