



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.

Valuing your hand, stopper bidding, and suit combination play.

#36634 BBO – Saturday 28th May 2022

21	♠ KT3	Dir: N																														
	♥ KT42	Vul: N-S																														
	♦ A53																															
	♣ 863																															
♠ QJ864	♠ 92																															
♥ Q65	♥ J87																															
♦	♦ T962																															
♣ AKQ72	♣ T954																															
♠ A75		<table><tr><td></td><td>♣</td><td>♦</td><td>♥</td><td>♠</td><td>NT</td></tr><tr><td>N</td><td>-</td><td>5</td><td>4</td><td>2</td><td>2</td></tr><tr><td>S</td><td>-</td><td>5</td><td>4</td><td>2</td><td>2</td></tr><tr><td>E</td><td>2</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td>2</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td></tr></table>		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	N	-	5	4	2	2	S	-	5	4	2	2	E	2	-	-	-	-	W	2	-	-	-	-
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On board 21 last week, despite holding a combined 25 points only 2 out of 7 North South pairs reached game.

At all tables bar one the auction started P P 1♦ 1♠ (the other South opened a strong 1♣). Over 1♠ North has a normal double at this point (showing hearts) although one table passed and one table bid 1NT. The key to the auction came at South's rebid. Quite a few tables rebid 2♦. Most Wests continued with 3♣ over that and North now competed to 3♦ but that often ended the auction. 11 tricks were chalked up pretty easily. How could they have got to game?

The problem is the 2♦ rebid. That is effectively showing a minimum opening bid. But this hand is a lot better than that. It is worth 3♦ which usually shows about

15-17 and at least 6 diamonds. There are several reasons why:

- 15 points (admittedly the ♣J could well be worthless)
- A good 6 card suit
- Only 6 losers
- 2 aces (which tend to be worth more than the traditional 4 points).

That said, there are problems with bidding 3♦ as we shall see below! It takes up precious space which makes it impossible to bid 3NT with confidence. We also would like to know if partner has 4 or 5 hearts because 4♥ could easily be the best contract (especially with club ruffs available in the South hand).

After 3♦ West cannot really bid again (4♣ is just too high to risk) even though he will probably wish he had been able to show both his suits. North also has a tricky problem over 3♦ though. Now partner is known to be 15-17 the partnership has game values – but it's not clear which game will be best. What North would like to do is to show a spade stopper and ask for a club stopper in order to try for 3NT but there isn't a way for him to do that because a bid of 3♠ (the opponent's suit) would usually ask for a spade stop (see advanced section for more on stopper bidding). Bidding 3NT would be a gamble with nothing in clubs. On this hand it would work if East led his partner's spade suit but would fail on a club lead. On the other hand bidding 5♦ could also be wrong – there's no guarantee there will be 11 tricks. For example change South's ♠A into the ♣A and now 3NT is cold when 5♦ is likely to be losing 2 spades and a heart.

Of the two tables that did get to game, one started with a strong 1♣ (the auction continued 1♠ 1NT P 2♦ 3♣ 3♥ P 4♦ P 5♦). This auction was easier because 1NT presumably showed a spade stop. Therefore when North bid 3♥ over 3♣ he most likely won't have a club stop (or he would have bid 3NT). He also probably won't have 5 hearts (or he would have bid 2♥ the first time). Hence South knows 3NT is not a viable spot and simply repeats his diamonds.

The other successful auction began 1♦ 1♠ 1NT and South simply raised to 3NT. When East led the ♠9 declarer had plenty of tricks and a top board. Even though it was successful today, the 1NT bid would not be my choice – it could very easily

lead to a silly 3NT contract when your side is making at least 4♥ - hence I think North should start with a double to show his hearts. Usually he will be able to bid no-trumps later.

The play in a diamond contract should result in 11 tricks. West usually began with two top clubs which South ruffed. It looks at first glance as if South has 3 losers (one spade, one heart and one club). So he should consider how he can avoid one of them. East having a singleton spade honour is one possibility (that drops under the A and now declarer finesses against the other). But a far better chance is to try to make the 4th heart in dummy good in order to discard your spade loser. Declarer should therefore draw trumps and play hearts. Several tables played on spades instead and only made 10 tricks. With hearts 3-3 it doesn't matter today but how exactly would you play the heart suit? And how would you play if you did not have the ♥9? See advanced section for the answers.

Key points to note

- After 1 minor and a 1♠ overcall it is usually right to double to show 4 hearts if you have them. There is usually time to head for no-trumps if you find you don't have a heart fit.
- Jump rebids in the suit you opened normally show about 15-17 and at least a 6 card suit. It's an important bid to help partner judge whether game is there but it does take up space that can be a problem (see advanced section).
- When you identify losers as declarer, the next step is to work out which ones could potentially be avoided (either by ruffing in dummy or by discarding on something).
- The higher pips (8,9,10) can sometimes make a difference as to the best way of playing a particular suit (see advanced section)

More advanced

Stopper bidding in contested auctions can often cause confusion. Generally if the opponents have bid one suit naturally, if you bid that suit (3♠ here) you are ASKING for partner to bid no-trumps with a stopper (if you had a stopper you could just bid 3NT yourself). But when the opponents have bid two suits naturally it is usually better to play that a bid in one of those suits SHOWS a stopper there and asks partner to bid no-trumps with a stopper in the other suit.

The auction here makes it impossible for North South to diagnose the position using these methods though because it's another suit besides the one the opponents have bid that is the problem! On this layout the best spot is 5♦. But change South's ♠A into the ♣A and now 3NT is cold when 5♦ is likely to be losing 2 spades and a heart. There isn't a way around this using natural methods – it's a guess.

That's one of the problems with a 3♦ bid. The other is the fact South holds 3 hearts and North might have 5. I am aware of pairs playing some artificial methods with 6331 hands like this (e.g. using a 2NT rebid to show this sort of hand). That can at least resolve the 5-3 heart fit issue but it still struggles with the stoppers!

A point worth a mention is the presence of two aces in the South hand. These increase its value. Aces tend to be worth more than the traditional 4 points (and Jacks are worth less than 1). One reason is the control aces offer. As a stopper of the opponent's suit Axx is far better than Kxx because you can hold up the Ace and choose to win it when one opponent is out of the suit. You often cannot do that with Kxx.

I asked earlier how should this heart suit be played for 3 tricks? This is a suit combination I often see played incorrectly. Frequently players try something like low to the 9 on the 1st round, or perhaps Ace then low to the 10. Neither are correct because both those risk losing to a doubleton honour and then not being able to pick up the other honour. In isolation (i.e. not considering the distribution of any other suits, or considering entries) the correct play is ♥A, ♥K and then a 3rd round. This works whenever they are 3-3 but, importantly, it also works whenever there is Jx or Qx in EITHER hand. The 10 and the 9 together can then force out the other honour to establish the ♥10 in North.

The presence of the 9 makes a big difference. Without that the correct play would be specifically ♥K, ♥A and then low towards the remaining ♥104 in dummy. This again works when they are 3-3 but it also picks up Qx or Jx with East and allows you to lead towards the 10 to establish it as a winner. However this time you can't pick up Qx or Jx with West.

Of course suits are rarely played in isolation. On this hand declarer will have already discovered diamonds are 4-0 before he plays on hearts. This makes it more likely that East will have a heart shortage (although he is very unlikely to have only one heart on this hand because that would give West five and he may well have then made a Michaels cue bid over our 1♦ opening). In isolation, though, if East were more likely to be short, declarer should start with the ♥A just in case there is a singleton honour with East. Now, using the principle of restricted choice (something to be discussed another time!) he can finesse against the other honour.

Julian Foster (many times NSW representative)

SBC Christmas in July – Pairs and Teams



Let's celebrate Christmas in winter! Sydney Bridge Centre is going to run a Christmas in July Congress on 16th – 17th July 2022 at the NSWBA clubrooms on Level 1, 162 Goulburn Street, Sydney – a one-day Pairs event on Saturday 16th and a one-day Teams event on Sunday 17th. 10am start for both days.

The SBC Congresses are well known for its great atmosphere and good food! A delicious Christmas themed morning tea, snacks and lunch will be included.

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

The Program Brochure will be published soon. Please enter via the [NSWBA website](#). Please contact Wing if you need a partner and/or teammates!

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 1st July:** The 2NT Jacoby Raise
- **Friday 29th July:** Defence

\$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**. A theme for each month, and different topics for each lesson. Please find [the topics](#) 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 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.