

though NGS was right to assign a higher grade to one of the pair, but in a minority of cases the difference between the pair's grades seemed more likely to be due to the effects of chance on the system. Although this seems to adversely affect less than 1% of EBU players, that's still a few hundred people. This is a limitation of any bridge grading scheme that relies on partnership results to determine individual grades.

Some of the pairs that nearly always play together feel that NGS should give them almost equal grades. Currently in NGS there is no formula which is equivalent to 'If a stronger and weaker player partner each other regularly, and almost exclusively, it should be assumed gradually that they are of equal strength.' Perhaps there should be?

Plans for the Future

There are a number of enhancements being planned. We'd like to provide more details on the EBU website about your grade and about the graded events you've played in, and to give more visibility to partnership grades.

Many tournament players would like us to include team events. We've got a scheme for this which will work for multiple team-of-four events and Swiss Teams events. It involves knowing which pairs were sitting North-South and East-West for each board, so there are changes needed to various bits of the software, both in scoring systems and in the central EBU systems. That all takes time to agree, change, and test, but at least we've started on this.

It would also be good to enable clubs to download their players' grades in a way that would let them be used easily for handicap-based awards. Although the principle is straightforward, there are a few snags, as grades – and therefore potentially handicaps – change on a daily basis, and few venues are online to get grades while the event is in progress.

Various minor changes to the system have been proposed and are under consideration by the team. There is also an ongoing task to monitor the statistics behind the scheme, to check that all is well, to assess the likely impact of any changes, and to verify some of the values quoted above. Only some of this is currently automated, and new suggestions on what to measure keep being made.

Any qualified statistician with time to volunteer is welcome to apply.

Top Table

David Gold

DAVID GOLD was born in Perth, Scotland, in 1979, and started his career in the sports world as a top junior chess player. He became a full-time bridge professional at the age of 19 and it did not take him long to make his mark on the bridge scene. His international successes include a bronze medal in the Open Pairs at the 2005 European Open Championships, a silver medal in the Bridge Open Teams at the 1st World Mind Sports Games in 2008, and recently qualifying for next year's Bermuda Bowl (World Open Teams).



particularly enjoyed was *Play These Hands with Me* by Terence Reese.

What are your hobbies?

Cooking, dining, watching stand-up comedy, playing a little chess, and, currently, enjoying the gym.

What do you like and what would you change in bridge?

Bridge is great because it enables people from all over the world and all walks of life to play a great game against each other. What makes bridge so great, the greatest game in fact, is that unlike other contenders (chess, go, poker) it is not one-dimensional: it has many different facets and involves so many skills. It is also incredibly difficult to master – if one day I do, I will be happy, but I doubt it.

What I would like to change about bridge in England is to introduce new events with new formats to liven up the tournament scene, perhaps at least one BAM event – that's 'Board-a-Match' in the US, where such events are quite popular, or 'Point-a-Board' over here, where they are almost unknown. At international level we need to realise how far behind the best nations we are falling and work on our bridge to catch up.

What's the bridge success (so far) closest to your heart?

My biggest success and disappointment in one go is winning a silver medal in the world championships in Beijing 2008, by far my greatest achievement but we didn't win the gold and another opportunity could be a long way off.

When did you start playing bridge?

When I was 16. I learnt at Reading School in the common room, and played with friends in the free time. I once turned up at Reading Bridge Club with my school partner, and was told to come back on the beginners night; I swear one day I will.

How often / where do you play?

I play bridge most days, my favourite clubs are the Ace of Clubs and the Young Chelsea, both in London.

Do you always play with the same partners / team-mates? What do you expect of them?

I play bridge with a variety of partners. Generally I play with Tony Forrester, my regular partner, or I play with clients. When I play with Tony I hope for a high standard of play and for us to see the game the same way – which we usually do. When I play with clients, what I expect depends on their standard. Luckily most of my clients are good players and I expect a lot from them, but most important to me is that we both enjoy it.

What do you do for a living?

I play bridge for a living, mostly by partnering people or playing on professional teams, but I also do some coaching and occasional teaching.

What are your favourite bridge books?

I mostly like to read World Championship books and bulletins but a book I