

March 24, 2018
 Courier-Mail Bridge Column by Tony Jackman

Trials to select this year's open team for the Australian Nationals commenced last weekend at the QCBC. This segment had 22 pairs including – in a first for this state - some non-contending. In other words they were there for the good competition but, for whatever reasons, were unable to represent this year, even if their results might have secured a place. The play last weekend was on Mitchell lines with half the field North South against the others East-West with the top six either side then progressing to two more weekends of Butler play (11x20 board matches) next month. N/S qualifiers were G&J. Malinas, E. Li/ P.Rankin, T. Treloar/P. Evans, C. Qin/C. Lu, P. Hooykaas/ M. Doran and R. Parker/ J. Luck, while from E-W it was T. Strong/ J.Magee, N. Moore/L. Moses, C. Howard/K. Wood, G. Tucker/M. Hoenig. P&J. Evans and P. Wyer/ C. Martin. Top three pairs next month will form the open team for Hobart.

Meanwhile not all top bridge was in Brisbane. The Rockhampton Club held its annual Congress. Saturday's Pairs went to P. Gordon/R. Denmark ahead of W. Renton/Power/ J. Randall while on Sunday, team's victors were M&D. Holewa with G. Taylor/ D. Breadsell then the Brown and Randall teams.

E Dealer, N/S Vul

	NORTH		
	a K10752		
	© AJ62		
	.. 8		
	§ A107		
WEST		EAST	
a 93		a 8	
© 1053		© Q874	
.. Q7643		.. 10952	
§ 963		§ Q842	
	SOUTH		
	a AQJ64		
	© K9		
	.. AKJ		
	§ KJ5		
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		Pass	2C
Pass	2S	Pass	3S
Pass	4NT	Pass	5S
Pass	7S	All Pass	

Today's hand was an early board from the trials. Let's hope that the contestants were not all properly warmed up. Only three pairs managed to reach this stone-cold grand slam. The auction shown (from Hutton/Page) seems simple enough. Page (at South) elected to open 2C intending to rebid 2NT if partner gave a negative 2D response.

Instead Hutton's reply was a positive 2S – around 8+ points and 5+ spades. Page, minimum for 2C but with great spades 'passed the baton'. His 3S was totally forcing – better than a direct 4S – and promised a fine spade fit. Enough for Hutton! 4NT was Keycard. The 5S response showed the missing two aces and trump Queen and Page's 2C opening had to have at least another 10+ high card points. So, spurning 5NT for kings, 7S was next, making easily via two heart ruffs.