

The Trophy

The New England Bridge Conference (NEBC), the ACBL's District 25, periodically awards the Larry Weiss Trophy. In *The Bridge World* magazine, the late Edgar Kaplan once said the late Larry Weiss was "the first gentleman of bridge." When Weiss, a longtime New England expert, died, his brother Stephen Weiss of Special Projects, the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation in New York, donated the trophy, which is inscribed, "For Grace and Skill at the Bridge Table."

Three Criteria

Weiss listed three criteria for the award:

1. Some degree of success in contract bridge during the year for which the award is made.
2. Some degree of association with New England bridge.
3. Notably, superior behavior and gracious presence at the bridge table.

The first of these is not tied to any specific event or masterpoint achievements. It requires only subjective judgment that the candidate is a skilled player. The second requires a familiar face at face-to-face bridge events in New England. The third speaks for itself.

In 2023 the NEBC recognized the dramatic and challenging changes of the previous few years. The Larry Weiss Trophy was retired, and a new one named the Weiss-Bertoni Award was created to replace it.

Bob Bertoni worked tirelessly to promote bridge tournaments in New England for many years. He served as president of the the Eastern Massachusetts Bridge Association, was the Vice President and then President of the NEBC, and was serving as the representative of District 25 on the ACBL's Board of Directors at the time of his death in 2021. He also established the district's presence on the Internet. His vision of high-quality tournaments promoted with all available tools was not only extremely effective but also inspirational to other leaders. He was also the last winner of the Larry Weiss award in 2018.

In 2023 the three original criterion were maintained for the new award. A fourth criterion was added:

4. Extraordinary service to promote face-to-face bridge at all levels in New England.

The NEBC should delegate an awards committee to consider annual nominations for the Weiss-Bertoni Trophy by NEBC members. Past practice is that the most recent winner is responsible for establishing a procedure to select a new winner. It seems sensible for the committee selecting the current nominee to include the previous winner, if possible, plus one representative from each of the units, with a preference being given to former winners of the trophy who are still actively participating in face-to-face bridge in New England. This would provide for nine voting members on the selection committee with at least five votes being needed to select a winner.

All appropriate means—including emails and prominent postings on the district's website—should be undertaken by the committee to solicit nominations from New England's bridge players for the award.

Anyone submitting a candidate's name for consideration should present a rationale in support of the person, which would include their contributions to face-to-face bridge, especially in the form of volunteerism

Any active member of the ACBL whose primary residence is in New England is eligible for the award. That specifically includes all club managers, directors, and officers of the NEBC and the units. Because the award is presented at most once per year, previous winners should not be considered.

Announcement of the Award

This is clearly a very prestigious award which should be given appropriate publicity. Consideration should be given to announcing the award at the Swiss following the delegates' meeting when the award is made, sending an article regarding the award winner to the recipient's Unit publication, and posting on the District website. An email should also be sent to all members of the district. If possible, national attention should be drawn to the award's recipient.