

The Bakhshi family



DAVID and Heather Bakhshi are well known bridge players, with David playing regularly for England. Together, David and Heather have done the seemingly impossible . . . they have children who play bridge . . . and not just the odd game . . . Liam Sanderson (16) and Jasmine Bakhshi (11) have played for the English Junior teams many times with great success. How have they done it?

What age did you start learning bridge?

Jasmine: I started playing with my family when I was nine years old.

Liam: I started learning bridge when I was about nine years old. I remember watching David on Vugraph and playing BridgeMaster hands on BBO.

Heather: My father loved bridge but did not play much when my brothers and I were growing up. I was in my early thirties when I first learned. I read loads of bridge books and signed up for weekly lessons with Corrine Poitou, and she encouraged me to play duplicates. I loved it.

David: Neither of my parents played bridge, but when I was 15, I was introduced to the game by one of my school teachers, Ian Johns.

Do you play social bridge at home or are you always OUT playing bridge?

David: Before Liam and Jasmine became interested I didn't play any social bridge, but we now play a few hands at home when the kids want to get some extra practice.

Do you have siblings who don't play?

Jasmine: I live with my brother and parents and together we have a perfect four.

Is it difficult to keep even tempers when playing with siblings and family?

Liam: The first time I played with Jasmine I felt quite stressed because I wanted her to do well. Normally I don't have any trouble staying calm regardless of who I partner.

David and Heather - how did you manage to whet their appetites?

Heather: I think introducing bridge as part of regular family games at home has encouraged them to view the game as fun. Some of my most cherished childhood memories are of my family playing card games and board games. Thus, I've tried to do the same for Liam and Jasmine. Bridge is one of many games we play as a family.

The introduction of the U15 squad last year was enormously motivating for both of them. Meeting other children their own age who play bridge has been terrific. I hope the EBU continues to support this age group.

Have you managed to persuade friends initially made outside the bridge world to join in?

Jasmine: Yes, I have been encouraging a group of my school friends who are keen to learn.

Liam: Yes, I have encouraged several friends at school, some of them have joined the England Junior squad.

Do you play bridge at school? Is it thought very cool to have played for England at such young ages?

Liam: At school, I play regularly in the evenings with a few friends. If we don't have four, we will play on BBO with a robot. This year we have a Friday bridge club for the first time where we play socially and in organised matches versus other schools. Students and teachers are always positive and interested about competitive bridge.

What do you like most about playing bridge? How would you recommend getting children your age to learn how to play bridge?

Jasmine: Because my Dad teaches and plays bridge I have met lots of very nice people who he knows. Since I've been playing junior bridge myself, I've now started making lots of my own friends and I am really enjoying the social side of the game.

Liam: I enjoy the puzzle-solving aspect of the

game as well as the social element. I've met many great people in the junior squads.

I think more kids would be interested if they could be taught by young and vibrant teachers who are passionate for the game.

David, tell us about teaching the children bridge.

I think it was inevitable that they would both try playing at some point. We started by playing some minibridge, then introduced bidding as they increased their confidence in their ability to win lots of tricks.

I feel the main thing is not to push children into playing if they are not interested or ready. As soon as they decide they want to play it will be impossible for them not to be hooked!

What are your favourite subjects at school?

Jasmine: History and Maths are the subjects that I am most passionate about.

Liam: I am currently in my GCSE year but I have made my A-Level selections. I plan to take Maths, Further Maths, History and Economics.

Do you play other games?

Jasmine: We have family games nights where we play Cluedo, Uno and Perudo. Liam often insists that we play some bridge too! I also enjoy playing tennis and netball, and I play both of these sports for my school.

Liam: Like Jasmine, I also like family games nights. My favourite X-box game is FIFA and I am confident of winning my house FIFA competition at school. I enjoy watching and playing football.

Do you think you will make a career out of bridge, or pursue a different path keeping bridge as a strong hobby?

Jasmine: I think I will always have bridge as a fun thing to do in my spare time. At the moment, I'm hoping that I can do something that involves horses.

Liam: I am most likely to pursue a different career path. However, I expect bridge will always be a strong part of my life.

What are your favourite types of family holidays?

Jasmine: That's a tricky one! I'm very lucky because I've been on some fun European trips with my Dad, but I also love going to America to visit my grandma. When I'm there I get to go to horseback riding camp and see lots of my American friends and family. □