



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

#6067 BBO – Saturday 11th June 2022

6		♠ 74 ♥ 9 ♦ KQT98762 ♣ J8	Dir: E Vul: E-W	
♠ 982 ♥ KJ65 ♦ J3 ♣ T952		♠ KQT6 ♥ T873 ♦ 5 ♣ AK63		
6 ♠ AJ53 5 12 ♥ AQ42 17 ♦ A4 ♣ Q74		♣ ♦ ♥ ♠ NT N - 4 - - 4 S - 4 - - 4 E - - 2 - - W - - 2 - -		

Board 6 on 11th June contained useful points in both the bidding and, later, the defence. Most pairs ended up in the wrong game contract but all the defences allowed it to make anyway!

East has a normal 1♣ opening. Some Souths doubled but I prefer 1NT as it's more descriptive overall. Just because I have both majors doesn't always mean double is better. Partner can still use stayman over 1NT to find a major fit. Also if partner bids 2♦ or 3♦ over the double we will risk getting into the wrong contract.

North of course then has to decide what to do. Over double it's a fairly clear 5♦ bid - partner is showing takeout of clubs so it looks like we won't have a club stop and we just want to play in our 8 card suit.

Over 1NT it's less clear as we have more choices. If we are playing transfer to the minors as well as the majors (a good idea), it may be better to transfer to diamonds to get partner to play the hand (the lead is then going round to the strong hand). Or it may be better to conceal our hand's shape (see below) and just bid 5♦.

Minor suit transfers over 1NT can be useful in several ways:

- With very weak hands we can transfer out to a weak suit
- With intermediate (and some weak) hands we may be able to bid 3NT
- With strong hands we may be able to bid a 6 minor slam

We might also want to play in no-trumps - if our diamond suit can be run it will provide 7 or 8 tricks. But we'd really like to be sure partner has the ♦A before we commit to no-trumps. Although it's likely, the downside when partner does not have the ♦A is massive. Just imagine how stupid we would look playing in no-trumps if partner had 2 small diamonds and a defender held Ax. If they hold up the ace for one round, our hand is going to be worth exactly 1 trick as there is no entry to the remaining diamonds! The other nightmare would be if partner has decided to overcall 1NT with a 4441 shape and a singleton Ace. Although that works sometimes, it would be disastrous to do it on this hand and end up in 3NT with the diamonds blocked.

There are ways when playing minor suit transfers to tell whether partner has the ♦A or not. See advanced section for some bidding methods in this area.

The pairs who scored best on this board were those who played in no-trumps. This will always make 10 tricks and, in practice, will often make 11 because the defence may start with both top clubs. More interesting is the defence to a 5♦ contract. Let's assume first that North is declarer. East has a normal lead of a top club. After that holds then what? Almost every table continued with another top club. But that set up the ♣Q in dummy to discard declarer's losing spade on. The winning defence is to switch immediately to the ♠K. That establishes a spade trick for the defence before the ♣Q is set up.

How do the defence get this right? They can't be sure if North is declarer. But they can give themselves a chance by signalling at trick 1. If West tells East how many clubs he has, East knows the defence has two club tricks. But it's still a guess what to switch to at trick 2 (a heart would be necessary if declarer's majors were the other way around). Indeed at pairs it may be right to just cash the 2nd club anyway. See advanced section for more.

Of course if South is declarer, it's very different. West leads a club to the K and this time East can see North's shape. Now finding the spade switch is easy. Such is the power of the "hidden hand" in bridge!

After a spade switch declarer could go two off because he might try the heart finesse in an attempt to discard his spade loser. There are sometimes ways declarer can work out this is futile (but not, as it turns out, on this hand) - see advanced section for how.

Key points to note

- When you have a balanced 15-18 hand sitting over an opening bid, a 1NT overcall is frequently best as it describes your hand in one bid and puts partner in charge of the auction.
- 8 card suits should nearly always be trumps! But if you know the suit will run then playing no-trumps is also a good choice - especially at pairs.
- Minor suit transfers over 1NT are a valuable bidding tool to escape from bad NT contracts, find good 3NT contracts or minor suit slams.
- When defending 5 level contracts, count signals tend to be most valuable as you need to know what tricks to cash.
- No matter how good the defence, the fact declarer's hand is hidden gives him a big advantage. The defence may just have to guess what to do.

More advanced

There are, as usual, assorted schemes for minor suit transfers over 1NT. Some pairs play 2♠ as a range probe (2NT min, 3♣ max) and 2NT as a transfer to either minor. I prefer "four suit transfers" - that is, besides the normal major suit transfers, 2♠ is a transfer to clubs and 2NT is a transfer to diamonds. The advantage of this is it gives opener an intermediate step over both transfers - for example he can bid 2NT or 3♣ in response to a 2♠ transfer. One can be used as a "super-accept" (i.e. it likes the transfer suit) and the other says it doesn't like the transfer suit. These can be either way round - it doesn't really matter.

My regular partner and I play that the intermediate step likes the suit and completing the transfer doesn't like the suit (that allows responder to pass if they just had a weak hand and the stronger hand will now be playing the contract). But what do we mean by "like the suit"? Again that's a matter of agreement but what we play is that it guarantees at least Ax, Kx or Qx. The key point is it tells responder holding something like KQxxxx that their suit is going to run most of the time. This may allow us to bid a good 3NT on pretty minimal point values. But the focus is on the top honours so even if we have something like xxxx we still do not "super accept".

If defending 5♦ by North, how can East know to switch to a spade at trick 2? He can't be sure. A spade is right on this hand. But change declarer's shape to 1282 and now a heart is the killing switch as it sets up partner's ♥K before the ♣Q is set up. One thing is certain though. If East gets a count signal on the clubs he knows declarer has 2. Therefore he knows another top club cannot beat the contract as that will definitely set up the ♣Q for a discard. At the 5 level or higher it tends to be more useful to play count signals than attitude - that lets the defence identify which of their tricks are cashing. Hence West should play a count card at trick 1 (the 2 if reverse count, the 10 if natural count). That knowledge at least gives East a chance.

Note you might argue that a spade switch doesn't require partner to have anything whereas a heart switch requires partner to have ♥K. Playing imps (where we are just trying to beat the contract) that logic isn't valid because if declarer has ♥K he always has 11 tricks and the best we can do is take our 2nd club before it runs away. Playing matchpoints

it's harder. If declarer does have ♥K, then cashing the 2nd club is the best we can do. If not then we have to guess between hearts and spades. All we have to go on perhaps is that if declarer did have ♥K and long diamonds he might have explored slam opposite a strong NT. This shows how much harder matchpoints is than imps – because we don't know what our target is. Are we trying to beat the contract or just limit overtricks?

Lastly I said that if East does play ♣K and switches to ♠K, declarer may be able to work out the heart finesse will probably fail. How? The answer is card reading. Declarer knows East has ♣AK from the opening lead. He is also likely to have ♠KQ after the switch at trick 2. After he draws trumps if he had found East with 2 diamonds that would tell him East most likely has a balanced hand. ♣AK and ♠KQ add up to 12 points. If East also had the ♥K he would have had 15 and, assuming the pair is playing strong no-trump, surely he would have opened that? Hence the ♥K is almost certainly with West.

On this hand, however, East only shows up with 1 diamond. Therefore this inference is not available because he would most likely have also opened 1♣ whether he had this hand or the same hand with the ♥K. So although it doesn't help today, this sort of reasoning can often help you identify the location of a key card. It can be just as important to notice what a player did NOT do during the bidding as what they did do!

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.