

Southern California

Bridge News

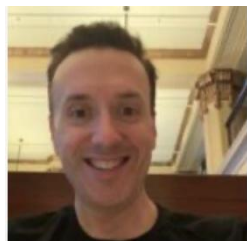
Volume 63, #8

August 2026

Published by ALACBU

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Jordan Chodorow



As your President, I am here to serve you. If I can do anything to enhance your enjoyment of our great game, please let me know at President@D23ACBL.org.

As you have probably heard by now, Los Angeles has officially been awarded the 2030 Fall NABC! Thank you to the selection committee for bringing the Nationals back to L.A., where so much of bridge history has been written. And a big thank you to our Regional Director, Cornelia Gould, for making the case for us. This is a real feather in her cap!

Former D23 President Mike Marcucci - who knows everything about the history of bridge in L.A. - told me that D23 has held NABC's in 2003 (Long Beach), 1992 (Pasadena) and 1977 (Pasadena), but L.A. has not held an NABC since 1969 at the Ambassador! (We also held NABCs there in 1957 and 1960 and at the Biltmore in 1963.) I will share with you information about the host hotel as soon as the contract is signed, but I'm told the committee is highly excited about it.

It's been a long time coming, and I'm thrilled that it's coming. Now the hard work begins. In that light, I am asking anyone and everyone who wants to work on LA2030 to get in touch with me at the email above. Putting on an exceptional NABC that makes ACBL want to come back to L.A. with regularity will require all hands on deck. We'll be holding an initial meeting soon, but believe me, I'll be asking for your help for the next several years.

I next want to thank our outgoing NAP coordinator, Jeff Grotenhuis. Jeff has done a tremendous job coordinating this event. It's a

PRESIDENT continued on page 2

Regional Director's Report

by Cornelia Gould

(Region11Director@acbl.org)



Rumors have been flying and there have been a lot of questions about the "Championship Only" NABC's to be held starting in the Fall of 2028 in Austin, Texas. Some people have feared that there would be events for the top players only with the elimination of Regional events.

This was the subject of significant discussion at this summer's Board meetings held in Minneapolis in July. I will devote this column to the new NABC's, and cover other topics covered at the Board meetings in my September column.

There has been ongoing work by the Board and ACBL management to clarify how the NABC's will be organized starting in late 2028. An official summary and Q&A has been prepared to answer your questions about the new NABC format. You can access it here; see page 8.

To summarize, for Spring and Fall NABCs

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sometimes thankless job, but I deeply appreciate his efforts. Mitch Dunitz has assumed the role of NAP coordinator, and has moved the date of this year's D23 Final from Sunday, October 4 to Sunday, October 25 (my birthday). It will still be held at the Long Beach Bridge Center at 10am & TBD. Only the date has changed. If you have already preregistered, you're good to go. If you haven't, Jeff is kindly still accepting registrations, or you can email me at the address above.

Finally, a big thank you to our awesome STaC coordinator, Ruth Baker. The D23 Summer STaC was held July 20-26. It drew 391 tables and will produce a rebate to D23 of \$900. Great job, Ruth!

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only (summer NABC's will continue to be organized as they have been in the past), there will be two distinct levels of play: The Championship Track, and Signature Track. Anyone may enter Championship Track events,

but they are geared toward high level players (those with 10,000 MP and above). The Signature Track will be available only to those with fewer than 10,000 MP. The events under this track will be bracketed so that people will play against those with similar levels of MP. Also, a new type of MP will be created for the Signature Track called Titanium points. Those points will be earnable only at NABCs and will be convertible to Gold and Red points.

Note that there will also always be side games, and there will be special I/N events organized by the local NABC committees.

So, do not fear that there will be no place for you at NABC's in the future if you do not play at the

championship level. And there will be new and exciting cities where future NABC's will be held.

Let me know if you have questions.

The Teacher's Corner

Know Your Rights...and Responsibilities *by Dan F. Oakes*

This month, I thought I'd take a look at some common situations that can result in a director's ruling.

You should always summon the director when there is an irregularity. But having said that, let's start there...

During the auction, anyone may point out an irregularity (for instance, a bid out of turn, or an insufficient bid), but during the play of the hand, dummy *may not* be the one to point out an irregularity; dummy has to wait until the completion of the hand. Also, there is no requirement to point out an irregularity committed by your own side. That's a mouthful...what does it all mean? Let's use a revoke as an example. Assume South is declaring, and East fails to follow suit, despite having a card in the suit.

If nobody else has said anything, North (dummy) cannot be the one to bring it to the attention of the table until play has concluded. If nobody else has caught it and play has concluded, neither East nor West is *required* to point it out.

While dummy cannot bring attention to an irregularity during the play period, dummy *CAN* try to prevent an irregularity. If declarer is on the board and

detaches a card from his hand, it's fine (and a good idea!) for dummy to say, "You're on the board" or some such – preventing the irregularity of declarer's leading from the wrong hand.

A very commonly misunderstood situation involves hesitation, with many people believing that hesitating is an infraction. First, a caveat – bridge is a timed event, and continual play that doesn't keep up with the pace of the game may be penalized. I'm not talking about that here – I'm talking about a marked delay over a single play or (more specifically) bid. What do the laws say?

The best way I've ever seen it described is this – the person who hesitates isn't a criminal; the hesitator's partner is a suspect. In other words, the hesitation itself is (legally) fine. Sometimes we have a problem that requires additional thought. But it falls under a more general heading that places a responsibility on your partner – unauthorized information.

You're allowed to base your actions on the calls and plays that are made, but not on your partner's hesitation, mannerisms, etc. Here's an example – South opens 1NT, and North bids 2NT natural and invitational. South, after a 30-second think, passes. West bids 3 clubs (don't ask me why West didn't act over 1NT; just go with it). North now bids 3NT, ending the auction. Let's break it down:

South was absolutely allowed to take 30 seconds for the pass over 2NT, but having done so, South has put North under the burden of UI (unauthorized information). North is entitled to know that South had a hand that didn't accept the invitation to 3NT. North is **not** entitled to know that South was strongly considering doing something else. Does that mean that North can't bid 3NT? Possibly but not necessarily. Here's what the rules say –

If the UI suggests an action, North can't choose that action *if there is a logical alternative*. North has already decided that his hand was worth an invitation, not a game force. North doesn't get to know that South almost accepted that invitation. So if North has, let's say, a good-but-typical 9-count, maybe with a 5-card suit and Axx of clubs, then pass is certainly a logical alternative, and North can't bid 3NT. The presumption is that had South passed in tempo, North would not have raised himself to 3NT.

On the other hand, let's say that North's hand includes the AQT9 of clubs. North *IS* entitled to reevaluate his hand in light of the auction, recognizing that having a club suit like that behind the club bidder means that his hand is worth more than the original assessment suggested. North may of course just bring out the red card and double West, but if N/S are, for instance, vulnerable against not and North decides to play for that 500-point game bonus, the director may allow it this time. It's ok to act with unauthorized information, but it's *not* ok to act *because of* the unauthorized information, and you must bend over backward to avoid doing so. When partner hesitates and passes, he has usually, in effect, made the decision for the partnership, and unless it's "illogical" to do so, you must respect that decision *even if it makes taking an action that you, personally, wouldn't have made without the hesitation*.

Here's another example – After an opposing preempt, you're bidding spades; they're bidding hearts. Your left-hand opponent bids five hearts. Let's say you figure that half of the people at your level would double, and half would bid five spades, but you've decided that when it comes around to you, you're going to bid five spades. Before that happens, though, partner takes a full minute over the five heart bid, and doubles. Right-hand opponent passes, and now it's your turn.

Kiss your five spade bid goodbye. Partner's hesitation suggested that the double wasn't clear-cut. It's your hand (opponents preempted), so what was partner thinking about? Probably bidding five spades

himself. The hesitation suggests a five spade bid by you; therefore, you must not bid five spades *if you have a logical alternative*. Do you? Yes...you were already thinking that a lot of people in your shoes would have doubled five hearts if it came around to you, so sitting for partner's double must be a logical alternative. You have to pick the logical alternative that the unauthorized information (the hesitation) *didn't* suggest. "I was going to bid five spades anyway" is not a defense.

A couple more quickies about hesitations: It is NOT legal to hesitate for the purpose of misleading the opponents. This includes hesitating on play with a singleton, for instance, or in a competitive auction, you can't hesitate to make the opponents believe you're considering doubling them before bidding, to discourage them from competing further. We're playing bridge, not poker. Also, although you can't take inference from *partner's* hesitation, it's perfectly legitimate to take inferences from the *opponents'* hesitations (and mannerisms, and other gratuitous slips in decorum), but you do so at your own risk. If they're "playing poker" with you, you're probably protected; if they had a "bridge reason" for their gyrations or hesitations...you won't be.

☺ ☺

A married couple are not speaking to each other after a horrible game and are driving home from a distant bridge tournament. They pass by a field where there are many donkeys. The husband breaks the silence by asking the wife: "Relations of yours?" "Yes," she says. "In-laws." (Eddie Kantar)

☺ ☺

Southern California Bridge News

Published monthly by ALACBU, Inc.

1800 Avenue of the Stars, 12th Floor,

Los Angeles, CA 90067

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Copy deadlines: the 10th of the month. Opinions expressed in the Southern California Bridge News are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of ALACBU, Inc., The Bridge News or the Editor. The Bridge News reserves the right to reject material it considers to be in poor taste or deems otherwise unsuitable for publication.

Bridge Jeopardy

by John Jones

Category – More Famous Bridge Partnerships

The answer is:

\$100 – This famous American pair played a highly aggressive forcing club system that had their names in the system.

\$200 – This American pair both were members of the Dallas Aces and first names of Robert (they both went by nicknames) and played the Orange Club

\$300 – Canada's most famous pair for years, but away from the table, they couldn't stand each other.

\$400 – This pair represented Britain in international play and unfortunately wound up being famous for cheating by holding their fingers to indicate the number of hearts in each of their hands.

\$500 – This famous Italian duo won the 1971 Spring Men's Pairs in Atlanta.

The questions will be found on page 19.

District 23 Unit Presidents

The Presidents of our nine Units in District 23 do a lot to make *your* bridge experience better. They seldom get any thanks or even recognition. To help redress that imbalance, here is a list of the current incumbent Unit Presidents:

Unit	President
551 – Pomona – Covina	vacant
553 – Glendale-Verdugo	Adam Barron
556 – Santa Clarita-Antelope Valley	Paula Olivares
557 – Long Beach	Leo Dittmore
559 – Pasadena – San Gabriel	Lisa Walker
561 – San Fernando	Joan Rubin
562 – West Los Angeles	Jordan Chodorow
564 – Downey-Whittier	John Dobson
568 – Torrance-South Bay	Carol Decordova

Hey, Unit Presidents, Secretaries, Reporters: help us keep our "Unit President" listing up to date! When you hold a new election, please report the results to us!

DISTRICT 23

North American Pairs Finals

Oct. 25, 2026

Long Beach Bridge Center 4782 PCH Long Beach CA

Sanction 2610723 pending



Unit Level Qualifying

Pre qualification at Club level
required by Oct. 18

Finals

Sunday, Oct. 25 @ 10 am
and
Sunday, Oct. 25 @ 3 pm

National Finals will be held during the Spring
Nationals in Dallas
Pre-registration for L.A. Final by Sept. 28 required.
Card fees are \$40 (\$20 per session)

Point Limits and Conventions

Master Points as of May 6, 2026

Championship: Unlimited, Open + chart

Flight A : 0-6000, Open chart Flight

B : 0-3000, Basic + chart Flight C :

Non-LM < 750, Basics+ chart

Maximum Masterpoint Awards

May be less, depending on game size

Championship Flight: 32.00 Gold

Flight A : 27.00 Gold

Flight B : 24 Gold

Flight C : 16.00, 50% Gold, 50% Red

Event chair

Mitch Dunitz • District 23 NAP Coordinator

email: chodorow@stanfordalumni.org c

cell: 310-600-4275 email preferred

Conditions of Contest may be found at:
<http://www.bridgewebs.com/acbl23>



LONG BEACH BRIDGE CENTER FALL 2026!

WWW.BRIDGEANDBEYOND.COM



SATURDAY NOVEMBER 7
SUNDAY NOVEMBER 8

Long Beach Bridge Center
Pacific Coast Hwy
Long Beach - CA

YOUR TEACHERS



John Ramos



Christopher Rivera

Bridge And Beyond is thrilled to announce its first ever
West Coast land event!

Two days of premier bridge instruction in the comfort of the Long
Beach Bridge Center. Enjoy classes, duplicate bridge, and Q&As
with our dynamic teaching team!

See page 2 for more details and we hope to see you in November!



CONTACT US:
INFO@BRIDGEANDBEYOND.COM





EVENT SCHEDULE

SATURDAY NOVEMBER 7

9:30AM	Breakfast
10:00AM - 12:00PM	Lesson
12:30PM - 3:30PM	Game Time
3:30PM - 4:00PM	Recap of Hands

SUNDAY NOVEMBER 8

10:00AM - 12:30PM	Lessons
12:30PM - 1:30PM	Lunch Break
1:30PM - 3:30PM	Lessons

LOCATION & PRICE

LONG BEACH BRIDGE CENTER

Long Beach Bridge Center, 4782 Pacific Coast Hwy, Long Beach, CA 90804
\$400



Allison Rudary

Bridge And Beyond's
 Travel Advisor
allison@largaytravel.com

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Welcome to the New NABC!

Transforming the Tournament Experience Starting Fall 2028.

Starting with the Fall 2028 NABC in Austin, TX, we are reimagining our Spring and Fall NABC schedules around two continuous, structured tracks: the Championship Track and the Signature Track. This new format ensures every player—from rising contenders to world champions—has a clear path to compete for and win an official NABC title.

Updated hotel and venue criteria expand our options for great host cities—bringing favorite locations and exciting new destinations within reach! By prioritizing exceptional playing space right inside host hotels, we ensure everyone enjoys top-tier playing conditions paired with seamless “stay upstairs, play downstairs” convenience.

Two Tracks to a National Title

The Championship Track: the ultimate arena for world champions, top experts, and ambitious challengers. Compete at the highest level for our most prestigious NABC titles in traditional qualifying and knockout formats.

The Signature Track: built for balanced, peer-level competition, this track uses bracketed fields so you can compete directly against others at your level. Whether you begin here or pivot from the Championship Track, you stay in the chase for an official NABC title.

Key Highlights

Earn Titanium Masterpoints®

Introducing a major Signature Track highlight: Titanium Masterpoints®, designed for advancing players under 10,000 Masterpoints. This is an entirely new Masterpoint type earned exclusively at NABCs, featuring its own Titanium race. As an added benefit, Titanium points convert directly to Gold and Red—so every point you win moves you forward on your journey through the ranks.

Shared Hands, Shared Insights

Play the exact same deals as the rest of the field—in similar events wherever possible—then compare notes afterward. Use your hand records to break down critical plays and discuss bidding with friends, peers, and top players. Watch video

commentary on how the best handled the trickiest deals—on the very hands you just played!

Just for Newer Players

The Spring and Fall NABCs will feature specially curated one – and two-day events designed specifically for newer players.

Hosted alongside local NABC Committees composed of bridge volunteers who truly understand the newer player’s perspective, these events offer expert guidance, warm hospitality, and a smooth, engaging tournament experience. When you aren’t playing, the options are wide open: step up into the Signature Track to test your skills, join a side game, or take time to explore the host city!

Frequently Asked Questions

The Big Picture & Track Choices

What is the difference between the Championship Track and the Signature Track?

Championship Track: the ultimate arena for world champions, top experts, and ambitious challengers competing in qualifying and knockout formats for our most prestigious NABC titles.

Signature Track: uses bracketed fields so you compete directly against players at your level. Whether you start here or pivot from the Championship Track, you remain in the chase for an official NABC title.

How will I be placed in a bracket or track?

Placement in the Signature Track will be based on Masterpoints—for pairs and teams, this will most likely be the average of the partnership or team. Full bracket details will be shared as plans are finalized.

Can my regular partner and I play together if we are at different levels?

Yes. Because Signature brackets are expected to use the average of a partnership’s Masterpoints, you and your regular partner can play together and be placed in a bracket that reflects your combined strength as a pair.

I just want good games—I don’t expect to win a title. Is there still a place for me?

Absolutely. The new NABC is for every kind of player, whether you are chasing a national title or simply love a good game. Side games will be available every day for exactly that purpose.

If I start in the Championship Track and don't qualify for the final rounds, what happens?

The 11-day schedule guarantees non-stop action. Should your run in a Championship Track event end, you can transition seamlessly into a Signature Track bracket or a side game.

How does the tournament flow over the 11 days?

Day 1: An opening day of charity games and warm-up events to kick off the week—a relaxed start before the main events begin.

Days 2–9: Primary competition. Championship Track players compete in open NABC title events; Signature Track players compete in balanced, bracketed fields.

Days 10–11: The tournament shifts to a playthrough format, ensuring events beginning on the final weekend keep everyone playing right to the end.

Your Favorite Events & Everyday Play

Are my favorite events still here?

Yes. All core NABC events remain—the premier championships you look forward to every year are still on the schedule. The new format expands your options without taking away existing favorites.

Are there side games every day?

Yes. If you would rather play a side game on any given day, that option is available throughout the entire tournament.

Is there still Intermediate/Newcomer (I/N) and Gold Rush play?

Yes. Programming for newer and advancing players continues alongside the specially curated events described above.

Venue & Location

Why are we upgrading our hotel and venue criteria?

By focusing on exceptional playing space right inside great host hotels, we expand our options for great host cities—opening the door to exciting new destinations while making it feasible to return to past favorites.

What does “stay upstairs, play downstairs” mean for players?

It means prioritizing host hotels that house the tournament playing space on-site. You get top-tier

playing conditions paired with the simple convenience of walking straight from your room to the game.

Will the venues be accessible for players with mobility needs?

Yes. Accessibility is a required component of our venue standards, and the on-site playing model is designed to make getting to and from the game easier for everyone.

Masterpoints & Hand Records

What are Titanium Masterpoints® and who can earn them?

Titanium Masterpoints® are an entirely new Masterpoint type earned only at NABCs, featuring their own dedicated race. Designed for advancing players under 10,000 points, they carry an added benefit: they convert directly to Gold and Red points, helping you progress through the ranks as you play.

What does “Shared Hands, Shared Insights” mean?

Players across the field play the exact same deals, allowing everyone to compare hands afterward. Use your hand records to study key plays and discuss bidding with friends, peers, and experts—and watch video commentary on the hands you played yourself.

The Newer-Player Experience

What special events are available for newer players?

The Spring and Fall NABCs feature specially curated one- and two-day events designed alongside local NABC committees. They offer expert guidance, warm hospitality, and a smooth experience. When you aren't playing in these, you can step up into a Signature event, join a side game, or explore the host city.

What if I come without a partner or team?

The ACBL will provide an on-site Partnership Desk to assist you in finding a partner or team.

Your Stay & the Experience

Do I have to attend all 11 days, or can I come for just part of it?

Come for as long or as short as you like—whether for a single weekend or the full 11 days. There is meaningful play every day, making even a short visit well worth it.

Will there be social events, speakers, and lessons?

Yes. Social events, speaker programs, and lessons will be planned alongside each host committee to suit attending players.

Registration, Entry Fees & Dates **When do these changes take effect?**

The new format debuts at the 2028 Fall NABC in Austin, Texas, at the JW Marriott, and will apply to future Spring and Fall NABCs.

How do I purchase entries?

Entry Express, the ACBL's online registration system, lets you buy entries before game day. Skip the entry desk lines, receive table and seed assignments by email, and head straight to play when you arrive.

How are entry fees structured?

Detailed pricing for each event will appear in the official tournament program and on Entry Express before registration opens.

Is the Summer NABC changing too?

No. The Summer NABC stays exactly as it is today—featuring nationally rated and regional events, Gold Rush events, Intermediate/Newcomer games, learning opportunities, the Youth NABC, and the Collegiate Bridge Bowl.

Do I need to be an ACBL member to play?

Yes. All participants must be active ACBL members in good standing. You can join or renew anytime at [acbl.org](https://www.acbl.org).

How will I learn more—and can I share feedback?

This is the first of several updates, and we want your input as plans take shape! The ACBL will communicate directly via email, with complete details posted on the ACBL website. Local NABC committees will share news in their Regions, and regular updates will appear in the *ACBL Bridge Bulletin* and *NABC Daily Bulletins*.

District 23 Rank Changes August 2026

Junior Master

Susan Addelson
Patti Ash
Susan Feffer
Jim Feffer
Alvah Miller
Brenda Singh

Club Master

Yeny Karakeosian
Aeshna Mathur
Ray Nakelsky
Luisa Romoff
Charlene Spero
Dharshan Sutharshana
Teresa Wray

Sectional Master

Rebecca A. Austin
Patricia A. Balzano

Sectional Master

Kirk Bretney
Eileen Cluge
Guerry Collins
Sherna Foucher
Tina J. Kenefick
Anna May Labbe
Fred Register
Nathalie Sarshalom
Lisa Wyatt

Regional Master

Jason M. Howard
John A. Kilmer
Nancy D. Micolino
Stephen Reiss
Wanda Yao

NABC Master

Raymond Boncato
Barbara Quinn

Bronze Life Master

Caryn Mason

Silver Life Master

Barbara L. Astrin
Susan Rhoades

Ruby Life Master

Rosemary A. Ford
Colleen K. Gardner
Toni . Stitt

Gold Life Master

John A. Bakovic
Fuad J. Khuri
Stephen S. Licker
Rajath Shourie

Sapphire Life Master

Donna D. Davidson

Around the Units in District 23



Pomona – Covina
by Tom Lill
www.acblunit551.org
www.acblunit551.club

La Fetra Games: Tuesdays and Fridays, 8:45
Claremont Bridge Club: Thursdays 9:30
Unit Pairs Game: September 19, 11:00 a.m., Ontario
Club Championships: September 15, 18, 8:45 a.m., La Fetra
Individual: September 5, 10:00 a.m., Ontario
Unit Board Meeting: 10:15 a.m. before the game

Yes, we have a new, improved web site, thanks to the efforts of Dan Robinson. You can find the URL above, next to my smiling face. I'll maintain both sites for a while ...

More good news: we're going to be getting some BridgeMate IIIs soon, followed (hopefully soon after) by a dealing machine that doesn't have to go to Sweden every time it throws a fit.

In the July Unit game, Fredy and Lulu Minter just snuck home with a 62.8% game. Breathing down their necks were Mary Ann Wotring – Vic Sartor. Yours Truly – Judy Mogharbel were a distant third, followed by Richard Parker – Art Weinstein and then Kitty Moon – Tom Cusack.

We had three promotions this month. Teresa Wray and Aeshna Mathur have advanced to Club Master. Caryn Mason is now a Bronze Life Master. Good work, and keep it up!

Our own Caryn Mason was on a team representing District 23 in the Grand National Teams at the Summer NABC. The team started off well, winning 3 of 4 matches in the first session. But then they seemed to stumble a bit, losing two of the final four matches, and ended up placing 10th. Alas, only eight teams qualify for the knockout stage. Still, not a terrible performance – they were less than 2 Victory Points away from qualifying. Wait 'til next year! As a

consolation prize, Caryn brought home 22.87 masterpoints, and is now a Bronze Life Master.

I didn't see any other U551 members in the masterpoint list, but with well over 3,000 people scoring, well, my eyeballs got paralyzed after a while.

Thanks again to Patrick Finley, for collating the masterpoint statistics for July.

1	17.41	Lulu Minter
2	15.90	Fredy Minter
3	11.61	Vic Sartor
4	8.50	Caryn Mason
5	7.31	Mary Ann Wotring
6	7.17	Nona Stokes
6	7.17	Ramona Hernandez
8	6.83	Patrick Finley
9	6.81	Richard Parker
10	6.63	Art Weinstein

And at the Claremont Bridge Club:

1	2.83	Patrick Finley
2	2.18	Steve Mancini
3	1.48	Dan Robinson
4	1.29	Ramona Hernandez
5	0.71	Steve Andersen
5	0.71	Marjorie Preston

At La Fetra, once again six scores were over the magic 65% benchmark. Five of them were turned in by Fredy and Lulu Miner: 69.58%, 68.68%, 66.67%, 65.50%, and 65.44% - that last score good for only second place, however, behind Vic Sartor – Caryn Mason's 68.43% game. The only other pack leaders were Nona Stokes – Ramona Hernandez.

Over in Claremont, three of the five game winners topped the magic 65%. Steve Mancini – Patrick Finley scored a monstrous 78.13%, while Dan Robinson and Olivia Esquibel turned in an impressive 70.83% effort. Patrick Rogers – Patrick Finley scored 66.67%.

As you may know, we (normally – when the Duplimate doesn't have a hissy fit) use hands supplied by The Common Game, at both La Fetra and the Claremont Club. Several of our players had noteworthy placings in the national Common Game tabulations, in which the results of La Fetra and Claremont players are compared with some 300-500 Howell movement pairs playing the same hands in other parts of the country, and

in a few cases, other parts of the world. The percentages shown below vary from the percentages won at the club, because in the Common Game each hand is matchpointed against a universe of hundreds of opposing pairs, not simply against one's club opponents.

At La Fetra, Lulu and Fredy Minter finished fourth nationally with a 67.73% game on July 14, and Vic Sartor – Caryn Mason came in first nationally with a 70.04% game on July 31. Caryn Mason – Patrick Finley and the Minters also finished in the top 50 nationally on July 14 and July 28 respectively.

At Claremont, Dan Robinson and Olivia Esquibel came in 5th nationally with a 63.67% game on July 30 and Patrick Finley and Steve Mancini had a top-50 placing on July 23.

For our hand-of-the-month, I return to a topic I used a few months ago – but it was *so* much fun, that I figure if you liked it once, you'll *love* it twice. Sitting in fourth seat, with only the opponents vulnerable, you pick up this nice collection:

♠ J 6
♥ none
♦ A 5 4 3
♣ A K Q 10 7 6 3

It's three passes to you. Well, Chief, what's your opening bid?

My thinking was, there are 13 hearts and 11 spades out there. Probably, no one has six of either, or they might have opened the suit, but I sure don't relish competition when my long suit is (as usual) clubs. So I opened 3♣. Partner gave me the hairy eyeball, of course, then considered that maybe – just *maybe* – I had not gone brain-dead and had a decent hand. She called 3NT. Making 4, tie for top in a 7 table game. The results at all the tables:

3NT-W,	+430	(twice)
5♣-E	+400	
2♣-E	+150	
3♣-E	+130	
4♣-E	+130	
5♣-E	-50	

According to Bridge Composer, the par result is either 3NT, 5♣, or 5♦, 400 to E-W. Wheee! Don't ask *me* how you would get to 5♦!

The full hand was

North		
♠	A 10 9 5 4	
♥	K 10 6 5	
♦	6	
♣	9 5 2	
West		East
♠	K 3 2	♠ J 6
♥	A 9 8 7 3	♥ none
♦	Q J 10 2	♦ A 5 4 3
♣	J	♣ A K Q 10 7 6 3
South		
♠	Q 8 7	
♥	Q J 4 2	
♦	K 9 8 7	
♣	8 4	

Finally, a **Rant**. (No, Tom would *never* do that, would he? No, never. What, *never*? Well ... hardly ever.). This will make more sense to you if you read the West L.A. column first ...

Playing solitaire on BBO, those &%^\$#@! robots committed the following atrocity:

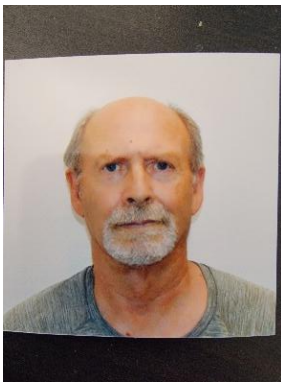
It was the very first deal of the session. In fourth seat, no one vulnerable, I picked up (approximately)

♠ Q 7 ♥ A Q J 10 2 ♦ none ♣ A K J 10 8 4

The dealer to my left opened 2♦ (weak). My partner passed, RHO bid 4♦. What now? Well, there's this thing called the Unusual Notrump, generally showing the two lowest unbid suits, but at high levels, can be used to show two places to play. (With all three unbid suits, you can double, right?) So, 4NT it was. This was followed by ... brace yourself ... THREE passes. Yes, my brain-and-electron-dead partner apparently was not programmed for this basic sequence. When the opening lead was made, and that wretched (no holding back when *I* rant) robot put down two small diamonds, the next thing I clicked on was the X in the upper right corner of my browser.

Bah!

Quote for the month: "Not doing more than the average is what keeps the average down." (William M. Winans)



Santa Clarita-Antelope Valley by Don Dachner

The Santa Clarita Bridge Club has games at the Newhall Community Center.

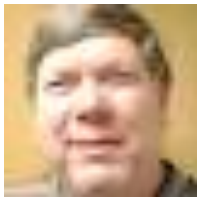
Wednesdays (10:00 AM – 12:45 PM): 18-board game (perfect for newer players or anyone who prefers a more relaxed pace).

Fridays (10:00 AM – 1:30 PM): 24-board game.

Please note there are no bridge games the week of August 10th. We return to our regular schedule the week of August 17.

July game results.

7/11		
N-S	Mark Brifman and Susan Strassner	65%
E-W	Bernard Seal and Ruth Baker	76%
7/18		
N-S	Donna Davidson and Bill Langlois	70%
E-W	Rand Pinsky and Basant Shah	61%
7/25	STAC game	
N-S	Alan Neuman and Harry Randhawa	63%
E-W	David Khalieque and Kristi Kubo	73%



Long Beach by Leo Dittemore

www.acblunit557.org
www.LongBeachBridge.com

Unit 557 continues to show strong, steady participation with an average of more than 10 Open tables per day, maintaining the club's hallmark of consistent attendance and lively duplicate action. This stable daily count reflects both member engagement and the club's reliable scheduling rhythm.

Our strong participation continues to reinforce the club's readiness for fall educational programming and championship preparation. We started a monthly afternoon Non-Life Member game which has added up

to seven tables on those days. Our cycle of introductory Bridge classes will commence in October. Our Monday morning Advancing Player workshop continues to be well attended drawing another ten or more tables each week.

Unit 557 players are gearing up for the District North American Pairs Finals on October 25. We expect to preform well in all flights.

Downey-Whittier by Daniel F. Oakes

Dan Oakes and Mike Ventri led the field with 65.10% in the Unit Championship on July 1, just ahead of John Jones and Nancy Stebbins, who were also over 60%. Yas Takeda and Robert Yu were third. Bob and Linda Krause were 1st B, ahead of Anita Frost and Toni Hoffman.

On July 8, Ventri was in the winner's circle yet again, this time playing with Steve Hough, and putting up a score almost as good as he did the prior week – 64.29%. Jack Rainsberry and Bill Skupen were 2nd (and 1st B), and Stephen Anderson and Tom Lill were 3rd. Anita Frost and Toni Hoffman were 1st C.

Ventri, playing with Oakes again, made it 3 for 3 on the 15th, this time with a 67.05% score. Rainsberry and Skupen were 2nd again (and 1st B), just ahead of Avice Osmundson and Kiran Kumar. Raj Ramchandani and John Dobson were 2nd B and 1st C.

Ramchandani and Osmundson teamed up to win the Unit Championship on July 22nd, with Rainsberry and Skupen picking up their third consecutive silver medal. Frost and Hoffman were third.

Finally, on the 29th, Ventri (clearly Player of the Month) made up for missing the points the previous week with his best game yet – 73% playing with Steve Hough again. Hoffman and Frost were a distant second (and 1st B), with Rainsberry & Skupen finishing 3rd (and 2nd B).

New cards, new boards, and an early (10:00 a.m.) start and finish every Wednesday...if you're not playing in La Habra, all that's missing is you – come on down!

West L.A. by Elisa Leonelli

BBO Robots vs Human Bridge Players

I regularly play on BBO in the ACBL World Daylong with GIBBO, because it takes about 20-30 minutes of my time, so I can fit this 12-board game anywhere in my busy day. And I may stop anytime, to reply to urgent emails for instance, then resume whenever I want within a 24 hour period. It cost \$2.25 in BBO dollars.

However I find the robots' bidding often confounding.

For example, one time I overcalled 2 Diamonds when right hand opponent opened 1NT, because with most of my human partners we agreed to play natural, since it's difficult to remember the numerous conventions.

I usually will have a good 6 card suit and 10+ HCP. In this case I had AKJxx of Diamonds, but 12 HCP. My robot partner bid 2 Spades, so I assumed it had 6 spades, and with Kx of Spades, I passed. It turned out that advancer had 5 Diamonds and 3 Spades to the Queen. I went down.

So, after the game, I checked the GIB System, which we should all study carefully, and noticed that it plays Cappelletti (Hamilton) and my 2 Diamonds meant I had two 5 card majors.

Another time, when I innocently bid 2NT with 8 points and no 4 card major, after my robot partner opened 1NT, I heard it respond 3 Clubs. I later discovered that GIBBO plays Lebensohl.

Recently, when I opened 1 Heart with 14 points in third seat, my robot partner bid 2 Clubs. Since it was a passed hand, I knew it was not forcing 2 over 1, so I thought it had a good 5 card Clubs suit and no Heart support. I had 2 Clubs, the unbid suits stopped, so I bid 2NT. My Gibbo partner insisted and bid 3 Clubs, I assumed he had a 6 card suit, an unbalanced and did not want to play in No Trump, so I passed. When I saw the hand my partner had 4 clubs to the King, 11 points and A10x of Hearts. This time I decided to email BBO Customer Support, and I was pleasantly surprised when they responded within 24 hours explaining that GIBBO plays Reverse Drury.

Since then I always click on every bid, my robot partner, the robot opponents, and even my own, to see what the bids mean in this bizarre GIB System.

I have also been playing with human partners on BBO, ever since Beverly Hills Bridge Club President Tim Deegan was kind enough to show me how, when our club closed in March 2020 because of COVID-19.

Now I play once a week in the ACBL World 499 game with somebody I met online four years ago in the 199 NiteClub 12 board game, which was followed by a free lesson. He does not live in Los Angeles, so we've never seen each other in person, but we talk on Facetime, and after each game we email comments back and forth to improve our play.

My favorite way to play bridge is Face to Face (F2F) at our lovely club in Beverly Hills, even though it takes 3 to 4 hours out of my day, so I only do it once a week. Having joined in 2019, by now I know many of the players and what bidding system they prefer. Several still play Standard American (SAYC), not 2 over 1, or conventions like New Minor Forcing and Inverted Minors, that I learnt from John Ramos (my first teacher at BHBC), and his partners at Bridge and Beyond, Christopher Rivera and Giorgia Botta.

But with more than 350 players participating in our club games in 2026, there are quite a few differences in the bidding.

When I played in our Limited 750 game a few months ago, our British opponents complained that my partner did not alert my weak opening bid of 2 Diamonds. They told us that in the UK that is an alertable bid, while in the US it is not.

More recently, when my right hand opponent opened 2 Diamonds in our Monday open game, his partner said "Alert," so I asked and he explained it was a 4-4-4-1 shape with 17-24 HCP. Later I looked it up and found other meanings for a 2 Diamond opener, not just this one, called Roman, but also Flannery, showing 4 Spades and 5 Hearts with 11-15 HCP.

So I learnt that it's usually a good idea to ask what certain bids mean, even if they seem obvious, and I suggest to my partners that they do the same.

Please check our website and make reservations to play at our Beverly Hills Bridge Club, earn upgraded Red and Black masterpoints.

If you know anyone who wishes to learn bridge or start playing again, current BHBC President Dawn Lee is teaching a free introduction class on Saturday or Sunday September 5 and 6 at 10 am.

Problem Solvers' Panel

This PSP is a reprint, originally have appeared in June 2024.

Problem Solvers' Panel

John Jones is moderator. Wafik Abdou, Mark Bartusek, Jordan Chodorow, Mitch Dunitz, Daniel Korbel, Mister Mealy-mouth, Mike Shuster and Jon Wittes are panelists.

As always, panelists are playing 5-card majors, 15 - 17 NT, and 2/1 GF. Beyond that, except where indicated, panelists may use any reasonable methods.

1

IMPs
E-W Vul

East	South	West	North
1NT	2♣*	6NT	pass
???			

* Majors

You, South, hold: ♠ J10962 ♥ QJ109872 ♦ 6 ♣ void

What call do you make?

The first two problems were submitted by frequent panelist David Grainger. They came from IMP matches at the San Diego Regional. Grainger commented that "you can replace 2♣ with 4♥ if you feel like it, but I chose 2♣ at the table and it really leaves you better placed here than 4♥ would."

One panelist didn't like the 2♣ bid.

Shuster: Pass. I check on the health of the person who bid 2♣. Are they OK? I'm worried about them.

Others pass without much thought.

Dunitz: Pass. Lead a heart. Not much thought here.

Chodorow: Pass. 7♥ is unilateral and, if I commit it, they'll probably bid and make 7NT.

Some panelists are concerned that 6NT might be going down.

Abdou: Pass. Suits are not breaking. A sacrifice may be a phantom and if partner has no help could be down 1400, which is not a bargain. A younger me would have bid 7♣ which has the potential to drive them to a grand and could be a phantom unless the 6NT bidder has 7 solid clubs (a good partner would hold Txxxx).

Korbel: Pass. What a strange situation. I think it's a little bit unilateral to bid here. On a bad day I go for more than 6NT. On a very bad day the bad breaks prevent them from making this.

Other panelists think it may be close.

Bartusek: Pass. Seems like this has to be a good sacrifice at these colors; but I'll be tapped out before I can set up my spade tricks. Looks like we have only five trump tricks for -2000 vs -1440. Additionally, if their spade honors are wasted like AQ opposite Kx and/or there's a bad minor suit break might we even beat 6NT? There is an additional problem in that bidding 7♥ might cause partner to erroneously correct to 7♠ with some major suit distributions (despite 7♦ being the bid to ask partner to choose a major).

Mealy-mouth: Pass. May I borrow your slide rule, John? Thanks! *No, I only have three slide rules left. They all came from my father and are in my display case.* In 7♥ doubled, I'll go down only 1400. That'll gain one IMP for my team, perhaps that IMP that will win the match. That's the worst case. And if partner has a trick (might he have the ♥K? Slide rule again, please!), I'll go down only 1100, gaining 8 IMPs.

Hooray for New Math! Alas, I'm an old-fashioned guy. I like to make what I bid and beat what they bid. So, I'll pass and settle for +100 when partner has ♠87 ♥6 ♦JT975 ♣QT986 or East has ♠AQ opposite West's ♠K3 and their three spade tricks dwindle to two. Fortunately, few of my opponents use a point-count that includes tens.

Wittes: 7♥. Under most circumstances, I expect to take five hearts and two spades, which would be -1400 against their plus 1440 or 1470. It could be slightly better against a more favorable major suit holding by partner.

The table result from Grainger: 6NT is -1440, 7H is -800. I passed. Partner had ♠Ax ♥xx ♦xxxx ♣Jxxxx and they take too many minor winners.

Score 12 IMPs for Mr. Wittes! I'm not at all certain that I would have had the courage to bid 7♥ at the table, considering the chance that 6NT might fail. Kudos to the 7♥ bidder and thanks for the problem, David!

2

IMPs
None Vul

North	East	South	West
1♣	pass	1♥	pass
2♣	pass	???	

You, South, hold: ♠ AK64 ♥ AQ64 ♦ void ♣ A6542

What call do you make?

In this situation, 2♦ is clear, it's an artificial force. What are 3♦, 4♦ and 5♦? Which of them are splinters and which are which are exclusion RKC? Let's hear from the panel.

Dunitz: 2♣. 6♣ if I was playing rubber bridge. But here I would bid 2♣, show clubs at my next turn. And sniff at 7♣. With slightly more, 5NT (grand slam force) now.

Korbel: 2♦. Artificial game force. I will raise clubs next then most likely leap to 5♦ Exclusion RKC.

Shuster: 2♦. That is just artificial force.

Chodorow: 3♦. This is a splinter. Partner will pattern out for now; next round, I'll leave room for her to show ♥K.

Bartusek: 4♦. Splinter bid since 5♦ exclusion will not get us the info we need at a low enough level. I will follow up with 5♦ showing a void over partner's presumed 5♣ sign-off. This will allow partner to cuebid the heart king (or shortness). I'm going to assume no trump losers and reach 6♣ at least. Of course, if the partnership plays 4♣ or 4♦ as Kickback for clubs then that would be the best call to find out about the Club King and the Heart King.

Wittes: 4♦. I would think this should show a void showing fit for partner. If partner bids 5♣, I'll raise. If partner makes a grand try, I'll cooperate at least once.

Mealy-mouth: 4♦. Hmmm, is my partner the same super-genius who took the 7♥ save in the first problem and earned the one IMP that won the match? If so, I'll bid 4♦, Exclusion Roman Keycard Gerber (as he'll surely read it). But if I'm playing with a sane partner, I'll bid 6♣, trusting him to know that the ♥K will justify a boost to 7♣.

Abdou: 5♦. If 4♦ is kickback, is 4NT exclusion or natural? I think 5♦ should be clear exclusion (going with building a fence around partner).

I have a rule about which bids become Exclusion. My rule is for Exclusion to exist; there must be a splinter bid available. In this case 3♦ is a splinter; thus 4♦ would be Exclusion.

Grainger commented "partner's hand may as well have been a 0 count and it still makes 7♣ on 1-1 trumps. If you make some convoluted auction to look for the ♣K, he doesn't have it and you miss the grand, I bid 7♣ over 2♣. (Joel (Wooldridge) called it a man raise)." Well done!

3

Matpoints
N-S Vul

North	East	South	West
1♣	1♥	1♠	2♥
pass	3♥	???	

You, South, hold: ♠ AJ98654 ♥ void ♦ 8 ♣ 108643

What call do you make?

Two panelists didn't like the 1♠ response and would have bid 4♣ instead of 1♠.

Shuster: *Would have bid 4♣ on his first call.* Is this the same guy from problem one right? I think he might need to be seriously ill mentally.

Mealymouth: 4♣. Dern my partners! With minimum hands they pass the opponents' bids without even looking to see if those bids are sufficient. On this deal, West needed to bid 5♥, not 2♥, to make a sufficient bid over my 4♣ response (*If he had bid 4♣ instead of responding 1♠*). So, I'll bid 4♣ and give West a second chance to bid a sufficient 5♥.

The other panelists mostly choose between 4♣ and 4♠.

Korbel: 4♣. This looks like a dumb problem, and my bid looks like a dumb solution, but it's actually an insidious situation. We could be cold for 7♣ and languish in 4♣. Or, they could outbid us to 5♥ and we might have no idea what to do. I wonder if I can get away with a 4♣ call now and if anybody bids I can bid spades next.

Bartusek: 4♣. Tempting to bid 3♠ (my second choice), but that may be too unilateral and unwise. 4♣ is about right, and we can back into 4♠ if partner preferences with a doubleton on the way to 5♣. Note that partner has usually denied three card spade support by not making a support double. This auction might even allow partner to double 4♥ if the opponents bid again?

Dunitz: 4♠. The seventh spade makes me bid 4♠. Partner will be short but even a stiff honor would work wonders for this hand. If the opponents are foolish enough to double, I'll retreat to clubs.

Chodorow: 4♠. When partner opens 1m and passes at a low level, assume she's on 12-14 balanced.

Wittes: 4♠. I expect to have a play opposite most dummies, especially opposite spade tolerance and a reasonable club suit.

One panelist consults partner, I like that!

Abdou: 4♥. If partner bid 4♠ with two or a stiff honor, we have arrived. If he bids 5♣ I will settle. If he bids 4NT DI I will go for slam (♠x ♥xx ♦Axxx ♣AKxxxx).

4

IMPs
N-S Vul

East	South	West	North
pass	1♣	2♣*	pass
4♥	???		

* Michaels (majors)

You, South, hold: ♠ A3 ♥ A4 ♦ A6 ♣ AJ86543

What call do you make?

The choices look like pass, double and 5♣. Let's listen to the panel.

Bartusek: Pass. It's unlikely that we can make anything since partner couldn't even bid a non-forcing 2♦. 5♣ seems too unilateral and risky. There is no sense in doubling it for an extra 50 points at IMPs, let's just hope we beat it.

Shuster: Pass. I'm chicken.

Chodorow: Pass. Double is not penalty and 5♣ is overly committal.

Abdou: Double. With minors I could have bid 4NT, so this is a good hand with some clubs, I know transfers the blame but maybe partner will know what's right, I sure don't.

Dunitz: Double.

Korbel: Double. I hope partner doesn't get carried away with diamonds. I can't just up and bid 5♣, and I can't pass either.

Wittes: Double. I rate to have at least four tricks in defense. Partner couldn't bid at all, so I can't imagine making 11 tricks in clubs.

And the bidder, who might well strike gold.

Mealymouth: 5♣. I'll bid 5♣ without stuttering, and hoping to catch partner with a pair of kings. When I played lowball in Gardena 40 some-odd years ago, my opponents had me pegged for a conservative, so they all folded when I bluffed. Now I'll just guess, giving my opponents the last guess. Perhaps they won't know who can make what either.

Bridge Jeopardy Questions

\$100 – Who are Jeff Meckstroth and Eric Rodwell?

\$200 – Who are Bob Hamman and Bobby Wolff?

\$300 – Who are Eric Murray and Sammy Kehela?

\$400 – Who are Boris Schapiro and Terrance Reese?

\$500 – Who are Benito Garozzo and Giorgio Belladonna?

5

Matchpoints
None Vul.

East	South	West	North
2♠	X	3♠	X*
pass	???		

* = Responsive

You, South, hold: ♠ 742 ♥ J752 ♦ AQJ ♣ AKJ

What call do you make?

I'll start with a panelist who objects to the conditions.

Mealy-mouth: 3NT. What, me double with flat shape? Never in the last 70 years. *OK, the hand is flat, but you'd really pass a 16 HCP hand?* This could happen only if I were filling in for color-blind South who took ill after mistaking a red card for a green one. I don't blame him for leaving mid-auction to go to the lavatory and vomit. As the opponents won't let me get away with an "SOS" redouble now, I'll bid a confident 3NT, hoping the spades block. But if an opponent doubles, he'll be sorry, as then I can make a clearly SOS redouble for partner to bid his longer minor.

One panelist bids, envisioning possibilities.

Chodorow: 4♥/4♠. To paraphrase Bill Clinton, it depends on what your definition of "responsive" is. Some play it could include four hearts, in which case I'll content myself with 4♥ with a king extra but weak hearts and no shape. Others play it denies four hearts, in which case the right 12 count (♠x ♥AK ♦Kxxxx ♣Qxxxx) produces slam and I want to make a positive noise.

The other panelists all pass, many mentioning that they will lead a trump.

Bartusek: Pass. I lead a trump. I must cut down any potential ruffs in dummy. I have a very defensive hand. Bidding anything seems like a crapshoot. Note that partner's double somewhat implies a balanced hand (never a spade void) because with a lot of distribution he would usually just bid something.

Abdou: Pass. Yuck! Passing and leading a spade feels right. Partner didn't promise four hearts, my hearts are lousy, and my hand is not offensive with honors in short suits. This obviously could be wrong opposite ♠x ♥AKxx ♦Kxxx ♣xxxx and right opposite ♠J ♥AQx ♦Kxxx ♣xxxxx.

Dunitz: Pass. I'll lead a trump.

Korbel: Pass. If I had more values in hearts this would be an easy pass. But sometimes partner doubles with minor suit oriented hands, and then passing here could be very disastrous. In any case, it's only one board.

Wittes: Pass. I have a good defensive hand. If partner has only three hearts, we might not be able to make anything.

Shuster: Pass. Where am I going?

I'm with the passers, and certainly would lead a trump. This wasn't my best problem.