



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.

#81403 BBO – Wednesday morning session 18th November 2020

10		♠ 986	Dir: E
		♥ KT75	Vul: Both
		♦ AK7	
		♣ QJ2	
♠ AT5		♠ KJ7	
♥ Q82		♥ J9643	
♦ Q643		♦ 5	
♣ K94		♣ AT53	
13	♠ Q432	♠♦♥♣NT	
	♥ A	N - 1 - - -	
11	♦ JT982	S - 1 - - -	
7	♣ 876	E 2 - 3 1 1	
		W 2 - 3 1 1	

Board 10 last week shows an example of card reading and counting as well as a few bidding points.

The auction will most likely start with 3 passes. West does have 11 points in 3rd seat so they might choose to dredge up an opening bid but there isn't much going for it:

- They have a very balanced hand
- They have poor intermediate cards
- They have no suit they particularly want to indicate as a good lead for partner

I would pass. If West does pass then North has the choice whether to pass the hand out or not.

In the passout seat there is a "rule" that I have found to be surprisingly useful in bridge in helping to decide whether to open or not. It is called the "Rule of 15" and basically says add your high card points to the **number of spades** you hold. If that is at least 15 then go ahead and open. You might think that is very strange. However what it is trying to do is evaluate just how useful the spade suit is in competition. You might find that you open a 1354 13 point hand 1♦ and suddenly hear the auction going 1♠ X 2♠ back to you or something. Because the opponents have the spade suit, they can outbid you at the same level. So the more spades you have the better your hand actually is as the less chance of this happening!

Of all the "rules" I have come across in bridge this is actually the one I have probably found to be the most reliable to follow. Here we would add our 13 points to our 3 spades, reach 16 and open.

What we open is sometimes a matter of system agreement – either 1♣ or 1♦. If your system allows you a choice though, you should choose 1♦ as it suggests a good lead to partner.

East, having already passed, might now decide to overcall 1♥ to get in the way. Although the suit is poor, he does have a 5431 shape which is usually good.

South's bid probably now also depends on system agreement. After 1m (1♥) some players agree that X shows exactly 4 spades and bidding 1♠ shows 5+. Others just bid 1♠ with 4+ spades and use double as a hand without 4 spades. As usual there are good and bad hands for both methods and it really doesn't matter much as long as you and your partner agree!

South will bid whatever shows 4 spades, West will probably raise to 2♥ and that will be that (North has hearts and will be happy to defend, East will be relieved to have found a fit, South has a pretty minimum hand and, being vulnerable, is unlikely to bid again especially as game all vulnerability is the least attractive at which to compete – see last week's column!)

So 2♥ by East is quite a likely final contract (it was reached twice last week).

What would South lead? Personally I would lead the ♦J almost regardless of what partner opened. It is extremely likely to be safe (an important consideration at matchpoint pairs where you don't want to give cheap tricks away). Also because we only have 1 trump there's a fair chance partner has 4. Leading a long suit might allow us to later "force" declarer to trump and promote trump tricks for partner.

However we'll come back to the ♦J lead. But let's suppose North had opened 1♣ and South therefore led a club which happened at at least one table. The play is likely to go ♣74JA. When declarer leads a trump the A will appear. At this stage South should probably switch to diamonds and declarer will be forced to trump. They will play more trumps but after North wins the K he can play a 3rd diamond forcing East to trump again. This will leave North with 2 trumps and EW with 1 each. Declarer has "lost control" of the trumps. Usually that is a very bad thing to happen but here, surprisingly, it doesn't matter so much – mainly because there is no long suit the defence can take any winners in. We still have control of all the suits and West's ♦Q is a winner. So if declarer finds the ♠Q, they will score 3 spades, 1 top ♥ (the J), 2 diamond ruffs in East, and ♣AK – i.e. 8 tricks. You might think it's a guess who has the ♠Q but in fact declarer can work out almost for certain that South holds it (see advanced section). And they can actually end up with 9 tricks (again see advanced section)!

Let's return to an opening ♦J lead. Declarer should never cover with the ♦Q – that cannot possibly promote any tricks. Here, in fact, by not covering, eventually the ♦Q becomes a winner because North only has 3 including the AK. So declarer will ruff the 2nd round of diamonds and lead a trump. The A appears and the defence force declarer again. That leaves declarer with 2 trumps in each hand. If they play another trump now, North will win and play a 4th round which removes all of declarer's. One again though, if declarer can find that ♠Q he can score 9 tricks.

Has anyone noticed that, despite what I said earlier, the "rule of 15" hasn't actually served North so well this time! They could have passed the hand out and scored 0 – instead they might be scoring -140!

Key points to note

- The "rule of 15" (high card points + number of spades) is a surprisingly accurate way of evaluating whether to open in 4th seat or pass the hand out.
- When you have a choice of opening bids, pick the one that will help partner with the lead.
- If you suspect trumps are breaking badly for declarer leading a long suit may help force declarer to trump and later lose control.
- What someone did NOT do in the auction is just as important as what they DID do. That information can be critical to deciding how to play a hand – see advanced section.

More advanced

If we take up the play at the point we had reached earlier after an original club lead the hands now look like this with declarer on lead:

North: ♠986 ♥107 ♦- ♣Q2

West: ♠A105 ♥8 ♦Q ♣K9

East: ♠KJ7 ♥J ♦- ♣1053

South: ♠Q43 ♥- ♦98 ♣86

Declarer tries to draw trumps with the J and that leaves just one trump with North. Now declarer needs to find the ♠Q. How do they do that? By counting!

There are 3 things you may need to count in bridge – shape, points and tricks. Each (or all 3) can be vital knowledge. Here it happens to be points. Let's look at what we have seen North play. After a high club lead it looks like North has ♣QJ. We have seen the ♦AK, we have also seen the ♥K and we know for sure he has exactly 4 hearts (because South showed out on the 2nd round). Add those points up and it comes to 13. But he also seems to have a balanced hand. Therefore if he had had the ♠Q he would have had 15 points. Surely he would have opened 1NT?

The fact that he DID NOT open 1NT should therefore tell us the ♠Q is with South! If we play 3 rounds of spades ending with West we will come down to this 3 card end position:

North: ♠- ♥10 ♦- ♣Q2
West: ♠- ♥- ♦Q ♣K9 East: ♠- ♥- ♦- ♣1053
South: ♠- ♥- ♦9 ♣86

If West now leads his winning ♦Q what can North do? If they ruff it, they have to lead away from their ♣Q2 and our 9 will score. If they don't ruff, they have to discard the ♣2. Now we cash the ♣K. Either way we only lose 1 more trick to go with the ♦J, and ♥AK – making 9.

Finally let's return to the ♦J lead to start with. It's not as easy for declarer this time because they have not "seen" any of the club suit. That means they don't know where the ♣Q and J are – hence they cannot draw the same inference about points that we could above (North could have ♠Q and South the ♣Q). Therefore it is much more of a guess where the ♠Q is – but you may well get it right anyway simply because South showed spades in the auction and North didn't. If you do get it right you can end up with 9 tricks in a similar way to above – North will basically end up having to lead from his ♣QJ2 which lets declarer take 3 club tricks, 2 diamond ruff, 1 heart and 3 spades.

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.