

2017 Qld Open Teams Trials by Richard Wallis

This year's ANC is in Canberra, and the trials for the Open Teams ended on 1st April, but there were no "April Fool's" present!

The trials were beset with setbacks from the start, 17 pairs being reduced to just 16 due to illness on the Friday before, and then another withdrawal due to illness after just 9 of the 15 matches, and finally a 3rd withdrawal on the final day due to being flood-bound following the torrential and widespread rain from ex Cyclone Debbie.

The first withdrawal eliminated the sit-out and reduced the trials down to just 5 days, so no problem, but the second withdrawal was before 2/3 of the matches had been completed, and thus according to the current regulations, the Director had to re-score all of the previous matches with the withdrawn pair replaced by a sit-out. This was good news for those that lost to the pair, but bad news to those that had beaten them, which included Tim Runting and myself, when we lost our best win to that time.

Tim and I were never in contention, being on the wrong side of 3 slam swings in the first match did not help, but too many lapses of concentration by both of us were very costly, and we could not get above halfway at any time. Sometimes it seemed like I was playing in the Seniors, such were my mindless bids and plays.

Before the final match 3 pairs had forged ahead, and at the end of the last match Therese Tully and Pele Rankin were first, Jill Magee and Terry Strong were second, and Paul Hooykaas and Ralph Parker were third, with all other pairs over a full match away. This is success at the first attempt for Jill and Terry, and the team will go to Canberra with the potential to succeed.

M 1	T2			Board 10 in the first match was a harbinger of things to come when I got it completely wrong after a favourable lead.
Bd 12	-			
Dir W	AQ83			The bidding was natural and I took a chance with 3NT when Tim showed his clubs, and at least with the HA I can hold up as long as I want.
Vul NS	AQJ6542			
J84		K7653		
KJT942		Q86		In 3NT on a heart lead, win the 3 rd round and take the club finesse into the safe hand and claim 9 tricks safely by way of 3 Aces and 6 clubs.
T		K642		
T83		K		I got the lead of the S8, and now I can take the CA as a safety play and in fact make 12 tricks, but I woodenly still took the club finesse and was devastated when I cashed the CA next and found out the safety play would have paid off.
	AQ9			
	A753			
	J975			
	97			
W	N	E	S	I was so devastated that I miscounted the clubs and thought I needed the second 'marked' spade finesse to succeed and thus went 3 off to lose 11 Imps instead of gaining 8 for +690.
2H	3C	3H	3NT	
//				

M 1 AJ976
Bd 18 AKQ
Dir E KJ
Vul NS AJT
 4 K853
 - JT987632
 QT9653 -
 KQ7653 8

QT2
 54
 A8742
 942

W	N	E	S
/	X	4H	/
/	5S	/	4S
/	6S	//	6D

On board 18 in the first match East took advantage of the Vulnerability by opening 4H, which gave Tim a huge problem in the pass-out seat! Of course there was action at all tables with the East hand, but the normal 3H opening allowed NS to stop in 5S.

The winning action for me was to pass 4HX, which will go for a large penalty, and West will get into even more trouble if he rescues with 4NT for the minors.

Tim was blinded by his 23 HCPs, and oblivious to the opening preempt, tried for slam by raising to 5S, which I should have passed as I thought he was asking for second-round heart control, but I foolishly cued with 6D.

West led the CK, and when dummy went down I could see my chances were not good, and thought of cashing out for 1 off, or making if by chance East had the singleton SK.

The DJ to get to hand for the trump finesse saw the roof cave in and I finished 3 off for -300 and -12 Imps. 1 off was not much better.

M 2 AJ87
Bd 12 QT7
Dir W AJT98
Vul NS 5
 3 5
 AKJ98632 4
 7 KQ654
 Q72 AJT986

KQT9642
 5
 32
 K43

W	N	E	S
4H	/	/	4S
//			

On board 12 in the second match we got a surprisingly good result from a simple contract, especially when the 4H opening looked to be perfectly normal.

I had an easy 4S bid after the opening 4H by West was passed around to me, and Tim respected that my bid was under pressure and did not get excited by his great support, 2 Aces, and an outside singleton.

West led the HA and switched to the D7, which was probably a singleton, but even if it was from KQ7, I could afford to lose an unnecessary diamond, so I flew up with the DA and led a top trump, making 10 tricks for +620.

A gain of 9 Imps for such a simple contract prompted me to look up the results of the other matches, and thus the mystery was solved!

Only 3 pairs played in 4S, 3 others playing in 5S and even 1 in 6S, none of which were successful.

M 3 54
Bd 13 A2
Dir N KJ76
Vul All AK854
 AQJT96 732
 Q986 J754
 AQ 3
 Q J9762

K8
 KT3
 T98542
 T3

W	N	E	S
1S	3D	/	1D
X	/	3S	/
4S	5D	/	/
X	//		

On board 13 in the third match it was not clear how high we should go, nor how high EW could safely go!

My SK looked precariously placed, and I knew by Tim's 3D jump raise that we had at most 1 diamond trick, so I bid 5D when 4S came around to me, hoping for 1 off at most, and for 4S to be making.

West had the good hand, and hoping for the DK on her right, or partner to have the SK or CA, she doubled and led the SA!

The sight of the DK on her left was bad news, and partner's discouraging Spade more bad news, but still West might have the SK give her a club ruff, so she switched to the CQ at trick 2.

All hope for the defence disappeared when I won the SK at trick 3 and led a diamond towards dummy. That was 11 tricks for +750 and 13 Imps.

My 5D bid could have been a phantom save, as 4S can be defeated by the unlikely lead of the H3, giving Tim a heart ruff and thus 1 off. On the lead of the DT, West ruffs the DQ to get to dummy to take the successful spade finesse, then plays a heart off the table and finesses the H9 if South returns a heart, or can drop the now stiff HA.

M 4 AQ75
Bd 1 75
Dir N KQ95
Vul Nil A94
KJT9642
JT63
-
K3

8
98
JT8742
QT86

3
AKQ42
A63
J752

W	N	E	S
	1NT	/	2D!
2S	/	/	3C
4S	X	//	

On board 1 in the fourth match West got carried away with his 7-card suit, and then got crucified by a terrible break.

After Tim's 15-17 1NT opening I showed my hearts and clubs and game values, but before Tim got to bid again West jumped to 4S and Tim had no problems in dealing with that bid.

Tim led the H7, and I won the HQ and returned a trump, Tim winning the SQ and returning another heart.

After the top hearts Tim got a heart ruff and we still had 2 more tricks to come, so 4 off and +800.

West was unlucky to get such a bad spade break, but his heart holding may make it hard for us to make any game, so I think 4S was over the top.

In fact 10 tricks are easy with our cards in either 4H or 3NT, and Deep Finesse suggests that 11 tricks are there, probably by a squeeze.

M 6 Q873
Bd 9 Q62
Dir N AK62
Vul EW T7
964
J7
Q874
J643

KT2
AK8543
3
AK3

AJ5
T8
JT95
Q952

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

On board 9 in the sixth match East doubled as a first step, and then showed his strong hand with a 3H rebid, but West had nowhere to go, and all passed.

Tim and I play 4-card diamonds with inverted minors, which still apply after a double, so 3D was natural and non-forcing.

The DJ was the obvious lead, and declarer ruffed the second diamond and could do no better than cash his top hearts and exit with a heart, hoping for something good to happen.

However, Tim could exit with a top diamond, so declarer ruffed and played 3 rounds of clubs, but I could also exit with a diamond, so declarer had to lead a spade, ducked to Tim and we took 3 spade tricks for 2 off and +200.

This was a double blow for East, as 3D has no chance as West can get a heart ruff, so we gained 5 Imps.

M 8 -
Bd 10 KJ965
Dir E AK943
Vul All A92
AQT53
Q
J862
T75

8762
732
Q
QJ864

KJ94
AT84
T75
K3

W	N	E	S
		/	1C
1S	2H	3S	4H
/	4NT	/	5D
/	6H	//	

On board 10 in the eighth match I had some misgivings about bidding 4H over 3S with such good spades, as 3NT was definitely a viable contract.

From Tim's point of view, slam looks promising, but the SA would be no good without the HA unless I also held the HQ, which would make a Voidwood inquiry more fruitful if it had been available.

If East had passed and I had been able to bid 3H, then 4S by Tim would have been Voidwood, but now it is not available, so my 5D response to standard RKCB only showed 1 Ace, which may have been the SA, but then I would most certainly have the HQ.

If spades were our suit, a 5H bid now would stop out of slam without the trump Queen, but no such option exists here in hearts.

Thus Tim bid 6H and instead of a spade, East led the DQ, which Tim won in hand and led the HK and 2 more trumps, finishing in dummy, to run the DT, making 13 tricks for +1460.

Strangely only one other pair bid the slam, so we gained 11 Imps.

M 9 8752
Bd 2 T654
Dir E 73
Vul NS AJ8
A4 JT6
KQJ82 73
AQJ2 KT654
K3 Q72
KQ93
A9
98
T9854

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

On board 2 in the ninth match EW arrived in 3NT on minimal values, but it was not without chances.

If West was declarer, a spade lead from Tim would give us 3 spade tricks and 2 Aces, but if I lead a spade, East has a second stopper. However I led the CT, and declarer ducked in dummy and Tim made the good play of the CJ, which unblocks the suit for me, as long as I can be persuaded to lead clubs again.

Declarer cashed his diamonds and Tim's first discard was the S2 showing his CA, so I rose with the HA after the diamonds were cashed and led a club so we could cash out for 1 off. +50 was worth 7 Imps as 4 EW pairs made 3NT from the West seat, 2 of them 11 tricks!

East has a better chance of making 3NT by playing the CQ at trick 1, which may win if I have the CA, or force Tim to play the CA, and declarer should duck this and win the 3rd club, in case Tim had the HA and the suit broke 3-3 or the T9 were doubleton.

It would not have worked here, but at least it was a viable plan.

M 10 7543
Bd 16 AT63
Dir W AT9
Vul EW 95
A92 KJT6
4 QJ8
J6543 KQ7
KT72 643
Q8
K9752
82
AQJ8

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

On board 16 in the tenth match EW were playing 'better minor' but East opened 1C, maybe to prohibit a club lead if he ended in a Notrump contract, but it backfired on him.

Over my 1H overcall, East invited with 3C, and Tim gave a very encouraging raise, but since he was a passed hand, and I was minimum I was content.

West led the C2, her partner's suit, and dummy's C9 won the first trick, so I prepared for a possible cross-ruff by leading a spade off the table.

West won the SA and switched to a trump, but when East won the next spade he could not lead another trump, so returned a club, but I was now in a position to cash the HA and ruff spades and clubs for only 9 tricks when hearts did not break.

If East had opened 1D (his better minor) West would probably have led a diamond and I can only make 8 tricks, so 3 to them instead of us.

M 11 QJ97
Bd 12 K8
Dir W K732
Vul NS K53
- AT72
AJT96 Q75
984 T
T8762 AQJ94
K8543
432
AQJ65
-

W	N	E	S
/	1D	X	1S
2H	2S	/	4S
5C	//		

On board 12 in the eleventh match we gave up too easily, but at least neither of doubled the final contract, as it was cold.

Once East doubled she was silent, but at the vulnerability, and with his great distribution, West showed his second suit before East had a chance to double 4S for penalties which she was eager to do!

Tim led the SQ and declarer won on the table, discarding a diamond, and ruffed a spade to pass the CT and draw trumps before taking the heart finesse unsuccessfully, but that was still 11 tricks for -400.

Since I knew we had a double fit, I should have bid 5D over 5C, as both contracts make 10 tricks, and 5D only goes off if East leads a spade.

Three pairs were allowed to play in 4S, one of them doubled and all made 10 tricks, so we lost 11 Imps. Our West was the only one to play in 5C, although 2 other NS pairs played at the 5-level, maybe after West bid 5C.

M 12 653
Bd 11 K984
Dir S J7532
Vul Nil 4
 AJT974 Q82
 T A76
 4 6
 AJT75 KQ9862

 K
 QJ532
 AKQT98
 3

W	N	E	S
			1D
2H!	X	3C	4H
5C	5D	6C	/
/	6D	/	/
X	//		

Board 11 in the twelfth match was a guessing game all around, and luckily we guessed correctly, but it could have gone sour.

The 2H by West showed the black suits, weak or strong, thus East was on firm ground when he bid 3C, and probably only bid 3C in case West was weak, but he also had a spade fit.

The raise to 5C by West must have showed a strong hand, as East had no hesitation in bidding 6C over our 5D.

West confirmed the strong hand by doubling 6D, and surprisingly, after cashing the black Aces, played a second spade instead of leading the HT to get a ruff.

Down 2 for -300 was worth 3 Imps, whereas -500 would have been 3 Imps out.

The difference is because on a non-diamond lead EW make 13 tricks in spades, and 12 tricks otherwise, so we were lucky that East did not attach importance to the minimum 5-3 spade fit and bid 6S over 6D.

One EW pair did play in 6S, and another doubled 5H and let it make.

M 13 J63
Bd 8 85
Dir W AT7532
Vul Nil Q4
 AKT92 Q8754
 62 943
 K64 -
 753 AKJ62

 -
 AKQJT7
 QJ98
 T98

W	N	E	S
/	2D	/	4H
/	/	X	/
4S	/	/	5D
/	/	5S	6D
//			

On board 8 in the thirteenth match the question as to who owned the contract was not clear at any stage of the auction.

Tim opened with a natural weak 2, and I was certain that EW had at least a 9-card spade fit, yet West was a passed hand and East failed to act over the weak opening bid.

I bid the obvious 4H, and this time West came to life in the pass-out seat with a double, and was rewarded by a 4S bid from West. Maybe if I had bid 5D over the double, it would have kept West out of the auction, but suddenly after I bid 5D, I was having to make the decision as to whether 5S was making!

Since I had a surprize for the defence on a spade lead, I opted to bid 6D, and to my surprize it was passed out!

Unluckily, East had the top clubs so the spade lead never came, and we were 1 off at the start, which went to 2 off when, being undoubled, Tim elected to cash the DA instead of taking the finesse.

The good news was that the diamond void made 5S cold, so we gained 8 Imps.

M 13 -
Bd 10 KT982
Dir E 8632
Vul All AQJ3
 A984 K72
 4 J53
 AKJ94 Q5
 K96 T7542

 QJT653
 AQ76
 T7
 8

W	N	E	S
		/	1S
2D	2H	/	3H
/	4H	//	

On board 10 in the thirteenth match both Tim and I got overly optimistic and got lucky.

I did not like to open with a weak 2S when I also held 4 good hearts, nor did I like to pass with such a promising hand, so I opened 1S!

Tim had an easy negative double over the 2D overcall, which is probably his best action given his void in my opening bid, but instead he chose to bid his 5-card suit, which was not game-forcing after the overcall, and yet he went on to game anyway!

East led the DQ and West cashed the top diamonds and led a small diamond which for some unknown reason East ruffed with the HJ!

4H is always cold via the club finesse, but now Tim could ruff a club and a diamond and give up a club for 10 tricks and +620.

All roads lead to Rome and we are still likely to have got to 4H if Tim had made a negative double, and a mere 5 Imps.

M 14 K2
Bd 19 J873
Dir S 62
Vul EW K9862
 AJ8 753
 Q2 KT64
 AK985 QJ43
 753 A4
 QT964
 A95
 T7
 QJT

W	N	E	S
	/	2C	/
1NT	/	3NT	2S
2NT	/		//

On board 19 in the fourteenth match I got too active with no great strength or distribution and we paid the penalty.

After my overcall Tim led the SK and West had no reason to hold-up his SA as he had a certain second stopper, so he cashed 3 diamonds finishing on the table and led a small heart, which I ducked.

Declarer went back to dummy with a diamond and led a spade off the table and that was 9 tricks and -600!

After I bid 2S, Tim has no real choice with such a minimum hand except to lead the SK, but if I had kept out of the auction, he has a natural lead of the C6, and now declarer has no chance of 9 tricks as he cannot block out the clubs.

Only 1 other West got to 3NT and they also made 9 tricks, so that was 8 Imps away, whereas +100 if EW get to 3NT on their own would have been +7 Imps, and even -120 if they stopped out of game was a small gain.

M 15 AQJ54
Bd 10 T832
Dir E 6
Vul All AK9
 K8762 T3
 7 Q4
 T854 AQ97
 875 JT642
 6
 AKJ965
 KJ32
 Q3

W	N	E	S
/	2NT	/	1H
/	3H!	/	3D
/	4NT	/	4D!
/	6H	//	5S!

On board 10 in the fifteenth match Tim has 4-card support for my suit, so ignored his excellent spade suit and showed his good support with a Jacoby 2NT.

My 3D response showed 14-16 HCPs and Tim's 3H response asked me about any singleton or void, and my 4D response showed a shortage in the highest suit (spades)!

Next was RKCB and since I knew we had a 6-4 fit, I showed 2 Key Cards with the HQ, which locked us into slam. Time knew we had an Ace missing, so there was no danger of being too high.

Since my shortage was known, West led a deceptive S9, but spades were not important to me, so I won the SA and led a trumps and got the good news about trumps.

Now 3 rounds of clubs, pitching a diamond, and East rose when the diamond was led off the table, so that was 12 tricks for +1430.

Three pairs got to slam, but that was still worth 8 Imps.

M 15 75
Bd 16 K2
Dir W KQT9854
Vul EW AJ
 QT842 A
 AQ9843 J6
 76 3
 - KQT976543
 KJ963
 T75
 AJ2
 82

W	N	E	S
2H	3D	4C	4D
/	5D	/	/
X		6C	X
//			

On board 16 in the fifteenth match, at the crucial time, East found it too hard to ignore an almost solid 9-card suit and an outside Ace!

West's 2H opening showed less than an opening hand and one other 5-card suit, and from our bidding and supporting diamonds and East's hand it was obvious to him that her other suit was spades!

When we bid to 5D, East passed, but he could not bring himself to pass the later double by the weak hand and pulled it to 6C, which I was happy to double.

East ruffed the second diamond and led the CK, and won the spade return and drew trumps, eventually taking the losing heart finesse for 2 off and +500.

This was a disaster for East as even if he cashes the SA first then leads the CK West can return a spade for him to ruff and West will get another club ruff, so with the HA as well, it would be 3 off for +500 to EW.

No contract made, scores being equally distributed, so we would have lost 10 Imps instead of gaining 10 Imps.