



## 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.

## #32871 BBO – Wednesday morning session 20<sup>th</sup> January 2021

5	♠ J43	Dlr: N
	♥ J762	Vul: N-S
	♦ 97	
	♣ T764	
♠ T6	♠ 82	
♥ K98	♥ QT54	
♦ AQT862	♦ J54	
♣ 92	♣ KJ83	
2	♠ AKQ975	♣♦♥♠NT
9	♥ A3	N 1 - - 3 1
7	♦ K3	S 1 - - 3 3
22	♣ AQ5	E - 2 1 - -
		W - 2 1 - -

Board 5 last week saw a very strong hand opposite a very weak hand. We'll discuss some aspects of bidding with those, and some play points too. Some pairs reached game and a couple made it (even though it should go off). Others stayed in a partscore.

The auction will surely start with two passes and South holding the big hand gets to open. Many will open 2♣ showing a strong hand of some sort. This is reasonable as you only have 3 losers (look at the cards you have in each suit and count a loser for each one of the AKQ you don't have - so here that is 0♠, 1♥, 1♦, 1♣). Of course 3 losers doesn't equal 10 tricks. If partner has nothing and we have to lead everything from our own hand we could lose

1♥, 2♦ and 2♣ and that's assuming we have no spade losers either. But on average the loser count is still a good guide.

Many pairs these days play 2♣ as an absolute game force not just something like 21+ points. Yes that means you might land up in game going off sometimes when partner has nothing but there are many other advantages - you can keep showing your hand at a lower level without fear partner will pass. As with all bidding agreements, it's a trade-off. These pairs therefore sometimes open hands this strong at the 1 level.

Should we still open 2♣ here if it's a game force? Or 1♠? I think it's close but I prefer 2♣. One way of deciding is to consider what partner might have. Imagine partner with just one useful card and see if we will still have good play for game. Here the ♦A makes game almost cold and even just the ♥K will give us an entry to dummy and the chance to lead towards ♦K or take the club finesse (6♠, 2♥, 1♣ and the chance of either ♦K or ♣Q scoring too). That's worth a go. Next consider whether partner would respond to a 1 level opening with that card and nothing else. Here the answer is no. If partner held 3 points (♥K) and nothing else they'd pass 1♠. Yet game could still have a good chance. That should point us towards opening 2♣.

Over 2♣ West might overcall 2♦ (see advanced section) but let's assume for now that they don't. North will bid 2♦ negative and South now shows their hand type with 2♠. North will reluctantly raise (see advanced section) and the pair will get to 4♠.

In fact on this hand 4♠ is too high if the defence is accurate. Let's look at the defence and play now.

What should west lead? I would lead a black suit for sure. A red card led round to a game force hand is extremely likely to give a trick away. One table led ♦A. That's fatal immediately as it gives south 6♠, 1♥, 1♦ and 2♣ with the aid of the finesse. Even if we had bid and raised diamonds in the auction I STILL would not lead the ♦A. Just because partner raises does not mean he automatically has a top honour in the suit!

♣9 is a reasonable shot. Trick 1 probably goes 9 10 J Q. Declarer now has 9 tricks (6♠, 1♥, 2♣) and some chances for 10. How should they play?

The first job is to draw trumps. Some tables played ♠A then low to the J. That works OK this time because spades split 2-2- but often they will split 3-1. You should start with ♠AK so that you can later cross to that precious ♠J in dummy drawing the final trump in the process.

What are our chances to make 10 tricks? One easy one is to cross to dummy and lead towards the ♦K hoping the A is onside (which fails here). Another is to play ♣A and another from hand first and hope they split 3-3 whereupon we cross to ♠J and discard the ♥3 on the now good ♣10 in dummy. There's another more subtle chance too – see advanced section.

Which should declarer do? Clubs first definitely. That's because you can try them by playing from hand. If you do set up that ♣10 in dummy you will need that precious ♠J to still be there to reach it! What's more if the clubs fail, you can THEN go to dummy and try the diamonds. The same isn't true the other way around – once you have used that ♠J in dummy you can't get back there again so there's no point later trying to set ♣10 up, your only chance then is the diamonds.

In normal play if the defence don't do anything silly East will eventually get in and can play a diamond through allowing the defence to score 2 ♦ to go with 1 ♥ and 1 ♣. Even though 4 ♠ goes off here, I would still want to bid it as there are still several reasonable chances for it to make even with partner having a dreadful hand for us.

### *Key points to note*

- Loser count is a good way of evaluating a hand.
- When deciding whether to open 2 ♣ consider if game has a chance with partner having just one good card. If it does but partner would pass a 1 level opening with it then that should point to opening 2 ♣.
- It's usually wrong to lead away from honours round to a known big hand - even if you have bid and raised a suit.
- Entries to weak hands can be very precious. Preserve them until you are ready to use them!
- Consider each suit that might give you extra tricks. See if you can try one chance first and still preserve the other.

### *More advanced*

If NS are bidding uncontested it will go 2 ♣ – 2 ♦ – 2 ♠. North's next bid should be 4 ♠. This is following something called the **principle of fast arrival**. South's 2 ♣ bid is game forcing so we will be getting to 4 ♠ at least. So the quicker North gets there the WEAKER their hand is. Bidding 3 ♠ would be stronger as it allows room for South to cue bid and explore slam. Given South has a minimum for their 2 ♣ game force, they have an easy pass of 4 ♠ (it is all too common to see players bidding really strong hands more than once, forgetting they have already shown a very strong hand).

At this favourable vulnerability West might well get involved in the auction. There are a variety of methods for bidding over strong bids. It doesn't really matter what they are - the key point is you are generally bidding to be a nuisance, to take up space to make it harder for the opponents, or to point out a good lead to partner. You aren't generally bidding to find your own makeable contract.

If it goes 2 ♣, 2 ♦ overall North will probably pass and East can push to 3 ♦. Now South has to start showing their hand at the 3 level so the principle of fast arrival can no longer be used.

A big downside of 2 ♣ is the space it takes up plus the risk the opponents will bid and make you start showing your hand at an uncomfortably high level. For this reason players are tending to open stronger and stronger hands at the 1 level. These days auctions are so competitive they often get away with it even if partner does initially pass.

If South does open 1 ♠ the auction is likely to go 1 ♠ (2 ♦) P (3 ♦). Now South is struggling to get the full value of their hand across and may want to double first (takeout) before finally bidding their spades. If they just bid 3 ♠ partner is again likely to pass with just the ♥K.

I said after ♣9 10 J Q there was another option for 10 tricks. The 3-3 club split isn't that likely after the 9 lead but it's not impossible - some players lead "top of nothing" so West could have 98x.

The more subtle chance is that West has exactly 98 doubleton. After the ♣A that would leave dummy with 76 and East with K3. So here we could force out the K and set up our 7 to discard the ♥3 on. Got to watch all those spot cards!

So after ♠AK we should play clubs from hand to find out. When neither of those chances work we have to take our last remaining hope of the ♦A onside. That also fails here but at least we gave ourselves every chance.

Of course if West leads ♠10 we are in even worse shape. Now we don't even have 2 club tricks so when we reach dummy we have to decide whether to take the club finesse or lead up to ♦K. If we have had an auction where diamonds were overcalled we should definitely try clubs (a very good card reading inference in bridge is if opponents bid and raise a suit but then do not lead it, the opening leader almost certainly has the A). But even the club finesse working is only 9 tricks. With no further entry to dummy our only real chance for a 10<sup>th</sup> trick is for East to have exactly ♣KJ doubleton - extremely unlikely.

Julian Foster (many times NSW representative)

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The Sydney Bridge Centre is running a **F2F Swiss Pairs Congress** on the Valentine's Day on Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> February 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, the Best Novice (or Restricted) winners and the Best Over & Under winners (a pair with one restricted player and one novice player) – **Over the Shoulder Mentoring** Liam Milne, Susan Humphries, Jessica Brake or Shane Harrison (all are many times NSW representatives and 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.