

A day in the life of . . .

Jason Hackett

Initially introduced to bridge at the age of 11 by mother Olivia, by 16 Jason Hackett and his twin brother, Justin, were the youngest ever players in the World Pairs Championship in Miami Beach in 1986, and soon they went on to become European Junior Champions and World Junior champions. They were also in the England bridge team that won a Silver Medal in the Open Teams at the 2008 Mind Sports Games and were part of the Europe team in the Buffett Cup recently held in Cardiff.

MY day starts late, as usually my nights stretch into the very small hours of the morning. If I play poker on-line (most nights), I may not finish before 6am, so if I am to get a good sleep I don't get up much before 3 or 4pm. It will come as no surprise that I then need lots of *espresso* before I really join the land of the living!

Once I am properly awake, I start thinking of breakfast, which is either a continental-style affair or a sushi or even something more substantial, depending on how hungry I am. I am very much into food, especially French or Asian, and I like to try all sorts of international cuisines. This is easy in Manchester, where I live and where there are lots of ethnic eating places which also deliver food, so I don't have to go out in order to have a tasty and exotic afternoon snack.

I spend the rest of the afternoon pottering on the computer; I regularly update my Facebook page or might play more poker if there is any going on. If I get up early, I go for a walk – usually once or twice a week. My walks are serious affairs, some ten-mile hikes in the hills, and although I often go with friends I also enjoy walking on my own. Considering my weight, I am reasonably fit, so I can keep going for quite a distance, though the occasional stop in a coffee shop – if I come across any – is welcome.

What I do in the evening depends on whether I am playing bridge with a client or not. If I don't have a bridge commitment, I end up playing twice a week on-line on BBO, or I might go and play at a club or congress with a friend. Although I am a

bridge professional, I quite frequently play with friends. I just enjoy playing, it does not matter with whom, though of course when it comes to the main national events I have to be careful which team I play for, as poor results would weaken my chances of being chosen to represent England in international championships. That is my top priority.

If I am not out playing bridge, or occasionally live poker, I go out for a meal with friends. I hardly ever eat at home, though I enjoy cooking and actually do a mean fish *carpaccio* (tuna or sea-bass) with grapefruit after a Gennaro Contaldo Italian recipe I found on the internet. *Carpaccio* is a way of preparing food without cooking it, and I am very much into that sort of thing. Apart from recipes

found on the 'net, I have built up quite a collection from travelling around Europe and the world, and I am always prepared to try out something new in restaurants. At the moment I am sampling Yemeni and Afghan dishes, which are meat-based, though my favourite food is probably fish – especially fish cheeks, a delicacy I discovered in China.

Travelling is my great passion in life, and I pursue it as much as I can, preferably by car. I dislike flying, not just because the space in airplanes is cramped, but also because I detest the petty bureaucracy at immigration in many foreign airports. I am not adverse to travelling by train, though, and one of my most memorable journeys was on the Trans-Siberian railway ten years ago. I learnt Russian at school, so I could manage some form of interaction with fellow passengers, which I greatly enjoyed. My friends and I stopped at Irkutsk,



Jason's Top Tip

If you have a bad board, forget about it and move on to the next hand.

There is no point in flapping around if you have a bad result on one board: you will just lose concentration and put off your partner. By all means tear your hair out if you are playing in an event where screens are used and your partner cannot see you, but in normal duplicate events showing your frustration will just get you a worse result on the next (and maybe subsequent) board.

You will do much better if you cherish partnership harmony and keep your mouth shut. The post-mortem can wait till the end of the session, when you can talk things over calmly over a drink.

though, and continued to Mongolia by car, which enabled us to see places at our own pace. This seemed adventurous enough to me, so I rejected the option of travelling through Mongolia on horseback – without a saddle – which is a local tourist attraction.

Although I enjoy visiting far away countries, my favourite part of the world is the South-West of France. The climate is good, the food and wine superb, there are lots of places and things to see, and naturism, which I like to practise, is well supported. Moreover, the region can easily be reached by car, which has the added advantage that I can bring back to Manchester lots of local produce!

By now it will be clear that food, drink and congenial company are very important to me. That is why I particularly enjoy playing in bridge tournaments in Ireland, France and Spain where the playing schedule is not as intense as in England, and allows time for socialising with fellow players around the restaurant table or at the bar. In fact, this is where, in my view, live poker scores more highly than bridge: it is played in better venues with greater emphasis on hospitality.

Apart from this, I enjoy both games: bridge provides much more of an intellectual challenge, but I like the fact that at poker you are on your own and, if you play on-line, it is at times of your choosing. I am quite happy to play poker by night and play bridge, or go travelling, by day. □

To read more about Jason Hackett, visit www.ebu.co.uk/general/biographies/players.