

2015 Northern Suburbs Imps Pair by Richard Wallis

I have not played in this event many times since it began, and this year it seemed a good Congress to have my first game with established National Director, Peter Busch. We started with a big win in match 1, but it was much harder after that as it lined us up against the top 3 seeds for the next 3 matches. Moderate wins in these matches somehow put us into first place at the lunch break.

A 20 Imp loss in match 5 brought us back to reality, and while we continued to threaten after that, a couple of losses in between the wins ruined our chances of a first-placed finish. Thus we started the last match only realistically looking for a minor place, but a draw even denied us that, leaving us in 6th place.

The event was won by Tony Hutton and Malcolm Carter, who came from the middle of the field on Sunday with a series of big wins. The only time they were in first place was after the last match, which is the best time to be there! Second were Terry and Louise Collins, with John and Ivy Luck in third place.

Nonetheless it was a great day and I was glad to persuade Peter to come out as a player, rather than in his usual role as Director. We may have better luck at our next outing together.

M 1	8				On board 7 in the first match South did not heed the warning of her partner's pass of her 1S opening bid, and unwisely showed her second suit over my balancing bid of 2D.
Bd 7	QT982				
Dlr S	9853				
Vul All	QT5				South's hand does have good shape, but it is a minimum in HCPs, with short honours in the red suits, and therefore going to the 3-level does not seem wise.
A962				K53	
764				A53	
J74				AQT62	
KJ7				42	My 2D contract was not going to be hard to make, and if the early play showed the meagre values in the North hand, or if a spade ruff was threatened, the DA is likely to be cashed, dropping the stiff DK, enabling 9 tricks.
	QJT74				
	KJ				
	K				Peter led the D4, and South was in trouble when her DK fell under my DA.
	A9863				
W	N	E	S		
/	/	2D	3C!		Double-dummy, South can make 8 tricks in clubs, but she did not have the advantage of seeing all of the hands, and she finished 3 off for +300 to us, which amounted to +7.
//					
M 2	AKQ7				Board 11 in the second match was too hard for most pairs, including us, and we played a cold slam in a part-score.
Bd 11	-				
Dlr S	AQT752				I doubled on the first round intending to bid diamonds next to show a good hand, or raise 1S by Peter to game if I got lucky. When 2H came back to me I was loathe to double again in case Peter had only hearts and converted to penalties, so I showed my longest suit, at the same time inferring a good hand.
Vul Nil	K87				
943				J652	
AQ62				KJ87	
K4				J9	
QJ64				T92	East led the H7, and after ruffing I entered dummy with the CA and successfully finessed the DQ, drawing trumps in 2 rounds, thus guaranteeing 12 tricks.
	T8				
	T9543				
	863				This should have been the end of it, but when I ruffed the spade in dummy and a heart back to my hand to run my trumps, inexplicably EW discarded their clubs, and my C8 took the 13 th trick.
	A53				
W	N	E	S		
1C	X	1H	/		This board was a chance for a pick-up, and was not a loss, as we actually gained 0.2 Imps averaged against each other pair.
2H	3X	//	/		

M 3 K983
Bd 21 873
Dir N A94
Vul NS A82
 Q65 JT4
 AQ52 JT
 62 KJ7
 K965 QJ743
 A72
 K964
 QT853
 T
W N E S
 / / 2D!
 / 2H! / 2NT
 / 3NT //

Board 21 in the third match was a classic case of a revealing auction being ignored by North to reach a poor contract.

The 2D opening bid by South showed a likely unbalanced hand with diamonds and 11-15 HCPs, 2H asked for clarification, and 2NT showed at least a doubleton in both majors, and therefore, a likely singleton Club, and North has only A82!

Peter listened to the explanation of the bidding, and led the C5, which was a nice surprize to me. Declarer ducked a club to my CJ, and the club return clarified the position for Peter to unblock the CK and set up my club tricks.

Declarer had no chance in 3NT on a club lead unless Peter had the singleton DK, and when this did not happen, I won trick 5 with the DK and cashed my clubs, on the last of which Peter discarded the H2.

Declarer discarded hearts as well, and covered the HJ, so Peter was able to win three hearts for 4 off, and +400 for 8 Imps.

M 4 95
Bd 30 K873
Dir E K932
Vul Nil JT7
 Q2 T87643
 J952 T6
 8765 J4
 943 K65
 AKJ
 AQ4
 AQT
 AQ82
W N E S
 // 2D! 3NT

On board 30 in the fourth match I opened with a very frisky, and many would say unwise, Multi-2D, but I got lucky.

South did not appear to be prepared for such a good hand after a weak-two opening, and bid a wide-ranging and possibly ill-defined 3NT.

Also apparently North did not expect a 25-27 HCP hand for the 3NT overcall, as he made no attempt to look for slam.

Peter led the D8 and Declarer overtook the DT in dummy at trick 3 to lead the CJ, making 13 easy tricks when the club finesse worked and the suit broke 3-3. He did not even have to take the spade finesse.

A couple of other Easts also opened with either the Multi or a direct 2S, not always keeping NS out of slam, but enough NS pairs bid the slam to gain us a modest 4 Imps.

M 5 J86
Bd 3 AK54
Dir S 6
Vul EW J9865
 AK532 Q974
 QT 9
 K9 AT8753
 QT42 AK
 T
 J87632
 QJ42
 73
W N E S
 1S / 4H! /
 4S //

Board 3 in the fifth match showed the advantages of having defined outside values when showing support via a splinter bid.

In my view, while 4S is obviously safe, East has too much potential in the minor suits to ignore both the long suit and minor suit controls by showing the singleton heart.

I prefer a splinter bid in support of a major suit to show a range of around 9-12 HCPs, and definitely not 3 controls and the trump Queen.

EW may not get to slam via a 2D response, but at least the game-force will be established early, or maybe even immediately if playing 2/1, and allow cue-bidding to start.

Having such good controls it was easy for West to ruff the second heart in dummy, draw trumps in 3 rounds, and set up the diamonds with 2 ruffs for 12 tricks.

Not many pairs got to slam, judging by the result of only a 1 Imp gain to us for -680, so the loss would have been high if EW had bid slam.

M 6 87652
Bd 15 T6
Dir S AJT8
Vul NS 43
 QJT K943
 Q872 A943
 4 KQ9
 AK872 J6

 A
 KJ5
 76532
 QT95

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

On board 15 in the sixth match the defence slipped a little, and Peter took full advantage.

North got the defence off to a good start by leading the S5 won perforce by South, who led the C5 after some thought. Peter ran this around to the CJ in dummy and played HA and H3, so South was in again.

South now exited with the D7 and North was in the spotlight, A spade lead now would lead to a ruff and 1 off, but Peter had played the SQ at trick 1, hiding the SJ and ST, and North was taken in and led back a club, allowing Peter to draw the final trump and claim 10 tricks for +420 and almost 6 lmps to us.

Note that if you are going to falsecard in spades, when South plays the SA at trick 1 North knows you have the SQ, so that is the best card to play. The SJ may work, but the ST is never likely to work as if South has AJ he may finesse the SJ, expecting the SQ to be in the North hand after the lead of the S5, often promising an Honour.

M 6 QT9873
Bd 18 J862
Dir E Q3
Vul NS 4
 J64 A5
 A Q943
 T982 7654
 AKJ72 T53

 K2
 KT75
 AKJ
 Q986

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

On board 18 in the sixth match I made the mistake in a part-score hand of trying for a 4-4 heart fit when I knew we already had at least a 6-2 spade fit.

I thought that I was safe in that I could bid 2S over a 2D response, or simply pass a 2H response, but I forgot that we had agreed to play extended Stayman, so Peter rebid 3D to show a maximum (out of 14-16), and at least one 4-card major.

Even now our agreed system prevented me from signing off in 3S, as this denied spades and showed 4 hearts, so all I could do was rebid 4D and ask Peter to bid his major suit.

The CA was cashed by West at trick 1 and with the bad trump break, Peter finished 2 off for -200 and a poor score.

I knew that instead of my bidding 4D, Peter would pass a 4S rebid by me, and that is what I should have bid. As it happens, a club lead by East is not certain, and on any other lead 4S may even make!

M 7 AJT52
Bd 19 7653
Dir S 2
Vul EW JT6
 4 K9863
 Q9 T82
 KQT87 J654
 AK985 7

 Q7
 AKJ4
 A93
 Q432

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

On board 19 in the seventh match I was playing 2S in the dark as West's 2C overcall of Peter's 1NT opening was supposed to show a single-suiter!

East did not make the mistake of leading his C7, as he was not looking for a ruff when he had 5 trumps, and instead he tried to find West's suit by leading the H2.

When I won on the table and took the losing spade finesse, East led the H8, which did not look likely that he had the HQ, so I flew HA and got the good news.

The bad news came when I led a spade off the table, so 9 or 10 tricks had been reduced to just 8!

Left to our own devices, we would not have found our 4-4 heart fit as the extended Stayman would not allow it, but Peter would have played in 2S after a transfer sequence.

A 2NT bid by West, to show the minors, would be normal.

M 8 93
Bd 1 AQT87
Dir N 874
Vul Nil 874
 KT854 AJ762
 95 J2
 5 AQT6
 AQT93 KJ

Q
 K643
 KJ932
 652

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

On board 1 in match 8 the number of tricks to NS generally depended on the contract! In a 4S contract, declarer was mostly held to 11 tricks when NS cashed their heart tricks, but many EW pairs in slam made 13 tricks when NS did not lead hearts.

At our table, since I was a passed hand, I thought I was able to double the transfer bid of 2H for the lead. Now East bid 3H showing good spade support and denying a heart stop, to right-side the contract in case West had Kx.

On lead to 4S I was loathe to lead a heart, especially since Peter did not double 3H to show support, and thus EW scored up -510 in quick order.

Peter did not double 3H in case my double was for take-out, which it would have been if I was not already a passed hand, but enough EW pairs bid and made the slam so that we gained almost 1 Imp averaged over the whole field in spite of -510.

M 9 AQJT6
Bd 13 AQ64
Dir N Q4
Vul All 96
 9432 75
 T9872 KJ5
 J5 K76
 J5 T8743

K8
 3
 AT9832
 AKQ2

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

On board 13 in the ninth match I did not take advantage of the limited range for the 1S opening in Precision and we missed a good slam.

My 1S opening showed 11-15 HCPs and therefore after the 2D response I had an easy 3H rebid to show maximum, which would have given Peter a reason to think of slam, although the bad fit may have still put him off.

In 3NT Peter won the lead of the CJ and set about the diamonds, leading to the DQ in dummy,

Under no pressure, Peter won the club return and cashed the DA, having 12 tricks when the DJ dropped and we scored up +690, with a feeling of having missed a slam, but we still gained 1 Imp!

Some pairs got to slam, but played the diamonds the wrong way, firstly leading to the DQ, and when that lost, finessing the DT to lose 2 tricks. Better is to run the DQ, and if that loses, finesse the DT next, only losing to KJ in the West hand, but picking up split honours or KJ in the East hand.

M 10 Q632
Bd 18 A63
Dir E -
Vul NS KQJ864
 J KT984
 842 K9
 K742 AQJ654
 A9532 -

A75
 QJT75
 T98
 T7

W	N	E	S
		1D	1H
/	4H	4S	/
5D	//		

On board 18 in the tenth match, helped by the favourable vulnerability, I bid like a champion but I played like a chump!

Because of the great shape I gave some thought to opening 1C, especially since the 1D opening would not show diamonds until I had a chance to rebid spades.

Over the 4H rebid, which turned out to be a no-play contract and double for +500 would have been more productive, I had an easy rebid of 4S, which must be a 5-card suit, and therefore indicate 6+ diamonds.

Peter converted 4S to 5D, and South led the DT, which I won on the table to pitch a heart on the CA and then pass the SJ.

When South won the SA, 5D is now cold, but I took my eye off the ball and cashed the SK before ruffing a third spade, and now South could ruff the 4th spade in front of dummy to take it 1 off.

We lost 5 Imps instead of picking up about the same number.

M 11 JT74
Bd 31 Q95
Dir S 8
Vul NS AKQ86
 KQ98 2
 JT874 6
 4 AKQT72
 T53 J9742

A653
 AK32
 J9653
 -

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

Board 31 in match 11 started off rather routinely, but the bidding quickly escalated to the 5-level, where East had bid my best suit! I doubled, expecting it to be converted to 5D even though West had already passed 5C, but to my surprize 5CX was the final contract.

Peter led the SA and HA, followed by the HK, which declarer ruffed and cashed the DA then ruffed a diamond low on the table. I over-ruffed the diamond and drew 3 rounds of trumps, on the last of which declarer discarded a low spade.

Knowing I had to make my last club as declarer would be forced to ruff, I led a spade to dummy and declarer made the mistake of cashing the other spade before leading a heart, ruffing in her hand, but that was her last trick!

I was able to ruff the DK and cash my SJ for 6 off and +1400. Declarer could have saved a trick by not cashing the SQ before ruffing the heart, but that would still have been +1100, and only about 12 Imps instead of 15.

M 12 KT5
Bd 1 T9
Dir N JT7
Vul Nil Q8532
 7 A62
 K8743 AJ65
 92 AK53
 AKT94 J6

QJ9843
 Q2
 Q864
 7

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

Board 1 in the twelfth match was a problem for our system when South made a weak-jump over my Precision 1C opening.

Peter firstly has to double to show a positive (8+), which made it difficult for him to show both of his suits. Since we were restrained by the system, he thought, very reasonably, that 3D over my 2NT would be transfer to hearts, but I was not on the same wavelength, and simply showed my 4-card suit over his presumed diamonds.

When he corrected 4D to 4H, I suspected what had happened,, but with only a minimum 1C opening, I could only pass.

There were no problems in the play, and when I guessed the hearts, I made 13 tricks for +510. This was only a 1 Imp loss across the field, so very few pairs must have bid the slam.

Thinking about the bidding sequence later, there are many good reasons in this auction why 3D/3H by responder should be transfer to hearts/spades, and that is what we will play when next we have a game. In fact if NS do not bid again, the full system as after a strong 2NT opening could be brought into play!

M 12 K96542
Bd 8 A
Dir W J95
Vul Nil 875
 73 AJ
 KQ T9875
 K742 AQT63
 AK632 9

QT8
 J6432
 8
 QJT4

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

On board 8 in the twelfth match I let my poor hearts and short club cloud my judgement and did not make a game try.

My plan was to raise 2NT or 3H to game, but bid a non-forcing 3D or 3H over a 3C rebid, however the 3D rebid was unexpected, and 11 tricks looked so far away!

Playing Precision, the 2C opening was limited, so I did not consider bidding 3NT with my hand, since my spade opening is so fragile. Maybe I would have with Axx, as that combination gives better hold-up options. Holding AJx, 3NT was definitely on the agenda.

North gave Peter a good head-start by cashing the HA before switching to the D9, and when the DT won trick 2, 11 tricks were easy and we scored up +150. In fact after this good start, 12 tricks can be made via the ruffing finesse in hearts, as long as Declarer cashes 3 trumps first. This was a modest 1 Imp gain.

M 13 87
Bd 11 AQ7
Dir S AJ763
Vul Nil AJT
 Q54 632
 96 J8
 82 QT95
 KQ6432 9875
 AKJT9
 KT5432
 K4
 -
W N E S
 2C 3NT / 1S!
 / 4S // 4H

On board 11 in the thirteenth match Peter was reluctant to open 1H on such a poor suit, as he wanted to bring both his suits into play, so his plan was to treat the hand as a 5-5, and rebid hearts next.

Playing Precision, where the 1H bid is limited to 15 HCPs, it is perfectly reasonable to open 1H with this hand and reverse into spades on the next bid. Many players playing natural systems would also reverse on this hand, based on shape, not HCPs.

West put a damper on our bidding by bidding 2C on what I consider to be an unsuitable hand (even 3C is better in my view, but Qxx in spades can be discounted), and I bid what I thought I could make!

I suspected 4H showed a 5-card suit, but then spades would be a 6-card suit, so I converted, and we possibly lost a further Imp as 12 tricks were the limit in spades.

Enough pairs were in slam to bring the average up to -800, so we lost 7 Imps.

M 14 74
Bd 23 J42
Dir S 853
Vul All AQ752
 K86 QT2
 KT65 AQ87
 A9742 K76
 6 J94
 AJ953
 93
 QJ
 KT83
W N E S
 / 1NT // 1S

On board 23 in the fourteenth and last match EW had some tough decisions both in the bidding and then the play.

West should reopen with a double when 1NT gets back to her, as if East does bid 2C, she has an easy 2D rebid, which should not show extras as she should not bid over 1S! Then EW would have found their heart fit, and maybe even got to 4H, where 11 tricks can be made.

When 1NT was passed out, East led the H7, and EW quickly cashed 4 tricks, but East had not idea whether to shift to a club or diamond next, and looking at QJ in dummy switched to a club and I had 6 tricks for -100! and 3 Imps against the average.

West could have subtly played the hearts in order as K, 6, 5, T, when she would have been on lead, but led back the HT in case East had a 5-card suit. Even then West could play the H6 then the H5 to suggest a diamond return, but many would not notice.