

Foto by Michele Leone

Bridge The salvation?

Specialization, quality and web

di Michele Leone

The forecasts talk about a slow agony that will bring to an inexorable end the old and glorious game of bridge.

In the last period there are less and less people visiting and registering to the bridge clubs.

We live in a society that has dramatically changed in the last years.

True. Maybe....but what exactly has changed?

The reality is that the modern society keeps playing like in the old time or even more! The new generation wants to play, and play, and play. It's just the instrument, the way to play, that is different. Internet! 47% of the web returns are coming from games.

Today a young person is growing up with Google, eBay, Zone, Wikipedia and I-pod, is downloading music from I-Tunes, using Skype to talk with his friends and playing with Second Life (60,000 in Italy) ...but does not play Bridge online.

Young people and Bridge are two parallel universes that do not know each other. Young people can and want to play whatever game, but bridge. Not even the over 35, 40 or 45 play anymore.

Evidently, something didn't work out, and not only in Italy.

What about the clubs? Many people hope that a glorious past will protect the Bridge clubs from the changes driven by the technological progress, but they seriously risk to fail.

There are already less and less clubs.

It looks like what really matter is just the 'number of tables'.

Many Bridge players are forced, or prefer, to cross the city in order to reach the club that can guarantee four more tables. A quality game is not really important anymore. More tables, more prizes, more points, more glory... simply aberrant.

So, the small clubs are closing... and the idea of opening a new nice, private club just seems a signal of madness.

Also the game formulas are getting simpler and poorer...only pairs tournaments! The team matches, the Bridge diamond tip, is disappearing in many clubs.

Young people & courses

There are more and more teachers and Bridge schools, but costs do not decrease. How can we pretend that today a young person, a student or a person with a

temporary job when lucky, pay to learn bridge?

Maybe it's even too much to pretend that a young person would spend an evening a week to go to bridge lessons in a place with persons much older than him - with timings of learning and memorization significantly different.

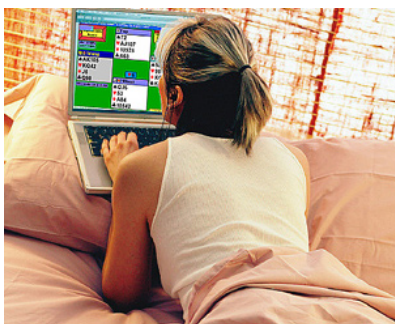
Today, the general idea is that bridge is played just in private clubs where there is an annual fee to pay.

Sorry, this is wrong!



One more chance

Now, fortunately, for both the game and the school, the World Wide Web arrived!



For the Bridge players all around the world there is BBO (BridgeBaseOnline www.bridgebase.com) with about 500.000 persons registered and 50.000 accesses a day.

It's possible to learn, to train and to play for free at every time of the day and from every place of the world.

You can also see lively all the championships and international tournaments. Simply fantastic! (1).

Every day thousand of rubbers, duplicate and pairs tournaments: a huge opportunity for the new (and old) generations of Bridge players.

The Italian situation

The average age of Bridge players is around 60 and we know that not all of them make an effort to follow the technological evolution.

But in reality there are already a number of many positive examples of dynamic 70ish that overcame their initial concerns around the PC and are getting many advantages in playing bridge in internet.

The computer science is improving our lives. Age doesn't matter. We are always able to learn.

We would need "PC & Bridge & BBO" training. An old PC is more than enough to play and it's not needed to be expert. Few hours are enough to be comfortable at the virtual table. Even if.. no prices, no federal points. Sorry.

The real table is better, no discussion. However the advantages of playing Bridge online are incredible... and, at the end, why not doing both, real and virtual?

Thinking that who is playing online is not going the club is wrong. On the contrary, we see the bridge online as a way to create new bridge players that then will go to the clubs.

Bridge courses online

It's our opinion that to have new bridge players it's key to leverage also new technologies, with a detailed, universal, for free information (2).

The Web allows a flexibility that clubs and schools could never have.

Bridge [courses online](#) already exists and represent the future!

Internet is a wonder place and, in this field, we are working with dedication and passion.

It's already a while that we started the transition of the Bridge courses to the web.

In September we launched the customized courses online and, by the end of May, we plan to launch a new course for free of Bridge for beginners (flash lessons, from 7.30 to 8.30 pm – see details below).

To effectively run our promotional campaign we need committed players and teachers (3) that could from time to time run lessons on line on specific topics. these lessons, of one hour, for free, will be planned in prefixed days and timings. Our school will make available all the materials and the technical knowledge to handle the lessons.

We are in favour of the complete liberalization of teaching and we want to give to everybody the possibility to teach Bridge to somebody else.

We are forming a group of on line teachers and we will publish the list soon on our website. Don't worry, always for free.

"Web & Bridge" night

Around mid May we will organize at Canottieri Milano a first session presenting the "Web & Bridge" for teachers, players and students interested in the topic (4).

Teaching Bridge to a friend

All the material used for our courses will be made available on our website so that everybody could use it for his own lessons or also just to show it to a friend.



Moreover, everybody is welcome to share ideas, material, or whatever could be useful to create an "expert training system" unique and valid for everybody.

A big potential is offered by the "training room" of BBO (5), that allows to obtain specific hands to get trained on different bid steps. By connecting in parallel also with Skype or Messenger (telephonic VOIP for free) it's possible to comment vocally the exercises, avoiding the need to chat.

No need to say that this is facilitating a lot the learning process. The traditional way of running courses will also be modified,

Final "Step"

We should revise our strategy of selling for the "Bridge" product, advertising it also on magazines for games online, seeing it not only as an occasion for playing but also as a possibility to get in contact with other young people in the world.



A special team could also show to the young people at school a game session in direct connection to BBO. Even better would be to teach bridge in one computer classroom.

It's our opinion that the web could really give a valid contribution for the Bridge and that it's in this field that we will find the new bridge players.

We could think at the Bridge table as the end point of an evolution. In the past we were starting from the other simple cards games and in the future we will start from the simple and banal web.

"Change or die" says Murdock...

Happy Web & Bridge to everybody!

Michele Leone (6)
Aprile, 2007

1) Ideally the BBO data could also be reported on Teletext. .

2) The Milan area will have in one year from now a large band Wi-Fi net, for free. We hope other cities will follow soon.

3) No need to get any examination. The users will evaluate the capabilities.

4) Entrance for free. For booking please contact leomike@libero.it

5) We are not advertising BBO but only highlighting the real potentialities.

6) Teacher at the prestigious "Canottieri Milano" club

Bridge Course Online



for free

Complete courses for beginners.

- 6 lessons: from 19.30 to 20.30
- 2 evenings a week
- Starting end May. Next wave in September

For any information,
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