



## 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.

### #10515 BBO – Saturday ARVO session 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2021

12		♠ 87	Dir: W
		♥ AQ54	Vul: N-S
		♦ 97	
		♣ AK762	
♠ KQT9632	♠ AJ4		
♥ 98	♥ KT76		
♦ Q2	♦ AT643		
♣ T8	♣ 5		
13	♠ 5	♣♦♥♠NT	
7 12	♥ J32	N 4 - 2 - -	
	♦ KJ85	S 4 - 2 - -	
8	♣ QJ943	E - 1 - 4 1	
		W - 1 - 4 1	

Last week Board 12 saw most pairs playing in 4♠ East West but some North South pairs found their club fit and a couple of East West pairs pushed on to 5♠.

Looking first at the bidding, West has a fairly standard 3♠ pre-emptive opening bid. The 7222 shape is a bad feature as it increases the losers (having a singleton somewhere would be better). However this is more than outweighed by:

- Our pre-empt is in spades, the highest suit so it takes the maximum space from the opponents
- We have a decent suit so we are happy for partner to lead it
- We are not vulnerable and they are vulnerable so we can afford to pre-empt quite aggressively

A couple of tables did open only 2♠. This allowed North to act which in turn allowed North South to later bid 5♣ over 4♠. Over 3♠ it is very tough for North South. North might choose to double but it's very risky as East could be sitting with a large hand. In practice most Norths passed 3♠ and I would have done as well.

East should raise to 4♠ whether or not North doubles though. Why should East raise? Forgot the points! When there is shape around, it's tricks that matter. Count the likely tricks. 7 spade tricks and the ♦A is 8 and partner may be able to get 2 club ruffs. That's 10 tricks. Even if that doesn't work (either because partner we can only get 1 club ruff, or they only have 6 spades) the ♥K is a 50% chance of a trick (higher if North doubles 3♠ as that makes the ♥A much more likely to be with North). So there are numerous ways we can come to 10 tricks. Deep Finesse shows East West do indeed make 10 tricks despite only having 19 points between them.

At a couple of tables East didn't raise immediately and South responded to their partner's takeout double with 4♣. Now when East belatedly did bid 4♠ North South went on to 5♣. Bidding 4♠ immediately makes it pretty much impossible for North-South to bid again.

So how many tricks should 4♠ make? Deep Finesse says 10 but some tables managed 11. The normal start to the defence is a top club from North. Seeing dummy they might switch to a trump to try and reduce club ruffs (North can't know West only has one more club!) or they might switch to a diamond (see advanced section for how South can signal diamonds here).

After a diamond switch declarer will almost certainly duck it to South's ♦K. At this point most Souths continued another diamond and the ♦Q scored in hand. This should allow West to make 11 tricks (see advanced section for how) but, in practice, most declarers completed drawing trumps, ruffed their club in dummy and eventually led towards the ♥K to make 10 tricks and score +420.

Where North South did manage to get into the auction and play 5♣ they scored better than -420 as 5♣ should only go 1 off for -100 or, if doubled, -200. The defence will almost certainly start with two rounds of spades. There is a spade loser, the ♥K and one diamond. Why only one diamond? Because declarer should guess to play the ♦K when

they lead from dummy towards the KJ because West has pre-empted in spades and will probably have shown some spade honours in the play already – hence they are very unlikely to also have the ♦A. After the ♦K has scored, declarer can lose one diamond and ruff the other two in dummy.

Should East West push onto 5♠ if North South do bid 5♣? Definitely not! West has far too many losers (and when you have pre-empted you should generally leave things to partner) and East is looking at a fair bit of defence so could easily be taking 3 tricks against 5♣ with no guarantee of making 5♠. One of the best “rules” in bridge is do not bid “5 over 5” (sometimes also referred to as “the 5 level belongs to the opponents”). About the only time it is right to bid 5 over 5 is when there is extreme shape around. This hand does not qualify and, as is pretty typical, neither side can make a 5 level contract so bidding 5 over 5 just converts a plus score to a minus score!

### *Key points to note*

- Pre-empt aggressively with spades and when you are not vulnerable (especially if the opponents are vulnerable).
- When raising pre-empt tricks are more important than points.
- Bidding 5 over 5 is almost always wrong – it’s one of the best “rules” in bridge!
- When there is a singleton in dummy, suit preference signals are useful (see advanced section).
- As defenders be wary of when you might need to cash your tricks before declarer can discard losers. This is a big risk when declarer has pre-empted as they will be short in the side suits.

### *More advanced*

Defending 4♠ after a top club lead, what should South play at trick 1? Many pairs will have some agreed method where the A or the K normally asks for an attitude or a count signal. However, in a suit contract when dummy turns up with a singleton in the suit led it is more useful to switch to playing a suit preference signal. The rationale is that you don’t need an attitude signal as you are not usually going to want to continue the suit (there are some exceptions to this where you might want to try and force some trumps out of dummy but those aren’t that common). Nor do you need a count signal to know how many partner has. The more important information to know is which of the other two side suits is it better for the defence to attack. Sometimes of course it will be obvious from what dummy holds in them but more often than not it is unclear and some help from partner is useful.

Here South should play their smallest club at trick 1 and that will signal they prefer diamonds to hearts. Seeing this, North may well switch to a diamond although it’s not unreasonable for them to switch to trumps to try and cut down club ruffs in dummy. Remember a signal from partner is never a “command” to play that suit – it’s merely providing information which an intelligent partner then uses to help guide their defence. If North sees that South has something in diamonds they might view there isn’t an immediate risk of the diamonds setting up and it’s therefore worthwhile trying to cut club ruffs.

If North does switch to diamonds and South wins the ♦K at trick 2, what should they continue? In fact it needs to be a heart to cash the defence’s 3rd and last trick! If, as several Souths did, they return a 2nd diamond to declarer’s Q, that should now result in 11 tricks. How? Declarer draws trumps in two rounds ending in dummy, cashes the ♦A discarding one of their hearts and now trumps a diamond back to their hand. This sets up the 5th diamond in dummy. NOW they ruff their club loser to reach dummy and discard their last heart on the winning diamond. Well done to the couple of declarers who did this.

Could South foresee this happening? Yes I think so for 2 reasons:

- a) North will have switched to the ♦9 so South knows they won’t have the ♦Q. Hence that card is in declarer’s hand so there’s definitely a risk of the diamonds getting set up and there are trump entries to dummy to reach them.
- b) declarer has pre-empted so it means they are going to be short in several side suits and allowing them even one discard could be fatal for the defence.

Perhaps South thought North had a singleton diamond? It’s certainly possible but they would be more likely to have led that at trick 1 (from their point of view it might be too late to cash a top club first - they might be hoping the play

will go diamond to partner's A to give them a ruff, and then they may be able underlead their clubs to get back to partner's hand for another diamond ruff to defeat 4♠). Also declarer would be mindful of the singleton possibility as well so they might well just take the ♦A if they were worried about a ruff.

How might declarer play if North switches to a trump? A good bet is to win it in dummy and lead a low diamond towards the ♦Q immediately. The same position will arise if South wins the ♦K and exits a diamond or a trump – but this time South can stop the 11th trick by playing a 2nd club to force dummy to ruff. This takes a vital entry out of the East hand while declarer still has the ♦Q in his hand. After declarer crosses back to the ♦Q there is now only one remaining entry to dummy so it's impossible to set the diamonds up and both hearts cannot be discarded.

Julian Foster (many times NSW representative)

## **We have REOPENED for Face-to-Face bridge on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> October 2021**

### **For Face-to-Face sessions:**

Welcome back! Our clubroom on Goulburn Street has opened from Monday 18<sup>th</sup> October 2021. We will start with 6 regular sessions on the first week: Monday – Thursday morning, 10am – 1.15pm and Tuesday night 7.15pm – 10.00pm. There will be a separate field for Supervised players on Wednesday morning and a “Play it out loud” Supervised session on Wednesday night (6.30pm start).

### **For BBO sessions:**

We will continue to run the 5 regular club session online on BBO. Please check our [session timetable](#) here.

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.

24 boards, BB\$4 per person per game.