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Newsletter No 3 2024

Hi Everyone

Celebrating Success

Congratulations to Geo Tislevoll, Leon Meier, Ashley Bach, and Nick Jacob who recently WON the Asia Cup held in Bangkok. An incredible effort, 25 rounds of qualifying (a total of 300 boards), followed by 48 boards in the semifinal and a further 48 boards in the final. In total 7 days of solid bridge.

The WBF and Bangkok

Mid last month Alister and I attended the WBF (World Bridge Federation) sponsored zonal seminar/workshop held in Bangkok. There were 25 representatives from zones 4, 6, 7, and 8. Whilst a great deal was accomplished in the plenary sessions, real value was gained from all the informal conversations. We were able to strengthen our relationship with the ABF and forge new relationships with the WBF. It is important that we have a voice and are heard within the WBF. Something we have achieved over the last 5 years. Without that voice the dominance of Europe and the USA would prevail. We often think of ourselves as a small NBO (National Bridge Organisation) but we are not. With 12,500 members we represent 2.72% of members affiliated to the WBF. Our friends across the ditch are 6.52% but their population is more than 5 times ours. For those into numbers China has 47,000 members, India 4,000 plus 10,000 social members, with both countries having populations more than 1 billion. The seminar involved two full days and whilst I must write up a report of the event, I thought I would share some tit bits.

1. Pre-Covid the total affiliated membership of the WBF was ~584,000, now it is ~460,000. Whilst we have dropped 7.4%, overall bridge playing numbers are down 21.2%.
2. All round the world there are initiatives to replenish numbers and find new players. Three initiatives are worthy of mention.
 - a. The Netherlands Bridge Federation have been working with local municipalities to promote bridge to people living on their own. They have had huge success. We will pick up on this and plan approaching the Ministers of Mental Health and Social Welfare.
 - b. The French Federation have a programme call Les Petit targeting 5- to 7-year-olds.
 - c. The ABF are rolling out a youth initiative with support from Paul Marsden.
3. The Asian market is very different to ours. Bridge in many countries is recognized as a sport, they are members of the IOC and receive governmental funding. They have direct connections in the education sector.



4. Playing bridge in Asia is often perceived as a form of gambling. So, to run the Asia Cup in Thailand they required police permission.
5. Last year the WBF rolled out a programme to promote the women's game. That will continue in the future. There is support to expand the initiative to include mixed and senior.
6. A recognition that online bridge is now part of the mix. I think we will see the zonal playoffs now played online.
7. At the World Championships held last year in Morocco the WBF issued a yellow card red card system to manage behaviour. Surprisingly 110 yellow cards were issued. The behaviour of the senior players needs to improve as that behaviour ultimately filters down. The WBF shared a video, of which a link is provided. I strongly recommend you watch and see if you can find the 34 things you should not do. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=smOG-ungzyk&t>

Teaching and Learning

Last week the teaching and learning committee met. We are waiting to receive a copy of their plan. We know the material needs to be up to date, relevant, and contemporary. Teachers are often the first people our beginners meet. As ambassadors it is important that our teachers have the tools to excite our beginners and capture their interest to play for life

We are excited about the ideas coming forward and will share that with you, hopefully in the coming weeks.

Incorporated Societies Act

The Board has decided it will re-register under the new Act. We are hopeful that we will have draft 6 of a new constitution ready by the middle of the month. Once approved that will go to our lawyers for a final review before it is shared with the clubs.

The plan is a recommended constitution that will be voted on at a Special General Meeting immediately prior to our 2024 AGM.

Rewriting the constitution has been a large piece of work but we hope it will provide a framework for those clubs who are planning to re-register.

Toolkit

Regarding helping, we are preparing a discussion document that the regional committees can discuss with clubs in their region. We want to hear from clubs what will be useful. The needs will not be universal as the requirement of smaller clubs will be different to the larger clubs, who may be better resourced. We have our national conference in July, and we want to finalise the shape of the toolkit at that meeting. Your early attention to the discussion document would be appreciated.

People

Nominations for the regional committees have now closed. New committees will come into force on the 1st July. For those stepping down we want to thank you for your contribution to the game.

Martin Reid has stepped down from the International Committee after many years of service. A special thank you. Martin has been replaced by Michael Cornell, unquestionably our most experienced international.

Membership

It is pleasing to see players returning to the game. Slowly our numbers are improving so a special shout out to the work clubs are doing. The focus of the teaching and learning committee is retention. Several clubs deserve a bouquet increasing their membership in the last month- Franklin 22, Warkworth 24, Hokowhitu 11, Levin 11, Oamaru 19, Hutt 14, Kapi Mana 25, Paraparaumu 16, Ashburton 22, Christchurch 15, Crockfords 11, Cambridge 41, Nelson 24. We look forward to recording other successes as learners' classes are completed.

Marketing and Communications

April/May has been about continuing to support clubs with advertising campaigns, progressing a website redevelopment plan, surveying clubs and learners about lessons, developing and chasing PR opportunities, finalizing some promotional videos for social media, and developing plans for an upcoming "retention" zoom call and Facebook result call.

27 clubs have run a Facebook campaign. Overall, we are happy with the level of reach. So far, we have reached 513k people compared with last years' smaller campaign, reaching 130k. Almost 11k people have clicked through to the website landing page. A 2% conversion rate.

Tournament Participation

By the time you read this newsletter Kings Birthday congresses in Auckland, Hawkes Bay and Otago will have taken place. Pleasingly is the number of entries. A positive signal that players are welcoming the opportunity to come together.

Auckland junior/intermediate pairs	23 pairs
Auckland open pairs	33 pairs
Auckland open teams	25 teams
Hawkes Bay 3+1 teams	18 teams
Hawkes Bay intermediate pairs	33 pairs
Hawkes Bay junior pairs	6 pairs
Hawkes Bay open pairs	61 pairs
Hawkes Bay intermediate teams	16 teams
Hawkes Bay open teams	35 teams
Otago open teams	8 teams
Otago open pairs	28 pairs

Cheers Allan