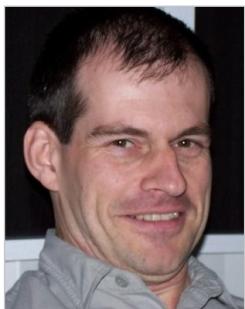


GNOT Metropolitan Final

15th — 16th SEPTEMBER 2018 (SAT—SUN)

by JULIAN FOSTER



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A

disappointing 32 teams turned up to the Sydney Metropolitan final of the GNOT to determine 4 more teams to qualify for the National finals at Tweed Heads in November (joining 3 that had already qualified directly from club heats). This event used to be over 60 teams and has steadily reduced in recent years. If current trends continue, we will have no choice but to either raise prices or reduce the number of teams qualifying (or both).

The format was knockout (14 board matches early on, 28 board matches later) with a swiss repechage. The last two teams in the knockout qualify plus the top two in the swiss. One additional quirk is that the teams with the largest wins get choice of opponents in the next round. Although this is different, it does mean the first match can become overly important. Get a large win there, choose the weakest team in round 2, give yourselves the chance of another big win to get choice in round 3 and so on.

That made this board doubly sad for us:

Match 1 Board 6

Dealer E | Vul E-W

♠ A76	♦ 5	♥ AJ32	♣ KJ
♥ KQ	♦ QT94	♦ 84	♦ KJ
♦ A87632	♣ AK96	♣ Q875432	
♣ JT			

W	N	E	S
		1D	3C
4C	P	4H	P
4S	P	5C	P

Good diamond raise. Later bids were all cue bids

South led a ♣ which North ruffed with her singleton diamond and South still had a diamond trick. Very unlucky. Firstly to wrongside it. We play a weak NT so have to open the East hand 1♦ to give us a 2♦ rebid after 1♠ (a 1NT rebid being 15-17). Strong NT players might choose to open 1♣ intending to rebid a 12-14 1NT over 1♠ – and that would probably lead to West playing 6♦. Secondly, even after the ruff, the odds are the ruff is from a doubleton diamond in which case the A will now draw the remaining trumps.

When our opponents stopped in 5♦ making at the other table we had lost 12 imps on the board instead of gaining 13 had slam made. A net turnaround of 25 imps!

We still won the match but by a small margin and, as a result, had a much tougher 2nd round match.

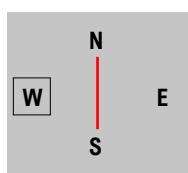
At the end of that match, despite having played together for almost 20 years, my partner and I found ourselves on different wavelengths on a relatively common situation:

Match 2 Board 28

Dealer W | Vul N-S

♠ KT6
♥ 4
♦ KQ75
♣ A7432

♠ Q5
♥ AJ53
♦ 8643
♣ QJT



♠ J9842
♥ QT2
♦ A2
♣ K86

♠ A73
♥ K9876
♦ JT9
♣ 95

W	N	E	S
P	1C	1S	X
?			

What would you bid?

The auction went P 1♣ 1♠ X. What should West do now? And what does XX mean?

I redoubled intending it to show a maximum pass, competitive hand with some values but no obvious bid. But partner thought it was rescue – i.e. let's get out of 1♠ x in case N is about to pass it. In all those years I don't believe we have ever discussed it. 1NT is the other bid W could make – again it shows some values (otherwise you would just pass), it has tolerance for spades and stoppers in ♣ and ♥.

Another treatment I have seen for XX in this sort of sequence is to show precisely Ax or Kx in partner's suit. That knowledge can be very useful either to allow partner to compete in the bidding, or to know whether they can safely lead the suit if our side ends up defending.

Like any sequence involving a XX it tends to be one you want to agree on – you don't want to have an accident as they can be very expensive!

At the table after I redoubled, North asked partner what it meant then it continued 2♣ P P back to me. This is a case where I have unauthorised information – partner's explanation that he is taking my XX as rescue is for the opponents benefit only. I have to pretend I have not heard it. So the question becomes would my hand bid again? I think in hindsight you probably shouldn't – partner has "heard" your XX showing a hand willing to compete further and has not done so over 2♣. Given you have quite defensive values you should probably pass 2♣. At the table, however, I doubled again still wanting to compete so partner bid 2♥ and we played there going 1 off – I had duly converted a plus score from 2♣ going off to a minus score. Had North passed the redouble, I have no idea what partner was going to do considering he thought my XX was a desire to get out of 1♠. He might even have bid 2♦ (like most pairs these days their 1♣ opening only promised 3)!

Matches 3 & 4 were now a 28 board match for those still in the knockout.

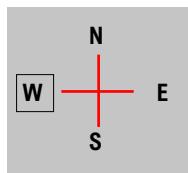
This was an interesting exercise in defence after declarer had misguessed trumps:

Match 4 Board 20

Dealer W | Vul All

♠ K976
♥ AJ93
♦ K2
♣ Q53

♠ J53
♥ Q8
♦ JT763
♣ T98



♠ AQ82
♥ 742
♦ 5
♣ KJ762

♠ T4
♥ KT65
♦ AQ984
♣ A4

W	N	E	S
P	1C	P	1D
P	1NT	P	2D
P	2H	P	4H
P	//		

2D game forcing checkback

East led the ♦5, surely a singleton given it was dummy's first bid suit.

Declarer won the K and then misguessed trumps by going ♥A, ♥ to the 10 and Q.

Now what? The unthinking defence is to quickly give partner their diamond ruff. But what is partner meant to do after that? They will have to lead a black suit, both of which might well give a trick away. Furthermore they will effectively have ruffed a diamond loser because the ♦AQ will remain in dummy to provide two more discards. At one table this happened. East chose to cash the SA and play another ♣. This allowed the contract to make because declarer could discard his two clubs on the ♦AQ. East can exit a club – that gives the ♣Q a trick but declarer can only discard two spades on the ♦AQ and must still lose two spades. However if declarer was 3424 shape the ♠A is required (now declarer can only discard 2 of his 4 clubs and must still lose a club). East basically has to guess declarer's shape and has no way of knowing.

So the better defence is actually not to give partner a ruff at all but to put through a black suit for him. Which one? The order partner played his trump pips might provide a clue – they are all useless so can be used to give a suit preference message. Lowest first suggests clubs, high then low suggests spades. After the ♣10 through to the Q and K declarer was helpless. If he draws the last trump himself he only has one trump left in each hand which is not enough to ruff losers. He actually won ♣A and tried to cash ♦A which East could ruff. The contract could actually have now been two off if East underleads to West's ♣9 for a spade through. But East couldn't be sure West had the ♣9, he might have been leading through from 10x. So he safely cashed the ♣J and ♠A to make sure of one off.

The penultimate board of this match cost us dearly. We were competing in spades over opponents hearts. Firstly we had the chance to pass opponents out in 3♥ but we competed to 3♠ and they bid 4♥. Then we could have bid 4♣ (making) but we passed out 4♥ instead. To top that off, we then allowed 4♥ to make when it had 4 easy losers! The resulting -12 imps saw us lose the KO match by a mere 2 imps to drop into the swiss.

Match 5 wasn't that eventful but match 6 had plenty of slam hands.

Match 6 board 15. Dealer S. NS Vul. This is your holding:

♦ AQ985
♥ QJ5
♦ A9
♣ A43

You open 1♣. Partner bids 4♦ splinter. Now what?

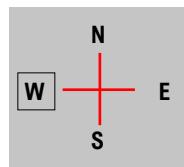
Your ♦ holding is great opposite a splinter but you can't cue bid 4♥. Perhaps you should just blackwood anyway assuming partner must have something in hearts. At the table things were made easier for me by the opponents doubling 4♦. Although lead directing or save suggesting doubles can be very valuable, they can also give opponents more space to help their auction. Here the double gave me the chance to redouble to show ♦A and, more importantly, gave room for partner to cue 4♥ himself. Now I bid blackwood and partner leapt directly to 6♣.

He held Jxxxx AKxxx – Qxx. With the ♣K in the hand on lead, there was nothing the defence could do even if they had had a trump trick (there is time for declarer to draw trumps and discard club losers on the hearts). As it turned out the ♠K was singleton onside so all 13 tricks were easy.

Match 6 Board 20

Dealer W | Vul All

♠ AQT7
♥ A97
♦ A2
♣ A752



♠ KJ32
♥ KQJ43
♦ K9
♣ 94

W	N	E	S
1C	P	1H	P
2NT	P	3C	P
3H	P	4NT	P
5D	P	6H	//

We bid uncontested 1♣ 1♥ 2NT (18-19) 3♣ (checkback) 3♥ 4NT 5♦ (1 or 4) 6♥. West might have bid 3♠ over 3♥ to find the 4-4 fit which can sometimes play better.

In 6♥ you receive a ♠ lead. How do you play? It looks like you just have 12 easy tricks (4♠, 5♥, 2♦ and 1♣). Those are the hands where you need to ask "what could go wrong?" The only thing that could be a problem here is if hearts split 5-0. If 108652 sit over the A97 you cannot do anything, but if they sit over the KQJxx you can. Even though 5-0 this specific way round occurs only 2% of the time, it costs nothing to allow for it. You should play the ♥K first and, lo and behold, on this particular hand RHO does show out! You can now finesse the ♥9, cash ♥A and cross back to ♦K to finish drawing trumps. Anyone who lazily cashed the ♥A first would pay a big price this time!

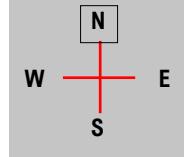
Match 7 had one distributional hand that had the potential to swing lots of imps:

Match 7 Board 13

Dealer N | Vul All

♠ KT3
♥ 6
♦ AK95
♣ AK752

♠ Q75
♥ Q8532
♦ T8732
♣



♠ AJ942
♥ AKJT94
♦ 4
♣ QJT9643

♠ 86
♥ 7
♦ QJ6
♣ QJT9643

W	N	E	S
	1C	4C	5C
5D	6C	X	

Major 2 suiter

This was the very first board for us. North opened 1♣ and I had the first decision as East. I eventually chose to bid 4♣(major 2 suiter). That now went 5♣ 5♦(?) 6♣ to me. I doubled that and led ♥K. Thinking partner's 5♦ might have had the A, I now got greedy and switched to a ♦ hoping to get a ruff with my trump. That didn't eventuate of course and, thankfully, declarer could only discard one spade from dummy on the diamonds so I still scored my ♠A for +200. 6♥ can be made by EW but it requires them to get the spades right which is by no means easy. Thankfully for us our opponents didn't manage it at the other table and went 1 off in 6♥x for -200 and 9 imps to us.

Scores on this board ranged from 5♣ making for NS +600, all the way up to 6♥x making for +1660 EW.

In the final match, our opponents had two bidding misunderstandings and gained imps on both of them! On one of them they played in 2♦ which had been intended as a cue raise of hearts. But the 1♥ overcaller happened to only have a 4 card heart suit and ♦KQ while the 2♦ bidder happened to have 5 diamonds to go with his 3 card heart support! The other gained even more:

Match 8 Board 18

Dealer E | Vul N-S

♠ J943			
♥ K65			
♦ A98			
♣ A93			
	N	E	S
♠ 62			
♥ T43			
♦ QJT753			
♣ K4			
	W	E	S
♠ AKT			
♥ J987			
♦ 62			
♣ QT62			
♠ Q875			
♥ AQ2			
♦ K4			
♣ J875			

W	N	E	S
		P	1C
2D	3D	P	3H
P	3NT	//	

3♦ actually showed hearts (North got the system wrong!) hence South's 3♥ bid. South then judged to prefer 3NT and not convert back to 4♥ which was a very fortunate decision!

I led ♦6 to the 10 ducked, partner continued the ♦3 to knock out the K. Declarer now played a ♠ to the J which I won deceptively with the A. The defence may well beat this contract if they just go passive and play hearts at every opportunity since declarer can only make 2♠, 3♥, 2♦ and 1♣ (they might guess the ♣10 and set up a 2nd club trick but the defence might have the 13th heart set up by then). But of course from my point of view I thought declarer had K10xxx in hearts and that was the last suit I was going to lead! So I switched to a club (where I knew partner had something given his suit preference ♦3 at trick 2). But after a club to the K and A declarer could knock out my ♠K and eventually lead up to the ♣J for his 9th trick.

Unlucky for us perhaps but we are not entitled to any redress in this situation – the explanation of the bidding given to us was quite correct. North just happened to misbid. Effectively he psyched even though he didn't mean to! This is different to the situation where an explanation of the bidding has been given incorrectly. In that case you might be entitled to an adjustment if you can argue you'd have done something different (and more successful) had you had the right information.

The 7 teams to represent Sydney in the National finals have therefore now been determined.

Three Sydney teams had already qualified directly from club heats:

Kanektar	Avi Kanetkar, Bruce Neill, Johnno Newman, Nye Griffiths, Pauline Gumby, Warren Lazer
Krochmalik	Robert Krochmalik, Daniel Krochmalik, David Stern, Robert Grynberg, Tom Moss, Michael Wilkinson
Beauchamp	David Beauchamp, Carola Hoogervorst, Andre Korenhof, Mauritz Van der Vlugt, Peter Fordham, Mike Hughes

This weekend the following two teams qualified directly from the knockout:

Ranson	Nico Ranson, John McMahon, Tomer Libman, Lavy Libman
Buchen	Peter Buchen, Terry Brown, Ron Klinger, Matt Mullamphy, Kim Morrison, Matthew Thomson

At the end of the swiss the top of the leaderboard looked like:

	Team	VPs
1	Weston (D. Weston, J. Foster, T. Nunn, M. Bloom)	111.13
2	Zhang (W. Zhang, Y. Li, P. Dalley, W. Zhu, Y. Zhang)	103.70
3	Bock (S. Bock, J. Newman, D. Browne, J. Wyner)	96.78
4	Solar (M. Solar, G. Bilski, A. Peake, R. Speiser)	96.18

The **Weston** and **Zhang** teams therefore complete the line up of 7 Sydney teams qualifying to the National finals to be held in Tweed Heads Nov 30th – Dec 2nd. I wish all 7 Sydney teams the best of luck. ❤