

2009 GNOT Final by Richard Wallis

As has happened the past few years, the final of the GNOT was held at Club Banora, in Tweed Heads, NSW. 62 teams, with teams seeded 1 & 2 (Sydney 1 & 2) having a bye for the first round, turned up on Friday morning to fight out the knock-out stages over 4 days, and while we (Julia Leung, David Appleton, Pele Rankin, Paul Hooykaas, Therese Tully and Richard Wallis) were seeded at 4, we did not play anywhere near our potential, suffering the indignity of losing our first 14-board match to team 61!

My continued absence in Perth on business did not help, and lack of practice showed in systemic errors on a couple of occasions, but we all had our highs and lows, so it was a team effort after all. After our first-round loss we were straight into the Repechage, and up against Sydney 8, containing an ex Qld player of ill-favour, Leiv Bornecrantz, and luckily for State honour we managed a good win. 2 more wins saw us well placed going into the match against Gold Coast 1, but my systemic slip-up on the last board of the match allowed Neville Francis to play in 2HX making, for 11 Imps and the match to them.

Another win followed by a small loss to Melbourne 1 brought us up against Gold Coast 4, and once again we stuttered, this time at the other table, and the 14 Imp loss took away our slim chance of climbing out of the Repechage back into the quarter-finals. Good wins in the last 2 matches pushed us up to 10th place in the Repechage, the highest placed of the Qld teams, but a disappointing result overall.

Sydney 2 were also pushed into the Repechage, but emerged from there in first place, and went on to win their quarter-final against Perth 3 comfortably, and their semi-final against Sydney 1 by just 1 Imp, but won every quarter of the final against Canberra 1 to triumph by 98 Imps.

M 1	AK			Board 3 in match 1 was a chance for a large pick-up to us that went begging due to a mental lapse on my part. Therese took a reasonable shot at 3NT with her 20 points over West's weak minor opening, and I could have looked for her longest major by bidding 4C/D, but my heart suit would play opposite a singleton, so 4H was the obvious bid.
Bd 3	76			
Dlr S	KQJ985			
Vul EW	AK7			
-		QT6532		
A5		843		
AT643		2		
JT8432		Q96		
	J9874			
	KQJT92			
	7			
	5			
W	N	E	S	
			/	
2NT	3NT	/	4H	
//				

On the AD lead, even I could not have gone wrong, but West led the CJ, and I was able to discard my diamond loser on a top club before leading trumps, all the time thinking 4H was going to be easy, and so it should have been!

However, West returned a heart, and after drawing trumps I led a spade to dummy and got my first disappointment, and then mistakenly called for the DK, before correcting the call and asking for the SK! Then I ran the DK, discarding a spade, and could no longer make 10 tricks.

If I keep the SK as an entry and give up the DK, I get 11 tricks, if I ruff the DK and give up a spade, I can give up another spade for 10 tricks. At the other table North bid to 6D for 3 down, so we still gained 3 Imps.

M 1 K76
Bd 13 T9742
Dlr N Q6
Vul All K73
 3 AQJT85
 KJ865 AQ
 AK974 -
 J2 AQT98

942
 3
 JT8532
 654

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

Board 13 in match 1 was a very interesting play problem that most declarers seemed to get wrong. At our table EW did not get very adventurous, and played in game, with slam available in 4 out of the 5 denominations.

Unfortunately Paul and Pele got to 6H, only really makeable on a double-dummy basis, and fell 1 trick short to lose 13 Imps against the -650 from our table.

6C is fairly straight-forward on repeated finesses, and a 3-3 club break, losing just to the SK. 6S is the most interesting, especially on a heart lead, as East must win on the table with the HK, cash the DA discarding the HA, and then take the club finesse, twice, if necessary, before finally playing trumps from the top. Now East can ruff the heart return high and draw the last trumps, again a 3-3 break.

The hand is interesting for another general principle, that is mis-fit hands belong in notrumps. 6NT has no real problems, just the requirement that the club finesse must work, and the spades must be brought home for 1 loser. In 6NT the spades can often be tested while the HQ remains as an entry to dummy for the Club finesse, and 3 discards are available on the red-suit winners.

M 2 84
Bd 19 Q964
Dlr S T875
Vul EW A52
 AQ962 KJ753
 T A2
 2 QJ64
 KJ9874 T6

T
 KJ8753
 AK93
 Q3

W	N	E	S
			1H
2H	3H	4S	5H
5S	//		

On board 19 in match 2 West was caught in no-man's land when he had a moderate hand for Michael's, and could be reasonably certain at the vulnerability that East had some values as well, but whose hand is it?

Therese had been pushed into the 3H, so probably does not have a good hand, so my 5H bid was easy, as Therese could have showed a stronger hand, or a penalty oriented hand by other means.

West made the right decision when he took the push to 5S, but now it was up to East to make 11 tricks.

I led the DK (getting count) and switched to a heart, as the clubs looked ominous, and I wanted to get our tricks as soon as possible, but East won this and drew trumps, so it all came down to the club guess for East.

Luckily she led the CT (looking for a cover or a flicker?) but went up with the CK for 1 down and 13 Imps to us when David and Julia were not tested in 4S at the other table, making 11 tricks for +650.

M 3 AT
Bd 2 542
Dlr E KQ9532
Vul NS JT
 J8652 K93
 AQ97 JT6
 874 6
 9 A87653

Q74
 K83
 AJT
 KQ42

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

On board 2 in match 3 my rebid showed 15-18 and Therese had no hesitation in bidding to 3NT, to which West led the S5. For some reason, probably due to West's failure to overcall, I thought that East had the SK.

If West holds both Aces with or without the SK, it does not matter how I play, but this seemed unlikely since he did not overcall. If I was correct, and East also holds the CA, when he wins this he may decide to switch to a heart instead of continuing spades if I play low in dummy, so I went with my 'gut' and rose with the SA to lead the CJ, to give East a losing option, if there was one.

Here I was unlucky in that the clubs broke 6-1 and West discarded a spade on the second club to suggest a heart switch, but East came to my rescue when he did not notice the discard and continued the 3rd round of spades anyway, so I made 11 tricks for +660.

At the other table David and Julia were more ruthless, taking their 6 tricks for +200 and 13 Imps.

M 3 4
Bd 8 AK7
Dlr W KQT2
Vul Nil A7654
 AK972 J865
 84 QT9632
 A9874 J5
 J 3
 QT3
 J5
 63
 KQT982
W **N** **E** **S**
 1S X 4S 5X
 5S X //

The auction on board 8 in match 3 was over in a trice, but could have been dangerous for us.

Therese's double was of the normal variety, either support for every other suit, or a strong hand, and East's jump to game suggested that Therese might even be void in spades, so I succumbed to the pressure and bid 5C over 4S.

Therese's hand was very suitable for making 11 tricks in clubs, and that was the contract at the other table, but here West was not to be denied and bid one more for the road, which Therese was happy to double, although considering my 5C bid I would not have blamed her for bidding 6C!

If Therese does have a 0445 distribution 6C is cold, but here we were right to stop in 5SX, and we had no trouble taking our 5 tricks for +500 and 3 Imps.

M 5 K97
Bd 13 KT6
Dlr N AKJ762
Vul All 9
 T6 Q42
 972 AJ
 QT4 853
 AKQ74 JT632
 AJ853
 Q8543
 9
 85
W **N** **E** **S**
 2C 1D / 1S
 / X 3C 3S
 / 4S //

We have been playing support doubles for many years, but they do not seem to come up all that often, but on board 13 in match 5 we used a support double to good effect and gained a game swing.

If East had passed the double, I may have made a game try by bidding 2H, but over 3C I was merely content to play for the part score with my moderate, but shapely hand. However, Therese's excellent hand, and my free-bid, prompted her to bid the cold game.

West led the CA and switched to the D4, which took away some of my options, so I decided to rely on setting up the hearts for my 10 tricks.

I pitched my club on a second top diamond, took the spade finesse successfully, drew trumps, and led to the HT in dummy, losing 2 hearts and a club for 10 tricks and +620.

I could have played the hearts for 1 loser, but this would only have been important if the spade finesse lost, and +620 was worth 10 Imps when they made 11 tricks at the other table but were not in game.

M 6 5
Bd 16 QT96
Dlr W T98542
Vul EW A5
 T872 93
 A853 742
 AQ7 J6
 97 KQJT62
 AKQJ64
 KJ
 K3
 843
W **N** **E** **S**
 / / / 1S
 / 1NT / 3NT
 //

On board 16 in match 6 I thought that my 6 spades tricks may be more useful in a notrump contract, especially as the lead would be up the Therese's hand, but she still had to make it.

Good technique will earn its own rewards over time, and this is where Therese's good technique paid it due.

EW had been silent, and I had opened in 4th seat, so Therese nearly did not bother to make the 'futile' duck of the CK on the opening lead, as this was only going to be important if East had a 6-card suit, and West had both Aces!

To her pleasant surprise, this was exactly how it panned out, and since East futilely persisted in clubs with no entry instead of switching to the DJ after winning the first club, she could have made 10 tricks, but settled for +400.

At the other table South finished in 4S, which has some chances, but they all disappear on a club lead, and South finished 2 down for +100 and 11 Imps.

M 6	AQJ8432			
Bd 21	9			
Dir N	QJT8			
Vul NS	8			
6		T		
A7		T86543		
43		762		
AKQ97642		T53		
	K975			
	KQJ2			
	AK95			
	J			
W	N	E	S	
	4S	/	4NT	
5C	/	/	5S	
6C	/	/	X	
//				

Board 21 in match 6 was one of the most interesting in regard to bidding system and barrage bidding.

At our table the bidding was very straight-forward, and when Therese opened 4S, I immediately thought of slam, so I used RKCB.

West has a hand that is too good distributionally to let vulnerable opponents to play at the 5-level, but none the less he bid a wimpy 5C over my 4NT asking bid. Therese's pass showed 1 of the 4 Key Cards (DOPI), so I knew we were missing 2 Aces, and settled for 5S.

Now, after some thought, West came forth with 6C, and the pass by Therese could have been interpreted as showing first-round control, but I allowed for the fact that Therese had pre-empted and may not have been sure we were in a forcing option, so I took the sure penalty of 500 that was available by doubling.

At the other table, Pele knew that she was not going to let vulnerable opponents play in 5S, so she bid 6C at once, and now, without a clear understanding of what North's pass showed, South had to guess, and bid 6S, for +100 to us and 12 Imps.

M 8	32			
Bd 19	-			
Dir S	K8643			
Vul EW	JT8742			
AK9		J75		
AKJ97542		QT6		
Q		JT975		
A		Q6		
	QT864			
	83			
	A2			
	K953			
W	N	E	S	
			/	
1C	X	/	3C	
X	/	5D		
6H	//			

On board 19 in match 8 EW were playing Precision, and Therese's double of 1C showed the minors, so at favourable vulnerability, I pre-empted the bidding to the 3-level before West had a chance to re-bid.

West's double was takeout, so Therese had a chance for more pre-emption, and bid 5C.

It is not clear what East was thinking of when he made a free-bid of 5D, maybe just natural, but that does not make sense in view of Therese's announced 4-card minimum diamond suit.

Anyway, EW were not on the same wavelength, for West took the 5D bid as encouraging, and promptly bid the low percentage slam in hearts.

The opening lead was the CJ, covered all around, and the line to 12 tricks depended on setting up the diamonds (with 3 entries to the table) or taking the double spade finesse (a 25% shot). Declarer did not look into the bidding closely, and went for the diamond suit, but as long as Therese ducks the DQ at trick 2, this line had to fail.

At the other table they did not get the same bidding, but also tried to set up the diamonds for a spade discard, but this relies on AKx in one hand or a miss-defense, and so was not as good as 25%.

M 8	86			
Bd 22	J93			
Dir E	KT9			
Vul EW	A8432			
KQJT9754		A32		
T7		AK8642		
A76		2		
-		765		
	-			
	Q5			
	QJ8543			
	KQJT9			
W	N	E	S	
		1H	2NT	
4S	5C	5S	//	

EW were very unimaginative on board 22 in match 8 and allowed us to barrage them out of slam.

My 2NT overcall was for the minors (weak or strong), and playing Precision, West's 4S was to play opposite a partner who had a maximum of 15 points.

Therese took away any Ace-asking bids with 5C, so East had to guess as to the final level, and with only a minimum, albeit A, AK, he chose a conservative 5S, and there the auction rested.

Given the opportunity to find out West had 2 Key Cards and the SQ, I am sure that EW would have finished in slam, but East has more than a minimum hand in support of spades, and would have been justified in bidding 6S himself, unless West would bid 4S with just the spade holding and nothing outside.

At the other table, I do not have the bidding, but slam was reached for 13 Imps to us.

M 9 KQ732
Bd 2 9
Dlr E JT92
Vul NS AKJ
 J4 9865
 KQJT5 A643
 K83 65
 972 Q64

 AT
 872
 AQ74
 T853

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

On board 2 in match 9 I felt I was too strong to pass, and while this would have been a good time for double to be negative, that was unclear, so I supported with only 2 spades.

When Therese made a game-try in diamonds, I was delighted to be able to show 4-card support, but 4S became the final contract, to which East led the HA.

When Therese was forced to ruff the next heart and diamond finesse lost, she was booked for a 1 trick defeat, but as East found out, you cannot give her a chance or you could rue the day.

West led back a club and Therese won in hand to draw 3 rounds of trumps, revealing she had 4 losers unless the club finesse was on, which looked unlikely.

Therese then ran her diamonds, finishing on the table, while East discarded his exit cards, and then she ruffed dummy's last heart, which East was able to over-ruff, but the forced club return gave her 10 tricks for +620 and 11 Imps against 3D making -110.

M 9 92
Bd 5 KQT94
Dlr N J2
Vul NS QJ53
 AQJ6 T53
 - AJ85
 QT64 K95
 AK762 T84

 K874
 7632
 A873
 9

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

EW certainly got their bidding boots on for board 5 in match 9, but while the operation was a success, the patient still died due to inadequate declarer treatment. Deep Finesse suggests that 10 tricks can be made in notrumps by EW, but East could not see all 4 hands.

I led the H2 (showing a4-card holding), and Therese put in the H9, ducked, but the HT continuation was taken by the HJ and a club was led and ducked, so I led another heart, and Therese cleared her hearts.

Reference to Therese's original pass would have told East that I had some values, but he seemed to be playing as if Therese held the key cards and eventually finished up 2 off for +100.

At the other table, South got carried away with their 4-card support, and bid 3H after the overcall, doubled by East for 3 off and +800, so we gained 14 Imps, which was almost our winning margin.

I am a believer in pre-empting the opposition, but opposite a passed partner, and at adverse vulnerability, there has to be some common sense.

M 9 T95
Bd 13 Q86
Dlr N KT954
Vul All 76
 876 AKQ
 542 AKJ973
 A82 QJ7
 AJ82 3

 J432
 T
 63
 KQT954

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

On board 13 in match 9 I instinctively doubled 2C to show the suit, but systemically it showed 5+ Hearts, which gave Therese momentary palpitations. Luckily these cleared up when East bid 2H (natural) and she realized I had forgotten the system and actually had clubs after all.

West's 2D denied the hand to make a positive response, but they took over after the 2H response, and pushed their side into the cold slam. Maybe that is what West was expecting for the 2H rebid, but it seems fortuitous to me to have such a good spade and diamond holding, but then again, my double may have worked against us in that West may have assumed all of East's points were thus outside of clubs.

The general rule is quoted as "8 ever, 9 never", but that can be changed by the bidding, as I think happened here, but East played for the drop in hearts and duly went 1 down when she also lost a diamond.

A flat board when there was no opposition helpful bidding at the other table – I do try and help!