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APOLOGIES

I would like to tender a small apology for the lower than normal number of hands reported directly from the Gold Coast Pairs in the Monday and Tuesday editions of the GCC Bulletin. Apart from my duties as GCC Bulletin editor I am the co-convenor, photographer and hold various other roles at the 2009 Yeh Cup which, for Sunday and Monday runs alongside the GCC Pairs. A more newsworthy reporting of hands will return on Wednesday.

MEET THE PLAYERS (OR IN THIS CASE AND OTHERS) - BILL BAILEY



What? Has Stern gone completely mad? Who is Bill Bailey and what is his relevance to bridge? OK, here's a clue – Bill revolutionised bridge discussion and you will likely use his 'baby' each time you play bridge. Yes, Bill was the developer of Deep Finesse. This piece of software analyses bridge hands with perhaps the most useful part being the analysis telling you all the makeable contracts for a bridge hand. Just think:

1	♠ 108	Dir: N
	♥ AKQ5	Vul: None
	♦ KJ108	
	♣ 652	
♠ KQ97		♠ A43
♥ J8		♥ 9743
♦ 9432		♦ A5
♣ J74		♣ AQ83
13	♠ J652	♣♦♥♠NT
7 14	♥ 1062	N - 1 1 - -
6	♦ Q76	S - 1 1 - -
	♣ K109	E 2 - - 2 -
		W 2 - - 2 -

That little box on the bottom right which shows how with best defence and double dummy declarer play N/S can make 1♦ and 1♥ and E/W can make 2♣ and 2♠. However it must be noted that it assumes you can see all four hands so always take finesses the right way, always drop the singleton king or doubleton queen offside and finesse the J-x-x-x.

He admits not being a very strong "real-time" player but tends to be fanatical about analysing hands post-mortem. Existing bridge software is geared toward man competing against machine, and he wasn't interested in that. He wanted a tool that would allow him to sleep at night instead of sweating the really tough deals he thought he had perhaps blown when playing but wasn't sure.

An imperfect, analysis assistant was not good enough as he didn't want fuzzy assessments of positions even if they were accurate 98% of the time. He needed to know the truth, always. Enter Deep Finesse...

Bill is 44 years old and lives in Palo Alto California in the USA with his wife of 15 years, Susan, son Bolton and daughter Caroline.

Like most of us he started playing hearts (Rickety-Kate) with friends at Harvard University. Some found it easy and bought bridge books teaching themselves how to play. Actually his history is unusual in that he became an avid reader of bridge books and really studied the game long before he did any serious playing. He didn't start tournaments until he was working on Deep Finesse

His favourite bridge books include "Bridge with the Blue Team" by Forquet, anything written by Hugh Kelsey and "Better Bridge for the Advancing Player" by Frank Stewart. The latter was the first book he read after finishing with beginner books which he confesses made the game seem easy to him while Stewart's books were the first to open his eyes to the subtleties of the game.

Deep Finesse was a natural fit for him. Bridge was a passion and computer programming a strong skill so it was an obvious combination. Unlike chess computers which were well developed at that time nobody had written any bridge software that could play at any reasonable standard. His initial ambition was to start with a double dummy analyser and then advance it to a full bridge playing robot.

After 11 years as a database developer at Oracle Corp and tired of the pressures of Silicon Valley, Bill finally decided to take a year off and pursue a dream. Bridge and computers are his two passions in life (besides wife and kids he notes), and building a bridge program was a long time goal. While some players like Fred Gitelman were helpful in the early years giving advice and incorporating DF into his online bridge playing software, Deep Finesse has been very much Bill's own baby.

Deep Finesse uses a series of search technique, transposition tables, alpha-beta pruning, intelligent heuristics to determine which lines of play to explore first and if they bear fruit there is no need to do further searching from that point. If they fail then a more detailed analysis becomes necessary. ***ED: A set of 36 boards can take between 10 and 20 minutes to fully analyse depending on the complexity of the hands and the computer power employed.***

In the early months Deep Finesse occasionally made mistakes. It almost always came down to being too aggressive in deciding a play line was not worth pursuing. He remembers some early errors in his "quick peek" algorithm. That's something which at each position quickly determines fast winners in each suit. If they sum to more than are sufficient for the contract, then an exhaustive analysis of the position is not necessary a certain time saver. He notes that nobody has reported an error in a Deep Finesse since those early days.

With the completion of the Double Dummy Analyser (Deep Finesse) he's been side-tracked for a long time after he was offered the post of Chief Technology Architect at an internet start-up. It was a tough decision but in the end he opted for the "real" job. Unfortunately this has been very demanding and has afforded no time for continued work on Deep Finesse. Someday he says he will return to Deep Finesse but it is not on the immediate horizon.

Bill has opened up Deep Finesse for a number of people to use in their products. There is a Deep Finesse analysis engine which can be incorporated into outside software which is how we can see the analysis outputted by various different hand generating software packages.

Currently Deep Finesse is available for \$US39.95 via Internet download from www.deepfinesse.com. There is a free demo you download first and if you like what you see, you can purchase an unlock-code for the full version online.