

2005 Sydney ANC

The Sydney ANC was the best series of results for Qld players in my memory and probably ever.

With 1 round to play in the Teams, the QLD and NSW Women's teams were both locked into the final, and Qld got a maximum win on the last match while NSW had a draw to take a 6 Imp carry-over into the final. This carry-over was to prove decisive in a close final and Qld only got to the lead in the last set to win by 3 Imps. I am sure that a full report on the Women's Teams will be presented elsewhere.

In the other teams events all Qld teams had a chance to qualify for the final in the last match, but unfortunately they all saved their worst until last and all finished 3rd. Still, 1st in the Women's and 3rd in the other events is a top result.

In the Butler that followed the Teams, Therese Tully and Sue Lusk won the Women's, while Magnus Moren and Neville Francis finished 2nd in the Open, another great pair of results. Magnus and Neville now get to play in the Australian team at next year's Commonwealth Games in Melbourne with Bruce Neill and Ron Klinger.

I was playing in the Senior's with Tony Jackman, and our team-mates were Jenny Han/Richard Morey and Kerry Wood/Charlie Howard, with Ian Afflick our non-playing captain and general. It was a great week and although we fell at the last hurdle, the team played very well to lose only 4 and win 10 over the double round-robin. While our ultimate demise was felt by all in the last match, the 13 Imps we missed out on getting to the final could have been made by any one of us in most of the preceding 13 matches. Especially against NSW, who got into the final at our expense and won easily against WA, we only needed to pick an extra 7 Imps as they would have gone back by 7 Imps. The full table of results is as follows:

	NSW	SA	VIC	WA	ACT	TAS	NT	Total
Round 1	+4	+29	+7	-22	+15	+33	+35.7	+101.7
Round 2	-7	+1	-11	-35.2	+28	+35	+37.5	+48.3
Total	-3	+30	-4	-57.2	+43	+68	+73.2	+150.0

M 1 (NT) 98642
Bd 2 J96
Dir E 743
Vul NS T3
 KJ Q
 8 QT75432
 K8 T52
 AKQJ987 52

AT753
 AK
 AQJ96
 6

W	N	E	S
		3H	X
3NT	/	/	X
/	/	4H	X
//			

On board 2 in the first match the NT East opened 3H and I doubled for take-out, over which West bid 3NT. When this came around to me I doubled again, and West was happy to play there with 8 tricks in clubs and a potential trick from the opening lead. Surprisingly, Tony was not inclined to bid, but lack of discipline from East caused her to bid again so I was able to double again and 4HX became the final contract. After I doubled 4H to confirm a good hand I think Tony should now bid 4S (which is cold), but West might now bid 5C, which is only 1 light.

Unfortunately I led the SA, which was the wrong one, and this set up a discard for declarer's 3rd diamond. If I lead the DA I can cash the HA and lead another diamond to dummy and cash the 3rd diamond, which may have led to 3 off. However, I had 4 certain tricks and when I ruffed a club with my trump winner, this set up a trick for Tony's HJ for 2 off and +300. At the other table NS went on to 5S over 5C and lost 100 for 9 Imps to us.

3NT is an interesting contract on any lead as West is squeezed in a peculiar way. On a spade lead declarer appears to have 8 clubs and 1 spade for 9 tricks, but if my hand cashes both hearts, West must throw a club winner, and is then thrown in with a spade to conceded 2 tricks at the end and 1 off.

M 1 (NT) AQT8
Bd 9 AQT4
Dir N Q
Vul EW KJ97
 K5 7
 J63 K87
 A32 KJT9865
 A8532 T4

J96432
 952
 74
 Q6

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

On board 9 in the first round match against NT I missed what could have been valuable overtricks because of a mis-interpretation of the EW methods.

EW stated that they were using the loser-trick evaluation, and the 2D bid over Tony's 1C opening was alerted as Intermediate!

I passed on the first round, but came back in with my 6-card suit when 3D was passed back to me and Tony raised to game.

After the lead of the CA and a continuation, I had 10 certain tricks without the spade finesse, and since East had intermediate strength, I expected her to have that card anyway, so I won the CQ and played to the SA in dummy to pitch 2 hearts.

I was surprised after the hand to find that East only had 7 HCPs, and it was explained that the Intermediate strength was based on around a 6 loser hand.

This turned out to be a double game swing, as at the other table Jenny and Richard had played the hand in 3NT as EW, making 10 tricks for +630 and 14 Imps to us.

M 1 (NT)	K7			
Bd 23	A42			
Dlr S	QJT432			
Vul ALL	87			
AQJ4		853		
KQ		JT98763		
A97		-		
KQ65		932		
	T962			
	5			
	K865			
	AJT4			
W	N	E	S	
	/	/	/	
2D	/	2H	/	
2NT	/	3D	/	
3H	/	4H	//	

On board 23 in the first match the NT West opened with an artificial 2D and East gave a negative response, but took a fly at 4H when West showed the balanced 20-22.

Everyone knew that 3D by East was transfer to hearts, so when 4H became the final contract, everyone knew that it was Tony's lead and he duly led the DQ, with 10 tricks the result and -620 to us.

However, after the hand, our captain pointed out that East's first bid had been 2H, so she should have been declarer and I have a possible lead of the ST, which will lead to a spade ruff by Tony and only 9 tricks.

This is what happened at the other table, but since they were only in 3H, the contract was still made, but 10 Imps away. Luckily we had plenty to spare, so it was not a tragedy, as the 16 Imps that we missed out on only amounted to 1.6 VPs after the cut-off (Imps above 35 are divided by 10).

M2(NSW)	92			
Bd 8	KJ9			
Dlr W	A975			
Vul Nil	K642			
AKQ543		J87		
642		AQ753		
4		K62		
T95		87		
	T6			
	T8			
	QJT83			
	AQJ3			
W	N	E	S	
2S	/	4S	//	

On board 8 in the second match Tony opened with a weak 2S and I jumped to game more as a pre-emptive tactic that with any great expectation of making 10 tricks, and NS passed throughout.

The NSW North led the S2, and then another diamond when Tony drew trumps and led a diamond towards dummy, North rising with the DA. Tony was thus able to win 10 tricks via the heart finesse and the club ruff for a surprising (to me) +420.

3NT also makes from my hand on a diamond lead (via the heart finesse), but would go off if North won the DA and shifted to clubs.

At the other table the NSW EW did not get to game, which is just as well as Kerry picked a good time to underlead her DA, so EW did not get a diamond trick and only made 9 tricks for -140 and 7 Imps.

M2(NSW)	QJT854			
Bd 9	4			
Dlr N	8			
Vul EW	98642			
A973		-		
J87		AKQT93		
A2		KT63		
AKQT		753		
	K62			
	652			
	QJ9754			
	J			
W	N	E	S	
	3S	4H	4S	
4NT	5S	/	/	
6H	/	/	6S	
X	//			

Board 9 in the second match was crucial to the outcome of the match, and we lost 15 Imps due to a barrage from NSW, and less than perfect defence.

North used the vulnerability to open with 3S, I bid an obvious 4H, and South an equally obvious 4S. Thus by the time Tony got to bid it was already uncomfortably high.

Tony used RKCB, and I should have bid 6C over 5S to show 2 Key Cards and the trump Queen (DOPI), but I was not certain that 4NT was not asking for my better minor.

Tony had another chance with 5NT, but in a guessing game he decided to play safe, especially if my pass over 5S was correct, showing just 1 Key Card. 6H was losing 13 Imps, but NS came again with 6S and Tony accepted whatever was on offer.

Best defence can hold 6SX to just 6 tricks and +1700 (HA, D3 switch, SA and another, and another spade when West wins the CA), but we slipped 2 tricks in defence and only got +1100, which was 15 Imps away when EW at the other table bid 7H. It is still 11 Imps away on perfect defence, so the slips only cost 4 Imps.

M2(NSW) QT986
Bd 20 9874
Dlr W QT2
Vul Nil 6
 J7542 K
 63 J
 987 J654
 JT4 KQ98732

A3
 AKQT52
 AK3
 A5

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

Board 20 in the second match was a potential slam that was missed at many tables, including both the open and closed rooms in our match.

After 2 passes I opened with a Precision 2C opening rather than a normal 3C, and the NSW South doubled for take-out. However, when North responded 2S he was not excited, and bid 3NT, with 10 likely tricks on top.

North elected not to show his second suit and 3NT became the final contract to which Tony led the CJ. I think that the North hand was better suited to playing in a suit and 4H was a better bid, which would certainly have led to slam. 4H also has the advantage of implying a 5-card spade suit.

South knew that a certain slam had been missed when he saw dummy, and he won the opening lead and ran his hearts and diamonds. He could have now counted me out as I had thrown all of my small clubs, but instead elected to throw me in with a club for a spade lead and I was able to cash 2 clubs for -660 and 1 Imp.

M2(NSW) J842
Bd 22 -
Dlr E AQT2
Vul EW AK982
 7 AKQT65
 A82 KQ76
 KJ86 43
 QJ764 T

93
 JT9543
 975
 53

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

On board 22 in the second match Tony's 1NT response was forcing, and my 3H was natural and showed 14-15 HCPs, so after considering 4H, he took the advice from the Bols bridge tip and bid 3NT.

There are many hands where 9 tricks in NT may be easier than 10 in spades, especially when I was supplying a likely 7 tricks, so I had no thoughts of going on to 4S.

The NSW North was endplayed with the opening lead and tried a good shot for reaching partner's obviously limited hand by leading the DQ.

Tony led a spade towards dummy and was not psychic enough to finesse the ST, so North was in again with the 4th spade and could have cashed 4 tricks, but held to his original plan by leading DA and another so Tony had 10 tricks for +630.

At the other table EW finished in 4SX and ended up 1 off for another +200 and 13 Imps.

M2(NSW) 743
Bd 24 AKT72
Dlr W 432
Vul Nil 53
 T9 AQJ865
 86543 J9
 KJ65 A98
 JT 98

K2
 Q
 QT7
 AKQ7642

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

On board 24 in match 2 against NSW I was caught napping and missed a chance to gain 11 Imps.

South's 3NT overcall normally heralds a long solid suit and a spade stopper, and sometimes very little else, so when Tony led the ST, after taking my Ace I should have considered the hand more thoroughly and laid down the DA to see what response I got from Tony.

This would have led to a quick 1 off, but I woodenly led another spade and declarer was able to claim 11 tricks when the hearts still provided 3 tricks when the HQ was overtaken.

This was a flat board as the bidding and play at the other table was identical, but I count it as a missed opportunity.

M 3 (WA) A65
Bd 2 AKJ7
Dlr E J64
Vul NS 943
 KJ Q8732
 6 QT843
 752 8
 AKJT875 Q6

T94
 952
 AKQT93
 2

W	N	E	S
/	5D	//	2H 3D

On board 2 in the third match against WA, the 2H opening bid by East showed less than opening points and either majors or minors.

I bid 3D to show my good suit and hoping that Tony could bid 3NT if he had stoppers in the majors, and I was somewhat surprized by his major suit holding when he put dummy down in the 5D contract.

The explanation was that he had not heard the full explanation that 2H showed either majors or minors and assumed it showed hearts and a minor, presumably clubs after my 3D bid.

Maybe East would have led the CQ to 3NT, but that seems unlikely, so 3NT is likely to have made 9 or 10 tricks. Of course West knew from my 3D that his partner had the majors so did not mention his very good suit for fear of a misfit.

In 5D I was able to ruff the second club and on the run of the trumps East was squeezed so had to throw spades. A spade duck and continuation was taken in dummy to lead another spade endplaying East to lead into dummy's hearts, but that was 1 off and -5 Imps against 4C off 2 at the other table.

M 3 (WA) 53
Bd 5 Q32
Dlr N 652
Vul NS JT873
 J7 64
 T864 AK9
 AKQ4 JT973
 Q54 K92

AKQT982
 J75
 8
 A6

W	N	E	S
5D	/	1D	4S

On board 5 in the third match against WA, West made a unilateral decision to bid 5D after I overcalled 4S and paid the penalty for a phantom sacrifice.

The penalty could have been much worse as I was not certain of 2 spade tricks so did not double, and with Tony's deep heart trick, the contract was 2 off on top and we scored up +100, which could have been +300.

At the other table Jenny and Richard showed more discipline and passed out 4S, which has 4 top losers so we gained another +100 for 5 Imps.

The West hand does not have much to recommend it for a 5-level contract, and I prefer a double to 5D, as long as the double is not for take-out, otherwise pass. The old adage that when you are pre-empted, stay pre-empted holds true for this hand.

M 3 (WA) K976
Bd 11 J97654
Dlr S K5
Vul Nil 2
 84 T5
 AK2 QT83
 T843 A96
 AT75 KQ86

AQJ32
 -
 QJ72
 J943

W	N	E	S
/	3S	//	1S

On board 11 in the third match against WA I could see nothing in my hand that pulled it above minimum, so had no problem passing Tony's limit raise, but the 2 hands fit together perfectly and 10 tricks are easy, unless West leads a trump!

Luckily for us, West did lead a trump, and when I won in hand and led to the DK, East continued the good work by cashing the CK and leading another trump.

9 tricks are the limit of the hand now and I duly wrote down +140.

The trump lead was spectacular, as our bidding had given no clue to West, and the HA seems to be a stand-out opening lead, but it would have been more critical if we had bid game,

At the other table the obvious HA was led to the same contract of 3S and this time declarer wrote down +200, so we lost 2 Imps.

M 3 (WA) 73
Bd 22 KQ9862
Dir E K965
Vul EW A
A8 KT542
T5 J3
T 74
KQJ97632 T854
QJ96
A74
AQJ832
-

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

Duplication of values was never more evident than on board 22 in the third match against WA.

After my 5C cue-bid which showed duplication opposite his CA, and my failure to go past 5H following his 5D slam-going bid, he knew that we had 2 top losers in spades, so wisely passed 5H.

As luck would have it, East still led a club, and Tony was able to claim 13 tricks for +510 very quickly.

Whether East would have found the spade lead if the final contract had been 6H, we will never know.

Unfortunately, at the other table, NS were not so illuminating in their bidding, and the spade was not so obvious when the bidding settled in 6H, and the slam was made for 11 Imps away.

M 4 (SA) K754
Bd 2 T964
Dir E K
Vul NS J652
98 JT3
K75 AQ8
AJ852 QT643
AQ9 KT
AQ62
J32
97
8743

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

On board 2 in the fourth match against SA Tony could have bid a forcing 2D (inverted) but chose to bid 1H and I rebid 1NT showing a balanced 11-12. After a 2D response we would have bypassed 3NT without a heart stop, but may have got to 5D, which is too high unless you can drop the DK.

South asked questions as to whether my 1NT rebid denied a 4-card spade suit (It does not) and then led the C2.

Thus when I won the CK and finessed to the stiff DK in the North hand, North played safe in the ethical stakes by leading back a heart and I made 10 tricks for +430.

The ethical considerations are a bit cloudy, as without the questions I think that North will choose to lead a spade back most of the time, so he would have probably been on safe ground this time.

At the other table Kerry and Charlie had no ethical problems, declarer took the wrong view in diamonds, and 3NT went 1 off for 10 Imps to us.

M 4 (SA) 96
Bd 6 Q98
Dir E KT96
Vul EW AK83
K7 J532
A543 K76
AJ8743 5
9 JT754
AQT84
JT2
Q2
Q62

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

On board 6 in the fourth match against SA NS appeared to have a systemic difference of opinion when South thought that 3NT showed spade support and thus went on to the hopeless spade game.

In 4S Tony led the H3 and I played my King with no other option and I was surprised that it held the trick!

A diamond switch and return and the ensuing ruff ensured 2 off for +100.

At the other table North passed the 2D overcall (so would I if I intended to pass the next double) and also passed the next take-out double from South.

This contract lost the obvious 6 tricks for +200 and 7 Imps to us.

M 4 (SA) 532
Bd 12 AJ9
Dlr W QJ52
Vul NS KT4
AQ64 J8
8432 T65
- KT743
Q9732 J86

KT97
KQ7
A986
A5

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

On board 12 in the fourth match against SA the bidding system won the board for us by virtue of who was the declarer.

At our table South rebid 3NT after North made a limit bid in diamonds, and Tony led the C3. When declarer played low in dummy I played the C8 which held the trick, and I continued with the CJ.

Declarer went to dummy with the HJ and got some good news when I covered the DQ from dummy, but was in trouble when Tony showed out, throwing a high heart, to suggest a spade entry.

When I won the DT I cleared the clubs and declarer eventually went 2 off trying to make the contract, so we scored +200.

At the other table Kerry and Charlie were playing Precision, so North became declarer in 3NT without diamonds being mentioned, so East led a small diamond, giving up 3 diamonds without losing the lead.

The net result was 10 tricks and +630, so we gained 13 Imps.

M 4 (SA) KQ3
Bd 19 AJT864
Dlr S A7
Vul EW T9
AJ9742 T6
KQ5 2
T54 KQ3
2 AKQJ873

85
973
J9862
654

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

On board 19 in the fourth match against SA I missed the best contract of 3NT when I was not able to inquire about a heart stopper, so settled for game in the known 6-2 fit.

This was wrong, and North expressed this view by doubling for penalties. Having made my decision (5C is cold on a heart lead) I stuck by it since I had a singleton heart, but South thought that the double was not for penalties and bid 5D, and I doubled the final contract of 5H.

North got the hearts wrong by cashing the HA (who could blame him?) and this contract went 4 off for +800.

At the other table NS were content to let EW play in 4S, which failed by 1 trick for another +100 and 14 Imps.

M 4 (SA) Q876
Bd 21 KQJ8
Dlr N KQ
Vul NS KJ9
KJ9432 5
T52 A9743
J6 T9
86 AT753

AT
6
A875432
Q42

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

Sometime it pays to keep out of the bidding and board 21 in the fourth match against SA was a case in point. I would have acted over a 1D or 1S opening, but the 4-card heart opening kept me out of it.

NS had a free run to 5D and Tony led the C8 that I won with the CA when declarer played low in dummy.

It did not look like Tony had a club singleton, so I decided to try my singleton instead, and declarer thought that he had no choice but to finesse, so Tony won the SK and returned one to give me a ruff! The HA made it 2 off and +200.

If declarer knew that Tony had a 6-card spade suit, he could have won the SA and later discarded his spade loser on the good heart for 11 tricks.

At the other table Kerry and Charlie got too high with Blackwood and ended up in 6D, but only went 1 down for -100, so we gained 3 Imps.

M 6(ACT) K53
Bd 1 94
Dlr N AJ72
Vul Nil A875
 98
 T862
 Q954
 KJ6

 T764
 KQ
 T63
 T932

W **N** **E** **S**
 / 1NT X 2C
 / / 2H //

On board 1 in match 6 against ACT I doubled the weak 1NT (11-13) for penalties. 2C by South was described as clubs and a major, so when Tony failed to double, I bid 2H, hopefully implying both majors.

This was not read as such by Tony, and he was pleased that he had 4-card support, but not pleased enough to invite game with 3H. I would have accepted the invitation since the opening bid was bound to give vital information in how to play the hand and so it proved.

South led the CT and North won the CA and unwisely cashed the DA before exiting with a low diamond. When I overtook the CQ in dummy and successfully finessed the SQ, I knew 11 of North's limited hand, so South was bound to have a heart honour, either singleton or doubleton since North's 1NT normally precluded a singleton.

Thus I laid down the HA and only lost 1 Heart making 10 tricks in all for +170. At the other table, East was in 4H and either did not get the vital clues about North's high cards, or failed to read them and went 1 off for 6 Imps to us.

M 6(ACT) K962
Bd 7 8
Dlr S J763
Vul All T743
 Q8543
 KQ4
 -
 AK965

 AT7
 AJT753
 84
 J8

 J
 962
 AKQT952
 Q2

W **N** **E** **S**
 1S 2D 2H 1D
 5H // 5D

One of the differences between Pairs and Teams is when to accept a penalty or when to bid again to achieve a higher score. On board 7 in match 6 against the ACT Teams tactics would normally suggest taking whatever penalty was available in 5DX rather than trying to make 11 tricks in a major, but Tony, with his void in diamonds and good support, bid 5H rather than double 5D.

When dummy went down a missed slam looked a real possibility as with so few points missing it was likely that the opener had the SK. The singleton SJ in the South hand was as good as the SK, as I was able to make 12 tricks in comfort and the potential to lose 13 Imps was real.

However, at the other table EW did choose to double 5D, and this went 2 off for -500 and 5 Imps to us.

M 6(ACT) AKQJT9763
Bd 16 5
Dlr W JT
Vul EW 7
 -
 AJ97
 986
 AKQ863

 5
 K843
 AQ743
 J92

 842
 QT62
 K52
 T54

W **N** **E** **S**
 2C 4S 5C /
 / 5S //

On board 16 in match 6 against ACT nobody knew who could make what and I subsided when I pushed North to the 5-level.

While a take-out double would have worked, double of 4S would have been for penalties in our system. However, since Tony's 2C was natural and limited (11-15), I knew that 4S was a chance of making and that 5C was a viable spot.

When North bid 5S, I could do no more than hope that it was 1 level too high and passed and led the CJ on which Tony played the C8, suggesting a heart switch.

However, 3 tricks were our limit, and we wrote down +50 shortly after.

Since both 6C and 6D were cold because of the favourable position of the heart and diamond honours, it looked like we had missed the boat.

However, at the other table EW reached 6H, which only makes 11 tricks after a spade lead shortens dummy, so we stood to gain. Kerry did not double 6H as this may have given away the heart position, and the contract went 5 off for +500 and 11 Imps after all.

M 6(ACT) 74
Bd 23 K542
Dlr S 752
Vul All 8765
 J8 AT653
 JT7 93
 AQ94 JT83
 AQ92 T3
 KQ92
 AQ86
 K6
 KJ4
W N E S
 // 1H

On board 23 in match 6 against ACT it looked like South had struck gold when dummy was placed on the table, after the opening bid of 1H had been passed out. I was reluctant to bid on such a weak hand, but EW can make a contract in every denomination except hearts, and can even make 10 tricks in diamonds.

Tony led the SJ and since I could see no future in that suit (South was unlikely to also hold 5 spades), I won the SA and led the CT.

Tony won the CQ, cashed the CA and gave me a ruff. I then led the DJ and we cashed 2 tricks in that suit before Tony led his 4th club for me to ruff with the H9 and promote his JT7 into the setting trick for +100.

At the other table South opened 1NT and this contract went 1 off to flatten the board

M 7(TAS) QT5
Bd 4 JT8654
Dlr W T972
Vul All -
 K98642 -
 K9 AJ
 AKJ AQ72
 53 54
 JT762
 73
 3
 Q863
 AKQ984
W N E S
 1S / 2C 3C
 3H / 3NT //

On board 4 in match 7 against Tasmania South's 3C overcall after my natural response of 2C was very foolish at the vulnerability as it would have been very expensive if doubled and left in, considering what happened at the other table. However, it was not clear to us or his partner what his 3C meant, so Tony showed his heart stopper and I bid 3NT with what looked like the necessary club stoppers.

South led the top clubs and I was able to take the spade finesse and claim 10 tricks for +630.

At the other table EW had an accident and East opened 1C out of turn, so West was barred from bidding. South was definitely not going to disturb 1C, and North also wisely passed, so 1C became the final contract.

In spite of South's club holding, East made 7 tricks in 1C, in fact Deep Finesse suggests that EW can make 8 tricks in clubs, so Jenny and Richard scored up -70, but 11 Imps to us.

M 7(TAS) T9762
Bd 9 AJ62
Dlr N Q
Vul EW J85
 AJ4 Q
 9543 K7
 AJ975 832
 7 AKT9642
 K853
 QT8
 KT64
 Q3
W N E S
 / / 2C /
 / / 3C 2S
 X 3S / 3D
 X // /

On board 9 in match 7 against Tasmania I opened with a natural 2C and Tony, with no fit and a poor heart suit, elected to pass, which was a good decision.

North balanced with a take-out double when my 2C opening was passed around to him, although he has not got a good hand for this if South bids diamonds.

Luckily for North, South did bid spades, but I deemed my 7-card suit worth another go since Tony was marked with some values by the apparently limited nature of the NS cards.

Now it was South's turn to overbid and Tony was very happy to double 3D, and also 3S when North converted. We had no trouble taking 6 tricks for +300 and 5 Imps against the -130 from 2C passed out at the other table.

M 7(TAS) T
Bd 12 AJ964
Dlr W Q9653
Vul NS Q3
A54 QJ6
QT873 K5
A KJ84
A964 JT85

K98732
2
T72
K72

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

On board 12 in match 7 against ACT I thought that I had a good plan to make 3NT as East, but I was fooled by South's false encouraging signal. Luckily for me, so was North, so I made 3NT after all.

South led the S7 against 3NT and I won the first trick with the SQ to give South the possible impression that she could lead spades safely again. I ran the CJ and North returned the D5, on which South gave an encouraging signal.

Winning on the table, I led a heart and when the HK won, I returned a heart, getting the bad news there. North led the D4 and a simple finesse now would have given me 9 tricks, but if South has the DQ she could be end-played, so I rose Ace and cleared the clubs finishing in hand.

The D8 exit now to South's DQ would have completed the end-play and I would have made 10 tricks on a forced spade return. When the DT appeared, I was forced to discard the S5 and now a spade return would end-play dummy for 1 off. However, North overtook with the DQ, cashed her HA, and exited to her partner's presumed DJ expecting 1 off, but I had the DJ and 9 tricks. At the other table a simple diamond finesse yielded 9 tricks for a flat board.

M 7(TAS) JT8753
Bd 15 75
Dlr S AQJ
Vul NS T2
KQ96 A4
QT942 K63
87 632
95 K8763

2
AJ8
KT954
AQJ4

W	N	E	S
/	1S	/	1D
/	4S	//	1NT

On board 15 in match 7 against ACT South paid the penalty for not bidding out her shape when North assumed at least 2-card spades support for the 1NT rebid and jumped to the hopeless 4S.

I got off to a good start for the defence when I led the H3, which declarer won in hand to take and repeat the club finesse. The hoped-for discard on the CA was skewered by Tony's ruff, and we finished with 4 tricks for 1 off and +100.

Even if Tony does not ruff, the spade pips are such that declarer will lose 4 trump tricks as long as we do not get end-played.

At the other table Jenny and Richard got to the sensible contract of 3NT, which made 9 tricks by way of the club finesses and another +600 for 12 Imps.

M 7(TAS) T54
Bd 23 86
Dlr S A98543
Vul All T8
AK983 Q
KT97 A32
6 QJ2
962 AJ7543

J762
QJ54
KT7
KQ

W	N	E	S
2C	//		1NT

On board 23 in match 7 against ACT Tony's 2C showed the majors the way we play it, and I took a chance that his long suit was likely to be spades and not hearts and passed!

Luckily his minors were not the other way around, although even then 2C is likely to make. On a friendly break in spades and clubs he made 11 tricks! The same friendly break allowed 10 tricks to be made in spades, but 9 tricks were the limit in hearts.

At the other table Richard opened 1C and Jenny decided not to bid her 6-card suit, although many would, and East saw no reason to disturb a contract that was to be played in his 6-card suit.

This contract also made 11 tricks for EW, but this was -500 to us, and 8 Imps away.

M 10(NT) T2
Bd 8 AKQ83
Dlr W KT8752
Vul Nil -
AKQ 865
J642 95
6 J4
AQJ65 T87432

J9743
T7
AQ93
K9

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

On board 8 in match 10 against NT North made what looked to be a unilateral decision to bid slam as soon as his partner showed some diamond support.

This sort of auction puzzles me, as North forced his partner to pick between diamonds and hearts, and then when she chose diamonds, which happened to be his 6-card suit. He then drove to slam even though he knew that 2 Aces were missing, and his partner's Ace could even have been the CA!

Tony was on lead and knew enough not to lead the CA even if he did not have such a fine spades holding, and in spite of South's fine hand, she was 1 down at trick 3!

At the other table a more sensible 5D was reached for +400 and 10 Imps to us.

M 10(NT) A964
Bd 9 72
Dlr N A6
Vul EW AK964

QT52 J3
KJT A8654
J94 KT8
753 JT8

K87
Q93
Q7532
Q2

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

On board 9 in match 10 against NT both South and I had a mental lapse when Tony led the HJ against her 1NT contract. I ducked to preserve control, but I should have won the HA and led another to trap declarer's Queen and at the same time ask Tony to return a diamond.

However, declarer also ducked the HJ and that caused both of us to ponder our next moves.

Tony next led the HK and when that held, continued with the HT which gave me my reason to ponder?

The lead of the HJ normally denies the HQ, but if declarer had that she would normally have won the first trick, so maybe Tony had it after all.

Finally I decided that declarer was the more likely one to have made a mistake, and played the HA to drop declarer's now singleton Queen and cashed my 5 tricks.

Alas, with the clubs proving friendly, declarer was still able to make 7 tricks for -90. At the other table Charlie and Kerry found their 4-3 spades fit and made 9 tricks for +140 and 2 Imps to us.

M 10(NT) JT94
Bd 13 86
Dlr N Q842
Vul All Q62

AKQ 732
A3 KQJT742
AKJ95 -
A87 Kt4

865
95
T763
J963

W	N	E	S
	/	4H	/
5NT	/	6D	/
6H	//		

On board 13 in match 10 against NT it was clear that our understanding of the Grand Slam Force was at odds with each other.

When I opened with 4H, Tony's only concern was with the trump honours and for some reason that was not clear then or now, chose 5NT rather than 4NT (RKCB) followed up with 5S after the 5D reply to ask about the trump Queen.

My 6D response was supposed to show 2 of the top 3 honours, but better than just KQxxxxx, but Tony thought that it showed AK or AQ (and he is probably right), so he signed off.

Of course 13 tricks were cold, but surprisingly this was just another flat board as the grand slam was also missed at the other table.

M 11(VIC) T
Bd 3 AKQ93
Dlr S J875
Vul EW Q82
 KQJ8643
 - A752
 KT T7654
 J975 932
 A
 9
 J82
 AQ64
 KT643
W N E S
 3S X 4S X
 //

On board 3 in match 11 against VIC NS got in to the auction early with a take-out double of Tony's 3S opening.

I had an obvious 4S bid, and I am not sure if the double by South was for the minors, or just showing points expecting 4S to be defeated on power!

5C or 5H can make 8 tricks for a small profit against 4S, but 5D can be held to only 7 tricks by a cross-ruff, and a loss against 4S.

However, while being allowed to play in 4SX took away any possible slam interest on our part, +1190 for the 12 easy tricks were reasonable compensation and 11 Imps to our side against the -680 recorded at the other table.

This was a key board in a match that we were losing, and helped to keep the loss to a minimum.

M 11(VIC) J954
Bd 15 KJ65
Dlr S T6
Vul NS KT3
 Q62 AK3
 AT2 743
 953 AKQJ872
 AJ82 -
 T87
 Q98
 4
 Q97654
W N E S
 1D / 2D /
 2H / 2S /
 2NT / 3NT //

On board 15 in match 11 against VIC we were always behind the eightball after the nebulous 1D opening.

My 2D was forcing and denied a major suit, and Tony's 2H was stopper showing. When I showed my spade values and denied a club stop with 2S, Tony bid a non-forcing 2NT.

Since he only had 11-12 HCPs, he had to have perfect cards to make slam, and club honours except the Ace were not part of that equation, so I opted for the 9 trick game with 3NT and that closed the auction.

Opposite a major suit opening and a 3D response we had a great deal more systemic understandings that could have identified the key controls and allowed us to get to 6D, but here we were stuck with guessing.

Luckily EW at the other table were no better off and our +490 was a flat board.

M 11(VIC) 82
Bd 16 Q9542
Dlr W JT54
Vul EW 74
 AT53 QJ94
 KT76 -
 7 AK8632
 T932 AJ5
 K76
 AJ83
 Q9
 KQ86
W N E S
 / / 1D X
 / 1H 1S 2H
 2S / 4S X
 //

On board 16 in match 11 against VIC, South tried a speculative double that came unstuck when Tony's meagre holding was well positioned, even the CT was a vital card.

I was almost worth a 1C opening, but decided against it on the basis of the softer holding in spades. 1D does not promise diamonds initially, but a diamond suit is implied by the 1S rebid, in the face of the take-out double by South.

Once Tony has shown spade support, my hand is much stronger and I had no hesitation in bidding 4S. The double by South looked like it heralded a bad break, but the opening lead of the CK and the sight of dummy overcame even this.

Since the spades were 3-2 after all, 11 tricks were easy and we scored up +990 in short time. This was 7 Imps against -680 from 4S undoubled at the other table.

This was another key gain from nowhere in a match we were losing badly.

M 12(NSW) T
Bd 1 KT93
Dir N JT6
Vul Nil K9873
 K654 AJ2
 Q2 A864
 AQ9542 -
 T AQJ654
 Q9873
 J75
 K873
 2
W **N** **E** **S**
 / / 1C /
 1D / 1H /
 2NT / 3NT //

On board 1 in match 12 against NSW, EW were caught in a misfit that would have played better with reasonable breaks. With 16 opposite 11 it was inevitable that game would be reached, and as is often best with misfits, this was 3NT.

Tony led the H3, and while this gives away a cheap trick, it allows for easy subsequent leads. Declarer successfully passed the CT and led to the SA to led the top 2 clubs, putting Tony back on lead again while I discarded a spade and a diamond.

If declarer ducks the obvious heart, and wins the next, the lead of the CJ allows me to be end-played in spades to lead a diamond for the 9th trick by way of the finesse. Luckily declarer seemed to give up and took his 8 tricks for 1 off and +50.

At the other table the end-play was found and we scored +400 for 10 Imps.

M 12(NSW) A8532
Bd 8 J98
Dir W K5
Vul Nil K98
 Q64 T9
 4 Q7653
 J8743 AQ9
 AJ32 T76
 KJ7
 AKT2
 T62
 Q54
W **N** **E** **S**
 / 1S / 4S
 //

On board 8 in match 12 against NSW we got to a routine spade game, but Tony was neatly fooled by the very deceptive opening lead of the H7!

This is obviously not 3rd or 4th highest, so he rose with the HA and took the spade finesse in the normal way. The diamond came back and East cashed both diamonds before leading another heart.

Now the real pain was felt when West ruffed the HK and Tony knew that he had been had. The next result was 3 off and -150.

The damage was not great as the same contract went 2 off at the other table, so we lost 2 Imps.

Without the devilish heart lead, Tony would have taken the heart finesse in the normal lead and may have only gone 1 down. Double dummy the contract is cold as the backwards trump finesse works, and declarer loses 3 tricks in the minors.

M 12(NSW) T752
Bd 10 JT3
Dir E AJ95
Vul All T2
 96 QJ
 KQ4 7652
 743 T82
 KQJ85 9763
 AK843
 A98
 KQ6
 A4
W **N** **E** **S**
 / / / 1C
 / 1D / 1S
 / 4S //

Board 10 in match 12 against NSW was a thin slam that was missed by both sides.

While I have 20 HCPs, my suit is not good enough to force on the second round, and when Tony raised to game I was more aware of his limited hand (less than 7 HCPs) than by the possibility of slam opposite perfect cards.

I won the opening lead of the CK and led the top trumps, getting the good news, and then 12 tricks were cold.

On the 4th diamond I threw my club, ruffed a club and entered dummy with a trump to run the HJ. It did not matter where the honours were as when West won he was end-played and had to lead another heart or give a ruff-sluff.

M 12(NSW) 43
Bd 13 A6
Dir N JT763
Vul All KQT8
 AKQJT 987 84 J97
 7
 KT5432
 Q952
 43
W N E S
 4S // 1S /

On board 13 in match 12 against NSW Tony considered how the play might continue when dummy was placed on the table and so avoided the end-play resulting in defeat of the spade game.

If I had led a club or a heart, there would have been no story, but with nothing to guide me I led the D2.

Declarer won in hand, led a trump to dummy, and then led another diamond to hand before finishing trumps on the table. This peculiar play of cashing a second diamond was suspicious, so when declarer next led a heart off the table, Tony rose with the HA and led the CK.

The contract was now doomed, as we had to win 2 clubs and 2 hearts, and wrote down +100.

At the other table, also after a diamond lead, Kerry was not so obvious, and led a heart from dummy after drawing the second trump and North ducked. Since the DT had forced the DK, South thought that they could safely lead another diamond, but now North was end-played on the next heart for +620 and 12 Imps to us.

M 12(NSW) 986
Bd 23 A86
Dir S 543
Vul All AT73
 AQJT53 987 5
 -
 KT543
 A98
 KQJ64
W N E S
 1S 2H 4S 5C
 / 5H X //

On board 23 in match 12 against NSW the fragility of a 5-3 fit versus a 5-4 fit was illustrated when Tony preferred hearts to clubs after I showed both of my suits.

On a 3-2 heart break, I can duck a diamond before leading a second trump and lose just 1 diamond and 1 trump for +850 in 5HX, but on the actual 4-1 break, I quickly lost control and finished 2 down for -500.

If I had planned for a 4-1 break, (assuming that I was going 1 off) then I could have ducked a diamond after drawing just 1 trump and West would have made just 2 trumps and a diamond for 1 off.

However, in clubs, with the fall of the HJ on the first round, a safety play is available to hold the heart losers to just 1, and the extra trump prevents the force, so 5C was cold.

At the other table Kerry and Charlie went to 5S, conceding just -100, but 12 Imps away.

M 12(NSW) AJ7
Bd 24 KQT95
Dir W 2
Vul Nil KJ93
 K963 6 AK54 A874
 Q54 J83 T9863 52
 T82 A742 QJ7 QT6
W N E S
 1D 1H 2D 4H
 5D X //

On board 24 in match 12 against NSW our confident bidding drew a sacrifice from the West player with 3 almost certain tricks and a prospect of a 4th, but he was right! 4H is cold thanks to the ST in my hand.

My decision to bid game was not made in great expectation that it would be certain to make, but more as a pre-emptive measure to take away EW's chance of finding their best contract.

Tony led the HK and we left spades alone and waited for our 2 rightful tricks there, finishing up with 5 tricks in all for +500 and more than the non-vulnerable game was worth anyway.

If we had 2 diamonds each, 5D would have only gone down 2, but 4H would have gone down as well, so in a way, West was lucky.

At the other table, NS subsided in only 3H, making 10 tricks for -170 and 8 Imps to us.

M 13(SA) Q75
Bd 2 Q73
Dir E 853
Vul NS QJT2
 JT2 A864
 K42 J98
 KQJT A764
 853 K6

 K93
 AT65
 92
 A974

W N E S
 / // 1NT /

On board 2 in match 13 against SA I led hearts because they were slightly better than clubs. Tony knew from my lead of the H5 that we had only 3 possible tricks in hearts, so when he won the HQ at trick 1 he switched to the CQ, thereby sealing delarer's fate.

After clearing the clubs, I went back to hearts, and when I won the SK we had our 7 tricks for 1 down and +50.

At the other table, I am not sure of the play, but Jenny did not have to contend with a club lead through her King, and thus made 7 tricks for +90 and 5 Imps to us.

M 13(SA) K8
Bd 12 2
Dir W KQJ654
Vul NS AT52
 974 JT
 J9763 KT85
 T A82
 KJ76 Q983

 AQ6532
 AQ4
 973
 4

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

On board 12 in match 13 against SA we were potentially on the end of a slam swing.

After West opened 2H to show a weak two (could be only 5-cards), Tony made a natural bid of 3D, and East jacked the bidding up to 4H before I had a chance to bid.

When dummy went down after the lead of the DT I was hoping that either the spades were breaking badly, or that the lead was a singleton, as otherwise we had missed a slam.

My second wish was granted when East won the DA and returned a diamond for West to ruff and I was able to claim the rest of the tricks for +650.

However, with the heart finesse working and both long suits behaving well, 6NT was cold, so a slam chance had been missed.

At the other table NS had a free rein, but subsided in only 3NT so the loss was only 1 Imp.

M 13(SA) Q4
Bd 13 KJT93
Dir N Q754
Vul All T5
 985 K62
 7 AQ52
 KJT96 A2
 AKQ4 J983

 AJT73
 864
 83
 762

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

On board 13 in match 13 against SA Tony had a chance to defeat 3NT when I led the SJ, but he failed to overtake with the SQ (this play can hardly cost the contract whether or not I have the SA or SK).

Declarer can still succeed in 3NT by taking the heart finesse, or running the DJ, but may have gone down if he had taken the diamond finesse in the normal way.

However, when Tony played low to the opening lead, so did declarer, and now 3NT did not need the heart finesse and 10 tricks were made.

At the other table Jenny took the right finesse to make 3NT so the loss was only 1 Imp.

M 13(SA) Q63
Bd 14 A42
Dlr E KQJ97
Vul Nil K8
 AT875 KJ942
 K9 J7
 85 6
 AJT6 Q9743
 -
 QT8653
 AT432
 52
W N E S
 4S 5H 2S 4H
 //

On board 14 in match 13 against SA I made an possibly premature decision with such a fine distributional hand to sacrifice over their possible spade game, so I showed my heart suit on the first round, intending to show diamonds next.

When West bid the expected 4S, I did not have to show my second suit as Tony bid 5H in front of me, and to my surprize, nobody doubled. The sight of dummy gave me cause to hope, and with everything right, I made 11 tricks in comfort for +450.

At the other table NS were content to let Jenny and Richard play is 4S, which was also cold for another +420 and 13 Imps to us.

When Peter Hainsworth held my hand in the Open Teams, he waited on the first round and then bid 4NT over 4S, showing 2 places to play. This prompted a double by West, and North selected 5D, and 5DX became the final contract. This was also cold, so they scored up +550 and 14 Imps against +420 from the other table.

M 13(SA) J94
Bd 22 K954
Dlr E 9854
Vul EW KJ
 T8763 AK5
 863 QT72
 K2 AQ6
 Q72 T83
 Q2
 AJ
 JT73
 A9654
W N E S
 1S / 1C /
 // 1NT //

On board 22 in match 13 against SA I did not follow the old stand-by of 4th highest of my longest and strongest because East had shown at least 3 clubs, and instead led the D3.

Since Tony had just what I wanted in clubs, a club lead would have given us the first 7 tricks, with at least 1 more to come for 2 off and +200.

The diamond lead allowed East to set up the spade suit and claim 7 tricks for -90.

At the other table Jenny opened 1NT and played in 2S after a transfer sequence, finishing 1 off and -100 for 5 Imps away.

M 14(WA) 8
Bd 2 K763
Dlr E AJ74
Vul NS QJT8
 KQJ96 AT753
 J8 Q9
 K953 QT86
 93 A6
 42
 AT542
 2
 K7542
W N E S
 2H / 1NT /
 // 4S //

On board 2 in match 14 against WA I would have bid 2H (hearts and a minor) in a flash over the 1NT opening if I was not vulnerable, but at adverse vulnerability I allowed my minimum hand to sway me towards a pass.

When West transferred to spades and East jumped to game I was out of the bidding and the cold 5H was lost to our side.

I led the D2 and got a diamond ruff for +100, but that is scant reward for +650 or +300 if they bid on over our game and we doubled. In 4SX I can get 2 diamond ruffs for +500.

At the other table Charlie opened 1S, which allowed South to Michaels, but Kerry jumped to 4S which closed the auction.

NS did not get a diamond ruff so they only finished 1 off for -50 and 2 Imps to us.

M 14(WA) 9654
Bd 7 J43
Dlr S AK94
Vul All KQ
 KT87 AQ
 97 AQ52
 875 J852
 8632 A74

 J32
 KT86
 QT
 JT95

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

On board 7 in match 14 against WA I failed to make the obvious penalty double when West pulled East's penalty double of 1NT and we lost 5 Imps instead of gaining 6! Since we had at least 20 HCPs, I should have doubled and hoped that Tony led a trump, as I know that EW have at best a 7-card fit.

Tony did lead a trump, ducked by declarer, so Tony led his last trump and West's hand was dead. EW made just the 4 obvious tricks for 4 off and +400.

At the other table, Kerry had no valid reason for pulling Charlie's penalty double of 1NT, and 1NTX became the final contract, making 9 tricks with everything well placed for -580 and 5 Imps away.

M 14(WA) AKQJ986
Bd 10 -
Dlr E QT8754
Vul All -
 2 T754
 AT753 KJ64
 AK92 -
 Q83 AKJ54

 3
 Q982
 J63
 T9762

W N E S
 1H X 4H /
 4NT / 5H /
 / 5S X //

On board 10 in match 14 against WA Tony was floored by his own bidding when he allowed for a possible slam by doubling 1H on the first round instead of bidding 4S (slam is less likely with both opponents bidding). This gave East a chance to jump to game in hearts, which prompted West to investigate slam by bidding 4NT.

When East's 5H response was passed around to Tony, he bid 5S, and with a silent diamond suit, he was likely expecting that he may make this contract. East doubled 5S and led the CK.

Now is when the EW bidding was a big help to the defense as when Tony ruffed the CA, West knew from the bidding that East had 4 hearts, so Tony also had none of these, which only left diamonds and spades in his hand.

The sight of dummy made Tony think that 5SX was cold, only slightly inconvenienced by the need to draw 4 rounds of trumps, but when East showed out of diamonds he knew he was in trouble and finished 3 off for -800, as did a few others.

At the other table North's bidding was not so revealing, so Kerry discarded the D2 on a spade to tell Charlie what to lead, and now 5SX cannot be defeated! Another -850 meant 17 Imps away.

M 14(WA) J9654
Bd 16 A
Dlr W KQ5
Vul EW AK96
 7 Q
 QT7 KJ9642
 J8432 A6
 J432 QT87

 AKT832
 853
 T97
 5

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

On board 16 in match 14 against WA I am sure that if Tony had a small singleton heart instead of the Ace, we would have been in slam instead of a simple game making 12 tricks.

My 1S bid after the 1H overcall of his 1C opening only showed 5-8 and a 5-card suit, and with 3 losing hearts I had no serious thoughts of slam when Tony raised me to game. However, if he had agreed spades with a splinter bid of 4H I would have been worth a mild try for slam.

There was nothing to the play and I quickly wrote down +480. This was not a loss as they failed to get to slam at the other table, but it felt like a potential loss at the table.

M 14(WA) AK72
Bd 20 K97
Dlr W K7654
Vul All 8
 985
 6
 93
 QJT9732

JT6
 843
 AQJT8
 AK

Q43
 AQJT52
 2
 654

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

On board 20 in match 14 against WA both Tony and I bid too cautiously and we missed a vulnerable game. The game was also missed at the other table, so it was a flat board, but we should have bid game, or at least tried for game with no opposition bidding.

When Tony rebid 1S, it still did not show diamonds, but it confirmed an unbalanced hand, as he would often rebid 1NT with a balanced hand of 11-12 HCPs, even with a 4-card spade suit. I was thus not inclined to push too hard as his shortage may well have been hearts, and he was limited to 15 HCPs.

When I rebid hearts, Tony's hand improved due to his singleton club, and he could have invited game with 3H, but he pessimistically passed since my 2H was not forcing.