

2016 Australian Seniors Teams by Richard Wallis

January is here again and this year David McLeish and I teamed up with Therese Tully and newly retired Richard Ward for the Seniors Teams, traditionally first up with the Womens Teams at the Summer Festival in Canberra.

We started off badly, losing our first match narrowly at first, but when board 17 was found to be arrow-switched, a 13 Imp gain where both pairs scored well was cancelled. A maximum win in match 2 and a small win in match 3 put us against Beachamp for match 4, in which neither pair performed well and almost a maximum loss ensued.

We recovered with a big win in match 5, but then for the second consecutive year we met the eventual winners (Neill) when they were not going well, and suffered a medium loss, which was enough to send them on their way up the ladder and to the finals, where they beat all comers for the title.

We finished with a medium win, a losing draw and a medium win for 14th place overall, but it was great fun and we had our chances to shine, but did not rise to the occasion this time – maybe 2017!

M 1	AK98				On board 1 in the first match East opened with a Multi-2D, and David, with a strong Notrump and stoppers in both majors, bid an obvious 2NT, which East passed.
Bd 18	K754				
Dir E	KQ6				
Vul NS	T9				From my hand, it seems as if East has spades, but I have no clear-cut way to investigate a heart fit, so I simply raised to 3NT and hoped our combined power would see us home.
T2				QJ7543	
AJ86				3	
JT93				A5	
K86				7543	David's spade cover is very good, and when East led the SQ it became even better.
	6				
	QT92				West made it easier by winning with the CK at trick 1 and returning the ST, which David could win knowing he had another spade trick to come.
	8742				
	AQJ2				
W	N	E	S		He had already decided to finesse West for the HJ, and when this proved correct, he had 9 tricks for +600.
2H!	2NT	/	3NT		At the other table NS found their heart fit, but 4H failed by 12 tricks for +200, and 13 Imps to us.
//					
M 2	J3				On board 7 in the second match we had a straight-forward auction to 4S, and West made it easier by leading the H3! I won in dummy and played 2 rounds of diamonds to ensure a diamond ruff for my 9 th trick, and the club would make it 10, or even 11 if the CJ was well placed.
Bd 7	AJ854				
Dir S	A5				
Vul All	KT72				After winning the Diamond at trick 3, a trump did come back but it was too late as I could win in hand, ruff with the SJ on the table and return to hand by ruffing a heart high to draw trumps and set about the clubs.
764				82	
32				KQT97	
KJ983				QT2	
A63				J98	There was no way to play the clubs for 1-loser, so it was 10 tricks for +620. At the other table the better trump lead was found, and declarer finished a trick short for +100 and 12 Imps.
	AKQT95				
	6				
	764				
	Q54				4S is still makeable on a trump lead, but declarer has to win in hand and lead clubs straight away, while the red Aces remain in dummy. If EW switch to a diamond, declarer ducks and a diamond continuation allows the ruff after all, or else the 4 th club is set up for a discard of a diamond, while the entry remains.
W	N	E	S		
/	2H	/	1S		
/	4S	//	3S		

M 2 AQT93
Bd 11 T73
Dir S J87
Vul Nil 43
 - KJ7642
 984 A6
 AK32 QT64
 AKJT75 8
 85
 KQJ52
 95
 Q962

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

On board 11 in the second match I had a gut-feeling that East was poised to pass a take-out double from West, and thus was well prepared for a spade lead!

Fortunately I had an alternative defence, and it struck gold. David encouraged opening the lead of the HK, and I continued with the HQ, and when Declarer won the HA I knew David had another heart to put me in, because of his encouragement at trick 1.

Declarer took the club finesse successfully, but when that suit failed to break, he could only cash 8 tricks for 1 off and +50 to us.

At the other table North also escaped the axe in 1SX, by not over-calling, but Richard and Therese bid extremely well to 5D, which was cold, in fact making 12 tricks on a very friendly layout.

1SX would not have been pretty, and David would have been extremely lucky to make 5 tricks, with a likely result 3 off for -500.

M 3 -
Bd 3 AKJ9764
Dir S A743
Vul EW K9
 J864 AKQT953
 532 -
 QJ962 5
 J Q5432
 72
 QT8
 KT9
 AT876

W	N	E	S
5S	4H	4S	5H
6S	6H	/	/
	x	//	

Board 3 in the third match turned into a guessing game at both tables, and luckily we guessed right.

David has a very good hand for a 4H opening bid, but I am a passed hand, so he has some latitude.

East has an automatic 4S, and I have an automatic 5H, so when West bid 5S, David took out insurance by bidding 1 more, and it was back to West for the final decision.

Having bid 5S on very little and with zero tricks in a heart contract, West was not prepared to risk it and sacrificed in 6S!

I led the H8, ruffed by declarer, who led a top trump, then a small club towards dummy, and I hopped up with the CA, hoping to take the setting trick with the DK. A trump return, or playing low on the club would have led to 2 off, but we had to settle for 1 off and +200 when I led a second heart and declarer made 11 tricks.

At the other table, NS doubled Therese in 5SE and that also made 11 tricks, for +850 and 14 lmps.

M 3 -
Bd 4 Q97543
Dir W QJ972
Vul All 98
 KT8532 9764
 6 J8
 6 A543
 KQJT3 765
 AQJ
 AKT2
 KT8
 A42

W	N	E	S
1S	2S	X	6H
//			

The bidding on board 4 in the third match was short and sweet after I got over the shock of an opening bid on my left, some values on my right, David showing a two-suiter, and I have a balanced 21-count!

In fact we got to the wrong slam, as 6H can go off by playing the DA and another, and it is much easier for West to lead the D6 than for East to make this play if North was declarer. West gave some thought to leading the D6, but only having 1 trump persuaded her to lead the CK instead.

6H is now cold, but as I was pulling out the CA, the C4 hit the deck first! West was in her rights to let the Director decide, but she graciously allowed me to play the card I intended and we quickly wrote down +1430.

At the other table, North was declarer in 6H, and understandably Therese did not find the DA lead, so it was a flat board.

M 4 K85
Bd 3 KJT742
Dir S J2
Vul EW 93
 JT972 Q43
 A5 8
 QT7 AK64
 T74 AQJ86
 A6
 Q963
 9853
 K52

W	N	E	S
/	2H!	X	/
3S	/	4S	5H
/	/	X	//

Board 3 was one of our rare successes in the fourth match, but when I saw the hand I was expecting it to be just another flat board.

After David opened with a weak 2H, I did not fancy our chances of taking 4 tricks in 4S, so bid the obvious 5H, and East correctly decided to take what was on offer in 5HX rather than push on to 5S, and he led the DK.

When dummy tracked, David could see 5H was the right spot, as 4S was cold, and it was only a matter of 8 or 9 tricks for us, with very little riding on the outcome.

In fact if the CA was over the CK, he would go 3 off for -500, but then 5S will make easily for -650.

When the CK was onside, David made 9 tricks for -300, which was 8 Imps to us when Richard was allowed to play in 4S at the other table for +620.

M 4 96
Bd 20 A7
Dir W K9752
Vul All AKT3
 A42 J7
 QJ9 KT632
 AJ7 QT4
 QJ52 974
 KQT853
 854
 85
 86

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

Board 20 in the fourth match was a wait and see hand before I acted, as the vulnerability was daunting if EW had enough for game!

However, when 2H was passed around to me, it was obvious that David had some values, so the risk was warranted.

EW did not compete any further, and Deep Finesse suggests that they were right, and West led the HQ.

I won the HA and returned a heart, threatening a ruff, as I wanted EW to broach the trump suit and East dully obliged.

I was now able to draw trumps and give up a diamond, a trump and 2 hearts, for 9 tricks and +140.

Interestingly, 4S is cold, as on the lead of the HQ, declarer ducks, and either gets a heart ruff, or if EW lead trumps, then it is easy to set up the diamonds for a heart discard.

At the other table, playing Acoll, Richard opened 1C and rebid 1NT, which was the final contract, making 7 tricks for +90 and 6 Imps.

M 5 A52
Bd 4 AQT65
Dir W QT
Vul All A85
 K764 QJ8
 J74 92
 A872 K9654
 QJ K72
 T93
 K83
 J3
 T9643

W	N	E	S
/	1NT	//	

Board 4 in the fifth match was a lucky one for our system, which can include a 5-card major in our 15-17 1NT opening. In fact, with any reasonable 5-card suit, 1NT can be shaded down to just 14 HCPs.

The contract got off to a bad start when East led the D5, and EW cashed the first 5 tricks. However then it was all over when David won the SA and the hearts were friendly, so David quickly claimed 7 tricks for +90.

At the other table NS found their 5-3 fit, and quite reasonably got to 2HN, which also has only 7 tricks, so that was 1 off and +100, for a combined +190 and 5 Imps to us.

Of course there are some times when the concealed 5-3, or even 5-4 fit in a major suit plays better than 1NT, but nothing is perfect!

M 6	75				On board 12 in the sixth match the power of the closed hand was never more in evident, when I finished in 2H with only 16 HCPs between the 2 hands, only a 4-3 fit,a and poor suit.
Bd 12	A97				
Dlr W	AJ765				
Vul NS	Q87				The first bit of good luck occurred was when West led the C3, and East played the C9 and I won the first trick with the CJ.
A943		Q86			A diamond to the DA and a spade off the table gave me more good news when the SJ forced the SA.
Q54		KJ6			I ruffed the diamond switch, then cashed the SK and ruffed a spade in dummy, and was disappointed when the SQ came from East.
Q43		KT82			Another diamond ruff in hand, and a club discarded on the SK, ruffed by East, who must have felt vulnerable holding now KJ bare in trumps, so he forced dummy with a club,, but that was my 8 th trick!
K53		AT9			At the other table Therese made 8 tricks in 1NT as East for +120 and 6 Imps.
	KJT2				
	T832				
	9				
	J642				
W	N	E	S		
/	1D	/	1H		
/	2H	//			

M 7	QJ63				On board 18 in the seventh match I opened with a light 1C, and rebid 1NT to show 11-14 balanced, with less than 4 spades, and David raised to game.
Bd 18	KJ9				
Dlr E	AK2				
Vul NS	T64				West, having been silent throughout, led the H4, and I won in hand to lead the SK, followed by the ST when East ducked. Instead of returning her partner's lead, possibly because she had most of the points for the defense, East led the C2, which I ran around to the CT in dummy and led another club off the table. East played low and the CJ won.
752		A94			3NT is always cold, as West has no other entries, but this defense allowed an easy 10 tricks for +630.
A8543		T2			At the other table South must have passed on the first round, and also passed 1NT by North, whether as an opening bid, or a minimum rebid, but this time making 9 tricks for -150, and 10 Imps to us.
J87		9654			
83		AQ92			
	KT8				
	Q76				
	QT3				
	KJ75				
W	N	E	S		
/	1S	/	1C		
/	3NT	//	1NT		

M 7	KQ3				Board 20 in the seventh match caused a variety of results around the room, not all of them good.
Bd 20	QJ98				
Dlr W	7				I did not know what to do over East's 5C response, but should have heeded the axiom: Do not bid weak over weak.
Vul All	Q7653				West had no hesitation in doubling for penalties, and it was East's turn to think again, as she did have 3-card support for her partner's 5-card spade suit, but she passed.
A9842		JT5			West led the SA and still had 3 more trump tricks to come, so that was 2 off for -500.
6543		72			At the other table Therese bid 2C on the first round, and South only over-called 4D, over which Therese rebid 5C, which was passed out.
AQJ5		-			The 5-0 break did not cause any inconvenience as there is only 1 club loser, and always only 4 losers, but -200 was 12 Imps away.
-		AKJT9842			
	76				
	AKT				
	KT986432				
	-				
W	N	E	S		
1S	/	5C	5D		
X	//				

M 8
Bd 10
Dir E
Vul All
 865
 KJ4
 K642
 762

AQJT
 5
 853
 KQT94

732
 QT2
 AJT
 AJ85

W
 2H
 //

N
 X

E
 2D
 /

S
 /
 3NT

On board 10 in the eighth match I had no good bid when East showed a weak two in hearts, but took a chance and went for the best result by bidding 3NT.

West led the HK and continued with the HJ attempting to unblock the suit, but East did not grasp all of the ramifications of the heart position and played the HA and when the HT dropped, led the H9 suggesting a spade entry.

However, I had a plan, based on East holding only one of the diamond honours.

Accordingly I cashed the CA and entered dummy with a club to take the diamond finesse. Upon winning with the DK West led a spade, but I rose with the SA and ran the clubs making my trick total up to 8.

On the last club East was squeezed in spades and diamonds, so the DQ popped and the diamond finesse was no longer necessary, 9 tricks for +600, and 11 Imps against 2H off 1 for -100.

M 9
Bd 1
Dir N
Vul Nil
 KJ854
 J962
 K96
 5

AQ2
 AKT5
 T
 KQJ93

96
 Q74
 J32
 AT862

W
 /

N
 1C
 5C

E
 /
 //

S
 3C

On board 1 in the ninth match an inverted minor raise worked well for us, as well as the silence of our opponents.

My 3C raise showed 5-9 HCPs and at least 5 clubs, so David was well placed to have a shot at game. East led the S7, which eliminated the spade finesse for him, so there were 12 easy tricks.

Even on a non-spade lead East may be reluctant to lead the DA, and could well lead a heart, which sets up a spade discard, so slam is a good bet on the 2 hands.

Surprisingly East did not mention his diamond suit, but I am fairly certain David would still have bid game after my 3C raise over a 2D over-call. A 3D over-call may well have won the auction, as I am not strong enough to bid 4C.

At the other table Therese did bid her suit, and she was allowed to play in 3D, making 8 tricks for -50, but 9 Imps to us.

M 9
Bd 11
Dir S
Vul Nil
 KT75
 A95
 Q4
 QJT8

2
 JT62
 KJ876
 K64

A9
 Q743
 AT9532
 A

W
 X
 //

N
 1H

E
 4S

S
 1D
 5H

On board 11 in the ninth match I had a highly distributional hand, with potential to set up my diamond suit, so even with 3 Aces, I elected to bid 5H rather than double 4S by East.

East led the SQ, and David won in dummy and gave up 2 hearts, and with our 6-5 diamond fit, quickly claimed 11 tricks for +450.

This was a lucky position for us, as if West is on lead, an unlikely diamond lead would beat 5H, but 5D is always cold.

At the other table, after a similar start to the auction, South fancied his chances when Therese bid 4S, and expressed them with a penalty double.

However, the DA did not cash, and even if he had started with the CA, there was no way to put North in to give him a club ruff, so 4SX was cold.

So that was +450 and +590, amounting to 14 Imps to us which was only just less than our winning margin

M 9	Q		
Bd 12	72		
Dir W	AQ86432		
Vul NS	K74		
J82		97653	
A9		QJ843	
J97		T	
QJT86		A5	
	AKT4		
	KT65		
	K5		
	932		
/	1D	2D!	X
2S	3D	/	3NT
//			

On board 12 in the ninth match East bid a Michael's Cue-bid of unknown strength, and that was the undoing of the defence.

My double was values, and when David rebid his diamonds, I bid 3NT, holding solid stoppers in both majors.

If EW remain silent, I am sure that West would lead the CQ to 3NTS, and that gives declarer a problem, but instead he led the S2, a suit in which he had support for partner.

After winning in dummy I came to hand with the DK and was pleased to see everyone follow, thus I had 10 tricks and could cash out. When the SJ dropped I had 11 tricks for +660.

At the other table, the contract was the same, but declarer lost his way and went 1 off, for +100 and 13 Imps.

To make 3NT on the lead of the CQ, declarer must duck twice in dummy, losing just 2 clubs and 2 hearts.