

2011 GNOT Teams Final by Richard Wallis

As usual the GNOT final was held at Tweed Heads, but this year it was at the Ultima Apartment complex, quite handy in Tweed Heads to where the players were staying, but not as plush a playing venue as in past years.

Tony Jackman, Ron Clark, Pele Rankin, Paul Hooykaas, Therese Tully and myself were playing in the event as Brisbane A, courtesy of an invitation from the Convenor to make up an even number of teams following the late withdrawal of a Victorian Country team.

We were off to a terrible start when we lost to a northern NSW team in match 1 and dropped straight into the Swiss. Things continued to go bad when we lost to a SA Provincial team in match 2, so we were near the bottom of the heap. However, when you are near the bottom it is often easier to go up than down, and we started to climb out of the mire.

Pele and Paul could not make it for the first 2 matches, and it is no coincidence that our fortunes changed when they arrived for match 3. Our first modest win was followed by a succession of larger ones so after 7 rounds we were leading the Swiss! Then we had a piece of luck you need to win. We were playing against Sydney 2, and Tony Nunn bid well to reach a slam in diamonds. The slam is cold, but I misread the opening lead from Therese to give him his 12th trick easily.

After trying unsuccessfully to squeeze out a 13th trick, Tony entered dummy at trick 10, no doubt intending to cash the CK set up at trick 1, but instead called for 'a club'. Accordingly Sartaj as dummy played the CT and the slam was defeated. The Director was called at the end of the hand and initially allowed the slam to make, giving us just a 16-14 win, but during the break the board was considered again, and because play was completed before the Director was called, the result was changed to 1 off, and our result was changed to a 22-8 win.

While even the first result did not put Sydney 2 into the top 2 places in the Swiss, the additional 6 VPs lifted us from 4th to 1st and we were in the quarter-finals. The fairytale continued in the QFs, where we played Sydney 5, and a moderate standard of play from both teams had us in front by just 2 Imps after 20 boards. We were now in the semi-finals against our friend David Beauchamp in Sydney 3, but were comprehensively beaten. It is not that we played badly in the SF, just that the other team played very well, and they continued the form to take out the final comfortably against Sydney 1.

M 1	7				On board 11 in the first match Therese could have bid spades at any of the 4 levels with her hand, but chose the aggressive approach to shut the opponents out of the auction.
Bd 11	J53				
Dlr S	972				
Vul Nil	AK9732				Some players with North's hand would reason that partner has opened the bidding, and I have AK in another suit, so I will double, but not this North.
	AKQJ95		8632		
	T872		94		
	J		QT86		Many times that would be wrong, but not on this occasion and Therese lost her obvious 5 tricks for 2 off and -100.
	J8		QT4		
		T4			
		AKQ6			Even doubled this would have been a good result if Tony and Ron at the other table had found their way to 5C, but this is a lucky result and they sensibly played in a part score in their 5-3 diamond fit for +130 and 1 Imp.
		AK543			
		65			
W	N	E	S		
			1D		
4S	//				Even though you own the boss suit, a simple overcall of 1S on the West hands gives NS too much room to move and could enable them to get to 5C.

M 2 7
Bd 26 AJT73
Dir E K62
Vul All J742
 A9643 T85
 Q86 K4
 A873 Q
 T AKQ9865

 KQJ2
 952
 JT954
 3

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

On board 26 in match 2 I forgot the maxim that when a contract looks too easy, look for pitfalls, and fell a long way.

The best action by me with my short club and 3 trumps is to pass Therese's double for penalties, and we can comfortably take this 3 off on a cross-ruff, but I chose to bid my 5-card suit.

North led the S7, and unfortunately I did not suspect that this was a singleton, and when I saw dummy it looked like we had missed game!

Game definitely looked like a good bet when North rose with the HA at trick 2 and led a club. Even now club leads from the table will diminish South's trump power, but not suspecting the fowl breaks, I led a trump as I had diamond control and good clubs for discards.

South drew dummy's trumps and put me in dummy for the last time with a heart where I found out that my precious discards had vanished, and I finished 2 off.

At the other table Ron innocently led the unbid suit (diamonds), and declarer won on the table and finished with 10 tricks for -620 and 13 Imps away.

M 4 954
Bd 23 72
Dir S QT54
Vul All AK73
 QJT72 86
 KQT3 965
 J3 AK72
 J4 Q652

 AK3
 AJ84
 986
 T98

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

On board 23 in match 4 West's 2C showed the majors, and Therese's double was for takeout.

She does not have to have such a good hand for the take-out double, but I had nowhere to go, so decided to take my chances in defense since my strength was in the majors.

I led the CT (a trump may have been better), and Therese won with the CK and led back a diamond, and declarer made a basic mistake when she took the opportunity to ruff a diamond in the long trump hand before leading a spade.

I was thus able to play 2 rounds of trumps, and when I won the next spade, a club to Therese and the DQ set up 3 heart tricks for me and 2 off and +500.

If I lead a trump we could not do any better than declarer did for herself. At the other table NS went off in a part score for another +100 and 12 Imps.

M 4 J92
Bd 25 J43
Dir N QJ8743
Vul EW T
 854 AQ7
 AKQT8 765
 2 AKT65
 J532 84

 KT63
 92
 9
 AKQ976

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

On board 25 in match 4 NS sailed into 4H after my overcall, and Therese led her CT, from either 1 or 3 cards by our methods.

It cost nothing to cash 2 clubs, and when Therese showed up with the singleton, I played back the C9 (asking for a spade return) in the hope that one of her trumps was bigger than the H7.

She duly ruffed high and returned a spade, and with the finesse failing, declarer had to concede 1 off.

Of course I could not lead back the top club for this ruff as declarer would (and did) throw a spade when Therese ruffed, and could then win the SA draw trumps in 2 rounds and throw another spade from dummy on the CJ.

That would allow 1 spade to be ruffed in dummy and another to be thrown on the DK.

At the other table Paul and Pele did not get too high on their modest values and we gained 6 Imps.

M 5 KT98753
Bd 7 J7
Dlr S Q8
Vul All 54
 J62 Q
 AT5 Q943
 AK52 J964
 AKQ J876
 A4
 K862
 T73
 T932
W N E S
 2C / 2D /
 2NT / 3C /
 3NT //

Board 7 in match 5 looked like the kind of hand to Therese that you waste the impetus of the opening lead setting up your suit but can never get in to cash it, and she gave some thought to leading another suit hoping to help me.

Luckily she did lead the ST, and when I played the SA and returned one, she was able to claim 7 tricks for 3 down and +300.

The real fun was at the other table where North must have thought that they were given a 7-card suit for a reason, and that reason was to bid 3S over the 2C artificial opening and disrupt EW.

The disruption was not for very long, and although +200 in 3SX was scant reward for the 5C, 5D or even 5H available due to favourable layouts, it was more than adequate since the final contract was more likely to be 3NT.

This equated to 11 Imps to us.

M 7 6532
Bd 11 KT976
Dlr S 7
Vul Nil 732
 KQJ84 -
 - QJ832
 AJT963 K5
 94 AKJT65
 AT97
 A54
 Q842
 Q8
W N E S
 1S / 2C / 1D
 2S / 3H /
 3NT / 4H /
 5C //

On board 11 in match 7 we both had good hands but no fit, and under those circumstances, 3NT is often the best contract, as here.

However voids, even in partner's suit, tend to make you nervous playing in NT, so we settled in our best fit as we could see it. Actually our best fit and the one we can apparently make slam in is diamonds, South's opening bid.

South was warned off the lead of the SA and instead chose to lead the D2, covered by the D9 in dummy, but won in hand by Therese with the DK to preserve the finesse for later.

Heart and spade ruffs followed after which Therese cashed the top clubs and was delighted to see the CQ fall. Since the diamond finesse was marked by South's minimum of a 3-card suit, that meant 11 tricks were in the bag, and when Therese cashed the last club South discarded a diamond, so she made 12 tricks for +420.

At the other table they also stayed out of 3NT, but also stayed out of 5C, so we gained 6 Imps.

M 8 QJT
Bd 20 65
Dlr W 765
Vul All AJ962
 A73 K95
 AQ3 K874
 A82 KQT943
 KT75 -
 8642
 JT92
 J
 Q843
W N E S
 1C / 1D /
 1NT / 2H /
 3D / 3S! /
 4C / 4H /
 4S / 6D //

On board 20 in match 8 we were playing against recently returned Internationals Tony Nunn and Sartaj Hans, and Tony bid aggressively to 6D, which can be made by cashing 1 trump followed by the top hearts in dummy and leading the remaining heart from dummy. If I ruff the HK remains for a spade discard and subsequent spade ruff, and if I discard, the heart loser is ruffed high in dummy.

The pair cue-bid first or second round controls, which explains all the cue-bids of the King high suits, so Therese had no indication what to lead, especially since I did not double 4C.

When Therese led the C2, I read this as more likely to be a singleton rather than from length, and rose with the CA, setting up the CK for an easy 12 tricks.

Greed is hard to overcome and now Tony set about running his trumps to see if a double squeeze would give him 13 tricks, but that was never going to happen as Therese had the clubs under control.

As already mentioned in the preamble, when he did go to dummy to cash the CK he mistakenly called for 'a club', which under the rules calls for the lowest club in dummy to be played and the slam went 1 off, giving us +13 instead of -12, or 6 additional VPs.

M 10 JT87653
Bd 15 T
Dir S A
Vul NS QT93
 4 Q92
 764 KQJ932
 KJ97432 -
 65 A842
 AK
 A85
 QT865
 KJ7

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

On board 15 in the final match of the Swiss we owed our good fortune to EW confusion about the meaning of the jump to 4D. We were leading the Swiss, but needed a good result to at least hold onto second, and were up against a strong Victorian team also vying for a spot in the Quarter-finals. EW at our table were a nice pairs of lads in their early twenties.

West meant 4D as natural, although this seems a dubious bid when Therese showed at least a 4-card suit by her opening bid, and East thought that it was agreeing hearts, although he must have been wondering where the diamonds had disappeared to?

Therese got us off to the best start with the H5, and when declarer chose to exit with the SQ (nothing to gain and everything to lose), she followed this up with 2 more rounds of trumps to take the contract 5 for +1100.

At the other table they played in a mundane 4S for 11 tricks and -650, but 10 Imps to us.

M 10 6
Bd 28 A9632
Dir W J9
Vul NS A9652
 J82 QT9543
 Q5 874
 7642 AT8
 QJ43 K
 AK7
 KJT
 KQ53
 T87

W	N	E	S
/	2H!	2S	4H
4S	/	/	X
//			

On the last board of the Swiss my 2H opening showed less than an opening hand and hearts and a minor, and East made a somewhat light natural overcall, over which Therese bid 4H.

EW do not have many defensive tricks, but they also do not have many offensive tricks, and should have let us have the contract, but perhaps expecting East to have a better hand for his overcall, West offered up 4S as a sacrifice, and Therese was happy to oblige with a double.

When you have the opponents outgunned with HCPs, it is a good idea to lead trumps as soon as possible, and with that in mind, Therese led out her trumps from the top.

Dummy was now dead, and East was able to take only 5 tricks, for +1100 to us, against -650 from 4H making 11 tricks at the other table, so we gained a somewhat lucky 10 Imps, which was enough to get us to the quarter-finals.

QF K843
Bd 3 K6
Dir S T65
Vul EW KT82
 AT7652 J9
 52 JT874
 42 J73
 J93 765
 Q
 AQ93
 AKQ98
 AQ4

W	N	E	S
/	2D	/	2C!
/	4D!	/	3D
/	6D	//	4S!

The quarter-final of 2/10-board segments was a low scoring match and we just got over the line courtesy of an unexpectedly good result from board 3.

After I showed a powerful hand with long diamonds (the top trumps made up for the lack of a 6th diamond) Therese had definite slam interest, so she used Minorwood, my 4S showing 4 or 1 key cards.

Against 6D East led the HJ, and now thanks to the club break and heart position 13 tricks are available when trumps divide 3-2, but Therese was content to take the 12 tricks and gave up a spade.

After the HJ lead, 12 tricks were possible even if the trumps were 4-1, but that would involve finessing the H9 at trick 2, and then drawing 3 trumps before playing clubs hoping for a 3-3 club break or West to have Jx.

I did not expect to pick up a slam swing on such a simple hand, but at the other table South only opened 1D!, and NS finished in 3NT by North, making 12 tricks for -490 and a surprising 10 Imps to us.