

Who's Minding the Store?

David Lusk

In 1999, with Andrew Mill and later Peter Gill, I was asked to mind the national youth bridge scene.

In this we were aided by David Stern, our dedicated Convenor, and an enthusiastic committee which threw in some bright ideas. Many of these ideas have been put into practice and youth bridge in Australia has shown some benefits but has sadly fallen short of thriving.

David Stern will step down as Convenor and I will cease to be national youth coordinator from the end of 2005 but I will continue to serve on the committee. After all, my interest in youth development won't be evaporating overnight.

During the last 6 and a bit years, the position in which youth bridge finds itself has doubtless improved but it is still way short of where we hoped that it might be.

Reflecting on that period, I pondered the idea of ownership. Who owns the Australian Youth Bridge Programme?

Whatever the answer to that question may be, is it in the right hands?

The Committee exists under the auspices of the ABF. Some states have programmes which are run by the state association or federation, but do any of these organizations own the programmes they foster? Certainly they have a vested interest in youth bridge because they see the encouragement of youth as a key element to the game's long term prosperity.

There are at least 300 active young players in Australia. How much of a vested interest do *they* have in a national programme for young players?

I would suggest that our young players of all ages should have the greatest interest of all. Of course they can play against our more senior players (and learn to beat them, I'm sure) but the best enjoyment comes in playing with other young players. No doubt youth bridge is more inclined to thrive where support is provided by appropriate organizations. However, it also thrives really well when young players are involved in their own promotion and organization.

Well what can you do? Probably more than you think. Here goes:-

- Work hard on resisting the notion that bridge is not cool.
- Recruit friends and acquaintances to try bridge.
- Demand support for youth bridge from your state association and your club.
- Support events for young players and encourage your bridge playing friends to do the same.
- Balance your bridge and other important activities.

Significantly, four of the six members of the current ABF Youth Committee are under 30.

Is it time to pass the baton to those who will benefit most?

Colts Team at the GNOT:

Paul Gosney

The GNOT was recently held at Banora Point and the ABF continued its tradition of sending a colts team to participate in the hope of providing experience for our up and comers. This year however the team was predominantly over the age of 20 due to the unavailability of more qualified 'colts', mainly because of clashes with exam periods. With the venue Club Banora being little more than an hour's drive from Brisbane, the team consisted of three Queenslanders; Nick Moore, Pranjal Chakradeo and Paul Gosney in addition to established Sydney pair Nick Rodwell and Anthony Newman. After narrowly losing the first knockout match by three imps to ACT Provincial we were then unlucky enough to subsequently draw Melbourne 3 and Brisbane 1 and sustained two heavy losses. Anthony, sitting North, was on the wrong side of two preemptive decisions in round 3 resulting in a total of 25 imps away.

Board: 18

Dealer: E

Vul: N-S

		North		
		♠ 6		
		♥ KQJ6532		
		♦ 106		
West	♣ KJ4	East		
♠ A8532		♠ K97		
♥ --		♥ A10974		
♦ J74		♦ A92		
♣ AQ963	South	♣ 52		
		♠ QJ104		
		♥ 8		
		♦ KQ853		
		♣ 1087		

At our table East, Pranjal, opened 1♥ and, with the opponents silent throughout, I ended up declaring 4♠. I was given a chance to make this when Bill Hunt found the lead of the 2 of Hearts, but thoroughly fooled, I won the ace and took a club finesse, going off when that failed and spades broke 4-1. At the other table East decided to pass in first seat then, after

West had opened 1♠, Anthony quite reasonably jumped to 3♥. When West re-opened with X -800 was the (unlucky) result.

Board 23

Dealer: S

Vul: All

		North		
		♠ AJ97532		
		♥ Q963		
		♦ 3		
West	♣ 6	East		
♠ K4		♠ 10		
♥ A7		♥ K104		
♦ AKQJ106		♦ 754		
♣ 843	South	♣ AQ9752		
		♠ Q86		
		♥ J852		
		♦ 982		
		♣ KJ10		

Sitting West I opened 1♦, North bid 3♠ and Pranjal 4♣. This inspired me to bid Keycard and when I heard a disappointing 5♦ (One key card) this became the final contract. After Ace and another spade, I had numerous chances including clubs 2-2, king of clubs onside or diamonds 2-2 and some sort of endplay in clubs. None of these materialised so I went one off. Our teammate in the North seat found a more timid 2♠ bid over 1♦ after which the opponents bid to 3NT. No doubt North was remembering his previous adventure to the 3 level rather than noticing he had a 7-4 with decent suits.

In the fourth match we played Northern Victoria and I had the pleasure (?) of being on lead against declarer, David Thompson, 12 times during the 16 board match. Here is an interesting defensive hand I experienced while partnering Nick Moore:

Board 8
 Dealer: W
 Vul: EW

	♠ QJ76	
	♥ Q10	
	♦ Q1064	
	♣ K76	
West		East
♠ 432		♠ A10985
♥ J76		♥ 985
♦ AK73		♦ 52
♣ AQ8		♣ 1093
	South	
	♠ K	
	♥ AK432	
	♦ J98	
	♣ J542	

The auction is long forgotten. South (Thompson) somehow ended up playing in 2♥. West (Gosney) led ♦Ace and East (Moore) played the 5 (high encouraging). Unsure of the diamond layout, West tried the ♣Queen before the spades/diamonds got going, North winning and East playing the 10.

Declarer now tried to sneak a spade through, but Moore rose Ace, returned a diamond to score a ruff then led a club through the J taking the contract one off. Although declarer can make by drawing trumps, Nick's defence was impressive as he is a relative newcomer to the game.

In Round 5 we played Wide Bay still without a win. I partnered Nick Rodwell for this match and despite the following board we had yet another loss this time by 24 IMPs, moving us to the bottom table.

Board: 8
 Dealer: W
 Vul: Nil

	North	
	♠ J8765	
	♥ 86532	
	♦ --	
	♣ Q87	
West		East
♠ K2		♠ Q43
♥ KJ74		♥ AQ
♦ Q953		♦ K62
♣ K64		♣ A10532
	South	
	♠ A109	
	♥ 109	
	♦ AJ10874	
	♣ J9	

After 1♦: 2♦ (Majors), E-W settled in 5♣. Nick found the tremendous lead of the ♦Ace leading

to two off.

We finally recorded a win in Round 6. With +137 IMPs on the second day we worked to 31st position out of 52

Youth Calendar, 2006

International events in bold type.

14-22 January
Australian Youth Week
Under 16 Camp
Canberra

February
OKB World Inter-collegiate
On-line

June 30 - July 10, 2006
World Youth Pairs and Camp
Piesztany, Slovakia

July
PABFC
TBA

July 2006
ANC Youth Pairs & Teams
Adelaide

July/August 2006
World Youth Teams*
Thailand

September 22 - 24 2006
Australian Youth Triathlon
 (Provisional dates only)
TBA

*Note that the World Youth Teams Championship will shift from odd to even years. After 2006, the next such event will be held in 2008

Who's in Charge?

All states and territories have an individual or group who take responsibility for youth bridge within their local jurisdiction.

ACT: **Griff Ware**

Queensland: **Joan Butts (Teaching)**
Larry Moses
Richard Touton

New South Wales: **Ross Stewart**
Leigh Gold
Peter Gill

Northern Territory: **Betty Mill**

South Australia: **David Lusk,**
William Jenner-O'Shea
& Youth Committee

Tasmania: **Adam Guarino-Watson**

Victoria: **Andrew Mill**
Cathy Mill
(Alphington)

Western Australia: **Bob Johnson**

If you are looking for a chance to get involved as a youth player, David Lusk can put you in touch with the appropriate person or group.

David Lusk: lusk@internode.on.net

or Phone 08 8336 3954

Contact details are also available on the ABF Website:

www.abf.com

Youth Committee 2006

Convenor: Mark Abraham
Mark.Abraham@anu.edu.au

Coordinator: To be announced

Committee:

Gabby Feiler gfeiler@iprimus.com.au

David Lusk lusk@internode.on.net

Leigh Gold leighkater@hotmail.com

Griff Ware thegruffle@mac.com

2006 OKB InterCollegiate

The schedule has been set for the 10th Annual Junior Championships on OKbridge.

The qualifying round will take place on Saturday, February 25th, with the continuing round to be played on February 26th.

Please see the conditions of contest listed on the Fifth Chair Foundation web page - www.fifthchair.org listed under programs.

Please email me your registration, with the School name, team captain, and all teammates email addresses, as well as age at the time of the tournament.

tarsh1@mindspring.com

We look forward to having a rousing tourney this year.

Marcia West, Coordinator
10th Annual Junior Championships

Youth Week 2006

The 2006 Australian Youth Week will be conducted at Fenner Hall in Canberra from January 14th --22nd.

Provisionally, the programme will be as follows:

Sat/Sun

Jan 14-15 **Australian Youth Pairs**

Mon/Tues

Jan 16-17 **Australian Youth Teams**

Wed-Fri

Jan 18-21 **Youth Butler Pairs/Trials**
(Winners will join Open Butler qualifiers for the Commonwealth Games event.)

Jan 19-20 **Under 16 Events & Youth Camp**

Sat

Jan 21 **International Youth Challenge**

Youth Week has provided our young players with memorable bridge experiences since the first Australian Youth Championships were conducted in 1969.

For those of you who have played in past years, you know you'll be back. For those who have never competed in this event, there is no better time to start. Last year, more than a dozen young players were involved for the first time, including a significant number from New Zealand. They all had a ball, learnt a great deal about bridge and couldn't wait to get involved in Summer Festival events as soon as their youth commitments were completed.

All players under 30 on Jan 1 are eligible to play in the Youth Pairs and Teams.

Youth Butler -- Revised Format

As for previous years, the Youth Butler will start with 10 qualifying pairs playing off in the double round-robin for the first 5 spots. As has been the case in the past, eligible pairs will be selected from results in the Youth Teams Championship adding the the pre-qualified pair from the Youth Triathlon (September, 2005).

After the field is cut following the completion of a double round-robin, the leading pair will be invited to form part of the 2006 Australian Youth Team.

The remaining four pairs will continue to play in team arrangements, with and against the other pairs. Note that this is the major departure from the last few years as there are still four pairs, rather than two teams, in the mix.

In summary, the new format will be:

Stage A: 5 tables, Double round-robin, 10 board matches.

The winners become 'automatics'.

The second, third, fourth and fifth pairs from Stage A go forward into stage B.

Stage B: 2 tables, cross-imped multiple round-robin, switching table opponents and team-mates throughout.

All pairs moving into stage B will receive a carry forward from stage A.

As always, any selection is subject to ratification by the ABF Youth Committee and the ABF.

The full regulations, including appropriate changes, appear on the ABF Website (Youth).

Bring Bridge Back to the Table

Sharon Osberg

Poker is all the rage. Online poker games and television poker championships have exploded in popularity. Games like Texas hold'em and five-card stud are spreading like wildfire among high school and college students. By some counts, as many as 80 million people in the United States play poker. And according to Pokerpulse.com, an independent research site, about two million people play poker online every month. You would think that with those kinds of numbers, the card game called bridge would also be getting a lift. But think again.

According to the American Contract Bridge League, 25 million Americans over the age of 18 know how to play bridge. These people are well educated (79 percent have a college degree), affluent (the average income is \$62,000 per year), primarily white (71 percent) and older (the average age is 51). Of these 25 million adult bridge players, only 3 million play the game at least once a week. This is a huge decrease from the 1940's when 44 percent of American households had at least one active bridge player.

Bridge should be popular. It's an elegant game, full of strategy and tactics. It's part science, part math, part logic, part reason. But a huge component of bridge is also very human. This melding of the former with the latter is what sets bridge apart, not only from other card games, but also from board games like chess. While computers can now routinely beat all but a handful of chess grandmasters, they can't come close to outplaying the world's finest bridge players. Why is this? Because computers can understand math, but they can't understand people - at least not yet.

Bridge is a partnership game. Above all else, a successful bridge player must be a great partner. Trust, communication and patience are the essential attributes of winning at bridge. Once a strong partnership is formed, it provides a platform for individual creativity, allowing players to inject their own personalities into the game. Take my bridge partner, for example. I play with Warren Buffett, the investor and founder of Berkshire Hathaway.

No one would describe Warren as timid. Yet, when we first played bridge, we got trampled by our opponents because Warren deferred to me, and I was afraid to make mistakes. As we got to know each other, and as our partnership solidified, things changed.

The Warren Buffett you know from business is now the same Warren Buffett I know at the bridge table. And as Warren would tell you, playing bridge is like running a business. It's about hunting, chasing, nuance, deception, reward, danger, cooperation and, on a good day, victory.

Bridge used to be very popular. In 1938, three bridge books - "Complete Contract Bridge," "Culbertson's Own New Contract Bridge" and "Five Suit Bridge" - made this newspaper's best-seller list. In 1957, "Goren's New Complete Contract Bridge" also made the list - for four weeks. Films like "Shadow of the Thin Man," "It's a Wonderful World" and "Sunset Boulevard" featured characters playing bridge. Matches were covered in newspapers, magazines and on the radio.

One famous game in the 1920s captivated the public's attention for months. On Sept. 29, 1929, John and Myrtle Bennett of Kansas City, Mo., invited their friends, Charles and Myrna Hofman, over for a game of bridge. Things were going well until several hours into the match when Mr. Bennett overbid. A domestic brawl ensued, and suddenly Mrs. Bennett walked into a bedroom, returned with a gun and shot her husband several times. Mrs. Bennett was charged with first-degree murder, but she was acquitted on the ground that the shooting was accidental. Of course, a jury of bridge players might have ruled that it was justifiable homicide.

So, why has bridge's popularity steadily declined over the last 50 years? It's probably too easy to correlate this decline with the advent of television, but it's no coincidence. Television served as a social replacement for bridge night. To compensate for increasing competition from technology, some sort of marketing by the various bridge organizations might have kept bridge visible, but until very recently, no marketing was done. As a result, bridge is rightly perceived as a game "my grandparents" play.

Bridge will never have the spectator appeal of games like poker. It's just too cerebral. Moreover, the learning curve is steep. But it's worth trying to bring back some of the glory of bridge by getting young people engaged in the game. Progress has been made on that front. The American Contract Bridge League has recently developed a youth marketing plan focused on affiliate clubs and has launched a Web site, bridgeiscool.com, where young people can learn, play and obtain information about tournaments, clubs and special events. Warren Buffett and Microsoft's Bill Gates, another bridge enthusiast, have recently asked me to organize a bridge program for public schools. They know that the key to reviving bridge is getting children to play, and they are prepared to provide \$1 million of initial financing for the effort.

Public schools should be thrilled with this proposition. Bridge embodies cooperation, logic, problem-solving and has even been linked to higher test scores among children. Who knows, the next Warren Buffett or Bill Gates might be sitting in a classroom somewhere waiting for someone to teach them the meaning of a grand slam.