



## 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 (Julian Foster, Marcia Scudder and Paul Roach) answer them.

## #97325 BBO – Wednesday morning session 6<sup>th</sup> January 2021

11	♠ T432	Dir: S
	♥ T9	Vul: None
	♦ AT52	
	♣ AT8	
♠ AJ7	♠ Q65	
♥ AJ872	♥ KQ63	
♦ J6	♦ 983	
♣ KQ7	♣ J65	
8	♠ K98	♠ ♥ ♦ ♣ NT
16	♥ 54	N - 1 - - -
8	♦ KQ74	S - 1 - - -
	♣ 9432	E 1 - 3 1 2
		W 1 - 3 - 2

Happy New Year to everyone. This week I'll look at board 11. Almost all pairs ended up in 4♥ which should go off but was allowed to make several times.

Starting with the auction I think there are several close decisions for East West. South will pass and West has the first decision. 1♥ or 1NT (assuming 15-17)? Personally I'd open 1NT even though I have a 5 card major and no diamond stop. It describes the hand well overall. It also puts partner in control (i.e. they know whose hand it is). Besides, if you open 1♥ and partner doesn't raise what will you rebid?

After a pass from North, East also has a decision. Even though it doesn't work well on this hand I have a lot of sympathy with passing 1NT. At matchpoints it's not worth pushing for tight games and you are so balanced that no-trumps might play as well as a suit. One pair played in 1NT and I suspect I'd have done the same!

There are arguments to stayman though:

- Just because your hand is 4333 doesn't mean partner is too – they may have a doubleton and a ♥ fit (if we have one) will then still play better.
- There is a chance partner will have a 5 card major and a 5-4 fit is so much more powerful that you don't want to miss it.

If you do stayman you have another close decision over partner's 2♥ response. Do you pass or invite? If East does invite, West should definitely accept (the auction 1NT-2♣-2♥-3♥-4♥ was quite common last week). But I have a lot of sympathy for pass, again because you are so balanced. Indeed pass is theoretically the right decision because 4♥ should go off – but +140 didn't score so well this time because several pairs allowed 4♥ to make.

After a 1♥ opening East will obviously raise but again has a choice. Those playing Bergen raises might choose 3♣ (6-9 with 4 card support). However being so balanced I think I would just raise to 2♥. West will then make a game invite of some sort and now East should bid game as they have 4♥ when they might have had 3, and they have 8 points in their 6-9 range).

Let's turn to the play and defence in 4♥. There are 2 clear diamond losers and the ♣A so it all revolves around the spade suit. Most Norths led a spade (see advanced section for more discussion about which one). As so often the play at trick 1 determines the fate of the contract.

Suppose North leads the ♠10. Declarer should play low (there is no point covering as you are missing both the 9 and 8 – remember the only reason to cover is to promote lower cards in your hands into tricks later). South should also play low. Why? Because one of the most basic rules for defenders is do not underlead an ace against a suit contract. Therefore South **knows** West has the ace. They also have the J (partner's 10 denies it). So if South does put the K up declarer will score the ♠A, Q and J and will make 10 tricks losing just 2 diamonds and the ♣A.

When South plays low declarer's ♠J scores trick 1. But after that declarer can only make 1 more spade trick (South covers the Q if it is led, otherwise they play the 9) and will go 1 off in 4♥.

Suppose now that North leads the ♠4. South again knows the A is with West but it's not immediately so clear where the J is. In fact South can work out West has the J too - see advanced section for how. So again South should only play the K if declarer puts the Q up from dummy.

The key to getting these positions right is twofold:

- a) never do something that definitely cannot work (i.e. play the K here) - the alternative MIGHT make no difference but it MIGHT be better.
- b) remember that honours should generally be used to cover other honours (so here you should hold back the K to cover dummy's Q).

### *Key points to note*

- Opening 1NT with a 5 card major is generally fine if it describes your hand well overall.
- There are many situations where there is not a clear cut "right" bid on a hand. 2 or 3 options are possible and obviously on any one hand any of those might prove best.
- Just because you have 4 card support for partner's major doesn't mean you HAVE to make a Bergen raise. Very flat hands don't play as well and may only be worth an initial raise to 2.
- Honour cards in defence should generally be used to cover other honours. Putting them up "into thin air" is virtually never right.

At trick 1 when your partner makes the opening lead, try to place the cards in that suit. You will be amazed how often you can almost work out the entire suit layout (see advanced section)!

### *More advanced*

When leading it is useful to play a method that tells partner if you have an honour or not. Many pairs play "2nd and 4th". What that means is they lead 4th highest from suits with honours. But when they don't have an honour, they lead 2nd highest. So from 8763 for example they would lead the 7 (and on the next round play the 3<sup>rd</sup> highest - i.e. the 6). Partner will usually be able to tell which it is by considering what other spot cards are visible (or, in some cases, from the auction).

Does the 10 count as an honour for these purposes? Opinions vary and it's something worth discussing with your partner. Here, if it does, you would lead ♠2 but, if it does not you would lead ♠4. In my 2 most regular partnerships we treat the 10 as an honour in one and we don't in the other! Another variation you see is that people treat the 10 as an honour in a suit but not in no-trumps (or vice-versa). As I frequently say - it is far more important to agree what your partnership does than what it actually is! Once you know your agreement you can work out what holdings partner can and cannot have in any given situation.

If North leads ♠4, let's see what South can work out here. Start by imagining it is 4th highest (which is probably the natural instinct with a 4 that looks low). The cards higher than the 4 which South cannot see are A,J,10,7. Rule 1 is do not underlead an ace against a suit contract. So South knows West has ♠A. Which means if the 4 were 4th highest North would have led it from J1074(32). But would you lead the 4 from that? No, neither would I. I would lead the J.

Therefore South can work out that isn't the position. Hence the 4 is NOT a 4th highest lead. Hence its most likely to be 2nd highest (it cannot be from shortage as that would give West 5 spades but they opened 1♥).

Now South knows it's 2nd highest that means they also know North does not have an honour - so ♠J is also with West. The only remaining 4 card holdings are 10432 or 7432. If you treat the 10 as an honour then in fact the only

holding possible from which the 4 would be led is 7432. If you don't treat the 10 as an honour then both are still possible.

But the key on this hand is to work out that West has ♠AJ. Once you know that you know playing the K on anything other than dummy's Q will give declarer 3 spade tricks. Playing low MIGHT still let them make 3 spades (e.g. if the lead is from 7432 because declarer now has AJ10 and your K is just the victim of a simple finesse) but it MIGHT hold declarer to 2 spades – as it does here. So you should of course make the play that might gain.

The more times you see positions like this the more this sort of thinking becomes easier. It is amazing how often you can work out the layout of a suit almost entirely just from a single lead!

Note that some North's led the ♠10. That is sometimes done to make it clearer that you don't have anything in the suit (North may be concerned partner isn't going to be able to read the ♠4). It makes little difference here but it can be dangerous to squander a relatively high card like a 10 early on.

Julian Foster (many times NSW representative)

### Win an Over the Shoulder Mentoring opportunity by Julian Foster!



The Sydney Bridge Centre is running a **F2F Matchpointed Swiss Pairs Congress** on the Australia Day 26<sup>th</sup> January 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 Julian Foster, Marcia Scudder or Margaret Foster or Marcia Scudder (all are many times Teams of Three Captains).

**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:

Our first F2F session in the new year will start next Monday 11<sup>th</sup> January 2021, 10am start.

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.