



## 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](mailto: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.

### Trial bids and considering the defenders' shape when declaring

#81256 BBO – Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> December 2021

2	♠ KQ82	<i>Dir: E</i>					
	♥ 96		<i>Vul: N-S</i>				
♦ 3							
	♣ KQT953						
♠ 974	♠ 63						
♥ J52	♥ AKQT4						
♦ KT82	♦ AJ65						
♣ A64	♣ J8						
10	♠ AJT5	<table border="1"> <tr><td>♣♦♥♠NT</td></tr> <tr><td>N 3 - - 2 -</td></tr> <tr><td>S 3 - - 2 -</td></tr> <tr><td>E - 4 4 - 3</td></tr> <tr><td>W - 4 4 - 3</td></tr> </table>	♣♦♥♠NT	N 3 - - 2 -	S 3 - - 2 -	E - 4 4 - 3	W - 4 4 - 3
♣♦♥♠NT							
N 3 - - 2 -							
S 3 - - 2 -							
E - 4 4 - 3							
W - 4 4 - 3							
8 15	♥ 873						
	♦ Q974						
7	♣ 72						

4 pairs did play a BBO game on Christmas Day so I have picked a hand and will do a short column.

With only two tables it was effectively “board a match” – 2 points if you outscored the equivalent pair at the other table, 1 point if you drew, and 0 if you lost.

On board 2 both tables reached 4♥ and, although the contract can be made, both times it went off. How should it be played?

The normal start to the auction is 1♥ P 2♥. North at this point then bid 3♣ which is perfectly reasonable – you have nice shape and clubs indicate a good lead for partner as well. East now has to decide what to do. 4♥ is a bit much in my

opinion, partner might only have a 6 count. But you are better than minimum with very nice trumps and would like to invite partner to game.

A simple invite of 3♥ might be enough (but see advanced section for a better treatment). Another more descriptive option is 3♦ which is a “trial bid” inviting partner to bid game if they are maximum for their 2♥ bid and to look at their diamond holding to help decide. Here West is almost maximum for their 2♥ bid and also has honours in diamonds so he has a clear 4♥ bid. Note a trial bid is primarily an invite just asking if partner is min or max for their raise – they should generally only use their holding in the trial suit as a “tie breaker” to decide whether to bid game or not on marginal hands. There are different types of trial bid played so it’s worth knowing your partnership’s agreement – see advanced section.

What about the play? South will no doubt lead the ♣7 (his partner’s suit). Declarer should win this immediately (he’d look very silly ducking it and then run into a club ruff!). After drawing trumps the contract depends on making 4 diamond tricks. That requires deciding which hand has the ♦Q and finessing against it. Even though North bid 3♣ it is more likely that South has the ♦Q simply because North is known to have club length and 2 hearts so is less likely to have length in diamonds – more of North’s cards are known so there is less room for the remaining spaces in his hand to be diamonds. There are also other reasons to play South for the ♦Q – see advanced section.

#### Key points to note

- After an auction starting 1 Major P 2 Major, bids in new suits are best played as “trial bids” inviting to game but asking partner to look at their holding in that suit if they are in-between minimum and maximum for their original 2 major bid.
- When one hand has shown a long suit, it is less likely to have length in other suits.
- When playing a suit consider what distributions you can and cannot handle.

## More advanced

Simple bidding methods would play 3♥ as a general invite to 4♥ but more experienced players usually prefer to play something different. When the opponents intervene you want to be able to distinguish hands which just wish to compete to the 3 level and hands which genuinely want to invite game. Hence it is quite common to play 3♥ as NOT invitational, it just wishes to compete to 3♥ and nothing more. To make a genuine try for game you bid something else (i.e. make a trial bid).

There are 3 types of trial bid typically used:

- a) Long suit (essentially natural – and asking partner to bid game with honours in that suit). This is what you should assume unless you have agreed otherwise.
- b) Short suit (showing basically 1 or 2 small in that suit – partner now knows honours in that suit aren't much use).
- c) Help suit (similar to long suit but not always long – typically showing a suit where you want some help so often a holding like ♥xx and expecting partner to accept the try with honours in that suit, or perhaps with shortage in that suit but extra trump length).

The same principle with the 3♥ bid can actually also apply even in an uncontested auction. If you pass at the 2 level many opponents these days will come back into the auction and may find a good spot to play themselves (after all if one side has a fit the other side almost always does as well). An immediate raise to 3 by opener is then a “shut-out” bid designed to make it riskier for the opponents to come back in.

One final point about trial bids. If the opponents intervene with the bid immediately below your own 3 level (so 3♦ on this hand or 3♥ if your side has bid and raised spades) you no longer have room to distinguish competitive and invitational hands. Some pairs solve this problem by playing “game try doubles” – they play double of the overcall as a general game invite (not penalties) and 3♥ as competitive and not invitational.

In the play I suggested declarer should play South for the ♦Q based purely on the likely club distribution. The club lead looks like a doubleton to start with but declarer can confirm that by exiting with their own club after drawing trumps. It is quite likely the defence will play 2 more round of clubs and now declarer knows for sure clubs are 6-2. At that point 8 of North's cards are known, 5 of South's. So already South is more likely to have more diamonds. But there are two other reasons as well:

- a) Consider what the hand would look like if North did have long diamonds. North would have only 1 or 2 spades which would leave South with an awful lot of spades. Yet we didn't hear anything from South in the auction. Surely he'd have overcalled 1♥ with that many spades? The fact he didn't makes this layout unlikely.
- b) Consider diamonds in more depth. If they are 3-2 you just have to find the queen. What if they are 4-1? If one player has Q97x then you can only pick them up if they are with South. Try giving North Q97x and playing the suit. Whatever you do they will score a trick because their 97 sit over your 8. But you can pick that holding up with South because after ♦A then ♦J covered, West remains with 108 and you can finesse South's known remaining 97.

One final point to be careful about. Declarer should make sure they can get back to their hand a 2nd time. It is OK to exit once to the defence after drawing trumps (to help make sure of the distribution) as they will play a black suit until declarer ruffs. But you must play diamonds now because after ♦A then ♦J covered, you will be in the West hand and you need to get back to East to be able to take the finesse against South's ♦9. So if you exited clubs and the defence cleared those after winning the ♦K in West declarer must then just exit spades and wait to ruff a spade back to hand to take the diamond finesse.

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.