



## 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.

### 1NT with a 5 card major. Some general principles in defence.

#77122 BBO – Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> August 2022

<b>10</b>	♠ A95	<i>Dir: E</i>																																	
	♥ Q842	<i>Vul: Both</i>																																	
	♦ K65																																		
	♣ JT2																																		
♠ K87	♠ QJ642																																		
♥ KJ3	♥ AT																																		
♦ T72	♦ AQ8																																		
♣ 8764	♣ Q53																																		
10	♠ T3	<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>1</td><td>-</td><td>-</td></tr><tr><td>S</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>1</td><td>-</td><td>-</td></tr><tr><td>E</td><td>2</td><td>1</td><td>-</td><td>2</td><td>2</td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td>2</td><td>1</td><td>-</td><td>2</td><td>2</td></tr></table>					♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	N	-	-	1	-	-	S	-	-	1	-	-	E	2	1	-	2	2	W	2	1	-	2	2
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Defence is one of the hardest areas of bridge because you can't see your partner's hand. So it's an area many pairs are very bad at! One obvious way of getting better is with signals. But board 10 last week also showed some general principles that can help players defend more accurately.

First the bidding though. There is frequently debate about whether you should open 1NT holding a 5 card major. Personally I think it's fine and I would open a 15-17 1NT with the East hand. The question you have to ask yourself if you open 1♠ is what are you going to rebid over the various things partner might do? Over 1NT will you invite? Not clear with only 15 points opposite 5-9. Over 2 of a minor will you rebid 2NT? But that would normally show 12-14 and you have 15. Nothing is clear. All of these problems disappear if you open 1NT – you have

defined your general hand type and strength in one bid.

The obvious potential downside of 1NT is the chance of missing a fit in the major that will play better than no-trumps. There are ways to look specifically for 5 card majors but usually these are bid with game forcing hands. I discussed some of the options over 1NT in the column on 30 July. Yes, 1NT will lose out occasionally but, overall, I think you will come out well ahead if you just open it on all balanced hands with the right point range - whether or not you have a 5 card major.

Here 4 tables chose to open 1♠ and 2 opened 1NT. 1NT ended the auction as West has no reason to move and neither do North or South. West has a normal raise of 1♠ to 2♠ and again that should end the auction (although two Easts invited, one with 2NT, one with 3♠). I don't think the East hand is worth an invite at pairs after 1♠ 2♠. Partner is likely to be 5-9 so, even if he has a total maximum, you still only have 24 points and your hand is balanced. It's more likely you will push yourselves too high than miss a good game.

Deep Finesse shows that both no-trumps and spades should make 8 tricks but some tables made 9. Against 2♠ every South led the ♣A which is perfectly reasonable. The first problem for the defence was what card North should play under that? With a lot of people playing reverse attitude signals, the ♣2 from North meant South happily carried on with 3 rounds of the suit and gave East's ♣Q an undeserved trick. If North plays the ♣10 or ♣J that will certainly put South off (or it should do!) but it might also give a trick away (as it happens South has the ♣9 so it's OK but North doesn't know that). There is no right answer to this conundrum.

Another potential problem is the heart suit. Suppose South switches to hearts and dummy plays low. Should North play the ♥Q? Definitely not on this hand (in either spades or no-trumps) – it just gives declarer 3 easy heart tricks! See advanced section for how North can work this out.

Finally what about the trump suit? Many declarers played a spade to the K and A. I would have started with the ♠Q from hand because I would like to try and use the ♠K as an entry to dummy to lead towards my diamonds and take a finesse. On this hand North can (and should) counter this by ducking (and ducking again after the ♠J) to keep his ♠A to beat the ♠K.

But sometimes one of the defenders will have ♠Ax and cannot hold the ace up long enough. Now declarer will be able to reach dummy with the ♠K.

Defending 1NT as South I would probably lead a passive heart (I would not consider leading away from a diamond suit headed only by the J round to a strong NT) but ♣A has merit as well because you get to hold the lead and see dummy which may give you a better idea what to do. On a heart lead, North should again withhold the ♥Q. One table actually led ♠10 which was nice for declarer (another advantage of opening 1NT and concealing a 5 card major – occasionally the defence lead it for you!).

Declarer will attack spades and should end up with 8 tricks (4 spades, 2 hearts and 2 diamonds). But of course to get 2 diamonds, declarer will have to reach dummy to take the finesse – or rely on the defence playing the suit for him at some stage. When North gets in with ♠A he may be able to safely continue hearts (unless East deliberately won ♥A at trick 1) but he could instead put ♣J through and give the defence 3 club tricks. They have the ♠A and will eventually come to a 5th trick in diamonds.

On this hand (like many others!) there is definitely plenty of scope for the defenders to give away tricks. Overall, tight defence tends to gain a lot at bridge – for two main reasons:

- 1) On average you are defenders 50% of the time while you are only declarer 25% of the time.
- 2) The average standard of defence is fairly poor so you get a lot more “edge” if you and your partner are better at it than the field.

### Key points to note

- Don't be concerned about opening 1NT with a 5 card major if you are 5332 and in the right point range. It's much more descriptive and avoids several rebid problems you could be faced with if you open the major.
- When declarer has shown a point range (usually by bidding NT at some point) as soon as dummy goes down, work out the range of points your partner can have – and keep that in mind throughout the hand.
- Don't always put an honour up if you are sure a higher honour is sitting over you – withholding it can make declarer's communications much harder.
- It's useful to play a leading method like 4th/2nd that will help partner identify if you have an honour or not in a suit.
- When switching suits in defence after trick 1, it's useful to play attitude – i.e. low implies you have something in the suit, high does not.

### More advanced

Just to clarify the problem in clubs. If North plays the ♣J under South's Ace, South will now know for sure that declarer has the ♣Q and will switch. But the problem is playing the ♣J will itself have cost a trick if declarer has ♣Q9x and South ♣AKx (declarer will now be able to play low to the 9, knowing that South definitely has the ♣K). North can't really win but I think, on balance, I would play the ♣J especially if I was playing reverse attitude signals. If I play the ♣2 it's almost certain partner is going to give a trick away. At least if I play the ♣J partner won't immediately give a trick away and he might (as in fact he does here) have the ♣9 anyway. Of course pairs playing natural attitude signals don't have a problem on this hand – their ♣2 gives the meaning they want it to give! This is an example of how some hands are better for some signalling methods than others.

Why should North not play the ♥Q if South leads the suit or switches? It's correct not to play the ♥Q against either spades or no-trumps at either trick 1 or 2 but, interestingly, the reasoning varies in each case:

- a) Against spades if a heart is led at trick 1. North should immediately know East has the ♥A because partner would never underlead it. Hence it is pointless to play ♥Q when the ♥K and ♥J are sitting in dummy – it can only make life easier for declarer.

- b) Against spades if South starts with ♣A and then switches to a heart. Here it's not as clear because South might now be underleading his ♥A to give declarer what he thinks might be a nasty guess early on. But a useful principle when defending can help – when switching to a suit during the play of the hand (i.e. not at trick 1) it's sensible to play "attitude switches" – that is, a low card expresses interest in the suit and a high card does not. Here if South switched to the ♥9 North should work out it's just a neutral exit and not waste his ♥Q.
- c) Against no-trumps if a heart is led at trick 1. Again, it's useful to play a method where leading a low card implies an honour in the suit. A common such method is "4th & 2nd" which means 4th highest from a long suit headed by at least one honour, but 2nd highest from a suit without an honour. Here South could lead a 2nd highest ♥7. From North's perspective it is just possible this is 4th highest from ♥A1097 but South might lead the ♥10 with that and it's also only one specific holding. On balance the ♥7 is more likely to 2nd be from a weak suit and North shouldn't waste his ♥Q.
- d) Against no-trumps if South starts with ♣A and then switches to a heart. Here there's yet another line of reasoning. Whenever declarer has shown a particular point range, as soon as they see dummy both defenders should calculate how many points partner can have. Here North can see 10 in his own hand plus 7 in dummy. 17 + declarer's 15-17 makes 32-34 which leaves 6-8 for partner. Likewise South can see 8 in his own hand plus 7 in dummy. 15 + declarer's 15-17 makes 30-32 which leaves 8-10 for partner. So, after the ♣A lead (which surely also has the ♣K), North has already "seen" 7 of South's 6-8 points. Hence he cannot possibly have ♥A

The main benefit of not playing the ♥Q is to mess up declarer's communication. Look at it from declarer's perspective. When North ducks he can win cheaply with the ♥10 but now hearts are blocked. He might cash ♥A and try to reach dummy with ♠K to be able to cash the ♥K but that doesn't work today (provided of course North defends accurately and makes sure the ♠K is not an entry). Declarer's other option is to win the ♥A anyway. That preserves the ♥K as a definite entry to dummy later (which he wants to be able to take the diamond finesse) but it means he can't score 3 hearts (in fact if he believes South has underled the ♥Q he might even greedily finesse the ♥J and only make 1 heart!)

Julian Foster (many times NSW representative)

## Australia Wide Open Pairs on Monday 29<sup>th</sup> 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 29<sup>th</sup> 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.

## Stroke Awareness Day on Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> September 2022



An annual SBC fund-raising session for the Stroke Recovery Association. The Stroke Recovery Association is founded by one of our bridge players and provides a range of support and information services for people affected by Stroke and their families / carers. This year, we will run this fun event on Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> September 2022, 10am – 1.15pm.

Snack and refreshment throughout the session, great raffle prizes and lots of spot prizes for everyone. **RED** masterpoints.

You don't need a partner. No need to book in, visitors and walk-ins are welcome. \$18 member (\$15 concession member) / \$22 visitor. Come join us for a game of meaning!

## 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 9<sup>th</sup> 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 4<sup>th</sup> September 2022



Sleep in on a Sunday and enjoy a relaxed game in the afternoon! 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 one, and hopefully two Sunday Fundays each month, whenever the venue on Goulburn Street is available. The next few Sunday Fundays will be held on:

- Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> September 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.