



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.

Responding to 1NT and No-Trump Play

#13756 BBO – Saturday 19th February 2022

20		♠ Q64	Dlr: W
		♥ 974	Vul: Both
		♦ 76	
		♣ A8743	
♠ J52	♠ AKT8		
♥ K32	♥ 86		
♦ QJ92	♦ AT84		
♣ J62	♣ KQ5		
6 ♠ 973	♣ ♦ ♥ ♠ NT		
8 16 ♥ AQJT5	N - - - -		
10 ♦ K53	S - - - -		
♣ T9	E 1 3 - 4 2		
	W 1 3 - 4 2		

Board 20 last week saw several East West pairs go several off in no-trumps even though Deep Finesse makes 8 tricks. Let's see what happened.

The normal auction starts P P 1NT. A couple of Souths overcalled 2♥ but I wouldn't have done vulnerable with a fairly balanced hand and only 10 points. Too much risk of going -200.

Now West has to decide whether to move or not. With a balanced 8 points including 3 jacks opposite 15-17 it's marginal. Atimps it's definitely worth it (the bonus for bidding game when it makes is high) but at matchpoints it's less clear (because you only score points for the number of pairs you beat as opposed to how much you beat them by so you should take the action which works most often not the one which scores the most when it works). There's a good case to pass 1NT.

A simple invite is 2NT but, these days, many pairs use that for something else and start any invite via Stayman. See advanced section for more. If West does invite East also has a marginal decision whether to go to 3NT or not. I probably would on this hand as I have good intermediates and no jacks.

The normal lead by South against any number of no trumps is the ♥Q. One table led the ♥A but this isn't often right at No-Trumps. You need to keep communication to set your long winners up so you want to try to force the King out early while partner still has a heart. By leading the Ace, you let declarer hold up the King and take it when he chooses. In a suit contract it's totally different as your long cards won't usually score tricks at all (declarer will trump them). Hence you wouldn't normally lead a suit like this at all and, if you did, it would be the Ace.

The ♥Q was usually ducked and now most Souths did well by continuing smoothly with the ♥J. You know you have the Ace but declarer doesn't! It gives him a nasty problem. Several declarers ducked again which of course failed spectacularly on this occasion when South then cashed the ♥A and two more hearts. After the defence switched to clubs declarer had no entry to dummy to take the diamond finesse either. That meant he had to lose a trick to the ♦K and the ♣A and was held to at most 6 tricks.

The only successful declarers were those in 1NT who played the ♥K at trick 2. This gave them an entry to dummy where it's reasonable to take the diamond finesse. When that loses the defence score 4 hearts, ♦K and ♣A but that's all.

Those who ducked the ♥J were hoping that North had Ax or Axx, South had QJ10xx(x) and no other entry. Now by forcing North to wait until the 3rd round to win the Ace, the long hearts with South get cut off. But there are several reasons for declarer to try the ♥K at trick two - see advanced section for why.

Although the winning contract today for East West is 4♠ I can't see any reason to bid that at all.

Key points to note

- You can play 2NT as a simple invite over 1NT but there are better uses for the bid.
- Lead the Q against no-trumps from holdings like AQJ10x to try and force out the K early.
- Don't be afraid to try the K from dummy in positions like this. Often even it fails there won't have been anything you could have done anyway. And it will avoid looking really silly!
- When entries are short start with a finesse in the suit which will leave you another entry to then finesse in another suit.

More advanced

Although most of us are taught initially that 2NT is an invite over 1NT, it's not actually needed for that. It's quite possible to just use stayman and then bid 2NT over any response (provided of course you just play simple stayman so the only responses partner can make are 2♦, 2♥ and 2♠). You do give slightly more information away to the opponents (i.e. they learn if opener has a major) but you free up the 2NT bid to use for something else. A common method is "4 suit transfers" where, in addition to the common major suit transfers, 2♠ is a transfer to clubs and 2NT is a transfer to diamonds. One point to be aware of if you use this method is that using stayman no longer implies responder holds a major at all. Therefore 1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ - 2NT does not imply spades and 1NT - 2♣ - 2♠ - 2NT does not imply hearts, it's just the only way to invite. This is an inference the opponents are entitled to know (it could influence their lead or subsequent defence). But remember that's only after an invitational sequence - if responder jumps to 3NT over the stayman response then that DOES imply the other major (responder wasn't using stayman as an invite so he must have been looking for a major fit and hasn't found it).

So why should declarer try the ♥K at trick 2? Besides any clues from the defenders (tempo, body language, etc) there are 4 possible reasons:

1. The K might win the trick.
2. The K is potentially a vital entry to dummy.
3. South might have another entry (♣A or ♦K) so, even if the hearts were Axx with North ducking still wouldn't help.
4. North might have Ax and the other key cards so, even though we lose our possible heart trick, we still cut off the long winners for the defence.

The point is ducking only really gains in one exact layout (Axx with North and no other entry with South). It loses in many more layouts (this hand being one).

One other declaring point. Once the ♥K has scored in dummy there are two possible finesses that could be taken - spades or diamonds. Today it works better to take the spade finesse, score 4 tricks there, then knock out the ♣A (that is how Deep Finesse makes 8 tricks). But that wouldn't be the right line of play. The diamond finesse is right. The reason is that, whether it wins or loses, you will still have another entry to dummy to THEN take the spade finesse. The same isn't true if you start with the spade finesse. You can't then ever take the diamond finesse so you will lose out if both are working.

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Regular F2F and Online sessions at 3 venues

- F2F @ CITY -

There will be sessions every day from Monday to Thursday at City, with a separated field for Supervised players on Wednesday morning. All morning sessions start at 10.00am. We have two evening sessions – the Tuesday night is for Open (7.15pm start), please contact office for pre-arrangement if you are not a regular of this session. The Wednesday night is a study group for Supervised players, 6.30pm start and aim to finish at 9.00pm.

- F2F @ CANADA BAY -

To start with, we will have two morning sessions in Canada Bay Club. We co-host the Monday morning session with Strathfield Bridge Club and add an extra Thursday morning session to the week. Both club members will enjoy member's rate for the table money fee. Cash only for the moment, we intend to extend the usage of PP over there.

Please find the details of [the session timetables](#) and find out [more about our venues](#) on our website.

- ONLINE @ BBO -

If you prefer to play online, there are regular club sessions on Monday morning (10.15am), Thursday afternoon (1.45pm) and Saturday afternoon (1.45pm) on BBO. To join our online game, please follow this [step by step guidelines](#). BB\$4 for 24 boards.