



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.

#51277 BBO – Saturday ARVO 13th November 2021

Board 20 last week was a freak hand. The odds of a hand such as South's turning up are astronomical! I've been playing bridge for almost 35 years and it's only the 2nd 7600 hand I remember (although, amazingly, in the Monday night tournament session this week a 5800 hand also showed up!) With such distribution around there are few "normal" rules and points mean pretty much nothing – the shape is far more important. It is therefore generally better to declare if at all possible. It's all too easy to double a high level contract and find it makes because your high cards get trumped!

Now it comes to South who may by now have recovered from the shock of seeing their hand! Several players bid 5♣ over 4♥ and that ended the auction. Clearly you are going to bid over 4♥ but a much better bid is 4NT. This is not blackwood – it is like the unusual 2NT bid over a 1 level opening so it shows a distributional two suiter initially assumed to be both minors (but see advanced section for more on this) and asking partner to bid their better one. You definitely want to get both suits into the auction - after all, you'd feel pretty silly if you bid 5♣ and found partner with a void in clubs and ♦Kxxx!

There should be almost nothing to the play on the hand in clubs. Assuming a major is led, declarer ruffs, plays $\heartsuit A$ and ruffs a diamond in dummy. When the $\heartsuit 8$ and Q appear on their left they are now guaranteed to make $6\clubsuit$ as they could draw trumps and give up a trick to the $\heartsuit K$. However at pairs it is better to ruff back to hand and continue trumping diamonds as diamonds might be 2-4 with East starting with $\heartsuit K542$. Even then you may still be able to ruff 3 diamonds in dummy to set the suit up and make all 13 tricks (if West doesn't have the $\clubsuit J$ they won't be able to ruff ahead of dummy). When in fact diamonds turn out to be 3-3, 13 tricks become trivial.

As you might expect from a hand like this, there were a variety of strange scores. Top was 6 clubs redoubled with an overtrick for +1740, 2nd was 5 clubs redoubled with an overtrick for +1400 which just beat 6 clubs +1 for +1390! 4 pairs stopped in 5 clubs and they all made 12 tricks. The mistake most made was to draw 2 rounds of trumps first. But that left them only one trump in dummy to ruff a diamond and they had to therefore lose a trick to the ♦K. Remember if you are planning to ruff losers in dummy, you need to do it before drawing trumps!

The odd score out on the traveller was the East West pair who were allowed to play 5♥ for -200. Again South is being quite pessimistic selling out at the 5 level. In fact the optimum result on the hand for both sides is 7 hearts doubled 4 off for +1100 North South! This is the “par” contract – see advanced section for more on what this means.

Key points to note

- You may get dealt a 7600 bridge hand once or twice in a lifetime if you are lucky – make the most of it!
- No-trump bids at high levels in these sorts of auctions are “unusual” typically showing a two suiter (initially assumed to be minors).
- With freak hands around, it is almost always better to declare if possible. This at least avoids the nightmare of doubling a high level contract and finding it making!
- The “par” contract on a hand is the result where both sides do optimally.

More advanced

Because there is so little room available after pre-empts, it’s not possible to bid accurately and a lot of flexibility is needed. South’s 4NT bid over 4♥ here would typically show a very distributional two suiter. Partner assumes it is the minors initially and shows their preference. If they bid 5♣ and NOW South bids 5♦ that is showing that clubs wasn’t one of the suits – so it’s now showing diamonds and spades. That’s actually pretty rare however (with that hand the most practical action is usually to just bid 4♠ and hope for the best!) 4NT is a much more useful bid over a 4♠ opening. Now if you pull 5♣ to 5♦ you are telling partner you actually had diamonds and hearts.

Generally over pre-empts you don’t really have the time or space to double and then bid your suit to show a very large hand. So double should usually be played as a flexible hand of some sort – but remember the higher the level the more likely it is partner may just choose to pass. Double on the South hand here would be insane. It is far too likely partner will pass which is the last thing you want to hear!

There is often psychology involved in these high level decisions. If South bids to a 6 level contract all on their own; and if they confidently redouble East when he tries a double with his two aces, a strong East may work out that there’s a freak hand around. This might cause him to find the successful save in hearts. Today -800 in 6 hearts or -1100 in 7 hearts would have scored East West about an average although it would have deserved more since most pairs should really be bidding the North South cards to at least the 6 level.

I mentioned the “par” contract is 7♥ doubled for -1100. It is worth understanding what “par contract” means. Put simply it’s the best result that can be achieved on the hand if both sides do optimally and reach their highest scoring contract. Here North South can make 7♣ which would score +2140. But East West can then do better by playing in hearts and conceding 1100 instead. Obviously North South cannot bid at the 8 level and playing 7NT is hardly going to work either! Hence the best they can do is double 7♥.

Vulnerability often makes a big difference to what the par contract is. For example there might be a hand where North South can make 10 tricks in hearts and East West can make 8 tricks in spades. Most of the time the par contract here will be 4♠ doubled 2 off for -300 or -500. But in the situation where North South are not vulnerable and East West are vulnerable the par contract is just 4♥ for North South +420. This time it’s not worth East West bidding 4♠ as it will cost them 500.

In theory if everyone is playing perfectly you want to score better than the “par” score for your side on each hand. In the real world of course, that seldom ever happens so the par contract is more of theoretical interest than anything else. Sometimes achieving “par” will actually get you a virtual top, other times a virtual bottom! It all depends on what the other players do on the same board.

Finally, although not directly relevant to this hand, another method some pairs adopt over pre-empts is “non-leaping Michaels”. This applies over 3 of a major where a bid of 4 of a minor typically shows 5+ of that minor and 5+ of the other major – it’s like a Michaels cue bid. It’s especially useful over 3♠ where it might be silly to overcall 4♥ with a

1525 shape and find partner with 1 heart and 5 card club support! Nor can you usually afford to bid 4♠ as that takes you past 4♥ which may be your best contract. The rationale is that this is a more useful hand type to be able to show than a natural 4 minor overcall (with that hand you either have to pass or shut your eyes and bid 5). However this is definitely something to agree with your partner! My regular partner and I had an accident in the finals of the State team selections last year – he bid 4♣ over 3♠ meaning it as non-leaping Michaels and I thought it was natural and raised it to 5♣. We landed up in a silly 5-2 club fit at the 5 level instead of the normal 4♥ contract with a 5-3 fit. Very luckily for us 5♣ made as well so we escaped – but we fully deserved to lose a lot of imps. Sometimes there is no justice in bridge!

Julian Foster (many times NSW representative)

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 80 people 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.