



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.

#96921 BBO – Saturday ARVO session 8th May 2021

18	♠ K96	Dir: E
	♥ A83	Vul: N-S
	♦ A765	
	♣ 973	
♠ T84	♠ A752	
♥ QT96	♥ KJ542	
♦ 98	♦ K43	
♣ J642	♣ Q	
11 ♠ QJ3		
3 13 ♥ 7		
13 ♦ QJT2		
♣ AKT85		
		♣♦♥♠NT
		N 3 4 - 1 1
		S 3 4 - 1 1
		E - - 2 - -
		W - - 2 - -

Last week I saved myself some time looking through the hands to select one to write about – because I played in the session myself!

I have chosen board 18 because it demonstrates how effective pre-empting can be. We are often familiar with facing an opening pre-empt and having to decide whether we can bid over it or not. But a pre-emptive raise of partner's suit in a competitive auction can also cause enormous problems for the opponents.

At our table, and quite a few others, the auction started 1♥ 2♣ 3♥. 1♥ and 2♣ are both fine although a few Souths chose to double. Double could certainly

work and we definitely have at least some support for all the other suits, however I prefer 2♣ for a few reasons:

- We only have 3 spades and partner is going to assume 4 if we make a takeout double of 1♥. So we could easily end in a 4-3 fit.
- Our spades are quite good. Paradoxically I'd be happier to double if my spades were worse! This is because if we have to trump a 2nd heart in our hand it will be with our Q or J which could weaken our trumps. Trumping with small spades in this hand would (we hope!) still leave the bigger spades in partner's hand to draw trumps with.
- 2♣ is a reasonable suit and it is pointing out a good lead to partner. At the point we first bid over 1♥ we don't know who will end up on lead so that factor is important.

The key to the auction is the 3♥ pre-emptive raise by West though. This gives North an absolutely revolting problem. They don't know how strong their partner is for their overcall, they don't have the shape to make a takeout double, they are very balanced to be pushing to the 4 level, but they do have values themselves and will feel like it is their hand so they should do something. All sorts of actions could be right and they simply don't have the space to find out. I think I would reluctantly pass (I don't have 4 spades for a takeout double and I don't really want to raise to 4♣ with such a balanced hand when vulnerable, nor do I want to gamble 3NT when I only have 3 small clubs as I need partner's to be really good to be able to run the suit).

East should definitely pass 3♥ – partner is saying they are weak so there is no way we are going to make 4♥. We should leave NS to guess what to do over it! As South again I think I'd reluctantly pass. Partner is known to have some values but we have no idea where and East could have a stronger hand than they actually do. We don't really have anything more than our minimum 2♣ overcall.

Consider the difference if West passes or raises to 2♥. Over pass North has an easy 2♥ bid (a cue raise showing a good raise of clubs). Over 2♥ North can bid 3♣ (the fact they have bid voluntarily means they have some values as well so this also describes their hand quite nicely).

Effectively the pre-empt forces NS to guess. When that happens even the best opponents sometimes guess wrong. Here when they are vulnerable it could be quite expensive!

If you are used to a jump raise of partner's suit being invitational then this may be a new suggestion for you. The obvious question then is what do I bid when I do have an invitational raise? The answer is a "cue raise" – i.e. a bid of the opponent's suit (3♣ here) is used to show a raise of hearts that has values in it (where partner might want to go onto game if they are better than minimum), as distinguished from a weak pre-emptive raise (where we only want partner to bid game if they are really strong for their original 1 level opening or have extra shape).

If NS do choose to bid onto 4♣ (one table in fact reached 5♣) that isn't going to work well for them here. The defence will lead hearts and keep leading them which should cause declarer to lose trump control and go two off (see advanced section for further discussion on this).

On this hand the Souths that doubled came out best. Their partner bid diamonds and two pairs ended in 3♦ making +130. But had the West at those tables pre-empted 3♥ then they would not have been able to play in 3♦!

Key points to note

- Prefer to overcall a decent suit if there are other flaws to making a takeout double of a major (e.g. you don't have 4 of the other major)
- After an opening from partner and a simple suit overcall playing a jump raise of partner's suit as pre-emptive is very effective – i.e. a very weak hand (preferably with a bit of shape) and at least 4 card support. Use a cue bid of the opponents' suit to show a good raise (i.e. with more values).
- When the opponents are pre-empting you, accept that sometimes you will simply not have room to bid as you would like and make a guess – sometimes that will be wrong! At pairs it can sometimes be better to just go quietly and take a small plus score rather than risk a large minus.
- A forcing defence can be extremely effective (see advanced section). ♣♥♦♠

More advanced

When you have long trumps it is often very effective to play a "forcing" defence – i.e. force declarer to use their trumps up so you end up with more than they do. That will allow you to potentially draw or knock out declarer's trumps and then cash your own suit.

To play a forcing defence you typically lead your own long suit. It works especially well here. Lead a heart. Declarer wins the ♥A. But whatever he does East will get in with ♠A and ♦K and each time he should play another heart. Declarer has no useful losers he can throw away so is basically forced to trump. But once declarer has trumped twice he is down to 3 trumps while West has 4. He has lost "trump control". At our table declarer hoped clubs were breaking and cashed ♣AK. When they didn't he was in trouble. He was down to one small trump in each hand and I had Jx left. I could trump the 3rd round of diamonds, draw both declarer's remaining trumps with my J and cash our 4th heart to beat 4♣ by 2 tricks. If declarer knew initially that the trumps were breaking that badly he could probably have escaped for 1 off but of course he doesn't know that until too late!

One final point about responding to takeout doubles. If South does double then West should still raise to 3♥ but suppose for some reason he didn't. What should North respond? I would bid 3♦. Yes 3 not 2. Remember you are responding to partner's takeout double and you might have to bid on no points at all – so when you bid 2♦ you are not showing any values at all, it is completely different to partner voluntarily responding to your opening bid – you have FORCED partner to bid when you double!

Here North has 11 points. It is impossible for partner if you bid 2♦ on hands with 0 points AND hands with 11 points. That's why you need to jump with the 11. Conversely as South after the double you have said your piece – you have a minimum hand and, unless partner does jump or force by cue bidding the opponent's suit, then you

shouldn't generally bid again. So often I see players bidding 2♦ with North and raising to 3♦ with South – they get to a reasonable spot but both players are unaware they have each totally misbid! North should jump to 3♦ and South should pass. The reason becomes apparent in these situations:

- a) Suppose North DID have 0 points and had to bid 2♦. Now when South raises to 3♦ on 13 points that takes their side completely overboard.
- b) Suppose South in fact has a bigger hand (say they have 16 points) and appreciates North may have to bid on nothing. So when partner bids only 2♦ they will pass – but here they'd probably miss game.

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.

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.