

From the Chairman

Technology reaches new peaks

by Jeremy Dhondy



If I had written this editorial in 1974 I might have been introducing bidding boxes. They got quite a bad press in those early days but today you would be pushed to find a tournament or club duplicate that doesn't use them. Even in Australia, where they have been wedded to a bit of paper in the middle of the table, many clubs have switched. A lot of clubs also use the computer to score and some of those have Bridgemates or other equivalent devices on the table to assist. This allows players to see their ranking, the hands and how they did by the time they are home.

In an EBU tournament you get the results emailed to you after the session, so if you have gone to bed rather than for a drink you can still see if you have qualified. While some items of technology are not important to a club, it is going to play a greater part at all levels. Watching or playing online is either free, or very cheap and the EBU online KO has proved a welcome addition to the calendar for quite a few teams in the last couple of years.

At the recent EBU Autumn Congress two things made their debut and may well become more common. The first was a simple (free) app made by Bridgemate. You can download it to any iPhone or Android. You can see your results for the session, your current ranking, hands (provided you have played them) – in short, a wealth of information. In Swiss events it tells you which table to go to next. All it requires is Bridgemates and a set-up.

The second innovation has the potential to be more far-reaching. The finalists in the Two Star Pairs found a machine in the centre of the table and a tablet which performed the functions (& more) of a standard electronic scoring device. What does the machine do? The Bridge+More (*pictured*) sits in the middle of the table, connected to the internet, and invisibly deals the next hands while you play. When

you are ready for the next deal – the cards emerge, and four new hands are ready for play. Insert the cards you have just played without messing up the order and the dealer records the exact way the hands were played. It will be a while before these reach clubs because at present they are expensive. The EBU is going to trial them a bit more and gradually I think they will become more common and affordable. They do away with the need for dealing in advance; you need far fewer cards and no wallets or boards. The tablets and machines survived the 57 boards of the final with almost no difficulty. The scoring was instant although perhaps the display could be improved. One possible luddite said, 'If you had told me in advance these were going to be used I wouldn't have entered but I thought they worked well'. No more picking up boards chucked along the floor from the next table!

THANK YOU BILL PENCHARZ

One of our vice presidents, Bill Pencharz, has resigned. He is a former Chairman of the Union, was our Honorary Solicitor for many years and I would like to thank him here for the assistance he has given the Union and me personally since I have become Chairman.

GOOD NEWS FOR BRIDGE

I hear players talking gloom and doom sometimes, perhaps lamenting the decline in young players or lower numbers in tournaments. To counter this there is the positive announcement that bridge has been added to the programme at the 2018 Asian Games to be held in Vietnam. I hope it goes well and others catch on. The World Bridge Federation has also recently held its first online World Bridge Cup in which Bill Gates was a participant and the Chinese have held a camp for aspiring young players, attended by 800 youngsters. □

