



Wednesday Wisdom

The Sydney Bridge Centre mini lesson

Julian Foster (many times NSW representative) will be analysing an interesting hand from each Wednesday morning session. This hand commentary will be sent to participants before the next Wednesday BBO session.

You are also welcome to [send questions](#) about hands that you have played. We will collate them and let our panellists leading by Julian Foster to answer them.

#13119 BBO – Wednesday morning session 17th March 2021

19		♠ 2	<i>Dir: S</i> <i>Vul: E-W</i>																														
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		♦ JT96																															
		♣ AQ83																															
♠ T6		♠ KJ87																															
♥ 93		♥ KQJT																															
♦ K84		♦ AQ52																															
♣ K96542		♣ J																															
7	♠ AQ9543	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>♣</th> <th>♦</th> <th>♥</th> <th>♠</th> <th>NT</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>N</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>1</td> <td>-</td> </tr> <tr> <td>S</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>1</td> <td>-</td> </tr> <tr> <td>E</td> <td>1</td> <td>1</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>W</td> <td>1</td> <td>1</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>2</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>			♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	N	-	-	-	1	-	S	-	-	-	1	-	E	1	1	-	-	2	W	1	1	-	-	2
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Board 19 last week saw the majority of pairs reach a contract EW going down, although a couple were allowed to make 3NT. Could they have avoided getting too high?

There are several possible auctions on this hand. South has to initially decide whether to open and, if so, whether to open 1♠ or treat the hand as a weak 2♠. See advanced section for some more on this.

Where South passed this usually ran round to East who opened 1♦. South overcalled 1♠ and this ran back to East. Now what? My answer may surprise people. Pass!

Why pass even though we have 17 points? The question to ask is where are we going? Remember partner passed initially and then again over 1♠. He cannot have much. In addition:

- He hasn't raised diamonds.
- He hasn't doubled 1♠. If he had even 6 points with 4 hearts he would have made a negative double. So the only time we have a heart fit partner will be incredibly weak.
- Furthermore, this hand isn't worth anywhere close to 17 points now – the ♠KJ are sitting under the 1♠ overcall and the ♣J could also be worthless. Our hand could be worth as little as 12 points.

There really isn't much likelihood of us making much if partner couldn't bid. On the other hand we have plenty of defence against spades.

What else could we bid anyway?

- Double? This is takeout so partner is going to bid clubs almost all of the time(!) and then we will have to rebid NT when partner could have absolutely nothing.
- 2♥? This was chosen at a couple of tables but it is a reverse showing at least 4 hearts and at least 5 diamonds, plus a strong hand (we are effectively forcing to 3♦ if partner has to go back there). We need more strength and shape for that. Both those tables ended in 3D going 2 off.
- 1NT? No – very risky because partner is known to be a weak hand. A free 1NT here typically shows a good 18-19, here we have a bad 17.

Where South opened 2♠, this also came round to East. This is harder and this time I probably would bid. See advanced section for why it's different. Most tables facing this problem chose to double and then had to bid 3NT over the (almost inevitable) 3♣.

What happened in the play to 3NT?

South naturally starts with a spade so the 10 probably scores in dummy. Declarer will surely knock out the ♥A but that still only gets them up to 7 tricks (1♠, 3♥, 3♦). They can probably engineer an 8th but they just don't have 9 tricks. The defence are likely to score 2♠, 1♥ and 2♣ first. If declarer tries for diamonds 3-3, he may set up a diamond trick for North as well.

The times 3NT made were when South continued with a 2nd spade after winning the ♥A. This is too risky as it is known to be giving declarer a 2nd cheap spade trick (if partner had a spade honour they would have played it at trick 1). Also your outside entry to your spade suit (♥A) has now been knocked out so there's little point in setting them up. South should go passive because they should know partner has something in clubs (see advanced section for why).

Observe that if we had passed out 1♠ it might scrape home for a score of +80 NS or it might drift off. Either are a lot better than EW scoring -200 by going off themselves!

Key points to note

- Having length in the opponent's suit in an auction is generally a bad sign – you should be cautious in the bidding.
- Consider what partner has NOT done (but could have done) in the auction as well as what he has done.
- Don't be afraid to pass an auction out if you don't think your side is going anywhere.
- Sometimes you can infer partner must have something in a suit because otherwise declarer would be playing on it themselves (see advanced section).
- A lot of the time it is right for the defence to be passive and not open up new suits.

More advanced

Should South pass, open 1♠ or open 2♠? There is no right or wrong answer – it has more to do with partnership agreement and style. These days when they are at “green” (i.e. not vulnerable v vulnerable) many pairs agree to make very aggressive pre-emptive openings. So if they are opening 2♠ on something as bad as Kxxxxx xxx xxx x then if they ALSO open 2♠ on this hand, partner will have no idea what to do opposite. They might be cold for game or going off in 2♠! Playing that style, this hand is too good to open a weak 2♠ and you would probably pass or open 1♠ instead. Partner should of course allow for that in the auction. Conversely had we been vulnerable and our agreed style is to be much more conservative then we would probably open this hand 2♠.

Note of course the information about this style is extremely important and the opponents are entitled to know it as well. When explaining bids, you should indicate your partnership's agreed style where you have one.

What about the auction 2♠ P P to East? This is harder. There are 3 bids that might be considered, none of them ideal:

- a) Double. Most East's did this and when their partner, unsurprisingly, bid 3♣ they bid 3NT. Double has the upside that you might find a heart fit but also risks getting too high as you can't pass 3♣ which is the most likely bid partner is going to make!
- b) 2NT. Not truly balanced but it at least limits the strength of the hand and allows West to pass it when they have rubbish.
- c) Pass. For the same reasons given earlier about passing out 1♠. But here it risks our side missing game.

I think I would bid 2NT (usually about 16-19 here). If partner has enough values to move, he can still check for a heart fit so we won't lose that. But we can bail out in 2NT if partner is weak.

Why is this situation different to 1♦ 1♠ P P? Because there partner was known to be weak (he has already declined two chances to bid). But over 2♠ partner could have some quite reasonable hands they just couldn't bid on immediately. Therefore game is still a distinct possibility from our perspective.

What about the defence to 3NT? How does South know North has something in clubs when they win the ♥A? Two reasons:

1. By inference – if declarer had something in clubs surely they would be playing on the suit?
2. By signals. South should not win the ♥A straight away, they should duck the first round. On that trick North should have given us a count signal (playing reverse count that would be the ♥4). On the next heart we do win the A and this time North should give us a suit preference signal. They should play the ♥5, the lowest of their remaining hearts – to indicate a preference for clubs.

Just because partner has indicated a preference for a suit doesn't mean that is a command for us to play it though. The defenders cannot afford to cash their club tricks and set up the ♣K while the ♦K is still in dummy. So they should go passive and probably just exit in a red suit leaving declarer to try everything himself. 3NT will drift at least 1 off provided the defence stays passive and don't give declarer tricks. That is an all-too-common theme. Years ago I remember reading an article which claimed that every time the defence switch suits they typically give away ½ a trick. One of the great skills in bridge is knowing when you need to be "active" and when "passive" but in general players tend to be more active in defence than they should be.

Julian Foster (many times NSW representative)

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The Sydney Bridge Centre is running a **F2F Matchpointed Swiss Pairs Congress** on Easter Monday 5th April at Level 1, 162 Goulburn Street, Sydney. It is a one-day congress with 24 boards in the morning, lunch break, then another 24 boards in the afternoon. A delicious light lunch is included.

An invaluable and meaningful prize for the Open winners, the Overall Novice & Restricted winners and the Best Novice (or Restricted) winners – **Over the Shoulder Mentoring** by Derrick Browne, Helena Dawson or Jamie Thompson (all are many times Teams of Three Captains)

RED masterpoints awarded. Please refer to [programme brochure](#) for details and [enter online](#).

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.