



Weekly Wisdom

The Sydney Bridge Centre mini lesson

XXXXXX 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 leading by Julian Foster to answer

#85154 BBO – Wednesday morning session 31st March 2021

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Board 6 last week was a typical part-score battle with the points evenly spread. The first decision is East's. A couple of tables opened 1♦. I would be tempted as well – you have some 10s and two As and getting into the bidding first tends to be an advantage. But it's hard to crime a pass as well.

If East does open 1♦ the bidding is likely to continue P 1♥ X (North should make a takeout double holding clubs and spades). East will probably pass having opened such a complete minimum! Or they might rebid 1♠ or 1NT (depending on style – see column from 17 February). South will no doubt now bid 2♣, West will probably compete to 2♥ and that might be it, although there's a case for South to bid onto 3♣ – especially if East did rebid 1NT. Why?

- We can almost "see" partner's singleton heart – East is balanced so has at least 2, West rebid the suit vulnerable so almost certainly has 6. With our 4 that only leaves 1 for partner.
- We have the ♠Q which rates to fit with partner's implied spade suit from their takeout double.
- Our DK may be well placed after the 1♦ bid on our right.
- We are not vulnerable so even if we go off we may well score better than a heart contract making their way.

An alternative auction starts P P 2♥. North should make a takeout double over this. Yes partner is a passed hand but we have perfect shape and could well want to compete – especially at favourable vulnerability. The hand with the shortage in the opponent's suit should tend to be the one that stretches to act. South will then bid 3♣ (see advanced section for more discussion on how South can distinguish between good and bad hands here).

3♣ by South might make but in practice might go off. Declarer normally will only have 2♠, 1♥, 1♦ and 3♣ plus one ruff in the other hand (either a ♥ in North or a ♦ in South). That's only 8 tricks. They either need some more ruffs (i.e. they don't draw all the trumps) or they finesse against East's ♠10 (which is basically seeing through the back of the cards!) But even 3♣ going 1 off for -50 is a good score because EW can make their heart contract.

Most tables were in 2♥ (twice by West and once by East after a 2♦ multi opening). All 3 tables made 9 tricks, declarer losing one trick in each suit. I'd probably lead the ♣K but declarer will often take both black aces, 5 hearts and will set up 2 diamonds if they lead the ♦J from dummy (if South covers, declarer wins and leads towards the ♦10 later, otherwise declarer runs the ♦J to North and later the ♦A will drop South's K to again set up the 10).

Accurate defence can hold 2♥ to 8 tricks though – how? At first glance the answer is a diamond ruff. Suppose North leads a diamond to the 10 K and A. South wins the HA and can now play a diamond to North's Q and get a ruff. This seems better but still isn't quite good enough because the winning ♦J is still now in dummy and can later discard one of West's black suit losers. So declarer loses 1 black suit card, ♥A, ♦Q and ♦ ruff. See advanced section for what the defence actually need to do!

Key points to note

- Opening the bidding tends to give your side an advantage. It's worth getting in even with 11 point hands provided they are reasonable.
- If you are short in the opponent's suit, you should be the one that may need to stretch to act in a competitive auction.
- Cards in suits your partner has implied in the auction tend to be good features in your hand and should encourage bidding further.
- "Lebensohl" is a very useful convention when responding to takeout doubles of weak twos (see advanced section).
- Sometimes you have to be patient in defence and wait to take your aces at the right moment (see advanced section).

More advanced

Firstly let's discuss an auction where partner doubles a weak two bid and it's passed back to us. There is a very wide range of hands we could have and in many cases we will have to start bidding at the 3 level (the only exception is 2♥ X P where we still have a 2♠ bid available). Suppose you had the shape of the South hand here but you had 0 points. You would have to bid 3♣ over partner's double of 2♥, it's just your longest suit. But now suppose you had the same shape but this time had 10 points. If you ALSO bid 3♣ with that sort of hand it makes life impossible for partner.

Imagine North is sitting with about 16 points. Opposite 0 points they obviously don't want to do any more – but opposite 10 points they might make game! How can they tell whether to bid more or not? They can't. The answer is the OTHER hand needs to help somehow. The solution is a convention called Lebensohl. This says that a bid of 2NT in response to a takeout double of a weak two is an artificial bid showing a BAD hand (usually about 0-7 points). Over that partner nearly always bids 3♣ (the only time they don't is when they had doubled with a really big hand to start with and can't afford for partner to pass 3♣). After 3♣ South simply passes or bids their own suit.

By starting with 2NT on all hands in the 0-7 range it means that an immediate bid of a suit at the 3 level can now show some values (usually about 8-11). So on the hand here South could bid 3♣ showing 8-11 instead of 0-11. That makes no difference here as North has a minimum double and won't go any further anyway but if North had about 16 points, now they know they are close to game.

So what does South do with hands that might have wanted to bid 2NT naturally? The answer is usually to either pass the double and convert it to penalties (which they might do if their trumps were good) or to just bid 3NT and hope! Defence is difficult so 3NT frequently makes even when it theoretically shouldn't – hence this tends to be a winning tactic. Yes occasionally you will end in 3NT 1 off instead of 2NT making. But that's a small price to pay for being able to more accurately evaluate all the other part-score and game going hands.

Returning to the problem of defending 2♥, I suggested the play start diamond to the 10 K and A, then a heart to the A followed by a diamond to the Q and a diamond ruff. Now South switches to a black suit. Advanced North defenders should be signalling which suit they want with a suit preference card as they give the ruff (it's academic on this hand but they should be signalling spades not clubs, the reason being it may be critical for partner to lead a spade through declarer's Q; the same isn't true for clubs which they can play safely themselves). But declarer gets in with one black ace, draws the remaining trumps, crosses back to the other black ace and discards a black suit loser on the winning ♦J. Still making 9 tricks! So what does the defence need to do? The solution is for South to think ahead and be patient. They need to DUCK the first round of trumps and win the second. Now when declarer wins the first black ace in dummy they can't get back to hand quickly to draw the last trump. If they try losing the black suit trick, North can win and play the 4th diamond so South can ruff the ♦J away. Now there is no discard and declarer will eventually lose the other black trick as well.

Even if South doesn't project the play forward completely (and most of us wouldn't!) it's good general principles to win the 2nd round of trumps here and not the first for two reasons:

- a) it helps cut declarer's communications (and this time that does prove key because declarer is 2632; if declarer had a black suit singleton and that was the one the defence switched to they could ruff back to hand to finish drawing trumps then later return to dummy with the other black ace to discard that loser on the $\spadesuit J$); and
- b) it allows partner to make a discard and signal to us (not so relevant on this hand since it doesn't matter which black suit we play but on many hands this signal could be critical).

A lot of the time in bridge it pays to be patient and not rush in with our aces and kings! The column on 30 December also had a hand where it was right for the defence to duck the A of trumps on the 1st round and win the 2nd round to exhaust dummy of trumps. That was to allow them to continue to force declarer. Today it's for a different reason.

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, you don't need to be a member to join us for a game in SBC. We have sessions for different level of players. If you need a partner, please come in 15-20 minutes before the game start, our directors will try to find you a partner.

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.