



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 and play after a 1NT overcall.

#34489BBO – Saturday 17th September 2022

6		♠ 5	Dlr: E
		♥ J984	Vul: E-W
		♦ AKT7	
		♣ 9642	
♠ K732	♠ J84		
♥ K5	♥ 63		
♦ 432	♦ QJ965		
♣ AKQ5	♣ T87		
8 ♠ AQT96	♣ ♠ ♥ ♦ NT		
15 4 ♥ AQT72	N - - 4 1 1		
13 ♦ 8	S - - 4 1 1		
♣ J3	E - 1 - - -		
	W - 1 - - -		

Board 6 last week again showed the value of shape and how bidding more aggressively frequently pays off.

The normal auction will start Pass, 1♠, 1NT. After a 1NT overcall (typically 15-17 or similar) double is usually played as penalties (typically 10+). That means a 2 level bid is usually showing a WEAK hand with a long suit. Many players find this surprising. See advanced section for why it is a different situation to an opening bid from partner and a double or an overcall from your right hand opponent.

Here North isn't strong enough to double 1NT so should pass, as will East and the spotlight returns to South. Most Souths passed out 1NT, perhaps being put off by the knowledge there are 15-18 points and a spade stop sitting over him. But with

a 5-5 shape it's definitely worth bidding again - 2♥ here. Partner could easily have support for your 2nd suit and not have been able to bid before.

West has already broadly described his hand with 1NT so should now leave it up to his partner. What should North do? His hand has improved enormously when partner bids hearts. I'd bid 4♥! For several reasons:

- It's a good chance of being a 9 card fit (while South's 2♥ bid doesn't guarantee 5, it frequently will be because it's a lot riskier to reopen with only a 4 card suit so many minimum hands with 4 will have just passed out 1NT). Even if partner doesn't have 5, he should have extra values instead.
- I'm almost as strong as I could be (having already limited myself to 9 when I didn't double 1NT).
- My singleton spade is now good as I have ruffing values to help ruff partner's spade losers or to set up his suit.
- I have two sure tricks with ♦AK.

How will the play go in hearts? West will lead a top club and probably play two more rounds, forcing South to ruff (assuming the defence doesn't make the mistake of cashing ♣AKQ and setting up dummy's ♣9 - see advanced section for how to make sure you avoid this). Now declarer should just start dealing with his spade losers. One can be discarded on ♦K so he needs to ruff 3 spades in dummy. He knows the ♥K is almost certainly offside given the 1NT overcall so there's no point trying a trump finesse. He has all the intermediate hearts so can just start ruffing and lose a trick to the ♥K at some point. Play ♠A, spade ruff, heart to the ACE, spade ruff, ♦AK (discarding a spade), diamond ruff and a further spade ruff (East can't overruff). Declarer is now down to just ♥Q10 in his own hand, one of which will be a trick. He loses the ♥K and 2 clubs to make 10 tricks. Even though North South only have 19 points between them they make game easily. If declarer does mistakenly take a heart finesse and West returns a 2nd trump this removes one spade ruff in dummy. But declarer can still recover - see advanced section for how.

Let's also briefly look at what might happen if West is left in 1NT. North needs to decide whether to lead partner's suit despite only having a singleton or try something else. I'd be tempted to try something else. A heart obviously will work nicely today but it's pretty much a guess. A heart lead sets up 4 hearts to go with ♦AK and ♠A.

Declarer should start with cashing ♣AK and when the ♣J drops he can cross to the ♣10 in dummy to unblock that suit. Now if he leads up to the other major suit King he should get to 6 tricks (4 clubs and two kings). If he makes the mistake of trying

to play diamonds rather than cash the top clubs, North can take ♦K and switch to whichever major he didn't start with. If this is a spade through dummy's ♠J, South can also get his spades set up (but see advanced section for how he needs to play) and declarer will then be held to 5 tricks as he won't be able to unscramble his 4 club tricks. The difference between -100 and -200 could be large at matchpoints because some North South pairs may be scoring +170 in hearts.

Key points to note

- After a 1NT overcall on your right it's normal to play double as penalties (any hand with 10+) and 2 level bids as weak single suiters. This is totally different to bidding after a pass or a simple overcall on your right.
- Don't be afraid to bid a 2nd time if you have some shape (even if values have been shown over you). Partner might have a good fit for your 2nd suit and not have been able to bid the first time. Remember shape beats points every time!
- Remember to (re)evaluate your hand in the auction based on what you have already shown/denied. Hands can change in value enormously if partner now bids a suit you have a good fit with!
- K for count, A for attitude is a useful signalling method for defenders.
- If as a defender you can save your partner from having to make discards early on that's usually good.

More advanced

It often seems counterintuitive to players that a 2 level bid by North here is weak whereas a 2 level response to an opening bid is usually showing at least 10+. The reason is that after a 1NT overcall you have a bid available (double) to show any hand with 10+. Therefore you don't also need a 2 level bid to show 10+ hands and they can be played as weak. Even a hand with a long suit and 10+ should be happy to start with a double as it's just going to lead its long suit. You can always bid your suit later if the opponents do run from 1NT doubled.

Without the 1NT overcall it's very different. You don't now have a bid to show strength so you just need to start with normal forcing bids.

Defending 4♥ it might be tempting for West to just start with 3 top clubs. Indeed if East started with 2 and South with 3 then this would be right. But if he does that here he will crash partner's ♣10 and set up dummy's ♣9. He can play a 4th round of course to have East ruff the ♣9 but it's not ideal as that wastes a trump unnecessarily. It makes no difference on this hand but it may on some others. How can West tell what to do? This is where playing a method like "K for count" is useful. If West leads the ♣K at trick one he is asking for a count signal from his partner (leading the ♣A or ♣Q would ask for an attitude signal). When East shows 3, after West sees South's ♣J drop on the 2nd round he knows the layout and can safely play a LOW club to partner's ♣10 on the 3rd round, preserving his ♣Q to beat dummy's ♣9.

I said declarer could still make 4♥ even if he takes a losing trump finesse and West returns a 2nd trump. How? He can only ruff 2 spades in dummy now so he needs to set up his spade suit instead. He basically has to decide if West started with ♠Kxxx or ♠Kxx. With the former he needs to play the ♠Q on the 3rd round which will smother East's ♠J. He runs the ♠Q if West doesn't cover. With the latter he needs to play a low spade on the 3rd round to bring down the ♠K. Now his ♠Q will drop East's ♠J on the 4th round. Which is right? Who knows?! He might get a clue if East or West help him by giving count but otherwise it's really just a guess. And a guess he shouldn't have put himself in the position of having to make!

If North is defending 1NT and leads or switches to the ♠5 at some point how should South play? He needs to put in the ♠9. If he wins the ♠A he now can't continue the suit as he'll have to lead round to dummy's ♠J. If declarer ducks the ♠9, South has a choice of either continuing with ♠A and ♠Q (smothering dummy's ♠J) or immediately continuing ♠Q. A thoughtful defender will probably do the latter because it means his partner may not have to make a discard at all (if he started with 52 or 53) or only one discard if the layout is as it is here. Playing ♠A then ♠Q will mean partner has to make more discards which on some hands he might find uncomfortable. Here it's not a problem as North can spare 2 diamonds but it's a general point to consider when defending. Always try to make your partner's life easier if you can.

Julian Foster (many times NSW representative)

Sunday Funday on 9th October 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 9th October 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.