



Sally Bugden, EBU board member, introduces:

Best Behaviour at Bridge

BRIDGE players are lovely people – I speak with experience as I've had the great good fortune to meet many of you. But, as in all walks of life, there is the potential for a few badly behaved players to spoil the enjoyment of our great game. So, what can we do about it?

Alliteration is sometimes a bit of a bother, but for the purposes of encouraging more players to the game, it can have a really positive effect. Best Behaviour at Bridge or BB@B, has been in effect in Sussex since the beginning of the year.

Sussex has had a code of conduct in operation since 1999, named Zero Tolerance after the American Contract Bridge League (ACBL) code. The reaction to the code has been encouraging - it is dependent on players and directors alike to ensure that it succeeds.

However, with its association in England with Anti Social Behaviour Orders, many bridge players have commented about the negative aspect of the Zero Tolerance title.

The Laws of Contract Bridge allow the director to rule against bad behaviour, but there were requests from Sussex bridge players for the county committee to update its policy and make it clearer on the actions that can be taken if the policy is abused.

Our friendly guide to the BB@B code

Bridge is an extremely enjoyable game. Courteous behaviour is an exceptionally important part of that enjoyment.

This guide serves as a brief reminder of how to behave at the bridge table. We are sure that all players naturally follow this code of conduct, but there are times when concentration and pressure can take their toll and it is for these situations that we issue this as a reminder.

- Greet others in a friendly manner prior to start of play on each round.
- Be a good 'host' or 'guest' at the table.
- Make your convention card readily available to your opponents and fill it out completely.
- Make bridge enjoyable for yourself, partner and opponents.
- Give credit when opponents make a good bid or play.
- Take care of your personal grooming.
- Ensure that your mobile phone is turned off.
- Enjoy the company as well as the game.

Remember that it is rude to criticise your partner or opponents in public, to be less than polite at the table, to gloat over good results or object to a call for the tournament director or to dispute or argue about a director's ruling.

A code of conduct expected of all bridge players

So, we compiled BB@B, borrowing heavily from the ACBL, giving them deserved recognition for the enormous amount of work they have done in this area. Sussex is encouraging its clubs to implement the policy as well and offers effective support to assist them in their efforts.

We have been discussing a code of conduct at a national level for the last year, looking at the Sussex experience at the county chairmen's meeting we held in May 2005. I am delighted to announce that a decision was taken at the EBU board meeting in May this year to implement BB@B at all EBU national tournaments and competitions.

Max Bavin, our chief tournament director, will be informing all TDs how the new code of conduct will be implemented, but in the

meantime it is good to look at the USA process that has been up and running since the Spring North American Bridge Championship (NABC) held in Reno in 1998.

Rick Beye, the ACBL's chief tournament director, informed me: 'After the board decision to implement the code at our NABCs, there was a period of adjustment. Initially some tournament directors and some players found it difficult, but once players knew they were going to be penalised and the TDs recognised that they had National Bridge Organisation (NBO) support for making rulings, everything settled down.'

The overall effect has been a positive one, with a steep rise in retention of members. As Rick says: 'Anyone in sales knows that it is far easier to retain an existing client than to go out and get a new one!' The ACBL feels confident that its code encourages and keeps new players in the game and I am sure that confidence will be replicated here.

As in all games that are governed by rules and regulations, bad behaviour will be penalised

If a player at the table behaves in an unacceptable manner the director should be called immediately. Annoying behaviour, embarrassing remarks, or any other conduct which might interfere with the enjoyment of the game is specifically prohibited by Law 74A. Law 91A gives the director the authority to assess disciplinary penalties. This can include immediate disciplinary board penalties, and if a future violation is incurred at the same event, disqualification from future competition in that event. Any further violations may result in a disciplinary hearing where the player(s) future participation in tournaments will be considered.

Please call the director if you think you may have been affected by bad behaviour. You will be helping others as well as yourselves