



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.

#43461 BBO – Wednesday morning session 10th March 2021

17	♠ J432	Dir: N
	♥ J8	Vul: None
	♦ Q4	
	♣ KT964	
♠ A987	♥ 65	
♥ A92	♥ KQ76	
♦ A97	♦ KJ652	
♣ AJ3	♣ Q5	
7	♠ KQT	♣ ♦ ♥ ♠ NT
17	♥ T543	N - - - -
11	♦ T83	S - - - -
5	♣ 872	E 2 5 4 3 4
		W 2 5 4 3 4

It may seem strange to pick a board to discuss that was completely flat but that's what I have done this week! On board 17 every EW pair made 12 tricks playing in 3NT. Yet not one of them should have done! Let's see why not.

As usual let's consider the auction first. It will almost certainly be EW uncontested. East has the first decision about whether to open 1♦ or pass. These days many would open 1♦ (although playing a weak NT you might well open that). If they do the auction is likely to be 1♦-1♠-1NT-3NT. Once East shows 11-14, West should be content with game. There is no obvious fit and the hands have a maximum of 31 points (normally you need about 33 for 6NT with two balanced hands). If East passes initially, West will open a strong NT

and the auction is likely to be 1NT-2♣-2♠-3NT.

Deep Finesse says no trumps should only make 10 tricks. That is achieved with a spade lead that sets up 2 spade tricks to go with the ♣K. Declarer can then only take 1♠, 3♥, 5♦ and 1♣. Declarer will naturally start on their diamond suit and the normal way is to cash the ♦A and then lead towards the KJ intending to finesse. When the Q pops up from North it makes that suit nice and easy!

In practice the spade bid in the auction will probably deter the defence from leading spades. North is more likely to lead a club. South might try a heart or a club. This should lead to 11 tricks (1♠, 3♥, 5♦ and 2♣). Note I said 3 heart tricks. But the reason every declarer actually made 12 tricks is they scored 4 heart tricks because every South discarded a heart at some point. This meant East's ♥7 scored a trick that it was not entitled to. Had South clung on to the 10543 they would have eventually scored a trick with that ♥10. How can they tell? There are two ways on this hand - count points (see advanced section for the details) and general principles.

By general principles I mean two things that you simply learn through experience at bridge:

- discarding from 10xxx or Jxxx costs a trick an amazing proportion of the time.
- try to keep the same length as dummy's suits if you can beat its lowest card in the suit.

Had South followed these principles they would have discarded 2 clubs on the long diamonds. Declarer will almost always then play on hearts hoping they split. But if declarer now plays a club South should STILL cling onto that precious heart holding and discard the S10 instead. Today had they held declarer to 11 tricks instead of 12 they would have scored a complete top!

Key points to note

- Opening reasonable 11 counts with points in your longer suits is generally a good idea.
- Don't look for slam with two balanced hands unless you have about 33 points between the two hands.
- Try to avoid discarding from Jxxx or 10xxx. It costs a trick a large proportion of the time.

- Try to keep the same suit length as dummy if you can beat its lowest card in a suit. When declarer has opened or rebid NT, you can work out the points partner will have to within a fairly narrow range. That can often help you in defence (see advanced section).

More advanced

First a small point about the auction where East passes and West opens 1NT. East uses stayman and then bids 3NT over 2♠. North is on lead and the auction should tell him that East's dummy is going to have 4 hearts in it. Why? Because he used stayman to look for a major fit but then did not raise spades. Without 4 spades or 4 hearts he would normally just have bid 3NT directly. That information isn't of much use to North on this hand (they have a fairly clear club lead) but it might help on some other occasions (e.g. to avoid a heart lead).

Let's return to the defence. How can South work out not to discard a heart? The first step is to count points. Whenever declarer has shown a point range (almost always via a NT opening or rebid), as soon as you see dummy as a defender you can work out partner's point range too. You should get into the habit of doing this mental exercise every time.

Suppose first that East is declarer and West is dummy (after the 1♦-1♠-1NT-3NT auction). East has shown 11-14. South should add his own 5 points to dummy's 17. Add that 22 to declarer's known 11-14 and you get 33-36. That leaves partner with 4-7 points.

Suppose now West is declarer and East is dummy (after the P-1NT-2♣-2♠-3NT auction). West has shown 15-17. Now South adds their 5 to dummy's 11. Add that 16 to declarer's known 15-17 and you get 31-33. That leaves partner with 7-9 points.

Sometimes you can get an even more accurate estimate. For example if there has been an invitational auction and declarer has accepted, you know they are going to be near maximum in their range.

So how does that help? Keep the range in your mind as the play develops. As you see partner play some cards you may be able to work out what cards there is room for them to have left. Here if South had led a club and North had won the K and returned the suit, once declarer plays diamonds South also sees partner play the ♦Q. By now they have seen 5 points and partner had 4-7 to start with. Hence it's impossible for partner to also have the ♥A. If declarer also has the ♥J they will always have 4 heart tricks. But if partner has the ♥J, it's essential for us to cling on to our 4 hearts to stop dummy's 4th heart scoring a trick.

The point count is not quite as clear if North is on lead and East is dummy since North leads a club which is probably from an honour but South doesn't know which one. When North shows up with the ♦Q South knows partner has 7-9 points which include a club honour and the ♦Q. It's more likely to be the A or K of clubs than the J (simply because leading away from a J is a less attractive lead). There is just room for North to have ♥A, ♦Q and ♣K but that would be a specific three cards making up 9 points. The odds are against that. So I would still assume declarer has the ♥A and cling onto my hearts – especially as I am not immediately in trouble with discards.

Note that, although it makes no difference on this hand, North is likely to cling onto his ♠J432 for all the same reasons. He knows West has 4+ spades from the auction so his J may be essential to stop the suit (from his point of view declarer could have AKQx xxx Axx Axx).

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 Derrick Browne, Helena Dawson or Jamie Thompson (all are many times Teams of Three Captains)

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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/>

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Normal table money fee.

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BB\$3 per person per game.