



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.

Overcalling with big hands. Card reading as declarer.

City – Monday Morning 10th October 2022

9		♠ Q73	Dir: N	
		♥ 8653	Vul: E-W	
		♦ T		
		♣ J7653		
♠ AK95	♠ 42	3		
♥ K7	♥ AJT4	19 8		
♦ QJ4	♦ 862	10		
♣ AQT2	♣ K984			
		♠ JT86		
		♥ Q92		
		♦ AK9753		
		♣		
			♠ ♦ ♥ NT	
			N - - - -	
			S - - - -	
			E 4 - 2 - 3	
			W 4 - 1 - 3	

Board 9 last week contained some useful bidding lessons and a trap for declarer!

The normal start to the auction will be two passes to South. I would open 1♦. Even though I only have 10 points I have nice shape and I want to indicate a diamond lead to partner if we end up defending. In 3rd seat it's also becoming increasingly common to open pretty light. It's almost certainly your opponents' hand and opening can make things much harder for them. See advanced section for more discussion.

Now it's West's turn. He has a balanced hand but it's too strong to just overcall 1NT - that would show 15 to a bad 18. With a big 19 point hand he should start with a double. Yes partner will initially assume it's a normal takeout double of

diamonds but West will clarify his actual hand later as we'll see. North has nothing to say and it's back to East. This is an area where I see players go wrong all the time. I bet many players would bid 1♥ here. However, responding to a takeout double is NOT the same as responding to an opening bid from partner. When partner opens you have the option of passing if you have nothing. You don't have that option over a takeout double - if you have nothing and pass you will probably find yourself defending 1♦x which is almost certainly making with overtricks! Therefore, even with 0 points you must bid something. That in turn means if you do have some values you need to let partner know. Here East is already a passed hand so he's close to being as good as he could be. East should jump to 2♥. This usually shows about 8-10 points (1♥ shows about 0-7). It doesn't show any more than 4 hearts - remember he is responding to partner's takeout double so he can assume partner has hearts.

Now we return to West. He completes the description of his hand with 2NT. He doesn't need to jump. By doubling first and then bidding no-trumps he's showing a hand that was too good to overcall 1NT initially - about 18-20. If he was even better than that he could jump to 3NT. East also has a balanced hand and has an easy raise to 3NT since, even though he has now discovered partner had a big balanced hand rather than a normal takeout double, he still doesn't have enough to go looking for slam.

It looks like a few pairs stopped in 2NT so I imagine they got their wires crossed about what point ranges they were each showing.

Just to clarify why East needs to jump to 2♥. It doesn't matter on this hand but suppose West had had a takeout double with about 16 points. Now, knowing partner has 8-10 allows him to bid or at least invite game. If partner bids 1♥ on 0 points and also on 10 points it's impossible for West to know what to do!

Let's turn to the play now. North has no reason to lead anything except his partner's suit and South will probably play AK and another to set up winning diamonds. Declarer now needs to count his tricks. He has 4 top tricks in the majors and 1 diamond so he needs 4 club tricks. Several declarers went off and I suspect they played a club to the K and got an unpleasant surprise when South discarded! If declarer then also finesses a heart into South or cashes his top tricks he will end up going off.

What declarer should do is start with the ♣A. Why? Because the only thing that can worry him is if one hand has Jxxx or more clubs (if clubs are 3-2 he has 4 easy tricks in the suit). But he has already seen South has 6 diamonds and North only 1 (as soon as North shows out, declarer should mentally note that North had 1 diamond, he had 6 between declarer and dummy so that means South must have started with the other 6 – this sort of counting is completely fundamental to improving at bridge). So which hand is more likely to have 4 clubs? Definitely North simply because he has 12 unknown cards and South only has 7. So declarer should cater for the possibility of finessing against North and cash a top honour from West first. When South shows out, it's easy to lead a low club to the 9. If South had followed to the 1st club, declarer should next play the ♣Q. Again, if South shows out now declarer can finesse against North's ♣J by leading low to the ♣K9.

If West does go wrong in clubs by playing the ♣K on the first round it's too late to recover on this hand - but see advanced section for a possible play had East had another entry.

Key points to note

- Opening in 3rd seat can often be done light. Some pairs play a convention called Drury in response to this to allow them to stay at the 2 major level when partner has opened light – see advanced section for details.
- Doubling first and then bidding notrumps shows a hand that was too good to overcall 1NT initially - about 18-20 balanced.
- Responding to a takeout double is not the same as responding to an opening bid. You are forced to bid something over a double with no points so you should jump with 8+ points to help partner when he has about 16. Making the same bid with a wide range makes it impossible for partner.
- Think what length suits the defenders have shown. A hand that's much shorter in one suit is more likely to be longer in another.

More advanced

3rd seat light openers are becoming more and more common. They have significant tactical advantages. It's harder to bid accurately when the other side opens. Also 3rd seat knows it's the opponents hand so he has little to lose by getting in first. There are some bidding methods that allow for this - for example pairs play "Drury" over a 3rd or 4th seat 1major opening. This is where 2♣ is artificial and shows what would normally be an invitational raise but is deliberately keeping the bidding a level lower to let partner just rebid 2 of his major if he has opened light. Some pairs go further and treat 2♣ as specifically an invitational 3 card raise and 2♦ as specifically an invitational 4 card raise.

Another thing that 3rd seat can do is pre-empt on a wider variety of hands. After partner has passed you could pre-empt on hands up to 12 points and still not be worried about missing game. That's makes it very tough for the opponents to judge how high they can bid when you could have anything from 0 to 12! Here, had South not had 4 spades he might consider opening 3♦.

Note that if you do play this sort of style your opponents are entitled to know. You should make them aware of it – on your convention card and by explaining the bids at the time.

The concept of considering the length a defender shows in one suit to gauge which defender is more likely to be longer in another suit is known as "vacant spaces". Sometimes the bidding indicates which suits the defenders have but, without bidding, seeing someone show out will tell you the count of that suit. Here South has 6 diamonds and North 1. So South only has 7 "vacant spaces" left in his hand for clubs whereas North has 12. So it's just simple probability that, if anyone has 4 or more clubs, it's much more likely to be North.

Once the diamonds are set up declarer cannot afford to lose the lead to South. But he can afford to lose the lead to North because North is known not to have any more diamonds. This is known as the "safe hand".

So the heart suit might have been a safe source of a 9th trick. A finesse against the ♥Q can be taken either way (the normal way of ♥K and low to the ♥J hoping North has the ♥Q or by running the ♥J immediately hoping South has the ♥Q). Here it might have been OK to run the ♥J and finesse against South. Even if it lost to ♥Q with North declarer would have 2 spades, 3 hearts (after untangling them as West will be left with singleton ♥K), 1 diamond and 3 clubs.

BUT(!) the problem here is after the ♣K has been played East doesn't have another entry so this doesn't work. Assuming South doesn't cover the ♥J (he shouldn't because the ♥10 is also in dummy) then the ♥J will win but declarer

will be left with ♥K singleton in hand and then has no way back to the ♥A in dummy later. So it's no use here but the general idea of taking a two-way finesse into the safe hand when playing no-trumps is, however, well worth noting.

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 – 10.00pm, 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.