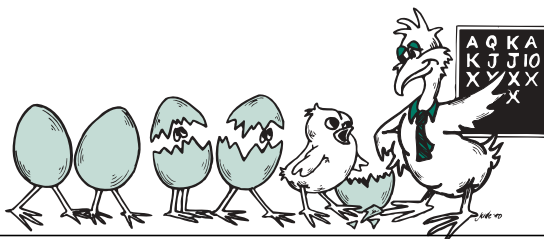


# THE BRIDGE TEACHER



December  
2002

VOL. 12 • ISSUE 4

## JUNIOR MONTH GAMES

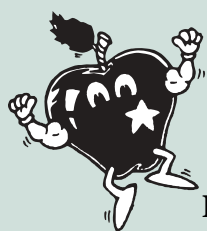
If you run a duplicate game, remember that you can convert your game to a Junior Fund game at any time during the year. A Junior Fund game makes your game eligible for sectional-rated black points — and in return the ACBL collects an additional \$1 per player. This is an excellent way to offer more points when you want to celebrate a special occasion at your club and our younger members will benefit. Junior Fund games support activities for Junior bridge players.

If you need more information, please contact the ACBL Education Department.



## BRIDGE WEEK IN NORTH AMERICA

Don't forget to support ACBL's first "Bridge Week in North America" celebration from January 6 through January 12. Get together with your students and hold a Bridge Week party. See if your efforts can rival those of the re-enactment that will be held on January 11 at the Waldorf Astoria in New York City. It should be lots of fun. (See *The Bridge Bulletin*, Dec., page 34, for details.)



## Apples to . . .

**Joel Shapiro** (Toronto ON) for becoming ACBL's first Five-Star Teacher. Congratulations, Joel!

**Kitty Munson Cooper** (Albuquerque NM) for the work she has done in updating the Pre-Club Lesson Plans for schools. We are recommending the use of these lesson plans for all school programs and, in the right circumstances, your regular lessons. Take a look. There's a link for the free download of the lesson plans at ACBL's website [www.acbl.org](http://www.acbl.org) under Teachers (School Bridge Area — click on the Pencil in the School House).

**Carolyn Weiser** (Woburn MA) for creating a Quick Index for the *Bidding (Club Series)* text which is now available for you at ACBL's website [www.acbl.org](http://www.acbl.org) in the teacher pages.

*The Official  
Newsletter of  
The  
American  
Contract  
Bridge League  
Accredited  
Teachers*

## IN THIS ISSUE

Junior Month .....	1
Bridge Week .....	1
Surfing the "Net" ...	2
The Business of Bridge .....	3
Teachers' Bookshelf .....	4-5
Star Teachers .....	6
Make Students Famous .....	7
Student-Junior Membership .....	7
John's Play & Learn .....	8

WINTER  
2002

# Surfing the Net — Online Discussion Groups

During my regular online class for advancing new players, a student mentioned that he had joined an online discussion group. My student was feeling overwhelmed — not only by the amount of e-mails he was receiving, but also by the swing in the content from serious to frivolous, from earnest to grandstanding, from evocative to mundane. He then asked if I belonged to any such groups, so we discussed it.

The class first wanted to know the difference between discussion groups and news groups, and exactly what groups are available. I promised to come back with information, but I was struck by the enthusiasm whirling at the tables. I decided to suggest the following: “How about if each of us who is interested takes one aspect of such groups and reports back next week?”

I could almost hear the applause as one student picked OKbridge’s discussion group, another wanted to look at Bridge Base Online (BBO), while others chose sites such as Swan Games ([www.swangames.com](http://www.swangames.com)) and Bridge Perfect ([www.bridgeperfect.com](http://www.bridgeperfect.com)). I chose Bridge Talk ([www.bridgetalk.com](http://www.bridgetalk.com)). Others grabbed topics ranging from what constitutes a news or discussion group to how one chooses which group(s) to join.

By midweek, the students who had signed up for a particular kind of group — those solely dependent on e-mail — swamped *my* public e-mail with frantic messages: “*Yikes*. My server won’t take anymore e-mail!” Hmmm, I forgot to warn them that they would get *lots* of e-mails — really lots!

Our group historian, Professor Jonas, began with a brief history. He explained that Usenet, the original news-group system, had a memory of two weeks and was originally designed for two articles a day. By 1986 a number of users created a system of categorizing specific topics within Usenet. While news groups preceded discussion groups, David Stevenson and Ed Reppert are responsible for a well-known and respected group on bridge laws. Stevenson and Reppert let people have their say about WBF, ACBL and all such national contract bridge organizations’ appeals, rulings, and interpretations of bridge laws.

I was intrigued that Mary, a quite conservative woman in our bridge group, just happened upon the Bridge Laws Forum (<http://bb.bbboy.net/bridgetalk>) discussion about drug testing. While she was appalled that such was even worthy of

“news,” she provided us with a long tale as she noted that at the bottom of each e-mail was a hyperlink for “Post follow-up to this message” and “See the message in context.” When it was over, Mary had read 249 individual e-mails about this topic and was sure she could now moderate her own anti-drug and drinking campaign. Indeed it’s a given that Stevenson and Reppert’s Bridge Laws Forum seems to be the largest of the news groups.

What distinguishes it from a discussion group? To answer this, we looked at the moderated OKbridge discussion group via [www.okbridge.com](http://www.okbridge.com) which seems well-established. Also, there’s the free Bridge Base Online with its discussion-group via Yahoo ([www.yahoo.com](http://www.yahoo.com)). You initially have to register and type in “BBO Community” in their search box. That

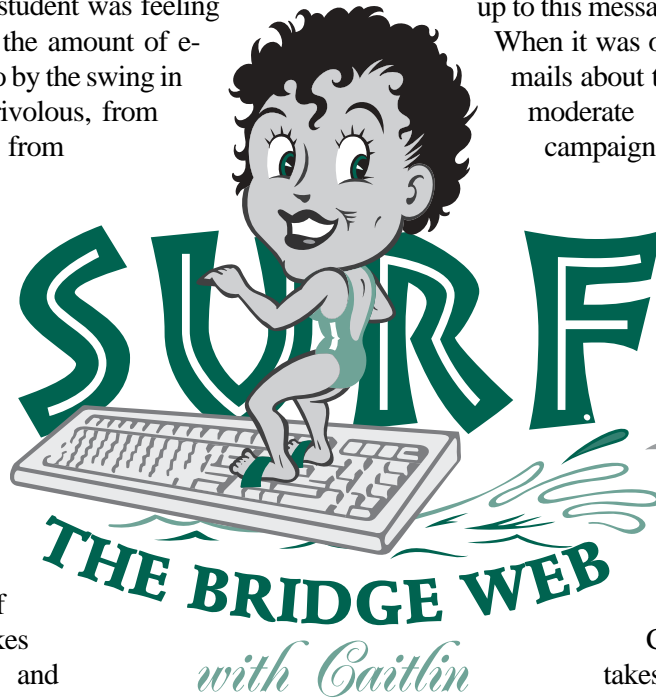
takes you to the site where there is a group set up for chat, a message board, a file area with anti-virus help, e-mail discussion groups and more. So now we see the breadth of what can constitute a discussion group — or is it a news group with files and message board? The lines are clearly fuzzy!

ACBL Online/e-bridge has forums which cover all types of groups. Note that some discussions are restricted to club members as is often the case with private clubs. Other forums include everything from technical support to playing tactics.

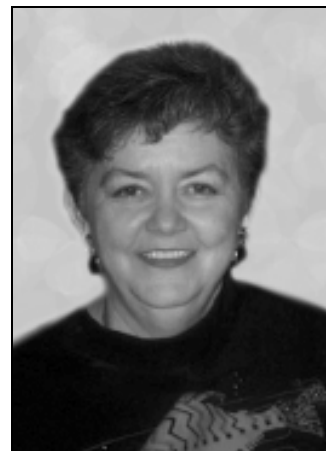
Virginia Crawford of Bridge Talk, a wonderful free site, speaks of “Ask the Expert” message boards. She says they’re used by many organizations to discuss in-house issues and keep members informed of company news. Crawford believes that these are a step up from regular news groups since, using the latest technology, they allow hand formatting, division of topics into sensible categories, and perhaps most importantly, the ability to view a complete thread with all contributors’ replies.

“This is a huge plus,” says Crawford. “It’s just not possible to do this with a news group, as only one reply can be seen at the same time.” Now it made sense why Mary had 249 separate e-mails. It is said that we online players enjoy the anonymity of our computers. The proliferation of interactive groups, however, is proof that many online players enjoy ways of breaking the barriers of that anonymity.

To all who work behind the scenes to provide us with a wealth of information — bridge quizzes, laws, tips on bidding or defending — I say *wow!* What a great way we as teachers can help our students become more self-sufficient.



# Attracting Students: The Business of Bridge



We talk a lot about the need to attract students, and it is easy to make the mistake of thinking that you always need new students. You don't; you just need students, period. Think about the ways you can get students to repeat courses or take new ones from you.

by Lynn Berg

Some students don't get all there is to get from a course the first time. Offer a special price for repeating. I tell my students that once they have paid for a course, they can repeat any individual session for only \$2.00. My classes seem more successful with more "warm bodies" present, and my students like the inexpensive review.

Recently, I offered the "Commonly Used Conventions" course for the second time. In addition to the new students, I've had several repeaters. When I next offer the "More Commonly Used Conventions" course, those repeaters are more likely to go on and take the new course as well.

Offer courses in series, close enough together that it makes sense to continue from one to the other. You might even offer a discount to those students who go directly from one course to another.

It may seem like old advice, but it bears repeating. Develop a data base and use it to advertise your courses. Use the data base in several ways.

Send a notice of the course they've already taken to students so they can repeat and so that they can tell their friends about it. When you have a course more advanced or related in some other way, tell former students about it. A familiar advertising technique is to create a need and then to fill it. "You've learned how to open the bidding, but do you know how to play the hand? Our January *Play of the Hand* Course will give you the tools to be a more successful declarer." Use postcards and e-mail to get out the word.

Identify yourself so that your classes are sought out. I give anyone who takes a class a three-ring binder to hold notes and handouts. It has a bold label, "Lynn's Lessons." When I want to offer a new class, I send out flyers on three-ring punched paper, so the information

can go right in the student's binder. I hate hole-punching — I think I'd flunk if my life depended on doing it — so I get it done at the local office super-store. That way I can still have my flyers on bright, index weight paper.

Don't just offer eight-week series. Try calling your course "Bridge Camp," two or three all-day intensive sessions which cover one carefully limited topic like "Special Doubles." Advertise this to



anyone who has ever taken a class, make it a reservations only small class, and charge top dollar. For this higher fee, keep the class small, make your handouts extra attractive and prolific, include other small premiums (cards, pamphlets). Use the wonderful workshop material developed for Easybridge! and have a double or triple fee structure — a larger fee for single sessions, a reduced fee for multiple sessions or a table of four signing up together. Any small excuse for a slight discount or a small premium will help attract students. Returning students should always get some extra small consideration to encourage repeating.

Are you showing favoritism? You bet! You have a wonderful pool of potential students. It's all of your former students who already know how good a teacher you are!



# DEFENSIVE Teaching

When I took the TAP course back in the 1980s, I fell in love with the concept of the table as your blackboard. I've used it for years and still would never

techniques to keep things running smoothly in the classroom.

**Problem #1:** Students don't hear the cards you call off when laying a hand out on the table.

**Solution:** Each student is responsible for one suit. Get the appropriate student's attention focused before calling the cards. I say something like "spade person — are you ready? Give North the spade king, queen, four, two." Repeat the holding at least once. When those cards are down, move on to the heart person and repeat for each suit until the entire deal is on the table.

**Problem #2:** Sound-alike cards ace and eight. As bridge players it's clear to us when we say ace king

consider teaching any other way.

by Pat Harrington

These methods work for all class levels from beginner to advanced. It's far superior for the students to see an illustration in actual cards on the table rather than trying to see symbols for cards on a backboard, white board, or flip chart. But there are many pitfalls in using our methods. A good teacher must be aware of what can go wrong and find ways to prevent problems when using the cards on the table.

We take a defensive driving course to prevent accidents on the road. Here are some defensive teaching

## BENEFITS OF BRIDGE

Here are a couple items of interest from a clipping packet distributed in Phoenix.

**Huntsville Times (AL)**  
**August 15, 2002**

We've heard through research that stimulating and exercising the brain is beneficial for seniors, that that is why it is important for them to do things like play bridge and do crossword puzzles," said Pat Legg, director of the Huntsville Hospital Senior Horizons Program, which sponsors a weekly bridge group. "But, with bridge, you also have an activity that is socially stimulating. Bridge is a way to offer friendship and a healthy activity at the same time."

**Ramsey Suburban News (NJ)**

"A November 2000 study by a University of California at Berkeley researcher, Marian Cleeves Diamond, found that playing contract bridge leaves people with higher numbers of immune cells." See [http://www.berkeley.edu/news/media/releases/2000/11/08\\_bridge.html](http://www.berkeley.edu/news/media/releases/2000/11/08_bridge.html).

In this press release, Diamond says, "Contract bridge was ideal for what we were after," she said. "It is the closest activity to a challenging card sorting task that also contains multiple factors that should stimulate the dorsolateral cortex. Bridge players plan ahead, they use working memory, they deal with sequencing, initiation and numerous other higher order functions with which the dorsolateral cortex is involved."

**Villadon Times (NJ)**  
**Sept. 25, 2002**

"The AARP has strongly recommended the mental challenge that bridge offers in that age group."



that we want the top two cards because cards are given in descending order. This is not clear to students who have no problem laying down 8, K, 6, 4.

**Solution:** Always designate the ace as the big one, the bullet, whatever makes you comfortable. Designate the eight as eight-spot, the number eight or something similar. Better yet, avoid using the number eight entirely. We generally place only one or two hands face up and don't have to use eights so there is no need to even risk having this problem occur.

**Problem #3:** As we discuss different problems, card changes are made in the existing hand. Students sometimes don't keep up with the necessary changes.

**Solution:** Use the strategies listed in #1 and #2 above and walk around the classroom (or have an assistant do this) to monitor the hands on the table. If a writing board is available, use it as an aid. You can write the hand(s) on the board to allow students to check the hand(s) on the table. But their focus should be on the cards on the table, not on the board.

**Problem #4:** Sloppy tables. The attention of the students is much better focused when the cards in the deal under discussion are the only visible cards. Instruct students to lay out the designated cards and turn the remainder face down in front of them and focus on the hand you are discussing.

Many students like to hold the leftover cards in their hand as if it was a bridge hand. They get mesmerized by the exciting distribution of a handful of hearts or spades and their attention wanders from the hand under discussion.

**Solution:** Get any unused cards out of view. Instruct the class to turn unused cards face down but you will probably have to walk around the room to make sure this happens. Gently turn over face-up cards or request a student to put his "hand" face down.

**Problem #5:** Students who simply do/can not listen or follow instructions (usually due to age or infirmity). A new problem to me this season was a lady who strung the suit she was responsible for out across the table, constantly moving cards and kept adding more cards from her suit to the hand under discussion.

**Solution:** Never place the hand you are discussing in front of this person. It doesn't matter if the manual says put a hand out for North. Put it out for West instead. When

placing the discussion hand on the table, I always try to select the direction of the person who is most likely to be able to keep track of the dummy-style hand. When laying out only one suit, never use the suit held by that person.

One of my beginners was so confused with using the cards this year that I had to go to the table and unobtrusively pick up her suit and hold it during the discussion. If I had not done that, she would have been placing cards willy-nilly all over the table and confusing the other three players.

**Problem #6:** Before or after a complete deal is played, we frequently place all four hands face up for discussion. Sometimes we want to go over the play of a specific suit. Students are still thinking about other suits, the opening lead, how to bid the hand, etc.

**Solution:** Turn over all of the cards in the other three suits and have students focus on the suit under discussion.

**Problem #7:** When we go over the play or defense of a deal with all four hands face up dummy-style, students forget what cards are visible and who makes the opening lead.

**Solution:** Make your own guidecards. On the front, have the compass directions, on the back have labels for declarer, dummy, and opening lead. During discussion, turn the guidecards to the back side to keep the labels straight for students.

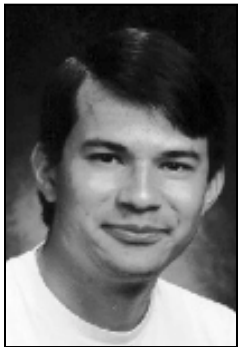
**Problem #8:** Sometimes you play a board and then want to make card changes to discuss one particular hand. If you tell the students to keep East's hand face up and suit the remaining cards, there will always be some tables that mix East's cards back into the pack.

**Solution:** Ask East to use the guidecard to cover his 13 cards and have the students suit the rest of the cards. Then uncover East's hand for discussion and card changes.

Sounds like a lot of work, doesn't it? It is, but students are happy when we use the table as our blackboard, so it's worth the energy we spend to make it work. Once at an Audrey Grant weekend that I hosted, a student asked me where she could find a teacher who used the cards on the table like Audrey did. The answer seemed easy — I recommended an ACBL accredited teacher. Sadly, however, her teacher was ACBL accredited but did not use the cards on the table.

**Don't let that be you!**

# STAR TEACHERS



## ***Brad Bart, Hamilton ON***

Brad was born in Hamilton, Ontario (1972). He learned bridge from his father, Fred Bart, a former duplicate player and has been playing competitively for the last 13 years. Brad got involved in the school lesson bridge series while studying at the University of Waterloo and while completing his degree at Simon Fraser University (2000). He is now a lecturer at Simon Fraser University and teaches and organizes bridge for student players and Juniors in the Vancouver area.

TIP: Bidding is all about finding your best fit.



## ***David Germaine, Huntley IL***

David started teaching the Audrey Grant series when he moved to Del Webb's Sun City, Huntley at the end of 1999. In addition to teaching at Sun City, David also teaches at the local community college. He has already taught nearly 200 residents in the five courses. In addition to teaching and playing at the club level, David has developed a passion for designing and weaving rugs, creating fine woodwork, and playing tennis.

TIP: After his students get to the second or third course, he urges them to play on the Internet. There are several free sites that are not too competitive. This introduces them to duplicate play and the "pressure" of a real game outside the safety of the classroom. Since it is anonymous, they aren't as intimidated as when they walk into a club game. They love to tell him about their experiences online.



## ***Zerelene (Zerky) E. Jones, Lafayette LA***

After years of teaching and coaching high school sports, transferring her passion for teaching physical sports to a mental sport seemed natural. She was attracted to the game one afternoon when three Life Masters needed a fourth for an after-lunch game. One of the early graduates of the TAP, Zerky has taught four of the ACBL Bridge Series courses and is about to embark on teaching the fifth. "If you really want to learn this game," Zerky comments, "you should teach. Teaching is only a job if you would rather be doing something else." One of her enjoyments is creating transparencies for each class. She highlights all of the guidelines and concepts in order to present the exercises on a projector, ensuring full class participation.

TIP: More is retained from what is seen, than what is heard or read.

## ★ STAR TEACHER PROGRAM ★

Send the Education Department a list of your students from a *Club (Bidding)*, *Diamond (Play of the Hand)*, *Heart (Defense)*, *Spade (Commonly Used Conventions)*, or *Notrump (More Commonly Used Conventions)* class and begin earning perks. When you send in your first list, we will send you an ACBL Accredited Teacher patch.

When you have taught 100 or more students in one of the five ACBL courses, you become a Star Teacher. There are one-, two-, three-, four-, and five-star teachers. At that point, you will receive your attractive Star Teacher pin, get a Star beside your name on the Internet listing at ACBL's website, and you will be eligible for additional discounts on the ACBL Bridge Series texts.

Send in a list today!



# Get Your Students Playing and Make Them Famous!

The editors of *The Bridge Bulletin* are always on the lookout for stories about newcomers. You can assist with that while making your new players happy about seeing themselves

*by Brent Manley  
Editor, The Bridge Bulletin*

want to know what they look like and our magazine is now printed in full color. It's unlikely we would use a black and white photo.

3. Quality is important for photos. They should be in focus, fairly close to the subjects, well lit (not dark) and not too crowded (no more than six to a shot). They should be actual photographs or digital images — not photocopies.

4. Timing is important but not critical. We don't want to be reporting on something in September that happened in January. That said, we can work around such a problem if the subject is good enough.

If you know of someone you think would be a good subject for coverage in *The Bridge Bulletin*, e-mail [editor@acbl.org](mailto:editor@acbl.org) or [jody.latham@acbl.org](mailto:jody.latham@acbl.org).

We welcome your ideas and look forward to working with you.

and their accomplishments in the bridge magazine with the world's largest circulation.

Here are some guidelines that will help assure their stories get into *The Bridge Bulletin*.

1. Make sure there is something unusual about the newcomer you want to feature (came in first in their very first game; had a very big score; won several events at a newcomer game, etc.). There has to be a "hook" for featuring new players in the magazine.

2. Color photos are important. Our readers will

## STUDENT MEMBERSHIPS

At their Fall Meeting in Phoenix, the ACBL Board of Directors approved a student membership for \$5 per year. To be eligible, a Junior must be a first-time member of the ACBL under the age of 19 and a graduate of, or enrolled in, a School Bridge Lesson Series program funded by the ACBL and the ACBL Educational Foundation. This membership offer is effective immediately.

The student membership is being offered in an effort to get school age Juniors involved in their local bridge communities. This is a "starter" membership that gives "under-19" Juniors appropriate reading material ("The Grapevine") and some minor benefits which will hopefully encourage these students to get hooked on collecting masterpoints and will motivate them to play in ACBL clubs and tournaments.

Special forms will be available in early January. In the meantime, any membership form can be labeled a STUDENT MEMBERSHIP. It must contain the student's birth date, the school in which the student is currently enrolled and the name of the student's teacher in order for the \$5 membership to be processed.

A student member can continue to renew his/her ACBL membership for \$5 a year provided the student is under the age of 19 and is not interested in a full membership, which would offer ACBL's magazine, *The Bridge Bulletin*.

Please help us get these young players involved in both Bridge and the ACBL by promoting this new membership offer.

# JOHN'S PLAY AND LEARN

Is your club doing all that it should to attract future players to your games? Here is a formula not only to bring in new players but to improve the bidding and play of newer players already playing in some of your games. It requires the assistance of some of the more experienced players in your club.

The process is quite simple:

1. Have a place to play for up to six tables,
2. Have a short (mini) lesson for the first 30 to 45 minutes and follow it with a two-hour play period.
3. Have two sets of duplicate boards.
4. Use traveling scoreslips.
5. Recruit enough volunteers to have one at each table.

Use a set of boards played at the previous club game and the travelers from that game for the newcomers to play. The newer players can add their scores to the bottom of the slip and compare their results to those of the more experienced players.

The mini-lesson at the start of this game can be on any short topic of bidding or play. Some of the items I have used are: Stayman, transfers, takeout doubles, negative doubles, and developing tricks when you are declarer. Defensive play includes leads, basic signals and of course, counting. As you can see, there is almost an endless supply of topics.

You should advertise these games as you would your regular games. May I suggest you try one series of approximately eight weeks in January/February and then another in March/April. If these are successful then add another in October/November.

This type of game works best with volunteer help from players with a little bit of experience in giving lessons (preferably the same ones for each week of the complete eight-week series). In addition, use some of the regular club players to help out by giving advice at each table.

There is no need to actually score the results of the



*Remember "Adventures in Duplicate" has been reprinted and costs \$2 each. Great gift for your students.*

**(A new slant  
on a game  
for new players)**

*by John Petersen*

deals, the players will see the results from the previous game on the traveling scores. Discuss these results with the players after each deal. You will generally find that fifteen deals is all they will have the stamina to play, so focus on how the deals are played and not how many they play.

Because of the different mini-lesson topics each session, these games can be advertised as "drop in." I charge a minimal amount to play and I have been successful in asking the club to pick up whatever is required to pay the rent and coffee. Remember, this game is generating new players for the club and is an excellent promotional tool.

**Editor's note:** Jerry Helms was the first teacher we heard of to "invent" the idea of having students play deals from previous club games to gain duplicate experience. John has taken the idea one step further. He is the Education Liaison for Unit 429 (British Columbia) and has been using this approach successfully for the past two years.

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