

January 07, 2017
 Courier-Mail Bridge Column by Tony Jackman

The annual masterpoint awards for best performances during 2017 have just been released. The McCutcheon Trophy is national, and goes to the player who, through the calendar year, has grossed the most masterpoints in Australian events. It is not a ranking of our top players, more of the most active through the year – but it's as good as we have. For much of 2016 our own Neville Francis led, but he was overtaken late by a trio of Sydney stars, Sartaj Hans who amassed a mind-boggling 503 mps, then Pauline Gumby and Warren Lazer. Distances make it harder for Queenslanders and it was a great performance by Neville to finish fourth with 476. What it also gained for him was the O'Sullivan Trophy, for our state's highest point winner – perhaps not a great consolation as he has won it several times before. Tony Hutton took second spot in the O'Sullivan on 325, just ahead of Pele Rankin. Other major category winners here were Malcolm Carter (best Grand Master) and Murray Perrin (best Gold Life Master).

Belated congratulations to the winners of the Queensland Wide Pairs recently played in most clubs across the state. Kenmore's R. Wallis/ T. Tully won N/S with a huge 75%, while E/W went to C. Perkins/ Y. Houbolt (68%) of the Townsville club.

N Dealer, N/S Vul		NORTH	
		♠ AKQ86	
		♥ 10986	
		♦ K976	
		♣ -	
WEST			EAST
♠ 10			♠ 97532
♥ A3			♥ Q
♦ 8532			♦ Q
♣ Q109432			♣ KJ8765
	SOUTH		
	♠ J4		
	♥ KJ7542		
	♦ AJ104		
	♣ A		
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1S	Pass	2H
Pass	3H	Pass	4NT
Pass	5D	Pass	???

Today's hand had many South's puzzling over what to do after auctions starting similarly. Where North's rebid of 3H was systemically forcing – as most would play – and therefore stronger than an immediate 4H raise, Souths in a New Year's Eve field, often felt compelled to try for slam – perhaps helped by a celebratory drink (or two). When Blackwood revealed a missing ace the braver bid 6H while others, including me, signed off in 5H. Who was right? The slam is a little less than a 50 % chance, but here it makes, so both the optimists and pessimists can argue their decision was right. Against the S10 lead, I won SJ in hand then had partner purple in the face when, at trick two, I led CA and trumped it in dummy in order to lead from there. All was well – too well – when HQ was singleton onside. Best result on the hand went to Richard Ward/ Therese Tully who as E-W, sacrificed in 6C for two down. They must be advocates of 'The Law of Total Tricks'!