



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.

#8749 BBO – Saturday ARVO session 18th September 2021

18	♠ K75	Dir: E																													
	♥ AJT5	Vul: N-S																													
	♦ KJ4																														
	♣ AJ7																														
♠ 63	♠ QJT42																														
♥ 62	♥ 843																														
♦ A6532	♦ Q8																														
♣ K953	♣ Q62																														
17	♠ A98	<table border="1"> <tr><td>♣</td><td>♦</td><td>♥</td><td>♠</td><td>NT</td></tr> <tr><td>N</td><td>2</td><td>2</td><td>4</td><td>2</td><td>3</td></tr> <tr><td>S</td><td>2</td><td>1</td><td>4</td><td>2</td><td>3</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	2	2	4	2	3	S	2	1	4	2	3	E	-	-	-	-	-	W	-	-	-	-	-
♣	♦		♥	♠	NT																										
N	2		2	4	2	3																									
S	2		1	4	2	3																									
E	-	-	-	-	-																										
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7	♥ KQ97																														
	♦ T97																														
9	♣ T84																														

Board 18 last week saw all but one North-South pairs reaching game (either 4♥ or 3NT), the question was whether they made it or not.

The normal auction will start with 3 passes to North who opens 1NT (15-17). Some Souths immediately bid 3NT which, given the 4333 shape, has some appeal. Others went via Stayman and once they found partner had hearts as well – some invited (which North accepts), others just bid game directly.

I would have used stayman. Just because OUR hand is 4333 doesn't mean that partner's has to be as well. It is here of course but playing in the 4-4 heart fit will usually be better whenever partner has any doubleton. If your 1NT opening can have a 5 card major then that's another reason to play in hearts as it could be a 9 card fit.

What should South bid after the stayman response? Playing teams I would just bid game (we are vulnerable so it's too risky to miss game when it's making) but playing pairs there's a case for only inviting. North will obviously accept here but that might also give us a chance of reaching 3NT instead (see advanced section).

Overall 11 tables played 4♥, 5 tables played 3NT and 1 pair stopped in 2♥.

East has a clearcut lead of the ♠Q against either contract. The lead of top of a semi-solid sequence of honours is one of the safest and most effective in bridge. I was surprised this wasn't completely unanimous.

After that start, 4♥ is very difficult to make and declarer has to be very careful. The times it did make were usually when the defence provided some help! Declarer's normal start was to win the ♠K, draw trumps ending in South and lead a diamond. Quite a few Wests jumped up with the ♦A but it's much better to duck. Jumping up with the ♦A is wrong for several reasons:

- It solves declarer's problem in the suit – they may have needed to guess where the A and the Q are – and could easily have been about to run the ♦10 and lose to the Q.
- There is no rush. North has opened 1NT so is known not to have a shortage in the suit and there is no obvious source of tricks for any diamond losers to be discarded on.
- On this layout it costs the defence a trick (partner's Q now falls under the K).
- It may save declarer an entry (they might have had ♦KQ in hand and need to lead twice from South – jumping in with the A means they no longer have to do that).
- After we win, we aren't really sure what we want to switch to anyway.

After West won the ♦A, many switched to a club which helped declarer even more because they also needed to play on clubs but were running out of entries to the South hand to do so.

There is a saying in bridge “2nd hand plays low, 3rd hand plays high”. Obviously there are exceptions to every “rule” but that is a good general principle to follow – and it definitely applies here.

This is also a good hand for passive defence. No need to switch suits at all. If the diamond is run to East’s Q, they just carry on with spades. Declarer can now try something in clubs but the defence are going to score 1 spade, 2 diamonds and at least 1 club to beat 4♥.

To make the contract without help from the defence, declarer has to play very carefully – see advanced section.

The play in 3NT is not that different. It will fail if declarer loses to the ♦Q as East can set up the spades and will eventually get in with ♣Q to cash them.

Key points to note

- Two 4333 hands often play better in 3NT than a 4-4 major fit. But, more often than not, the 4-4 fit will play better whenever either hand has a doubleton.
- Leads from top of honour sequences are the safest and most effective in bridge – don’t look elsewhere unless you have a very good reason!
- Playing low in 2nd seat is right more often than not – there is no need to jump up with aces unless there’s a risk declarer has a shortage or you can see losers being discarded if you don’t take it.
- Passive defence is often best – switching suits often helps declarer, either directly by giving them tricks, or indirectly by saving them an entry.
- As declarer be alert to the possibility of endplaying defenders to help you (see advanced section).

More advanced

How could we reach 3NT instead of 4♥? If South invited after using stayman then North could bid 3NT as a suggestion – this is basically saying they are accepting the game invite but think 3NT could be a better spot. Here South should be delighted to agree with his 4333 shape!

Playing the weak NT could also help on this hand. On the assumption the pair are playing 5 card majors, North is likely to open 1♣. The auction will then go 1♣ - 1♥ - 3♥. At this point South could now bid 3NT as a suggestion to play. This time it’s North who will be delighted to agree with his 4333 shape!

How should you play 4♥? I think in practice you would run the ♦10 playing for the Q onside – and later you’d then hope to lose only one club trick as well. As we’ve seen that doesn’t work well here and, if declarer plays diamonds before drawing all the trumps, after winning ♦Q East could return a diamond to their partner’s A and receive a ruff to take 4♥ two off!

So how can 4♥ be made genuinely?

One way is after winning ♠K declarer draws trumps and plays on clubs – by running the 10, or leading low to the 7 (effectively playing West for H9x). Assuming East continues spades, declarer wins the A and finesses the club again. Finally they cash the 3rd club and exit with their last spade to East. At that point East is endplayed – they either have to give a ruff and discard (which South will ruff in the South hand, discarding one diamond and then lead a diamond to the K) or they have to open the diamond suit themselves. One or two Easts appear to have played the ♦Q which made declarer’s life very easy! If you are forced to play the suit, better on this hand is to lead the 8 to partner’s A and another diamond back. Now declarer still has to guess where the ♦Q is.

Another way of making it would be to only draw two rounds of trumps initially, finesse the club, win the ♠A, finesse the club again, cash the ♣A, then draw the final trump by crossing to South. Finally lead a diamond to the K and then exit a spade. East is again endplayed (but this time they cannot even give declarer a guess). They can cash the

♦Q (which West can't afford to overtake) but are then forced to give a ruff/discard. This only works, however, because clubs split evenly (otherwise the 3rd round could be ruffed by the trump that had to be left out due to a shortage of entries to South).

The play in 3NT is very similar. Declarer needs to play on clubs to lose to the Q. Now East can set the spades up but doesn't have an entry in time to cash them. Declarer can score 2♠, 4♥ and 2♣ (with the aid of a 2nd finesse). Then they lead a diamond to the K for their 9th trick. Note there isn't a guess – if East has the ♦A the contract is doomed as they have winning spades. Hence the only hope is that the diamonds lie the way they do.

The key to making either contract is recognising that you are going to need to lead from South quite a few times and entries there are in short supply (or will be if you play 3 rounds of hearts). Then also recognising that things will go better if the defence have to open suits up for you rather than the other way around!

Julian Foster (many times NSW representative)

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. 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.

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.