



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.

"Protection" in the auction

#13760 BBO – Saturday 26th February 2022

2		♠ KQ	Dlr: E
		♥ T92	Vul: N-S
		♦ AKQJ73	
		♣ QJ	
♠ 974	♠ AJT852		
♥ 8764	♥ KJ		
♦ T52	♦ 4		
♣ T43	♣ K985		
18	♠ 63		
0 12	♥ AQ53		
10	♦ 986		
	♣ A762		

Normally when a pair holds a combined 28 points they bid game quite easily. But on board 2 last week only 1 pair actually managed to. Let's see what went wrong.

The normal start to the auction is 1♠ P P to North. One South did make a takeout double of 1♠ (this was the pair who did reach game) but I wouldn't recommend it with a fairly balanced 10 count, it's not really strong enough.

The key to the auction is what North does after 1♠ P P. Almost everyone at the table bid 2♦. Some Easts then bid 2♠ (but be aware that's very risky because his partner has already passed so he could easily be walking into a bloodbath). Most Souths then raised to 3♦ but that typically ended the auction.

So who should have done more? North in my view. Both initially and also after their partner raises 2♦ to 3♦. After just bidding 2♦ the first time South could have no idea North was so strong. Once North hears a raise from partner they should definitely be bidding on (most likely to 3NT).

So what should North do initially instead? The answer is to start with a double. Yes initially it's assumed to be takeout of spades but, just like when sitting directly over an opening bid, you also do it with a hand that's too strong to overcall immediately.

This introduces the concept of "protection" which often causes a lot of confusion. It applies in a situation like this where an opening bid has been passed by the opponents. The point is if the final hand passes that's the end of the auction so it should try to come back into the auction on hands lighter than usual because partner may have had to pass with some quite reasonable hands. For example most balanced hands that aren't strong enough to overcall 1NT (i.e. less than 15) can't really bid unless they can make a takeout double. Therefore the hand in the final seat should try to bid with as few as 9 or 10 points in order to "protect" partner and still allow the pair to reach a decent contract. See advanced section for more on the implications of this.

Imagine for example the North hand being the same shape but without the ♦AK or ♣QJ (so KQ 109x QJxxxx xx). Now they only have 9 points. But North South can still make 3♦ (losing 1 spade, 2 diamonds and 1 club) so they don't want to be passing out 1♠.

What does that mean for the auction here? After a double from North, East might venture 2♠ (risky as I said above). South will now probably bid 3♥ (because they think at that stage partner has made a takeout double of spades and they have a decent hand with 10 points when they might have had nothing). Over that North might well just try 3NT holding 7 pretty easy tricks and hoping partner has 2 more. Their other option is bidding 4♦ which, after doubling first, now shows you had a hand that was too strong to bid 2♦ the first time. But that will lead South to raise to 5♦ and from North's perspective that could easily be silly losing ♠A and 2 clubs. 3NT looks more practical despite only having one spade stopper.

The play isn't that interesting and should lead to 12 tricks losing just the ♠A. This is because the club finesse works and the heart position is also very fortunate. But of course this is highly likely after the auction - see advanced section for more on this. Most pairs did indeed make 12 tricks but they were typically only playing in 3♦. Although 6♦ does make it's pretty lucky and, as we can see from the traveller, even bidding and making game would have scored very well today.

Key points to note

- In "protective seat" (after 1X P P to you) you should strive to come back into the auction to "protect" partner who may have had to pass on some quite reasonable hands and you'll miss your own contract if you pass it out.
- Mentally add 2-3 points to you hand and bid as if you held that (so that means starting with a double on hands with 16+).
- When responding to bids in protective seat be aware partner is bidding some of your hand for you. Mentally subtract 2-3 points from your hand.
- It's a good idea to play 1NT in protective seat as 11-14 and 2NT as natural (19-21).
- When one opponent has passed their partner's opening bid they will usually have at most 5 points. That makes it easier to work out where the missing high cards are.

More advanced

It's worth thinking more about protection. If North bids 2♦ with about 9 points (as we've seen is worthwhile) then making the same bid with the 18 points they have here will make it impossible for partner to know what to do - the range is just too wide. That's why in protective seat you should start with double on anything from 16+ points.

A good rule of thumb is for the hand protecting to mentally add about 2 or 3 points to their hand (so here North should bid as if they have about 20-21 points instead of 18). That also means the other hand needs to mentally SUBTRACT the same 2-3 points when responding because their partner has already bid some of their hand for them. So here South should bid as if they have about 7-8 not 10. This is sometimes referred to as the "principle of the transferred King" (or Queen). Opinions differ about how much adjustment both hands should make.

A related question is what a jump overcall means in protective seat. There is no point playing them as weak because weak jump overcalls are intended as a pre-empt. But there's no-one left to pre-empt after 1X P P! So they are usually also played as intermediate – about 12-15. This North hand is slightly too strong for that in my view but its close (because the clubs could be worthless). I certainly prefer 3♦ to 2♦ on the hand. After 3♦ South could bid 3♠ to ask for a stopper to play 3NT.

Note the protection concept is often applied to no-trump bids as well. That means 1X P P 1NT is frequently played as 11-14 (in contrast to an immediate overcall which usually shows 15-18). That "protects" partner who could have had to pass with 14 points as well. It's quite embarrassing to have 14 points each and pass the opponents out at the 1 level only to find you are cold for 3NT! So how should protective seat bid after 1X P P with different balanced ranges that aren't suitable for a takeout double?

- 11-14 1NT.
- 15-18 Double and then bid NT at the minimum level.
- 19-21 2NT (this is important to note - in protective seat 2NT should NOT be Michaels showing both minors, it should be natural).
- 22+ Double and then jump in NT.

Contrast this to what you do in direct seat:

- 11-14 Pass.
- 15-17(18) 1NT.
- (18)19 -21 Double and rebid NT at the minimum level.
- 22+ Double and jump in NT.

These sorts of auctions have declarer play implications too. When the opponent start with 1X P P it tends to be worth bidding quite aggressively. There are 2 reasons for this:

1. Most of the missing big cards are known to be in the opener's hand. The hand that passes their partner's opening bid will have at most 5 points so, once they turn up with a King (say), they can't usually have any other major cards. This makes it easier to place the cards which is often worth a trick when declaring.
2. With almost all the points in one defender's hand, that player will often have to lead away from honours and give away tricks.

Frequently you will find you can make game on fewer values than usual.

Finally, look back to the opening side's perspective. Precisely because passing partner's opening bid does create all these disadvantages many players nowadays will stretch to respond - even maybe on as few as 4 points. Yes of course that can backfire (partner jumps to 2NT!) but a lot of the time when you don't win the auction, you won't have made it as easy for declarer in the play.

Julian Foster (many times NSW representative)

RED and Super Green Masterpoints Events in March

- **Super Green F2F Collaboration Pairs in Canada Bay** over 3 Thursday mornings from 10th, 17th & 24th March. 10am for 10.15am start – 1.30pm. You can join 1, 2 or all 3 sessions. Each session will award Green masterpoints, and the overall winners will be awarded for extra masterpoints!
- **RED F2F first Two Tiers Tuesday** (both Open AND Intermediate sessions) in City on Tuesday 15th March, 10.00am start
- **RED Online St. Patrick's Week on BBO** on Saturday 19th March, 1.45pm start

F2F Friday Workshop is back!

We are as pleased as you are that Will is running his Workshops again. The Friday Workshops are filling up! Please book in early to avoid disappointment. The next two workshops will be held in the City on:

- **Friday 11th March:** Back to Bridge
- **Friday 8th April:** Play and Defend

\$50 for member (both Sydney Bridge Centre and Strathfield Bridge Club members can enjoy the special rate) / \$55 for visitors. Please find the [details](#) on our website. [Booking](#) essential for catering purpose.

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.