



## 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.

## #60198 BBO – Wednesday morning session 13<sup>th</sup> January 2021

<b>19</b>		Dir: S																											
		Vul: E-W																											
♠ 6543	♠ K84																												
♠ AQ8762																													
♠ AKT9832	♠ Q5																												
♥ 2	♥ AKQJT98																												
♦ J2	♦ A763																												
♣ J93	♣																												
9	♠ J764	<table border="1"> <tr><td>♠</td><td>♦</td><td>♥</td><td>♠</td><td>NT</td></tr> <tr><td>N</td><td>4</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td></tr> <tr><td>S</td><td>4</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td></tr> <tr><td>E</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>6</td><td>6</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td>-</td><td>1</td><td>7</td><td>6</td><td>1</td></tr> </table>	♠	♦	♥	♠	NT	N	4	-	-	-	S	4	-	-	-	E	-	-	6	6	1	W	-	1	7	6	1
♠	♦		♥	♠	NT																								
N	4		-	-	-																								
S	4		-	-	-																								
E	-	-	6	6	1																								
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16	♦ QT95																												
6	♣ KT54																												

This week we'll have a look at a slam hand that only one pair managed to bid. South will pass and West has to decide whether to open a spade pre-empt and, if so, at what level.

I would open 3♠ although at the position and vulnerability (see advanced section for more about this) it's actually fairly minimum.

North should pass and the key decision rests with East. Several players bid 4♥ over 3♠ which should then become the final contract (a hand that has pre-empted should not generally bid again – they have described their hand already so their partner is now in charge).

It may seem natural to want to bid your long solid suit. But stop and think about how enormously powerful that East hand is when played in spades. If partner has AKxxxx (which they probably should for a vulnerable pre-empt) then you are very likely to have 7 spade tricks, 7 heart tricks and the ♦A. That's 15 tricks! Once trumps are drawn, that long heart suit will provide as many tricks as we could possibly need. I've said before that it's not sufficient to count winners to bid slam, you also need to consider whether we have 2 quick losers. Unless your partner is in the habit of opening 3♠ on J10xxxx vulnerable (in which case you should find a new partner!) you are not going to have 2 spade losers. You might have one (they could perhaps open 3♠ on KJ109xxx). You also have first round control in all the other 3 suits and a massive source of tricks. Hence we should absolutely be considering slam. In fact the decision really is between 6♠ and 7♠!

Why should we bid slam in spades and not hearts? Suppose partner did happen to have ♠KJ1098xx and no other entry. If we play in hearts, we draw trumps and then play on spades. If the defence duck the A and take it on the 2<sup>nd</sup> round then we cannot get to any more of the spades! So we will lose those little diamonds in our hand. Contrast with playing in spades. Now the West hand is worth 6 tricks. And the long hearts in East will still be tricks because there is another entry to them (♦A). I mentioned this in a previous column for a part score hand but the principle is just the same here – you should prefer to play in the weak hand's long suit. It's now worth something and the high cards in the other hand will still score tricks. The same is not true the other way around.

Only one player found what I think is a good practical bid on the hand – 6♠. They were rewarded with a top – well done. To be honest if I was ranking the possible bids, I would even put 7♠ ahead of 4♥! Bidding 7♠ confidently would be hard (but see advanced section for some possible bidding methods).

Let's consider the play as well. If North leads a red suit we have no problem. We win, cash the ♠Q and find out about the 4-0 break. But it doesn't matter because we can now finesse against South's known ♠J, draw trumps and cross back to whichever red ace wasn't knocked out at trick 1. Then the hearts provide all the tricks we need. The only lead to cause us a problem is a club because we have to ruff that in dummy. It's not very likely North will lead a club from AQ here but you might try and cash the ♣A before club losers get discarded (it's also unlikely from North's perspective that the ♣K is with the 3♠ pre-empter so cashing the A is less likely to cost).

If we have had to ruff a club in dummy our first plan should be to do the same as before. We don't need to worry about ruffing another loser with East's spades because we can discard them all on our long heart suit instead. So cash the ♠Q. If both opponents follow we can draw trumps once we get to hand. We therefore play ♥A and ruff a heart in hand. Draw trumps, cross back to the ♦A and take all our heart tricks.

The hand gets harder when North discards on the ♠Q. But we are OK. We just carry on playing top hearts. What is South going to do? They have ♠Jxx left. As soon as they ruff, we can over-ruff and draw trumps then cross back to ♦A for the rest of the hearts. If they don't ruff, we just keep throwing away our minor suit losers. Once we have none left, we will have to ruff a heart ourselves and play trumps from the top so South will score the ♠J – but that's all, we still make 6♠. The heart suit in this sort of situation is acting as what is known as "substitute trumps" – even though declarer doesn't have another spade in dummy to finesse South's J, the hearts sort of do it for declarer by threatening to discard all declarer's losers if South doesn't ruff.

### Key points to note

- Hands that have pre-empted should generally not bid again – their partner is in charge.
- It makes sense for pre-emptors to vary widely based on which seat you are in and the vulnerability. But the partnership needs to agree the style. (See advanced section).
- Long solid suits as a side suit make for incredibly powerful hands as they provide discards for partner's losers. Slam is frequently possible provided we have controls in the other suits.
- There is no need to ruff losers in dummy if you can discard them on a long suit instead.
- Prefer to play in the weaker hand's long suit so it cannot get cut off.
- A side suit can sometimes be used as "substitute trumps"

### More advanced

These days pre-emptors are getting more and more aggressive because they tend to work! However there is a vast difference between the various seats around the table and the vulnerability. Let's consider:

- In 1<sup>st</sup> seat. We don't know whose hand it is yet – partner might have a strong hand. It's 2-1 in favour of it being the opponents' hand though so we can be reasonably aggressive but not too much in case we make partner's life difficult instead.
- In 2<sup>nd</sup> seat. We now know one of the opponents doesn't have an opening bid. That means it's now 50/50 whether our left hand opponent or partner has a good hand. Our pre-emptors should be sound here.
- In 3<sup>rd</sup> seat. This time we KNOW our left hand opponent must have a good hand. We also know partner doesn't so there is no risk of them going overboard. We can bid on a very wide range of hands with little risk.
- In 4<sup>th</sup> seat. There is no-one left to pre-empt! We can pass the hand out and score zero so there is only a point to bidding if we are going to make a plus score. Hence our jump bids here should be constructive (many players treat them as intermediate 12-15 type hands).

Vulnerability is also critical. If we are pre-empting against their contract they are going to have a choice of bidding their contract or doubling us. When we are vul and they are not, they only have to take us 2 off to score +500 and beat any score they'd make for game (usually +400 to +460). Conversely when they are vul and we are not, they now have to take us 4 off to score +800 to beat the value of their game (usually +600 to +660). At equal vulnerability they need to take us 3 off. Therefore it is much riskier for us to pre-empt with a bad suit when vul, even more so if the opponents are not vul.

Many players these days play a hugely varied style of pre-emptors. 2<sup>nd</sup> seat vul v non-vul, the west hand here is about the minimum you should have. At the other end of the scale is 3<sup>rd</sup> seat non-vul v vul where almost anything goes! It is very important, however, to agree with your partner the sort of style you will adopt. Then partner knows what to expect (you should also explain that style to the opponents if asked to explain your bids – they are entitled to know your agreements).

Finally I mentioned about bidding 7♠ (not that it works here!) East really wants to check on key cards but they aren't interested in the ♣A, only the ♠AK. One option is "Exclusion" which is a special type of keycard that asks partner for their key cards EXCLUDING those in the suit bid. It only occurs as strange unusual jumps that cannot be

natural. There is a case for East's 5♣ bid over 3♠ to be exclusion here (if, against all odds, they did have a hand with 8 or 9 clubs that wanted to play in 5♣ they could bid 4♣ then 5♣). But you'd want to have a very clear agreement with partner before risking bidding it! Those interested in the responses should look up Exclusion keycard.

Another possibility might be for East to jump to 5NT over 3♠. It's also a very unusual bid and a lot of pairs play 5NT as "pick a slam" but that makes more sense in an auction where there are a couple of suits or NT as options. Here only one suit has been mentioned – so 5NT is more often played as an ask about the top three trumps. The simplest responses are to bid 6 with 0/1, and 7 with 2 (the presumption is the person doing the asking will always have at least 1 themselves).

But, despite all that science, playing matchpoints in a club session I would probably just settle for 6♠. It would be so annoying to bid 7♠, unluckily go off, and then discover that just bidding 6♠ would have got you a top anyway!

Julian Foster (many times NSW representative)

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### Win an Over the Shoulder Mentoring opportunity by Julian Foster!



The Sydney Bridge Centre is running a **F2F Matchpointed Swiss Pairs Congress** on the Australia Day 26<sup>th</sup> January 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 and the Best Novice (or Restricted) winners – **Over the Shoulder Mentoring** by Julian Foster, Marcia Scudder or Margaret Foster or Marcia Scudder (all are many times 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.