



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.

#15321 BBO – Saturday ARVO session 15th May 2021

7	♠ 954	<i>Dir: S</i>
	♥ KQ862	<i>Vul: Both</i>
	♦ J98	
	♣ 73	
♠ J862	♠ KT3	
♥ AT43	♥ J97	
♦ 542	♦ AT7	
♣ K6	♣ Q984	
6	♠ AQ7	♣♦♥♠NT
8 10	♥ 5	N 2 2 2 1 2
16	♦ KQ63	S 2 2 2 1 2
	♣ AJT52	E - - - -
		W - - - -

Board 7 last week gave NS a few difficulties both in the bidding and the play.

The normal start to the auction is 1♣ P 1♥ P and South has to decide their rebid. One or two chose 2NT – that feels wrong to me, we have a singleton and it shows 18-19 which we are well short of.

Most players bid 2♦ and this is ok. However it's important to understand 2♦ is a "reverse" bid. Why "reverse"? I'm not actually sure why it's called that(!) but the important thing is that it's a bid of a suit above your first one **which forces your partner to go back to your first suit at the 3 level**. Because your partner

might have as few as 5 or 6 points for a simple 1♥ response this means you need a good hand to be able to stand the 3 level. 16 points is a minimum for a reverse bid.

What would you do if you were weaker with the same shape? Rebid 2♣. Yes I know this doesn't describe as many cards in your hand. But you aren't strong enough to bid higher. If partner has a decent hand they will bid on and now we may be able to show our other suit.

Here after 2♦ North just wants to get out with their minimum 6 count that doesn't have much in either of partner's suits. There is a way to do this (see advanced section). Most players last week bid 2♥. I wouldn't have done that as normally responder repeating their own suit shows at least 6. But we do have a problem bid here. Without any more complex methods available I'd bid 3♣ as the least bad option - 2♠ would be 4th suit game force, we can't raise diamonds with only 3 and we can't bid NT without a spade stop. So that doesn't leave us much!

South is now left to guess whether to pass 3♣ or to try 3NT hoping partner has more than a minimum. Not ideal!

Almost every pair last week ended up in 2NT or 3NT so we'll discuss the play in NT.

West has a normal spade lead (the unbid suit). East will play the K and South should probably duck to try and cut the defence's communications. After winning the next spade (with the A - see advanced section for why), what now?

It's not that clear what the best line is. We have 7 cards in both minors so it's reasonable to play either but it's often best to knock out the certain losers first (i.e. ♦A). Most declarers therefore played a diamond to the J. East won the A and returned another spade. That gets us 2 spades and 3 diamonds. ♣A is 6 so we still need 2 more. Meanwhile the defenders have 2 spades (when West gets in to cash the ♠J), ♥A, ♦A so they need 2 more as well. Their problem is if they attack hearts they will give declarer the K and Q. So they need to go passive and wait. The way the club suit is played therefore becomes the key.

What should we do in clubs as declarer? If we could reach dummy twice the best play is low to the 10 (expecting it to lose to K or Q) and then low to the J. But here we may have no entry to dummy at all. In practice we will probably

get one if we lead a heart towards dummy as West may well duck. That would let us try low to the 10 but then we'd have to cash the A on the next round and hope East started with ♥x (no luck today).

What if we had to play clubs from our own hand? Most players would instinctively go A then J of clubs but that's not actually best - see advanced section for an improvement.

Most routes of play ended up with 8 tricks in practice though because after knocking out the ♦A and winning the next spade, declarer cashed their diamonds, lead a heart to dummy (West ducking) and a club to the 10 and K. After cashing the ♠J (the defence's 4th trick), West either has to give the ♥Q a trick in dummy or play clubs back to declarer's AJ.

Key points to note

- A reverse bid after a 1 level response is a bid of a suit above your first suit which forces partner to go back to your 1st suit at the 3 level
- You need at least 16 points to reverse (remember partner might only have 6 points)
- It is often right to duck the 1st round of a suit in NT even holding 2 stoppers
- How you play a suit frequently depends on what entries you have
- Don't automatically play the highest card in your suits to force out honours. It can be better to hope an honour is short and has to be played when you lead a small card (see advanced section)
- "Blackout" is a useful convention to improve bidding accuracy after a reverse (see advanced section)

More advanced

When we win the 2nd round of spades we should win the A not the Q. The reason is to try and conceal our holding as best we can. West already knows declarer has the Q (because East played the K at trick 1) but East will not know where it is. This doesn't make much difference on this hand but it's a good general principle to follow to keep the defenders guessing wherever possible.

So how do NS bid these hands with some more advanced methods? The answer is a convention called "Blackout" which applies after a reverse following a 1 level response. Most commonly it is played as "the most economical bid out of the 4th suit and 2NT is artificial and shows a weak hand" - i.e. a bare minimum response (about 5-7 points). Bids after that by opener (other than the 4th suit) are NOT forcing. This allows the partnership to stop out of game when they have a minimum reverse opposite a minimum response like this hand. Its other big advantage is that, by inference, any OTHER bid by responder becomes game forcing (8+ points) which allows game and slam going hands to proceed more easily (e.g. North could bid 3C to agree clubs knowing it was game forcing).

On this hand the bidding would go 1♣-1♥-2♦-2♠-2NT-P. 2♠ is the artificial blackout bid. South now bids 2NT non-forcing with a spade stopper and no fit (with a 19 count they'd bid 3NT).

There are only actually 4 sequences where Blackout applies:

1♣ - 1♥ - 2♦ - 2♠ = blackout / 1♣ - 1♠ - 2♦ - 2♥ = blackout

1♣ - 1♠ - 2♥ - 2NT = blackout / 1♦ - 1♠ - 2♥ - 2NT = blackout

(Note 2NT when bid as blackout does not show a stopper, it's just the artificial weak bid).

It is worth discussing blackout with your partner to clarify the different sequences. And to agree which bid actually is blackout! What I have shown here is one scheme. But some pairs play the most economical bid as blackout, even if it's a repeat of responder's suit (the idea being to keep the bidding low). Either method is playable - you just need to both be on the same wavelength!

Finally I also talked earlier about playing the club suit when we have to do it from our hand. Many players instinctively would go A then J. This will lose to the K or Q and on the next round we then have to hope the suit splits 3-3. The better play is A and then a low club. This gains whenever there is Kx or Qx in one hand. Why? Because that honour will have to be played on our small card so on the next round we still have the J and the 10. If a defender is left with K9 or Q9 in one hand our J will force out the honour, then the 10 will draw the 9 making our 5th club a winner. So this works against quite a lot of the 4-2 breaks. What sometimes isn't appreciated is it still works if clubs are 3-3. The defence might score a cheap trick on the 2nd round but on the 3rd round the K and Q will just fall together!

Having the J and 10 makes the difference. Without the 10 we'd have to hope for 3-3 or KQ doubleton. The intermediate cards we have often make quite a difference to the best play in a suit (as well as what entries we have).

Julian Foster (many times NSW representative)

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The Sydney Bridge Centre is running a **F2F Australia Wide Novice Pairs Event** on Wednesday 26th May at Level 1, 162 Goulburn Street, Sydney. A no-fear morning session from 10am – about 1.15pm. **ONLY players with less than 100 masterpoints** will be accepted in this competition. A separate field from the Open and the Supervised session. Refreshment included.

Your results will be compared to other participating players who are of similar level in the whole country – a much better indicator to see where you are in the bridge journey! ALL participants will be given a booklet of hand analysis after the session. An invaluable and meaningful prize for the winners – a **Complimentary SBC**

Workshop by Will Jenner-O'Shea of your choice.

Please find the details on the [program brochure](#) and [enter online](#).

Players with more than 100 masterpoints are welcome to join our normal Open duplicate on the side.

The Sydney Bridge Centre is now running F2F club sessions AND online sessions on BBO

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

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.

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BB\$3 per person per game.