



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.

#66658 BBO – Saturday ARVO session 7th August 2021

15	♠ AQ5	<i>Dir: S</i>					
	♥ QT943	<i>Vul: N-S</i>					
	♦ A						
	♣ AJ97						
♠ 64	♠ J98						
♥ KJ5	♥ A8						
♦ J96	♦ Q8432						
♣ Q5432	♣ KT6						
17	♠ KT732	<table border="1"> <tr><td>♣♦♥♠NT</td></tr> <tr><td>N - 1 4 4 2</td></tr> <tr><td>S - 1 4 4 2</td></tr> <tr><td>E - - - -</td></tr> <tr><td>W 1 - - - -</td></tr> </table>	♣♦♥♠NT	N - 1 4 4 2	S - 1 4 4 2	E - - - -	W 1 - - - -
♣♦♥♠NT							
N - 1 4 4 2							
S - 1 4 4 2							
E - - - -							
W 1 - - - -							
7 10	♥ 762						
	♦ KT75						
6	♣ 8						

Firstly thanks to Martin Clear for pointing out a better “squeeze” line on the board I looked at last column. I have added an [addendum to that column](#).

Board 15 last week saw the majority of North South pairs play 4♥. But at least half the field went off. Let’s consider how the hand should be bid and played.

The normal start to the auction is P P 1♥ although a few Souths opened 2♠ showing spades and a minor (usually leading to a 4♠ contract instead). Several Easts overcalled 2♦. I wouldn’t have done this – even at favourable vulnerability it is very dangerous with a balanced hand, only 10 points and only 5 bad diamonds.

If we assume East passes, South has a decision whether to raise to 2♥ or bid 1♠. The only reason to consider 1♠ ahead of 2♥ is because you might find a 5-4 spade fit instead of a 5-3 heart fit. On balance, however, with a weak hand it is usually better to show support immediately if you have it. This puts your side in a better position if the opponents come into the auction.

North then has to decide what to do next. They have a very nice hand now they have found support so there is certainly a case for bidding 4♥ directly as several tables did.

If they decide not to bid game directly, they will make some form of invite. There are various methods played here but a common one is to use other suit bids below 3 of your major as “trial bids.” These are basically invitational to game and primarily ask partner to consider whether they are minimum or maximum for their raise to 2 but, where they are marginal, to also to look at their holding in the trial suit. Mostly people play “long suit” trial bids where the suit you bid is semi-natural so a good holding is values in that suit as well.

If North chooses to bid 2♠ as a trial bid then, despite holding only 6 points, South should definitely bid game with such nice spades and a singleton club. Over a 3♣ trial it’s not so clear. Although you have a singleton you only have 3 trumps so South might choose not to bid game.

One key thing to note is a bid of 3♥ by North after 1♥ - 2♥ is often NOT played as invitational (see advanced section for why).

If South did respond 1♠, what should North rebid? If partner can pass 2♣, North is pretty strong for that. The alternative is 3♣ (but see advanced for an alternative structure). In practice North has about a 2.5♣ bid! I would bid 2♣ simply to keep the auction lower and see what happens. I may also be able to then show delayed spade support later because whenever partner has 5 spades, we are likely to want to play there.

But let’s now consider how we should play 4♥ by North since that’s where most tables were. The normal lead is a diamond to declarer’s A.

There are two basic ways of getting rid of losers in a suit contract – ruff them in dummy or discard them on winners (usually from a long suit). On this hand we do have a spade suit we could discard losers on but we need to draw trumps first if we want to do that. But trumps need to be led from dummy if we want to avoid 3 definite losers there and we are short of entries. If we release our ♣A that exposes some club losers anyway. So our best approach is actually to ruff those club losers in dummy.

I would play ♦A, ♣A, ♣ ruff, ♠ to the A, ♣ ruff, then discard my final ♣ on the ♦K. Now I would try a trump to the 10 hoping that West has the J. East will have to win the A and will probably play another diamond forcing me to ruff. At this point I am down to ♠Q5 and ♥Q94 and dummy has ♠K1073 and ♦10. You need to continue drawing trumps in order to stop your spades getting ruffed so you must play a trump next. The question is which one? See advanced section for more.

It looks like players went wrong in a number of ways. Some played a heart to the Q. This only gains if West has both the A and K (and most of the time even if he did, he is probably going to win one of them). Playing the 10 is really just taking a finesse against the J, it just so happens there are higher cards out as well. In an ideal world we'd lead trumps from South twice but we don't have enough to do that as we need to use them to ruff our club losers! Another common problem was players were reluctant to keep drawing trumps and started playing spades. However that just meant West could ruff, lead another club and when declarer ruffed low, some Easts scored their ♥8. Remember even if you don't have the top trumps, you still have more of them than the opponents and you need to be trying to draw theirs once you have dealt with your other losers.

Key points to note

- Prefer to raise to 2 major with 3 card support and a weak hand rather than bid another suit – “support with support.”
- After 1M – 2M, new suits below 3M are best played as “trial bids” – invites to game in the major and looking for assistance in that suit. A bid of 3M is not invitational (see advanced section).
- In a suit contract decide whether you primarily intend to deal with your losers by ruffing in dummy or discarding them. That will determine how you play the hand.
- Don't be put off trying to draw trumps even if you are missing top ones – you still have more than the opponents!

More advanced

I suggested that 3♥ from North is not invitational after partner raises to 2. Why? What is the point of bidding it then? The answer these days is to shut the opponents out. Just because both opponents have passed once does not mean they cannot bid again! Once one side has found a fit, the other side almost always has one as well so it is often worthwhile getting back into the auction (perhaps with a takeout double). If North passes 2♥ this is made much easier. Raising to 3♥ straight away makes it a lot riskier. You might bid 3♥ with a weak opening and a 6th heart (so you know you have at least 9 between you). When playing this style, to make any sort of invite you MUST bid another suit as a trial bid (or 2NT).

What about North's rebid after 1♥ - 1♠? There are two styles in use. Traditionally simple rebids (2♣) are non-forcing and a jump rebid (3♣) is strong (16/17+). An alternative is to play simple rebids as forcing and use jump rebids as something else (most commonly as “mini-splinters” – that is shortage and typically showing a hand worth about a raise to 3 of partner's response).

As usual there are pluses and minuses to the method of playing simple rebids as forcing:

Pluses

- Allows you to keep the bidding low initially with strong hands to find out more about partner's hand. This can help with game and slam bidding.
- Allows you to show more accurate types of raise of partner's suit to evaluate game or slam there.

Minuses

- When responder has a bad hand that wants to pass the rebid! Suppose South had a 6 count with 1 heart and 4 clubs. They would like to pass 2♣ if partner bids it. But playing this method they are not allowed to - partner could have a 19 count! So they have to dredge up a raise to 3♣ and North needs to take into account partner could be very weak (in traditional methods South raising to 3♣ would be invitational because they could have passed 2♣).

Another advanced competitive bidding concept is a “game try double”. This arises specifically in a sequence where there is no room left to make an invitational trial bid. An example could occur on this hand. If East did overcall 2♦ then the auction is very likely to go 1♥ 2♦ 2♥ 3♦ back to North. In this exact situation (where the opponents are bidding the suit immediately below ours) there is no room left below 3♥ to make any invitational bid. But you still want to be able to distinguish between a hand that genuinely wants to invite game and a hand that just wants to compete to 3♥. To do this, some pairs therefore agree that a double from North is not penalties of diamonds, it is a general invite to game in hearts (3♥ would just be competitive and not inviting partner to bid 4♥).

Finally, in the play after ruffing 2 of your club losers and discarding one on ♦K, then a ♥ to the 10 and A, how do you continue with trumps when you next get in? You know the ♥J is with West (since East had to win the 10 with the A). So there is a choice of plays at this point – you can play East for ♥AK alone and lead the 4 hoping the K will hit thin air and your Q can later draw the J, or you can play West for Jx (East with AKx) and lead the Q hoping to smother the doubleton J and set your 9 up. Neither is that likely here because players normally win with the cheapest card they can. Therefore the fact East won the ♥A would suggest the K is also with West! Sure enough, neither play works on this hand but it still gets rid of two more of the opponents’ trumps and leaves them with just one trump winner and you with 10 tricks overall (if you have to ruff the next trick that leaves you with only one and the opponents have one too – so you just revert to playing your spade winners to keep control).

Julian Foster (many times NSW representative)



Win an Over the Shoulder Mentoring Experience with The SBC Mid-Week Online Swiss Pairs

The [SBC Mid-Week Online Swiss Pairs](#) is a one-day congress to be held on Wednesday 18th August, 10am start. We will play six 8 boards round with a lunch break in the middle.

RED masterpoints awarded. BB\$12 per player. Open winners will receive Free Entry to State Online Individual on 4th September, Novice / Restricted winners will receive Over the Shoulder Mentoring experience as prizes.

[Enter in advance](#) required on the NSWBA website. We intend to run separate fields for Open and Restricted & Novice players, if number allows. Please nominate the field you would like to compete in.

The Sydney Bridge Centre online sessions on BBO

Our clubroom on Goulburn Street is temporary closed under the current restriction. We are running regular club session online on BBO for the moment and will resume our F2F sessions once we can. Please keep an eye on our [website](#) for the latest announcement.

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.

24 boards, BB\$4 per person per game.