2015 Territory Gold by Richard Wallis

I had the pleasure of playing in the Territory Gold in Alice Springs with Margaret Bourke this year, and she did me a big favour by learning the 2/1 system I normally play with Therese Tully, albeit with a few minor changes.

We started off with the Match-Point Pairs, played over a qualifying and semi-final on Wednesday and a final on Thursday morning. Alas there was no carry-over and we saved our worst performance for the final, only scoring 50% for a 9th place. Next we teamed up with Micha Solar and George Bilski for the Swiss Teams, consisting of 8 matches played over Thursday night and Friday, where we all preformed creditably, for a 6th place finish.

We saved our best until last, which was the Swiss Butler Pairs, contested over 11/10-board matches on Saturday and Sunday. A couple of small losses on the first day had us poised at table 3 for the 7th match on Sunday morning against one of the top seeds, where luckily for us our opponents had a couple of blind spots and we ended up with a good win to move to 3rd place.

A modest win against the leaders in match 8 was not enough to displace them, but moved us up to 2nd, and then a good win in match 9 while they lost, got us to the top spot for the final 2 matches. A near maximum win in match 10 gave us a 10.8 VP lead for the last match, and thus only a draw was needed to ensure victory. EW had most of the cards for the last match, and it did not feel good to us at the end, but we emerged with a 1 Imp win to keep us in the lead and a very satisfying win.

Tony Jackman, a partner and good friend for many years, and apparently a budding comedian, emailed me the following message on Sunday night: "I always thought Margaret Bourke was a good player, and now I am sure of it!"

M 1 Bd 1 Dir N	987 8762 AT52	-		Board 1 in the first match was a straight-forward check-back situation, and when Margaret showed 3-card spade support, I went for game in spades.
Vul Nil KJT42	A5		AQ5	3NT is a lucky make if NS do not lead diamonds, but goes 1 off on a diamond lead, whereas 4S is cold on any lead.
AKJ4 43 Q9		(953 286 <t87< td=""><td>South alerted my suspicious mind by asking about the 2D bid (alerted by Margaret) before passing 4S, and both Margaret and I were getting ready for a diamond lead, but North had a club ruff on his mind and</td></t87<>	South alerted my suspicious mind by asking about the 2D bid (alerted by Margaret) before passing 4S, and both Margaret and I were getting ready for a diamond lead, but North had a club ruff on his mind and
	63 OT			led the CA and another club.
	QT KJ97 J6432			After this good start, I was able to win in hand, draw trumps ending on the table, and discard a diamond on the CK before taking the heart
W	N	E	S	finesse for my contract, needing only a reasonable layout.
	/	1C	/	When South had the short heart honours, I had an easy 11 tricks for
1S	/	1NT	/	+450, and a modest 2 Imps against the board average of -370.
2D!	/	2S	/	
4S				

M 1 Bd 5 Dir N Vul NS	T965 85 75	42		On board 5 in the first match Margaret preferred rebidding 2C to rebidding 1NT, even though I might have expected a more unbalanced hand, or a 6-card suit.
AQ KQ764 AQT9	J64		J8 AJ K642	 Obviously I was always going to slam when Margaret opened 1C, but the grand slam was not out of the question if we had a fit somewhere, so I rebid 2D, which was an artificial game-force now known as Bourke's Relay.
A2	K73 T932 J83		KQ875	What I was hoping for was 3-card heart support, but instead I found 4- card support for diamonds, which indicated Margaret had 2 hearts at most, 4 diamonds, and at least 5 clubs.
\ A /	T93			Now 4NT was RKCB for diamonds, and by her 5H response I knew she had the vital HA and DK, making the grand slam a good chance.
W 1H 2D! 4NT 7NT	N / / /	E 1C 2C 3D 5H	S 	I bid 7NT instead of 7D, which has more play possibilities, as I did not want to rely on just one suit, when either clubs or hearts may give me enough tricks. When dummy tracked I lost no time in claiming 13 tricks for +1520, which was a surprizing 10 Imps to us.

M 2 Bd 16 Dir W	9652 Q876 Q964	6		I do not think anyone knew what was going on in the bidding of board 16 in the second match, as surely the 1S rebid by East was intended as forcing, and showed longer clubs!
Vul EW T8 KT92 J753	2 AKJ4 2 J3 3 A		J3 A	My double over the 1C opening is unconventional, but I did not want to pass with 14 HCPs and 3-card support for every suit. When 1S was passed around to Margaret, she balanced with 2D, and now suddenly, West thought they had enough for game after all!
A43	Q73 A54 KT8 KT95	5	QJ8762	Margaret led the D4, and our system worked against us as I felt I had to unblock the DT under the DA in dummy, but this gave Margaret the wrong message about my diamond strength, as she could hardly credit West with J753 as his diamond stopper for bidding 3NT over
W / 1H	N / /	E 1C 1S	S X /	 3C. It looked easy for West when he led the CQ, which held, until he saw Margaret show out by discarding the D2!
/ 3NT	2D //	3C	, , ,	Now he passed the HJ, and Margaret won and led a spade, declarer playing low in dummy. Winning the SQ I now cashed the DK and then led the D8, allowing Margaret to cash her 2 remaining diamonds, and the HA made it 2 off for +200 and 5 Imps.

M 3 Bd 25 Dir N Vul EW	KQ98 J986 T86 V 87			On board 25 in the third match East showed 25-27 HCPs by the 3NT rebid, and West elected to pass and hope for the best, but this was not a success. I led the S4, and East was in trouble immediately, since there were
T3 T73 43 JT9632		A5 AKQ5 AQJ72 KQ		now likely to be at least 4 spades and a club to lose, with no prospect of setting up the club suit in dummy. East did not set up his best suit and hope for some confusion in the
	J764 42 K95 A54			spade suit, instead leading out the top hearts before the CK. I ducked the CK and won the next, although ducking is the best move in case Margaret's C8 was a singleton, and exited with the SJ. Margaret overtook the SJ to cash her spades and the HJ before exiting with the DT, allowing us to take 7 tricks for +300 and 4 Imps.
W 2D	N / /	E 2C 3NT	S / //	West might have been lucky with the club support by East in 3NT, but it is surely better odds to play in 5C rather than 3NT, and since East is declarer, this is cold unless I lead an unlikely spade!

M 4 Bd 4 Dir W Vul All	76 KT87 K85 764	74		Board 4 in the fourth match involved a bit of determination to limit my losses and finished with a bit of luck. The 3D response by Margaret showed spade support, and either 3 or 4-card support. I could have found out the type of support and point-
Q8543 QJ2 A96		9 7	AJT9 965 73	range by bidding 3H, but obviously I was not interested in game. North led a non-committal C7, and South won the CA and immediately played the HA and another, getting a heart ruff.
QT	K2 A3 QJ74 A853	12	<j92< td=""><td>The contract looked to be 1 down at this stage, and if South was short in hearts, he was likely to be long in spades, with North having a singleton. When I won the DA and led a spade up, I wanted to avoid 2 off by taking what looked like a losing spade finesse, so I rose with the</td></j92<>	The contract looked to be 1 down at this stage, and if South was short in hearts, he was likely to be long in spades, with North having a singleton. When I won the DA and led a spade up, I wanted to avoid 2 off by taking what looked like a losing spade finesse, so I rose with the
W 1S 3S	N / //	E 3D	S /	SA hoping to pitch away my diamonds on the clubs before South could trump in. To my surprise, the SK dropped so I made +140 for 6 Imps.

M 4 Bd 7 Dir S Vul All	53 AKJ KJ3 K843	32		On board 7 in the fourth match North bid 2S as a transfer to clubs, and the 2NT response was a super-accept showing good clubs and a maximum hand.
T64 Q75	T64 Q75		AJ987 96432	North now put all of her eggs in 1 basket by jumping to 6C, but surely with such poor club pips, 6NT must be at least as good a chance as 6C, and does not rely on a club break.
986 JT65			74 7	South could have saved the day by opening 1D, considering his hand
	KQ2 T8			as too strong to open with a 15-17 1NT due to the good 5-card suit, and then NS may have arrived in 6D, which is cold without needing any finesses.
	AQ1 AQ9			On the actual layout, the cards are well-placed for 12 tricks in 6NT,
W	N	Е	S 1NT	but when Margaret led the SA and the clubs did not behave, 6C had no chance and finished 1 off for -100 and a massive 15 Imps to us
/	2S!	/	2NT!	instead of about 8 Imps to NS in 6NT.
/	6C	//		

M 5 Bd 15 Dir S Vul NS	J94 AJ98 9 85	AJ98643 9		On board 15 in the fifth match lady luck was with us in a big way when North decided to open with a Mult-2D, instead of 3H as did the rest of the field. I was more intent on South's response rather than Margaret's bid, and
KT632 KQ2	T632 Q2		75 75	I did not notice that she had doubled over the 2D, showing a good hand.
J752 2			AK3 AKQJ73	When North passed the 2H response by South, I still had not noticed the original double when Margaret now bid 3C, and therefore passed, hoping for the best.
	T QT8(T964			After the lead of the HT and subsequent ruff, followed by SA and S8, Margaret drew trumps and lost a diamond for 9 tricks and +110.
W / /	N 2D! /	E X 3C	S / 2H //	Then the first double was brought to my attention and I knew we had missed a cold game! At many other tables, North opened 3H, East doubled, and West jumped to 4S, inevitably going off, so we had actually picked up 3 Imps, but it could have been a lot more if I had not dozed off!

M 6 Bd 27	A3 Q95			5		Board 26 in the sixth match was a key board for hand evaluation in deciding whether to get to game or not.
DIr S Vul Nil	KQ7 642	63		When South rebid 1S, it presumably showed length in clubs as well, to justify the jump to 3C by North inviting game.		
9654 JT43 J82 Q9			KT2 A862 A54 JT8	South declined the invitation, but clearly he does not have a minimum hand after North showed club support, and since he has a hear stopper, 3NT is a reasonable chance with 13 HCPs and a good 5-card suit.		
	QJ87 K7 T9 AK75			On the other hand, North has a heart stopper himself, and his club support is weak, so an invitational 2NT may have been more suited to his hand anyway.		
W	N 1D	E /	S 1C 1S	I led the HJ, which gave away a trick, but that only meant -130 instead of -110, and since the board average was +250, we had still gained 3 Imps.		
/	3C	//	15	Since the clubs are 3-2, 3NT is easily makeable by NS, and most must have got there to have a high average.		

M 7 Bd 4 Dir W	AJ8 J963 Q8			Board 4 in the seventh match was a straight-forward 3NT for EW, requiring just a little bit of care, but at our table a wheel fell off during the play and it affected declarer big time.
Vul All K654 AQ8	II J876		T72 KT2	EW play one of those systems with transfer responses to 1C, and at the end of the auction, I believe that East had shown opening values, with a long club suit and short diamond.
A932 53	Q93			After my double of 3D Margaret led the DQ, and while declarer was considering this, I gave some thought to overtaking at trick 1, but played low. To my surprise, declarer took the DA at trick 1!
	754 KJT7 9		·······	Declarer next played to the CA, and noting the fall of my C9, came back to hand with the HA and led a club up considering the finesse, but eventually playing the CK to reveal the club loser.
W	Ņ	E	S	
1C! 1NT		1S! 2C		Declarer gave up a club and Margaret won and led the D8, so I cashed my diamonds and exited with the S3, which declarer
3C	/	20 3D		predictably got wrong, so we had 3 more tricks to cash for 5 off and
3NT	//	50	^	+500. Declarer explained he thought he had 3 clubs, so was certain of 9 tricks as I could hardly have long clubs as well as diamonds.

M 8 Bd 12 Dir W Vul NS	AKQ QJ87 J9 AQ9			Generally speaking in a Swiss movement it is an advantage to have the cards, but board 12 in the eighth match was an exception. North opened with 2NT (19-21), and after checking for a spade fit, South signed off in 6NT. Holding a minimum of 32 HCPs between the
T972 AT62			43 95	two hands, this was eminently reasonable, and from the score, was repeated at a few other tables.
54 JT8	J865		T8732 K743	Margaret avoided the fatal opening lead of a club, and instead led the D3, giving nothing away.
	5865 K4 AKQ6 652			Declarer has many chances for 12 tricks, firstly if the hearts broke, or the T9 were doubleton, but when neither of these happened, there was a still the chance of a squeeze if I had the CK as well as the 4^{th}
W	N	Е	S	heart.
/	2NT	/	3C	When the squeeze did not work, that was 1 down for +100, and 7
 	3H	/	6NT	Imps against the board average of +210. It is a shame really that those pairs not in slam actually gained so much.

M 9 Bd 27 Dir S Vul Nil	Q54 AK64 K93 KT5			On board 27 in the ninth match I should have opened 1S on my 5224 hand, but upgraded it to a 1NT opening because of the 5-card spade suit, wanting to be declarer in any NT contract, wanting to protect my red-suit holdings by having the lead up to me.
KJ973 Q7	1973 7		A862 9532	Margaret used simple Stayman, and obviously raised to game, and North found himself on lead, and end-played at trick one!
Q4 AQ93			AT872 -	North led the top hearts, and with nothing better to do, continued the suit, which I ruffed to set up the H9 for a discard.
	T JT8 J65 J876			Now a cross-ruff looked in order so I cashed my SK and it looked hopeful for an overtrick when South played the ST, but the SQ did not fall under the SA, so I cashed the H9, pitching a diamond, and set
W	N	E	S /	about the cross-ruff by cashing the DA and ruffing a diamond back to hand.
1NT 2S	/ /	2C 4S	 	CA and a club ruff, followed by another diamond ruff, and when I led the next club from hand I had my 10 th trick en passant, even if North was now void in clubs. +420 was a modest 1 Imp gain.

M 10 Bd 6 Dir E Vul EW	643 QJ Q7 QJT8	862		On board 6 in the tenth match, in my view, West paid too much attention to her void in East's announced spade suit and drove to a slam that can make double-dummy, but in practice will always fail. EW were playing transfer responses to a 1C opening, so the 1H
-	-		KQ752	response showed at least a 4-card spade suit.
AK632 AT982 A94	T982		T985 3 K73	West's 2H rebid was natural, to which East responded 4D, a splinter agreeing hearts, and by virtue of the first transfer response, East was the declarer!
	AJT9 74 KJ65 5			I do not know enough about their system to confirm if having 4 hearts showed a minimum of 5 spades in the East hand for the 1H transfer response, but now West has a void in her hand opposite a long suit,
W	N	E /	S /	and a singleton opposite her other long suit, and likely only 4 trumps to set up the suit.
1C! 2H 6H	 	1H! 4D	, 	All in all, I think this was not a hand to go slamming on and East could not find a way to get home, even after the ruffing finesse in spades worked, and +100 was 12 Imps to us.

M 11 Bd 20 Dir W Vul All	Q962 Q83 53 AK54			Board 20 in the eleventh match was literally the last board of the Territory Gold for 2015, and after a less than spectacular previous 9 boards, I was not sure whether to balance with 1NT, or pass it out, thinking the final event could hang on this board.
AJ3 KJ74 KT2 J92		T J	(85 ⁻ 952 864 -3	Eventually pass won out, but we were off to a bad start when with nothing to guide her, Margaret led the S2, giving declarer an easy trick. However things picked up from there when declarer miss-picked everything and the contract went 3 off for +300.
	T74 A6 AQ9 Q876			Deep finesse suggested that NS can make 3NT, but there was a lot of work to do and we were happy with our +300. The line for 9 tricks is not obvious, even double-dummy, so I doubt if anyone found it.
W 1C	N //	E	S	As it turned out we picked up 4 Imps for +300, just enough to finish up with a 1 Imp win and ensure our victory.