



Newsletter

October–December 2021

President's Letter

by *Georgette Weiss*



We are all anxiously waiting for things to get back to normal in bridge land, whatever the new normal will be. We are still working with Beth El on a contract to resume holding the Unit Game there on Thursday nights. We will put a notice on the NVBA website (www.nvba.org) and send out an email to those who are on the NVBA Board email list to announce when it will open. If you are not currently on distribution for the weekly emails from the NVBA Board, and would like to be, please send your email address to: email.manager@NVBA.org.

Things seem to be getting better with the Delta variant of COVID, but there is a new variant on the horizon. Clubs in our area are slowly opening up. Attendance has not been what it was pre-pandemic, which tells us many people are still not ready for face-to-face (FTF) bridge. Please check with each club owner on their regulations and safety requirements for playing FTF in their games. Games that are open can be found on the NVBA website.

Richmond unfortunately decided it was not wise to go forward with their October sectional. I am sure many players were disappointed, but it is better to err on the side of caution to keep us all safe. NVBA has also decided we are not comfortable hosting our planned October sectional, so it is canceled. It didn't make sense financially or for safety's sake. We are all disappointed, but hope we will be able to hold our next scheduled sectional February 3-6, 2022.

Hopefully by then everyone will have gotten their 3rd shot. My husband and I got ours as soon as we heard about them. We wanted to make sure we were safe for ourselves and others. Safety at the bridge table is my primary concern for all of us.

In This Issue:

President's Letter	1
Winning the 2021 Flight B GNT	2
Parade of Winners	6
Hail and Farewell/Climbing the Ladder	7
NVBA Supports Local Charity ECHO	8
Volunteers Needed for TJ Bridge Club	9



Winning the 2021 Flight B Grand National Teams

By Rick Bingham, bingham.rick@gmail.com

Grand National Teams (GNT) A grass roots event where players first qualify at the club level, form teams of 4-6 players and compete in the district championships, in four different flights (Open, A, B and C). The winning team from each flight in each of the 25 ACBL districts across North America advances to the national championship, typically (non-COVID times) held at the Summer NABC.



My bridge partner Ryan Connors and I decided to form a team and compete in the GNT Flight B, for players with fewer than 2,500 masterpoints. We recruited Tom Peters and Ernie Schuler, good Maryland players who won the 0-2,500 pairs national event two years ago.

The conversation with my wife last winter went something like this:

"I'm forming a team to play in the District 6 GNT District 6 finals, but there are 25 teams entered and only 4 advance to the 2nd weekend, so it's not that likely we'll advance".

Then later:

"We made it to the final 4 and will play the 2nd weekend, but I doubt we'll make it to Sunday, let alone win the District and have to play the national finals online during our July vacation in Maine. And if we make it to the national final, we'll probably get knocked out in the first one or two days."

I was wrong on all counts.

Our four-person team won the District 6 final, after two weekends of competition in February and April 2021. That win qualified us to represent District 6 (the MD, VA, DC area, roughly) in Flight B at the National final vs. the rest of North America. Anticipating up to five tough days of bridge at the Nationals, we made the smart decision to augment our team with a 3rd pair, Adam Gann Kind and Will Colmer, two tough younger District 6 players who had played well against us in the District competition.

The 2021 GNT national final was played from July 14-18, 2021 on BBO, as part of the Summer NAOBC. The event was supposed to have been played at the Summer NABC tournament in Providence RI in July, but was moved online. Every player was required to have audio/video communication (via Zoom typically) with his LHO or RHO, intended to eliminate cheating. For this year only, the field included a bigger field of 42 teams in Flight B, instead of just one per District. Districts were permitted to qualify up to two teams per flight, if desired, to account for the fact that there was no 2020 GNT National final.

The format of the event was first a one-day Swiss, playing eight 7-board matches, to reduce the field to 16 teams. Subsequent Days 2-5 were seeded knockout 56-board matches, playing the round of 16, quarterfinals, semi-finals, and then the finals on Day 5.

DAY ONE In the Swiss we qualified in 10th place, out of 42 teams starting—not an outstanding performance, but enough to advance us to Day 2. By qualifying higher than the bottom 4 teams, we weren't selected immediately to play one of the top 4 finishers.

DAY TWO We played the Kelley team that won District 6 in 2020, winning this match 98-

(Continued on page 3)

(Continued from page 2)

55; we won every quarter and never trailed. As captain, my strategy for the Day 2 match was to spend the first two quarters in the afternoon sightseeing around the Maine coast and picnicking at Pemaquid Point lighthouse. In short, let our other two pairs do the heavy lifting in the first half, and then Ryan and I played the two evening sessions. There are certain advantages to having a 6-person team, and playing an event remotely on BBO.

DAY THREE In the quarterfinal match we played the District 7 team of young players called GA Tech Wreck that had finished at the top of the Day 1 Swiss teams. On two of the first 14 boards, my LHO Christian Jolly as declarer managed to win the 13th trick with the ‘beer card,’ the 7 of diamonds, announcing ‘BEER!’ as he did so, and we shared a laugh on Zoom about this. Despite their ‘beer card’ triumph, we won every quarter and never trailed, winning the match 149-91.

DAY FOUR The Day 4 semi-finals were against a team from Arizona, District 17. We lost the 1st quarter and still trailed by 17 at the half, but finished strong and won by 58 with a score of 163-105. Again Ryan and I took the 1st two quarters off, since he wanted to spend time with his out-of-town visitors, and I went kayaking on Great Pond in Maine. Moving on to the final day.

DAY FIVE The final match was against a tough District 24 team from NY City. We won the 1st two quarters, but then lost the 3rd quarter by 22 which cut our lead to just 8 IMPs with 14 boards to play. A win in the 4th quarter secured our GNT victory with a score of 122-103, our closest match. In four days of knockouts we lost only two quarters of play, and trailed only in the semi-final match. Immediately after the end of play, since we were all on Zoom anyway, we had a team video meeting to recap the final boards and toast our victory.

There were several keys to our success:

1. Sound bridge and team tactics, including:

- Bid to the right level, compete for the part scores, obstruct their auctions, make lead directing bids when possible;
- Good hand evaluation, get to every reasonable game & slam, stay out of bad low percentage ones;
- Sound declarer play, taking advantage of clues from the auction and the preceding defensive plays and taking the best line of play;
- Tough defense, beating thin games and slams and part scores when the opponents got too high.

2. Augmenting our team from 4 to 6 players for the National Final. This greatly reduced fatigue during the grueling and stressful five days of the event and gave us each a break.

3. Making smart team line-up decisions during the matches. During a close semi-final match, Adam/Will played in the 1st, 2nd and 3rd quarters against the same pair, who were clearly having trouble handling their aggressive bidding and Precision club system. The opponents expressed their pleasure at learning they would be playing against a different pair playing 2/1 Game Forcing system in the 4th quarter. So, at Adam’s suggestion, and since we had seating rights in the 4th quarter, we made a quick decision to keep Adam/Will at the same table vs. the same pair, and won 50 IMPs that quarter to win the match by 58.

There were many interesting hands from this 5-day event. I’ll share just three of them that contributed to our wins.

(Continued on page 4)

Hand 1 Round of 16 match, board 50. Ryan as declarer made a nifty trump reduction and end play to avoid losing a part score swing on this hand.

Dir. East	<i>Ryan</i>		
Vul: N-S	♠ K842		
	♥ KQ54		
	♦ A874		
	♣ 5		
		N	♠ T95
♠ A76		W ♣ E	♥ J932
♥ T76		S	♦ void
♦ KJT9			♣ AKT962
♣ J43			
	<i>Rick</i>		
	♠ QJ3		
	♥ A8		
	♦ Q6532		
	♣ Q87		
West	<i>Ryan</i>	East	<i>Rick</i>
Pass	1 ♦	Pass	Pass
Pass	3 ♦	Dbl	3 ♣*
Pass		Pass	Pass

* limit raise in diamonds

The opening lead was the ♣A, and at trick 2 East shifted to a small heart, Ryan winning with dummy's ♥A. A small trump to his ♦A revealed the 4-0 trump split and the strong possibility of losing 3 trumps along with the two black aces, for down 1. Ryan then played as follows:

Trick 4: Spade to dummy's ♠J, losing to the ♣A.

Trick 5: Club return, trumped in declarer's hand.

Trick 6: Spade to ♠Q won in dummy.

Trick 7: ♣Q, trumped in hand.

Trick 8: ♥K won in hand.

Trick 9: Small heart trumped low in dummy.

This key play reduced dummy's trumps to the same length as West's.

Trick 10: Spade to the ♠K in hand.

With 3 cards remaining, dummy was reduced to ♦Q65, while West held the ♦KJT. By then leading any card from the North hand and playing a small trump from dummy's hand,

West had to win the trick, but he was then end played and forced to give a trick to dummy's trump Queen. Making three.

The other table played in 2♦, making 2, so Ryan's careful play was needed to win 1 IMP instead of losing 5 for down 1.

Hand 2 Final match, board 24. An opportunity to make a lead-directing bid or double can generate a swing, such as on this hand.

Dir. West	<i>Ryan</i>		
Vul: None	♠ KT75		
	♥ K76		
	♦ 95		
	♣ T753		
		N	♠ A9843
♠ J6		W ♣ E	♥ A84
♥ QJ9		S	♦ K2
♦ J73			♣ K92
♣ AQ864			
	<i>Rick</i>		
	♠ Q2		
	♥ T532		
	♦ AQT864		
	♣ J		
West	<i>Ryan</i>	East	<i>Rick</i>
1 ♦	Pass	1 ♠	Pass
1 NT	Pass	2 ♦*	Dbl
Pass	Pass	3 ♦	Pass
3 NT	Pass	Pass	Pass

* 2-way New Minor Forcing, artificial and game forcing

After my lead directing double of the 2♦ bid, Ryan dutifully led the diamond ♦9. Declarer put up dummy's ♦K hoping I would win the ♦A prematurely, but I ducked this trick to keep communication with partner's hand, in the hope that Ryan held a 2nd diamond. When Ryan got in with the 4th round of clubs, he led back his low diamond and I had enough diamond tricks to set the contract.

At the other table, the bidding went as follows, leading to 3NT being played by East instead of West:

(Continued from page 4)

Tom	North	Ernie	South
1 ♣	Pass	1 ♠	3 ♦
Pass	Pass	3 NT	Pass
Pass	Pass		

A small diamond opening lead could have defeated 3NT, but South chose a small heart instead, which went to the ♥Q, ♥K and ♥A. Ernie cashed the ♣A, noting the fall of South's ♣J, and then did well to finesse the ♣9, playing for North to have ♣Txxx, and losing no club tricks. He was then able to establish 1 diamond trick to go with his 5 clubs, 2 hearts and 1 spade, making 3NT. This hand gained us 10 IMPs.

Hand 3 Final match, board 48. Sometimes a little luck is needed to win a long match, such as this double game swing:

Dr. West	Tom		
Vul: E-W	♠ AKQ954		
	♥ 84		
	♦ 852		
	♣ 63		
♠ T		♠ 32	
♥ J32		♥ AK975	
♦ KQT963		♦ AJ7	
♣ 872		♣ QJT	
		N	
		W	E
			S
	Ernie		
	♠ J876		
	♥ QT6		
	♦ 4		
	♣ AK954		
West	Tom	East	Ernie
Pass	3 ♠	Pass	4 ♠
Pass	Pass	Pass	

The 4♣ contract bid by Tom/Ernie made easily, losing just 2 hearts and 1 diamond. The hands were bid differently at the other table:

Adam	North	Will	South
3 ♦	Pass	3 NT	Pass
Pass	Pass		

South's opening lead of the 4th best club from ♣ AK954 gave Will his 9th trick, to go with his 6 diamond and 2 heart tricks. Luckily South didn't lead a spade or a top club. Making game at both tables was good for a 15 IMP gain.

We earned a substantial amount of gold points from these events. Winning the District 6 final paid 27 gold masterpoints, while winning the GNT national final paid 56 gold. Other flights awarded more or fewer points, and the Flight C awards were part red and part gold.

This event was a great opportunity to play against our peers in tough competition, including other good teams from around the district, with the chance to win many masterpoints. We're already looking forward to the start of the 2022 GNT season!



The Winning Team: Rick Bingham and Ryan Connors (above); Will Colmer and Adam Kind (below); Tom Peters and Ernie Schuler (below left).



Parade of Winners

NVBA is particularly excited to announce that members of our own Unit won the Grand National Teams (GNT) Flight B competition at the North American Bridge Online Championships in July 2021. The team of Rick Bingham-Ryan Connors-Thomas Peters-Ernie Schuler-Adam Kind-Will Colmer prevailed over the team from District 24 in the Final Round by a score of 122-103. On page 2, Rick Bingham gives an account of the event.

Virtual Vacation Online Regional, August 12-15, 2021

These pairs finished in the top 5 of their bracket

Thurs AM Side Game (28 Tables)

3 Diane Woodworth – Sandy Carroll

Thurs Early Top-Flight Pairs (28 Tables)

4 Weizhong Bao – Frank Feng

Thurs Late Gold Rush Pairs (95 Tables)

3 Fanjun Kong – Li Chen

Fri AM Side Game (29 Tables)

4 Ram Sarangan – Tom Musso

Fri Aft 499er Pairs (28 Tables)

4 4 Mitchell Wiener – David Sichel

Sat Early Top-Flight Pairs (35 Tables)

1 Jay Kelkar – Bill Pettis

Sat Aft Side Game (42 Tables)

1 Weizhong Bao – Frank Feng

Sun AM Side Game (32 Tables)

3 Diane Woodworth – Sandy Carroll



Congratulations to these Flight B and NLM Pairs who won the District North American Pairs (NAP) Competition on September 26-27, 2021 and will represent District 6 at the Reno, NV NABC in March 2022:

Flight B Winners:

- 1st Peter Van Zijl – Dr. Michael Berard
- 2nd Rick Bingham – Ryan Connors
- 3rd Rick Uhrig – Dan Koch
- 4th Barbara Devaney – Alexander Stille

NLM Flight Winners:

- 1st John Huffman – Stephen Collier
- 2nd R Mani – Jichong Chai
- 3rd Janice Nichols – Loring Nichols
- 4th Ann Stoneman – Diane Goolsby

Hail and Farewell

We welcome the following new members into our Unit:

Janet E Brooks
 Thomas W Early
 Felicity R Gillette
 Ajit Gokhale
 Naveen Hota
 Janice K Jensen
 John S Macpherson
 Molly Pruett
 Sylvia E Robinson
 Dana Smith
 Gloria D Valencia

We welcome the following transfers into our Unit:

Allison R Brandt
 Frank Feng
 Mike Giesler
 Ramakrishnan S Iyer
 Leah C Lion
 Anne E McLaughlin
 Louis J Roman
 Dr Nathan N Safranek
 Sitaraman Sathiamoorthy

Tim M Crank
 Benjamin P Dolgin
 Elizabeth Gibbens
 Wayne Gibbens
 John W Hornbeck
 Shirley Ostrom
 Rozelin Prochaska
 Thomas A Schmitz
 Sandra Winans
 Sheila R Zedlewski

We give our regards to the following people who have transferred out of our Unit:
 Norman Blahuta
 Carl Coan

We are sorry to note the passing of three of our members:

John McCann
 Phyllis Schultze
 William H Zietz



Climbing the Ladder

New Junior Masters

Ronald Boggio
 Sheryl Gorsuch
 Lee Prior
 Robert D Shay
 Joan R Soll
 Carolyn H Town
 Pat D Williams

New Club Masters

Nancy Bleeker
 Barry Culman
 Carol M Fink
 Cora Jacobson
 Elizabeth Klass
 Peter F McCloskey
 Aline O Quester
 George H Quester
 Mary C Sophos
 Irene Zarechnak

New Sectional Masters

Paul Bernstein
 Charles E Davidow
 Paul E Levine
 Jennifer B Maggio

Mary Mitchelson
 Danyi Xu

New Regional Masters

Pam Bacher
 Mary E Beatley
 Chris C Betsold
 Dr Gary Burin
 Virginia Gray-Roddy
 Kimberlee A Grindstaff
 Betty A Hollis
 Leslie Kenne
 Karen S Magley
 Robert G Mukai
 Lee B Oppenheim
 Mary L Pike

New NABC Masters

Rekha Arness
 Nancy F Harrington
 Anne Hastings
 Glenn D Preston

New Life Masters

Mitchell Karlick
 Tami Reitan

New Bronze Life Masters

Brian D Lamm
 Tami Reitan
 Thomas A Stanley
 Adam Winsler

New Silver Life Masters

Benazir Ghaussy
 Dr Ruth Ann Verell
 Diane M Woodworth

New Ruby Life Masters

Ralph Bayrer
 Shiang Chen
 David Goldfrank
 Craig L Pritzker
 Al V Stolpe

New Gold Life Masters

Joe Leighton
 Joan M Mitchum
 Thomas P Jennings

New Sapphire Life Masters

Susan M Miskura
 Bernard H Oetjen
 Ronald L Spieker

NVBA Supports Local Charity ECHO

Thanks to Francesca Mazarella and her team, another successful bridge fundraising effort was accomplished with the recent sale of over 100 copies of *The Phoenix*, a 2021 cookbook of easy and go-to recipes that were provided by local bridge players. The recipes are great! The Northern Virginia Bridge Association (NVBA) funded the printing of the cookbook this year, as they did the 2020 cookbook last year. Thus, all proceeds from the cookbook sales went directly to the charity, [ECHO](#) (Ecumenical Community Helping Others), located in Springfield, VA.

This year, we offered both print and digital copies of the cookbook, and we had three sponsors: Rusty Krauss of Krauss Investment Group, Mark Tonnesen of Appliance Connection, and Francesca Mazarella of Francesca Interiors. The project raised \$3,530. We have a few print cookbooks left for sale. If you want a print or digital copy, please contact Francesca Mazarella at: franemaz@gmail.com. Francesca's daughter Joanne Mazarella, who is a local abstract artist, and her daughter, Jacqueline Sophia Burton, created the artwork.



Carolyn Baird, our Communication Leader, initially researched potential charities, and we selected ECHO. We decided to continue supporting this worthy local charity where most donations go to those in need. The volunteers were so helpful in making the donating process easy. Accepting the donations from Francesca and Carolyn are: Maureen Doherty, Assistant Director of Client Services, and Tom McKay of ECHO.

ECHO is a non-profit, all-volunteer organization that has been in operation for 50 years. It is located at 7205 Old

Keene Mill Road in Springfield, Virginia. ECHO accepts donations of money, clothing, food, household supplies, toys and school supplies. It helps people with long-term needs and those experiencing emergency needs. ECHO spends only 1.2% of money donated on Administration and Fundraising. The preponderance of donations goes directly to needy recipients. More information is available on the ECHO website. In the photo at right, volunteers are emptying groceries, used clothes and paper grocery bags from Francesca's car trunk.



Team:

Francesca Mazarella, Anita Lancaster, Katy Culp, Lucy McCoy, Carolyn Baird, Donna Hickling, Tami Reitan, Georgette Weiss, Jacqueline Mazarella, Joanne Mazarella, Jacqueline Sophia Burton, Ronald Kral.

Sponsors:

Rusty Krauss, Krauss Investment Group
Mark Tonnesen, Appliance Connection
Francesca Mazarella, Francesca Interiors

Contributors:

Suzanne Abrams, Elizabeth Anderson, JJ Armour, Carolyn Baird, Sandy Carroll, Grace Cohen, Katy Culp, Bob and Jean Durfee, Robyn Falls, Marge Gazzola, David and Jane Goldfrank, Jo-

(Continued from page 8)

seph Goldfrank and Kinga Dobolyi, Doug Grove, Margot Hennings, Donna Hickling, Elizabeth Huffman, Doris Knief, Anita Lancaster, Francesca Mazarella, Jacqueline Mazarella, Joanne Mazarella, Craig Pritzker, Nan Rabinow, Tami and Scott Reitan, Diane and Steve Rothman, Elly Schwartz, Sheila Soper, Howard Stevens, Eileen Street, Wendy Swanson, Georgette Weiss

Kibitzers: those who donated

Ann Atcheson, Don Beyer, Marty Bley, Eric Cassel, Dale Dallaire, Katy Culp, Rich Long, Helen Marek, Marlene Gross, Joyce Currie, Bob Boyd, Isabella de Zamaroczy, Pat Cefalu, Dyson Lloyd, Danielle Scilla, Dennis O'Malley.



Volunteers Needed for TJ Bridge Club

For many years, a small group of adult volunteers has attended the meetings of the bridge club at the Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology — both to teach the game to kids who are interested enough to have signed up but don't know how to play and to offer assistance to those who have varying degrees of familiarity with bridge, enjoy playing and would like to learn more. Typically, the club meets during two after-class periods on Friday afternoons (2:20 - 4:00 pm) at TJ (6560 Braddock Road, Alexandria), with a maximum of 32 students in each session.

It's fun to work with this self-selected, high-caliber group of students, and doing so, we hope, will foster interest in bridge among a rising generation new to the game. Sometimes, volunteers sit in on a game to make up a full table. If you're interested in participating, whether regularly or just occasionally, please call or email Catherine Bardsley (703 819-9795 or catherine.bardsley@gmail.com).

Northern Virginia Bridge Association

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The NVBA Newsletter is published four times a year by the Northern Virginia Bridge Association. If you need membership information or have a change of address to report, contact Eric Poskanzer at NY2VA@yahoo.com; for information/suggestions about newsletter content, contact Lucy McCoy at 703-848-2331 or newsletter@nvba.org.