



Bridge: A MindSport For All

Connects People, Challenges Minds

Summary Report Session 2A – Impact of a Global Pandemic on Bridge

The aims of Session 2A were to explore issues relating to the impact of the pandemic on bridge and how they might be resolved, to consider case studies and to identify future research needs. The key questions addressed the next steps for the bridge community, and the opportunities and challenges of the New Bridge Different. There were several pre-recorded presentations for the session, plus five live presentations:

- Kevin Judge discussed the benefits, barriers and motivations experienced by bridge players, through the lens of social capital. Social capital is a balance between cooperation and self interest and is an imperative approach based on the work of James Coleman who describes social structure, ideology and stability.
- Nicky Bainbridge described her experiences of running her bridge club when the pandemic hit. Some members continued as online members, but a significant number indicated they were waiting for face-to-face bridge to return. Some players prefer to play in person because this part of their social life.
- Patrick Shields talked about how a County Association filled the gaps that bridge clubs couldn't easily fill.
- Peter Cox described the situation with bridge in Australia, which at the time was in a fairly unique position, as they had reopened for face-to-face bridge. The future there could be a hybrid version. Most people would be playing in clubs with some online bridge.
- Jan Kamras discussed the activities of the European Bridge League. Courses and seminars in future could be partly online and partly face to face, meaning that more NBOs might be able to participate. For competitions, players want to meet; it's part of their enjoyment in playing competitive high level bridge.

The panel discussed how to maximise the positives and minimise the negatives of the online experiences during the pandemic. Primarily, online is more convenient, but face-to-face is more sociable. We need to keep the game together, while recognizing that both aspects have strengths. There was a discussion about how a hybrid solution might work. It was also pointed out that about 50% of bridge players were not playing online. The audience then split into six separate groups to discuss various key challenges:

- **Future of Club Bridge:** A hybrid solution could be way forward.
- **Testing Times for Tournament Bridge:** The economics of tournaments is important. Also, there are concerns about cheating online.
- **New Etiquette of Online Bridge:** The atmosphere in online bridge is different to at a bridge club. There is a different playing etiquette that has to be learned.
- **Pandemic Organisations:** There might be a need for change of focus in NBOs re social/competitive bridge or managing hybrid bridge.
- **Locating the Missing Players:** Only 40-50% of previous players are playing online at the moment. Over half the players are waiting for face-to-face to come back and that should be a key to future discussions.
- **Online Bridge – An Inferior Game?** Inferior is the wrong word to describe online bridge – different is a better word. How can we combine the best of online and face-to-face bridge?

The panellists gave a few brief thoughts to sum up. Peter Cox asked how do we motivate the clubs to want to move forward? Patrick Shields said the best way was face-to-face and online to move forward together, using the advantages from both. Nicky Bainbridge said it's important to not leave anybody behind. Christina Ballinger said how much we are all really looking forward to playing face to face again. Espen Gisvold said that the pandemic has changed the shape of bridge and it will be a hybrid in future. Cathryn Fox wondered whether in a few years' time we would look back on this period positively. The session recording and presentations can be accessed [here](#).