



## 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.

### #50639 BBO – Saturday ARVO session 30<sup>th</sup> October 2021

<b>3</b>	♠ K975	<i>Dlr: S</i>																													
	♥ KQJ		<i>Vul: E-W</i>																												
	♦ K8																														
	♣ K543																														
♠ A8	♠ T43																														
♥ 976	♥ A85																														
♦ T43	♦ AJ72																														
♣ AJT87	♣ Q92																														
♠ QJ62	<table><tr><td></td><td>♣</td><td>♦</td><td>♥</td><td>♠</td><td>NT</td></tr><tr><td>N</td><td>-</td><td>1</td><td>1</td><td>3</td><td>-</td></tr><tr><td>S</td><td>-</td><td>1</td><td>1</td><td>3</td><td>-</td></tr><tr><td>E</td><td>2</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>1</td><td>-</td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td>2</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>1</td><td>-</td></tr></table>		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	N	-	1	1	3	-	S	-	1	1	3	-	E	2	-	-	1	-	W	2	-	-	1	-
		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT																									
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S		-	1	1	3	-																									
E	2	-	-	1	-																										
W	2	-	-	1	-																										
♥ T432																															
♦ Q965																															
♣ 6																															

Board 3 last week was one of those fairly innocuous looking partscore hands. Yet it was one with some interest in the bidding and where most pairs misdefended. Let's see how.

After two passes, North has a normal strong 1NT opening. South then has to decide whether to simply pass (as most tables did) or whether to try to remove 1NT into a suit contract. They could do this by bidding simple stayman ("Garbage stayman" as it is sometimes called – i.e. being able to bid stayman holding garbage!) Note that if you play extended stayman where partner could respond 2NT or higher then it's not safe to bid on the South hand at all.

Bidding simple stayman will work well when partner bids 2♥ or 2♠ – you will be happy to pass and expect it to play quite well with the chance to ruff some club losers in the South hand. The challenge of course is a 2♦ response! South can then choose to pass 2♦ or, more likely, seek to scramble into a 4-3 major fit. See advanced section for more discussion on this.

The majority of tables, however, simply played 1NT by North. Most Easts led the 4th highest diamond. While it's not that appealing leading away from honours around to a strong no-trump hand, no other suit is particularly appealing either. It's one of those hands where any lead could be right – there really isn't anything much to go on. Playing matchpoints where you tend to want to avoid giving cheap tricks away you might even decide to lead a passive spade – something that doesn't work at all well on this particular hand!

After a diamond lead around to the 10 and K, declarer will start to build some tricks in one of the major suits. It may not make much difference but I would tend to play hearts first because I will want to get that suit unblocked if I am later going to score the ♥10. When East wins the ♥A they need to switch to a club to beat the contract. That will set up 4 clubs and 3 aces for the defence. If they fail to do that, declarer will then have time to play spades to knock that ace out and will most likely then score 3 tricks in each major, at least 1 diamond (quite likely two if the defence continue diamonds) and potentially also the ♣K. When declarer plays on hearts, East should be able to work out there is no future in diamonds and West should be able to signal a club preference – see advanced section for how.

At the table it seems like most defending pairs continued diamonds which gave declarer the chance to knock out the ♠A and set up 3 spade tricks before their own ♣K was knocked out. Therefore most declarers made their 1NT contract, in some cases with overtricks even though it could have been beaten.

If declarer chooses to play on spades that will actually work better for him because it will knock the ♠A out of the hand which also has the long clubs. However it's a blind guess from declarer as to who has which major suit ace. The only clue really is that West passed in the auction so he won't have 3 aces. It looks like East has the ♦A but there's no way of knowing where the others are.

Where South did choose to bid stayman, North obviously responded 2♠ and that became the final contract. Provided declarer draws trumps, gets the hearts unblocked and leads a club from South, it should normally make 9 tricks (3 trumps,

3 hearts, 1 diamond, ♣K and one club ruff). The two pairs who duly scored +140 were unlucky today to lose out to two pairs who scored +150 in 1NT thanks to some defensive help!

### *Key points to note*

- Weak hands with both majors may consider responding simple stayman to 1NT but they need to have a plan for what to do over a 2♦ response.
- Simple stayman has advantages over extended stayman because it allows responder to bid on weak hands without risking going too high.
- Leading away from honours around to a strong NT is often a poor choice (prefer passive leads when playing pairs) but some hands have honours almost everywhere so it's largely a guess!
- After partner plays to trick 1, you can often work out what card(s) everyone has in the suit led.
- It is often right as a defender not to take the Ace of a suit immediately – even if it's not a case of holding up to cut communications a 2nd round of a suit can enable partner to signal.
- After giving count, remaining spot cards in a suit can be used to give suit preference signals (see advanced section).

### *More advanced*

So what if South does choose to bid stayman over 1NT but partner produces the worst response of 2♦? There are now a couple of choices:

Pass 2♦. The nightmare is when partner is 3325 though! For this reason it's not usually a good idea to bid this with only 4 diamonds. A 4450 shape is ideal or perhaps 4351. Now diamonds will be at worst a 5-2 fit.

Bid 2♥ as the start of a scramble to find a 4-3 major fit. Opener is expected to pass with 3 hearts or go back to 2♠ (if they have chosen to open 1NT on a 2254 shape then you are unlucky this time!)

Some pairs prefer to play that after 1NT-2♣-2♦ then 2 of either major is to play – i.e. usually showing 5 in that major and 4 in the other. If you play that method it is more dangerous to bid on this South hand because after a 2♦ response you are now simply guessing what major to bid and you could land up in a very silly 4-2 fit! Playing 2♥ as a scramble at least guarantees you will always at least find a 4-3 fit but it might mean you play that instead of a 5-3 fit.

I mentioned that pairs playing extended Stayman (which can include responses like 2NT) are not able to bid on hands like this because there is too much risk of partner making a response South cannot handle. In my view simple stayman is a better method because we know partner will never bid more than 2♠ so it is safe to bid on hands like South's. On this hand North would indeed bid 2♠ and South will happily pass.

What about the defence to 1NT? After the diamond lead assume declarer plays hearts. Once East wins the ♥A they can work out there is no future in diamonds. Why? Because partner played the 10 at trick 1. With the 9 in dummy, partner would have played the 8 if they had it. So East knows declarer has at least the K and the 8 and the Q96 are sitting over our AJ7. We are not likely to get more than one diamond trick and should look elsewhere.

So where do we look? We first get partner to help us! East should duck the first heart and win the 2nd. This gives West a chance to give a signal. The signal is very subtle but good players should work it out. West will give count on the 1st round of hearts. Then on the 2nd round their card should be suit preference – lower card prefers clubs, higher card prefers spades (ignore the suit we led and the suit declarer is playing on).

So if the pair is playing reverse count, West's cards should be 9 then 6 (instead of the 7). If playing natural count West's cards should be 6 then 7 (instead of the 9). A sharp-eyed East can see these are the only heart pips missing and work out the signal being given is preference for the lower suit (clubs). Looking at dummy it seems pretty likely that clubs will be the best source of tricks for the defence anyway but that is no reason for West to get lazy with the signals. After all West could have ♠AK9x and only the ♣J. Now they do want a spade switch.

On this hand once East switches to a club, the defence keep playing the suit until declarer takes the K and now when West gets in with ♠A they can cash their remaining clubs to beat the contract. Declarer is limited to scoring at most 3 hearts, 2 diamonds and the ♣K.

Julian Foster (many times NSW representative)

## **We have REOPENED for Face-to-Face bridge on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> October 2021**

### **For Face-to-Face sessions:**

Welcome back! Our clubroom on Goulburn Street has opened from Monday 18<sup>th</sup> 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.