

2018 TBIB Imps Pairs in Canberra by Richard Wallis

The weekend between the National teams events at the Summer Festival in Canberra includes a major Imp Pairs event, sponsored by TBIB Insurance Brokers. The event consists of 11, 9-board matches over 4 sessions, played in a Swiss format.

David McLeish and I started out with a win, and a winning draw in the next match, but that was the highlight of the weekend, and our win/loss record was about even, thus we finished mid-field of 188 pairs. The board scores were quite varied and it was difficult to estimate the result before it was posted, a few times what seemed like a small win ending up as a moderate loss.

Therese Tully and Richard Ward were near the front all weekend and started the final match in the lead. However, in spite of a 4 Imp win in this match, they were overtaken by 2 other pairs and had to settle for third.

M 1 KQJ642
Bd 8 AQ9
Dlr W QJ2
Vul Nil 9
 3 AT9875
 KJT543 87
 975 643
 JT7 Q4

-
 62
 AKT8
 AK86532
W N E S
 / 1S / 2C
 / 3S / 4C
 / 4H / 6C
 //

On board 8 in the first match I had a good hand, but the void in David's best suit was not necessarily an asset, especially when he jumped to 3S in response to my nebulous 2C bid.

There was some doubt as to whether my 4C rebid was setting Clubs, or a cue-bid agreeing spades, but in any event 4H was a cue-bid, at the same time denying first or second-round control in diamonds, so I clarified the issue by jumping to 6C, hoping David had at least 1, and we had not missed a grand slam!

West led his singleton S3, and must have been pleased when East played the SA, but less pleased when I ruffed it.

Since clubs were friendly I had an easy 12 tricks for +920 and a lucky 11 Imps as the 3-2 break is just below 50% and the heart loser has to be disposed of.

As it turned out my void in spades was an asset after all, as without it 6C was off, and even though I could discard the H6 on the established spade, the heart finesse was working anyway.

M 2 K93
Bd 15 863
Dlr S K952
Vul NS KT4
 QT86 542
 974 AJT52
 Q63 A84
 853 J7

AJ7
 KQ
 JT7
 AQ962
W N E S
 / / / 1NT
 / 2C /(!) 2D
 / 2NT / 3NT
 //

On board 15 in the second match in spite of 2 Aces I was not quite good enough to open 1H, as I had no easy rebid unless David responded 1S and then he would be misled, so I passed.

When North bid 2C in response to South's 1NT opening, I assumed that it was showing at least 1 major suit and did not risk a 2H overcall, despite the favourable vulnerability, which, while risky, was a mistake on this hand. - No risk, no gain.

Since David had nothing to guide him he led the S6, which gave declarer his 8th trick, and the HK at trick 2 guaranteed a 9th as long as clubs behaved.

If I had suggested a heart lead by bidding 2H over 2C, before South had responded, it is possible that NS would have stayed out of game, even leaving me in 2H (X), or more likely playing in 3C for -150.

3NT for 1 off would have been +11 Imps instead of -7 Imps for -600, and even 2HX for 3 off and -500 would have been +4 Imps.

M 3	AJ6		
Bd 26	8632		
Dlr E	74		
Vul All	T865		
QT963		82	
K		JT6	
KQJT3		A986	
AJ		9432	
	K74		
	AQ974		
	52		
	KQ7		
W	N	E	S
1S	3H!	/	1H
4D	/	4S	//

On board 26 in the 3rd match West had a reasonable hand, but preferred a simple 1S overcall instead of a more descriptive Michael's Cue-bid, and East wisely kept out of it until he was forced into action by the 4D rebid.

David's 3H raise was of the weak 4-card support variety, so at the Vulnerability, I was not tempted to respond, leaving West free to easily bid his second suit.

East's preference for spades was not unexpected, until dummy went down and revealed the fine diamond support and doubleton spade, and this poor contract went 3 off for +300 and 7 Imps.

Neither of us were in a position to double 4S, and if we had, maybe East would have found his diamond support?

4D would have only been 1 off, which is okay against a making 3H, but that requires the right view in trumps, finessing the H9, or cashing the HA first, and still would have been +3 Imps to us.

M 4	J9752		
Bd 32	Q72		
Dlr W	54		
Vul EW	KJT		
-		AKQT843	
AJ9864		K3	
Q32		KJ9	
AQ82		7	
	6		
	T5		
	AT876		
	96543		
W	N	E	S
1H	1S!	/	/
2C	/	2S	/
3H	//	4S	//

On board 32 in the fourth match David made a tactical overcall of 1S that is not found in many bridge magazines, and East appeared to me to be waiting for the take-out double from his partner, so I resolved to redouble to suggest a minor suit.

However, West apparently did not sense the impending disaster and rebid 2C instead of doubling, and East made a 2S waiting bid, but jumped to 4S when West rebid his heart suit.

I led the HT, hopeful of being able to defeat 4S when dummy tracked with a void in spades, but East cashed the SA and his spades were so good that after 2 club ruffs in hand and winning the second diamond on the table, he led a winning heart to discard a diamond, then the next heart executed a trump coup on David for 11 tricks and -650.

If West runs the HJ, he can make 12 tricks in hearts, but 4H or 4S are both making contracts, so we appeared to be a little unlucky to lose 9 Imps on such a routine game.

M 5	87652		
Bd 9	72		
Dlr N	Q86		
Vul EW	K53		
9		A3	
KJ6		Q9854	
AK432		J7	
AQ92		J876	
	KQJT4		
	AT3		
	T95		
	T4		
W	N	E	S
	/	/	1S
X	3C!	3H	3S
4H	//		

On board 9 in the fifth match North and I passed on the first round of bidding and David doubled South's light 1S third-seat opening for take-out, over which North bid an unusual 3C, but this obviously showed spade support, as it did not show clubs.

The 3C response enabled me to bid 3H, and David had no hesitation in raising this free bid to game, to which South led the SK. If North had bid 3S, I would have had to pass on my hand, and then rely on a second take-out double from David.

Since everything was very friendly, I had no trouble making 11 tricks for +650, losing a club and a heart, which seemed like just another wash!

However very little is certain in a large Butler field, and we picked up a 7 Imps for our trouble, but this was still a loss in the match.

4S is not a good sacrifice as it goes for +500, so is still a pick-up for EW.

M 6	-		
Bd 18	J8543		
Dlr E	Q5432		
Vul NS	Q64		
AKJT984		762	
K2		A	
7		AKT	
A53		KJT987	
	Q53		
	QT976		
	J986		
	2		
W	N	E	S
		1C	/
1S	/	3C	/
4NT	/	5C	/
7C	X	//	

On board 18 in the sixth match we gave EW a blueprint to get to the correct contract, but either they were not listening, or did not understand the implications of the final double.

After the jump rebid in clubs, West ignored his fine spade suit and focussed on the club fit, but with a minimum of a 6-3 fit, did not think it necessary to ask about the trump Queen before settling in 7C.

Along with most others the double of a freely bid slam called for a lead of dummy's first-bid suit, so after 3 passes, the S3 hit the table and the grand slam was down at the first trick.

Of course, the double should have alerted EW to the impending spade ruff and they could have sought the safety of 7S or 7NT, now that the spade finesse was marked.

7C was going to go down anyway unless East divined the club position, so maybe the double was ill-advised, but luckily we picked up 15 Imps in a losing match, that was going to be a wipe-out if East or West removed to 7NT.

M 7	J98		
Bd 25	AKT753		
Dlr N	AT6		
Vul EW	2		
K		A75432	
Q94		-	
K9752		QJ	
QJ65		AT743	
	QT6		
	J862		
	843		
	K98		
W	N	E	S
	1H	1S	3H!
/	/	4C	/
4S!	X	//	

On board 25 in the seventh match the EW bidding tactics were somewhat confusing.

David opened the North hand with 1H and my 3H jump showed 4-7 and 4-card support, so David was not tempted to bid again.

However East was not finished, and rebid his other suit, clubs. This looks to be clear-cut for West to either pass 4C or raise to 5C, but inexplicably, West bid 4S, and stuck to his decision when David doubled.

The spades conveniently split 3-3, and if played by West (unlikely!) 4S is cold as the heart force is prevented by West's heart honour, but on the lead of the H2 from my hand, and having shown 4 hearts, East eventually lost control in 4SX, and finished 1 off for +200.

This was a 9 Imp pick-up instead of a 13 Imp loss if West had raised to 5C, which is cold, but we still had a modest loss in the match.

M 8	QJ4		
Bd 33	QT8643		
Dlr N	J43		
Vul Nil	9		
53		A72	
A		KJ92	
QT762		98	
QJ832		AKT6	
	KT986		
	75		
	AK5		
	754		
W	N	E	S
	2H	2NT	/
3NT	//		

On board 33 in the eight match North opened with a natural and single-suited 2H, and I made a normal overcall of 2NT, raised to game by David.

South could have scuttled the contract immediately if she had led her own suit, but instead chose to lead the H7, partner's suit, and I was in with a chance.

If I had cashed my club tricks now the enforced discards would have made it difficult for NS, but the singleton HA in dummy made for entry problems, so I was forced to try the diamond suit, and led the D9.

South played low without a flicker, and I knew North had very little in hearts, so I was not up to the task of rising with the DQ for my 9th trick, and thus finished 1 down for -50 and 4 Imps away.

Of course, South gave me another chance, because if she had risen with the DK and switched to spades now, I was always down.

M 9	84		
Bd 9	AJT9		
Dlr N	QT7		
Vul EW	K832		
J7653		KT	
K54		73	
J82		A9653	
76		A954	
	AQ92		
	Q862		
	K4		
	QJT		
W	N	E	S
/	/	/	1C
/	1H	/	2H
/	/	3D	/
/	3H	/	4H
//			

Balancing is an art and risky at the best of times, as East found out on board 9 in the ninth match!

David was a passed hand so I had no game interest when I made a minimum raise, and David was probably conscious that I was third in hand, so did not make a game-try.

However, when East came to life with 3D, having failed to overcall on the first round of bidding, David went 1 more, and that was all I needed to have a shot at game, since my DK was now likely to be at full value!

East led the DA, and with both major suit Kings well placed for David he quickly wrapped up 11 tricks for +450 and a modest gain of 4 Imps.

Depending on their system, East could be strong enough to open 1D in second position, especially as there is an easy rebid of 2C over 1S by West, or 1NT over 1H by West.

Over a 1D opening by East, I would make a take-out double, so we may still have reached 4H.

M 10	J8		
Bd 18	J7		
Dlr E	AT92		
Vul NS	AKT72		
QT97		K65432	
42		KT3	
KJ865		Q	
QJ		654	
	A		
	AQ9865		
	743		
	983		
W	N	E	S
/	3C	2D!	2H
/	4H	/	4C
4S	5C	//	/

Board 18 in the tenth match was a battle with none sure who held the upper hand.

My 2H overcall of the multi-2D opening left some doubt in West's mind as to whether East had spades or hearts, especially when David bid 3C, but when David subsequently showed some heart tolerance, that made it more likely that East had spades.

David made a forcing pass of 4S, and with my singleton SA, I chose to offer 5C again, and David passed, to which East led the DQ.

David won the DA and got the pleasant news in trumps, so the clubs could be drawn with the SA still as an entry to dummy. Next was the HJ, covered by East and a heart ruff set up the suit for 12 tricks and +620.

Of course if the heart finesse had lost, 5C had no chance even with the clubs favourable, so it is not a slam to be in. Taking the heart finesse at trick 4, returning to hand with the CT to repeat the heart finesse would have yielded 13 tricks.

M 11	2		
Bd 27	T83		
Dlr S	AK94		
Vul Nil	AT754		
8743		AKQT65	
Q9642		KJ5	
762		-	
Q		J862	
	J9		
	A7		
	QJT853		
	K93		
W	N	E	S
	2H!	2S	2D
3S	/	4S	3H
/	5D	//	/

On board 27 in the eleventh and final match, I opened with a weak 2D bid, and David knew where he was going, so he bid a psychic 2H response to try and throw EW off the track.

This was a good try, but surely after I had shown heart support his 5D bid let the cat out of the bag, but maybe EW thought he was just offering a choice of contract, and my heart support was not primary.

West led the CQ, which I took at face value, and won on the table to draw trumps and finesse the C9 for 11 tricks and +400.

I understand why East failed to bid 5S over 5D, as his hearts and clubs were vulnerable in a 5S contract, but they maybe usefull in a 5D contract.

The hand would be diabolical in a teams match as 5D is cold for NS and 5S for EW, so a double game swing result would occur many times.

It is unlikely that NS would go to 6C over 5S to achieve the optimum result on the board.