

2005 QBA Senior's Pairs

The Surfers Paradise Club used to hold the Senior's Pairs, but they relinquished the right this year, for the first time, it was run by the QBA at the QCBC club rooms at Wooloongabba. A total of 24 pairs entered, and while this may have been disappointing for the QBA, it did clash with the GNOT Finals at Tweed Heads, and the number of entries allowed a complete Howell movement which was well received by the players.

Tony Jackman and I got off to a reasonable start, and were always close to the lead, but in the end Michael Kent and Rob Slobom won by the length of the straight with us in 2nd place just ahead of Ian Afflick and Paul Collins. Since there were only 23 matches, Director Alan Gibson was able to set up 5-board rounds against every other pair, which gave you some chance to recover from a bad board in the beginning. A cynic may say it gave you more opportunities to make mistakes. This was a great format, and appeared to be enjoyed by all of those who played, so should be adopted whenever allowed by the entry numbers.

M 1	K964			
Bd 5	A			
Dlr N	QT754			
Vul NS	K52			
85		QT3		
QJT9		753		
AJ92		K86		
A63		QT94		
	AJ72			
	K8642			
	3			
	J87			
W	N	E	S	
/	1D	/	1H	
3D	1S	/	2S	
//	3S	/	4S	

Board 5 was actually the first one we played and our opponents were inexperienced, which explains the odd decision to bid the 4-card diamond suit at the 3-level. I think West got confused at being told that my 1D opening showed at least 2 diamonds, and he thought it meant I did not have diamonds. He did the same thing again on board 2 and I passed with AQT4 to await Tony's re-opening double, but it never came and he escaped with 2 off and a bad score to us.

I was not inclined to double the 3D bid, never for a moment thinking it was only a 4-card suit, and we ended up in 4S, which should go down on a club lead even though the spade finesse was right.

The opening lead was the D6 and West won and led the HQ to my stiff Ace. A diamond ruff, East playing the D8, enabled me to discard a club on the HA and lead a club, winning with the CK to lead another diamond, ruffing down the King. It was then obvious that 3DX would have been a bloodbath, but I still did not have any idea where the SQ was, so decided to continue on cross-ruff lines and emerged with 10 tricks for +620.

M 2	973			
Bd 6	QJ85			
Dlr E	K97			
Vul EW	J97			
T654		K2		
T3		76		
T54		AJ862		
KQ64		AT32		
	AQJ8			
	AK942			
	Q3			
	85			
W	N	E	S	
/	1H	1D	X	
//		2C	3H	

On board 6 in the second match we gained a good score when North was not on the same wavelength as her partner.

She explained that she only had 7 points when she passed her partner's jump raise, but she forgot to take into account that she was forced to bid after the take-out double, and her minimum response of 1H could have been made on no points at all. Since a jump to 2H would show about 9-11, she had a maximum for her bidding thus far.

If I had passed the 1H response, then a mere 2H by South would have shown a good hand, but over the 2C rebid, 2H may have just been competing for the part-score with a moderate hand. South is not strong enough to go to game opposite a very weak hand, thus must involve her partner with an invitational jump. North should accept, although her 4333 shape is not a big asset.

If the black Kings had been reversed, North's pass would have reaped a reward, but on the actual hand, 10 tricks were easy.

M 2 JT954
Bd 8 3
Dlr W AT9
Vul Nil T843
 A Q762
 AKQ2 JT754
 K864 J
 KJ52 AQ9
 K83
 986
 Q7532
 76

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

When dummy went down on board 8 in the second match after South led the H6, I briefly thought of 13 tricks, but this was quickly dispelled when the trumps were 3-1.

I could still draw all of the trumps and throw my DJ on the 4th club, but then I would need the DA or SK to be doubleton or tripleton, and I would have to guess which, as transport problems would prevent playing for either distribution to occur.

It was therefore better odds to just rely on the DA being well placed, so I finished drawing trumps in hand and led the DJ, covered by South. My first instinct was to duck this, and rely on a short Ace, but I thought that South might have played the DQ and ducked the DA, so I covered in dummy, losing to North.

This was woolly thinking as not even a raw beginner is going to play the DQ when also holding the DA, but fortune was on my side when I was able to set up the D8 by 2 ruffs and 12 tricks rolled in. Note that if I ruff 2 spades, the SK drops and I could have made 13 tricks after all.

M 3 8
Bd 12 AK7
Dlr W 842
Vul NS KT9876
 AKJ975 T4
 5 QT9643
 KQ53 A6
 QJ A32
 Q632
 J82
 JT97
 54

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

On board 12 in the third match North's 1H was purported to show heart tolerance and another suit, and my 2H was natural.

When Tony showed his suit, I decided to show my 6th heart, and he showed his 6th spade, after which I had a choice of 4S or 3NT.

Being a Pairs event, I decided to go for the highest scoring contract, but this looked to be a bad decision when South led the C5.

The sight of dummy's excellent club holding gave me some hope, but as I won the CA it was obvious that 4S was going to make 11 tricks by ruffing a diamond and giving up a heart. However if the spade finesse lost, I had at least 3 losers in 3NT.

Good news when the ST held, and even better news when North showed out on the 2nd round of spades, as that meant only 11 tricks in a spade contract, so we gained a good score.

M 3 AQJ2
Bd 14 AQJ4
Dlr E A54
Vul Nil A6
 865 93
 T8753 K972
 KJ76 982
 K4 J975
 KT74
 6
 QT3
 QT832

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

On board 14 in the third match it was obvious that NS had a system mis-understanding when South jumped to 6D and North returned to 6H. My normal lead was going to be the D9, but this did not seem like a good idea when South wanted to play in a diamond slam. Still, since North made it obvious that 4D was not natural, I should have stuck to my lead and then we would have had a happy ending.

Since North had hearts and South had spades and diamonds that only left a club lead, although I generally detest leading away from Jxxx. The C9 made this less of a no-no, so I led the C5 and immediately regretted it when dummy went down.

Declarer guessed wrongly when he called for the CT, and won the CA to lead back the C6, my C9 forcing the Queen, with Tony showing out! I was oblivious to the possibility of a revoke, and neglected to protect Tony, and declarer next finessed the HQ, losing to my HK.

Since it was obvious that 6NT was the wrong spot, I cashed my CJ for 1 off and again toyed with a diamond return, but rejected it in favour of a safe club return. The slam still should have gone off, even with the revoke, but we could not pick North's 4-card spade suit, and eventually we recorded -990 for an absolute bottom.

M 4 KJ86
Bd 17 T5
Dlr N 65
Vul Nil AJT53
T75 A4
987 KQJ62
KT942 AQJ8
Q7 98

Q932
A43
73
K642

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

On board 17 in the fourth match I was not strong enough to double in the balancing position, so I just bid my 5-card suit. When Tony supported, and EW found they had a heart fit, I elected to go to 4C, and had nothing to lose by bidding 3S on the way.

Tony was happy to play in spades, but did not think of raising, as he knew I was already relying on him for a few points. Also I had not doubled to start with, nor had I opened as dealer, so I had a limited hand with at least 9 black cards.

Since East had bid the red suits and turned up with 2 spades, after drawing trumps I elected to play West for long clubs, and cashed the CK in dummy, intending to finesse if necessary.

The finesse was not necessary and we wrote down +140 for a good score.

M 5 J72
Bd 22 Q94
Dlr E QJT9
Vul EW A87
AQ6 K854
AKJ5 T83
87642 5
K JT432

T93
762
AK3
Q965

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

On board 22 in the fifth match East was in two minds at to whether to respond in the first place, but when West offered what looked like a playable contract with his reverse into hearts, he quickly passed.

Luckily for him, West did have a real suit and was not merely making a forcing bid prior to showing a good hand with 3-card support for spades.

I led the DQ, which Tony overtook to lead a trump. Declarer could afford to finesse, and even though it lost he still got the diamond ruff. When the spades broke 3-3 that was 8 tricks, which looked like a poor score for us.

If declarer had not finessed, he could have ruffed a diamond and led a club, and if I returned a heart that would have cost us our trump trick and 9 tricks would have resulted.

On a diamond lead, he could ruff in dummy, ruff a club, cash 3 spades finishing in dummy, and lead another club to ruff with the HJ for the 9th trick. Deep finesse suggests that 9 tricks can be made in hearts with West declarer, and this is probably the line, as South can lead 2 rounds of trumps before a diamond can be ruffed if East is declarer.

M 6 K5432
Bd 27 K
Dlr S QJ9643
Vul Nil J
J8 AT76
843 QJT52
T2 AK8
KT8763 9

Q9
A976
75
AQ542

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

On board 27 in the sixth match North pre-empted by myself and his partner when he chose to bid his 5-card major in preference to his 6-card diamond. His relatively weak hand and poor club support probably predicated this choice.

I think that South got a little carried away in bidding 3C on such a motley 5-card suit and absolute minimum values, but now North felt his distribution justified showing his second suit, since he had such poor club support.

Now the earlier bid of 1S instead of 1D came back to haunt North when South gave preference to spades. While I was quietly confident that 3S would go down, I thought that this was more likely if I did not double, so 3S became the final contract.

This poor contract had no chance from the beginning, and was held to only 6 tricks for 3 off and +150 to us.

M 6 864
Bd 28 43
Dir W QT6532
Vul NS QT
 AKQT732 5
 K9 AT652
 - AKJ97
 AK53 J7
 J9
 QJ87
 84
 98642

W	N	E	S
1C	/	1H	/
2H	/	2NT	/
6S	/	7S	//

On board 28 in the sixth match Tony was in charge of setting the final contract, as he had the full range of asking bids available after the positive response to his 1C opening.

I was somewhat taken aback when he jumped to 6S after I had shown 8+ HCPs and 5 to one of the top honours in hearts.

Since he did not ask about the minors, I concluded that as well as solid spades he was void in diamonds and had at least AK in clubs, and his heart holding was either Kx (if I had Qxxxx), or QJ??? (if I had Kxxxx).

A heart holding of Kx seemed more likely since he did not make any more asking bids, so since my values were very crisp, I bid 7S, which proved to be lay-down.

This is a tricky hand to bid with any assurance, as the void makes Blackwood a poor choice unless partner (as here) shows both red Aces. Natural bidders could open 2C, followed by 3S asking for cue-bids, and there is sufficient room for East to cue-bid all 3 controls.

M 7 A874
Bd 1 KT2
Dir N 4
Vul Nil AQJ98
 QJT52 963
 Q98765 43
 83 KQ65
 - 6432
 K
 AJ
 AJT972
 KT75

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

On board 1 in the seventh match West got carried away by his extreme distribution and paid the full penalty. Luckily it was only pairs scoring, so just another bottom.

West meant his 3C on the first round as Michael's, since my 2C opening was natural and limited.

Tony's 2D bid was a forcing inquiry, and my 3S was natural, in spite of West's 3C bid. A 4H cue-bid seemed to be in order from Tony now, but this may have been misinterpreted, and he did have forewarning of likely bad breaks, so he signed off in 5C.

The bidding is almost certain to have died at 5C, but West was still on his charger, and offered his head on the block with 5H, which I doubled. East must have been unsure of the 3C bid, especially in the light of my 3S bid, so did not correct to 5S, and 5HX became the final contract.

I led the D4 and Tony won, cashed the SK, and gave me a diamond ruff. I cashed the SA and gave him a spade ruff, followed by another diamond ruff and a spade ruff with the HA to make all 5 of our trumps and 8 tricks in all for 6 off and +1400.

M 7 JT8
Bd 5 T83
Dir N AT8
Vul NS AQJ9
 KQ3 9742
 AQ954 62
 J753 Q64
 3 T874
 A65
 KJ7
 K92
 K652

W	N	E	S
//	1NT	/	3NT

On board 5 in the seventh match Tony raised my 1NT opening directly to game and West gave something serious thought before finally passing, thus I mentally allocated him most of the missing points, and I thought a likely 2-suiter.

East led the S9, which I ducked, and West got off lead with the C3, won in my hand with the CQ and I led to the HJ, with West in again.

A simple heart return will lead to an endplay for 9 tricks, and Ace another heart will lead to a squeeze for 9 tricks. West instead exited with the D3, and now I was able to pick up the diamonds for 3 tricks. When I cashed the clubs finishing in hand, West was squeezed out of his hearts and diamonds and thrown in with the HK to lead away from the SK for 10 tricks and +630.

This is a simple example of thinking in advance, as West had no reason to hesitate over the 3NT bid, but by doing so he gave so much away. It is dubious whether West should bid even if 1NT was opened on his right.

M 8 AT3
Bd 8 Q9732
Dir W -
Vul Nil Q8752
 KQ864 J95
 86 AKJT
 AQJ 9743
 JT9 K3

 72
 54
 KT8652
 A64

W **N** **E** **S**
 1S / 4S //

On board 8 in the eighth match I raised Tony's 1S bid to game and with nothing to guide him North led a 4th highest H3.

Since he had other sources of tricks, and no immediate heart losers, Tony did not finesse at trick 1, and led to the SK, taken by the SA and North returned the H2, won in dummy by Tony to finesse the DJ.

The good news was that the diamond finesse worked, but the bad news was that North was void, and put his partner in with the CA to get another ruff for 1 down.

Of course after North ruffed the diamond and led a club, Tony took his only chance for the contract by rising with the CK, so lost 2 clubs and finished 2 down.

Maybe I should have given South a chance to bid his diamonds, and then Tony would have known that the diamond finesse could wait and another round of trumps would have led to success.

M 9 T6432
Bd 11 86
Dir S 86
Vul Nil AQJ4
 J9 -
 KJ9753 Q42
 KJ75 AQT9432
 3 K98

 AKQ875
 AT
 -
 T7652

W **N** **E** **S**
 2H 4S 5H 1S
 6H / / 5S
 // X

Board 11 in the ninth match generated a few interesting scores around the room, and we were on the wrong end.

At our table, West overcalled in hearts, and his partner bid 5H over my 4S shut-out bid without ever mentioning diamonds. When Tony bid 5S, West bid 6H, probably hoping that the cost was going to be less than 500, but when he saw dummy, he realized that he had 11 top tricks and 12 if we fell asleep and failed to lead a club.

Of course Tony switch to a club when he won his HA, but not before he ducked a heart, so his diamond ruff disappeared. It is not certain that I would have returned a diamond if Tony had won his HA at the first opportunity, but there was not much else to do since the CK was on the table.

Our score of +100 was likely to be a bottom, as 5S is cold, and at least one of those EW pairs that did find their diamond fit failed to lead a heart to 6SX, so 12 tricks were made.

M 9 AK974
Bd 13 QJ86
Dir N QT95
Vul All -
 T2 3
 4 AKT532
 A874 62
 AKJ985 QT42

 QJ865
 97
 KJ3
 765

W **N** **E** **S**
 3C 1S 2H 2S
 5C / 4C /

It is not often that the opponents open the bidding, your partner overcalls in suit that you have a singleton, and yet you are cold for slam in your own suit, but board 13 in the ninth match was one example.

If your side has a 5-5 fit in a major, it often pays to jump to game, as even if game goes down, the cost is not likely to be high, and the opponents may be able to make game themselves.

This was one such opportunity, but no doubt swayed by the vulnerability, Tony only made a simple raise, which gave West an easy 3C bid and East was able to invite game by bidding 4C after I passed.

West gave some thought to bidding more than game, but the 2 losing spades warned against slam, so he contented himself with just game.

There was no problem in the play for 12 tricks as West was able to set up dummy's hearts and lost just 1 spade.

M 10 K9
Bd 16 QT64
Dlr W A764
Vul All KQ7
 J7542 T863
 AJ973 5
 9 JT53
 T2 J543

AQ
 K82
 KQ82
 A986

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

On board 16 in the tenth match West opened 2H to show a weak 5-5, with hearts the only know suit. My 2NT was a little underweight, but I knew that my HT was a good card and worth something, and an extra trick is often available when the bidding gives away the distribution.

Since I showed 15-18, Tony's first thought was to jump straight to 6NT, probably hoping that there were only 12 tricks and not 13, but he erred on the side of caution and simply invited slam with 4NT. I had nothing to spare, so passing 4NT was the easiest decision of the weekend.

As expected, the known 5-5 distribution in the West hand gave me a blue-print for 12 tricks, especially after the lead of the DJ by East. Since East had 4 cards in every other suit, she had no way of knowing what West's other suit was, and guessed wrong.

I won the DA and led to the HK, winning the spade return with the SA to cash the DK and then take the marked heart finesse. Since the diamond finesse was confirmed, that was taken next, followed by a club to hand. When I cashed the second club and the CT dropped, another finesse became marked and I had 12 tricks after all. Likely to be a below average score since many pairs probably bid the slam.

M 11 AK6
Bd 23 T3
Dlr S T72
Vul All A6542
 54 QJT9872
 AQ5 872
 Q9853 -
 T87 QJ3

3
 KJ964
 AKJ64
 K9

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

On board 11 in the eleventh match I had a chance to make 3NT but gave East too many points for her 2-level overcall and went 1 down when I ducked the spade lead. Against a pre-emptive overcall of 3S or 4S, I would likely have got it right.

After the lead of the SQ I can win and run the HT, which West may be best to duck, but I continue the heart and now West can switch to a club and restrict me to 9 tricks.

If West leads a spade instead of a club, a diamond could be ducked and 10 tricks made.

In the auction, 1NT was forcing, and I intended to rebid 2NT as invitational. 3D was natural, and with 2 stoppers, I elected for the 9-trick game. With everything wrong, 5D has no chance, I just had to play 3NT more productively to get a good score.

M 11 T
Bd 25 K9876
Dlr N AKT6
Vul EW T95
 AQJ73 84
 4 AQJT3
 Q8432 5
 Q7 KJ643

K9652
 52
 J97
 A82

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

On board 25 in the eleventh match East made what I consider to be a very poor decision to overcall 2C when she had a bad suit and such a strong heart holding.

I had a very minimum hand for the opening, but 2 suits and 4 controls with an easy rebid, so passing was never a strong consideration.

West, no doubt beguiled by the overcall, appeared to keep bidding thinking that either East had a lot of clubs, and his Q7 would be useful, or they had a fit in either diamonds and spades.

When Tony passed and West bid 2S, East had nowhere to go without a diamond stop, and was forced to rebid the moth-eaten suit. The preference to spades rather than 3NT seemed to confirm the spade fit, and West raised to game, a little adventurously, since he had forced out the bid and East could have bid 4S herself with a suitable hand.

Tony confirmed the rashness of the 4S bid by his double, and we had no trouble getting this contract 2 off for +500 and a likely top. Note that even though I had opened he did not double 3S, as his spades are not well placed, and I had 15 HCPs at most.

M 12 AK965
Bd 28 K65
Dlr W KJT93
Vul NS -
 - 8732
 84 AT73
 Q52 76
 AKQT7543 J82
 QJT4
 QJ92
 A84
 96
W N E S
 5C X //

On board 28 in the twelfth match we were a victim of both the dealing position and the vulnerability. West had the vulnerability in her favour and put it right to us with a 5C opening that was bound to succeed.

If I had been allowed to open 1S, a 5C overcall would hardly have phased us as I could have rebid 5D if necessary, but it is certain that Tony would have bid 4S before West had a turn to bid.

As it was, I could not pick suit myself, and could only double, hoping Tony would remove it, but to no avail. 5CX at least had 3 losers, but poor consolation for +650, or even +1430 if declarer gets a count on the hand and picks the diamond finesse.

At one other table, where North doubled, South bid 5H, and raised North's 5S bid to slam. West took out insurance by bidding 7C, which only went for -500, so was a good save against game.

Anyone who opened with less than 5C with the West hand (there must have been a few) deserved the poor score that would have engendered.

M 13 82
Bd 1 K83
Dlr N QJ8
Vul Nil AQ875
 KQT65 A73
 QJT6 A
 93 AKT54
 92 KJT3
 J94
 97542
 762
 64
W N E S
 2S 1C X /
 3H / 3D /
 3NT //

On board 1 in the thirteenth match we missed a potential slam, but thanks to the deceptive opening lead of the H4, which fooled North, I made 13 tricks for the best score available to our side.

Since I was unbalanced, and initially too strong for a 1NT overcall anyway, I started off with a take-out double of the 1C opening, and Tony's 2S was encouraging. Not inclined to bid 3NT yet with my singleton heart, I showed a strong hand with 3D, but when Tony next showed his heart suit, I was happy to make the obvious pairs bid of 3NT.

South has a very weak hand and would have been best served by leading his partner's suit, but instead chose to lead the H4. In my partnerships, 4th highest (which it must be given our combined holding) shows an honour, so, knowing from the opening bid that North had the HK, I called for the HQ and North obligingly covered.

I went to dummy with a spade and led the D9, which North unwisely covered with the DJ, marking him also with the DQ on the bidding, I was able to pick up the diamonds without loss and made 13 tricks.

M 13 KJ842
Bd 5 KT874
Dlr N KQ
Vul NS A
 QT65 A3
 J Q9653
 9532 A87
 KJ42 987
 97
 A2
 JT64
 QT653
W N E S
 / 1NT / 2C
 3NT //

NS were playing a system that allowed North to open 1NT on board 5 in the thirteenth match, and the 3NT response to 2C showed both majors. This is a very unusual system and I would not recommend it to anyone, but without any sort of fit, it was a NT hand, just not as high as game.

I was warned off a heart lead by the explanation of the 3NT rebid, so I chose to lead the C9, which promised the C8 and denied an honour.

This fortuitous lead set up 2 club tricks to go with my 2 Aces, and another 2 tricks arrived due to the bad breaks, so it finished 2 off for +200 to us.

I doubt if any pairs stayed out of trouble on this hand, although I feel that Precision players may have stopped in 2NT via:

1C 1D, 1S 2C, 2H, 2NT end.

M 14 KQ82
Bd 7 A983
Dlr S T
Vul All Q983
T76 9543
KQ4 T6
J653 K82
AJ2 KT75

AJ
J752
AQ974
64

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

On board 7 in the fourteenth match I failed to lead the club that would have sealed declarer's fate in 4H, but luckily for us they did not take advantage of it and went 1 down anyway.

On a club lead declarer might still succeed by running the H9 and later entering dummy to run the HJ, pinning the HT and restricting the trump losers to just 1, but Deep Finesse suggests that 9 tricks are the limit.

After I led the S4, declarer could have cashed both spades in dummy, ruffed a diamond to hand, and discarded both clubs on the top spades while West ruffs.

The HA will leave both opponents with a trump that they could make at their leisure, but with the diamonds set up after 1 more ruff, it appears as if 10 tricks would result.

Our declarer seemed to consider none of this as they quickly conceded 1 off.

M 15 AK42
Bd 12 Q8
Dlr W AQ52
Vul NS AK32
QT 876
T9754 AJ3
JT8 97
965 T8732

J953
K62
K643
Q4

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

Board 12 in the fifteenth match was a slam that our opponents did not even appear to think about, despite having 23 opposite 9 and a 4-4 fit.

In close slams such as this one, I tend to stay out of them if there is no fit, but consider slam if a fit is shown as here. 3C was asking for a 5-card major, 3D showed at least one 4-card major, and 3H showed a spade suit, thus establishing the fit.

Instead of signing off in game, with such good controls North could have shown slam interest by bidding 4C, thereby agreeing spades. Blackwood by North would not have been appropriate, as South could be much weaker.

I led the S8 to 4S and North was untroubled to take 12 tricks for -680.

In slam, on a non-spade lead, declarer has 2 possible lines if all follow small to the first spade. Firstly to play for the SQ to be doubleton, (on either side) or for East to have the doubleton ST and run the SQ from dummy to smother the ST. Obviously the doubleton SQ is better odds as it caters for both sides. After the ST falls on the first round it is the only chance on this hand, as Q876 in one hand will be guaranteed a trick.

M 15 J962
Bd 15 J965
Dlr S A8
Vul NS 942
AK73 854
T7 A
KQ3 JT7542
AJT6 Q53

QT
KQ8432
96
K87

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

The vulnerability may have worked for us on board 15 in the fifteenth match when North did not raise South's weak 2H to game over Tony's take-out double.

Over the 3H bid I had any easy 4D, which Tony raised happily to game. He may not have been so happy to raise if North had passed, unless I still bid 4D, which is unlikely. When I made a free bid of 4D he could expect me to have at least a 5-card suit so we were on solid ground.

Note that even 2H is too high for NS at the adverse vulnerability as that would be 500 if doubled. 4H by South after North's raise would have been ill-advised and suffered a severe penalty as Tony would have certainly doubled again.

5D was cold, and I made 12 tricks when the CK obliged by being onside with a 3-3 break.

M 16 J972
Bd 17 AQJ52
Dlr N AQ5
Vul Nil A
 653 KT4
 KT73 84
 8 KT9732
 J7642 KQ

 AQ8
 96
 J64
 T9853

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

The bidding on board 17 in the sixteenth match was unusual to say the least.

North would appear to have a reasonable although slightly flawed 2NT rebid after my 2D overcall, and I even prefer double followed by 3NT if South bids 3C to the actual 2S bid found at the table. I do not know what South expected by North's 2S, but he passed fairly easily.

Looking at all four hands, with everything friendly, it is possible to make 11 tricks in hearts or spades, but our declarer contended himself with just 9 tricks.

3NT is a very good contract, making 10 tricks against perfect defense, so I expect that -140 was a good score for us, but without the individual summary sheets that David Anderson used to supply I do not know.

M 17 T854
Bd 21 T876
Dlr N 93
Vul NS T63
 AQ9 63
 A54 KQ93
 T654 AQ
 972 AQJ54

 KJ72
 J2
 KJ872
 K8

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

Board 21 in the seventeenth match was a good score for us due to the peculiar tactics adopted by NS.

I opened with an artificial 1C and South overcalled 1S, which showed spades and a minor, and Tony's 2NT showed a spade stopper and 10 or 11 points.

North led the suit that they had a known 4-4 fit, but not recognizing the ST as an honour, led the S8. South did recognize the ST as an honour, and therefore 'knew' that Tony had AQT9 so played low and Tony won with the S9.

A losing club finesse was followed by a winning spade finesse and then Tony ran the clubs, discarding diamonds from hand. South was already under pressure, but as he was now known to have diamonds and spades, good technique by Tony gained another trick. Tony played the HK and then another to his Ace, and when South played the HJ on the second round North was marked with Txxx thus he finessed on the 3rd round and made 12 tricks for a top score.

M 17 KT965
Bd 22 AK42
Dlr E J5
Vul EW T5
 8743 AJ
 876 T3
 Q873 AK92
 Q7 KJ642

 Q2
 QJ95
 T64
 A983

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

Board 22 in the seventeenth match was a hand where desperate measures were called for in my 1NT contract when NS began to run their heart tricks.

I thought a spade switch after cashing the hearts was inevitable, but threw 2 clubs from hand and a diamond from dummy in a last-ditch attempt to divert South's attention.

Luckily South won the 3rd and 4th hearts and NS did not have any signalling methods for North to suggest a switch, so South was in the dark, and his spade holding steered him towards a club.

I quickly won the club in dummy and led one back to establish my 7th trick, but looking at all 4 hands, on a spade switch I could duck the first round and the 5-2 break with South having the CA would have still seen me emerge with 7 tricks. However, at the vulnerability I may have ducked 2 spades to give me the best shot at avoiding 2 off and the dreaded -200.

M 18 A8765
Bd 26 A
Dir E K654
Vul All K63
 Q9 2
 KJ752 Q
 J87 AQ932
 AJ8 T97542
 KJT43
 T98643
 T
 Q
W N E S
 3C 3S 2NT / 4S
 // /

Board 26 in the eighteenth match could have developed into a bidding war with shapely hands in 3 positions, but surprizingly EW gave up without a fight.

East opened 2NT to show both minors, and perhaps put off by the vulnerability, West rather timidly bid only 3C (to play). With some sort of fit in both minors, West could have made it harder for Tony by bidding 4C, although 5C would have been a bit of a stretch.

Having described his hand with the opening bid, East correctly did not bid over Tony's 3S bid, and I was able to raise to 4S, expecting West to bid again in view of my minor suit singletons.

Although 11 tricks are there double-dummy, 10 is the most probable number without the sight of all 4 hands, even with the help from the 2NT opening bid. Tony was not put to the test when EW slipped a trick in the play and he made 11 tricks after all for +650 and a good score.

5CX is a good save, making 10 tricks due to the fall of the DT, and even 6CX will be better than letting NS make +650.

M 18 J863
Bd 28 T
Dir W AT94
Vul NS QJ95
 AT5 KQ974
 AKQ95 873
 Q J865
 8763 4
 2
 J642
 K732
 AKT2
W N E S
 1H / 2H /
 3C / 4H //

Board 28 in the eighteenth match must have been a bottom for us when EW sailed into 4H and we could not find the double-dummy defence to beat it.

With a minimum hand and heart support, East did not bid his 5-card spade suit, and the cold 4S was missed. However, when West made a help-suit game try of 3C, he suddenly thought that he had a great hand and jumped to 4H.

Leading from Jxxx in an unbid suit normally leads to a poor score, but this is the 1 time when it would have paid off!

On a spade lead, West cannot draw trumps or we can cash 4 clubs, a heart and a diamond, so he has to lead a club. Now Tony can win the club and give me a spade ruff, and the diamond entry allows me to get a second spade ruff.

After the DA followed by the CQ, West was able to ruff the next club on the table, take 1 round of trumps, and noting the fall of the HT, lead the ST to dummy to take the heart finesse. When he cashed the SA, the marked finesse enabled him to garner 11 tricks for -450 to us.

M 19 94
Bd 1 KJ963
Dir N 84
Vul Nil A987
 KQ JT872
 2 AT8
 AKJT95 Q
 K542 QT63
 A653
 Q754
 7632
 J
W N E S
 1C / 1S /
 2D / 3C /
 3C / 3NT //

Board 1 in the nineteenth match was a misfit that I thought belonged in 3NT, but 4S was secure in spite of the 4-2 break, owing to the good spade pips.

Tony's bidding showed 16+ HCPs and at least a 6-card suit, so I knew that a heart was automatic, but hoped that he had at least 1 heart honour, as even a singleton honour gave me a chance. If his major suit cards were reversed, 3NT would have been easy.

When a heart was led and dummy went down I regretted not raising diamonds, as this would have had chances, but both minor suit games fail because of the 4-1 club break, so 4S was the only game.

After the heart lead I had 7 tricks and luckily none of them got away, but unluckily no more appeared, so I went 2 down for -100 and a poor start to the last session.

M 19 987
Bd 3 K43
Dlr S A96
Vul EW JT97
K4 63
T5 J9862
KQ87 J53
AQ654 K82

AQJT52
AQ7
T42
3

W	N	E	S
2C	2S	3C	1S
//			4S

Board 3 in the nineteenth match was a 50/50 chance that fell our way. I was not inclined to bid a light-weight 1NT with my hand over the 1S opening, nor did double or pass come into serious consideration, so I had no choice but to bid 2C as the lesser of the 4 evils.

North made a normal raise to 2S, which gave Tony the chance to bid 3C and take away some of South's options.

The key to 4S being a good contract is North's values outside of clubs, but after the raise South did not have any mechanism to make a game try anymore, so he simply bid 4S.

In spite of North's 4333 distribution and modest hand, all of the points are working and 4S is a 50-50 prospect, depending only on the trump finesse.

Luckily for us the finesse failed, and we had achieved our best result.

M 20 AQ94
Bd 8 9
Dlr W AKJ7
Vul Nil T743
75 J32
A4 KJ752
QT9643 852
Q52 86

KT86
QT863
-
AKJ9

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

Board 8 in the twentieth match was a hand with great potential for NS but one in which we did not adequately explore. Luckily the club finesse lost so 11 tricks were the limit on the hand and we scored well for +450.

In our version of Precision, a 2D opening shows a limited hand with at least 4/4 in the majors, so I had to open with 1D on the North cards.

Since 1D was not natural, Tony could have bid 4D as a splinter bid instead of the shut-out 4S, but since most of my strength was in diamonds and I was short in hearts, I would have just settled for game and the same result would have been achieved.

The opening lead was the C6, which still looked to be a possible doubleton or small trebleton, so I rejected the finesse and rose in dummy and led a heart to set up cross-ruff. The good pips in trumps allowed me to garner 11 tricks by ruffing the heart return, discarding 2 clubs on the top diamonds, and then ruffing the clubs in dummy.

M 21 862
Bd 15 A95
Dlr S AKQJ42
Vul NS A
AQ953 4
K42 6
65 T987
QJ5 K876432

KJT7
QJT873
3
T9

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

Board 15 in the twenty-first match was a little exciting for South after he bid a pushy 2H after North made a simple overcall, and then suddenly his partner was interested in slam.

I do not know what system of overcalls NS were using, but the simple 2D overcall found at the table on the North cards does not seem to do it justice. Nonetheless, 5D by North fails on a spade lead and ruff, and then declarer can be locked in hand and forced to concede a heart trick. 5D by South, although an unlikely contract, is cold.

Tony is too weak to bid 3C on the first round, which we would play as forcing, so he was forced to pass, but having limited his hand he was happy to take the opportunity to show his clubs on the next round.

Even though South is a passed hand, he still seems a little weak to bid 2H without diamond support and possibly wasted spade honours, but he struck gold and North firstly cue-bid and after no interest from South, still looked for slam.

5H by South was a safe contract, and after the lead of the CQ South could have ruffed the 2nd diamond to successfully take the trump finesse and get 12 tricks, but led trumps from the table and we got 2 tricks.

M 22	J82			
Bd 16	KJ9842			
Dir W	864			
Vul EW	A			
Q4		K976		
QT		76		
Q97		KJ32		
T87643		KQ5		
	AT53			
	A53			
	AT5			
	J92			
W	N	E	S	
/	2D	/	2S(?)	
/	3H	//		

On board 16 in the twenty-second match NS were playing the Multi-2D differently to what I am used to when South responded 2S, and North bid only 3H which was the final contract.

When I play the Multi-2D, a 2S response is invitational opposite a 2H opening bid, and North therefore has a clear-cut 4H bid. However, South is stronger in spades than hearts, so NS must have been using their own responses. Whatever, the system, a good 4H was missed.

After the opening lead of the CK 4H is cold by a simple elimination play. Draw trumps and duck a diamond. If either opponent plays a spade, 10 tricks are assured by finessing on the next round if necessary. If a club is played, discard a diamond if West had won the diamond (and later a spade on the established club), or if East is on lead, ruff the CQ or win the CJ as appropriate.

On a diamond return, win in dummy and exit with a diamond and the same endplay works.

M 23	KQ986			
Bd 23	K			
Dir S	K84			
Vul All	T842			
J7542		T3		
T653		Q942		
Q7		A953		
K3		QJ6		
	A			
	AJ87			
	JT62			
	A975			
W	N	E	S	
/	3S	/	1NT	
//			3NT	

On board 23 in the twenty-third and last match Tony opened with a slightly off-shape 1NT, and my 3S response gave him a choice of games, which was an easy decision for him.

With nothing to guide him, except barring a spade lead, West led the H6, which took an entry out of dummy prematurely and was therefore good for the defense.

EW 'knew' from the opening bid of 1NT that Tony had a second spade, and therefore another entry to dummy, so defended on that basis, which allowed an extra trick and we gained +630.

After winning the opening lead on the table, Tony ducked a club and a heart came back into his tenace. Now the 3rd club was ducked and a diamond came back from East, ducked in hand and West was forced to put up the DQ, setting up a second diamond to go with 3 spades, 3 hearts, and 2 clubs.