



Weekly Wisdom

The Sydney Bridge Centre mini lesson

Julian Foster (many times NSW representative) will be analysing an interesting hand from each Saturday ARVO BBO session starting from April. To subscribe, please email your name and email address to office@sydneybridgecentre.com.

You are also welcome to [send questions](#) about hands that you have played. Please use "Weekly Wisdom" as email subject. We will collate them and let our panellists leading by Julian Foster to answer them.

#52016 BBO – Saturday ARVO session 17th April 2021

5	♠ 76	Dir: N
	♥ T963	Vul: N-S
	♦ QJT76	
	♣ J7	
♠ AJT5	♠ KQ8	
♥ AQ42	♥ J8	
♦ 98	♦ 53	
♣ Q53	♣ AK9842	
4	♠ 9432	♣ ♦ ♥ ♠ NT
13	♥ K75	N - - - -
13	♦ AK42	S - - - -
10	♣ T6	E 5 - 3 5 2
		W 5 - 3 5 2

Now that the Wed BBO duplicate has been discontinued we have agreed my weekly column will switch to analysing a hand from the Saturday BBO duplicate. For the benefit of new readers I normally split the column into 3 parts - a general analysis, some key points to note from it, and then a more advanced section. I try to vary the themes around between bidding, play and defence as well as between big slam hands and little competitive partscore hands (which are all worth the same playing pairs). My personal favourite area of the game is defence. If people have queries about a hand they are welcome to submit questions. If several people ask about a hand that will be the one I look at. Otherwise you are stuck with whatever I pick out!

The advantage of a BBO duplicate means I have access to the bidding and play records for every hand so I can see how results on a board actually came about - rather than just what the traveller says. You can find all the previous columns on the SBC website under Learn Bridge - Mini lessons:

<https://www.sydneybridgecentre.com/mini-lessons/>

Board 5 last week was a hand that was almost all about the bidding. It's very likely to be uncontested East West. East has a normal 1♣ opening and West will respond 1♥. East then has a choice between a 1NT or 2♣ rebid. I'd tend towards 2♣ for several reasons:

- I have a good 6 card suit, no particular reason to hide it
- I have aces and kings, good for suit play
- I don't have a diamond stopper
- I don't have any tenace type holdings that suggest it would be better for me to play the hand (conversely imagine partner had ♦Kx - we definitely now want them as declarer so the K cannot be led through at trick 1).

After 2♣ West might make a practical jump to 3NT (they know East doesn't have 4 spades when they didn't rebid 1S). A few tables did this - no luck this time as North has an easy ♦Q lead which should lead to the defence taking the first 5 tricks. I have a fair bit of sympathy for 3NT at pairs (see advanced section for more on this) as it nearly always scores more than 5♣, it's the most likely game, partner could have a diamond stop, plus the defence don't know about our spades so might lead those.

If, however, West decides to take a more scientific route their next bid should be 2♠. Normally after a simple rebid, subsequent bids are what I call "naturalish" – i.e. usually natural but might be just showing a stopper for NT purposes. At this stage East will think West has 5 hearts and 4 spades so, unable to bid NT themselves without a diamond stopper, they should bid 3♥ to show some support there. West certainly can't now play 3NT if partner couldn't bid it so will probably show their club support with 4♣. East could now bid 5♣ but might also suggest 4♠, an offer West should definitely accept at pairs.

Let's return to the initial rebid and suppose East chose 1NT. Now what? This depends what methods East/West have agreed. It is common to play some form of checkback (see advanced section for more details). This will enable

West to find out what East has in the majors. Then they face the same decision about whether to try no trumps or look elsewhere.

A few pairs seem to have played in a partscore. However, West holding a decent 13 points opposite an opening bid from partner should definitely be forcing to game, it's merely a question of which one.

There is very little to the play on this hand. Declarer has 11 easy tricks in spades or clubs. However how should you play the club suit? See advanced section for the answer.

Key points to note

- You should generally rebid decent 6 card suits - only consider opening or rebidding NT if the suit is poor and the hand generally balanced (6322).
- At pairs tend to only play 5 minor as a last resort. Look for higher scoring games in NT or majors first.
- Bidding is often a trade off between quickly bidding a plausible contract and giving little information away versus looking more scientifically for the best contract but giving more information to the defence.
- After two suits have been bid naturally, a 3rd suit is generally natural but may be stopper showing hoping partner can bid NT.
- When a suit looks easy to cash, stop and think if you can do anything if it breaks badly (see advanced section).

More advanced

Playing pairs, one should tend to try and only play 5 minor as a last resort. Notrump or major suits games score more, even when making fewer tricks. That's why, on this hand, the optimum spot is 4S on the 4-3 fit. If the defence tried 3 rounds of diamonds, the ruff can be taken in the East hand so trumps can still be drawn even when they are 4-2 (this is an 84% chance). 4-3 fits tend to play well when the trump quality of the 4 card suit is good (because it will be needed to draw the opponents trumps), and that hand will not get forced to trump a side suit too early (which could cause loss of trump control). +450 in 4S would even outscore 5C making all 13 tricks (+440) if the defence somehow managed not to cash their 2 obvious diamond tricks!

Playingimps, it is more important just to play the best game since the difference between +400 and +450 is marginal whereas going -50 would be a disaster. Here 5C is marginally safer (spades could be 5-1) but there's very little in it.

What about checkback after a 1NT rebid? There are various options and I covered this in the column on 17 February so I won't repeat it all here. Just briefly it's quite common nowadays to rebid 1NT as East with any balanced hand even if it has 4 spades as it describes the overall hand better (and allows the inference that when they DO rebid 1S they now have an unbalanced hand). Then West can use checkback to ask whether East had 3 card heart support or 4 spades. Here East would deny either of those holdings by bidding 3C. Now West has to decide whether to risk 3NT without a diamond stop or explore with 3S. This time 3NT is played by East so South might view to lead a spade rather than a diamond - but a top diamond would allow them to see dummy so is probably still best.

Although this hand is nearly all about bidding there is one advanced point in the play of the club suit. It looks trivial doesn't it? How many people would start with the CA though? It's often natural to keep an honour in both hands to keep entries fluid but it would be wrong here. It won't matter very often but just suppose clubs split 4-0. You can't do anything if South has all 4 but you can if North does - PROVIDED you have played low to the Q first! Now your AK98 remain sitting over North's J107 and you can finesse twice through them and avoid losing a club (West needs another entry of course but that's no problem here). The question to ask is "what could go wrong" and plan the play accordingly. It might only make a difference 5% of the time (a 4-0 split is 10% so 4-0 in one particular hand is half that) but that's the difference between an expert and a good player!

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, you don't need to be a member to join us for a game in SBC. We have sessions for different level of players. If you need a partner, please come in 15-20 minutes before the game start, our directors will try to find you a partner.

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.