



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.

Advantages of bidding first. When (and when not) to leave the best trump out.

#26995 BBO – Saturday 16th April 2022

4		♠ K954	<i>Dlr: W</i>				
		♥ J952	<i>Vul: Both</i>				
		♦ JT3					
		♣ 85					
♠ Q3	♠ J62						
♥ A73	♥ QT864						
♦ KQ986	♦ 72						
♣ 972	♣ J43						
5	♠ AT87	♣♦♥♠NT					
11	♥ K	N	4	1	1	5	2
4	♦ A54	S	4	1	1	5	2
20	♣ AKQT6	E	-	-	-	-	-
		W	-	-	-	-	-

Board 4 last week showed the advantage of getting into the auction first. The play in the best contract of 4♠ was also instructive. 11 tricks are available but no one managed more than 10.

West is dealer and several tables chose to pass. This usually meant 3 passes to South. A couple of Souths opened 2♣ but I prefer 1♣. Yes you have 20 points but the ♥K isn't necessarily worth its full value and 2♣ takes up lots of space (imagine the auction starting 2♣ - 2♦ - 3♣ and you still haven't mentioned spades). It is frequently better to open quite big hands (even up to 22-23 points) at the 1 level, particular with 2 or 3 suited hands where there are a number of possible suits that could form the best contract. These days it is rare for a 1 level opening to be passed out so it is unlikely to cause you to miss a game and it is

more likely you will be able to describe more of your hand if you start lower. On this hand none of that really matters though. After 1♣ West overcalls 1♦ and North should double (showing both majors). South should now simply bid 4♠ as they have found a fit and partner has enough to respond. Here of course, having dredged up a response on a 5 point hand, North will pass 4♠ and hope it's not already too high. But had North been stronger he could then have continued (remembering that partner must have a very good hand because he bid straight to game over a response that could have been as few as 4 or 5 points).

Let's go back to the start though. Suppose West does open 1♦ as quite a few tables did (and I also would). Notice how much harder it is now for North South. The auction will likely go 1♦ P P. South has far too much for a simple overcall so will probably start with double. North responds 1♥ and South now most likely bids 2♣ or perhaps 2NT. It's far from clear for North to move again - indeed one table played 2♣ and I have a fair bit of sympathy for them. The advanced section has another possible auction but it also has risks. In general getting to 4♠ is just made much more difficult after West opens. In fact it is commonly the case that it's harder to bid accurately once the opponents have opened - it's a reason why stretching a bit to get into the auction first is well worth it.

Let's look now at the play in 4♠. Most tables led the ♦K which declarer wins. You do need to draw some trumps now because if you don't the defence can cash ♦Q and score a diamond ruff. But quite a few tables played 3 rounds of trumps. This meant they lost a trump, a heart and a diamond.

However, once you have played ♠AK the defence only have one trump out and it's the best one (often referred to as the “master” trump). While there are exceptions (see advanced section), it is usually not right to draw this one. Better is to leave it out and play your own side suits. The defence can score that trump whenever they want but it's better for you if they have to ruff something to do so - as opposed to drawing two of your trumps with it. Here after the ♠AK declarer should just play clubs and discard red suit losers. After that he starts cross-ruffing and only ends up losing the ♥A and one trump. See advanced section for more details.

A few tables also bid to 3NT North South. They all made 9 tricks after a heart lead to the K and A followed by the ♥7 return covered by the 9 and J. East played 2 more rounds to give North a heart trick. 2 spades, 1 diamond and 5 clubs then made up 9 tricks. But if the defence don't give declarer a heart trick they can actually beat 3NT. East needs to switch to a diamond rather than continue hearts. When partner returns the ♥7 at trick 2, East can get this right. If West had started with 4 hearts, he should return his original 4th highest. The ♥7 can't be 4th highest so East can work out continuing hearts will give declarer a trick to which he is not entitled (in some auctions North will have bid 1♥ in response to South's takeout double too). Of course it's easy to say that here. But at the table it's harder. If North is declarer East can see South's clubs in dummy. He knows they will run and if the spades are also running (i.e. if North has the ♠Q) then it might be right for the defenders to just take what heart tricks they can.

Key points to note

- It's a big advantage to open the bidding. It can make it much harder for the other side to find their best contract.
- 2 and 3 suited hands are frequently better opened at the 1 level even when they are as strong as 22-23 points. It saves space to be able to show all your suits to help find the best contract and, in practice, the risk of being passed out and missing game is very small.
- Once the defenders have only one top trump left it's usually wrong for declarer to keep playing trumps.
- As a defender if you have the master trump it can often be right to refrain from ruffing, trying to get in with a side suit and then drawing 2 of declarer's trumps with it.
- Think about what losers it's best to discard - especially if a defender is going to be able to trump in at some point. You need to be able to get rid of all your losers in a suit before the defence can get in.

More advanced

After 1♦ P P another option for South is to perhaps lie slightly, treat their hand as balanced and bid 2NT. Note this is far better played as natural in 4th seat like this as opposed to an unusual NT showing two suits. The unusual NT is primarily a pre-empt but here there's no one left to pre-empt as both opponents have passed!

After 2NT North will probably use stayman and the spade fit will be found. Of course the downside of 2NT is that partner might transfer you to a bad 5 card heart suit. That's what always seems to happen when I bid no-trumps with a singleton! Note partner won't have a good 5 card heart suit or he'd already have overcalled 1♥ over 1♦.

This hand is a good example of why it's usually right to leave a master trump out and go about your own business. When you do that here you play clubs and discard your diamond losers. Then you just start cross ruffing the red suits. It doesn't matter when the defence take their trump as that's all they get besides the ♥A. You still have 2 trumps in each hand so you basically take 4 ruffs in total, one of which gets overruffed (i.e. you get 3 more tricks). Contrast that with drawing the last trump. That now costs two of yours and means you only have 1 trump left in each hand, hence you only get 2 more tricks. It's also critical to discard the diamonds from North first - if you discard hearts East can ruff and the defence still score the ♦Q. and ♥A. You can't get rid of all North's hearts but you can get rid of both North's diamonds before the defence can ruff in.

Although it's usually right not to draw the defence's master trump there are of course exceptions. So when is it right? A couple of situations:

1. When you have a long suit ready to provide discards and you don't have any side suit losers exposed if the defence win a trump trick.
2. When you have a long suit ready for discards but there are no more entries back to it if the defence was to ruff in.

In both cases you just need all the trumps out of the way so you can run your long suit and take your discards without risk of the defence getting in again.

It's also worth considering this from the defence's perspective. Because it's usually right for declarer to leave a master trump out, it's equally often right for the defence to refrain from ruffing, instead trying to get in with another suit and then use the master trump to take out two of declarer's. Whether that strategy succeeds will depend on how many discards declarer can get and how many they need!

If a trick still has to be lost in a side suit that can pose a risk to declarer when they leave the last trump out. Here if hearts have not yet been played the defender with the ♥A might have the last trump and be able to use it to draw two of declarer's before he can start his ruffing. Here that won't happen because West has the ♥A and East has the 3rd trump.

Julian Foster (many times NSW representative)

Play in the Same League – A special event for Novice players ONLY



The Sydney Bridge Centre is running a **F2F Australia Wide Novice Pairs Event** on Wednesday 25th May at Level 1, 162 Goulburn Street, Sydney. A no-fear morning session from 10am – about 1.15pm. **ONLY players with less than 100 masterpoints** will be accepted in this competition. Refreshment included.

Your results will be compared to other participating players who are of similar level in the whole country – a much better indicator to see where you are in the bridge journey! ALL participants will be given a booklet of hand analysis after the session. An invaluable and meaningful prize for

the winners – a **Complimentary SBC Workshop by Will Jenner-O'Shea** of your choice.

Please find the details on the [program brochure](#) and [enter online](#).

Players with more than 100 masterpoints are welcome to join our normal Open duplicate on the side

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 6th May:** Competitive Bidding and Judgement
- **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 -

We have been running Monday and Thursday Morning sessions in Canada Bay Club, 10.00am for 10.15am start. Starting from 1st June, there will be **NEW session on Wednesday afternoon for Supervised players**. Details will be announced soon! Please keep an eye on our website.

Member's rate for both Sydney Bridge Centre and Strathfield Bridge Club players in any session and events run by either club in either venue.

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.