



Wednesday Wisdom

The Sydney Bridge Centre mini lesson

Julian Foster (many times NSW representative) will be analysing an interesting hand from each Wednesday morning session. This hand commentary will be sent to participants before the next Wednesday BBO session.

You are also welcome to [send questions](#) about hands that you have played. We will collate them and let our panellists leading by Julian Foster to answer them.

#2284 BBO – Wednesday morning session 24th February 2021

7	♠ Q853	Dir: S Vul: Both																								
	♥ 742																									
	♦ QT83																									
	♣ K9																									
♠ 764	♠ AJT																									
♥ 963	♥ T5																									
♦ AJ976	♦ K4																									
♣ 85	♣ AQT763																									
	♠ K92	<table border="1"> <tr><td>N</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>1</td><td>-</td></tr> <tr><td>S</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>1</td><td>-</td></tr> <tr><td>E</td><td>2</td><td>1</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td>2</td><td>1</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td></tr> </table>	N	-	-	-	1	-	S	-	-	-	1	-	E	2	1	-	-	-	W	2	1	-	-	-
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7	♥ AKQJ8																									
5 14	♦ 52																									
14	♣ J42																									

Board 7 last week saw three NS pairs scoring -200, two of them going two off in 3♥ and one going two off in 3NT. We'll consider whether NS should have got so high, and then also look at the defence since both contracts could have been beaten by even more!

The normal start to the auction is 1♥ P 2♥ (North should generally prefer to raise with immediate support rather than bid 1S - although a 4-4 fit can sometimes play better than a 5-3 one it is nearly always better to support when you can - it makes life much easier for partner and both of you if the opponents start intervening).

East then has to decide whether to intervene over 2♥. Most tables did bid 3♣. I probably would too but it should be done in the knowledge it's risky. On a bad day South could be sitting over you with 19 points including KJ9x of clubs and you could score -1100! What's more many pairs will be able to make a penalty double now because they have already found a fit so don't need to play takeout doubles to look for other fits. On the plus side 3♣ indicates a good lead for partner and makes life potentially harder for NS, especially if South wants to invite partner to game.

What should South do over 3♣? Not so easy. It's tempting to bid on with our good trumps but we still only have 5 tricks with them. Jxx of clubs is a bad holding as any clubs partner has will now almost certainly be lead through at trick 1. So there's definitely a case to pass even though no one did at the time (see advanced section for another point here).

The 3♣ bid also makes it less clear what a 3H bid by South now means – is it just a competitive bid or an invite to game? What many pairs play in these situations is that a bid of 3♥ is just competitive and not inviting partner to bid more. A bid of something else is a **game-try** – i.e. it is a genuine invite to partner. Sometimes you will have room to make one or two such bids below 3 of your own major suit, other times you won't. Here the only available bid is 3♦. Therefore it's not possible to play that as showing or denying anything specific in diamonds, it is just a general game-try asking partner to bid game if they were maximum for their previous 2♥ bid. Where you have more bids available (e.g. suppose the auction had gone 1♠ P 2♠ 3♣ now you have 3♦ and 3♥ available) you can agree with your partner what each means (some pairs prefer them to be natural'ish, others prefer them to be shortages – it doesn't actually matter that much, the important thing as usual is being on the same wavelength!)

How should the defence to 3♥ go? West will lead C8 and East will win the first two tricks with the Q and A. East knows that clubs are 2263 round the table (West would not lead the 8 from J85). So they should play a 3rd club which will give partner a ruff provided they have any trump higher than dummy's 7. What should West return after that? What their partner asks for! How do they ask? By a suit preference signal with the card they use to give partner the ruff. East has 4 clubs left at that point. A high one (10 here) says they prefer spades, a low one (3 here) says they prefer diamonds. East should be asking for a spade (see advanced section for why, and for more discussions).

If West obliges the next trick should go ♠7 3 10 K. After this declarer should eventually lose 2 more spades and 2 more diamonds, making just 5 trumps and the ♠K for an unpleasant score of -300.

What seems to have happened in practice is East didn't play a 3rd club to give West the ruff with the ♥9. So declarer scored a later trick with the ♣J.

One pair ended in 3NT by North. This is way too high with only 21 points between the hands. Luckily for them it also only ended up 2 off after the obvious club lead. But it too could have been worse. After declarer won the ♣9 he tried a low spade. East has to take his Ace and cash his clubs. This will score 1♠, 2♦ and 5♣ for the defence. 4 off! East's problem is he can't see the North hand so he doesn't know the club K is dropping under his Ace. Clubs could be 1363 round the table instead. In that case he probably doesn't want to play the SA into thin air. When he ducked, declarer could scramble 1♣, 1♠ and 5♥ to escape for the same 2 off that 3♥ went at other tables.

Key points to note

- Competing over auctions where the opponents have found a fit can be dangerous but that danger is sometimes outweighed by indicating a good lead and making their auction harder.
- Bidding on with balanced hands with 2 or 3 cards in the opponents suit is risky when vulnerable.
- After the opponents intervene, it is worth discussing how to distinguish between hands that just want to compete and hands which want to genuinely invite partner to bid game.
- Suit preference signals when giving partner a ruff are essential to defend well.
- Don't rush to play aces - save them to beat Ks and Qs!

More advanced

Firstly there's one other relevant point in deciding whether South should bid 3♥ over East's 3♣ – the vulnerability. This hand is game all which, at matchpoints, is mathematically the worst vulnerability to compete further in (firstly if we go off we are going off in 100's, secondly if we defend we are taking them off in 100's). Had we been not vulnerable 3♥ feels automatic (it could easily be -100 against their 110 or 130 in clubs). But we are taking a big risk of -200 when we bid 3♥ and that's almost always a bad score at matchpoints because it is worse than any partscore the opponents can make.

We said earlier East should be signalling a spade when they give partner a ruff. Why? Because they have a holding that may (if partner had the K) take 3 tricks immediately but also because (if partner doesn't have the K) they need partner to lead the suit through dummy twice to score 2 tricks in it. It's exactly the same as declarer leading towards AJ10 and taking a double finesse. They are hoping to make 2 tricks whenever at least 1 honour is onside (a 75% chance). Here as defenders we already know one honour is onside.

When West switches what should they play? Most good defenders play attitude switches. That is you lead low if you have something in the suit but high if you don't. So here West should play the 7 to try to indicate they have nothing. Here that makes no difference as East will always play the 10. If the 10 holds they will know partner had the K, if it loses to the K the scene is set for a second spade lead through dummy's Q to hopefully gather two more tricks. What East should definitely NOT do is play the Ace. That just gives declarer the K and the Q separately (same reason you shouldn't generally lead aces into thin air). East should reason there is nowhere for declarer's spade losers to be discarded (diamonds aren't an immediate threat because we have the K and there is no easy way for declarer to get to dummy to finesse against it should they need to). Could declarer have singleton ♠K? Yes occasionally (their hand could be 1543). But this is odds against.

Another reason for signalling spades over diamonds is the diamond suit might be "frozen". What do I mean by that? I mean it may be a combination where the side that first plays the suit costs a trick. Suppose the diamond suit looked like this around the table:

	Q1083	
J9765		K4
	A2	

Now if West switches to a diamond and declarer puts in the 10 then our K is dead and the defence don't score any diamond tricks. But if declarer has to play the suit himself we will always score a trick (try it - we cover the Q if they lead that to promote partner's J). Whichever side attacks the suit ends up being worse off. Broken honour holdings like Kx sitting over other honours are always dangerous suits to attack in defence!

Julian Foster (many times NSW representative)

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The Sydney Bridge Centre is running a **F2F Matchpointed Swiss Pairs Congress** on Easter Monday 5th April at Level 1, 162 Goulburn Street, Sydney. It is a one-day congress with 24 boards in the morning, lunch break, then another 24 boards in the afternoon. A delicious light lunch is included.

An invaluable and meaningful prize for the Open winners, the Overall Novice & Restricted winners and the Best Novice (or Restricted) winners – **Over the Shoulder Mentoring** by a Teams of Three Captain, including Derrick Browne.

RED masterpoints awarded. Please refer to [programme brochure](#) for details and [enter online](#).

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 but due to Covid restrictions the numbers are limited. It is essential that you pre-book for these sessions via this [F2F Session Booking Form](#). Walk-ins are welcome for sessions which are not fully booked.

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.