

From the Editor

by Ken Trock



There have been some new developments in Unit 140. First, as Unit President Brett Kunin mentions in his President's Report, the annual Awards Brunch was held in East Hanover this year. With respect to the quarterly Sectional, he outlined several things. There were a total of 113 tables at the March Sectional, netting a small profit for the Unit. And of the 5 teams from District 3 that are representing Summer Nationals in Toronto in the GNTs, 3 are from 140 and another is a hybrid team made up of players from 140 and 106.

As to the largest item on the docket, we have contracted with the Edison Elks at our tournament site for them to store our tables, chairs, and other sundry items. The Elks will construct an onsite platform and storage shed that we purchased for this purpose. As you read this, it might have already happened. They'll charge a nominal monthly rental fee and a fee each tournament to carry and setup the tables and chairs in the playing area as well as put them back in the shed post tournament. This allows us to no longer have to rent public storage at a nearby location. This also means the folks who were picking the equipment up a day before the tourney and driving it back the day after no longer have to. As with most projects like this, the highest costs are borne upfront. Some high level math shows that we will break even with this arrangement in 1 ½ to 2 years.

We can thank President Brett and the Unit 140 Board for making these things happen.

NJBL Nominating Committee

The following candidates were confirmed at the Annual Meeting/Awards brunch on March 9 to serve 3 year terms on the NJBL Board (alphabetically):

Beth Carlson
Bob Carroll
Komal Kamat
Kelly Kiefer

Slamming on the Breaks

By Jay Korobow



Yes, “**Breaking up is hard to do**”, but was an easy way to make a lot of cash for Neil Sedaka with his million copy seller of the same name. He also had another big hit called “Oh, Carol” which was in part a tribute to the great Carole King and might apply to the Declarer below named Carol. Oh Carol!

Playing SAYC rather than 2/1 (GF) in this BBO team match, North wanted to be sure they were showing enough extras, so rebid 3♥ instead of 2♥. Some play that as a splinter, but that undiscussed exotic call is one way to get hurt, and I mean that figuratively, of course.

North Deals
None Vul

	♠ A K 8 7 6		♠ Q 9 4 3 2
	♥ Q J 6 5 4		♥ 10 8 7
	♦ A 10		♦ J 2
	♣ 9		♣ K 8 7

♠ J 5		♠ 10	
♥ K 3		♥ A 9 2	
♦ 9 8 7 6 4		♦ K Q 5 3	
♣ 10 6 3 2		♣ A Q J 5 4	

	♠ N		
	W		E
		♠ S	

West	North	East	South
	<i>Neil</i>		<i>Carole</i>
	1 ♠	Pass	2 ♣
Pass	3 ♥	Pass	4 ♦
Pass	4 ♥	Pass	6 N
Pass	Pass	Pass	

South sensibly just showed their second suit next with a 4♦ call, and North completed their picture with a bid of 4♥. In the replay, that’s where North-South ended up, with 2 overtricks making 6, as 6♥ is a very nice contract and not too “hard to do”.

This South was from a country where they love to declare, and I don’t mean Independence on July 4th. Or maybe they love hogs there; anyway, they simply ended the hog-wild auction with 6NT, and that became the final ill-fated contract instead of 6♥:

With 2 Spades, 4 Hearts, 3 Diamonds and 2 Clubs, a finesse of the ♦J was one way to achieve trick 12. However, the opening lead of the ♦9 put that to rest early when the play of Dummy’s ♦10 drew the Jack. Also put to bed was the chance of 5 Heart tricks when the ♥Q lost to the ♥K on the finesse that on some days might bring the whole suit in. Now on lead in the following position, West had their last chance to do Neil Sedaka proud with a “break up”, but just couldn’t find the unintuitive Club shift that would achieve that.

	♠ A K 8 7 6		♠ Q 9 4 3 2
	♥ J 6 5 4		♥ 10 8
	♦ —		♦ —
	♣ 9		♣ K 8 7

♠ J 5		♠ 10	
♥ 3		♥ A 9	
♦ 8 7 6		♦ K 5	
♣ 10 6 3 2		♣ A Q J 5 4	

	♠ N		
	W		E
		♠ S	

Instead, West shifted to the ♠J, and Declarer then managed to end in Dummy using Hearts as transportation to achieve this position with East still to discard as North's final Heart was played.

♠ —	♠ A 8 7	♠ Q 9									
♥ —	♥ —	♥ —									
♦ 9 7	♦ —	♦ —									
♣ 10 6 3	♣ 9	♣ K 8 7									
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	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ —										
	♥ —										
	♦ 5										
	♣ A Q J 5										

With 2 Spades, 4 Hearts and 3 Diamonds achieved, 3 more tricks were needed. Needing to keep the spade ♠Q protected versus Dummy's threat there, East had no choice but to hope against hope that their Partner had the ♣J or ♣Q, so they pitched a small one from ♣K87. NOW the successful Club finesse brings in 3 Club tricks, and the slam can be made for a nice pickup.

Had West found the timely Club shift (or on opening lead), this position could not be achieved due to the problems of timing and communication. An earlier Club play (provided East sagely would not play their King, but low instead) would have Broken Up the Squeeze, and the slam would definitely fail.

Alas, "breaking up" is "oh so hard to do", and Carole as South was on a path to be rewarded for their hoggy 6NT bid when "Oh, Carol", they fell from grace just like the other Neil Sedaka song. They took the Club finesse a trick or two earlier than shown, and when the ♣K did not fall doubleton at that point, they in fact went down 1 for a sizable loss instead. 12 tricks were no longer there, and, in the end, Carole said to Neil: "I wish you would simply rebid 2♥ not 3♥; is that so hard to do? Bids like that are going to break up our partnership".

President's Message

by Brett Kunin



2024 started well for the New Jersey Bridge League, and March was a great month for the Unit. Our Sectional drew well, and with the raise in entry fees, increased advertising, and a substantial increased attendance of players from New York City, even though our goal is to break even, we actually made a tidy profit. I hope to see all of you at our next Sectional in May (see the flyer in this issue of The Declarer).

The Annual Meeting/Awards Brunch was a rousing success at the new location in East Hanover. I am pleased to report that we will return to the Hanover Manor in 2025 and will be going back to a more traditional Sunday in March.

I hope all of you celebrated Easter and Passover with family.

When it is Appropriate to Overbid For Intermediate and Advancing Players

by Brett Kunin

Often, particularly at Matchpoints, it is imperative to make the opponents guess at the highest level that you dare bid in order to give them a guess as whether they are to bid, balance or Pass. This is particularly true at favorable vulnerability. Here are examples from a club game.

On Board 12, At favorable vulnerability, my partner opened 3♥ in 1st chair. My RHO doubled, and it was my call looking at ♠ K942 ♥ A6 ♦ – ♣ KJT9643. An initial reaction, with 2 possible defensive tricks, is to pass. However, a deeper analysis is appropriate. First, the opponents likely hold at least a 10 card Diamond fit, and RHO is showing Heart shortness. Second, since the double promised at least 3 Clubs, LHO was likely to be short in the suit. Consequently, it was not difficult to envision that the opponents were very likely to make 4 or 5 Diamonds. Therefore, I immediately bid 4♥, and we bought the contract undoubled. Partner did not need a good hand at this vulnerability. Here is the layout:

Partner

♠ Q5
♥ KJ98542
♦ 953
♣ 5

LHO

♠ A108
♥ Q1073
♦ AJ642
♣ 8

RHO

♠ J763
♥ --
♦ KQ1087
♣ AQ72

You

♠ K942
♥ A6
♦ --
♣ KJT9643

With good defense, my partner was down 2, while more than half of the field was in 5♦ the other way for +600 or 4♥x our way for +300. Even -300 would have been a good score for us. Parenthetically, with 19 combined trumps, you have the additional protection of the Law of Total Tricks to bid immediately.

On Board 18, I picked up

♠ J ♥ QJ9653 ♦ 6 ♣ J8532. Although I am a proponent of disciplined preempts, at favorable vulnerability in 1st chair, Marty Bergen would say “with 65, come alive”. As I would have only one opportunity to bid, I opened 2♥. LHO passes, and my partner looking at ♠ 9762 ♥ AK8 ♦ KT76 ♣ 64, realizing that it might not be our hand, bid 2NT, which systemically (for us), asks for a feature. My RHO doubled, and I bid 3♥, showing no feature. I bought the hand for 3♥.

Partner

♠ 9762
♥ AK8
♦ K1076
♣ 64

LHO

♠ 10543
♥ 1074
♦ AJ94
♣ K10

RHO

♠ AKQ8
♥ 2
♦ Q852
♣ AQ97

You

♠ J
♥ QJ9653
♦ 6
♣ J8532

<u>You</u>	<u>LHO</u>	<u>Partner</u>	<u>RHO</u>
2♥	Pass	2N ¹	Dbl
3♥ ²	Pass	Pass	Pass!?

¹ – Feature asking

² – No feature

I was able to play it for -1, while the opponents can make 5 Spades or 5 Diamonds.

The hand shows that (1) you can trade on favorable vulnerability and (2) try to think deeply about all the hand possibilities before making a call.

NJBL Banquet and Pairs Game

2023 Masterpoint Race Winners



Peter Stein, Don Post, Frederick Shubert

2023 New Life Masters



Jay Fisher, Gil Meierhans, Jaishree Gupta, John Gimblette, Xiaowen Li

Hanover Manor



Courtesy of Fred Shubert

2023 Mini-McKenney Winners



Dennis Thompson, Sam Borenstein, Jiang Gu, Xiaowan Li, Nancy Goss

2023 NJBL Player of the Year Jiang Gu



Game Results

North/South: Ruth Zowader/Arnold Kohn, Fred Shubert/Richard Podkowik, Robert and Chantal Frantzen
East/West: Xiaowen Li/Jiang Gu, Alisa Crowe/Rochelle Djmal, Peter Stein/Arnold Dorin

Member Profiles

Fred Douglas



I was raised in Central NJ but learned bridge as a graduate student at U.C. Berkeley nearly 40 years ago. While about 8-10 grad students and family/friends played casual rubber bridge

at first, it was a revelation when four of us went off and started playing in a local club and then tournaments. (Aside: one of my regular partners back then is world famous, David X. Cohen, the cocreator of Futurama. He dropped out of the computer science program to write for the Simpsons.)

I took to bridge because I liked the intellectual challenge of it and the fact that so many situations are different. This is unlike chess, which I played through high school, in which every game starts the same. That remains true today! And as I get older, I like the intellectual stimulation.

Back to CA. It turns out Mike Lawrence was a regular at the Piedmont, CA club where we played 2-3 evenings per week. (And yes, I think I'd have received my PhD about a year earlier if I'd never learned the game!) I then spent a year in Amsterdam, where I discovered they have their bridge clubs in bars, and they drink a lot.

When I returned to the US I landed coincidentally back in the Princeton area, not far from where I grew up, and started playing regularly with your Editor and mine, Ken Trock. We played quite frequently for a couple of years, but when my wife and I had our first child I cut back to occasional tournaments and stints of OKBridge (a precursor to BBO, which had one really good idea, using essentially Elo ratings rather than masterpoints!). When we had our second child in 1999, I had no time for bridge, and gave it up completely ... for a while. Ken and I kept in touch and about a decade later asked if I might try playing again. I started again and got

hooked. Since I still didn't have time to go to clubs much, I played online and in occasional tournaments, plus clubs when I traveled for business: at one point I was traveling to the San Jose area. I considered that my home club because I might play there twice in a week but never in NJ.

By this time one child was out of the house and the other old enough for me to get out more, and I started playing for a time at the Monroe club, one of the few evening games in the area. Initially I played with whatever pick up partner Organizer Howie would find for me, but then I played in the Westchester regional with Nick Trobovic and we started playing regularly in Monroe. I left on vacation and couldn't reach him when I returned; after a few days I searched for news of him and found his obituary! He'd been in poor health, alas. This happened to me as well with an NABC pickup partner with whom I played in San Diego and Philadelphia: when I couldn't reach him after that, I found he'd passed away. This seems to happen far too much to our bridge cohort.

Given how little I was able to get to clubs and even local tournaments, it turned out that at the start of the pandemic in 2020, I needed a fair chunk of black and silver points to make Life Master, but with all my online play I had well more than the total 300 points necessary and was not that far from the 500 needed for Bronze LM. BBO gave me a chance to play far more often, and I achieved LM in June 2020 and BLM in November 2020. I'm roughly halfway from there to Silver LM and currently just need points (not pigments).

With no offense to my other regular partners, I have to call out Ken for the many years of fun play together, and for him always being kind and gracious. With my foursome in CA when I first learned the game, I had smooth sailing with two of them, but the interactions with the third were always fraught: "I can't believe you played the K!... later the other

person would retort "I can't believe YOU ...!" I like partners who can accept our mistakes and move on, and Ken is great at that. With the pandemic, I started playing somewhat regularly with Fred Shubert (Unit 106) online, and he and his regular partner have played regularly with Ken and me in local Swiss teams. A year ago we won every match in the GNT Flight B tournament, but took third due to where we fell with victory points. This year I write this a day after that tournament, where we were set to compete again ... until I contracted Covid. Francis Gupta took over for me and they won first place! I feel like the quarterback who sprained his ankle on the first play! I also play regularly with Jeff Goldberg, from Brooklyn, who was set up with me for an NYC Honors Club tournament; we played online for years before finally playing in some events in person. And he introduced me to Joanne Gray of Toronto, with whom I now have a weekly BBO game, and who I'll finally get to meet at the summer NABC. (Apologies to the less regular partners I've left out!)

I still work full time, so the wide variety of local weekday daytime games don't help me too much. Pre-pandemic, I was just starting to plan to go to Essex after work, but then it closed. I really hope more brick and mortar clubs will open and support working players with weekend or evening games, but I'm thankful to BBO for the opportunity to play regularly despite that.

My wife Lisa is in the picture above. Early in the pandemic, I believe, I heard from ACBL how they put out "Tricky Bridge" as an app to teach people the game. Lisa had been in that crowd in CA who had played casually back in the '80s but had never played since. I pointed her at Tricky Bridge and she took to it. Really, really took to it: she probably plays more on it than I play on BBO. But she still has trepidation about playing with humans rather than with and against robots (I can't blame her; she's seen what has happened with some of my partners like the one I mentioned above), and she's very happy to play just in that environment. I'll keep working on her!

Jiang Gu



I live in Mountain Lakes New Jersey. I am a trained statistician and have been playing bridge for many years. I've won 2 national championship titles (2004 Lebar IMP Pairs, 2018 Freeman Mixed BAM Teams), have 4 second place finishes in the NABC, one semi-final at the Vanderbilt, and a semi-final finish at the Spingold. I'm an ACBL Grand Life Master and reached 15K masterpoints last year. Now I'm enjoying life as a full time bridge player.

I was born and raised in Shanghai, China and learned to play bridge in my high school years. After my high school graduation, I played with the college team for four years. In 1995, I came to the US and continued my fascinating bridge journey, which has brought me to being a full-time bridge player today. I love to join all the challenge games.

I really like the NABC Robot Individual, it's a great event. Having finished in 2nd place a few years ago, it's great to finally win the title!

The best tip I've learnt along the way is "don't gamble"; I learnt this from 3 time Robot champion Alex Perlin. The other thing to remember is to take your time, playing slowly can help you limit your mistakes.

* **Editor's Note:** Jiang won the Spring 2024 Robot Individual, hosted online on BBO March 9 – March 11. He topped a field of almost 2300 players with a 3 day average score of 69.35%

Unit 140 Top Masterpoint Earners at March Sectional in Edison

Player	Masterpoint Range		
	0 – 1500 MPs	1500 – 5000 MPs	5000 + MPs
Roy Samitt	9.06		
Jin-Ming Liao	8.20*		
Bo Gao	8.20*		
Xi Xing	8.20*		
Steve Albin		14.28	
Jeffrey Halle		12.12	
Xiaowen Li		9.50	
Jiang Gu			22.82
Dennis Thompson			16.97
Peter Stein			10.92



Congratulations to Alex Allen and Abe Pineles for winning the Baldwin North American Pairs at the recent Louisville Nationals. A huge last session score of 71.45% moved them from 10th to first overall. This is their 2nd National title together.



Big Games

(Must be face-to-face to qualify)

February 16 – April 30, 2024

OPEN

OPEN		
81.25%	Alexander Allen - Donna Dulet	Queen of Hearts BC
79.64%	Stephen Arshan - Donna Dulet	Jersey Bridge Club
77.38%	Brett Kunin - Sam Borenstein	Summit Area Bridge
75.00%	Dorothy Koernig - Stephanie Austin	Canoe Brook
72.49%	Robin Shamah - Rochelle Djmal	Jersey Bridge Club
71.78%	Dennis Thompson - Steve Albin	Bill's Bridge
71.21%	Sam Borenstein - Dennis Thompson	Summit Area Bridge
71.01%	Alexander Allen - Donna Dulet	Queen of Hearts BC

LIMITED/INVITATIONAL

LIMITED/INVITATIONAL		
71.96%	Gautam Desai - Maya Desai	Shadowfax
70.44%	Christine Mason - Karen Silver	Summit Area Bridge
70.33%	Joy Scally - Joyce Michaelson	Summit Area Bridge
70.24%	Arman Tookmanian - Frederick Shubert	Shadowfax
70.00%	Richard Perlman - Zori Stern	Bill's Bridge

Evaluating 1NT

By Bob Miller

For a long time, I had been opening 1NT with hands that are flat and holding Ace, Ace, Ace, King in four different suits with no 10s or 9s. I consistently had been going down two and finally realized that these hands should be opened with one of a minor, yielding much better results. A variant of this came up recently.

Sitting South in second position, I was dealt the following: ♠ KJ64 ♥ A87 ♦ A32 ♣ AQ5. I didn't think this was a good 18 points for two reasons: first, it had no 10s or 9s; second, it had no five card suit. I downgraded the hand to 17 points and opened 1NT. Partner quickly followed with 3NT. Here are all the hands:

Partner

♠ A75
♥ Q42
♦ KQ109
♣ K102

West

♠ Q1032
♥ J95
♦ J87
♣ J96

East

♠ 98
♥ K1053
♦ 654
♣ 8743

Me

♠ KJ64
♥ A87
♦ A32
♣ AQ5

A Spade was led, and we quickly made eleven tricks. The final tally was that everyone made eleven tricks, but only two of us did NOT bid the slam.

I am left to wonder if this was good thinking or lucky.



**SILVER
POINTS**

New Jersey Bridge League Spring Sectional May 17 – May 19, 2024

Edison Elks Club
375 Old Post Road, Edison, NJ 08817
Playing Site Phone: 732-985-2487



**SILVER
POINTS**

Tournament Chair: Arman Tookmanian (908)798-7654 **

Friday, May 17

- 10:00 AM • Open Stratified Pairs • Stratified 0-499 Pairs*
2:30 PM • Open **GRASSROOT** Stratified Pairs
• **GRASSROOT** 499er Stratified Pairs*

Saturday, May 18

- 10:00 AM • Open Stratified Pairs • Stratified 499er Pairs*
2:30 PM • Open **GRASSROOT** Stratified Pairs
• **GRASSROOT** 499er Stratified Pairs*

*499er events will be held provided there are sufficient pairs

Sunday, May 19

- 9:30 AM: • Bagel Breakfast
10:30 AM: • Playthrough Bracketed Swiss Teams: There will be a short break for lunch and food will be served.

Stratifications: Open Pairs A (3000+) B (1000-3000) C (0-1000)
499ers Pairs A (300-499) B (100-300) C (0-100) (May be varied based on participation.)
In pair events, strats are based as an average of the total master points of the pair. In any event or flight with a master point upper limit, no individual's MP total may exceed that limit.

Covid Policies: MASKING WILL BE OPTIONAL PURSUANT TO ACBL PROTOCOLS - see our website www.njbl.net However, should any bridge player request that players mask at the table, compliance is MANDATORY.

Parking Policy: No parking in designated spots marked "Reserved" in the Elks parking lot. PARKING IS LIMITED, and carpooling is recommended. There is overflow parking available across the street in an Edison H.S. parking lot.*

**** Questions for the Tournament Chair:** All calls to Arman until April 22; Any questions between April 23 through May 11, please call Brett Kunin, 973-243-2388; AFTER May 11, all calls to Arman.

Reservation Policy: Reservations are not required for this tournament.

GRASSROOT Games: Almost 30% More Masterpoints

Food and Beverages: Free coffee and limited snacks will be served. Pizza will be served on Friday and Saturday at \$1.75 per slice. Bottled water and soda, \$1.00.

Partnerships: We will try to find you partners, but we cannot guarantee them. Please email your request to Amie Dorin at arnied26@gmail.com or call him at 732-841-2351 by Friday, May 10th. Note that we are much more likely to be able to find a partner for you the EARLIER you make the request.

NJBL Website: Visit our website www.njbl.net to read about upcoming tournaments and events, past results, bridge clubs, THE DECLARER (NJBL's online newsletter), and many other useful bridge links.

Entries: \$34 per pair per session. For non-ACBL members, you MUST purchase a 4-month membership to be able to play. In addition, we must charge an extra \$4 per person per session for those whose ACBL membership has expired. \$152 per team for Sunday's Swiss teams' game.

Milestones

Changes in Rank: February 2024 – April 2024

Emerald Life Master

Mani Gupta	Bridgewater
Jim McCarroll	Hampton

Diamond Life Master

Mark Mohr	Springfield
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Gold Life Master

William Golush	Denville
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Ruby Life Master

Jane Fuller	Summit
Gilda Steinberg	Marlboro

Silver Life Master

Lloyd Alterman	South Orange
Julie Anderson	Tinton Falls
Robert Derosa	Manchester
Thomas Miller	Chatham

Bronze Life Master

Robert Ayers Jr.	Toms River
Eva Thompson	West Orange

Life Master

Robert Derosa	Manchester
Felicia Freed	Califon
Thomas Miller	Chatham

Advanced NABC Master

Michael Absatz	Eatontown
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NABC Master

Valerie Benton	Berkeley Heights
Mary Reber	Chatham
Shashikant Sathaye	Warren

Regional Master

Barbara Levine	Lawrenceville
Garret Sayia	Mantoloking
Frederick Shubert	Hackettstown
Eileen Voorhees	Kenilworth
Leigh Walker	Piscataway

Sectional Master

Arlene Dunn	Brick
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Club Master

Tianyang Chen	Princeton
Sihan Fei	Princeton
Margaret Grapel	Bradley Beach
Eli Herbst	Princeton
Ellen Kemp	Kendall Park
Arthur Mason	Westfield

Junior Master

Jaideep Bajaj	Princeton
Maryanne Curtin	Mountainside
Makarand Deolalkar	North Brunswick
Heike Graef	Toms River
Lynn Leahey	Rumson
Betsy Seligson	Morristown
Thomas Wasilewski	Marlboro

REMEMBRANCES

The Board of Directors of the New Jersey Bridge League offer their condolences to the families and friends of the following members of the ACBL Unit 140. They will be missed at our bridge tables. We would like to remember all who support and participate in this great game. Please notify Julie Anderson at Julie17rae@gmail.com of any deaths within our membership; indicate, when known, dates of passing and club(s) attended.

Barbara Dranoff

d. March, 2024

former player in various clubs