



Tuesday Night Tips

The Sydney Bridge Centre mini lesson

If you have joined our F2F session on Tuesday night, you probably already know the host Martin Clear. He is a big fan of the evening game because of his daytime job, and has been leading the group for bridge discussion after the session. This "discussion" will now continue online - Each week Martin will play in the field and pick an interesting hand from the Tuesday night BBO session. Join your bridge buddy for a game on Tuesday night (7.15pm start)!

What if This Goes Wrong?

#45477 BBO – Tuesday Night 7th September 2021

7 D	N	W	N	E	S
	♠ J109	1♦	X	P	P
	♥ A932	2♣	P	P	2NT
	♦ 82	P	P	P	
	♣ AKQ3				
W		E			
♠ K		♠ Q8653			
♥ KQ5		♥ J876			
♦ KJ1076		♦ 95			
♣ J1072		♣ 54			
	S				
	♠ A742				
	♥ 104				
	♦ AQ43				
	♣ 986				
		2NT S	NS: 0	EW: 0	

An interesting principle in choosing a line to play turned up on Board 7 of the Sydney Bridge Centre & Friends competition on Tuesday Night 7th September: what are the consequences of being wrong if my chosen line fails? In addition, an important and not-well-known probability principle came up which should have assisted declarer to make his contract.

At our table, West opened 1♦, and North doubled. This was passed around to South who bid 1♠. Opener then rebid 2♣. Two passes followed and South reasoned that North's double probably contained a club stopper (it certainly did!) and decided 2N was the best chance. We were the only ones in NT, with a wide selection of contracts chosen (common when no-one has

an eight-card fit). Every trump suit was tried except clubs, which is interesting as clubs is the only contract making 9 tricks.

Against 2N, West had a difficult lead choice and went with a diamond, which gave declarer his 7th winner. Where to get an 8th? Spades are the obvious suit, and declarer crossed to dummy with a club and ran the ♠J to West's King. West knocked out the Diamond Ace, the bidding and card fall making it clear to all that West now had three diamond winners set up. Declarer then went to dummy with another club, and led the ♠10, to which East smoothly and correctly played low.

This repeated finesse technique is called a double finesse. You gain a trick whenever either one of the spade honours is in position. It's usually not a good idea to have a double finesse position and only take the first one: you're almost guaranteed to lose a trick, and then you don't get the benefit on the second round.

But many of you might be thinking, is that still true after the first finesse has lost? After all, there are four initial possibilities, a) KQ with West; b) K with West and Q with East; c) Q with West and K with East; and d) KQ with East (the equal likelihood of each option is complicated by East having longer spades, but that is maybe offset by West needing more points for the opening bid). The thinking many people come up with is that once the King has turned up with West, the last two of those four options (which are roughly equally likely at the start, it is true) have been eliminated, so the chance of West having KQ as opposed to K-without-Q is now 50/50, right?

The answer is that this is not so, and the reason is a lovely piece of probability analysis called the Principle of Restricted Choice (PRC). The PRC meets with a lot of resistance initially (I met one player who said he "didn't believe in it" - it's not a religion), so I will explain it as carefully as I can. Yes, the chance of West initially holding KQ is roughly equal to the chance of West holding K-without-Q, but as any good West will choose at random to win with either K or Q, you are no longer comparing those two equal chances: you are comparing the chance of West initially holding K-without-Q to the chance of West initially holding KQ *and choosing to play the King*. The fact that West has a choice

means that the King winning the first spade trick results from either 100% of the time West had K-without-Q, versus only 50% of the time that West had K-and-Q, thus making it roughly 66% likely that West will NOT have the Queen.

Yes, this can be hard to follow at first glance, but consider the hand being played 8 times, with each of the 4 honour possibilities (West holding KQ, K-not-Q, Q-not-K, neither honour) happening twice, and on the two possibilities where West has KQ he plays the K once and the Q once. Taking the second finesse after losing the first finesse to either honour will lose only on the two-out-of-eight situations where West started with KQ but win on the FOUR-out-of-eight situations where West started with only one honour.

So declarer should have taken the second finesse. He did not, he played the Ace, and West showing out doomed the contract as there was nowhere to go for an 8th trick. There are actually two other reasons to take the second finesse: firstly, playing the Ace only gains if the Q is now on its own; and secondly, losing the finesse does not doom the contract.

There are often bridge play moments where declarers shy away from a strategy because they think it may not work, but don't consider how bad that would be if it happened. In this case, putting the ♠A up on the second round would make the contract only when West had precisely KQ doubleton, and it left no chance at all otherwise, as there are no entries left to the closed hand at all. But taking the second finesse and having it fail to West holding K and Q does not doom the contract! West can then cash three diamond tricks, but with the two spades, that is still only five for the defence. And declarer has set up an eighth winner with the ♠9.

However unfortunately, that 8th winner would be blocked. The spade holding (remember this is on the assumption that West had the ♠Q, not the real position) would be the 9 in dummy and the A7 in hand, with no way to get to the closed hand after winning the ♠9. However miracles sometimes occur and when they do, it is usually from a squeeze!

Declarer will make 8 whenever West has a third spade (3154 shape), as the spades break. If declarer has only two spades, he may also have only 1 heart (2155 shape). Declarer would know this as East would have shown out on the second club to dummy, and when West cashes his last diamond winner, the dummy's four cards would come down to ♠9, Ax in hearts and ♣Q. West exits with either a club or heart, and those two winners (♣Q and ♥A) cashed in dummy force East to part with either the only heart stopper the defenders have (due to West having a singleton that falls under the Ace), or one of the spades. Making 8.

And if West with that 2155 decides not to pressure his partner, and exits with a heart before cashing the third diamond winner? Dummy then cashes ♣Q, forcing East down to two spades and two hearts, and now the ♠9 is run, a heart is conceded to East and she is forced to lead a spade back to the Ace. A lovely 'stepping stone' finish for 8 tricks!

Martin Clear (SBC Tuesday Night host)

Repeat on Demand - The SBC Encore! Mid-Week Swiss Pairs



A lot of players really like the idea of a weekday congress and asked us to run it again. If you didn't manage to join our last time, here comes the opportunity!

The [SBC Encore! Mid-Week Swiss Pairs](#) is a one-day congress to be held on Wednesday 29th September, 10am start. We will play six 8 boards round with a lunch break in the middle.

RED masterpoints awarded. BB\$12 per player. Winners (of 3 categories) will receive FREE entry to the NSWBA Online Teams of Three, details will be announced very soon!

[Enter in advance](#) required on the NSWBA website. We intend to run separate fields for Open and Restricted & Novice players, if number allows. Please nominate the field you would like to compete in.

The Sydney Bridge Centre online sessions on BBO

Our clubroom on Goulburn Street is temporary closed under the current restriction. We are running regular club session online on BBO for the moment and will resume our F2F sessions once we can. Please keep an eye on our [website](#) for the latest announcement.

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.

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