



## 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.

## #885 BBO – Wednesday morning session 7<sup>th</sup> October 2020

10	♠ QJ7	Dir: E Vul: Both																									
	♥ QT7																										
	♦ A97																										
	♣ AT86																										
♠ 543	♠ K98																										
♥ AK5	♥ 964																										
♦ Q2	♦ JT43																										
♣ J9752	♣ KQ3																										
13	♠ AT62	<table border="1"> <tr><td>♠</td><td>♠</td><td>♥</td><td>♦</td><td>NT</td></tr> <tr><td>N</td><td>1</td><td>3</td><td>3</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr><td>S</td><td>1</td><td>3</td><td>3</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr><td>E</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td></tr> </table>	♠	♠	♥	♦	NT	N	1	3	3	2	S	1	3	3	2	E	-	-	-	-	W	-	-	-	-
♠	♠		♥	♦	NT																						
N	1		3	3	2																						
S	1		3	3	2																						
E	-	-	-	-																							
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10	♥ J832																										
9	♦ K865																										
8	♣ 4																										

This week we will again look at an innocent looking hand that most people would probably dismiss as uninteresting. Board 10. Most unusually every table had the same auction! P P P 1♣ P 1♥ P 1NT. But that is where the similarity ended! The declarers made 7, 8 or 9 tricks and there was a wide variety of plays.

What should East lead? Everyone led a diamond, either the J or a small one. A diamond is fine but which card? I would lead the 3 - if the lead is to work I need partner to have some honours in the suit anyway so the J risks blocking things. The J might also go wrong if partner has Q9 doubleton as it crashes against one of those (rendering declarer's 8 and 7 more powerful).

Trick 1 should go ♦ 3 5 Q A. Some declarers ducked the Q. No need to do that here – if you beat the Q with the A you still have the K987 which are good for another 2 stoppers between them. Declarer now almost knows the full layout of the ♦ suit! Let's work out how. We have already seen the Q. We know the J is with the opening leader (because West holding QJ would have played the J at trick 1). Where is the 10? At first glance we don't know but we can actually work it out. Let's initially assume it's with West. If West had Q10 that would give East J432. But most people lead 4th highest so they'd have led the 2 with this and they actually led the 3. Therefore we can reasonably assume East has the 10 and the hand is like it is. But there is one other possible combination - West could have singleton Q and East J10432. It's always a good exercise as declarer to try and place the high cards in the suit led and it's amazing how often you can place almost all of them!

Declarers normal next move would be the spade finesse. To do this you should lead the Q. Two tables played the ♠7 to the 10. This won but it now left the spades blocked (QJ on their own against the A62 in dummy) which isn't ideal.

After a spade trick going QKAX I now know I have 3 or 4 spade tricks (I don't yet know if they are breaking 3-3). I could cash my spades to find out. But there is no rush to do that and in fact there are a couple of reasons not to. One is entries (see below), the other is letting the defence signal (see advanced section). So next I would play on diamonds. I have the K987 so I hope to just lose one trick to the 10 or J and make 3 tricks in the suit to go with 3 or 4 spades and 1 club.

How should I play the diamonds? If I'm in hand I would run the D9. If E covers I can win and force out the J leaving my 8 a winner. BUT I have to be careful. If I had played all the spades off first how am I going to reach that ♦8? I have no entries left in South. This is why you should be wary of cashing the spades first!

However after the spade trick I am actually in dummy. But that's fine – I can just lead a LOW diamond away from the K86 to my 9. Now when East wins the 10 or J I can later lead my 7 towards dummy's K8 and finesse the 8. How do I know to do this? I don't for sure but it's a very good assumption that East has led from a 4 card suit initially (wouldn't you?) Note how critical the ♦9 and ♦8 are here. It's why we upgrade hands with good intermediates - unlike 3's and 4's, they can build into tricks!

Note that a low diamond away from dummy also works if West's original diamond was singleton Q – they will show out when we lead towards the 9, East can win the 10 but we now know for sure we can later lead through his other honour and finesse him.

Some declarers played on hearts instead. Why is this wrong? Because you don't have time. You only have 1 sure club stopper and you are missing the ♥A and K. The defence might (should!) win ♥K and play clubs. Here it's actually OK but if the clubs sat worse (perhaps East holds KJ9 over your A108) the defence might easily be able to set up 4 club tricks ready to take when they next get in. Now declarer only makes the contract at all because spades split 3-3 and they get 4♠, 2♦ and the ♣A. Playing on diamonds will set up 3 diamond tricks to go with 3 spades and ♣A to make sure of 7 tricks and this becomes 8 tricks when spades behave.

So declarer should end up with 8 tricks (4♠, 3♦, 1♣) and the defence 5 tricks (2♥, 1♦, 2♣).

### *Key points to note*

- Against NT from holdings like J10xx and KQxx it is generally better to lead low. This is because you are trying to build long tricks in the suit later – and there isn't the risk that one of your honours will get trumped if you don't set them up fast. Leading an honour can also block the suit or crash cards in partner's hand.
- As declarer you can often work out the full layout of the suit the defence have led – based on the cards played.
- No trump play is basically a race. Count your tricks – play on suits you can set tricks up in time before the defence can get theirs going.
- Intermediate cards like 7,8,9 are powerful enough to be additional stoppers in suits and can be built into tricks themselves. That is why we mentally upgrade hands with good intermediate cards.

### *More advanced*

When playing on spades at trick 2 what card should North play? We already determined earlier it should not be the 7. On the face of it the Q and J are worth the same so does it matter? In practice I would lead the Q – this is because it is more likely to be covered (remember East cannot see the North hand so he will probably cover the Q in case declarer is trying to pull a fast one by leading the Q without the J). As declarer on this hand you want the Q to be covered as you can win the A and now have spade entries in both hands. If you didn't want a cover you could sneakily lead the J. Now East might not cover as they cannot see the Q and may be worried they will crash against it in partner's hand.

If declarer does duck a diamond to East what should they switch to? Club or Heart?

Here advanced defenders can make use of subtle suit preference signals. When West is following suit to spades, they would normally start by giving count (the 5 here assuming reverse count). After that their cards are all small and have no bearing on winning the trick. So advanced defenders use these to give extra signals. When following suit in spades West could play 543 or 534. Here they would play 543 and the 4 is the higher of their remaining cards so it's a suit preference signal indicating they like ♥ not ♣ (suit preference applies here between the other two suits – we assume we won't play on the suits declarer is playing on). That's how sharp-eyed top defenders are!

Note there is a follow up to this from declarer's point of view. The more cards you play as declarer the more signals good defenders will exchange. This is therefore another reason NOT to cash all the spades and instead, after ♠QKA5, immediately duck a ♦. Now East hasn't received a signal. The best defenders in the world will still make mistakes if you force them to make a decision early in the play when they don't have much information. But give them a decision later in the play and they will seldom get it wrong. It doesn't much matter on this hand but it can be critical.

Finally if East does switch to ♥s what card should they lead? The 9. Generally when you switch to a suit as a defender you lead low to say you have something there and high to say you don't (note this is NOT the same as when you are on lead at trick 1). So West would win the ♥K and, knowing East isn't interested in hearts, would switch to clubs which allows the defence to get their tricks set up.

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.