

Queensland at the Grand National Open Teams Finals

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The Australian Bridge Federation's flagship event is the Grand National Open Teams focussing, as it does, on all players across Australia providing opportunities for good teams bridge, gold masterpoints for local events and travel subsidies for those teams who make it to the finals at Tweed Heads in November. This year there was a total of nearly 2000 teams involved from the start and, in Queensland, we had 556 teams playing for the 15 places in the finals. These places are allocated proportionately according to the number of entries

Brisbane	190
Sunshine Coast	102
Gold Coast	88
Darling Downs	61
Wide Bay	34
Far North	24
Whitsunday	22
Northern	20
Capricornia	15

An additional feature for Queensland players in 2017 was that the top placed Queensland team would be playing in the Commonwealth Nations Bridge Competition in February, just prior to the Gold Coast Congress. To select the two Queensland teams for the CNBC, the QBA had intentionally used events which involved subsidised players from across the state so as to maximise the chances for regional players to have this opportunity.

And so it was that 15 hopeful Queensland teams entered the arena against 45 other teams at the Ultima Resort at Tweed Heads. The format is brutal. One loss and you drop to the repechage where you then have to place 1st or 2nd to re-enter the finals.

Queensland lost 5 of their teams to the repechage in the 1st round, one (North Queensland) by a mere 4 imps. But Round 2 was a blood bath with 8 more Qld teams being eliminated leaving just Brisbane 1 and Brisbane 2 to battle on. The former fell in Round 3 (65-48) to Sydney 4 and the latter in Round 4 (62-36) to Sydney 1, the eventual winners.

The focus now moved to the repechage where a number of our teams were doing well. At the end of Round 7:

- Wide Bay (Ann McGhee, Mike Stoneman, Ian Cruickshank, Rob Anderson) with a 5-2 win-loss record were running 20th;
- North Queensland (John Johnson, Geoff Allen, Hugh McAllister, Di McAllister) were 19th, also with a 5-2 record;
- Sunshine Coast 1 (Richard Trollope, Rosemary Crowley, Ann Mellings, Maureen Jakes) were 17th;
- Far North Queensland (Rebecca Delaney, Lesley Fraser, Rick Gryg, Tony Lusk) were 16th;
- Whitsunday (Janeen Solomon, Noel Bugeia, Bessie Baldry, Terrence Sheedy) were 12th;
- Brisbane 1 (Neville Francis, Magnus Moren, Tony Hutton, Malcolm Carter, Therese Tully, Richard Ward) were 5th;
- Brisbane 2 (Bill Haughie, Paul Gosney, Ralph Parker, Paul Hooykass, Andy Hung, Paul Wyer) were 4th; and
- Brisbane 3 (Alan Gibson, Alison Dawson, Elizabeth Zeller, Brian Patterson) were 3rd.

Placings at the end of Round 8 were: 3rd Brisbane 2; 4th Brisbane 1; 9th Brisbane 3; 12th North Queensland; 13th Sunshine Coast 1; 19th Whitsunday. Then in the final round:

- Brisbane 2 defeated Brisbane 1 by 24 imps;
- Sunshine Coast 1 had a small loss against Geelong;
- North Queensland had a creditable 5 imp win against a strong Canberra 1 team;
- Brisbane 3 had a big win against Far North Queensland

And so the top 10 final Queensland placings with none making the semi-finals were:

3	Brisbane 2	16	Capricornia
5	Brisbane 3	18	Far North Qld
6	Brisbane 1	21	Whitsunday
11	North Queensland	30	Gold Coast 1
14	Sunshine Coast 1	31	Gold Coast 3

Top Queensland pairs in the 155 repechage datums were:

1st	Neville Francis Magnus Moren	34th	John Johnson Geoff Allan
4 th	Paul Gosney Andy Hung	36 th	Rosemary Crowley Richard Trollope
7 th	Alison Dawson Elizabeth Zeller	37 th	Janeen Solomon Terrence Sheedy
17 th	Ralph Parker Paul Hooykaas	39 th	Verna Brookes Peter Busch
26th	Jan Randall Peter Randall	42 nd	Rick Gryg Tony Lusk

The final between two Sydney teams was very close for the first three sets but Sydney 1 (Liam Milne, Nye Griffiths, Sophie Ashton, Sartaj Hans, Adam Edgtton, Nabil Edgtton) won the fourth set 44-11 to take the title with a score of 97-67 over Sydney 3 (Michael Wilkinson, Shane Harrison, Matt Smith, Fraser Rew, David Wiltshire).

Here are three interesting hands from the event.

You are in 4th seat vul vs not vul holding

♠ Q73
♥ K983
♦ Q64
♣ AJ10

Dealer opens a 14-16 HCP which is passed around to you. Do you bid or pass? If you are playing Cappelletti or extended Landy or DONT or similar you may not have a bid for this flat, ugly 12 count. But it is for hands such as this that some partnerships modify their overcalling system so that a double here simply shows an opening hand. It just as dangerous to pass as it is to double on this hand - vulnerable with a possible 16 count sitting over you, but partner must have some values on this bidding so it's not as scary as it feels. If you were forced to pass, or simply chose to, you will lose 10 imps for the whole hand was:

E/NS	♠ Q73	
	♥ K983	
	♦ Q64	
	♣ AJ10	
♠ 9864		♠ K102
♥ 74		♥ J10
♦ 9753		♦ AJ8
♣ 853		♣ KQ974
	♠ AJ5	
	♥ AQ652	
	♦ K102	
	♣ 62	

And, whilst holding declarer to just 3 tricks was reasonably satisfying, it did not make up for the missed vulnerable game.

And, in the same match, in 1st position vul vs not vul you hold:

♠ 64
♥ 1064
♦ AQ54
♣ A974

The bidding goes round to partner who opens 3♠. Do you pass or raise? Dick Cummings, one of Australia's great international players from the 60s and 70s and regular partner with Tim Seres, advocated always raising to game holding two aces opposite a vulnerable pre-empt. That is what the Sydney player, Andrew Peake, did in a match against Brisbane and was rewarded when the whole hand was:

E/EW	♠ KQ	
	♥ KJ9	
	♦ KJ972	
	♣ Q53	
♠ AJ109832		♠ 64
♥ A32		♥ 1064
♦ 106		♦ AQ54
♣ 8		♣ A974
	♠ 75	
	♥ Q875	
	♦ 83	
	♣ KJ1062	

If the diamond finesse had failed he would have lost 5 imps against the part-score bid at the other table. As it was, he gained 11 imps – and that was the match. Across the field 4♠ was bid and made 17 out of 60 times.

There were two hands in the event where EW had a 6-6 heart fit. Not surprisingly, both hands reached the stratosphere very quickly in the bidding by which stage it was anyone's guess whose contract it should be. This final hand also took off quite quickly once West decided that this 9 count was an opening bid.

W/NS			
♠	8	♠	KJ976
♥	J107652	♥	-
♦	-	♦	A632
♣	AKJ1083	♣	Q765

W	E	
1♥	1♠	
2♣	4♣ ¹	1 Too strong for 3♣, not Minorwood
4♦ ²	4♥ ²	2 1 st or 2 nd round controls
4♠ ²	5♣ ³	3 Sign-off, no more to say
6♣ ⁴		4 Optimistic

North on lead held ♠ A3 ♥ K843 ♦ KJ954 ♣ 94 and chose to lead a diamond. The only winning defence is to cash the ♠A and then lead a trump. So it was possible to discard the spade loser at trick 1 and to ruff out most of the hearts, give up a heart and claim. The contract at the other table was 5♣X making 11 tricks but a useful 8 imps in anyway.

As the finals got under way the GNOT Swiss Pairs, comprising 7x8 board matches, was held. Queenslanders did quite well in this field of 94 pairs with the following finishing in the top third:

2 nd	Paul Wyer Bill Haughie	15 th	Margaret Pisko Trish Anagnostou
3 rd	Ken Dawson Rosemary Crowley	16 th	Suzie Braithwaite Pele Rankin
8 th	Therese Tully Richard Ward	22 nd	Jill Magee Terry Strong
11 th	Kerry Wood Charlie Howard	31 st	Janeen Solomon Terrence Sheedy