

The following article was featured in the Daily Telegraph 31.5.2021.

# Spike in bridge cheating allegations

By **Jamie Fullerton**

A SPIKE in bridge cheating, attributed to the card game being played online more in Covid lockdowns, has caused the game's English governing body to complain about a "horrendous" amount of investigations into foul play.

The English Bridge Union (EBU) said

allegations of cheating rose from one a year to 50 a year, after 30,000 players moved from playing in-person to online.

*The Sunday Times* reported that 25 people have been suspended from the EBU for up to five years for unfair or dishonest play. Ian Payn, EBU chairman, said that in the week beginning May 17 alone the organisation had to

deal with five disciplinary hearings, all for cases related to online bridge.

"We knew historically that there had been people happy to cheat online because it was quite easy," said Gordon Rainsford, chief executive of the EBU.

"But by and large, up 'til the pandemic, online bridge [cheating] had not been so serious."

## News

# ns due to rise of online gaming

Bridge is a four-player game, with two players in each of two teams pitted against each other. During the bidding section of the game, each player is only allowed to see their own cards, as they attempt to work out how many tricks – sets of four cards – their team can make.

Cheating occurs online when players pretend to be their own team partner,

allowing them to see their full card set. Other players have used what the EBU called "illicit communication" to tell their partner about their cards – a feat easier online than when opponents are physically present.

The EBU said warning letters are sent to bridge cheaters who are identified, but a disciplinary committee gets

involved if correspondence doesn't prove a deterrent.

Writing on the EBU website, Mr Payne said: "The overhead to dealing with online cheating has been horrendous. I can't imagine how many man hours go towards the completion of the case. And some cases can be very stressful."