



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.

Blackwood and continuations

#8878 BBO – Saturday 2nd April 2022

15		♠ K54	Dir: S																														
		♥ AKJT7	Vul: N-S																														
		♦ 97																															
		♣ KT6																															
♠ QT72		♠ J86																															
♥ 432		♥ 96																															
♦ 8652		♦ QT43																															
♣ 83		♣ 9754																															
14		♠ A93	<table><tr><td></td><td>♣</td><td>♦</td><td>♥</td><td>NT</td></tr><tr><td>N</td><td>7</td><td>4</td><td>7</td><td>5</td><td>7</td></tr><tr><td>S</td><td>7</td><td>4</td><td>7</td><td>5</td><td>7</td></tr><tr><td>E</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td></tr></table>			♣	♦	♥	NT	N	7	4	7	5	7	S	7	4	7	5	7	E	-	-	-	-	-	W	-	-	-	-	-
	♣	♦			♥	NT																											
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21		♣ AQJ2																															

There were quite a few slam hands in last weeks session. Board 15 was one where North South had a grand slam available but, while everyone bid 6, no one managed to bid 7. Let's see how it might have been reached.

South has a typical 2NT opening (20-22 balanced). Quite a few Norths just bid an immediate 6NT over 2NT. That's actually a bit pessimistic here. After recovering from the surprise of partner showing that much(!) North should immediately realise the pair definitely has enough for a small slam (a combined 34-36 points) and might have more available. The question is how best to explore further.

Some Norths started with a transfer to hearts and followed that up with Blackwood. But then again subsided in 6♥ or 6NT. This is a better route but it

still requires some confidence to bid 7.

So how to bid it?

I'd start with a transfer to hearts and the practical thing is probably then to bid Blackwood. Note that usually it's not a good idea to bid Blackwood with two losers in a side suit but here it's very unlikely to be a problem (see advanced section for more on this).

Assuming the pair is playing key card Blackwood partner will show 0 or 3 (which of course has to be 3 in a 20-22 hand). North can then ask for the ♥Q and for side suit kings. Methods to do this vary a bit (see advanced section) but if North can find out South has the ♥Q and the ♦K then he is very close to bidding 7.

The key is to count tricks and points. 3 aces, ♦K and ♥Q with South means North can immediately count 11 tricks (5 hearts and the AK in all the other suits). But those cards are only worth 17 points and South has shown 20-22. So he definitely has to have more. It would be dreadfully unlucky if he happened to have only 20 points and his additional 3 points were all jacks. Assuming that's not the case he will have at least one of the other queens which means 12 top tricks. But there surely have to be good chances for a 13th.

At a couple of tables South super-accepted partner's transfer (by bidding 4♥). North should now be even more encouraged. Given South has 3 card heart support and such great controls with the aces, I like the super-accept.

On this particular hand there is nothing to the play as there are 13 easy tricks (5 hearts, 4 clubs, ♠AK and ♦AK). It's not easily possible to diagnose that to be able to bid 7NT but I might bid 7♥. We might well have 13 tricks anyway but another chance playing in hearts might be if partner has 5 diamonds. Then I might be able to set the long diamonds up (by ruffing one in hand) as an extra chance.

As a final point, note how important it is to play no-trumps. The two pairs in 6♥ scored a joint bottom board. At imps this is irrelevant but at matchpoints the extra 10 points for playing 6NT make a huge difference!

Key points to note

- When considering slams count the known tricks and points. Where partner is known to still have more values try to imagine where they could be and picture what that means for your tricks.
- If you know you have enough for 6, don't give up on 7!
- Blackwood often isn't a good idea when you have two losers in a side suit. You need to know WHICH aces partner has, not necessarily how many.
- It is worth discussing what bids mean after Blackwood. It's essential to know what these bids mean to be able to bid slams accurately.

More advanced

Why is it usually not a good idea to bid Blackwood with 2 losers in a side suit? Because Blackwood won't tell you WHICH aces partner has, only how many. If he doesn't happen to have the ace in that suit you could be losing two quick tricks in the suit even if you have everything else. On this particular hand this is not a concern because partner is known to be very strong and the partnership is known to have 34-36 points. Therefore South has to have at least the A or K of diamonds. But on many hands it will be a concern. The way to resolve it is with cue bidding. Once partner has confirmed they have a control in that suit then maybe Blackwood is ok.

Continuations after Blackwood are an area any serious partnership needs to discuss. The stakes are higher in the slam zone so it's well worth knowing what you are doing!

The key things you usually want to find out are:

- The trump queen (if partner has responded 5♣ or 5♦ which doesn't tell you about the Queen)
- Side suit kings (either how many or which ones)
- Whether partner has extras (eg a longer suit or more points than he might have shown).

There are lots of variations in the methods used. What I do with my most regular partner is the following.

The next non-trump step after the 5♣/5♦ Blackwood responses asks for the Queen but it also asks for side suit kings. Responses are:

- The most economical bid between trumps and no-trumps denies the Queen
- The less economical bid between trumps and no-trumps shows the Queen but denies any side suit kings.
- A bid of another side suit shows the Queen of trumps AND that side suit king (you could have another king too).

So for example if hearts are trumps and the bidding goes 4NT-5♣ then 5♦ asks. 5♥ denies the ♥Q. 5NT shows the ♥Q but no other Kings. 5♠ would show the ♥Q and the ♠K.

Where the Queen is known (i.e. a 5♥ or 5♠ response) the next step asks for cues of side suit kings.

A bid of 5NT just says we have all the key cards and asks partner to bid 7 if they have a reason to (e.g. more values than they've shown so far or a long suit that could be a source of tricks).

Some people prefer to have a 5NT bid asking for kings. Once again opinions vary about whether it's better to show how many kings (i.e. similar to initial keycard) or specific kings. I prefer specific kings as it can be critical to know which one partner has to be able to evaluate what tricks you may have available.

Another popular use of 5NT is "pick a slam". This is very useful if you know there are slam values but there are still choices of possible suits or no-trumps.

Another thing to be aware of is if you continue asking, you are usually showing interest in a grand slam by inference. Otherwise you would just bid 6!

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 18th 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.