

2019 Gold Coast Open Pairs by Richard Wallis

This year in the Bobby Richman Pairs I played with Craig Francis, no relation to Neville Francis, although he jokingly calls him 'Dad' as Craig is a little younger and far less experienced. Our second qualifying session was just below average, but the first session was far worse, and we finished in section G for the final 3 sessions. Consequently I am going to skip the qualifying and go straight to the final.

We finally hit our straps in the G final, winning comfortably, which was a little embarrassing, as we should have been in a higher section and it was not really fair on the less experienced players. We were not the only experienced pairs to falter in the qualifying though, as section F had 3 pairs who probably expected to make the final, or at least the Plate.

Nevertheless Final G was a very enjoyable event, everyone was friendly and courteous, and generally enjoying themselves. Of course in this type of Howell movement you play follow the leader, and the ladies that took our seats for the next round following each move, always asked how we were going and continued to ask when we saw them during the Teams event that followed the Pairs.

S 1	93			<p>On Board 2 in the first session I had a good 5-card suit and 14 HCPs so decided to double 1NT (15-17) for penalties. 2C by West looked like a rescue bid initially (no redouble or pass looking for a redouble), so I bid 2S over 2D, and now West looked to the opener for a spade stop for 3NT, so it was not rescue after all.</p> <p>Oblivious to the danger, I led 4th highest spade as I need just the SJ from Craig to put 3NT in danger. When dummy tracked and Craig could only play the S9 I knew I had escaped a massacre.</p> <p>However worse was yet to come as declarer proceeded to lead the HQ, and I made the mistake of covering, which gave her the entries to lead to the diamonds for 4 tricks, followed by the club finesse and break for 13 tricks in all.</p> <p>2SX would have been a very large negative score, but since obviously no pair bid a slam needing everything right, -520 was an absolute bottom anyway!</p>
Bd 2	8632			
Dir E	7432			
Vul NS	1096			
76		AJ104		
A97		QJ10		
AQ108		965		
AJ52		K73		
	KQ852			
	K54			
	KJ			
	Q84			
W	N	E	S	
2C	/	1NT	X	
3S	/	2D	2S	
		3NT	//	

S 1 Bd 3 Dir S Vul EW	K6432 KQ7 984 76		On Board 3 in the first session I, South, had a fair hand and my redouble showed 3-card support for spades. Craig's 2S rebid was not forcing, but confirmed a 5-card suit. My heart shortage and good diamond suit over East prompted me to bid 4S next rather than invite, although it is likely that Craig would have accepted anyway. East led the CK, CA, HA and C9, won in dummy by Craig, who proceeded to cash out the spades finishing in hand to take the diamond finesse. When the DK popped he could claim the rest and the reason East cashed out was obvious as Craig had 11 tricks otherwise. Surprisingly this was a 75% score, so most NS pairs must have played in a part-score.
J107 986 652 J432		95 AJ10532 K AK98	
	AQ8 4 AQJ1073 Q105		
W	N	E	S
/	1S	X	1D
/	2S	3H	XX
//			4S

S 1 Bd 15 Dir S Vul NS	J10 64 J1086 K9864		On Board 15 in the first session Craig's 2D response to my strong 2C opening simply showed at least 1 Ace or King, and my 2H rebid was artificial, forcing Craig to rebid 2S (Kokish), whereupon I clarified my hand with 3H. Craig's 4C was first or second round control and I got lucky when I just jumped to 6H, because it was actually first round control. A more sensible bid would have been 4NT (RKCB) to check that it was the CA and sign off in 5H opposite a zero-ace reply. South led the DK and I was exposed to a loser at trick 1, but the CA settled the issue and we were soon scoring up +980 for 88%. Since spades were so friendly, 6S also makes but you would only get there by accident. This hand illustrates a principle that I understand, but unfortunately rarely follow: Slow down! If Craig had held the CK and no other, a diamond lead would have led to defeat.
Q92 QJ72 942 A107		AK65 AK10983 A3 2	
	8743 5 KQ75 QJ53		
W	N	E	S
/	/	2C	/
2D!	/	2H	/
2S!	/	3H	/
4C	/	4D	/
4H	/	6H	//

S 1 Bd 21 Dir N Vul NS	Q7 A6 J AKQ109632		On Board 21 in the first session North opened with a strong 2C (not my choice!) and rebid the suit at every turn up to game, and at the same time denying any support for South's majors.
K10 98754 109432 5		AJ64 102 AQ87 J74	It seemed like a good idea to have a look at dummy, so I cashed the SA and continued with the S4 to Craig's SK and the ball was in his court.
	98532 KQJ3 K65 8		Unfortunately Craig guessed to return a heart, and declarer claimed the rest of the tricks for -600.
			However we had the last laugh as 3NT is cold and many declarers made 10 or more tricks in 3NT so we scored 88%.
			North has the potential to take many tricks in NT, but his diamond shortage is a serious risk, and the 2C opening took away a level of bidding to allow North to ask South for a diamond stop.
W	N	E	S
/	2C	/	2D
/	3C	/	3S
/	4C	/	4H
/	5C	//	

S 2 Bd 22 Dir E Vul EW	K943 952 109763 Q		On Board 22 in the second session Craig opened 1H and my 1S response kept South silent, following which Craig jumped to game. Even with 5 diamonds and 4 spades, I would only respond 1D if I was strong enough to reverse into spades on the next round of bidding.
- AKQJ73 AK2 J853		J1062 - QJ854 K942	North hit on the lead of the D10 instead of the CQ and got lucky when South ruffed this, but then their luck ran out as South tried to cash the SA at trick 2.
	AQ875 10864 - A1076		Craig had carefully discarded the DA when South ruffed, and thus he was able to draw all of the trumps, cash the DK and finesse the D8 for 10 tricks and a 75% score.
W	N	E	S
1H 4H	/ //	/ 1S	/ /
			Those Norths who led the CQ gave West no winning play. If they ducked, then South would play the C6 suggesting a diamond switch and a cross-ruff would develop. If they covered, the C6 return would again suggest a diamond return and NS will take 3 diamond ruffs and 3 club ruffs plus the CA and only 6 tricks for EW.

S 2 Bd 23 Dir S Vul All	974 A1086 KQ10542 -		On Board 23 in the second session I missed a golden opportunity to get a good score when I rebid 3H instead of my good 6-card club suit. After Craig's cue-bid I know he has a good hand so 4C would be reasonably safe and if clubs are trumps my hand could take quite a few more tricks than I can take if hearts are trumps. If I rebid 4C it is likely that Craig will raise to game with such good support, and 5C is cold.
AKQ KJ973 98 KJ2		8532 Q4 7 AQ9543	
	J106 52 AJ63 10876		In 3H North led the DK and switched to a spade. Craig won the SA and ruffed a diamond in dummy then led the HQ which North ducked.
W 1H 3D	N 2D /	E X 3H	S / / //
Back to hand with the SK and then the HK led to 10 tricks when South did not get their club ruff. However +170 was only worth 19%.			

S 3 Bd 3 Dir S Vul EW	A10432 A3 KQ2 K32		On Board 3 in the third session I opened with a weak 2H with a poor suit and Craig asked with 2NT, to which my 3H rebid suggested a poor suit and maximum points. I was off to a good start in 4H when West led the C5, and, after dummy tracked it looked like only a 4-1 break would put 4H down. I did get a 4-1 break, but the kind I could deal with and I subsequently lost 2 hearts and the DA for +420. Since 4S is also cold on the 3-2 break, losing just a spade, a heart and a diamond, and we have 25 HCPs, this looks a routine flat board.
Q97 J AJ10763 1085		J8 KQ72 984 Q976	
	K65 1098654 5 AJ4		
W / /	N 2NT! 4H	E / //	S 2H! 3H!
Even more so when you consider that 3NT also makes 10 tricks, but somehow we scored 64%.			

S 3 Bd 5 Dir N Vul NS	J62 72 10654 10874		On Board 5 in the third session Craig doubled the 1NT opening bid for penalties and I had more than enough to leave it in. If I had North's hand I would likely have at least thought about getting out, but since the doubler is on lead, it is often best to leave it in unless you are weak with a 6-card suit.	
AK8753 A109 A2 63		Q9 KJ85 973 Q952	I definitely would have escaped 1NTX if I was North, and 2D is a far superior contract, reachable by bidding 2C, showing the lower of 2 suits, and South bids their lowest 4-card suit thus North can pass 2D.	
	104 Q643 KQJ8 AKJ		Craig led the S7 and I could infer by the Rule of 11 that South had just one higher card. If it was the SA or SK then the SJ becomes a second trick for declarer if I play the SQ, so I played the S9 and much to their surprize declarer won the first trick with the S10!	
W X	N / //	E /	S 1NT	That was the end of the good news for declarer and +500 was worth 81% to us.

S 3 Bd 8 Dir W Vul Nil	KJ10832 105 764 J5		On Board 8 in the third session Craig opened with a weak 2 in spades and I had 4-card support and a 20-count!	
Q9 743 J3 K109743		7 AJ862 Q98 Q862	For some reason best known to her, East thought before passing 2S, so I deduced that the outstanding HCPs were likely to be well placed, and maybe QJ10xxx would be enough in Craig's hand as long as he had an entry.	
	A654 KQ9 AK1052 A		Grand slam aspirations were quickly dispelled by the 5D response to RKCB, and I bid the obvious 6S, to which East led the HA and another heart.	
W / / //	N 2S 5D	E /! /	S 4NT 6S	Craig also noted the hesitation over 2S so diagnosed that if the trumps broke 3-0 it would be likely that it was East who was void, so cashed the SA in dummy first, leading to an easy 12 tricks for +980 and 81%.

S 3		AJ765		<p>On Board 15 in the third session Craig's 2S response to my opening bid of 1H showed 4-card support for hearts, 7-9 HCPs, and a singleton somewhere. His hand did not quite fit the description, but the 5-card suit headed by the AJ must be worth an extra HCP!</p> <p>I could have found out which suit had the singleton by rebidding 2NT, but I did not care as 4H was where I was going anyway.</p> <p>West had a difficult lead, and chose to lead a trump, as East's heart values are not worth much anyway, to try and avoid giving a trick away on the lead and cut down on ruffing in dummy.</p> <p>I drew trumps in two rounds and led the SQ to dummy to lead a club. East rose with the CA and led the D9.</p> <p>The diamond finesse now is a simple line to 11 or 12 tricks, but since I have 2 discards on the clubs, I rose with the DA, took my discards, and when the diamonds broke I had 12 tricks for 94%.</p>
Bd 15		9843	K1043	
Dir S		J64	KJ	
Vul NS		7	983 A1042	
982		Q		
105		AQ762		
K107		AQ52		
J9863		KQ5		
W	N	E	S	
/	2S!	/	1H	
//			4H	