

A Dynamic Club

The Atlanta Duplicate Bridge Center is dynamic; nothing stays the same. “While we’re closed during a major tournament, we delight in trying to make the club look different,” says **Dan Plato**, co-owner of the club with **Alvin Daigle**. “Whether it’s new paint, or new wall decorations, or maybe a new plant or two—anything to let people know we care about their environment. And our calendar is never ever the same!

We strive to run all the ACBL sanctioned special events, but we also go to great lengths to create our own events.”

Dan’s career didn’t change when he moved from the theatre world, where he was a director and a teacher, to the bridge world—where he continues to be a teacher/director. The fields have a lot in common. “Teaching has to be about energy; the students get excited and enjoy the experience. They’re involved in sharing and in giving to each other. That’s what teaching bridge is about.”

“While each club has to find its own recipe for success, for us the main ingredient has been teaching. We teach and teach and teach and then we teach some more. During our busy weeks, we frequently have as many as 100 people taking classes. Our offerings range from simple major suit raises to Lebensohl. The common thread of the teaching program is to have the students involved. We put cards in their hands and they play.”

There are eighteen games offered each week and half of them are designed for novice or intermediate players. Another important recipe for the club’s success is that the bridge players can play with their peers but also have the opportunity of “playing up” whenever they want. At the other range of the spectrum, the club has a couple of the toughest games you’ll find in the country.

About a year and a half before buying the Atlanta club, Dan played very little. Then he went to a tournament and played with Ray Spalding. They had such a good time that they hit the tournament trial. They traveled! They’d meet half way for a tournament. That year Ray won the Mini-McKenney trophy and Dan came second. Dan found he loved the game! So much that, when he found out that the bridge club in Atlanta was for sale, he moved there and decided that’s what he wanted to do...own and manage a bridge club.

Alvin and Dan co-own the club, which has twelve different directors who provide the thread that holds the whole thing together. The friendship and good will are so plentiful that some of the previous owners stayed on as directors. Dan runs the club with a velvet glove. Alvin just hugs everyone who walks through the door. They’re a good combination. “You should see it,” says Dan. “They line up at the door when Alvin arrives, ready for their hug.”

“Both Alvin and Dan are wonderful cooks,” says **Marty Nathan**, one of the directors. “In addition to the normal array of finger-food, the Saturday afternoon game includes a special dessert. Lunch is served on Tuesday and Thursday mornings. New Year’s Day featured a brunch. . .and, of course, the customers often bring treats as well. They’re big on promotion with many different events. One is the monthly ‘Beat the Pros’ game. If you can beat the percentage of the designated pair, you win a free play.” Marty appreciates the way the club is managed. “I’m given the authority to run the games efficiently. For example Dan and Alvin agreed that I could penalize habitual late arrivals and this corrected the problem.”

Another unique feature of the club is that it thrives when the sun goes down! “Nearly half of our patrons are regular night-time players and not a night goes by that we don’t find as many as fifteen or more tables in action,” says Dan. “The only night we close is Saturday night. Even then, we have our once a month Swiss Team event.”

The Atlanta Duplicate Bridge Center: a place of friendship, energy, variety, vigor—and hugs!

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Current owners: Alvin Daigle and Dan Plato.



Previous owners and current directors: Carey Snider and Diana Beasley.



New directors and teachers: Fred Tanzer, Seymour Smilowitz, Marty Nathan, and Joe Velardita.