

Jiang Gu wins 2024 Barry Crane 500

by Ken Trock

Unit 140's own Jiang Gu, from Mountain Lakes, not only won the Barry Crane 500 in 2024 but he set an all-time record. His 3984 masterpoints are 300+ more than Joe Grue won in 2018.

It was still a tight race around early September when he had less than a 200 point lead over Mark Itabashi of California. Jiang would extend that lead to over 600 points in the Fall and by the time 2024 closed, he had shattered the record and led Mark by almost 1200 points.

Here is my Q and A with Jiang.

Q. It looks like you were on a whirlwind travel schedule last year. Did you set out to do this prior to 2024 and will you try to maintain anything like that for 2025?

A. I set the goal in late April last year. I have no intention of doing it in 2025.

Q. What did any family or significant others think about you traveling and playing bridge that much?

A. I got support from my family although sometimes I got complaints.

Q. You've won the NJBL Player of the Year 7 times already. You told me at the Banquet last year you wanted to win a few more. Do you still feel that way?

A. Yes.

Q. Would you try to win an award you haven't yet been close to? For example, you were 137th in the country in Online points in 2021. You haven't been in any Ace of Clubs races so far. I know these are a far cry from the Barry Crane.

A. I don't think that I will try to win those races you mentioned.

Q. Lastly, what were your favorite tourneys, partners, best results, toughest opposition, notable moments in 2024?

A. My favorite tourney was the Seaside, OR Regional, playing with John Miller. We never played together before, but we did very well to get my best Regional result and at that time (early October), I was sure that I would go on to win the Barry Crane 500.

My favorite partner is Glenn Robbins, we play either F2F or online every week. 1/3rd of my 2024 Masterpoints were from when I played with him.

My notable moment was when I won the 2024 Spring NABC Robot Individual. I was very disappointed when I travelled to the Fort Myers Regional and was told the tournament got cancelled right before it was scheduled to start (due to the aftermath of Hurricanes Helene and Milton). I did break the Barry Crane record but failed to reach 4000 points for the year.

Our toughest opponents were Eric Rodwell and Eddie Wold when I played with Alex Kolesnik at the Charleston Regional. My favorite team event partners were Joe Grue and his partners as well as Alex Kolesnik and Finn Kolesnik.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to my partners and teammates. Especially my partners in this unit -- Alex Perlin, Alex Allen, Xiaowen Li and Bob Wang.

Our District 3 colleagues compiled these numbers:

Jiang played in 311 F2F events and 228 online events. Here is his 2024 point breakdown.

Event Type	Masterpoints Earned
Regional	2,621.52
NABC	573.87
Virtual Club	357.87
Sectional	201.45
Online Regional	115.12
Robot	58.27
STAC	52.88
F2F Club	3.05

Effective Slam Bidding (Part 2)

by Brett Kunin



Playing at the club with one of my regular partners, these hands came up that afternoon as part of The Common Game. We sat East/West.

On board 23, both vulnerable, my partner (West) opened 1♦, and my RHO bid 3♠. I held ♠ 6 ♥ AKQ963 ♦ J104 ♣ Q94, and upgrading the Diamond honors, I bid 4♥. My LHO passed, partner employed Blackwood, and I dutifully bid 5♠, showing 2 key cards plus the Q of trump. Partner bid 6♥, ending the auction. Preemptor led the ♠5, and partner (restraining any comic relief comments) tabled ♠ AKQJ ♥ 8742 ♦ KQ72 ♣ A.

<u>Partner</u>	<u>RHO</u>	<u>Me</u>	<u>LHO</u>
1♦	3♠	4♥	Pass
4NT ¹	Pass	5♠ ²	Pass
6♥	All Pass		

¹-Blackwood

²-2 key cards in Hearts with Queen

The full deal:

Lead: 5♠	<u>Partner</u> ♠ AKQJ ♥ 8764 ♦ KQ72 ♣ A	<u>LHO</u> ♠ 5 ♥ J105 ♦ 63 ♣ KJ108632	<u>RHO (preemptor)</u> ♠ 10987432 ♥ -- ♦ A985 ♣ Q7
	<u>Me</u> ♠ 6 ♥ AKQ963 ♦ J104 ♣ 954		

I learned of the 3-0 trump break, drew 3 rounds of trump, and therefore, had to lose one trick in the minors, either the ♦A or a Club (astute readers will see that 13 tricks can be made by throwing Diamonds on Spades and later ruffing out the ♦A). The preemptor made a fine call, as 3♠ is down only one trick.

Bidding the slam was a 91% board. The lesson here is that when under pressure, do not be a rigid point counter and bid what you think you can make.

Later in the round, we played Board 19 at unfavorable vulnerability. South opened 1♦, my partner, West, passed, and North called 2NT, which this pair played as a game force (I did not ask for an explanation at the time), and I was looking at: ♠ 9843 ♥ 3 ♦ 9 ♣ AQT9532. Despite the adverse vulnerability and knowing that my RHO often held 3-5 Clubs in such an auction, I nevertheless chimed in with a 3♣ call, as you rarely pick up a 4-1-1-7 hand with four of the top six in your long suit. The interference had its desired effect, and the opponents rested in their worst scoring game of 5♦.

Vul: Us	<u>Partner</u> ♠ J5 ♥ 8754 ♦ 10872 ♣ 764	<u>LHO</u> ♠ A1072 ♥ AJ96 ♦ AKQ54 ♣ --	<u>RHO</u> ♠ KQ6 ♥ KQ102 ♦ J63 ♣ KJ8
	<u>Me</u> ♠ 9843 ♥ 3 ♦ 9 ♣ AQ109532		

Although the point count and the flat shape was correct for the forcing 2NT call (13-15), the failure to bid a good 4 card major led to our opponents to not learning that they had a huge double fit. Despite 4-1 breaks in each red suit, with the ♠J coming down, the Heart grand slam cannot be stopped. Only one pair reached 7♥ (they did not have interference in their auction), and the majority of pairs bid a small slam.

The lesson: Much of the play at Matchpoints involves giving the opponents the “last guess”, and a reminder that it can be effective to take away the opponents valuable bidding space by preempting when the opponents have a fit and most of the high card points.

Here is a bonus deal. Try practice bidding these hands with your partner and see if you can get to a cold 7NT.

	<u>Partner</u>
Matchpoints	♠ K84
	♥ KQ9864
	♦ K
	♣ Kxx

	<u>Me</u>
	♠ AJ62
	♥ A102
	♦ AQ4
	♣ Axx

When we defended on this deal, our opponents scored slightly above average even though they only got to 6NT. This was better for them than the pairs who bid 6♥ in their 9 card fit. Only one pair bid the grand slam. Note that the hand always makes 7, even without the ♠J and ♣Q. There are 2 Spade tricks, 6 Hearts, 3 Diamonds, and 2 Clubs. The key to bidding this are to cue bid both minor suit Kings in the auction!

Member Profiles

Alex Shih

Alex Shih and Amber Lin
March 11, 2025



Hi! My name is Alex Shih, and I love bridge. This past weekend, I got to play in my first Sectional (in Edison). It was so much fun, and I got to meet so many great bridge players!

Because I am a junior (10 years old), a lot of people asked me how I discovered bridge. Sadly, there is no bridge history in the family.

I developed my interest in bridge in June 2023, when my mom's friend Uncle Tony introduced it to me. He thought I might like bridge because I like numbers, detailed rules, logical thinking, and I have a pretty good memory. He also knew that my parents have been wanting me to improve my social skills, and he thought that bridge might help me in that area because "playing bridge requires some verbal interaction/discussion with opponents, usually in a very controlled and civilized manner." Uncle Tony was very nice to give me a few bridge lessons over Zoom and I

got hooked. I also love reading so during my free time I read books that Uncle Tony recommended, such as Audrey Grant's books.

In December 2023, my mom learned about the ACBL from attending a seminar on gifted education when the presenter mentioned bridge as an example of a great activity for gifted kids. After emailing ACBL, my mom found out about BridgeWhiz from Ms. Barbara Clark. I quickly joined BridgeWhiz and took classes there for about a year and loved it. I learned a lot from the classes, and it is also very nice to play bridge with other kids, even if it's just online. I want to thank BridgeWhiz for their wonderful teachers!

My passion for bridge continued to grow. I tried reading as many bridge books as I could find in my local library (there needs to be more bridge books!). For Christmas, I asked for bridge books like ones by Hugh Kelsey and Eric Rodwell. Recently I read *Bridge in the Menagerie*, which was recommended by Ms. Amber Lin and Mr. Kevin Rosenberg.

But I also wanted to be able to play more tournaments, so I asked my mom to look for partners for me. She emailed Ms. Barbara Clark, who emailed more than a dozen people and Ms. Amber Lin wrote back and told us about the USBF! I attended one of their meetings and Mr. Cornelius Duffie thought I was good enough to compete. I also got to meet Mr. Adam Kaplan online then and interestingly I had just watched the great documentary *Double Dummy* with my family a few weeks before joining USBF.

Soon after joining USBF, in December 2024, I had an amazing opportunity (thanks to Ms. Amber Lin and all the USBF mentors) to go to Atlanta to see if I could qualify for one of the USA teams. It was so much fun to play multiple days of bridge and be able to review the hands with experts. My family and I can't believe I made it to the USA1 team. I am so happy to be training with very experienced coaches and having the opportunity to play with super bright, passionate, and accomplished bridge peers! I am really hoping that my team and I will win the U16 World Championship this summer!

To prepare for it, I am working very hard, practicing and learning more advanced bridge techniques in both bidding and the play with my partner and coaches. I am also hoping to play more tournaments to get more in-person practice. I am trying to find NJ/NY players to play with for future in-person tournaments. I also wish that there were more in-person clubs in NJ, especially for youth. The nearest club we know of meets during school hours. At the recent Sectional, I was only able to participate as part of a team because of Ms. Amber Lin and Mr. Kevin Rosenberg. I am so grateful that they took time to play bridge with me during their special trip to NJ!

Looking Back

by Chuck Adelman

I need to show a great hand from the Common Game on Wednesday, February 19th. In second seat, I held ♠ 9 ♥ 653 ♦ AKQJ642 ♣ A8. My RHO opened a preemptive 2♥, and I bid 3♦. My partner then bid 3NT. RHO decided to bid 4♥ (so much for 2♥ being preemptive). Since my partner had bid 3NT not knowing that I have 8 solid tricks, I thought it was safe to bid 4NT. This was to play, but even if partner took this as Roman Key Card and bid 5♣ showing one ace (no trump suit has been established), I could safely stop in 5♦. If partner showed two aces with a 5♥ call, then 6♦ should be safe.

Well, partner probably wasn't sure what my 4NT meant. Since we are a relatively new partnership, we play "ASBAF", "All Strange Bids Are Forcing" and partner decided to bid what she thought I could make, 6♦! This ended the auction, and my LHO led a low Spade. Dummy came down:

♠ AKT
♥ QJT7
♦ 10875
♣ K5

Lead: Low Spade

♠ 9
♥ 653
♦ AKQJ642
♣ A8

Well, we are missing the ♥AK, but luckily LHO was void and could not lead a Heart. The thought did cross my mind to play the ♠10. Had this held, then the ♠AK could later be used to discard two of my losing Hearts. However, if RHO had either missing Spade honor, then he would win the trick, play ♥AK, and give his partner a Heart ruff for 3 down. Not good.

So, I played the ♠A. Seeing 7 Diamonds, 2 Spades, and 2 Clubs, I thought the only chance for a 12th trick was to play all my Diamonds and hope the opponents make a discarding error. No such luck. LHO kept her Spades and RHO kept his Hearts and I went down 1 for a dead bottom.

Then at 2 in the morning (when I usually do my best thinking), I found a way to make the contract! After winning the first Spade, I should draw trumps in two rounds and then play the two good Clubs ending in Dummy. Now my hands would be:

♠ KT
♥ QJT7
♦ T8
♣ --

♠ --
♥ 653
♦ QJ642
♣ --

What I need to do next is play the ♠K, discarding one of my losing Hearts, and then play the ♠10, discarding another losing Heart. Now I would be left with:

♠ --
♥ QJT7
♦ T8
♣ --

♠ --
♥ 6
♦ QJ642
♣ --

LHO would win, but since she started with no Hearts and then had her Diamonds drawn, she would have to lead a black card enabling me to ruff in Dummy while discarding the last losing Heart in my hand. Making 6!

We still had a good game at 60%, finishing 3rd out of 30 pairs, but making this contract would have changed a dead bottom to a clear top. The next day, I showed this hand to as many people as possible (this is a hand that could be in a Bridge Bulletin column!), and my excitement and adrenaline propelled us (a different partner) to a 68% game and clear first place!

Not sure if this type of situation will come up again, but if it does, then I won't miss the opportunity!

Unit 140 Top Masterpoint Earners at March 7-9 Sectional

Player	Masterpoint Range		
	0 - 1500 MPs	1500 - 5000 MPs	5000 + MPs
Bo Gao	7.91		
Judy Kutin	4.90		
Deborah Sack	4.90		
Tianyang Chen		19.41	
Sarik Goyal		16.85	
Robert Brolin		14.24	
Ke Zhao		11.20	
Jeffrey Halle		10.95	
Jiang Gu			21.88
Peter Stein			5.89
Stephen Arshan			5.89

Awards Brunch on March 2nd

Game Results	North/South Place	East/West Place	Overall Place
Otilie Bello - Stanley Weiss	1		2
Chorng-Hour Yang - Betty Cox	2		3
Hans Neuteboom - Robert Derosa	3		4
Dennis Thompson - Himanshu Joshi		1	1
Joseph Wright - Steve Highfill		2	5
Alisa Crowe - Rochelle Djmal		3	6

What Could Go Wrong?

by Jay Korobow



When you hold something like Axxx versus KJxx and cannot lose a trick in the suit, play generally involves cashing the Ace in case the Queen drops singleton, and if not, playing for the missing cards to divide 2-2. Some insightful player once coined the phrase “E”ight “E”ver, “N”ine “N”ever to guide Declarers who were unsure as to the most promising strategy, which indeed is the finesse when it’s Axxx vs KJx (8 Ever), but “N”ot to when you have a “N”ine card fit.

The phrase has stuck, and like Tinker to Evers to Chance (which is really about baseball fielding), has been misapplied to other holdings. Consider the 9 card fit A10xxx vs. Kxxx. Is this simply a reliance on a 2-2 break to avoid any losers in the suit? Sure, if each opponent plays low on the first round of the suit, what other “chance” is there to “tinker” with “ever”?

But let’s say Declarer starts the suit by leading low towards the Kxxx in hand, and RHO pops the Queen? Now, how do you ever or never continue play in the suit? Some mathematically “declined” person once suggested it was more than simply a probability and statistics problem; that on the play of the Queen (or the Jack, as well), the principle of “Restricted Choice” best governs the situation. That phrase has also stuck and has become an accepted analytical tool to add to consideration of the most likely successful play in 8 card fits, 9 card fits, and many other card combinations and positions.

I’d much rather talk baseball than get into the nitty gritty of it all, but basically it involves the theory that if a player held QJ in a suit, and needs to play one, there is a choice involved since either could be played with equal integrity. So, when the Queen is selected and appears, the principle suggests the defender with 2 cards is somewhat less likely to hold the Jack as well, because they “might have” played that one instead. I know, I know, but it’s not baseball season yet, at least as I script this article.

South Deals		♠ J 3										
Both Vul		♥ Q 6 4										
		♦ 8 7 5										
		♣ J 10 8 3 2										
♠ A 10 6 4 2		♠ K 8 7 5										
♥ K J 2		♥ 5										
♦ 10		♦ A K Q 9 3 2										
♣ A 9 6 5		♣ K 4										
		♠ Q 9										
		♥ A 10 9 8 7 3										
		♦ J 6 4										
		♣ Q 7										
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	N											
W		E										
	S											
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>									
2 ♠	Pass	4 N	2 ♥									
5 ♥	Pass	6 ♠	Pass									
Pass	Pass											

Thankfully , none of this really applies to the hand that is the focus of this story. Playing in a random foursome on BBO at IMPs, I decided to drive to slam with simple Blackwood when partner overcalled the opponent's weak 2♥ with the call of 2♠. After hearing 2 Aces were included, I placed the contract in 6♠ and then sat back to watch partner play (or misplay) it.

North was somewhat helpful by starting with the ♥Q as opening lead, which went to South's ♥A. All that was left now to bring home this ambitious slam for a ton of IMPs was to bring in the trump suit with no losers. With the defenders' Spades dividing 2-2 and each playing low on the first round of the suit, what could go wrong? Indeed!

After winning the ♥A, South shrugged their shoulders and decided to play the ♠Q next. Well, yeah, I didn't actually see them shrug as this was online, but I'd be willing to make a small wager. If Declarer held the ♠9 as well, they might have won this in the closed West hand, playing North for J32 and next finessing for that holding without ever having heard of "Restricted Choice". But alas, there was no ♠9, so Declarer won the trick in Dummy with the ♠K and continued the suit with a chuckle. Well, yeah, I didn't actually hear the chuckle, but making the impossible slam versus the silly defender who led from "QJx" of the trump suit, certainly would create some merriment, I would wager.

South's ♠9 appeared as Declarer led the suit back towards their ♠A10, and then confidently inserted the Ten. When North unexpectedly won their ♠J for the setting trick, their chuckle was so loud you couldn't even hear my partner (or me) loudly cursing! And on that, you don't have to bet.

Good one!

Big Games

(Must be face-to-face to qualify)

December 1, 2024 – February 28, 2025

OPEN		
75.60%	Roy Samitt - Jeffrey Halle	Jersey Bridge Club
75.57%	Alexander Allen - Donna Dulet	Queen of Hearts BC
75.50%	Arnold Dorin - Clifford Wilson Jr	Monroe Bridge Club
74.17%	Dennis Thompson - Steve Albin	Bill's Bridge
73.50%	Robert Derosa - Hans Neuteboom	Toms River BC
72.44%	Jim McCarroll - Arnold Kohn	Bill's Bridge
72.32%	Donna Dulet - Stephen Arshan	Jersey Bridge Club
71.86%	Stephanie Miller - Bill Miller	Bill's Bridge
71.69%	Gudmundur Vigfusson - Ken Smith	Montclair Golf Club
71.54%	Peter Stein - Donna Dulet	Jersey Bridge Club
71.39%	Richard Ross - Alexander Allen	Jersey Bridge Club
71.13%	Marc Lipman - Beau Norton	Stafford BC
70.24%	Justine Robertson - Anthony Palumbo	Jersey Bridge Club

LIMITED/INVITATIONAL		
78.13%	Suzy Hess - Suzanne Schissler	Rumson Friday
72.92%	Jeffrey Kaplowitz - Susan Kaplowitz	Bill's Bridge
72.50%	Lance Greenberg - Sharon Scheckner	Regency at Monroe
72.50%	Gail Kornfeld - Norm Kersh	Westlake BC
71.67%	Bobbie Cohen - Harvey Keller	Westlake BC
71.25%	Joy Scally - Joyce Michaelson	Summit Area Bridge
70.63%	Lisa Conroy - Kathleen Walsh	Summit Area Bridge
70.24%	Bob Welgos - Ginnie Thomas	Shadowfax
70.17%	Morton Seligman - Herb Shulman	Queen of Hearts BC
70.00%	Connie Singelakis - Judy Jewell	Westlake BC



New Jersey Bridge League APRIL WEEKEND SECTIONAL April 26-27, 2025

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



Saturday Pairs Contact: Kelly Kiefer (732) 425-2116
Sunday Charity Swiss Chair: Arnie Kohn (732) 216-5579

Saturday, April 26 10:00 AM • Open Stratified Pairs • 499er Stratified Pairs*
2:30 PM • Open Stratified Pairs • 499er Stratified Pairs*
*499er events will be held provided there are sufficient pairs

Special Prizes for Pairs with Best Two-Session Result

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.

Sunday, April 27 RETURN OF THE CHARITY SWISS
Benefiting the Orange Education Foundation
for its Support of Unit 140 Youth Bridge

9:30 AM: • Bagel Breakfast

10:30 AM: • Playthrough Bracketed Swiss Teams; Break mid-afternoon
for free hot lunch.

Reservations and Prepayments Are Required

Please list each player's full name, ACBL number, approximate masterpoints, and specify which team member will be captain. Make payment by check payable to "ACBL Unit 140." Mail entries and checks to Arnie Kohn, 35 Dawson Lane, Monroe, NJ 088321

Entries: You must be an ACBL member to play. If you have never been a member, you may sign-up for a free four-month guest membership at the tournament; if you have previously been a member, you may purchase a one-year membership for \$59. The entry fees are \$36 per pair per Saturday session and \$180 per team for Sunday's Swiss teams' game.

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.

Food and Beverages: Free coffee and limited snacks both days; free pizza served Saturday between sessions; a free hot buffet lunch provided Sunday. Bottled water and soda, \$1.00.

Partnerships: Email your requests to Arnie Dorin at arnied26@gmail.com or call him at 732-841-2351 by Saturday, April 18th. Note that we are much more likely to be able to find partners the EARLIER you make the request. We will try to find you partners for the Saturday pairs games, but we cannot guarantee them. We will attempt to find pairs for the Sunday, although it will be difficult for this event. We are unlikely to find a single player as a fourth person on a team.

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.

Milestones

Changes in Rank: December 2024 – February 2025

Sapphire Life Master	
Edward Sable	Marlboro

Gold Life Master	
Steven Siegel	Mendham

Ruby Life Master	
Stephanie Austin	West Caldwell
George Biris	Jersey City
Sarik Goyal	Jersey City
Katherine Smith	New Providence
Henry Van Handle	Succasunna

Silver Life Master	
Merle Barnett	Monroe
Fred Douglass	Basking Ridge
Gerald Essig	Princeton
Jane Grewcock	Summit

Bronze Life Master	
Robert Carroll	Lawrenceville
Steven Stark	Farmingdale
Bruce Williams	Marlboro

Life Master	
Robert Carroll	Lawrenceville
Carolyn Laible	Short Hills
Bruce Williams	Marlboro

NABC Master	
Carol Antebi	West Allenhurst
Ann Huber	Madison
Steve Katzman	Short Hills
Buffy Phillips	Rumson
Robin Stern	Wayside
H Tykot	East Windsor

Regional Master	
Judy Kutin	Princeton
Rita Mestel	Lakewood
Joyce Michaelson	West Orange
Bob Welgos	Wharton

Sectional Master	
Marek Glowacki	Monroe
Vijay Kotak	Monroe

Club Master	
Martin Hoffman	East Brunswick
Carol Mendelson	Summit
Miguel Porto	Summit

Junior Master	
William Adams	Kinnelon
Simon Chen	East Brunswick
Kevin Cuskley	Rumson
Christopher Johnston	Beach Haven
Beth Poore	Morristown
Ronald Singer	Livingston
Leon Stark	North Brunswick
Joel Tenenbaum	Princeton
Gudmundur Vigfusson	Nutley
Zihan Wang	Jersey City
Michelle Weiner	Rumson
Dolores Welch	Morristown
Jeffrey Zhang	Princeton

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.

Sheila Albert

d. December 2024
frequent player at Princeton

Leonard Blessing

d. February 9, 2025
frequent player and director at Scotch Plains

Lynne Long

d. December 2024
frequent player at Princeton

Steven Siegel

d. January 15, 2025
frequent player at Essex and Shrine

Anne Troum

d. December 15, 2024
frequent player at Shrine