

At the recent District 13 Board meeting, several members commented that there is confusion about Districts, Units, and the structure of duplicate games in general. So here's a "primer" on duplicate bridge in the United States (actually almost all of North America).

1. American Contract Bridge League (ACBL): The parent organization that regulates and oversees duplicate bridge (and the rules of rubber bridge) in the United States, Canada, Mexico, and Bermuda.
2. Districts: 25 geographical entities within the ACBL.
3. Units: 308 geographical entities within the 25 Districts within the ACBL. The number of units in a district is not uniform; it ranges from 2 to 26.

We are in District 13, which covers (most of) Wisconsin, the western section of the Michigan UP, Lake County in northern Illinois, and Chicago and suburbs west to the Fox River. There are three units in D13: Unit 123, Chicago Contract Bridge Assoc. (CCBA), Unit 149, Wisconsin and Upper Michigan Bridge Assoc. (WUMBA), and Unit 222, Greater Milwaukee Bridge Assoc., the 6 SE-most counties in Wisconsin (GMBA). The CCBA is one of the largest units in terms of membership with 3,000+ members; many units have only a few hundred members.

So what do Districts and Units do, you ask? As the local branches of the ACBL, they support its mission: *"To promote, grow and sustain the game of bridge and serve the bridge-related interests of our Members."* One of the major ways this is done is by holding tournaments. Tournaments are the games at which you get "color" Master Points, which you need to climb the ACBL ladder. The ACBL sets levels and qualifications for each category from Rookie through Grand Life Master.

In order to award Master Points, a tournament must be sanctioned by the ACBL. Tournament Directors are ACBL employees and are "hired" by Districts and Units. Districts and Units also establish their own tournament fees and schedules. District-sponsored tournaments are "regionals," unit-sponsored tournaments are "sectionals." Regionals award red and gold points; sectionals award silver points. There are also three ACBL-wide tournaments each year (the North American Bridge Championships or NABC's), run by the ACBL itself.

"I have TONS of BLACK MP's." Of course you do. They come from the many CLUBS at which you play daily. Although under the auspices of the ACBL as far as rules are concerned, clubs are privately owned. Clubs run games, the ACBL (and Districts and Units) run tournaments.

All tournaments are open to all bridge players (non-ACBL members may pay a higher entry fee). Yes, you pay dues to belong to the ACBL, a portion of which returns to your District and Unit.

The ACBL not only WANTS you to play bridge, it wants you to LIKE doing so, so if you have suggestions, ideas, or questions, please tell a member of your Unit or District Board. We are as strong as our membership, and out of an estimated 25 MILLION bridge players in the US, only about 167,000 belong to the ACBL. Getting your social bridge friends interested in duplicate is one of the best ways you can help the ACBL.

This year is a great opportunity for D13 players to be "heard" because Suzi Subeck (Northfield, IL) is ACBL President. Suzi has been a strong advocate for our interests since 2009, and you may be sure she will take your comments seriously. Who knows – you may start a major sea change in the world of Duplicate Bridge.