

# TCG - The Common Game

Contributed by Jack Cole

One of the reasons we liked playing STaC games at our club was that results were compared amongst all the pairs that participated from many clubs. We were, however, disappointed to learn that STaC comparisons simply rank all pairs by their club percentages; your percentage score is still calculated only against your small playing field of just the tables in your club.

The Common Game (TCG) does it better. TCG hands are played across the continent and, once all the results are in (a few hours later), TCG re-computes your percentage hand-by-hand versus the entire field, similar to a tournament, in which you are scored against many more pairs. With TCG, you have a better understanding of how you are doing in a large field without ever having to travel to a tournament and pay extra fees.

To find your recalculated “**Field Percentage**” and “**Field Rank**” for each game, click on the link called [Personal Common Game Home Page](#) in the TCG email that you receive after the game. You will then see a screen like the one below, with one row per game. Our Field Percentage on Jan. 15 was 53.05%, and we placed 833<sup>rd</sup> out of 2406 pairs. The “**Section Percentage**” is the score we received at the club.

Game Date (FRA)	Club Website	Your Partner	Field Pct	Field Rank	CG Points	Section Pct	ACBL MPs	CG Handicap
2021-01-15	Grand River Bridge Club	Lari Cole	53.05	833 / 2406		51.66	0.37	
2021-01-01	Grand River Bridge Club	Lari Cole	51.78	838 / 2055		55.22	0.87	
2021-01-11	Grand River Bridge Club	Lari Cole	61.20	44 / 613	0.20	62.39	1.44	
2021-01-04	Grand River Bridge Club	Lari Cole	53.82	162 / 562	0.05	53.22	0.59	

This report shows all TCG games you have played this month. You can use the “Prior Games” tab to look further back.

There is so much more to learn about the benefits of The Common Game. Stay tuned!

## 2. Your Declarer, Dummy, and Lead Percentages

**THESE RESULTS ARE AVAILABLE ONLY AFTER ALL DAILY ACTIVITY IS OVER – USUALLY AFTER 7 PM.**

Using your TCG Results email that you receive shortly after the game, click again on the [Personal Common Game Home Page](#) link. You are viewing data under the “Attendance” tab which contains your Field Percentage and Field Rank that you learned about already.

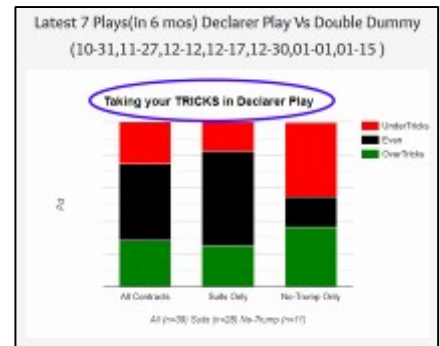


Click over to the “**Positional Results**” tab, which shows how you fared as Declarer, Dummy, Defender on Lead, and Defender not on Lead for individual games and overall Matches-To-Date (called MTD - that’s the one to look at!) displayed on the first line.

POSITIONAL RESULTS - % AGAINST FIELD (# OF BOARDS)					
Date	Partner	Declarer	On-Lead	Dummy	Not On-Lead
MTD	Average	51% (83)	54% (90)	58% (80)	59% (86)
2021-01-15	Lori Cole	53% (7)	43% (8)	66% (7)	45% (6)
2021-01-01	Lori Cole	54% (12)	40% (5)	82% (3)	56% (7)
2020-12-30	Lori Cole	57% (9)	50% (7)	59% (5)	66% (7)

As shown, I was the Declarer for 83 hands, and on those hands we scored 51%. We fared better when Lori declared, at 58%. The same is true when it came to choosing a lead – 54% versus 59%. Notice that these numbers are affected by not only how well the hands were played, but also by the quality of the contracts that were reached.

The next tab is “**Declarer Play vs. Double Dummy**”. It repeats the stats from the “Positional Results” tab, and below those shows how you did versus a perfect double dummy player – one who can see all four hands. The red part of each bar shows the times you made fewer tricks than were possible. No one can match Double Dummy, but you can use this information to watch your progress over time and identify weaknesses. For example, this person can see that they need to work on their play of no trump hands!



### 3. Fast Results Analysis, Part 1

We continue with the [Personal Common Game Home Page](#) link in your Common Game email, on the “**Attendance**” tab (for this month), and the “**Prior Games**” tab (for previous months). (Reminder that some TCG results may not be available until later in the day.)

On the left, beside each session, there are buttons labelled **FRA**. These provide a “Fast Results Analysis”, which is a great resource for the player who is trying to understand how they got the score that they did. TCG has a video explanation of this page, but here’s the “Cole’s Notes” ( :- ) version.



In the figure below, I’ve shown my own FRA for the first three boards of our January 1 game. I was East, and ended up as *Dummy* for boards 1 and 3, and *Declarer* for Board 2. The Table Results (contract and outcome) are shown, along with the scores, and the leads; then it gets more interesting.

VENUE: GRAND RIVER BRIDGE CLUB DATE: 01-01A											
Date	Board*	Your Position	Table Result	Extra Tricks*	Your Score	Lead	Field Pct	Optimal* Contract	Optimal* Score	Bidding Commentary	Team Scoring
01-01A	01	E: Dummy	3♥ W +1	1	170	♠Q	81.82	4♥ NS-1	+100	They missed sacrifice	2
01-01A	02	E: Declarer	3NE -2	1	-100	♠J	4.55	3♠ EW	+140	They missed double	-6
01-01A	03	E: Dummy	2N W +1	3	150	♠3	90.91	2NX NS-1	+100	Optimum Contract Bid	2
01-01A	04	On Lead	4♥ N +1	3	650	♠3	40.91	3♥ NS	+660	They Bid Wrong Come	

The “Extra Tricks” column compares our play to Double Dummy’s, highlighted in **Green** if we made more than we should and in **Red** if we made less. On Board 3, Lori made three tricks more than she should! The “Field Percentages” (our score compared to the big Common Game field) are 81.82, 4.55, and 90.91, showing clearly that Lori should play more of the hands!

The “Optimal Contract” and “Optimal Score” are also from Double Dummy analysis. They may be “optimal”, but they are not always what you might expect (TCG has a disclaimer that they may not be achievable using reasonable bids and lines of play, and should be used “as a guide”). Hovering your cursor over the Optimal Contract pops up **all** of the Double Dummy makeable contracts, as shown to the right,

Optimal* Contract	Optimal* Score	Bidding_Commentary
4♦X-NS-1;	+100	They missed
3♠-EW	NS:1N 3♥3♦    EW:3♣3♠	missed
2NX-NS-1;	+100	Optimum C

The “Bidding Commentary” is just the software editorializing on our contract versus Double Dummy. Ah, but the last column, “Team Scoring” is interesting: it shows how our result would have scored in a team event (Swiss Pairs, for example), if the other table had bid and made the optimal contract.

All in all, the FRA is a great tool for seeing where you might improve your score. But wait, there’s more to FRA.....next week!

*P.S. Since writing last week’s article, I’ve learned that not all sessions show up in the “Positional Results” area of TCG because of the heavy computations that are required. TCG suggests another tool, which I will evaluate and report on in the future.*

#### 4. Fast Results Analysis, Part 2

We continue with the [Personal Common Game Home Page](#) link in your Common Game email, on the “Attendance” tab and the “Prior Games” tab. (Reminder that some TCG results may not be available until later in the day.)

OSA 19	W: Defending	4♠N-1	-550	9.09	5♠X-EW-1;	-500	We missed slam	-4
OSA 20	W: Declarer	4♠W+1	650	59.09	6N-EW	+1440	We Missed Slam	-13
OSA 20	W: On Lead	3N S-2	660	0.00	4N NS	NS: 4W:6N 3♣3♦	num Contract Bid	1

We’ve seen the deal-by-deal Fast Results Analysis (FRA) that shows, for example, the hands on which one performed poorer than Double Dummy. This day, on board 19 I was declarer at 4S, making five! Happy... until TCG tells me that, first of all, we should have been playing 6NT, and also, by the way, I should have made another trick! Thank you, TCG! But how?

So I click on the board number, at the left. TCG sends a message off to BBO, and a full-screen picture of the board appears, as shown to the right.

TCG can help figure things out, using tools from BBO. Alas, TCG comes up a little short here, because it neither shows the bidding (it just shows the final bid), nor the actual play of the hand. Those

The screenshot shows a bridge hand analysis interface. At the top left, the board number '19' is circled. The hand layout is displayed with West (Jack Cole) and East (Lori Cole) hands. The hand layout shows the following cards:

- West (Jack Cole): ♠Q52, ♥54, ♦AK65, ♣AK108
- East (Lori Cole): ♠A10743, ♥AKJ, ♦QJ2, ♣94

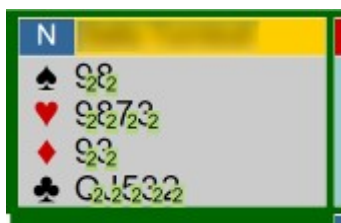
The interface also shows the hand layout for South (KJ6, Q1062, 10874, 76) and North (98, 9873, 93, QJ532). The final contract is 4♠W and the optimal contract is 6N-EW. The interface also shows the hand layout for West (Jack Cole) and East (Lori Cole) hands.

things **are available** from BBO by going to the History tab, selecting the match, and the board. (They are available from TCG too, but that's a future article.) BBO's display (at right) is a quarter the size of the TCG display, but by using the "Next card" button you can step through the **actual play** of the hand. You can also go to the "hamburger" menu (three horizontal bars) and turn on "Show double dummy", but the display is so small that it's difficult to use.



This is where The Common Game steps back up. There are two ways to use the tool from TCG. The first is to click the "Play" button, and replay the hand from scratch, making all your own decisions, for all 4 hands. That may not be enough to find the ultimate line of play so, when in doubt, you can also click the **"GIB"** button.

GIB stands for "Ginsberg's Intelligent Bridgeplayer" (or perhaps "Goren-in-a-Box"). GIB is the Artificial Intelligence (AI) behind the BBO robots, and it was originally developed by Matthew Ginsberg for Microsoft's online bridge club! Each time the GIB button is clicked, the AI works out the result of playing every eligible card in the hand, and shows you the best card(s) to play!



For example, North is about to lead, and GIB shows (with the little green 2's) that leading **any** card will result in a +2 result; 6 Spades is makeable, so no surprise. Suppose North chooses the 9 of Hearts, and now it's East's turn.

**Press GIB again**, and it shows that playing East's Jack would drop you to +1! The finesse fails, as South holds the Queen. Play the Ace or King instead, as they are marked "2".



You can work your way around the whole hand like this. GIB may also show "█" (makes exactly) or a red number (down that many tricks). I suppose I could even use BBO to replay the hand my way, and follow along with GIB in another window, to find out exactly where I went wrong. But there is a better way (coming in part 8)!

Have a go at replaying a hand with GIB's help. Next week – more stats from TCG!

## 5. Competition Details of Recent Club Matches

Over the past four weeks, we've covered the link from the Common Game email that is labelled [Personal Common Game Home Page](#). We've seen the Field Percentage, Field Rank, Positional Results, comparison to Double Dummy, and Fast Results Analysis, including being able to replay each hand with help from the robots.

Now it's time to look at the section called [The Common Game ClubWebResults Page](#). That's where you can find the competition details of recent club matches. Follow the link from your email, and you will see a list of GRBC sessions, like this.

Date	Game_Type	Sections MP	Tables	Top AVG_Pair_MP	MAX_Pair_MP	
Sat, Feb 13, 2021	#54822 199er Grand River Kitchener Sat 1:00pm	299er Leaderboard	8.5	1.26	69	154
Fri, Feb 12, 2021	#44085 OPEN Grand River Kitchener Fri 7:00pm	Open Leaderboard	9.0	1.35	2,575	7,940
	#42899 499er Grand River Kitchener Fri 1:00pm	Open Leaderboard	14.0	1.68	196	362
	#41851 99 Grand River Kitchener Friday 12:30	299er Leaderboard	7.5	0.72	31	65
Thu, Feb 11, 2021	#51117 O 1000 Grand River Kitchener Thurs 7pm	Open Leaderboard	7.0	1.68	380	746

Find the session of interest. Say, it's the third line, where at our club 14.0 tables played, and 1.68 Masterpoints (MPs) were given to the top finishers. This was a 499 game: the average pair had 196 MPs, and the maximum of any pair was 362 MPs.

Then click on the “**Leaderboard**” link, to see how the rest of the continent did. Results are organized by N/S, E/W, and Howell. In this example the E/W boards were played by **84 clubs and 1093 pairs** (and another 233 in Howell movements). The top E/W percentage was 75.43! If you got a great score that day, you might be in the top 50, and find your name in the scrolling Leader Box.

rank	%	Player1	Player2	Club	ST
1	75.43	Neil Silverman	Iris Kisitsyna	FL Lauderdale	FL
2	74.51	Charles Zempel	Angela Smith	Club Pelican Bay	FL
3	70.52	Bob Fitter	Gary Soules	Contra Costa	CA
4	70.00	Valerie Sotolov	Darrell Eider	Cryphons II	TN
5	69.84	Roshanak Madadnoei	Melhan Safspour	Stephen Bridge	ON
6	69.70	Robert Sagor	Phylippe Galeshi	Pembury Bridge Club	MA
7	69.45	Elizabeth Marcus	Josie Beniett	BAND Online	TX
8	69.23	Cabot Jaffee	David Lundberg	North Orlando Bridge Center	FL
9	68.66	Pamela Van	Barbara	Honors Bridge Club	NY

Scrolling down in the same page reveals the boards. More about them, next week!

## 6. More Game Results

We continue our look at the results of recent matches. Follow the [The Common Game ClubWebResults Page](#) link from your Common Game email to a list of GRBC sessions, and find the session of interest. I'll use the 499er game from February 19 as an example, if you want to follow along. There are two links per session, titled “Game Type” and “Sections HR”.

Board 1 (02/19/21)

N Deals: #J196432  
N Name: Vol: 1

Hand layout (N/S vs E/W):

- N: ♠K5, ♥A106, ♦KQ753, ♣T3
- S: ♠7, ♥Q3, ♦A142, ♣Q986
- E: ♠AQ8, ♥8742, ♦86, ♣AK72
- W: ♠1, ♥16, ♦10, ♣13

EW 4N, EW 3N, EW 4N, NS 2N, EW 3N, Optimal Contract -430

Click on the latter link, named “**Leaderboard**” (called **Open** or **299** for some reason). This Leaderboard web page is **all about the hands, and the results in the Big Field** (in this case, ~ 500 pairs). Your own club results will be the subject in a couple of weeks. \_

Scroll way down, below the Leaderboards, until you see the click-able list of boards, and Board 1, as shown on the left.

You can choose any board; I'll stick with #1.

Below the hand layout is the computer's Double Dummy analysis of make-able contracts. Optimal is 4NT for E/W, but the most interesting stuff comes next.

To the right, for the first few hands of the game, we can read an **expert analysis** of each deal. The experts discuss the bidding and key points in the play. They sometimes reference other topics (notice the Rule of 20 link here), **and** you can submit questions to them! There is also a link to a sister site ([BridgeWinners.com](http://BridgeWinners.com)) where sometimes further discussion ensues, and additional hands from the match are analysed by members. Only about eight hands are analysed, but it's **free expert help!** This analysis is especially useful if you wonder whether any E/W could have found that elusive no trump game.

**AiB Team - Robert Todd and Theri Andino Hand Analysis**  
North passes (unless partner can take a joke that a preempt could be this light), and East opens 1♦ on the [Rule of 20](#). South doubles that and West starts with 1♥ (still completely forcing.) Now North can go ahead and jump to 4♣, which East and South pass, but West will not be able to just let it go - we can see that 4NT to play is the best bid, but that's very hard to find at the table. West is more likely to go with either 5♦ or a double for penalty - but East probably won't let a double sit and will bid 5♣, which West corrects to 5♦. So it seems like EW get themselves too high in ♦ - they lose 1♠ and 2♣.

\*\*\*\*\*  
Comments? Questions?  
[CLICK HERE](#) to submit a question or join the [BridgeWinners.com](http://BridgeWinners.com) board discussion.  
[CLICK HERE](#) or email me directly at [robert@advinbridge.com](mailto:robert@advinbridge.com)

## 7. Even More Game Results

We continue our look at the results of recent matches. Follow the [The Common Game ClubWebResults Page](#) link from your Common Game email, to a list of GRBC sessions, and find the session of interest. I'll continue to use Board #1 from the 499er game from February 19<sup>th</sup> as an example, if you want to follow along.

Boards: 1 2 3 4 5  
23 24 25 26 27

**Board 1 (02/19/21)**

N Deals: 196432  
None Vul: 1

♠: KS, AK6, AQ753, T3  
♥: T93, 9, 54  
♦: 7, Q5, AT42, QJ986  
♣: AQ8, 8742, 86

Hand layout: N (♠, ♥, ♦, ♣), S (♠, ♥, ♦, ♣), W (♠, ♥, ♦, ♣), E (♠, ♥, ♦, ♣)

Once again, click on the link, named [Leaderboard](#) to see a page that is **all about the hands, and the results in the Big Field**. Scroll way down, below the Leaderboards, below the click-able list of boards, and even *further* down below Hand #1, to the **Results Distribution**.

I ended last week by asking “*did any E/W find that elusive NT game?*”. The **Results Distribution** tells us. This table shows the hand scores for all pairs in the Big Field, in decreasing occurrence.

RIS RESULT	# of Pairs	PCT	MP %
130	116	24	40
50	83	17	79
150	71	14	21
100	43	9	92
-100	41	8	61
-430	30	6	4
-110	25	5	54

Perhaps you held this hand as E/W, and bid and made 4 Diamonds, for a minus 130 score (from N/S's point of view) and earned a 40%. You would be in good company, as 115 other pairs had the same score (although maybe not from the same contract). 43 N/S's scored +100, likely from putting E/W down 2 tricks. **AND kudos to 30 E/W pairs** (out of nearly

500) who made the **optimal contract of 4NT** (or 3NT, making 4). On this hand there were 23 different scores!

That's how it was in the Big Field of 500. Next week we will talk about *your* results among players at *our* club.

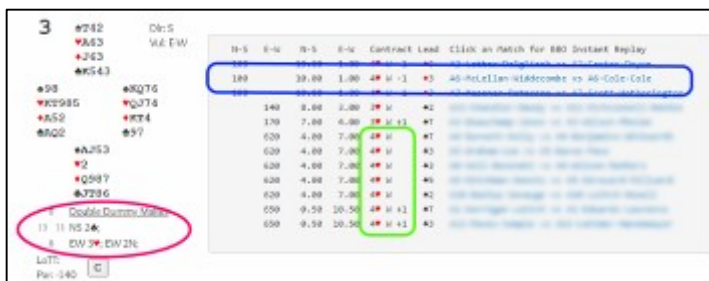
## 8. The Common Game: The Best Part

Today, we will look at what TCG can tell us about our play within our club. Follow the [The Common Game ClubWebResults Page](#) link from your Common Game email, to a list of GRBC sessions, and find the session of interest.

Since we're into March now, I'm going to examine the March 1, 2021 499er game. Click on the link called "[#16514 499er Grand River Kitchener Mon 7:00pm](#)", to the right of that date, and you'll see this page, with:



- A link to download a hand record, which includes stats on the number of points & card distributions in the hands
- A graph of the "strength" of the field. On this night the average Masterpoints among Club players was 181
- A list of everyone who earned points, and how many.



Scroll down, below the event details, until you get to the boards. Let's look at board #3, which was one of our poorest, shown at right. Double Dummy says Jack & Lori (EW) should make 3♥. We overbid to 4♥, and went down one, which seems fair, but wait: 7 other pairs bid and made 4♥! How?

This is **The Best Part**. Click on the blue names of the players at any table and you are transported to BBO, and this exact hand, for that exact table. Picking the first successful game (a pair that bid and made 4♥), we see this familiar hand display at right.

Back in TCG article 4, talking about Fast Results Analysis (FRA), we saw this feature but some functionality was missing. Now it's all here. You can see the bidding, and that the opponents *pushed* EW to 4. More importantly, you can replay the hand exactly as it was played at the table, one trick at a time, using the **Next/Previous** buttons. *Most* importantly, you can use the **GIB** button to have the AI



show you the leads and plays that result in par, under-, or over-tricks. So how did they make 4♥?



We don't have to look too far here. Press **GIB**, and we see that an opening lead of any club **or** the 10 of spades allows the contract to be made (the **5**); 6 of the 7 successful 4 contracts received one of those leads. Any other lead can defeat the contract by 1 trick (the **1**); the 3 defeated 4♥ contracts, including ours, all received a diamond lead. Only two tables received an opening lead that didn't

seal their fates; if you are curious, you can step through those hands, pressing GIB at any time, and find where they went astray.

Finally, if you just want to try solving the hand yourself without seeing what the other players or the robots did, you can press the **Play** button, and select cards from each hand. You can even press Play, then use Next to get partway through the hand before assuming control. This is an amazing tool for figuring out what went wrong (or right), and how other Club players dealt with it. Thanks to BBO and TCG for making it so easy to use.

## 9. The Common Game: It's a Wrap!

We've come to the end of my tour of The Common Game. There's a lot of information there, and it's sometimes hard to locate what you want, so I've made a chart of the highlights and how to find them. Refer to the indicated Alert issue for more information.

Article Alert Issue	TCG Feature	How to get to it (links from your email shown in blue)
1 Jan. 25/21	Big Field % and Big Field Rank. <i>How you scored versus the big field.</i>	<a href="#">Personal Common Game Home Page</a> , Attendance tab. The current month is shown. Use Prior Games tab for older games.
2 Feb. 1/21	Declarer, dummy & lead percentages. Play versus Double Dummy bar chart. <i>How you performed personally.</i>	<a href="#">Personal Common Game Home Page</a> , then click Positional Results tab for percentages, Declarer Play vs. Double Dummy for the bar chart. (Some games do not appear here. See note with Article 3.)
3 Feb. 8/21	Fast Results Analysis: Double Dummy Contract & Trick analysis, Team Score. <i>Game performance, board-by-board.</i>	<a href="#">Personal Common Game Home Page</a> , Attendance or Prior Games tab, then press FRA button.
4 Feb. 15/21	Fast Results Analysis: Replay any board, with or without GIB assist. <i>Replay a board that FRA hilights.</i>	<a href="#">Personal Common Game Home Page</a> , Attendance or Prior Games tab, then press FRA button, then click on the <a href="#">board number</a> .
5 Feb. 22/21	Top scores in the Big Field for matches. <i>How many players; who scored what.</i>	<a href="#">The Common Game ClubWebResults Page</a> , locate the session of interest, then click <a href="#">Leaderboard</a> .
6 Mar. 1/21	All boards with some Expert Analysis. <i>Discussion of bid and play of hands.</i>	<a href="#">The Common Game ClubWebResults Page</a> , locate the session of interest, then click <a href="#">Leaderboard</a> , then scroll down.
7 Mar. 8/21	All hand results scored in the Big Field. <i>Pairs who made all scores for all hands.</i>	<a href="#">The Common Game ClubWebResults Page</a> , locate the session of interest, then click <a href="#">Leaderboard</a> , then scroll down even further.
8 Mar. 15/21	Club results, hand records. Replay any board as played by <u>any pair</u> , or from scratch, with or without GIB assistance. <i>See how you or others worked a hand.</i>	<a href="#">The Common Game ClubWebResults Page</a> , locate the session of interest, click on the session name, scroll down to boards, click on <a href="#">any pair</a> .



Of all these, I find the last one to be the most instructive. It works for *any* BBO club game (whether it used Common Game deals or not), and you can watch *anyone* play an interesting hand and see how it was made or went astray.

The Common Game offers many benefits to players looking to analyse and improve their games. It's entirely free to the club and offers the club itself one more benefit: players wanting to compare their outcomes to a bigger field can do so, while still supporting **our club's games** on BBO.