



8 March 2021

Newsletter No: 1 for 2021

Welcome to 2021. It is hard to believe it is already March. Prior to the most recent lockdown we were the envy of bridge players all round the world. Hopefully, our enviable position can quickly be reinstated. Whilst I support the proposition of having a safe environment, coming in and out of lockdown does impact our daily lives.

Regrettably, the organisers of the Taranaki Congress had to pull the pin. They had put in a huge amount of work to make the event special, so we feel for them.

The next major event is the National 15A Swiss Pairs in Wellington on 13 March. In the event we face a further lockdown, Richard and Murray have a work around in place so this event can continue, be as it may not as a national event. It could well mean players from Auckland will not be able to attend. Hopefully, the event will be open to all and we can still run it as a national event.

Some clubs outside of Auckland have been able to continue with their bridge, which is good. Others including Auckland have foregone bridge for the time being.

Many players have reverted to playing online. To the organizers of online bridge thank you for helping us keep our sanity. We had hoped with all the commentary about cheating that we would not be confronted by situations where we have had to refer cases to the Conduct Complaints and Discipline Committee. **We want to be very clear, if players are found to have cheated, we will follow the directive of the WBF.** The WBF and all National Bridge Organizations have a zero tolerance for cheating. In many jurisdictions players have been banned from the game for very lengthy periods, including should they re-enter the game then they will be on probation. You can expect similar action here. I am perplexed why anyone would want to cheat.

Undeniably COVID 19 has impacted our overall membership. Numbers are over 700 down on this time last year. We know the reason for the drop is primarily due to the fact that many beginner lessons did not take place in 2020. So, with attrition and low uptake we are at a low point. We want to congratulate those clubs who reached out with online lessons. By and large those clubs are in a healthier state. I am convinced there is plenty we can do to restore and grow membership. The Board is testing a new strategy about how we can work in partnership with clubs to grow membership and increase participation. Once the testing is complete, which hopefully is in this quarter, we will consult on the plan. In the meantime, there is plenty you as a club or you as a player can do. COVID has had a



positive impact on golf. Membership is up as is participation. The prime reason for the increase in golf is that people are not travelling. Are we any different? I think not!. We should be reaching out to family, friends, and acquaintances to give Bridge a shot. We all know it is a great game that has many attributes, notably it is good for the mind, it is very social, delivers fellowship and, if you seek exercise sit east-west (see below advertisement from East Coast Bays Bridge Club).

We don't want to appear negative as the drop in numbers is not Armageddon. What it does is focus the mind on what we can do to grow numbers. The challenge is for each player to find, in 2021, one new member.

On a positive note, and putting the Taranaki Congress aside, tournament participation is up. Many events have been at capacity which is pleasing. For example, we had 48 teams playing the South Island teams. Had Taranaki Congress proceeded we would have had excellent numbers including great support from restricted, intermediate, and junior pairs.

As you know National Congress this year (COVID permitting) will be at Baypark, Mt Maunganui. Hopefully by the time Congress comes around we will have a bubble with Australia. If that is the case, we are hopeful of a "healthy" contingent from Oz. We are also keen to see greater participation from Junior and Intermediate players. Intermediates/ Juniors are most welcome to play in Open/Restricted Open events, with prizes for best performances within their grade. there are separate Intermediate/ Junior events scheduled as always for the last three days of Congress.

So, you are urged to get behind the event. Work with your club to encourage your friends and fellow competitors to enter. It is a great way to meet people, make new lifetime friendships and participate in a wonderful game. I remember a few years back a contingent of junior players from Kerikeri went to the Gold Coast Congress. There may have been some trepidation at the time but if you talk to them know it is the best thing they did. They are now regular participants. Join the fun and play. Be part of the social vibe.

Due to good fiscal management and because international play is on hold our finances are in good shape. Like many leaving money in the bank is disappointing. In real terms after inflation the value of our money is diminishing. We are presently seeking out alternatives, conscious of course that we are only short-term custodians of our money. Whatever we do we will adopt a conservative balanced approach and will only consider socially responsible investments.

We have approved an upgrade of our technology so we can handle multiple entries and payments. The upgrade will be in place for Congress 2021.

We know there is a call for director training at all levels- club, tournament and national. Training is now in our line of sight and will be subject to urgent attention. Over Easter there will be a director training programme held in Hamilton. Keep a look out for the flyer.

I know it is ages since we updated you on the prospect of a national grading system. There would be some justification if you thought this initiative had died a natural death. To the contrary. We have

been investigating the benefits of such a programme and how we can give life to this initiative. There is still plenty to do but we believe we have a pathway to have something up and going for 2022.

In May (22nd and 23rd) there will be an international match (open, women, seniors, mixed and youth) against Australia. This will be played online using Realbridge. This is a big event because we need to be sure we have robust processes and oversight in place and of course confidence in any and all Wi-Fi connections. The event will be played over many time zones. As we get closer to the event, we will share more with you so you can kibbitz.

Each year at about this time we participate in Board elections. This year we have four vacancies up for election which is a positive signal that we have a healthy number of people wanting to contribute to the administration and development of bridge in New Zealand.

In accordance with the constitution both Karen Martelletti's (Tauranga) and John Skipper's (Christchurch) current term ends but both have nominated for re-election. In addition, we have received nominations from the following- Sam Coutts (Dunedin), Alan Dick (Rotorua), Gary Duncan (Wellington), Anna Kalma (Cambridge), Anne-Marie Russell (Wellington).

Voting papers have been sent to all clubs. Voting closes on 26th March.

Stay safe, stay well, and enjoy your bridge.

Cheers Allan



This elderly gentleman goes to the Dr. for his annual checkup. The doctor is impressed that this man is in even better shape than he was a year before. Curious, he asks him what he does for mental stimulation. The man answers that he plays duplicate bridge. The doctor, a bridge player himself, tells him that's great! "And what do you do for physical exercise?" The gentleman replied "I sit East-West"!

East Coast Bays Bridge Club is inviting you to the next set of lessons March 22-23 2021. Monday nights or Tuesday mornings. Contact: lessons@ecbbridgeclub.co.nz

