

2012 ANC Seniors Trials by Richard Wallis

This year, by a fortunate coincidence, 12 pairs entered for both the Womens and Seniors Trials, so Stage 1 was not required, and we could proceed straight to Stage 2, playing 11 matches of 20-board over 4 days, with both sections playing the same boards at the same time.

As has been the practice for many years now, I entered with Tony Jackman, and we had looked forward to the trip to Darwin this year, although it was going to be an expensive ANC for the players, as July is peak season in Darwin. However, we fell at the last hurdle and only came in 4th, so we are staying at home. Those players with enough foresight to book accommodation before they actually made the team will get reasonable deals, although still expensive, but late bookers will have to pay a high premium. The Seniors team for the 2012 ANC in Darwin is Keith McDonald / Andrew Slater, Paul Collins / Ian Afflick, and David Harrison / Leck Kaszubski.

Unfortunately after the first 2 days of play, one pair in the Seniors had to withdraw due to ill-health, and thus there was a bye for the remaining 5 matches. Since we had not finished more than 66% of the total number of boards, the Director, Alan Gibson, was forced to re-score the first 6 matches, omitting the withdrawn pair. Understandably, this caused some confusion, as the scores for some pairs changed markedly. Where a pair had a good win against the withdrawn pair, that good score was lost and their total score reduced, but on the other side, where a pair had had a big loss against the withdrawn pair, that bad score was also lost, and their total score increased.

The Wallace Cross-Imps system is used for these trials, and, I believe due to a lack of understanding of how they work, the method continues to cause adverse player reactions. Simply put, the system works like this: For 6 tables, on each board the score at your table is compared to the score at each of the 5 other tables, and Imps calculated for each board based on the score difference. The 5 results (in Imps) are then averaged for the board, and become the result for that board. This is similar to Butler averages, except that the top and bottom scores are not removed, thus a large outlying score at any table affects the table at which it occurred most, but all other tables to some extent.

M 1	J32			Luck was against us on board 12 in match 1, where South took over after North opened a 15-17 1NT and blasted into the grand slam with no clear idea of what the best contract was likely to be.
Bd 12	J7			
Dlr W	AQ6			
Vul NS	AK964			North dutifully showed the 2 key cards, and was probably surprised when South next bid 7S, but was even more surprised when dummy went down as there were many hands where 7H was cold, but 7S had no play, and hearts were not even mentioned.
T85		97		
542		T963		
KT84		J9752		
853		J2		At most tables, South transferred to spades and rebid 3H, receiving spades preference, so at 3 other tables, the final contract was 7S, but in the likely knowledge of a 5-3 fit. Still not good, but around 50-50.
	AKQ64			
	AKQ8			
	3			
	QT7			Of course when your luck is in you can do anything, and not only did North have 3-card support for spades, but both of the major suit Jacks as well as the CK, so 7S or 7NT was claimed at trick 1.
W	N	E	S	
/	1NT	/	2H!	
/	2S	/	4NT!	We thus lost 5.2 Imps, whereas if it not been South's lucky day, we would have picked up about 15 Imps.
/	5H	/	7S!!	
//				

M 1	AQT4			
Bd 17	KJ52			
Dlr N	QJ			
Vul Nil	A76			
K985		J		
96		Q74		
AT65		87432		
KJT		9854		
	7632			
	AT83			
	K9			
	Q32			
W	N	E	S	
/	1NT	/	2C!	
/	2NT	/	3C!	
/	3NT!	//		

Before I selected my opening lead, I asked for a review of the bidding, and was told that 2C asked for a 5-card major, and 2NT denied one, but I was not sure whether North was maximum or minimum. 3C was then explained by North as probably asking for a 4-card major.

With no likely entries, I eschewed leading my bad 5-card diamond suit, and, based on the explanation I was given, led the SJ, since Tony was marked with at least 5 spades by North's failure to show a 4-card major.

Of course on a 'normal' diamond lead, declarer can still make 3NT by picking the HQ and playing the spades for 3 tricks, finessing the SQ, but I sure made it easy for him.

I do not know what caused North to ignore both of his major suits in favour of a dicey 3NT, but his odd bidding gained him 5.6 Imps, where it could have lost him 9 Imps. Maybe he thought that South's 3C should have been looking for a 4-card major, but was not sure.

M 2	QT972			
Bd 6	T			
Dlr E	AKQT95			
Vul EW	J			
A4		KJ		
A9763		KQJ8		
J		7632		
AQT52		K73		
	8653			
	542			
	84			
	9864			
W	N	E	S	
		1NT	/	
2D!	X	2H	/	
3H!	4D	4H	/	
5D	6D	6H	//	

Board 6 in match 2 was tailored made for our system. Tony and I do not play convention transfers after a 1NT opening, and 2D forces me to bid 2H and await developments, if there is one.

Tony's 3H rebid is natural and slam invitational, but with no Aces and diamond losers, I signed off reluctantly in 4H.

Having heard my heart support, and holding the 2 black Aces himself, Tony made one further try for slam by cue-bidding his diamond control, which could conceivably be a void, so I would have shown the SK on the way to 6H, just in case, but North's 6D got in the way and I signed off in 6H.

South dutifully led the D8, but it was claim time as soon as both opponents followed to 1 round of trumps. To make it easier, just in case the clubs did not break, after drawing trumps I cashed the CQ in dummy before leading to my CK, which showed up the 4-1 break, but since it was the CJ singleton in the North hand, the safety play was not needed.

M 2	Q3			
Bd 16	K9			
Dlr W	JT764			
Vul EW	Q976			
952		J7		
A76		QJ8542		
KQ852		A		
T8		AJ53		
	AKT864			
	T3			
	93			
	K42			
W	N	E	S	
/	/	1H	1S	
2H	/	3C	3S	
4H	//			

On board 16 in match 2 South made it easier for us to get to game by only a simple overcall instead of jump overcall, which may have been system-driven, but otherwise seems odd when he bid to 3S all on his own.

My 3C was a help-suit game try, based on my 6-card suit and 2 Aces, and Tony was happy to accept.

4H has 4 losers, but in a funny way North was squeezed by her own partner at trick 3 when he led the ST, having first cashed the top spades.

Looking at dummy's long suit, you want to keep a diamond, but North also wanted to keep her clubs, so a diamond was discarded while I ruffed.

North won the HK at trick 4 and led a club, but I was able to win the CA, cash the DA, overtake the HJ in dummy, and ruff a diamond. Then I entered dummy with the H7 and pitched all of my clubs on the established diamonds for +620 and 9 Imps.

M 3 QJ965
Bd 3 AQJT75
Dir S A
Vul EW 2
A82 K3
K94 832
K92 Q8763
KJ94 Q76

T74
6
JT54
AT853

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

On board 1 in match 3 we were trapped by the limited strength of our own Precision System.

I was obviously not strong enough to open with a forcing 1C opening bid, but non-the-less I liked my hand enough to reverse with 2S even after Tony passed the original 1H opening bid.

He thought that since I did not open 1C, we were not going to game, and obviously 2S was a good spot so he passed.

I believe that he failed to take into account that my 2S bid almost certainly showed a good 2 suited hand, and his 3 trumps, outside Ace and singleton heart, made game a good prospect, and thus a 3S invitation should have been forthcoming.

After the non-trump lead I had no trouble taking the heart finesse and ruffing the hearts good for 11 tricks and +200. The loss was only -3.2 Imps, so most pairs must have missed game (or played in 1H).

M 3 AK
Bd 15 A
Dir S AK864
Vul NS AJ963
T973 Q842
AJ83 97652
J7 92
K74 52

J65
KT4
QT53
QT8

W	N	E	S
/	1C!	1H!	X
/	2D	/	3D
/	6D	//	

On board 15 in match 3 I had a very difficult hand to bid. I could open 2NT to show my points, but that would be silly, so I decided to open 1C and see how the auction developed.

East's overcall showed both majors, and Tony's double generally showed 5-8 points, so I made a huge underbid of 2D, hoping that EW would not quickly subside.

My suit was not good enough to force with 3D, and besides, I had a perfectly respectable club suit as well. The good news was that Tony did not bid 1NT, also showing 5-8 points, but also values in the majors.

To my surprise Tony raised diamonds, so I bid the obvious slam and waited anxiously for dummy to appear.

Of course when dummy did appear I could draw trumps and take the club finesse for all of the tricks.

Looks like a flat board, but those are very rare commodities in such a competition, and we gained 7.6 Imps.

M 3 AT875
Bd 18 97
Dir E J75
Vul NS 954
3 KQ64
AKJ2 -
9843 AKT2
KT73 AQJ82

J92
QT86543
Q6
6

W	N	E	S
		1C	/
1H	/	1S	/
2D	/	3D	/
3NT	/	6NT	//

On board 18 in match 3 we gained 9.6 Imps from a failing slam by the opponents, whereas if they had bid the correct slam, we would have lost about the same amount.

East described his hand shape pretty well with the raise of the 4th suit, but he had a couple of points to spare over what was required for the bidding up to this point, and showed that with the raise of 3NT to 6NT.

I am sure that West was put off slam investigations after the 3D raise by his good holding in East's presumed heart void, but in fact the top hearts were not wasted as all.

If you are playing in only game, West's heart holding dictates 3NT as the most likely game, especially with West as declarer, but in a higher level contract, the 5-4 club fit figures to make 11 tricks and possibly 12, so 4C instead of 3NT is a better bid, and has the added advantage of making the East hand declarer and protecting any possible tenaces from attack on the opening lead.

After 4C slam in clubs is almost certainly to have been reached.

M 4 A4
Bd 6 T64
Dir E Q7653
Vul EW 942
 T52 K97
 AJ982 K5
 A T842
 AJT3 KQ86
 QJ863
 Q73
 KJ9
 75

W	N	E	S
1H	/	/	/
2H	//	2D!	/

On board 6 in match 4 I mistakenly passed as dealer, even though I could open 1D in our Precision system, but when the bidding came back to me I forgot that I was a passed hand!

In our system a 2C response to a 1H or 1S opening bid is a trump ask, thus I could not bid a natural 2C after Tony opened 1H. This of course does not apply to a passed hand, but I had one of those all too frequent Seniors Moments and forgot that I had passed, so I bid 2D, and passed when Tony showed a minimum hand by rebidding 2H.

Unfortunately Tony devalued his hand after my 2D response, whereas he had the values to bid a forcing 3C. It is unlikely that we would have got to the lucky club slam if I had bid 2C, but at least we would have reached a making game.

Tony had an easy 11 tricks when the trump finesse worked and the suit broke, but that was 10 Imps out as it appears the field got to game.

M 4 T
Bd 16 T764
Dir W KJ932
Vul EW J32
 AKJ96542 Q83
 8 AJ53
 - QT86
 A965 Q8
 7
 KQ92
 A754
 KT74

W	N	E	S
1C	2D	X	/
4S!	//		

On board 16 in match 4 both Tony and I could have done more to get to the cold slam. He had already done a fair bit by upgrading his 12 point hand to a Precision 1C opening, but this is justified by the trick-taking potential of the hand.

My double of 2D showed at least 5-8 points and no outside 5-card suit, and I had some extras.

After the double, 3S by Tony should be forcing to game, and I would have had an easy cue-bid of 4H leading to the slam.

Tony was not sure that 3S would be forcing, so made sure of game by bidding it, but I thought that he had no interest in slam, and my diamond holding did not look very effective.

However, after the 1C opening it is likely that there will be at least 11 tricks in spades, so a 5H cue-bid was probably safe. We only lost 2.4 Imps by not bidding slam, but could have picked up about 9 Imps.

M 5 AQT987
Bd 13 -
Dir N 7
Vul All AT87652
 5 KJ64
 8532 JT76
 A832 J654
 K743 9
 32
 AKQ94
 KQT9
 QJ

W	N	E	S
/	1S	/	1C!
//		/	3NT

On board 13 in match 5 we had another Seniors Moments, but this one was Tony's, and he fell on his feet.

I had a good distributional hand and opened 1S as dealer, only to see Tony open 1C as South!

I had high hopes for this hand, with slam in either black suit a chance with the right cards opposite, but now I was forced to pass throughout the rest of the auction, or what was left of it.

From Tony's point of view, many contracts offered themselves up, but since it was all guesswork, he opted for the universal contract of 3NT, and neither opponent saw any reason to disturb this contract.

When a diamond was led and dummy went down he could see that 3NT was probably in jeopardy compared to 4S unless good things happened, and the first good thing was the appearance of the DJ at trick 1 followed by winning trick 2 with the CQ.

Tony then led back a diamond to establish his 9th trick and EW had to let him back into his hand or set dummy up, and we gained a lucky 10.4 Imps.

M 5 QJ932
Bd 17 -
Dlr N QJ82
Vul Nil AT75
K54 T6
A7 Q2
A54 KT973
KJ863 Q942

A87
KJT986543
6
-

W	N	E	S
X	1S	/	2C
//	2H	/	4H

Sometimes when we get what we asked for we find out it was not what we wanted after all!

Board 17 in match 5 was a case in point. I opened 1S, 1 point light, but justified by the shape, and Tony bid 2C, which was asking about my length and strength in spades, and West double for the lead.

By a strange twist of fate, my response of 2H showed my holding, and before I knew it Tony had bid 4H, which had to be natural!

It did not look right to pass on my hand (why had I opened?), but I was not being asked my opinion, so pass I did.

East has 2 obvious leads, the C2 or the DT, but after the double, naturally chose the C2, and away went dummy's diamond loser, so I had 10 tricks, losing just 2 hearts and a spade for +420, and a fortunate 4.6 Imps.

If Tony had bid 2H initially, and then jumped to 4H, West would have been on lead, and may have played the DA to look at dummy.

M 6 T76543
Bd 12 6
Dlr W 85
Vul NS Q643
KQ2 A
KJT53 A9874
J92 AKT3
A9 JT2

J98
Q2
Q764
K875

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

On board 12 in match 6 EW found it too difficult to diagnose their excellent fit, and a slam was missed.

The 4H rebid by West was about right, although the hand has got a non-minimum look about it, 14 points and two touching honour sequences, and many other pairs probably duplicated the result. These features would be a positive asset if East made move to slam.

The East hand is rich in controls, has 5-card support, so probably warrants another try. I would suggest a cue-bid of 4S, and if West can show the CA, slam is a reasonable bet, but after 5C, to keep partner in the loop, now cue-bid the DA. Surely with such good spades West will now bid 6H.

There was nothing in the play, and after drawing trumps, cashing the SA on the way, West could discard the clubs on the spades and take the diamond finesse to try for 13 tricks.

M 6 QT9
Bd 17 J542
Dlr N 4
Vul Nil AQ876
A753 J2
QT97 AK863
J7 8632
943 KJ

K864
-
AKQT95
T52

W	N	E	S
3H	/	1H	X
//	4C	4H	5C

On board 17 in match 6 East made a very clever play that unluckily for him could not succeed due to his partner's trump holding.

Over the 3H weakish raise, I felt that I could not get into too much trouble as a passed hand by bidding 4C, and I was happy for the opponents to bid 4H on a club lead. Next thing I knew I was in game, and East had led the HK.

It seemed likely that East had the CK, so I decided to play him for Kx, and after ruffing the opening lead in dummy, ducked a club by running the CT. This has the added advantage that West may not cover with the CJ. I was pleased to see East win the CK, and when he exited with the S2 and West ducked, I drew trumps and discarded spades and hearts on the diamonds for 12 tricks.

East had laid a trap that I may have fallen into if I had 2 diamonds (to enter dummy and return later), and I had the C9, but with neither of those I had no option except to play for trumps and diamonds to run.

M 7 T85
Bd 9 AQJ5
Dlr N AT7
Vul EW QT5
 AKJ4 962
 K2 93
 952 KQ86
 9632 AKJ8

 Q73
 T8764
 J43
 74

W **N** **E** **S**
 1NT //

Board 9 in match 7 showed up a difference in philosophies, and the fact that I had 4-card heart support was irrelevant.

Opposite a moderate 1NT opening, it is likely that the South hand will contribute very few tricks unless hearts are trumps. Even if partner only has 2 hearts, it is at least a 5-2 fit.

At the table Tony passed my 1NT opening and the defence was ruthless.

East led the CK, and led a spade through dummy's meager strength, West winning with the SJ to return a club, and EW cashed out the black suits, during which I needlessly wasted my diamonds and clung onto my hearts.

West won the 4th club and led a diamond, and all I could make were my 2 Aces, for 5 off. Luckily on 2.5 Imps away.

M 7 A64
Bd 14 9542
Dlr E A984
Vul Nil 83
 K2 T9
 KQ7 AT6
 KQ6 J72
 T9542 AKJ76

 QJ8753
 J83
 T53
 Q

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

On board 14 in match 7 EW had a routine auction to 3NT and Tony was on lead with a moderate 6-card suit and no entries. What to lead, and if a spade, which spade?

Tony did decide to lead a spade, and rather than the psychic SQ, which gives declarer no chance, he selected a normal 4th highest S7.

Now the problem was on East, as she could tell from the lead that I has a spade honour, as Tony would lead the SQ from an original holding of AQJ7, but which one?

There are 2 chances in 3 that I do not have the SA, so declarer went with the odds and played the SK from the table, but this was the 1 chance in 3 where playing low would have won all of the marbles.

We cashed our 7 tricks for 3 off and +150. Note that 3NT by West is cold as even the SA opening lead sets up the 9th trick with the SK, and this must have been the general result as we picked up 8.25 Imps.

M 7 QT54
Bd 16 83
Dlr W KQT
Vul EW KT86
 9 83
 KJ QT97654
 A9532 874
 J9532 7

 AKJ762
 A2
 J6
 AQ4

W **N** **E** **S**
 / 1D / 2S!
 / 3S! / 4C
 / 4D! / 6S
 //

On board 16 in match 7 I opened 1D with such good intermediates, which got us off to a good start. The vulnerability, or perhaps the system, prevented West from making it harder for us by opening 2NT for the minors.

Tony's 2S response was a trump and honour asking bid, and my 3S showed one of the top 3 spades but no outside Ace, so when he cue-bid the CA I was able to show my diamond control and he leapt to slam.

West led the C3, and when Tony claimed 12 tricks giving up a diamond for a heart discard, West lamented his heart holding prevented him from finding the 'killing' hearts lead.

However, due to the fortunate club position, no lead can beat 6S, as after drawing trumps declarer cashes the top clubs in hand and the marked finesse shows up allowing for a heart discard. Then the DA is conceded.

Other Wests must have opened 2NT as the slam was worth the full 11 Imps to us.

M 8	J9			
Bd 3	KT3			
Dir S	KT32			
Vul EW	AJ76			
Q762			K8	
Q5			964	
QJ865			A94	
K4			T8532	
	AT543			
	AJ872			
	7			
	Q9			
W	N	E	S	
/	2C	/	1S	
/	3NT	//	2H	

On board 3 in match 8 I did declarer's work for him a couple of times, by firstly leading a heart to 3NT, and then in the end-game cashing my clubs and squeezing Tony out of our 5th trick.

Since 4H is makes 10 or 11 tricks, we still gained +1.5 Imps on the hand, but it could have been 11 Imps.

Since North did not use 4th suit forcing, I concluded that he had the diamonds well stopped, and I could obviously not lead a club, nor did a spade look inviting, so I led a heart, but this made it easy for declarer to get his 5 heart tricks.

Declarer cashed out his hearts, on which I played the S8 for a diamond, and Tony pitched the S7 (for diamonds) and then a couple of diamonds, and declarer led the CQ, covered by both Tony and declarer. After winning the CA and cashing the CJ, declarer exited with a club, and suddenly I had 4 tricks and was looking for just 1 more!

Alas I ignored the discard pain from Tony and instead of exiting with the SK after cashing 2 clubs, I cashed the last club which squeezed him out of his spade or diamond guard.

M 8	64			
Bd 7	K7542			
Dir S	KT763			
Vul All	A			
32			KT975	
QT63			A8	
J4			AQ985	
QT654			7	
	AQJ8			
	J9			
	2			
	KJ9832			
W	N	E	S	
/	1H	1S	1C	
/	2D	X	2C	
X	//		3C	

Aggressive bidding by NS on board 7 in match 8 came unstuck due to miss-fitting hands, and we were there to pick up the crumbs.

Over 1H by North, I could have doubled to show both of my suits, or bid 2NT to show the shape, but I chose a simple overcall of 1S since I had a good hand and could always bid diamonds later if appropriate.

When North bid 2D my double was obviously for penalties and thus showed a good hand. Having shown my hand with the double, I would not have doubled 2H if South had shown preference although it is likely that Tony would have doubled.

North should be showing at least 5 hearts, and thus South would have been better to bid 2H instead of rebidding the bad club suit again.

South was off to a great start when Tony led the S3 and the CA turned up on the table, but 3C was never a chance with the 5-1 trump break and everything else badly placed, eventually finishing 3 off for +800 to us and 13 Imps.

M 9	KJT83			
Bd 8	K65			
Dir W	J6			
Vul Nil	Q54			
AQ965			4	
Q2			AJ93	
K543			AQ987	
98			K63	
	72			
	T874			
	T2			
	AJT72			
W	N	E	S	
1S	/	2D	/	
3D	/	3NT	//	

Board 8 in match 9 was a simple hand to bid to 3NT after Tony opened 1S, and after the standard lead of the CJ, I had 9 tricks by way of the successful heart finesse.

Prospects looked good for more than 9, but since only North controlled the spades, +400 was all that was there. Actually this simple contract was worth 6.5 Imps to us, so many did not find it so simple.

North had the chance to shine on the hand, and gave it some thought but did not act.

North knows that the spades are not behaving, and unless I have another source for 9 tricks, 3NT is not a certainty. North also knows that South may give the contract on the opening lead, but a spade is unlikely to give much away, so North should double for a spade lead, and then 8 tricks are the limit.

On course, and unlikely diamond lead also holds declarer to 8 tricks.

M 9
Bd 19
Dir S
Vul EW
72
KQ742
Q8
QJ73

QT83
86
T53
T852

9654
AJT
K9
AK96

AKJ
953
AJ7642
4

W	N	E	S
1H	/	4H	1D
/	/	X	5D
			//

On board 19 in match 9 I did not know whether we could make 4H after Tony's 1H overcall, but the vulnerability was worth the risk, and also South might make a phantom save if 4H was going down.

South showed a lot more faith in our bidding than it deserved by bidding 5D over the top of me, and I did know what to do with that.

Thankfully for us the dummy was not spectacular but did have 3 trumps and a doubleton heart, so South did get something to work with.

Tony led the HK, which I overtook to get a count card with the CK and led the second club to see if he had 2 or 4.

Declarer ruffed the club, ducked a heart and won the spade return to ruff a heart, then played 2 rounds of trumps getting the friendly break.

It turned out that South won the battle as 4H was indeed cold, and he swapped -620 for -300 and gained 5 Imps for his trouble.