



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.

#60587 BBO – Wednesday morning session 25th November 2020

20	♠ 764	<i>Dlr: W</i>																														
	♥ 64	<i>Vul: Both</i>																														
	♦ KJT985																															
	♣ 54																															
	♠ K92	♠ QJT3																														
	♥ A53	♥ KJ2																														
	♦ A72	♦ Q63																														
	♣ T873	♣ J92																														
	4 ♠ A85																															
	11 10 ♥ QT987																															
	15 ♦ 4																															
	♣ AKQ6																															
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	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT																											
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Board 20 last week shows a few useful points in bidding and defence. There are a wide variety of possible auctions on this hand - depending on how aggressively players choose to open!

There are players who will open the West, North and East hands although none are clearcut! West is vulnerable with a 4333 11 count and poor intermediates. Furthermore the most likely opening of 1♣ is hardly lead directing! There's a good case for pass. North might open a weak 2♦ (if playing it) but vulnerable I think it's too balanced with too many losers. East in 3rd seat might also open (see advanced section for what).

But almost all tables last week started with 3 passes to South who opened the obvious 1♥. At several tables that went PP to East. I would have bid 1NT as East now which shows a balanced hand with a heart stopper and maximum for a hand that has already passed. In fact most Easts doubled and West bid 1NT. I prefer 1NT as East because of the flat shape, soft cards (Qs and Js) and most importantly the heart holding – I don't want that being led through at trick 1 to South's known suit!

After X from East and 1NT from West, South might try again anyway with 2♣ which will run to North. Alternatively North might dredge up a 1NT response to 1♥ the first time over which South will bid 2♣ which again will come back to North.

What should North do over 2♣? In both cases I would bid 2♦. This shows a weak hand with diamonds. You might think North should bid 2♥ - giving preference. That might work but think about in what suit your hand will be most useful? If you play in diamonds your hand is guaranteed at least 4 tricks (losing the ♦AQ). But if you play in hearts it might not be worth any tricks at all! If the defence take their ♦A straight away you might never reach your diamonds.

This introduces an important principle - **with a good hand opposite a weak one it is often best to play in the weak hand's long suit**. It will be worth something if its suit is trumps. The high cards in the other hand (♣AKQ here for example) will still take tricks. The same is not true the other way around. The North hand may contribute no tricks at all in hearts. This is especially true with a suit holding like the one we have here (fairly solid but missing the A). Had I had something like A10xxxx in diamonds I would prefer to bid 2♥. This time my diamonds aren't guaranteed to take tricks plus I have a definite entry to help partner playing in Hs (perhaps to take a black suit finesse).

The principle is borne out by this hand. Deep Finesse shows NS can make 2♦ (losing 1♠, 2♥ and 2♦ - one ♠ loser is discarded on the ♣Q) but can only make 1♥ (losing 2♠, 2♥, 1♦, 1♣) if the defence are accurate.

Another possible auction starts with 1♣ from East followed by a 1♥ overcall. West with 11 points now has a choice of an aggressive 2NT (natural invite) or a heavy 1NT (normally about 7-10 here). Playing teams when vulnerable you probably need to be aggressive as you gain so much more for making game. Playing matchpoints that isn't so

important and there's a case for just bidding 1NT. Note that as South even if East had opened 1♣ and the auction gone 1♥ 1NT P P back to me I would still bid 2♣ which should be natural (I cannot have such an enormous hand that I want to cue bid now – I would never have just overcalled 1♥ with that on the previous round).

Let's consider the play if West does play NT. All 3 Norths led a diamond but I prefer a heart. North is better off trying to set up partner's suit than their own suit because partner has a stronger hand and is more likely to have entries to get back in to cash their suit. Even if we set our diamonds up we are not getting back in to cash them. Hence the only time a diamond lead is right is when we are cashing the entire suit initially – not impossible but highly unlikely.

Trick 1 should go ♥627A. Declarer will knock out the ♠A. South cannot now lead a heart round to the KJ so they may try to cash ♣s. If they cash AKQ then they set up a club for declarer who will now make 2NT (3♠, 2♥, 2♦, 1♣). South might start on clubs but should then play a diamond through to North's K. North returns a 2nd heart setting South's suit up while they still have a club entry. Declarer is then limited to 7 tricks - 3♠, 2♥, 2♦. See advanced section for more thoughts on the defence and also on how West can genuinely make 2NT after a heart lead.

Key points to note

- With a good hand opposite a weak one it is often best to play in the weak hand's long suit. It will be worth more if its suit is trumps.
- Lots of hands are marginal opening bids. Factors to help decide are vulnerability, shape, intermediate cards and lead direction.
- When defending prefer to try and set up a suit in the stronger hand (i.e. with entries). There is no point setting up your suit if you can't get back in to cash it.
- Defenders can hold up aces in NT too. It can help cut off declarer's suits and get a signal from partner (see advanced section).

More advanced

In 3rd seat East might open 1 of either minor depending on your methods. But another reasonable choice is a mini-psychic 1♠ (yes even if playing 5 card majors). It takes up more space and points to a good lead. Of course West will still think it's a 5 card suit and may well raise too high here - that's the risk you take!

When defending South should usually hold up the ♠A to the 3rd round. It makes it more awkward for declarer who would have to use the ♥K to be sure of reaching the last spade. More importantly it lets North assist. He should play his spades in the order 764. 7 for reverse count then 64 shows suit preference for diamonds over clubs. Not a great surprise to South given his clubs! But it still may help him find the diamond switch (if North held nothing in diamonds he might signal clubs instead).

South might also cash one top club aiming to get a count signal (a useful agreement some pairs play is that the lead of a K asks for a count signal and the lead of an A or a Q asks for an attitude signal).

If South discovers that clubs are 4333 round the table they should cash all theirs and then exit a diamond. Declarer will again be limited to 3♠, 2♥, 2♦. If South discovers clubs are as they are they should only cash AK and then switch to diamonds. If this is ducked to North's K, they can play another heart through which, as we saw earlier, also limits declarer to 7 tricks.

Deep Finesse tells us West can always make 2NT though. How? They have to take the ♦A on the first round and play on clubs themselves. Because South only had 1 diamond they can never get North in, nor can they effectively lead hearts. So West can slowly set up their club trick and later lead up to the ♦Q. By the time North finally gets in with ♦K to play a 2nd heart it's too late because declarer now has 3♠, 2♥, 2♦ and 1♣. Of course at the tables who led a diamond at trick 1 this effectively happened anyway because after winning the ♠A, South had no more diamonds and had to play clubs!

Taking the ♦A on the 1st round is a highly unlikely play in the real world unless the auction has shown North has diamonds or that South has both hearts and clubs (if so, and they also hold up the ♠A for 3 rounds, declarer can count their hand shape to be 3514 or maybe 3604 – so the diamond shortage is “known”).

Julian Foster (many times NSW representative)

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.