



## 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 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.

## #2980 BBO – Wednesday morning session 12<sup>th</sup> August 2020

9	♠ AT6	Dir: N
	♥ KT5	Vul: E-W
	♦ KQJT	
	♣ K52	
♠ QJ52	♠ 983	
♥ 76	♥ QJ984	
♦ A7432	♦ 5	
♣ 73	♣ AJ98	
16 ♠ K74	♣ ♠ ♥ ♦ NT	
7 8 ♥ A32	N 3 2 1 2 3	
9 ♦ 986	S 3 3 1 2 3	
♣ QT64	E - - - -	
	W - - - -	

This week we'll look at declarer play although there is a bidding question first.

On board 9, N has a pretty standard 15-17 1NT opening. S will probably invite and the question is should N accept?

I would. If we literally count points we are right in the middle of 15-17. But there are a few reasons to accept:

- we have 3 10's which could be valuable and are definitely better than 2s or 3s – intermediate cards improve our hand.
  - we have a nice easy ♦ suit that will set up for 3 certain tricks – good combinations of honours in the same suit improve our hand.
- c) our hand contains an A and several Ks. The standard 4/3/2/1 point count tends to undervalue As and Ks and overvalue Js. My gut instinct for a better scale might be something like 5/3.5/2/0.5. But that's obviously harder to calculate with so we usually stick to the standard but mentally just note whether our hand is "good" or "bad" in that context.

So let's say we accept and play 3NT. East has a pretty standard ♥Q lead (top of a sequence) and we will assume that declarer wins the first trick (note as East I would lead the ♥Q here and not 4<sup>th</sup> highest because I also hold the 9 and the 8 so it's nearly a sequence – if one of the opposing hands held ♥10x we would feel silly if the 10 scored a cheap trick – in fact here if you led the ♥8 it would do).

Let's look at things from declarer's perspective. We should, as always, start by counting our tricks. We have 4 certain tricks (♠AK, ♥AK) and can quickly set up 3 more by playing on ♦s. That's 7. So we still need 2 more. The only place we can go for them is ♣s. Can we do it? Yes but we will need a finesse. Not the usual AQ type finesse against the K, this time a finesse of the 10 against the J. We basically hope that East hold the ♣J. We either lead low to the K first (losing to the A) and then later low to the 10. Or we immediately lead low to the 10. When that holds (E should not usually play the ♣A into thin air) we now play low back to the K and set up our 2 tricks.

So is that good enough to make the contract? Not necessarily. It depends! Which suit are you going to play on at trick 2? If we go for Clubs we will be OK because we will get rid of the ♣A and that happens to sit with East. That ♣A is the entry he needs to his long ♥s. Without it, he cannot set up his long ♥s and get back in to cash them. But if we go for Diamonds first (which looks a lot more natural) we will fail. West will win ♦A and play their 2nd ♥. That will set East's ♥s up (if we duck, they just continue the suit). Now when we start trying to get our 2 club tricks it's too late. East can jump straight in with their ♣A and score 2 more ♥s.

So you might ask – why should we play on ♣s and not ♦s? The answer is we have absolutely no idea - it's a blind guess who has which ace. If you knock the right one out first you will make your contract, otherwise you will fail. HOWEVER.....

## More advanced

Can we do better? Yes! We don't actually need to guess at all. Can you see how?

I said earlier that we will assume declarer wins the first trick. That's the problem! What we actually have to do is duck at trick 1 - even though we hold both the ♥A and ♥K.

Let's digress slightly to the "standard" hold-up play in NT. Suppose a suit is divided:

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      xx
KQJxx      xxx
      Axx
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When west leads the K, south must duck and take their Ace on the 3<sup>rd</sup> round. Now East has no more of the suit left and if we later lose a trick to East (and West doesn't have another certain entry) we will be safe as the last two winning cards in the suit cannot be taken against us.

This hand is a slightly more advanced version of that play. Let's step through the play if East is left on lead with ♥Q at trick 1. What can they do? Suppose they carry on with ♥s (nothing else is better). This time we win. If we play on ♣s we are fine as we were before. East can set the ♥s up but can never get back in to cash them. But suppose we choose to play on ♦s. Last time we went off. This time there is a critical difference. When West wins the ♦A they no longer have a ♥ to return! The defence cannot get their heart suit set up any more. Whatever they do instead we can win and now have time to play on ♣s to set our other 2 tricks up.

What if West did have a ♥ to return? No problem - that means the opposing ♥s were 4-3 the whole time and we don't mind East scoring TWO ♥s to go with their two minor suit Aces only. We just couldn't afford East to score THREE ♥s.

Why is it important to duck even though we hold two stoppers in the suit? Because here we have TWO key opposing cards (♣A and ♦A) to knock out. If we only had one key opposing card to knock out it wouldn't matter.

No Trump play is always basically a race to set up your tricks. The defence get a head start with the opening lead. Sometimes if they get that right there's nothing declarer can do. But declarer's main weapon to fight back is the holdup play to cut the defence's ability to pass the lead between their hands and cash their tricks.

## Key points to note

- When evaluating your hand, don't just count the points. Look at other features like the intermediate cards you hold, and what sort of honour combinations. In practice As (especially) and Ks tend to be worth more than their standard 4 and 3 points, and Js are worth less than their standard 1 point.
- It is frequently correct when playing in no-trumps to duck a round early even if you hold two stoppers in the suit. It can be particularly critical if you have to knock two key cards out of the defenders' hands to build the tricks you need.

Julian Foster (many times NSW representative)

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## The SBC online session timetable

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## 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](#).