



**31 August 2020**

**Newsletter No: 7 for 2020**

Welcome to all the new players who have recently joined the bridge fraternity. We hope that you find the game exciting and that over time you make many new friends.

After 102 days of no COVID-19 community cases we were all shell shocked with a community case in Auckland that has impacted our lives more than we thought it would.

Auckland raced back into lockdown while the rest of the country entered Alert Level 2. We have issued several advisories which by and large clubs and players have heeded and supported. For this we thank you. Drafting these advisories has not been easy because as individuals we apply different interpretations and assessments. I thought I would share with you the 3 guiding principles I follow.

1. Being willing to show leadership even if it is not popular.
2. Caring for the welfare of our players.
3. Ensuring we preserve the reputation of NZ Bridge and Clubs as responsible bodies.

On the 25<sup>th</sup> the Board had its usual monthly meeting. Not surprisingly COVID-19 and all its implications consumed most of the meeting. We determined it was necessary to cancel the South Island Pairs. The decision to cancel the event came with a heavy heart, as we know the Invercargill Club had invested a great deal of time and effort to make this event possible. We have apologised to the Club and are hopeful that we can do something special in 2021. To the players who intended playing we equally apologise for the late notice and any inconvenience caused.

The next national event on the calendar is Congress 2020. This will only take place if we are at Alert level 1. The Board resolved we should do what we can to allow this event to proceed. This means keeping entries open as late as possible. However, we will have to draw a line in the sand shortly allowing players time to do something about their travel and accommodation. The last date reasonably practical is Friday 11<sup>th</sup> September. On or before the 11<sup>th</sup> we will issue notice whether the event is proceeding or not. We have our fingers crossed. Should Congress 2020 be cancelled the AGM will be virtually held using Zoom.

COVID-19 has had a significant impact on player numbers. Normally during the early part of the year player numbers increase as people partake in the lessons. This year that did not happen. Since March overall player numbers are down 319.



Two other subjects dominated the meeting.

1. Tournament Grades and alternative options to the present set up. We know this is at the forefront of many minds and we know the present structure is a barrier to tournament participation. We are working on several alternatives designed to address the present underlying issues and provide the right incentive to reward improvement. We are hopeful by late October we can start sharing our thinking and giving you the opportunity to provide feedback.
2. Strategy 2021-2025. Over the last 3 years we have made significant progress in improving the player experience. We will continue doing more of the same, but we recognise things are changing and we need to keep ahead of the curve if we are going to deliver value to clubs and players. We are in the process of drafting a new 5-year plan. We need to undertake several streams of work to test and validate our thinking and planning is correct before sharing this with you. The plan is to have something out for discussion before Christmas.

We know Clubs are experiencing challenges finding tournament directors. Murray is working on a training programme to take place this year. Assuming we are back playing tournaments please contact Murray if you are having problems. We might be able to arrange a work around.

During lockdown we had several players participate in the Yeh Brothers 2020 Cup, an event usually played at the table whereas this year it was online. 28 teams from across Asia, Australia and New Zealand were featured. Two teams represented New Zealand with the team of Nick Jacob, Geo Tislevoll, Matthew McManus (honorary kiwi), Michael Ware, James Coutts, and Justin Mill (honorary kiwi) winning the event. Congratulations all round.

Stay well, stay safe and hopefully you can enjoy being back at bridge soon.

Cheers Allan