



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.

#2575 BBO – Saturday ARVO session 22nd May 2021

8	♠ KT83	<i>Dir: W</i>																														
	♥ K8	<i>Vul: None</i>																														
	♦ KQ42																															
	♣ AJ9																															
♠ A52	♠ J97																															
♥ 754	♥ AQT932																															
♦ 973	♦ T																															
♣ T864	♣ Q53																															
16	♠ Q64	<table border="1"> <tr> <td></td> <td>♣</td> <td>♦</td> <td>♥</td> <td>♠</td> <td>NT</td> </tr> <tr> <td>N</td> <td>1</td> <td>4</td> <td>-</td> <td>3</td> <td>-</td> </tr> <tr> <td>S</td> <td>1</td> <td>3</td> <td>-</td> <td>3</td> <td>-</td> </tr> <tr> <td>E</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>2</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> </tr> <tr> <td>W</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>2</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> </tr> </table>		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	N	1	4	-	3	-	S	1	3	-	3	-	E	-	-	2	-	-	W	-	-	2	-	-
	♣		♦	♥	♠	NT																										
N	1		4	-	3	-																										
S	1		3	-	3	-																										
E	-	-	2	-	-																											
W	-	-	2	-	-																											
4	♥ J6																															
9	♦ AJ865																															
11	♣ K72																															

Board 8 last week saw most of the field playing 3NT NS. Double dummy this has no chance but in practice it made several times.

The usual start to the auction will be Pass and 1NT (15-17). Should East overcall? It has some risk attached but I would for a few reasons:

- It's a good 6 card suit that we want partner to lead if they are in.
- It's nil vulnerability – this is the best vulnerability to compete in at pairs because our contract is only going off in 50's should it fail and we were only taking 50's from the opponents contract should they fail. I went into this in more detail in the column on 11 November 2020.
- It's matchpoints – if it gets doubled and we go -800 then it's just one board and we can recover all that bad score on the next board!

Let's assume East bids 2♥. Now what should South do? There are a few options depending on what methods you are playing. One very useful convention that is frequently played in this position is “Lebensohl” (which also comes up against weak twos – see the 31 March 2021 column). Its primary purpose is to allow you to distinguish between weak hands with a long suit that just want to compete to 3 of that suit (perhaps a hand with around 6 points and a 6 card suit), and strong hands that want to bid onto at least game and show their suits on the way.

The key is that a **2NT bid by South after interference is artificial**. It requires partner to bid 3♣ and is most commonly used to show the weak hands. After 3♣ South either passes or bids their suit which is just showing a weak competitive hand. Given North has already defined their hand quite closely with 1NT they should not bid again.

Because weak hands start with 2NT, this means that 3 level bids become natural and game forcing. Therefore on this hand South could bid 3♦ and North most likely bids 3NT.

So what do you do if you want to bid 2NT naturally to invite in NT? You can't - there is always a downside to every convention you play! Generally speaking you take a view – you either pass or you force to game. Overall it is more useful to be able to compete on the weaker hands than it is to stop in 2NT when it's right (some of the time if you bid onto 3NT without the proper values the opponents mis-defend and let it make anyway!) That is the basic use of Lebensohl. But see the advanced section for further discussion on the meanings of other bidding sequences.

Assuming we arrived in 3NT, how will the play and defence probably go? East has to decide if they attack hearts immediately (which will almost certainly give declarer a trick they might not be entitled to but may gain the defence the tempo to get their hearts set up before declarer can get to 9 tricks) or whether to sit back and hope partner can get in to lead hearts through to them.

On this particular hand it's right to lead a spade and partner leads a heart through so we can take the first 7 tricks! However I would have been with the majority in leading a heart – getting our suit going is usually the most important consideration. Many chose the ♥10 or ♥9. If we had a certain outside entry there is actually a case for the ♥Q which

isn't a lead you will find in many textbooks – see advanced section for why. On this hand it makes no difference though.

Regardless of which heart is led, declarer will win and, on the face of it needs the club finesse to make their contract (which will mean they score 1♥, 5♦ and 3♣). However with 27 points between the two hands, it's quite likely almost all the opponents' points are with East which might suggest the club finesse will fail. So first declarer should just run their diamond suit and see if anything interesting happens. That means East has to make 4 discards which they will not enjoy! They can throw all 3 spades and 1 heart and still preserve enough tricks to beat the contract if they can get in. However if they throw a club away declarer may decide to cash clubs from the top and score 3 club tricks.

In fact whatever East does, declarer is able to make the contract – provided they view what the opposing hands are. See advanced section for details.

A sneaky trick declarer might try is to cross to the ♦A and lead a low spade towards their hand. West needs to be wide awake and dive straight in with the ♠A to return a heart for partner. Ducking is fatal as declarer now runs for home with 1♠, 1♥, 5♦, and 2♣s.

Key points to note

- It's worth overcalling decent 6 card suits to help partner with the lead even when the point count is a bit light – but the vulnerability and form of scoring are important considerations.
- Lebensohl is a useful convention for the partner of a 1NT opener to play – it allows them to distinguish between weak competitive hands and strong hands.
- Running your long suit in no-trumps is often very effective and gives the defence lots of discard problems (sometimes impossible ones).
- Lebenshol can be used to distinguish additional hand types as well (see advanced section)
- A “backwards” finesse can sometimes help if you are sure a normal finesse is offside (see advanced section)

More advanced

While basic Lebensohl can be used to determine hand strengths there are more advanced versions which provide additional definition of NT bids and cue bids of the opponent's suit (either bid directly or indirectly via 2NT first). Typically these show different combinations of hands with the other major and with or without stoppers (all these bids are game forcing).

One such scheme after 1NT (2♥) is:

- 2NT-3♣-3♥ Stayman (i.e. implies 4♠) with a ♥ stopper
- 2NT-3♣-3NT Game values without 4♠ and with a ♥ stopper
- 3♥ Stayman (i.e. implies 4♠) without a ♥ stopper
- 3NT Game values without 4♠ and without a ♥ stopper

I remember this by “direct denies” – direct bids over the overcall (i.e. not going via 2NT first) deny stoppers and indirect bids going via 2NT show stoppers. It is of course perfectly possible to play these bids the other way around – it's a matter for partnership agreement. If you are likely to forget it is perhaps safer to play the other way around so a direct 3NT bid does show a stopper!

On this hand South could therefore jump to 3NT denying 4 spades and denying a heart stop. North now knows there isn't a spade fit and, holding a heart stopper themselves, will be happy enough to pass 3NT.

Although these bids can be useful, in practice they don't come up very often. By far the most common are just the simple situations where you bid a suit of your own naturally at the 3 level to game force and you go via 2NT-3♣ to just compete in a suit.

Returning to the play, I said I would lead the ♥Q if I had a certain entry. Why? The reason is the ♥K is almost certain to be on my right (because of the 1NT opening and the later 3NT bid) but the ♥J might not be. If declarer has ♥Kxxx and dummy has ♥Jx it will be annoying if the J scores a cheap trick initially, our entry gets knocked out, and we cannot then effectively attack the remaining ♥Kxx. The Q works better here because if declarer ducks you can continue with the A and knock out the K while still preserving your entry. It also gains with a singleton J in dummy, and on some layouts where declarer has both the K and the J.

Whatever East does on 5 rounds of diamonds, declarer can make 3NT:

- If they discard a club declarer can just cash the ♣A and ♣K.
- If they keep all 3 clubs and discard all 3 spades and 1 heart, declarer has two options:
 - Put East in with hearts – he can cash 4 but then has to lead away from the ♣Q.
 - Take a “backwards” finesse in clubs. This arises when you are pretty sure the regular finesse won’t work (because you have a good feel for where the points are). So you lead the ♣J intending to run it. East has to cover and South wins the K. But that now leaves North with ♣A9 and declarer can now finesse against West’s 10. They have effectively shifted the finesse to one against the 10 rather than the Q. That works on the hand today.

Incidentally, how does East know what to discard on the diamonds? This should be their thought process:

1. Count points. We know North has 15-17, we can see 11 in dummy and we have 9. That is 35-37 so partner has 3-5 points. Enough for one useful card but no more!
2. Count tricks. Once declarer starts playing diamonds we can see 6 tricks for declarer (1♥ and 5♦). If declarer had both black aces they have 3 more certain tricks with the ♣K so there’s not much point playing for that! Hence we want partner to have one of the black aces, but we don’t yet know which.
3. Look at partner’s signals. Partner should be helping us which they can do in two ways here. They can play all their diamonds from the top (9,7,3) which should be suit preference for the higher suit (spades). Then their first discard should be an encouraging spade.

Julian Foster (many times NSW representative)

Queen’s Birthday BBO Pairs on Monday 14th June



Because of online games, there is a fear that Face-to-face club sessions may disappear. We believe that there is value for our players in running both! We invite you to join us to this experiment on **Queen’s Birthday Monday on 14th June**. Both our BBO session (10.15am start) and our Face-to-Face club session (10.00am start) will issue **RED** masterpoints!

- **RED** 14th June – BBO Monday morning, 10.15am start
- **RED** 14th June – F2F Monday morning, 10.00am start

Because of time difference, they will play different hands. Normal table money fee. Visitors and walk in are welcome.

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, 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.

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.