



# Five Minutes With...

## *Russel Harms*



Despite a demanding professional schedule as a practising barrister Russel makes time for his passionate pastime: bridge.

With no formal training in playing bridge, Russel learned from a friend during breaks from study. He was studying Law at Adelaide University at the time.

‘ Four of us played bridge for money but we stopped playing when one partnership became too good,’ he said. Russel continued his interest in the game.

‘ I retained an interest in bridge and studied the bridge columns in newspapers. I did not play again until I attended a Friday night bridge session at the SA Bridge Association in 1983,’ he said.

This led to Russel becoming a member at SABA. He admits to then attending one lesson in the beginners’ course. However, he then purchased Klinger’s book Bridge Basics.

‘ I taught myself from that book,’ he said.

After studying the book he knew he wanted to continue playing bridge and to strengthen his game.

Russel is now a Silver Grandmaster and generally plays weekly in the South Australian Bridge Federation events hosted at SABA, Unley. Many SABA members also play at state level.



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When he can, Russel competes at a national level and he has experienced some sweet victories under the South Australian banner.

So what have been some of the highlights?

‘ Probably winning the Grand National Open Teams (GNOT) in 1992 and the wins in the National Championships representing SA at Seniors level in 2011 and 2023.’

In addition to national tournaments, Russel generally plays weekly though he’d like to play more often. He enjoys both the competitive aspect of the game but also the mental exercise. He generally immerses himself in the game.

‘ For me the most important thing is that bridge shuts out the stressors from work and life generally. When it doesn’t succeed in doing that, I tend to play poorly,’ he said.

Russel sees that there are benefits for young people learning to play bridge.

‘Bridge is a game which can’t help but improve one’s ability to apply logic to any situation, even if the game is not played particularly seriously.’

However, Russel has avoided teaching his own children to play bridge!

‘ That said, I did not encourage my own children to play bridge because I was concerned they would become addicted to it, like me, and ignore their education!’ he said.

Notwithstanding his busy life, Russel has generously contributed to our club as President from 1992 – 1994. Additionally, he has provided some pro bono legal services from time to time. At a national level, Russel served as General Counsel to the Australian Bridge Federation (ABF) for several years until it became too difficult to manage alongside his own work commitments.



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Work and bridge consume Russel's time, however he enjoys some social tennis. An overseas break is a priority for him and in 2023 Russel attended the Ashes at Lords in London and additionally the Qatar Formula 1 Grand Prix.

Russel intends to work for a while longer and will continue to play bridge.

'I cannot imagine that I will ever be prepared to give up playing bridge', he said.