



Knowing a good hand is a learned skill and takes practice. Photo by Lisa Crandall

BRIDGE AS AN OLYMPIC EVENT?

By Lisa Crandall

The card game of Bridge has been around since the early days of the 20th century, apparently evolving from a card game called Whist. It is popular on an international level with contests and competitions, large and small, held around the world every year. Factoring in the precise number of smaller local clubs, and groups of friends who play for “fun”, it is impossible to even estimate how many players there are around the globe. However, as of 2017, the World Bridge Federation (WBF) has 116-member National Leagues and over one million members who play competitively.

Right here in our part of the world there are formal organized bridge clubs that meet regularly in Brockville, Kemptville and Prescott. They each offer regular opportunities where learners and beginners are welcome. On the other hand, in Cardinal there is a group of enthusiastic learners who welcome newcomers to their weekly games all the time. They view themselves as a sincere, but not too serious training ground for beginners. They meet every Tuesday morning in the lobby of the Ingression Center. If you enjoy cards and socializing

it might be worth checking out. After all it might be your only chance to claim you are an Olympic athlete in training.

Now what’s this about a card game being an Olympic sport you might be wondering? Well, in 1999 the WBF was recognised by the International Olympic Committee as an International Sports Federation. This status requires that competitive events must function on a certain very strict level of organization, including random drug testing. Then, in 2002 the WBF was invited to participate at the Winter Olympics at Salt Lake City, USA, as a demonstration sport. In 2015 they made a formal bid to be accepted as an actual event at the 2020 Olympics in Beijing. Although they did not make the short list of new Olympic sports, announced in 2016, there is always hope that might change in the future.

According to many Bridge aficionados, it is a blend of skill and teamwork that makes it Olympian in temperament. Recalling that the spirit of the Olympics is described as contributing to the building of a peaceful and better world, by educating people through sport, practiced without

discrimination of any kind and in the Olympic spirit, which requires mutual understanding with a spirit of friendship, solidarity and fair play.

According to Bridge for Dummies, a game consists of at least four players working in pairs, sitting across from each other at a table. The entire 52 card deck is dealt out and whichever player (the declarer) is taking the lead in a hand then assesses their hand, estimates what is probably in the hand of their partner and bids or contracts to make so many tricks in that round. Winning a trick is essentially playing the highest card. Then play commences with each player contributing one card at a time and whomever has the highest card in each round claims the trick. If the contract or bid is met at the end of the round then that player/team is awarded extra points. Bridge really is a subtle, sophisticated game that is more about skill than luck.

If that appeals to you then check out local groups. The group in Cardinal is eager to teach you how it’s done and share some laughs along the way. **Look for them in the lobby of the Ingression Center in Cardinal, On. on Tuesday mornings between 9AM and 11AM.** There’s always room for people who want to learn and extra tables for those who want to practice. [LH](#)

FAMOUS BRIDGE PLAYERS, PAST, PRESENT AND FICTIONAL

Actors: Omar Sharif, Telly Savalas, Tennis Star Martina Navratilova, Microsoft’s Bill Gates, Billionaire Investor Warren Buffet, Mahatma Ghandi, Prime Minister Winston Churchill, President Dwight D. Eisenhower, Comedian George Burns, James Bond, Detective Hercule Poirot (Agatha Christie Novels) and Snoopy (the Dog-Peanuts)

Bridge is such a phenomena of popular culture that there is a series of cookbooks, written by Canadians, known as “The Best of Bridge”. The books started as a collection of recipes that a group of friends would bring along to share at their regular Bridge games. It started with The Best of Bridge in 1976 and has grown to 18 books in the series. Over the past 40 years there have been more than 4 million copies sold.