



## 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.

### Michaels cue bids, the power of double fits and how to endplay someone.

#40534 BBO – Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> August 2022

<b>10</b>		♠ AQ864	Dir: E																										
		♥ Q9532	Vul: Both																										
		♦ AJ7																											
		♣ KT8																											
♠ KJ	♠ 732																												
♥ QJ6542	♥ AKT97																												
♦ A4	♦ 6																												
♣ KT8	♣ 9542																												
13 ♠ T95	<table><tr><th>♣</th><th>♦</th><th>♥</th><th>♠</th><th>NT</th></tr><tr><td>N</td><td>-</td><td>6</td><td>-</td><td>3</td></tr><tr><td>S</td><td>-</td><td>6</td><td>-</td><td>3</td></tr><tr><td>E</td><td>-</td><td>3</td><td>-</td><td>-</td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td>-</td><td>4</td><td>-</td><td>1</td></tr></table>				♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	N	-	6	-	3	S	-	6	-	3	E	-	3	-	-	W	-	4	-	1
♣	♦	♥	♠	NT																									
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Board 10 last week had the potential to be a competitive auction at quite a high level. It also has interest in declarer play technique.

If East is playing a method where he can open 2♥ showing hearts and a minor he'd probably do that but otherwise the normal auction begins P P 1♥ to North. He is clearly going to bid, it's just a question of what. A 1♠ overcall is one option, a Michaels cue bid of 2♥ is another (showing 5 spades and 5+ of a minor). There are different opinions on this – some players prefer to get the shape across and therefore bid Michaels on almost any strength of hand. Others prefer to limit the use of Michaels to either weak hands (paving the way for a possible sacrifice) or strong hands (paving the way to make our own contract) but not intermediate hands. Those overcall one suit and hope to be able to show the other suit later in

the auction.

Personally I prefer the latter approach – I don't know how partner can judge what to do if the Michaels bidder can have such a huge variation in strength. The counter-argument of course is that, with intermediate strength, just overcalling one suit doesn't describe nearly as much of your hand and if the opponents raise quickly (as they will on this hand!) you may never get to show your 2nd suit where you might have a big fit (as you do on this hand!). Then again, a standard Michaels bid doesn't tell partner WHICH minor you have either and that can also be critical.

There are alternatives to Michaels of course – see advanced section for more on this.

Whatever North does, East is clearly going to raise hearts. At the table there were 5 different bids chosen - 2♥, 2♠ (as a cue raise of a 1♠ overcall), 3♦ (Bergen raise), 3♥ and 4♥. With 5 card support and a singleton I prefer a raise straight to 4♥.

The only South who bid on the 1st round was the one who, perfectly reasonably, bid 2♠ after the auction 1♥ 1♠ 2♥. All the others faced an auction at the 3 or 4 level and, not unreasonably, passed.

By the time the auction returned to North it was at least at 3♥ and only one table braved bidding 4♦ to show their other suit. This was pretty risky but it told South about the double fit and caused him to bid 4♠ over 4♥.

In theory it's right for North South to sacrifice in 4♠ over 4♥ since 4♥ can be made. However in practice only one table did make it. Let's look at the play.

North will most likely lead a diamond. Most declarers won that, drew trumps ending in dummy and led a spade hoping the Q was onside. That led to 2 spade losers and later, 2 club losers as well for 1 off. But 4♥ can be made. Declarer has 8 easy tricks (6 hearts, ♦A and a ♦ ruff in dummy). He needs to trump his diamond in dummy, draw trumps and lead a club to the 8 or 10. Although that loses to the ♣J, North is now “endplayed” – whatever he does has to give a trick away. That gives declarer a 9th trick and he can then set up another club for his 10th trick. See advanced section for the details of how this works.

Where North South do reach 4♠ the contract should only make 9 tricks. Although on the face of it there are no trump losers, in practice there are no entries to the South hand to take the trump finesse. So declarer should lose a trump, a diamond, a diamond ruff and a club. In practice it's not so easy for the defence to do this – North South didn't find their 10 card diamond fit so East West may well not know about it to take their ruff either, particularly as East holds the singleton and he never gets in!

6♦ is extraordinarily lucky to make – it works because this time there ARE entries to the South hand to take the spade finesse and the spade layout means the 4th and 5th spade in North can be used to discard two clubs from South. There's also no opposing ruff like there is when played in spades. It's almost inconceivable to construct an auction to 6♦ although if South did know about North's two suits immediately he might well try 5♦ over 4♥ and that would have scored extremely well anyway.

It's a good example of the power of a double fit. Having both spades and diamonds means if you play in the suit split evenly (i.e. diamonds here) you can use the long cards in the other suit to discard losers. This is the same reason that a 4-4 fit often plays better than a 5-3 fit (when it's a side suit the 5-3 fit can be used to discard losers but a 4-4 fit can't). Double fit hands tend to make more tricks than you might expect based purely on points. Conversely they also make fewer tricks in defence and you should therefore be more inclined to bid on if you know your side has a double fit.

### Key points to note

- Michaels cue bids are a valuable bidding tool but you should discuss what strengths you bid them on.
- You might also consider using bids to show specific two suited overcalls rather than leaving one suit unknown. This can make partner's life easier in the auction.
- Throwing an opponent on lead at the right time can "endplay" them so that they have to give you a trick.
- Having a double fit always tends to mean you make more tricks than you might expect based purely on points (and also make fewer tricks in defence than you might expect). Here North South can actually make a slam with only 19 high card points (and some of those aren't actually needed!).

### More advanced

Michaels cue bids are a common method but, as we have seen, they can cause problems both with the point range they show and by not showing the 2nd suit in situations like this hand.

The point range issue can be resolved either by playing the "weak or strong but not intermediate" method or I know some players who restrict Michaels to intermediate hands or better.

There are two possibilities to resolve the problem of which suits you have:

1. Play the Michaels bid as showing specific suits. For example you might agree that Michaels over a major shows clubs and the other major (say) and accept that when you have diamonds and the other major you have to overcall instead.
2. Introduce a 3rd bid to show all combinations of the two suiters. A method that does this is "Ghestem". It uses the cue of the opened suit, 2NT and 3♣ as the 3 bids which show the 3 combinations of 2 suiters you can have. Its advantage is that partner always knows the suits you have so, here, South would know about the big diamond fit and would not sell out to 4♥. But there are several disadvantages to Ghestem which is why I think you don't see it around as often as used to be the case:
  - a) It means you can no longer use 3♣ as a natural weak jump overcall, something that can be useful as a pre-empt.
  - b) It is easy to forget and it can create huge problems if that happens! Imagine someone playing Ghestem forgetting and bidding 3♣ as a weak jump. Partner thinks it's showing 2 completely different suits and leaps around to something that gets doubled for a huge penalty (I've seen penalties as high as 2,000 when this happened!)

Looking in more depth now at the play in 4♥, note it is important for declarer to ruff his diamond in dummy. This leaves no diamonds in either his hand or dummy – it's called "eliminating" the suit. Now if the defence play diamonds, declarer can take a "ruff and discard" (discard a loser from his hand while ruffing in dummy) to gain a trick. If declarer fails to do this, North can exit a 2nd diamond without costing a trick.

After declarer plays a club to the 8 and J what can North do? At that point declarer has the ♠KJ, some trumps, no diamonds and ♣K10. He has 8 tricks (6 trumps, ♦A and a ♦ ruff in dummy). But he is about to get given a 9th as North is endplayed. A black suit lead allows declarer to score the K of that suit, or a diamond lets declarer trump in dummy and discard the ♠J. If North has given a ruff and discard or given the ♠K a trick, the 10th trick comes from leading another club to the 10 and setting up the ♣K (this is effectively playing for one of the ♣J or ♣Q to be onside). If North instead gave the ♣K a trick, the 3-3 split in the suit means the 10th trick is now the 13th club in dummy which can be used to discard the ♠J. Either way declarer loses only 1 spade and 2 clubs.

The key is to keep South off lead to protect both declarer's black kings. That's why the Deep Finesse analysis shows West can make 4♥ but East can only make 3♥. If South is on lead at trick one he can start with a spade and the defence can take their 2 spade tricks immediately. Now they sit back and wait and will get 2 clubs as well.

Julian Foster (many times NSW representative)

## 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 Funday's each month, whenever the venue on Goulburn Street is available. The next few Sunday Funday's 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.

## 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 7th 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.

## 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.