



Tuesday Night Tips

The Sydney Bridge Centre mini lesson

The Tuesday night BBO has discontinued from 1st December 2021. Please join Martin Clear on Tuesday night for a Face-to-face game at Sydney Bridge Centre, 7.15pm start.

Martin Clear continues to host and lead the group for bridge discussion after the session. He will also pick an interesting hand from the face-to-face session for the Tuesday Tips column.

The Purpose of Finding a Fit

F2F at City – Tuesday Night 23rd November 2021

16		♠ AKT	Dir: W
		♥ T763	Vul: E-W
		♦ 842	
		♣ J54	
♠ Q985	♠ 4	8	
♥ AQ2	♥ 8	11	16
♦ 6	♦ AKQJ973	5	
♣ KT876	♣ AQ92		
	♠ J7632	♠ ♦ ♥ NT	
	♥ KJ954	N - - 1 - -	
	♦ T5	S - - 1 - -	
	♣ 3	E 6 6 - - 4	
		W 6 6 - - 5	

I don't write a lot of analysis of bidding. There's a number of reasons for this, chief among them that I find bidding bridge hands simply less interesting than the play of the hand. A bridge column that analyses a hand's bidding in great depth and then say at the end "and of course the play was simple" strikes me as rather like doing a restaurant review that consists entirely of admiring the place settings and saying at the end that the food was acceptable. Bidding is also much more open to style differences: some people like 5-card majors systems (eg. Standard American), some like 4-card major systems (eg. Acol), some like Strong Club systems (eg. Precision), some prefer complex systems (eg. Forcing Pass). The play of the hand, however, retains principles that have remained

unchanged since bridge settled into its final form in the 1920s. So lauding a particular bidding system is like claiming that Asian food is better than European food: it's a matter of taste.

However I accept that players can often find greater and easier room for improvement in their bidding than in their play, and so I am going to cover today a principle of bidding that is often forgotten, even though it should be at the heart of what you are intending to do when you choose a strain to play in: what is the purpose of finding a fit?

First let's explain what a 'strain' is: it's the type of contract you play in. There are five strains: clubs, diamonds, hearts, spades, and no-trump. The actual contract has a strain, and a level (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 or 7). Choosing a strain is slightly different in Pairs, and as I concentrate mostly on Pairs, I will look at what we are trying to do in that form of the game. In Pairs, we try to play in a major fit, and if we don't have one, we play in no-trumps. The Pairs scoring system penalises playing in the 20-points-a-trick minors too heavily to play in them unless it is patently clear that no-trump is not working. In a major contract, you need score only one more trick than no-trump in order to score better than no-trump, but the situation is far worse in minors. If 3NT is making, you will need to score a full three extra tricks in a minor suit contract to get a better score. That means you will need 12 tricks, so you might as well bid the slam! Even at low level, playing 'safely' in a minor contract is poor strategy: 1NT scores the same as 2-minor, but if the 1NT declarers happen to get an overtrick - and 1NT is probably the contract that most often gets an unwarranted overtrick through inaccurate defence - you need to find TWO overtricks in the 2-minor contract or you get an inferior score.

So let's examine the reasons for playing in a fit, minor OR major. No-trump scores more than any trump contract for the same number of tricks, so how does trumping gain extra tricks? The obvious answer is to say, "Well, I have KQJT9 in spades, and I will make 4 spade tricks if I play in spades!" However this overlooks an important fact: you will get four tricks from such a spade holding in a no-trump contract as well. The length in your suit is NOT the main factor giving advantage in a trump contract. The two factors that DO give an advantage are: 1) CONTROL of suits that the opponents plan to take tricks in; and 2) ruffs made by the SHORTER trump hand.

Control of opponent suits is the reason most non-expert players want to play in a trump contract. There's a surety to knowing the opponents are not going to run away with a great swathe of tricks in one suit. Often I see a pair of hands

that should be bid 1N-3N, but nervous bidders have ended up somewhere else because each of them was worried about a particular suit they were weak in ... and given that they had 26 point between them, it turned out their partner had their weak suit well controlled.

It should be noted too that if you DO have control of a suit, some controls are better in no-trump than in a trump suit. If you hold AK8 of a suit, you have two stoppers in no-trumps and also two stoppers in a trump suit. If you have QJT9 of a suit, you have two stoppers in no-trumps but a significant risk that your stoppers will be ruffed by an opponent if you play in a trump suit. This applies especially if one of your opponents has bid the suit but not been raised. What is called 'soft' values - winners of the third or fourth round of the suit - should encourage you to a no-trump contract more than the quick tricks of Ace and King.

The second reason for playing in a trump suit rather than no-trump is crucial in Pairs: ruffing with the trumps that are in the SHORTER trump holding. A dummy that produces three trumps and a singleton elsewhere is usually providing two extra tricks compared to playing in no-trump, and those extra tricks apply at all strength levels of the hands: part-score, game and slams. Ruffing opportunities in the short trump holding is the most important reason to choose to play in a trump contract.

So what happens when you have a choice of two possible trump suits? It is often better to play in the one where the short suit is longer, because it provides ruffing opportunities. If you have a 5-3 fit in one major and a 4-4 fit in the other, the 4-4 is generally the better choice.

The choice of trump suit came up on Board 16 on Tuesday night in face-to-face play at the Sydney Bridge Centre. Although the powerful East hand can be opened with a strong forcing bid (2♣ for most bidders), most East players opened 1♦, and heard 2♣ in response. It is fine to open 1♦ here because the absence of actual high card points (only 16) means it is unlikely to be passed out - East's strength is in shape rather than a huge point count.

The bidding after 2♣ though was not good. Not a single pair ended up playing in clubs. West's 2♣ bid showed (in most systems) 10+ points and 5+ clubs (the 5-length is not a 'systemic' requirement, it is simply inherent in bidding suits 'up the line' and bidding no-trump with a flat hand). Once West makes that bid, East needs to know only three things: does West have the ♠A, the ♥A, and the ♣K? And, oh joy, all three of those cards are in the response to Roman Key Card Blackwood! East should bid 4N, and bid 7♣ if partner has all three, and 6♣ if partner has 2. If partner turns up with only one key card, pass 5♣. If you play 0314 RKCB, and partner responds 5♦ to tell you "1 keycard", you are in trouble. You would need to bid 5♠, which, by virtue of being neither a Queen-Ask nor a reversion to the trump suit, asks partner to bid 5N. You may get that home if you are lucky.

However most Easts were unable to go past the power of their diamond suit, and played in diamonds, and only one of them in slam. As it turned out the hand played as well in diamonds as clubs, but in general, try to play in the suit that has the most cards in the short hand, which would be clubs here.

Martin Clear (SBC Tuesday Night host)

Let's get together this Christmas!



Another difficult year that we've been through together, another memory that we shared in common. Let's get together this Christmas on Wednesday 8th December and /or Friday 10th December 2021! Each party will have two sessions of duplicate, you can choose to play in both sessions or in either the morning or the afternoon session for the same entry fee. That means you can choose to play the whole day with a lunch break or play one session with lunch either before or after your chosen session. Morning tea, afternoon tea and snacks will be served during the sessions.

- **Date:** Wednesday 8th December 2021 or Friday 10th December 2021 (you're welcome to join both)
- **Time:** 10.00am – 1.00pm and / or 2.15pm – 5.15pm with morning & afternoon tea and lunch
- **Venue:** City, level 1, 162 Goulburn Street, Sydney 2010
- **Cost:** Members \$40 / Visitors \$45 per person (fee includes a delicious Christmas themed morning tea, afternoon tea, snacks and a 3-courses lunch. Vegetarian options available. No concession, no vouchers).

There will be separate sections for Open and Supervised players.

RED masterpoints.

We can only accept bookings for 28 tables at each party. You [MUST book online](#) for catering and board dealing purpose.

For Face-to-Face sessions:

Welcome back! Our clubroom on Goulburn Street has opened from Monday 18th October 2021. We will start with 6 regular sessions on the first week: Monday – Thursday morning, 10am – 1.15pm and Tuesday night 7.15pm – 10.00pm. There will be a separate field for Supervised players on Wednesday morning and a “Play it out loud” Supervised session on Wednesday night (6.30pm start).

For BBO sessions:

We will continue to run the 5 regular club session online on BBO. Please check our [session timetable](#) here.

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.