



18 September 2023

Newsletter No: 2 for 2023

Hi Everyone

### General

We are now less than a week away from our 2023 Congress, which once again will take place at Mt Maunganui. It will be a week with plenty of bridge, with some light entertainment sprinkled in, plus a range of improver seminars.

The registrations are around 600. What is pleasing is the uplift in the number of juniors and intermediates. Afterall, along with the restricted open they are our future players. I spoke to Bridget last week and everything is on track for a good week.

For those attending we are sure you will have an enjoyable time, and that hopefully you can celebrate some success at the table, but importantly you have time to catch up with old friends and make some new ones.

In the heat of competition, we encourage you to be respectful of your partner, the opposition, staff, and directors.

### Membership

Over the last few months, we have reported a steady rise in the overall membership. We are seeing the benefits of the learner classes and players returning with overall numbers up 45 to 12,773 at 31 August. The following is a snapshot region by region.

Region	March	April	May	June	July	August
Ak/Nthland	2846	2834	2912	2986	3032	3046
W/Bays	1921	1938	1986	1973	2004	2020
CD	1705	1712	1735	1771	1805	1804
Wellington	1877	1873	1881	1889	1937	1946
Canterbury	1626	1645	1655	1677	1695	1721
Otago/Sth	1394	1384	1396	1378	1420	1425
TOPS	823	826	842	846	835	811

All we can determine from the data we collect is new players versus players returning. For our planning it would be useful if we could obtain more detailed information. We appreciate some clubs may not have



the bandwidth, but it would be useful to know the following, perhaps a snapshot as at the end of September 2023, and thereafter as players join/rejoin.

#### Existing Members

Gender: 1. Female 2. Male	Age: 1. Youth 2. 25-40 years 3. 40-60 years 4. 60 years+	Number of tournament players	Player Habit: 1. F2F 2. Online 3. Both
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#### New Members

Gender: 1. Female 2. Male	Age: 1. Youth 2. 25-40 years 3. 40-60 years 4. 60 years+	1. Returning 2. New
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#### **Online Review**

We are aware that many of you are already thinking about the 2024 tournament schedule and making plans around attendance, including preparing to book flights and accommodation. As a result, you will be keen to know which tournaments will be Face to Face, and which will be Online.

As you can imagine the current trial year (2023) of online/face to face comparison has thrown up many challenging issues and we want to share with you the process to date, and the plans for the months ahead.

We appointed a working party to consult with Clubs, Regions, and Players, to consider quantitative, and qualitative data; the risks and merits of running two forms of the game; and to report their findings to the Board. As part of the process the working party determined it required more information about how the two forms of the game could run concurrently without negatively impacting one or the other, and consequently a decision was taken to run a series of trial weekends throughout 2023. Before the end of the year there will also be further feedback sought from Regions, Clubs and Players. The working party has submitted their initial findings to the Board, plus there will be important learnings from the recent Top of the South Online Weekend, and we do have two more trial weekends to complete in 2023.

In the meantime, we can confirm 2 regional events in the first quarter of 2024.

1. South Island Teams- 10<sup>th</sup> February- will be online.
2. North Island Teams - 16<sup>th</sup> March in Wellington- will be held face to face.

Are we able to decide on the future form of the game?

We are close, but we need to see the trial year to the end, we need to model some variations expanding the trial through the grades, and we need to consider a range of technical matters that online throws up, in its current form, if we want to preserve the integrity of the game. These include our ability to

seed fields, managing the vast differences in player capability that may distort results, managing the risk of cheating, technology use, and more.

As this project runs on, it is also timely that the Board moves from the short-term focus required during those Covid years, to develop a future direction and strategy that recognizes all that has changed and is changing. Player habits and behaviours, cost of living, travel and accommodation, online accessibility, demographics, general demands on club administrators, changing legislation, and much more are matters and examples of things that will impact the future.

We still believe clubs and their social community are the cornerstone of the game and we must ensure we retain a framework and environment for clubs to grow and thrive. But it would be naïve to ignore the role online bridge has to offer. Our challenge is to find a future that caters for and/or harmonizes both forms for the future of the game.

So where to from here?

1. The working party will continue to gather more data- through to early 2024.
2. The Board is setting time aside for a strategic workshop- November/December.
3. The Board will then publish a 3-year plan inclusive of online bridge, in early 2024.

I want to assure all stakeholders (players, clubs, and regions) that no decision has been taken. We appreciate there are strong feelings on the future shape of the game with some committed to F2F and others to Online, but we need to consider all facets. I equally appreciate that there is commentary that members of the working party may have a biased view on the future. The one thing I can assure you of is that the working party has and continues to be very professional. Whatever we decide will be decided on what we believe is the best for the game and not by personal agendas. This is not the first time we have had to consider change- think about when we moved from verbal bidding to written bidding to bidding boxes to a future of bidding on tablets. Throughout there was resistance to change but we adapted. Now we don't think about it.

We thank you for your continued patience on this matter.

### **Teaching and Learning**

In November for the first time in quite some time, we have a Teaching and Learning Conference. This will take place in Christchurch. Already we have 25 registrations, which is good news. The committee is working on the programme which will include a few external speakers. If you are interested, please register. We know some teachers would like to attend but they cannot travel for one reason or another. An opportunity to take part online in the plenary sessions may well be possible. Unfortunately, this cannot apply to the workshops.

Over the years the teaching Committee has developed world class teaching material for the use of Clubs and Players. With the formation of a new teaching and learning committee we have agreed terms of reference for their use.

Driving the committee is a commitment to support the promotion of excellence by contributing to and leading teaching and learning policy and initiatives. We have asked the committee to develop and support strategy and resources to

1. Meet the needs of new players.
2. Improve knowledge and skills of existing players.

I know the committee is working hard, so it is about watching this space.

### **World Championships**

As you aware these took place in Marrakech in Morocco. Post the event parts of Morocco suffered a large earthquake with loss of life to ~3000. To our knowledge one player stayed on after the event and we do know they are safe and well. Is there something about world championships, a week after Wuhan we had the explosion of Covid-19, and now a major earthquake.

I know the teams- Open, Women, Mixed- were excited about participating. When only 24 teams in each category qualify for the event, competition is exacting. For a long part of the qualifying stages our open team was in the mix but faltered on the last day. Nothing to be ashamed about as they finished in the top half. When you consider the composition of many of the teams are professionals with a wide range of resources it was another commendable result. We continue to support the sending of international teams to broaden experience and build the game.

### **Marketing**

Over the last few weeks Mel has been meeting with clubs as she builds an understanding of bridge and the needs of clubs, to inform the development of a marketing strategy. She is also developing a Facebook marketing campaign that clubs can opt into ahead of the 2024 lessons commencing. It will not require any social media knowledge by clubs and will be a small investment in experimenting with what could be a promising method of attracting new players to clubs. Mel will be sending information to all clubs about this in the coming weeks and continuing to meet with clubs throughout New Zealand.

We were pleased Stuff picked up the article about Arch Jelly. For those who missed the news Arch and his partner KC Lee won the Billie Tohill in Auckland. The interesting part of the story is that they won their direction in the morning by 1 match point and then did the same in the afternoon. To top it off they then went on to win the event by 1 match point. Not bad when you are 101 years.

### **Privacy Act Compliance**

We are preparing a policy statement and some best practice guidelines regarding mass emails to players and other clubs. This will be ready in the coming weeks.

A couple of items are worth highlighting:

1. When you are doing a mass mailing, only include those who have agreed to be contacted and use the BCC (blind CC line) so that personal email addresses remain confidential.

2. You should have a procedure in place to action an unsubscribe request and acknowledge that has been actioned.
3. Our Facebook community page provides a great opportunity to promote upcoming events, rather than direct mailing. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/919332668703912>  
Of course, the tournament schedule on NZ Bridge website is available and is widely used to promote events.
4. Other clubs are under no obligation to promote your club's activities.

### **Conduct Complaints and Discipline Committee**

It is with sadness that we share Len Andersen, independent chair of the above Committee passed away over the weekend. We send our condolences to family and friends.

Len has had to deal with some challenging situations, but he applied his professionalism throughout.

For those attending Congress 2023 I look forward to catching up.

Cheers Allan

