

2009 ANC Senior Pairs by Richard Wallis

The ANC Open Pairs used to be a prestigious event, played over 4 sessions at the beginning of the ANC, and restricted to 28 pairs, and the Mixed Pairs was played at the end of the ANC over 2 sessions, but sadly that is no longer the case. As participation declined, the events were combined and shortened, almost to the point at times of being farcical! In a combined event, a recent winner of the Open Pairs apparently did not play any of the top contenders.

This year at least the events were not farcical, but they were combined and shortened to just 3 sessions, with the Open and Womens Pairs in one group of 12 tables, and the Mixed and Seniors in a second group of 11 tables. Whilst it would obviously be preferable to have all 4 events as separate competitions, entry numbers and timing did not permit this, and the combined events were at least complete Howells, and from my point of view, very enjoyable.

Tony Jackman and I used the Pairs as a warm-up to the ANC Teams that were due to start on the Monday, and we were a little up and down at times, but generally very close to the pace all the way, and in spite of having our worst round of around 54% in the 3rd session on Sunday afternoon, managed to be in front at the end. Eva and Tony Berger also started off the week in good style, coming in 4th overall and 2nd in the Seniors Pairs.

The ANC dinner/dance was a little disappointing for both pairs, when, during the presentations, the Seniors Pairs was somehow forgotten! The presenter called over to our table to apologize later but apparently when the omission was mentioned after the presenter returned to his table, he felt it was too late to make the presentation as the dancing had started?

M 1	8			On board 2 in the first match East started the bidding with a 5-card suit weak-two, and without at least 3 diamonds, I preferred 3C to a take-out double. I did not want to overcall 2NT with only a doubleton spades, as the ability to hold up is compromised.
Bd 2	AT87			
Dlr E	A8752			
Vul NS	AQ8			
QJ76		KT9432		The take-out double may have succeeded here, since Tony had 4 hearts, but with good club support and good controls, he had no hesitation in asking for Key-Cards, and when I showed 2, he bid the cold slam.
65		932		
T96		KQ3		
T542		7		
	A5			South led the SQ, and I was able to claim 12 tricks after testing trumps, all the while concerned that we had missed the best slam, but 6C was worth 80% because while other NS pairs played in hearts, not many pairs bid the slam.
	KQJ4			
	J4			
	KJ963			
W	N	E	S	
		2S	3C	While double would have worked well here, it would not have been easy for Tony to instigate a slam, and he would not have known the true value of his club holding.
4S	4NT	/	5H	
/	6C	//		

M 2 KJT6
Bd 6 987
Dlr E T953
Vul EW A7
Q432 985
Q6 AJT54
Q8 J765
JT543 8

A7
K32
AK2
KQ962

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

On board 6 in match 2 Tony was not put to the test when East led the HT, promising the HJ and maybe a higher honour except the HQ.

This is a classic dilemma for declarer, does he play East for the HA and put up the HK, or does he play West for the HA and duck, hoping for doubleton Ace or at least blocking the suit.

In any event, it is right to duck the first round, but West overtook and returned the suit, enabling East to set up their suit and making it imperative that East be kept off lead.

Perhaps trying to bluff Tony out of taking the spade finesse, West discarded a spade on the 3rd heart!

Tony had 8 tricks and a 9th looked promising in clubs, but that hope was dashed on the 2nd round of clubs, so he had no choice but the take the spade finesse.

The early discard of a spade was West's undoing, as Tony had 10 tricks for an above average score.

M 3 JT2
Bd 10 J7
Dlr E J85
Vul All AT863
K9853
KQT2
42
J4

A64
983
AKT3
KQ7

Q7
A654
Q976
952

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

On board 10 in match 3 West overcalled spades, but had another trick up his sleeve when he led a heart to my 2NT contract and found his partner with 4-card support, including the Ace.

Tony's 2C response showed only 5-8 HCPs and a 5-card club suit, and he may have been persuaded to bid 3NT with the helpful spade holding, but wisely passed it out.

At the sight of the heart lead he was no doubt glad he had not raised to game, and so was I. East encouraged hearts and EW took just the first 4 tricks before leading a spade, won in hand with the Ace.

When both followed to 2 clubs, I had 8 sure tricks, and intended to take them immediately to ensure my contract. The diamond finesse, which I would need if I had been in game was not worth the risk.

However, after running my clubs it was cost-free to lead the DJ off the table, and East could not resist the urge to cover, so I made 9 tricks for an 85% score.

M 5 9843
Bd 17 AQ98
Dlr N 643
Vul Nil JT
2
T52
QJ9572
Q74

A5
KJ3
AT8
K9862

KQJT76
764
K
A53

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

On board 17 in match 4 we achieved one of our few outright tops, courtesy of West, who, holding an unbid 6-card suit, decided to lead it rather than the suit his partner had opened in. To compound the problem, he led the DQ, right into his partner's singleton King!

I won the first trick with the DA, led the HK, and then overtook the HJ in dummy to lead the CJ, rising with the King when East played low.

When I next led a low club towards dummy, West, still not focusing, rose with the CQ (East cannot afford to overtake) and then cashed the DJ and played another diamond, giving me a safe entry to hand to lead a club and set up my 10th trick.

On the normal spade lead I can only make my 7th trick by cashing out the hearts on the table and playing a club to my King, which must be right on the bidding. East has 5 spades and a club.

M 5 T76
Bd 20 Q
Dlr W QJ9754
Vul All AK8
 Q9532 A4
 KT943 862
 A3 6
 6 QJ97532

KJ8
 AJ75
 KT82
 T4

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

On board 20 in match 5 I felt I was unlucky in three ways.

West's 2H opening showed less than an opening bid and 2 suits, one of which was hearts. West explained East's double of 3D as asking for her other suit, and she duly obliged over my 3NT by bidding 4S.

I was not as happy about a spade lead compared to a heart lead, but was hoping to be able to run a few diamonds early on, so tried 4NT.

West led the S3, and I was unlucky that East had the SA and could return the suit through my KJ, setting up the spades.

I thought that I was home when a diamond to the Queen in dummy held trick 3, but I was unlucky a second time when it was West who held the DA and they cashed out for 2 off after winning it at trick 4.

But most of all I thought that I was unlucky that East had 3-card heart support and only 2 spades, but still asked for his partner's second suit! Since spades were odds-on to be the second suit, he clearly had a preference for hearts, and on a heart lead I had 11 tricks.

M 6 -
Bd 24 A87542
Dlr N A42
Vul Nil KQT2
 QJ543 AK62
 QJT93 K6
 K 8763
 74 A63

T987
 -
 QJT95
 J985

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

On board 24 in match 6 Tony kicked himself seconds after finishing the board for missing his only chance to make his contract.

West's opening bid showed many types of hands, among them both majors, and East's double asked for clarification, the pass showing both majors.

Worried about the possible penalty double (I thought by East), I considered bidding 2NT instead of passing, and regretted the decision to pass when West showed 55 in both majors by passing East's double.

Tony, after a lot of thought, pulled the double himself to 3C, and I bid 4C and then 5C expecting EW to have a good play for 4S. A phantom as it turned out although the defense is difficult (diamond to North, ruff a heart, then a club, finally cash a club and a heart).

In 5C, it was quickly apparent the West was 5512, and his only real chance for 11 tricks was to play West for the singleton DK, but Tony played small to dummy and made 10 tricks but still an 80% score.

M 7 J3
Bd 28 K42
Dlr W A53
Vul NS QJT94
 KT964 AQ75
 QT8 J5
 Q64 KJT98
 53 82

82
 A9763
 72
 AK76

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

On board 28 in match 7 we were some chance to make 4H if I had just bid it, but I was reluctant to punt a game opposite a passed partner, since I was only marginal for a game try anyway.

However, by bidding 3C and getting a favourable reaction from Tony, I had probably pin-pointed the correct defence to 4H, that is, a diamond switch after cashing 2 spade tricks. Any other switch and I could give up the 3rd round of hearts and then discard my diamond loser on the 5th club.

The point was academic when East chose to bid 4S as insurance against 4H making (cold if the spades were 3-1) and I took what looked to be the easier way to a good score by doubling for penalties.

Tony led the CQ and continued the suit, so we took our 5 tricks in comfort for +300 and 85%.

M 8	KJT52			
Bd 1	42			
Dlr N	-			
Vul Nil	AKQT76			
86			Q974	
AKJ			T975	
AQJT632			K985	
2			3	
	A3			
	Q863			
	74			
	J9854			
W	N	E	S	
	1C	/	1D	
3D	4C	/	5C	
5D	/	/	X	
//				

On board 1 in match 8 West played it very coy by making a non-committal jump to 3D over my negative response, and then being 'forced' to bid again when we arrived in game.

Tony's pass was not of the forcing variety, since I had not shown strength by my 5C bid, and my initial 1D response had limited my hand to less than 8 HCPs, but since I had a quick trick outside of clubs I doubled for penalties.

Tony led the CA on which I played the CJ, hoping to get him to switch to spades, and he was receptive to my signal, so we took the next 2 tricks in spades, but that was our lot, since the heart finesse worked.

I would have expected a declarer who counted out the hand to have gone 2 down, as Tony had only shown up with 13 HCPs for his 1C opening bid, but he took the finesse after all.

1 down when we were cold for 5C did not look to be a good score, but 5D must have been common, and others must not have doubled, because it was worth 95%.

M 9	AQ75			
Bd 5	743			
Dlr N	K2			
Vul NS	KQ74			
KJ9863			T4	
Q8			AK5	
J6			QT853	
865			J92	
	2			
	JT962			
	A974			
	AT3			
W	N	E	S	
	1NT	/	2H	
2S	4H	//		

On board 5 in match 9 my 2H response was natural and invitational, so Tony had a choice, and with a median hand, it is likely that his spades honours over the overcaller was at least part of the reason for going to game.

West led the DJ, and dummy's hearts were too small to be able to ruff diamonds early on, so I rose with the DK on the table and led a trump, won by West with the HQ to lead the D6.

If I could lead 1 more trump leaving the top trump outstanding, I could ruff a diamond, but on the next trump, East played a third round and led the DQ, exposing me to 2 more losers.

This is where the well-place spades honours came into play as I could take the spade finesse to discard 1 diamond loser, and park the other on the 4th club for 10 tricks and +620.

This modest game was worth 85%.

M 9	QT4			
Bd 7	T876			
Dlr S	QJ2			
Vul All	KQ9			
5			K876	
KJ952			-	
T964			AK73	
642			AJ875	
	AJ932			
	AQ43			
	85			
	T3			
W	N	E	S	
	1NT	2C	1S	
/	2S	//	2H	
X				

On board 7 in match 9 West got a little carried away when he alerted us to a bad break early on in the auction and we were able to stop at a safe level.

Tony's 1NT was a 1-round force, and he was just about to invite game in hearts when West doubled. Thinking that the double was some sort of club support, but deciding to check just in case, he asked East about the meaning of the double and was surprised to learn that it was penalties!

Since hearts were ruled out, all thought of game were also put aside so he signed off in 2S, which was passed out.

West led the C4, I put up the King in dummy, East ducked (?), and I played the CT. Happily in dummy I took the spade finesse repeatedly and drew trumps, before leading a diamond to dummy and East was end-played.

He believed my CT at trick 1 and cashed the top diamonds and exited with a diamond, so my club loser went away and I endplayed West for a 2nd heart trick and 9 tricks in all for +140 and 90%.

M 10 AKQT95
Bd 10 AQJ4
Dlr E J2
Vul All 4
 4 -
 9872 K3
 97643 AKT85
 Q98 AJ7632
 J87632
 T65
 Q
 KT5

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

Board 10 in match 10 was an impossible hand for us to get a good score on.

Tony could have passed the hand out in 1C, and we would probably have conceded -130, although -150 was possible unless I lead the DQ, but who would pass out 1C with the North hand?

After deciding not to pass, Tony could have probably kept East out by jumping straight to 4S, but then 6H could be on, so he made a sensible decision to double, to keep hearts in the picture, since he could always bid spades later if I bid diamonds.

The double allowed East to show his 2nd suit, and my nothing bid of just 2S allowed West to show support, so East was suddenly in game, instead of playing in 1C!

Tony has potentially only 2 tricks, since certainly East is 6-5, and maybe only 1 trick, so he took out insurance and bid 5S, doubled by East and passed out.

5D was cold, and 5SX was only 1 off for a good score? No, only 15%.

M 11 AJ9543
Bd 13 T
Dlr N AQ72
Vul All 76
 QT872 -
 8742 AQ653
 K JT4
 QT4 KJ953
 K6
 KJ9
 98653
 A82

W	N	E	S
3H	1S	2H	2NT
//	3S	4H	X

On board 13 in match 11 I was surprised when EW still bid to game even though I had announced strength and a heart stop with my 2NT bid.

On the probably heart lead we can make 4S, in spite of the 5-0 break, but I was not going to bid game, so I was happy with being able to double them in 4H.

The sight of dummy's low trumps was good, and assured 3 tricks in my hand, but the 5-card spade suit meant that our spade winners had disappeared, and I had to rely on an outside trick in Tony's hand to defeat 4H.

When East led a club to dummy and the CT held, I knew what to lead after winning the first trump, and we duly took our 4 tricks for +200 and 70%.

M 12 AJ93
Bd 20 A98
Dlr W AJ6
Vul All KJ6
 76 KT52
 KQJ62 T73
 KQ742 985
 8 T54
 Q84
 54
 T3
 AQ9732

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

On board 20 in match 12 we were given a 2nd top because East tried to be too clever. Knowing we were expecting a heart lead, he surprised us with the S2! Tony surprised him right back by winning the first round with the S9 in hand and leading a spade straight back.

East now found the heart lead, but he made up for his earlier mistake by leading the HT, and now West was squeezed in the red suits when Tony cashed his 2 spades and 6 club tricks, for +690.

Over Tony's 1NT overcall, my 3C response is invitational, and Tony was in doubt about accepting with both a maximum and good club support.

If East had a singleton heart he may have had some justification for leading his spade suit, but he has 3 to an honour, and the heart lead should have been automatic. Then to waste his honour when he finally did lead the suit was inexcusable.

On a heart lead Tony can take the 3rd round and the make 10 tricks with the losing spade finesse.

M 13 T93
Bd 21 KJ74
Dlr N T84
Vul NS Q75
 J742 KQ
 T86 AQ32
 7 AQ6
 AK643 JT82
 A865
 95
 KJ9742
 9
W **N** **E** **S**
 / 1C 1D
 1S / 2NT /
 3NT //

On board 21 in match 13 we were up against a father/daughter Mixed Pair who were contenders for the overall lead, and the 85% score we got on this board made up for the bottom we got from them 3 boards later.

East got a free finesse at trick 1 when I led the D5 to her 3NT contract, but she did not follow normal avoidance play techniques after that to capitalize on her good fortune.

She immediately led the CJ, maybe with the intention of running it, or maybe hoping I was asleep enough to cover it with Qxx, but she won in dummy and cashed the other top honour hoping for a 2-2 break, but no luck there.

Since Tony had the club trick it was important now to drive out the SA before my diamonds were established, but she made the fatal mistake of giving Tony his club trick first, and then there was no escape. She did not take the heart finesse so went 2 off.

M 14 AK7
Bd 27 KT65
Dlr S 986
Vul Nil KQ3
 94 Q82
 42 Q87
 K742 AQT3
 AT976 542
 JT653
 AJ93
 J5
 J8
W **N** **E** **S**
 / 1NT /
 X 2H 3C //

On board 27 in match 14 I was tentative during the bidding, but if I now bid 3H Tony would have expected it to be at least a game try and would have gone to game.

At least by passing we got a plus score, but still only 30%.

I was very reluctant to pass, especially since we had a heart fit, and what I should have done playing pairs was to double. Then we would have got a top.

I led the DJ looking for a ruff, but that was also a fit for EW, which was a surprise to me as I thought that East had freely bid 3C with a good club fit, not just 542!

We collected out 6 tricks for +100, but that was poor reward when +140 was likely in either major.

M 17 A98
Bd 9 KJT972
Dlr N A94
Vul EW A
 KQJ642 T3
 - A865
 J3 872
 T9762 KQJ3
 75
 Q43
 KQT65
 854
W **N** **E** **S**
 1C /
 2S 3H /
 //

I play a simple overcall as lead-directional, which is why I do not overcall on Jack-high suits. A jump overcall is disruptive, and does not carry the same lead-directional connotations so maybe on a poor suit.

I do not know what arrangements EW had on board 9 in match 17, but at least this time it paid to lead the suit overcalled.

West made a simple overcall on quite a good distributional hand, but neither East nor West troubled us again in the bidding. 5C is a good sacrifice, but that suit did not get mentioned. Maybe they cannot show a two-suiter against the Precision Club, although many other partnerships could do so.

If East had led his partner's suit, 11 tricks is the limit, but he had what looked to be a very good lead of his own, so he led the CK, which did not trouble Tony in any way and he was able to get rid of both his spades losers on the diamond suit for 12 tricks and +480.

M 17 AT93
Bd 10 KJ652
Dlr E KQ8
Vul All T
 J7 K84
 AT974 83
 J75 A63
 753 KJ862

Q652
 Q
 T942
 AQ94

W	N	E	S
/	2D!	/	2S
X	/	3C	X

Timing is everything in bridge, as EW found out on board 10 in match 17, when they decided to get involved at the wrong time.

Tony's 2D showed 4 spades, at least 4 hearts, and 11-15 HCPs, and while there might be a play for games in spades opposite a maximum with a good fit, I elected to stay out of game.

Maybe West had a brain explosion, because nothing really explains why he wanted to get involved opposite a passed partner with only 30card support for the minor suits!

If Tony had a maximum he could have bid 3S over the double, and I would have certainly raised to game, but it is dangerous for him to bid again as I could be very weak with only 3 spades.

East was virtually forced to bid since West was also a passed hand, and when he bid my best suit the double was the easiest bid I made on the day. +800 was more than adequate compensation for our missed game.

M 18 T6
Bd 16 KJT973
Dlr W 73
Vul EW K96
 J732 AKQ4
 A 642
 AKJT542 Q6
 T AJ73

985
 Q85
 98
 Q8542

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

East was having in a little nap on board 16 in match 18 when West jumped to game after his negative double showed a 4-card spade suit in his hand!

Tony could not bid 2H with his hand as that showed an intermediate hand strength, and I was not inclined to get too excited with my poor hand, albeit reasonable support for Tony, so EW had a free hand.

I do not know whether West has a habit of over-valuing his hand for his jump bids, or whether East did not think about the trick-taking potential of his hand.

It may have been a bit much to get to slam, unless pushed by NS, but East should have realized that if West was prepared to bid game on the strength of his negative double (and only on a spade suit of Jxxx), he had slam potential, as long as West had second round control in hearts.

The way I look for this is to bid 5S over 4S, and West would be expected to bid 6S with 2nd round control, or 6H with 1st round control. Maybe then West would have thought about the grand slam.

M 18 QJ74
Bd 24 65
Dlr W Q95
Vul Nil AJ32
 A9865 2
 QJ7 K842
 2 J764
 Q985 KT76

KT3
 AT93
 AKT83
 4

W	N	E	S
/	/	/	1D!
1S	1NT	//	

On board 24 in match 20 I opened in 4th seat with a nebulous 1D, and Tony showed his spade control by bidding 1NT over the overcall, to show a stopper and 8-10.

Opposite a passed partner I was not inclined to invite game, although I thought that it must have been close with my spade honours to bolster his stopper, assuming that a spade was led.

East had 3 suits that he could try and develop, but none of them was the one his partner had overcalled in, and he was not inclined to lead that with only a singleton, considering that his partner had failed to open the bidding.

I would have selected a club, as it was the suit I need least help from partner to develop tricks in, and that would have restricted us to only 9 tricks. Luckily for us he led the H2, which Tony could identify as a 4-card suit so he rose with the HA won the 2nd round of diamonds with the DQ, confirming the finesse position, then gave up a spade, and EW could only cash 3 tricks for +180.

M 21	-		
Bd 26	AQJ53		
Dir E	Q654		
Vul All	A532		
K973		QJ64	
4		76	
872		KT93	
Q9876		KJT	
	AT852		
	KT982		
	AJ		
	4		
W	N	E	S
/	2H	/	1S
/	5C	/	4C
/	5H	/	5D
//			6H

On board 26 in match 21 I was looking for a grand slam when Tony responded 2H, and I bid 4C as a splinter to see if he had any interest. His 5C cue-bid showed some interest, and I was not surprised that he had no other Ace to show. My 5D was hoping for something else in his hand, like the DK or SK, but his 5H denied anything else. I assume that he would have bid 5S with the SK, but (correctly in my view) did not value his spade void highly, since it was my first-bid suit, which is why he signed off in 5H.

I was always going to slam, and reluctantly accepted his sign-off as denying the cards to make the grand slam a good bet.

East led a heart, and Tony won on the table and ruffed a spade, and led another heart to the table to ruff another spade. There are always 12 tricks even if the DK is wrong, but in a pairs game it is important to get as many tricks as possible.

Now he took the diamond finesse, and when this won he cashed the SA and ruffed another spade, which made dummy high – 13 tricks.