

Teams of Three

5 JUNE 2022 (SUN)



The proud captain

by Fraser Rew

The Teams of Three is always one of the most popular events on the calendar. Unfortunately entries were well down this year, but it was still great to be back to face-to-face bridge again.

I drew the nucleus of the 2018 NSW Youth team - Alex Phillips, Alan Stoneham and James Palmer - so I was confident of a good result, even if it meant that I had 10 minutes to learn how to play Flannery for the first time in my life!

Despite my confidence, we started with a 5-imp loss to the Hughes team. The damage happened on this board:

Board 6

Dealer E | Vul E-W

♠ AKQ2
 ♥ AT4
 ♦ AKQ52
 ♣ 4

♠ 93
 ♥ J3
 ♦ 9864
 ♣ AT963

♠ 86
 ♥ Q872
 ♦ J
 ♣ QJ8752

♠ JT754
 ♥ K965
 ♦ T73
 ♣ K

W	N (Alan)	E	S (Fraser)
		P	P
P	1D	P	1S
P	4C*	P	4S
P	P	//	

* Splinter — strong hand with four Spades and a singleton or void in Clubs.

Holding an extra trump and a useful King, maybe I should bid 4♥ (cuebid) over 4♣. Maybe Alan has a good enough hand to make one more move. Neither of those things happened, however, so we lost 10 imps when Nick Hughes and Sherry Gao bid 6♠.

We bounced back with a maximum win in Round 2. We had four double-digit swings in eight boards - including, rarely, one on an undoubled partscore hand.

At the other table, South opened 1♣ and West showed a strong hand, but subsided in 2NT. North, on lead with Kx of partner's suit, looked no further for an opening lead. That not only set up the club suit, but established the ♣10 as an entry to the hearts, and declarer made 10 tricks.

At our table, the auction was more revealing:

Board 9

Dealer N | Vul E-W

♠ Q765
 ♥ 97
 ♦ J8742
 ♣ K8

♠ KT8
 ♥ A5
 ♦ A95
 ♣ AQJ76

♠ 932
 ♥ QJT64
 ♦ 63
 ♣ T32

♠ AJ4
 ♥ K832
 ♦ KQT
 ♣ 954

W	N (Alan)	E	S (Fraser)
	P	P	1C
X	1D	1H	P
1NT	P	2D*	X
2NT	//		

* Intended as a transfer but not taken as such

Because of my double, partner knew to lead his fourth-highest diamond. Declarer won the second round to play Ace and another Heart, but I won the King to continue Diamonds. My first discard was ♣9 (discouraging), so partner exited with a Spade to set up a second trick there. When the dust settled, we had the contract three away - a five-trick improvement on the other table.

In Round 3, teammates were the only pair to bid the excellent slam here:

Board 22

Dealer E | Vul E-W

♠ JT753
♥ 963
♦ 763
♣ T3

♠ 852
♥ AKT952
♦ AQJ5
♣ AQJ5

♠ AQ942
♥ KQ4
♦ 4
♣ K874

♠ K86
♥ AJT7
♦ QJ8
♣ 962

W (James)	N	E (Alan)	S
		1S	P
2D ¹	P	3C ²	P
4C	P	5C	P
6C	//		

(1) Natural, GF
(2) Natural, shows extra values

East was unable to cuebid 4♥ over 4♣, as that would show a first round control, and unwilling to bid 4♠, in case partner construed that as a suggestion of contract with better spades. East trusted that there would be some sort of heart control, given the extra values and the failure to bid 4♠. When that was indeed the case, we won 12 imps for +1370 vs -660 in 3NT.

Alex took advantage of the vulnerability to find a profitable sacrifice here:

Board 12

Dealer W | Vul N-S

♠ KQT64
♥ K
♦ AKT95
♣ 62

♠ 852
♥ 8764
♦ 87642
♣ 8

♠ 93
♥ AQ5
♦ J
♣ KQJT743

♠ AJ7
♥ JT932
♦ Q3
♣ A95

W (Alan)	N	E (Alex)	S
P	1S	2C	3C
P	4S	5C	X

He didn't see much defence to 4♠. With only two spades, a diamond, a heart, and a club to lose, that was a 4-imp gain, when James made an overtrick in 4♠ at our table.

The proud Captain Fraser Rew (front) with his team Alan Stoneham, Alex Phillips and James Palmer.



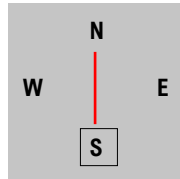
I know that nobody likes it when the winners complain about their bad luck, but hear me out:

Board 15

Dealer S | Vul N-S

♠
♥ KJT8
♦ 8642
♣ 97632

♠ T9853
♥ A53
♦ Q73
♣ AK



♠ KQJ42
♥ 9762
♦ J
♣ Q54

♠ A76
♥ Q4
♦ AKT95
♣ JT8

W	N	E	S
			P
1S	P	2D	// (!)

West's reasoning for passing 2♦ was that he didn't have any good bids to make. (If you're reading this and agree, stop right there. Even if East's bid were not 100% forcing, requiring you to find some other bid even if you'd rather pass, you have a 13-count with two Aces and King - perfectly respectable).

I would have bid 2NT, and 3♦ seems a viable alternative, but 2♦ was the actual contract.

Sitting south, I mentally scored this a 7 imps in, for -130 vs the +400 or 430 that teammates would bring back in 3NT. I felt a little ill when partner showed out on the first round of spades, trusting that teammates would find their 8-card fit, and would in fact be playing the doomed 4♠. And so it proved to be: 5 imps out when they held it to one away, out instead of 7 in.

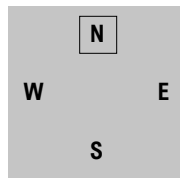
That moved us into third place before the last round, but we hit the ground running:

Board 17

Dealer N | Vul None

♠ AQ5
♥ JT
♦ 9762
♣ K864

♠ 9872
♥ K93
♦ J853
♣ A9



♠ JT3
♥ AQ62
♦ AQT
♣ 732

♠ K64
♥ 8754
♦ K4
♣ QJT5

W	N (James)	E	S (Fraser)
	P	P	1C
P	1NT	P	P
X	P	2H	P
P	X	//	

At the other table - as at most tables around the room - the auction was the same until 1NT, but East-West passed this out and were -120, when declarer took two spades, three hearts, two diamonds and a club. At our table, partner, holding a maximum with short Hearts, found the double, and I was happy to pass for penalties. We took the same eight tricks as the other North-South pairs, but instead of +120, that meant +500.



Two boards later, several factors combined to gain us another 10 imps:

Board 19

Dealer S | Vul E-W

♠ K65432
♥ QT
♦ 6
♣ KQ84

♠ AJ87
♥ K542
♦ QJ74
♣ 5

♠ 9
♥ A873
♦ A952
♣ A973

♠ QT
♥ J96
♦ KT83
♣ JT62

HOME TABLE

W	N (James)	E	S (Fraser)
			P
P	3S!	//	

AWAY TABLE

W (Alan)	N	E (Alex)	S
			P
1D	1S	X	P
2H	2S	4H	//

Third-hand preempts are quite wide-ranging, hence my partner's decision to open 3♠ with a weak suit and points outside. It's hard to fault either East or West for passing; nonetheless, both the good 4♥ contract and the 500-point penalty were missed, and we escaped for only -150. There was more action at the other table.

There's a saying that at suit contracts you should count losers, but that doesn't work well here. Although you have only a Diamond and a Heart loser, you have a lot of small black cards that you need to worry about. To make matters worse, North found the best lead of a small Diamond - both threatening a ruff and knocking out an entry.

Declarer rose Ace, played the King and Ace of Hearts, and led a Diamond towards the Queen. When that held, he led the ♠A, noting South's 10 with keen interest: if you trust North to hold at least one Spade honour, the contract is now cold if you play it carefully (spoiler alert: he did). Accordingly, declarer now led ♠7, and discarded a club from dummy when North ducked (remember the J87 were effectively equal at that stage). South won the ♠Q, cashed the ♥J to extract a trump from each hand and exited with a club to dummy's Ace, leaving this position:

♠ K63
♥
♦
♣ KQ

♠ J8
♥ 5
♦ J7
♣

♠
♥
♦ KT
♣ T62

Declarer led a Diamond off dummy. South rose King to play another club, but declarer had the hand under control: he ruffed, led the ♠8 (covered with the King and ruffed with dummy's last trump), came back to ♦J, and cashed the ♠J at trick 13 for his 10th trick. That's a tough but rewarding way to gain 10 imps!

Two more big swings gave us almost a maximum, and enough to leapfrog the two teams ahead of us.

Thanks to my teammates, to the other captains who volunteered their time and, as ever, Wing for organising both the day and the excellent selection of food and drinks.

[...More results can be found HERE](#)