



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.

Handling misfitting hands, planning your rebids, reverses (again!)

#46143 BBO – Saturday 29th January 2022

6		♠ A983	Dlr: E
		♥ AJ97	Vul: E-W
		♦ Q8	
		♣ AT7	
♠ Q7642	♠ KJ		
♥ K6532	♥ QT		
♦ J3	♦ A652		
♣ 6	♣ KJ432		
15	♠ T5		
6	♥ 84		
14	♦ KT974		
5	♣ Q985		

The East West hands on board 6 last week do not have an 8 card fit in any suit and are what we call a "misfit". Several East West pairs got into trouble with some playing in 2NT going as much as 4 off vulnerable. Let's see what happened and how it might have been avoided.

The key to misfits is to identify them as soon as possible and get out of the bidding before it gets worse! All too often you see pairs keep bidding their own suits, perhaps resorting to no-trumps, eventually ending up far too high and going a lot off – sometimes doubled.

Playing standard methods East has a normal 1♣ opening and West a normal 1♠ response (one or two tables responded 1♥ but with 55 it's right to bid the higher suit first – see advanced section for why). Playing a weak no-trump I would have opened that as East – yes it's not perfectly balanced but I have honours in all my suits, I don't want to have to rebid my anaemic club suit and I can't reverse (see below). So opening 1NT avoids a lot of rebid problems. This is always an important consideration when opening the bidding - think what you will rebid over the common responses partner might make. If some of them give you a problem, then perhaps you should consider a different opening bid.

At some tables after 1♣ - 1♠ North now overcalled 1NT. This is usually played as natural (15-17) by a non-passed hand (had North already passed it obviously cannot be 15-17 so then it's best played as showing the other two suits). 1NT is perfectly reasonable on this hand but on this occasion it doesn't work very well as it may get East West out of trouble! East can (and should) pass over it and after South also passes, even if West rebids 2♥ the pair will at least still be able to stop at the 2 level.

When North didn't bid that's where East West got into trouble at some tables. Some Easts rebid 2♦. This is something I've discussed in previous columns. That is a "reverse" bid (i.e. a rebid of a suit higher than the one you opened). After a 1 level response you need a good hand (16+) to do that because you are forcing your partner to go back to your first suit at the 3 level and they might only have 5 or 6 points for their initial response. This hand isn't good enough.

When East did reverse over 1♠ West was completely stuck. 2♥ is fourth suit forcing now so that's not a viable option. Some bid 2NT which became the final contract and plays horribly. There is no good answer at that point – the damage has already been done! Even when East does have enough for a reverse there's still a risk of getting too high when responder has a really weak hand. A useful convention to help with that is "Blackout" (see advanced section).

So what should East rebid here? Either 2♣ or 1NT. I far prefer 1NT as it's semi-balanced and the texture of your club suit is terrible (note the same reasons I gave above for preferring to open a weak NT). The value of West bidding 1♠ the first time now comes to the fore because over 1NT he can bid 2♥ showing a weak hand (yes I know 2♥ is a new suit which is usually forcing but that doesn't apply after a limited rebid like 1NT). East will give preference to 2♠ (West might be 55 or 54 but he won't be 44 so spades can never be worse than hearts – see advanced section for why) and that should be the end of the matter. Even that is too high but at least it's not going 4 off! Another problem was caused when West responded 1♥ to start with because they now couldn't now bid spades over partner's rebid without getting too high as well.

The play in 2NT is utterly revolting. As long as the defence duck a round of spades and the ♥Q declarer gets locked into the East hand and has to play away from his minor suits giving the defence lots of tricks there. The best anyone did was 1 off and that was with some help from the defence. Best defence in fact holds declarer to one trick in each suit which is 4 off (this happened at 3 tables).

The fact that no-trumps plays so badly on this hand is instructive in itself. To work well no-trumps needs a source of tricks and communication between the hands to set up at least one long suit – these hands have neither of those things. Even though there isn't an 8 card fit in any suit, the hand is far better played in one of West (the weak hand)'s suits. That way the West hand is at least worth something and it has some entries with ruffs. Playing 2♠ one off might not feel very nice but it was better than most other tables did and scored 66%!

Key points to note

- It's important to plan ahead in the auction and consider what you will rebid over various things partner might do.
- When the hands look like they are misfitting – stop bidding! Going higher usually just makes things worse.
- Misfits are usually better played in a suit contract rather than no-trumps because that at least allows some communication and tricks as ruffs.
- With 55 hands it's right to respond in the higher suit first. With 44 hands it's the other way around.

More advanced

When responding it's right to respond with the higher suit when 55 but the lower suit when 44. This might seem counter-intuitive at first glance.

The reason for the difference is that with 44 hands partner will have room to rebid the higher suit themselves at a low level (e.g. 1♣ - 1♥ - 1♠) so we can still find an 8 card fit there if we have one. If we responded 1♠ we might miss an 8 card heart fit since opener may not be strong enough to reverse to show his own heart suit.

With 55 hands responding 1♠ allows us to find an 8 card fit in either major. If we responded 1♥ partner will rebid 1♠ with 4 so we'll find a 9 card spade fit alright but when partner has 3 spades we won't find our 8 card spade fit. By responding 1♠ responder can rebid 2♥ next (which he would also do if he had 5 spades and 4 hearts) and this allows an 8 card fit in either major to be found (again opener could still have 4 hearts but not have been strong enough to make a reverse bid to show them).

These principles mean that in the recommended auction on this hand (1♣ - 1♠ - 1NT - 2♥) East can go back to 2♠ knowing that West is not 44 (he could be 54, 55, 64 or 65). So we will always be in at least a 5-2 fit.

After a reverse when responder is weak there's still a risk of getting too high. "Blackout" is a useful convention that can be applied after a "low level reverse". This means a non-jump reverse after a 1 level response. So one of these 4 sequences:

1♣ - 1♥ - 2♦; 1♣ - 1♠ - 2♦; 1♣ - 1♠ - 2♥; 1♦ - 1♠ - 2♥

In these sequences responder might only have 5-6 points and opener might have 16. It's useful for responder to be able to show they have a minimum so the partnership can stop below game. To do this a particular bid by responder is agreed as an artificial "blackout" bid – showing about 5-7. Anything bid over that is non-forcing. By inference (and this is frequently the most valuable aspect of the convention) any OTHER bid shows 8+ and is game forcing.

There are different agreements in use for blackout. In my regular partnerships I have two different agreements. With one partner we play the most economical out of 2NT and the 4th suit is the artificial "blackout" bid. With another we play it's the next step (even if that happens to be a repeat of responder's suit). As usual it doesn't matter – you just need to agree.

It's important to understand that when 2NT is used as a blackout bid it does not show a stopper in the 4th suit – it's just an artificial bid showing a weak hand (of course opener can still pass it if they have a minimum and a stopper themselves). If opener has a really strong hand that still wants to game force they can still bid the 4th suit themselves to ask for a stopper.

Note that Blackout is not relevant in other rebid situations:

- After a 2 level response because a reverse is game forcing already (the difference is responder has shown 10+). E.g. 1♥ - 2♣ - 2♠
- After a jump response at the 3 level usually also played as game forcing – e.g. 1♥ - 1♠ - 3♣

Julian Foster (many times NSW representative)

WHAT'S ON in February

Let's hope we will have a fresh start in February with the downward trend. More **Red** and **Super Green** masterpoints to grab both in club and online!

- **Super Green F2F at Canada Bay:** Strathfield Summer Pairs over 3 Monday mornings on 7th, 14th & 21st February 2022, 10am for 10.15am start – 1.30pm
- **RED Online on BBO: SBC Valentine's Day Monday Morning** on 14th February 2022, 10.15am start

Normal table money fee. No need to book in advance. Visitors and walk-ins are welcome!

More Bridge in the New Year

Our City venue has reopened on Monday 3rd January 2022, and our Inner West venue at Canada Bay Club has restarted bridge sessions on Monday 10th January 2022.

- 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.