



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.

#40189 BBO – Wednesday morning session 2nd December 2020

7	♠ 64	Dir: S																											
	♥ T	Vul: Both																											
	♦ J8742																												
	♣ 98764																												
♠ J95	♠ AKT																												
♥ K865432	♥ AJ7																												
♦ T	♦ 9653																												
♣ A2	♣ KT5																												
1	♠ Q8732	<table border="1"> <tr><td>♣</td><td>♦</td><td>♥</td><td>♠</td><td>NT</td></tr> <tr><td>N</td><td>1</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td></tr> <tr><td>S</td><td>1</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td></tr> <tr><td>E</td><td>-</td><td>1</td><td>6</td><td>2</td><td>4</td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td>-</td><td>1</td><td>6</td><td>2</td><td>4</td></tr> </table>	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	N	1	-	-	-	S	1	-	-	-	E	-	1	6	2	4	W	-	1	6	2	4
♣	♦		♥	♠	NT																								
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8 15	♥ Q9																												
	♦ AKQ																												
16	♣ QJ3																												

Some weeks back I mentioned the power of splinters and how knowing about shortage in partners hand can help you evaluate how well hands fit together.

Board 7 last week was a good example of this. The EW hands “fit” almost perfectly together. So much so that you can make 6♥ even though there are only a combined 23 points! The only loser is a diamond although the play to actually make 6♥ is very tricky (see advanced section). But it’s a very easy 4♥ contract.

One of the main reasons for making so many tricks is the fact you have a singleton diamond opposite 4 small. With nothing wasted there, every major honour card you do have fits well with the other hand. Imagine how much worse it would be if East had ♦K not ♣K for example.

Let’s start with some possible bidding.

South might choose to open 1♠ or 1NT. Personally I’d choose 1NT even with 5 spades. It describes my overall shape and strength better and it’s not like my spades are especially good. The other problem with 1♠ is what do I rebid? Rebidding that anaemic spade suit is not appealing. Besides, after a 2 level response from partner (showing 10+) I will want to be in game but if my 2NT rebid is 11-14 then I am too good for that. Opening 1NT avoids all these problems.

After 1NT it is actually not obvious for EW to bid at all! West has shape but is very weak, has a poor quality heart suit, and is vulnerable. It may go P P to East who may choose to double but might also pass 1NT out (that happened at one table last week). If East does double, West has a choice of passing for penalties or jumping in hearts. They should not just bid 2♥ - that shows a hand that is too weak to defend 1NTx. If they do pass, North will almost certainly run and now West probably jumps in hearts leading to a 4♥ contract.

If South opens 1♠ it will also go P P and now East will either bid 1NT or double. This will depend on what range 1NT shows. Although a “normal” 1NT overcall shows 15-18 or thereabouts, many pairs play 1NT in the protective position as weaker (12-14). This is because partner could easily be sitting with 12-14 as well and couldn’t bid over 1♠. It is quite embarrassing to find yourself with a combined 28 points but defending a 1 level contract! So East might start with a double intending to rebid NT (showing 15-18 now). Either double or 1NT will lead to West showing hearts and EW probably bidding to 4♥. It’s highly unlikely they will bid to 6♥ though.

If East or West had been dealer it would be easier to diagnose the diamond situation. For example West might open a weak 2♥ (vulnerable this hand is perhaps a bit weak for 3♥). East could enquire and if West can show diamond shortage then East knows the hands fit well. Had East been dealer he would open 1NT and West could now transfer to 2♥ and then bid 4♦ which is a splinter showing shortage and saying the pair are playing in hearts (3♦ is natural

and forcing so there is no need to jump with a good hand with diamonds, hence it is much better to use the jump bid as this type of hand). It would still require both pairs to take a rosy view of things to reach 6♥ even then!

In the play there are 11 obvious tricks (2♠,7♥,2♣). Normally the spade finesse is the best chance for a 12th. If South has opened the bidding and North has passed, that's still possible but a bit less likely. See advanced section for some other options.

Key points to note

- Don't be worried about opening 1NT with a 5 card major (especially a poor suit) - it can often be more descriptive and avoid a lot of rebid problems.
- Agree what range 1NT shows in protective seat (i.e. after 1A P P).
- Diagnosing shortage is a powerful way to assess how well two hands fit together. Shortage opposite nothing means all the honour cards in other suits are working to build tricks and this can enable you to bid game, and sometimes even slam, on minimal values.
- If you transfer over 1NT and then jump in another suit (e.g. 1NT-2♦-2♥-4♦) that is best played as a splinter effectively "self-agreeing" your transfer suit. It does not need to be natural because just bidding the other suit is natural and forcing anyway (e.g. 1NT-2♦-2♥-3♦).

More advanced

One way of making 6♥ is via a squeeze. Suppose the defence try and cash two diamonds, declarer ruffing the 2nd. You now draw trumps and must next cash the ♠AK. Continue to run all the trumps and the last 4 cards in declarer's hand are J 3 - A2. The last 4 in dummy are - - 9 K104

Play the last trump and discard the diamond from dummy. South at this point is down to Q - - QJ3 and must still make a discard. The ♠Q will give declarer's J a trick and a club means the ♣10 will score the last trick. Note it was necessary to cash the ♠AK to get them out the way - because declarer needed the threat of being able to cash the ♠J in his own hand. This unblocking play is known as a "Vienna Coup" (no, I have no idea why!)

Readers who are into squeezes will no doubt say that the defence can break that up by leading a club and then playing a 2nd club when they get in with a diamond. That's true but on a club lead declarer goes a different route! Win ♣A and run all the hearts discarding all the diamonds from dummy. Declarer's last 5 cards are J95 - 10 2. Dummy's are AK10 - - K10

South has to keep ♠Qxx and ♣QJ (otherwise you have an extra trick in that suit) and must therefore throw all his diamonds away. Now you lead ♣K and ♣10 discarding your ♦10 on it, leaving South endplayed to lead into dummy's ♠AK10!

Note that for either of these lines to work South needed to hold all three of the ♠Q, ♣Q and ♣J. In reality, even after auctions starting 1♠ P P or 1NT P P, this is very low odds and you'd almost certainly still just take the spade finesse! Don't get fooled into thinking it's "right" to follow some obscure line just because it happens to work. The Deep Finesse analysis is double dummy - the real world is very different!

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.