

Olney Bridge Club News

Official newsletter of the Olney Maryland Bridge Club

The Bridge Guy Speaks

I'll kick off the inaugural issue of the Olney Bridge Club News with a recap of our progress to date.

As many of you know, we've held our first five beginner bridge lessons at the Olney Library. The turnout has been excellent. We've generally had four or five tables with 4 at each table. We'll complete the initial 6-lesson set on Saturday, July 22, with an overview of defensive measures.

We also plan to hold four follow-up practice sessions to allow students to perfect the lessons they've learned. All are welcome – we'll bring you up-to-speed on any topics you've missed.

The follow-up practice sessions are scheduled for July 29, August 5, August 12, and August 19 (all Saturdays) from 2:30 – 4:00 at the Olney library. We'll use pre-dealt hands (or you may shuffle and deal from a spare deck).

On another note, we're also looking for a home for the actual meetings of the Olney Bridge Club. We're initially exploring more library meetings or a room at the Longwood Recreation Center (off Georgia Avenue, north of Goldmine Road) but there may be other options. We'll also need to determine when and how often to meet. See the questionnaire on a later page of this newsletter. Stay tuned for more upcoming events. We've still got a lot of work to do!

Beginner Bridge Classes

2023 Classes:

Lesson 1: Intro to Bridge – June 17

Lesson 2: Declarer Play – June 24,

Lesson 3: Opening Bids – July 1

Lesson 4: Responses – July 8

Lesson 5: Opening NT Bids – July 15

Lesson 6: Defense – July 22

Final class of this session: Saturday, July 22 from 2:30 – 4:00 at the Olney library.

Check this block in future newsletters for an upcoming reprise of the six beginner bridge classes.

Upcoming Practice Sessions:

July 29, August 5, August 12, and August 19, all from 2:30 – 4:00 at the Olney library.

Practice at Home

Many of you are already exploring online tools for personal practice. Let me add a few additional suggestions.

First, I highly recommend reading the bridge column of the Washington Post. Frank Stewart is an old curmudgeon, but generally pretty funny as well as informative. Check out bridge.careytutor.com: I've linked many of his past articles under the "Columns/Books" menu item. I have linked a few other columnists as well.

Bridge software is another option. There are several free alternatives. The ACBL “Learn to Play Bridge” website provides a number of hands to bid and play. You can find a link on my website under the “Bridge Tutorials” menu item. For another online resource, the Bridge Base Online (BBO) website offers a variety of free tools. BBO is linked on my website under the “Online Bridge Sites” menu item, where you’ll also see some explanation of the tools available. Finally, you can purchase the Bridge Baron 29 computer program. Although bridge software is far behind comparable chess software, Bridge Baron plays “well enough” to satisfy most practice requirements.

And, as a last resort, you can always grab a deck, deal the cards, and do your best to bid and play all four hands using your acquired knowledge. The more hands you see, the better you’ll get!

Count? Count?!?

Many beginning players are concerned about counting every card in the deck. Yes, indeed, the best players keep track of many if not all of the cards played – but that’s why they are the cream of the crop. And they often are getting paid for their efforts.

We mere mortals can only do our best – and that means focusing on the most critical cards. As a beginner, one should start by counting high card points – as soon as a new hand is seen. The next obvious step is to estimate the high card points in partner’s hand and in the opponents’ hands – based on the bidding. With that information in hand one can then begin piecing together the distribution of cards in the hands.

As Declarer in a suit contract, count your losers – how many must you eliminate to make your contract? Then start with the trump suit – how many cards between your hand and Dummy? Thereafter, keep track of how many trumps are missing, not how many have been played. For example, if you see 8 trumps between your and your partner’s hands, the opponents have 5. If both play to the first round of trumps, then the split is 4 – 1 or 3 – 2.

As Declarer in a No Trump contract, count your winners – enough to make your contract? Then start by counting one suit – often your longest combined suit between the two hands, where you think you might win extra tricks. Again, identify the number of missing cards and keep track of how many cards the opponents play.


You can practice with free online games (e.g., on BBO) or with bridge software (e.g., Bridge Baron). Practice multiple hands, focusing on counting just one suit. Check your results as the hand is played.

After you’ve mastered the basics of counting one suit, only then might you proceed to two suits. In a suit contract that may be the trump suit plus the “critical” side suit where you might eliminate some losers. In a No Trump contract that may be the two mostly likely suits to generate additional tricks.

All of this requires a long-term effort over many months. I’ve included a set of “counting” articles on my bridge.careytutor.com website under the “Card Play” menu item to provide some tips. After playing bridge for a while you’ll be surprised at how much you can track – and your bridge will improve.

Try to Bid It

Here's a competitive hand played on July 15, 2023 (played nationwide, but specifically at the Rockville Duplicate Bridge Club).

Board 1	♠ K J		
North Deals	♥ Q 3		
None Vul	♦ J 9 8 7 5		
	♣ 9 8 6 2		
♠ Q 8 7 5 4		♠ 10 9 3 2	
♥ A J 10 6		♥ K 9 4	
♦ Q 3		♦ 10 6	
♣ K 4		♣ A J 7 3	
	♠ A 6		
	♥ 8 7 5 2		
	♦ A K 4 2		
	♣ Q 10 5		
		7	
		12 8	
		13	

EW 3♠; EW 2♥; NS 1N; NS 2♦; NS 1♣;
Par -140: EW 3♠=

Try bidding this yourself (for both North/South and East/West) before reading the detailed discussion.

You'll notice that the two partnerships both have 20 high card points combined. South has no long suit and will open 1 Diamond (longest minor). West has a choice: a takeout double with good heart and spades, but weak clubs, or a 1 spade overcall with a weak suit. The preference is "double". If partner responds in clubs, you'll curse the bridge gods and perhaps try 2 No Trump.

In this case, the bridge gods are kind: after North raises to two diamonds, East responds with 2 spades (fewer than 10 points and 4 spades or more). Perhaps South raises to 3 diamonds and West competes with 3 spades.

In the diagram you'll see the optimal bids: 3 spades, 2 hearts, 1 no trump by North/South, etc. The par score (duplicate scoring) is $3 * 30 = 90$ points for 3 spades plus a 50-point bonus for making a part score. Duplicate scoring is mostly the same as rubber scoring but includes a few bonuses such as this one.

Famous Bridges

Charles Goren, playing mostly in the 1930's, 40's, 50's, and 60's, popularized the 4-3-2-1 high card point count system. He improved on the foundation work of his mentor, Milton Work, with the help of Work's other protégé, Olive Peterson. He promulgated the 4-card suit opening bid scheme, still used by Acol players (mostly in England) to this day.

He won the world championship in 1950 in addition to 31 other North American championships. He wrote many books that popularized methods for beginning and intermediate players and hosted a very widely-read bridge column for years. He was a long-term bridge partner of Helen Sobel, who may have been the best bridge card player of all time. He also partnered with Omar Sharif (the actor and avid bridge player). He helped popularize the Precision Club bidding system, a "strong 1 club" system that has been and still is played by many strong players. Goren's New Bridge Complete (which includes 5-card majors for the first time) is a classic and is available at the Montgomery County library.

Goren appeared on Groucho Marx's "You Bet Your Life" program and on the game show "What's My Line." He died in 1991 at the age of 90.

Olney Bridge Club

We are forming an Olney MD Bridge Club. The primary purpose of the Olney MD Bridge Club is to teach and encourage social bridge in the areas including and surrounding Olney, Maryland. I am in the process of establishing the Olney Maryland Bridge Club as a 501c4 nonprofit membership organization.

The details of the club are still to be determined. See the questionnaire below to see questions related to the club meeting place, day, time, and frequency.

Club Questionnaire

Where should the club meet?

- Olney library
- Longwood Community Center
- Good Hope Community Center

On which day of the week and time should the club meet?

- Saturday, 2:30 – 4:30
- Sunday, 2:30 – 4:30
- Weeknight, 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM

How often should the club plan to meet?

- Weekly
- Biweekly
- Monthly
- Bimonthly

Note that meeting at the Olney library is free-of-charge, but also no club fees of any kind may be charged.

Meetings at Longwood or Good Hope require a room-rental fee (potentially, \$20 per hour).

Please email your selections on the above questionnaire to

bridgeinfo@bridge.careytutor.com. I'll tabulate the results and report in a future newsletter.

Also, please feel free to use that same email address to send any questions, comments, recommendations, or other correspondence to the editor. In particular, if you have a bridge article to include in a future newsletter or a suggestion of a possible topic, any such submission would be much appreciated.

Bridge Quotes

Learn from the mistakes of others. You won't live long enough to make them all yourself. **Alfred Sheinwold**

We had a partnership misunderstanding. My partner assumed I knew what I was doing.
Anonymous

No matter where I go, I can always make new friends at the bridge table.
Martina Navratilova

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