



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.

#95942 BBO – Saturday ARVO session 31st July 2021

2	♠ KQ3	<i>Dir: E</i>																													
	♥ T	<i>Vul: N-S</i>																													
	♦ J86																														
	♣ A98743																														
♠ 654	♠ J9872																														
♥ 763	♥ 9854																														
♦ Q974	♦ T532																														
♣ QJ6	♣																														
10	♠ AT	<table border="1" style="font-size: 0.8em;"> <tr><td>♣</td><td>♦</td><td>♥</td><td>♠</td><td>NT</td></tr> <tr><td>N</td><td>6</td><td>4</td><td>7</td><td>3</td><td>7</td></tr> <tr><td>S</td><td>6</td><td>4</td><td>6</td><td>3</td><td>7</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	4	7	3	7	S	6	4	6	3	7	E	-	-	-	-	-	W	-	-	-	-	-
♣	♦		♥	♠	NT																										
N	6		4	7	3	7																									
S	6		4	6	3	7																									
E	-	-	-	-	-																										
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5	♥ AKQJ2																														
1	♦ AK																														
24	♣ KT52																														

Board 2 last week was a slam hand for North South where at first glance you have 16 tricks but it soon gets harder! At the table just over half the field bid to the 6 level. Only one pair bid 7NT but, unluckily, went off. Let's see how the auction might go.

East will pass and South should open 2♣ or whatever bid shows a big hand in their system. This hand is definitely too strong to open at the 1 level – you have 24 point and only 3 losers yourself and you need almost nothing from partner to make 3NT or 4H. It is a matter for partnership agreement whether 2♣ is just a strong hand or whether it is a complete game force – see advanced section for more discussion.

What should North respond? There are plenty of bidding methods over 2♣ openings. The most common approach is that 2♦ is a negative response (usually 7 or fewer points) and other bids are natural (at least 5 card suits) and positive (at least 8 points). See advanced section for some other thoughts. Here North could bid 3♣ (even if 2♣ was not game forcing to start with, a positive response like this now creates a game force).

South now knows that they have a club fit and a minimum of 32 points between the hands. Slam should be virtually certain – the only question is 6 or 7? South needs to find out about the ♣AQ and what to do about their spade loser – partner might have ♠K or ♦Q which would provide a discard for the ♠10.

So they could potentially just bid blackwood and, when they find the ♣Q is missing, they will most likely settle for a 6 level contract. Bidding 6♣ would not be wise playing pairs though. You should prefer to play in a major suit or in no-trumps because they score more so you might well bid 6NT at this point.

However, to explore those options earlier South should probably continue with 3♥ over 3♣ - 6♥ could easily still be a good contract. North having no heart fit should now bid 3NT. Note they don't need to do anything more than this – they have already shown they have a positive response with clubs. It is now up to South to move further. They should do this with a bid of 4♣ to confirm the club fit and interest in slam. Note the use of 4♣ here. Many players use 4♣ as a Gerber ace ask. But this hand is a good example of why that isn't a good idea. So often you want to use 4♣ either as natural (as here) or as a cue bid (when playing in a major). Very few strong pairs actually use 4♣ as an ace ask.

North is happy to co-operate and should make a cue bid of 4♠ (see advanced section). Once again this is likely to lead to a contract of 6NT.

What about the play? When you first see the two hands you will probably curse that you are not in a grand slam as you count 3 spades, 5 hearts, 2 diamonds and 6 clubs – a grand total of 16 tricks! But as you cash the ♣K things change! Clubs prove to be 3-0 and all of a sudden you only have 2 club tricks for a total of 12. Fine in 6NT but,

playing pairs, we should also be looking at whether we can make an overtrick. We have 12 tricks in top cards. Can we make a 13th? Not if clubs are trumps. But we can in no-trumps – see advanced section for how.

A final small point on the play. When playing the heart suit quite a few players started with the A. This made no difference today but it is definitely not the right play. You have the 10 in dummy so you have 5 cast iron tricks provided you play the 10 against South's 2. Suppose one of West's hearts was with East and they held 98754? Now if you crash the 10 against the A, your 2 at the end is going to be a loser! So you should cash the ♥10 in dummy and then cross back to hand in another suit. A lot of the time (like here) it won't matter. But sometimes it will!

Key points to note

- Hands of 23+ points or lots of tricks should generally open 2♣ - it is too risky to open them at the 1 level and find yourself playing there when game is cold!
- Many pairs these days play the 2♣ opener as game forcing (even if partner has nothing) – it makes other auctions much easier (see advanced section)
- Natural positive responses to the 2♣ opener usually show at least a 5 card suit and 8+ points.
- A bid of 4♣ is better played as natural or a cue bid – rather than ace asking
- Count tricks and be careful not to unnecessarily crash high cards against each other – you can come unstuck if the suit unexpectedly breaks badly!
- If it looks like you have a certain loser, don't necessarily give up. Sometimes a squeeze will happen – and you don't need to know the details, just playing off your long suit can work magic (see advanced section).

More advanced

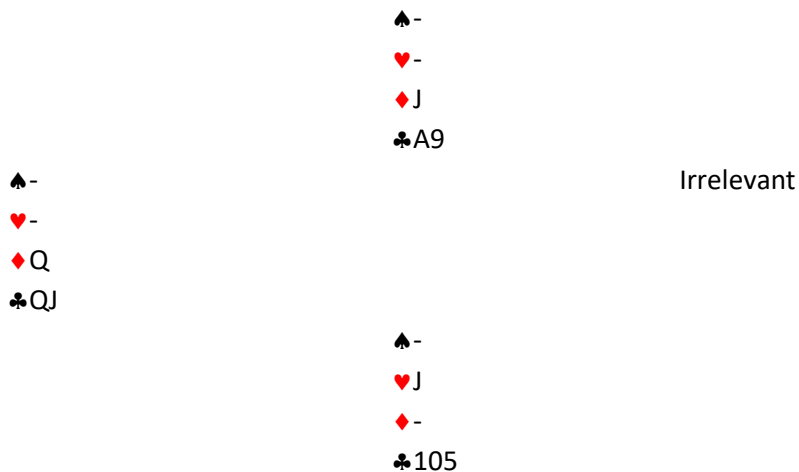
Many pairs these days play that the 2♣ opening is an unconditional game force. Yes this does sometimes mean you end up playing game with 24 points opposite 0 and go off. But that is a small price to pay for being able to explore with more bids on lots of other hands secure in the knowledge that partner cannot pass anything below game.

The 2♦ response varies too. A common treatment is “negative or waiting”. That is, the responding hand only bids a natural positive with a good suit to show of their own. Otherwise they simply bid 2♦ “waiting” (even on quite strong hands) to see what partner rebids. That reveals the nature of their game force – it could be large and balanced or it could be based on a long suit.

Bidding that way the hands here would probably bid something like 2♣ - 2♦ - 2♥ -3♣ - 4♣ - 4♠ - 4NT - 5♦ - 5♥ - 6♣ - 6NT. 4♠ is a cue bid after clubs are agreed, 4NT is blackwood, 5♦ is 1 key card, 5♥ asks for the ♣Q, 6♣ denies it. So South settles for 6NT.

Note the use of 4♠ by responder as a cue bid even though North doesn't have the ♠A. In auctions where one hand is known to be very strong and the other much weaker it is sensible that the weaker hand be allowed to make cue bids on 2nd round controls – they simply won't have 1st round controls often enough for it to be useful. Here of course when South hears 4♠ they are delighted because it means the ♠10 loser will be taken care of and all they are interested in now are the ♣A and ♣Q.

So what about the play? 7NT can be made on a squeeze. Squeezes are advanced declarer play techniques but sometimes, even if you don't know the details, they can just happen if you follow a few basic principles! After ♥10, 3 spades, and the ♦AK, declarer continues cashing their hearts and discards clubs from dummy. They end up in this position with 3 tricks to go:



When they lead the last heart what can West do? Discarding the ♦Q means declarer can discard the ♣9 and score the last 2 tricks in dummy. Discarding a club means declarer can discard the ♦J and score the last 2 clubs. There is in fact nothing West can do – they have been “squeezed”.

It is worth noting the key things needed for this to work:

1. Some “threats” – i.e. cards that are threatening to become winners depending on what West discards (here that’s the ♦J and ♣9).
2. An entry (here that’s the ♣A in dummy – without that it wouldn’t matter if West DID throw away the ♦Q because South couldn’t reach the ♦J anyway).
3. No “idle” cards. Imagine West had one more small card in their hand – they could discard that and have no problem. Generally declarer needs to be in the position to win all the remaining tricks except 1 (there are exceptions).
4. The discards coming in the right order. West has to discard before dummy – if dummy had to discard first, West could just keep the same length as North and have no problem.
Plus of course declarer has to play off all his cards to give West the problem. Simply knocking out the ♣ trick or claiming 12 tricks is lazy!

Something many declarers at the table did was discard a diamond from North when running the hearts. It might have seemed like it didn’t matter but it’s actually fatal. That ♦J is the most valuable card in North’s hand! Keeping the ♣A in North is also essential because that’s the later entry to the possible winner. However, if you keep regard to the principles above and just run your long suit all you really have to do is watch out for the card above the ♦J. If you don’t see the ♦Q appear you discard the J at trick 11 and just hope that the clubs are now going to run. If East had had the ♦Q you would fail because West could have just discarded a small diamond and clung onto the ♣QJ. But at least you gave yourself a chance.

There are lots of different squeezes and lots of books on the area. But it’s advanced stuff and it’s important to appreciate it is perfectly possible to play extremely good bridge and enjoyable bridge for decades without ever knowing or caring about them! They are, however, a rich source of satisfaction if you do bring one off at the table!

Julian Foster (many times NSW representative)

Addendum

A technically better line (with thanks to Martin Clear) is to cash ♥10, then cross to ♠A, cash the ♦AK and the remaining hearts throwing 4 clubs from North. Then cross to the ♠K and cash the ♠Q in this position throwing the ♣2 from South:

	♠Q	
	♥-	
	♦J	
	♣A9	
♠-		Irrelevant
♥-		
♦Q		
♣QJ6		
	♠-	
	♥-	
	♦-	
	♣K1052	

West is in the same trouble as before and has no good discard. This line is better, however, because this squeeze will work if EITHER defender has the ♦Q and all three clubs. It does not rely on these cards only being in the West hand. That occurs because one of the threat cards (♦J) is in the same hand as the last winner we cash.



RED The SBC Mid-Week Online Swiss Pairs

A congress that is not held during weekends!

The [SBC Mid-Week Online Swiss Pairs](#) is a one-day congress to be held on Wednesday 18th August, 10am start. We will play six 8 boards round with a lunch break in the middle.

RED masterpoints awarded. BB\$12 per player. Open winners will receive Free Entry to State Online Individual on 4th September, Novice / Restricted winners will received Over the Shoulder Mentoring experience as prizes.

[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.