



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.

Minor Slam

City – Monday Morning 3rd October 2022

24		♠ T654	Dlr: W
		♥ 876	Vul: Nil
		♦ 754	
		♣ 975	
♠ QJ3	♠ A8	0	
♥ AT942	♥ J	13	16
♦ KQJT	♦ A98632	11	
♣ 6	♣ AKT4		
♠ K972	♠ -	♠	♦
♥ KQ53	♥ -	♥	♣
♦ -	♦ -	♦	NT
♣ QJ832	♣ -	N	-
		S	-
		E	3 7 5 2 5
		W	2 7 4 2 5

Welcome to my first column looking at a hand from the Monday duplicate. This is from the City session. I understand in future the Canada Bay session will play the same boards so it will then apply to both sessions.

If people ask me about a hand I am happy to feature that, otherwise I just pick one myself.

Board 24 was a potential slam in diamonds. 13 tricks are very hard (and will be discussed in the advanced section) but 12 tricks are easy. However only one pair managed to reach 6♦ for a well deserved top.

The normal auction will start 1♥ P 2♦. South does have the other two suits and might consider a takeout double. However, he should be put off by the heart length and diamond void which suggest the opponents could be about to run into trouble. Also, a 2 level response means there's an opening bid on your left and at least 10 points on your right so bidding could get our side into trouble. I'd just pass.

West will raise to 3♦ and now it's over to East. His hand is enormous now. Partner is likely to have at least 9 cards in the red suits so the black suit aces and kings will take care of almost all the black suit losers. He also has a 6th diamond so there will be at least 9, and almost certainly 10 trumps, plus a singleton heart will fit very well if partner has the Ace. I think I would simply use Blackwood. When partner shows 2 key cards with the Queen (assuming we are using key card Blackwood) we have all the key cards. Now a grand slam is a serious possibility if partner has either the ♠K or the ♥K (which can be used to discard the ♠8).

Many pairs probably haven't discussed what bids mean after using Blackwood. But you want bids that show/deny the Queen of trumps (if it hasn't already been shown) and ideally also a way of asking about other side suit kings. See advanced section for some methods. On this occasion East should settle for 6♦ when he finds out partner has no other kings.

It's also worth noting that bidding a grand slam in a regular game is only worthwhile if you can count 13 tricks. Normally just bidding 6 will score well. There is nothing more depressing than bidding 7, going one off on an unlucky 4-0 trump break and finding you'd have got a top for stopping in 6!

The play in 6♦ is fairly easy. You can just ruff two clubs in dummy and eventually try the spade finesse for an overtrick which loses.

The scoresheet showed one pair in 6♦, 2 in 5♦, 2 in 3NT and one clearly had an accident and stopped in 2♦. That highlights the quirks of matchpoint scoring. No-trumps score so much better that even 10 tricks in 3NT (430) out scores 12 in 5♦ (420). Therefore it's generally losing tactics to play in 5 of a minor at pairs. Yes there will be some hands where it's right but normally you should either play in no-trumps or 6 of a minor.

Key points to note

- When partner shows length in two suits, top controls in the other suits are very useful as they cover partner's losers there.
- 9 or 10 card fits are very powerful.
- At matchpoint pairs it's a losing proposition to play 5 minor unless it's the only option left (because it scores so much worse than no trumps). Look to play 3NT or 6 minor.
- Serious partnerships should discuss what their bids mean after Blackwood. This can enable them to check for the Q of trumps and side suit kings in order to possibly reach a grand slam.

More advanced

Slam bidding is very hard but it first requires an appreciation of the power of hands and fits. Once East finds out about the big diamond fit, his controls should propel the pair to slam.

After Blackwood, where the responses have not mentioned the Q of trumps (5♣ or 5♦) it's usual for the next non-trump step to be an ask about it, and sometimes side suit kings too. There are different methods of responding in use but one is to have the next step deny the Q, another is the trump suit to deny the Q. Where the Q is known (after a 5♥ or 5♠ response) you can also ask for side suit kings.

Some pairs choose to show specific side suit kings (e.g. a 6♣ response shows the ♣K), other the number of kings (0,1,2 etc). As usual on any given hand either method can work best. However, I think specific kings is superior as knowing about one king in the right place may be critical.

Something else for advanced partnerships to discuss is the meaning of 5NT. Some play it as the king ask. Others play it as "pick a slam" which can be very useful when more than one strain is still possible. A third option which I play with my regular partner is that it guarantees all the key cards and shows interest in a grand slam if partner has a reason to bid it (e.g. an undisclosed source of tricks or extra values, etc).

Finally it's sometimes possible to make a specific ask about a side suit. Frequently there isn't room but where there is a method I play is for an ask to be about the K and Q of that suit. Responses are in steps showing neither, Q only, K only, K and Q. That knowledge might enable you to count 13 tricks and reach a grand slam.

Making 13 tricks on this hand is much harder than 12 and is more a theoretical exercise. In the real world you would just try the spade finesse. But 13 tricks can be made by a squeeze. South has all the relevant cards in all the side suits so he will find discarding impossible when declarer runs all his trumps. Exactly which squeeze works depends on the lead. A squeeze requires communication between the hands so on a heart lead South will end up getting squeezed between the black suits, on a club lead it will be a squeeze between the major suits. Readers that are particularly interested can, I'm sure, work out the exact details.

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