



SIMON GILLIS has an impressive record in both domestic and international competitions. In the UK he has won the Gold Cup once and the Brighton Teams twice. Abroad he has won in Deauville and (twice) in Iceland, and in 2014 he came second in the World Open Pairs B Final in Sanya.

When did you start playing bridge?

Very briefly at school but I really learnt in my last year at university – though sadly stopped within three years due to work.

How often / where do you play?

I play about thirty-forty days a year. Gold Cup, Spring Fours and perhaps the Easter Festival, and then any major international open event like the European Open Championships, the Transnationals and the Rosenblum. The Cavendish is now a ‘must play’ as it is in Europe.

I also try and play one French tournament like Deauville or Biarritz alongside the Iceland Bridge Festival. I’ll play much more when the kids are at university.

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

We are a group of about eight or nine, mainly Norwegians. They are very much my friends as well. We mix around quite a lot as our style of playing the game is quite similar.

My expectations are no different from what one would expect from any friend or professional from another field. Zia, for example, is really insightful and good fun when we go through the hands. All the players find plenty of time to practice bidding on BBO before tournaments and there are inevitably tough bidding problems thrown around from the US Nationals.

What do you do for a living?

Investment manager, but I also advise charitable foundations on their investments.

What are your favourite bridge books?

I have to be honest: I rarely read any. They usually describe hands or problems that come up once

every eighty boards. However, *Professional Slam Bidding* by Krzysztof Martens is a remarkable book for presenting new ideas on advanced slam bidding.

What are your hobbies?

Too many, I’m afraid. I’m a wine geek, love literature and cinema, table tennis and high stakes poker – but most of all I love studying and discussing financial markets.

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

I most love the fact that it’s a difficult and social game. Chess is too dry, Go is too difficult, and poker is intrinsically boring. I love most of all turning up at any major tournament and knowing so many people whom I like.

The game needs advancement and promotion, both financially and through schools etc. but it’s an uphill struggle. The young prefer other stimuli than those on offer around a bridge table.

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

It has to be the second win of the Open Teams at the Reykjavik Bridge Festival – quite fantastic. Artur Malinoswki described the team as ‘Simon and his Friends’. I played with Boye Brogeland, the only pro on the team, and Marianne Harding played with Odin Svendsen.

Marianne is now my regular partner in mixed events, Boye has taught me more about the game than anyone could imagine, and Odin has similar insane taste in literature, cinema, food as I. We just all felt so good after the event, particularly because of beating Tor Helness and two other world champions, Erik Sælensminde and Per Austberg, in the key match. □