



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.

Ducking aces in defence.

#90281 BBO – Saturday ARVO 20th November 2021

1		♠ KQ954	Dir: N																															
		♥ T4	Vul: None																															
		♦ K765																																
		♣ A7																																
♠ T		♠ AJ32																																
♥ KJ962		♥ 853																																
♦ A432		♦ QJ																																
♣ 542		♣ KJ63																																
12	♠ 876	<table><tr><td></td><td>♣</td><td>♦</td><td>♥</td><td>♠</td><td>NT</td></tr><tr><td>N</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>1</td><td>-</td></tr><tr><td>S</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>1</td><td>-</td></tr><tr><td>E</td><td>1</td><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>-</td><td>1</td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td>1</td><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>-</td><td>1</td></tr></table>				♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	N	-	-	-	1	-	S	-	-	-	1	-	E	1	1	2	-	1	W	1	1	2	-	1
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Board 1 last week saw almost all tables playing in 2♠ by North. Most made 8 or 9 tricks (although perfect defence can hold it to 7 as we'll see below). Yet even on what might be considered a fairly "boring" hand there is actually quite a lot of interest in the play and defence. In particular, how it's frequently right NOT to win a trick immediately as a defender.

The auctions were nearly all the same and very simple. 1♠ pass 2♠ all pass. I have mentioned before that when the vulnerability is nil all it is usually advantageous to play the contract rather than defend – and hence one should be more aggressive in trying to get into auctions. That's even more so when the opponents have at least an 8 card fit because there is a very high chance your side also has a fit.

This hand is difficult for East/West, however. East cannot possibly bid over 1♠ so the only hope might be that West decides to bid after South's 2♠. Normally the hand with the shortage in the opponent's suit should strive to act. But West is in a very exposed position here – for all he knows North could be sitting over him with 19 points and about to bid game! Even if he did act, it would probably have to be with a takeout double and now East will bid clubs rather than hearts. If West does pass and the auction comes back to East, he now at least knows the opponents are limited in values – but he doesn't have a clear bid either and has plenty of defence to spades. For those reasons most tables did pass out 2♠. The only ones who played in hearts did so after West overcalled 3♥. However that's a very risky action from West – and it caused East to raise to 4♥ (which is always the risk of bidding when light on points – you can't always shut partner up!)

So what about the play and defence to 2♠? East has a choice of red suit leads in my view. A trump lead would be terrible (you know they are splitting badly and leading the suit will just help declarer). A club might work but has more chance of giving a trick away (there are more points on your right than your left so it is more likely to run around to declarer's honours). Here those tables that did lead a club saw South scoring a cheap trick. East knows they have a nasty trump holding for declarer so they should tend towards a more passive lead and try not to give a trick away elsewhere.

Several tables led the ♦Q. That was OK except quite a lot of Wests played the Ace on it and then returned a diamond. Declarer's ♦K now dropped the ♦J and left declarer with winning diamonds. West should in fact duck the ♦Q lead and allow declarer's ♦K to win trick 1 – see advanced section for why ducking is very unlikely to cost.

The best lead for the defence as it turns out is a heart – this allows West to score a trick in the suit. If the defence don't lead a heart, declarer can play ♣A and another which, once East wins the ♣K, sets up the ♣Q to discard declarer's losing heart on (and declarer still has the ♥A in dummy to reach it). The heart is the key trick the defence need to take, allowing declarer to discard a diamond on a club doesn't matter much – because that diamond is going to become a winner later anyway.

After a heart lead the defence should end up with 2 spades, 1 heart, 2 diamonds and 1 club – i.e. 6 tricks in all. But they have to be quite sharp to get them all. As we've seen they must start with a heart. They also have to be careful not to crash their diamond honours. West can underlead their ♦A though. This is generally safe for the same reason that ducking the ♦A at trick 1 is safe.

Another point of interest arises in the trump suit. Once declarer reaches dummy, they will naturally lead a spade towards the KQ. At most tables East won the A on the first round. This didn't make much overall difference on this hand. But it can be very effective defence to duck smoothly with this sort of holding – see advanced section for why.

Key points to note

- Although getting into the bidding is very important (especially when no one is vulnerable at pairs) there are limits that can make it too risky.
- Tend towards passive leads more often at pairs especially if you know you have a nasty surprise in store for declarer in another suit!
- Don't automatically play the Ace on top of partner's Queen – it is only right when declarer has singleton King. It's frequently better to duck and allow declarer's King to score. It's also often possible to work out from the bidding that it's safe to duck.
- Also consider ducking smoothly if you hold AJx(x) over declarer's suit headed by the KQ.

More advanced

How can West work out not to overtake the ♦Q if East leads it? Two reasons:

- a) They can see the 1098 in dummy so expending two of the defence's honours on the one trick is just going to help declarer set up their own winners.
- b) The main reason for taking the ♦A is concern that declarer might have a singleton K. But that is extremely unlikely here. Why? Because it would mean East had QJ765. What's more East is also known to have quite a few points – West can see only 16 between his own hand and South's. But North didn't make any further move over 2♠ so he is limited as well. Knowing how important it is to compete at this vulnerability East is quite likely to have overcalled if they had 5 diamonds and a reasonable hand.

Therefore, when you think about it, it seems very unlikely that declarer has a singleton ♦K. Accordingly West is better to just encourage on the ♦Q and allow declarer to score his ♦K. But that now leaves partner's presumed ♦J and your Ace to beat dummy's remaining diamonds.

If the defence have led a heart and West has scored an early heart trick, they may well consider switching to diamonds. It looks far more attractive than leading clubs round to dummy's Q1098. For exactly the same reasons as above it's generally safe for West to underlead the ♦A. In fact that can be very effective because declarer doesn't know where the diamond honours are. They are far more likely to duck and allow East to score their ♦J.

What about the trump suit? East knows he is going to score at least two trump tricks anyway but declarer doesn't! As such, it can be very effective for East to duck smoothly when declarer leads a spade to his hand. Look at it from declarer's point of view if the first round of trumps goes 6 10 Q 2. It now looks like West has the ♠A. On this hand, declarer is short of entries to South so he might next try leading a low spade from hand hoping West started with ♠A10 alone. But on other hands declarer might cross to South again thinking that the spades are sitting favourably. Once he leads a 2nd time from dummy and West shows out, it will be an unpleasant surprise! With AJx sitting over declarer's K, East can now take 2 rounds of trumps immediately. What's more, declarer may have just wasted a valuable entry to South that he could have used to take a successful finesse in another suit.

This ducking play can also be devastating with a 4-4 fit. Imagine declarer has a 4-4 spade fit and the play going the same way. The hand could easily fall apart for declarer after they lead the 2nd spade because East can now play 3 more rounds of the suit and remove ALL the trumps!

Note that it's quite safe for East to duck in these cases because they know their partner only has 1 spade. If they didn't know that it would be dangerous. East would look pretty silly ducking with AJx if partner happened to have Kx and declarer only had the Q!

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.