

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 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.

#42417 BBO – Wednesday morning session 23th September 2020

4		♠ J8	Dir: W
		♥ AQ6532	Vul: Both
		♦ J7	
		♣ QT6	
♠ AQT543	♠ 92		
♥ 874	♥ JT		
♦ K5	♦ AT42		
♣ 92	♣ K8543		
10	♠ K76		
9	♥ K9		
8	♦ Q9863		
13	♣ AJ7		
		♣♦♥♠NT	
		N 1 2 2 - 3	
		S 1 2 2 - 3	
		E - - - 1 -	
		W - - - 1 -	

Board 4 last week was one of those average hands that come up all the time. The results last week were a typical mix ranging from NS+110 (3♦ making) to NS-140 (EW making 2♠+1 or 3♠).

Here most Wests will open with a weak 2♠ (or possibly a multi 2♦ showing a weak two in either major). We'll assume 2♠ for now. What should NS do?

North has the first problem – should they overcall 3♥? I would not overcall for several reasons:

- I only have 10 points and they aren't even very good points – my two Js (including one in the opponent's suit) are definitely not worth 2 points
- My heart suit has terrible spot cards
- My hand is relatively balanced
- I am vulnerable

Bidding over pre-empts is hard because you often have to guess. After any bid that quite tightly defines a hand (typical examples are pre-empts or a 1NT opening), the partner of that bidder (East here) is in the most powerful position at the table. Only they know whose hand it is. East will happily pass 2♠ with anything from about 0 to 14 points being pretty confident they are not missing game. That is a very wide range! Both North and South might hope their partner has points but in fact discover East has them – and a double card waiting!

This is why pre-empts are so effective. Not only do they force the opponents to guess, they basically win the race to describe your hand to your partner – and place them in control of the auction. Just imagine as North what a disaster it might be if East had points and ♥KJ109 sitting over you. They will double 3♥ and you could easily go for -1100! There is a huge difference between overcalling at the 1 level and the 3 level, and when vulnerable or not vulnerable. North is in a very exposed position after a 2♠ opening.

Both the pairs who did overcall 3♥ landed up in 4♥ 1 off. This is also a common problem – if you overcall on hands with too little you can't stop there because partner will bid on when you don't want them to!

So after 2♠ P P, should South act? Yes. South is in what is known as the "protective" position. They need to recognise there are plenty of quite reasonable hands that their partner might hold which they simply couldn't bid with. So South needs to strive to keep the auction open in case partner has that. Here South has a balanced 13 points. There is no reason at all partner cannot have the same and we are cold for 3NT!

So as South I would bid 3♦. No it's not particularly nice as I only have 5 diamonds but I am not strong enough to overcall 2NT (which should be strong here just like it is as a 1NT overcall), nor can I make a takeout double of 2♠ because I don't want partner to assume I have 4 hearts and go leaping to game there! So 3♦ is the least bad option. It's still risky but not as bad as North overcalling because at least I now know East has passed 2♠ so they don't have enough to try for game themselves. Hence partner must have SOMETHING.

Back to North. Now what? Now there is a good case to bid 3♥. This actually describes your hand quite well. It wasn't good enough to bid 3♥ the first time but since you are now offering the suit you must have quite a few (at least 5, usually 6) and you must have some values (otherwise you'd just pass 3♦).

South then needs to decide what to do over 3♥. Not easy. 3NT is plausible though – to protect your ♠K from being led through and the ♥K is now a very good card. But note if South had been weaker when they bid 3♦ they could now pass 3♦ – they know their partner cannot have a strong hand with hearts because they would have already overcalled 3♥ with that.

Just to finish with bidding, suppose West had opened a 2♦ multi. Notice how much easier it now is for North – they can bid 2♥ (still risky but a level lower). Although the multi 2♦ has the advantage of sowing some confusion, natural weak twos are actually a more effective weapon against better players (see advanced section for why).

Let's now look briefly at the play and defence as well. 3NT by south is a somewhat lucky making contract. The defence can take no more than the ♠AQ and the ♦AK. Meanwhile, with the aid of the club finesse declarer has 6♥ and 3♣ tricks.

3♥ by North seems like it would make the same 9 tricks but in fact it can be beaten (see advanced section for how).

If West was left in 2♠ it ought to be defeated (even though it wasn't at either table last week). North has a hard lead. Even though it works here I would never lead away from an AQ, nor do I want to touch trumps. I'd probably try the ♦J but that could prove horribly wrong! Declarer will most likely win ♦A and start by attempting to ruff a ♥ in dummy. South wins ♥K and switches to a trump. If declarer wins ♠A or ♠Q and plays a 2nd ♥, North wins and plays the ♠J. That removes the ♥ ruff and, in time, the defence should score 1♠, 3♥ and 2♣ for 1 off.

Key points to note

- Simple pre-empts are a very effective weapon. They define your hand narrowly which puts your partner in control of the auction – only they know which side's hand it is.
- That means opponents have to be careful – they could easily get doubled and go for a large penalty
- But at the same time opponents cannot let themselves be talked out of a game contract – the player in the pass out seat may need to bid a bit light to “protect” partner.

More advanced

I mentioned natural weak twos are more effective than a multi 2♦. Why? Three reasons:

- a) They take up more space (as we saw in this hand – North could overcall 2♦ with 2♥ but has to bid 3♥ over 2♠).
- b) The defence only get one chance. Over a multi 2♦ you can PASS knowing that it will almost never be the final contract. So advanced players can wait and then bid on the next round once they know what declarer's suit actually is and have some idea how strong responder is. A natural weak two could get passed out so you may have to commit to acting immediately which is riskier.
- c) They immediately identify your suit. Often when a multi is opened, partner cannot tell which suit you have. There are many situations where they might want to jump high if you have one suit but not if you have the other. So they have to respond 2♥ or 2♠ which allows the opponents more room. It is much safer to bid after 2♦ P 2♥ to you than it is after 2♥ P 4♥!

There are all sorts of schemes for defending against a multi 2♦ – I can cover that in a future article.

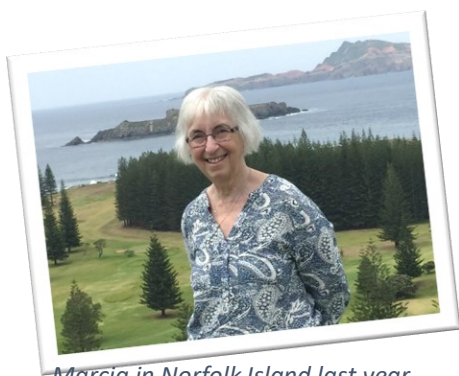
So how can 3♥ by North be defeated? Via an advanced defensive play called a “trump promotion”. Suppose EW have managed to cash the ♦AK and the ♠AQ and the lead is with West. Now they play another spade. What can declarer do? East will score a ruff if declarer discards or ruffs low. So declarer has to ruff with the ♥Q. But that now means West's lowly ♥8 will score a trick! Check and see. Declarer has to use their A and K to draw East's J and 10. But the 9 in the South hand has to be played against the A to do that. Which leaves the ♥8 as the highest trump – in

other words it has been “promoted”! Trump promotions can do remarkable things – I have seen the ♦5 be promoted to the setting trick in a 2♦ contract!

On this hand it is hard to achieve this in the real world. East will surely lead a ♠ to the AQ. If West plays a 3rd spade at this point, a smart declarer won't trump at all – they will instead just discard a diamond allowing East to score a trump – but effectively just swapping that for one of the defence's diamond tricks. To make the trump promotion effective, the defence need to have cashed the ♦AK first (so there are no more losers for declarer to swap) and this isn't easy – it requires West to underlead ♦K5 and then East to return to the ♦K. This is an example of where Deep Finesse might say a contract can be held to 8 tricks but the defence to achieve that basically requires you to see all the cards.

Julian Foster (many times NSW representative)

A chat with Marcia Scudder



Marcia in Norfolk Island last year.

We have invited Julian Foster, Marcia Scudder and Warren Lazer to offer an **Over the Shoulder Mentoring** experience to the winners of our **Labour Day Online Pairs Congress on Monday 5th October**. Share with you a casual chat with Marcia:

Why do you like bridge?

Bridge is a game where every hand is different, and every hand is a puzzle to be solved. Sometimes the puzzle is easy, sometimes it's difficult. Sometimes, even the very best players can't solve it. It's also a game where you never stop learning new skills. I've been playing since University days, so a very long time. We are so lucky that in these COVID

times we are still able to enjoy our game online.

What is the best thing happened to you at bridge?

My special Bridge year was 2003. My partner and I represented NSW in the Women's Pairs at the ANC in Darwin. We won that event, then joined our teammates to win the Women's Teams. Then there was the playoff for the Australian Women's Team which we won (as part of a different team). As a result we went to Tahiti to compete in the Zone 7 competition. As winners of that event, we won the right to represent Australia in the Venice Cup, part of the World Championships, in Monte Carlo. Suffice it to say, we did not win!

The winners of the SBC Labour Day Online Congress are going to win an Over the Shoulder Mentoring from you. What one lesson you would like them to take away?

Many of the cards that are played in defence carry a message.

For example the lead of a 2 against a NT contract usually indicates a four card holding. Your partner can now work out how many of the suit Declarer has. A piece of information that might come in handy later.

As another example, you lead from three small cards, and see that Dummy also holds only small cards in the suit. Partner plays the J and Declarer wins with the Ace. Where are the K and Q? Declarer does not hold the Q unless they hold AKQ. Think about it. Holding AQ, they would not win the J with A. What about the K? If partner held it, they should play it and not the J, unless they held KQJ, then the J is correct (bottom of equals). More about the hand to keep in mind.

We will next interview Warren Lazer (many times NSW representative) and Matthew McManus (director of the Congress). Join us on Facebook group and keep an eye on our posts!

Win an Over the Shoulder Mentoring opportunity by Marcia Scudder!



The Sydney Bridge Centre is running an **Online Swiss Pairs congress** on the Labour Day 5th October. It is a one-day congress with 24 boards in the morning, lunch break, then another 24 boards in the afternoon. There will be separate field for Novice, Restricted and Open players. An invaluable and meaningful prize for the winners in each category – **Over the Shoulder Mentoring** by Warren Lazer, Julian Foster or Marcia Scudder (all are many times NSW representatives).

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

To join the SBC online sessions on BBO

Please follow this [Step by Step Guideline](#) to join the Sydney Bridge Centre duplicate session on BBO.

The SBC online session timetable

We have daily session from Monday to Saturday. Please find our [session timetable](#) on our website.

To book an Introduction to BBO session

Join our [BBO Training session on Zoom](#), we will be able to show you how a tournament table looks like on BBO, how to make alerts, how to find out the meaning of opponent's bids, etc. It's a live session running on Zoom teleconference application, completely free of charge. You can book a session with us by picking a time suitable for you via this [booking form](#).