

2014 Seniors' Teams Playoffs by Richard Wallis

It has been my desire to participate in the playoffs for the Australian Seniors' team for a few years now, and in April 2014 it finally happened. Therese Tully and I earned our playoff points at the ANC Seniors' Teams and Butler in Adelaide in 2013, thus we were qualified to enter. 2014 is not a World championship year, thus a few of the fancied pairs did not enter, and there were some new partnerships, but 14 pairs fronted up at Coogee Beach in Sydney on 4th April to contest the 10 places for stage 2, and a chance for this Year's Australian Seniors' team for the Asian Championship, Australia's only major event for 2014.

As expected, the field was pretty tough, with no easy-beats, and we had a see-saw stage 1, coming home with 2 small losses followed by 2 good wins in the last 4 rounds to qualify in 9th place. However, our best win, in round 13, was against a pair who then dropped from 9th to 11th and thus were eliminated, so we started stage 2 in last place, about 40 VPs behind the leaders, Peter Buchen and Henry Christie, who maintained that position until the end. The other 2 place-getters were Richard Brightling and David Hoffman, and Bruce Neill and Arjuna De Livera. Bruce and Arjuna loomed up from 10th place in Stage 1 to come 3rd overall, a great result for them.

Stage 2 proved to be an even tougher event, and we made too many mistakes due to waning concentration to progress up the ladder to any great extent. The only results of merit in Stage 2 were good wins against the pairs who finished second and third. A loss on the last round to fellow Queenslanders, David and Paula McLeish, dropped us back to last place. In spite of the result, it was still a very enjoyable event and I look forward to playing again another year.

M 1/1	92			On board 3 of the first match South opened with a Multi 2D, and North's 2S response showed a preference for hearts, hence South's splinter bid of 4C, agreeing hearts!
Bd 3	AQ87			
Dlr S	AK6			
Vul EW	9864			
874		AKQ53		Therese had heard enough, and thought that slam was a strong possibility, and with North not liking spades, and South having 6 hearts, thus likely less than 4 spades, it was virtually certain that I had at least 3 spades, and the suit would break, so she bid 6S, rather than the more obvious 6C.
9		54		
T98753		-		
J72		AKQT53		
	JT6			After such strong heart support, she thought that the non-vulnerable opponents would bid 6H over 6C anyway, and then she would bid 6S, thus skipped to what she thought she could make. When South doubled and led the H2, the writing was on the wall, and North's club return doomed the contract to 1 off and -200.
	KJT632			
	QJ42			
	-			
W	N	E	S	
/	2S!	X	2D!	This was not the start we wanted, but we were not alone, as the average was -310, so we still lost 11 Imps, and the match by just 2 Imps, or 8.92 under the new VP scale.
/	/	6S	4C!	
//			X	

M 2/1 Bd 18 Dlr E Vul NS	Q75 K74 873 KQT6			On board 18 in the second match Therese opened a natural weak 2H, and South made a sporting double, which tempted me to be conservative and only raise to 3H!
AKJ3 T9 AQ954 87		T2 AQJ862 T6 J92		Now North got into the act and made a responsive double, over which South had no choice except to bid 4C. At least they found their 4-4 fit, but everything was wrong for them!
	9864 53 KJ2 A543			I led the SK, followed by the HT, and Therese overtook with the HJ and followed with the ST, which allowed me to give her a spade ruff with the S2, asking for a diamond return.
				Now a diamond ruff completed the rout, and we had taken the first 8 tricks for 5 off and +500.
W 3H //	N X	E 2H /	S X 4C	This was not necessarily a major pick-up for us, as the good lie of the cards that enabled us to take 4C 5 off also would have enabled Therese to make 4H, and also 3NT was cold, so only a potential 2 Imps. However the average was only +180, so actually 8 Imps in.

M 3/1 Bd 30 Dlr E Vul Nil	QJ972 6 95 AQJ85			On board 30 in the third match my 2NT overcall showed the red suits, and Therese was left in no-man's land, with only 3 red cards!
6543 QT4 AQ32 T9		AKT8 A32 J6 7642		She obviously chose diamonds, and East led the SA, presumably to have a look at dummy before deciding on his next move, but dummy ruffed!
	- KJ9875 KT874 K3			Two top clubs followed, and Therese next led a heart towards dummy and East ducked! Setting up the HK for a trick was no good to her, so she rose with the HK and ruffed a heart to hand to lead the SQ.
				The SK was ruffed in dummy and another heart ruffed to hand to lead the SJ. Then the final spade ruff completed the first 9 tricks for our side, with a 10 th trick looming.
W /	N 3D	E 1C //	S 2NT!	However EW were able to negotiate the diamond pips to take the last 4 tricks and limit our score to +110. This was a modest 3 Imps in a losing match, as the board average was 0.

M 4/1 Bd 7 Dlr S Vul All	4 AJ5 JT5 AT9832			On board 7 in the fourth match I could not bring myself to open 2H with a 7-card suit, so I bit the bullet and opened 3H, as 4H was too rich for me!
J987532 8 7 K764		AK6 Q7 AQ96432 Q		West was silenced, and Therese raised to game, which left East in the difficult position of having a good hand but no good bid.
	QT KT96432 K8 J5			He obviously chose 5D which was passed out, and I led the HT, won by Therese and she had 2 winning lines.
				A diamond return allows us to cash 2 hearts, a diamond and a club, or a spade return gives us a spade ruff instead of the second heart trick, so the contract went 2 off for +200.
W /	N 4H	E 5D	S 3H //	We did not double, and it was just as well, as EW are cold for 5S, not that West was likely to take 5D out if it was doubled.
				The double would not have gained much anyway, as many EWs did get to 4S and the average was +310, so we gained 11 Imps.

M 5/1 Bd 18 Dir E Vul NS	Q6 643 87653 K75		On board 18 in the fifth match I thought that I had a good, hand, but I needed support in at least one of my suits. While it looks like a 4-loser hand, the clubs could fall apart without some help, and the spades could easily have 2 losers.
T7 KJ82 AQT4 963		984 QT975 J92 AJ	West made a take-out double on my left, which seemed to make my clubs less useful, so when Therese gave forced preference, I meekly passed!
	AKJ532 A K QT842		West led the H2, and when dummy tracked I knew we had missed game, unless everything was bad. Unfortunately everything was good, and I made 11 tricks for +200.
W X /	N / 3S	E / 2H //	S 1S 3C
It was hard for Therese to raise to game on what looked like meagre values, but they fitted my hand perfectly. They fitted so well in fact, that 5C was also cold.			
Most pairs must have got to game, as the board average was -380, so we lost 5 Imps.			

M 6/1 Bd 21 Dir N Vul NS	8532 K9 AK73 754		On board 21 in the sixth match North gave too much credit to her partner's overcall when she doubled our final contract of 5H, in spite of Therese's strong bidding.
KJ JT863 654 K32		A7 A7542 T AQJT8	My 4H bid was not strong, generally only promising 5-card support, but Therese's hand had great potential so she made a slam try by bidding 5C.
	AT964 Q QJ982 96		The CK was definitely useful, but I could not fully value the SK, so I signed off in 5H, and it looked like I had made the right decision when North doubled!
W 4H 5H	N 4S X	E 1H 5C //	S 2S /
South led the ST, and Therese rose with the SK and led the HJ from the table. North made a reflex cover with the HK, and suddenly there were 12 tricks for +750.			
The board average was -450, so we gained a big 7 Imps, which enabled us to win the match instead of having a small loss.			

M 6/1 Bd 23 Dir S Vul All	T8 T AJT9842 A74		On board 23 in the sixth match Therese had a nice hand, but was outbid by North, which is just as well as 5H fails by 3 tricks!
J74 9875 76 K986		652 AKQJ42 K QJ5	South's 2S rebid did not guarantee a 6-card suit, which is why North bid her own suit rather than 4S, which would have made at least 11 tricks, except on an unlikely club lead..
	AKQ93 73 Q53 T32		Therese led the HK, which by our agreements asks for reverse count, and my H5 was easy to read as an even number. Therese divined the hearts and switched to the CQ at trick 2, which I could encourage.
W / /	N 2D 5D	E 2H //	S 1S 2S
After the club switch declarer should have made 12 tricks if she had made the reasonable play of trying for 11 tricks by cashing the DA and then trying to pitch both of her clubs on spades before the hand with the DK ruffs in, since the DK drops, that would have been 12 tricks.			
Instead declarer cashed 3 spades to pitch a club when they were 3-3, and then took the losing diamond finesse for 1 off and 12 Imps to us versus a board average of +540.			

M 7/1 Bd 7 Dlr S Vul All	A975 K7 KJ8543 7		On board 7 in the seventh match Therese doubled 4H with great trepidation because she had nowhere to go if I had bid 5D. I gave some thought to passing for penalties, but decided it would have been too close for comfort so bid the obvious 5C, much to Therese's relief.
K86 A5 Q62 QJ853		QT43 T A7 AK9642	No one doubled, and North led the HK, which I won in hand and drew the trumps.
	J2 QJ986432 T9 T		The SJ was obviously going to be a critical and although I could place the SA with North, I had no clue as to who may have the SJ. If I had led towards dummy there would have been no story, but I thought that if I put North in with the SA, I may get a clue about the SJ, or he may lead away from the DK and make the SJ irrelevant.
W / 5C	N 4H //	E X	S 3H / After some thought North led a diamond and I finessed to my DQ, which seemed to me as if the SJ was onside and I took the losing finesse, but had 11 tricks for +600 and 10 Imps against -160.

M 8/1 Bd 17 Dlr N Vul Nil	Q54 K5 T65 A8764		On board 17 in the eighth match I knew by Therese's 1NT bid that she had reasonable values, but not 4 hearts (no negative double), and thus either clubs or diamonds or both (not many spades either from East's raise).
KJ732 AQJ K7 532		T96 T76432 A82 T	The 3C rebid was thus easy, and Therese did very well to not get carried away and raise to 4C. In spite of Therese's 1NT West led the S3, and dummy's SQ won the first trick, making 3C cold. When the HA was on side there were 10 tricks and +130.
	A8 98 QJ943 KQJ9		An unlikely spade lead and continuation will take 2S off, but in general I would expect it to make, and there are 9 tricks in hearts, so +130 seemed like a good pick-up, but the board average was 0, so we only gained 4 Imps in a match we lost to the Stage 1 and Stage 2 winners by 20 Imps.
W 1S //	N / 1NT	E / 2S	S 1D 3C

M 9/1 Bd 21 Dlr N Vul NS	- QJT852 432 QJ96		On board 21 in the ninth match I was getting ready to act when North opened with a weak 2H bid, but South's 2S response silenced me. North ignored the club suit and rebid his hearts, possibly because the 2S response showed some heart support, and Therese made the excellent lead of the D5.
A87632 AK9 T K52		T5 763 J875 AT73	Double-dummy defense can now hold 3H to just 7 tricks, but in ensuring I got my diamond ruff, we set the diamonds up for a discard and one of our club tricks disappeared.
	KQJ94 4 AKQ96 84		After the diamond lead, to hold 3H to 7 tricks I have to lead a low club after winning the first heart, and Therese has to duck! I can win the next heart and lead the CK and another, for Therese to cash 2 club tricks before giving me a diamond ruff.
W / 	N 2H 3H	E / //	S 2S Still 1 off was +100 against the board average of -10 and 3 Imps.

M 10/1 Bd 7 Dlr S Vul All	AJ4 KQT72 6 QJ93		On board 7 in the tenth match East made a speculative double when Therese bid game following my double of his 1S to show 3-card support for hearts.
6 J853 AQJ72 K65		T9852 6 KT84 872	This may have paid off, as if Therese only has a 5-card suit, East knows from his heart holding that West has 4 hearts, but not this time. East led the D4, and when West won the DA he led back the S6 looking for a spade ruff to go with his probable club trick, but we had the spades!
	KQ73 A94 953 AT4		Now Therese could win the SA and cash the HK before going over to the HA to expose the heart finesse and after drawing trumps could take the club finesse in comfort for 11 of 12 tricks.
W 1D 2D	N 1H 4H	E 1S X	S 1C X //
When the club finesse lost that was only 11 tricks, but +990 against a board average of -560, so we gained 10 Imps. Even on a diamond return there are 10 top tricks via the heart finesse, so we were booked for a 6 Imp gain anyway			

M 12/1 Bd 26 Dlr E Vul All	J AKJ82 A643 A75		On board 26 in the twelfth match the longest part of the board was in the bidding!
87 T975 KQ9 QT32		T63 43 JT52 9864	My 3S rebid after the 2H response shows a near-solid suit able to play opposite a void for 1 loser at most, and Therese's 4C rebid was a cue-bid agreeing spades. I had nothing more to say, so signed off in 4S, but then Therese used Key Card to find out I had 2 Key Cards and the SQ, thus I had to have the top trumps.
	AKQ9542 Q6 87 KJ		5NT was then a King ask, and 6C was my lowest (in fact my only) King. Therese concluded that since I had so little extra, I must have a seventh spade or the DK, so bid the Grand, expecting to be able to set up the hearts for 13 tricks if I did not have the HQ. It was highly unlikely that I had any more than 2 hearts on the bidding.
W / / / / /	N 2H 4C! 4NT 5NT 7S	E / / / / //	S 1S 3S! 4S 5S 6C
West led the DK, and there was nothing in the play. When all followed to the SJ on trick 2 and the CK on trick 3, I was able to claim 13 tricks for +2210. It looks easy to bid but only one other pair bid 7S, so the board average was +1610, and we gained an unexpected 12 Imps.			

M 13/1 Bd 6 Dlr E Vul EW	8764 T2 743 KQ92		On board 6 in the thirteenth match West must have been daunted by the 15-17 points on his left, as he meekly passed my 1NT opening, as did Therese and East.
KJT95 AK4 KQ85 6		32 Q9763 T9 J853	Since he had such a strong hand, it would seem like a good idea to have a look at dummy before leading to trick 2, so leading the HK (or HA) may point to a good defence!
	AQ J85 AJ62 AT74		However, West was made of sterner stuff and started off with the attacking lead of the SJ. This of course gave me a free trick, and mindful of spade length on my left, I firstly played off the top clubs in dummy, and then took the marked club finesse for 7 tricks and +90.
W //	N	E /	S 1NT
An opening top heart lead would have been encouraged by East, and I would be squeezed by the run of the hearts and may then get the clubs wrong, limiting me to just 5 tricks, and -100. The board average was +70, which gave us 4 Imps.			

M 1/2	T984			On board 1 in the first round of Stage 2, Therese opened 1H with minimum points but a good suit that offered an easy rebid, and I bid a game-forcing 2D.
Bd 1	52			I had controls in all 3 outside suits, so after the 2H rebid, I used RKCB and was a little disappointed to find out we had a key card missing, but if it was the CA, that meant the hearts were solid with a normal split, and besides, the 5S response committed us to slam anyway.
Dlr N	98			
Vul Nil	A9753			South led the CK, and there were no problems in the play, as a club could be ruffed, and another thrown on the DK, so we scored up +980.
AKQ		J62		The board average was +650, which means that one other pair bid the slam, and we gained 8 Imps in a match we lost by 13 Imps.
T63		AKQ874		
AKT762		5		
T		642		
	753			
	J9			
	QJ43			
	KQJ8			
W	N	E	S	This was not a good way to start Stage 2 when we were giving away such a big start to the leading pairs, especially when a grand slam on board 6 that was bid by our opponents turned out to be a flat board rather than the loss I expected.
	/	1H	/	
2D	/	2H	/	
4NT	/	5S	/	
6H	//			

M 2/2	QJT97			On board 18 in the second match of Stage 2 North was caught in a no-win situation both with the bidding and the play.
Bd 18	AJT			Since Therese had good intermediates she put me in the 3NT game when I had spades rather than hearts, and North led the SQ, ducked.
Dlr E	Q9			
Vul NS	A85			North had 2 entries, so he continued spades, and I won and led a heart up, and was somewhat surprized when it won.
AK62		54		Now the CT was passed to North, who continued spades, but with the clubs 3-3, and the DQ being well placed, I had 10 tricks for +430.
74		KQ93		
A72		KJT6		I thought that this was a lucky make and wondered why North did not rise with the HA and set up the spades, and then sit back and wait with the CA to run the spades.
KJ42		T97		
	83			
	8652			
	8543			
	Q63			
W	N	E	S	When I saw the hand record, I could see why! If North rises, the lucky heart and diamond positions gives me 3 hearts, 4 diamonds and 2 spades, so 3NT is cold! Not all made game as the board average was only +340, so we gained 3 Imps.
	/	/	/	
1NT	/	2C	/	
2S	/	3NT	//	

M 3/2	KT873			On board 22 in the third match of Stage 2, I ventured a Michaels cue-bid to show both majors at adverse vulnerability, and NS brushed this aside to bid 3NT anyway!
Bd 22	53			Therese led the H7, and North called for the top heart, but I did not hear him, and thinking he had called for the H9, played the QJ under the HA!
Dlr E	K6			
Vul EW	A976			There was no recourse and I thought that I had given him the contract.
AJ542		Q6		After the heart lead, 3NT has no chance, as I can win my Aces at the first opportunity and lead the HQ to set up the suit while I have the other Ace as an entry.
QJ842		T76		
A		QJ9875		However, luckily for us declarer has no real chance to make 9 tricks in NT, and when he cashed the clubs and led the S9 off the table and put Therese in to lead another heart, we took it 1 off for +50.
J2		Q3		
	9			
	AK9			
	T432			
	KQT85			
W	N	E	S	Since the Aces are well placed for declarer, 5C is cold and we had gained an unexpected pick-up. The board average was only +80, but still it was 4 Imps against the pair who finished 3 rd overall.
	X	/	1C	
2C!	2NT	/	2H	
/			3NT	
//				

M 3/2 Bd 25 Dir N Vul EW	QJ6 A42 K9876 J2		On board 25 in the third match of Stage 2 we were up against it when Therese showed both majors with her 2D cue-bid, and I thought South's double showed some diamond support, thus Therese was likely to have longer clubs than diamonds.
A 85 J543 AT9743		KT843 KJT96 T2 8	Accordingly I bid my reasonable 6-card club suit, but Therese did not read it as natural and rebid 3H, which was doubled by South and passed by North. At least she bid my doubleton and I had 2 Aces!
	9752 Q73 AQ KQ85		South led the CK, and Therese won on the table and unblocked the SA before ruffing a club to hand to cash the SK and ruff a spade, setting up the suit. Another club ruff, North discarding a diamond, and then the ST, ruffed on the table but North discarded another diamond!
W 3C //	N 1D /	E 2D! 3H	S X X
			That was the first 7 tricks in the bag and another club ruff brought the total up to 8, with the HK being the 9 th trick for +730, against the board average of -20, so we gained a lucky 12 Imps, and won the match by 10 Imps.

M 4/2 Bd 8 Dir W Vul Nil	JT85432 AT 4 843		On board 8 in the fourth match of Stage 2 West could be forgiven for thinking that he had a count on the hand about halfway through the play, but he would have been basing his assumption on Therese having a 6-card suit for her jump overcall, and that was wrong.
A J AK96 AJT7652		K76 Q75 JT753 KQ	Therese led the HA and declarer ruffed the second round and cashed the SA before going to dummy with a trump and ruffing the last heart with the CJ, Therese discarding a spade.
	Q9 K986432 Q82 9		Another club to dummy on which I discarded a heart, and the SK cashed, and Therese is known to have 3 clubs and 2 hearts, so if she has 6 spades the diamonds are 2-2, so he played for the drop and finished 1 off for 12 Imps to us.
W 1C 3C 4D	N 2S / /	E 2NT 4C! 6C	S / / //
			How could declarer do better, well, instead of ruffing a heart, he should ruff a spade, then the spade suit is known to be 7-2, and when I discard on the second club entry to dummy, Therese has at most 1 diamond and the diamond finesse should be taken.

M 5/2 Bd 17 Dir N Vul Nil	76542 83 K864 K3		On board 17 in the fifth match of stage 2 I should have trusted Therese's hold on the spade suit and bid 3NT over her forcing 3C rebid following my reverse, but I bid to the 11-tricks game instead.
8 KJT2 AQ9 AQ984		KJT3 A5 JT5 T762	3NT is no thing of beauty in a spade lead, but the texture of the spade pips prevents South from playing 3 rounds without giving me 2 spade tricks, and 9 tricks would have been easy, especially since the heart finesse works as well.
	AQ9 Q9764 732 J5		In my 5C contract, the bidding seemed to convince North that our diamond holding was modest, and he led the D4, giving me a headstart to 11 tricks. On winning the CK at trick 3, North thought for some time before exiting with the S4, and South won the SQ to lead back a diamond.
W 1C 2H 5C	N / / //	E / 1S 3C	S / / /
			When North won the CK he knew I had a 1435 distribution, since I still had the DQ, so I did not think he would underlead his SA, and accordingly played the DA, heart to dummy and took the ruffing finesse in spades, discarding the DQ when South did not cover. +400 was worth a useful 5 Imps in a losing match.

M 6/2	63				<p>On board 25 in the sixth match of Stage 2 I was in a quandary when Therese doubled the 1C opening and then jumped to 4S at adverse vulnerability. I had declined to bid 2D over the 2C response, which I believed to be a sort of limit bid, and here I had 2 Aces!</p> <p>Having failed to bid 2D, the best bid on my part now may be to cue-bid 5C over 4S, but when Therese cue-bids 5D, I would likely have bid 6D anyway and there we are.</p> <p>If I had bid 2D showing some values at my first turn to bid, a 5C cue-bid over 4S would have been easier to read, but Therese thought I was doing the standard cue-bid, asking for second round control in clubs, so she bid the slam, which has no real chance, even on a non-heart lead.</p> <p>It is not such a bad slam on the bidding, actually cold if the HQ is the HK, but we lost heavily as everyone else played in game, and that was the match lost.</p>
Bd 25	AK85				
Dir N	QT8				
Vul EW	Q542				
T5			AKQJ9872		
J62			Q3		
A652			K4		
AT76			J		
	4				
	T974				
	J973				
	K983				
W	N	E	S		
/!!	1C	X	2X!		
5S	/	4S	/		
	/	6S	//		