

THE DUMMY

Quarterly Publication of the Delaware State Bridge Association ----- February 2021

UPCOMING EVENTS

Want to win a **Door Prize?**

Saturdays in February

10:00am
DSBA_Championship
Flights A, B, C
(<500, <1500, open)

Special Limited Games

09:30 **Tuesday Morning**
(0-300)
12:30 **Thursday Afternoon**
(0-1000)
9:00 **Friday Morning**
(0-750)
10:00 **Saturday morning**
(DSBA tourney)
06:00 **Sunday Night**
(0-500)

Open Games

07:00 **Monday Night**
09:30 **Tuesday (Shuffles)**
09:30 **Thursday (Shuffles)**
07:00 **Thursday Night**
09:30 **Friday**
10:00 **Saturday Tourney**

*Due to my isolation, I
finished 3 books yesterday.
That's a lot of coloring.*

DSBA PRESIDENT'S LETTER

PUT ON YOUR SHADES - THE FUTURE OF BRIDGE IS BRIGHT

We were all glad to see the demise of 2020. For those of us who cherish duplicate bridge, it has been traumatic. Activities that filled our weeks with fellowship and camaraderie ended abruptly. Our club games and tournaments have been replaced with online events through Bridge Base Online (BBO). Some of us choose not to play at all saying, "It's just not the same game." Others cite general challenges with technology and difficulty with keyboarding as reasons not to play bridge online.

Well, that light you see at the end of the tunnel is not an oncoming train. There is hope, and there is the real likelihood of face-to-face bridge returning in 2021. Vaccines exist, they work well, and people are being vaccinated as you read this. Once we are vaccinated and can gather safely, face-to-face bridge will return! But will it be the "same"; and if not, what will it look like?

It is likely that face-to-face bridge will first return to local clubs. Those local clubs will plan to use the same materials, table spacing, and scoring technology as before. They will do that because it is what they know, and what they can execute. The ACBL, if history informs us at all, will be inclined to do the same. Physical cards, shared boards, bidding boxes and tables spaced on 8' centers . . . it is what they have and what they know.

For many of us, returning to the pre-COVID-19 bridge table is what we want. But it is not what we as bridge players, nor the ACBL need. The pandemic pushed the bridge pause button, forcing the ACBL to scramble, forming an alliance with an online bridge organization they have held at arm's length for 25 years.

DSBA PRESIDENT'S LETTER (continued)

That's right! Online duplicate bridge has been around for more than 25 years. That is plenty of time to blend the many attractive features of bridge online into face-to-face competition. With online bridge, there are no bidding boxes, boards to make and supplies to store and schlep around. Game administration is easier so fixed costs are reduced. Players can still gather to play at any place with good Wi-Fi. I believe the local McDonald's would be delighted to host 40 bridge players from 2:00 to 4:00 in the afternoon . . .

Speaking of attractive features, note that I do not want to give up self-alerts, the ability to ask questions heard by only one opponent, or having a complete record of every bid and card played. I do not miss "leads out of turn" or "bids out of turn," even when they are to my advantage. And wouldn't it be nice to have a couple of members who are homebound join the local club game?

Why has it taken so long? Sure, there are challenges. User friendliness, accommodating disabilities and game integrity (cheating) are some of the barriers and real concerns of online bridge players. Are they insurmountable obstacles, or simply problems yet to be solved? We are constantly seeking ways to reverse the decline of duplicate bridge, and the best ideas may have just been forced upon us.

So, if you have been playing online, think about what online features you would like to retain when face-to-face bridge returns. If you have stayed away from the online game, for whatever reason, give it a try. Your input is important in shaping the look of bridge events when we return to face-to-face bridge.



DSBA President Mark Henderson

My relationship with whiskey is on the rocks.

ADVANCEMENT IN RANK

Junior Master

Francis J. Clark
Jay Gunaserka

Bronze Life Master

Mary K. Reilly

Sapphire Life Master

Mark G. Henderson
Anne C. Taylor

Sectional Master

Walter Weeks

Silver Life Master

Colin C. Mackay

Emerald Life Master

Francis (Mooch) F. Taylor

Regional Master

Pamela Folz

Ruby Life Master

Leon J. Tomaszewski

REMEMBER? 2019 DELAWARE 299er TOURNEY



YOU CAN'T MAKE THIS UP

(Made Up by Mark Henderson)

Last March, when face to face bridge shut down due to Covid-19, we set about keeping the bridge community together through on-line team bridge. Dozens of teams were created, with names like *The Gay Blades*, *Four Boreds Around*, *A Lady and the Tramps*, and *The Strange Club*. Friends got together weekly to play the game they love. As time passed, Pair games emerged online, both nationally and at the club level. The focus on team bridge faded, and rightly so, as the Pair games offered master points and supported our local clubs.

For many, however, Team Bridge has continued to thrive. Stories abound of teams that have been competing weekly for nearly a year. One such story is particularly dear to my heart. Since April 2, 2020, *The Gay Blades* have competed, fought, scratched, and clawed, (no biting!) against *The Lady and the Tramps*.

The team names are worthy stories themselves. *The Gay Blades*, (Bern Rehberg, Mark Henderson, David Venetianer, Kurt Engleman) owe their identity, I am told, not to their sexual orientation, but to ice skating. Seems Bern Rehberg has a cherished picture of himself at age one, with his Olympic skater father, together on the ice. Only problem, Bern "faceplanted" just in time for the picture.

The Lady and the Tramps (Barb Rhoades, Cindy Rowland, Anne Taylor, Ala Hamilton-Day) refused to share the origin of their name for this article, and none will admit to being a lady. I believe they expect to "tramp" on whoever they play. But you can decide for yourself.

So here you have it, Boys against the Girls, 11,000 masterpoints vs. 16,000 masterpoints, David against Goliath . . . 47 struggles and no hospitalizations! And where are we now?

The Tramps and the Blades have traded 2,387imps. The Tramps have won 23 matches, the Blades 22, with two ties. The total imp score after 47 matches is Tramps 1195, Blades 1192.

But that is not all. There have been interlopers, substitutes that have influenced the results. Roy Perry and Rick Rowland have donned a wig and a little lipstick and sashayed as "Tramps." Melody Henderson has risked her feminist reputation to skate with the "Blades." We are comforted by the fact that we have others to blame for our failure!

This battle is not over! The Gay Blades have resolved in the New Year to vanquish "A Lady" when we find her, and the rest of the Tramps in 2021. **SPECTATORS WELCOME!**

The Gay Blades

2020 RACE WINNERS

MINI-MCKENNEY

ACE OF CLUBS

0-5	Rohan Mandayam Susan Keyser Francis Clark	Rohan Mandayam Susan Keyser Francis Clark
5-20	Beth Kinney Neil Himelein Elayne Davidson	Beth Kinney Neil Himelein Elayne Davidson
20-50	Pamela Folz John Kinney Kusum Patel	John Kinney Pamela Folz Darlene Bolig
50-100	Ann Biehn Deborah Flayhart Susan Royce	Ann Biehn Deborah Flayhart Susan Royce
100-200	Mark Nehra Duke Lohr Sally Humphrey	Mark Nehra Sally Humphrey Francis Jacobs
200-300	Sugi Hayes Teresa Spicer Robert Hatton	Sugi Hayes Robert Hatton Teresa Spicer
300-500	Debbie Schenkel Diane Gordy Donald Pyne	Donald Pyne Debbie Schenkel Judith Cronin

500-1,000	Kim Holm Tamara Holm Teresa Young	Teresa Young Karin Schwenk Tina Brinsfield
1,000-1,500	Karen Pollak Sharon Weintrob Francis Bizzoco	Sharon Weintrob Karen Pollak Thomas Hughes
1,500-2,500	Melody Henderson Herbert Chalek David Venetianer	Melody Henderson Herbert Chalek Nancy Steele
2,500-3,500	Mark Henderson Terry Patton Cynthia Morris	Mark Henderson Terry Patton Cynthia Morris
3,500-5,000	Bernard Rehberg Harold Jordan Fred Gillespie	Bernard Rehberg Harold Jordan Fred Gillespie
5,000-7,500	Alessandra Graves Francis Taylor, Jr. Ala Hamilton-Day	Alessandra Graves Francis Taylor, Jr. Ala Hamilton-Day
7,500-10,000	Randall Berseth Peter Filandro Marie Filandro	Randall Berseth Marie Filandro Peter Filandro
10,000 +	Richard Popper Rick Rowland Jess Stuart	Rick Rowland Richard Popper Jess Stuart



Delaware State Bridge Association Door Prizes!



Thanks to all who have been participating in the [Winter 2021 Delaware State Championship Tournament](#). It has been great to "see" so many of our bridge community on BBO.

But, for those of us who do not know everyone or do not remember faces they haven't seen for close to a year, we are trying to connect faces to the BBO IDs. So here is the deal: send a selfie or other recent picture of yourself to Soley Kristjansdottir (siggasoley@gmail.com), together with your BBO username. By submitting a picture, you agree to have it posted or linked on the Unit 190 website with your name and BBO ID. We will post your picture AND you will be eligible for a door prize of 25 BBO dollars in each subsequent Saturday session in which you play. One prize will be awarded each Saturday *for each flight*, to a player who played on that Saturday in that flight, and whose selfie was received by midnight the night before.

Some photos have already been submitted. You can see them [here](#). We look forward to "seeing" you online at future tournament sessions, at 10:00 EST each remaining Saturday in January and February on BBO.

www.bridgewebs.com/unit190acbl

Scheduled Bridge Studio Events:

	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Saturday
Morning			9:30am: 0-300 & Open			9:00am: 0-750 9:30am: Open	Feb 2021 10:00am DSBA_Championship Flights A, B, C (<500, <1500, open)
Evening	6:00pm: 0-500 6:30pm: Open	7:00pm: Open			7:00pm: Open		



Robert Montgomery “Monty” Taylor

Monty Taylor passed away suddenly on January 16, 2021, after battling a long and debilitating illness. Monty was born in Memphis on April 10, 1955, on Easter Sunday, to parents Lula and Connor Taylor.

He graduated with high honors from University of Memphis, married his wife, Anne and moved many times in his career before calling Delaware home. He was soon to be retired from TotalTrax, Inc, where he worked as a mechanical engineer and computer specialist.

Along the way Monty was blessed with 2 wonderful children, Ryan and Leigh. Monty’s love of music was a passion throughout his life. He was honored to play acoustic guitar at both of his children’s weddings. He had an outstanding tenor singing voice was a member of several chorale groups.

Monty also had a true passion for the outdoors. He enjoyed backpacking, sailing, windsurfing, paddle boarding, hiking with the dogs, biking, and basically anything that took him outside especially with his children. He was an accomplished bridge player and frequented many tournaments in partnership with his wife, Anne.

He is preceded in death by his parents and his sister, Kathy Taylor and brother-in law, Bill Cullinan. Monty is survived by his wife of 43 years, Anne, of Newark, DE, his son, Ryan and his wife, Angie and grandchildren, Olivia and Amelia of Wilmington, DE. His daughter, Leigh and her husband, Kyle Moran, of Wilmington DE, his sister, Susan Klein and his Aunt Kathleen Montgomery, of Memphis and his brother-in-law, Tom Cullinan of Indian Wells, CA, along with many cherished nieces and nephews. He also leaves behind many great friends and his beloved yellow lab, Coby.

In lieu of flowers we ask for any offerings to be made to the <https://www.sierraclubfoundation.org/> or The Dystonia Medical Research Foundation (DMRF). Private services will be held and an outdoor Celebration of Life ceremony to be held in late spring with details to follow.

DANCING WITH BILL

By Bill Herdle

I play almost every day on BBO in a team game, a casual game, a BBO open pairs game, or in a club game. Occasionally, a partner invites me to play in a club game for an unfamiliar club. Almost without exception, the games I enjoy most are the team games and the local club games, including the 2021 Winter Delaware State Championship. The reason is simple: I know the people I am playing against. I can mentally attach faces to the anonymous BBO usernames. I know when I am playing against a skilled pair and especially need to be on my toes. (There is no guarantee of good dancing by me, but it is fun to watch and learn even when I mess up.) There are too few opportunities to be with friends these days, and the Unit 190 games are among the best.

SPORTS NEWS

By Bern Rehberg

I would like to thank all my partners for keeping me relatively sane throughout 2020. I may have done some damage to their equilibrium, given my occasional randomness, but that will go unreported. Kudos to the good sports Mooch (**Boilermaker**) Taylor, Kurt (**Indians** - but not for long) Engleman, Debbie (**Phillies**) Schenkel, David (**Jets**) Venetianer, Mark (**The AGGRESSOR**) Henderson, Melody (**the thinker**) Henderson and Fred (**UNcommon game**) Gillespie. And isn't it special to be able to hang out with **Tramps** once a week? What more could an old man ask for?

BRIDGE-ing the Canal

By Trina Williams

Unique to Delaware, a canal divides the Northern and Southern parts of the state. Also unique to Delaware, the canal divided northern bridge from southern bridge for many years. But now...

Due to the innovative ideas of several persons in the state, followed closely by the hard work and initiative of many persons in the state, we have conquered 2020 and its effects on our most precious hobby: bridge!

Bridge Studio of Delaware led the online "charge" by offering games to all members of Unit 190 (state of Delaware) and Delaware State Bridge Association (DSBA). Everyone expected that face to face bridge

would return quickly. When it did not, “Shuffles” (southern club) partnered with Bridge Studio (northern club) to unite bridge across the canal! The DSBA sponsored bridge instruction aimed at introducing online bridge to anyone who wanted to learn to play. The DSBA scheduled a Saturday Tournament (9 consecutive Saturdays) open to all Unit 190 members.

The results have been phenomenal! Tuesday “Shuffles” and Thursday morning “Bridge Studio/Shuffles” games are averaging 15 tables, and Saturday tournament games with flighted events, are averaging 16 tables! Bridge Studio regular club games host players from all over the state. No more North vs. South; no more southern tournaments and northern tournaments; simply one group of bridge players reaching out to play in their favorite game against all competitors.

THANK YOU to each person who participated in the planning, setup, and implementation of this project. And THANKS to each member who plays in these games. We have built the “bridge” and joined forces for the common good!

TEAMING AROUND

By Barbara Rhoades

Since team bridge began online, back in April, I have been playing two weekly team games on two different teams. ***The Rhoades Scholars*** (Harold Jordan, Soley Kristjansdottir, Greg Burch, Roy Perry and I) vs. ***Mshugenah*** (Jay and April Apfelbaum and R. David Walker and Dara Diner) play 18 boards every Wednesday evening at 7:00. Roy and I share a playing slot. He plays the first 9 boards and I bring it home. This game is always followed up with a “***Scholars***” zoom aftermath, where we get to “see” each other, have a few laughs and discuss the boards just played. It is great fun!

Lady and the Tramps (Cindy Rowland, Anne Taylor, Ala Hamilton-Day and I) vs ***The Gay Blades*** (Mark Henderson, David Venetianer, Bern Rehberg and Kurt Engleman) play 12 boards every Thursday morning at 9:30. This Boys vs. Girls match involves a lot of trash talking, silly banter, and cheering for our own team. I am told the girls have a slight edge, but me and my fellow teammates believe the edge is bigger than the Blades will admit (do not believe everything you read).

Feel free to come kibbitz either of these games. The Wednesday evening match usually gets a nice crowd. We would love to “see” you. **[GO TRAMPS!](#)**

What's in a Name?

Or What Were They Thinking When They Came Up with That?

By Tom Tully

Playing bridge online has been my salvation during the Corvid -19 pandemic and deciphering players' usernames on the BBO website has greatly added to the fun. Starting with my own **TNT43RR9**, I've had friends tell me they might have recognized **TT** and guessed I was born in 1943; but they did not know my middle name is Nelson (or that my father was a chemist with a sense of humor). Some people knew my Viet Nam connection, but no one connected **RR9** to Radio Relay and the 9th Marines.

My long-time friend and bridge partner Karen Pollak uses **bunkycpa** from her husband's nickname for her plus her early career: **bunky** was already in use by someone else so she had to add something to it. Our much younger and more practical Swiss Team partners are Nancy Ferguson (**NDFerg**) and Karin Schwenk (**Kschwenk**), but we simply refer to them as **The Babes** for all their energy (and other attractive assets).

Although not required, we wanted to have a team name and some obvious ones came to mind like **Team No Trump**, **Bridge of Sighs**, and **Bridge Over the River Cry**. **Bridge Over Troubled Water** was the actual brainchild of Denise Ucciferro (**ducciferro**) and her teammates Stuart Nemser (**nthog31**), Phyllis Lochiatto (**Boothwyn**), Sugi Hayes (**Sugi_1**), and Sally Humphrey (**Ryan12**). I will have more about Sally and her real-life child later.

All these clever names were true to these hard times, but not reflective of the unique composition of our team like, say, the great Swedish pop group **ABBA**, who used the initials of their first names to form that famous acronym. So, we played around with **KKNaT**, **KKaNT**, and **TaNKK** (with "and" as the requisite vowel) and finally settled on **TaNKK** as the best variant. We didn't want to sound annoying like a gnat or negative as in can't or cant. Tanks project an image of strength, right? There is also the real possibility of "tanking" (which we have done) but you must take the bad with the good. Is this deep or what?

Two of our stalwart guest teammates have been Bill Herdle (**billherd**) and Tom Denney (**t9231857**). Despite the rumors, Bill is not Colin Cowherd's sidekick on The Herd sports program; and Tom did not serve in the U.S. Navy before the Civil War. Tom was discharged from naval service on the 23rd of September in **1958**. But in a rare senior moment he entered his username exactly 100 years too early and has been stuck with it ever since!

One of our first online opponents gave new meaning to "reach out and touch someone" with **Feel the Bern**. The name was devised by Mark Henderson in honor of teammate Bern Rehberg. Bern had himself tried to honor his youngest son Raymond Alexander with **raylex**, but his computer's Spellcheck changed it to **railed**. Apparently BBO does not allow changes in usernames once they are entered, and like Tom Denny, Bern is stuck with his.

Bern was playing then with Debbie Schenkel (**dgs24**) who uses her initials and birthday, April **24** (the day, not the year, mind you). Mark was tagged as "The Goose" by his college basketball buddies for his "style" and still has the coffee mug to prove it. There were two similarly named players ahead of him on BBO, so he became **Thegoose03**. Melody Henderson's **Samantha11** is a nod to her alter ego, the enchanting lead character of the TV show **Bewitched**; but again, the name was already taken so Melody added the number 11 to it because she liked the look of the number and found it easy to remember.

Jeff Billheimer (**billheij**) is now with the team and his username makes sense once you know who it is. Would you have deciphered it on first inspection? I think including the "m" would have made it too easy and maybe Jeff did too. Someone should ask him.

Our Southern friends gave us some stiff competition until they disbanded for the summer. **Home with the Holms** was Tamara (**Homerlee**) and Kim (**Kimholm13**) Holm with teammates Trina Williams (**mamagrace**) and Patricia Brown (**Tricolbro**). Tammie used the nickname for her married name plus her maiden name to form her username. Kim simply entered his name when asked to do so and added 13, his favorite number. So, there are not another dozen Kim Holms out there as his username might imply -- but wouldn't that be a blessing! And speaking of blessings, Grace was Trina Williams' mother's name and the source of **mamagrace**. Patricia used abbreviations of her nickname Tricia, maiden name Coleman, and married name Brown to form **Tricolbro**.

Another early and on-going match for **TaNKK** has been against **Andy and His Gang** with Andy Rosenberg (**andyr4**) and Wayne Rosenberger (**Wayneros**) and their teammates Bill (**Williamgol**) and Joan (**XLQueen**) Goldstein. All the men were obvious in their choices; but what are the chances of your playing against a Precision pair whose real last names differ only by one of them going to the **ER**? The one lady in the group is the real winner with a gem of sophisticated self-deprecating humor. You go, Girl!

We have also been playing against a team that always makes me think of a County & Western band. **CJ & the Bills** is Carole Everitt (**clegrandy**) and Jean Brown (**JKSB1201**) with teammates Bill Everitt (**rangerbill**) and Bill Dillon (**wmkdillon**). Carole uses her initials and her grandkids' nickname for her while Jean uses her initials and her birthday. Mr. Everitt proudly recalls his service as an Airborne Ranger Army officer in Viet Nam; and Mr. Dillon reminds us (as did Mr. Goldstein) that Bill is short for William (although he once told me he only uses William under special circumstances such as when being interrogated by the police). The K is for Kimball, an old family name on his father's side.

During the tax season, Bill Everitt gets so busy doing tax returns at H&R Block that Sally Humphrey subs for him. Her username **Ryan12** is her son's name plus his age when she first started playing online.

Strange Club is John Strange (**Johnboat 23**) with Caroline Hughs (**Poodlerock**) and teammates Steven Katz (**Stevester**) and Owen Powell (**OwenHuw**). John is a sailor who built his own boat in his garage many years ago when one of the girls in his daughter's class at Wilmington Friends School christened him **Johnboat** in the Amish tradition of using first names as a sign of respect and affection. John added 23 just because he likes the number.

Caroline's beloved grandmother raised poodles, was affectionately known as Poodle, and inspired Caroline herself to own poodles and be called Poodle by her own grandkids. The rock part has something to do with being cool or solid, but no one quite remembers the origin.

Anyone who has met Steven Katz pretty much understands **Stevester**. Owen's middle name is Huw, which is Welsh for Hugh, and I defy anyone to have guessed. Steve and Owen are another Precision pair, so look out!

Are you seeing a pattern here in these team matches? Need a hint? Okay, in every case one of the pairs is a married couple and, in every case, but one, the husband uses some form of his real name in his username, but the wife does not. We do not have Mark, but we do have William, Kim, Bill and John. On the other hand, we do not have Melody, Tamara, Joan, Carole or Caroline in any of the wives' usernames. I may have to delve further into this because there are several married couples in Unit 190 that **TaNKK** does not play that do not maintain this pattern. **Rickrow + Cindyrow** comes immediately to mind, but that will have to wait for further research.

Speedball matches are fast-paced and well-attended, and I like to check out the competition by clicking on the entries and seeing what pops up. One night Karen and I competed against a tough crowd which included two Grand Life Masters (one of whom, **missynist** was a woman). One pair was **ugogirls + stickycard** and another was **babyboyO + jellyO**. I think **Super1963 + alfie** were a little off because that movie came out three years later in 1966 (the year I came home from Viet Nam). **2tango + jawdoctor1** came prepared in case **fruitloop** or **G89Ape** got fresh while trying to cut in on the dance floor.

Knottygirl probably liked macramé and **plantlady2** most likely had a green thumb (unlike Tom Denny, who admits to having fat fingers). **Hahahapc** was either mocking political correctness or loves computers, and I loved **xoxoxo12** for giving out hugs and kisses by the dozen!

So, what is in a name? Apparently, there is lots of patriotism, family history, fun, and passion represented by those odd and often amusing usernames. So, get out there and throw your name in the ring! See you online. And if you see me, please click on **TNT43RR9** and say Hi!

I dusted once, but it came back.

Not falling for that again.

FLUSTERED FLO – REAL OR VIRTUAL?

By Pieter VanBennekom

The rollout of COVID vaccinations has not been going very well, but at least there's hope that sometime this year, enough people will have received shots to think about going back to face-to-face bridge.

When bridge clubs reopen and the ACBL resumes tournaments, what happens to online bridge? As per a recent heated discussion on the Bridgewinners website, some people are of the opinion that online bridge via BBO was always meant only as a temporary solution, and that once it is safe to go back to in-person events, online games should be discontinued.

The ACBL should not sponsor or sanction any more virtual clubs or tournaments to drive people back to the tables, these people feel. Playing bridge online for some free practice would be fine, but competitive bridge should be played in person, they say.

"There are countless reasons why bridge should be face-to-face," wrote Louis Beauchet. "To see your friends and enjoy laughs, walks and dinners with them, travel and hold cards in your hand – isn't bridge a card game?" He denigrated online bridge as little more than a "computer video game."

One of Louis' main antagonists was Cornelia Yoder, who told him he needs more variety in his life if the only laughs he gets with friends are from in-person bridge. "And as for holding cards in your hand, I cannot imagine why that physical sensation would be important to anyone," she added. Cornelia and others say they find the online version superior to in-person bridge and they will never go back.

The ACBL and many clubs around the country will probably run side-by-side in-person and online games for a while, even after it is determined safe enough to get back to the tables. Some people may still be fearful of getting into physical gatherings and will welcome the continued availability of online bridge.

In Florida, depending on vaccine progress, clubs may start to reopen late spring or early summer, just when the snowbirds fly back north. By then, they will have become used to playing year-round with Florida friends. They will want to continue playing online from their summer homes, so big clubs like ours in Vero Beach, 4th largest in the country, are looking at indefinitely running online games.

Whatever the future of bridge online or in-person, BBO games continue to provide many interesting and challenging hands. In a recent casual session, my partner Christine and I got an absolute top – and a whopping 15.3 International Match Points (IMPs) – for making a doubled Small Slam in 6♦ on just 27 combined high-card points, despite spirited bidding interference during the auction. One opponent had a six-card suit and the other even boasted a seven-card suit.

On such a wildly distributional hand, of course the results were all over the place. One other pair playing in the same direction bid and made the same Slam, but they did not get doubled, which gave us the top. Most people playing our way tried 3 No-Trump. That made twice, but went down most times, by three or even four tricks. And other pairs playing in our same direction got points from doubling the opponents in 3 or 4 Spades and collecting significant down points.

I like the hand enough to turn it into a Bridge Burglar blog entry, because it allowed us to use two of our favorite gadgets – Inverted Minors and the Voidwood Slam convention – to reach the ambitious, but unbeatable contract.

For unwisely doubling, the West player will become my column's anti-hero, Flustered Flo, and I will be her nemesis, Smug Sam, with the North hand that became dummy. Christine will be my partner, Shy Shem, who gets to play the Slam as the South Declarer. Flo is playing with her usual East partner, Loyal Larry.

East Dealer; North-South vulnerable

North

♠ - - -
♥ Q 4 2
♦ Q 10 6 4 2
♣ K J 10 5 3

West

♠ A 9 8 7 5 4 3
♥ J
♦ K 7 5
♣ 4 2

East

♠ K 10 2
♥ 10 9 8 7 6 3
♦ 9
♣ Q 9 8

South

♠ Q J 6
♥ A K 5
♦ A J 8 3
♣ A 7 6

The bidding:

<u>East</u> (Loyal Larry)	<u>South</u> (Shy Shem)	<u>West</u> (Flustered Flo)	<u>North</u> (Smug Sam)
Pass	1♦	Pass	2♦*
2♥	3 NT	Pass	4♠**
Pass	5♥***	Pass	6♦
Pass	Pass	Double	All pass

* alerted as inverted minors, Diamond support, opening count

** Voidwood, asking for keycards, excluding Ace of Spades because of void

*** showing 3 keycards, 3 Aces or 2 Aces with King of trump suit (Diamonds)

Opening lead: ♥J

Does bidding interference by opponents help or hurt when you are trying to get to a Slam? It all depends – sometimes it can help aggressive bidders.

That is what Flustered Flo found out in an online BBO casual game with the West hand when she doubled her nemesis Smug Sam's **6♦** bid from the North seat. She thought her double was a sure thing, since she had the King of her opponents' trump suit, apparently in safe position behind the opening bidder in Diamonds, as well as a side Ace.

Shem took the opening lead in dummy with the **♥Q** and immediately tried the losing finesse for the **♦K**, putting Flo on lead again. Flo knew that she could not lead her **♠A** because dummy was void, so she chose the **♣4**, which made things even easier for Shem. Shem played dummy's **♣J** and Flo's East partner, Loyal Larry, had no choice but to insert his **♣Q** Queen under Shem's **♣A**. Shem then had the rest, drawing two rounds of trumps and running his good Clubs and Hearts.

The +1,540 score, for Shem making the doubled vulnerable Slam, was an absolute top for Sam and Shem, and thus a bottom for Flo and Larry. Only one other North-South pair bid the Slam but did not get doubled. Another N-S pair was in 5 Diamonds, making 6, while a couple were lucky enough to make 3 No-Trump. Most N-S pairs that tried 3 NT went down by several tricks – by the time, the finesse on the **♦K** failed, all the opponents' **♠** were good.

"I've got a problem with your bidding," Flo later told Sam when they hooked up for a Zoom meeting to discuss some of the more interesting hands they had played. "You say you play Inverted Minors, which means that your **2♦** bid should have shown **♦** support as well as opening count. But you had only 8 high-card points – how does that even come close to opening count?"

"With my void in Spades, I had the equivalent of openers," said Sam, smug as always. "That void turned out to be immensely powerful, so it was the right response. As a matter of fact, I have a problem with YOUR bidding, Flo. How come you didn't interfere with your long Spades? Your partner interfered with long Hearts, but I would have expected you to put up more resistance with even longer Spades."

"In the old days, I would have said that I had a **♠** mixed in with my **♣**," said Flo. "But the computer sorts our hands now, so I don't have that excuse anymore. I simply miscounted my **♠**. Are you saying that if I had overcalled or maybe pre-empted in **♠**, you wouldn't have been able to use the Inverted Minors convention and then you wouldn't have reached your Slam?"

"Not really," said Sam, "if you would have bid **♠**, yes, Inverted Minors is off, but you would give me the opportunity to cue-bid in **♠** and force the auction to Game or Slam, depending on what my partner had. He had a big hand, so we'd get to the Slam anyway."

"Was my double really that bad?" Flo asked. "I thought I had two sure tricks with the **♦K** of your trump suit and my **♠A**. And I hoped I might get another trick with my singleton **♥J** if my partner had the **♥A** in his suit."

“Hope is not a strategy,” said Sam. “Actually, none of your supposed tricks were sure bets. Since both of us had ♦, you did not know who had the ♦A, so your ♦K might have been finessable. And once you discovered how many ♠ you really had; you could have suspected someone would be void in the suit. Anyway, a double is not work the risk. If we didn’t make it, you would get a good board anyway with a plus score. But if we did make it, it was going to be really bad for you.”

“So, you got a chance to rub it in?” Flo asked.

“It’s not that so much,” said Sam, trying to be magnanimous. “I just really liked the hand because it gave me an opportunity to use two of our favorite bidding gadgets, Inverted Minors and the Voidwood or Exclusion Blackwood convention. It’s not often that you get to use two gadgets on the same hand.”

“So glad to be of service to you as a useful foil,” said Flo.

A note from the DUMMY Editor . . .

News flash! Our world and our game have changed. Unit 190 members, please consider adding your voice to the discussion about how we return to F2F bridge. And hold up your phone for that selfie, then email it to siggasoley@gmail.com, together with your BBO username. and a chance to win a **Door Prize** when you play with friends on Saturdays at 10 AM. For information, kudos, and compliments, my email address is alabridge@gmail.com.