

2017 Qld Open Pairs by Richard Wallis

The Qld Open Pairs has found a new home, the Northern Suburbs Bridge Club. A little earlier than usual, the Open Pairs for 2017 were conducted at NSBC over the weekend of 7th and 8th of October. The entry of 42 pairs was a little low for a State event, but ideal for the players, as that meant it was played as a complete Howell, involving 41 3-board matches over 4 sessions.

I played with Lyn Carter, a partnership that was only arranged 13 days prior to the event at a dinner party at which we both attended. It was a magic partnership, as we were 10th after the first match and never went lower, finally getting to the front after match 34 and staying there until the end.

Therese Tully and Richard Ward finished second, and Jill Magee and Terry Strong, after a slow start but leading for much of Sunday, finished a close third. Diane and Hugh McAlister finished fourth to also claim a share of the prize money. Best country pair were Ken Cupples and Adrian Lohmann.

A bonus for this year is a place in the 1018 Commonwealth Nations Bridge Congress, to be held just prior to the Gold Coast Congress in 2018. The invitation goes to the top two pairs, and then lower down the order if a qualified pair declines.

NSBC were consummate hosts, and treated us all to tasty cakes, confectionery, fruit and even sandwiches throughout the two days, and Director Alan Gibson appeared to have a relatively trouble-free weekend, with very few calls for the Director.

M 2	986		
Bd 4	T53		
Dlr W	A542		
Vul All	A83		
AQJ7542		K3	
AJ		KQ984	
KQ		J83	
94		J62	
	T		
	762		
	T976		
	KQT75		
W	N	E	S
1S	/	2H	/
2S	/	3S	/
4NT	/	5D	/
5S	//		

On board 4 in the second match East showed 5 hearts and at least 10 HCPs by the 2H response, and this appeared to inspire West to look for slam when East also later showed some spade support.

West's enthusiasm was dampened when 2 Key Cards were found to be missing by the 5D response, so he signed off in 5S, but this set me thinking about what to lead.

Since I had the threat of heart tricks in dummy, and no trump control, I decided to have a look at dummy by cashing an Ace at trick 1, and since I only had 3 clubs I led the CA, on which Lyn played the CK!

This was very promising, but just in case Lyn placed me with a doubleton club and returned one at trick 3, I cashed the DA before leading the next club.

Thus we took the first 3 tricks for 1 off and a shared top with two other pairs. One declarer managed to go off in the less demanding 4S contract.

M 2	J9862		
Bd 5	874		
Dlr N	J32		
Vul NS	K8		
Q		AT753	
A932		T65	
K5		T986	
AJ9654		2	
	K4		
	KQJ		
	AQ74		
	QT73		
W	N	E	S
	/	/	1NT
X	2H!	/	2S
3C	//	/	X
//			

On board 5 in the second match I did not find out what West meant by his double of Lyn's 1NT opening (15-18), but we had agreed that whatever a double of our 1NT meant, we played system-on, so my 2H was a transfer to spades.

This must have looked very enticing to East, but they refrained from doubling, so the initial double must have shown a single-suited hand, and to their dismay, West took it out to 3C!

When this was passed around to Lyn, she doubled looking for penalties, and then it was around to me.

The one thing I was sure of from her double was that Lyn did not have any more than 2 spades, and after the double she was unlikely to have a 5-card suit, so was likely to have some 2443 shape.

Holding a trump trick a pass seemed like the logical choice and after I led the H7 (MUD) the sight of dummy was a revelation, and a relief.

Declarer had nowhere to go and we had no problem taking 6 tricks for +300 and a complete top.

M 3	KJT85		
Bd 9	AQ32		
Dlr N	A8		
Vul EW	J3		
AQ72		93	
94		KT86	
JT75		K42	
742		AQ96	
	64		
	J75		
	Q963		
	KT85		
W	N	E	S
	1S	X	/
1NT	2H	//	

On board 9 in the third match I opened 1S intending to rebid 2H, instead of opening 1NT which describes my strength more simply, so continued in that vein even when West bid 1NT after East's takeout double.

Lyn had a problem in that West has shown some spade length and values, whereas East has implied a heart suit, so it is not clear whether the 5-2 spade suit or the 4-3 heart suit would be better, since both suits are unlikely to break evenly.

Lyn elected to pass 2H and East led the S9, won by West with the SA and he continued with the S2. Obviously I finessed as West is marked with the SQ by the opening lead, and when this wins I know that East is likely to have the remainder of the points.

The CJ now was won by the CA and the next club finessed to discard a diamond and I was able to use my trumps in dummy to restrict East to just 2 trump tricks and +140 for above average. This would have been a better score, but 5 EW pairs played in NT contracts, going 2 or 3 off for +200 or more to NS.

M 5	T983		
Bd 14	8		
Dlr E	QT82		
Vul Nil	AJ85		
AQ742		J	
Q752		JT63	
A		KJ7654	
K43		96	
	K65		
	AK94		
	93		
	QT72		
W	N	E	S
			1C
X	1D	1H	1NT
2H	3C	/	/
3H	//		

On board 14 in the fifth match Lyn doubled 1C on the West cards because of holding of both majors, and must have been relieved when North bid 1D before I could!

I bid 1H over 1D with many misgivings, and was somewhat relieved when Lyn confirmed her 4-card support by raising to 2H. Concern came back to me when Lyn bid 3H over North's 3C, but there was no double, and South led the D9.

Dummy gave me some hope and I won the DA and led to my HJ, but South ducked! I decided not to lead trumps again, and cashed the DK to get the lie of the land, then ran the SJ before a diamond towards dummy, on which South discarded a club.

A club discard followed by a spade ruff setting up the SK, and then another diamond which forced South to ruff high and the CQ next held the trick, but I was now in control, making 10 tricks for +170 and a top.

I gave South a chance of defeating the contract by leading a trump at trick 2, and he should have played 3 rounds to prevent ruffs.

M 9 AK873
Bd 26 -
Dlr E JT9542
Vul All K3
 J962
 A93
 AQ
 A976

T54
 KQJT765
 K87
 -

Q
 842
 63
 QJT8542

W	N	E	S
		3H	/
4H	//		

On board 26 in the ninth match I could not bring myself to open 4H with so many losers, so took the low road with a 3H opening, raised to game in a flash by Lyn.

South led the SQ and when dummy tracked, the spade holding in dummy made it obvious to all that this was a short suit lead.

North knew this, but played low not wanting to set up the dummy and waiting for the next spade lead, but of course it never came! South switched to the CQ, allowing me to discard a spade, draw trumps and claim 11 tricks for +650.

Assuming that the lead was from Q or Qx, North can afford to overtake and cover both possibilities. If it is a doubleton, the third spade may promote a trump trick for South, and in the actual case South gets a ruff to restrict declarer to 10 tricks.

Out of 21 tables, 12 EW pairs played in hearts, and surprisingly in only one case did NS take 3 tricks.

M 10 K87
Bd 29 AJ65
Dlr N A98
Vul All A52
 T964
 KT73
 KJ5
 J4

Q2
 94
 T7632
 KT98

	AJ53		
	Q82		
	Q4		
	Q763		
W	N	E	S
	1NT	/	2C
/	2H	/	3NT
//			

On board 29 in the tenth match I veered away from standard 4th highest and instead led the CT. When this was allowed to hold, I thought I had hit the jackpot, and continued with the C9, won in hand by declarer while Lyn played the CJ.

The SK and another spade brought some good news for declarer, but there it ended, and he got everything wrong, eventually finishing 2 down for +200 to us.

An endplay on Lyn's hand may have gained another trick, and even leading a club towards dummy would have gained a trick providing there was still an entry to dummy.

Of course an opening lead of the D3 would have given declarer no recourse as this sets up my suit with the CK as an entry.

This was an 80% score, but interestingly only 4 declarers made 9 tricks in 3NT and all from the North seat.

M 13 T98
Bd 6 986
Dlr E K52
Vul EW AK43
 J6
 AKQ7
 QT4
 Q765

AQ73
 432
 A97
 JT9

	K542		
	JT5		
	J863		
	82		
W	N	E	S
		1C	/
1H	/	1NT	/
3NT	//		

On board 6 in the thirteenth match and old NoNo came back to haunt me. In my early days of competition play an experienced player advised me that it was very rare for a good score to result from leading from Jxxx, and I have had many examples of the truth of that advice over the years.

My 1NT rebid does not deny 4 spades, as a 1S rebid would confirm at least 4 clubs, but South chose to lead the D3!

On any play from dummy I can assure 2 diamond tricks, but I wanted to be in dummy to lead a club, so I called for the DQ, which was wrong on this particular hand, and once again a lead from Jxxx was wrong.

If I had played low, it is almost certain that North would have played the DK, giving me 3 tricks in the suit, and 10 tricks.

All was well as eventually I had to rely on the heart break, so I still had 9 tricks for +600 but only 48%. In all 7 declarers made 10 tricks and 3 made 11 tricks!

M 14 T62
Bd 9 6
Dlr N AK9765
Vul EW 742
 AJ 9743
 K753 JT942
 T74 J3
 QJ96 AT
 KQ85
 AQ8
 Q5
 K853

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

On board 9 in the fourteenth match South opened a strong 1NT and North took a practical shot at a possible game. Played by South, this contract is cold, but it requires care, and not enough was given in defence or attack.

Lyn led the CQ and when dummy went down, I overtook with the CA and led the CT, which was a mistake, but declarer made a mistake by ducking, so I switched to the HJ, what I should have switched to at trick 2.

Declarer made a second mistake by covering the HJ, and now 3NT cannot make if hearts are continued, but Lyn can count the SA later, 2 clubs and a heart already, so she can take the contract straight down by returning the CJ, which is what she did, leading to +50.

Declarer can win the CK at trick 2 and lead the SK, setting up the 9th trick and we can only cash 3 clubs and the SA. If I lead the HJ at trick 2, the play of the HA by declarer assures 9 tricks since Lyn has the SA.

M 18 52
Bd 20 T8
Dlr W AQJ7653
Vul All A7
 Q86 KT73
 KJ65 A94
 T8 K
 Q654 JT932
 AJ94
 Q732
 942
 K8

W **N** **E** **S**
 / 1D / 1H
 / 2D / 2NT
 / 3NT //

On board 20 in the eighteenth match my hand had a lot of potential, but I did not want to push it, so rebid a simple 2D, hoping Lyn would make some move towards game in 3NT.

When she made a game try with 2NT, I had no hesitation in raising to game, and West led the C4, which was a big worry as it may have remove my only entry.

Lyn won in hand with the CK and not being able to see all the cards, took the losing diamond finesse, leaving East with an easy exit which she took. Since Lyn had 3 diamonds, there was no danger in the suit being shut out.

Lyn cashed the diamonds followed by the SA for 9 tricks and +600, which gained us a surprizing 90%.

The biggest worry for Lyn would be if East won the DK, cashed the HA and led the H9, but our hearts were just good enough to cope with this defence.

M 21 Q9743
Bd 28 AQT6
Dlr W 2
Vul NS AT9
 AT8 KJ
 K5 J2
 AQJ986 KT4
 Q6 KJ5432
 652
 98743
 753
 87

W **N** **E** **S**
 1NT 2D! 3C /
 3NT //

In board 28 in the twenty first match Lyn opened 1NT with her good 6-card suit, and North overcalled 2D, to show both majors.

My 3C was natural and forcing, allowing Lyn to cue-bid 3H if she needed a spade stop, but her 3NT rebid showed both stops.

North led the S4, won on the table with the SJ, and Lyn cashed the SK followed by the diamonds, forcing a number of discards from both North and South.

North was forced discard a spade to keep the heart tenace, as to keep 3 spades and discard the HQ would be too easy, so Lyn cashed the SA for 9 tricks and exited with the CQ.

North was forced to lead back the HQ at trick 13 for 10 tricks and +630, but this was exactly 50%. Since North has all the entries, Lyn could have led Clubs early on before cashing the SA.

Most EW pairs got to game, some in 5D for a poor score, and the two Easts who became declarer in 3NT both failed.

M 23	8		
Bd 6	963		
Dlr E	94		
Vul EW	KQT8432		
KQ762		JT54	
AQJ742		5	
5		QT63	
6		AJ95	
	A93		
	KT8		
	AKJ872		
	7		
W	N	E	S
		/	1D
2D!	3C	3S	/
4S	5C	X	//

On board 6 in the twenty third match West cue-bid 2D over the 1D opening to show both majors (Michaels Cue-Bid), and my 3C was a negative free-bid.

The vulnerability was favourable, so I guessed that 4S was going to make, and sacrificed in 5C, which East was happy to double.

Dummy club shortage was a disappointment, but at least it looked like 4S was going to make, so I had to avoid any more than 3 off.

East led the H5, which threatened 4 off, so I desperately dropped the H9 under the HJ from West, and he took the bait and exited with the SK, which I won on the table to lead a club.

East won the CA and led the D6, so I ruffed a spade to hand to lead the CQ, revealing the bad break, and realized that I had 6 top losers.

Now I had to take the diamond finesse to discard one of my hearts and hold the loss to 3 off for -500 and just above average.

M 26	K8		
Bd 14	KQ82		
Dlr E	K982		
Vul Nil	A63		
A62		Q93	
A73		94	
J		QT7653	
J98742		QT	
	JT754		
	JT65		
	A4		
	K5		
W	N	E	S
		2D	/
3D!	X	/	4S
//			

On board 14 in the twenty sixth match I opened with a suspect 2D opening and Lyn made a tactical raise to 3D, trying to shut NS out of the auction.

If Lyn passed 2D, North has an easy 2NT, and now NS will likely find their heart fit.

North could have tried 3NT, but instead chose to look for a heart fit by doubling for takeout. On the actual hand this worked out better than 3NT, as 4H is cold and 3NT has no real chance.

However instead of 4D by South, asking North to pick a major, South put all of his eggs in one basket by bidding 4S!

Lyn led the DJ, and now her diamond raise worked against us. When South took the losing spade finesse, I did not place South with the outstanding diamond, and thus did not return a diamond, so we missed the ruff to take the contract 1 off. -420 was almost a bottom and contributed to our worst result on the weekend.

M 29	J83		
Bd 23	AJ9642		
Dlr S	J3		
Vul All	Q6		
KT6		Q74	
K5		8	
KQ976		T8542	
KJT		9742	
	A952		
	QT73		
	A		
	A853		
W	N	E	S
			1C
1D	1H	2D	3H
/	4H	//	

On board 23 in the twenty ninth match I have a medium hand with bitty outside values, but I have an extra 2 hearts, so I happily accepted Lyn's game invitation.

East led the D4, and at trick 2 West covered the HQ, thus I was able to draw trumps and ruff a diamond, so I could lead a club off the table looking for a later spade discard to make 11 tricks.

On the second diamond East followed with the D2, which should have given West a clue to the actual distribution, but either he was not watching, or did not do the calculation, (I have shown a 6-card heart suit, and at least 2 diamonds) but he won the CK and gave me a ruff and sluff in diamonds.

I ruffed in dummy and pitched a spade from hand, cashed the CQ, and crossed to dummy with the SA to discard another spade on the CA for 12 tricks, and +680 and a lucky top.

If West returns a black card 11 tricks are the limit.

M 33 K7643
Bd 4 874
Dlr W KQ5
Vul All Q9
A952 QJ
- QT52
AT962 843
K764 8532

T8
AKJ963
J7
AJT

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

On board 4 in the thirty third match as North I made a simple overcall of the 1D opening bid by West, and this silenced East, who probably considered the hand too weak for a negative double.

Lyn made a 2H response, which did not excite me with my weak hand, but I did have 3-card support, so could not really pass despite these misgivings. Of course Lyn raised to game, and again I wondered if I had enough.

Luckily all of my HCPs were placed over the opening bidder, and pulled their full weight, evidenced by the CQ winning the opening trick.

West's spirited bidding suggested short hearts, so Lyn took the heart finesse at trick 2, revealing the 4-0 break.

The DJ next caused West to rise and lead the SA and another, allowing an entry to finesse the hearts again, followed by a diamond to dummy to discard a club and then repeat the heart finesse for 11 tricks and a near top.

M 35 9754
Bd 12 J9
Dlr W KQ986
Vul NS 53
AK T632
QT76542 AK3
753 JT4
7 J92

QJ8
8
A2
AKQT864

W	N	E	S
1H	/	2H	5C
/	/	X	//

On board 12 in the thirty fifth match, Lyn has a hand with great potential, but not quite the HCPs normally considered as a sound opening bid.

A pre-emptive 3H could be considered normal with the 7-card suit, non-vulnerable, but an outside AK is too valuable to ignore, so she wisely opened 1H with her 9 HCPs.

South had no problem bidding 5C, as did all but 5 of the field, and when this came around to me I doubled.

Lyn led the SK followed by the SK and then the H6, which took the contract 1 off, but when I tried to cash a second heart declarer ruffed and claimed 10 tricks, but still +200 for us and 93%, an equal top.

If I had led back a spade at trick 4 that would have been 2 off for a complete top, but I did not know who had the SQ. Leading the SK followed by the SA and then the H6 would have pin-pointed the ruff.

M 37 AKJ7
Bd 17 A8
Dlr N 864
Vul Nil Q943
5 Q98
JT52 KQ976
KQ93 AT752
J875 -

T6432
43
J
AKT62

W	N	E	S
3H	1C	1H	1S
5H	3S	/	4S
	X	//	

On board 17 in the thirty seventh match I could have bid 2NT over the 1C opening to show diamonds and a major, but preferred the direct overcall of 1H, intending to show my diamonds on another round if appropriate.

South showed the 5-card spade suit and Lyn's 3H was undiscussed, but likely to be weak with 4-card support as both 2C and 2S were available with a stronger hand.

When North bid 3S, I bided my time to see if NS were going to get to game, as I thought I had an easy 5H bid if game was reached.

When South took the plunge, Lyn bid 5H before me and North doubled without pause for thought.

As it turned out a 2NT overcall could have turned out better, as 5D is cold but 5H will go off on a DJ lead. Luckily South has what looks like a safe lead in the CA, and when I could ruff this and lead a trump, 5HX was cold for +650 and a fortunate top.

M 41	AJ9		
Bd 28	AKT		
Dlr W	JT2		
Vul NS	AT92		
Q853		KT7	
J42		Q83	
KQ64		9873	
J3		754	
	642		
	9875		
	A5		
	KQ86		
W	N	E	S
/	1NT	/	2C
/	3D	/	3NT
//			

On board 28 in the forty first and final match North showed a maximum 1NT opening without a major suit, and South bid the obvious 3NT.

I had no clear lead, and I was reluctant to lead a major suit, so instead I chose the D9, and was pleasantly surprized to see Lyn play the DQ at trick 1 and then lead the D4 to dummy.

Declarer had 9 tricks by way of 1 spade, 3 hearts (3-3 break), 1 diamond and 4 clubs, but he did not test the hearts before cashing the clubs, thus he did not have an entry to hand to cash the last heart.

Sometimes it can be useful to run a long suit and force the defenders to make a few discards early in the play, but the diamond lead fortuitously for us took away a vital entry to the only prospect for a 9th trick in the 4-card heart suit.

The heart suit is better than the 3-3 break for the extra trick, due to the H9 on the table. If either the HJ or HQ were to fall that is enough.