



A King with Finesse

New teen monarch plays just for the fun of it

By Sue Munday

“Bridge should be enjoyable,” decrees Murphy Green, ACBL’s 2012 King of Bridge. “We’re doing it for fun — at least that’s what I’m all about.”

Green is pretty level-headed for a teen who’s had a number of bridge honors and scholarship dollars come his way in recent weeks. “It’s humbling,” he says quietly. “It’s all very humbling.”

He was part of the five-man team that won the Bridge Base Online National Youth Swiss at the Youth NABC in Philadelphia — a team award worth \$4000.

“It was a perfect day,” the soft-spoken Green says. “We tied one match and won the rest. It was an amazing performance!” Green’s team included fellow Atlanta Junior Bridge players Arjun Dhir, Richard Jeng and Andrew Jeng, plus Zach Grossack from Newton MA.

In addition to the \$1000 scholarship from the ACBL Educational Foundation that accompanies the King of Bridge crown, Green received a \$1000 scholarship for being voted by his peers to receive the John McAllister Sportsmanship Award at the Youth NABC.

“That was perhaps the biggest compliment,” Green says. “I think it’s an honor that recognizes that I would rather enjoy bridge than criticize my partner or make things uncomfortable for everyone at the table.”

Earlier in the spring, Green won a slot on the José Damiani Cup USA2 squad. It was Green’s second experience representing the U.S. in international play. “Going to China this summer was an awesome experience,” he says. “I’ve never been overseas before. Seeing a world I’ve never been exposed to and playing bridge and hanging out with my friends for 10 days was an unforgettable experience.”

Curt Kristensen, one of Green’s teammates in China, comments, “Murphy was the rock of our team, quick to encourage and praise others.”

Six years ago, bridge was not even a blip on Green’s radar. It started with a random flyer on a random bulletin board at the Alpharetta GA public library announcing an Atlanta Junior Bridge day camp for teens. Remembering what joy her mother found in playing bridge, Laura Green signed up one table’s worth of kids for basic lessons — her son and three daughters. While the two older girls quickly found reasons not to go to class, 12-year-old Murphy and his younger sister stuck it out.

“I wasn’t that much of a fan,” Green recalls.

Then Carolyn Eckert, one of the enthusiastic teachers active in the Atlanta area, “took me and a couple of other kids under her wing. I made some friends and I began to have some fun. And after some time, I found that I liked the game!” he says, almost surprised by the revelation.

“Not satisfied with being a good player, Murphy continues to study bridge and improve,” says Patty Tucker, president of Atlanta Junior Bridge. “He has been able to have a normal teenage life and play, learn and improve in bridge.”

Tucker describes Green as unfailingly kind and helpful. “He is supportive as a partner and teammate. I don’t think ACBL could have chosen a better King of Bridge.”

“The Atlanta Junior Bridge program is the reason I am where I am,” says Green, who was named an ACBL Youth Ambassador in 2009. “It’s not just that they teach us and get us started. They help us continue and keep us going once the beginning classes are over.”

Green, who is studying pre-business at the University of Georgia, has no aspirations to play bridge professionally. “I’m definitely going to pursue a normal career. I’ll probably always play bridge, but it’s going to have to fit around a normal lifestyle.”

While he is at school, Green is maintaining his regular partnerships by playing online. He aspires to play for a collegiate championship at some point during his college career. He has found evidence of a bridge club on the Athens GA campus, but he hasn’t discovered whether it is active. “Regardless, I hope I can assemble something so that the university can vie for a collegiate title while I’m here.”

The King (or Queen) of Bridge honors a high school senior’s overall participation in the local bridge community, as well as the accumulation of masterpoints. Green helped his younger sister start a bridge club at their high school. In an effort to “give back to the organization that uncovered this passion” in him, he has volunteered at several summer Atlanta Junior Bridge camps. He also participated in summer mentor programs run by his own former mentor, Eckert. □