



## 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. His column is updated weekly and published on the Sydney Bridge Centre website, under “Learn Bridge”.

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.

## Declarer play - working out where your tricks are coming from and listening to the opponents' bidding.

#93011 BBO – Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> March 2022

Board 12 saw most pairs playing 3♠ by East making 9 tricks. But 10 were available. Let's have a look.

12		♠ 9	Dir: W			
		♥ JT832	Vul: N-S			
		♦ Q954				
		♣ A72				
♠ A532		♠ QJT84				
♥ 964		♥ AQ7				
♦ K6		♦ 83				
♣ KQT4		♣ J98				
7	♠ K76					
12	♥ K5					
10	♦ AJT72					
11	♣ 653					
		♣ ♦ ♥ ♠ NT				
		N	-	2	-	-
		S	-	2	-	-
		E	3	-	4	2
		W	3	-	4	2

At most tables West opened 1♣ and East responded 1♠. Several South's overcalled 2♦. A bit risky for reasons I've discussed before:

- Only a 5 card suit
- Vulnerable against not
- Relatively balanced hand

There are a couple of points in its favour though:

- It points to a good lead if partner were to end up on lead
- Partner isn't a passed hand so could still have some values.

In that last point it is important to appreciate what we mean by a “passed hand”. Yes partner passed over West's 1♣ but they can still have quite a reasonable hand to do that (most weak no trump hands will probably have to pass). A “passed hand” means one where partner passed as dealer – in that case we would know they are fairly weak and 2♦ then has a lot more to lose than gain. Here that isn't the case.

It makes little difference whether South overcalls or not on this hand because West bids 2♠ regardless (see advanced section for other possible inferences here though), North competes to 3♦ and East pushes on to 3♠. All perfectly reasonable.

South has a nasty lead to 3♠. I think I would have led a trump for similar reasons to those I mentioned last week - it's unlikely to cost a trick. I wouldn't consider a red suit lead from those holdings - not even if partner has raised diamonds in the auction. On this hand the ♦K sits over us so the choice of ♦A and another is safe - but ♦K could just as easily have been with East in which case leading ♦A would give a trick away. A club would be my 2nd choice but that's less appealing as it may help declarer establish dummy's first suit. The spade lead doesn't work very well here as it should give declarer a fairly easy route to 10 tricks (5 spades, 1 heart, 1 diamond and 3 clubs) although you have to be a bit careful to get them all.

I was surprised how few declarers actually took the spade finesse on the hand. After ♦A and another, some played ♠A, and some played a low spade - in both cases giving up a trick to the ♠K. But there is no need to do that. If South has bid then he is more likely to have the ♠K so it's definitely worth trying the finesse. Of course you do have to get to hand to do that though. How to do that? Play a club. We have the J98 in hand so we can always force an entry by playing a club to the 8 and if that loses we can next play the 10 to our J. As it happens, North will probably duck the ♣A so our 8 will win. Then we lead ♠Q to take the finesse and play 3 rounds picking up South's ♠K. Then we continue with clubs to force out the ♣A. Yes this line does have some risk (see advanced section) but it would still be my preferred choice playing pairs.

Why play a club at trick 2 and not a heart though? Because once we have the ♣A out of the way we can discard one of our hearts on the 4th club in dummy. Taking the heart finesse will, if it loses, expose us to 2 heart losers before we have set up

our clubs (assume the defence will return a heart to knock our ace out). If we can discard a heart then we will make 10 tricks even though the heart finesse fails - we only lose 1 heart, ♦A and ♣A. We have to lose the ♣A and it's a good general principle to knock out certain losers first because you might then be able to do something about other losers. There is one more catch we may have to overcome though - see advanced section.

What if South hadn't led the ♦A to start with? Suppose, as happened at some tables, it was a club to the ♣A and ♥J switch. Declarer might try the heart finesse which will lose and the defence may then play another heart to knock out the ♥A. Declarer is now at risk of going off if the spade finesse loses but he should still take it. When it wins all is OK. He can draw trumps, play clubs discarding his last heart, trump a heart back to hand and lead towards the ♦K. When the ♦A is onside he has 10 tricks. What's more, if South overcalled 2♦ he can be almost sure the ♦A will be onside if the play has gone this way - see advanced section for why.

### *Key points to note*

- Don't typically lead unsupported aces - even in suits your side has bid and raised.
- Don't be afraid to take finesses at pairs - especially through a hand that's bid as it's still odds on to have a key opposing card.
- Usually aim to knock out certain losers first. You may then be able to do something later to get rid of other losers.
- Support doubles allow an extra inference that a direct raise to 2 major guarantees 4 card support. That can help partner compete further in the auction.
- Watch the spot cards carefully as declarer - you may need one of them as a later entry.
- If the defence bid and raise a suit but don't lead it then there's a very good inference that the opening leader has the Ace.

### *More advanced*

One further point about the auction 1♣ P 1♠ 2♦ and similar ones. A popular method these days is support doubles where a X by opener here shows 3 card spade support. This is very useful to East when he has 5 spades as now he knows there's a fit. But it can also be useful in another sense because it leads to another inference. It means when West DOES bid 2♠ that guarantees four card support. Here that will encourage East to compete further to 3♠ because he now knows there is a 9 card fit. Support doubles are typically played over bids up to 2 of your side's major (so X of a 2♥ overcall would be support but X of a 3♦ overcall wouldn't, that would just be takeout). Like any convention there are downsides though – imagine responder has dredged up a 1♠ response with a 4333 5 count and now they are faced with partner doubling 2♦ to “helpfully” tell them they have 3 card spade support! You can hardly leave the double in so you may have to find a bid from a set of very unpalatable choices.

After ♦A and another it might be tempting to try the heart finesse at trick 2. I wouldn't because if it loses another heart puts me in danger of having another heart loser exposed before I have knocked out the ♣A. It's an example of the good general principle of knock out the certain losers first - especially if they may help you later (perhaps identify which way to take a 2 way finesse in another suit or set up winners so you can avoid taking a finesse in the first place).

I mentioned some risk of playing on clubs though. That risk is if clubs are 4-2. If one round of clubs is ducked and then I take the spade finesse and it loses, North may now be in a position to give South a club ruff. But it's a risk I'd take at pairs with the spade finesse odds on to work.

What's the other catch with knocking out the ♣A? Assuming the ♦K and ♠A have already gone from dummy, if North holds up the ♣A to the 3rd round we can't now immediately reach our last club. But this is where entries are so important. Look at the little spades. West has the ♠5 and East the ♠4! So you can cross to the ♠5 to cash the club winner and you can afford to play a 4th round of trumps to do that because East will still have one left. Swap the ♠4 and ♠5 round and the whole hand might have to be played differently!

On an initial club lead to the ♣A and ♥J switch I said declarer can be pretty sure South has the ♦A. Why? Two reasons. First simply because he needs it to have enough points to have overcalled. But second if defenders have bid and raised a suit it's normal for them to lead that suit. Typically the ONLY reason they don't is when the opening leader has the A but not the K. That's a useful inference. Declarer might even view to play ♥A and not take the finesse on the grounds that when North has shown up with the ♣A, South is almost marked with the ♥K to have enough values to make a vulnerable 2♦ overcall - and it's possible (albeit unlikely) that it's singleton.

The key to the hand though is recognising the potential for the 13th club in dummy to discard a heart loser and having a later entry to it. Which points to knocking out the ♣A before heart losers are exposed. If the heart finesse is winning there will still be time to take it later thanks to that precious ♠5 entry to West.

Julian Foster (many times NSW representative)

## F2F Easter Monday Matchpointed Pairs Congress



Let's have some real cards in hand and play in a F2F congress with real people!

The Sydney Bridge Centre is running a F2F Matchpointed Swiss Pairs Congress on Easter Monday 18<sup>th</sup> April at Level 1, 162 Goulburn Street, Sydney. It is a one-day congress with 24 boards in the morning, lunch break, then another 24 boards in the afternoon. A delicious light lunch is included.

An invaluable and meaningful prize for Overall Novice & Restricted winners and the Best Novice (or Restricted) Pairs will receive a meaningful prize – Over the Shoulder Mentoring by an advanced player in one complimentary SBC session (either online on BBO or F2F in club). To support our fellow clubs, the Open Winners will receive a Complimentary Entry to any one-day local congress in New South Wales in 2022.

**RED masterpoints awarded.** \$50 per person (a delicious lunch and snacks included)

[Enter in advance](#) required on the NSWBA website. We intend to run separate fields for Open and Restricted & Novice players, if number allows. Please nominate the field you would like to compete in.

## 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.