



## 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.

## #81885 BBO – Wednesday morning session 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2021

|           |        |         |           |   |   |   |   |
|-----------|--------|---------|-----------|---|---|---|---|
| <b>11</b> |        | ♠ AQ9   | Dir: S    |   |   |   |   |
|           |        | ♥ AQ62  | Vul: None |   |   |   |   |
|           |        | ♦ J63   |           |   |   |   |   |
|           |        | ♣ K97   |           |   |   |   |   |
| ♠ 86      |        | ♠ KJ432 |           |   |   |   |   |
| ♥ J74     |        | ♥ 53    |           |   |   |   |   |
| ♦ K54     |        | ♦ T987  |           |   |   |   |   |
| ♣ QJT42   |        | ♣ 85    |           |   |   |   |   |
| 16        | ♠ T75  | ♣♦♥♠NT  |           |   |   |   |   |
| 7         | ♥ KT98 | N       | 2         | 3 | 4 | 2 | 3 |
| 4         | ♦ AQ2  | S       | 2         | 2 | 4 | 1 | 3 |
| 13        | ♣ A63  | E       | -         | - | - | - | - |
|           |        | W       | -         | - | - | - | - |

Board 11 last week was a NS hand with a decision about game or slam and whether to play in hearts or no-trumps. Plus a tricky play problem in 4♥.

The auction is likely to be uncontested NS and start 1♣-1♥-2♥. North now has the key decision. Obviously with 16 points opposite an opening bid they will bid to at least game. Are they strong enough to look for slam? Two tables did and both ended in 6♥ going off.

I'd say no. Their hand is very balanced and partner could only raise to 2♥. We have a lot of losers to do something with. Especially these days with people opening lighter and lighter. If partner is balanced they will be at most 14 points

(15 would have opened 1NT). That's at most 30, not usually enough for slam (two balanced hands tend to need around 33 points to make slam). Even when partner is unbalanced we'll need them to have perfect cards for us – something like ♠Kx ♥K10xx ♦x ♣AQxxxx. Slam is certainly possible but it's not that likely.

Second question is which game? 4♥ is obviously an option but when both hands are balanced, 3NT can be better. With 4333 shape North should bid 3NT next. This gives a good description of their hand and gives South the choice of games. North also has some points to spare which is important when considering playing 3NT with a known fit elsewhere (see advanced section for why).

As South, being 4333 as well I would elect to pass 3NT. If I had had a doubleton I'd have converted to 4♥ though as a 4-4 fit will then usually play better (with a ruff in one hand being an extra trick).

3NT by North will probably make 10 tricks on the likely spade lead. Declarer wins the 1st spade and takes a losing diamond finesse. Now declarer scores 2♠, 4♥, 2♦ and 2♣. If East leads a passive diamond, it might only be 9 tricks but it's still easy to make 3NT.

What about 4♥? On a spade lead it'll be the same 10 tricks, the only difference being declarer draws trumps before finessing diamonds. But on the ♦10 lead it's much harder to make. There is a risk of declarer losing 2♠ and a trick in each minor. It can be done with an endplay though - see advanced section.

Note that the passive diamond lead is better for the defence. This is often the case, especially when leading round to a hand known to be quite strong. So should we be leading a diamond not a spade? I believe the answer depends what form of scoring we are playing.

Playingimps (i.e. teams, butler and most swiss pairs events), your primary objective is to try and beat the contract (because the difference in score between the contract making and going one off is enormous - overtricks don't matter). A spade lead is probably the most likely to set up tricks for the defence. But it's also risky as it is leading round into a known strong hand.

When playing matchpoint pairs (most club sessions) it's not the same – you are just trying to outscore other pairs, it doesn't whether the difference in score is 10 points or 1100 points, you still only get 2 matchpoints for each pair you beat! This means beating the contract is actually not the most important aspect - you just don't want to give a cheap trick away. Hence at pairs it tends to be better to lead passively and a diamond on this hand is a good example of that.

### Key points to note

- Balanced hands aren't so great when considering slam. You need points and a source of tricks.
- 4333 in both hands can often play better in NT even with a major suit fit (especially if you have more than minimum game values).
- Prefer passive leads when playing matchpoints. Don't give cheap tricks away.
- A lot of defenders are too "active". There are times for that but frequently passive defence is best – then declarer has to do his own work!
- It can sometimes be possible to avoid taking finesses and instead force the opponents to give tricks by end playing them (see advanced section).

### More advanced

A 5-4 major fit should almost always play in the major and not in no-trumps (because 9 card trump fits are so much more powerful than 8). But sometimes when you have a 4-4 fit and two balanced hands, you may consider whether it is better to play in that or play 3NT.

A lot of pairs try 3NT hoping to score the extra 10 points (e.g. 630 instead of 620). Often that doesn't work though because they forget that most of the time the 4-4 fit is worth a trick more (with the ability to ruff a loser in the other hand). So you find you actually score 630 instead of 650!

There are two situations where that argument DOES work:

- When both hands are 4333 (now no ruffs are available in the 4-4 fit).
- When you have some extra points (e.g. you have 29-30 between the hands instead of 25-26). This means some of your additional cards are probably Qs and Js instead of small spot cards. These may well now be high winners without needing to be ruffed. Hence you'll make the same number of tricks as the suit contract and now you do score 660 instead of 650.

In this hand both apply so playing NT is definitely a feasible option.

We saw 4♥ was easy to make on a spade lead. But what about on the ♦10 lead? We would normally take the diamond finesse at trick one so West will be on lead a trick 2. I'll look at two scenarios. In the first West either returns a diamond or the ♣Q. We have 9 tricks for sure (1♠, 4♥, 2♦, 2♣). We draw trumps, cash any remaining top diamonds and top clubs and arrive at this position:

|      |      |      |
|------|------|------|
|      | AQ9  |      |
|      | 6    |      |
|      | -    |      |
|      | 9    |      |
| 86   |      | KJ43 |
| -    |      | -    |
| -    |      | 9    |
| QJ10 |      | -    |
|      | 1075 |      |
|      | 10   |      |
|      | -    |      |
|      | 6    |      |

Now we exit the 3rd round of clubs leaving only the spade suit left to be played. If East had won the club he would have to lead a spade into our AQ or give us a ruff and discard. As it happens on this hand West has to win and he will lead a spade through us. But we simply cover his card (e.g. 8 9 J 5). Once East wins that NOW he is endplayed to lead spades back or give us a ruff & discard. Both routes lead to 10 tricks. The critical thing is we have eliminated the diamonds and the other clubs by cashing our winners in those suits so the defence cannot safely exit to them.

The 2nd scenario is harder - it's where West switches to a spade through us at trick 2. We finesse and lose to the ♠J. East now exits passively again (see how annoying it is as declarer when the defence don't give you tricks?!). After drawing trumps we can make 4♥ but it's very specific. We have to cash the ♣AK, ♦AQ and reach the position below:

|      |     |     |
|------|-----|-----|
|      | AQ  |     |
|      | 6   |     |
|      | -   |     |
|      | 9   |     |
| 6    |     | K43 |
| -    |     | -   |
| -    |     | 9   |
| QJ10 |     | -   |
|      | 107 |     |
|      | 10  |     |
|      | -   |     |
|      | 6   |     |

Now we can either play ♠AQ which East wins but, because he only started with two clubs, he has no more clubs left and has to give us a ruff and discard to get rid of our club loser.

Or we can cash the SA and exit our club. This time West wins and, because he has no more spades left, he has to give us a ruff and discard to get rid of our spade loser!

Neither line of play is very realistic though as it requires both spade honours offside and both black suits 5-2. In practice you might well prefer just to take a second spade finesse!

Julian Foster (many times NSW representative)

## Win an Over the Shoulder Mentoring experience with a Teams of 3 Captain!



The Sydney Bridge Centre is running a **F2F Swiss Pairs Congress** on the Valentine's Day on Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> February 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, the Best Novice (or Restricted) winners and the Best Over & Under winners (a pair with one restricted player and one novice player) – **Over the Shoulder Mentoring** Liam Milne, Susan Humphries, Jessica Brake or Shane Harrison (all are many times and well loved NSW 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.