



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.

Overall or double first? How to safely try for an overtrick.

#18749 BBO – Saturday 1st January 2022

8	♠ 75	Dir: W
	♥ A42	Vul: None
	♦ KQ	
	♣ AKJ852	
♠ AQ94	♠ J863	
♥ QJ6	♥ 983	
♦ A987	♦ J543	
♣ T7	♣ Q4	
17	♠ KT2	♣♦♥♠NT
13	♥ KT75	N 4 - 2 - 3
6	♦ T62	S 4 - 3 - 3
	♣ 963	E - 1 - 1 -
		W - 1 - 1 -

Happy New Year to everyone! 1st Jan was clearly a popular day to play as we had 21 tables in the duplicate.

Board 8 saw a classic decision about whether to overcall or double first and then bid your suit. It also had some interest in the play.

Most Wests opened 1♦ (although it is also suitable for a weak NT if playing it – see advanced section) and North then had to decide what to do. Traditionally simple overcalls were limited in strength and with a good hand (16+) you tended to double first and then bid your suit. The trend has moved in recent years towards bidding your suit on stronger hands (right up to 18 points) and aiming to compete again when stronger. This is reflected in what happened at the table - 7

Norths chose double, 13 overcalled 2♣ and 1 overcalled 3♣ (but that was over 1NT where they probably couldn't bid 2♣ naturally).

I think it's close on this hand. The advantages of 2♣ immediately are that it gets your suit in and takes a whole level of bidding away from East (not an issue on this hand as it turns out but it often can be). It also avoids the problem you could have if you double instead – imagine the bidding continues 1 major on your left and 3 major on your right. Do you really want to then bid 4♣?! It's largely because auctions are typically so much more competitive these days that bidding your suit first tends to be preferable as it avoids having to bid at an uncomfortably high level next time.

The downside of 2♣ immediately is that you might risk missing a better contract if partner passes (imagine partner with ♥KQxxx and little else – you could be making 4♥). Indeed North South can make 3NT on this hand although it's pretty lucky (clubs need to play for 6 tricks and the opponents cannot take enough spades first) and no-one got to it.

Some Norths played in 2♣ but most had some more competition – some Easts raised diamonds, and some Wests re-opened with a double (whereupon most Norths then bid 3♣). There's a good case for South to raise 2♣ to 3♣ immediately – it makes it harder for the opponents to come back in. The importance of competing (especially at this vulnerability – see advanced section) is seen by what happened at the three tables who did compete to 3♦ East West. They all scored very well as one went 1 off for -50 and two went 2 off for -100, in each case doing better than the 110 or 130 that most North Souths scored when playing in clubs.

The vast majority of tables played a club part-score by North so let's look at the play there. The likely start to the defence is two rounds of diamonds. A couple of Easts led the ♦J – this hand shows why that is wrong, it set up the 10 in the South hand allowing declarer to discard a loser on it. When you don't have a sequence of honours, lead low – particularly in partner's suit.

After winning the ♦ at trick 2, declarer should then draw trumps (with 9 cards in the suit and no opposition bidding suggesting any particular length in other suits the odds are to try and drop the Q and that works here). At that point 3♣ is making easily enough with 6 clubs, 2 hearts and 1 diamond. So North should look for ways to make an overtrick. Some Norths tried leading a spade to the K but that lost so they ended up losing 2 spades, a heart and the ♦A. Other Norths

played ♥AK and a 3rd round of hearts. When the suit split 3-3 the last heart in South was a winner to discard a spade on (clubs having broken 2-2 means the ♣9 is an entry to dummy to reach it). But this isn't the best play either – see advanced section for an improvement.

Key points to note

- It is often close with a strong hand whether to overcall your suit or double first. The tendency these days is to just bid your suit with hands right up to about 17/18 points. Doubling first can often make it harder later as the auction might come back to you uncomfortably high!
- Lead low from a suit with a single honour – especially if partner bid the suit. Leading the honour is very seldom right.
- If your opponents play a weak NT, you should definitely play double as penalties. Likewise if you play weak NT, you definitely need to agree your running methods after it is doubled!
- When looking for extra tricks as declarer consider:
 - a) the opponents' bidding – it may help you decide where key cards might be based on the missing points
 - b) which hand you can lose a trick to safely (West here to protect your ♠K from being led through)

More advanced

If East West were playing a weak NT, West can open that. A lot of players play artificial methods over that so they would be unable to bid 2♣ naturally. But that doesn't really matter here – North should be doubling the weak NT for penalties! One of the few disadvantages of the weak NT is that it can occasionally go for a large penalty and therefore it's essential to play penalty doubles against it. East should not stand the double though – and should start some sort of running mechanism. If you do play weak NT you definitely need to have agreed what methods to play to run from 1NT doubled. My own preference is that XX asks partner to bid 2♣ and shows a single suiter, immediate suit bids show that suit and a higher one. So here East would bid 2♦ showing diamonds and a major. West of course is happy to pass 2♦ and trouble has been avoided! North South will most likely bid on to 3♣.

I have mentioned in previous columns about how when no-one is vulnerable it pays to bid. The East Wests that competed to 3♦ did well because their scores of -50 and -100 were better than the -110 or -130 they'd score defending clubs. For this reason North South need to double 3♦. North especially should reason that 3♣ will be making and will score at least +110. So they cannot afford to pass out 3♦ as that won't score enough. But doubling and taking +300 would have been a top!

So what is the best play for an overtrick in 3♣? Leading a spade to the K is definitely wrong – think about the points. There are only 17 points missing and West opened the bidding so he must have nearly all of them. When East turns up with the ♣Q it is almost certain that West has the ♠A. So it's better to play on hearts and try for an extra trick there. Although today playing ♥AK and a 3rd round works, it's not the best play. It only works because West has to win the 3rd round of hearts and he can't attack spades. But if East had had ♥Q (which there is room for him to have) he would have won and put a spade through. Even though there's a winning heart in dummy at this point, the defence still take two spades. The right answer is therefore for declarer to cash ♥A and then play a low one to the 10 losing to West. This protects the ♠K from being led through and gives declarer time to then test the hearts.

Finally, it is worth noting that in isolation the best play for 3 tricks in that heart suit is to play K, A and then lead towards the 10. That scores 3 tricks whenever the suit is 3-3, and also when West has a doubleton honour. It's not the best play on this particular hand though because here we can't afford East to get in.

Julian Foster (many times NSW representative)

More Bridge in the New Year

Our City venue has reopened on Monday 3rd January 2022, and our Inner West venue at Canada Bay Club will restart bridge sessions on Monday 10th January 2022.

- F2F @ CITY -

There will be sessions every day from Monday to Thursday at City, with a separated field for Supervised players on Wednesday morning. All morning sessions start at 10.00am. We have two evening sessions – the Tuesday night is for Open (7.15pm start), please contact office for pre-arrangement if you are not a regular of this session. The Wednesday night is a study group for Supervised players, 6.30pm start and aim to finish at 9.00pm.

- F2F @ CANADA BAY -

To start with, we will have two morning sessions in Canada Bay Club. We co-host the Monday morning session with Strathfield Bridge Club and add an extra Thursday morning session to the week. Both club members will enjoy member's rate for the table money fee. Cash only for the moment, we intend to extend the usage of PP over there.

Please find the details of [the session timetables](#) and find out [more about our venues](#) on our website.

- ONLINE @ BBO -

If you prefer to play online, there are regular club sessions on Monday morning (10.15am), Thursday afternoon (1.45pm) and Saturday afternoon (1.45pm) on BBO. To join our online game, please follow this [step by step guidelines](#).

BB\$4 for 24 boards.