



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.

Responding to takeout doubles and handling 4-4 fits when trumps split 4-1

#46480 BBO – Saturday 9th April 2022

1	♠ T982	<i>Dlr: N</i> <i>Vul: None</i>																													
	♥ A63																														
	♦ KQ7																														
	♣ 542																														
♠ J643	♠ 5																														
♥ T954	♥ KQJ																														
♦ T85	♦ J43																														
♣ T9	♣ KQJ876																														
9	♠ AKQ7	<table><tr><td>♣</td><td>♦</td><td>♥</td><td>♠</td><td>NT</td></tr><tr><td>N</td><td>-</td><td>3</td><td>2</td><td>4</td><td>3</td></tr><tr><td>S</td><td>-</td><td>3</td><td>2</td><td>4</td><td>3</td></tr><tr><td>E</td><td>1</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td>1</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td></tr></table>	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	N	-	3	2	4	3	S	-	3	2	4	3	E	1	-	-	-	-	W	1	-	-	-	-
♣	♦		♥	♠	NT																										
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Board 1 on 9th April showed the value of a 4-4 trump fit although you had to be slightly careful in the play.

Let's consider the bidding first though. East has a normal 1♣ opening and it's then South's turn. Almost every table overcalled 1NT. This certainly shows the point range but it's not what I would have done. I would have doubled - mainly because Ax isn't great as a club stopper. You would like to be able to hold the ace up longer in no-trumps if you need to. The hand has support for all the other suits and you can still bid again over partner's response because you are stronger than minimum. Another reason to double is you have aces which tend to be good for suit play (queens and jacks and what we call “soft” holdings tend to be better for no-trump play). Even though a hand is in the right point range for an action,

as you get more experienced it's important to also look at the “texture” of the hand – i.e. what sort of stoppers it has for no-trumps, what sort of holdings in other suits, etc.

Here the choice of bid didn't really matter. For those who did overcall 1NT, partner usually bid stayman, found out about the spade fit and bid 4♠.

Double should also lead to 4♠. After a double West will pass and North should jump to 2♠. This is an area where confusion frequently occurs and players respond to a takeout double the same way they would to an opening bid. The situation after a takeout double is very different, however. You can pass an opening bid if you have nothing - that's not a realistic option over a takeout double as it will leave the opponents in a doubled contract they could easily be making (sometimes with overtricks)!

So, however unpalatable it might be, you need to respond to a takeout double even if you have no points at all. That's why with a hand like North's which does have some values (about 8+) you need to do something different to tell partner. So often you see players responding at the 1 level on hands where they should be jumping. A rough rule of thumb is to respond at a minimum level on 0-7, jump with 8-11 and bid game (or cue bid the opponents' suit to force) with 12+.

The jump to 2♠ pays dividends when, as here, partner is better than a minimum takeout double. Once South knows North has 4+ spades and at least 8 points they can bid 4♠ quite easily.

Most bidding routes should lead to 4♠ although the declarer will be different depending on whether South began with double or 1NT. Some pairs landed up in 3NT, some perhaps hoping to score 10 points more than a spade contract but this doesn't work on this hand. When spades split 3-2 and diamonds split 3-3, 3NT will make 10 tricks (+430) - but 4♠ will make 11 (+450). Here the 4-1 spade split means 3NT only makes 9 tricks (+400) but 4♠ should make 10 (+420). In each case the 4-4 fit scores better. There are occasions, however, when it is right to play in no-trumps to score the extra 10 points - see advanced section for how to identify them.

The play in 4♠ would be simple if spades broke 3-2. You would score 4 trumps in one hand, 4 diamonds (when they break 3-3), ♣A, ♥A and one ruff in dummy (discard one of North's hearts on the 13th diamond and later ruff a heart in dummy).

When trumps break 4-1, however, declarer needs to be a little more careful but should still make 10 tricks. The key is to draw two rounds of trumps but when you find they split 4-1, stop playing trumps. If the opponents get a ruff after that it's with a trump trick they were going to score anyway and, more importantly, it now allows declarer to draw their final trump. What you need to avoid is the situation where a defender could get in and draw the 4th round of trumps taking out both your remaining ones. See advanced section for more details.

Key points to note

- Look at the overall texture of the hand when deciding whether to overcall 1NT or double.
- Responses to takeout doubles are not the same as responses to opening bids. You can pass an opening bid with nothing, you can't do that over a takeout double.
- When responding to a takeout double you are forced to bid on nothing so you need to do more when you have values (8+) to help partner. Typically bid at minimum level on 0-7, jump with 8-11 and game force with 12+.
- A 4-4 trump fit will usually play a trick better than no-trumps. Voluntarily playing no-trumps to score an extra 10 points tends to work best when the pair has extra points (see advanced section).
- Keeping trump control when the suit splits 4-1 may require leaving two trumps out initially so as to not run the risk of a defender being able to draw a 4th round of trumps.

More advanced

We saw that North should jump in response to a takeout double. If his hand was weaker (0-7) he should just respond at a minimum level. Now South has some idea of partner's range and can make another move when he has enough so game may still be an option if partner is maximum within the range they have already shown (i.e. if doubler has 18+ opposite a minimum response or 15+ opposite a jump response).

So often you see auctions starting with a takeout double where doubler has about 14 points and responder about 11. Responder bids at the 1 level, the doubler raises and then the pair reach game. They end up in the right contract but both have actually misbid! Responder should have jumped and doubler should not have bid again. Responder deserved to hear partner pass and miss a cold game. Doubler deserved partner to have 0 points and get overboard by bidding again!

We saw that on this hand 4♠ tends to outscore 3NT. Players often think they should play 3NT at matchpoints to score an extra 10 points. What they forgot is that only works if 3NT and 4♠ are scoring the same number of tricks. Frequently the 4-4 fit will be worth an extra trick so, like here, you find it actually still scores better than 3NT. The time when it is worth playing in 3NT is when you have some extra values between the hands (e.g. a combined 28/29 points instead of 26). The extra trick in a suit contract normally comes from ruffing a side suit loser in one hand but when the hands have more points, these are usually queens and jacks in side suits which will score tricks in their own right without needing to be ruffed. Hence they will score in no-trumps too. Now you may well score +430 instead of +420.

When spades split 4-1 on this hand you are potentially looking at a spade, 2 hearts and a club loser. The 3-3 diamond split means you can discard one of the heart losers though so you should still make 10 tricks. The trap to avoid, however, is to allow the defence to draw the 4th round of trumps. After winning the likely heart or club lead you start with ♠AK. If they split 3-2 you continue to draw trumps but when they don't you should not draw a third round. If you do and you then have to lose the lead again, the defender with the 4th trump might be able to get on lead and draw both your remaining trumps. Not only will this stop you scoring any extra ruffs it may mean the defence can cash some of their own winners! Here declarer would probably get away with it because West is so weak. East would almost certainly have to win the trick in clubs or hearts and he doesn't have the 4th trump. But that's pure luck that all the top clubs and hearts are with East. Declarer needs to give up on trumps after 2 rounds and play diamonds. Once they split, the 13th diamond is played and a heart discarded (regardless of whether it's ruffed or not). Now

declarer is still in control. He can draw the last trump and later take the heart ruff in dummy. It's important to appreciate that if West had ruffed earlier, it's with a trump trick he was going to score anyway.

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.