



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 (Julian Foster, Marcia Scudder and Paul Roach) answer them.

#22457 BBO – Wednesday morning session 9th December 2020

20	♠ K9	<i>Dlr: W</i>
	♥ T9	<i>Vul: Both</i>
	♦ K8762	
	♣ KJ64	
♠ 742	♠ J83	
♥ AKQ54	♥ J8762	
♦ AT93	♦ J4	
♣ Q	♣ A83	
10	♠ AQT65	♣♦♥♠NT
15	♥ 3	N 4 2 - 2 -
7	♦ Q5	S 4 2 - 2 -
8	♣ T9752	E - - 3 - 1
		W - - 3 - 1

Board 20 was a good illustration of accurate defensive signals and how declarer can make things harder for the defence.

All tables reached 4♥ by West. The auction will probably be something like 1♥ P followed by some form of heart raise. Vulnerable the East hand is a bit too balanced for my liking to bid 4♥ immediately (especially as it contains 3 Js which are typically not worth much) – I would probably show it as a 6-9 Bergen raise if I was playing that. Bergen raises of majors are quite popular – typically 3♣ shows about 6-9 points with 4 card support, 3♦ also shows 4 card support but with about 10-12 points. Stronger hands bid 2NT (game forcing raise). An immediate raise to 3♥ is pre-emptive showing about 0-5 points. Bergen raises

always show at least 4 card support (in a previous column I have mentioned about how valuable a 9 card trump fit is compared to an 8 card fit so it's important to distinguish). They also jump the bidding to the 3 level quickly which can make it harder for the opponents to come into the auction.

What do you do with 3 card support? Obviously in the 6-9 range you just raise to 2. With 10-12 a popular method is to jump in the other major. So 1♥-2♠ or 1♠-3♥ show typically 10-12 points but with only 3 support for opener's major.

After a 3♣ Bergen raise the West hand might make an invite. 5431 shape is nice and knowing there is a 9 card fit is very useful. They would bid 3♦ to do this. Note that doesn't show anything in diamonds – it's literally the only bid they have room to make that isn't a sign-off in 3H or a commitment to game. So it's just a general invite. East holding an Ace and an undisclosed 5th trump as part of their 6-9 should certainly then accept any invite.

Although there are 4 tricks for the defence, 4♥ made at every table. How can the defence get it right?

All Norths led a diamond which is perfectly reasonable. Trick one probably goes 64QA. After declarer draws trumps they play another diamond which North will win. At this point North has to find the ♠K switch to cash 3 spades. Otherwise spades will be discarded from dummy on the ♦109.

Can they do this? They ought to be able to. But their partner should help. On the 2nd round of trumps, South can make a discard which should signal what they have. What you discard depends what methods you play. Playing traditional high encouraging, South can discard the ♠10 and that should make it easy. But these days a lot of pairs play reverse attitude – a low card encourages. South might discard the ♠5 to encourage spades. The trouble is from North's point of view that 5 isn't completely clear to read because they can't see the 4 or the 2. If South had 10542 the 5 might actually have been meant as discouraging! Defenders should always make the clearest signal they can afford. Here it may be better for South to discard the ♣10 discouraging. By inference North may now decide the ♠K is worth a go.

In fact, regardless of any signal, North should realise that diamonds are a threat of discards and that partner must have something in spades (see advanced section for how and why).

Key points to note

- Bergen raises are a popular method for showing raises of majors. They focus on showing the 9 card fit and they also jump the bidding to the 3 level quickly which can make it harder for the opponents to enter the auction.
- Defenders should always make the clearest signal they can. You need to bear in mind that while your highest or lowest card is obvious to you, it might not be to partner who cannot see what is in declarer's hand!
- Good declarers minimise the chance for defenders to signal (see advanced section)
- Good defenders should always count and can often get the defence right without needing a signal from partner (see advanced section)

More advanced

I mentioned that South could make a discard on the 2nd round of trumps which should help North get the defence right. Very true. But a good declarer shouldn't give them the chance! Declarer can draw just one round of trumps which both defenders follow to but should then immediately play a diamond. Now when North is in with the ♦K they have not had a signal from their partner and might not find the spade switch.

Having said that North has other inferences available to him and should still get it right:

- a) He knows that declarer has the ♦10. How? Because at trick one it went ♦64QA. Had South had the Q10 he would have played the 10. Therefore North knows that the ♦10 is going to provide a discard for something in dummy.
- b) He can count points. He "knows" declarer has ♥AKQ (assuming they have drawn trumps) and he has already seen ♦A. That's 13 points. The only position where the ♠K might cost a trick is when declarer has ♠AQ. But that would give declarer 19 points. They would have bid 4♥ immediately with that rather than inviting. Therefore North can infer South must have some values in spades. Either the A or the Q make the ♠K perfectly safe to play.

Point (a) brings up yet another possible counter play by declarer. Should they in fact play low from dummy at trick 1? Had they played the J it would have gone 6JQA. Now when North wins ♦K they don't know the diamond position as clearly. A further diamond lead might be perfectly safe. What declarer does may depend how greedy they are feeling! Playing low preserves the ♦J, 10 and 9. So when North now gets in with ♦K declarer has TWO spade discards available on the ♦10 and ♦9. If North goes wrong declarer will now make 11 tricks! But the knowledge declarer has given away might make it more likely North will get it right and they will go off.

By playing the J at trick 1, they sacrifice that chance as now they have to play the 10 or 9 to force the K and then only have one spade discard available. But the trade-off is they give the defence less information.

Which play you make can depend on a few things:

- How desperate you are for a "top"!
- How good or bad you judge your opponents to be!
- Whether you think the auction and lead have been normal and everyone else will be in the same position, or whether you think something odd has happened at your table.

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.