

2008 Seres McMahon Mixed Teams

After failing to qualify for the Open Teams finals, Tony, Meta, Wynne and I entered for the Seres McMahon Mixed Teams, a new Friday-only event at the Gold Coast Congress, run in parallel with the Swiss Butler Pairs. While I normally play with Tony at the GCC, by way of a change, I played with Wynne and Tony played with Meta, which proved to be a winning combination when we won all 6 of our matches and finished comfortable winners.

The fragility of a Swiss format to your final position was demonstrated on the final round, which pitted us against the then equal leaders (team 7), and a couple of favourable results for us inflicted a big loss on them that dropped them all the way to 10th. It was even worse for us in the Open teams where from being poised to strike for the top 6, a big last-round loss plummeted us almost 60 places.

The entry of 108 teams (and a similar number of players for the Swiss Butler Pairs) showed that the new format for the GCC has been accepted by the players, which augments well for the future. In addition, total entries for 2008 in the Pairs and Teams were up on 2006.

| | | | | | |
|----------------|----------|----------|----------|-------|---|
| M 1 | A8753 | | | | We gained a game swing on board 4 in the first match largely because of systemic differences. |
| Bd 4 | AJ6 | | | | |
| Dir W | KT9 | | | | At our table NS were playing a natural system and South was fixed by the 1S opening bid. They were too weak to bid 2H and 1NT was not forcing and if passed out (as likely) could have been a disaster, so they passed, as did Wynne. |
| Vul All | A3 | | | | |
| | | | | Q942 | |
| | | | | 97 | |
| KT6 | | | | J2 | |
| K | | | | KQJ74 | |
| A8754 | | | | | I led the CK, and when that held switched to the S2, on which Wynne conveniently played the SK. Declarer has no real hope and finished with only 6 tricks for +100 to us. |
| T862 | | | | | |
| | J | | | | |
| | QT85432 | | | | |
| | Q63 | | | | At the other table Meta and Tony were playing Precision, and after Tony opened 1C, Meta responded 3H, to show this type of hand, and Tony had no hesitation in raising to game, |
| | 95 | | | | |
| W | N | E | S | | |
| | 1S | // | | | This contract was never in any difficulty, and by using her entries wisely to set up the spade, Meta made 12 tricks for +680 and 13 Imps. |

| | | | | | |
|---------------|----------|----------|----------|------|---|
| M 1 | 42 | | | | On board 6 in the first match my 1D opening was of the nebulous kind, but after that the bidding was natural and straight-forward. |
| Bd 6 | J976 | | | | |
| Dir E | T953 | | | | At the other table EW were not very adventurous and stopped in just 2S, making 10 tricks after a spade lead. |
| Vul EW | 983 | | | | |
| | | | | Q983 | |
| KT65 | | | | KQ53 | At our table, we were maybe a little too adventurous, but Wynne found the winning line to land the game and 10 Imps. |
| AT | | | | A64 | |
| KJ7 | | | | T2 | The opening lead was the C9, won by South who switched to the D2, and the DJ by Wynne held the trick. A trump to dummy lost to South, who exited with another diamond, won on the table. |
| QJ65 | | | | | |
| | AJ7 | | | | |
| | 842 | | | | |
| | Q82 | | | | The moment of truth was at hand and Wynne was only missing the placement of the two major suit Jacks, and the SJ was most crucial. |
| | AK74 | | | | |
| W | N | E | S | | |
| | | 1D | X | | This is where South's take-out double came back to haunt her, as she was favoured to have either 3 or 4 spades for the double, so Wynne ran the S9 and claimed when it held. If North had shown out, Wynne could have repeated the trump finesse. |
| 1S | / | 2S | / | | |
| 4S | // | | | | |

M 2 JT97
Bd 13 Q964
Dir N -
Vul All J9753
 K4 -
 85 AKJ732
 KQ9 J87432
 AQT862 K
 AQ86532
 T
 AT65
 4
W N E S
 / / 1H 1S
 / 3S 4D 4S
 5D //

On board 13 in the second match I wish I could say that I had visualized the distribution perfectly to make 5D, but South was not helpful enough to double and warn me about the bad trump break.

I won the C4 opening lead in hand, and expecting to have possibly missed a slam, led a trump to dummy and found the bad news. A successful heart finesse would now see me home, as I could finesse the D9 and lose just a trump and a heart, but I could do that later so led to the HA and then to the D9.

When the HT fell previously, I still had visions (blurred) of the HQ dropping for 12 tricks, so I wrongly led a heart to my Ace and now should have gone 1 off if South cashed the DA, but inexplicably she tried to cash the SA first and now I was home.

At the other table the bidding was similar, except Meta doubled the final contract (who would not?) but this not give declarer any clues and they finished 1 off for +200 and 13 Imps.

M 3 JT62
Bd 24 KQT
Dir W T32
Vul Nil 985
 KQ53 A9
 J9 A863
 KJ85 A764
 T74 K62
 874
 7542
 Q9
 AQJ3
W N E S
 / / 1NT /
 2C / 2H /
 2NT / 3NT //

On board 24 in the third match everything hung on the opening lead, and I was lucky and the declarer at the other table was not.

Our bidding sequence was such that Wynne was known to have 4 spades and invitational values and I was known to have 4 hearts and more than minimum (14 or 15).

A heart lead is inconceivable, and a diamond lead unlikely, so that leaves a choice between the black suits.

North is also known to have 4 spades, but will they be destroyed by a spade lead? Will North have an entry and be able to lead clubs for success?

At our table, South attacked with the CQ, and the CK turned out to be my 9th trick for +400

At the other table, Meta led the S7, and there was no way for declarer to come to their 9th trick now and another +50 resulted in 10 Imps to us.

M 3 JT
Bd 25 J82
Dir N K873
Vul EW QT52
 K642 A3
 KQ6 AT7543
 A42 QT6
 K76 A9
 Q9875
 9
 J95
 J843
W N E S
 / / 1H /
 2C / 2NT /
 3H / 3S /
 4D / 5C /
 6H //

On board 25 in the third match we benefited by a slam swing because our opponents had their Precision pair (Betty and Mike, playing similar systemic bids to us) sitting NS. I am sure that Tony and Meta would have bid the hand the same as we did, as would have our NS opponents.

Wynne's 2C response asked about my trump length and quality, and the 2NT rebid showed a 6-card suit to one of the top three honours.

Her 3H rebid showed slam interest and invited cue-bids, and then after I showed both black Aces, Wynne bid the obvious slam.

While 12 tricks are not hard to make looking at all 4 hands, after drawing trumps and playing Ace and another diamond from dummy, North should be able to duck smoothly to give declarer a guess, and I may have still been pondering my decision, except that South led the D5 and I no longer had a problem.

What would you have led from the South cards? Nothing is a stand-out, and I bet quite a few also led the D5.

M 4 KT65
Bd 8 K7
Dlr W 3
Vul Nil AQ7643
732 -
J86 Q942
KQJ5 T87642
J85 K92
 AQJ984
 AT53
 A9
 T
W **N** **E** **S**
/ 1C / 1S
/ 3D! / 4NT
/ 5D / 5NT
/ 6H / 7NT
//

Some boards are completely out of your control and you can only watch helplessly while the opponents get to a great result, either through good luck or good bidding, and board 8 in the fourth match was a typical such hand, but a fairytale result for us.

We had played against this team of ANU students in the Open Teams and I was impressed at the time by their youth and enthusiasm for the game (some only having played for a year), but they suffered in that match because they overburdened themselves with too many artificial systemic agreements compared to their limited experience.

On this hand their experience came back to haunt them when South did not recognize the simple splinter bid of 3D, showing spade support, instead thinking it showed a big hand with the minors.

After that there was no recovery, and without the knowledge that North had good spade support, South finished in the no-play 7NT.

This was one of those times where if Meta and Tony had bid 7S, which is cold, they would have gained very little for it, as it +1010 and +150 was worth 15 Imps.

M 5 A8
Bd 17 T6
Dlr N K32
Vul Nil KJT853
K753 Q4
AK84 J76
QJ876 AT5
- AQ974
 JT962
 Q932
 94
 62
W **N** **E** **S**

On board 8 in the fifth match the opponents unusual methods almost caught us napping, when North opened 2C (Precision) and South responded 2H, which was weak and to play if North had at least 3 hearts, and prepared for 2S or 3C otherwise!

Wynne doubled for takeout, and North retreated to 3C, which I was happy to double. However, at this time we were not aware as to how weak South could be so it was impossible for Wynne to visualize my powerful hand in clubs, so she bid 3NT, passed out.

The opening lead was the CJ, won on the table with the CQ, and Wynne came to hand with the HA to successfully finesse the diamonds twice before exiting with the SQ to claim 10 tricks for +430, AT the other table, Tony also opened 2C, Meta passed, West doubled, and East converted to penalties so 2CX became the final contract, finishing 2 off but -300 was 4 Imps to us in a match that we only won by 3 Imps.

M 5 AQT2
Bd 18 K42
Dlr E 8
Vul NS QJ843
J8765 K
Q765 T9
K6 A9432
92 AT765
 943
 AJ83
 QJT75
 K
W **N** **E** **S**
 / 1D /
1H / 2C /
2D //

On board 18 in the fifth match I opened 1D and rebid 2C, which showed at least 5-4 in the minors and 11-13 HCPs and NS were silent throughout.

Things did not look good when South led the DQ won on the table, and North won the next lead of a spade from dummy and led the C4, South dropping the CK under my Ace.

Things did not get any better and I finished up 3 off for -150, which looked pretty flat as obviously NS could make a part-score.

At the other table East started off with 2NT for the minors and West finished in 3DX, which also made only 5 tricks, but this time it was +800 and 12 Imps.

Sometimes aggressive bidding kicks a goal for your side and sometimes it is an own-goal.

M 6
Bd 21
Dir N
Vul NS
 7632
 T963
 4
 K863

AQJT54
 K754
 Q52
 -
 98
 AQ82
 AJ7
 AQ54

K
 J
 KT9863
 JT972

| W | N | E | S |
|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| | 1S | 2NT | X |
| 3C | 3H | / | 4NT |
| / | 5H | / | 5NT |
| / | 6S | / | 7H |
| // | | | |

On board 21 in the sixth and last match, the vulnerability was in our favour and we took full advantage of it, taking away valuable bidding space and allowing NS to make a fatal bidding error.

4NT was RKCB for Hearts, and 5NT showed all key cards and was meant to ask for specific Kings, but misunderstood by North.

I did not get her interpretation of 6S, but she did not show too much surprise at his explanation of the meaning of 6S before I had led.

My opening lead was a problem to me, obviously the CJ could hardly give much away, but a trump seemed a possibility against a grand slam.

After some anguish and misgivings I duly led the HJ and luckily declarer was missing T9xx and not T8xx, so 7H had no chance at all, going 2 down for +200 against the 650 for 4S at the other tables.

Double-dummy 7S and 7NT are both cold, by the simple means of dropping the SK singleton offside, the diamond finesse, and then a club-heart squeeze against West – a fairly routine contract for some wild bidders no doubt.