



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.

Part score bidding and the importance of vulnerability

#28738 BBO – Saturday ARVO 27th November 2021

13		♠ J87	Dir: N											
		♥ AT86	Vul: Both											
		♦ AJ8												
		♣ A42												
♠ A		♠ KQ962												
♥ 9753		♥ J4												
♦ 62		♦ Q73												
♣ KQJ965		♣ 873												
14	♠ T543	<table><tr><td></td><td>♣♦♥♠NT</td></tr><tr><td>N</td><td>- 4 5 2 4</td></tr><tr><td>S</td><td>- 4 5 2 4</td></tr><tr><td>E</td><td>2 - - -</td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td>2 - - -</td></tr></table>				♣♦♥♠NT	N	- 4 5 2 4	S	- 4 5 2 4	E	2 - - -	W	2 - - -
	♣♦♥♠NT													
N	- 4 5 2 4													
S	- 4 5 2 4													
E	2 - - -													
W	2 - - -													
10	8 ♥ KQ2													
8	♦ KT954													
	♣ T													

Board 13 last week was a competitive deal which saw quite a few different contracts played with mostly plus scores for north south. As is often the case with partscore boards the vulnerability plays a part.

The auction here could develop very differently depending on who bids spades first. North has a normal 1♣ opening (unless playing a weak NT). The first decision is East's. He has 8 points. Should he overcall 1♠? I would for the following reasons:

- My spades are reasonable and I am happy for partner to lead them.
- 1♠ takes up a lot of space over 1♣ which may make it harder for the opponents to show their suits. If North had opened 1♥ I probably wouldn't overcall as it takes up no space.
- It's very rare to be taken for a large penalty at the 1 level so it's usually worth getting into the auction if you can.

But there are several arguments against bidding as well:

- I only have 8 points
- I have a balanced shape (5332)
- I am vulnerable (see advanced section for why this matters so much).

If East does overcall 1♠ South has a problem. There isn't an ideal bid. All the plausible options have flaws:

- 1NT - usually shows about 7-10 balanced with a spade stopper. But I'm not balanced and my spade stopper isn't very good!
- 2♦ - usually shows 10+. I'm not strong enough.
- Double - usually shows the other suits. But partner will assume I have 4 hearts and could bid them on a 4 card suit. With my spade length I am worried their hand (with the longer hearts) will get forced to trump.
- Pass - feels a bit wet with a good 8 points - even if partner has opened our singleton

Playing pairs I think I'd tend towards 1NT as the "least bad" option but everything we choose could be wrong! 1NT could easily end the auction on this hand.

Note that if East did pass then South should respond 1♠ (they are quite weak so should show their major suit first).

West also has a problem whichever side bids spades! After 1♣ 1♠ P he would like to bid 2♣ naturally but that is now going to sound like a cue raise of spades (see advanced section). So he may choose to just pass or possibly bid 1NT himself although this hand doesn't look very suitable for no-trumps (see advanced section for why). After 1♣ P 1♠ West again may want to bid 2♣ naturally but that could also be unclear as partner may think it's a cue of the opponents suit (perhaps showing the other suits?) So again he may have to pass initially.

This didn't happen at any table but what should North do if it goes 1♣ 1♠ P P back to them? The answer may be surprising - pass! Yes give up at the 1 level. Where are we going? Partner couldn't bid over 1♠ - we have no reason to second guess that. Besides the opponents are vulnerable so if we beat 1♠ we are scoring 100 a time.

If South does choose to double over 1♠, North will surely bid 2♥. This time South's concern about the long trump hand being forced to trump doesn't come to pass and 2♥ actually plays well - see below.

So what happens in the play of the various contracts?

If East is left in 1♠ it may not be pretty. The defence can start by taking two club ruffs. Then they exit to the ♠A in dummy. Either defender can ruff a club and the West hand is now dead. Declarer should then lose 2 hearts, 3 diamonds together with the ♣A and the 2 club ruffs. That just leaves them with 5 trump tricks and a score of -200 which would have been a virtual zero.

Several tables played in diamonds North South. This mainly made the 10 tricks it should make (4♥, 5♦ and 1♣). One of South's spades can be discarded on the long heart but that's all. NS +130.

Two tables played in hearts and made 7 and 8 tricks respectively. But they could have made more and outscored 130. See advanced section for how.

Key points to note

- Overcalls at the 1 level these days can be pretty light on points.
- Be more inclined to overcall with a suit you are happy for partner to lead and/or an overcall which takes up more bidding space (1♠ over 1♣ is ideal)
- Sometimes you have no ideal bid and have to choose the "least bad" option!
- Don't be afraid to pass the opponents out if you have length in their suit – especially if they are vulnerable. Scoring +200 could be very good for your side.
- Shy away from no trumps with hands with long suits that may get cut off, and with singleton honours (see advanced section).

More advanced

Why should West shy away from no trumps if it goes 1♣ 1♠ P to them? Mainly because their hand could quickly become worthless. Once the ♠A has gone, unless partner happens to have ♣A it's very likely North South will duck the ♣A and cut off our long club suit. The hand is worth more played in clubs because now our long suit is guaranteed to take tricks. The ♠A is also a bad feature - singleton honours are a pet hate of mine for playing no trump contracts. Not only can't you hold them up, they often block your own suits.

I mentioned West may not be able to bid 2♣ naturally after North has opened 1♣. Most experienced pairs play cue raises of partners overcall - that is, a cue bid of the opponents suit shows a good raise (typically 9+ points) and an immediate raise is more pre-emptive. That is very useful but it can sometimes, like on this hand, cause a problem when you want to bid naturally! To do that you usually need to pass and then hope to be able to bid again on the next round. Here as West if I heard any of 1♣ P 1♠, 1♣ 1♠ P, or 1♣ 1♠ X to me I would pass initially. If 1NT came back to me NOW I would bid 2♣ which is natural. East will be happy there although South might now decide to bid 2♦. East West are unlikely to push further but actually they've already improved their score as NS are now playing in a lower scoring diamond contract instead of a higher scoring heart or no-trump contract.

Notice how important the vulnerability is here. Because EW are vulnerable it's worth NS passing out 1♠ and taking it 2 off for +200. If EW were not vul now it's better for NS to bid on because this time taking 1♠ 2 off is only +100 and they score better playing in diamonds or hearts themselves.

Why does hearts score a trick more than diamonds? Because it's possible to take a ruff in the short trump hand (South). On a spade lead, declarer can win any switch and take a club ruff in South. Then they cash ♥KQ (which luckily drops the doubleton J). Now cross to North with the ♦A, draw all the remaining trumps and finesse the ♦Q. All up declarer can score 4♥, 5♦, 1♣ and a club ruff for 11 tricks. Of course that's quite lucky (and if the diamond finesse loses, there will be a lot of club losers as all your trumps have gone!) but you might as well try it.

No trumps also plays well for NS. The defence cannot run either of their suits. The ♠A blocks that suit and East has no other entry. After a spade lead, the West hand then also has no entry to its long clubs (assuming North holds up the ♣A). Even if East does find a club lead declarer, rather luckily, has 9 tricks available to take in the red suits. 3NT is not a game anyone is likely to bid with a combined 22 points though but it does in fact always make.

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 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.