

## **2016 GNOT National Final by Richard Wallis**

The GNOT National Final is held at Tweed Heads each year, where 64 teams from all over the country fight it out over 3 days to get into Monday's final. The event is run as a knock-out, firstly as a 16-board match, then three 24-board matches, and finally a 36-board match on Saturday afternoon.

Losing teams are knocked out of the main draw, but then play in a Swiss event with 12-board matches, and the top two after the Swiss play off on Sunday morning against the losing teams in the final 36-board matches for the right to play in the semi-finals, played on Sunday afternoon.

Neville Francis, Tony Hutton Pele Ranking, Paul Hooykaas, Therese Tully and I started off on Friday morning with high hopes, and we got off to a shaky start, just managing to grind out an 8 Imp win against a team from the Blue Mountains in the first match before wins in the next two 24-board matches put us in against Sydney 1, which included Ron Klinger and David Beauchamp.

This was a critical match against a highly favoured team and we were pleased to be ahead by a mere 5 Imps after the first 12 boards. The second and last set of 12 boards was a dour set and after score up it was 23 all, so we had won by 5 Imps, and were into the final knock-out match against Adelaide 2, comprising three 12-board matches.

Against Adelaide 2 we were always behind, losing the 3 sets by 6, 31 and 38, to drop into the quarter-finals against Geelong, who had won the Swiss Repechage, with Sydney 1 in second place and back into contention, playing against Canberra 1 in the other quarter-final.

The quarter-final against Geelong was a close encounter, but we won both halves to go into the semi-final against unbeaten Sydney 2, and at the same time Sydney 1 accounted for Canberra 1 to progress to the other semi-final against Adelaide 2. That is where the fairytale ended for us, as after a small lost in the first set, we lost the next 2 sets so convincingly, that we conceded before the last 10 boards. In the other semi-final, Sydney 1 accounted for Adelaide 2, so it was an all Sydney final on Monday!

Monday might have been exciting if I had watched or played a part in it, but from a distant observer's point of view, it was an anti-climax, with Sydney 2 winning all 4 sets to triumph by 63 Imps. The GNOT champs for 2016 are Liam Milne, Nye Griffiths, Sartaj Hans, Tony Nunn, Sophie Ashton and Paul Gosney.

This is a event great chance to catch up with bridge friends from around the country and while the venue is convenient, it is a little crowded, and moves are in place for a possible reduction in numbers for the final in 2017. This will result in some reductions in the qualifying places from some major venues around Australia.

**M 1** 94  
**Bd 3** -  
**Dir S** QJT83  
**Vul EW** JT8763  
 2 QT87653  
 AKT8753 QJ4  
 K652 A4  
 5 Q  
 AKJ  
 962  
 97  
 AK942  
**W N E S**  
 2H 2NT! 3H 1NT  
 4H 5C 5H /  
 X // 6C

Board 3 in the first match turned out to be a guessing game, and we guessed right when Therese bid 6 over 5!

The 2H overcall was natural, and my 2NT was transfer to clubs, generally at least with invitational values, but I had made the first guess when I decided to sacrifice if EW got to game, as while I have few points, I also have few losers and at least a 6-2 club fit.

EW were not done, and East continued on to 5H and it was Therese's turn to guess, and probably spurred on by my assumed strength, and her great support, she elected to go on to slam. EW guessed correctly by doubling, rather than going on, and East led the S7.

There was nothing in the play, but at least our last guess was correct as 5H is cold, and I was only 1 off for -100.

At the other table the guessing continued, and the adverse Vulnerability coerced Pele and Paul into selling out to 5C, which was -400, and 11 Imps away.

**M 1** AQ542  
**Bd 11** AK65  
**Dir S** T8  
**Vul Nil** JT  
 9 876  
 7 T94  
 965432 AKQ7  
 AK964 832  
 KJT3  
 QJ832  
 J  
 Q75  
**W N E S**  
 / 1S /  
 / 4S // 3D!

On board 11 in the first match Therese passed as dealer, and when I opened 1S in third seat, our system changes. Instead of showing a limited hand with spade support, as after a first or second seat 1S opening, the 3D bid is now a splinter, and I had no trouble raising to game, to which East led the DA.

4S was never in any danger of going off, and when East shifted to the HT at trick 2 I had 11 tricks for +450, and what seemed like a flat board, or maybe a 1 Imp pick-up!

At the other table Pele had a 4NT opening bid available to show both minors and used it after South passed as dealer, and this cut NS out of the bidding. Paul bid the obvious 5D, and North doubled for penalties, which was passed out and had 3 unavoidable losers, for -100 and 8 Imps.

After the 4NT opening, NS have nowhere to go. If North is declarer, after a count card East will know to shift to a club at trick 2 for 3 winners.

**M 2W** A7542  
**Bd 4** AQ  
**Dir W** QJ973  
**Vul All** 6  
 Q93 KJ6  
 8754 32  
 6 AT842  
 KQJ53 A92  
 T8  
 KJT96  
 K5  
 T874  
**W N E S**  
 / 1S 2D!  
 // X

On board 4 in the second match East made an ill-judged overcall of 2D after I opened 1S and paid the full penalty, when Therese doubled for take-out and I converted to penalties.

Therese led the ST and I won the SA (East playing the S6) and returned the S7, asking for a heart, and declarer won the SK and cashed the CA and played another, which I ruffed,

Since the SJ was still out, I knew declarer had it after the ST opening lead, so I gave Therese a ruff and I ruffed another club.

Now I played the HA and HQ, which Therese over-took and led the HJ. I can guarantee another trick by ruffing this with the DJ, and declarer over-ruffed with the DA and led a diamond, and we took 2 more tricks for 3 off and +800.

At the other table Neville did not bid 2D, and 3SN went 2 off for another +200 and 14 Imps.

<b>M 3</b>	Q2			On board 21 in the third match West hesitated very noticeably after my 2NT opening and also after my 3NT rebid, which denied a major suit.
<b>Bd 21</b>	A83			
<b>Dir N</b>	AKQJT6			
<b>Vul NS</b>	KQ			The warning bells were all there and I gave serious thought to bidding 4D initially after the first hesitation and definitely wished I had done so when he hesitated again over 3NT.
964		AKJT53		
QT842		J5		
4		-		East led the spades from the top (what ever happened to the idea of leading 4 <sup>th</sup> highest?) and then cashed the CA so I was 3 off for -300.
T652		AJ983		When we saw the complete layout, this did not appear to be so bad as EW are cold for 10 tricks in spades or clubs, so maybe it was even a pick-up?
	87			
	K97			
	987532			
	74			
<b>W</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>S</b>	In spite of the good fit, NS have 4 losers, and anything above 3D is too high, so at the Vulnerability, EW should prevail in the bidding.
/	2NT	!	3C!	
	3NT	//		At the other table neither side knew whose hand it was, and when the bidding stopped at 5S, another -50 was 8 Imps out.

<b>M 4</b>	-			Board 18 in the crucial fourth match was one of the most distributional hands that I have held, and yet I did not make one bid!
<b>Bd 18</b>	-			
<b>Dir E</b>	KQJ87654			Normally I regard an 8-card suit, especially one headed by the KQJ, as a very suitable trump suit, and make every effort to make it so. At adverse Vulnerability, and with Therese showing 7 or more spades, I was happy this time to sell out to 5H, as our defensive prospects looked pretty good.
<b>Vul NS</b>	AK765			
87542		6		
Q6432		AKJ987		
AT		9		
Q		JT943		Therese led the SK and after my play of the C4, switched to the C8. But dummy was a big disappointment, with 11 tricks likely unless West had 2 diamonds, but when he won the DA and ruffed a diamond, we shortly after wrote down -450.
	AKQJT93			
	T5			
	32			
	82			
<b>W</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>S</b>	At the other table, North did get obsessed with his diamonds, bidding first 6D and then 7D over spade bids by South. This contract will go 4 off on a trump lead and continuation, but I believe that the second club was ruffed in defence and thus dummy could be entered via another club ruff, to discard on the top spades, but still +500 for 2 Imps.
5H	//	1H	4S	

<b>M 5</b>	AQ8654			On board 20 in the fifth match, East made a very aggressive jump to 4C over my 1S opening bid, and this caused us no end of trouble.
<b>Bd 20</b>	AT4			
<b>Dir W</b>	J3			The winning option would be to pass the double and take our 5 tricks for +500, but I thought it was asking too much for magic cards.
<b>Vul All</b>	K8			I gave thought to the Moysian fit, but the 6-card spade suit seemed safer, so I bid 4S, which was passed out, and East led the D2, an obvious singleton.
K97		J32		
9765		32		Dummy was disappointing, and watching EW take the first 5 tricks by cross-ruffing was even more disappointing. I won the heart switch in dummy and finessed the SQ for 8 tricks and -200.
A9654		2		
9		AQJ7542		At the other table South finished in 3NT, apparently without any club bids from East, and West led the D5, won cheaply in hand. South can now take 7 tricks via the finesse of the SQ, but only took 6, so finished 3 off for +300 and 3 Imps to us.
	T			
	KQJ9			
	KQT87			
	T63			
<b>W</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>S</b>	
/	1S	4C	X	
	4S	//		

**M 5** A4  
**Bd 6** AQ85  
**Dir E** AT6  
**Vul EW** KJT4  
 QJ75 KT632  
 9742 KT3  
 QJ K52  
 986 52  
  
 98  
 J6  
 98743  
 AQ73  
  
**W N E S**  
  
 1C / /  
 3S / 2C  
 2S / 4C  
 //

On board 6 in the fifth match I was looking for higher things when Therese showed club support, even though her raise was not encouraging.

I did not want to be in 3NT with a single spade stopper, so I asked with 3S, but when Therese could not help, I was in a precarious contract.

A safer approach would be to just accept that 3C would be good contract and take what was in front of my eyes. Even double of 2S would have worked, and 3C may even provoke EW to bidding 3S, which I would definitely would double.

In 4C if the heart finesse loses, I had 4 obvious losers after the inevitable spade lead, and I thought an endplay was the best chance to avoid it, but picked the wrong one for -50 and 8 Imps out.

The winning play, which I did not find, is to lead a heart towards dummy at trick 2, on which East has to rise and lead another spade. Then I win the DA and HJ, draw trumps finishing in hand and cash the hearts before endplaying South with a diamond exit.

**M QF** J73  
**Bd 1** AJ953  
**Dir N** J65  
**Vul Nil** 65  
 K98642 AQ  
 QT2 K76  
 8 KQT2  
 873 AJ42  
  
 T5  
 84  
 A9743  
 KQT9  
  
**W N E S**  
  
 / 1C! 1NT!  
 2S 2D! / /  
 //

On board 1 in the quarter-final Therese did not hear the announcement of strong after the 1C (Precision) opening bid.

My 1NT overcall showed the minors, but thinking 1C was natural, Therese bid 2D as a transfer to hearts, which I passed comfortably, as that is in keeping with a response to my actual meaning.

East bid 2S, which was passed out, and Therese led the C6, which declarer won on the table, cashed the top spades, and led the DA

I wanted clarification on the clubs, so I exited with the H8, hoping Therese would win and lead another club, but we were not on the same wavelength (my C9 looked too high) and declarer finished up with 10 tricks for -170.

On a club back, the final club will promote the SJ for 2 off, so this looked like a bad result as 4S should be always off at least 1, but somehow Pele and Paul bid and made game, so we gained 6 Imps.

**M QF** AT93  
**Bd 5** Q  
**Dir N** KQ43  
**Vul NS** QT65  
 K87 QJ542  
 AJT985 43  
 AJT5 62  
 - KJ73  
  
 6  
 K762  
 987  
 A9842  
  
**W N E S**  
  
 1D 1S 1H  
 4S //

On board 5 in the quarter-final West got a little carried away when East overcalled 1S, and raised to game, in spite of having 10 of his 13 cards in the suits bid by us!

I led the D8 (MUD), Therese won the DQ and switched to the C5, and declarer miss-guessed by playing the CK, and ruffed on the table.

Next was the HA followed by the HJ and Therese discarded, and declarer discarded the D6, which seemed odd but I thought I had miscounted!

Play continued with the D9 from me, and declarer lost 2 more tricks, to finish 1 off, but towards the end of the play declarer found his other diamond, and owned up before the questions started, so another trick was transferred for 2 off and +200.

At the other table the contract was 3S, which made 9 tricks for +140 and 8 Imps.

<b>M SF1</b>	Q532			
<b>Bd 4</b>	AK63			
<b>Dir W</b>	64			
<b>Vul All</b>	KQ6			
AK7		964		
Q2		T4		
KQ52		AJT98		
AJ54		973		
	JT8			
	J9875			
	73			
	T82			
<b>W</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>S</b>	
1D	X	/	1H	
2D	2H	3D	/	
3NT	//			

On board 4 in the first stanza of the semi-final, West took a calculated risk when East showed belated diamond support, and took a shot at 3NT without a solid heart stopper.

This is a reasonable chance with his 19 HCPs as it only requires good diamonds (he likely has 5 card support) and Jxx in hearts.

If Therese had woodenly led the H3, 4<sup>th</sup> highest, this gamble would have paid off big time. Luckily for us she decided to look at dummy by leading the HA, and after I encouraged, we cashed out for 1 off and +100.

At the other table Paul and Pele were more circumspect and stopped in 4D and after the lead of the D4, the defence slipped up and failed to take their 4 tricks, so that was +130 and 6 Imps to us.

2H by us is an easy make, so East was correct to bid again, and having not supported diamonds initially, he probably thought he was only competing for the part score.

<b>M SF1</b>	Q5			
<b>Bd 9</b>	KJ8643			
<b>Dir N</b>	83			
<b>Vul EW</b>	AKQ			
T76		AKJ982		
QT72		-		
K964		QJT		
97		T643		
	43			
	A95			
	A752			
	J852			
<b>W</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>S</b>	
	1H	1S	2H	
2S	3H	//		

On board 9 in the first stanza of the semi-final we had a difference of opinion in the meaning of rebidding a suit that has been supported.

When Therese rebid 3H I was not sure of her expectations. I had 2 Aces, so I gave thought to raising to game, but there were 3 separate bids and also double that could have been interpreted as game tries, so after a thoughtful pause I passed!

East led the top spades and unfortunately for Therese he had a natural switch to the DQ, which took away an entry prematurely.

10 tricks still looked good, but on the HA East discarded, so it was only 9 tricks after all for +140.

Of course, double-dummy, declarer could lead the H9 at trick 4, as when it is covered, the HA is still there to repeat the finesse.

Declarer at the other table took the normal line in 4H so went 1 off for +50 and 5 Imps.

<b>M SF3</b>	98			
<b>Bd 5</b>	AT9			
<b>Dir N</b>	J97			
<b>Vul NS</b>	QJ752			
KT5		J32		
KJ32		Q86		
A865		43		
93		AKT84		
	AQ764			
	754			
	KQT2			
	8			
<b>W</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>S</b>	
/	/	1NT!	2S!	
//	3C	/	3D	

On board 5 in the third stanza of the semi-final we were on a downhill slope and it was getting steeper.

Therese's 2S overcall of the 9-12 1NT opening bid showed that suit and a minor, but the major is normally at least 5 cards, so I should have passed!

In the faint hope that she had clubs, or 5 diamonds, I bid a correctable 3C, and of course the inevitable happened and we finished 1 level higher in our 4-3 fit.

There was no escaping this poor contract, especially when West started out with the DA and another, followed by a third trump when he won the SK, so that was only 5 tricks for -400.

In fact 2S is not such a good contract, especially if EW generate a diamond ruff, or even possibly 2!

At the other table Tony and Neville finished in 3C, but that contract was scuttled by the 5-1 club break, so that was 10 Imps out.

<b>M SF3</b>	T9762		
<b>Bd 9</b>	64		
<b>Dir N</b>	AQJ		
<b>Vul EW</b>	Q96		
QJ54		AK	
J72		KQT8	
T972		8643	
73		T54	
	83		
	A953		
	K5		
	AKJ82		
<b>W</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>S</b>
/	/	1D	2C
/	2S	/	2NT
/	3C	//	

On board 9 in the third stanza of the semi-final Therese had 2 obvious options after I passed and East opened 1D, either 1NT or 2C.

Probably influenced by my pass as dealer, she opted for the 2C overcall, but showed her stoppers with 2NT when I bid 2S.

Now it was my turn to be influenced by her failure to bid 1NT on the first round and I returned to 3C, which was passed out.

In spite of the trump lead, this contract had only 3 losers, so that was +130, but there are also 9 easy tricks in 3NT. A trump or spade lead will always hold declarer to 10 tricks, but this would not have been a good time to lead the opening bid suit as then 11 tricks may ensue.

At the other table I do not have the auction, but NS did get to 3NT, and that was -400, for 7 Imps away.

At this point in the semi-final we were 74 Imps down with only 10 boards to play, so we conceded.