



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 a strong NT. When doubles go wrong!

#71962BBO – Saturday 3rd September 2022

17		♠ 8543	Dir: N
		♥ 98432	Vul: None
		♦ J92	
		♣ 6	
♠ AQT9	♠ 762		
♥ K7	♥ T6		
♦ AT	♦ KQ76		
♣ QJ532	♣ K974		
♠ KJ	♣ ♦ ♥ ♠ NT		
♥ AQJ5	N - - 1 - -		
♦ 8543	S - - 1 - -		
♣ AT8	E 5 2 - 3 2		
	W 5 2 - 3 2		

Board 17 last week saw a large variety of scores including some quite painful ones for North-South!

The normal start to the auction is Pass Pass 1NT. Now it depends what East West play over a strong NT. Double (penalties) is a fine start if available – but quite a few partnerships play double to mean other things, their rationale being a penalty double of a strong no-trump only comes up rarely. They are right – but it gives them a big problem on a hand like this!

About half the tables did double 1NT. Most Norths ran and showed hearts. As East I would have made a takeout double of hearts – I am looking at 8 points and

partner has made a penalty double of a strong NT. Therefore I know it's our hand and we probably have game values (even if we are short of game values it may play well for us because all the strength is known to be in one opposing hand). So I cannot afford to pass since partner may not be able to bid again – it's my responsibility to keep the bidding open.

South will be pleasantly surprised to discover partner has hearts. If East has doubled 2♥ West will probably have to reluctantly give up his hopes of a juicy penalty holding only two hearts himself and will bid 2♠ (unless North's bid also showed spades in which case he'll probably bid 3♣). Now from East's perspective 11 tricks in 5♣ looks a long way away and 4♠ will probably be a 4-3 fit. So it seems reasonable to bid 3♥ to ask for more information (a heart stop to play 3NT or a 5th spade). Over 3♥ West may well try 3NT. The one table that did scored -50 and a total bottom as the defence quickly set up 4 heart tricks to go with their ♣A. On the face of it this seems unlucky but there are perhaps warning bells for West to consider before bidding 3NT (see advanced section).

Some East West pairs reached partscores (2♠ or 3♣) but others did even better. One reached 5♣ and South doubled that only to find there was no defence to 11 tricks, all he could make was his two aces. You'd think +550 would be a top most days but not this time. Another East West competed to 4♣ over 3♥ and South doubled that. Although I have a little sympathy for doubling 5♣ I don't have any for doubling 4♣. To double contracts you need tricks not points. How many tricks does South have against clubs after partner shows hearts and there's a penalty double sitting over him? Very few! Points can be useless when the opponents have a lot of shape or their cards sitting over yours. Indeed, 4♣x making an overtrick scored +610.

So what was the best East West score? One North passed 1NT doubled which became the final contract and went for a penalty of -1100. On the North hand after a double of 1NT, it essential to get partner out of it! It is almost certainly going to be a disaster and you could easily have a far better spot available. The simplest method of running is just to revert to bidding naturally (better than keeping your system on – natural means you can also run to minor suits). There are also many others. See advanced section for some choices.

There isn't much to the play in clubs on this hand – it goes like a dream for East West with the ♠KJ doubleton falling. Declarer just draws trumps and only loses the two aces. One East West pair played in 2♠ - this could have been held to 9 tricks (club to A, club ruff, heart to A, club ruff) but in practice made 10 tricks. +170 would usually score well but today was only average.

Key points to note

- Penalty doubles of NT can still be effective even when the opening 1NT is strong.
- It's essential to have a method to run from partner's 1NTx with a weak hand.
- If you are the one who knows your side has game values (or very close to it) it's your responsibility to keep the bidding open. Partner may not know you have values.
- Penalty doubles of suit contracts need tricks not points. If the opponents have distribution against you or all the cards in the right place, your points might be worth nothing!
- Be wary of playing 3NT with only one stopper of the opponent's suit if your own long suit is weak – you need partner to have all the remaining top cards for your suit to run.

More advanced

What methods are played over the opponents' strong NT? Personally I am quite happy to play exactly the same that I play over a weak NT – including penalty doubles. But some pairs decide double is better used as something other than penalties. One such method is "DONT" (Disturb Opponents No Trump) where double shows a single suiter (partner bids 2♣ to find out what it is unless they can't afford 2♣ to be passed) and other bids show that suit and one above. I've also seen double played as diamonds or both majors. Pairs who play these sorts of methods need to discuss what they bid on the West hand here.

Another advantage of playing the same methods whenever the opponents open 1NT is you don't have to decide on a definition of what a "strong NT" actually is! For example 15-17 is almost always considered strong. But what about 14-17, 14-16, 13-15, etc? Does it depend on the lower point range the opener could have or the higher? As usual all that really matters is there's a clear agreement which both partners know. But it's a lot easier to just play the same method regardless and not have to worry!

What about running after your own 1NT gets doubled? Again lots of choices. My preferred option is to play redouble as a single suit (partner is expected to bid 2♣ so I can show my suit); suit bids show that suit and a higher one; pass is just neutral. But there are plenty of other methods available too:

- Ignore the double and bid as usual (I wouldn't recommend this as you can't run to a single suited minor)
- Bid naturally (risks having to guess on a two suited hand because you can't show both)
- Play everything as transfers (again loses the ability to run to 2♣ unless you play redouble as that – and also loses the ability to show more than one suit at a time)
- Play pass as forcing to redouble, either to play or to show some combination of two suits (gives up the ability to play in 1NTx when it might be making – I find in practice the opponents may stay in 1NTx and it always scores well when it makes but they very seldom stay in 1NTxx and then you have the problem of whether you can or should penalise whatever they run to).

So on this hand I would bid 2♥ as North showing both majors. East should double that (takeout of hearts), South will pass (showing heart preference over spades which North will be happy about!) and West now has to decide whether to chance 3NT with just ♥Kx or bid 3♣.

I mentioned there are some warning bells for West when partner asks for a heart stop. The main one is the poor quality of his clubs. He only has one heart stop which will be knocked straight out and he will almost certainly need the club suit for 3NT to be good. That means he either needs partner to have a heart stop as well or to have the ♣A and ♣K (if he only holds the ♣A, any finesse is into the South hand so is likely to fail). Is that likely? It's possible of course but it's odds against when South has opened a strong NT. Perhaps West should consider a couple of reasonable alternatives?

1. Spades. His spades are fairly good quality so he could choose to bid those again and accept playing in a 4-3 spade fit. Another argument in favour of this is that holding ♥Kx he knows he cannot immediately be forced

to ruff in the long trump hand. That shouldn't work today because the defence can beat 4♠ with club ruffs – but there's no guarantee they will find that.

2. Clubs. After East has doubled hearts but then bid 3♥ over West's own 2♠ bid he is more likely to have 4 clubs. Why? Because when he doesn't raise spades he almost certainly only has 3 of those and he made a takeout double of hearts. So he is now good odds to be at least 4-4 in the minors. With a 9 card fit and the spade honours well placed, 5♣ could easily play better than 3NT. That's certainly the winning decision today.

Julian Foster (many times NSW representative)

Sunday Funday on 25th 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 25th September 2022, 1.30pm - 4.30pm

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.

F2F Workshops for different levels of players!

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 7th October:** Playing Easy Hands. Playing Hard Hands.
- **Saturday 8th October (Half Day ADVANCED):** Slam Bidding and Advanced Plays.
- **Friday 18th November:** Improve Your Overcalls and Competitive Bidding

\$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, 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.