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OPINION

On talking to the players, I have heard little but praise for the first week of this year's ANC. The playing rooms are comfortable, the lollies have been greatly appreciated, and Adelaide's welcome to out of town visitors has been superb. From my own perspective, staying at the venue was a great treat; my room was comfortable, and just as importantly, very quiet.

I am, however, concerned with the support given to the Butler events this year. Two weeks ago 40 Australians were in Hamilton for the NZ Nationals, but only seven of those players were in one of our own Butler events. Hamilton fielded 117 tables for the New Zealand Pairs, while Adelaide had 39 tables on Day I of the Butler.

The ANC is the equivalent of the NZ Nationals – at their tournament, the Interprovincial Teams is a similar event to our Interstate Challenge, and it takes place at the start of the event, with the NZ Pairs and the NZ Teams following. How is it that a small country like New Zealand can attract nearly three times as many pairs as what is supposed to be our premier event? The argument that there has been a lot of bridge on this year doesn't impress me, neither does any suggestion that Adelaide is not an attractive city to visit. Hamilton in winter is a bleak place, in my opinion – cold, cheerless, and the two-star hotel venue is way out of town.

While Australia has a number of major PQP events to attract the competitive players, with the Surfers Congress now attracting the largest number of players of any Australian event, there is no reason for the ANC Butler to be so under-subscribed. We need to support our important events, and help them flourish.

This year, too, there has been a very poor turnout from the locals. Two side events have already been cancelled due to lack of entries, and the support of the local clubs has been minimal. Two ladies travelled by bus to the venue, only to be turned away when there was no game for them. ANC side events only work when there is a symbiotic relationship between the ANC conveners and the local clubs. In Sydney last year, the side events



The Editor

TODAY'S TIMETABLE

Championship Event:

Open & Women's Butler Stage III

10am, 2.30pm

Senior's Butler Stage B

10am, 2.30pm

ANC Swiss Pairs

10am, 2.30pm

Congress Event:

Lyndoch Lavender Farm Matchpoint Pairs I of 2

10am, 2.30pm

SABA Teams — 1 of 3

7.30pm

were held in local clubs, and the Melbourne ANC attracted good attendances, but in Hobart, the side events were a non-event. In Perth next year, the various local clubs will be sponsoring side events, and in any case, BAWA does not have its own clubrooms, so there is no conflict between the ANC and the State Association.

Not wanting to get into local bridge politics, I can only say that I find it strange that the members of SABA should continue to attend its regular club games, but stay away from the scheduled side events in droves.

I sincerely hope that the 2007 ANC is highly successful. Perth is a long haul for the majority of players, but perhaps the attraction of being 'on the other side of the world' will appeal to the Easterners.

The future of the ANC, 67 years of history, is at stake. The various states empty their coffers annually to fund teams and pairs to the ANC. But if the Butler is to become a 'little fish' in comparison to other national events, it is in danger of losing its credibility. This year, in the Seniors event, with a number of entrants in Stage A declaring their ineligibility for Stage B, one could come just about last and still make it to Stage B.

The Butler is a great event, gruelling perhaps, but surely perceived by all to be the most indicative test of a pair's effectiveness. We select our representative teams by way of a Butler. The honour of winning the Butler should prove ones standing in the bridge community.

CLASH OF THE TITANS

In Round 12 of Stage II, NS leaders Bruce Neill – Andrew Peake faced the EW leaders at the time, Magnus Moren – Neville Francis. At the end of Stage II, however, Peter Gill – Paul Gosney had overtaken Magnus and Neville to head the Butler going into Stage III.

The following deal could have worked out differently for EW if declarer had formed a different opinion of his chances:

Board 13, North deals, all vulnerable

	♠ K 4		
	♥ A K 6 4 2		
	♦ 9 8 5		
	♣ Q 10 7		
♠ J 10 8 7 6 5		♠ A 9	
♥ 10 5		♥ Q J	
♦ A Q 10		♦ J 7 6 3	
♣ 8 3		♣ A J 9 4 2	
	♠ Q 3 2		
	♥ 9 8 7 3		
	♦ K 4 2		
	♣ K 6 5		
WEST <i>Francis</i>	NORTH <i>Peake</i>	EAST <i>Moren</i>	SOUTH <i>Neill</i>
	1♥	Dbl	Pass
4♠	All Pass		

On a hand where many of us would choose to pass, East doubled, which systemically showed 16+ HCP, any shape. This explains West's leap to game. Moren looked sheepish on exposing his hand, saying he didn't know what he was thinking about.

Peake led ♥A, on which Neill played ♥9 and Francis contributed ♥10. ♥K fetched ♥8 from Neill.

As a kibitzer sitting behind Peake, I was pretty sure that Neill was asking for a diamond switch, and sure enough, at trick three, Peake switched to ♦9. Neill played ♦K to this trick, and the contract should now have been home. Declarer can win ♦A, and play a spade to the nine, forcing South's queen. Even on a late club shift by South, which knocks out ♣A, declarer can succeed, with diamonds breaking 3-3.

It is easy for the armchair critics to see that a club shift is required at trick three. From South's point of view, it would seem that North needs to hold one of the minor suit queens or ♦A to defeat the contract. Holding both minor suit kings, would ♥9 followed by ♥3 suggest equal holdings in the minors? The jury is out.



Andrew Peake

However, for declarer the operation as successful but the patient died. Francis had the pre-conceived notion that he needed North to hold doubleton ♠K-Q for the contract to make. When Peake followed with ♠4 when a spade was played towards dummy, Francis gave up, playing ♠A and thus giving up two tricks in trumps.

On the next example, I was impressed by the attitude of all four players.

Moren was in 4♠ from the East seat, having lost three tricks in this end position, with South on lead:

	♠ ---	
	♥ ---	
	♦ Q J	
	♣ 8	
♠ 10		♠ 9
♥ 10		♥ ---
♦ 7		♦ 9
♣ ---		♣ J
	♠ ---	
	♥ K J	
	♦ ---	
	♣ 9	

Magnus conceded one down when Peake said he had a diamond winner. However, there is no entry to the diamond winner with South on play, and the last three tricks can be taken on a crossruff, with ♠J taking care of dummy's diamond loser.

Nothing was said until the end of play, when the four-some approached the Director, Sean Mullamphy. "What is the ruling, please, we don't know".

"I do", said Mullamphy, consulting his rule book.

It was agreed that there was no logical line of play which could result in another trick being lost.

All four men were happy with the ruling; there was not a hint of ill-feeling from any player. I find this rare in a case like this; someone always wants to argue the toss. These men played the entire match without a hint of gamesmanship, accepting claims quickly and showing good sportsmanship.

The full deal:

	♠ J 4	
	♥ 3 2	
	♦ Q J 6 4 2	
	♣ A 8 4 3	
♠ A K 10 3		♠ 9 8 6 2
♥ Q 10 6 4		♥ A 8
♦ 7 5 3		♦ A K 9 8
♣ Q 5		♣ J 10 7
	♠ Q 7 5	
	♥ K J 9 7 5	
	♦ 10	
	♣ K 9 6 2	

RIDING THE TIGER

Playing bridge to your best ability at national tournaments and enjoying it is as much to do with managing yourself and your partnership as it is to do with the technical stuff.

Here is one important theme.

ATTACK OF THE FEEBLES

Playing against Kieran Dyke and David Wiltshire is something I look forward to – games against them are always a real pleasure. Neil and I were playing in Stage II of the Butler and recovering from a very poor start when we met them. I picked up this hand during the match:

	♠ A x x x x
	♥ K Q x
	♦ J 10 x
	♣ A x
1NT	2♣ ¹
3♦ ²	3♠ ³
3NT	Pass

1. 8+ HCP
2. 5 diamonds, 16-17HCP
3. 5 spades

Partner opened a 14-17 notrump and two rounds later I knew that he held a maximum with a doubleton spade, but I passed when I clearly should have made a mild slam try with 4♦. Jumping to 6♦ is better than passing.

I was telling myself at the time that I was being conservative when I was really trying to avoid making a bidding decision.

After the hand I apologized to partner at the table. I said to Neil that I'd had an *Attack of the Feebles*.

Most players get a little mentally tired from time to time and your nerve can weaken for a hand or two. I know this happens to me and I like to deal with it directly. If you feel this happening to you, stop before you make another bid or play and get your head back on track right now – however long it takes.

Take advice from Clint Eastwood's Dirty Harry: 'Man's got to know his limitations.' The important thing is to recognize it, tell partner so we can ignore the bad result and get on with trying to play well. You need to get past stuff like this honestly and not make silly excuses.

That way you minimize the effect on the partnership and the bad result doesn't linger. Don't let silly results come in pairs – it is always the second one that causes the real trouble. We escaped this match with a small win and got on with business.

SPECULATIVE OPENINGS

In recent times there has been a move towards what I might euphemistically describe as 'speculative' openings. "What is a speculative opening?" you might ask – well, it's a hand that generally has only one meaning – it describes a hand containing a five-card major with no further constraints. These openings are being used more and more frequently, sometimes with great success - and other times with no success at all. We all know the players who employ these openings and so it has become not so much a "How do I bid over this?" question as a "I wonder what penalty we can get?"

I first came across these openings at last year's SNWT, and logged the players using them in the ol' memory bank for future consideration. My partner and I have a very simple agreement to double with any 16+ HCP, so it was relatively easy to earn +1400 for our side on the following hand:

Round 9, Women's Butler Stage II			
Board 2, East deals, NS vulnerable			
	♠ Q		
	♥ 10 5		
	♦ K Q J 5 3 2		
	♣ J 10 8 2		
♠ A J 8 2		♠ 10 9 5 3	
♥ A		♥ K Q J 9 3	
♦ A 7 6		♦ 9 8 4	
♣ K 7 5 4 3		♣ Q	
	♠ K 7 6 4		
	♥ 8 7 6 4 2		
	♦ 10		
	♣ A 9 6		
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
Dbl	All Pass	Pass	2♥

South 'speculatively' opened 2♥, West doubled and East passed. South's question about the meaning of the double produced the response "16+, any shape". West led ♥A and switched to a small club. South won one of her three tricks, conceding the rest for 15 IMPs away on the board.

You may question North's wisdom in passing the double – a timely question or two may have yielded the information required to avoid complete disaster – but it may also have 'given the game away' to the opponents.

So, what do you consider the gain in adding the 'speculative opening' to your quiver of arrows to unleash at the opponents – rather less, I would have thought than washing a floor without a bucket of water!!!

OPEN BUTLER STAGE III AFTER 4 ROUNDS

	Total VPs	Total IMPs	Wins	Last VPs	Last IMPs
1 Markey & Mill	84	76	3.5	25.0	37
2 Neill & Peake	78	39	3.0	23.0	32
3 Snashall & Dixon	72	48	2.0	24.0	35
4 Wiltshire & Dyke	71	37	4.0	16.0	5
5 Gold & Stark	71	32	3.0	15.0	0
6 Gill & Gosney	68	2	2.0	7.0	32-
7 Rosendorff & Zeller	66	15	3.0	24.0	36
8 Moren & Francis	66	1-	1.5	1.5	0
9 Reynolds & Appleton	62	6	2.0	22.0	26
10 Adams & Beauchamp	59	0	2.0	8.0	26-
11 Ewart & Howe	58	33-	2.0	6.0	36-
12 Zollo & Eddie	55	40-	0.0	14.0	5-
13 Dawson & Demuy	42	73-	0.0	6.0	35-
14 Noble & Bilski	35	108-	0.0	5.0	37-

WOMENS BUTLER STAGE III AFTER 4 ROUNDS

	Total VPs	Total IMPs	Wins	Last VPs	Last IMPs
1 Schroor & Kaplan	90	93	4.0	25.0	44
2 Bird & Creet	77	50	3.0	23.0	31
3 Glanger & Scudder	77	35	3.0	22.0	26
4 Tully & Lusk	75	41	2.0	14.0	3-
5 Driscoll & Greenfeld	71	34	2.0	25.0	44
6 Liepins & Chadwick	65	19	2.0	14.0	3-
7 Bashar & Moses	65	9	3.0	8.0	26-
8 Weal & Yule	63	3-	1.0	24.0	34
9 Kahler & Hopwood	60	7-	2.0	16.0	3
10 Chadwick & Sharp	56	17-	2.0	6.0	34-
11 Stephens & Pettigrew	55	19-	2.0	16.0	3
12 Manford & Clements	49	49-	1.5	4.0	44-
13 Wilson & Wilson	42	74-	0.5	4.0	44-
14 Snashall & Murray-White	36	112-	0.0	7.0	31-

SENIORS BUTLER STAGE B AFTER 4 ROUNDS

	Total VPs	Total IMPs	Wins	Last VPs	Last IMPs
1 Grant & Hancock	98	121	4.0	22.0	25
2 Dilks & Gallus	70	24	1.5	14.0	3-
3 Marks & Rocks	68	30	2.5	14.0	2-
4 Hunt & Lachman	68	28	3.0	17.0	8
5 Piper & Ashworth	68	19	2.0	13.0	8-
6 Samuel & Samuel	64	4	3.0	17.0	7
7 Kahler & Davis	64	2	3.0	16.0	3
8 Berger & Berger	61	16-	2.0	16.0	6
9 Clarke & Colmer	61	27-	2.0	7.0	29-
10 Rutkowski & Tobin	60	1-	2.5	23.0	29
11 Bignall & Januszke	58	42-	1.0	14.0	6-
12 Bourke & Ramshaw	54	32-	0.5	16.0	2
13 Watts & Yuill	49	51-	1.0	8.0	25-
14 Klofa & Schwabegger	44	59-	0.0	13.0	7-



The ballroom with three sections of Butler in play



A 'huddle' taking place

Quotable Quips

“Who did you get your 2 off?
Ourselves”

“The Fat Controller can now also
be referred to as the Out of
Controller or the Lost Controller”