

## FOR THE NEW KIDS ON THE BLOCK.....

### *The Lone Star Regional Tournament rocks!!*

"I'm not ready to play in tournaments yet" .....So not true!!! One of the best things about the regional tournament is that there will be events for EVERY playing level. My very first duplicate experience was at a 2000 National Tournament and I won a fraction of a master point! That is because the event was designed for the brand new player. The Regional will have 0 to 20 point events which is the perfect spot to begin your duplicate career. In fact, there will be a 0-20 event every morning and afternoon if there are enough players! If you enter a '49er event, the players will all play against each other, but you will be competing against other players in the 0-5 group for master points. There is an air of excitement at a tournament that will give you a rush!

Another reason to play in the regional is the location. The Houston Westchase Marriott is conveniently located just south of Westheimer and one block inside Beltway 8. It is easily accessible from all parts of the city. There is plenty of free parking and lots of good restaurants are within easy walking or driving distance.

The Lone Star Regional will have lots of extra hospitality this year. Since this is the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the regional, the registration gifts will be special as will the prizes for winning section tops. Enjoy special treats and lots and lots of chocolate candy and free coffee!

Special events at the regional include a speaker program at 2:15 each afternoon from Tuesday through Saturday. At these sessions you will get a free bridge lesson. There will also be a salute to Lynne Graham and Mary Lee Bentley on Thursday in the Intermediate/Novice area, and Teacher Appreciation Day with a reception on Thursday evening. I hope that many of you will play Thursday morning and afternoon in the novice games as we remember our beloved teachers, Lynne and Mary Lee.

If you would like to have more information on competitive duplicate play, Betsy Dubose is teaching an Introduction to Duplicate Bridge class at St. Martin's Episcopal for three Tuesdays in January just prior to the regional. This class is a perfect bridge from social bridge play to understanding duplicate bridge.

The Lone Star Regional is one of the biggest regional tournaments in the country. Players come from all over the country to play. It starts Monday evening, January 24, at 7:30 pm and there will be three games each day through Sunday afternoon. See you there!

## ***It's a Partnership Game***

- Always remember that your partner is on your side. Always be supportive and understanding of partner's errors. It will pay dividends when you mess up and you will!
- Don't let emotions get in the way. Try not to be angry at the opponents or previous opponents or afraid of the pair you are playing against.
- Learn only one new convention at a time. Refrain from learning your new convention from another novice player. Instead, use a bridge textbook as a reference and learn the ENTIRE convention along with your partner. Often times beginning players learn only part of a convention and then get into trouble.
- Have a convention card with each player you play with and review it before the game. Occasionally review the entire convention card with your partner.
- Vary your bridge experience! Do you always sit east/west? Sit north/south some of the time. Play "up" in an open game once in a while. Try attending tournaments for the experience, points, and fun!
- Call the director when an irregularity occurs.

## ***Defense—You'll Play it half the time!***

To improve in your defense you have to make good use of signals. The three basic types of signals, in order of priority, are count, attitude, and suit preference.

- The attitude signal encourages or discourages partner from continuing the suit. Using standard signals, a high card (the highest you can afford) is encouraging and a low card is discouraging. Tell your partner whether or not you would like to have him continue with that suit when he leads it. Also, with your first discard only, tell your partner which suit you would like to have led next. Look at the dummy, look at your hand, and think carefully about your attitude in the suit.
- The count signal is used when the declarer is playing a suit. A higher card followed by a lower card shows an even number in the suit whereas a low card followed by a high card shows an odd number in the suit. Giving count will help your partner know when to take his trick, hopefully stranding a long suit in the dummy. Giving count can be

especially critical when defending against no trump where you can try to strand a long suit in the dummy.

- Suit preference signals are used when attitude and count do not apply. A high card shows preference for the higher ranking suit and a low card shows preference for a lower ranking suit. It may be that the board has a singleton or void in a suit. It would not be helpful to give your partner attitude about the suit. Instead tell partner which suit to switch to. For example, partner leads an ace of hearts and there is only one or none of them in the dummy. Tell partner with a high heart to switch to the higher ranking non trump suit and with a low heart to switch to the lower ranking non trump suit. Suit preference is also given when you suspect your partner is going to ruff the card you lead to him. Lead a low card in the suit to ask for the lower non trump suit and a high card to ask for the higher non trump suit. "Talking" to your partner in this way will help your defensive game enormously!

Watching your carding is an important part of playing good defense, the most difficult aspect of the bridge game.

### ***To bid or not to bid, that is the question:***

Competition at the three level: Because defense is more difficult than play of the hand, it is often important to compete on part score deals. You will often find your side bidding hearts and their side bidding spades or vice versa. Often you will be in a situation where you wonder if you should go to the three level to win the contract or not. The high card points are probably distributed fairly evenly and both sides have found their fit. When should you bid? When should you pass? When should you double? First of all, look for reasons to bid.

Reasons to bid to the three level or double:

- Does the opener have an extra trump? With a six card suit and a partner who has raised your suit promising a 9 card fit, take the push to the three level.
- Does the responder have an extra trump? If the responder raised showing at least three card support, take the push to three if you have four card support.
- Does the over caller or responder have an extra trump? Consider taking the push to three (see the above two items).
- Does your side have extra distribution? With 5/5 hands and 6/4 hands, or a fit in two suits (a double fit) bid one more. (Remember six/four bid one more)

- Does your side have extra high card points? With extra high card points and a trick or two in their suit, consider doubling the opponents when they go to the three level. (if partner is distributional, he should usually pull it)
- How about vulnerability? Everyone loves to hear himself bid, but no one likes to be doubled and go set, ESPECIALLY VULNERABLE.
- Does your side have minimum values and minimum number of trumps? You can pass and hope that they have already gotten too high.

The single most important consideration in part score deals is the number of trumps. When the points are evenly distributed, the number of tricks available is roughly equal to the number of trumps. With nine trumps, you will usually be able to successfully compete to the three level. (See: The Law of Total Tricks by Larry Cohen)

### ***Famous Bridge Players***

See if you can match them up!

The "Oracle of Omaha"

Somerset Maugham

Dr. Zhivago

Groucho Marx

The only NBA basketball player to score 100 points in a game

Dwight

D. Eisenhower

Britain's wartime prime minister

Martina Navratilova

Host of "You Bet Your Life"

Winston Churchill

Of Human Bondage author

Warren Buffett

Creator of "Peanuts"

Omar

Sharif

Gracie Allen's better half

Wilt

"The Stilt" Chamberlain

34<sup>th</sup> President of the U. S.  
Burns

George

Female winner of 18 Grand Slams  
Charles Shultz

*See you at the Lone Star Regional!*

*Joyce Ryan*

*St. Martin's Bridge School*

Please send your comments, questions, and suggestions regarding this newsletter to  
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