

WCBU President's Report to 2024 AGM

I am pleased to present the WCBU President's Report for 2024.

First and foremost, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to the dedicated committee members for their incredibly hard work and commitment throughout the year. Their efforts have been invaluable in maintaining the smooth operation of the Union.

I would also like to express our gratitude to our sponsors, Personal Trust, Warwick Wealth, Western Cape Department of Sports and Provincial Sports Council for their generous support. Their contributions have played a significant role in ensuring the success of our events and initiatives. It is through their support that we can continue to grow and provide the best possible events for our members. We are currently negotiating to bring an additional two sponsors on board.

The committee is currently overcommitted with various initiatives. To ensure that all these projects can be successfully executed, we kindly request volunteers to assist with the workload. Your participation and support would greatly contribute to the success of these endeavours.

During the past year, the WCBU once again successfully ran our Western Cape Pairs, Western Cape Teams and Cape Town Festival of Bridge Tournaments, as well as the very popular WCBU Hermanus Pairs. The revamped Bridge Centre operates smoothly and we are grateful to Shirley Phillips and her team for their great work. Away from the Bridge Centre, our affiliated clubs Bidding Box, Hermanus, Impala, Keurboom, Pinelands and Table View have all faced challenges in attracting players and we commend their operating committees for their dedication to serving players. Jan Chrobok continues to do a great job organising the annual Buccaneer interclub league which now includes clubs from further afield than previously. The Pianola website database system provides a powerful tool to store tournament results and communicate with players.

I am proud to say that our union has not only focused on the game of bridge but has also actively supported various charitable causes. The generosity and involvement of our members in these charities have made a positive impact on the lives of those in need. It is crucial to emphasize the importance of supporting our charities. For instance, every time we play and support Peninsula School Feeding our contribution is sufficient to provide 3 children with 2 meals a day for year. During the past year some old established charities have unfortunately been forced to close their doors due to financial constraints. It is important that we not only enjoy the game of bridge but also recognize the importance of using our resources to help others in a meaningful way. Your continued support for these initiatives highlights the compassion and goodwill that defines our members. We receive acknowledgement from players throughout South Africa for this initiative.

The world of bridge is undergoing a remarkable transformation. As we navigate through this period of change, we need to embrace these developments and adapt to the evolving bridge world. We face numerous challenges and opportunities namely:

- The number of affiliated bridge and SABF members in South Africa is dropping.
- The number of non-affiliated bridge clubs in South Africa is growing year by year.
- The membership of non-affiliated clubs in the Western Cape appears to exceed the WCBU membership by a factor of four or five.
- We are not attracting young players and our average age is increasing.
- Bridge schools are full, yet beginners are not transitioning to clubs.
- The number of players taking part in red and blue masterpoint events has dropped.
- Red point events elsewhere have had to be cancelled due of lack of interest.

- The number of players playing in Links and WCBU BBO events is dropping off.
- The advent of online bridge has erased regional boundaries and bridge jurisdictions.
- Bridge tourism is growing, providing an opportunity for South Africa.

This committee has committed to implementing a series of initiatives aimed at accommodating and leveraging the issues highlighted above including:

- bringing the card dealing operation inhouse and by reducing costs we now provide boards free of charge to all our affiliated clubs.
- providing recycled boards at a nominal cost to non-affiliated clubs.
- negotiating a regional licence for BriAn which allows clubs to run tournaments on smartphones without computers or Bridgemates. The Constantiaberg club has trialled the system over several sessions very successfully.
- appointing a sub-committee to report back to the committee on allowing non-affiliated clubs to join the WCBU as associates. We can provide both new clubs and non-affiliated clubs with boards and the BriAn system at a minimal cost
- using our training and Internet resources to help clubs and players in other unions.
- taking a significant step towards enhancing our TD skills and knowledge by reaching out to the English Bridge Union (EBU) for permission to use their TD training materials. The wealth of resources and expertise offered by the EBU is invaluable. This is the first time that the Trustees of the EBU have allowed a union outside of England to use this material. For this we thank them. Their material is currently being taught face to face and is being converted to be utilised on Zoom. We have recommended to the SABF that we adopt the EBU's rules and regulations. We look forward to our ongoing collaboration with the EBU which highlights our commitment to fostering a culture of learning and improvement.
- commencing negotiations with the City of Cape Town for the lease of the sport fields adjoining the Bridge Centre, which formed part of our original lease. The committee has accepted a proposal for the lease of a portion of the field for Pickleball courts. We are also in negotiation with a company that provides sports facilities and mentoring to children from disadvantaged communities. They wish to build padel, beach volleyball and beach soccer courts on the fields. It is envisaged that we will provide bridge lessons to these children, hopefully leading to the cultivation of a more inclusive and diverse bridge community.

Lastly as an affiliate of the Western Province Provincial Sports Confederation all our members qualify for discounts from Avis car hire, City Lodge hotels and membership of the Sports Science Institute at Newlands. We will provide further details in our monthly newsletter shortly.

In closing, I want to thank each and every member of our union for their involvement, enthusiasm, and commitment. It is your dedication that makes the WCBU a vibrant and supportive community. Together, we have achieved much, and I look forward to an exciting year ahead.

Mark Kenyon

President WCBU