

2011 Gold Coast Seniors Pairs by Richard Wallis

This was the year of the 50th Gold Coast Congress and fittingly, it was the biggest yet. We had some players from devastated Christchurch who had to pull out, but others who still came and had the carnage to deal with upon return home. First-timers came from the USA, Canada, Pakistan and China, as well as some from old Blighty, and a few overseas stars returned, including PO Sunderland, Bill Hirst, Howard Melbourne, Michelle Brunner and John Holland.

Added excitement, but extra work for the organizers, was the appearance of the WBF president, and the European Bridge Federation President. I do not believe that the WBF President played, but Therese played with the EBF president in the Mixed Teams on Friday.

John Brockwell and I comfortably made the final of the Seniors Pairs on the Saturday, but we stayed in cruise mode during Sunday and Monday's final, finishing in 13th place, well behind the runaway but fading leaders, Hasmat Ali and Bal Krishan. Tony Jackman and Ron Clark were the best of the Queenlanders, within touch of the leaders until the last round when an average round dropped them to 4th.

Q 1	T				We had started with 4 good boards in a row, but these were due to our opponent's mistakes rather than our good play, and then board 5 came along to allow us get into the action.
Bd 5	AKT764				
Dlr N	AQT743				
Vul NS	-				My good hand was somewhat soured when John responded in my void, so I went slowly with a simple rebid of my second suit to await developments.
AK4		J87652			
J32		8			
J986		K2			John's next bid was the key to the hand as his jump to game was the 'delayed-game raise' and it showed primary support for my suit!
K83		J654			
	Q93				Over an initial spade bid from John I might have investigated further, but the grand slam seemed out of the question so I bid what I thought was a reasonable spot.
	Q95				
	5				
	AQT972				
W	N	E	S		East led the unbid suit, so the CA was absolutely useless to me, but when West won the AK and led a trump, I won on the table, which confirmed the break, and then I was able to ruff 2 diamonds on the table, and set the suit up for 12 tricks.
/	1H	/	2C		
/	2D	/	4H		
/	6H	//			

Q 2	Q986532				On board 12 I tempered my jump overcall to just the 2-level at the adverse vulnerability, but there was no denying EW after the negative double.
Bd 12	T97				
Dlr W	QT2				
Vul NS	-				I tried the old chestnut of leading the lowest card (S2) when I was known to have a long suit and John got the message and gave me my club ruff, but what next?
4		K			
AK83		Q652			The 1C bid only promised 3+, so the club fit was not apparent, so I could not read John's C6 return as high, so returned a diamond, sacrificing our 4 th trick and allowing the contract to succeed.
AJ9		K65			We would have got a better score by taking the phantom sacrifice which is only 1 off, and may have prompted EW to bid 5H.
QT974		AJ852			
	AJT7				
	J4				
	8743				
	K63				
W	N	E	S		At other tables, West opened a Precision 2C, thus the 5-5 fit (and no discards) was obvious when dummy went down, and my hand returned a trump after getting the club ruff for 1 down.
1C	2S	X	3S		
4H	//				

Q 1 QT84
Bd 16 AQT8
Dir EW J
Vul W KJ32
9 5
KJ652 743
QT963 K872
76 AQT84

AKJ7632
9
A54
95

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

On board 16 in the 1st qualifying round the bidding went a little crazy when West came back in with 1NT! It transpired later that East forgot his partner was a passed hand, and thought the 1NT was strong.

I had good shape and good support, so upgraded my hand to a jump raise, which sparked John's interest in slam.

He knew we had a 7-4 fit by my jump response (not so for a simple raise), so the SQ was not relevant, but the 5D response established a missing Ace.

A club lead would have taken the contract off at trick 1, but West led the DT, and for some unknown reason East did not cover this, so the DJ won on the table.

It was obvious to us that as a passed hand the 1NT showed the red suits, so rather than try and guess the club suit (impossible), John took the heart finesse and was able to discard a club loser for 12 tricks.

At some other tables West did lead a club, so +980 was a lucky 94%.

Q 2 AK
Bd 5 QJ972
Dir N A85
Vul NS A85
J542 T873
K T54
KJ53 QT76
KQT3 96

Q96
A863
92
J742

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

On board 5 in the 2nd qualifying I felt that I had many prospects for game when John gave me a simple raise, although playing 4-card suits, he could have had just 3-card support.

The sight of dummy fuelled my optimism, as I could discard a club on the SQ and lose just a heart, diamond and club.

Playing pairs, 10 tricks may be a bad score if the HK was onside and doubleton, or the ST was singleton in the West hand, but I made up my mind quickly to take no chances with what was a good contract, maybe not reached by every NS pair.

Accordingly I unblocked the spades, and went to dummy with the only entry (HA) to take my pitch before leading trumps again.

Very pleasantly the HK came down singleton off-side, so I made 11 tricks the hard way, for a 90% score, possibly undeserved.

Q 2 A9732
Bd 6 Q8643
Dir E 8
Vul EW 85
Q4 KT865
K JT97
QJT765 K3
QJ97 43

J
A52
A942
AKT62

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

On board 6 in the 2nd qualifying I was put to a guess that I did not need to take.

I had what was almost the perfect negative double of the 1D overcall, and was disappointed when John rebid 1NT, which did not improve my hand.

Having already limited my hand by the negative double, and expecting more bidding, I decided that my hand was worth 2 bids, so in preparation for my next bid of 3H, I bid 2S. I am still waiting for my next chance to bid on this hand.

Since I had already limited my hand I should, of course, have brought John back into the bidding by bidding 2D, and getting his better major.

According to Deep Finesse, 2H can make 9 tricks, and 2S is makeable, but the line for 8 tricks in spades is not obvious.

For the second hand in a row I dropped the singleton HK off side, but I still only made 7 tricks for a surprisingly good score of 59%.

Q 2 K98
Bd 19 T9754
Dlr S J
Vul EW A743
 J75 62
 J86 32
 96 QT7532
 KQT62 J95
 AQT43
 AKQ
 AK84
 8
W N E S
 / 2D! / 2C
 / 4D / 2S
 / 5H / 4NT
 // 6S

On board 19 in the 2nd qualifying my 2D response to the strong 2C opening by John showed 8+ HCPs and no shape.

I had 2 key cards and a singleton in response to his 2S rebid, so I showed the supports and the singleton with my 4D rebid and John took over.

He made an easy 13 tricks when the hearts and spades behaved, by cashing the top spades and hearts in his hand and entering dummy with a trump to cash the hearts.

He thought afterwards, that with only 4 losers to start with and all of them covered by my key cards and splinter, he should have made a move towards the grand slam!

For the grand slam, he just needs a favourable spade position, and to be able to ruff 2 diamonds on the table, all of which were there, he just has to be careful not to lead any trumps, otherwise the SJ in West's hand will be promoted.

In fact many pairs did not even bid the small slam, as we scored 74% anyway.

F 1 AK3
Bd 2 A93
Dlr E A4
Vul NS T8743
 764 JT8
 5 KQJT842
 QJ 862
 AKJ9652 -
 Q952
 76
 KT9753
 Q
W N E S
 / X / 4H /
 // 4S

On board 2 in the first round of the final I was very nervous when I doubled 4H, as although it is not strictly for take-out, just showing values, I did not want John to bid 5D.

I could not bring myself to pass the hand out, and I think that passing 4Hwx is the best bid, but luckily I had a good spade holding, even if there were only three!

Not that it would have made any difference, but although the CA would have seemed like a logical lead, instead West led his singleton in partner's suit.

John won in dummy, cashed the top trumps, and then led out the top diamonds preparing to ruff in dummy, but when the QJ dropped, he could draw trumps, noting a 3-3 break and claim 11 tricks for +650.

If the diamonds had not been favourable, 4S was likely to fail, and we would have got a bad score instead of 81% for the lucky lie and trump break.

4Hwx would have netted 5 tricks when 4S was failing, so it better.

F 1 JT95
Bd 6 9843
Dlr E 42
Vul EW QT8
 AK3 62
 A752 KQ
 K98 AQ53
 AK6 J9752
 Q874
 JT6
 JT76
 43
W N E S
 1H / 1D! /
 4D / 2C /
 6D // 5D /

On board 6 in the first round of the final I was caught between 3 unpalatable choices.

I had the points for a 12-14 1NT, but did not like the 2245 shape.

If I opened 1C I was not strong enough to reverse into diamonds or rebid 1NT, so I would be forced to rebid 2C on that motley suit, unless I was lucky enough for John to respond 1D, or 2C forcing.

If I opened 1D and rebid 2C, John would not expect longer clubs.

In retrospect since I have rebid problems otherwise, I should have shown my points with 1NT, or, heaven forbid, pass.

John's 4D was agreeing diamonds, and probably Minorwood, but I did not want to cloud the issue with 4S, so signed off in 6D.

Since 6NT is an easy contract with the clubs 3-2, I strongly suspect that even if the diamonds had been 3-3 and I had made 6D, we would have got a poor score, but probably better than the big fat zero we got for -100.

F 1 AJ7542
Bd 11 764
Dlr S AQ5
Vul Nil 9
 QT983 K6
 AK8 T92
 4 KJ976
 QT72 KJ8
 -
 QJ53
 T832
 A6543

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

On board 11 in the first round of the final I was kept out of trouble when West chose to open my longest suit in front of me.
 Having opened 1S, West had nowhere to go when his partner bid 2D, as 2NT would have shown a stronger hand, so he simply rebid his motley suit.
 Since I had a 6-card holding, I thought that the final contract would not be spades, but I was wrong again when East made a game try with 3S, declined by West.
 I did not want to give the spade distribution away by doubling, although my pips are too small anyway, but I may have risked it if West had bid 4S.
 I led the C9, ruffed the return, and exited with a heart, won by declarer in hand to run the S8!
 My trump length still prevailed, and we took it 1 off for an 88% score, so I did not need to double after all.

F 1 AJ93
Bd 15 T53
Dlr S JT92
Vul NS Q7
 54 KQ7
 AKQ762 J8
 KQ4 85
 K2 AJ9863
 T862
 94
 A763
 T54

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

Board 15 in the first round of the final proved what a fickle game match-pointed pairs really is.
 The 2NT rebid is forcing to game, and a 3C response would have found about 17+, but a fit had not been identified, and slam seemed unlikely, so 3NT became the final contract.
 By way of the friendly cards, we have 12 tricks as soon as we gain the lead, so NS have to cash their 2 Aces to get any MPs, and NS were part way along when North led the DJ and South took the DA instead of ducking.
 However, when he was not psychic enough to find the spade switch, John made 12 tricks for +490.
 This was 100% to us, which was hard to understand, unless other EWs preferred to play in their 6-2 heart fit, as it seems unlikely that every other NS took their 2 Aces, or EW got to slam off 2 Aces.

F 2 86
Bd 1 J5
Dlr N KQ87
Vul Nil 76432
 942 JT53
 A764 KT983
 T532 J64
 T9 J
 AKQ7
 Q2
 A9
 AKQ85

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

On board 1 in the second round of the final we were the lucky recipients of a bidding stuff-up by NS.
 North thought that the 3NT rebid showed at least 25 HCPs, so made a slam try with 4NT, and South accepted but offered 6C as an alternative contract.
 North must have forgotten about his 5-card club suit, and still bid 6NT, bemused by the 6C bid, and then the spotlight fell on John.
 If the final contract had been 6C, the spotlight is even more on John, as only the heart opening lead and continuation beats 6C, but John picked a good time to have a look at dummy and led the HA.
 We took our 5 heart tricks in 6NT and conceded the rest for +200 and 100%.
 On a non-heart lead to 6NT, I'm caught in a 3-suit squeeze as well as a guard squeeze, but it looks like 11 tricks are the limit, but a heart can be discarded from either hand in 6C unless our tricks are taken at tricks 1 and 2.

F 2 J74
Bd 8 864
Dir W KJ
Vul Nil 98643
 A32 KQ985
 AQJ73 T5
 943 Q82
 75 AT2

 T6
 K92
 AT765
 KQJ

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

On board 8 in the second round of the final we passed up our 5-3 spade fit in favour of 3NT with a flimsy diamond guard, and were richly rewarded when the cards favoured us.

I could have made another forcing bid after John rebid 2H and found out about the 3-card spade support, but instead chose to rebid 3NT and leave the opening leader on more of a guess.

The diamond lead was a little disconcerting until dummy tracked, but then our 3-3 holding gave me hope of a 4-3 break after North played the DK at trick 1.

North continued with the DJ at trick 2 and now I knew I was in with a chance, as South could not afford to overtake without giving me a free trick in the suit.

North led the C9 at trick 3 and South was obviously under great pressure on the running of the spades and I took the heart finesse with great confidence and racked up 11 tricks for 92%.

F 2 Q4
Bd 19 2
Dir S AQT92
Vul EW AJT52
 AKJ765 8
 63 AKJ97
 J63 K54
 98 KQ74

 T932
 QT854
 87
 63

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

On board 19 in the second round of the final John's 2D was going to show a weak 2S, and North intended his double to show diamonds.

I was pretty sure that John was going to pass my 2S response, but if by some miracle he did turn out to have a weak 2H (NS have a lot of spades) then we will be in game.

Having shown diamonds by way of the double, North decided to compete for the part-score and show his second suit, but South was either asleep during the bidding, or just assumed that the first double showed a good hand, and passed 3CX instead of converting.

Both are 5-2 fits, and neither is a good save against a part-score, but clubs played a trick better for us and +500 was adequate compensation for +110 or +140.

This is why pre-empts work, the opposition often feel compelled to act, and then run into an ambush by the responding hand.

F 2 AK4
Bd 27 KT3
Dir S T75
Vul Nil KJ74
 JT3 8762
 AQ5 9872
 AQ9862 4
 2 QT93

 Q95
 J64
 KJ3
 A865

W **N** **E** **S**
 1D X / 2NT
 / 3NT //

Board 27 in the second round of the final was a nothing board, but thanks to a sleepy East, it produced the most startling second trick of the whole week.

John's 2NT was natural, almost an opening bid, and since I had a maximum 1NT opening and would have accepted an invitation, I pushed on to 3NT.

The opening lead was the D8, and after a bit of thought, John called for the DT, which held the trick, just as the 'rule of 11' predicted.

For some reason he decided to duck a club, instead of taking the finesse in the normal manner for 4 possible tricks, so he called for the C4 from the table, and East play low routinely (as many would, but the C9 guarantees only 2 tricks for NS), and when John ducked with the C5, all West could contribute was the C2!

Since West had both heart honours, and they are marked after East had the CQ, 9 tricks were now routine for +400.

F 3 K9
Bd 2 K875
Dir E AT95
Vul NS A65
 AJ87 Q65432
 T3 Q9
 J7 K432
 KJT92 3

 T
 AJ642
 Q86
 Q874

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

On board 2 in the third round of the final we took advantage of the boss suit and the vulnerability to steal the hand.

South had to bide their time until my spade suit was revealed after the nebulous 2D opening bid, as they were not strong enough to double initially, but came to life when I converted.

North is the one with the good hand, but could not rely on South for too many tricks after failing to act on the first round, so meekly went quietly.

A slightly different lie of the cards could have made 4S cold, but not this time and I went 2 off for -100.

Since 4H is cold, and most NS pairs should at least get +140 or +170, I expected -100 to be a good score, but this was not the case as it only score 54%.

This was because only 4 pairs played in hearts NS, 2 going off in 4H, and 2 going off in 5H, one 2 off for a cold top to EW.

F 3 62
Bd 6 8
Dir E K98
Vul EW QT97653
 AK984 Q5
 A J976543
 A76 QJ5
 A842 J

 JT73
 KQT2
 T432
 K

W N E S
 4H // 3D! /

Board 6 in the third final caused some discussion between our opponents as to what constitutes a reasonable pre-empt at adverse vulnerability. 3D was a pre-empt in hearts.

East only looked at his partner's hand, and realized that opposite that hand, 4H was cold most of the time, without realizing that West had a rock-crusher, and may well have gone onto slam if he believed the 3H bid.

Place some of West's good cards in the hands of NS, and East could go for a big number.

East thought he was on surer ground as we were leaving the table when he realized that the hand was cold for 10 tricks, and that the diamond finesse that West lost was illusory, as the diamond losers could be discarded on the spades.

One declarer made 10 tricks in 4H, one 9 tricks in 3NT, but all others went off, so only 54%.

F 3 9
Bd 8 J97
Dir W AQ94
Vul Nil AJ876
 KJ82 AQT64
 K542 AT63
 JT2 7653
 K6 -

 753
 Q8
 K8
 QT9432

W N E S
 / 1C 1S 3C!
 3S 4C 4S 5C
 X //

On board 8 in the third round of the final NS outbid us and all we could do was take the money! But what a difference the right lead makes.

South pre-empted over my overcall, and then sacrificed over our pushy 4S, but they were right.

The HA was calling out to me as the opening lead, but I decided to 'play safe' by leading the D6 instead.

John's diamond holding was such that declarer did not need the club finesse as he could cash the CA, then discard all of dummy's hearts on the good diamonds while John ruffed with his CK. -550 was an absolute bottom and put paid to our slim chances of a revival.

On the lead of the HA, we get to cash 2 hearts and a spade, and if declarer guesses to finesse in trumps, we get average for +100, otherwise +300 is about 80%.

F 3 K8763
Bd 12 A63
Dlr W 8
Vul NS QJ63
 5 J9
 KT Q9854
 K9653 T4
 T9874 AK52
 AQT42
 J72
 AQJ72
 -
W **N** **E** **S**
 2NT / 5C //

John picked a good time to open with a weak hand for the minors on board 12 in the second round of the final, and by the time South had a chance to bid the bidding had reached the 5-level, and a 5-card holding in his best suit was known to be on his left!

A double by South would have given them a lucky result if North had bid spades instead of passing for penalties, but they went quietly, and I was undoubled.

5C was obviously a good contract against the spade game for NS, and I was even more delighted when South showed out of clubs, as that meant that 6 was on. Even 5CX was worth over 90%.

One EW pair bid to 6C over the NS game, and another to 7C over the NS slam, but since no NS played in slam, they lost heavily.

F 3 Q9743
Bd 27 QT63
Dlr S JT4
Vul Nil 5
 2 AKJ865
 K875 9
 952 AK763
 AQJT9 K
 T
 AJ42
 Q8
 876432
W **N** **E** **S**
 / 2S! / /
 X //

North stymied my good hand on board 27 in the third round of the final by opening with a weak 2S in front of me, but when John re-opened with a double, I knew what to do.

I led the DK, getting count, cashed the SK and then led out the diamonds, declarer winning in hand.

Desperate for tricks, declarer took the losing heart finesse, and John cashed the CA and then led the CQ, ruffed by declarer with the S3 and over-ruffed by me.

We were in control now and declarer only made 3 tricks, for 5 off and 1100 to us.

Of course I had a slight pause when North bid 2S in front of me, and after play was over Declarer asked to see John's hand, but he was satisfied with what he saw.