



Christmas Special

The Sydney Bridge Centre mini lesson

Learning is a theme of our Wednesday sessions – Julian Foster (many times NSW representative) has been analysing an interesting hand from the BBO session during the club closure, John Newman (the beloved bridge teacher) is going to start the **F2F Supervised (1 hour Lesson plus 2 hours Game) session** starting from this week 16th December.

[Join one of these sessions](#) if you enjoy the following Christmas Special!

F2F Christmas Party – Wednesday morning session 9th December 2020

11 ♠ KQJ8 ♦ KQ8542 ♣ QJ7 ♠ 98532 ♥ 763 ♦ 3 ♣ AK96 ♠ K4 ♥ A942 ♦ AJ76 ♣ 532	Dir: S	
	Vul: Nil	
	♠ AQJT76 14	
	♥ T5 7 7	
	♦ T9 12	
	♣ T84	
	♠ ♦ ♥ ♣ NT	
	N - 5 5 - 4	
	S - 5 5 - 4	
	E 1 - - 2 -	
W 1 - - 2 -		

This is a special extra column I've been asked to do for the Christmas party session. I trust everyone had fun. It was great we were able to run a party this year at all and thanks to Wing for all her work putting it together.

Board 11 from the morning session showed the power of a double fit.

South has a 1♦ opening (see advanced section for a different method). North should respond 1♥ to look for a major fit first (remember at matchpoints majors score much better than minors so playing 5♦ should be a last resort).

At this point East is likely to get involved with, most likely, 2♠ showing a weak jump overcall. South had a comfortable raise to 2♥ normally. Should they now stretch to bid 3♥?

I would say yes. If you can show a fit it is extremely valuable to partner. A rule of thumb in these sorts of positions is it's OK to allow yourself to get pushed up one level but not two levels. So you can stretch to 3♥ but had East bid 3♠ you should not allow yourself to stretch to 4♥ on what is a minimum opening bid. Here it looks like the ♠K is well placed and you have two aces so it's nothing to be ashamed of. Partner of course needs to allow for the fact opener may be taking a push in the bidding so should not go overboard (here of course they would still bid game anyway).

Whatever South does, West's next bid should be 4♠. They know of an 11 card fit. It could be a good sacrifice over 4♥ but it could easily be making (imagine partner with ♠AKxxxx and a singleton heart - you will probably only lose 1♥, 1♦ and maybe 1♣).

Now the spotlight returns to North. Should they bid on? I would say yes. The primary reason is they know they have a double fit (remember South opened 1♦). Such hands are very powerful - the side diamond suit will provide lots of tricks once trumps are drawn. What's more a big double fit hand means you often have fewer tricks in defence than your points might suggest so doubling is not likely to be profitable.

North could bid 5♦ to tell partner they have that double fit and offer that as a better spot to play. They might be worried that playing in hearts their hand will be forced to trump spades and will lose control. South should probably go back to hearts - they have the ♠K which is, most likely, over the A so they know that forcing risk won't eventuate. But North might just bid 5♥ themselves - after all why tell the opponents you have that double fit?!

There isn't much to the play on this hand. The only losers are the ♣AK but, in reality, when North is declarer it's not so clear for East to lead a club. Some Easts tried the ♠A which it might be necessary to cash before declarer can discard spade losers but which today proved disastrous! After drawing trumps, two of South's clubs get discarded on the long diamonds and declarer makes 12 tricks for +480. Those in 5♦ typically made 11 tricks for +400 as it was played by South and West obviously leads the ♣A. In fact declarer will have been relieved to make at all and not suffer a club ruff!

Should East/West consider bidding on to 5♠? Not on this hand - it goes for 500! One of the best rules in bridge is “the 5 level belongs to the opponents” - it is uncanny how often it is wrong to bid 5 over 5. This hand is no exception even though there are big fits around.

Key points to note

- Double fit hands make lots of tricks!
- It's ok as opener to stretch one level up from your normal bid (e.g. over an opposing pre-empt) to show support for partner. But not two levels.
- It's right an amazing proportion of the time to bid 4♠ over 4♥.
- It's wrong an amazing proportion of the time to bid 5♠ over 5♥.

More advanced

I've talked about splinters in the past. Had North South had an uncontested auction this hand would be another good illustration of them. Forget for the moment that East will bid. Uncontested NS would bid 1♦-1♥-2♥. Now what? Having found a double fit the North hand is now huge. It could easily splinter 3♠. This allows South to quickly put the brakes on. Their ♠K is opposite shortage and is likely to be useless. But just imagine South had the same hand with the ♣K instead of the ♠K. Now the two hands make slam! Over the splinter they would now know their hand is fitting perfectly and should make some sort of cue bid which gives the pair a chance to find slam.

I also mentioned an alternate opening for South. Personally I am a fan of the weak no trump. An opening 1NT shows 12-14. On this hand South would start with that and North would either stayman or transfer to diamonds followed by bidding hearts.

Many people say the weak NT's biggest weakness is it can be doubled and go for a large penalty. Yes it can but the number of times that actually happens in the real world is amazingly small. In fact the weak 1NT is actually a pre-empt (and often a very effective one)! It describes your hand accurately, puts your partner in charge of the auction, and takes the whole 1 level away from the opponents. As East here it's easy to jump overcall 2♠ after 1♦-1♥. After 1NT-2♣ or even 1NT-2NT (transfer to diamonds) it's not so easy. Overcalling 2♠ is not a jump now so partner may think you have a better hand than you do. Jumping to 3S is also pretty risky with such a balanced shape. The 1NT start to the auction makes it tougher to intervene.

There's lots of other implications to playing the weak NT (most obviously the 1NT rebid now becomes 15-17) but it's something some pairs might like to look into. I think it's especially good at matchpoints because 12-14 balanced hands are more frequent than 15-17 ones so you get to open it more often. You do, however, need to discuss what you do if it gets doubled - you definitely need a method of running!

Julian Foster (many times NSW representative)

The Sydney Bridge Centre is now running F2F club sessions AND online sessions on BBO

Yes, we have reopened on Goulburn Street only. Rozelle and Henley remain closed for the time being. We are now running F2F sessions in the City AND also online sessions on BBO. Please find our full session timetable on our website:

<https://www.sydneybridgecentre.com/sbc-sessions/>

For Face-to-Face sessions:

All are welcome but due to Covid restrictions the numbers are limited. It is essential that you pre-book for these sessions via this [F2F Session Booking Form](#). Walk-ins are welcome for sessions which are not fully booked.

Normal table money fee.

For BBO sessions:

All are welcome. No need to book. Please find us on BBO / Featured Areas / Virtual Clubs / ABF-Australia. Tournament title "Sydney Bridge Centre & Friends". Tournament will open only 2 hours before the game starts.

BB\$3 per person per game.