

The interdistrict 99er game is growing and wants you!

By Ray Yuenger

It's hard to believe the 99er NiteClub first opened its online doors almost six months ago. Time flies when you are locked down. The club formed in mid-October when three adjoining Districts, 21, 22, and 23 (the latter two both in southern California), jointly agreed to offer an online game to an underserved audience, namely district members with under 100 masterpoints. We scheduled the game to begin at 6:30 PM PT on Mondays through Thursdays.

We weren't sure whether the game would be successful, but it has proved popular beyond our original dreams. We began with 13 tables, and that number crept up to the low 20s by the end of November. At that time District 17 also joined with our group and the average table count increased over the next month to the low 30s. As time has passed into April, District 19 has also enlisted in our group and their virtual clubs are now enrolling their 99ers.

The district liaisons had been discussing creating a separate section for players under 20 masterpoints, so they wouldn't have to compete against the more experienced players, even though our games do have three stratifications. Jay Whipple, whose software is the groundwork for the interdistrict 99er game, said that he could support a separate section, so in mid-March we started the 0-20 game, starting at 6:20 PM PT, playing the same 12 boards.

It's probably too soon to identify any trend yet, but it seems that when the 0-20 section first started, it primarily involved people from the 0-99 game, but it has been changing to include mostly brand-new players. We are hoping to see more beginners register for this game.

Here's how you register. (There's more than one way, but this is what I do.) Log onto BBO (BridgeBase Online), then click on "Competitive," then click on "All Tournaments." This allows you to search pending, running, and completed tournaments. If you enter "All-W" in the search box two hours before the start of the game, it should show you both the 0-20 and 0-99 games, and then you can register for either one.

It's a \$6 table fee, but after the game there is a free lesson on Zoom (link provided during the game) by teachers like Lynn Yokel, Will Watson, and others equally as good.

Of that table fee, \$3.50 gets passed through to your "home" club if you have one. Some clubs have been struggling without any face-to-face games, but I'm happy to report that this program through February has generated over \$12,000 in table fees to local clubs in District 21, which means a lot of D21 members have been playing in this game.

Part of the set-up is that local clubs need not enroll their members on any evenings or days that the local clubs are offering competing games. Our intent is not to compete with any local clubs, but just to fill a gap in the online market. So you may not be able to play on a given night of the week if your “home” club hasn’t enrolled you for that night. But try to sign up if you are interested and we’ll try to help you out. If you have any questions, write to 99erNiteClub@gmail.com. You’ll probably get a response from Lamy Agelidis of District 22, a person who has been the real backbone of this joint operation, but she may refer your question to me. If you don’t have a partner, don’t worry, there are always people at your level looking for partners. Give it a try.