

A day in the life of . . .

Jeremy Dhondy

Jeremy Dhondy is the winner of lots of national trophies, and has represented England in the Camrose Trophy. In 2007 he won the European Mixed Teams in partnership with his wife, Heather. Jeremy is also currently Chairman of the Laws and Ethics Committee.

I GET up just after 7am, before Heather, and make the coffee (not my only domestic chore). By 7.45, I'm out of the house and drive to the school where I work.

I chose my job very carefully, largely on the basis of having the shortest possible commuting time. Originally I was appointed to teach geography and economics, with a bit of politics thrown in, but now more than half of my time is spent on my duties as one of the Deputy Heads, with the special responsibility of running the school's computer network. My first job in the morning is to sort out details of staff missing – an exercise which has turned me into a cynic. However, I must not grumble (much) as on the whole I am lucky: ours is a 400-year-old grammar school with about 1200 pupils – places are highly sought after and the pupils are bright. This means we don't have the problems of many comprehensives, but preparation and the parents are more demanding, which takes its toll on some of the staff.

Once I've dealt with the admin, I do my teaching, which now includes IT, and then it's back at the computer. My role is to free the staff from as many bureaucratic duties as possible, so I do all the form-filling and information-providing that the Department of Education inflicts on us at an ever-growing pace, which is one of the reasons why I am going to take early retirement in August – and believe you me, I am looking forward to it!

In between administration and teaching, lunch is a quick sandwich during meetings or while solving problems. The school day ends at 3.35, but I rarely leave before 5.30 – there is just too much to do.

Once I'm back home, if I don't have more work to attend to, it's hobby time.

Mostly it's bridge: playing (though less now at club level), bridge administration at club (Young Chelsea), county (Middlesex) and national (EBU) level, but also bridge writing. Contrary to popular belief, Heather and I don't live for bridge, though: we both enjoy looking after our tropical fish (even if we no longer give them individual names as too many have died) and watching cricket matches. Once I have retired, we hope to be able to follow the national team to watch them play in Australia and other far-away places – if our team is good enough, that is.

Heather and I enjoy doing things together, and share an interest in lazy holidays, theatre and concerts, and a partiality for good food. We enjoy eating out as much as cooking for friends at the weekend, if we are not playing, and are quite adventurous in our choice of recipes. These range

from Chinese to Indian to English, but if it's pastry stuff you are after, sorry – the Dhondy household is not for you. Ditto if you are a pudding fan: we can stretch to fresh fruit with lots of alcohol, but that's as far as we go.

When Heather and I play bridge together, we always have a bet on how many people will tell us that we don't play together often. We usually play in the same team, but we each also have several other regular partnerships. Variety is the spice of life, and even untried partnerships can be very rewarding provided one is relaxed about the occasional misunderstanding.

Some people may think that, as Chairman of the Laws and Ethics committee, I am not a relaxed type of bridge player. The fact is that all games need laws and you don't know you need them until some unpleasantness threatens to arise. I



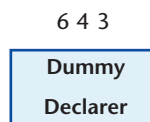
Photo: Ron Tecchi

Jeremy Dhondy's Top Tip

Give the defence as hard a time as possible!

My tip is to give the defence as hard a time as possible. However good their signalling is, they can be led down the wrong path some of the time.

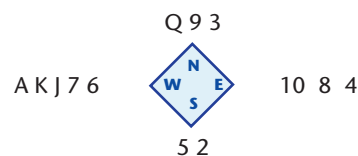
Suppose you are playing in 3NT and West lead a fourth-highest 5. You hold:



K Q 7

When you follow from dummy and East plays the jack, I am sure you would win with the king to give West a guess as to where the queen is.

This time you are in a suit contract and would like to avoid losing two tricks in a side suit. West leads the king asking for count and the layout is:



When East plays the 4 you *must* play the 5 and hope that West thinks the 4 is the start of a peter showing four cards. As West, you would not, of course, be fooled because you have agreed with partner that you will play the 8 from 10-8-4-2.

If your opponents are playing reverse count, then you must play the 2 and hope that West thinks East is playing the 4 from 10-8-5-4. It won't always work because some of the time East will have a chance, during the bidding, to raise with four of the suit but if you play the true card West will always get it right so any percentage is worthwhile.

You must know and be able to play the chosen card smoothly so give a good, long look at dummy before you play a card so you can prepare. I played once with a partner whose reaction to seeing dummy was: 'Thank you, small.' This didn't give him the best chance of working out the right card to play!

usually call the Director, so problems can be sorted out in a dispassionate manner, which often prompts the comment: 'There goes the school master!' That's as may be – teachers do like to be in control. But I sleep sounder at night knowing I'm doing my bit to make bridge a less stressful game. □