

2015 Territory Gold by Richard Wallis

I had the pleasure of playing in the Territory Gold in Alice Springs with Margaret Bourke this year, and she did me a big favour by learning the 2/1 system I normally play with Therese Tully, albeit with a few minor changes.

We started off with the Match-Point Pairs, played over a qualifying and semi-final on Wednesday and a final on Thursday morning. Alas there was no carry-over and we saved our worst performance for the final, only scoring 50% for a 9th place. Next we teamed up with Micha Solar and George Bilski for the Swiss Teams, consisting of 8 matches played over Thursday night and Friday, where we all preformed creditably, for a 6th place finish.

We saved our best until last, which was the Swiss Butler Pairs, contested over 11/10-board matches on Saturday and Sunday. A couple of small losses on the first day had us poised at table 3 for the 7th match on Sunday morning against one of the top seeds, where luckily for us our opponents had a couple of blind spots and we ended up with a good win to move to 3rd place.

A modest win against the leaders in match 8 was not enough to displace them, but moved us up to 2nd, and then a good win in match 9 while they lost, got us to the top spot for the final 2 matches. A near maximum win in match 10 gave us a 10.8 VP lead for the last match, and thus only a draw was needed to ensure victory. EW had most of the cards for the last match, and it did not feel good to us at the end, but we emerged with a 1 Imp win to keep us in the lead and a very satisfying win.

Tony Jackman, a partner and good friend for many years, and apparently a budding comedian, emailed me the following message on Sunday night: "I always thought Margaret Bourke was a good player, and now I am sure of it!"

M 1	987			Board 1 in the first match was a straight-forward check-back situation, and when Margaret showed 3-card spade support, I went for game in spades. 3NT is a lucky make if NS do not lead diamonds, but goes 1 off on a diamond lead, whereas 4S is cold on any lead. South alerted my suspicious mind by asking about the 2D bid (alerted by Margaret) before passing 4S, and both Margaret and I were getting ready for a diamond lead, but North had a club ruff on his mind and led the CA and another club. After this good start, I was able to win in hand, draw trumps ending on the table, and discard a diamond on the CK before taking the heart finesse for my contract, needing only a reasonable layout. When South had the short heart honours, I had an easy 11 tricks for +450, and a modest 2 Imps against the board average of -370.
Bd 1	8762			
Dlr N	AT52			
Vul Nil	A5			
KJT42		AQ5		
AKJ4		953		
43		Q86		
Q9		KT87		
	63			
	QT			
	KJ97			
	J6432			
W	N	E	S	
	/	1C	/	
1S	/	1NT	/	
2D!	/	2S	/	
4S	//			

M 1	T96542			On board 5 in the first match Margaret preferred rebidding 2C to rebidding 1NT, even though I might have expected a more unbalanced hand, or a 6-card suit. Obviously I was always going to slam when Margaret opened 1C, but the grand slam was not out of the question if we had a fit somewhere, so I rebid 2D, which was an artificial game-force now known as Bourke's Relay. What I was hoping for was 3-card heart support, but instead I found 4-card support for diamonds, which indicated Margaret had 2 hearts at most, 4 diamonds, and at least 5 clubs. Now 4NT was RKCB for diamonds, and by her 5H response I knew she had the vital HA and DK, making the grand slam a good chance. I bid 7NT instead of 7D, which has more play possibilities, as I did not want to rely on just one suit, when either clubs or hearts may give me enough tricks. When dummy tracked I lost no time in claiming 13 tricks for +1520, which was a surprising 10 Imps to us.
Bd 5	85			
Dlr N	75			
Vul NS	J64			
AQ		J8		
KQ764		AJ		
AQT9		K642		
A2		KQ875		
	K73			
	T932			
	J83			
	T93			
W	N	E	S	
	/	1C	/	
1H	/	2C	/	
2D!	/	3D	/	
4NT	/	5H	/	
7NT	//			

M 4 Bd 7 Dir S Vul All	53 AKJ KJ3 K8432		On board 7 in the fourth match North bid 2S as a transfer to clubs, and the 2NT response was a super-accept showing good clubs and a maximum hand.
T64 Q75 986 JT65		AJ987 96432 74 7	North now put all of her eggs in 1 basket by jumping to 6C, but surely with such poor club pips, 6NT must be at least as good a chance as 6C, and does not rely on a club break.
	KQ2 T8 AQT52 AQ9		South could have saved the day by opening 1D, considering his hand as too strong to open with a 15-17 1NT due to the good 5-card suit, and then NS may have arrived in 6D, which is cold without needing any finesses.
W / /	N 2S! 6C	E / //	S 1NT 2NT!
			On the actual layout, the cards are well-placed for 12 tricks in 6NT, but when Margaret led the SA and the clubs did not behave, 6C had no chance and finished 1 off for -100 and a massive 15 Imps to us instead of about 8 Imps to NS in 6NT.

M 5 Bd 15 Dir S Vul NS	J94 AJ98643 9 85		On board 15 in the fifth match lady luck was with us in a big way when North decided to open with a Mult-2D, instead of 3H as did the rest of the field.
KT632 KQ2 J752 2		75 75 AK3 AKQJ73	I was more intent on South's response rather than Margaret's bid, and I did not notice that she had doubled over the 2D, showing a good hand.
	AQ8 T QT864 T964		When North passed the 2H response by South, I still had not noticed the original double when Margaret now bid 3C, and therefore passed, hoping for the best.
W / /	N 2D! /	E X 3C	S / 2H //
			After the lead of the HT and subsequent ruff, followed by SA and S8, Margaret drew trumps and lost a diamond for 9 tricks and +110.
			Then the first double was brought to my attention and I knew we had missed a cold game! At many other tables, North opened 3H, East doubled, and West jumped to 4S, inevitably going off, so we had actually picked up 3 Imps, but it could have been a lot more if I had not dozed off!

M 6 Bd 27 Dir S Vul Nil	A3 Q95 KQ763 642		Board 26 in the sixth match was a key board for hand evaluation in deciding whether to get to game or not.
9654 JT43 J82 Q9		KT2 A862 A54 JT8	When South rebid 1S, it presumably showed length in clubs as well, to justify the jump to 3C by North inviting game.
	QJ87 K7 T9 AK753		South declined the invitation, but clearly he does not have a minimum hand after North showed club support, and since he has a heart stopper, 3NT is a reasonable chance with 13 HCPs and a good 5-card suit.
W / /	N 1D 3C	E / //	S 1C 1S
			On the other hand, North has a heart stopper himself, and his club support is weak, so an invitational 2NT may have been more suited to his hand anyway.
			I led the HJ, which gave away a trick, but that only meant -130 instead of -110, and since the board average was +250, we had still gained 3 Imps.
			Since the clubs are 3-2, 3NT is easily makeable by NS, and most must have got there to have a high average.

M 7 Bd 4 Dlr W Vul All	AJ8 J963 Q8 J876		Board 4 in the seventh match was a straight-forward 3NT for EW, requiring just a little bit of care, but at our table a wheel fell off during the play and it affected declarer big time.
K654 AQ8 A932 53		T72 KT2 6 AKQT42	EW play one of those systems with transfer responses to 1C, and at the end of the auction, I believe that East had shown opening values, with a long club suit and short diamond.
	Q93 754 KJT754 9		After my double of 3D Margaret led the DQ, and while declarer was considering this, I gave some thought to overtaking at trick 1, but played low. To my surprise, declarer took the DA at trick 1!
W 1C! 1NT 3C 3NT	N / / / //	E 1S! 2C 3D	S / / X
Declarer next played to the CA, and noting the fall of my C9, came back to hand with the HA and led a club up considering the finesse, but eventually playing the CK to reveal the club loser.			
Declarer gave up a club and Margaret won and led the D8, so I cashed my diamonds and exited with the S3, which declarer predictably got wrong, so we had 3 more tricks to cash for 5 off and +500. Declarer explained he thought he had 3 clubs, so was certain of 9 tricks as I could hardly have long clubs as well as diamonds.			

M 8 Bd 12 Dlr W Vul NS	AKQ QJ873 J9 AQ9		Generally speaking in a Swiss movement it is an advantage to have the cards, but board 12 in the eighth match was an exception.
T972 AT62 54 JT8		43 95 T8732 K743	North opened with 2NT (19-21), and after checking for a spade fit, South signed off in 6NT. Holding a minimum of 32 HCPs between the two hands, this was eminently reasonable, and from the score, was repeated at a few other tables.
	J865 K4 AKQ6 652		Margaret avoided the fatal opening lead of a club, and instead led the D3, giving nothing away.
W / / //	N 2NT 3H	E / /	S 3C 6NT
Declarer has many chances for 12 tricks, firstly if the hearts broke, or the T9 were doubleton, but when neither of these happened, there was a still the chance of a squeeze if I had the CK as well as the 4 th heart.			
When the squeeze did not work, that was 1 down for +100, and 7 Imps against the board average of +210. It is a shame really that those pairs not in slam actually gained so much.			

M 9 Bd 27 Dlr S Vul Nil	Q54 AK64 K93 KT5		On board 27 in the ninth match I should have opened 1S on my 5224 hand, but upgraded it to a 1NT opening because of the 5-card spade suit, wanting to be declarer in any NT contract, wanting to protect my red-suit holdings by having the lead up to me.
KJ973 Q7 Q4 AQ93		A862 9532 AT872 -	Margaret used simple Stayman, and obviously raised to game, and North found himself on lead, and end-played at trick one!
	T JT8 J65 J87642		North led the top hearts, and with nothing better to do, continued the suit, which I ruffed to set up the H9 for a discard.
W 1NT 2S	N / /	E 2C 4S	S / / //
Now a cross-ruff looked in order so I cashed my SK and it looked hopeful for an overtrick when South played the ST, but the SQ did not fall under the SA, so I cashed the H9, pitching a diamond, and set about the cross-ruff by cashing the DA and ruffing a diamond back to hand.			
CA and a club ruff, followed by another diamond ruff, and when I led the next club from hand I had my 10 th trick en passant, even if North was now void in clubs. +420 was a modest 1 Imp gain.			

M 10	643				<p>On board 6 in the tenth match, in my view, West paid too much attention to her void in East's announced spade suit and drove to a slam that can make double-dummy, but in practice will always fail.</p> <p>EW were playing transfer responses to a 1C opening, so the 1H response showed at least a 4-card spade suit.</p> <p>West's 2H rebid was natural, to which East responded 4D, a splinter agreeing hearts, and by virtue of the first transfer response, East was the declarer!</p> <p>I do not know enough about their system to confirm if having 4 hearts showed a minimum of 5 spades in the East hand for the 1H transfer response, but now West has a void in her hand opposite a long suit, and a singleton opposite her other long suit, and likely only 4 trumps to set up the suit.</p> <p>All in all, I think this was not a hand to go slamming on and East could not find a way to get home, even after the ruffing finesse in spades worked, and +100 was 12 Imps to us.</p>
Bd 6	QJ				
Dlr E	Q7				
Vul EW	QJT862				
-					
AK632				KQ752	
AT982				T985	
A94				3	
				K73	
	AJT98				
	74				
	KJ654				
	5				
W	N	E	S		
1C!	/	/	/		
2H	/	1H!	/		
6H	//	4D	/		

M 11	Q962				<p>Board 20 in the eleventh match was literally the last board of the Territory Gold for 2015, and after a less than spectacular previous 9 boards, I was not sure whether to balance with 1NT, or pass it out, thinking the final event could hang on this board.</p> <p>Eventually pass won out, but we were off to a bad start when with nothing to guide her, Margaret led the S2, giving declarer an easy trick. However things picked up from there when declarer miss-picked everything and the contract went 3 off for +300.</p> <p>Deep finesse suggested that NS can make 3NT, but there was a lot of work to do and we were happy with our +300. The line for 9 tricks is not obvious, even double-dummy, so I doubt if anyone found it.</p> <p>As it turned out we picked up 4 Imps for +300, just enough to finish up with a 1 Imp win and ensure our victory.</p>
Bd 20	Q83				
Dlr W	53				
Vul All	AK54				
AJ3				K85	
KJ74				T952	
KT2				J864	
J92				T3	
	T74				
	A6				
	AQ97				
	Q876				
W	N	E	S		
1C	//				