



Tuesday Night Tips

The Sydney Bridge Centre mini lesson

The Tuesday Night at City has developed its own vibe – a group of bridge enthusiasts playing a friendly competitive game with Phil Halloran and Martin Clear as the hosts. Phil organises the session to make sure there is no sit-out, and Martin continues to lead the group for bridge discussion after the session. He will pick an interesting hand from the face-to-face session for the Tuesday Tips column.

Voids and Blackwood

F2F at City – Tuesday Night 24th May 2022

8		♠ AJ73	Dir: W
		♥ KJT95	Vul: Nil
		♦ AJ96	
		♣	
♠ K64	♠ T9852	14	
♥ 63	♥ 2	3	7
♦ T543	♦ Q87	16	
♣ T872	♣ AJ53		
		♠ Q	
		♥ AQ874	
		♦ K2	
		♣ KQ964	
		♠ ♦ ♥ ♣ NT	
		N 3 5 7 3 5	
		S 3 5 7 3 5	
		E - - - -	
		W - - - -	

We'll continue with another interesting slam hand this week, because they're fun, and I think for a lot of players, they're difficult to bid. Last time we walked through the higher levels of Blackwood and the meaning of the 5NT follow-up; this week we're going to look at where Blackwood is wrong.

Yes, believe it or not, there are times when Blackwood is not the perfect solution. Blackwood is great for checking if the opponents have two quick tricks before you get to run your overwhelming chunk of winners. However, Blackwood can be unhelpful when one of those winners the defenders have is not going to win. This is when you are in a trump slam

and you have a void.

Such a situation happened on Board 18 of the 24-May Tuesday night face-to-face game at the Sydney Bridge Centre. North and South have plenty of quick winners, a huge 10-card trump suit, and no problems at all making 13 tricks. But can you bid the grand slam?

A number of pairs started with North bidding 1♥ and South either bidding 4♥ (if that shows a hand good enough to make that contract) or, more commonly when a direct 4♥ bid would be weak and pre-emptive, bidding 2♣, and after North's rebid of 2♦, bidding 4♥. North then usually stared at the cards for a while, bid 4N Blackwood - of any variety, and found South with the dreaded "one Keycard" response. North then gets to muse on whether South has the ♥A, where the missing ♣A is no problem at all, and ♥7 is a fine chance; or South has the ♣C, where bidding ♥7 is going to see declarer needing to find a way to 'finesse' the trump Ace ... good luck with that.

The best way to go with a void is cue-bidding. A cue bid is a bid showing first-round control in a suit. Cue-bidding has some dangers, as it can be mistaken for other bids. If you use 4♣ as Gerber, that puts a big hole in cue-bidding. You may also prefer splinters - a bid where a jump in a new suit shows a void or singleton rather than a first-round control - and on some bidding sequences, a bid may not be clear as to whether it is a splinter or a cue. It's advisable for regular partnerships to talk through some sequences like this and make sure they are on the same page.

Sometimes, especially when the opponents come into the bidding despite your heavy preponderance of the high card points, a cue bid can be mistaken by partner for a natural card, often with catastrophic consequences. This comes unstuck most often when you are bidding a suit that partner has already bid as a natural bid, which looks like a simple competitive raise. Partner passes, happily expecting a 4-4 fit, and instead gets to play in a 4-1 'fit'.

How can these two hands be bid? The trouble with 'round the houses' bidding (having a fit with game-going strength, and having to bid a side-suit then back to the game bid, to avoid a weak pre-emptive sequence) is twofold. Firstly the room for cue-bids is taken before opener knows about the fit, and secondly, if responder has

a hand good enough to explore slam, 'round the houses' loses agreement as to what the trump suit is. A sequence like 1♥-2♣; 2♦-4N does not make it clear to opener that Hearts are the trump suit and the ♥K should be counted as a Keycard while ♦K should not.

One helpful bid here is the Jacoby 2N bid. If you have agreed to play this, a response of 2N to a 1-Major opening promises 4 trumps and a hand good enough for game. Opener with a minimum and no hope of slam, simply rebids 4 of the agreed major. All other bids show some hope of slam. With extra strength, but no shape, bid 3N or 3 of the agreed major - partners need to agree which of these is stronger than the other. Other bids show slam interest, and there are a number of response systems to find slam: one simple one is that a 3-level rebid by opener shows a shortage, and a 4-level rebid shows a second suit. If you have not agreed such a system however, a 4-level bid should be a cue bid, showing first round control in the suit bid: Ace or void. This works in the hands shown here: 1♥-2N; 4♣ is a cue in clubs. South has no cue to make, so returns to 4H. And now North can bid 4N Keycard Blackwood.

How does this help identify the difference between the useful ♥A and the useless ♣A? There is a general rule you should be using in Blackwood that you should not include in the response to a Blackwood ask any Ace that is of a suit partner has shown first-round control in. Partner must have had a void for that bid, and is not interested in the Ace. So when South responds with a "1 Keycard" bid, North can ask about the Queen of trumps, and even ask for Kings. Again on a King ask, responder omits Kings in the useless club suit. Per my last column, the King Ask promises all the needed Keycards, so with no losers in any suit that declarer is not void in, South should respond to the 5N bid with 7♥.

When this hand came up in the last round on Tuesday night, the pair we played against had a bidding misunderstanding after South responded to 1♥ with 4♣ Gerber (which I think is premature) and they struggled to find how strong they were. They finished in 5♥, and I noted that it might be difficult to find the grand slam as I did not think most people had the cue-bidding systems to get there. Lo and behold, the scoresheet showed one 7♥ contract among the 6♥ ones (all made 13 tricks). I noted the pair who had achieved this and after the game, during the chips-and-drinks analysis session, I asked them about it.

They looked a little shame-faced in their answer. It turned out that North had bid some form of Blackwood, and South had given the wrong answer to it - showing ZERO Keycards. North, assuming the partnership were off two Aces, one of which would not matter, decided to bid 6H anyway, given strong bidding by South. South, realising the earlier bidding error, decided that a partner who could bid 6♥ knowing the trump Ace was missing could probably make 7♥ when the trump Ace was NOT missing. I can't fault either of those last two bids. I suppose that's one way to find the grand without cue bidding!

Martin Clear (SBC Tuesday Night host)

A fun way to learn from the experts – F2F NSWBA Teams of Three



The Teams of Three is one of the most popular events organised by NSWBA! You form a team of 3 players and we invite advanced players to be your Captain. Your Captain will play 2 matches with each player. It's a fun way to learn about team matches in bridge, it's also a great opportunity to learn from your Captain partner.

This one-day congress will be held on **Sunday 5th June 2022** at the NSWBA clubrooms on Level 1, 162 Goulburn Street, Sydney, 10am start (please arrive at 9.40am to draw team captains).

Attractive prizes. \$50 per player (lunch included). **RED** masterpoints.

Please find the [details](#) and enter via MyABF.

F2F Night Game in the City

Yes most of our regular sessions are run during the day, however, the night game culture is not lost! The SBC evening games are run by our volunteers who contribute their time for the love of the game.

The **Tuesday PM (Tuesday Evening hosted by Phil and Martin)** has created its own special vibe which attracts a steady growth in table number. The session starts at 7.15pm, 24 boards will be played. Martin Clear will be your host of the session with Phil Halloran and the après in which drinks & snacks will be served. We are trying to avoid sit-out for a proper competitive night, so please [contact office](#) if you would like to join the group on the first time. Promotional table money fee at \$6 per person! Limited time only.

For players who have just started their bridge journey and are looking for a more social game night, please join our **Wednesday night Supervised session** instead. The session starts at 6.30pm, with a 20 – 30 minutes pre-game talk by Jake Andrew (on the current Supervised Play) and Wing Roberts (on the upcoming Beginners Supervised Play). The session is run on duplicate movement, so players can get to meet other people. We aim to finish at around 9pm, so only 12-16 boards will be played. Table money fee \$12 for member and \$15 for visitors. No need to book, walk-ins are welcome.

There are more sessions during the day, both F2F and online, please refer to our [session timetable](#) on our website.