



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.

Bidding over Michaels. Showing extras to aid slam bidding.

#47574 BBO – Saturday 16th July 2022

19		♠ J9843	<i>Dir: S</i>																															
		♥ Q	<i>Vul: E-W</i>																															
		♦ Q8742																																
		♣ 73																																
♠ AK7		♠ Q65																																
♥ AKJ985		♥ 743																																
♦ 5		♦ AKT9																																
♣ Q52		♣ AK9																																
5	♠ T2	<table><tr><td></td><td>♣</td><td>♦</td><td>♥</td><td>♠</td><td>NT</td></tr><tr><td>N</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td></tr><tr><td>S</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td></tr><tr><td>E</td><td>5</td><td>4</td><td>7</td><td>5</td><td>7</td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td>5</td><td>4</td><td>7</td><td>5</td><td>7</td></tr></table>				♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	N	-	-	-	-	-	S	-	-	-	-	-	E	5	4	7	5	7	W	5	4	7	5	7
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Last week's session seemed to contain a large number of slam hands. Board 19 was one of the East West ones – but no pair managed to reach slam. Let's consider what happened.

The normal start is Pass from South and 1♥ from West. One North waded in with a Michaels 2♥ bid (showing 55+ in spades and a minor) and one overcalled 1♠. Often at favourable vulnerability like this that can pave the way for a good sacrifice or competing for the partscore. Today it could have been disastrous if East had decided to try for penalties. After Michaels, North-South would most likely end up in 2♠ doubled which can be held to just 2 tricks (North's two long trumps) and 6 off for -1400! In theory that's better than the likely -1460 they would score conceding 6♥. But theory is all very well - in the real world not a

single East West pair bid the slam so scoring -1400 would have been a total bottom!

In both the cases where North bid, however, East just drove to game. It's hard to crime this – it's not so easy to envisage such a huge penalty with only Qxx in spades. East cannot know West is sitting there with such good spades!

When North passed 1♥, the question is what East should respond. Last week I mentioned about bidding 3NT with a 4333 shape to show a flat game raise but the hand then was too weak (being only 12 points). This time I think it's too strong! You have lots of controls in the minors and a good 16 points. 3NT typically shows a flat hand around 13-15 and will usually have “softer” values (i.e. not many aces). Another option for East is 2NT meaning it as a game forcing heart raise – but it's more common to play that as guaranteeing 4 card support so you know you have a 9 card fit.

I would have just responded 2♦ to find out what partner does – with the intention of jumping to 4♥ next (to show a game forcing hand with 3 card heart support). But on this hand West should jump rebid 3♥ showing 6+ hearts and extra values (15+ and hence game forcing because 2♦ was at least 10+). This actually gives East another problem. Now 4♥ is no longer a jump. He is also far too strong to just raise to 4♥ as he knows the partnership is at least close to the slam zone. But he doesn't have an easy bid to agree hearts. Although it's usually wrong to bid blackwood with no control in a side suit (see advanced section for why) on this hand I think it's the most practical shot. It would be extraordinarily unlucky if partner had nothing in spades – after all where can his 15+ points be? What's more there is no other sensible bid that won't make the auction even more confused!

Assuming the pair are playing keycard blackwood West will show 3 key cards, East should then ask for the Queen of trumps and when West denies that, he should settle for 6♥. Today the ♥Q drops singleton so 13 tricks are easy.

At the table no-one reached slam. After the Michaels 2♥ overcall East just bid 4♥. This is a situation where you want to be able to show a good raise in hearts with values as distinct to a distributional weaker raise. Given North shows spades with Michaels you can use 2♠ to do that (see advanced section for more). Two tables bid 3NT over 1♥ – as mentioned earlier I think East is too strong for that. West certainly still has a nice hand but it's not so clear to head towards slam opposite what could be a 4333 13 point hand. Two other tables did start with 2♦ (one of them playing it as game forcing) but both then

raised 3♥ to 4♥. Again, as mentioned above, East is too strong for that. See advanced section for the additional implications of playing the 2♦ response as game forcing, however.

Key points to note

- A 3NT response to 1 major should show a fairly narrow 13-15 point range to give partner a good description. 16 points with so many controls is too strong for the bid on this hand.
- It is useful to have a way of showing a strong raise of opener's suit after the opponents intervene with Michaels cue bids or unusual 2NT bids. This way immediate raises can be weaker.
- Although it's not often a good idea to blackwood without any control in a side suit sometimes it's the least bad option – and is OK if partner is known to have enough values that he will almost certainly have a control in that suit.

More advanced

After a Michaels (or unusual 2NT) overcall it's common to play double as interest in penalising them. You also want a way to show a good raise of partner's suit. Then you can distinguish that from weaker more distributional hands which can raise immediately and may hinder your opponents' auction. Michaels over 1 major normally shows 55 in the other major and a minor so you definitely know one of their suits. Hence you should treat it as if they have overcalled in that suit and use that for your cue raise (so on this hand after 1♥ 2♥ 2♠ would show a good heart raise).

When they have shown 2 specific suits (e.g. an unusual 2NT overcall showing both minors) it's a good idea to agree that a cue bid in ONE of these shows a good raise. There are different approaches in use here. One approach always uses one cue bid (e.g. their higher suit – so 3♦) to show a good raise. Another approach links hearts to clubs and spades to diamonds – in other words a cue of 3♣ shows hearts (so a good raise if partner opened hearts, or a good hand with hearts if partner opened spades); similarly a cue of 3♦ shows spades (so a good a raise if partner opened spades, or a good hand with spades if partner opened hearts). The key, as usual, is that you and your partner have agreed what you do over intervention like this.

Using blackwood with no control in a side suit is not usually a good idea. Blackwood pinpoints how many key cards partner has but not where they are. Without a known control in a side suit, you might find you are off the cashing AK in that suit! That's why it is frequently better to use cue bidding when looking for a slam. After you are confident you have controls in each suit and are likely to have enough tricks for slam – THEN you can use blackwood. But rather than using it as a tool to bid a slam (which is what most players think of it as), it's actually more of a tool to keep you out of a silly slam. It allows you to check you aren't off two aces (for example you might have 32 points between the two hands and lots of potential tricks but the missing 8 just happen to be two aces).

The hand this week is an exception because East has enough points that he can infer partner almost has to have a spade control of some sort. Where can his 15 points be? Yes it's just possible he has 10 points in hearts and the Q and Js of the minors with nothing in spades. But that would be extremely unlucky.

A similar principle applies when you have a void – partner having the ace in your void could be useless, while having the ace in one of your suits could be critical for slam. On that sort of hand you want to know WHERE partner's key cards are, not how many he has. So blackwood isn't usually a good option.

I said East was too strong to just raise to 4♥ after a 3♥ rebid. Is it different if East's 2♦ response initially was game forcing rather than just 10+? I don't think so but it's something that all 2 over 1 players need to sort out. 2 over 1 allows you to keep the bidding lower to have more room to explore. That's good – but you still need a way for either hand to show or deny extra values. It is not a method I have played that often but I think it makes sense for West to still make a jump rebid to show extras. If West just rebids 2♥ on this hand, East doesn't have much beyond his original game force so will probably just bid 4♥ next (although West might then go on). But if West's jump rebid shows extras then East definitely must move beyond game – just as he should in the "standard" auction where his original 2♦ was only 10+ points.

Julian Foster (many times NSW representative)

Australia Wide Open Pairs on Monday 29th August 2022



Our players really enjoyed the Australia Wide Novice Pairs held earlier this year. Here comes the Open Pairs version! The **SBC Australia Wide Open Pairs** will be held on **Monday 29th August** at **both City and Canada Bay**. Double masterpoints – **GREEN** for sessional results and **RED** for the nation-wide ranking.

\$18 for members (\$15 for concession members) / \$22 for visitors. A souvenir booklet of hand commentaries included.

No need to book in. Walk-ins and visitors are welcome. If you are looking for a partner, please contact office for match making.

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 workshop will be held in the City on:

- **Friday 9th September:** No-Trumps Systems and Bidding
- **More are being scheduled:** please keep an eye on the Sydney Bridge Centre website.

\$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.

Sunday Funday on 14th August 2022



Our first Sunday afternoon game went well with 10.5 tables! We hope you enjoyed the classic cucumber sandwiches, cheese platter and everything makes a Sunday great. As requested by players the club will now run two Sunday Fundays each month, whenever the venue on Goulburn Street is available. The next few Sunday Fundays will be held on:

- Sunday 14th August 2022, 1.30pm - 4.30pm
- More are being scheduled! Please keep an eye on the SBC website

You don't need a partner. No need to book in, visitors and walk-ins are welcome. \$18 member (\$15 concession member) / \$22 visitor. Refreshment throughout play and join us for a glass at the end of the session.

Regular F2F and Online sessions at 3 venues

- F2F @ CITY -

- Monday morning 10.00am – 1.15pm, Open Inclusive
- Tuesday morning 10.00am – 1.15pm, Two Tiers Open Inclusive
- Tuesday night 7.15pm – 10.00am, Open Inclusive (booking in advance required, please contact office)
- Wednesday morning, 2 separate sessions – Intermediate/Open (9.45am – 1.15pm with a 15mins pre-game talk) and Beginners Supervised (10.00am – 12.30pm)
- Wednesday night 6.30pm – 9.30pm, Beginners Supervised
- Thursday morning 10.00am – 1.15pm, Open Inclusive

- F2F @ CANADA BAY -

- Monday morning 10.00am for 10.15am start – 1.30pm, Open Inclusive
- Wednesday afternoon 1.30pm – 4.30pm, Intermediate Supervised (1-hour lesson plus 2-hours game)
- Thursday morning 10.00am for 10.15am start – 1.30pm, Open Inclusive

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.