



8th EBL TDs' Workshop

Directing Online Bridge Tournaments

Gordon Rainsford



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Nearly 30 years of online bridge

- **OKBridge** held first game 1992
 - initially primitive, text based
- **Bridge Base Online (BBO)** started 2001

Many other platforms now exist



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- **StepBridge:** Netherlands
- **Bridge Club Live:** England
- **Real Deal Bridge:** Australia
- **Bridgемate/Pianola Play:** Netherlands/England
- **Funbridge:** mainly robot play (like BBO daylongs) but some partnership options have recently been available
- **Lovebridge:** Hungary; not primarily online, but has been used with a server in the cloud for Singapore trials
- **RealBridge:** England, strong international base



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Mechanical irregularities removed:

- Mis-boarding
- Mis-duplication
- Revokes
- Bids out of turn
- Leads out of turn
- Insufficient bids*
- * now permitted by RealBridge for TD & teaching purposes



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Other advantages:

- No board dealing
- No time taken by scoring
- Everyone has a stationary seat
- No distractions from other tables
- Can enforce pauses in auction and play
- No time taken by moving
- Self-alerting reduces mis-information



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Yet more advantages :

- Display options chosen by each player
- Virtual screens that really work!
- TDs can get to tables quickly & easily
- System cards don't get lost
- Electronic logs of time and actions
- Hand and play records from all tables



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New problems created by online bridge:

- Mis-clicks
- Conn problems & other software glitches
- Time limit guillotine
- Poor Swiss format & other movements
- Score adjustments – but can be re-scored
- CHEATING & RUDENESS!
- Anonymity of players causes suspicion



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Laws and regulations for online bridge:

WBF Code of Laws for Electronic Bridge 2001

– 20 years old and not much used

Online bridge is a variation, not a different game
Subject to same sanctions for disciplinary matters

Regulations may be more useful than different laws:
e.g. EBU have Sky-Blue Book written by Robin Barker



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Regulations for online bridge should include:

- Statement about cheating
- Undos - L25A & L45C4(b)
- Undos - misinformation – L21B and L47E
- Claims – what happens if they play on?
- Slow play – scoring boards if removed
- UI cases - breaks in tempo maybe caused by connection problems



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Regulations for online bridge should include:

- Alerting regulations and explanations
- No UI from self-alerting
- Correction periods
- Provision of system cards
- Information from the proper use of the platform is authorised

Table 1
Rd 1 / 1

Karin

Lisbeth Troll

WEST

4

E

PASS

X

PASS

X

3NT

4NT

5NT

6NT

7NT

3♠

3♥

3♦

4♣

4♥

4♦

4♣

5♥

5♦

5♣

6♥

6♦

6♣

7♥

7♦

7♣

sara

Alert

Undo

Director

Leave

Scores

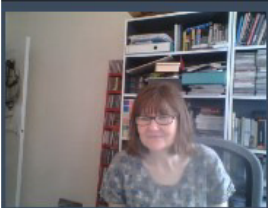
Kirsten

Alert

♠ A Q 10 8 6 4 2

♥ Q 8 ♣ Q 7 2 ♦ 4

♠ 4



W **2** EAST
N
S

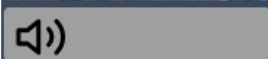


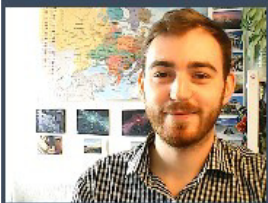
Table 1
Rd 1 / 2



Andy Bowles

4 **X** S

0
0



Scores

Emma Lawton

Hand layout showing cards for North (K♠, 9♠, 5♠, 5♥, 5♣), East (K♥), South (K♣, 9♣, 6♣, 2♣, 2♣), and West (Q♦, J♦, 8♦, 7♦, 4♦, 4♦). A central card (6♦) is shown.



Eugenio Mistretta

ALERT

Last trick
Auction
Claim

Undo
Director
Leave

Q♠ 7♠ 6♠ 4♠ 3♠ A♥ Q♥ 9♥ 5♥ J♣ 8♣ 4♣ 9♦ 9♦

Sam Knox



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RealBridge

- Learned from other platforms' mistakes
- Video— social and serious events
- Delayed Kibitzing
- Config (json) files
- Proper Swiss, artificial scores, claims
- Option for mandatory delays
- Virtual screens
- Balanced movements



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Euro Qualifiers for World Championships-1

- RealBridge 2021 - security paramount
- Central venues with neutral observers
- Used video but not audio
- Players used keyboards, not touchscreens
- Players attended advance practice sessions
- Individual links for players to go to tables



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Switch view		Sort: Table No ↑ ▾		Filter: <input type="text"/>	
A Sacristan		Manuel Gonçalves			
Ana Brito	1 6.13	Jorge Cruzeiro	2 6.3	Ivars Ilzins	Annaig della Monta
David de Partearroyo		Paulo Pessanha		Jesen	
Marko Tenn		Tony Ratcliff		Ka	
Carlos Gonçalves	4 R3	Eduardo Pinto	5 6.7	Ann O'Connell	Toivo Jullis
Joel Aasmäe		Julian Pottage		Vil	
Andy Bowles (support)		Jan Verhees			
Ilan Bareket	7 6.5	Nathalie Saada	8 R3	Goran Borevković	Alda S. Guðnadóttir
Patrick Bocken		Tjali Tuwanakotta		Peter	



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Euro Qualifiers for World Championships-2

- Continuous TDs' meeting by Webex
- Private text between TD and one player
- Integration with EBL display software
- TDs list of frequently used messages
- 75 minutes for 10 boards was not enough
- 1.5 TDs for each section was usually enough
- Two additional "Consultant TDs" to poll



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Personal conclusion:

Online bridge has so many advantages when properly implemented that it seems to me to be an objectively better way of running games than holding cards, but the majority of players still seem to prefer to hold pasteboard in their hands!