

2016 Australian Seniors Trials by Richard Wallis

This year, as a change, the Australian teams trials for the World Championships in Poland in September 2016 were conducted on a teams-entry basis, and Therese Tully and I teamed up with Ross and Pam Crichton from Canberra, to play in the Seniors Trials in Canberra from 12 March.

Ten teams entered, and the playoff was conducted as a 2-tiered affair, with the top 4 aggregate PQPs in division 1 and the remaining teams in division 2. Alas, we were in division 2.

On the first 2 days division 1 played a double round-robin of 20-board matches, and division 2 played a double-round robin of 12-board matches. First and second in division 2 played a 48 board match on Monday against third and fourth in division 1, while first and second in division 1 went straight through to the semi-finals on Tuesday against the winners of the Monday quarter-finals.

We had a great time, with some highs and lows, and good team-mates, and eventually finished fourth, which was our starting position, but about 7VPs out of a QF place. Qld did have some success, with Bill Haughie, playing with Ron Klinger, yet again making the Australian Seniors team.

The Womens trials were played concurrently, this time a stage 1 over 3 days, followed by a semi-final on Tuesday, and a final on Wednesday and Thursday, and in this Qld was very successful, with Pele Rankin and Paula McLeish in the winning team, and now booked for the Worlds in September.

M 1	872				On board 5 in the first match Therese had a weak suit, more suitable for a weak-jump overcall of 2H, but when Vul we play that as a little stronger, so she contented herself with a simple 1H, as with 2 entries, that is the suit she wants led if EW play in Notrumps.
Bd 5	K97				
Dlr N	Q72				
Vul NS	9632				
QT6			KJ95		East showed his second suit over my simple raise, and since West had a good stop, he bid 3NT, which became the final contract.
AJ5			Q		
A9854			KJ63		I dutifully led the H7, won on the table, and West led a small spade to hand, winning with the SQ when Therese ducked. Now West led to the CK in dummy, won by Therese who returned a heart, and we cleared the heart suit. It was imperative for West not to lose the lead now, but when he cashed the DK in dummy he had nowhere to go, and I could put Therese in with the SA to cash out for 2 off and +100.
85			KQT4		
	A43				
	T86432				
	T				
	AJ7				
W	N	E	S		
		1C	1H		At the other table the contract and opening lead was the same, but Ross took the diamond finesse the right way, and set up the spades along the way for 10 tricks, +430 and 11 lmps.
2D	2H	3D	/		
3NT	//				

M 2 KQJ43
Bd 22 A
Dir E T32
Vul EW A764
 7 A8652
 K86542 Q
 Q87 J5
 J93 KQT52
 T9
 JT973
 AK964
 8
W N E S
 3C! / 2S! / X
 // //

Board 22 in the second match was the sort of bidding to produce a stroke from shock!

Since the minor was unknown, I did not have a good bid over the opening 2S, which showed spades and a minor, so I passed, but when East confirmed spades and clubs, I had an automatic take-out double when 3C came back to me.

To my surprise, 3CX was passed out, and I thought Therese had interpreted my initial pass and subsequent double as penalties, especially when she led the C4.

West won the C9 and made the mistake of going over to dummy to take a spade ruff before next playing a heart, and Therese won the HA and cashed the CA, taking West's last trump, and then she could cash her spades, followed by my 2 diamonds for 3 Off, and +800.

At the other table North played in 3D, making 10 tricks for -130, so we gained 12 Imps.

M 3 Q42
Bd 3 AQ42
Dir S A9763
Vul EW 2
 K965 A
 T76 KJ853
 T52 KJ4
 AQ3 KT97
 JT873
 9
 Q8
 J8654
W N E S
 / 1D 1H /
 2H 2S 4H //

On board 3 in the third match EW got to a reasonable game, albeit on minimum values, but although the hearts were well placed, transportation problems and the 4-1 break proved insurmountable and declarer went 2 off for +200.

Therese led the SJ and East had to win in hand and then get to dummy with the CA. How much easier it would have been with Ax in spades so declarer could win the opening lead on the table and lead a heart at trick 2.

My singleton club prevented another entry to dummy to finesse trumps, and we did not lead spades any more, so declarer lost 3 hearts and 2 diamonds for 2 off.

At the other table Ross became declarer in 3NT as West, and North led the S2. Holding 2 club entries and with the HQ well placed, he was able win 4 hearts, 2 spades and 3 clubs for 9 tricks and +600, which amounted to +13 Imps.

M 3 KQT53
Bd 10 AJ75
Dir E 7
Vul All T76
 987 -
 K842 T3
 AK62 JT983
 Q3 AKJ954
 AJ642
 Q96
 Q54
 82
W N E S
 4D X 2S! /
 // 5D X

On board 10 in the third match East opened 2C, 10-13 and a 5-card suit, and West bid a relay of 2D, not alerted, so I doubled for take-out and we found our spade fit, but when East bid 4C, I did not know whose hand it was, so took the easy way out and passed.

When East took the diamond finesse and finished with 11 tricks for -150, it looked like it was the right thing to do, even though it was apparent we were cold for 4S.

The real action was at the other table with the bidding shown, where the 2S opening showed the minors, and Ross's jump to 4D was to play, but North was not to be denied and doubled to show the majors.

Pam raised the ante with 5D, and South doubled, but I am not sure if it was values or for penalties. North must have been unsure also, as he passed the double and then clarified the trump position by leading the D7, so Ross finished with 12 tricks for +950 and 13 Imps.

The board average was only -220, so EW won out.

M 4 92
Bd 20 AQT3
Dir W A9
Vul All QJ965
 - AKQT753
 862 754
 JT86532 7
 873 42
 J864
 KJ9
 KQ4
 AKT
W **N** **E** **S**
 / 1C 4S 5C
 //

On board 20 in the fourth match both South and I were lucky.
 I was lucky because NS were playing double for penalties above 4H, so South should have doubled!
 South was lucky because he took 4S out to 5C with just 3-card support for North's possible 3-card opening bid suit, and found a suit 5-card after all!
 The top 2 spades were our only tricks, and South quickly wrapped up 11 tricks for -600. In fact, if South could be declarer, 12 tricks are available in Notrumps, Hearts and Clubs.
 At the other table Ross did not consider bidding on over the 4S overcall, and 4SX was the final contract.
 When I bid 4S I thought I had 7 tricks in my hand, but the 4-2 break put paid to that, and declarer could only muster 6 tricks, for +1100, and 11 Imps.

M 5 QT64
Bd 1 AK93
Dir N T7632
Vul Nil -
 93 J875
 J8 QT7
 KJ A8
 QJT9842 AK63
 AK2
 6542
 Q954
 75
W **N** **E** **S**
 / / 1C /
 2C / 2H /
 2S / 2NT /
 3NT //

On board 1 in the fifth match Therese got a little frisky with the system because of her exceptional support, and we got lucky.
 The 2C response was inverted, and my 2H rebid showed 14-16, but still my club holding was unclarified, and then 2S asked if I had a shortage, with 2NT denying a shortage.
 In for a penny, in for a pound, Therese now raised to 3NT, and the bidding ended with South on lead and with nothing to guide him, he selected the D4.
 Dummy was a revelation when it hit the table, and it seemed prudent to lay my cards on the table and claim 9 tricks by way of 2 diamonds and 7 clubs.
 I did not look up the scores, but I venture to suggest that very few pairs would be able to cash the 2 hearts and 3 spades from the opening lead, so 3NT would be favoured to make most of the time.
 At the other table EW played in 3C, losing the obvious 4 tricks for -110, but 7 Imps to us.

M 6 96
Bd 15 T853
Dir S KJ9
Vul NS J853
 T87432 -
 9 QJ762
 Q732 A8
 K9 AQT762
 AKQJ5
 AK4
 T654
 4
W **N** **E** **S**
 / 1NT 2C 1S
 / 2H // X

On board 15 in the sixth match I was completely taken by surprize at the weird distribution and paid a penalty for not following my instincts at trick 3.
 East led the CA and followed up with a small club, forcing a ruff in dummy. When West followed with the CK, I was tempted to cash the HA at trick 3, but did not see any advantage, so I tried to get a discard on the spades first.
 When East ruffed the first spade and led a small club, I had nowhere to go, as allowing West to ruff would just get a cross-ruff going, so I ruffed high and cashed the other top heart and the appearance of the H9 made me wish I had cashed the HA at trick 2 as I could then have run the club around to my Jack.
 I could probably have made 7, or even 8 tricks by the trump at trick 3, instead of 3 off for -300. At the other table a bidding glitch ended with West declarer in 2S, which somehow went 2 off, but 11 Imps away.

M 7
Bd 4
Dir W
Vul All
 J983
 987
 QT7
 653

	T54		
	KJT2		
	K8		
	AK74		
		K2	
		AQ654	
		932	
		QJT	
	AQ76		
	3		
	AJ654		
	982		
W	N	E	S
/	1C	1H	X
/	1NT	/	3NT
//			

On board 4 in the seventh match I was completely as sea in a straight-forward contract, made easier by friendly defence, and went off in a cold contract.

East did not lead his suit to 3NT, instead choosing the peculiar lead of the D9! I played low from dummy, and for some unknown reason, West played the DT, which makes 3NT cold, as I was now able finesse the D8, ensuring 4 diamond tricks.

Alas I had a blind spot and looked elsewhere for my 9 tricks and I am still looking!

I tried the spade finesse first, and then for a 3-3 break in both black suits, and when that did not come to fruition, and West did not have the HQ, I went 1 off for -100.

At the other table a straight-forward diamond break and spade finesse allowed 9 tricks for -600, and we lost 12 Imps.

M 8
Bd 19
Dir S
Vul EW
 8643
 AQJ643
 92
 6

	K2		
	52		
	Q863		
	A9874		
		JT7	
		KT97	
		KJT74	
		5	
	AQ95		
	8		
	A5		
	KQJT32		
W	N	E	S
2H	3C	4H	1C
/	5D	X	4NT
//			6C

On board 19 in the eighth match East made a lead-directing double of my 5D response to Keycard, and lived to regret it!

The 2H was a weak-jump, and my 3C response showed at least 5-card support, but was not forcing.

Therese had controls in all suits, so was interested in slam if I had 1 Key Card, and duly asked with 4NT, The double of the 5D response was a little disconcerting, but 6C was the only option now.

West followed his partner's suggestion, and led the D9, and when dummy hit, prospects did not look good, as even if East had the SJ and ST, about a 25% chance, there was no way to finesse twice.

A few extra trumps hoping for favourable discards did not get any result, but when Therese cashed the top spades, East's spade holding allowed both hearts to be discarded, and 12 tricks rolled home.

At the other table, the contract was the same, but without the distraction of the lead-directing double, the HA was led and 11 tricks was the limit, so we gained 14 Imps.

M 8
Bd 24
Dir W
Vul Nil
 AJ
 AQ942
 AJT752
 -

	KT7652		
	K7		
	8		
	Q984		
		43	
		J865	
		Q6	
		K7632	
	Q98		
	T3		
	K943		
	AJT5		
W	N	E	S
1D	2S	/	3S
4H	/	6H!	//

On board 24 in the eighth match East had a rush of blood and gave more credence to his hand than was justified.

My 2S was weak, and West made what I consider to be a normal bid of 4H over Therese's 3S support, almost certainly showing 11 red cards. East's comment as he was putting down his hand was "if you can bid 4H I can bid 6H", but he was wrong, both in fact and in his hand evaluation!

Since I likely had a trump trick, I led a spade, hoping to set up the SK, or maybe even cash the first 2 tricks.

When Therese played the SQ and declarer won the SA I knew he was going 1 off, as declarer must have the SJ.

At the other table Pam did not get carried away after the 4H rebid, and Ross made the same 11 tricks for +450 and 11 Imps.

M 9 54
Bd 7 AK984
Dir S AJT7
Vul All A4
 A98 QT72
 Q72 5
 Q92 K85
 T873 KJ952
 KJ63
 JT63
 643
 Q6

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

On board 7 in the ninth match we missed a potential game but received reasonable compensation when EW got overboard.

Therese's 3H response following the take-out double showed the normal system response of 4-7 and 4-card support, so game was definitely under consideration, but it is only a guess, and it was possible we did not have 4 tricks in a spade contract, so I passed rather than coerce them into bidding 4S.

West's responsive double was open to interpretation, West thinking it showed a desire to compete with only 3 spades, but East expected 4 spades.

Therese led the HJ and the hand quickly fell apart, making only 5 tricks for 4 off and +400.

At the other table NS did get to 4H, but North played for a 2-2 heart break instead of finessing, and thus finished 1 down for another +100 and 11 Imps in total.

M 10 J9753
Bd 13 QT5
Dir N 85
Vul All QT4
 AT64 K2
 A9 32
 AJT92 K743
 53 AK762
 Q8
 KJ8764
 Q6
 J98

W	N	E	S
X	/	1C	/
2H	/	2D	/
4D	/	3C	/
4NT	/	4S	/
6D	//	5H	/

On board 13 in the tenth match Therese started off with a negative double, which just shows 4 spades, and she got very interested when I rebid 2D, her best suit!

2H was a general force, and then the jump to 4D sets that suit as trumps and asks for cue-bids.

My 4S rebid denied any control in hearts, and showed first or second-round control in spades, which suited her hand very well.

A quick check on Key Cards showed just the DQ missing, so the small slam was a good bet, but 7D too risky.

South led the H4, and when dummy tracked, slam looked very good, requiring diamonds no worse than 3-1, and clubs no worse than 4-2.

The plan was to cash the top diamonds, followed by the top clubs, and then ruff a club. If the clubs were 3-3 then the heart could be discarded, otherwise back to hand with the SK to ruff another club, and then return to hand by ruffing a spade to pitch the heart on the established club.

When all was very friendly, 13 tricks were easy for +1390. At the other table a bidding accident had EW stop in 4D, so we gained 15 Imps.

M 10 QJ8742
Bd 14 T7
Dir E K9
Vul Nil A52
 65 AKT93
 J984 K3
 T52 J863
 KQJ8 T3
 -
 AQ652
 AQ74
 9764

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

On board 14 in the tenth match North was the sleeper, and he never woke up!

South has a good take-out double, although many would bid hearts first and double on the next round, but when 2S came back to him he sold out, in spite of his void, my likely 5-card suit, and Therese's lack of support clearly showing spade length with North.

South did not want to give us an easy trick, and led the C7, which was safe, and put North on lead to put a heart through.

When I finally led a spade off the table and inserted the ST as a safety play, I was amazed when South showed out, and I still had 2 trumps to lose for 3 off and -150.

At the other table Ross also double the 1S opening lead, but this time West was silent, and North passed for penalties, also making 5 tricks, but +300, so we gained 4 Imps.