



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.

Minor suit transfers over 1NT and defence to high level contracts

#39043 BBO – Saturday 18th June 2022

11		♠ KQ9862	Dlr: S
		♥ Q5	Vul: None
		♦ A65	
		♣ 84	
♠ AT7	♠ 53		
♥ AJT4	♥ K963		
♦ KQ7	♦ T32		
♣ T75	♣ QJ63		
11 ♠ J4	♣ ♦ ♥ ♠ NT		
14 6 ♥ 872	N - - - 2 -		
9 ♦ J984	S - 1 - 2 -		
♣ AK92	E 1 - 2 -		
	W 1 - 2 -		

Board 11 last week was a typical partscore hand. But several pairs didn’t find their best fit.

The auction started P 1♣ 1♠ at most tables. This looks normal to me. However, a couple of Norths chose to overcall 2♠. Although this is usually a weak bid, it is safe for it to vary a fair bit in strength in this situation because South is a passed hand. If South had not passed as dealer, I would definitely overcall 1♠ as I am too strong for 2♠. Partner might pass 2♠ with a decent hand and we could miss a game.

I still tend to prefer 1♠ on North’s hand though. The major downside of 2♠ is it could go for a large penalty! There’s more risk of this at the 2 level than the 1

level and my hand is lacking any shortages so it has quite a few losers. Besides, 1♠ already takes up a whole level of space from the opponent.

After P 1♣ 1♠ some Easts bid 2♣ and this led to East West playing in 3♣.

2♣ is definitely not right for two reasons:

- We have a heart suit that we should show. There is no reason why partner can’t have 4 hearts and we could make 4♥ if he has a good hand. We should generally always look for a major suit fit before a minor one. Even if we can’t make game, a heart partscore will score more than clubs.
- We don’t necessarily even have a club fit. West doesn’t need to have 4 to open 1♣ (indeed, he doesn’t here) so East should have 5 clubs to raise.

East should instead double over 1♠. This is known as a “negative” double. I’m not actually sure of the origin of the term “negative” here - it’s really just takeout. The most important thing it shows is 4 hearts (or a weaker hand with longer hearts - see advanced section). Yes ideally you’d have the other suit (diamonds) as well but you don’t always have the perfect hand dealt to you! If partner does bid diamonds then his clubs will be longer (otherwise he’d have opened 1♦ to start with) so you can safely retreat to 3♣.

A couple of Easts also doubled after North bid 2♠. That’s a bit too much on only 6 points though since you are effectively forcing to the 3 level.

After P 1♣ 1♠ double what should South do? There are some special uses for redouble here (see advanced section) but without that there’s no obvious action. 1NT is possible but has no heart stop. Pass might feel a bit wet but it’s what I’d do because I am going to get another go - West is highly unlikely to pass the double of 1♠. West has an easy 2♥ bid in response to the double (you basically bid here as if partner had responded 1♥ initially). Some Norths bid 2♠ themselves at this point but this is very dangerous. East could still have a big hand and South hasn’t shown any spade support or any values yet. North should pass 2♥, as will East.

NOW South can come to life. This time with another double - this one is described as “competitive” which really just says he has some values and can stand anything sensible that partner wants to do. So that usually means he has tolerance for spades (he obviously doesn’t have direct spade support or he would just bid them) and he has the 4th suit (diamonds). Once again, like so many doubles at low levels these days, it is not a penalty double.

North now knows his partner has something and can happily bid 2♠ with his extra spade. That might well end the auction although at matchpoints nil vulnerability that’s unlikely and East West may push onto 3♥ - see advanced section for why. North South would most likely sell out to that.

So my complete auction might be P 1♣ 1♠ X, P 2♥ P P, X P 2♠. After that West might push onto 3♥.

Let’s look briefly at the play now. Although no East West pair played in 3♥ it can go one off losing ♣A, ♣K, a club ruff, a spade and a diamond – the defence cannot get South in to play a 4th round of clubs so after drawing trumps declarer will be able to cash the ♣Q and discard a diamond on it. In practice, however, why would North lead a club, especially when West opened the suit? He is much more likely to start with ♠K. Now declarer might make 3♥ because he can draw trumps (if he guesses who has the ♥Q) and not suffer the club ruff. If North South play in spades they should also make only 8 tricks. They should lose 1 spade, 2 hearts and 2 diamonds. That, however, requires the defence to play passively and not open up diamonds – see advanced section for more about the diamond suit.

It’s worth noting that both sides make 8 tricks in their contract and they both have 8 trumps. Is that a coincidence? Actually it isn’t – see advanced section for reference to the “law of total tricks”.

Key points to note

- Always look for a fit in a major first before resorting to a minor.
- Jump overcalls can be wider ranging after partner has passed as dealer because you are unlikely to miss game.
- Doubles in competitive auctions can mean all sorts of things. But these days at low levels they tend NOT to be penalty.
- Frequently it is necessary for the defence to just be passive and let declarer lose tricks!
- In competitive auctions try to identify the size of your and their trump fits. The law of total tricks may then help you judge how high to compete (see advanced section).

More advanced

I said East’s negative double usually shows 4 hearts. That’s true but it could also be a weaker hand with longer hearts that isn’t strong enough to bid at the 2 level. This can be quite descriptive because if you double first and later bid a suit it means your hand is limited by the fact you couldn’t bid that suit at the 2 level initially.

After an auction like 1m (1M) X there are various uses for redouble. I’ve seen all the following:

- a good hand interested in penalising the opponents.
- a competitive hand with some values but no obvious bid (tends to have the 4th suit and tolerance for partner’s overcall – i.e. a doubleton).
- Ax or Kx in partner’s suit (can be very useful knowledge for partner if he ends up on lead).
- As usual it is a matter of agreement within your partnership. Each of these options will have some hands where it’s a great success and others where you wish you had a different agreement!

We saw in this particular hand that both sides had 8 trumps and they can both make 8 tricks in their respective suits. There is an interesting concept in bridge known as the “law of total tricks”. It states that the total number of tricks made by each side in their best fit is equal to the total number of trumps in those fits. So here it’s saying that the total number of trumps is 8+8=16 and therefore the total number of tricks available is also 16. That is borne out by this hand because each side can make 8 tricks. It would equally be borne out if one side made 9 tricks in their contract

and the other made 7. Obviously this “law” doesn’t work on every bridge hand but it is a surprisingly good guide. Whole books have been written on the topic (the most well known being “To bid or not to bid” by Larry Cohen) so I won’t discuss it further here.

On this hand it might cause East West to reason like this:

- They have 8 hearts and it sounds like North South have 8 spades.
- So there are probably 16 total trumps and hence 16 total tricks.
- Therefore if 2♠ is making 8 tricks then so was 2♥.
- Hence 3♥ would only be 1 off and that, even if doubled, would be a better score than -110 for 2♠.
- Further, if 2♠ was going off and just making 7 tricks then that would suggest their side would make 9 tricks – i.e. 3♥ would make.
- Either way they are better off bidding 3♥.

Of course the vulnerability plays a part in this too. As has been mentioned in other columns, nil vulnerability is the best time to compete at matchpoints because you only go off in 50s and you would only be taking the opponents off in 50s if you defended. That’s why East West should probably push onto 3♥ over 2♠ on this hand.

Finishing again with the play I said that East West need to go passive when defending a spade contract. The key suit here is diamonds. Try running through what will happen in the suit if East West lead it first. Declarer (assuming he guesses where the honours are) can effectively finesse East for the ♦10 and only lose 1 trick in the suit. Now have a look at the suit if North South play it first. There is nothing they can actually do to engineer a 2nd trick by force. Diamonds are what is referred to as “frozen” (whichever side leads it first gives away a trick). These positions are quite common and it’s why passive defense is often best. Far too often defenders switch suits all the time and far too often they give tricks away when they do!

Here if North is playing spades, East West can start with 3 rounds of hearts. When they win the ♠A they just return another trump (a club is safe too but may not look it). Declarer will eventually be forced to lead diamonds himself. Even if he plays something like a low diamond to the 8 and West’s Q, West will still have a 4th heart he can exit with.

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](https://www.nswba.com.au). 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.