

Deng Xiaoping's Pastimes : Playing Bridge



Deng Xiaoping learned to play bridge from a friend in 1952, after which the card game became his main recreation after work. In his later years, bridge became an important way for him to keep his mind sharp.

When playing bridge, Deng became so completely absorbed he seldom spoke, neither did he want any disturbance. For a time, he played every Sunday, from 3:00-6:00 p.m. and 7:00-10:00 p.m. The hour break was for supper and there was no time wastage.



Deng was the founder of bridge game in China. During the Cultural Revolution (1966-76), bridge playing was forbidden as it was seen as a kind of bourgeois entertainment. In July 1978, however, some senior members of the bridge circles in Beijing wrote a letter to Deng Xiaoping, expressing their hope to develop bridge activities in China. Deng approved and the game took off. In 1979, the first national bridge contest was held. Then in 1980, the Chinese Contract Bridge Association was established, and later became affiliated to the World Bridge Federation (WBF).

In December 1981, with his contribution to bridge development in China, Deng Xiaoping was awarded the Goren Personality of the Year award by the International Bridge Press Association. He served as the Honorary Chairman of the Chinese Contract Bridge Association from July 1988 and, on February 26, 1989, Deng was awarded a gold medal by the WBF. In June 1993, WBF Chairman Bobby Wolff visited China, and granted Deng WBF's highest honorary award, to thank Deng for his efforts and contribution to the bridge game in China and the world