



THINGS YOU MIGHT LIKE TO KNOW ABOUT DUPLICATE BRIDGE

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Welcome to Duplicate Bridge and the ACBL

This booklet has been designed to serve as a reference tool for miscellaneous information about duplicate bridge and its governing organization, the ACBL. It is intended for the newer or less than seasoned duplicate bridge players. Most of these things that follow, while not perfectly obvious to new players, are old hat to experienced tournaments players.

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Part 1. Expected In-Behavior

Just as all kinds of competitive-type endeavors have their expected in-behavior, so does duplicate bridge. One important thing to keep in mind is that this is a competitive adventure.....as opposed to the social outing that you may be used to at your rubber bridge games. Now that is not to say that you can't be sociable at the duplicate table. Of course you can.....and should.....just don't carry it to extreme by talking during the auction or play. Do it between hands.

Another important habit to develop if you haven't already is that of NOT discussing the hands during or immediately after the play. Save your discussion for your partner's ears only and preferably after the game is over. You and your partner will make lots of mistakes (we all do) and making an issue out of them is a total waste of time.

Keep your mannerisms and intonations consistent at all times. Neither partner nor the opponents are entitled to information gained from deviations in behavior or changes in voice patterns. It takes a great deal of effort to master a uniform tempo of play and a steady voice level, but without such habits, the opponents obtain much more information that you need to give them. This behavior is one of the more difficult for newer players to assimilate.

It is important to remember that duplicate bridge is a timed event. Playing deliberately is not the same thing as "slow play". The latter comes about mostly because of bad habits such as (a) too much general conversation, (b) not focusing on bridge when the opponents pause to think about bids or plays, (c) wasting the other players' time by such things as writing down the contract before putting your hand down as dummy, and (d) too much time spent studying the traveler from the last board and discussing the results among the players at the table.

Inexperienced and experienced players alike need to learn and remember that the Director is there to see that the Laws of Duplicate Bridge are followed. When an infraction occurs, please call the director. They are trained to help bridge players sort things out and to assess penalties if need be.

Part 2. ACBL Alert Procedure

The ACBL uses what is called an Alert System so that all players at a table have equal access to the information contained in any auction. In order to meet this goal, it is necessary that all players understand and practice the principles of Full Disclosure and Active Ethics. Ethical bridge players will recognize the obligation to give complete explanations. They will accept the fact that any such information is entirely for the benefit of the opponents, and may not be used to assist their own partnership.

According to the Laws of Duplicate Contract Bridge: Law 40.B. Concealed Partnership Understandings are prohibited:

- (1) A player may not make a call or play based on a special partnership understanding unless an opposing pair may reasonably be expected to understand its meaning or unless his side discloses the use of such call or play in accordance with the regulations of the sponsoring organization.
- (2) Bridge is not a game of secret messages; the auction belongs to everyone at the table. Remember that the opponents are entitled to know the agreed meaning of all calls.
- (3) The bidding side has an obligation to disclose its agreements according to the procedures established by ACBL. When asked, the bidding side must give a full explanation of the agreement. Stating the common or popular name of the convention is not sufficient.
- (4) The opponents need not ask exactly the "right" question. Any request for information should be the trigger. Opponents need only indicate the desire for information - all relevant disclosure should be given automatically.
- (5) The proper way to ask for information is "please explain." Players who remember that a call requires an Alert but cannot remember the meaning must still Alert.
- (6) In all Alert situations, Tournament Directors should rule with the spirit of the Alert procedure in mind and not simply by the letter of the law. Players who, by experience or expertise, recognize that their opponents have neglected to Alert a special agreement will be expected to protect themselves.

(7) Adjustments for violations are not automatic. There must have been misinformation. An adjustment will be made only when the misinformation was a direct cause of the damage.

(8) When an Alert is given, ASK, do not ASSUME.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

An announcement is one word or a short phrase which tells the opponents directly the meaning of partner's call. When bidding boxes are used, the "Alert" strip is tapped also. Announcements are required in the following instances:

- (1) After a natural one notrump opening bid, the partner of the bidder will say aloud, "fifteen to seventeen" or whatever the agreed range is.
- (2) After a ♦ or ♥ transfer response at any level to any level after a natural notrump opening, overcall or rebid, the partner of the transferor will say "transfer."

(An Announcement also is used for those methods that initially treat the bid as a transfer even though rarely the bidder will have a strong hand without the next higher suit. When the message is sent that the transfer was not a transfer, just the first step in showing another type of game-going hand, the call that sends that message must be Alerted.)

(3) After a 1NT forcing or semi-forcing response to a 1♥ or 1♠ opening bid with no interference, the opening bidder will say aloud, "Forcing" or "Semi-forcing," if there was no other meaning attached to the agreement (such as showing four or more spades).

(4) After a non-forcing opening 1♣ or 1♦ for which the opener could have fewer than three cards in the suit opened, the opening bidder's partner says, "May be short."

HOW TO ANNOUNCE

When Bid Boxes are not in use, the partner says aloud the required spoken statement. When Bid Boxes are being used, the Alert strip is tapped and the appropriate spoken statement is made.

IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE ALERTER OR ANNOUNCER TO ENSURE THAT THE OPPONENTS ARE AWARE THAT AN ALERT HAS BEEN MADE. WHEN IN DOUBT WHETHER TO ALERT OR NOT, ALERT!

FAILURE TO ALERT OR ANNOUNCE

If partner fails to Alert or Announce, a player may not make any indication during the auction. Showing surprise or discomfort may awaken partner to the error and would be a violation of Law. In addition, a player may not make allowances for partner's error. The auction must continue as if partner had acted properly.

When the auction is over, the declaring side MUST reveal to the defenders, after first calling the Tournament Director, any errors of explanation (including Alerts or Announcements that were omitted) before the opening lead is faced. A defender MUST reveal any of his partner's errors but may NOT do so until after the play has been completed. A defender (or any other player) who becomes aware of his own error or omission should correct it immediately. Again, in either case the Tournament Director should be called first.

TYPES OF ALERTS

Pre-Alerts

Pre-Alerts are given before the auction period begins on the first board of a round. Pre-Alerts are designed to act as an early warning of any unusual methods for which the opponents may need to prepare. Additionally, a pre-Alert is required when playing methods permitted by the ACBL Mid-Chart or SuperChart in an event conducted using that chart. Pre-Alerts are given aloud by saying what the systems or methods are.

Immediate Alerts

Immediate Alerts are given at the time partner makes a call which requires an Alert. These Alerts are given in the form described under How to Alert above.

Delayed Alerts

Once the auction has progressed to the point that the opening bidder has had the opportunity to make a second call, conventional calls at the four level or higher are not Alerted until the auction is over. These DELAYED ALERTS are REQUIRED to be made by the DECLARING side before the opening lead. The DEFENDERS are REQUIRED to Alert declarer AFTER the OPENING LEAD but BEFORE declarer makes a play from dummy (Alerting before the lead is turned face-up and the dummy is spread is best).

HOW TO ALERT

Using spoken bidding, the partner of the player making an Alertable call says "Alert." Using bidding boxes, an Alert is made by tapping an Alert card on the table or by tapping the Alert strip on the side of the bid box. In addition, the Alerter must say "Alert." Using screens, ALL Alerts are immediate - there are no delayed Alerts. All Announcements become Alerts.

OTHER

Most natural calls do not require Alerts. If the call promises about the expected strength and shape, no Alert is necessary. Treatments that show unusual strength or shape should be Alerted.

NOTE: Partnerships whose systems include extremely aggressive methods, such as frequent use of four-card overcalls at the two level or higher, weak two-bids with bad five-card suits, or three-level preempts with bad six-card and/or most five-card suits must pre-Alert the opponents before the round begins.

A treatment is a natural call that carries a specific message about the suit bid or the general strength of the hand. Agreeing to open five-card majors is a treatment - when you open 1♥, partner "knows" you have five or more. This is indeed a message but not an unexpected one, so no Alert is required. Weak jump shifts, on the other hand, are unexpected and therefore Alertable.

Natural bids that convey an unexpected meaning must be Alerted. This includes strong bids that sound weak, weak bids that sound strong, and all other bids that, by agreement, convey meanings different from, or in addition to, the expected meaning ascribed to them.

In general, when the use of conventions leads to unexpected understandings about suit length by negative inference, a natural call becomes Alertable. Some such agreements have become expected and are fairly common, therefore no Alert is required. EXAMPLES are: 1♥-P-1♠. If 1♠ promises a five-card suit (when playing an opening 2♦ bid as five hearts and four spades), no Alert is required. 1♣, 1♦, or 1♥-P-1NT. If the 1NT bidder could or could not have four cards in one or both majors, again no Alert. 1♣-P-1♥ or 1♠. If the major-suit bidder could be passing up a four-card or longer diamond suit, no Alert is required.

CONVENTIONS

A convention is defined as any call which, by partnership agreement, conveys a meaning not necessarily related to the denomination named or, in the case of a pass, double or redouble, the last denomination named.

Examples of calls deemed to be conventional are: showing support for a previously bid suit and shortness in the bid suit (such as a splinter bid) and bidding your worst suit for takeout.

In general, conventional calls require an Alert. In ACBL-sponsored events, however, there are some common conventions that do not require an Alert during the auction: Stayman, ace-asking bids, most meanings of cue-bids, strong artificial 2♣ openings and most doubles, redoubles and passes. Some Alerts are delayed until the auction is completed.

Commonly used conventions such as Stayman (but not Puppet Stayman), strong 2♣ bids, ace-asking bids like Blackwood and Gerber (others require a delayed alert), and most cuebids are not alertable. However, any cuebid which conveys a very unusual or unexpected meaning still requires an Alert.

DOUBLES, REDOUBLES AND PASSES

Except for those doubles with highly unusual or unexpected meanings, doubles do not require an Alert. Passes or redoubles with highly unusual or unexpected meanings require an Alert.

WEAK TWO BIDS

Weak two bids are not normally alertable (but if the style is very weak with five card suits, it's a pre-alert). The 2NT response to a weak two bid is not Alertable if it is forcing and asks for further clarification. Natural, non-forcing 2NT responses to opening two bids must be Alerted. Responses to the 2NT inquiry are also Alertable.

NOTE: A non-forcing suit response to a weak two-bid requires an Alert. A simple raise (**2♠-P-3♠**, for example) of a weak two-bid that is invitational or better requires an Alert.

JUMP SHIFTS AND JUMP RAISES

Game-forcing natural jump shifts are not Alertable. Other jump shifts (either conventional or natural and weak or intermediate) not in competition must be Alerted. A natural jump shift in competition does not require an Alert regardless of strength.

Natural jump raises in competition are not Alertable regardless of strength.

OPENER'S REBIDS

A 1NT rebid if strong (may have 16 or more HCP) requires an Alert.

A rebid in a suit that tends to be longer than the opening bid suit (canapé) requires an Alert.

Opener's rebid of two of a minor over partner's forcing or semi-forcing notrump response to a major does not require an Alert if it shows three or more of the suit bid

HIGH-LEVEL OPENING BIDS

3♣,3♦,3♥,3♠. Natural and preemptive (weak) opening suit bids at the three level are not Alertable. If you commonly preempt at this level with very weak suits (worse than Qxxxxx) or in suits of fewer than six cards you must pre-Alert your methods. Intermediate, strong or conventional usage must be Alerted.

3NT: A 3NT opening that promises a strong, balanced hand is not Alertable. Gambling 3NT openings and all other conventional uses must be Alerted.

Natural opening bids at the three level or higher which convey an unusual message regarding HCP range or any other information which might be unexpected to the opponents must be Alerted. Some EXAMPLES are: (a) 4♥,4♠ openings which are natural but are weaker than might be expected because the partnership has some other method (an example is the Namyats convention) for showing a good 4♥,4♠ opening, (b) 1♥-P-4♥ when playing a forcing club where the 4♥ call may have, by agreement, values for game but not slam, (c) a natural 3♣ opening which is stronger than expected since the partnership has agreed to open 2♠ (a Mid-Chart agreement so the Mid-Chart has to be in effect) with weak minor-suit preempts.

REMEMBER! Below game, non-forcing natural suit responses to preemptive openings require an Alert.

DEFENSIVE AND COMPETITIVE CALLS

A jump to 2NT to show the minors or the lower unbid suits is not Alertable. A bid of 3NT as unusual must be Alerted. A bid of 4NT is not Alertable as long as the prior bid was by an opponent. Non-jump unusual notrump bids below 4NT, except those made by a passed hand, must be Alerted.

Natural jump overcalls that are weak do not require an Alert. All other natural and conventional meanings are Alertable. Unusual overcalls, including the tendency to overcall at the two level frequently with a suit of fewer than five cards or with less than two-over-one values (approximately 10 HCP), must be Alerted.

UNUSUAL CARDING AGREEMENTS

Except for leading low from a doubleton which requires a pre-Alert, carding agreements do not require an Alert of any kind. However, the box on the card in the middle of SPECIAL CARDING [] PLEASE ASK must be checked when playing a completely unexpected method or one that is not easily or clearly described by simply checking a box.

EXAMPLES:

Leading low from a doubleton (also requires pre-Alert)

Carding which changes during the hand

Obvious switch agreements

DECLARER IS EXPECTED TO EXAMINE AN OPPONENT'S CONVENTION CARD WITHOUT PROMPTING IN ORDER TO ASCERTAIN THEIR DEFENSIVE METHODS.

Part 3. Type of Events

Stratified Games

In stratified events the field is subdivided into stratas or strats so that participants have more chances for placing within the event. Each strat (or stratum) has a masterpoint limit with the highest strat (called the A strat) being unlimited. Each entry's strat is determined by the partner or teammate with the most masterpoints. Each pair or team is then entered into its strat and all higher stratas. Players in Strat C can win points in Strats C, B, and A and players in Strat B can win points in Strats B and A. Players in Strat A win points only in that strat.

Players in all three stratas play against each other generally using the Matchpoint form of scoring. This provides players in lower stratas a chance to benefit by playing against more experienced players as well as the opportunity to do well and win the event. At the same time the players in the lower stratas are not giving up the chance to compete for points within their peer group or strat. Players in the higher stratas also benefit because the stratified events provide larger fields and thus higher masterpoint awards.

A stratified pairs game is first scored on the total number of tables in play and masterpoints are computed for the "A" or top strat using the appropriate masterpoint award schedule for that game, just as if it were an open pairs event. However, there are games (stratas) with THE gameeach stat is awarded points based upon that strat only. For instance, awards for the second or "B" strat include all of the remaining tables in the game while awards for the third or "C" strat include only those in the lowest masterpoint category. The masterpoint awards of the lower stratas are reduced from that of an open game. A sample game structure of a 14 table stratified pairs event might look like this:

<u>Strat Limitation</u>	<u>Tables</u>	<u>Prs.</u>	<u>Prs.</u>	
		<u>Pairs</u>	<u>N/S</u>	<u>E/W</u>
Strat A = 0-unlimited	14	28	14	14
Strat B = 0-750	10	20	10	10
Strat C = 0-150	5	10	5	5

Stratified team games are like stratified pair events with the major difference being team play as opposed to matchpoint pair play. The stratas are set similarly to those of pair events and have the same restrictions.

IMP PAIRS

IMP Pairs events are uncommon at sectionals and regionals. Until recently about the only time you could play in one was at the NABCs or an occasional regional. The advent of computers made the scoring of IMP Pair games easier thus they are somewhat more common today.

Strategy should be similar to that of a Swiss Team event scored on the IMP (or International Match Point) basis. At the bottom of the current convention card there is an IMP scale that is used when scoring results in a Swiss Team event and/or in an IMP Pairs events.

In a Swiss Team event teammates compare scores and the difference is located on the IMP scale in order to find the result of that board. If your team is on the plus side your resulting score will be plus imps, if you're on the minus side your result will be minus imps. If there is no difference, the result will be 0 imps. The total of your pluses and minus for a round determines whether you won, lost or tied the match.

In an IMP Pairs event a pair plays an entire session of bridge just as though it were Matchpoint Pair event. However, the results are determined rather differently. After all the results on a board are in, the top score and the bottom score are dropped and the remaining scores are averaged to determine a number called a datum. It can be a plus number or a minus number. Your result on the board is then compared to this datum and the resulting difference is converted to IMPs using the same IMP scale. This is done for each board in play and your result for the game is the total of the IMPS you gained or loss on each board.

Perhaps an example will help. Assume that Board 1 is played 12 times with the following results:

	N/S Score	E/W Score	N/S IMP result	E/W Imp result
1. 4H by N	450		+2	-2
2. 4H by N	420		+2	-2
3. 4H by N	480		+3	-3
4. 6H by N	980		+12	-12
5. 6H by N	980		+12	-12
6. 6H by N		50	-9	+9
7. 3NT by S		430	+2	-2

8. 6H by N		50	-9	-9
9. 4H by N	420		+2	-2
10. 6H by N		100	-10	+10
11. 2H by N	200		-5	+5
12. 4H by N	450		+2	-2

In order to determine the datum for N/S one of the top scores (980) and the bottom score of -100 are ignored and the remaining 10 scores are averaged. The datum is then 373 for N/S and -373 for E/W. Now each pair's result is IMPed to the datum using the IMP scale. I have posted the results in the columns above.

IMP scoring of any kind puts a great deal more significance to just being in game, slam or partscore than in the best game, best slam or best partscore that is so important to MP scoring. And while overtricks will help to increase your score they are relatively insignificant. So just bid the best you can and play to make your contract!

On the down side of IMP pair events disasters are not as easy to recover from as they are in matchpoints. And many experts tend to believe that the element of luck is exaggerated at IMP scoring. However, like any bridge game this event can be enjoyed even more with experience. So be sure and try it.

Bracketed KO Teams

Knockout (KO) events are normally only held at tournaments. While such an event can be straight KO (you're out when you get beat), most KO's these days are bracketed. Bracketed KO's work like this:

Each team must select a captain who will be responsible for all official representations to the Director or Committees. The captain or his/her designee must enter the team prior to the official closing time for entries. At that time the entry is purchased, the captain must report the total number of masterpoints held by all the players on the team as well as how many people comprise the team. (Later the completed entry will include a listing of the names of all team members, home cities, states, player numbers, number of masterpoints per last notification from the ACBL and a notation as to who is captain.) Four, five or six member teams are permitted with each team member being expected to play at least 50% of each match.

The directors now determine the average masterpoint holding of each team. The field is then divided into brackets with the top x number of teams making up the first bracket, the next x number of teams making up the second bracket, etc. I have used x to signify the number of teams in each bracket as best determined by the directors from the total number of entries.

Each bracket then becomes a separate event; thus you compete with those teams whose average masterpoint total is relatively close to that of your team. The number of teams in a bracket usually varies from 8 to 16 depending upon the total number of teams entered. First match selections within a bracket are usually done randomly but can be done by seeding according to masterpoints. Each session of the KO you will play at least one other team until you lose and are "knocked out". (Frequently the first round may be a round robin of three teams in order to eliminate only one team.) If you continue to win, you play the next session up to a maximum of four sessions.

Continuous Pairs (or Side Games)

Perhaps the most inappropriately named event on the tournament schedule, the continuous pairs is really a one session pair game with a potential bonus for players who play more than one session over the course of the event. Each individual session is normally run as a stratified pair game with overall and session awards for each strat.

Players buy entries for each session as pairs; they may play with different partners in different sessions; they may play as many sessions as they wish. Players compete for the "bonus" overalls (not stratified) as individuals. The overall score for each is the sum of the percentage scores of his two best sessions. The two best scores may be achieved with different partners. At Regionals, flight A section tops become gold points for players who play more than one session in the event. Bonus overall awards at Regionals are also gold.

You must play in two sessions in the same continuous pairs event to be eligible for the bonus overall awards. Since most tournaments have more than one continuous pairs event, check the schedule carefully.

Swiss and BAM Teams

Swiss Team events consist of one team of four players playing another team of four players. Scoring is usually in IMPs. The team who scores the greater number of IMPs is the winner and usually the difference in IMPs between the winner and the loser is converted to Victory Points. The maximum VP's earned are either 20 if using the 20 points VP scale or 30 if using the 30 VP scale. The loser gets the reciprocal of the VP's won by the winning team. It is also possible to play a Swiss Team event strictly on Win/Loss scoring although that is not prevalent today.

In order to play a team game, four or more (up to six) players form a team and enter the event together. A captain is designated to officially represent the team in all actions dealing with other teams, the Director and Committees.

In a Swiss event, after all the teams are assembled, the site Director assigns at random two teams to play each other in a match of 6-9 boards. Two members of your team plays two members of the other team at each of two tables, so your team plays both the N/S and E/W cards for every hand. The team scoring the best results in each match wins, and is then assigned next to play another team which has also won their match. Similarly, losers are assigned other losing teams for their next match.

This goes on for 7 or 8 matches during two sessions or 4 matches for a one session event. Winners play teams that win -- losers play teams that lose. Thus, you eventually play teams at about your level of play on that day. There are some fractional master points awarded for every match won, and major points are awarded the overall winners.

A similar team event known as a Board-A-Match teams is played with each board played being either won or lost only. BAM Teams use a format similar to that of duplicate pair events so that it doesn't look much like a team game but in actuality teams are still playing other teams.

Strategy for KO Teams

Bracketed KO's, as well as straight KO's and Swiss teams, normally use what is called IMP scoring. There are considerable differences in approaching bridge from a IMP strategy as opposed to that using matchpoint scoring. To name a few, there are different theories on sacrifice bidding, balancing, and doubling. In a long IMP match such as a KO Team event, a good or bad result on an early board should not affect your bidding or play on the next deal.

IMP Principles: (1) The key to success in matchpoint scoring is how often you beat your opponents, not by how much you beat your opponents. Playing IMPS, the opposite is true--the key to winning is how much.

(2) In matchpoint duplicate bridge, the key to winning a board may very well be an overtrick--even one gained through considerable risk to the contract. At IMPS, however, an undoubled overtrick can never be worth more than 1 IMP. The same is true for the relatively small total point differences between playing notrump, major or minor suit contracts. Hence, it tends not to be the denomination of the game that is important at IMPS, but rather the safety of the game and the odds of its success.

(3) The odds on bidding close games or slams playing IMPS are influenced by the vulnerability. While I could present all the odds, suffice it to say that close vulnerable games are a much better proposition than close non-vulnerable games. Basically you should bid any vulnerable game that stands a reasonable prospect of making, but bid non-vulnerable games only with solid expectations of making it.

(4) The IMP odds change drastically for small slams. No longer is vulnerability a factor as both vulnerable and non-vulnerable small slams are closer to an even money bet. However, another factor enters in. It is best to assume that most close slams will not be bid by your counterparts at the other table unless they are either very aggressive or very good bidders or both. Consequently, if you are well ahead in your match or playing a team that you rate to beat, it is best to be conservative in your slam bidding. On the other hand, if you are behind playing a good team that figures to beat you, play for a substantial swing and bid a close slam.

The odds in favor of bidding and making a grand slam are very much against doing so. A word of advice on bidding grand slams is "forget it--unless you can count 13 tricks."

(5) As a general rule do not be concerned about small one or two IMP losses on specific deals. Instead, the key to winning is to obtain a plus score on the little or partscore hands. In fact your primary concern should be getting a PLUS, not how big a plus or how small a minus. This means that, as declarer, you make your contract whatever it is, and, as defender, you attempt to defeat their contracts at the risk of allowing overtricks if your tactics fail.

(6) Sacrifices in IMP play are severely overrated with the one possible exception of the opponents being vulnerable and your side being non-vulnerable. They generally do not account for material IMP swings if they are correct, but they amount to large swings if they are wrong. In addition, the prospects of being doubled are great as the opponents are less likely to be pushed one level higher. However, advance saves are more likely to work; this form of sacrifice attempts to push the opponents to the five level before they have a chance to exchange much information. This may cause the opponents to (a) misjudge their strength and bid too much, (b) miss a slam, or (c) find a profitable sacrifice for your side. On the down side, if the opponents bid a slam after your preemptive tactics, you may not know whether or not it will make and/or whether you have forced them into it and they are unlikely to be there at the other table.

(7) Close doubles should be avoided at all costs when the form of scoring is IMPS. This is particularly true of partscore contracts as the risks are far too great for the possible gain.

(8) Decisions that must be made in the second half of a KO match should be influenced by your results on the first half's boards. It is also important to remember that you do not have to win the match or that all matches have to be won at your table. Remember at all times that you have teammates who may be having a good round and who will be able to cover one or two bad results but not several. One of your objectives should be to avoid losing the match at your table as most KO matches are lost rather than won.

(9) Balancing at matchpoints is the norm but at IMPS it is usually quite dangerous. As such, is not recommended as a general rule.

(10) Be a good partner and teammate. Team morale is extremely important and it will be in everyone's best interest if all team members attempt to make the game fun. It will also increase your chances of winning and doing

Part 4. Special Events within the ACBL

Each year the ACBL (our governing organization) offers several special events. The qualifications for these events vary but there's usually something for everyone.

Grand National Teams - GNT

The GNT is a “grass roots” event with each team’s members competing in their District of membership. However, some exceptions can be made for full-time students, members of the armed forces, and people with dual or temporary residency.

It starts September 1st of each year and goes through the Summer NABC. All levels are eligible to play but it is divided into four flights. For eligibility in each category (Open, and Flights A, B and C) stated limitations must be met as of September 1 each year.

The Flights are presently as follows:

- Open Championship Flight Unlimited
- Flight A Under 5000 Masterpoints
- Flight B Under 2000 Masterpoints
- Flight C Non-Life Master under 500 Masterpoints

The purpose of this event is to select teams from each Flight to represent their District in the National GNT finals held at each Summer NABC. Each District designs the preliminary phases of this event but within guidelines established by the ACBL’s Conditions of Contest.

The GNT starts with qualifying team games at the club level where masterpoint awards are sectionally rated half Red and half Black. Teams that qualify at the club level are then eligible to play at the special Unit level games where one-session unit qualifying games are sectionally rated Red points, but two-session unit qualifying games are sectionally rated Red with a percentage of GOLD for overalls. In each of the above qualifying events (club games and Unit final) a team must be average or better to qualify to continue to the next round.

Teams that qualify at the Unit final level are then eligible to play in the District final where awards are GOLD for overalls. Flight C is 25% GOLD for overall. Other masterpoints in all flights are Red.

North American Pairs – NAP

A second grassroots event is that of the North American Pairs. This is a pair event and you start competing at the club level in specially designated games. Again it's flighted with Flight A being open to any player, Flight B open to players with less than 2000 masterpoints as of the June masterpoint cycle, and Flight C which is open to Non-Life Masters with fewer than 500 masterpoints as of the June cycle. (The June masterpoint cycle is run by ACBL data processing between May 1st and 15th and points won but not included in this cycle do not affect masterpoint eligibility.

Club level qualifying games must be held only in June, July and August of the year preceding the Spring NABCs. The Unit level final is scheduled by Units and approved by the District NAP Coordinator and is usually scheduled for fall. The District level final is also usually held in the late fall and in any case it must now be completed by the 3rd Sunday of January of the following year. The National event is then held sometime during or preceding the Spring NABCs

Prior to the National final Flight C eligible players may play in Flights A, B & C until concurrence forces a choice. Flight B eligible players may play in Flight B and Flight A until concurrence forces a choice. Flight A eligible players may play in Flight A only. Any flight-mixed partnerships must enter the flight of the higher ranked player.

At the club games and at the unit final, all pairs who score 50% or above qualify for the next level. New partnerships between Club Stage qualifiers may be formed at the Unit Stage, and similarly, new partnerships between Unit Stage qualifiers may be formed at the District Stage. However, pairs qualifying to the National Finals qualify as a pair and no new partnerships may be after the District final. Masterpoint awards at the club level are mixed (red and black), mostly sectionally rated red at the unit level, but gold and red at the District level.

District winners and runners-up qualify for a subsidy from the ACBL which is to be used to attend the Spring NABCs.

49er Pairs

The 49er Pairs is open to all duplicate players with fewer than 50 registered masterpoints as of the September cycle. It is held at special club games throughout the month of September. A player may enter as often as he/she wishes and may play with the same partner or a different partner in each game.

Masterpoints are Black points and are awarded at 45% Sectional Rating.

Although there is no longer a National final, the District winners are listed in the December Bridge Bulletin and on the ACBL website.

ACBL-Wide Senior Game

The ACBL's Seniors game is usually held the third Monday afternoon in February. It's open to all duplicate players who are at least 55 years old by the date of the event. The same hands are played at all sites and it pays more masterpoints than a regular club game. Hand records with analyses are provided and District-wide 1st and 2nd place finishers are published on the ACBL website as well as in the ACBL bulletin.

Instant Matchpoint Game

In September, on a Wednesday evening in odd years or on Thursday evening in even years, the ACBL runs a special matchpoint game at all sanctioned club games. One GOLD masterpoint is given to section winners in each direction, with the remaining points being half Red and half Black. Hand records with analyses are provided.

ACBL-Wide International Fund Game

Each year the ACBL runs three week long events conducted to benefit the ACBL/CBF International Funds. The first week is in January and is scheduled to end on the Saturday afternoon of the Super Bowl weekend. The second event is in May and the third event is in July ending simultaneously with the International Fund Game at the summer North American Bridge Championships (NABCs). Some of the games include predealt hands with hand records but most are shuffle and play. Masterpoint awards are $\frac{1}{2}$ Red and $\frac{1}{2}$ Black at sectional rating.

ACBL-Wide Charity Game

Each year there are two ACBL-wide week long charity events that are conducted to benefit the ACBL Charity Foundation/CBF Charitable Fund. There are held during the Spring and Fall NABCs. Each game can include pre-dealt hands with analyses for an extra fee, but can also be run as shuffle and play game. Masterpoint awards are 100% sectionally rated Black masterpoints.

Worldwide Bridge Contest

The Worldwide Bridge Contest, usually held in June, allows matchpointing across the world. There are two separate games...one on Friday and one on Saturday and each features worldwide across-the-field scoring. ACBL awards masterpoints at sectional open pair rating, $\frac{1}{2}$ Red and $\frac{1}{2}$ Black and the WBF awards prizes based on the world matchpointing. The two top District winners by percentage receive BONUS AWARDS. Hand records with analyses are provided.

Club Appreciation Month

In October of each year all sanctioned clubs may hold a Club Appreciation Pair Game and a Club Appreciation Swiss Team. Masterpoint awards will be black points (85% of sectionally rated open pairs) for the Club Appreciation Pair Game. For Team Events, a club will award 5% GOLD masterpoints to maximum of 0.25 per player. The remaining masterpoints will be sectionally rated Black points..

Part 5. Glossary of Terms

ACBL (American Contract Bridge League) The American Contract Bridge League (ACBL), is a not-for-profit organization which was established in 1937 and has been headquartered in Memphis, TN since 1972. It is the main and largest official sanctioning body for competitive and duplicate bridge in North America. Each year more than 2.5 million tables of bridge are played under ACBL auspices at clubs and tournaments in North America, overseas, online and even on cruise ships.

The ACBL Bridge Series The ACBL publishes five student textbooks and teacher manuals designed to make bridge easy to learn and fun to play. Each student text is coordinated with a teacher manual which offers lesson plans for teachers. The series, written by Canadian author and educator Audrey Grant, follows a spiral curriculum (each course addresses bidding, play and defense but with a different focus) and presents eight chapters (eight two-hour lessons) per book: *Bidding* (The Club Series), *Play of the Hand* (The Diamond Series), *Defense* (The Heart Series), *Commonly Used Conventions* (The Spade Series) and *More Commonly Used Conventions* (The Notrump Series). Also available are sets of coded E-Z Deal Cards which allow the student to deal out the practice deals found at the end of each of the eight chapters in each of the texts.

ACBLscore ACBL has developed a computer scoring program known as ACBLscore. It is free and available for all sanctioned club games and tournaments. This program enables a game to be scored almost instantly once the last deal has been played and the results entered.

ACBL Web Site (www.acbl.org) The ACBL Web Site is the place where members can go to check their masterpoint totals and to find all kinds of information about the game of bridge and the ACBL. Tournament results, masterpoint races, an online sales catalog, a directory of ACBL bridge clubs and bridge teachers, the Junior program and so much more are available at www.acbl.org.

Active Ethics A primary objective of the ACBL is to instill in all players the concept that vigorous efforts should be made to provide equity in bridge. Every player should take pains to make sure that the opponents have in no way been harmed through incomplete or misleading information as to the meaning of conventional calls and treatments. An aggressive approach along these lines on the

part of each and every individual will ensure that bridge remains a game that everyone can enjoy.

Alert Procedure The objective of the Alert procedure (see Alert) is for both pairs at the table to have equal access to all information contained in any auction. Saying “Alert” (or making an Announcement — see definition in this publication) is a method of drawing the opponents’ attention to the fact that partner’s call has a conventional or unexpected meaning.

Announcement Procedure Announcements are an extension of the Alert System. An Announcement is a method by which a player uses one word or a short phrase to tell the opponents directly the meaning of partner’s call. Announcements are required in the following four instances only:

- After a natural 1NT opening bid, state the range, “12-14.”
- After a bid of diamonds or hearts transferring to hearts or spades respectively in response to a notrump bid, say, “transfer.”
- After a 1NT forcing or semi-forcing response to a 1♥ or 1♦ opening bid, say “forcing” or “semi-forcing.”
- After a 1♣ or 1♦ non-forcing opening where the suit may contain fewer than three cards, say, “may be short.”

When bidding boxes are in use, say the Announcement word, such as “transfer” and tap the Alert strip in the bid box at the same time. Calls that need to be Announced are shown in blue on the official ACBL Convention Card and noted on the Alert Chart.

Appeal An appeal is a request for a review of a director’s ruling. Any ruling by a director may be appealed, but an appeals committee does not have the authority to overrule the director on a point of bridge law or regulation.

Barometer This is a scoring method that originated in Sweden in which each deal is played simultaneously. Running totals are usually posted shortly after the conclusion of play of each set of boards, thus heightening the interest for both players and spectators.

Bidding Box A device to permit silent bidding, bidding boxes were first used in Scandinavian countries. To make a call, the player takes the appropriate card from the box and places it on the table in front of the player. All bidding cards remain on the table until the auction is concluded, thus avoiding the need for a review of the bidding and eliminating the possibility of mishearing a call.

Black Points Masterpoints awarded at club and unit level games are black. A new member (as of 1/1/99) needs at least 50 black points (out of a total of 300 points of all colors) to become a Life Master.

Board-a-Match (BAM) Board-a-Match is a form of duplicate scoring used in team contests in which one matchpoint is awarded for winning the hand and 1/2 matchpoint is awarded for a tie.

Bracketed Knockout Teams This event is run as a knockout team event with one exception. All teams will play against similarly rated opponents. Each team's bracket is determined by averaging the entire team's masterpoint holdings. This is the most popular event in which to play to earn gold points at regionals and NABCs.

The Bridge Bulletin ACBL's monthly magazine, *The Bridge Bulletin*, is filled with information on bidding and play for all levels of players, information regarding upcoming tournaments, bridge book and software reviews and reports on special bridge competitions.

Bronze Life Master A player with Life Master status who has at least 500 masterpoint is known as a Bronze Life Master.

Claim or Concession According to the *Laws of Duplicate Contract Bridge*, a claim or concession is a suggestion that play of a deal be curtailed; a statement to the effect that a player will win (claim) or lose (concession) a specific number of tricks. Procedures differ in social and duplicate bridge.

Club Game Classifications There are five general classes of games at clubs.

— Open club games welcome all players.

— Invitational club games may limit participation to members of a particular organization or to participants invited by the club manager. Guests are often accepted at invitational clubs.

— Masterpoint limited club games are for players who are beyond Rookie level but not ready for open competition. These games may have any limitation that is determined to be best for the players in question – such as 49er, 99er, Non Life Master.

Newcomer club games may operate under different titles (newplicate, novice, 0-5, 0-20, etc.), but participation is limited to persons holding fewer than 20 masterpoints on record with the ACBL.

College or high school club games are special forms of invitational club games restricted to students, faculty members and their spouses.

Club Masterpoints Points earned at the club level in games with club rating are called club masterpoints. These are black points and are distributed in fractional amounts. One hundred fractional points equals one masterpoint.

Compact KO (Knockout) A compact KO is a two-session bracketed KO designed to be completed in one day. This can be a gold-point event but is limited to four-person teams.

Convention A convention is any call or play which, by agreement or understanding between partners, serves to convey a meaning other than would be attributed to it by the opponents in the absence of an explanation.

Convention Card A convention card is a shortcut to allow the opponents to know what system a partnership has elected to play. It lists generally used conventions and treatments on a checkoff basis and provides space to list other conventions and treatments. (See also SAYC.)

Convention Charts Each ACBL game is governed by a specific convention chart which states the conventional agreements allowed. There is a Limited Chart, a Mid-Chart, a General Chart and a Super- Chart.

Correction Period The time specified by the sponsoring organization during which corrections to the score may be sought is the official correction period for a sanctioned game.

Diamond Life Master An ACBL Life Master who has at least 5000 masterpoints is known as a Diamond Life Master.

Director The director of a duplicate bridge game is the person designated to supervise the contest and to apply the laws. There are club directors, many ranks of tournament directors and IN (Intermediate-Newcomer) directors, those who have been trained to work with newer players (see also Club Director and Tournament Director).

Duplicate Bridge Duplicate bridge is a form of the game whereby the conditions of play are duplicated exactly at each table: the same cards in each hand, the same dealer, the same vulnerability. The Matchpoint score does not depend on the luck of the deal; it is derived by comparing the scores made by players who hold the identical cards under the identical conditions.

Ethics In bridge, ethics equals fair play. Breaches of ethics are generally thought of as unfair and illegal practices which could include deliberate cheating. The Laws of Duplicate Contract Bridge deal with the question of proper behavior at bridge.

Face-Down Leads Face-down opening leads are required in tournament play. Once the lead is made face down, partner may ask questions about the auction. This ensures that the partner of the leader will not influence the opening leader's choice of lead. A face-down opening lead made by the wrong player may be picked up without penalty upon instruction of the director.

Fouled Board A deal in which a card or cards or hands have been placed in an incorrect pocket constitutes a fouled board. Since the nature of duplicate is to play the exact same deals at each table and then compare results, a deal that changes during the course of play can no longer be compared and must be scored by a formula known as the "fouled-board formula."

GNT (Grand National Teams) The Grand National Teams (GNT) is a major ACBL team championship conducted with district qualifying rounds in clubs, units and/ or districts, leading to a final round held in conjunction with the Summer NABC.

Gold Life Master An ACBL Life Master who has acquired at least 2500 masterpoints is known as a Gold Life Master.

Gold Points Gold points are a type of masterpoint (MP). They are awarded for topping your section or placing overall at regionals and NABCs in events of two or more sessions which have either no masterpoint restriction or a minimum masterpoint limit of 750 points or more. Partial gold point awards are given for certain special events.

Grand Life Master The highest rank in the ACBL is Grand Life Master. To achieve this rank, a player must have earned 10,000 masterpoints and won at least one North American Championship event that has no upper masterpoint limit or its equivalent.

Hall of Fame The Hall of Fame was started by The Bridge World Magazine in 1964. The original members were Ely Culbertson, Charles Goren, Harold Vanderbilt, Oswald Jacoby, Milton Work, Sidney Lenz, Waldemar von Zedtwitz, Howard Schenken and Sidney Silodor. When The Bridge World discontinued its work on the Hall, no members were added until the ACBL inducted the original nine into its own Hall in 1995, then added eight more. The new members were Edgar Kaplan, Al Roth, Bobby Wolff, B. Jay Becker, Easley Blackwood, Barry Crane, John Crawford and Helen Sobel Smith. Additional members are elected each year and inducted at a dinner at the summer NABCs.

HCP HCP stands for High-card points, a basis for determining the relative strength of a hand, especially for notrump contracts. The most common valuation is: Aces = 4 points, Kings = 3 points, Queens = 2 points, Jacks = 1 point.

Howell Movement The Howell movement is a type of progression in duplicate in which all pairs except one move and in which all pairs meet. In large Howell-type movements, most of the pairs move and most of the pairs meet.

IMP An IMP is an International Matchpoint, a unit of scoring used according to a schedule established by the Laws of Duplicate Contract Bridge. In a team game, a difference in trick and bonus scores of the North-South pair and the East-West pair on the same team is used to determine IMPs from a chart. IMPs are sometimes converted to Victory Points by way of a chart based on either a 20- or 30-point Victory Point scale. A copy of the IMP and VP scales is printed inside each ACBL Convention Card.

Junior Master A player holding 5 to 19.99 masterpoints is known as a Junior Master.

Kibitzer A person who watches a game from the sidelines is called a kibitzer.

Knockout Teams Knockout Team event is one in which one team plays an entire session against one other team. The winning team from each match advances to play the next round and the defeated team is eliminated. (See also Bracketed Knockout Teams.)

Life Master Life Master is the most highly sought level of bridge achievement. A Life Master is a player who has earned 300 or more recorded masterpoints, of which at least 50 must be silver, at least 25 must be gold and at

least another 25 must be red or gold. New members as of 1/1/99 must also earn at least 50 black points as part of their total 300 points. Please note that no more than 100 MPs earned on the Internet may count toward the points necessary to achieve Life Master status.

Masterpoint This is the unit which measures bridge achievement in duplicate play. Masterpoints come in black, silver, red, gold, platinum and unpigmented, and they are awarded for different levels of play.

—Black points at club and unit games.

—Silver points at sectionals, progressive sectionals and STaCs.

—Red points in all events at regionals and the three NABCs.

—Gold points for section tops and placing overall in regional events and in events of two or more sessions with either no MP restriction or a minimum MP limit of 750 points or more (not Strat C). Partial gold points are awarded in some special events.

—Platinum points for all NABC+ championship events.

—Unpigmented points for online play on the Internet.

(Note: See “ranks” for the number and color of points needed to attain various levels of recognition: Rookie, Junior Master, Club Master, Sectional Master, Regional Master, NABC Master, Life Master and upper levels beyond LM.)

Masterpoint Records Masterpoints won at tournaments and at clubs using ACBLscore are sent electronically to ACBL. Other clubs mail in lists of players and points won for recording. Nonmembers are given receipts at club games when they win points and can credit their accounts with up to 20 masterpoints (won in the 12 months prior to becoming members) when they join the ACBL. Members can check their masterpoint holding by calling the Customer Service Line or online at www.acbl.org.

Matchpoint A matchpoint is a unit used in a method of scoring duplicate contests in which two or more scores are compared. A pair receives one point for each result it surpasses and one-half point for each result it ties.

Mitchell Movement The Mitchell movement is a duplicate progression in which the players seated North–South remain stationary and those sitting East–

West move each round to the higher numbered table. The players get “older” and the boards get “younger.”

Mixed Pairs A Mixed Pairs event is one in which partnerships must consist of one man and one woman.

NABC This is the term for the North American Bridge Championships which are operated annually by the ACBL. These tournaments are held in the spring, summer and fall and are rotated around the United States and Canada. Each NABC offers events for all levels of players and features the NABC+ events and an IN (Intermediate-Newcomer) program for players with fewer than 300 masterpoints. The IN program runs for the full 11 days of the tournament and offers a free Celebrity 20 Speaker program twice daily. There are trophies, masterpoints, special events and lots of entertainment at all NABCs.

NABC Master A player with at least 200 masterpoints, including at least 50 pigmented points of which at least 5 must be gold, at least 15 must be red, and at least 25 must be silver is known as an NABC Master.

NAP Formerly known as the Grand National Pairs, the NAP or North American Pairs is a major ACBL championship which is staged in qualifying rounds at the club, unit and district levels. It culminates in a final held in conjunction with the Spring NABC. This event is run as a flighted event.

National 49er Pairs This is a nationally-rated event for players with 0–49 masterpoints which is contested at the Spring NABC. It awards partial gold points.

National 99er Pairs This is a nationally-rated event for players with 0–99 masterpoints which is contested at the Fall NABC. It awards partial gold points.

National 199er Pairs This is a nationally-rated event for players with 0–199 masterpoints which is contested at the Summer NABC. It awards partial gold points.

Open Event In Open events, there are no restrictions due to expertise, gender or age.

Patron Member Program ACBL members may opt to become Patron Members and receive an enhanced benefits package. The current price is \$200 (U.S.) per year for an individual membership, \$250 (U.S.) for a household of two. Some of the additional benefits in the Patron program include the opportunity to

book a hotel room at the host hotel at NABCs, at-your-door delivery of the daily bulletin during the NABCs, and a complimentary ticket to the annual Bridge Hall of Fame banquet.

Penalty Card A card that has been prematurely exposed by a defender and which must be left face up on the table until legally picked up or played is called a penalty card. Please call the director when this type of infraction occurs at your table in a duplicate game.

Platinum Points Masterpoints awarded in NABC+ events that are currently considered for the Player-of-the-Year award are platinum. (These events DO include the three Senior and various Women championships but DO NOT include Junior, Flight B or other restricted events.)

Player Number The seven-digit number issued to each member of the ACBL is that person's player number. The first digit is changed to a letter when the member achieves Life Master status.

Proprieties The Proprieties was initially the section of the Laws of Duplicate Contract Bridge that dealt with conduct and ethics. Its purpose was to make the game more enjoyable for everyone, no matter what the situation. The 1987 version of the Laws made the Proprieties part of the law. It is a breach of the Proprieties to:

- Use different designations for the same call.
- Indicate any approval or disapproval of a call or play.
- Indicate the expectation or intention of winning or losing a trick before play to that trick has been completed.
- Comment or act during the auction or play to call attention to a significant incident thereof, or to the state of the score, or to the number of tricks that will be required for success.
- Look intently at any other player during the auction or play, or at another player's hand, for the purpose of seeing those cards or observing the place from which a player draws a card.
- Vary the normal tempo of bidding or play for the purpose of disconcerting the other players.

Protest A protest is an appeal of a decision made by a game director.

Qualifying Sessions (or Rounds) The early rounds of championships after which there is a reduction (cut) in the field (the contestants entered in the event) are the qualifying rounds.

Ranks As a player accumulates points, certain milestones, or ranking levels, will be reached that indicate progress. There are 12 grades:

Rookie, Junior Master, Club Master, Sectional Master, Regional Master, NABC Master, Life Master (LM). These additional levels can be attained after the rank of LM: Bronze LM, Silver LM, Gold LM, Diamond LM, Grand LM. Each ranking requires that the player have a certain number and a certain type of points.

—Rookie – 0 to 5 points, any color.

—Junior Master – 5 to 20 points, any color.

—Club Master – 20 to 50 points, any color.

—Sectional Master – At least 50 points, including at least 5 silver.

—Regional Master – At least 100 points, including at least 15 silver and 5 red/gold.

—NABC Master – At least 200 points, including 50 pigmented points, of which at least 5 must be gold, at least 15 must be red or gold, and at least 25 must be silver.

—Life Master – At least 300 points, of which at least 50 must be silver, at least 25 must be gold, and at least another 25 must be red or gold. New members as of 1/1/99 must also earn at least 50 black points as part of their total 300 points.

(NOTE: No more than one-third of the 24 points for any of the above levels may be earned in online play, where points are unpigmented.)

Red Points Masterpoints won in all events at regional tournaments and in regionally-rated events at the three annual NABCs (North American Bridge Championships) are red, unless they are gold. A player needs 25 red points (or the equivalent) as part of a total of 300 masterpoints to become a Life Master.

Regional (Regional Tournaments) Each of the 25 Districts within the ACBL sponsors regional tournaments, although a specific unit may be delegated the responsibility of planning and organizing the tournament. A regional tournament usually runs from four to seven days, attracting people from many states, and offers games for all levels of players. In addition, Non-Life Master regionals, limited to players with fewer than 300 masterpoints, and Senior regionals, limited to players who are age 55 or older, are available periodically.

Regional Master A player who has 100 to 200 recorded masterpoints, at least 5 of which are red or gold and at least 15 of which are silver, is known as a Regional Master.

Sectional Master A player with 50 to 100 recorded masterpoints, at least 5 of which are silver points, is known as a Sectional Master.

Sectional (Sectional Tournaments) Units are the sponsors of sectional tournaments, which usually run from three to five days. Units are allowed to run several special kinds of sectionals each year known as IN sectionals (see Intermediate-Newcomer Program) and STaCs (see also STaC – Sectional Tournaments at Clubs). Masterpoints won at sectional tournaments are silver.

Seeding Seeding constitutes the assignment of certain tables to particularly strong contestants to assure there will be no preponderance of strong pairs in direct competition within any one section. In pair events, tables 3 and 9 are usually reserved for seeded players; at NABCs, tables 3, 6 and 9 are usually reserved. Some team events are also seeded.

Senior Pairs (ACBL-wide) The ACBL-wide Senior Pairs is a special event held at clubs every year in February.

Side Game Series A Side Game Series is a series of at least three one-session games open to all players. Participants may enter as many sessions as they wish and play with the same or different partners. Overall ranking is done on an individual basis by computing the sum of each player's two best games. At NABC and regional tournaments, gold points are awarded to section-top placing players who have competed in at least two sessions of this event. Each session of a Side Game Series may also be run as a one-session stratified pairs.

Silver Life Master A player of Life Master status who has at least 1,000 masterpoints is known as a Silver Life Master.

Silver Points Silver points are masterpoints awarded at sectional tournaments, progressive sectionals and STaCs (Sectional Tournaments at Clubs). A player must earn 50 silver points as one of the qualifications for advancing to the rank of Life Master.

Skip Bid Warning The Skip Bid Warning is used whenever a player “skips” the bidding — when you open at the two level, for example, you either say “Skip bid, please wait,” or use the red Stop card in the bidding box. The opponent waits 10 seconds before bidding. This gives the opponent an opportunity to recover

from the “surprise” of your jump and prevents the “fast pass” (translation: I may have been surprised but I didn’t have anything to bid anyway!).

Slow Play Bridge is a timed event. Players are given an average of 8 minutes per deal and should learn to use the time wisely. Slow play is discourteous not only to the opponents of the moment, but to all of the other competitors in the event as well. It is the responsibility of every player at the table to try to catch up when their table has fallen behind.

Standard American Standard American is a nebulous term applied to the methods of bidding most commonly used in the U.S. It approximates the methods advocated by Hall of Fame member, Charles Goren, who was known to millions as “Mr. Bridge” during the last half of the 20th century.

Standard American Yellow Card (SAYC) The Standard American Yellow Card is a convention card which has been filled out to display a simple, modern method which leads to a good, solid understanding in a partnership when both players have read the card and the booklet. (The booklet is produced by ACBL and available at ACBL’s website —www.acbl.org.) This approach has gained popularity in online play. Few sequences are defined in the later rounds of Standard Yellow Card auctions. Players are free to assign forcing, invitational or non-forcing meanings to natural calls in such sequences. Players may still exercise their bridge judgments, such as in deciding to open a four-card major in third seat. The SAYC normally five-card majors approach can withstand an occasional deviation.

Stratified This is a type of game movement where all players are assigned to a group (strat) based on their current masterpoint holdings. Each contestant plays against players of all point ranges. Masterpoints are awarded to leaders of each strat. If a Strat C player scored better than one of the leaders in Strat B (a higher ranked strat), the C player will be awarded the points for Strat B.

Stratiflighted An event which is a combination of flighted and stratified. The upper level strat has no masterpoint restriction and is played as a separate game. The other players are subdivided into two or three strats with specific lower and upper masterpoint limits. Participants may enter either the unrestricted (“play alone”) group or the stratified group with a masterpoint restriction for which they are eligible.

Swiss Teams In a Swiss teams event, each team will play approximately 7 to 9 board matches against a number of teams during the event. Matches are arranged by pairing teams with approximately equal records as the game progresses.

Team Games A team consists of two pairs who play in different directions at different tables for a common score. One pair plays North-South for a designated number of boards and the other plays East-West for the same boards at a different table. If team A plays Team B, a deal is played at table “A-1” with the North-South pair from Team A and the East-West pair from Team B. Then it is replayed at table “B-1” with the North-South pair from Team B and the East-West pair from Team A. Each team plays the deal from each direction and the scores are compared.

Tournament Director The tournament director is the official representative of the sponsoring organization, responsible for the technical management of the tournament. The tournament director is charged with restoring equity at a table when an irregularity has occurred. When a player summons a director to the table, it should be done in a clear, courteous manner. It is suggested that you call the director to the table by saying, “Director, please.” Tournament directors are trained by the ACBL and ranked according to ability and experience. The IN (Intermediate-Newcomer Program) directors have a special knowledge of the problems arising with new players and have been trained to address them.

Tournaments The ACBL sanctions the following types of tournaments:

NABCs – three major national championships each year;

REGIONALS –sanctioned to each of the 25 Districts;

SECTIONALS – sanctioned to the 300+ units.

Tournament Events Tournament events may be classified by TYPE: Individual, Pair, Team. These types of events may be organized by EXPERTISE (masterpoint holdings) as: Open, Flighted, Stratified, Stratiflighted, Handicapped, Bracketed (Teams), Masters, Non-Masters, Life Masters, specific masterpoint restrictions (0-5, 0-20, 0-50, etc.). Events may also be restricted by GENDER: men’s, women’s, mixed or unmixed and by AGE: Junior (25 years of age or younger), Senior (55 years of age or older). SCORING METHODS are: Individual (matchpoints or international matchpoints – IMPs), Pair (matchpoints or IMPs), Team (win/loss, victory points, total points, board-a-match).

Unauthorized Information Law 16 of the Laws of Duplicate Contract Bridge says that a player may not make a call or play that could have been suggested over another by information the player has received extraneously from partner by an action such as a remark, a question, a reply to a question, an unmistakable hesitation, unusual speed, special emphasis, tone, gesture, movement, mannerism, etc.

Unit A unit is a division of the ACBL covering a designated area. Some units include only a part of a city, and others include entire states. The unit supervises bridge activities at ACBL games in its territory and conducts tournaments at the local and sectional levels. Groups of units form ACBL districts, and officers and board members of units elect the district's representative to the ACBL Board of Directors. ACBL has more than 300 units. ACBL members are placed in the unit where they are geographically located.

Victory Points Victory points is the scoring method favored by many experts in contests where there are many teams and each team plays a relatively small number of deals against each of the other teams. When using Victory Point scoring, the IMP score on each board is calculated. The total IMP score on the boards of the match are then converted to victory points in accordance with a predetermined scale.

Victory Points in Swiss Teams In Swiss Team events, the scoring is done first in IMPs which are then converted to Victory points. To receive credit for a full win, a team must win by 3 or more IMPs. A win by 1 or 2 IMPs constitutes a $\frac{3}{4}$ win, with the losing team getting the other quarter of a point. However, the team winning the match receives the entire match masterpoint award.

Vugraph A vugraph offers a method of presenting bridge play to an audience larger than can be accommodated around a bridge table. At the Spring and Summer NABCs, the ACBL conducts a vugraph show to cover the final rounds of the Vanderbilt and Spingold Team Championships. The audience watches the matches played simultaneously by the opposing teams. The presentation is complemented by commentary designed to make the audience both understand and enjoy the bidding and play of the experts competing in the event.

Vulnerability This is a condition of play in which premiums and penalties are increased. In rubber bridge, vulnerability comes about by having won one game toward rubber. In duplicate bridge, vulnerability is arbitrarily assigned.

Zero Tolerance This is a policy recommended by ACBL and followed at many clubs and tournaments. It strives to promote a friendly atmosphere at the table, while eliminating unacceptable behavior including rudeness, intimidation, gloating, profanity and a variety of other offenses. Automatic penalties are part of the program. If you feel an infraction of Zero Tolerance has occurred at your table, please call the director.

Zip KO (Knockout) A Zip KO is a one session knockout event usually held at midnight during a bridge tournament.

Zip Swiss A Zip Swiss is a special version of the Swiss teams designed to be finished in a short time, usually as a one-session event at the end of a day's championship play. (See also Midnight Swiss.)

Part 6. Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why do some people use the “Stop” card? Players should protect their rights and those of their opponents by using the stop card prior to making any bid that skips one or more levels of bidding. Use of the stop card is optional, but highly recommended. Players who choose to use the stop card must use it whenever they jump the level of bidding.

2. When my RHO (right-hand opponent) makes an insufficient bid, why am I asked if I want to accept the bid and what should I do? The Laws of Duplicate Bridge say that any insufficient bid may be accepted (treated as legal) at the option of offender’s LHO. It is accepted if that player calls. If LHO chooses not to accept the insufficient bid, the Director should be called. As to whether to accept it or not, it’s best to use your own judgment as each case is different.

3. What is a “bidding box” error? The use of bidding boxes at tournaments has now become standard. What is normally a clear situation with verbal bidding becomes hazier when bidding boxes are used. The Law reads: “Until his partner makes a call, a player may substitute his intended call for an inadvertent call but only if he does so, or attempts to do so, without pause for thought.”

It is important to understand what is meant by *inadvertent*. A call is inadvertent if, and only if, it was a “slip of the fingers”, the bidding box equivalent of a “slip of the tongue” (e.g. in reaching for the 3 club bid, the 3 diamond bid accidentally came out). In these situations the correct call may be substituted without penalty. A player, who calls attention to the inadvertent bid **as soon as he notices** what he actually pulled from the bid box, is usually judged to have done so without pause thought, even if some time has actually gone by.

Changes of mind situations are **not** inadvertent. For example, if you were playing strong notrumps yesterday and opened 1NT and then realized that with today’s partner you are playing a 10-12 point range, your 1NT bid was not inadvertent no matter how fast you tried to recover from your error.

Some players tend not to look at the card pulled from the bidding box even as they place it on the table. ACBL tournament directors are instructed to be liberal in judging that mechanical irregularities are inadvertent, but don’t expect to convince a director that you inadvertently pulled the pass card when you meant to bid 6 spades. **Try to make it a habit to look at your bid card before pulling it completely out of the box.**

4. Why do players call the Director on me and say I took too long to bid/pass? The Laws of Duplicate Bridge cover this subject under the heading of Unauthorized Information. Since players are authorized to base their calls and plays on information from legal calls and plays and from mannerisms of opponents (but not partner), to base a call or play on other extraneous information may be an infraction of law. Sometimes, although usually inadvertent, a player may make available to his partner extraneous information by means of an unmistakable hesitation. While that player is often unaware that he has made a noticeable hesitation, the opponents may want to call the Director to protect their rights which include that the partner of the person who hesitated may not choose from among logical alternatives one action that could demonstrably have been suggested by the extraneous information provided (in this case a hesitation).

5. How do I know what I have to “Alert”? The ACBL uses what is called an Alert System so that all players at a table have equal access to the information contained in any auction. In order to meet this goal, it is necessary that all players understand and practice the principles of Full Disclosure and Active Ethics. Ethical bridge players will recognize the obligation to give complete explanations. They will accept the fact that any such information is entirely for the benefit of the opponents, and may not be used to assist their own partnership. Therefore, the simple truth is that if you or your partner bids something that the opponents are not likely to understand or know, it is the other’s duty to alert them to that fact. (Also see Part 2 of this booklet.)

6. Why can’t I put a card back into my hand before it has touched the table? The Laws state that a defender’s card held so that it is possible for his partner to see its face must be played to the current trick. However, if you’re the declarer a card isn’t considered played until you face it up on the table, or have it touching or nearly touching the table (or maintained in such a position as to indicate that it had been played). These laws exist to keep people from playing in a careless manner and then trying to correct the errors they make without penalty.

7. Why can’t I ask the other players to see what cards have been played to a trick, after they have been turned over? So long as his side has not led or played to the next trick, declarer or either defender may, until he has turned his own card face down on the table, require that all cards just played to the trick be faced. In addition, until a card is led to the next trick, declarer or either defender may inspect, but not expose, his own last card played. Thereafter, until play

ceases, quitted tricks may not be inspected (except at the Director's specific instruction; for example, to verify a claim of a revoke).

8. When the declarer claims the rest of the tricks in a hand, and I don't think it's true, what do I do? After any claim or concession, play ceases. All play subsequent to a claim or concession shall be voided by the Director. If the claim is disputed by any player (dummy included), the Director must be summoned immediately and the applicable Laws enforced.

9. What can I do when I am uncomfortable at the table because the opponents are arguing? Perhaps the best thing to do is to call the Director. To get personally involved will perhaps affect not only your bridge game but also your relationship with the opponents who are arguing.

10. Why can't I put my hand on the bidding box before I am ready to pull my bid out? According to an appendix to the Laws a bid is made when the bid card is removed from the box with intent. Thus when a player runs his/her hand over the bid cards and starts, but does not actually remove one, he is not considered to have made any "call". However, unauthorized information (UI) may have been transmitted to partner. There are no specific penalties, but the director will adjust the score if he determines that partner's actions might have been influenced by the UI. The bottom line: *decide on your call before you reach for and touch a bidding card!!*