



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.

#17113 BBO – Wednesday morning session 11th November 2020

8	♠ KT2	Dir: W																									
	♥ KT97	Vul: None																									
	♦ AK97																										
	♣ KT																										
	♠ Q7	♠ AJ54																									
	♥ AJ54	♥ 8																									
	♦ Q432	♦ T5																									
	♣ 976	♣ AJ8542																									
16	♠ 9863	<table border="1" style="font-size: 0.8em;"> <tr><td>♣</td><td>♦</td><td>♥</td><td>♠</td><td>NT</td></tr> <tr><td>N</td><td>-</td><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>S</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>2</td><td>-</td></tr> <tr><td>E</td><td>3</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td>3</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>1</td></tr> </table>	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	N	-	1	2	1	S	-	-	2	-	E	3	-	-	1	W	3	-	-	1
♣	♦		♥	♠	NT																						
N	-		1	2	1																						
S	-		-	2	-																						
E	3	-	-	1																							
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9 10	♥ Q632																										
	♦ J86																										
5	♣ Q3																										

Board 8 last week contained some interesting points in bidding and defence.

If we start with the bidding West will pass and North will most likely open 1NT (15-17). The question is what East should do. Several tables passed and 1NT became the final contract. After the obvious club lead it typically went 1 off as the defence take 5 clubs to go with the two major aces (EW +50). But strong defenders should take it 2 off - see advanced section. However even 2 off (EW +100) wasn't a great score because EW were making a club contract (EW +110).

So should East bid over 1NT? I would say absolutely yes - for 3 reasons:

1. They have a 6-4 shape which can be powerful in the play (there is a saying "6-4 bid more").
2. The vulnerability is nil vul. Playing matchpoints this is the "bidders vulnerability" where the mathematics of bridge scoring make it much better to play the hand than defend (even if you go off). See advanced section for why.
3. You want to get your opponents out of 1NT if you can - it usually scores well for them.

There are many schemes available for bidding over the opponents 1NT. Google a few! As usual it's more important that you and your partner are both playing the same method than what it actually is!

A simple natural defence would work well here - overcall 2♣. I played a natural defence to 1NT successfully for years. However it does have one downside – you do not have a bid to show both majors which often proves very useful. Many players therefore use 2♣ for that. If you do that it means you either have to pass or do something else with this hand. 3♣ is possible but risky with a poor quality suit and South in charge of the auction (remember North has opened 1NT and defined his hand quite well so South knows whose hand it is - neither E or W do).

Another method that would work nicely here is "DONT" ("Disturb opponents no-trump"). A suit bid shows that suit and a higher suit so you would bid 2♣ here (single suited hands double 1NT).

A method I play with my partner ("Asptro") is one focused on majors and 2 suiters. We would bid 2♦ here which shows spades and another suit (at least 54 in the suits but can be either way round). This keeps the chance of a spade contract alive (a 2♣ overcall shows hearts and another suit, 2♥ and 2♠ are natural but single suited).

In response West bids spades if they have a fit. If not they bid something they are prepared for partner to pass. Here we would bid 2♥. When partner doesn't have hearts he bids his 5 card suit (3♣) which West will pass. 3♣ makes 9 tricks (5 trumps, ♥A, 2 spades and a spade ruff in dummy).

Key points to note

- At nil vulnerability you want to get your opponents out of 1NT. It will usually score well for them even if it goes down.
- There are lots of bidding methods over opponents 1NT. Any can work on any particular hand. It is useful to have a bid to show both majors but, besides that, it doesn't really matter as long as you both agree!
- Watching all the spot cards in defence is critical for top level defence (see advanced section).

More advanced

I mentioned 1NT should go 2 off. Let's see how the defence can do that. Trick one will probably go ♣ 5 3 9 10. Declarer will probably lead a heart to the Q hoping to at least score that or get some tricks set up before the avalanche of clubs begins!

No luck - West wins and returns ♣7 which reveals declarer's weakness. Most Easts would now happily cash their ♣ suit and the ♠A to beat 1NT. But advanced Easts would do something that most defenders are told never to do! They would return the ♣4 to partner's 6 and block the club suit!

West would initially look bemused and some would think their partner had gone mad. But advanced Wests would appreciate partner had a good reason to put you on lead. They want you to play something through declarer!

How do you know which suit though - spades or diamonds (hearts don't count as declarer played on them)? The answer comes from an advanced application of suit preference signals. East had exactly 2 cards he could have played to get West in - the ♣4 and the ♣2. So the 4 suggests spades and the 2 suggests diamonds!

A spade through gives East 2 spade tricks and NOW they cash their clubs to take declarer 2 down. Note how wide awake both defenders need to be though. East needs to realise what West's last club is. West needs to realise what clubs East had left and what they could have led. They both need to have watched every spot card. Tough but it's what happens at the top level.

Returning to the auction, I mentioned "bidders vulnerability". Let's explore what that means. Suppose you had the chance to either play 1NT or defend 1NT. This table shows for each of the 4 vulnerabilities the scores we'd get from making assorted numbers of tricks either playing or defending (assuming no doubles).

Vulnerability	What we do	Number of tricks taken by our side & score				
		5	6	7	8	9
No-one vul	Play 1NT	-100	-50	+90	+120	+150
	Defend 1NT	-120	-90	+50	+100	+150
	<i>What's best?</i>	Play	Play	Play	Play	Same
Us vul, them NV	Play 1NT	-200	-100	+90	+120	+150
	Defend 1NT	-120	-90	+50	+100	+150
	<i>What's best?</i>	Defend	Defend	Play	Play	Same
Us NV, them vul	Play 1NT	-100	-50	+90	+120	+150
	Defend 1NT	-120	-90	+100	+200	+300
	<i>What's best?</i>	Play	Play	Defend	Defend	Defend
Everyone vul	Play 1NT	-200	-100	+90	+120	+150
	Defend 1NT	-120	-90	+100	+200	+300
	<i>What's best?</i>	Defend	Defend	Defend	Defend	Defend

Notice how when no-one is vul you do better to play the hand almost regardless of how many tricks you make! This is because you are only going off in 50's which is less than the value they can score in their contract but you are only taking 50's if you beat their contract. When everyone is vul it's the opposite (now you are going off in 100's and taking 100's if they go off).

What does this all mean? Basically at matchpoints when no one is vulnerable you should compete more (especially over 1NT) as you have an advantage if you play the hand. Don't let the opponents be in this favourable position! When everyone is vul, you should tend to compete less.

Note this is unique to matchpoint scoring. Playingimps the difference between almost all the scores in the table is irrelevant so, while you still want to compete, you don't take risks that might lead to a heavy penalty.

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.