



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.

#72222 BBO – Wednesday morning session 23rd December 2020

I hope everyone had a good Christmas, even if your plans were spoilt by Covid. Let's all hope for more face to face bridge in 2021!

7	♠ AQ753	<i>Dlr: S</i>
	♥ T	<i>Vul: Both</i>
	♦ A75	
	♣ QT65	
♠ KJ642	♠ AK72	
♥ Q9	♥ AK72	
♦ 963	♦ QJT8	
♣ KJ7	♣ A9842	
12 ♠ T98	♣♦♥♠NT	
10 14 ♥ J86543	N - - 1 2 -	
4 ♦ K42	S - - 1 2 -	
♣ 3	E 3 2 - - 1	
	W 3 2 - - 2	

Board 7 last week showed how important it is to have tricks when passing takeout doubles.

As usual there are a number of possible auctions. South will normally pass as dealer. Even if you could open a weak 2♥ or a multi in your system I wouldn't consider it for several reasons:

- the heart suit is very poor (dangerous to play in without support and doesn't indicate a good lead for partner)
- I only have 4 points
- I am vulnerable

West should also pass. This is the sort of hand I might consider opening 1♠ in 3rd seat (takes a lot of space and indicates a reasonable lead for partner) but not in 1st or 2nd seat where partner is unlimited and could take us too high if we open. We also don't have a sensible rebid over many possible responses.

North has a normal 1♠ opening (West will secretly be relieved they didn't stretch to open 1♠!) and East has a normal takeout double. A couple of tables made overcalls of 2♣ and 2♦(?) but double is far better - offering support for 3 suits and includes the chance of playing in hearts if we have a fit there.

South now has a normal raise to 2♠ (stretch to support when you can - you are definitely not strong enough to bid 2♥ but 2♠ takes up a level of bidding which makes it harder for EW - see advanced section). West and North will pass and it's back to East. If East bids again the only option is a 2nd double. Bidding a suit now shows a hand that was too good to overcall that suit the first time (usually 18+ points) - we are nowhere near that. A 2nd double is still takeout (I have often seen players get confused in these sorts of positions but remember once someone has made a takeout double of a suit their hand isn't going to suddenly change shape to become penalties later! It's still takeout, just showing extra values).

If East does choose to double again then West has a big decision whether to pass and convert it to penalties or not. One table did and scored -870! I have a lot of sympathy for pass - after all partner has doubled twice, you have 10 points, you have 5 trumps, you have no other suit to easily show and the opponents are vulnerable so even one off for +200 could be a very good score. On the other hand arguments against passing are that you are sitting under declarer and that your trump spots are poor. So even though you have 10 points and 5 trumps how many certain TRICKS do you have? Very few. So often that is the key point as it proves here. See advanced section for more thoughts on this.

The play will be very disappointing for EW! No matter what they do they cannot prevent declarer scoring either 4 trumps in hand, ♦AK and 2 club ruffs in dummy or 5 trumps in hand, ♦AK and 1 club ruff in dummy. Declarer just leads a club when they get in and then crossruffs what they can, gets out their side suit losers and the defence will be forced to let declarer score more of their little trumps (North's 753 all sit over West's 642!)

Key points to note

- Especially when vulnerable, don't stretch to open preempts on bad suits.
- Don't stretch to open light in 1st or 2nd seat when partner is still unlimited.
- Takeout doubles are much more flexible bids than overcalling a suit - you are effectively showing 3 suits at once.
- If a hand that's made a takeout double doubles again, it's still takeout just with extra values.
- When considering passing a takeout double a big factor is how many tricks you have.

More advanced

How can EW avoid -670 here?! It's not so easy. One important factor is whether East should double a 2nd time. It obviously shows willingness to compete again and normally this means extra values. But how many? Here East only has 14 points but they do have an almost perfect shape. This is where having knowledge of your partner's style is so critical. If a 2nd double is likely to have 17+ points then West can more comfortably pass. But if it can be a hand like this then West needs to be much more wary. South's 2♠ bid makes it much harder because it takes a level of bidding away - there will be plenty of hands West won't now venture a free bid at the 3 level on which will still fit well with East. Hence the attraction of the 2nd double.

Note that knowledge of your partner's style is very important and, although you can't alert a double, you must include style in explanations you give to the opponents. You have additional knowledge about the sorts of hands partner will and won't take certain actions on - the opponents are entitled to that knowledge as well.

If West does decide not to pass the double then what should they do? One option is to jump to 3NT - they have a good spade stop and, if partner does have extra values, we have game values. Also we know most of the opponent strength is in one hand which tends to be worth a trick or so. 3NT can be beaten but it's quite tight (the defence need to let South get in with ♦K to play a spade through - then they will get 2♠, 2♦ and a ♣).

A second option is 2NT. But most experienced pairs here would not mean that as natural, they would mean it as denying hearts and showing equal length in the minors asking East to bid their longer (or better) minor. That way West doesn't have to guess a minor and the pair can find their best fit at the 3 level. If you have invitational values and do want to bid 2NT naturally what do you do? Either pass the double or bid 3NT and hope to make it! It's a trade off - the argument is it's more useful (and happens more often) to be able to find the right minor on competitive hands than stop in 2NT when you can only make exactly 8 tricks. Many good pairs play 2NT as artificial in all sorts of positions for this reason.

Two final thoughts.

- a) This hand is yet another example of shape beating points. EW have 24 points to NS's 16 but they cannot beat 2♠.
- b) Perversely it can often be better defending doubled partscores when the defence's trumps split 4-1 than 5-0. Why? Because when you defend a doubled partscore you often want to lead trumps as often as you can, either to stop declarer scoring extra ruffs or simply to try and draw trumps yourself to cash your side suit winners later. A 5-0 split means only one defender can lead them - as in this hand. In fact that is another reason for East NOT to double a 2nd time - they know from the auction and their own void that it's quite likely partner will pass and they won't be able to lead a trump themselves if that does happen.

Julian Foster (many times NSW representative)

RED Masterpoints for ALL our online BBO sessions during the holiday break

The Sydney Bridge Centre (vABF2006) is going to give out RED masterpoints in all the BBO sessions during the holiday break from 21st December to 3rd January (inclusive).

To join the SBC online sessions on BBO

Please follow this [Step by Step Guideline](#) to join the Sydney Bridge Centre duplicate session on BBO.

The SBC online session timetable

We have morning sessions on Monday and Wednesday, and afternoon session on Monday, Thursday and Saturday. Morning session starts at 10.15am, and afternoon session starts at 1.45pm. Please find our [session timetable](#) on our website.

To book an Introduction to BBO session

Join our [BBO Training session on Zoom](#), we will be able to show you how a tournament table looks like on BBO, how to make alerts, how to find out the meaning of opponent's bids, etc. It's a live session running on Zoom teleconference application, completely free of charge. You can book a session with us by picking a time suitable for you via this [booking form](#).