



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.

8 Card Suits in the Bidding, Play and Defence

#5274 BBO – Saturday 11th December 2021

15		♠ 9852	Dlr: S
		♥ A9	Vul: N-S
		♦ K94	
		♣ K943	
♠ KJ	♠ AT7643		
♥ KQJT8654	♥ 7		
♦ 876	♦ AJT52		
♣	♣ 8		
10 ♠ Q	♣ ♦ ♥ ♠ NT		
10 9 ♥ 32	N 4 - - -		
11 ♦ Q3	S 4 - - -		
♣ AQJT7652	E - 4 4 4 -		
	W - 4 4 4 -		

8 card suits are fairly rare overall but board 15 last week had two of them! Let's see how the players handled them.

South has the first 8 card suit as dealer. All but one table chose to open 1♣ and I think this is reasonable with 11 points. But there's a lot to be said for South's action at the remaining table (opening 4♣). Some pairs don't play this as natural, however (see advanced section). 4♣ takes up a lot of space and will often make it very hard for East West to accurately bid to a major suit fit if they have one. The main downside is when partner has a strong hand because he might not place you with as many as 11 points and you might miss game or slam your way (the outside queens could be useful to help partner). The vulnerability is also another important factor. If I had been non-vulnerable I might well open 5♣ (I am

probably going to want to bid that over their 4 major anyway) but vulnerable that is too much.

West then has to decide what to do with their own 8 card suit. Several tables overcalled 1♣ with 1♥ but I prefer 4♥. Mainly because I am concerned the opponents have spades and I want to make it hard for them to find 4♠ (not in fact an issue on this hand but, from West's perspective, it easily could be). But also just because the hand looks like we want to bid 4♥ so we should do so as quickly as possible.

North has an easy double of 1♥ and should also double over 4♥ - yes it's a bit aggressive with only 10 points at the 4 level but you could easily be being talked out of something. South will rebid 5♣ and West then has to decide again. Quite a few Wests bid onto 5♥. In theory that was wrong (neither 5♣ or 5♥ are making) but in practice they were all successful. It's also good "insurance" in case 5♣ is making (see advanced section).

What about the play? North South played in clubs at two tables (one in 5♣ doubled, one in 6♣). Both made 11 tricks although the contract should go off – the defence should score 1 spade, 1 heart and 1 diamond. To defeat it East has to hold off the ♦A and use it to beat the ♦K – otherwise declarer can discard their losing heart on the ♦K (because the hearts are 8-1 the defence can't cash their heart trick immediately so declarer's heart loser is at risk of being discarded). See advanced section for how declarer can make it harder for the defence but why they should still get it right.

Hearts played by East West made 11 or 12 tricks each time it was played. When the defence started with a club (normal), declarer could ruff and lead trumps. A diamond switch now meant 11 tricks, anything else meant 12 tricks. The ♠Q dropping singleton meant all declarer's spades were winners to discard both the diamond losers but that's only possible if the ♦A is still in dummy (declarer can cash the ♠J and then cross to dummy for the rest of the spades). If the ♦A has already been knocked out, the spade suit is blocked so the best declarer can do is overtake the ♠J to take one discard on the ♠10 but the rest of the spades are no longer winners.

To beat 5♥ North actually has to lead a diamond. That sets up a diamond trick, and a diamond ruff for South to go with the ♥A. Not at all easy to find! A spade lead (setting up a spade ruff) is not actually good enough – see advanced section.

Key points to note

- 8 card suits should generally try to declare.
- 4 level openings can make things very tough for the opponents but a 1 level opening can still work out better with a stronger hand as you may have more chance of reaching slam.
- The vulnerability makes a big difference when considering what level to open and how high to later bid.
- When declaring always be conscious the defenders cannot see your hand – leading from dummy towards your hand can give your right hand opponent lots of problems (either real or imaginary!)
- Even at high levels (unless it's obvious you can cash enough tricks to beat the contract), it is generally right not to play aces into thin air but to wait for them to capture Kings or Queens.
- As a defender try to count declarer's shape (this is often easier when they have pre-empted as a lot of their cards are known). See advanced section.

More advanced

A 4♣ opening can be played as natural but some pairs choose to use it for a different purpose. They play that it shows a good 4♥ bid (and 4♦ similarly shows a good 4♠ bid). This convention is sometimes referred to as "Texas". The rationale is you want to get the bidding to the 4 level quickly to make it harder for the opponents but you still want to distinguish between good and bad hands so partner can consider going on when they have a good hand. Usually the difference is the 4 minor openings show semi-solid suits (i.e. playable opposite singleton or void) whereas the 4 major openings tend to have more broken suits. The downside of course is that you lose the ability to open a 4 minor pre-empt. As usual there will be hands where either approach is best so, like any convention, it's a tradeoff.

I have said before that bidding 5 over 5 is usually wrong and that's true. In theory it's still wrong on this hand (neither side make at the 5 level) but, in practice, as we saw, it was quite hard for either side to find the right defence. When there is extreme distribution around, it is generally much safer to declare. In particular 8 cards suits should generally be declarer whenever possible and, from West's perspective, he has very little defence to 5♣. With the vulnerability in his favour as well, bidding on to 5♥ is pretty reasonable. Even opposite nothing you may well only go -500 and then 5♣ (or even 6♣) will be making the other way.

Playing in clubs, how can declarer maximise his chances after the ♥K lead? Very simply – after drawing the trump, lead a low diamond from dummy towards his own hand. East cannot see the South hand and might be nervous declarer has a singleton Q. If East does rise with the ♦A he now has to defend very specifically to beat the contract. He must underlead the ♠A to West's ♠K to cash a heart winner. Anything else and declarer can cash the ♦Q, then cross to another trump in dummy to discard a heart loser on the ♦K.

East should get that right though. After the ♥K lead, West has to make a discard on the first round of trumps. With so many hearts to spare they can afford to throw the ♥Q. This should be a suit preference signal indicating they have a spade card.

But it's safer for East not to rise with the ♦A at all. Why not? The way to work it out is to imagine declarer does have the holding you are worried about – i.e. singleton ♦Q and count the hand as far as you can. What else will South then have? After a trump has been played declarer is known to have 8 clubs. They probably also have 2 hearts (if they only had 1 that would mean partner had 9 hearts and surely would have bid onto 5♥ themselves?). So if they do have a singleton ♦Q they must be 2218 shape.

If declarer's hand was ♠KJ ♥32 ♦Q ♣AQJ107652 or ♠KQ ♥32 ♦Q ♣AQJ107652 then even if we do take the ♦A there is no way to reach partner's hand for the heart and declarer will be able to discard it on the ♦K. So we can't beat the contract then anyway.

If declarer's hand was ♠QJ ♥32 ♦Q ♣AQJ107652 then we can beat the contract by taking the ♦A and underleading our spade. But (and this is the key point) in that case ducking the diamond to the singleton Q does not cost the contract because there are still 3 major suit losers.

So, when we work it all out, there is no position where we MUST rise with the ♦A to beat the contract. On the actual hand, of course, as long as East is patient and waits for the ♦A to beat the ♦K, the defence will eventually get their 3 tricks.

Finally, I said a diamond lead from North is necessary to beat 5♥. Even if declarer were to win the ♦A at trick one and lead trumps, North can win and cash ♦K (crashing partner's Q) to give South a diamond ruff. Note a spade lead isn't good enough though. After that start, North can give South a spade ruff but that's only the defence's 2nd trick and they cannot now get a diamond trick. If they leave the ♦A in dummy, it will be a later entry for winning spades. South can switch to a diamond after the ruff to stop that but declarer is still able to cash two more spades to discard both his diamond losers (South can't ruff and North has to follow suit).

Julian Foster (many times NSW representative)

Holiday Operating Time and Events



Our clubroom on Goulburn Street is still open for F2F sessions the next two weeks before the Holiday Break from Christmas Eve 24th December 2021 - 2nd January 2022.

There will be F2F sessions every morning from Monday - Thursday, an extra Supervised session on Wednesday morning, night game on Tuesday (Open 7.15pm) and Wednesday (Supervised 6.30pm). BBO will continue to run through the holiday seasons on Monday morning (10.15am), Thursday and Saturday ARVO (1.45pm), including Xmas Day and New Year's Day.

Our F2F sessions on Goulburn Street will restart on Monday 3rd January 2022, [session timetable](#) remains the same. We will kickstart F2F sessions at Canada Bay on Monday 10th January 2022, with sessions on Monday morning and Thursday morning (10am start).

A lot of RED points sessions are scheduled during the Holiday Seasons! Please check out the **RED POINTS FRENZY** events to grab some RED masterpoints before the end of the year:

For Face-to-Face sessions:

- **RED** F2F Open on Monday 20th December 2021, 10am start
- **RED** F2F Open on Tuesday 21st December 2021, 10am start
- **RED** F2F Open on Wednesday 22nd December 2021, 10am start (There will be a separated field for Supervised players, Green masterpoints)
- **RED** F2F Open on Thursday 23rd December 2021, 10am start

Normal table money fee.

For BBO sessions:

- **RED** BBO Christmas Day on Saturday 25th December 2021, 1.45pm start
- **RED** BBO on Monday 27th December 2021, 10.15am start
- **RED** BBO on Thursday 30th December 2021, 1.45pm start
- **RED** BBO New Year's Day on Saturday 1st January, 1.45pm start

BB\$4 for 24 boards.