

2007 Gold Coast Senior's Pairs

The Gold Coast Congress has at last moved to the Convention Centre at Broadbeach, which can comfortably house everyone in the same room. The venue was deemed by all to be a great success, with very little downside, and I am sure that it will continue to grow. Broadbeach has dozens of quality restaurants and shops, as well as a wide range of accommodation, both budget and up-market.

After a poor result in 2005, and a moderate result in 2006, John Brockwell and I finally made a good showing when we held on to 2nd place in 2007. The signs were good when we went to dinner after the first qualifying convinced that we had a lot of work to do in the evening session, and returned to the happy news that everyone else also found the going tough and we actually finished 6th with 55.5%.

The first round of the final was fairly even, with 61% for second, and only just a little worse in the second round to hold on to second. That is when the results started to get a little rocky, although with our closest competitors also wobbling, we were still first or second the whole way.

The crunch came with 4 rounds to go when we met the leaders. While we did not seem to do a great deal wrong, they did not either, and when results went their way they finished up with 55 out of the 78 MPs, and we could not catch them.

Q 1	A			Board 4 in the first qualifying was a good board that would have been a disaster except for a little help from NS during the play.
Bd 4	AKQJ9863			
Dir W	7			John and I had agreed that we would use modified Hamilton style over the artificial 1C, so I could have bid 1S to show spades and a minor, but preferred to show my 6-card suit with 2D.
Vul All	J97			
K43		JT865		
T754		-		I was not given 2 suits for nothing, so had no hesitation in showing my other suit over 3H. When John showed his spade support over 4H, correctly assessing that I had 5 spades, I unwisely bid again over 5H and South could do little else but double for penalties.
A5		QT9832		
8654		A2		
	Q972			
	2			
	KJ64			The opening lead was the CK, which I won to advance the DQ, covered and won in dummy. North was so keen to get in to cash a heart (probably thinking South had the void) that they ruffed the next diamond lead from dummy with the SA!
	KQT3			
W	N	E	S	
/	1C	2D	2NT	
/	3H	3S	3NT	Ruffing the HA, I was able to set up my diamond suit without loss, but I soon lost control and was still heading for -800. More help occurred at the end, when NS compressed their club tricks and I took the last trick with the C8 in dummy for -500 and an undeserved good score.
4S	5H	5S	X	
//				

Q 2 T
Bd 12 J9754
Dir W J
Vul NS A87532
 QJ53 K76
 AT86 K2
 A9 KQT873
 964 QT
 A9842
 Q3
 6542
 KJ
W **N** **E** **S**
 / / 1D 1S
 2NT / 3NT //

Board 12 in the second qualifying round would have been a routine 3NT if played by me as East, but John showed his near opening by jumping to 2NT after the overcall, and with my source of tricks in diamonds, and the spade help, I pushed to game.

All looked lost when North led a club instead of the expected spade, but he had too many, and luckily John had the C9, which stopped North from overtaking the CK.

South exited with a heart, won in hand by John to lead a spade, and by the time he won the HQ on the table and cashed the spade tricks, it looked to him like South had 4 diamonds and that the contract was therefore going to fail.

His assessment of South's distribution was correct, but luckily the DJ was singleton, so he made 10 tricks after all. If I was declarer, the likely spade lead from South would likely have led to 11 tricks unless South was phsyic.

F 1 AK65
Bd 2 A
Dir E AKT862
Vul NS T9
 9832 T7
 QT876 K5
 Q93 4
 5 AKQJ8763
 QJ4
 J9432
 J75
 42
W **N** **E** **S**
 / X 1C /
 / 3D 3C /
 / 3D 4C //

Board 2 in the first round of the finals was another of the solid suits that seemed to follows us around.

The whole range of opening bids were used around the room, but our system did not permit a gambling 3NT opening, so I opened a simple 1C, and South and West passed.

North doubled, I rebid my club suit to keep South out, and North rebid 3D, presumably showing a good hand.

Once more to the well, I was in action again with 4C, and this time I won the auction, but not the contract as I had to go 1 off for -50.

North showed a good hand by doubling and bidding 3D over my 3C, and obviously figured that was enough, but it seems wrong to sell out to 4C with such a good hand, and it is likely that 4D would have earned a raise from South.

4C for 1 off was a near top.

F 1 AJ4
Bd 7 Q63
Dir S 9542
Vul All J62
 98652 73
 JT98 K72
 AJ3 QT86
 5 KQT7
 KQT
 A54
 K7
 A9843
W **N** **E** **S**
 / 1NT / 1C
 // // 3NT

On board 7 in the first final NS stretched their meagre values and reached 3NT unopposed. Since 1C was not natural, I started off with the CK, and quickly realized my mistake when North ducked.

The switch was not obvious from my cards and dummy, but I needed less from John for diamonds, so I next led the D6. Declarer flew up with the DK, won by John who then led the HJ, ducked all around.

The HT was ducked all around and the third heart was won in dummy, followed by a spade to hand and the CJ covered and won on the table.

I won the next club and cashed the DQ to take the contract 2 off for the magic +200, but when I exited with a diamond, John won the DJ and H9 for +400.

I bemoaned that fact that I could have exited with the DJ for John to cash his 2 tricks and the diamond return would have netted +500, but +400 should have been a good score. However we must have needed the extra trick as +400 was only worth 22/28.

F 1 JT52
Bd 17 AKQ9
Dlr N JT98
Vul Nil 2
 Q843 976
 875 T64
 K76 53
 T94 QJ863

 AK
 J32
 AQ42
 AK75

W **N** **E** **S**
 / 1H / 2C
 / 2D / 4NT
 // 5D / 6D

On board 17 in the first final our Acol system worked for us as John was able to open 1H and rebid 2D over my 2C response to show a real suit.

I was now able to take over and after finding out we were not missing 2 Key Cards, I bid the good slam, with the prospect of making all 13 if the trump finesse works.

It looked like 13 tricks were there when West playfully ducked the first diamond, but 12 was the limit after all and +920 was above average.

Pairs playing a 5-card major system were caught in no-mans land by the 1D opening as South often had no way of knowing that North had a real diamond suit, and 6NT has little or no chance of 12 tricks.

Any North that treated the hearts as a 5-card suit would have fared well, as 12 tricks in hearts are easy by ruffing a spade.

F 1 KJT843
Bd 25 76
Dlr N 4
Vul EW J743
 A97652 Q
 K QJ8542
 K6 JT
 8652 AQT9

 -
 AT93
 AQ987532
 K

W **N** **E** **S**
 / 2D 2H 2NT
 // 3S / 5D

Board 25 in the first final was very dependent on the position of the dealer, as both West and North had a weak 2S opening, and East has a 2H opening.

North is the dealer and opened with a 2D multi and I thought that the chances were good that the suit was not hearts, so bid the obvious 2H to try and show that I had a 6-card suit of my own. My reasoning was that it would be too dangerous to come in before dealer had announced their suit with only a 5-card suit.

South asked with 2NT, and John breathed a sigh of relief because looking at his hand his first thought was that I had stumbled into declarer's 6-card suit. Without South's intervention he had probably planned to bid his own 6-card suit, but imagine his surprize when North rebid 3S!

South now signed off in 5D, an unremarkable contract that had no chance, and should have been held to only 8 tricks but still gained above average.

F 2 6
Bd 9 AJ972
Dlr N AT97
Vul EW AQ8
 K943 AT7
 Q83 K5
 J86 K432
 J72 T543

 QJ852
 T64
 Q5
 K96

W **N** **E** **S**
 / 1H / 1S
 / 2D / 2H
 // 3H / 4H

Board 9 in the second final was difficult to judge from John's perspective, as any spade values in my hand other than the SA were not pulling their full weight.

In our version of Acol his 2D rebid does not promise 5 hearts, so my 2H may have been false preference, but his 3H invitation definitely showed a 5-card suit so if I was accepting I could bid 3NT with only 2 hearts.

John won the first club in dummy and led the H4, finessing the H9 and losing the East's HK, who now cashed the SA and led another, enabling John to set up the SJ in dummy for a useless discard. He next led the D7, winning in dummy when East ducked, and came back to hand to ruff a diamond.

It was now possible to make 11 tricks by discarding a diamond on the SJ before taking the heart finesse again. However, to add credence to East's defence, if the SJ was ruffed by East, 11 tricks may have turned into only 9, so he finessed in hearts for just 10 tricks and an equal top.

F 2 AT8
Bd 17 JT
Dir N K65
Vul Nil KQJ32
 QJ 963
 K98 Q76432
 QJ94 872
 A876 9

 K7542
 A5
 AT3
 T54

W **N** **E** **S**
 1NT / 2H
 2S 3C / 3NT
 //

Board 17 in the second final was a hand that John could have easily gotten wrong due to confusion on the part of our opponents and a failure to alert as a result of the confusion.

My 2H bid was obviously transfer to spades, and West meant his 2S to be general take-out, but it could have been anything except natural. This was the only thing East could be sure of as his 3, John's minimum of 2 and my presumed 5 did not leave many spades for West.

Obviously John should have elected to play in 4S, where 11 tricks can be won on any lead, but chose to play in 3NT, which he would have regretted if East had led 4th highest of his longest and strongest!

On the actual diamond lead John wended his way through the spades to finish up with 12 tricks for an equal top. The heart pips in the West hand allow 10 tricks to be set up in NT if South is declarer, but a heart lead by East leaves EW in control and 8 tricks is the limit.

F 2 A5
Bd 24 AQ7542
Dir W 852
Vul Nil JT
 Q943 87
 T3 J96
 AJ7 KQT9
 K832 A964

 KJT62
 K8
 643
 Q75

W **N** **E** **S**
 / 1H / 1S
 / 2H //

Board 24 in the second final looked like a routine hand with NS able to make a part-score in the majors, and EW in the minors.

However we were outgunned and did not enter the auction allowing North to subside in 2H, to which I led the DK.

John and I went through the motions of cashing our diamond tricks without giving declarer any vital spade information, so he lost the obvious 5 tricks for -110.

This was worth an average score, but looking at all 4 hands, we should have defeated 2H and earned a good score!

It is obvious from the low level of the bidding that both John and I have some points, and the opening lead indicated the diamond fit. At this stage we should analyze that any spade tricks are unlikely to go away so we should turn our attention to clubs. If I switch to a club at trick 2, we can cash 2 clubs and 3 diamonds finishing in my hand and then the 4th diamond, ruffed with the HT, promotes the setting trick for my HJ.

F 3 T653
Bd 10 64
Dir E Q32
Vul All 8742
 97 KQ82
 KQ973 AJT
 5 AKJ76
 AKJ63 T

 AJ4
 852
 T984
 Q95

W **N** **E** **S**
 1H / 1D /
 2C / 1S /
 4H / 2H /
 5S / 4NT /
 / 6H //

Board 10 in the third final was a routine 6H, but we got below average on what was actually the crucial last set of the competition for only making 12 tricks.

2C was 4th suit, and my 2H rebid probably showed club shortage, so John was less enthusiastic about slam prospects and signed off in game. I was not done however, and after finding out we were missing only 1 Key Card, 6H it was, and North led the C7.

Taking the diamond finesse can now make 13 tricks, and I believe that some pairs did this, but John wisely was not prepared to go down in a cold slam by taking a 50% finesse, so he gave up a spade and finished up with a normal +1430.

However, other pairs in the final 28 also decided to settle for 12 tricks and led a spade to dummy, but South ducked at least twice, and thus 13 tricks rolled home. Pairs is a hard game.

F 3 AQT853
Bd 11 J8
Dir S J9
Vul Nil 963
 J9764 K
 K9753 AT64
 AQ T8
 8 AKQJ54
 2
 Q2
 K765432
 T72

W	N	E	S
/	/	X	3D
4D	/	4H	//

On board 11 in the third final luckily we missed slam in our best fit, but unluckily we also missed the cold slam in my best suit.

This was another below average result when we needed it least as some pairs were doubled in 6H by West, and North did not find the spade lead, so it made an overtrick. Even those not in slam still made 13 in hearts on a non-spade lead.

The best slam is 6C as that can overcome the potential spade ruff by ruffing high and relying on the 3-3 break in clubs, and some pairs got there.

We wrong-sided the heart contract when I elected to double 3D when it came around to me instead of bidding 4C, and John bid 4D to show 2 places to play.

North was very interested in the 4D bid and that it likely showed both majors (I was sure it did looking at my clubs), but did not take any action. South led their singleton and North had no problem with returning a spade for a trump promotion.

F 3 KT85
Bd 16 86
Dir W AKT93
Vul EW 83
 QJ764 9
 K7532 A94
 - Q8652
 T52 Q974
 A32
 QJT
 J74
 AKJ6

W	N	E	S
/	/	1D	1NT
2S	3NT	//	

On board 16 in the third final I felt hard-done by when West bid 2S over my 1NT overcall, but led a heart, and turned out to have 5 of them also for 1 off. -50 was almost a bottom.

The 1D opening did not show any more than 3 diamonds, so I did not think I needed a diamond stop, but if I had doubled, West would still have bid 1S, and now John would have bid 1NT, raised to game by me and easy on a spade lead.

The H3 lead did not look threatening, but when West ducked the heart return and played the H2, I knew I was in trouble and should have looked for another way to make the contract.

The contract can be made after West ducks the HQ at trick 2 by leading the HJ and if West runs the hearts he subjects East to a suicide squeeze. After 5 hearts and 2 spades finishing in dummy, dummy has AKT9, 83 in the minors and I have Jx, AKJ6 and East cannot keep control in both minors.

F 3 KJ9542
Bd 17 87
Dir N Q
Vul Nil KT86
 AQ8 63
 QT4 J9652
 K72 J54
 Q542 AJ7
 T7
 AK3
 AT9863
 93

W	N	E	S
X	2D	/	/
	//		

On board 17 in the third final I had a brain implosion when I passed John's 2D opening to play in his unknown support for my 6-card suit instead of our certain 6-2 or even 6-3 fit in the majors.

West came to my rescue when he doubled, but reason has still temporarily left me and I passed again.

On the actual layout, after a heart lead 2DX is not without its chances, but John, probably in shock at my peculiar bidding, did not get the most out of the hand by ruffing the 3rd heart and exiting with a spade to dummy.

When he also miss-guessed the diamonds, he finished 2 off for -300 and our only bottom of the final rounds.

Obviously since 2S is cold, probably making 3, even 1 off is a bad score, but if he wins the hearts and leads a spade, West needs to win this and shift to a club so East can lead a trump, otherwise 2DX will make.

F 3	92		
Bd 22	T92		
Dir E	KQ9654		
Vul EW	AJ		
K5		AJT843	
8		AJ73	
83		J2	
K9876532		T	
	Q76		
	KQ654		
	AT7		
	Q4		
W	N	E	S
		1S	/
2C	/	2H	/
3C	//		

On board 22 in the third final John and I both got a lot of value out of out limited hands, and I was regretting rebidding 2H instead of 2S when John rebid 3C and I thought that had nowhere to go.

Having made my bed I had to lie in it, and it was with a certain amount of trepidation that I laid my meagre values on the tables, consoled by the fact that at least I had the 2 Aces.

The opening lead was the DK, followed by a heart, and John next led the CT off the board, covered all around.

He was now in charge, and ruffed the heart return to lead another trump after which he was able to face the SK and claim 9 tricks for +110.

This was a bonus, as despite our 6-2 spade fit, 7 tricks is the limit in a spade contract, and +110 turned out to be our only outright top for the final rounds.