

Not the Bledisloe Cup.....

Bridge Across The Ditch, 12 July 2022

Covid and its ongoing aftermath have had a profound effect on our lives, not least on our favourite pastime. But there have been positives. One of these has been the development of the outstanding new online platform RealBridge, developed in Cambridge in the UK as a response to the widespread curtailment of face-to-face bridge. Many now see RealBridge as the go-to venue for the online game. While I am sure that we would all welcome a return to the good old days, it is certain that RealBridge is here to stay, and that it has opened up many new possibilities. One of these materialised on Tuesday 12 July, when no fewer than 248 players took part in a match between the Auckland Bridge Club and Sydney's North Shore Bridge Club. This was the culmination of much hard work between Auckland's Sylvester Riddell and North Shore's Gary Barwick, who must be congratulated in this hugely successful and enjoyable venture. It looks as though this will become a regular fixture, and it is likely to serve as a model for similar future events.

The Auckland Club asked me to provide a report on the event, so I coerced my mentor Biritch the Russian Blue into watching the session with me as it unfolded. Biritch is not a great fan of online bridge, but even he grudgingly admitted that this was an occasion that was most unlikely to occur live. The event comprised 30 boards with cross-IMP scoring, with pairs from each club playing alternate rounds as NS or EW to even out any bias. The large field was split into two, with 62 pairs in the Open section, and the same number in a Rookie/Junior/Intermediate



section. The Auckland team was extensively supplemented by players from all over the country. Several pairs obligingly switched allegiance (temporarily, one assumes) to equalise numbers on the two sides. The hands featured an unusually large of slams, 7 in all including 3 grands; my search for some statistics suggested that this is a fewer than 1 in 100 occurrence. Of course, not all of these were really biddable, but several pairs found the majority of them.

The tournament kicked off in exciting style with this offering on Board 1, with 6♠ an easy make and the grand requiring a somewhat anti-percentage play of finessing for Q♠ missing 4 of the suit. Leading the field in the Open section for Auckland and friends were 2nd placed Jan Alabaster and Pam Livingston, and this is how they bid this fine 25-point slam. After a straightforward start, the key bid was Jan's splinter of 3♦, letting Pam know that there were no wasted values in that suit and agreeing the good fit in ♠. Two cue bids were followed by Key Card ace asking, and the slam was reached. Incidentally, Biritch checked to see how many declarers took the standard safety play in the trump suit of cashing the Ace first; not many, but they all got away with it on this hand.

<div></div> <div>Bd 1, Dlr N</div> <div>6♠+1 N</div>		<div>♠ AJ52</div> <div>♥ 7</div> <div>♦ 1052</div> <div>♣ AKQJ8</div>	<div>N  Pam Livingston</div>																							
<div>W  Lydia Gibbs</div> <div>♠ Q107</div> <div>♥ QJ95</div> <div>♦ KJ97</div> <div>♣ 53</div>		<div>E  Ceiny Maybury</div> <div>♠ 8</div> <div>♥ 42</div> <div>♦ AQ8643</div> <div>♣ 10764</div>																								
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One of the ways that you collect good scores at IMPs is to punish the opponents harshly when they step out of line. This was illustrated in no uncertain fashion by the event winners in the Restricted session, Amanda Bublitz and Justine Hart of the Hawera Club, batting for Auckland. Amanda and Justine averaged +2.25 IMPs per board, no mean feat in any field. On Board 10, they bid competently to the easy 4♠; however, the matter did not rest there, as North-South unwisely tried the vulnerable sacrifice in 5♥; our heroines defended this to the maximum for +1100, adding +10.33 IMPs to their tally.





















As far as I have been able to find, the largest individual IMP score was the +14.07 recorded by the Auckland team's ever-reliable Jo and Sam Simpson, who finished 3rd in the Open section. This illustrates the point that if you bid a slam, it had better be the right one! On this board, EW can make 6♣ or 6NT, but 6♥ is doomed by the appalling break. On a less lucky day, EW might have pulled to 6NT, having been warned of the distributional storms; Jo might then be rueing her decision to double, but when the wind is behind you.....

<div></div> <div>62</div> <div>♠ 532</div>		<div>N</div> <div> Jo Simpson</div>																															
<div>Bd 26, Dlr E</div> <div>6♥X-2 W</div>		<div>♥ KJ854</div> <div>♦ 873</div> <div>♣ 95</div>																															
<div>W</div> <div> Kathryn Brien</div>		<div> Jean Williams</div> <div>E</div>																															
<div>♠ 84</div> <div>♥ AQ9763</div> <div>♦ AK10</div> <div>♣ 108</div>		<div>♠ AKQ</div> <div>♥ 2</div> <div>♦ J92</div> <div>♣ AQJ763</div>																															
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<div> Sam Simpson</div> <div>S</div>		<table><thead><tr><th></th><th>W</th><th>N</th><th>E</th><th>S</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>1♣</td><td>P</td><td>1♣</td><td>P</td><td>P</td></tr><tr><td>2♥</td><td>P</td><td>2NT</td><td>P</td><td>P</td></tr><tr><td>4NT</td><td>P</td><td>5♥</td><td>P</td><td>P</td></tr><tr><td>6♥</td><td>X</td><td>P</td><td>P</td><td>P</td></tr><tr><td>P</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr></tbody></table>			W	N	E	S	1♣	P	1♣	P	P	2♥	P	2NT	P	P	4NT	P	5♥	P	P	6♥	X	P	P	P	P				
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








Coincidentally, the very same board showed why the overall Open winners, Giselle Mundell and Rena Kaplan for the North Shore, were thoroughly deserving of their result, racking up an impressive average of +2.54 IMPs per board. Giselle and Rena bid in a rather more educated fashion to reach the par contract of 6NT played by Giselle from the East seat, and she received the normal lead of the J♠. After winning this, she crossed to A♦ to take a losing ♣ finesse. She could now count 11 tricks and had to decide which red suit finesse to try for her 12th. South gave her the smallest of clues by returning 10♥ after winning K♣, implying no interest in that suit, and she took full advantage. After winning A♥ and running all her black suit tricks, West was reduced to Q6♦. So at trick 12 Giselle confidently finessed the ♦ suit to rack up 12 tricks, +1440 and +13.30 IMPs. Interesting to note that if South had had both K♥ and Q♦, she was subject to a show up squeeze in any event.

On a more light-hearted note, some of our more junior (or juvenile) players take a great deal of pleasure in scoring the notorious beer card; this card, the 7♦, earns the player (either declarer or defender) a beer from every other player at the table if it scores the 13th trick. So well done Mischa Solar (Aus Open) and Kim Thomas (NZ Int/Jun/Rookie) on hand 6, and Lynne Long (NZ Int/Jun/Rookie) on hand 18. However, Biritch has growled that he will *not* be providing a beer, so that you will have to try to get it from your opponents at the time.

And so to the results. Here are the top 10 pairs in each section, first the Open:

Pos	No	Pair	Average
1	10	 Giselle Mundell &  Rena Kaplan	+2.54
2	53	 Pam Livingston &  Jan Alabaster	+1.87
3	1	 Jo Simpson &  Sam Simpson	+1.68
4	18	 Elise Kotkin &  Barbra Abraham	+1.56
5	47	 Dale Lacey &  Robyn Freeman-Greene	+1.48
6	38	 Sandra Milner &  Giza Fletcher	+1.38
7	6	 Deirdre James &  Peter Koorey	+1.17
8	26	 Robert Case &  De Mitty	+1.08
9	4	 Tim Mountjoy &  Trish Lacey	+1.06
10	49	 John Buckleton &  Mike Dunn	+1.00

And the Junior/Rookie/Restricted:

Pos	No	Pair	Average
1	28	 Amanda Bublitz &  Justine Hart	+2.25
2	26	 Diane Donnelly &  Vicki Adnams	+1.82
3	36	 Kim Thomas &  Kevin Grundy	+1.60
4	9	 Maeve Doyle &  Colin Speller	+1.40
5	17	 Michelle Bloxham &  Lorna Davies	+1.37
6	6	 Steve Moore &  Graeme Duhs	+1.36
7	46	 Sue Glue &  Michelle Gunn	+1.31
8	10	 Betty Hopley &  Terrey Durbin	+1.10
9	61	 Noni Glew &  Holger Henze	+1.08
10	51	 Alison Pick &  John Pick	+1.03

Many congratulations to everyone. And the final match results were as follows:

Open: North Shore +203.24, Auckland -203.24

Junior: Auckland +238.60, North Shore -238.60

Overall: Auckland +35.36, North Shore -35.36

Bear in mind that this is the score across all 30 boards for all 124 pairs, so that the winning margin was a mere 0.01 IMPs per pair per board – a fittingly close tussle. But in the end, all were winners. Once again, many many thanks to the organisers Sylvester and Gary, and also the Directors, Patrick Carter of Auckland, and Gary Barwick and Sue Compton of North Shore. And of course to the brilliant RealBridge home team who have made this all possible. I am sure everyone will be looking forward to the return match – I will certainly see if I can persuade Biritch to play.

Links to full results:

Open:

<https://oceania.realbridge.online/dj.html?p=220712229826&q=BridgeAcrossTheDitch1>

Int/Junior/Rookie:

<https://oceania.realbridge.online/dj.html?p=220712229827&q=BridgeAcrossTheDitch2>

Douglas Russell

Auckland