



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.

Competing and doubling at pairs. How the experts know when to underlead and duck aces!

#31397 BBO – Saturday 7th May 2022

11	♠ J543	Dir: S											
	♥ A	Vul: None											
	♦ A9874												
	♣ A63												
♠ T76	♠ KQ9												
♥ KQJ72	♥ 86543												
♦ 52	♦ KJT												
♣ 754	♣ J9												
13 ♠ A82	<table><tr><td></td><td>♣♦♥♠NT</td></tr><tr><td>N</td><td>5 5 - 3 2</td></tr><tr><td>S</td><td>4 4 - 3 2</td></tr><tr><td>E</td><td>- - 2 - -</td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td>- - 2 - -</td></tr></table>				♣♦♥♠NT	N	5 5 - 3 2	S	4 4 - 3 2	E	- - 2 - -	W	- - 2 - -
				♣♦♥♠NT									
N				5 5 - 3 2									
S				4 4 - 3 2									
E				- - 2 - -									
W	- - 2 - -												
6 10 ♥ T9													
11 ♦ Q63													
♣ KQT82													

Board 11 last week saw quite a mix of auctions and contracts with several close decisions.

South has the first decision whether to open the bidding or not. 2 tables did, 6 did not. These days I think I would because:

- 1NT (if playing weak NT) has good pre-emptive value
- 1♣ (if playing strong NT) might help partner find a good lead if we don't win the contract
- It is an advantage if your side opens first – it's a lot harder to bid accurately after the opponents open.

For the majority of tables who passed, North opened 1♦. Now it was East's turn to have a decision whether or not to overcall 1♥. Obviously this is hardly a suit to be proud of(!) or one you want partner to lead but it might allow your side to compete in the bidding and that's very important at nil vulnerability at pairs. So I don't think a 1♥ overcall is such a bad shot. South will most likely bid 2♣ and West (after recovering from the surprise of hearing his partner overcall hearts!) will clearly raise. With such a balanced hand, I think raising to 3♥ is quite enough and East should respect that. On both occasions where East West did get into the auction they reached 4♥ though. This actually ended up scoring quite well because they were left undoubled to go 2 off for -100. But it deserved to score very badly! Had North/South doubled 4♥ and scored +300 they would have collected almost a complete top. I think North should definitely double 4♥ - he has 3 virtually certain tricks and partner has shown values in the auction with 2♣ so it's highly likely he has at least 1 or 2 tricks as well. Besides, your side rates to be making at least a partscore in clubs (scoring at least +110) so taking +100 against 4♥ is not enough – you need to try for at least +300.

Where hearts were not mentioned, South responded 2♣ to 1♦ and the pair usually ended up in a club or diamond partscore.

Where South opens 1♣ what should North respond? Many would bid 1♠ but I prefer 1♦ - see advanced section for why. In either case South will most likely rebid 1NT (11-14) but North will then push onto game on a 13 point hand.

Another variation is if South opens a weak 1NT. North will now start with stayman and, after finding partner has no major, now has to decide what to do. The most practical shot is 3NT (which two tables tried) hoping that partner can provide a further heart stop, or that there are 9 tricks immediately, or that the defence don't lead hearts. Today none of those things happen and 3NT should go off (declarer is limited to 5 clubs, and a trick in each of the other suits). It made at one table when both West and East discarded a heart on the clubs. This was poor defence. West has nothing else of any value so should cling onto all his remaining hearts and East just needs to keep one heart to play when he gets in. Note I said declarer has 5 club tricks – that's obvious on this particular hand but how should he play the suit in general? Clue – when clubs are 3-2 it doesn't matter but if they are 4-1 can you still make all the club tricks and, if so, how? See advanced section for the answer.

Those playing in club contracts received the obvious ♥K lead. 2 tables made 12 tricks now. They won, led a club to hand, ruffed a heart, cashed their ♣A and then made the key play of a LOW diamond away from the ace towards hand. East is stuck at this point. He can win the ♦K but now that's all he gets (declarer can win any switch in hand, draw the last trump and later discard his 2 spade losers on the long diamonds). Or East can duck the ♦K but now declarer wins the ♦Q, draws the last trump and then ducks a diamond. This sets up the rest of the suit to again discard the spade losers. Well played to those tables. Notice that Deep Finesse says North can always make 11 tricks in 5♣ or 5♦ but South can only make 10. See advanced section for why.

Finally let's consider defending against a heart contract by East/West. Deep Finesse suggests the contract should make 8 tricks – losing 2 clubs and the ace of each of the other suits. But that's playing double dummy. In the real world it might be far worse! Against strong defenders declarer may have to guess who has the ♦A and ♦Q and possibly even the ♠A. He might easily end up at least 3 off. See advanced section for more on the possible defence.

Key points to note

- These days decent 11 point hands (especially with a good suit) are well worth opening. Don't be afraid to do so!
- Generally respond in your longest suit UNLESS you have a weak hand that might only take one bid. Then you should bid a 4 card major first as it might be your only chance to find your fit.
- Overcalling on really bad suits can obviously backfire badly but it can also help your side compete which can be valuable (especially not vulnerable at pairs).
- If you think opponents have stretched too high, you need to double them at pairs – you can't afford to defend undoubled and risk only scoring +100 when your own contract(s) would have scored more. Double gives you the chance for at least +200 which beats any partscore.
- Entries are critical and you may sometimes need to duck or lead away from an ace to preserve later communications in that suit to dummy.
- Good defenders frequently underlead or duck aces during the play of the hand. This can give declarer some nasty guesses. They can usually work out this is safe to do by counting the possible shapes of the hand and considering whether declarer could discard his remaining cards in the suit (see advanced section).

More advanced

If you are cashing the clubs in 3NT, how should you play the suit? The answer is to cash the K or Q first and then play low to the A in dummy. Why? Because this way if East started with J9xx you find this out as you cross to the A (West shows out) and you are now in the right hand to finesse against East's remaining J9. If you play A and then K you can still finesse against East later but you are currently in the wrong hand and have to use another entry to get back to dummy first. That entry might be critical. Note if West started with J9xx there is nothing you can do and you will have to lose a trick in the suit – so it's that holding with East that you should worry about.

Looking further into the play in clubs, note how essential it is to lead a low diamond away from the Ace. Entries to dummy are getting very short so you need to keep the ♦A there. Playing ♦A and then a low one towards the ♦Q will also limit the defence to one diamond trick but the big difference is you cannot then get back to dummy to reach the 2 long diamonds you have set up! If East does duck, declarer (after drawing the last trump) has to duck the 2nd round as well to preserve communication with the Ace in dummy. Another example of how critical entries are.

Why should North respond 1♦ to 1♣ and not 1♠? Because he is strong enough to bid again (in fact here he will be forcing to game). If he had a weak hand he should certainly bid 1♠ first because it may be his side's only chance to find a spade fit. But with a strong hand he can afford to just bid his suits in the natural order. Whatever South rebids, North can continue - perhaps with a checkback enquiry over a 1NT rebid or with 2♠ natural. The advantage to bidding diamonds first is that you tell partner more accurately about your shape and, on a good day, you might also find a good 6♦ contract!

Why does South make 10 tricks in a minor but North 11? Because West can lead a spade. That sets up 2 spade tricks for East/West before the ♦K is knocked out (East can play the ♠9 to force the ♠A). Of course anyone who finds a spade lead instead of the ♥K is surely cheating! But it's different with East on lead. Suppose he leads a top spade. Declarer can DUCK this (Bath coup) and East cannot continue the suit without losing a trick. This gives declarer precious time. He can win any switch and start playing as mentioned above. That is, ♣K, heart ruff, then ♣A followed by a low diamond. Once again the long diamonds get set up and the remaining spade loser can later be discarded.

Finally how should North South best defend against hearts? South will lead ♣K and no doubt the defence will play 3 rounds. Declarer ruffs and leads a trump to North's ace. Now what? There is a good case now for North to UNDERLEAD his ♦A. This gives declarer a nasty guess which he may well get wrong. If he does the defence will score at least 1 spade, 1 heart, 2 diamonds and 2 clubs (3 off for +500). How can North work out it's safe to underlead his ace? By counting shape! There are 2 diamonds in dummy and there is no risk that one could be discarded. Why? Because the only thing a diamond could be discarded on is a spade. That would require declarer to have 4 spades. But East is known by then to have 5 hearts and 2 clubs (he opened 1♥ and he ruffed the 3rd round of clubs). So he would have to be a 4522 shape (and then guess to finesse against North's ♠J to be able to make the 4th spade good to discard West's diamond on). But think about what that means for the rest of the hand. If East is 4522 that means South is 2245. Surely South would have raised diamonds then? Given he didn't it follows that East must have at least 3 diamonds and hence cannot have more than 3 spades. That's a long winded way of concluding that the ♦A can never run away even if declarer does guess right. The earlier in the hand you underlead it (and smoothly!) the more chance you have of declarer going wrong. I also mentioned declarer may have to guess the ♠A too. With a suit layout like this one, if declarer plays a spade towards the K it is often good defence to duck smoothly as South! Now declarer has a problem. He might well think North has the A and cross to dummy to lead another spade towards his Q. When that loses, he now has a loser to the ♠J as well! If South wins the ♠A immediately then declarer's only option on the 2nd round is to finesse against North's ♠J. Ducking creates a losing option. This sort of defence is much easier when the ♠KQ are visible in dummy though – South could look very silly ducking if declarer had the ♠K but not the ♠Q!

Julian Foster (many times NSW representative)

Join us for the Cancer Council Morning Tea Party

Raise your cup for a meaningful fun session in City AND Canada Bay on **Thursday 19th May 2022!**



There will be variety of teas and cakes in the City. You're also welcome to bring more to make this the BIGGEST Morning Tea by Sydney Bridge Centre! Outside food is not allowed in Canada Bay venue, a special souvenir will be given to the attendees there.

Same hands will be played in both venues, we will score across the two venues. The sessional winners of each venue will receive a Complimentary Entry to the NSWBA Teams of Three event on Sunday 5th June 2022.

Raffle tickets are available in both clubrooms. \$2 each or 3 for \$5. Attractive prizes include an opportunity to have a complimentary game in SBC with Warren Lazer as your partner! Warren is one of a few Emerald Grand Masters in the country and a gentle mentor. All raffle draw takings will be donated to Cancer Council.

Extra \$2 for table money, SBC will donate \$4 for each player. **RED Masterpoints** awarded. No need to book in advance, walk-ins are welcome.

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 3rd June:** Reverses and Jumps
- **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.