

Festival Teams Canberra January 24 2014

The bar at Rydges during the SFOB turned out to be a perfect place to find team mates for the Festival Teams, on Friday 24th January. Sheer luck had us waiting for a drink next to Geo Tislevoll. A world class player, Geo is a Norwegian now living in Auckland. He and Kathy Boardman were looking for a pair. My partner for the event, the mercurial Michael Courtney, agreed (quickly) to play.

Michael and I didn't have much time to discuss system. He doesn't really need it. Our discussion about carding consisted of these words "Joan, if I lead a low card, keep playing that suit till you've got none left!" I resolved to do as I was told.

The first match against Gumby was not a success, for various reasons, but there were five matches to go. In the second match, Geo and Kathy bid to 6♣ and made it, while our opponents played in 3♣.

Brd 12 Dlr W NS Vul

	♠108732	
	♥A975	
	♦53	
(Kathy)	♣Q2	(Geo)
♠ void		♠ Q9654
♥ KJ643		♥ 10
♦ K74		♦ A102
♣ AK853		♣ J964
	♠ AKJ	
	♥ Q82	
	♦ QJ986	
	♣ 107	

Bidding

W	N	E	S
1♥	1♠	1NT	2♠
3♣	p	4♣	p
4♦*	p	6♣	all pass

(cue bid)

Once Geo heard Kathy cue diamonds, he was off to the races. He knew she'd be void in spades, and his diamond control and club fit improved his hand.

The ♦5 was led, and Kathy won the ♦A in dummy. She ran the ♥10, (South not covering, an error) to North's ♥A.

North tried a spade, but Kathy trumped, drew two rounds of clubs, and played ♥K and a low ♥, happy when the ♥Q dropped.

If South covers the ♥10 with the ♥Q, declarer will pitch a diamond on the ♥J, but can't ruff two hearts and one diamond when the hearts break 4-2.

It's an ambitious slam, but often, strong players are allowed to make these, when a defensive error occurs. That's exactly what happened here.

Michael Courtney has a certain “je ne sais quois” at the table. You get the feeling he knows everything about the hand from trick one. He always found the best leads, and his declarer play was spot on. Most interesting of all was his bidding style. I could see now why we didn’t have much prior system discussion!

A 1NT opening, in Michael’s hands, is far from the mundane 4333, 4432, or 5332 shape most people play. Slight variations of “balanced” that have morphed into bidding style include having a five-card major, avoiding reversing on 5422 hands, and sometimes opening 1NT with 6322 with a good six –card minor.

But Michael produced variations I’d never seen before; sometimes six spades and 6322; sometimes 5431 shape; and sometimes not quite 15 points. I responded as normal, but towards the end of the day, I was announcing to the opponents that our 1NT openings may be neither 15-17 nor balanced!

Finally I got into the mood myself, in the last match against Jim Wallis’s team. At equal vulnerability I held

♠84
♥Q63
♦QJ
♣AKQ1052

On my right East passed as opener, so what else would I try but ...1NT. Michael transferred to spades, and then bid, of all things, 3♣! I jumped to 5♣ trying to show a minimum hand with good clubs, with no interest in playing the hand in anything else. Michael raised to 6♣.

The full hand:

	(Michael)	
	♠ A7652	
	♥ A5	
	♦ AK	
	♣ 9643	
♠ K1093		♠ QJ
♥ K1042		♥ J987
♦ 1083		♦ 976542
♣ J8		♣ 7
	(Joan)	
	♠84	
	♥Q63	
	♦QJ	
	♣AKQ1052	

The lead was a diamond, and unfortunately we had wasted values there. When spades broke 4-2, Michael was unable to discard two hearts, so had to lose a spade and a heart for down 1.

I thought we might have lost 12 imps here, but in fact we gained 3, when Jim and Bill also played 6♣, down 2.

A good win in the last round saw us overtake the leaders Gumby, and win the event.

Results:

1st COURTNEY: Geo Tislevoll, Kathy Boardman, Michael Courtney, Joan Butts

2nd GUMBY: Pauline Gumby, Warren Lazer, Andy Braithwaite, Ian Robinson

3rd WALLIS: Jim Wallis, Bill Nash, Carol Richardson, Geoff Broughey

I will be down in that bar again next year for sure!