



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.

#94075 BBO – Wednesday morning session 28th October 2020

11		♠ AQT5432	Dir: S																									
		♥ T8	Vul: None																									
		♦ Q																										
		♣ 764																										
♠ 6		♠ K97																										
♥ Q75		♥ AK9432																										
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8	♠ J8	<table border="1"> <tr> <td></td> <td>♠</td> <td>♥</td> <td>♦</td> <td>NT</td> </tr> <tr> <td>N</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>2</td> <td>-</td> </tr> <tr> <td>S</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>2</td> <td>-</td> </tr> <tr> <td>E</td> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>4</td> <td>3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>W</td> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>4</td> <td>3</td> </tr> </table>			♠	♥	♦	NT	N	-	-	2	-	S	-	-	2	-	E	1	2	4	3	W	1	2	4	3
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Board 11 last week was an example of the “sacrifice” principle at pairs. What do I mean by that? Basically one side deliberately plays in a contract they know is almost certainly going down (doubled) but the score for that is still better than they would concede in the opponents’ contract. When playing regular pairs sessions we score using matchpoints where you score points based on how many pairs you beat (but not by how many points you beat them). A successful sacrifice can therefore win many matchpoints if other pairs don’t find it.

In this example if we just look at the Deep Finesse analysis to start with it says EW can make 4♥ for which they would score 420. But it also says NS can make 2♠. That means if NS deliberately played in 4♠ (doubled) they would expect to go 2 off. Not vulnerable that would score -300 – i.e. better than the -420 they would get by passing out 4♥. That is the best EW can do because they would go off if they pushed on to 5♥. 4♠ is therefore a profitable “sacrifice” on this board.

Understanding the scoring and vulnerability makes a huge difference in this area.

- The best time to sacrifice is when you are not vul and the opponents are vul. Now you can afford to go 3 off doubled and still show a profit (-500 v -620/-650).
- At equal vulnerability you can afford 2 off (-300 v -420/-450 or -500 v -620/-650).
- When you are vul and they are not, you can only afford 1 off (-200 v -420/-450). Sacrifices here are rare.

Note that we are assuming throughout that the opponent’s contract is making. That’s an important factor. There is nothing worse than taking a “phantom sacrifice” by bidding 4S and conceding -300 when in fact 4♥ was going off all the time and you were about to score +50 or +100!

Of course it’s easy to consider all this afterwards by just looking at the hand. But what might happen in reality on this hand? A normal auction probably starts 1♦ P 1♠ 2♥ P 3♥ 3♠ 4♥ round the table. South is worth opening (just) but can’t justify making a voluntary bid over 2♥ on the 2nd round. Over 3♥ North will probably have another go holding 7 spades and East is quite likely to now bid 4♥ (their ♠K looks well placed and they know they have at least 9 trumps (see advanced section) so have good chances of 6♥, ♠K, ♠ ruff, ♣A and hopefully one other trick from partner (who is likely to have something for 3H, albeit not much). That’s basically what happens with the ♦A being partner’s trick.

Judging whether to sacrifice is difficult. Should North or South bid 4♠ over 4♥? Even though it works on this hand I don’t honestly think I would for a few reasons:

- South has quite a balanced hand with defensive cards (which might help beat 4♥ or mean we have too many losers in 4♠)
- Both players have 2 hearts which is the worst holding in the opponents suit as you almost certainly have 2 losers – very different if you are short yourself or have length (from which you can infer partner will be short).
- The vulnerability - it’s equal so I need to be at most 2 off. Not clear to either hand that will be the case.

- d) North is looks at 8 points opposite an opening bid (and partner could have a singleton spade) so there's no guarantee 4♥ is making.
- e) Even if it does make, 4♥ may not be bid everywhere (see advanced section).

On the other hand it's always very tempting to bid 4♠ over 4♥ as it's exactly what the opponents do not want to hear! It gives them a problem. Sometimes they get it wrong – e.g. by bidding onto 5♥ and going off (we all know players who compete too much because they like to play the hand!) Or perhaps they double but only collect 300 when they were making 5♥.

In the actual scores on the board, almost all pairs did bid 4♥ and two pairs successfully bid 4♠ and scored a “top” on the board for conceding 300 instead of 420 or 450.

Key points to note

- Sacrifice bids can gain lots of matchpoints and cause the opponents headaches.
- Vulnerability of both sides is critical - it determines how many off you can afford to go.
- Judging when to sacrifice is hard! But most pairs do it too much.
- Looking at your length in the opponents suit is one useful guide. Holding a doubleton is usually bad (this hand happens to be an exception!).

More advanced

First an aside that isn't to do with sacrifices. How many trumps you have makes an enormous difference. A 9 card trump fit is HUGELY more powerful than an 8 card fit. This is partly because you are less at risk of being forced but it also gives you extra options to set up long cards in a side suit by ruffing in the other hand. In an 8 card fit you need 3 rounds to draw trumps (if they split 3-2) and you only have 2 trumps left. In a 9 card fit if they split 2-2 you can draw trumps in 2 rounds and still have 5 left! One of my biggest tips would be to bid much more aggressively once you know you have at least 9 trumps.

Back to sacrifices. In my experience many people sacrifice too often at matchpoints. Why? Because quite a few things have to work before it is right:

- a) The opponents have to be making their contract
- b) Your contract (doubled) has to be going for less than their contract would score
- c) The opponents have to be bidding their contract

Often none of these things are clear at the table. But the 3rd point is the one so many people forget. Here Deep Finesse said EW would make 4♥. OK but will a lot of pairs actually bid it? If not then most EW pairs will be scoring +170 and not +420. Now going -300 doesn't look so clever! Considering South opens the bidding and EW only have a combined 21 points it's by no means clear that all pairs will bid game. North is best placed to judge this here. They have 8 points and heard partner open the bidding so they know the opponents don't have anywhere close to normal game values.

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.