



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. 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.

#66865 BBO – Saturday ARVO session 26th June 2021

14		Dir: E	
		Vul: None	
♠ 7			
♥ K62			
♦ QJT97			
♣ KT63			
♠ J9	♠ AK543		
♥ A974	♥ JT3		
♦ 852	♦ A		
♣ QJ74	♣ A982		
9 ♠ QT862	♣ ♦ ♥ ♠ NT		
8 16 ♥ Q85	N - 2 - - -		
7 ♦ K643	S - 2 - - -		
♣ 5	E 4 - 3 2 1		
	W 4 - 3 2 1		

With the temporary closure of face to face sessions, it was pleasing to see the BBO session last Saturday was up to 14 tables. I hope everyone enjoyed the game. Board 14 was largely a bidding battle and ended up with scores in both directions. Let's see what might happen.

The auction has a fairly simple start 1♠ Pass 1NT. Although West does have a balanced hand this time it's important to understand that this is one of the exceptions where 1NT does NOT promise a balanced hand. It is merely any hand that has enough to respond, cannot raise spades, cannot bid another suit at the 1 level and does not have enough to bid at the 2 level – so usually a hand in the 5-9 point range. Even if you had something like 7 clubs in that point

range you should STILL bid 1NT. Usually in that case you would try to bid your clubs later and you have now described your hand well as you limited your hand by not bidding at the 2 level the first time.

The first major decision in the auction comes with North. A lot of tables passed but I would be very tempted to double. Double in this position is still takeout of spades, the same that it would be over 1♠ immediately. Yes you only have 9 points and yes you only have 3 hearts. But you have a nice shape, honours in all your suits, and the vulnerability (love all) favours bidding – see my column on 11 November 2020 for more discussion on why nil vulnerability is the best time to be declaring.

Let's suppose, for the moment, however that North does pass. What should East rebid? This isn't so easy. There are 3 realistic possibilities and they all have flaws:

- 2♣. You are a bit strong for this with a good 16 point hand. You risk missing game if partner has 8-9 points.
- 3♣. This is usually played as game forcing and you aren't strong enough for that as partner might only have 5-6 points. What's more it takes up a lot of room and if partner had a weak hand with hearts we'd be far more comfortable playing there.
- 2NT. This is about right for strength (it's basically invitational opposite 5-9) but you have no heart stopper and your diamond stopper can get knocked straight out. Also, hands with As and Ks tend to play better in suit contracts.

On balance, playing matchpoint pairs (where reaching game is less critical) I think I would bid 2♣. This leaves open more possibilities and if partner does something more we can come back to life! West holding a maximum in context might well raise to 3♣. See advanced section for some other bidding methods here.

East did bid 2NT at several tables and West then has an easy raise to 3NT. That contract was quickly in trouble after the obvious ♦Q lead. In fact at one table it went 4 off! The best declarer can do is run the ♥J immediately, lose 4 more diamonds and hope to score 8 tricks by way of 2♠, 3♥, 1♦ and 2♣ with the aid of the finesse. See advanced section for why they should in fact be 2 off if they play this way.

When defending 3NT a surprising number of tables "blocked" the diamond suit, however. In other words after winning HK North continued playing diamonds and South kept the K to win the 4th round leaving North stranded with the 5th diamond. This time it didn't matter hugely as no suit was behaving for declarer so the defence had another

chance. But best defence takes all the diamonds and North then plays a spade through declarer. See advanced section for how North South could get this right.

Playing in clubs, East West can in fact make 10 tricks but they have to be careful. Most of the time declarer tried ♠AK which North could ruff. That usually led to the defence scoring at least 2 clubs, 1 or 2 hearts and sometimes the ♠Q as well.

Let's return to the auction and suppose North doubled over 1NT. East will face the same dilemma but this time 2NT is less appealing because a red suit lead is highly likely after the double. I think 2♣ is clearer now. But now things change because South will join in with 2♦. West will bid 3♣. North should not bid again now (they said their piece when they made the double the first time – yes it's nice that partner has chosen our 5 card suit but we still only have 9 points for our takeout double so we should leave it to partner). East will likely pass 3♣ and at the vulnerability South will probably compete further with 3♦. Even though EW can make 4♣ on this hand I would probably sell out to 3♦ myself. 3♦ has 5 obvious losers (1♠, 2♥, 1♦ and 1♣) and should end up 1 off. That's assuming West doesn't play the ♥A into thin air and waits to capture the K or Q with it.

Key points to note

- A 1NT response to an opening 1 level bid does NOT show a balanced hand. It is merely a hand in the 5-9 range that can't raise and can't bid a suit at the 1 or 2 levels.
- After 1A P 1NT, a double is takeout of suit A (or a really strong hand).
- Nil vulnerability is the "bidder's vulnerability" – the way the scores work it is frequently better to declare than defend. So you should be aggressive in the auction.
- Natural rebids after a 1NT response can be tricky as the ranges are wide.
- Hands with As and Ks tend to be better for suit play. Hands with "softer" values like Qs and Js tend to be better for no-trump play.
- As defenders be wary of "blocking" a suit to strand winners in your partner's hand

More advanced

After the auction 1 Major Pass/Double 1NT my regular partner and I play a method of transfers by opener which we quite like as they allow a much wider range of hands to be bid. The broad scheme is:

1M – 1NT 2 level bids up to 2M are transfers - and are forcing
 Repeating 2M shows clubs but is non-forcing
 2NT is natural invitational
 3 level jumps are game forcing. Other than 3♣, they all show 55+ shape.

Transferring back to your own major shows a 6 card suit.

Some examples:

1♠ – 1NT – 2♣ shows a 2D rebid.

1♠ – 1NT – 2♥ shows at least 6 spades – effectively a 2♠ rebid.

1♠ – 1NT – 2♠ shows clubs but is prepared for partner to pass 2♠ with a doubleton and not primary club support

1♠ – 1NT – 3♥ shows 55+ game force (a 54 game force hand would start with a 2♦ transfer to 2♥ and then bid game)

So what does responder do over these? Generally they pretend partner has bid the suit they have transferred to. So if they would have passed that, they just complete the transfer. Otherwise they bid what they would have bid anyway. The advantage is that, after responder completes the transfer, opener can continue with other bids to show a greater range of hands. The only real downside is you lose a non-forcing natural 2♣ rebid. A small price to pay.

After a diamond lead against 3NT the contract is doomed but why should it go 2 off? The defence have to be very careful but they can do it. If East plays ♥J South must cover (if the J is run and loses to the K, next time East can finesse the Q and make 3 more hearts). If declarer wins ♥A, the defence can now duck the next heart, win the 3rd and cut off West's 4th. While in dummy West might instead try running the ♣Q to take that finesse. This time North

must duck the Q and wait to cover the J the next time (if they cover the first time, declarer can later get back to the West hand with ♣J). Now declarer cannot quickly get back to dummy again and will eventually lose a spade or another club.

How can the defenders avoid blocking the diamonds? Trick 1 will go ♦Q A. South will play either the 6 or the 3 depending on whether they play high or low encouraging. Once North gets in again he knows to continue diamonds but how exactly? Most tables just played from the top. The problem with this is when North plays the 10 on the 3rd round could they not have started with QJ10 on its own? Now South shouldn't overtake as it would be embarrassing to turn declarer's 9 into a trick!

North can make things easier for his partner by continuing with the ♦9 not the ♦J. This would be insane from an initial holding of QJ9 so it should tell South that North started with at least QJ109 (but not the 8 or they'd lead that). Hence South knows North has at least 4 diamonds. Therefore it is safe to overtake with the K on the 3rd round and return a 4th round – just in case partner does in fact have 5. Even if he doesn't and diamonds are 4441 we still want partner on lead at the end to put a spade through dummy. Advanced defenders are always trying to anticipate a problem partner might be facing from the other side of the table.

Julian Foster (many times NSW representative)

The SBC Online Charity Pairs on BBO – Saturday 17th July, 10am start



We won't be able to run a F2F Christmas in July Congress as originally scheduled on 17th-18th July, but we can still get into the spirit of the season – let's give hope to those in need. For each entry, Sydney Bridge Centre will donate AUD 4.00 to the Salvation Army's Red Shield Appeal, half of which comes from BBO generously reducing its fees. All are welcome to join us for this **charity game on Saturday 17th July on BBO**, including interstate players – you play, we donate. BB\$12 per player.

RED masterpoints awarded. Please find the [program brochure](#) and [enter online](#) on the NSWBA website.

The Sydney Bridge Centre online sessions on BBO during temporary lockdown

Our clubroom on Goulburn Street is temporary closed under the current restriction. We are running regular club session online on BBO for the moment and will resume our F2F sessions once we can. Please keep an eye on our [website](#) for the latest announcement.

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.

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.