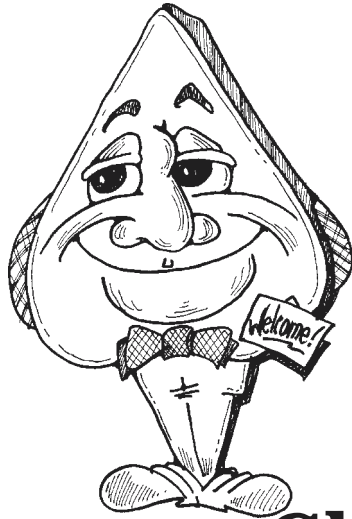


WELCOME!



TO THE
**North
American
Bridge
Championships**

***An Intermediate and
New Player Guide to
understanding the games,
activities, and competition
at the NABCs***

Join the fun!



American Contract Bridge League

*ACBL wishes to thank the following people
for their contributions to this book —*

Betty Starzec — for the original idea.
Julie Greenberg — for developing the idea and overseeing the project.
Edith McMullin — for excerpts from various ACBL publications.
Jude Goodwin-Hanson — for the illustrations.*
Frank Stewart — for the article on being a good partner.
Cindy Hill and Leona Allison — for the production work.

* All illustrations and cartoons in this book are covered by copyright.
None of the illustrations in this book may be reproduced without the express
permission of the artist.



American Contract Bridge League
2990 Airways Blvd.
Memphis, TN 38116
901-332-5586
www.acbl.org

Printed in USA by ACBL
Revised 1/03

Copyright 2002 by ACBL

Welcome
to the
North American
Bridge Championships



The American Contract Bridge League (ACBL) extends a gracious welcome to all of the Intermediate and Newcomer (IN) players who are attending this North American Bridge Championships (NABC). The ACBL offers these NABC tournaments three times a year as the ultimate bridge experience. The NABCs offer bridge at its finest for all levels of players from world-class players to beginners as well as special events, guest lectures and hospitality.

This booklet is your personal guide to all of the events and activities available to you at the NABC. It also provides some general information of importance to you now that you are an official NABC tournament player! Whether or not this is your first NABC, ACBL hopes you will find this booklet interesting as well as helpful.

Each NABC has its own personality. The flavor and adventure of each of these tournaments are the result of the special hospitality touches added by the local bridge community. Great food! A registration gift! Table giveaways! Bridge Bingo! Sightseeing adventures! Special events! You never know what exciting activities are in store for you. Take advantage of as many as you can — they are part of the overall NABC experience!

Enjoy the excitement!

Experience the game at its finest!

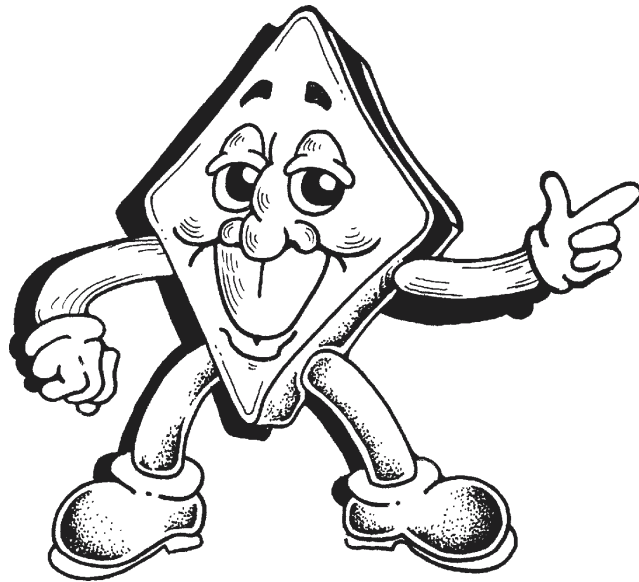
Get ready to come back again and again!

Sincerely,
ACBL Management

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
An Overview of the NABCs	1
Are You a Member? Join the ACBL Now!	3
The IN Program	4
Which Event Should We Enter	6
Types of Pair Games.....	6
Stratified Pairs	6
Flighted Pairs	8
Strati-flighted Pairs	9
Side Game Series Pairs	9
IMP Pairs	9
Types of Team Games	10
Knockout Teams.....	10
Bracketed Knockout Teams	10
Compact Knockout Teams	10
Swiss Teams	10
Midnight Swiss Teams	11
Midnight Zip Knockout Teams	11
Board-a-Match Teams	11
Types of Championship Team Games and Ribbon Events	12
Vanderbilt Knockout Teams	12
Spingold Knockout Teams	12
Reisinger Board-A-Match Teams	13
Blue Ribbon Pairs	14
Red Ribbon Pairs	15
Silver Ribbon Pairs	15
How Did You Do?	16
Scoring the Results	16
Methods of Scoring (IMPs and Victory Points)	18
Posting the Results (Reading the Recap Sheet) ..	19
We Won!	20
Masterpoints	21
Rankings	22
For Your Information - Duplicate Tips You Need to Know	23
Duplicate Do's and Don'ts	23

Being a Good Partner	24
Kibitzing	25
Bidding Boxes.....	27
Calling the Director.....	28
Claims.....	29
Appeals	30
The Convention Card	30
Alerts, Announcements, Skip Bids	32
Seeding	35
Active Ethics	35
Minding Your P's & Q's at the Table	
(Zero Tolerance Policy)	36
Playing Up to Speed	37



An Overview of the NABCs

Nothing expresses the spirit of the NABCs more than the hustle and bustle of the busy corridors before game time, the hush of those same corridors as the game is being played, and the good times to be had after the final card is played.

Although each NABC has a personality of its own, all offer a superb variety of pair and team events. Morning, afternoon, evening, and well into the night, bridge players can take advantage of playing the schedule they prefer and also enjoy the hospitality of the host city.

To find out just what is happening, read the *Daily Bulletin*, a mini-newspaper produced each day by ACBL and available each morning around 9 am. Not only does this publication provide information on the playing schedule and the prior day's results, but it also lists all of the special events that are available for you to enjoy at the tournament. You will find interesting deals, plays, and the latest information on what is happening in the bridge world as well as at the current tournament.

Use the information in the *Daily Bulletin* to plan your complete NABC experience. Spend the time after the evening session enjoying refreshments compliments of the host organization and attend some of the after-game entertainment. You will find the *Daily Bulletin* in news racks throughout the playing area and host hotel(s).

For the newer duplicate player, each NABC presents a full schedule of Intermediate-Newcomer (IN) events and activities. The NABC IN Program is perfect for "getting your feet wet" at this tournament. Read about it in the next section.

One of the most exceptional opportunities at an NABC is the chance to watch the pros by sitting right next to

them as a kibitzer. Anyone who understands the complexity of bridge can appreciate the skills of top bridge players as they bid and play the deals. (Read the article in this booklet on how to be a good kibitzer before you give this a try.) In what other sport can you be a spectator on the frontline and observe for free? It's an amazing opportunity and benefit of attending the NABCs. Just go to the playing area where the NABC Championship Event is scheduled and ask a tournament director to point the way to one of the top players!

During the final sessions of the premier events, such as the major team events — the Spingold, the Vanderbilt, and the Reisinger — you can enjoy the *Viewgraph Show*. You'll see the deals as they are being played by two top teams and you'll hear famous bridge experts analyze the play. *Viewgraph Shows* are extremely popular and a great way to get into the minds of our bridge champions and learn how they think.

Don't feel like playing today? Take advantage of a local tour and get to know the host city. Frequently the local committees arrange trips that you can take advantage of or they will provide information on local attractions. Visit the Local Information Booth and talk to the volunteers about suggestions for spending a fun day away from the tournament. They'll steer you in the right direction!



As you can see, there is a lot to do during the 11 days of each NABC. Take advantage of as much as you can while you enjoy bridge at its finest.

Enjoy the ride!

ARE YOU A MEMBER?

The ACBL offers sanctioned games at local clubs and tournaments, on cruise ships, and on the Internet!
The ACBL is a service-oriented membership organization offering considerable benefits to its members including reduced playing fees at tournaments!



If you are not a member of the ACBL,
join today to take advantage of the
reduced rates at this NABC!
You will receive your ACBL number immediately
and any masterpoints you win at this
tournament will be automatically recorded!
The ACBL offers a special first-year
membership package!
Ask one of the Tournament Directors for details!

The IN Program

The NABCs are a showcase for the ACBL IN (Intermediate-Newcomer) Program. Through this program, ACBL offers the best opportunity for the newer tournament player to enjoy the NABC experience!

The NABC IN Program consists of selected bridge activities designed especially for the newer player which are held in a special playing area. Each day the IN players meet in the program area and get to know one another. This environment allows ACBL to create a *home away from home* for first-time tournament players.

Some of the highlights of the IN program are:



An Opportunity to Compete with Your Peers — Games are stratified to ensure that your results are compared to those of other players at your same level of expertise!



A Variety of Types of Games — Pair games and team games.




Trophies — Trophies are given for wins at all levels!




The Winners' Circle — The pictures of the IN winners are displayed and available to be taken home as a remembrance.



Specially Trained Directors — Your games are run by directors who understand the needs of the newer player.


 **A Celebrity Speaker Program** — Enjoy meeting and listening to the best players and top bridge teachers. It's an opportunity to learn from the best. Handouts are given out for each of the lectures, which are scheduled before each afternoon and evening session (except for the last Sunday).

 **Special Social Events** — Plan to attend the IN Reception on the first Saturday between sessions and socialize with your friends or go over those pesky hands while enjoying the hospitality of the NABC.

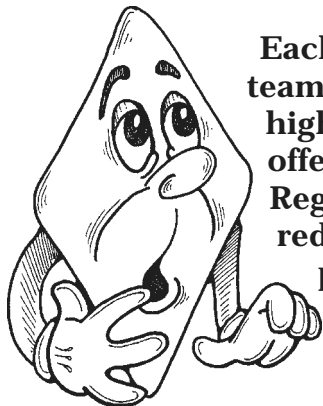
 **New Player Services Members** — This group of volunteers will be available in the IN area to assist new players as needed with questions and information — including helping you fill out your Convention Card, learning to read the result sheets, or handling the bidding boxes.

 **Special Partnership Desk!** — Partners are guaranteed for players who sign up one hour prior to game time.

 **Special Registration Gift!** — New players in the IN area consistently get a little something extra!

 **Table Giveaways and Door Prizes** — You never know what special item will be yours when you play!

Which Event Should We Enter?



Each NABC offers a variety of pair and team events for various levels of play. The highest level are the NABC+ events offering platinum points to the winners. Regionally-rated events offer gold and red points and IN events offer red points.

You are free to play in whatever division you are comfortable in.

Here is a guide to the types of events you will find at each NABC.

Types of Pair Games

In a pair game, you and your partner play together throughout the event against a series of opponents. Your “real” opponents, however, are sitting in your direction. They are the players who hold the same cards as you and whose results you are trying to beat.

Your bridge scores are compared with the bridge scores of those other pairs (called matchpointing) and your total matchpoint score is determined by adding together the matchpoints you earn on each deal.

Some adjustments have been made to pair games to make it possible for new and less-experienced players to earn masterpoints. The most common methods are stratifying, flighting, and handicapping. Most pair events in the NABC IN Program are stratified.

Stratified Pairs

All of the pairs entered in the event compete against each other but are ranked only with their peers. Each pair is assigned a stratum or “strat” based on the masterpoint holding of the partner who has more masterpoints.

For example, suppose Strat A is for players with 50 to 100 masterpoints; Strat B is for players with 20 to 50 masterpoints, and Strat C is for players with 0 to 20 masterpoints. The more experienced players, those with 50 to 100 masterpoints, would be designated as Strat A, the newest players, those with zero to 20 masterpoints, would be designated as Strat C, and the Strat B players would be those who currently have earned between 20 to 50 masterpoints . Sometimes there are only two strats and very rarely as many as four, but the concept remains the same.

Players from all of the strats play together in the same section. While selling entries, the director tries to equalize the fields by distributing the members of each strat equally among the different sections (when there is more than one section) and between the moving pairs and the stationary pairs within each section.

The game proceeds normally — the difference comes when the scores are tabulated and ranked. In a three-strat game, the scores are ranked three times.

- 1. The first ranking is done as in a regular open game — the scores of all of the players are considered. These are the Strat A results. If a B or C pair does well in this ranking, they receive full credit for that performance. It is not all that uncommon for a Strat C pair to place first overall, and when they do, they receive the full masterpoint award for that game.**
- 2. The second ranking compares the scores of only the players designated as Strat B and Strat C pairs — the scores of the Strat A pairs are disregarded. Once, again, if a C pair does well they receive points for their finishing position in the Strat B results.**

3. The third and final ranking compares the scores of only the Strat C pairs — all of the scores for the Strat A and Strat B pairs are disregarded.

.....

Note: Masterpoints are awarded for all three strats, but a pair is eligible for only one masterpoint award and will receive the highest award.

.....

Flighted Pairs

When flighting is used, the field is divided by expertise or experience or both into separate competitions. Flight A — “unlimited masterpoints” — will be open to all players regardless of their masterpoint holdings. Any pair can choose to play in this flight. The remaining flights — usually Flight B and Flight C (and sometimes Flight D) — will be limited to players with a certain number of masterpoints. Flight B might be 0 to 750 MPs or 0 to 1500 MPs while Flight C might be limited to players with 0 to 300 or 0 to 500 masterpoints.

Each flight is scored individually, and masterpoints are awarded separately for each flight. The masterpoint holdings of the players determine their flight. If one player is an expert and that player’s partner is new to the game, the pair must compete in Flight A.



In flighted events, a pair may play up but not down. That means that a Flight C player could choose to participate in Flight A or Flight B even if that pair’s masterpoint holding qualifies it for Flight C. Conversely, a pair may not play in Flight B or Flight C if its masterpoints qualify the pair for Flight A.

Strati-flighted Pairs

The top group of masterpoint holders plays in a game of their own — Flight A. The rest of the field is divided into strats (*i.e.*, Strat B, Strat C, and Strat D) and these pairs play in the same manner as they would in a regular stratified pairs.

Side Game Series Pairs (formerly Continuous Pairs)

This is a series of one-session games open to all players. Participants may enter as many sessions as they wish and play with the same or different partners. Overall ranking is done on an individual basis by computing the sum of each player's two best games. At NABCs and Regionals, gold points are awarded to section-top placing players who have competed in at least two sessions of this event. Each session of a Side Game Series Pairs is also scored as a one-session stratified pairs.

IMP Pairs

The scoring is based upon International Matchpoints. This type of content reduces the effect on the scoring of one or two big swing boards. The general effect of using IMP scoring is to dampen the value of high scores and to heighten the value of partscore contracts.

A chart of conversion points can be found on the inside of the standard ACBL Convention Card. Ask the tournament director for more information.



Types of Team Games

In team events, groups of four, five, or six players (with only four playing at a time) compete against other similar groups. Here is a guide to the more popular types of team events you will find at an NABC.



Knockout Teams

A team of four to six players (with four playing at a time) plays another team. The results are compared and scored by International Matchpoints (IMPs on Pg. 18).

The losers are eliminated or “knocked out” while the winners play other winners until only one winning team remains. The length of a KO match may vary from a single session to a full day (the Vanderbilt and Spingold) to a multi-day event (the Bermuda Bowl — an international competition sponsored by the World Bridge Federation).

Bracketed Knockout Teams

The teams are divided into groups — usually of 8, 16, or 32 teams — based on their total masterpoint holdings. The top group — Bracket 1 — and all other groups compete in a separate event with its own set of winners.

Compact Knockout Teams

This is a shorter version of Bracketed KO Teams and is limited to teams of four players.

Swiss Teams

Teams (of four, five, or six players — with only four playing at a time) play other teams in seven-, eight-, or

nine-board matches.

For example, Team A sits North-South at Table 1 and East-West at Table 2, while Team B sits North-South at Table 2 and East-West at Table 1. The results are compared and scored by International Matchpoints (IMPs).

Pairings for the first round are random. Pairings for succeeding rounds are determined by a team's win-loss record or Victory Point total. (See Page 18 — Methods of Scoring Team Games.)

As with pair games, Swiss teams may be flighted, strati-flighted, or stratified.

Midnight Swiss Teams

This is the most common and popular type of midnight game at a tournament. It generally consists of five matches of five boards each played at a rapid-fire pace and is sometimes called a Zip Swiss or a Speedball Swiss.

Midnight Zip KO (Knockout)

This is an event where there is always good news when there is bad news! It is a mini-knockout where short matches are played (five or six boards per match). If you lose a match (bad news), you do get to go to bed (good news).

Board-a-Match Teams

This is a method of playing multiple team matches in which each team plays against a variety of opponents in a Mitchell-like movement and each deal has a top of exactly one matchpoint. The only possible scores are 0, $\frac{1}{2}$, and 1.

The movement is arranged so that if the North-South pair of Team 1 plays a board against the East-West pair of Team 3, Team 1's East-West pair will play the same board against Team 3's North-South pair.



Types of Championship Team Games and Ribbon Events

Each NABC has special events that are much more prestigious in nature. These events are held each year at either the Spring NABC, the Summer NABC, or the

Fall NABC. They consist of a number of major championships and ribbon events for which competition continues over several days in order to determine a winner. Currently the winners and teams who place high in any of these three major team events are awarded placing points which may earn them byes in the early rounds of the U.S. Bridge Championship (an annual competition to select teams to represent the U.S. at World Bridge Federation Championships).

Vanderbilt Knockout Teams

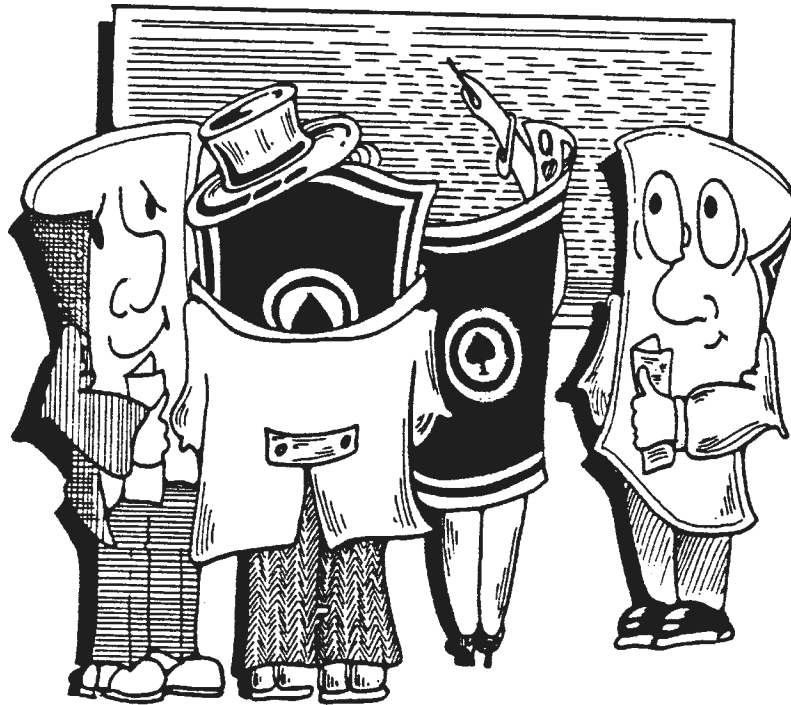
The Vanderbilt Knockout Team Championship began in 1928 and is contested annually at the Spring NABC. It ranks with the Spingold as the most highly prized trophy in the ACBL calendar. The Vanderbilt Cup was donated by Harold S. Vanderbilt and he endowed the event with a trust fund that provides individual replicas of the trophy for the winners.

Spingold Knockout Teams

The trophy for this event was donated by Nathan Spingold in 1934. The Spingold KO Teams became a part of the Summer NABC in 1938. This event is a significant factor in selecting the American representatives in world championship play.

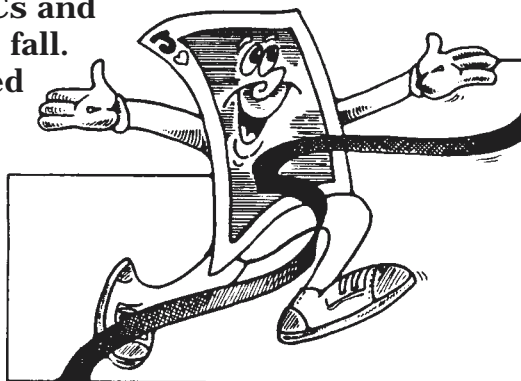
Reisinger Board-A-Match Teams

Donated by the Greater New York Bridge Association in 1965 in memory of Curt H. Reisinger, the trophy for this event is awarded to the winners of The Reisinger Team Championship, which is contested each year at the Fall NABC.



Ribbon Events

The Red Ribbon and Silver Ribbon pair events are held at the Spring NABCs and the Blue Ribbons in the fall. Qualifications are earned at tournaments and special events played during the year throughout the ACBL. These ribbon events are considered premier events for our tournament players.



Blue Ribbon Pairs

The Blue Ribbon Pairs has been part of the Fall NABC schedule since 1963. Entries are limited to players who have qualified to participate. The most common methods of achieving qualification are: (1) to have finished high in NABC events, or have finished first or second in regionally rated events, (2) to be one of the top 100 masterpoint holders, (3) to be a member of current official teams representing the ACBL or any of its member countries in international competition, and (4) to be a winner of one of the District Grand National Teams championships.

If you earn a Blue Ribbon qualification, you keep it until you use it to play in a “ribbon” event. A Blue Ribbon qualification may be used for entry into the Red Ribbon or Silver Ribbon Pairs — as long as you are otherwise eligible for those events, which are restricted by masterpoint holdings and age, respectively.

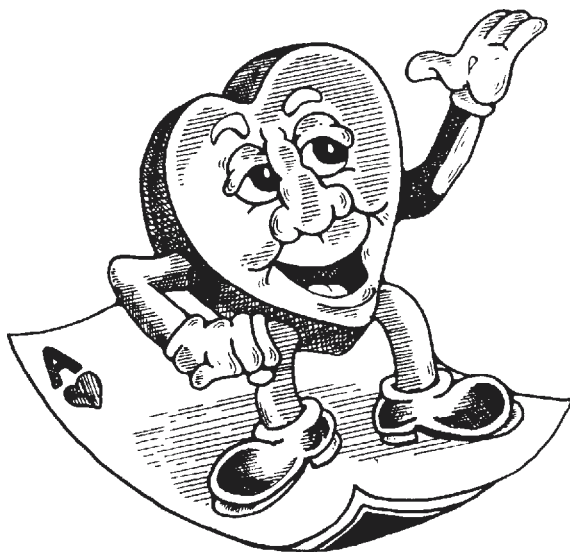
Red Ribbon Pairs

The Red Ribbon Pairs, a Spring NABC event, began in 1986. It is limited to players with no more than 2000 points who have qualified to play by placing first or second in regionally rated events of at least Flight B status.

If you earn a Red Ribbon qualification, you keep it until used. Red Ribbon qualifications may be used for entry into the Silver Ribbon Pairs as long as the age requirement is met.

Silver Ribbon Pairs

The Silver Ribbon Pairs, a Spring NABC event, began in 1992. It is limited to players 55 years of age or older. Players earn qualification by placing first or second in a regionally rated senior event. A Silver Ribbon qualification may be used for entry into the Red Ribbon Pairs as long as the masterpoint requirement is met.



How Did You Do?

After you play in each session, you want to know how you fared. ACBL's goal every time you participate in a Newcomer or IN Event is to see that you have a good time. We want you to focus on having fun. It would be nice for all of you to be winners, but playing well and enjoying the experience is something everyone CAN do.



You don't have to hold a lot of aces to win in duplicate bridge. Winning is the result of a comparison between how well you did with the cards when you held them and how the other players did with those same cards.

Scoring the Results

Each round, after you have played the boards, the North player will fill out a scoreslip with the results. The East-West players are expected to review the slip and initial it to confirm agreement.

The scoreslips are collected by a "caddy" and taken to the director in charge of scoring your section of the event.

The director's job is to enter all of the scores into the computer and, at the end of the game, compare the results on each board by matchpointing. Each pair is ranked according to how well the partnership did in comparison to the other pairs who played the board. You

will receive one point (called a matchpoint) for each pair whose result you have beaten and one-half point for each pair you have tied.

Example: If a board was played five times, and you scored 420 in a game contract, while two others scored 450 (Making five! Where did I lose that overtrick?), one went down one (-50), and one forgot to bid game (scoring only 170), you will get 2 matchpoints for beating two pairs. The pair who went down will get a zero (0), a bottom on the board. The folks who made 450 will share a top on the board, getting 3.5 matchpoints (they beat three pairs and tied one). The most matchpoints that were available on that board were 4, since it was played five times and the opportunity existed to beat only four other pairs.

An average result on the board would be 2 matchpoints (with a 4 top), so if 20 boards were played in a game, an average score for the entire game would be 40. When you add up all of your matchpoints, you will be



able to see whether you did better or worse than the average players in that game. You will also be able to see which boards you found troublesome and take the opportunity to discuss them with some nice former opponents. Lasting friendships, partnerships, and even marriages are made this way!

Methods of Scoring (IMPs and Victory Points)

If you are playing in a game where the scoring is by IMPs or Victory Points, here's what that means

IMPs — An IMP is an International Matchpoint, a unit of scoring used according to a schedule established by the *Laws of Duplicate Contract Bridge*. In a team game, the difference in trick and bonus scores of the North-South pair and the East-West pair on the same team is used to look up IMPs from a chart.

.....

VICTORY POINTS — When using Victory Point scoring, the IMP score on each board is calculated first. The total IMP score on the boards of the match are then converted to Victory Points in accordance with a predetermined scale.

.....

VICTORY POINTS IN SWISS TEAMS — Even in win-loss type Swiss events, a form of victory points is used frequently. To receive credit for a full win, a team must win by 3 or more IMPs. A win by 1 or 2 IMPs constitutes a 3/4 win, with the losing team getting the other quarter of a point. However, the team winning the match receives the entire masterpoint award for the match.

Posting the Results

The directors will post the results of the game on a computer generated recap sheet. The IN directors and NPS (New Player Services) volunteers in the area will be happy to help you “read” the results.

In general, here is what you will find on these recap sheets —

The top line identifies the event, the session (*e.g.*, Thursday afternoon, 1 of 2), and the section and direction of the results (*e.g.*, score for Section A, North-South players).

The next line tells when the event was played (*e.g.*, March 7, 2003) and gives information about the sanction number and event code.

The third line shows where the event was played (*e.g.*, Houston), the rating of the tournament (*e.g.*, NABC), and the type of movement used (*e.g.*, Mitchell, Howell, etc.).

Line four tells what the average score is and what is top on each board. It gives the masterpoint limits (if there were any) and the name of the tournament (*e.g.*, Spring NABC).

Line five will give specific information if it applies to the event. This line might define the number of pairs playing different strats (*e.g.*, Strat A-14/B-7/C-0).

The list of contestants follows and you will read across to find out the results. You’ll find Overall rankings, total points, carryover (if there was a previous session), session rankings, score for the current session, final masterpoint awards.



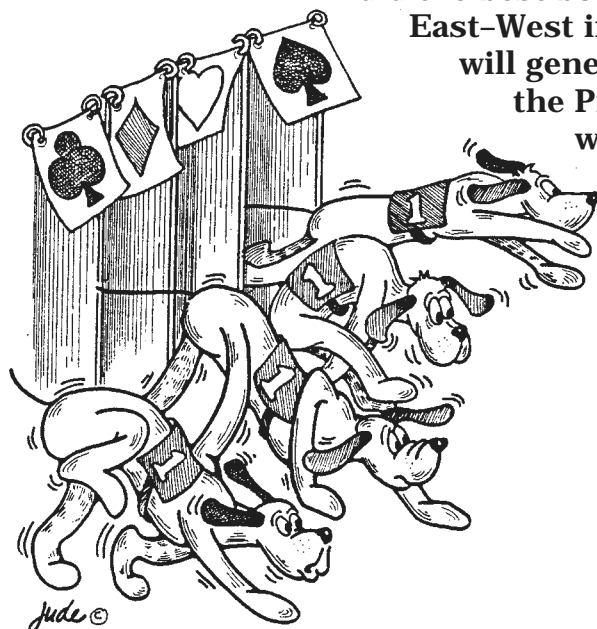
For most new players, reading the recap sheet is a matter of trial and error. Don't hesitate to ask for help.

We Won!

If you and your partner are the winners of the event, the IN directors will take your picture and display it on the wall of winners. If you check the scores and find a number in the rank column, this indicates that you have won some masterpoints. The final column on the recap sheet tells you how many points you won.



Trophies are awarded to all of the winners in the IN Program. Section tops are awarded to the players who did the best both North-South and East-West in each section. You will generally have to go to the Prize Desk for the whole tournament in order to claim your section top prize.



**Play
bridge
and be
a winner!**

Masterpoints and Rankings

Masterpoints

Masterpoints are a reward for winning or placing at duplicate bridge. Masterpoints, also referred to as points or MPs, come in many sizes and colors and are awarded for different levels of play. Generally, the awards are:








- Black points at club and unit games.
- Silver points at sectionals, progressive sectionals, and STaCs.
- Red points in all events at regionals and the three NABCs.
- Gold points for section tops and placing overall at regionals and regionally rated events at NABCs and in events of two or more sessions with either no MP restriction or a minimum MP limit of 750 points or more.
- Platinum points for all NABC+ championship events.
- Unpigmented points for online play on the Internet.



Rankings

As a player accumulates points, certain milestones, or ranking levels, will be reached that indicate progress. Each ranking requires that the player have a certain number and a certain type of points.

These are the 7 grades of achievement to reach the coveted rank of Life Master. There are 5 more levels after that:

-  **ROOKIE** — 0 to 5 points, any color.
-  **JUNIOR MASTER** — 5 to 20 points, any color.
-  **CLUB MASTER** — 20 to 50 points, any color.
-  **SECTIONAL MASTER** — At least 50 points, including at least 5 silver.
-  **REGIONAL MASTER** — At least 100 points, including at least 15 silver and 5 red/gold.
-  **NABC MASTER** — At least 200 points, including 50 pigmented points, of which at least 5 must be gold, at least 15 must be red or gold, and at least 25 must be silver.
-  **LIFE MASTER** — 300 to 500 points, of which at least 50 must be silver, at least 25 must be gold, and at least another 25 must be red or gold. New members as of 1/1/99 must also earn at least 50 black points as part of their total 300.

For Your Information — Duplicate Tips

There are some things you need to know in order to fully enjoy the duplicate experience. Here are some tips and additional information that you will find helpful.

Duplicate Do's and Don'ts

A few of the customs of home rubber bridge are inappropriate at duplicate bridge.

For instance, do not go around the table and look at declarer's hand (or exchange hands with partner). As dummy, you are an active participant at the table charged with turning cards for your partner and preventing partner from revoking or leading from the wrong hand.

Please do not write down the contract in your convention card until there have been three consecutive passes! Writing it down prematurely is tantamount to telling your partner you want him to pass.



And most importantly, do not engage in extraneous conversation or talk at the table once you have taken your cards from the boards. There are only 16 words in bridge, and "I bid one club," contains two too many. Slow passes, fast doubles, loud overcalls, etc., are not acceptable behavior in duplicate. (Incidentally, when bidding boxes are in use, some of these problems are avoided.)

Try to develop the attitude of the experts — each deal is unique and separate and should not be allowed to influence your performance on subsequent deals. Put aside a bad result and start fresh with the next 13 cards! Successful partnerships will discuss difficult hands and situations where something went wrong after the session and in private.

Being a Good Partner

A lot of your success at bridge will depend on your partner. Does partner play best with you across the table? Do the two of you function well together?

.....
***We all know that the rapport
one has with a favorite partner
is worth all the
conventions in the books.***

— *Victor Mollo's Hideous Hog*
.....

One of the intangibles that makes bridge unusual is the importance of good chemistry between partners. Everything that happens within your partnership can affect how well you do — not only your individual technical skills and depth of partnership understanding, but also your will to win, your mental stamina, and your morale.

Since every partnership must face bad results, you'd do well to handle these trying situations as gracefully as possible so you can try for a better result on the next board with absolutely no distractions.

.....
***People ask you for criticism, but
they only want praise.***

— *Somerset Maugham*
.....

We don't like our mistakes broadcast to the world (or even to two opponents). So, consider your partner's feelings. No purpose can ever be served by emotional criticism. After each session of play, the pair should carefully go over their results, good and bad, looking for areas that merit discussion.

Partner probably feels worse about personal mistakes than you do. (If you can't assume your partner is trying as hard as possible, start looking for another partner.)

.....
***A good partner always has a
smile on his face.***

— ***Benito Garozzo, Italian World Champion***
.....

Bridge is like any other pursuit — you get as much out of it as you are willing to put in. Fine-tuning a partnership requires plenty of hard work on the technical side. Work toward cultivating a mature, considerate attitude in your partnership. You might see your results improve.

Kibitzing

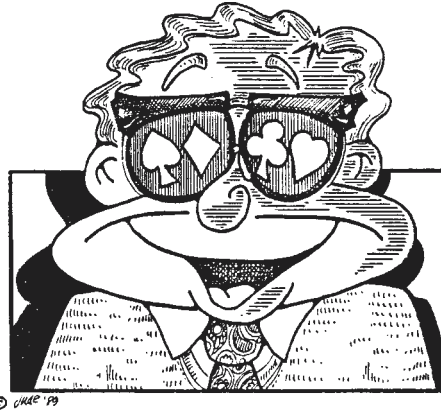
Do you know of any other sport where the participants pay and the spectators get in free? It's hard to resist that kind of bargain.

A spectator in bridge is called a kibitzer. Kibitzing is an interesting and fun way to learn from the experts.

There are rules of etiquette for spectators which differ from one sport to another. Think of a wrestling match or a football game where the air is full of the crowd's opinion of how the athletes are doing. Compare this to a tennis match where, at the proper time, there are outbursts of applause from the spectators, and if this handclapping lasts too long, the onlookers are given a

gentle reminder: “Quiet, ladies and gentlemen.” There are sports, like chess and billiards, where the spectators are so quiet you hardly know they are there. Being a kibitzer at a bridge game, however, is unique.

Remember 3-D movies? After putting on a pair of glasses, you were right in the middle of the action. Being a bridge kibitzer is a little like that. You sit very close to the competitors, but you are not allowed to display any expression or make a gesture which could influence what is happening.



There are many stories about kibitzers. When the world championship was held in the hometown of one player, his mother thought this was a wonderful opportunity to watch her son. After all, she was the one who had taught him to play. Non-vulnerable against vulnerable opponents, his hand looked something like this:

♠ 8 4
♥ 5
♦ J 10 9 6 5 4 3 2
♣ 7 3

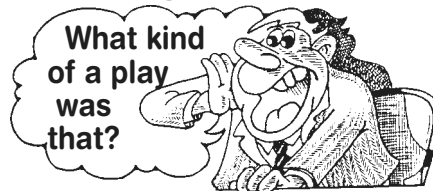
Her son opened the bidding at the three level, 3♦, with only 1 point. The mother, try as she might, could not keep her astonishment hidden. She did not teach her son to bid like that. She started to tug on his sleeve to remind him that he had only 1 point! He was embarrassing her. She was embarrassed even more when she later was asked to leave by one of the other players (to her son’s relief).

The kibitzer's etiquette comes from *The Laws of Duplicate Contract Bridge*. By following these few rules, you can be a good kibitzer and enjoy a very exciting part of the game of bridge.

SPECTATORS

A. Conduct During Bidding or Play

1. **One Hand Only** — A spectator should not look at the cards of more than one player, except by permission.
2. **Personal Reaction** — A spectator must not display any reaction to the bidding or play while a hand is in progress.
3. **Mannerisms or Remarks** — During the round, a spectator must refrain from mannerisms or remarks of any kind (including a conversation with a player).
4. **Consideration for Players** — A spectator must not in any way disturb a player.



B. Spectator Participation

A spectator may not call attention to any irregularity or mistake, nor speak on any question of fact or law except by request of the Director.

Bidding Boxes

At the NABCs, you will find bidding boxes on all of the card tables. These are devices which permit silent bidding.

To make a call, the player takes the appropriate card from a box, filled with cards designating all possible bids and calls, and places it on the table in front of the player. All bidding cards remain on the table until the auction is concluded. This provides an instant review of the bidding and eliminates the possibility of mishearing a call.

(See Alerts, Announcements, and Skip Bids for more information on using bidding boxes with these requirements.)

Calling the Director

Most newcomers to duplicate do not realize the main function of the director (“referee”). If you have been playing at a local club, you know the director as the person who usually sells the entries, makes the coffee, and occasionally sweeps the floor (or does whatever is needed to make the room ready for the game). The director is also responsible for setting up a workable movement for the game, depending on the number of players. The director’s manner determines the tone of the game, which should be friendly and peaceful. At an NABC, a number of directors will perform these same functions.

If an irregularity occurs at the table, the director is responsible for making a ruling (according to the official *Laws of Duplicate Contract Bridge*) that is not only fair to both pairs involved but that will also protect the other pairs who will play the board (“the field”). The IN Program director will make the ruling in a manner that doesn’t embarrass or upset anyone.

At the end of the game, the director scores the results and awards the masterpoints (the prizes for winning or placing).

It is true that many newcomers are afraid to call the director on a lead out of turn or a revoke or whatever. They fear it makes the game unfriendly. This is not the case. The director’s job is to alleviate any strain there is or that may develop, actually making the game more fun. By calling, you will ensure that the game is fair for everybody, not just you and your opponents. Duplicate bridge is a sport — the director must touch the ball in order to get it back in play.

Claims

PLAY IT OUT! PLAY IT OUT!! That is the common cry heard when someone attempts to claim. The Law (68D) is very clear. Once a claim or concession is made, all play must cease.

Why do players claim? When the play progresses to a point where all of the remaining tricks belong to one player, it seems right to claim and go on to the next board. If done properly, claiming can save time and energy.

What is the proper way to claim? When you can take the rest of the tricks, face your hand and state your line of play. **Be very specific.** If there are any trump cards out, be certain to mention that and how you plan to deal with them.

But I don't understand the claim! Don't be afraid to say that you don't understand or don't agree, but don't get into a confrontation with the claimer. Call the director! It is possible that the claim is invalid.

What is the role of the director in a contested claim? First, the director will ask the claimer to repeat his claim. Then the director will require all players to face their remaining cards. Once that is accomplished, the director will hear the opponents' objections to the claim and determine whether the claim is valid or invalid. If the claim is not valid, any tricks that could have been lost by any normal line of play will be awarded to the opponent. Normal play includes play that is careless or inferior for the class of player involved, but not irrational.

The more you play, the more you will claim. Just take the time to state your line of play carefully and don't allow your opponents to intimidate you. When you hear "Play it Out!," you only have two words to say — "Director, please!"

Appeals

An appeal is a request for a review of a director's ruling. Any ruling by a director may be appealed, but an appeals committee does not have the authority to overrule the director on a point of bridge law or a bridge regulation.

If you wish to appeal a director's ruling, notify the director either at the time of the ruling or immediately following the round. The director will give you an appeals form to fill out and explain the appeals procedure to you.

The Convention Card

Throughout your duplicate game experience, both you and your partner need to have convention cards that are filled out the same. The purpose of this card is primarily for the benefit of your opponents. By filling out the convention card and leaving it on the table as you play, your opponents can view a "nutshell" presentation of your bidding methods. If you have difficulty in completing the card, do not hesitate to ask for assistance from a tournament director or New Player Services member. Newer players may prefer to use a simplified convention card. The SS4 (or Fat Free Card as it is affectionately called) is available in the IN Program area.



Beginning duplicate players play very few, if any, conventions. As you become more experienced, you may want to add conventions to your game, especially after hearing some of the great lectures by expert players. When you add a new convention to your card, you are

responsible for understanding it thoroughly. Does it apply in competition? Do bids change in competition? Is it Alertable? Do not force your partner to play a convention he or she is not comfortable playing. When your partner is worried that a new convention may come up, it is distracting and partner's game may be affected. Conventions often require Alerts.

Since there are so many bridge conventions in use today, it has become increasingly difficult for the average player to examine his opponents' convention card in order to understand their bidding. The Alert procedure was introduced to make sure that the burden of disclosure of a convention or unusual bid is on the user of the convention rather than the victim. Here is how it works:

When a conventional call is made, it is up to the partner of that player to immediately say "Alert." No further explanations should be volunteered. Either opponent may then, at his proper turn, inquire as to the meaning of the Alerted call. When an opponent asks you about a bid or an Alert, you should ensure that your explanation makes available all the information your partnership has about the bid. This is the principle of full disclosure. The name of a convention is not an explanation and may be taken by your opponents as an attempt to intimidate them. If you are questioned about a bid that your partner has made and you have no agreement, it is proper to reply "We have no agreement as to style."

What happens if partner makes a mistaken explanation, an incorrect Alert, or fails to Alert? If partner has erred in one of the above ways, the declarer or dummy must notify the opponents and call the director after the final pass. A defender facing the same situation must notify the opponents and call the director after the play ends.

The ACBL Convention Card is printed in three colors to aid in the Alerting process:



1. Black: does not require an Alert.
2. Blue: requires a descriptive announcement, *i.e.*, “transfer,” “forcing.”
3. Red: requires an Alert.

.....

NOTE: A simplified convention card (the SS4 or “Fat Free” convention card) is available in the IN area. It might be easier for you to use this card if you and partner do not play a very complicated system.

.....

Alerts, Announcements, Skip Bids

Since duplicate bridge involves comparison of bridge scores among many tables and is played more as a competitive sport than as a social game, it is imperative to ensure the greatest possible degree of fairness. Consequently, you may encounter some new situations at a duplicate game, particularly if you are playing in an open game.

Most home bridge players know and play the latest conventions: Blackwood, Stayman, Gerber, takeout doubles. Many modern duplicate bridge players, however, have added some other conventions to their game. Remember, a convention is an artificial bid used to describe your hand or to ask or answer a specific question. For example, a 4NT bid usually has nothing to do with playing notrump; it asks how many aces partner

has in his hand (the Blackwood convention). Remember also that you are entitled to know what agreements your opponents have for any bid, and you can ask questions whenever it is your turn to call.

Since the opponents may be unaware that certain bids are artificial, the partner of the player employing the convention may be required to say, “ALERT” (or to use the flag or “ALERT” card when bidding boxes are in use). The next player may now inquire what the ALERT signifies if that player wants to know. (You are entitled to know what your opponents’ bids mean and the “ALERT” gives you the opportunity to ask.) This is only fair. But, you probably won’t hear many of these “ALERTs” in a Newcomer game.



An ANNOUNCEMENT is required in four situations. This tells the opponents directly the meaning of partner’s call:

- (1) State the range (e.g., “15 to 17+”) after all opening 1NT bids,
- (2) Say “transfer” after a diamond or heart bid which transfers to hearts or spades at any level in response to a notrump opening bid, overcall, or after opener’s natural notrump rebid,
- (3) Say “forcing” or “semi-forcing” after a 1NT forcing or semi-forcing response to a 1♥ or 1♠ opening bid,
- (4) Say “short” after all non-forcing opening bids of 1♣ or 1♦ which may be fewer than three cards.

An ANNOUNCEMENT is made by saying the information out loud and using the Alert card or flag from the bid box.

Another duplicate novelty is the SKIP BID WARNING. Obviously, when you skip a level of bidding, you are trying to give your opponents a problem. Unfortunately, the next player to bid may be surprised and make a fast pass or a slow bid, or a loud, firm double. In duplicate, before you make ANY jump bid, you say, for example, "I am about to make a skip bid; please wait 10 seconds before bidding. Three hearts."

Or, you may use the short form, "Skip bid, three hearts." After 10 seconds (spent studying the hand), your opponent should make a call in a calm manner, without any inflection in his voice. In this way, unauthorized information (in this case, information conveyed by an out-of-tempo call) will be kept to a minimum. With bidding boxes, the "stop" card is used before you make a skip bid, and the next player is obliged to study the hand for about 10 seconds prior to making a call



One last thing: In duplicate bridge, you must make your opening lead face down on the table. At the same time, you should say "Questions, partner?" If it is not your turn to lead, your partner and/or opponents will let you know. Now, you can put your card back in your hand without a big fuss and let the proper hand lead.

Seeding

A method known as “seeding” is used to assign particularly strong contestants to certain predetermined tables to assure there will be no preponderance of strong pairs in direct competition within any one section. At the NABCs, tables 3, 6, and 9 are usually reserved. Some team events are also seeded.

Active Ethics

A primary objective of the ACBL is to instill in all players the concept that vigorous efforts should be made to provide equity in bridge. Every player should take pains to make sure that the opponents have in no way been harmed through incomplete or misleading information as to the meaning of conventional calls and treatments. An aggressive approach along these lines on the part of each and every individual will do much to make sure that bridge remains a game that is enjoyed so much by all.



Minding your P's & Q's at the Table (Zero Tolerance Policy)

The ACBL Board of Directors and Management are committed to improving acceptable player behavior at all times. This commitment is fully expressed with the Zero Tolerance Policy.

Zero Tolerance Policy. The Z-T policy outlines what is expected of all players during NABCs and other ACBL sponsored events, as well as in the playing area before and after each session. The ultimate purpose of the Z-T policy is to create a much more pleasant atmosphere in our NABCs.

A player should maintain at all times a courteous attitude toward partner and the opponents. A player should carefully avoid any remark or action that might cause annoyance or embarrassment to another player, or that might interfere with another player's enjoyment of the game.



Below are some examples of commendable behavior, which, while not required, will significantly contribute to the improved atmosphere:

- Being a good “host” or “guest” at the table.
- Greeting others in a friendly manner.
- Praising the bidding and/or play of the opponents.
- Having two clearly complete convention cards readily available to the opponents. (This one is a regulation, not just a nicety.)

The following lists some examples of behavior which will not be tolerated:

- **Badgering, rudeness, insinuations, profanity, threats, or violence.**
- **Negative comments concerning an opponents' or partner's play or bidding.**
- **Constant and gratuitous lessons and analyses at the table.**
- **Loud and disruptive arguing with a director's ruling.**



If a player at the table behaves in an unacceptable manner, the director should be called immediately. Annoying behavior, embarrassing remarks, or any other conduct which might interfere with the enjoyment of the game is specifically prohibited by Law 74A. Law 91A gives the director the authority to assess disciplinary penalties.

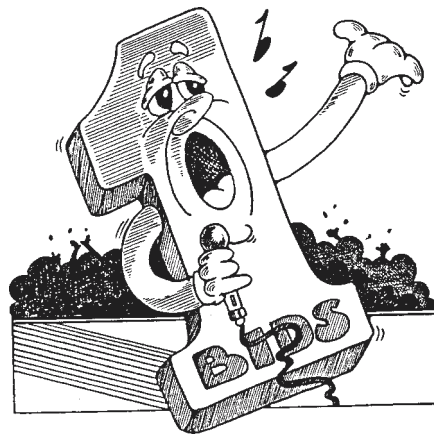
A Zero Tolerance Report Form is available for players to report incidents which occur away for the table and for directors to document complaints and action taken.

Playing Up To Speed

As new players, it is important to develop good habits and follow proper etiquette at the table. When you arrive at a table, or when new opponents come to your table, stop your conversation and greet them. It is easy to be so involved with your partner over the previous round that you become oblivious to everyone else. Once you have greeted your opponents, get on with your new round.

When polling players to find what their biggest bridge pet peeve is, slow play was unequivocally the winner! You are given seven minutes per board, which should be plenty of time for even the toughest hands. It is irritating to wait for your opponents to arrive at the table while the clock is ticking and your time for playing the next round is being eaten up. Equally, if not more irritating, is to be East-West and have to wait for people you are following to vacate your chairs. It is awkward to stand and wait without people thinking you are watching other boards being played.

Bid in tempo. Bidding too fast or thinking too long before bidding could send unauthorized messages to your partner. If you pass too quickly, it seems that you have no interest in this deal. If you pause for a long time, you probably have choices to make and can't decide which is the best action. If your preceding opponent makes a skip bid, announced or unannounced, pause for ten seconds before making your call. Even if you have nothing to think about after the jump, study your hand for 10 seconds and don't show disinterest during the pause.



Play in tempo. If you take too long to play a card, the message is that you have a problem. Never, ever hesitate before playing a singleton. You have no problem and planting the idea that you do is highly unethical. Don't forget to lead before doing your paperwork. If you're on lead after the auction is over, lead before writing anything on your personal scorecard. The declarer will

usually take some time to make his plan after seeing the dummy, so you will have adequate time for your scorekeeping or notes.

No postmortems. When you finish playing a board, put your hand back in the board and go on to the next board. This is not the time for discussion of the bidding or play. After all the boards have been played in the round, if there is still time before the move is called, you can discuss the deal with your partner — preferably away from the table. Otherwise, wait until a break or after the session to have your discussions. If you have something you feel needs to be discussed, make a notation on the inside of your convention card so you can talk about it later.

If the round is called and you are still playing, pass at least one board to the next lower table so they can start on time. Don't make them ask for a board or worse yet call the director and ask for a board. When you finish, score the board quickly and get caught up with the next round.

Try playing up-to-speed and you'll probably enjoy the game much more — surely your opponents will. Remember, no one cares how well you play, only how fast!





American Contract Bridge League
2990 Airways Blvd.
Memphis, TN 38116
901-332-5586
www.acbl.org