



Weekly Wisdom

The Sydney Bridge Centre mini lesson

Starting from October 2022, Julian Foster (many times NSW representative) will be analysing an interesting hand from each Monday morning session. The City and Canada Bay venues are planning to play the same hand on Monday morning. 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.

Bidding very large balanced hands; and the lightner double against slams

City and Canada Bay – Monday Morning 17th October 2022

3		♠ AJ	Dlr: S
		♥ QT8743	Vul: E-W
		♦ T	
		♣ Q976	
♠ 64	♠ T98753	9	
♥ 6	♥ 92	3	4
♦ 7653	♦ KJ982	24	
♣ KT8532	♣		
		♠ KQ2	
		♥ AKJ5	
		♦ AQ4	
		♣ AJ4	
		♠ ♣ ♥ ♦ NT	
		N 4 1 6 2 6	
		S 4 1 6 2 6	
		E - - - -	
		W - - - -	

Board 3 last week was a slam which was reached by 2 out of 5 tables in the city (although sadly one of those was in 7♥ 1 off!) and 6 out of 13 at Canada Bay. Let's have a look at the bidding and play.

South, when he finishes counting his points(!), will probably open with some sort of strong opening (most commonly 2♣). The vulnerability is wrong on this hand for East West to get involved – being vulnerable they are exposing themselves to a huge possible penalty. Had it been the other way around, however, it might well have been worth sticking in a bid to disrupt North South's auction. It is often worth trying to interfere over 2♣ because opener hasn't shown anything about his hand shape yet and, frequently, pairs haven't discussed what they do when someone does intervene!

Most commonly a 2NT opening shows balanced 20-22 so a 2♣ opening, when balanced, is stronger than that – i.e. 23+. There are different treatments both for 2♣ and continuations after it. Some pairs make 2♣ game forcing regardless, others allow some sequences to be non-forcing. Some pairs play 2♦ as a negative, others make it just a neutral waiting bid to see what partner's hand type is. After 2♣ - 2♦ most players then bid naturally to start showing their hand type. But there is another method available (“Kokish”) where 2♥ is another artificial relay requiring partner to bid 2♠. See advanced section for more discussion on all these variations around a 2♣ opening.

None of that matters here though. A 2♦ negative response is usually 0 to 7 so a positive response (i.e. anything else) shows about 8+ and a 5 card suit (with only a 4 card suit you bid 2NT which shows about 8+ balanced). Therefore on this hand North can give a positive response of 2♥.

South will be pleasantly surprised to hear 2♥ and has an easy raise to 3♥. Note he does not need to jump. After a strong opening bid and a positive response the pair is already forced to game so 3♥ merely agrees hearts as trumps and allows room to explore further.

Many players launch into blackwood as soon as there is a sniff of slam. But blackwood is actually more of a tool just to check you aren't off two aces before bidding slam. In fact the best way of exploring further is usually cue bids showing controls in side suits. These can help pinpoint whether the hands fit well together for slam and to confirm you aren't off a cashing AK in a side suit!

Once a major suit is agreed as trumps, bids below game in other suits are usually played as cue bids. North here has an easy 3♠ cue over 3♥ to show the ♠A. That fits very nicely with South's ♠KQ and at this point he can pretty much bid slam himself. Remember partner gave a positive response. The ♠A is only 4 points so North must have at least one other useful card, possibly more. Over 3♠ South will probably now just bid blackwood himself because it's still possible partner has even more and a grand slam is on.

After finding out about one ace, South can ask for the ♥Q and perhaps side suit kings (depending on methods). If he finds out that North has the ♥Q but no other kings, he will probably settle for 6♥ although at pairs he should consider 6NT (see advanced section). Only one pair managed 6NT and +990 scored them a complete top - well done.

There isn't a huge amount to the play on this hand. When 6♥ is played by North, East typically leads a diamond or a spade. In both cases declarer wins, draws trumps and tries the club finesse. He may be slightly surprised when East discards but it makes little difference – West scores the ♣K and that's all.

If 6♥ happens to be played by South it may not be as simple. West can lead a club and declarer will not be happy to see East ruff at trick 1! That gives a problem because there is still a possible club loser (the ♣K is now known to be offside). His best chance now is to take the diamond finesse. When that succeeds it will allow him to discard 2 of dummy's remaining 3 clubs on the ♠Q and the ♦A and still make 12 tricks.

There is a way for East to indicate he can ruff the opening lead in 6♥ – through the use of a "Lightner double" although it's a bit of a double edged sword! See advanced section for more discussion on this.

Key points to note

- The 2♣ opener shows a big hand but there are plenty of variations in the bidding afterwards which it's worth discussing – most obviously whether it's unconditionally game forcing or whether some sequences can be passed.
- Positive responses generally show 5 card suits and 8+. Even if 2♣ wasn't game forcing itself, this should now commit the pair to game.
- Once a major suit has been agreed, bids in new suits below game are cue bids showing controls in that suit. This can help pinpoint whether the hands fit well together for slam.
- A "lightner double" of a slam calls for an unusual lead (most commonly doubler has a void and can ruff the opening lead). But beware of declarer running to 6NT.

More advanced

There are quite a few variations played over a 2♣ opener. Some treat 2♣ as an unconditional game force and just accept that with 23 points they'll still end up in game even though partner could have 0. Others play the sequence 2♣ - 2♦ - 2NT as exactly 23-24 and responder is allowed to pass with absolutely nothing. The downside of that is they have to rebid 3NT on 25-26 which is taking a lot of space – if they want to look for major suit fits they might have to use 4♣ as stayman which means they'll have to go to 4NT if they don't find a major fit.

The "Kokish" relay is one way of addressing this. It's a method where, after 2♣ - 2♦, opener can bid 2♥ as a further artificial relay requesting partner to bid 2♠. Opener then reveals his hand type. If he had hearts all along, he now bids another suit or repeats hearts. If he had a balanced hand he bids 2NT. The advantage of this is there are now 3 different sequences available to show large balanced hands and none of them go above 2NT. The ranges for the 3 sequences can be anything you want to agree but a common structure is as follows:

- 2NT opening (20-22)
- 2♣ - 2♦ - 2NT (23-24)
- 2♣ - 2♦ - 2♥ - 2♠ - 2NT (25-26)

After all these 2NT bids, the pair's normal methods still apply – usually some form of stayman (simple or puppet) and transfers. The extraordinarily rare 27+ balanced hands would still have to jump to 3NT but then the pair is even more likely to reach slam anyway so the extra space taken up doesn't matter so much.

Why should South be considering 6NT? Because at matchpoint pairs scoring the extra 10 points for 990 instead of 980 could be extremely valuable. With the lead coming around to South's minor suit holdings, there is little risk of a stopper being immediately knocked out (conversely if North were playing 6NT, a lead through the minors could be nasty) so it's well worth a shot – his hand is also 4333 so he knows there will not be any useful ruffs in his hand.

The "lightner double" is a common method played where a double of a slam asks for an "unusual lead" – that could be dummy's first bid suit (doubler might be sitting with the AQ of it) but, most commonly, it's indicating he is able to ruff something if partner can find the right suit (usually he should just try his longest). The logic of the lightner double is there is little value in doubling a slam just because you think it may go off. Assuming the opponents are not insane(!) they will usually at least be fairly close to slam so you won't get a really large penalty. Also you frequently get a very good score just from a slam going off undoubled anyway. Therefore, a more useful meaning of the double is to try and beat a slam that otherwise would not be beaten (i.e. by calling for a lead you don't think partner would normally find). If it succeeds that is much more valuable.

It should be noted there is one big downside to the lightner double though. Declarer can listen to the auction too! If he also thinks there's an opening ruff looming, he may decide to run to 6NT. If that end up making the doubler may feel pretty ill – especially if partner "helpfully" informs him that he would have found the right lead to beat the original slam without the double anyway! Plus of course there's no guarantee the contract will go off even if the ruff is found (it doesn't here).

Julian Foster (many times NSW representative)

Melbourne Cup Day Bridge + Lunch on Tuesday 1st November



Bridging in style on Melbourne Cup Day! Put on your best tie / hat and join us for a Bridge Luncheon party on Tuesday 1st November 2022. We intend to run two separate fields for Open and Supervised players, lot of spot prizes to win! The SBC signature hor d'oeuvres for morning tea, roasted chicken and champagne lunch (vegetarian options available) and delicious desserts never disappoint you. Booking essential for catering purposes, please [book online](#) via the SBC website.

- Tuesday 1st November 2022, 10.00am – 2.00pm (with lunch break). Race on big screen at 3.00pm.
- \$50 for members, \$55 for visitors. You don't need a partner.

Sunday Funday on 30th 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 Fundays each month, whenever the venue on Goulburn Street is available. The next few Sunday Fundays will be held on:

- Sunday 30th 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 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.