



## 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.

## Christmas Party Special

F2F at City – Friday ARVO 10<sup>th</sup> December 2021

<b>15</b>	♠ QT6	Dlr: S
	♥ 9543	Vul: N-S
	♦ KQJ7	
	♣ 92	
♠ A853	♠ 972	8
♥ 6	♥ Q82	11 5
♦ 53	♦ 982	16
♣ AQJT54	♣ K763	
	♠ KJ4	
	♥ AKJT7	
	♦ AT64	
	♣ 8	
		♠ ♦ ♥ NT
		N - 5 5 1 -
		S - 5 5 1 -
		E 2 - - -
		W 2 - - -

This is an extra column over and above my normal weekly column (from the Saturday BBO duplicate) covering a hand in the Friday afternoon Christmas party session I played in. Sydney Bridge Centre ran two Christmas parties this year, each including bridge sessions in the morning and afternoon. I hope everyone enjoyed them. Particular congratulations to Jake Andrew who played all 4 sessions – and won every single one of them!

Thanks to all the staff who worked hard to put on the parties. So much of my own bridge has been online in the last 2 years it was great to play face to face and have real cards again. Online bridge obviously has its benefits but I still vastly prefer the “real” game.

Board 15 showed how valuable a “sacrifice” can be at pairs. A sacrifice is a bid of a contract you know is almost certainly not making but where you expect the penalty (assuming doubled) to be less than the value of the opponent’s contract.

When sacrifices work they are very effective but it’s easy to get carried away – see advanced section for some general guidelines.

Let’s start with a likely auction on this hand. South will open 1♥ and West should overcall 2♣ (yes West has 4 spades as well but this hand isn’t suitable for a takeout double with a doubleton diamond so it’s normal to start with your longest suit). North will most likely raise to 2♥ and the key to the auction comes from East’s next bid.

Although East has a 4333 shape with only 5 points (2 of them in the opponent’s suit) my partner raised to 3♣. South bid 4♥ (which they were always going to once partner had raised). But now look at West. You have:

- At least a 9, possibly 10, card club fit and the more clubs we have, the less chance we have of taking many club tricks in defence against their contract
- A singleton in the opponent’s suit
- A 6-4 shape with 6 losers (losers being counted as missing honours from the 1st 3 rounds of each suit – so West has 2 spade losers, 1 heart loser, 2 diamond losers and 1 club loser here). We only need partner to cover one of those to reduce that to 5 losers.
- The vulnerability in our favour so we can afford to go 3 off and still score better than their 4♥ game – see advanced section. 5 losers means 8 tricks – i.e. 3 off.
- All these factors point to a sacrifice being worthwhile.

At the table sitting West I actually bid 4♠ over 4♥. This was a suggestion that we might be able to play there (a level lower) if partner also had some spades (possible since with a weak hand she couldn’t introduce spades as a new suit herself over North’s 2♥ because that would be forcing) but prepared otherwise to go to 5♣. When she didn’t have spades she went back to 5♣. See advanced section for why 4♠ here is only likely to be a 4 card suit.

Holding such a strong hand, South should either double 5♣ or bid on to 5♥. But this is a very tough decision – it could easily be wrong to go to the 5 level (indeed bidding “5 over 5” is one of the things that is most frequently wrong in bridge!). As it happened neither South or North took further action so I was allowed to play in 5♣ undoubled.

What about the play? Most tables played 4♥ North South and made 10 tricks for +620. There are 2 black aces to lose and I imagine most pairs played for hearts 2-2 and lost a trick to the ♥Q as well. With 9 cards in hearts, the best odds are indeed to try for the Q dropping – it just doesn’t work on this particular hand. Two pairs played in 5♣ East West. They should lose 2 spades, 1 heart and 2 diamonds which means they score 8 tricks and (had they been doubled) -500. Looked at another way their 8 tricks will be 6 trumps, the ♠A and eventually the 13th spade or a spade ruff in dummy. -500 is a good score, however, because it’s less than the -620 or -650 they would have conceded in 4♥. One pair pushed onto 5♥ but must have got hearts wrong as they went 1 off. That’s another advantage of sacrificing – sometimes the opponents misjudge, bid on, and go off giving you an even better score!

As it happened, the defence slipped up at my table and let me make 9 tricks. But that made very little difference to the score – the board had effectively already been decided by East West bidding to 5♣. Note that had East not raised to 3♣ then West may well not bid again over 4♥. It’s the knowledge of the club fit that gives West the opportunity to bid on later. That’s why it’s so important to raise your partner whenever you can.

### *Key points to note*

- Be alert for sacrifice possibilities at pairs (i.e. playing in a contract known to be going down but still scoring less than conceding the opponent’s contract)
- Raise partner in the auction whenever you can – it can make their life much easier later in the auction
- Take note of the vulnerability before considering sacrifices

### *More advanced*

The vulnerability plays a crucial role in sacrifice decisions:

- When the vulnerability is favourable (i.e. you are not vulnerable and the opponents are vulnerable) you can afford to go 3 off doubled (-500) and STILL score better than a vulnerable game for North South (which is at least +620). East West are in that position on this hand.
- When the vulnerability is equal you can afford to go 2 off (-300 against -420 or -500 against -620).
- When the vulnerability is unfavourable (i.e. you are vulnerable and they are not) you can only afford to go 1 off (-200 against -420). Successful sacrifices here are rare.

When players first discover sacrifices, they often develop a tendency to do it too often! It’s important to remember that three things all need to be satisfied before a sacrifice is worthwhile:

- The opponent’s contract has to be making (not so clever to sacrifice for -300 when you were about to score +100!)
- The penalty your own contract is going for has to be less than the value of their contract.
- The field has to be bidding their contract.

None of these are easy to judge. Sometimes it may simply come down to how confidently the opponents seem to be bidding!

But it’s the third of these that players most frequently forget when playing pairs. Let’s say the opponents bid 4♥ vulnerable and we “sacrifice” in 5♣ and score -300. We look at the other scores expecting to have done well but we find ourselves with a virtual bottom! Why? Because there’s a string of pairs playing in 3♥ making 10 tricks and scoring +170! It is only worth us scoring -300 if we are confident that nearly all pairs their way will actually bid game to score +620. If everyone else is scoring +170 then a score of -620 and -300 will actually be worth the same – i.e. nothing! In that situation we are actually better off defending 4♥, hoping the opponents have misjudged and that it will go off. Now we score +100 when everyone else is scoring -140 or -170 and we get a top! The point is we have a lot more to gain than lose by passing 4♥ in those circumstances.

Finally why did my 4♠ bid as West only promise 4? Because if I had 5 spades and at least 5 clubs I would not have overcalled 2♣ on the previous round. I would either have started by overcalling spades or I would have bid 2♥ (“Michaels”) to show at least 55 in spades and a minor. Therefore East can be comfortable here that West is only bidding spades as an option in case East happens to have some they couldn’t bid before and 4♠ might be an even more profitable save over 4♥.

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 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2022, [session timetable](#) remains the same. We will kickstart F2F sessions at Canada Bay on Monday 10<sup>th</sup> 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.