



Social Bridge

Just what is “Social” Duplicate Bridge? The question might at first sound unnecessary yet it is an important one that needs to be asked.

There is, I believe, a growing acceptance that duplicate bridge does not have to be reserved for those who take the game so seriously that they have to play ever more complex systems and do not know how to smile - let alone be polite - and act as if we are not permitted to view a session of bridge as being a social occasion. Yet how sad it is that there are still those who would have us believe that duplicate bridge is a battle to be won at all costs, for whilst we do not permit complex systems and anti-social behaviour at the East Sussex our members take their bridge just as seriously and enjoy it just as much - if not more.

POOR STANDARD

There is also the view that to permit the game to be played socially, pleasantly and simply, means the bridge itself cannot be much of a standard. How ludicrous that is. Whatever the overall standard at the East Sussex is, some of our members - some of whom were only able to play duplicate bridge because the East Sussex gave them the opportunity to do so - are able to play against and sometimes beat those who readily deride them. But more importantly, who decided that players have to be “good” to be permitted to play duplicate bridge. And what constitutes “good”?

What is often forgotten is that we all, however good some might have become, all started out as learners and that most bridge players do not want to play complex systems.

ISOLATION

Some hold the belief that duplicate bridge needs special clubs for those who wish to play only a simple system: I believe that is just closing ones eyes to the problems. What they are really saying is that we need to isolate newcomers from rudeness, intimidation and gamesmanship until such time as they are sufficiently thick skinned to tolerate it. Fine. But what of the thousands who either cannot or are not prepared to tolerate such behaviour and attitude.

ZERO TOLERANCE

So what makes bridge “Social”? Primarily, it lies in the policy of Zero Tolerance of bad behaviour at any and every level of the game. Of course, some do not like the expression because of its ramifications to both those who would find themselves no longer tolerated and those who have the responsibility of applying it, which is not always very pleasant; but if duplicate bridge is to thrive and grow it will sooner or later have to adopt just such a policy. One only has to listen to beginners and what they have heard about duplicate bridge being a nightmare and how they will never set foot in a duplicate bridge club, to understand just how rudeness, gamesmanship and intimidation have contributed to preventing the game occupying the place it should rightfully hold among bridge players generally.