



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 takeout doubles. Declarer play - ruff losers or discard them?

#53283 BBO – Saturday 5th March 2022

13		♠ KJ97 ♥ A9752 ♦ J2 ♣ T4	Dlr: N Vul: Both																														
♠ T84 ♥ T6 ♦ T976 ♣ 7653	♠ AQ632 ♥ K84 ♦ K83 ♣ Q8																																
9 0 14 17	♠ 5 ♥ QJ3 ♦ AQ54 ♣ AKJ92																																
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On board 13 last week just over half the NS pairs bid game although there was quite a wide variety of auctions.

Unless NS are playing a method that allows them to open a weak hand with both majors (see advanced section for more) the normal start to the auction is P 1♠. South then has the first choice. Some bid 2♣, others doubled. I prefer double. Yes the downside is I only have 3 hearts but my hand is playable in 3 suits and I have some extra values to compensate. 2♣ risks partner passing on quite a few hands with hearts where we could make game. The takeout double effectively lets us bid 3 suits at once instead of 1.

West is too weak to act (even with 3 card support) so it's back to North. Over 2♣ North should bid 2♥. Normally that bid would be forcing but here North already passed as dealer so it's a good description of his hand - about as good as he can be for his previous pass and at least 5 hearts. South has an easy 4♥ bid over that - although a couple of tables only bid 3♥. Remember North did not HAVE to bid over your 2♣. He could have passed so bidding 2♥ is constructive (it can't also be weak and natural as he would usually have opened a weak two with that). With so many extra values South needs to take control and bid game.

What about after a double from South to start with? Quite a few Norths bid 2♥ but this is wrong - you should bid 3♥ which is showing about 9-11 points. The key to remember is you might have to bid 2♥ on zero points (you can hardly pass 1♠ doubled with that!). But if you make the same bid on a hand with 0 points as you do with 11 points, partner cannot possibly know what to do. That's why you need to jump on hands with at least 9 points opposite partner's takeout double.

Once North shows some values South can easily go to game. As it turns out after 2♥ several Souths decided to bid on and reached game anyway. But this is marginal - South needs to remember that North COULD have nothing at all, he hasn't shown anything other than at least 4 hearts when he bids 2♥. It's by no means certain South should bid on over 2♥ (if he does and finds partner did have nothing the pair is almost certainly now too high).

It's also important to appreciate that North's bid of 3♥ doesn't guarantee 5 hearts, it's just showing the extra values (he's assuming partner has 4 hearts for the takeout double which they will almost always). Over 3♥ because South didn't in fact have 4 hearts he's now concerned they might be in a 4-3 fit. So he should now bid 3♠ to involve partner. This is asking North to describe their hand further. North could bid 4♥ to show their extra length there but a more descriptive bid here is probably 3NT with all the soft spade values (which North might be worried will get ruffed in 4♥). South will be happy with either and both are fine contracts.

Only one table actually played 3NT so I'll discuss the play in 4♥ which was more common. East doesn't have a nice lead and most choices give tricks away. No one chose what I would have led which is the ♥4. Why lead that? Several reasons:

- Everything else is horrible. Leading away from any honours when you know partner has very little is nasty.
- It's the least likely to cost a trick. If my ♥K is over the ace, I will still score it. If it is under the ace there's a good chance declarer would have finessed me anyway.

- It may reduce spade ruffs in dummy. South made a takeout double and partner didn't raise so North probably has quite a few spades which he may want to ruff in dummy (remember at this point East hasn't seen the club suit in dummy).

After the diamond lead chosen at some tables, the defence had to cash the ♠A after winning their ♥K to stop declarer making 12 tricks. Some didn't. East should work this out though. See advanced section for how.

After a heart lead declarer will probably win in dummy and continue drawing trumps. After East's opening bid declarer can be pretty confident the finesses are going to win so they will plan to discard spade losers on their clubs. The worst that can happen is the club finesse does lose to West's ♣Q and he puts a spade through but even then East can only cash 2 spades. Now the diamond finesse still gives declarer 10 tricks.

Why wouldn't declarer try to ruff spades in dummy though? See advanced section.

Key points to note

- Takeout doubles are a more flexible bid than a suit overcall (they effectively show 3 suits at once) so prefer that where it's close even if the shape isn't perfect.
- When responding to takeout doubles remember you might have to bid with 0 points. Therefore you need to jump with about 9+ points so that partner can tell what to do when they have around 15-17.
- Jumps in response to takeout doubles don't guarantee extra length in the suit, only some values. Doubler can cue the opponents suit to ask for more information if they need.
- As declarer usually prefer to discard your losers on long suits in dummy rather than ruff them. But check what losers you will have once all the trumps from dummy have gone.

More advanced

It's quite popular these days to have an opening bid to show weak both majors. I've seen 2♣, 2♦ and 2♥ used as that. As usual there are arguments for and against each of those. Plus of course playing a method like that is a trade off in itself as you can't then use that bid for something else. But it can be effective as it allows partner to jump in either major and take away lots of bidding space from the opponents when they have minors. On this hand it would make little difference as South would enquire (again there are lots of different methods in use), find out North had 5 hearts and no doubt play 4♥. But this time neither East nor West will have bid (East will be put off overcalling 2♠ knowing North has the suit too!) so declarer won't have the additional information that East has almost all the missing points (another trade off of playing these destructive bids!)

After a double from South, North's 3♥ jump makes it easy to reach game as it distinguishes between a hand with nothing that has been forced to bid and a hand that actually has something. It's exactly the same principle as Lebensohl. Had East opened a weak 2♠ and South doubled the same issues arise. North can use 2NT as Lebensohl to show all weaker hands and, by inference, an immediate 3 level bid then shows some values (about 8-11, the range has to be a bid wider as we are already at the 3 level). This allows South with hands around 16 points to know what to do.

What about declarer's play strategy on this hand? Although he might try ruffing spades in dummy there's no real point on this hand. Only a ruff with the ♥3 is useful - ruffing another spade with the Q or J weakens his trumps. Also, think ahead. After ruffing spades in dummy, you still have to draw trumps. How are you going to get back to hand to do that? You'd have to take the diamond finesse early to establish a diamond ruff entry back later but that risks shortening your own trumps which could be fatal if hearts split 4-1.

Generally if there's a decent suit in dummy it is better to aim to set that up and discard your losers on it. But of course you have to look at the whole hand and see if you have losers exposed if you DON'T take ruffs in dummy. Here your spades are strong enough to stop the defence cashing enough tricks to beat you. If you had something

like 4 small spades, it's very different. You can't now afford to remove all the trumps from dummy and then lose the lead as the defence could cash several spades before you can take any discards. In that scenario the better plan may be to ruff at least some spades in dummy.

How might declarer make 12 tricks after a diamond lead? Because declarer can run it to his J and then finesse the Q in order to get to dummy to take the heart finesse. After losing the ♥K, if West doesn't cash the ♠A declarer can then discard ALL FOUR of his spades (3 on clubs, 1 on the ♦A). Note the difference underleading the ♦K makes. It gives declarer 3 diamond tricks. If East doesn't touch the suit declarer can only make 2 diamond tricks (East covers the J). Now even though declarer will still be able to discard 3 spades on the clubs he still must lose a spade.

After a trump lead it's reasonable for East to continue to go passive and just return another trump after winning the ♥K. While he can see his ♣Q is dead he can hope his partner has 10xxx which will stop the suit running immediately or that his partner has enough in diamonds to limit declarer to 2 tricks there. In either case it means there's no need to rush into cashing the ♠A. Different story after having started with a diamond though. Now East should see the risk. He can in fact count how many tricks declarer probably has in the red suits (4 hearts and 3 diamonds). So if declarer does have 5 club tricks that makes 12. Hence it is necessary to cash the ♠A as there is a risk it could be lost. Another example of the defence always needing to count.

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 8th April:** Play and Defend
- **More are under schedule**

\$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.