



# Five Minutes With...

## *John MacPhail*



John MacPhail received the Student of the Year award which was presented at the AGM in December 2025.

John was selected as the best candidate by the teachers and tutors based on his dedication as a student who has since played regularly in supervised and intermediate sessions, competitions and demonstrated strong progress and interest in the game.

It was by accident that John stumbled across bridge when he was at secondary school. His school offered a broad range of extracurricular activities including sports, music, drama and bridge; very enlightened!

‘When I was 14, I had an injury that kept me out of sports for a year. So I joined all the geeks in the bridge club,’ John said.

‘I found a partner and we devised our own bidding system, which meant I never really learned proper bidding systems,

‘We played duplicate and used to do pretty well,’ he said.

He alternated bridge club with the Magic Circle at school.

‘If you ever get bored of bridge, ask to see one of my card tricks,’ he joked.

As a newcomer to competitive bridge at a club, a highlight for John understandably was bidding and making a grand slam. Here’s looking forward to many more bridge successes.

John’s motivations to take bridge lessons and getting back to bridge as an adult are the many benefits he sees from the game from keeping the brain active and the social interaction.

‘It’s such a good game for concentration, alertness, and giving your brain a workout,’ he said.



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'With dementia recently becoming the leading cause of death in Australia, we know so well nowadays the importance of keeping fit mentally.

'To exercise your brain, you don't have to learn Icelandic, you just have to play bridge,' he said.

John appreciates the social interaction at the club,

'The social side is so important too, which is something I miss when I play online,' he said.

Another value is practicing tolerance when playing.

'I'm not naturally a very patient person, so bridge helps teach me tolerance,' he said.

John is a practising lawyer, so his time is limited when it comes to bridge and other leisure pursuits. However, he wants to play more bridge. On the ideal number of games to play weekly, John gave an algebraic response for you to work out!

'It's a bit like when keen cyclists say that the ideal number of bikes to have is 'x plus 1', where x is the number of bikes you actually have. Here the ideal number of bridge games is x plus 2 or 3,' he proffered.

John thinks bridge should be compulsory for school children!

'Like anything, the younger you learn, the better you get. Just ask Tiger Woods!

'And like golf, bridge is character revealing and a little microcosm of life, which brings out the best in people: character, determination, teamwork and how to be self-deprecating.

'And of course it potentially brings out the worst. Learning how to meet with triumph and disaster and to treat those two imposters just the same,

'As Kipling put it, it is an essential life-skill best learned young, and bridge is really good for that!

'That, plus it's a great exercise for practising maths and memory,' he said.



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As for John's other interests, he likes to exercise his body as well as his mind.

'I like to cycle and swim and keep fit.

'I'm also in a men's-only book club which has the ironic name "Tough Guy Book Club,"

'It's very good for me because it makes me read books that I wouldn't normally encounter or read.

'It's also terrible because it makes me read books that I wouldn't normally encounter or read; some of which are truly awful,' he said.

As for John's future bridge aspirations, in addition to further developing his game, we may have a future Bridge Director!

'I'd like to get my head around the laws of duplicate bridge, and perhaps qualify as a director,

'It's the sort of thing that appeals to me and fits well with my day job of being a lawyer', John said.

We congratulate John on achieving The South Australian Bridge Association Student of the Year Award 2025 and wish him well in his future endeavours.