

2012 National Seniors Teams by Richard Wallis

The second event at Canberra was the National Seniors Teams, and in this John Brockwell and I teamed up with Hashmat Ali and Bal Krishan, recent winners of the Seniors Pairs at the Gold Coast Congress. We came a creditable 11th, but after winning 6 of the first 7 matches and being well placed, were disappointed to lose the last 2 by small margins and thus drop down the list.

After winning the Seniors Last Train, Kathy Boardman and Richard Brightling were again in the winner's circle for this event, but this time coming from 4th position in the Swiss and having to win both the semi-final and the final. Our 20-10 win against them in round 2 was the highpoint of the event for our team, and our only win against a higher ranked team.

We had some great results, but alas, a few 'seniors' moments as well, and it would have been so easy to finish higher, but realistically, many of the teams out of the top 4 could say the same. Maybe next year we can improve, although I guess that these 'senior's moments are only going to get more frequent unless I can learn to concentrate more and play slowly, instead of playing by the seat of my pants as I used to do more successfully many years ago.

M 1	732				John finished up in a fairly routine 3NT as East on board 3 in the first match, and it is a fairly routine 1 off. Or is it?
Bd 3	974				
Dlr S	QJT8				
Vul EW	AT6				South led the H5 and the HJ won trick 1 on the table. The best chance for 9 tricks is a 3-3 diamond break, but for this to work, it is best to duck a trick to South if possible, as another heart lead would be welcomed. Accordingly, John led a diamond off the board and a sleepy North played the D8, and to his surprise, the D9 from John won the trick.
T54				AKQJ	
J3				AQT	
K762				A95	
Q532				J87	
	986				This should never have happened, but maybe North was trying to engineer a Grosvenor Coup, never expecting John to put in the D9, but he would have known afterwards that if he did it would have won! My impression is that North was not as devious as this.
	K8652				
	43				
	K94				
W	N	E	S		
/	/	2NT	/		Thus we gained 12 Imps instead of a flat board, and we were off to a good start.
3C	/	3D!	/		
3NT	//				

M 1	T8632				On board 13 in match 1 I took the easy way out since I had good outside controls and did not mention my poor diamond suit.
Bd 13	K754				
Dlr N	7				
Vul All	K82				Due to the unfortunate duplication in spades, 3NT has no chance on a spade lead, but there was no reason for South to lead anything other than the H6, so we were in with a chance.
KQ				A7	
A				QT2	
J986543				KT2	If the DQ is onside, there are plenty of tricks, as long as North does not also have the DA and can play through John's holding. However, if the DQ is onside, 5D is cold!
QJ4				AT763	
	J954				South won the DQ and led the H3 to North, who cleared the suit, and this is the time to take a count of the tricks. Since the DA is still to be lost, unless that is with North and the hearts are 3-6, (unlikely after the play of the H3 at trick 3) North will have a heart to lead to South and the contract cannot make.
	J9863				
	AQ				
	95				
W	N	E	S		
	/	1NT	/		
3NT	//				Thus the only chance is to enter dummy with the SK and take the club finesse and when this works you have 9 tricks.

M 2 QJ
Bd 1 KQT76
Dlr N 9843
Vul Nil 54
 T98432 AK7
 A5 432
 62 AK75
 K87 Q92

65
 J98
 QJT
 AJT63

W	N	E	S
/	2H!	/	3H
4S	//	X	/

On Board 1 in match 2 North's 2H opening showed 5 hearts and a 4-card minor, and John decided to adopt a wait and see approach, since he did not have a heart stop, nor 4 spades.

When 3H came back to him he doubled, probably thinking he had denied a 4-card spade suit, and I had no way to accurately assess my meager values.

The 6-card suit tipped the balance towards a game bid, so I signed off with 4S, and North led the HK.

Prospects looked good when dummy went down, as even on a 3-1 spade break something good could happen in clubs, and they brightened considerably on the fall of the spade honours, so we scored up +420.

At the other table North passed and East opened 1D, over which Bal overcalled 2C, to take bidding room from EW. This had the desired effect when 2C was passed out, and even though the result was 3 off for -150, that was 7 Imps to us.

M 2 T6
Bd 3 A9
Dlr S 96532
Vul EW K765
 K83 Q52
 76543 QJT82
 4 KQ7
 J832 94

AJ974
 K
 AJT8
 AQT

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

On board 3 in match 2 all of the key cards are well placed, so 4NT is cold, but transport back and forth between the NS hands presents a problem to declarer.

At our table, John led the HQ to 3NT and declarer made a reasonable plan that relied on either a 2-2 diamond break, or a singleton honour, so he cashed the DA at trick 2 and ended up 2 off for +100.

He could have come back to his hand with the CK and led a small diamond up for 10 tricks, or he could also have led the ST, and finessed in spades again when he won the HA also for 10 tricks. However if I won with the DQ (or DK) over dummy's DJ at trick 3, on winning the HA he would have to decide whether to finesse diamonds again or play for the 2-2 break, hence his choice at trick 2.

At the other table, Bal played in his 5-2 fit and made 10 tricks for +420 when everything was friendly.

M 3 KQT82
Bd 11 943
Dlr S A42
Vul Nil J2
 J9 653
 J62 AKQT85
 QT73 9
 KT53 984

A74
 7
 KJ865
 AQ76

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

Board 11 in match 3 demonstrated how some luck in the choice of declarer can greatly affect the outcome, as well as the importance lead-directional overcalls.

At our table John's weak jump made it harder for NS to investigate their fit, but it did at least tell them that 3NT had no future. South took the push with 3S and got lucky, but North was not to be pushed around, and possibly allowing for South being under pressure in bidding 3S, did not raise to game.

John led the HK to get count, and switched to the D9, which appears to give up the diamond suit, but North still only made 8 tricks for +50 to us, in a hand that Deep Finesse suggests can make 10 tricks.

The hand was won at the other table but I do not have the auction. I do know that Bal made 10 tricks in 3NT for +430, presumably after a diamond or club lead from West and a bad discard.

It is hard to construct an auction to 3NT during which East does not bid hearts.

M 3	AKQ3			
Bd 16	KQT93			
Dir W	J5			
Vul EW	87			
JT87		65		
7654		A2		
-		KQ7632		
KJ964		T52		
	942			
	J8			
	AT984			
	AQ3			
W	N	E	S	
/	1H	2D	/	
/	X	/	/	
XX	/	3C	X	
//				

It is not normally good practice to rescue partner when his overcall is doubled for penalties unless you have exceptional distribution, but I broke this rule on board 16 in match 3 and lived to tell the tale.

South's pass over John's 2D overcall and my void was ominous, so I was not in the least bit surprised when South passed North's take-out double.

I had a lot of misgivings, but finally elected to redouble for rescue, and hope to improve the situation, and it looked like I had lucked in when John bid 3C.

Trump leads appear to be the norm when the opponents are in a shaky fit, but South elected to lead the HJ, which John won to take the ruffing finesse in diamonds, followed by a heart off the table.

John was able to ruff 1 spade in hand, win a heart and a diamond trick, and take 4 clubs in dummy, for 7 in total and 2 off for -500. At the other table the contract was 3NT for 10 tricks and +430, so the loss was only 2 Imps, compared to at least 9 Imps away in 2DX.

M 4	KJ765			
Bd 7	75			
Dir S	QJ7			
Vul All	QJ3			
AQ92		T843		
AT		J64		
AK94		865		
AK7		T98		
	-			
	KQ9832			
	T32			
	6542			
W	N	E	S	
X	/	2S	2H	
4NT	/	5C	/	
5S	X	//		

On board 7 in match 4 I had my strongest hand of the tournament, which caused a rush of blood when John responded to my take-out double with 2S, and I went looking for slam.

When I signed off in 5S North brought me back to reality with a sharp double, and I knew I had done too much.

Luckily the finesses were known by the double to be not working, as John, with the worst possible distribution after bidding 2S, could not get to hand to take any, nor could he dispose of a loser on the HJ.

The opening lead was the HK, won in dummy and a heart was returned to South, who switched to the DT. John took this and exited with the 3rd diamond, but he went 3 off for -800, and 12 Imps away when EW at the other table played quietly in just 4S and went 2 off.

Double-dummy EW can make 9 tricks in spades, and John thought afterwards that he should have made 1 more trick, but I had no real excuse for being so optimistic, as playing out of the weak hand, I could not be sure that 4S would make even if the breaks were kind.

M 5	86			
Bd 20	875			
Dir W	K53			
Vul All	JT643			
AQJ9543		KT7		
A		T3		
8		AQJT42		
A985		Q2		
	2			
	KQJ9642			
	976			
	K7			
W	N	E	S	
2C!	/	2D!	2H	
2S	/	3S	4H	
4NT	/	5H	/	
5NT	/	6C	/	
7S	//			

On board 20 in match 5 John's 2D response was a positive, promising 3+ controls and 9+ points, and his 3S raise was stronger than a direct jump to game, so I went exploring for slam.

When he showed the 2 Key cards, but no outside King, I still went on to the grand slam as I expected any finesses to be through the South hand that was doing all the vulnerable bidding.

When dummy went down, I thought that I was in the right contract, as surely the ruffing finesse in diamonds would work, so I could dispose of my 3 club losers. I had the entries to set up the diamonds with 3 ruffs, but that would only give me 2 discards for my 3 club losers.

I won the HA at trick 1, led the SA, and went across to the DA and led the DQ (only for effect), ruffing high when South played low.

Back to dummy with the ST, and I led the DJ for my ruffing finesse, but again South played low without a flicker, so I paused for thought.

I finally concluded that South was not cool enough to play low twice when I led a diamond honour from the table, so ruffed this trick also, setting up my 13 tricks. As often happens when a grand slam is bid, EW at the other table stopped in game.

M 6 T932
Bd 13 7
Dlr N QT76
Vul All Q963
 J74 AKQ8
 AQ82 KT93
 KJ85 A3
 J2 AK8

65
 J654
 942
 T754

W	N	E	S
		2C	/
2D!	/	2NT	/
3C	/	3D	/
3S	/	4H	/
6H	//		

On board 6 in match 6 we did not do enough to investigate the grand slam, so John was not really tested, especially when South led the C7 and North played the CQ after John ducked in dummy.

My 2D was a positive response, showing at least 3 controls and 9 HCPs, and 3C investigated the major suits, John admitting to at least one, so I showed him the one I did not have.

After the favourable lead, his only potential problem would be a 5-0 trump break, so he led to the HQ as a safety play, and when all followed, he cashed the HA, setting up a winner in South's hand.

That was still 12 easy tricks, and we scored up +1430. Some EW pairs did reach the grand slam, and when East was declarer and South did not lead a trump, correctly guessed the hearts to make 13 tricks.

At the other table EW played in 6NT and went 2 off when West also miss-guessed the hearts, so we picked up 17 Imps.

M 7 QJ976432
Bd 7 AK4
Dlr S 9
Vul All 5
 AT8 K5
 Q62 T9853
 KQ532 A6
 Q4 AKJT

-
 J7
 JT874
 987632

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

On board 7 in match 7 North bid a sedate 2S on the first round over my weak 1NT, but when John bid 4H over him, he was goaded into bidding 4S after all.

John led the CK and then switched to the HT, won by declarer who led the SQ, won by John who led the H9.

I thus had 2 more spade tricks to go with a heart and the minor suit Aces, thus he was 3 off for +800.

Of course, 4H has no real chance as South can lead either minor, and when North wins the first heart, he can give South a spade ruff and then receive a ruff in whichever minor South led at trick 1.

At the other table Hasmat also played in 4S as North, but he was not doubled, going the same 3 off, but only -300 and thus 11 Imps to us.

M 7 JT942
Bd 19 K
Dlr S T53
Vul EW JT42
 AQ87653 K
 A2 QJ9874
 864 AKJ2
 8 97

-
 T653
 Q97
 AKQ653

W	N	E	S
			1C
3S	//		

On board 19 in match 7 I was surprised that John did not raise me to game when I bid 3S at adverse vulnerability. I would have bid 4S at equal vulnerability, but decided to temper my enthusiasm.

North led the HK, and I thought that 4S was so easy that I took my eye off the ball when North showed up with 2 spades tricks and only made 9 tricks.

This looked like a game swing against us as I expected EW to get to 4S in the other room, and I was right, but West also made only 9 tricks, so we gained 6 Imps!

On a club lead to 4S, West ruffs the second round, and can afford a heart and a spade, so goes over to dummy intending to return with the HA to play 3 rounds of trumps before exiting with heart to set up the discard for the 3rd diamond.

When South shows out on the first trump, it looks like the heart and diamond finesses are needed, and unluckily North makes the singleton HK for 1 off.

M 8 KJ954
Bd 1 J654
Dlr N Q7
Vul Nil KJ
 AQT2 7
 A3 K
 KJ94 652
 AT4 Q9876532
 863
 QT9872
 AT83
 -
W N E S
 // 1S / 2S

On board 1 in match 8 I opened light since I had an easy rebid no matter what John, but when he raised me to 2S passed out, I wondered where all of the points were, but they looked to be evenly distributed.

But no, West had more than his fair share, only to be stifled by John's raise to 2S. A 2NT bid now, while maybe justified, by his hand, could run into big trouble.

East led the C7 and I rued not being in our 6-4 heart fit, but realized that EW could probably make 3NT, so was not too concerned when I conceded 1 off for -50.

At the other table Bal & Hashmat (sitting EW for the only time) did not get to 3NT, but played in 5C and made it for an 8 Imp gain.

M 8 A84
Bd 15 9532
Dlr S AKT2
Vul NS 95
 KJ3 T9762
 AJT7 8
 Q873 654
 73 K642
 Q5
 KQ64
 J9
 AQJT8
W N E S
 X 1H 2S 1C
 / 4H // 2H

Complacency overtook good judgement on board 15 in match 8. When East led the ST it looked like I had to lose a spade and 2 hearts, assuming the CK was with East, and 4H was unlikely to make if West also had the CK unless I eschewed the club finesse and took the diamond finesse instead.

I toyed with finessing the CQ and taking the diamond finesse, but it was possible that West had everything, so that was also risky. Instead I led a trump to dummy, and now had to go 1 off when the hearts were bad.

This was particularly annoying when I learned that the diamond and club finesses were both onside, so my initial line would have been successful.

4H also went off at the other table, but I managed to lose another trick so we lost 3 Imps.

M 9 K943
Bd 13 JT98
Dlr N T
Vul All K762
 85 AJT
 AQ64 2
 AJ2 Q9743
 A953 QT84
 Q762
 K753
 K865
 J
W N E S
 / / /
 1C / 1D /
 1H / 1S! /
 2D / 5C //

On board 13 in match 9 the bidding looks a little strange, but when John put his hand down on the table his SA was placed instead of the CA. - He sometimes confuses the 2 cards, and I noticed it straight away as I had the CA.

Thus he had the spade stopped after all, and we should have been in 3NT, not 5C. Still we were off to a promising start when North led the DT, and South's singleton was the CJ.

I covered the DT in dummy and played 2 rounds of trumps, winning with the CT when North plated low.

The DA was ruffed by North, who exited with the HJ, and now it was too late to defeat the contract. I led a diamond to dummy and North could not gain by ruffing, so discarded, and although he could over-ruff the diamond, that was his last trump and I could discard my spade on the established 5th diamond and ruff a spade for my 11th trick.

This looked like it had flattened the board, but EW at the other table had stopped in 2NT, making just 8 tricks, for 10 Imps to us.