



Australian
Bridge Teachers' Association
"Quarterly" Bulletin

Vol. 18 No. 3 Summer 2006

ABTA Bulletin (Print Post No. PP232178/00001)

Editor: Nick Hughes

Another Quiet Year

It's has been another quiet one, with a small skeleton crew doing just enough to keep the ship afloat.

We hoped to have a Seminar in Sydney – combined with the Directors Association – but there were logistical problems and interest was not great.

AGM

This should reach you just before the AGM, which is on at the usual place and time in Canberra.

It's in the Executive Room on the ground floor of Rydges, on Sunday 22 January at 9.30am. This will give you time to get to the Convention if you are playing in the Swiss Pairs, which starts at 11am.

After the usual election of Office Bearers, there are a few matters to discuss.

Firstly, the ABF has given the ABTA a \$3,000 grant to be spent as we think fit. It could be used to subsidise country tours, or run seminars, etc.

Note that the ABF already provides funds to State Associations for teaching tours. The following is from ABF Management Committee meeting 12-11-05

"Teaching Tours. The ABF Subsidy has

been raised to \$3000 per annum per state. It was reiterated that applications must come via the state body."

Secondly, we need a better web presence, with top teachers encouraged to post their tips and lesson notes online.

So be there. And be prepared to put you hand up!

Membership Fees

These will be waived again for existing members. We have large cash reserves and minimal expenses at the moment, though hopefully that will change this year.

Nick Hughes

ABTA AGM

Sunday 22 January
at Rydges Lakeside, Canberra
(Executive Room, ground floor)

9.30 am - 10.30

Surfers Seminar

Tuesday 21 February

10.30am - 12
at Holiday Inn

Beginner Again

Nick Hughes

I don't teach much these days so I've forgotten the skills required to handle nervous beginners.



Anyway, Nicoleta and I decided on a whim to take a **salsa** course late last year. We got a flier in the mail box & happened to be free for those eight Thursday nights.

Eight x 1 hour classes for \$120 early bird special – though I think everyone got that. Well, that's \$15 an hour for each of us! Bridge classes are so much better value.

Still, we rang and booked, turned up on the night, a bit nervous. "Will it be all girls?" "What should we wear?" "Are we going to look Stupid? Or Fat? Or Old?"

It was all okay of course. Yes, most were younger, say 25 - 35, but the gender spread was okay.

Fernando and Becky were young and suave. They assured us it would be fun and easy, and so it proved. They started from the very beginning and kept revising throughout the course.

We learned some basic moves, drilled in and revised; met some new people, got a bit of exercise. But

What was wrong with the course?

Well, students find it hard to judge. We enjoyed and looked forward to going to one of the Latin dance clubs in Sydney

to strut our stuff.

However, that didn't really happen. Firstly, we hadn't learned enough, maybe 6 related moves out of 100+. So what? Well, we soon realised it would take a big commitment of time and money to become more competent. They could have taught us more but chose not to, being keen to bring us back for Level 2, etc. Sound familiar?

We were unprepared for the real world of Latin dancing. All through the course, Becky or Fernando would tell us what steps we'd be doing "A little faster now. Inside turn, then two basics, then a cross-over then two more basics." Then they'd call out each upcoming step.

This gave us the illusion of competence. Unfortunately, all the girls took their cues from looking at the instructors and listening for their orders. We men had no sense of control, we weren't actually leading.

When we went for our first night with some of the group, it all got ragged. The music was sooo fast, the other people were doing moves we didn't recognise, there was nobody to give advice by calling the moves or counting the beat. It was like a novice bridge player's first night of open bridge.

Follow-up

We are still keen to have a go but we've forgotten a fair bit. Sound familiar? Don't want to start again, so perhaps we'll try something else.

Like most good players, I never had a bridge lesson and still I teach. It was good to be able to look at learning a new skill from the other side.

Boost to Bridge in American Schools

The following article is reprinted (in shortened form) from an American newspaper. It's also on the ABF web site.

Poker may be all the rage with junior high school kids, but the two richest men in the country are betting a million dollars they have a better card game to offer young people: bridge.

That's contract bridge, the four-player card game whose popularity peaked a half-century ago and is now played largely by senior citizens, country clubbers, plus Microsoft founder Bill Gates and investor Warren Buffett.

The two billionaires are passionate bridge players who compete in tournaments and online. Now they want to fund a program to teach bridge in schools. Gates and Buffett have hired Buffett's bridge partner, Sharon Osberg, to start a program to teach contract bridge in junior high schools. They've anted up \$1 million to fund it.

"Bill Gates and I kind of cooked it up together," says Buffett, who thinks bridge would teach kids math skills, logical thinking and how to work with others. "We hope we could get a school program someplace, where the kids were taught the game and ... develop a lot of competition between schools."

Gates learned bridge from his parents but took it up seriously when he began playing with Buffett 10 years ago. "Bridge is a game where you can keep improving and feel great about it without ever hitting the limit of what can be done," he said in an e-mail.

The idea to teach bridge in school is

modelled on inner-city programs teaching chess and dancing. Chess-in-the-Schools, a New York program started in 1986 by philanthropist Lewis Cullman, teaches chess in elementary and junior high schools.

The billionaires' bridge program has yet to get a bid, says Osberg, a two-time world-champion bridge player and bank executive who has played bridge with Buffett for 15 years. The first school district she approached, San Francisco, said no deal.

Marley Kaplan, president of Chess-in-the-Schools, says she has pitched the idea of bridge to New York schools but found little enthusiasm among principals. "They said, 'We're not playing cards in class.'"

But at lunchtime, those budding Kasparovs are dealing Texas Hold 'Em anyway, she says. "In the cafeteria, the cards come right out."

Kids who are crazy about poker should love bridge, says Buffett, who spends nearly every evening playing online — 4,800 hands last year, he figures. "There's intellectual development involved and working as partners with people," he says. "If a lot of kids are exposed to bridge, a number of them are going to benefit in a very significant way."

Most bridge players have been out of school about as long as Buffett, 75. The average age of American Contract Bridge League members is 67. The league is also trying to appeal to kids: Last year, nearly 4,500 students

learned the game in classes taught at schools by league members. In September, the league launched a website, www.bridgeiscool.com.

"The problem is, all the action takes place inside your head," Osberg says. "It doesn't translate well to television."

And unlike poker, there's no money involved. "We play only for glory," says Linda Granell, marketing director for the bridge league.

What bridge has over chess and poker is that it requires players to learn to work with someone else, Buffett says.

"You have to learn to understand your partner, to be tolerant, sympathetic, encouraging," he says. "Those are skills that are not bad to have in life."

2005 ABTA Office bearers

(these positions will be declared vacant at the AGM in January)

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2006 AGM Notice

The AGM of the ABTA will be held on Sunday 22nd January 2006 in the Executive Room, Rydges Lakeside, Canberra at 9.30am.

Proxy Form

I _____ (Full name)

hereby appoint _____ (Full name)

as my proxy to vote on my behalf as he/she thinks fit at the 2006 AGM of the ABTA and any adjournment thereof.

Signed

Dues Notice

Membership fees for 2006 are waived for all current members. Basically, our capital expenses are minimal.

New members pay \$40, consisting of \$20 annual plus a \$10 Joining fee and Exam fee of \$10.