



AUDREY GRANT'S
AWARD
WINNING

Commonly Used Conventions

by Pat Harrington

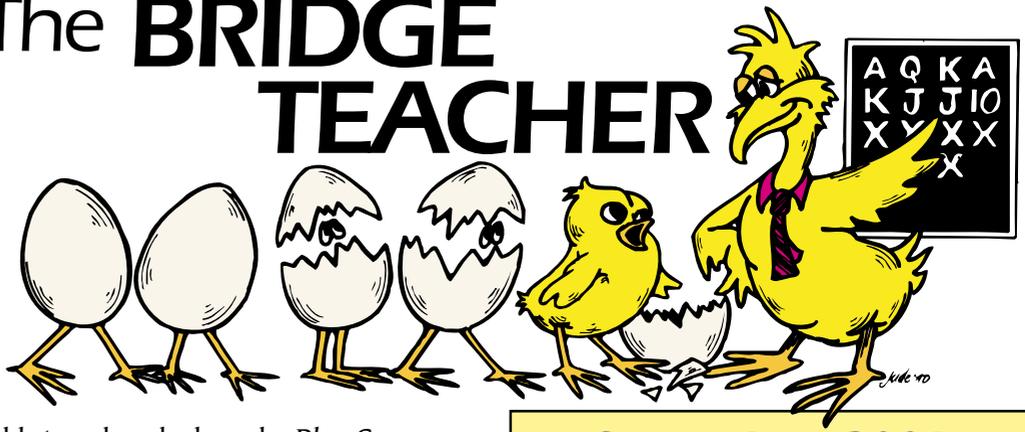
Are you tired of teaching the same old lessons? Are your students clamoring for new material? The new entry in the ACBL Bridge Series, *Commonly Used Conventions* is here to solve your problems! But first, a little background.

All of the ACBL's course books have a new look and a new name. The original *Club Series*, *Diamond Series* and *Heart Series* texts are renamed: *Bidding*, *Play of the Hand*, and *Defense* and will be spiral bound with the name over a large suit symbol indicative of the previous title. The original *Spade Series* has been replaced in the series of courses with the entirely new *Commonly Used Conventions*.

Don't despair about the loss of all those wonderful hands that appeared in the original *Spade Series*. They have been compiled into two more play courses complete with an analysis



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booklet and coded cards: *Play Course For The Advancing Student I* and *Play Course For The Advancing Student II*. Both of these make ideal review courses for students who have completed the first three lesson series. They can be ordered from the ACBL (800-264-2743 in the U.S. and 800-264-8786 in Canada). Play booklets are priced at \$4.50 and coded cards at \$3.50 but ACBL members receive a 10% discount.

The ACBL lesson program is nearly complete. We will let you know when the final product, *More Commonly Used Conventions*, is actually ready — it's expected by the end of the year. All of this material provides teachers with SIXTY weeks of lesson materials: eight weeks in the *Bidding* text; four weeks in the *Club Play* course; eight weeks in the *Play of the Hand* course;

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four weeks in the *Diamond Play* course; eight weeks in the *Defense* course; four weeks in the *Heart Play* course; then eight more weeks in the two play courses for the advancing student; eight weeks in *Commonly Used*

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Conventions; and, eventually, eight more weeks in *More Commonly used Conventions*. It's hard to get tired of teaching the same thing with all of this available!

Some teachers expand this material even further by spending more than one session on some of the course lessons or by adding an extra week to the play courses because they find that eight hands are too many for their students to play in one session. The use of the appropriate play course serves several purposes. Students need time to assimilate the material that was presented in each eight-week course and the best way to do that is to review and use what they learned while playing. *Play* courses also break the tedium of lesson after lesson. It's fun for the students to come out just to play hands. These shorter courses also give teachers more flexibility in scheduling classes at awkward times of the year.

Teachers will love the material in *Commonly Used Conventions*. In fact, the American Bridge Teachers Association (ABTA) recently presented its coveted book-of-the-year award to Audrey Grant for this latest addition to the ACBL lesson series. In two lessons each, the eight lessons cover:

notrump openings with Stayman and Jacoby transfers; major-suit openings and responses; minor-suit openings and responses; and two-level opening bids (weak twos and the strong 2♣ opening).

In addition to presenting new conventions (such as Jacoby transfers, Drury, and Jacoby 2NT), the course provides a good review of previous material before expanding into topics that were not covered in the first three courses (using 15–17 INT opening bids, third and fourth seat opening bids, and reverses). For example, lesson one begins by looking at INT opening bids and moves from the standard INT opening bid to one with a worthless doubleton, one with a five-card major, a 15-point INT opening and an offshape hand that is best opened INT.

Were we remiss in not presenting all of this information in an earlier course? Absolutely not! Think of how overwhelmed our students are with the material that is already included. The key is presenting information at the right time for the student. Now, with 44 class sessions plus some play outside of class under their belt, our students are ready to expand their knowledge. They are also curious about these situations which they may have encountered in randomly dealt hands.

Lesson plans are designed for a seminar of approximately one hour discussing examples using the E-Z Deal cards on the table followed by an hour playing four lesson hands. Student exercises are provided and can be incorporated into the lesson or used for homework. Teachers can adapt the material to suit the needs of their students and might expand the course into more than eight lessons or two six-week sessions with the addition of more deals. A minimum of four deals should be played in each lesson or someone will be disappointed about not having their turn to declare.

Commonly Used Conventions can be ordered from the ACBL. The teacher manual is priced at \$14.95 and will arrive shrink-wrapped and ready to place in a three-ring binder. ACBL accredited teacher price for the textbook is \$13 and there are quantity discounts ranging from \$11 for eight books to \$7.50 for the purchase of 100 books. If you purchase 100 or more texts, you can mix and match all four texts in the order and still get the discount. And did you know that ACBL Star Teachers get an extra discount on textbooks? The discount ranges from 25 cents per book for a one-star teacher to 70 cents for a four-star teacher. There's a good incentive to mail in your class lists! ♦

Special Seminars and Programs at the Las Vegas Fall NABC



Note: With the unusual start on Sunday and end on Tuesday (11/18–11/27), some of the programs you have come to expect to be held prior to the NABC will be held after. Check this list to see what's being offered and the dates.

Sunday, November 18

EASYBRIDGE! ACCREDITATION — Edith McMullin and the Easybridge! staff share with you how to present these new fun beginner games at your bridge club. Easybridge! is an innovative way of bringing new people into the game. Anyone can be accredited, but you must be a director to run the program. Time: 9 AM to 4 PM with a break for lunch. *Stage A in the morning and Stage B in the afternoon.* Accreditation is FREE. Material packet is \$20 to cover cost.

Note: *Easybridge!* will repeat on various days during the week. Contact Gail Smith at Headquarters for information.

Tuesday, November 20

FREE BRIDGE LESSON WITH AUDREY GRANT

Watch Audrey Grant entertain and educate our newcomers with a fun bridge lesson and duplicate orientation. Bring your students who plan to play in the IN Program.

Time: 10 AM to 12 Noon Fee: None

Friday, November 23 — Goodwill Day

MINIBRIDGE SEMINAR

Teachers, learn more about MiniBridge as a pre-cursor to your regular lesson programs. It's a handy tool — especially for students who are new to cards.

Time: 10 AM to 12 Noon Fee: None

SEMINAR FOR UNIT AND DISTRICT RECORDERS

This program is designed for recorders at all levels and with any amount of experience. Information will be provided on:

(1) The ACBL Recorder System: Duties and obligations of recorders.

(2) How to handle those commonly occurring recorder situations.

(3) How to deal with the more difficult and/or sensitive types of recorder problems.

(4) Advice on how to handle any troublesome situations you may have encountered.

Time: 10 AM to 12 Noon

Fee: None

Saturday, November 24 — Junior Day

BRIDGE TEACHERS AND BRIDGE CRUISES

Peg Cundiff, popular and entertaining host of many bridge cruises, provides an interesting morning program where you will learn how to be successful as a teacher/game director on a cruise ship. Tips on how to get assignments. (Certificate to participants.) Time: 9 AM to 12 Noon Fee: \$25 at door

EASYBRIDGE! PRESENTERS' BREAKFAST

If you are a past, present, or future Easybridge! Presenter, make plans to attend. There will be presentations by Edith McMullin, Marti Ronemus, and Gail Smith. Several of the more successful presenters (both large and small clubs) will be giving reports followed by a creative organizational meeting you won't want to miss.

Time: 8:30 AM to 11:00 AM

Fee: None

Special Seminars and Programs at the LV Fall NABC

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Sunday, November 25

CLUB MANAGERS' MORNING

9 AM to 10 AM — **MARKETING FOR CLUB DEVELOPMENT** — Join Edith McMullin, the creator of Easybridge! and the ACBL IN Program, to learn more about how to promote your club.

10 AM to 11 AM — **COFFEE WITH CAROL** — Carol Robertson — Director of the Club Membership Department and other members of the ACBL Staff will be on hand to answer questions and to let you know about new opportunities and programs for clubs. Come network with other club managers!

11 AM to 12 Noon — **ACBLscore QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION** — ACBL National Tournament Director Rick Beye and Jim Lopushinsky, creator of ACBLscore, will talk with the group about the benefits of using the ACBLscore program at your club and will answer your questions.

ACCREDITED TEACHERS DUTCH TREAT SOCIAL

ACBL Accredited Teachers are invited to network with fellow teachers from all areas of ACBL at this new get-together. Join us for a good time over cocktails and dinner. No business tonight! Check the Daily Bulletin for location. Bring your guests. Time: 5 PM to 7 PM Fee: Dutch Treat Location: Check the Daily Bulletin. We hope to offer a trip to another site.

Monday, November 26

TEACHER UPDATE MEETING

Join the Education Department staff to find out what's new in Bridge Education.

Time: 10 AM to 12 Noon

Fee: None

Tuesday, November 27

EDUCATION WORKSHOP

Liaisons, IN Coordinators, Club Managers, Teachers, Unit Officials are all invited to attend to find out more about ideas for promoting bridge locally. Join Betty Starzec and the ACBL Education Dept. staff. Time: 10 AM to 12 Noon Fee: None

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday — November 26, 27, 28

CLUB DIRECTORS' UPDATE COURSE (Continuing Education)

Three mornings focusing on the public relations aspect of running a successful bridge club with a focus on people-handling and The Proprieties of the Laws. *A certificate to those who successfully complete the review.*

Fee: \$20 for full course if pre-registered; \$25 at the door.

Time: 9 AM to 12:30 PM each morning.

Wednesday, November 28

TEACHER ACCREDITATION PROGRAM (TAP) —

Betty Starzec — If you haven't reviewed the TAP in a while, this might be the perfect opportunity for you to sit in again, free of charge, for this one-day program to find out what's new.

Location: Las Vegas Hilton

Time: 9AM, 1 PM, & 7 PM

Fee: \$125

Wednesday, Thursday, Friday — November 28, 29, 30

CDIN — CLUB DIRECTORS' COURSE — Priscilla Smith

This is a comprehensive course designed to introduce prospective club directors to all phases of running a successful club and club game. If you are interested in running games for your students, this is the course for you.

Time: All day Wednesday (with breaks) starting at: 1 PM to 10:00 PM; All day Thursday (with breaks) from 9 AM to 10:00 PM; Friday: 9 AM to 12 Noon with testing to follow.

Fee: \$80 if you preregister, \$100 at the door.



I was recently asked what my favorite teaching tip was, and the question startled me. I use different techniques in different situations, and I've tried to pass many of them on to you. Here's a checklist for you to review.

1. LISTEN. Your students will tell you if they understand what's going on. They will let you know, if you heed them, what to offer and when.

2. READ. *The Bridge Teacher*, *The ACBL Bridge Bulletin*, *The ABTA Quarterly*, and a host of excellent bridge magazines can flood you with new ideas and information. If your teaching materials and techniques haven't changed in years, you are shortchanging yourself as well as the students.

3. VALUE YOURSELF HIGHLY. If you don't think well of yourself, how can you expect students to appreciate you? Price high, not low, and you will attract more students. There's nothing wrong with donating your services if you want to be charitable, but undercharging is unfair to you and to your fellow bridge professionals.

4. LAUGH. Tell jokes, try to be witty, be happy as you teach. Your positive attitude will be mirrored by the class.

5. LOOK PROFESSIONAL. Sometimes I think this is one of the most important tips. Whether you want to believe it or not, students do notice our appearances. If you do value yourself highly, it should show in your dress and demeanor. This applies to men as well as to women, to senior-aged volunteers as well as to young

7. ATTEND MEETINGS. If your Unit's Education Liaison invites you to a teachers meeting, *go*. If you have a chance to meet with other ABTA (American Bridge Teachers Association) members, *go*. If you can get to an NABC and join in the wonderful activities presented by the Education Department for Accredited Teachers, *go*. You'll find support, camaraderie, information.

One of the flaws in a teacher's life is that it's lonely — that is, lonely for peers who understand and can help with your objectives, fears, problems. Even when we have triumphs, there is rarely anyone around who really

understands what is involved. But your fellow professionals can function as a support group — if you let them. And your attendance may be tax deductible if you keep records.

8. GIVE PRESENTS. I give all new students a loose leaf binder the first time they come to one of my classes. The binders are always red, and they have become a real "signature" for my classes. I charge enough for my classes to allow me to "give away" the E-Z Guide booklets for whichever course I'm teaching. Of course, the students have paid for them, but I



entrepreneurs. You don't have to have special bridge-themed dress, but you should make an effort to look like a pro. In my area, that means I wear a dress or a dressy pantsuit while many of the class members are in shorts, but they like the difference. It shows that I care enough to make an effort.

6. KEEP RECORDS. You should want to develop a database of students to whom you can send notices of new classes and special events. You should want to be able to show the tax man that your deductions and expenses are legal.



The Business of Bridge

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never mention them in my course publicity, so they are a pleasant surprise. I also give pens, glasses, or mugs, whatever might be inexpensive and attractive to remind them of the good time they had in my classes.

9. EXERCISE YOUR MEMORY. Try to remember the names of students and when they were in class — and which class if possible. Call each person by name at least once in each class. The personal attention pays off. If you are lucky enough to have an enormous class, you should still try to do this.

10. USE NAME TAGS. I saved this little one for last, even though it is *really* important. It will surely help you with tip No. 9! Wear a name tag or badge every time you teach, even though you're sure everyone knows your name. As pleasantly as possible, ask everyone to wear a name tag in all classes.

Oh, not if you're teaching two tables of friends in someone's house, but any time there's any chance your students don't all know one another. This will enhance the social aspect of your course. ♦

Have You Tried Home-Style Bridge?

By Julie T. Greenberg, ACBL Director of Education



During the recent Toronto NABC, Jerry Fleming of Los Alamos, New Mexico, reminded me of a wonderful bridge game known as "Home-Style." It is very popular in his hometown and he wondered why more people aren't using it. Have you ever tried it with your students? It's an easy, social, competitive game to run for new players who would like to practice.

In the late 70s when I first moved to Memphis, Tennessee — after 20 years as a tournament director in the field — I took over a country club game where "Home-Style" was the established format for the group. It was new to me, but I soon learned that it was very popular with the players. It's a game which can best be described as "Swiss Pairs," and ACBL highly recommends it as an alternative to duplicate.

"Home-Style" is a good tool for teachers because it is easy to run and a lot of fun for the participants. When you start with a pot-luck supper (or lunch), followed by this 16 to 20 board game, you can offer your players an afternoon or evening with a party atmosphere to celebrate the end of their most recent course. At my country club game, the players used to gather for dinner at the club before

playing in the game.

Here's how a "Home-Style" game works. Pairs are assigned at random on the first round and given numbers according to those assignments (NS Table 1 is #1; EW Table 1 is #2; NS Table 2 is #3, etc.). Players cut for the deal and they play four deals of bridge per round, Chicago-style (1st deal — no one is vulnerable; 2nd and 3rd deal — the dealer's side is vulnerable; 4th deal — everyone is vulnerable). At the end of the round, the scores are totaled and reported to the director (you). The scores are converted to Victory Points, recorded on the recap sheet, and then pairs with the closest scores for the next round are matched up. Continue this procedure, without repeating any pairings, until either four or five rounds of four deals have been completed. You can award club masterpoint overall and match awards. Check with the Club Membership Department for more information.

ACBL offers free of charge a "Home-Style" brochure and special "Home-Style" scorecard. Call the Club Membership Department (901-332-5586, ext. 315) and try this game with your students. We think you will enjoy the experience. ♦

Caitlin is founder of the foremost online bridge school, THE BRIDGE FORUM, (www.bridge-forum.com) With eight expert affiliates—Bergen, Cohen, Gitelman, Granovetter, Klinger, Lawrence, Miles and Woolsey—and a host of accredited teachers, BRIDGE FORUM teaches on a variety of sites. Caitlin can be reached at caitlin@bridge-forum.com.

As teachers we should stay abreast of computer programs geared to play with or against our students. Such programs make for excellent homework and in order to know what we are recommending, let's visit the fifth annual World Computer Bridge Championship (WCBC), which took place at the summer North American Bridge Championships in Toronto this past July.

With the event running so smoothly, Hans Kuijf of the Netherlands took first place with his program 'Jack' (www.jackware.nl). The final KO was a 64-board match divided into four quarters with Jack taking a carryover of 12 IMPs into the final against Micro Bridge. Jack and Micro Bridge (Japan, www.threeweb.ad.jp/~mcbridge) finished first and second in the round-robin stage of the championship, beating four other programs: Blue Chip Bridge (UK, <http://www.bluechipbridge.co.uk>); Bridge Baron (US, www.bridgebaron.com); Q-Plus (Germany, www.q-plus.com); and Wbridge5 (France, <http://ourworld.compuserve.com/>



[homepages/yvescostel](http://homepages.yvescostel)).

Note Jack is not currently on the market. Kuijf states that he does not yet have the time to market his product outside the Netherlands where a Dutch version is near ready to be released. All other programs can be purchased except Wbridge5, which can be downloaded free from its site. Of the group, Bridge Baron is the best selling while Q-Plus provides the robots found on ACBL ONLINE.

In general, such programs allow you to set the conventions you want to play, from weak notrumps to upside down carding, from Cappelletti to new minor forcing. Most also have files kept in a 'deal library' and can be called up as you wish. From this library you typically find selected sessions from national and regional tournaments. Thus you play the hands

and your results are compared to the scores from the actual session. You can give a specific event for your student to play as homework and together go over results.

How do these programs differ from those we know about, including Bobby Wolff's, Eddie Kantar's, Mike Lawrence's, Larry Cohen's, and Fred Gitelman's? Such are meant to raise the level of your game with interactive learning. Part of the author's work is to ensure there is a right answer. Just think of Gitelman's Bridge Master 2000 where you can take a finesse and if it is made at the wrong time, it will always be offside. Make the same play at the right time, and it will be the right call. Compare this to any of the WCBC contestants where the goal is to make the best call or play but there is no definitive answer. The computer, like you, is 'thinking' its way through the process of playing bridge and it, like you, will make mistakes.

Since 1997, District Director Al Levy has been behind the proposal to have the ACBL claim the computer world championships. Sponsors of this event have included Baron Barclay Bridge Supplies (www.baronbarclay.com), Microsoft's Gaming Zone program (www.zone.com), and most recently FunBridge (www.funbridge.com), an international software company that specializes in entertaining online bridge activities.

Early on in the short history of the

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WCBC, GIB (www.gibware.com) showed itself to be a very strong contender, winning both the 1998 and 1999 events, with Baron Barclay and OKbridge (www.okbridge.com) sponsoring GIB's first win and Orbis Investment Management Limited (www.orbis.bm) sponsoring its second. GIB had redeemed itself given its surprisingly poor 1997 showing. According to Ginsberg, this was due to a programming bug that was not found prior to the competition. In 2000 Meadowlark Bridge (www.rnnet.com/meadowlark) took first place while GIB did not enter the fray. Today GIB can

be found at the online playing site, SWAN, www.swangames.com.

This year neither Meadowlark nor GIB was a contestant. Dr. Rodney Ludwig of Meadowlark explains that while he will enter next year's contest, the program is currently being re-written and is not yet ready for competition, and Ginsberg reports prior conflicting commitments with his own promotional event.

When we recommend such programs to our students, one cannot help but ask the question: will computers ever rate to play as well as humans? During the event, much discussion ensued as to whether or not we will ever see the likes of a bridge 'Deep Blue'. For those who do not follow chess, this refers to an IBM computer that played against world chess champion Gary Kasparov and beat him. Indeed Zia, who played and defeated

seven different computers at once, might well argue that such is not likely with bridge. At the same time Kit Woolsey, well known both for his bridge and backgammon (www.gammonline.com) prowess, is convinced that at some point bridge programmers will meet the challenge and be able to beat top rated human players. Nonetheless, the fun of humans playing against computers remains. All enjoyed the show while 'Jack' and 'Micro Bridge' teamed up to play two different all-human teams made up of world class players. Jacek Pszcola, Piotr Gawrys (both Polish champions) and Sam Lev and Pinhas Romik from ACBL ONLINE beat the computer team by 18 IMPs and Lisa and David Berkowitz with Marty Fleisher and JoAnna Stansby beat the computers by 8 IMPs. Zia wanted to play; however, the computers remembered him all too well and shut down!

While Al Levy and this past year's contestants close the book on the 2001 championship, the work now begins on the next WCBC most likely to take place at the 2002 World Bridge Federation (WBF) world championships. I urge you to keep up to date about this event. The evolution of such computers reflects the level of play which our students can expect when engaging in very enjoyable and worthwhile 'homework.'

So until the next WCBC, let's take pride that the ACBL is home to the computer world championships. ♦

Teaching Blind Students

A recent e-mail made us aware that the Dutch Bridge Union is able to provide course material in English for visually handicapped and blind bridge students.

Apparently a group in the Netherlands has been working for a number of years on a project to develop materials which allow visually-handicapped students to learn bridge along with normally-sighted students. These materials include large size diagrams and larger playing cards.

Now this material has been expanded for use by e-mail with blind students who have "read" programs on their computers.

For more information, please contact the Dutch Bridge Union (NBB) at www.bridge.nl, click on "LINKS" and then click on Nederlands and then click on "Bridge visueel gehandicapt." Another approach is to use <http://www.home.hetnet.nl/~maco93/index.html> and then click on "translation."

Try "Bridge with Guidance"



Susan Freeman of Dayton, Ohio, came up with a variation of the methods "The Fifth Chair" has been using online. Susan calls her program, "Bridge with Guidance" and is using it successfully at her club. If you would like to try this with your students, here's more information sent to us by Judy Cotterman, who talked with Susan recently in Dayton.

Bridge with Guidance was designed primarily to facilitate a safe and comfortable environment in which new and social bridge players can become acquainted with duplicate bridge conventions and improve and strengthen their play. Susan also wanted to increase the number of bridge players at the center and to sell ACBL memberships.

The basic plan calls for a volunteer "guide" (experienced player with a friendly manner and the ability to get down to the basics) to sit at each table. The guide answers questions and makes suggestions regarding bidding, play, and defense while offering general information about the mechanics of play. Guides may observe or play at the table, depending on the number of participants.

Many of the guides have found that the players enjoy a basic exercise

where each describes what his or her partner has "told them about the hand" after each bid. The players are allowed to make corrections as they go along.

Each session the players work on one technique or convention (e.g., transfers, negative doubles, weak twos) using an average of eight hands which have been pre-duplicated. A brief overview is provided at the beginning of the session and specifics are addressed during play. Information is as basic or as specific as the players need it to be. The participants are

encouraged to ask questions about any facet of the play. After several sessions, the boards are mixed to give the players a chance to try several of the concepts.

Susan offers two sessions a week, one in the day and one in the evening, to allow people to become involved when they can attend. There is a small fee to defray the cost of materials and equipment and to help encourage commitment.

The reaction in Dayton has been extremely enthusiastic and positive.

The players have expressed appreciation for the information and the way it is provided.

Humor plays a big part in each session and the gentleness and support from the guides is key.

It takes a lot of volunteers to sustain the program and so Susan uses pre-registration in order to recruit the numbers she needs for each session. If you are looking for a project that your unit can use to get more involved in building the local bridge community, why not try Bridge with Guidance. ♦





THE BRIDGE TEACHER'S BOOKSHELF

by Pat Harrington

Here is the solution for every bridge player on your holiday gift list. Marty Bergen's newest offering, *Marty Sez*, a hardcover book with high quality pages, is perfect for gift-giving. The package is more upscale but the style is similar to his highly successful *Points Schmoints*. I like the format of *Marty Sez* even better with the one-page articles arranged by topic. Chapter subjects include: hand evaluation, opener's decisions, responder's decisions, bidding notrump, slam bidding, preempts, competitive bidding, doubles, declarer play, and defense. Yes, these are all topics that appear in most bridge books. The difference is that Marty touches on aspects ignored in other books — advice that is often not even known by experienced bridge players.

Here are four hands from the article on limit raises:

♠ 9 8 ♥ Q 9 7 5 3 2 ♦ 6 ♣ A K J 4
♠ A K 7 5 ♥ 9 8 5 4 2 ♦ K J 5 3 ♣ —
♠ 8 ♥ K 10 8 5 4 ♦ A J 9 8 ♣ K 5 4
♠ K 7 ♥ K Q J 10 4 ♦ Q 7 5 ♣ Q 5 3

Suppose you open each hand with 1♥ and your partner bids 3♥, a limit raise showing four-card support. Will you bid game with any of the above hands? Marty's advice is to bid game opposite a limit raise any time you have a singleton or void. Only the last hand (ironically, the hand with the most HCP) should pass.

Another article gives this advice; 2NT is NEVER a shutout bid. Now there's advice my students need to keep them from using 2NT as a denial of partner's suits.

The book is full of good advice like this — concise tips which are highlighted in the text and are easy for our students to remember. *Marty Sez* is a great source book for teachers looking for ideas for a mini-lesson and, with the addition of lesson hands, it can serve as the basis of a course — or several courses. Teachers whose students purchased *Points Schmoints* know how popular Marty's books are. This book is likely to break all sales records with your students.

Marty Sez is available for purchase from the ACBL. The regular price for this hardcover book is \$17.95 but there is a 10% member discount. Order your copy now and don't forget to order extras for gifts! ♦

NAME CHANGE FOR THE BETTER BRIDGE MAGAZINE

A while ago, when the ACBL purchased *Better Bridge* magazine from Audrey Grant, its founder, the agreement called for only temporary use of the *Better Bridge* name.

This is because Better Bridge, Inc. is the corporate name under which Audrey and her family have done business for a long time. With Audrey's full support, it has always been ACBL's intent to change the name to one that the organization could own and use indefinitely.

ACBL is excited about the new name of our magazine.

Play Bridge is an upbeat and active name for the publication. The name is in keeping with ACBL's desire to attract a wider audience and to grow its numbers. ACBL hopes to broaden the organization's appeal by taking advantage of new technology and increasing the visibility of the wonderful game of bridge.

The name change does not signify any significant editorial change in the magazine you have come to know and — judging from the letters we receive — really love.

Audrey, who has edited the magazine since its founding in 1993 and since it became a part of ACBL in 1999, will continue in that role. So invite your friends to join in the fun with ACBL and **Play Bridge!**

New Members and ACBL's Recruitment Program

by Julie Greenberg

In January of 1997, the new rebate schedule of \$6 for first-time new members and \$6 for renewals went into effect. Since that time, ACBL has been losing a considerable amount on money on each first time new member. Even without the rebates, the cost of a first-time ACBL membership is almost double the discounted \$16 fee. If a new member rejoins for two or more years, the investment begins to pay for itself. But the truth of the matter is that approximately 50% of the people recruited as first year members do not sign up for a second year.

ACBL is in a budget crunch and must make some changes to ensure the financial stability of our organization. In 2002, first time memberships will be discounted 25% rather than 50% and will be offered at \$24. At this price, ACBL will still lose money on first time members — but not as much.

At the present time, ACBL encourages the recruitment of new members through two incentive programs. Both are effective and financially feasible. Each time a club recruits 10 new members, it receives an

upgraded club championship a nice perk for the players. And, when a club official or a teacher recruits 25 new members, that person receives a \$50 gift certificate to the ACBL store.

The \$6 rebate program is not a successful program and it is very expensive. It currently pays \$6 per first-time member to the recruiter and \$6 per year when the new member renews (within the grace period) for a second year.

In 1996, the year before the new rebate schedule went into effect, 9,300 new members were recruited. In 1997, there was a slight increase in recruited members to 9,409 but the totals have decreased considerably in the following three years (1998 – 8,410 new members; 1999 – 7,549 new members, 2000 – 7,645 new members).

After examining the number of new people recruited during the last five years, it appears that the rebate program has not had an impact on the bottom line nor has it served as an additional financial incentive. It seems that teachers focus on getting their financial reward from students who continue to take lessons and club officials from newcomers who play in club games. The current rebate program is costing ACBL an average of \$50,000 a year — a lot of money for a program that isn't showing positive results.

During the Las Vegas meeting this fall, the ACBL Board of Directors will be looking at replacing this program with one that will bring greater rewards to the people who recruit large numbers of new members. It is our intention to continue to “thank” our smaller recruiters with the ACBL gift certificates and the upgraded club championships.

If you have any ideas for additional incentives for recruiting new members, please let us hear from you. ACBL wants to work with its teachers and club officials to make our organization stronger. ♦

**Play in the Red, White and Blue
Bridge Bash Charity Games
on December 10 and 15.**



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