



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.

#32463 BBO – Saturday ARVO session 9th October 2021

1	♠ KQ98	<i>Dir: N</i>																														
	♥ AJ	<i>Vul: None</i>																														
	♦ K53																															
	♣ K873																															
♠ 762	♠ 5																															
♥ T762	♥ K9854																															
♦ J976	♦ QT84																															
♣ Q9	♣ JT2																															
16 ♠ AJT43	<table border="1" style="font-size: small;"> <tr> <td></td> <td>♣</td> <td>♦</td> <td>♥</td> <td>♠</td> <td>NT</td> </tr> <tr> <td>N</td> <td>6</td> <td>1</td> <td>1</td> <td>6</td> <td>5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>S</td> <td>5</td> <td>-</td> <td>1</td> <td>5</td> <td>4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>E</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> </tr> <tr> <td>W</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> </tr> </table>			♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	N	6	1	1	6	5	S	5	-	1	5	4	E	-	-	-	-	-	W	-	-	-	-	-
			♣	♦	♥	♠	NT																									
N			6	1	1	6	5																									
S			5	-	1	5	4																									
E	-	-	-	-	-																											
W	-	-	-	-	-																											
3 ♥ Q3																																
6 ♦ A2																																
15 ♣ A654																																

Board 1 last week was a potential slam hand provided it was played by the right hand. 10 pairs were in slam (2 in 6NT, 8 in 6♠) all played by North. 7 made and 3 went off. The remaining 8 pairs all played in game, some 3NT, most 4♠ - making between 10 and 12 tricks. Let's see how the auction should perhaps go and how to best play the hand.

North will usually open a strong NT. As soon as he does that South should be mentally adding their 15 points to 15-17 and realising they have 30-32 points between them so slam should be at least a possibility. South will start with a 2♥ bid as a transfer to spades. The first question is whether North simply bids 2♠ or whether they “super-accept” in some fashion – see advanced section for more discussion.

If North does bid 2♠ then I would continue as South with 3♣ which is usually played as natural and game forcing. There is no immediate rush and no great reason to hide our clubs. Partner could have opened 1NT with 5 (sometimes even 6) clubs and 6♣ could very easily be the right contract. There is still time to return to no-trumps later.

Even though they have club support, after the initial transfer North knows there is at least a 9 card spade fit so they will almost certainly return there – especially as spades score more when playing pairs. Having found a spade fit, South is likely to move towards slam – probably with blackwood. When they find partner has enough key cards and the ♠Q then they will most likely bid 6♠.

Provided 6♠ is played by North it can always be made. However if played by South a heart lead will defeat it as it will set the ♥K up as a trick and, in due course, declarer will have to lose a club as well.

So how does 6♠ make with the heart finesse not working? At the table it was quite easy for many pairs because East led a heart away their K round into declarer's AJ. With clubs breaking 3-2 that meant there was just one club loser and 12 easy tricks.

It is frequently right to lead aggressively against small slam contracts played in suits because you often need to try to set a trick up quickly. Playing imps (teams) a heart lead is surely your best chance of beating the contract (hoping partner has the ♥Q). However at pairs there is a case for being more passive. You don't want to give cheap tricks away and leading away from an honour around to a strong NT hand is a big risk of doing that. There is definitely a case for a more passive lead – something like the ♣J.

What would happen then? Declarer wins and draws trumps. The pairs that went off at this point took a heart finesse. But, as you gain experience in bridge, one thing you try to do is AVOID taking finesses. After all you want a chance that is better than just 50%!

The way you do that here is via an “endplay”. After drawing trumps you should eliminate diamonds. Play ♦A, ♦K and trump North's 3rd diamond in South. That leaves no diamonds in either declarer's hand or dummy so if the defence

were to lead the suit now it would give you a “ruff and discard” – i.e. you can trump in one hand and discard a loser from the other. This nearly always gains a trick.

Next you play 3 rounds of clubs hoping to set up your 4th (if the suit splits 4-1 then we are basically going off anyway so it’s not worth worrying about!) As it turns out East has the 3rd club so he has to win. This is good news for declarer because East is now stuck. He only has red cards left in his hand. A diamond allows declarer to ruff in South and discard the ♥J from North, or a heart runs round into the ♥AJ. East is “endplayed” and must give the 12th trick away whatever he does.

What if West had won the 3rd round of clubs? Yes NOW we will still have to take the heart finesse. But the key point to understand is we are no worse off. We have just given ourselves an extra chance to avoid the heart finesse first. The finesse is our “last resort” – it’s not the first thing we try to do.

No-one tried 6NT which was just as well here as it has no chance whatsoever. It’s essential to play the hand in a suit to allow the losing diamond in North to be ruffed. If both hands are balanced you tend to need at least a combined 33 points for 6NT to be good. The slam with the best mathematical chance of making is actually 6♣ played by North – see advanced section for why. I have no idea how to bid to that though!

Key points to note

- Super accepts of transfers after 1NT are useful to quickly identify a good fit and perhaps reach a light game or shut opponents out
- After transferring, a bid of a 2nd suit at the 3 level is natural and game forcing. Don’t be afraid to do this – it can easily be your best contract.
- When playing a hand, rather than immediately taking a finesse consider whether there is a way of avoiding taking it!
- 4-4 fits can sometimes be worth a trick more than a 5-4 fit because the 5th card can provide a useful discard if it’s a side suit which is impossible if it’s trumps (see advanced section).

More advanced

There are assorted methods for super-accepts of transfers. Their aim is generally two-fold:

- To identify that we have a good fit and perhaps allow us to bid game when light on points
- To get to the level of our fit quickly to make it harder for the opponents to find theirs

A simple method is just to bid 3 of the major when maximum with 4 card support for the transfer suit (note 4 card support is normal as that guarantees at least a 9 card fit).

An alternative is to use that bid to show a MINIMUM with 4 card support (this is considering the 2nd of the aims above by getting us quickly to the 3 level that our 9 card fit usually suggests we will want to play at even if responder has almost nothing). Then other bids can be used to show maximums with 4 card support. Some players use 2NT, others use bids of different suits to show a concentration of values there, or perhaps a doubleton there. My regular partner and I dropped those though because we felt it just gave too much information away to the defenders (why tell them you have a weak doubleton – which is probably their best lead?!) Instead we just use 2NT as a maximum super-accept. Regardless of what you agree, a good approach is to play “re-transfers” on the next round by responder – e.g. 3♥ here would be a re-transfer back to spades. This guarantees that the 1NT opener (usually the stronger hand) will be declarer.

If North doesn’t super-accept and South bids 3♣ now what? Because we are in a game forcing sequence already it is useful to play something known as the “principle of fast arrival”. That basically means that the quicker you bid to the level you are already forced to, the WEAKER your hand. The rationale is that you bid at a lower level with a stronger hand to allow partner more room to cue bid or move towards slam. So here North should bid 3♠ not 4♠ over 3♣. While they are roughly in the middle of their 15-17 point range, they have 4 very nice spades and a known double fit because they have clubs too. Not to mention most of their points in As and Ks. When North shows a stronger hand

than just bidding 4♠, South can confidently move forward towards slam (probably with blackwood in practice even though they have no heart control – but it would be desperately unlucky for partner to have neither the ♥K nor the ♥A!)

I mentioned that 6♣ by North is actually the best slam. How so? The reason is it's a 4-4 fit. Sometimes a 4-4 fit actually plays a trick better than a 5-4 fit where the 5th card provides a useful discard. That is the case here. With spades as a side-suit we can just draw trumps, ruff North's 3rd diamond in dummy and then use the 5th spade to discard our ♥J.

6♣ still relies on clubs splitting 3-2 and it needs to be played by North to protect from the heart lead. But the key difference is we no longer care whether West or East has the 3 clubs. Nor do we need to eliminate diamonds. No endplay is necessary – we can simply ruff one loser (♦3) in dummy and discard the other loser (♥J) on dummy's long spade. So it will make basically 68% of the time (the odds of a 3-2 break in clubs).

6♠ is worse because it requires clubs 3-2 but it also requires:

- Either: East to have the 3 clubs (50%)
- Or: West to have the 3 clubs (50%) AND the ♥K (also 50%).

That's about 75% together. So it will make about 68% x 75% = 51% of the time.

Julian Foster (many times NSW representative)

The greatest learning experience – The Online Teams of Three



A fun event for players to learn directly from an advanced player in a relaxed environment. We invited these advanced players based on the recommendation of the NSWBA Event Committee to play Captains, who will take turn to partner with each team member throughout the day. You are not only learning from the Captain of your own team, you will also learn from other Captains when they are your opponents!

The [NSWBA Online Teams of Three](#) will be held on RealBridge, an online bridge program with built-in video support, so your Captain can give you “face-to-face” feedback.

RED masterpoints awarded. \$30 per player to be paid in advance via our online payment portal. We intend to run 3 separate fields for Novice, Restricted and Open players, so we can assign the most appropriate Captain to your categories. Please nominate the field you would like to compete in.

[Enter in advance](#) required on the NSWBA website. There will definitely be 3 separate fields for Novice, Restricted and Open players, so you can compete in your own league. Please nominate the field you would like to compete in.

We're REOPEN for Face-to-Face bridge on Monday 18th October 2021

For Face-to-Face sessions:

Welcome back! Our clubroom on Goulburn Street will be open from Monday 18th 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.

A Bad Hair fun competition will be held on the first week of reopening. A bad hair pair will be picked from each session to win a free game voucher. Each pair is limited to win once.

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.