



Hartford Bridge Club

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September 2021 Newsletter

Hi Everyone,

As the Scottish poet Robert Burns wrote (and John Steinbeck copied), "the best laid plans of mice and men often go awry." We certainly feel that way. The Delta variant and the surge of COVID-19 cases locally, in the state and across the nation have certainly thrown our plans into a cocked hat.

90th Anniversary Postponed

The club had been planning a terrific event for our 90th Anniversary on November 14th at the Farmington Club. We were truly excited about the prospect of holding our annual meeting and celebrating together our rich history as the oldest club in North America and our special community at a splendid location. But the uncertainties caused by the Delta variant, the difficulties, and indeed impossibilities of planning at this time and the likely need to wear masks indoors have caused the club to postpone that celebration until next spring when hopefully we can gather more freely and celebrate without the fears and risks to everyone's health and safety.

Health and Safety

Speaking of health and safety, we plan to keep the club open with a mask requirement until further notice. We will continue to monitor COVID-19 levels and public health announcements and will adapt as necessary to protect the well-being of those who participate in the club's live games.

Annual Meeting Date Changed

We also had hoped to hold the club's annual meeting as part of the 90th Anniversary event, but now find ourselves realizing that unfortunately we are not in a much better position now than we were last fall. So, again, we are now planning to hold the annual meeting virtually on Sunday, October 24th. Fortunately, we have a terrific template for the meeting from last year and we plan to again hold an efficient meeting followed by an online game in the afternoon. So, save the date and be prepared to join us that afternoon.

Dues Will be Due Starting October 1

Annual Dues of \$35 are due starting October 1 for the club's fiscal year of October 1, 2021, to September 30, 2022. You will be receiving invitations to the Annual Meeting along with a notice of the annual dues in mid-September. In these challenging times, the Board voted to increase the dues slightly to \$35 this year. They have not been increased for more than a decade. This fiscal year, we have had 462 dues-paying members and we much

appreciate everyone's support. We are hoping to maintain that level of membership in the coming fiscal year and are prepared to work hard and smartly to earn it.

For those of you who want to join or renew your membership now, you can find the membership form for paying by credit card online or by check via snail mail on our website's Membership Renewal page at <https://www.hartfordbridgeclub.org/2021-2membership-renewal>. Or, [click here](#) to open and print the Membership form from this newsletter.

Schedule of Games Augmented and Revised for Fall

One of the things the directors, with input from the Board of Trustees, spend a great deal of time thinking about, analyzing and planning is the game schedule. We were starting to build some good momentum for our live games after reopening in mid-June until we were forced to require masks. That requirement has halted that momentum in live games. For the fall, we are trying hard to devise a schedule of online and live games that works as well as it can for everyone playing at our games. We strive to have games that are well attended. You should know that the economics of the games are that at four tables, the club essentially breaks even after taking into account directors' fees and ACBL fees for live games and also breaks even after taking into account directors' fees, ACBL and BBO fees for online games. Above four tables, the club earns money at a 2:1 ratio from live to online games as the number of tables increases. In other words, five tables in live games are as profitable as six tables in online games; six tables in live games are as profitable as eight tables in online games; etc. We look carefully at such matters to try to ensure that the club meets its fixed expenses.

In setting our fall schedule, which will start on September 13 and which we plan to review at least monthly, we have tried hard to take into account what we hear from our members. Among the requests we have had is that those with fewer than 200 masterpoints would like more opportunities to play in the morning and would also like more 0-300 and 0-500 games. In the fall schedule, we have tried to accommodate those desires. Similarly, we have heard that those in the open games would like afternoon games and we have tried to accommodate that desire. We've also heard that some players with fewer than 200 masterpoints are reluctant to play in the 0-750 games, so we did an analysis of those games. What we found is that, in the last month, those games are scarcely different than 0-500 games as they have, on average, fewer than three persons with 450-750 masterpoints participating in them. Nonetheless, we appreciate that a number of our members have said they enjoy playing with their peers, so we have reduced the number of 0-750 games while adding 0-300 and 0-500 games. The new schedule, which will begin on September 13, can be found at the end of this newsletter.

Variety of Games Planned

We also want to note that we added a large number of NAOP qualifying games, which provided extra masterpoints as well as the opportunity to qualify for the North American Pairs competition. We continue to provide the maximum number of club championship games that we can, so members can earn extra masterpoints at those games. Finally, we're committed to adding spice and variety to our games. We expect to have Swiss Team games, imp games, mentor games, and high-low masterpoint pair games in the fall. We also contemplate experimenting with directorless games later in the fall. We need to work out the logistics, but if we eliminate the expense of directors, we can offer online games for as low as \$3 a game. The expectation is that this would be attractive in competition with the inexpensive BBO games.

In short, we know we need to compete with other opportunities on BBO and we intend to make the effort to try to do so in a variety of ways this fall. We don't expect all of them to succeed, but we hope our loyal and supportive members appreciate the effort and we want to hear from you. Please don't hesitate to tell us what you want. We do listen and pay close attention to what we hear from members.

Masks, Mask and More Masks

Speaking of making the club more attractive to members, Ben and Ginnie Bishop have been making masks by the hundreds to keep their friends, families, and fellow bridge club members safe, comfortable and fashionable. Dozens of masks have been ordered by members of the club...a drumroll, please...for free. Anyone can request one and there is a sign-up list at the club. Here's what Ben and Ginny say about their masks. "These masks are handmade by us with all new material. We offer a wide variety of fabrics, colors and themes. [See a few samples in the picture below.] Our surgical masks are designed for exceptional filtration performance with 4 plies of fabric...each mask has an aluminum nose piece sewn inside to the backing, and either adjustable elastic ear-loops or head-bands securely sewn to all layers." Each mask also comes with a removable tethered mask bracket (see photo) for added effectiveness and comfort. **And they're free!**



If you haven't yet taken advantage of this extraordinarily generous offer by Ginny and Ben, please come to the club and sign up for one or two. Although Ginny and Ben haven't sought this, a number of persons who received the masks have made donations to the club in appreciation of what Ginny and Ben have done. We greatly appreciate Ginny and Ben's generosity and the donations made in honor of that generosity. There has been no better recent example of the club with a heart.

Educational Initiatives

Our planning has also been derailed with regard to our educational initiatives. We are hopeful nonetheless to make some modest efforts and see what the appetite is for live instruction during these challenging times. If you and a group of friends are particularly interested in a topic, please let us know. Before the pandemic reared its head in March of 2020, we had achieved great momentum with our educational programs and we are hoping we can recapture that in the near future.

Revised Contests and

Free Games for Those with Fewer than 500 Masterpoints at One Open Game a Month

Lastly, we list the contest winners in the next section of this newsletter. We are reducing the contests in the coming months. One of our primary objectives is to encourage more participation in our live games so starting with September we will only be offering free games to those who have the highest percentage score in the open and limited **live** games at the club. All our other free game and prize contests are discontinued.

However, partially to make up for that, we will now allow those with fewer than 500 points to play free in the open game on the third or fourth Wednesday of every month, starting in September. We remind people that the games are stratified and that if enough C players participate in these games, there will be masterpoint awards for several pairs. Moreover, we notice that quite often C players place very high in their sections and occasionally win them. This a great opportunity to play for free and we hope it attracts a full house (20 tables).

Please Remember to Cancel Your Preregistration if You Aren't Going to Play

Speaking of full houses, we would be remiss if we didn't mention one troubling issue that has arisen with preregistration. Preregistration has many benefits, including weekly schedule reminders, the ability to sign up for recurring games for up to three months in advance, the reassurance of being able to see at any time the games you've registered for, the ease of canceling games and more accurate seeding, and most people who have had difficulties with the system have had their problems resolved by Linda Starr and Sally Kirtley. One issue, however, has repeatedly reared its head: People whose plans change fail to cancel their preregistration. This causes a problem for directors who are counting on the pair to show up and must scramble at the last minute to cope with the unexpected change. The board of trustees discussed this issue and determined that the first time a pair fails to show up after having preregistered, a friendly phone call will be made. We expect and hope that a second call will be unnecessary.

Despite all the challenges we're facing and the changed bridge world we all now live in, the club continues to attract a large number of participants to our games. We are grateful for that loyalty and support. Do let us know how we can better serve you. Remember, this is your club and your participation in its games is important for it to thrive.

Stay safe and healthy and we look forward to seeing you at our tables,
Donna and Felix

The Contests:

0-200 Games: Virginia and Ben Bishop—63.54%
0-300 Games: Tom Archambault and Doug Eitelman—73.81%
0-500 Games: Barbara Fletcher and Fred Gagnon—68.06%
0-750 Games: Barbara Fletcher and Bill Wininger—74.07%
Open games: Geof Brod and Joel Krug-78.89%

A free game will be awarded to each of the winners when they play at one of the club's live games.

And in the contest for best non-Life Master result in an open game, Ann and Mike Belzer won with a 59.03%. They needed to play in at least two open games in the month to be eligible for the prize of \$50 for each member of the pair.

Congratulations to all our winners! Well done!!! As noted earlier in this newsletter, starting in September, contests will only be held for the club's different limited and open **live** games. Good luck everyone!

Game Schedule Beginning September 13

Games in red are in house.

Monday, 10:15 a.m., Open, BBO
Monday, 10:15 a.m., 0-300, BBO

combined games: Open game players who place in the top strat win points based on the number of tables in both sections.

Monday, 10:15 a.m., 0-300, BBO

Monday, 1:30 p.m., 0-750, HBC

Monday, 7:00 p.m. , 0-300, BBO

Tuesday, 10:00 a.m., Open, HBC

Tuesday, 7:00 p.m., 0-500, BBO

Wednesday, 10:00 a.m., Open, HBC

Wednesday, 2:00 p.m., 0-750, BBO

Thursday, 10:00 a.m., Open, HBC

Thursday, 1:30 p.m., 0-200, BBO

Friday, 1:30 p.m., 0-500, HBC

Friday, 1:30 p.m. , Open, HBC

simultaneous games

Saturday, 10:15 a.m., 0-500, BBO

Saturday, 1:30 p.m., Open, HBC

Special Games in September

Wednesday, September 22, 10:00 a.m.

Those with fewer than 500 mps play free

Sunday, September 26, 1:00 p.m.

Swiss Teams