



Wednesday Wisdom

The Sydney Bridge Centre mini lesson

Julian Foster (many times NSW representative) will be analysing an interesting hand from each Wednesday BBO 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.

#29534 BBO – Wednesday morning session 14th October 2020

1	♠ AQ9865	Dir: N																														
	♥ 962	Vul: None																														
	♦ 876																															
	♣ Q																															
♠ 4	♠ 2																															
♥ QT75	♥ KJ843																															
♦ QJT2	♦ K543																															
♣ K762	♣ T53																															
8	♠ KJT73	<table border="1"> <tr><th></th><th>♣</th><th>♦</th><th>♥</th><th>♠</th><th>NT</th></tr> <tr><td>N</td><td>5</td><td>1</td><td>-</td><td>7</td><td>3</td></tr> <tr><td>S</td><td>5</td><td>1</td><td>-</td><td>7</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	5	1	-	7	3	S	5	1	-	7	3	E	-	-	-	-	-	W	-	-	-	-	-
	♣		♦	♥	♠	NT																										
N	5		1	-	7	3																										
S	5		1	-	7	3																										
E	-	-	-	-	-																											
W	-	-	-	-	-																											
8	♥ A																															
7	♦ A9																															
17	♣ AJ984																															

Let us return to a slam hand this week. Board 1 showed the power of a really large fit and lots of controls – allowing NS to make 7♠ with a combined 25 points. Even though you can make 7♠, 6♠ is the contract you would normally want to be in and 2 pairs last week managed it (well done). How should it be bid?

North's normal opening would be a weak 2♠ or perhaps a multi 2♦.

Let's start with assuming North opens 2♠. South will be pleasantly surprised to hear that and with such a strong hand with lots of controls and 5 card support they should immediately be thinking about slam as a possibility.

There are certainly hands where slam won't make, however. Give North AQxxxx Qxx xx xx for example. Now after a diamond lead a club and a diamond loser are almost inevitable.

How can South find out? They can perhaps use a 2NT enquiry to start with. A 2NT response to a weak two is usually a forcing enquiry made on a hand that wants to investigate whether game is available (perhaps we have 16-17 points opposite partner's 6-9). Here we are always going to bid at least 4♠ so this time we are using it for a different purpose – to investigate slam.

There are quite a few methods employed by pairs to respond to the 2NT enquiry. As usual there is no right answer, it's a matter of personal preference and any method can work well or badly on a particular hand. I'll list 3 common methods here:

- **Ogust.** This asks for the quality of suit and hand strength. Responses show progressively better hands. Typically
 - 3♣ shows minimum strength and a poor suit
 - 3♦ shows minimum strength but a good suit
 - 3♥ shows maximum strength but a poor suit
 - 3♠ shows maximum strength and a good suit.

This allows responder to judge whether to bid game or not.

- **Feature asking.** Typically this is asking partner to show where their other honours are. A "feature" is usually some sort of honour fragment in a side suit like Kxx. If you don't have anything like that you just rebid your weak two suit.
- **Shortage asking.** This is asking partner to bid a shortage if they have one. It is the same philosophy as a splinter bid – if you know where partner's shortage is, you can work out if the honours in your hand are fitting well. This is the method I play with my regular partner. The philosophy, however, is we only show a shortage if we are NON-MINIMUM (otherwise we repeat the weak two suit).

Note that none of the responses take you above 3♠. That is because, most of the time, you are using the 2NT bid to investigate whether to play in 3♠ or 4♠. This hand is different – we are using it to investigate whether to play in 4♠ or 6♠ (or maybe even 7♠).

Shortage asks work well on this hand. Here North would bid 3♣. Once South knows North has at most 1 club they just need to check partner has the Ace of trumps and they can then count at least 12 tricks with the only possible loser being a diamond (all your other clubs will effectively get trumped by North's spades). A good auction using this method would be 2♠-2NT-3♣(club singleton or void) -4NT (RKCB for spades by implication – it's the only suit the partnership has shown) -5♦ (1 or 4 key cards) -6♠

Note that South doesn't need to bother asking for the Queen of trumps which is what you would usually do when continuing after using blackwood (see advanced section for why).

Of course if partner has the perfect hand for us (Axxxxx xxx Kxx x) then we won't have any losers at all and can make 7♠. It is very hard to specifically find out about the ♦K but it can be done (see advanced section).

What if North started with a 2♦ multi? South is too strong to bid the usual 2♥ (pass or correct) response. If partner was maximum we might well make game. Therefore South would again start with a 2NT enquiry but this time that enquiry is different. The responses need to tell us what suit partner has. Most pairs tend to show good or bad weak twos in hearts or spades (e.g. 3♣ is a good weak 2♥, 3♦ a good weak 2♠, 3♥ a bad weak 2♥, 3♠ a bad weak 2♠). South will be expecting to hear partner has a weak 2♥ and will get a pleasant surprise when they learn otherwise! However they have not pinpointed a shortage so they are not in as good a position to know whether it is safe to bid slam or not. This is actually another advantage of simple weak twos over the multi (which I forgot when I wrote about the topic in a previous column). When the weak two suit is already known, it's possible to have more specific responses. When the suit could be one of two, you need responses to show which suit instead so you cannot ALSO tell partner about features, shortages, suit quality, etc.

Key points to note

- Very large trump fits (10+ cards) can be extremely powerful and will often make game or slam on minimal points. As long as you hold the AK of trumps, the Q is no longer needed.
- You want to agree how partner bids with a big hand opposite a weak two (usually a 2NT enquiry to investigate whether game is on, sometimes whether slam is on) and what opener's different responses to it show.
- Natural weak twos allow a greater variety of responses to be shown when responding to a strong 2NT enquiry than is possible after a multi 2♦ opening.

More advanced

When South asks for keycards and North shows 1, the next step would normally be to ask if partner has the Q of trumps. But South doesn't need to bother about that here. Why not? Because they know North has at least 6 spades for the weak two so they know the partnership has at least 11 trumps. Therefore even if we don't have the Q, we know it will drop under our A and K.

Here South is the one asking for keycards but suppose North did. South has 4 keycards on this hand so their initial response won't disclose the Q. But suppose they had 2 keycards. Now South should lie and say they hold the ♠Q! The reason is the same - South knows the partnership has at least 11 trumps so the Q will drop even if we don't hold it (note South knows this but North doesn't). You normally do the same if you know there are at least 10 trumps as well (making the assumption the 3 missing ones will split 2-1 so the Q will still be a heavy favourite to drop). If North did hold the ♠Q it will look odd to hear partner also show it(!) – but instead of assuming partner has made a mistake, you should actually trust partner's bidding and realise they are showing the extra trump length. That knowledge may sometimes be enough to bid the slam.

Suppose North did hold the perfect hand for us: Axxxxx xxx Kxx x. Could we legitimately explore bidding 7♠? Yes! Top pairs have additional methods after blackwood which ask about specific suits. These come up very rarely (frequently there is simply not enough room) but can be very valuable when they do. It's getting too advanced to go

into details here but one such scheme asks for the Q and K in a specific side suit. You have to be very careful to check what all of partner's responses might be to make sure none of them will take you too high. But here, if you can find out about the ♦K in time with partner's response being at most 6♠ then you can actually bid 7♠.

This is an advanced area and needs a lot of discussion with your partner. You can play bridge very successfully for decades without ever worrying about these sorts of bids!

Julian Foster (many times NSW representative)

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.