

2010 Barrier Reef Butler Swiss Pairs by Richard Wallis

While the field was down on last year, the quality was still high in the Open Butler Pairs event held prior to the Barrier Reef Teams in Mackay, and John Brockwell and I struggled to make any headway, with no severe losses, but no major wins either.

The event was played as a Swiss, with 8 matches of 7-boards, which made for an exciting contest. The Butler format meant that tactics were similar to teams play, and a 1-round delayed draw was employed for the first few rounds, before reverting to a live draw for the final rounds.

Magnus Moren and Neville Francis went to the lead after the first match and were never headed thereafter, averaging just over 20VPs per match. ACT duo P Kahler and T Davis were 2nd, with Phil Gue from Adelaide and Paul Wyer from Sydney in 3rd place. J Kelly and P Bugler won the Restricted Pairs, from B Tait and T Caruana.

It looks as if Pairs prior to the Teams will become a regular event at all BRC for future years, as while Townsville had previously only ran the Teams event, they have put the Butler Pairs event back on the Calendar for 2011.

While the venue was initially a little crowded, the only valid criticism that I heard during the event was that Butler scoring was similar to Teams, and therefore maybe this should be a Match-pointed Pairs event?

M 1	K853			On board 2 in the first match it was not clear whose hand it was, and the bidding did not stop until the 6-level.
Bd 2	T84			
Dir E	932			John's 2NT opening was for the minors, and I could easily envisage 5
Vul NS	AJ2			of either minor as being cold, and slam could make with a little luck.
AT6		94		On the other hand, we might only take my SA in a 6H contract,
7		3		although it was likely that the DA would cash as well, so I did not push
AKJT		Q8754		my luck over the 5H rebid.
Q9754		KT863		John had no tricks, so went one more over 5H, and North must have
	QJ72			been sorely tempted to bid slam in hearts, but sanity prevailed and
	AKQJ9652			due to the uncertainty, there was no double, maybe to avoid giving
	6			away the club position.
	-			
W	N	E	S	North led the H8, and it seemed obvious to play South for the possibly
		2NT!	4H	club void, so I only lost 3 tricks for 2 off and -100. There were some
5C	/	/	5H	sacrifices, but not enough, as the board average was +500, so we
/	/	6C	//	gained 9 Imps, the only sizeable swing of the match.

M 2 8652
Bd 13 T6
Dir N T964
Vul All 753
 AQJ4 KT93
 AQ752 K98
 QJ5 AK
 Q KJ92
 7
 J43
 8732
 AT864

W	N	E	S
	/	1S	/
2H	/	4H	/
4NT	/	5H	/
6H!	//		

On board 13 in the second match I made a bad choice of slam, but luckily got away with it when the hearts broke 3-2.

We were playing 4-card Acol, so a 3H rebid by John would not have been forcing, hence the jump to game.

I had intended to convert to spades after I found out about the key cards in hearts, but changed my mind and bid the slam in hearts.

North led the C7, and when dummy went down, I breathed a sigh of relief when trumps broke 3-2 and quickly claimed the 12 tricks and a modest 2 Imps gain against the average.

In fact with the CJ in dummy 6NT is a much better chance than 6H, having 12 tricks on top without any breaks required, but I did not have consider a Notrump contract with my club holding.

6S has extra tricks available by ruffing clubs, and can survive a 4-1 break in trumps, so should have been the contract.

M 3 T83
Bd 17 K8
Dir N 93
Vul Nil JT8632
 Q9 K876
 QT75 94
 K8762 QJT5
 Q7 K54
 AJ42
 AJ632
 A4
 A9

W	N	E	S
	/	/	1H
/	1NT	/	3NT
//			

I got the first round of the bidding right on board 17 in the third match when I passed as dealer, but slipped from grace on the second round when I chanced my arm with a 1NT response.

Predictably John had a good hand and I knew I was in trouble when he raised straight to 3NT, and East led the DQ.

There is a line for 8 tricks after the opening lead, and that is to play East for Kx or Qx in clubs, and for West to be kind enough to take the first round of clubs when it is offered. However, if the club position is such as that, and West ducks the club, the club suit is dead.

I took the simplistic line for 8 tricks by taking the heart finesse, hoping for a 3-3 break to garner the 8 tricks, and then for discarding problems for EW to produce the 9th trick.

However, nothing was friendly, and I went 3 off for -150 and 4 Imps to EW, the largest swing in a very tight match that we lost 4-6.

M 4 AT86542
Bd 23 KJ
Dir S 5
Vul All KT4
 KQJ9 7
 A82 T64
 A93 KT82
 AQ8 J7532
 3
 Q9753
 QJ764
 96

W	N	E	S
		/	/
1C	4S	/	/
X	//		

It is well known that I like to put it to the opponents by bidding my hand to the hilt when I have some shape, so it should not be a surprise that I jumped to 4S over West's opening bid at the 1-level, not the more prudent 3S favoured by others (there were a few -800s).

John's hand was a severe disappointment to me, especially holding 5-5 in the reds, a shape that he had virtually denied when he did not open 2H. He thought the hand was too weak to open 2H, which was why he passed as dealer.

East got me off to a good start when he led the C3, but West had no problems shifting to the SK, so any hopes of a club ruff quickly disappeared, and I finished with only 6 tricks and -1100 for 12 Imps away.

Some pairs did appear to open 2H, and finished in 4HX, also for -1100, although a few pairs played in 4H or 4S without getting doubled. The most popular contract for EW was 3NT, making 10 tricks, but at least one exuberant pair climbed all the way to 6NT.

M 5	AQT97			
Bd 7	A8			
Dlr S	985			
Vul All	972			
5			J842	
JT543			Q962	
AT72			K63	
Q84			JT	
	K63			
	K7			
	AK653			
W	N	E	S	
/	1S	/	1C	
/	3NT	//	1NT	

On board 7 in the fifth match I could have used 2C as check-back to find out that John had 3-card spade support, but with a good suit, thought that 3NT may be safer, and so it proved, thanks to the decision by West to lead their 4-card suit in preference to their longer suit.

As it turns out, 4S is a better contract, making except for the bad spade break, but 3NT is also cold if the spades break, or if it is West that has the 4 card holding, but 3NT would go down on a heart lead unless I was psychic enough to run the ST through East.

On the lead of the D2, John had 8 tricks in the bag, and could give up a spade for his 9th trick while EW could only cash 3 diamonds and a spade.

The most popular contract was 4S, generally failing, so we picked up 12 Imps.

M 6	KQJ7			
Bd 8	-			
Dlr W	AJ			
Vul Nil	AT76532			
5			AT863	
AT9765			KQ	
Q8654			K3	
4			KQJ8	
	942			
	J8432			
	T972			
	9			
W	N	E	S	
2H	X	XX	/	
3D	4C	X	//	

On board 8 in the sixth match South was most unhappy with her partner when she bid 4C, which was doubled by John, as she wanted to double 3D, and would have been delighted to double the 3H that John would have bid if North had passed. She actually expressed her displeasure before the 4CX was passed by North.

One of our systemic agreements stated that a redouble showed 0 or 1 cards in partner's suit, which is why I did not stick the redouble, but I also wanted to show my second suit.

John led the HK to 4CX, but we seemed to slip a tricks as we only took it 3 off for +500, which seemed like a good score, and gained us 5 Imps against the average of -290.

The reason the average was so high was that some Wests made 3DX, and a few made 3HX and one even 4HX, so it seems that South was lucky her partner did bid 4C!

M 6	AT9432			
Bd 11	954			
Dlr S	953			
Vul Nil	7			
7			KJ	
J			AQT63	
AKJ4			Q876	
AQJT962			53	
	Q865			
	K872			
	T2			
	K84			
W	N	E	S	
5C	/	/	/	
//			X	

On board 11 in the sixth match I had too good a hand to open 5C, and paid the penalty when John did not raise to slam.

NS had a silly mix-up when South passed initially, but balanced with a double, which was left in by her partner. This was actually the best result they could achieve after the double, as -1100 or -1400 are their likely scores if they get to play a suit contract.

North led the D9 to 5CX, and I could see that 6C would make if the finesse was on, or even 7C if the heart finesse was right and I could get rid of my spades loser, but if I lost the lead through a failed finesse, I could easily suffer a diamond ruff for 1 off.

Since I was only in 5CX, I could afford to give up a spade and a club, as long as I avoided a diamond ruff, so I quickly played the CA and CQ, and scored up +550.

Quite a few pairs bid to 6C, so the average was 580 to EW, and we lost 1 Imp!

M 7 6
Bd 17 AQT9842
Dir N 642
Vul Nil T9
 K74 9852
 763 K
 KJT73 985
 75 KQ843
 AQJT3
 J5
 AQ
 AJ62
W N E S
 // 4H / 6H

On board 17 in the seventh match I had a fair suit, but nothing outside, and John had a difficult decision when I opened with 4H. There was no scientific way to explore slam, so he just bid it, and East led the CK.

I had many lines to make 12 tricks, but none of them included dropping the singleton King offside, but if the HK was onside, I had time to draw trumps and take the ruffing finesse in spades to set up my 12 tricks, and at the very least get rid of my club loser.

When I lost to the HK, a diamond came back and I was forced to finesse, so I lost 3 tricks for 2 off and 9 Imps away.

At least one other I spoke to was inspired enough to cash the HA and made 13 tricks. Female intuition is hard to beat at times.

This would have been a good time to be playing opening 4C to show a good 4H opening, and 4H to show exactly what I have, or a bit worse.

M 7 AK
Bd 21 K86543
Dir N J962
Vul NS A
 85 T642
 J 9
 AQ K543
 QJT97532 K864
 QJ973
 AQT72
 T87
 -
W N E S
 4C 1H / 2D!
 4H 5C 6H
 7H //

On board 21 in the seventh match John decided to go to game, and to muddy the waters along the way, hence the 2D bid, but I got lost in the muddy water.

When East bid 5C I was contemplating whether to bid 5D or 6D at my next turn to bid, when out of the blue, John bid 6H before it was my turn to bid.

I thought that John must have a club void, and at most a doubleton spade, hoping for a non spade led, and a big red two-suiter, and since I had no black suit losers, I could hardly do less than bid the grand slam.

West contemplated doubling for a diamond lead, and East still gave the opening lead a lot of thought, before settling on the standard lead of a trump.

Dummy was a big surprise to all of us, and there was nowhere to park my 4th diamond, so I had to concede 1 off and 14 Imps away since some pairs had been allowed to make 6H.

M 8 A94
Bd 24 964
Dir W J9742
Vul Nil 94
 KQT862 73
 AJ QT
 5 AKQ83
 KQ63 T872
 J5
 K87532
 T6
 AJ5
W N E S
 1S / 2D /
 3C / 3H /
 3NT //

On board 24 in the eighth match I lost a spade until late in the play of an unsuccessful 3NT as West.

The bidding was fairly routine, and so was the final contract, although 4S would have been safer.

North was warned off leading diamonds, and instead, chose to lead the 4th suit, H6.

I played the HQ just in case North had led away from the HK, to gain an entry to dummy, but South covered, and I had to use my only entry to dummy to lead either spades or clubs.

I chose to lead clubs, as I thought that we had a 4-4 fit, compared to the 5-2 spade fit, and I won the CK in hand, and thought about a deceptive SQ to try and sneak another trick, but went back to clubs and could not guess right.

South cleared the hearts, and when NS began to run their hearts I found the 6th spades and realized that I had botched it!