



Five Minutes With...

Anton and Gregor Forster-Rohal



Introducing brothers Anton and Gregor Forster-Rohal who represent a new age of bridge players, with a wisdom beyond their years, a passion for learning and a remarkable capacity to explore new areas of knowledge. They both have the extraordinary ability to combine a precise systematic focus with the creative and random aspects of the game. However, what is hard to convey is the sense of benevolence and humour that characterised parts of the interview..

Tell us about yourselves?

Anton: I am 17 years old and am currently completing my Yr 12 SACE, focusing on maths and the sciences. Like my brother, I had the benefit of being homeschooled, beginning when our family lived in Qatar for most of our childhood. I am particularly interested in statistics, programming and network systems. I am not currently sure where my studies will take me, but possibly a career relating to the sciences. I am also interested in ancient history and archeology.

Gregor: I am 15, also interested in maths and am currently in Yr 10 whilst also being primarily homeschooled. I am fascinated by aviation systems, for example, with airports - how they work, and how the complex elements fit together.

How did you discover bridge??

We learned to play chess at home when we were quite young and we both enjoyed the focus on strategy, taking formal chess lessons in our return to Australia from Qatar. During our annual homeschool review, the teacher assigned to our family was, coincidentally, also a high-level bridge player. She suggested that Anton may like to try playing bridge. It was a game changer!



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Most of our peers aren't interested in the fact that we play bridge. Some of those who heard that we played bridge thought that it was a child's game or a game just for old people. Those who play cards or games tend to understand better. Unfortunately, only a couple are actively interested. We find more support and interest comes from older friends and acquaintances who have played it in the past or know of others who do.

Anton: I enrolled in a bridge week-long class run by SABA when I was 14 and loved it - not just the intellectual side but also social. When I began, I would come to the club every week and play with anyone who needed a partner, which led to meeting amazing people/personalities. However, for me to continue improving, I felt I needed a regular partner and more opportunities to play.

Gregor: I started playing bridge a year after Anton started. I agreed to support him by being his bridge partner and I also took the beginner's course. I then discovered that bridge was a great game - strategic and mathematical.

What has motivated you both to continue playing bridge?

We found that bridge, which is strategic like chess, also has a factor of randomness in the draw of the cards. With bridge, each hand offers new and exciting possibilities.

Bridge is also a life-long game and, unlike physical sports where capabilities may slowly dwindle, there is always something more to learn - so many ways to improve. We enjoy playing at SABA, being around better players who can mentor us.

We have both been honoured to represent South Australia in bridge.

Anton: I worked very hard the first time I had the opportunity to represent the state, and we came 2nd, a great achievement, and then Gregor came along a year later and the team came 1st!

Gregor: Playing in a supportive environment is certainly a reason that I have continued to play bridge. Winning is a wonderful motivating experience which has encouraged me to keep going.



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How do you see yourselves progressing with bridge??

Besides playing when we can at SABA, we meet up every two weeks to play with other youth players at the Adelaide Bridge Centre.

We extend our learning by reading books, talking to other players, playing bridge online, and studying new conventions through the American Contract Bridge League website.

We also play tournaments on BBO and compete to see who can get the best score against each other and the other state youth players.

We enjoy playing in congresses, which offer an exciting opportunity for goal setting and practising against higher level bridge players.

What opportunities does the internet offer you for playing bridge?

There are a lot of resources online. We can be finishing our homework one minute and going online to play bridge the next. Being online also helps us learn different systems and watch videos covering top level play.

At the moment, we have a good balance of online resources and the benefits of face-to-face contact. While playing online with people from very different cultures stretches our strategic thinking, playing in a physical location is also very important to us.

Gregor: Even though several of our peers play and learn on the internet, they are still coming to play in a club for the social contact. I don't think that AI will take the place of human contact.

Anton: In addition, I can play online bridge while traveling home on the bus from school.



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How does your partnership work?

It is convenient and we (can) play well together, although it can be a bit frustrating when one of us makes a mistake. We haven't yet settled on our play style as we are currently reviewing our system card to reflect our learning - for example what conventions work best for us.

Anton: Gregor is more tactical in play, tends to be the more aggressive player in our partnership and has a higher success rate with finesses.

Gregor: Anton is more knowledgeable in bidding. He also enjoys (maybe too much) making risky bids to slam.

What are your biggest challenges playing bridge?

Anton: Improving my counting, knowing how to progress and keeping my motivation up after playing badly. I like to be able to see a clear way forward to make good progress. The first part of the year is more fun for me with a wider range of competitions, but after August there are fewer competitions/congresses I attend so less opportunities to push myself.

Gregor: Remembering systems that I have learned. As I enjoy the card play, I tend to focus on this more than my system.

Do you have any comments about playing at SABA?

SABA is a welcoming environment that gives us an opportunity to connect socially and be around a range of people and personalities.

Members are friendly, there is a sense of inclusiveness, and we share good conversations. Everyone wants the best for us, and our parents encourage and support us all the way.

The club can try to appeal to the next generation of players, and think about how to advertise to them. STEM schools might be a good target, as bridge is a natural fit for people interested in both maths and card games.



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We would welcome back online sessions at SABA. When these occurred, they were great fun. We would like more lessons with a focus on advanced conventions, which would help us improve.

Mentoring from advanced players has also helped us to improve.

What do you see for the future?

Anton: After high school I don't have a formal plan and am still undecided in my options. I would look forward to overseas travelling at some stage in the future. No matter what, I hope to still be playing bridge!

Gregor: The world is changing so quickly and the impact of artificial intelligence on the workplace is impossible to predict, so I don't know where I will eventually work or in which area. However, I expect to still be playing bridge despite AI.

Is there anything that might surprise readers?

Anton: I like to think of myself as being open to new challenges, whether academic or sporting. I enjoy pushing myself to learn new things and experiencing all there is to offer in my current environment.

Gregor: I have played many team sports including tennis, soccer, and rugby. I am currently a CFS (Country Fire Service) Cadet and I really enjoy the camaraderie and learning new skills. The team aspects of being a Cadet I can apply to my bridge skills.