



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.

#8362 BBO – Wednesday morning session 27th January 2021

1	♠ KT754	<i>Dir: N</i>																													
	♥	<i>Vul: None</i>																													
	♦ K654																														
	♣ KQ53																														
♠ A2	♠ Q96																														
♥ AK765	♥ J																														
♦ 8732	♦ QJT9																														
♣ A2	♣ JT987																														
11	♠ J83	<table border="1"> <tr><td>♣</td><td>♦</td><td>♥</td><td>♠</td><td>NT</td></tr> <tr><td>N</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>2</td><td>2</td><td>-</td></tr> <tr><td>S</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>2</td><td>2</td><td>-</td></tr> <tr><td>E</td><td>-</td><td>2</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td>-</td><td>2</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>1</td></tr> </table>	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	N	-	-	2	2	-	S	-	-	2	2	-	E	-	2	-	-	1	W	-	2	-	-	1
♣	♦		♥	♠	NT																										
N	-		-	2	2	-																									
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15	♥ QT98432																														
7	♦ A																														
7	♣ 64																														

Board 1 last week saw a big variation in results ranging from NS+500 to EW +500!

Most of the discussion is about the bidding but we'll touch on the play as well.

I was surprised how many North players passed to start with. I would definitely open this 1♠ even though I only have 11 points:

- I have good shape
- I have no Js (which tend to be overvalued in the point count)
- I only have 5 losers
- I get in first and take up a fair bit of bidding space from the opponents

When North did pass the auction tended to go P P 3♥ end which is reasonable. South has a normal 3♥ pre-empt. West can't really bid over 3♥. 3NT is the only remotely feasible option (double is takeout and could have partner jumping to 4♠ or something awful!) but when you know your longest suit is splitting terribly there is just no source of tricks. Pass seems clear.

If North does open 1♠ East will pass and then South has a choice. I would bid 2♠. Even though I have 7 hearts I am not strong enough to bid at the 2 level. If the auction proceeds with the opponents competing to 3 of a minor (see advanced section) I would NOW bid 3♥. This describes my hand quite well as it shows I have 3 spades and only the values to raise to 2. But I also must have a long heart suit (at least 6, probably 7) to be wanting to introduce it now as a playable option.

What does West do over 1♠ P 2♠? Not nice! One table overcalled 3♥. I am not a fan of that – a 3 level overcall here is quite risky (North could be sitting with 19 points over you). You need a good hand and a long suit. Here you only have 5 hearts and average intermediate cards. But you do have 15 points and if the auction is about to get passed out in 2♠ you will wish you had bid. I would double (takeout). The only bid partner can make that is awkward for us is 3♣ but if he does that he should have definite club preference (see advanced section for why) which we hope is a 5 card suit. If he has a red suit we will find a fit and all will be fine.

North shouldn't really bid again as he has a very minimum opening bid. But he might be willing to compete to 3S if pushed.

What were the two 500's? One was North South getting too high in 4♠. The other was, in my view, a very unlucky EW. The bidding went 1♠ P 1NT (perhaps the NS pair were playing 4 card majors so South didn't raise spades?) Now West overcalled 2♥ which is not at all unreasonable (much less risky than a 3♥ overcall after 1♠ P 2♠). North made a takeout double and South of course passed it (probably barely able to believe his luck!) Poor old West got left in 2♥x, ran into a 7-0 trump split and went -500!

The most common contract was 3♥ by South so let's briefly touch on the play and defence there. As West I would start with a diamond. I have a nasty surprise waiting for declarer in trumps so I don't want to touch those and

leading an unsupported ace is usually bad – particularly when here I would have to guess which one. Besides I might be able to start forcing declarer's trumps and end up with more than him if I start on my long suit. A "forcing" defence like that can often be very effective.

South isn't going to be too happy with dummy in 3♥ but should reason that he probably has 2 spade losers, some number of heart losers and the ♣A. He can't do much about the heart losers but he can do something about spade losers (or at least save having to guess where the Q and A are). If he can get to dummy he can discard something on the ♦K. The only definite way to reach dummy is a club (we don't yet know the ♠K sits over the A) so I would lead a club at trick 2. West probably takes the A (although with a longer club suit he should duck – see advanced section). Now declarer will be able to reach dummy with the ♣K and take two spade discards on the ♦K and ♣Q (leaving him only 1 spade loser without needing to guess). West's best bet after winning ♣A is therefore to underlead his ♠A to force declarer to guess who has the Q and the A.

How should south play the heart suit? You are likely to have 3 losers, the risk is 4 losers! There are two choices – either lead low ones and hope the ♥AK are short. Or lead the Q and hope (as here) the J falls, thus promoting the 10, 9 and 8.

Here even after leading the ♥Q and pinning the ♥J declarer still loses 3 tricks (West's 7 will eventually become a winner). So 3♥ normally goes 1 or 2 down losing 2 black aces and 3 trumps and maybe the ♠Q too if declarer guesses wrong).

Key points to note

- Don't be afraid to open 11 point hands – especially ones with good shape. Opening the bidding gives your side a big advantage.
- Sometimes you have to double on hands that don't have the perfect shape (e.g. 5422) when you have values and are worried partner is not going to be able to compete.
- A bid of 2NT in a competitive auction is often best played as artificial (see advanced section)
- Don't generally lead unsupported aces. When you have a long trump holding, leading length is often best.
- It is frequently right as a defender holding the ace to duck the 1st round if declarer leads through you to the KQ in dummy. By winning on the 2nd round instead you may make declarer's entries messier (see advanced section).

More advanced

After the auction 1♠ P 2♠ X P what should East do? Many players would automatically bid 3♣, their longest suit. But there is a better choice available if you have some agreements. Many pairs play that 2NT here is artificial and shows BOTH minors. The rationale is:

- Partner's double is almost always going to have hearts so East just bids hearts if he has them
- 2NT as a natural bid is trying to land on a pinhead and score exactly 8 tricks. There are two other choices with a hand that might want to bid 2NT naturally – either we push to 3NT and put the pressure on the opponents, or we pass and convert the double to penalties.
- It is more useful to be able to show 2 suits and allow partner to pick their better one.

The last point is very important. It means West can double much more safely with his 2542 hand shape. He knows if East is 44 in the minors he will bid 2NT not 3♣ so the partnership will not land up in a silly 4-2 club fit when a good 4-4 diamond fit is available. Hence East is now far more likely to have 5 clubs when he does bid 3♣ so West can pass it more comfortably. If East happens to be 3334 then West is unlucky! Here I would still bid 2NT as East even though I am 45 in the minors.

So my auction on this hand would probably be nothing like any of the tables' actual ones! Mine would go 1♠ P 2♠ X P 2NT 3♥ P 3♠ end. Or possibly 1♠ P 2♠ X P 2NT P 3♦ P P 3♥ P 3♠ end. But the 1st of those auctions is better - if South has decided to compete with 3♥ it is better to do it immediately over 2NT before East learns which minor suit West prefers. After the double North was probably expecting to be defending against hearts (or looking forward to defending 3 of a minor) so he gets an unpleasant surprise when his partner wades in with 3♥! He hates hearts and has to go back to 3♠.

When defending 3♥ I said West would take the ♣A but should duck with a longer club suit. Why? Suppose West had Axxx in clubs. Now consider what happens if we win the A or if we duck.

- If we take ♣A, it's as before – declarer has a later entry to dummy and 2 spade discards on ♦K and ♣Q – so they just lose two black aces outside trumps.
- If we duck, declarer reaches dummy immediately – but now only has one discard (♦K). If declarer leads a 2nd club later this time we win the ace. But now declarer cannot immediately get to the ♣Q winner in dummy. They have to guess spades right to do so. You might say “but if we duck declarer now discards their club on the ♦K and doesn't lose a club at all”. That's true but it means they will definitely lose 2 spades no matter how they play the suit. So it's actually no worse!

But here we only have ♣Ax. This makes ducking too risky. Now declarer can win in dummy and discard their club on the ♦K. If they ruff a club back to hand our ace will fall! This now sets up the ♣Q in dummy after all and if declarer guesses spades right, he can discard a spade on the ♣Q, losing just one spade trick outside trumps.

Note that even if declarer had a singleton club it is often STILL right to duck the ace as a defender in these positions! Yes we lose our club trick but declarer doesn't have any discards available on club winners in dummy now. Whereas if we win the ace declarer has TWO discards available (provided he can reach dummy). Winning the ace is usually only best if the defence need to cash tricks quickly before they run away.

Julian Foster (many times NSW representative)

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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](#).

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<https://www.sydneybridgecentre.com/sbc-sessions/>

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Normal table money fee.

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BB\$3 per person per game.