

BACKING BLACK

International Newsletter

BRIDGE BLACKS IN ACTION IN YEH BROS CUP IN JULY



The Bridge Blacks return to the international scene in a line-up unchanged from the Bermuda Bowl Lyon squad in 2017. Yeh Brothers Cup is an annual elite invitation only event. China host the event this year in July. New Zealand were invited to send a team as a direct result of the Bridge

Blacks' Lyon performance. With NZB not sending a team to the Asia Cup in Goa this year – Yeh Bros Cup marks the first outing for the Bridge Blacks in their 2018 international season and starts on 1 July. The event will be covered on BBO and notification of any Vugraph opportunities to see the Bridge Blacks' matches will be alerted on the NZB facebook page.

NEW ZEALAND YOUTH TEAM SET FOR WORLD YOUTH CHAMPIONSHIPS



The four person squad sets off on 7 August to take part in the World Youth Championships in Wujiang, China. Nik Mitchell and Brad Johnston of Otago are the more experienced pairing. They are joined by Auckland

based MacLeans students Vincent He and Zachary Yan. All four took part in the Youth week in Australia earlier this year.

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Inside this issue:

Yeh Bros Cup	1
Youth in China	2
Feature: Michael Cornell	3
Funding the International programme	4

YOUTH IN CHINA



Held on alternate years, on the even numbered years – 2018 sees the 17th World Youth Bridge Team Championships take place in China. The “Bridge Jacks” squad fly out together on 6 August to Shanghai. Zachary is quickly catching up with some family members there and squad come together on the 7th at Suzhou in Wujiang Province. Zachary and Vincent are currently sitting exams in the lead up period to their participation in the event. Non-Playing Captain Douglas Russell is arranging BBO practice for them in the lead-up and Tracey Lewis, who has had a key role in the development of the squad, is hard at work on fundraising and organising a training weekend. The squad will be practising on 23rd June. In the morning of 24th June there will be a session on etiquette, table presence and rules in preparation for representing their country overseas. The World Youth Championships begin on 8th August. There is no doubt it is a tough ask for our squad to feature in the medals here – but the experience gained will stand them in good stead as they progress their game and international standings. **A fund raising fun afternoon** kindly hosted by the Auckland Bridge Club on Sunday 24th June is open to all. A one-session individual event at a cost of \$25 – which will include a live auction of some top players as a partner for a future tournament. You can place telephone bids if unable to attend. Michael Ware, Michael Whibley, Matt Brown, Michael Meyer, Douglas Russell and Julie Atkinson all available for auction. Ring Tracey on 021 1111972 to place a bid or for more information.



Can't make the fundraiser? You can donate online to the NZB Foundation:
BNZ Tauranga
02-0466-0272518-00
Quote “Youth 2018” in the details.

Nik Mitchell and Brad Johnston
Members of the Bridge Jacks squad

Both attended John McGlashan School in Dunedin and are members of the Otago Bridge Club.



MICHAEL CORNELL ON WHAT IT MEANS TO “EARN THE FERN”



As Bridge Black Michael Cornell prepares to captain the New Zealand Bridge Blacks in the Yeh Bros Cup in July he takes time out to tell NZB club players about the event and what it means to him personally to represent New Zealand.

“There are 28 teams invited to take part in the Yeh Bros Cup. 20 are quite good, (including us!) We received the invitation as a result of coming fourth in the Bermuda Bowl last year. As there was no international event this year, NZB deciding not to attend the Asia Cup in Goa, NZB supported us entering the Yeh Bros Cup when the invitation was given to a New Zealand team. It provides an opportunity to play some of the best in the world. It is crucial in developing your game at the top level to play the top players as often as possible in order to raise your game. It is a big money event for bridge with a first prize money tag of US \$180,000 to the winning team. It is a 5 day event. Two of the best teams are undoubtedly the Italian team of Lavazza (boasting the Italian world champions) and the Swiss Zimmerman team who are now back at full strength.” The event is sponsored and run by philanthropic business tycoon and bridge lover, Mr Chen Yeh from Taiwan. The event has been running for over 20 years. Until now it has been a

biannual event but has now become annual. This year Beijing are the hosts starting on 1 July. There are strong rumours of it being hosted in Paris next year. The Bridge Blacks will fly in on 29 June and attend the opening dinner on the 30th. Play starts on 1 July. The format is Swiss for the first two days – and the aim is to finish in the top 8, as you then get a second life and compete for the major prize. If not finishing in the top 8, there are run-off events to take part in.

Since that golden run at the Bermuda Bowl, Michael and long-time partner Ashley Bach have continued their outstanding performances with a silver medal at the South African National Congress earlier this year. Later in the year they head to Orlando for the World Bridge series World Pairs event. They go to defend the title of World Championship Pairs they won two years ago and will team up with friends from South Africa in the teams event.

Earn the Fern – flying the New Zealand flag

Michael Cornell, “It is a great honour to represent our country. Even when playing recently in South Africa as a pair, I still very much feel I am representing New Zealand. That pride and knowledge is another incentive to me to really play well. I always want to do my best to try and make it look as though New Zealand bridge players can play a bit of bridge. We treat it very seriously. We enjoy it, but always ensure we are in the best shape for the time we are at the table. I always enter any international competition knowing I represent the sport on behalf of all players back home. I think it is a good thing that there are to be some trials in the future. I also believe the selectors have done a good job in recent years. The continuity in the Bridge Blacks team has contributed to success. Investing in players and giving their potential the opportunity to be fulfilled has brought dividends to the nation in terms of results.”

The key to earning the fern? “Form a really good partnership. Our partnership success comes from the experience of playing with each other on a serious basis since last century. We have played virtually all the time in our international partnership since 2006. That was the first time we tried to make the NZ team and made it. You need a lot of rapport and to be good friends. That doesn’t mean we don’t argue from time to time. It’s a bit like a marriage, if you don’t have an argument now and again – there’s no spark in the relationship!”

Tips for the club player - Cope under pressure

“If you are taking part in your club champs, or vying to be immortalised in wood on the clubroom walls - most important – at the table – accept that **everybody** has bad boards. Even now I admit I don’t always react as well as I would like. But if you have a bad board – it’s gone – you are never going to get it back. There is no point at all in getting upset. The best way is to pretend it didn’t happen – try not to think about it. You must just get on with the next hand. Your partner was trying to do their best – you can talk about it afterwards. It is very unlikely the same situation will happen on another board in the same set so don’t even worry about it.

Work hard with your partner and make sure you are on the same page when it comes to your system – which takes time. Very worthwhile to put those hard yards in, you’ll get your rewards.”

“Thank you to all the club players of New Zealand who help fund our international programme and for cheering us on – your contribution means a great deal to the Bridge Blacks.”

Play in the Yeh Bros Cup starts at 9.30 in the mornings (1.30pm NZ time). The finish time is 7.30 pm, (11.30pm NZ time). Kick off – 1 July.

FUNDING THE INTERNATIONALS

What price to be an International? The cost to NZB is approximately \$100,000 per annum. The cost to the international player, with subsidy, is \$2,000 plus per outing. Without subsidy – add a minimum \$1,000 to \$1,500 to their personal bill per outing.

The years are not even though – and the budget is \$400,000 over a four year cycle. In Years 1 and 3 the World Championships and the APBF – Asian-Pacific Bridge Federation – events take place. In Year 2 the Asia Cup is held and in Year 4 the World Bridge Games (formerly the Bridge Olympiad). When events are held outside Asia Pacific the cost increases.

Up until now these overseas events have involved three classes of teams – the Open (Bridge Blacks), the Women (Bridge Ferns) and the Seniors (Bridge Masters). In addition there are Youth events (Bridge Jacks) during each year that are funded on an ad hoc basis dependent on skill level. From 2019 onwards, a new category of “Mixed Teams” at the World Championships has been introduced.

Whilst NZB would like to enter a team in all categories and have their costs covered – the books simply would not balance. Dependent upon previous performance and chances of success, teams may be given a contribution towards the cost of their flight to the venue. No accommodation costs are met by NZB and players have to fund this themselves, as well as paying their own general living expenses. The entry fees to the event together with travel insurance for all players and their uniform is paid for by NZB. The Chef de Mission and Non Playing Captains have their flights and accommodation paid.

As the budget cannot extend to cover all costs – sometimes events are described as “self-funded” and calls are made for players willing to meet all of their expenses in connection with representing New Zealand usually with the exception of the entry fee.

The New Zealand Bridge Foundation regularly assists the Youth team. Clubs and individuals also help with fundraising activities to aid Youth. NZB explore other funding to lessen the burden on all players as a whole. Grants are applied for to help with uniform, training and trial costs. Very few grant providers fund overseas travel and accommodation. Sponsorship deals are sought but bridge is not a high profile sport for endorsements.

Many players were up through the night last year watching the action from Lyon live on Vugraph. Their success brings TV, radio, newspaper coverage of our sport and that gives us nationwide advertising to encourage others to join our sport. When our internationals do well it is something we can all take pride in, because we have all made a contribution. Whenever you participate in a tournament you contribute to the international programme. A small portion of your annual sub to your club also helps fund our national squad.



Thank you from NZB and the Internationals for your contribution. We could not manage without your support.

If you would be interested in donating to the international programme, fundraising projects, or would like more information on how you could help support our internationals overseas please contact secretary@nzbridge.co.nz