

Why Me?

Have you wondered why it is me who is writing the articles for the EBU's online bulletin? Well, it helps that I am cheap – the EBU quite rightly does not waste its members' hard-earned money. But how did I get into bulletin writing in the first place?

Going back to the early 1990s, I used to work at a bridge magazine, International Popular Bridge Monthly. That gave me a good grounding in bridge writing and so, when I heard that the European Bridge League was looking for an extra writer for a bulletin at one of their championships to be held in Rome, I offered my services as a try-out on expenses only. Since the EBL likes paying out money even less than does the EBU, I was taken up on this offer and, having done reasonably well at the championships, became a regular member of the EBL's championship bulletin team.

A couple of years later, I had graduated to a place on the World Bridge Federation's bulletin team and went to the 1995 World Championships in Beijing in that capacity. In those days the two editors, myself and American, Henry Francis, used to virtually go in and watch alternate sets and write up the action in the other alternate sets, getting to bed around 3 am if we were lucky. We were given the use of an early digital camera, which was about the same size as your home vacuum cleaner, and rather cumbersome to carry around and use.

After several years of working for the EBL and WBF, I worked at an EBL championship at which I was, frankly, disgusted at the level of pay I was offered. I worked at that championship but, the next year, 2002, I tried something different. All the different zones of the world have their own regional championships, from which their qualifiers for the Bermuda Bowl, Venice Cup and Seniors Bowl come. I sent an email to the organiser of the PABF Championships, to be held in Bangkok, Thailand, asking if they might like to have a European editor for a change. They agreed, but this was effectively a one-man bulletin and I had to not only write the articles but also do the typesetting – turn it into printable pages. That worked out OK and my love affair with Thailand began. I had agreed to go with no guarantee of getting paid unless they were successful in their hunt for sponsorship of the tournament, but ended up receiving better than double the daily rate I had earned in Europe a year earlier – to say nothing of getting to spend time in a new and exotic country.

Since then I have done many one-man bulletins. It is hard work, with long days, but I would rather that than be under-worked and with too little to do, which is sometimes the case when part of a large team at a World or European event. I have produced one-man bulletins in Melbourne, Bangkok, Taipei, Manila, and several other places around the world, and bulletin work has taken me to many countries I would never otherwise have visited. I have a busy summer coming up, with bulletins in Seoul, near Bratislava Slovakia, Hong Kong, Lyons and Hamilton, New Zealand between now and early October. To be fair, that level of bulletin work is exceptional for me. Oh yes, and I expect that I will be asked to contribute again at the Eastbourne EBU Summer Meeting also – as I said earlier, I am cheap. It gives a better balance to my working life in bridge. If I do too much professional play I get tired of it, while if I did nothing but write I would get tired of that. As it is, the balance is currently just about right.

Lucky Trump Split

Round 2. Board 15. Dealer South. N/S Vul.

| | | | | | |
|---|---|--------------|--|---|--------------|
| | ♠ | J 8 | | ♠ | A |
| | ♥ | A Q 4 | | ♥ | K 10 8 6 5 2 |
| | ♦ | A 10 9 6 4 | | ♦ | K Q |
| | ♣ | A K Q | | ♣ | 8 7 4 2 |
| ♠ | | K 10 7 6 4 2 | | | |
| ♥ | | — | | | |
| ♦ | | J 8 5 3 2 | | | |
| ♣ | | J 10 | | | |
| | ♠ | Q 9 5 3 | | | |
| | ♥ | J 9 7 3 | | | |
| | ♦ | 7 | | | |
| | ♣ | 9 6 5 3 | | | |

| West | North | East | South |
|----------|-------|------|-------|
| — | — | — | Pass |
| Pass | 2NT | Pass | 3♣ |
| 3♠ | Pass | Pass | Dble |
| Pass | 4♦ | Pass | 4♥ |
| All Pass | | | |

N/S had a misunderstanding on this deal from Round 2, South intending the double of 3♣ to be for penalty but North reading it as take-out. This led to South declaring a pretty horrible heart game – undoubled as East showed superhuman restraint. You might think that the six-zero trump split would doom the contract but actually it proved to be the only trump division which allowed declarer to bring home his contract.

West led the jack of clubs and dummy went down, with N/S exchanging a few words about each others interpretation of the auction. Declarer thought for quite a while after winning the first club and, seeing no way to come to ten tricks, continued with two more clubs. When West showed out on the third club but failed to ruff, pitching a spade, declarer saw that he had a chance after all. He played ace then ruffed a diamond, cashed the nine of clubs and exited with a spade to the bare ace. Down to nothing but trumps, East returned a low heart to dummy's queen. Declarer ruffed a diamond, ruffed a spade with the ace and led another diamond and could not be prevented from making another ruff for his tenth trick.

A curious deal where a five-one break would have doomed the contract while a six-zero split made it impregnable.