

# Young Taydon proves bridge can span the ages

By Carolyn Webb

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He's got the smarts: Taydon Gold, 9, was the youngest participant by far in the bridge national teams championship at a Queens Road hotel on Sunday.

*Photo: Meredith O'Shea*

Australians' image of the card game bridge tends to be from 1950s US sitcoms, in which older couples sip martinis, smoke and gossip.

But on Sunday it was strictly business, not a ciggie or drink in sight, as 400 deadly serious players competed in the national teams championship.

Most participants in the tournament, Australia's third biggest, were aged in their 60s, but there were a few teams of twenty-somethings and thirty-somethings.

Standing out was Taydon Gold, 9, of Mount Waverley, who the Victorian Bridge Association says is the youngest player to ever compete in a major bridge event in Australia.

Over all three days of the long weekend, at the Bayview Eden Hotel in Queens Road, he must concentrate for up to eight hours a day.

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Association president Ben Thompson said Taydon was treated as equal to players as old as 92.

Bridge is becoming more popular in Australia, with 35,000 registered players, compared with 32,000 10 years ago.

It is popular with retirees who have time for sessions that can last three hours

But there is a push to recruit young people, with an annual youth tournament in Canberra in January.

Taydon attends a weekly youth night at Waverley Bridge Club in Ashwood, and the association wants bridge to be included as an option in 100 Victorian schools, alongside existing programs such as chess.



It's an ace pastime: Taydon is believed to be the youngest person to compete in a major Australian bridge event.

*Photo: Meredith O'Shea*

Taydon knows of no other child at his school who plays bridge, but he said it's fun "if you like to think".

Each pair of players and their two opponents are dealt the same cards but choose what card, or trick, to play. The ace has the highest value.

Before this “play” phase, there is an “auction” phase where players bid, or predict, how many tricks they might win.

You get bonus points for achieving the predicted number of tricks. Your score after each 85-minute match (14 deals of 13 tricks each) is added to the scores of the two other members of your team who have played your opposing team’s two other players.



Family business: Taydon takes a break to hang out with his professional bridge player father, Leigh Gold, and his social player grandfather, Geoffrey Gold.

*Photo: Meredith O'Shea*

Taydon said playing against people up to 70 years older was hard, "but I've been doing pretty well". He reckons he's "really good at maths".

His father, Leigh Gold, a professional bridge player, and grandfather Geoffrey Gold, a social player, are his mentors. Leigh said Taydon wanted to play bridge from age five. "We couldn't stop him." he said.

Mr Thompson said that "if you're an intellectually inclined young person, bridge is a great outlet for using your brain and having a great social experience".

Players swap "bridge jokes" that only insiders understand, and yes, there is quite a lot of quality chitchat.