



## 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](mailto: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.

### #38386 BBO – Saturday ARVO session 29<sup>th</sup> May 2021

12		♠ KT8432	Dir: W
		♥ 82	Vul: N-S
		♦ 42	
		♣ T95	
♠ QJ6		♠ A9	
♥ 74		♥ AJ96	
♦ A985		♦ J63	
♣ KJ74		♣ AQ82	
	3	♠ 75	♣♦♥♠NT
	11	♥ KQT53	N - - - - -
	16	♦ KQT7	S - - - - -
	10	♣ 63	E 4 3 1 1 3
			W 4 3 1 1 3

Board 12 last week had almost all pairs playing in 3NT by East. Let's see how they fared.

Starting with the auction, I think all Wests passed as dealer. With opening bids getting lighter and lighter, favourable vulnerability, and the advantages of getting into the auction first, quite a few tournament players would open - planning on rebidding 1NT (11-14). But pass is perfectly reasonable as well.

After a pass North should also pass. A weak 2♠ bid is very dangerous with a poor suit, no shortages, only 3 points, and vulnerable. East then has a normal 1NT.

Quite a few South's now overcalled 2♥ or a bid that showed hearts and another suit. Either would allow West to make a bid I discussed in last week's column on Lebensohl - 3NT. This would typically show game values but deny holding 4 spades and deny a heart stop. Here East would be happy to pass with his heart stopper.

Against 3NT South will almost certainly lead a top heart. East should duck. This manoeuvre is one of the oldest players in bridge and is called a "Bath coup". The name comes from the days of whist (a forerunner to contract bridge) and is believed to have originated in the city of Bath in England where lots of whist was played. The hope is that South will continue the suit round into East's AJ (South hoping that his partner has one of those cards). It's a common play and it basically forces a defender to stop attacking a suit unless they are prepared to give up a trick. See advanced section for more on how South might ascertain what is going on.

Let's suppose South decides to switch - most likely to the ♦K. Now what as declarer? Exactly the same again - duck! Even though this time the A and J are in different hands the play is just as effective. South can't play the suit again without giving up a trick. It's pretty rare to see two Bath coups in the same hand!

Note something important - the Bath coup typically applies when you hold AJ but NOT the 10. If you held the 10 as well you could win the K with the A and your J 10 between them provide a 2nd trick or stopper in the suit.

Of course all this ducking isn't really getting East to 9 tricks but it does prevent South attacking his red suit weaknesses any more. Assuming South now switches to a black suit, East can quickly get to 8 tricks with a spade finesse, 2 red aces and 4 clubs. So they only need one more. This will eventually come from a red suit. South will have to discard two red cards on the clubs. Then when he gets in with one red suit he will have to give away a trick in the other. In practice last week most South's continued with a low heart at trick 2 which gave the 9th trick immediately.

There's just one point to be careful of. Declarer needs to take a spade finesse at some point so if they cash all the clubs first they need to finish in the West hand. Otherwise there may be no safe entry to dummy (♦A isn't safe

because it opens up the suit for the defence). Note again that just cashing your long suit can cause the defence discard problems.

### *Key points to note*

- These days opening 11 counts (especially not Vul) is becoming quite common and puts your side on the front foot.
- Overcalling over 1NT can be risky but will make the opponents life harder.
- The “Bath coup” is a holding of A and J in a suit (which can be in different hands) where you duck when the K is led. The defence cannot continue the suit without giving up a trick.
- Attitude signals in some positions can help avoid falling for the Bath coup (see advanced section).
- Even though it may not look like you have enough tricks for your contract cashing your long suit may cause the defence insoluble problems.

### *More advanced*

West might choose to open a weak NT if playing it. After stayman East will bid 3NT and North will probably lead a spade. This will worry declarer but, with spades 6-2, North has no entry and 3NT should still make on the same lines as when played by East. However it’s harder in practice because declarer isn’t likely to get a cheap red suit trick early on.

If South is going to intervene over 1NT it’s more appealing to do it with a bid showing hearts and another than just hearts. Now we have two chances to find a playable spot. Not that that helps North here!

After South bids hearts, if West chose to make a takeout double, and East chose to pass then we’d be going -500 which is more than EW’s game! Neither actions are likely on this hand though - West’s double isn’t ideal with only 3 spades and East might be wary of passing the double knowing the hearts are sitting over him (much more appealing if our hearts sat over declarer’s!). Having said that the vulnerability and the fact East has good side suit cards as well as 4 trumps might tempt him at pairs!

So if South leads the ♥K how can they tell what is going on? Two ways usually - point counting and signals.

First points. You should always do this at the start of defending after one player has shown a defined point range. South has 10, he can see 11 in dummy and he knows East is 15-17. That adds up to 36-38 which only leaves partner with 2-4 points. It’s possible these are the ♥A but it’s odds against as that’s one specific card. So it’s highly likely declarer has the ♥A. But we can’t know where the ♥J is. Declarer would be ducking from Axx(x) as well. So points aren’t enough to help here (they seldom are when it’s a Jack you are concerned about).

What about signalling? One method employed here to help with this problem is varying what card you lead to ask for a particular signal. Sometimes you want to know the count (to know how many rounds you can cash). Other times you want an “attitude” signal – i.e. whether partner has something in the suit.

I like a fairly popular method “AQ for attitude, K for count”. That means we lead a King to ask partner to give a count signal (natural or reverse depending on our agreement). Or we lead an A or Q to ask for an attitude signal.

With a holding like the South hand here we therefore lead the Q not the K. The Queen COULD still be being led from QJ or, as here, from KQ. Either way we want partner to tell us if they have an honour (the K or the J) so we know it’s safe to continue the suit. Here on the ♥Q, North would DISCOURAGE and South then knows they have no honour and East must therefore have AJ so they probably need to switch.

A King tends to get led from holdings like AKQxxx or KQJxx where we don’t really care what honours partner has but we do need to know how many so we can cash the right number of rounds of the suit.

An Ace tends to get led from holding like AKxxx where we want to know if partner has the Q or (in suit contracts) if they have shortage so we can give them a ruff.

This all sounds very useful. But no method is perfect. What's the downside? Sometimes it means when we lead a Q, partner cannot tell if we are leading from KQ or from QJ. If they hold the A they might overtake the Q concerned declarer has singleton K and doing so could cost a trick as we've now wasted two honours on the same trick. Or when they get in, they may assume declarer has the K and therefore place other points with partner with potentially disastrous results! It's good to clarify the situation for partner as soon as you can - either by getting in yourself, or by signalling encouragement in the suit you led or at least discouragement in another.

Finally, some pairs have the agreement that one particular lead (the K or Q by agreement) asks for an "unblock" – i.e. asks partner to throw the J if they have it (hence if they don't we know they don't have it). That can have its uses but it risks wasting two honours on the same trick and therefore you need good holdings like KQ109 before you can afford to do it.

Julian Foster (many times NSW representative)

## Queen's Birthday BBO Pairs on Monday 14<sup>th</sup> 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.