

A day in the life of . . .

Neil Rosen

Neil Rosen has won many of Britain's major events, including the Gold Cup and the Spring Foursomes, several times. He has also won the previous incarnation of the Premier League, and has represented England on many occasions.

BECAUSE I am a night owl (more on this later!), my day starts late-ish, around 9.30am – having already earlier said good-bye to my son, Andrew, before he goes to school. Andrew is six, so needs Dad more than his sister, Nikki, who, at eleven, is beginning to be more independent though she still occasionally asks for help with her homework. I have to admit that on one occasion the standard seemed too high for me, but I manage to read and do Maths with her brother, and do so quite regularly.

My wife, Anne, is an England bridge international (she was part of the team that won gold in Beijing last October) and she works full time as a Regulator for the Financial Services Authority (FSA). We both lead busy lives, so having a nanny is a 'must'. Nikki can now be trusted to go to school by herself, but Anne and I share with our Nanny, Lydia, the task of taking Andrew to his school, so by the time I'm up and about in the morning, often the house is already empty. I don't linger, though: the Ace of Clubs opens its doors at 11am and I need to be there well before the members arrive.

I have now worked full-time in bridge for almost twenty years, and the Ace of Clubs Bridge Club, in Finchley, North London, is where I spend most of my time. I run the club, which I now own, with help from Jill Feldman and a staff of close to twenty, including directors, teachers and general helpers who make up the numbers as and when required. We now have about five hundred members and as we offer Supervised sessions as well as Duplicate and Chicago bridge sessions, with the club being open Monday to Friday all year round, we are kept well busy.

My day seems to consist of bridge and more bridge. My main interest is teaching, and I do it all at the club. If I am not teaching, I am involved with supervised play sessions, and when I am not doing that I am busy planning the next bridge holiday for our club members, or organising more day-time bridge sessions at the club, which are becoming increasingly popular.

There is not really a pattern to my day:

one bridge activity follows another, with a sandwich in between, until it's time to collect Andrew from school, another task Anne and I share with our Nanny. Then it's back to the club for more bridge! I love it, and would not go back to a 'regular' job. I took early redundancy from BT in my late twenties, when getting good enough to be considered for the England Camrose team, and have never regretted it.

Of course, all this and raising kids is a bit of a juggling act, but it seems to work for us. We try to do as much as possible together as a family: I like cooking, so I'm the one who produces the traditional Sunday roast we all enjoy. Anne and I keep weekend bridge to a minimum, and make as much time as we can for family holidays. These are mostly spent travelling, not just to places like Eurodisney, but also towns such as Budapest.

In the evenings, if I am not working at the club, I spend time on – you've guessed it – my extra bridge activities. I am the Chairman of the Middlesex County Bridge Association and also the Assistant Editor of *Bridge Magazine*, so have plenty to keep me occupied. Also, I like to practice with my current partner in national and international events, Martin Jones, and the best way to do that without using valuable family time is to play on-line, which is a good



Photo: Peter Hasenson

Neil Rosen's Top Tips

Two tips for the price of one!

As a full-time teacher I find myself with loads of options for inclusion here. I will limit myself to just two tips: one for improving newcomers and the second for more established partnerships.

A TIP FOR IMPROVERS: I always find that counting the trumps is one of the most difficult aspects of the game for aspiring players. I strongly recommend 'counting down' not 'up', i.e. if you have eight trumps between you and the dummy, then the opponents have five, or if you have nine then they only have four etc. *Just concentrate on counting down from this number* (five or four as appropriate) – this is a much easier proposition than counting up to thirteen and only requires the fingers of one hand!

A TIP FOR REGULAR PARTNERSHIPS: if at any stage during an auction your evaluation of your combined assets leads you to even vaguely think of the possibility of a slam being on (i.e. you have a 'thought-bubble' as in cartoon strips, which reads 'slam'), *then make sure you actually make some try towards slam.* Cue-bidding, splinters and Blackwood can all have a part to play here. Failing to make a try often will leave your partner with no chance of moving the bidding higher, leaving yet another slam going begging! I see so many missed opportunities when one player is left high and dry by their partner just signing off – worse still . . . slowly!

way of keeping the partnership sharp.

I must admit, though, that it is not bridge that keeps me glued to the computer till one or two in the morning. When everyone has gone to bed, and the house is quiet, that's the time when I can indulge myself and enjoy playing several very different games – mostly Word Racer! This is a word game for up to eight players, each round lasting two minutes, so it's fast and furious – quite different from bridge!

You will have noticed from all this that physical exercise does not feature prominently in my daily routine. I admit that I am no longer the fit and sporty Neil I was in my youth(?). I limit my exercise to an occasional game of football or frisbee in the park with the kids or an even more occasional bicycle ride with my daughter! But I am very happy with my life and would not change it one bit. □