



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.

#29662 BBO – Wednesday morning session 17th February 2021

8		♠ Q753	Dir: W	
		♥ K2	Vul: None	
		♦ K53		
		♣ AT65		
♠ T9		♠ K42		
♥ J954		♥ QT83		
♦ J6		♦ Q74		
♣ K7432		♣ J98		
12		♠ AJ86	♣	♦
5	8	♥ A76	♥	NT
15		♦ AT982	N	2 6 2 6 5
		♣ Q	S	2 6 2 6 5
			E	- - - - -
			W	- - - - -

Board 8 last week seemed like a fairly routine 4♠ contract but it has several other interesting points to consider as well.

Let's start with the bidding. EW are unlikely to get involved so North will start with 1♣. Most auctions continued 1♠-2♠-4♠. However South should respond 1♦. There are times when you should prioritise responding in a 4 card major ahead of a 5 card minor but that's only when you have a weak hand which may only make one bid - here we have 15 points so as soon as partner opens we know we will be bidding to at least game. Therefore we can afford to bid our suits in the natural order - i.e. longest first. The reason for this is we might be able to find a slam in diamonds which we'll miss if we don't bid them first.

North's rebid over 1♦ will vary - some will rebid 1♠, others 1NT. We'll assume 1♠ for now (see advanced section for a discussion on why 1NT is often better as long as you know what continuations you play over it).

South now knows there is a spade fit and at least game values. Holding a shapely hand with plenty of controls I would now bid fourth suit forcing (2♥). Whatever partner bids (2NT probably) I now bid my spades. Why would I bother with 2♥ and not just raise to 4 spades immediately? The answer is I am showing an even stronger hand - one that has some slam interest if partner is also better than minimum. If I was only interested in game (perhaps if I only had 13 points, or fewer controls, or less shape) I would just raise 1♠ to 4♠.

Here North is balanced and minimum so will probably decline South's slam suggestion and sign off in 4♠.

Whether 4♠ is played by North or South the most likely lead is a heart won by the K. It's natural to start with a spade finesse and you should lead a small spade from North not the Q - this is because a singleton K might pop up with East. After the ♠J holds and West plays the 9 declarer has a choice. They can cash the ♠A hoping the K will drop, or they can return to North and lead the Q now. See advanced section for more about this.

Once trumps are dealt with (leaving the winning K out if declarer chose to cash the ♠A) declarer should next set up his side diamond suit. After losing one diamond trick declarer should score 3 or 4♣ (depending on how they played the suit), 2♥, 4♦, 1♣ and one ♥ ruff in North. So 11 or 12 tricks in all. Note you need to set the diamonds up as tricks because after drawing 2 or 3 rounds of trumps there are not enough trumps left in South to ruff all of North's club losers - you have to aim to discard them on South's winning diamonds instead.

Key points to note

- Respond with your longest suit when you have at least invitational values. Only prefer responding with a 4 card major to a 5 card minor when you are weak and may only be able to make one bid.
- After two 1 level bids there are many advantages to rebidding 1NT with any minimum balanced hand - even one with a 4 card major (see advanced section).

- If entries permit lead low towards honours in case a singleton honour is onside.
- A good general principle when declaring is to set up your side suit.
Look for “false cards” as defenders to give declarer a losing option (see advanced section).

More advanced

The benefit to rebidding 1NT as North on any balanced hand isn't so much the fact you give partner a good description of your hand and strength (although that's a good thing to do). It's the additional negative inference it provides when you **don't** rebid 1NT. Now sequences like 1♣-1♦-1♠ show **shape**. That is 4441 or at least 54 in opener's suits – i.e. they deny a balanced hand. That knowledge is often very useful to partner.

How do you find a major fit after a 1NT rebid then? You need to play some form of “checkback” over a 1NT rebid. There are various options available:

- “Simple” checkback normally uses 2♣ (even if the opening bid was 1♣) as an enquiry for unbid 4 card majors or 3 card support for responder's major suit.
- “Two way” checkback uses 2♣ as a relay to 2♦ followed by invitational actions and 2♦ as an artificial game force (again regardless of whether ♣ and ♦ have already been bid).

Playing simple checkback the hands would bid 1♣ -1♦-1NT-2♣-2♠-4♠ or playing two way checkback they would bid 1♣-1♦-1NT-2♦-2♠-3♠-4♠. In the 2nd auction South can again show slam interest by bidding 3♠ over 2♠ (their 2♦ established a game force already so 3♠ leaves more room and is therefore stronger than just bidding 4♠).

Of course like everything the rebid of 1NT on any balanced hand method can have downsides. The big one comes if partner isn't strong enough to bid again as they might pass 1NT and miss a 4-4 major fit. So that is why a **weak** hand in response should bid their 4 card major ahead of a 5 card minor (had south had the same 4351 shape but only, say, 8 points you don't want the auction to go 1♣-1♦-1NT-P and miss your spade fit, hence that hand should respond 1♠ allowing North to raise to 2♠). A stronger hand as South can afford to start with 1♦ because they will be bidding again over a 1NT rebid and still have time to find a spade fit if one exists.

Note this isn't perfect - it still doesn't eliminate the risk completely. You could still miss a spade fit after 1♣-1♥-1NT-P. Opener could be 4xx4 for their 1NT and responder could be a 44xx weak hand. But that's about the only time there is a problem. It's worth living with it for all the other advantages.

Let's finish with a closer look at the play in the trump suit. The first round should go 3 2 J 9. There are two ways declarer can now pick up the suit for no loser. Cash the A hoping West had 1094 and East K2. Or lead the Q from dummy hoping West had 109 and East K42 (the Q “pins” West's 10 and promotes South's 8). Assuming most defenders just play their lowest card when following suit, the 9 from West suggests the latter holding is more likely. So declarer should probably get it right and end up with 12 tricks.

Suppose trick 1 had gone 3 2 J 4 though. Now there is only one chance to pick up the suit - cash the A and hope East has K2 (giving West 1094). No other combination works (try it).

This gives an advanced West scope for a deception. When they do hold 1094 they should play the 9 under the J and not the 4! This creates an illusion that they have 109 only. If declarer falls into the trap, they will next lead the Q from dummy (as we concluded we should on the actual hand) and West's 10 will now be promoted into a trick! The 9 here is a “false card” - in fact it's known as an “obligatory false card” as it's the only card West can play to give declarer a losing option in the suit. If they play the 4 declarer only has one option to pick up the suit – and it is going to work!

False cards are quite an advanced area and there are whole books about them. But they actually come up a lot more than you might think at first glance. It's all about giving your opponents losing options. If you can give them a choice of plays, every so often they will choose wrong!

Julian Foster (many times NSW representative)

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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 a Teams of Three Captain, including Derrick Browne.

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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:

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Normal table money fee.

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BB\$3 per person per game.