



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.

Michaels over 1 club?

#95076 BBO – Saturday 30th April 2022

22	♠ A3	<i>Dir: E</i>	
	♥ J92	<i>Vul: E-W</i>	
	♦ K8762		
	♣ Q83		
♠ QT762	♠ KJ95		
♥ KQT86	♥ 54		
♦ 3	♦ QT95		
♣ 62	♣ A74		
	♠ 84		
	♥ A73		
	♦ AJ4		
	♣ KJT95		

Board 22 last week was a partscore hand and at most tables North South played the contract even though East West could actually make the highest contract (3♠).

After an opening pass from East, South will open 1♣ (or 1NT if playing a weak NT). The key to the result on the hand is probably now whether West chooses to bid or not. At several tables West passed, North responded 1♦ and South rebid either 1NT or 2♣. North might then choose to invite although it's marginal with only a balanced 10 points (remember partner is limited to 14 and will, in practice, usually be less – see advanced section for why). This usually lead to a contract of 2NT or 3♣ by South.

A couple of Wests overcalled 2♣ - a Michaels cue bid showing at least 55 in the majors. That is (or should have been) the winning action today because East now knows his side have a 9 card spade fit. He will certainly bid to at least 2♠ and should compete to 3♠ if pushed.

Although West has plenty of shape there is definitely risk in making this 2♣ bid. You are forcing to the 2 level with no guaranteed fit and your left hand opponent has unknown strength. The adverse vulnerability is also dangerous as it will be attractive for the opponents to penalise you if they can (1 off scores +200 which beats any partscore they might make and 2 off scores +500 which beats any game they might make). On a bad day, North will be setting over you with majors and you will be in big trouble. Today, however, is a good day! At any other vulnerability I would bid Michaels for sure, this is the only vulnerability where I might consider not doing so. As so often in bridge, however, taking the more aggressive action pays off.

These days there is also a case for not playing 2♣ as Michaels over 1♣ but retaining it as a natural overcall – see advanced section for more on this.

The two Souths who played 2NT scored the best since they usually received a heart lead. This gave them 2 heart tricks and also allowed time to knock out the ♣A. As a result they made 1 spade, 2 hearts, 4 diamonds (both Easts discarded diamonds when clubs were cashed) and 4 clubs for +210. In an uncontested auction West has nothing really to go on with regard to what major to lead – today a spade works far better and holds declarer to 8 tricks (because the defence can cash 4 spades as soon as they get in with the ♣A) but partner could equally well have had the ♥J.

In a club contract the ♥K was also led although then East could get a heart ruff to hold clubs to 9. Alternatively if West leads his singleton diamond he can get a diamond ruff. Declarer actually has to be quite careful to make 3♣ at all if this occurs. There is a risk of now losing 1 spade, 2 hearts, a ruff and the ♣A – see advanced section for details of how to avoid this.

If East West do reach a spade contract they should make 9 tricks losing a trick in each suit. Today hearts are 3-3 so almost any line will lead to 9 tricks but, had they been 4-2, you would need to watch your entries to get West's long hearts set up because that hand will get forced to ruff a club to shorten its trumps. Best play is probably to lead hearts up from the East

hand early. Win the likely club lead and immediately lead a heart. Assuming South ducks, then start on trumps and later lead a 2nd heart up to set up the suit. The only East West pair playing 3♠ made it to score a top board.

Key points to note

- Michaels cue bids have some risk, especially at adverse vulnerability, but they are a valuable bid to help your side compete in the auction.
- Getting into the auction can also help your side find its best lead later if you later end up defending.
- These days because so many people play short club it's worth considering playing a 2♣ overcall over 1♣ as natural (perhaps with 2♦ as Michaels – see advanced section).
- When you have lots of intermediate cards in a suit, try to keep the entry situation fluid between both hands. Even if you don't really see why early on it might prove useful later!

More advanced

I said it was more likely South would have less than 14 if they rebid 1NT or 2♣ - why? Just statistics. With light openers these days South can be anything from 10 to 14 but there are many more hands in the 10-13 range. Also with some 14s he might have chosen to upgrade and open a strong NT. Therefore it's against the odds for North to invite with only 10.

I said the Michaels cue bid over 1♣ had risk on this hand but it's definitely a winning strategy overall. Not only does it get East West into the auction, it may also help them find the best lead should they not win the contract. Here for example East will surely now bid spades so there's a much greater chance West will find a spade if he is on lead.

Had South opened a weak NT, I think 2♣ showing both majors at this vulnerability is even more dangerous (although I am sure many would still do it!). That's because North now has a much better idea of partner's strength. After a 1♣ opening South could still be anywhere from about 10-19 points so it's harder for North to judge what's right.

There is also a case for a 2♣ overcall of a "standard" style 1♣ (i.e. not a strong club) to be natural. That's because these days 1♣ is increasingly being opened on 2+ clubs. While you could have an agreement that 2♣ is natural if their 1♣ can be 2 but is Michaels otherwise, that's fraught with the danger of one player forgetting and it also means you are reliant on checking the detail of each opponent's system card (or asking them) so you know what you are doing. Better is to have an agreement that's always the same. A system change I have recently made with my regular partner is to play a 2♣ overcall as natural (regardless of the minimum length of their 1♣) and to play a 2♦ jump overcall as Michaels (55+ in the majors). This gives up 2♦ as a weak jump overcall which is not a great sacrifice. With another partner we play 2♦ as Michaels but we also play 2♣ as showing 54 in the majors (2♦ being at least 55). So there are various options available.

Looking further at the play to 3♣, suppose West leads their singleton diamond which will go to the Q and A. Declarer will start on trumps. East wins immediately and returns a diamond for West to ruff. Best defence now exits a spade which declarer has to win (from his perspective if he ducks West might be able to get a 2nd diamond ruff). Now declarer is in danger of losing 1 spade, 2 hearts, 1 club and a diamond ruff. To make the contract he needs to discard a major suit loser on a diamond from dummy. But his diamonds are currently a problem - he will either have played the ♦J on the 2nd round (in which case his diamonds are not good) or he will have played small on the 2nd round (in which case his diamonds are blocked with singleton ♦J left in hand). So he needs to work on the diamonds.

He also needs an entry back to dummy later as his ♠A has just been knocked out. That entry can only now come in trumps. Therefore he should play a 2nd round of trumps back to hand with the aim of using a 3rd trump to get back to dummy later. He hopes the 2nd round will draw both the remaining trumps (i.e. that West's diamond ruff came from an original holding of 3 trumps). That isn't the case here but when West shows out it now tells him West started with 1 diamond and 2 clubs. This makes it safe to leave the last trump out and go about setting up the diamonds. If

he had played the ♦J on the 2nd round, he now plays ♦K and ruffs a diamond back to hand (which East has to follow to). This sets the 5th diamond up for one major suit discard. If he hadn't played the ♦J he cashes it now and then dummy's remaining diamonds are good for two major suit discards.

All that remains is to cross back to dummy with a 3rd round of trumps (drawing East's last trump in the process). Because declarer has all the intermediate trumps, this 3rd round trump entry isn't too difficult to arrange – so long as declarer followed the general principle of keeping his entry situation fluid and played a high trump from hand at trick 2! Had he carelessly started with the ♣5 to the ♣Q on the first round, he would now regret it because all his remaining clubs are higher than dummy's and he is cut off from the long diamonds....!

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.