



## 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.

### Invite to game or not? How it's different when playing pairs and teams.

City and Canada Bay – Monday Morning 31<sup>st</sup> October 2022

<b>10</b>		♠ AJ2	Dlr: E
		♥ KQ	Vul: All
		♦ Q654	
		♣ AJ96	
♠ K953	♠ QT64	17	
♥ JT42	♥ 653	9	6
♦ KT7	♦ A82	8	
♣ Q2	♣ T83		
	♠ 87		
	♥ A987		
	♦ J93		
	♣ K754		
		N	3 3 2 1 2
		S	3 3 2 1 2
		E	- - - - -
		W	- - - - -

Board 10 last week saw a majority of tables reaching 3NT by North and going off (although a few tables were allowed to make it). Unlucky? Maybe but let's have a closer look.

Most auctions are going to start with 3 passes to North who has a fairly standard 15-17 1NT opening. The key decision then rests with South. Does he invite? Most players did and North, being maximum, clearly then accepts leading to a contract of 3NT. However, even with the clubs behaving nicely, there's still only 8 tricks available unless the defence make a mistake.

This hand, however, highlights one of the differences between playing pairs and imps. At imps (i.e. teams or butler pairs) the reward for bidding and making a vulnerable game that your opponents don't bid is enormous. So it's still worth pushing to reach light games even if they are odds against making.

But we are not playing imps here – we are playing pairs. Although many players don't appreciate it, it is completely different. You only score points at pairs for the number of pairs you beat, not by how much you beat them. What that means in practice is it's nowhere near as worthwhile to push to reach light games.

Hence at pairs there's actually a good argument for South to just pass 1NT. After all, even if partner is maximum, you still only have a combined 25 points which is marginal for game. And we all know that, unfortunately, partner isn't always maximum! Here it's actually more likely he isn't.

See advanced section for more details on all these points.

What about the play in no-trumps? East will most likely lead his 4th highest spade which will go to the ♠K and declarer should win the ♠A. That means he retains Jx in his hand (known as a "tenace") so that, at least if East is on lead, the defence can't cash the spade suit. He will then play on clubs starting with the K in dummy and then low towards hand intending to finesse. The ♣Q appears which is good news. But there are still only 8 tricks if the defence are careful (1 spade, 3 hearts and 4 clubs). In fact declarer could also have a problem in hearts. If he didn't cash the ♥KQ in his own hand earlier, he may now not be able to reach the ♥A in dummy. There are ways of dealing with this though – see advanced section.

Declarer will most likely next play on diamonds but that should allow the defence to win ♦AK and 3 spades – provided of course West gets in and leads a spade through. If East gets in and cashes the ♠Q then declarer will score the ♠J which he's not entitled to.

On this hand West needs to signal to tell his partner he does not have the ♠J – which he can do when he discards on the 3rd round of clubs. However, it's not as simple as that. Imagine East had led from a 5 card suit initially (perfectly possible – he could have had ♠Q10642 and declarer ♠AJ) – now it is right for East to cash the ♠Q if he gets in. To get that right he'd need to know how many spades West started with rather than whether he had the ♠J. Sometimes an attitude signal is critical, other times it's a count signal. Whichever you use will work well on some hands and not so well on others – there

are no perfect methods in bridge (if there were by now everyone would be playing them!). Here, however, the defenders can also count the points they have seen in declarer's hand to work out what to do – see advanced section for details.

### *Key points to note*

- It's very different playing pairs and imps. At imps it's worthwhile pushing to reach a marginal game – especially when vulnerable. At pairs it isn't. Hence South should probably pass 1NT on this hand.
- Declarer should retain "tenace" position in suits if possible – which means he is safe in that suit provided one defender is on lead.
- It's almost impossible to defend accurately without signalling – either attitude or count.
- When defending after a point range has been shown by declarer try to track how many of his points you have seen during the play. This can help you later work out whether he or partner can have another key card.

### *More advanced*

Looking first at the imps v pairs scoring point. At imps it is worthwhile being in games that are, on paper, less than an even chance of making. This is why. Imagine you bid and make a vulnerable game (scoring +620) that your opponents miss (scoring +170). That's a gain of 10 imps. Now imagine you bid it but go off (-100) but your opponents stop in 3 making (+140). That's a loss of 6 imps. So by pushing to game you gain more when right than you lose when wrong. Some maths works out that it's still worth bidding vulnerable games which only have a 37% chance of making. They only need to make more than 37% of the time and you still come out ahead! For a non-vulnerable game the figure is about 50%. Of course at the table it's impossible to know what percentage chance your contract will have so all you can do is follow the general principle of bidding more aggressive to game when vulnerable.

But none of this matters at pairs. If someone else scores +140 you will still beat them regardless of whether you score +170 or +620. This time the size of the score difference is irrelevant. So you have far less to gain by bidding on.

Another reason South should consider passing 1NT is that it's not equally likely that partner is minimum or maximum. There are many more 15 point hands than there are 17 point hands. The further away you get from the average 10 points, the less likely a hand is. Hence it's more likely here that partner is NOT maximum – which makes passing at pairs even more attractive.

How can declarer handle the heart blockage? One way of course is to cash the ♥KQ in hand before playing on clubs. Then cash the ♥A when in dummy with ♣K. But that's risky as it might set up some heart winners for the defence. It also reveals much more about what declarer has. A better way of handling it is to manage the club suit better. On the 1st round of clubs declarer could play the ♣9 to the ♣K. Now after the 2nd round brings down the ♣Q, the 3rd round is declarer's ♣J. But that then leaves declarer with ♣6 and dummy with ♣7 which will be another later entry to dummy! (Of course this is not without risk. Sometimes the ♣9 could be important itself – perhaps if East had singleton ♣Q).

Leaving the clubs like that means declarer could then consider playing on diamonds before hearts to increase the chances of the defence going wrong. Observe how declarer cashing the ♥KQ can help the defence. Imagine declarer does that and later plays a diamond to the Q and East's A. At this point East has seen ♠A, ♥KQ, ♦Q and ♣AJ in declarer's hand. That's 16 points. Therefore, while he could have ♠J, he cannot have ♦K (that would give him 19 points for his 15-17 1NT opening). Hence it's safe to play a diamond to partner to get a spade back. Of course West can save his partner from having to do this because he can count as well! He has seen the same points so by the same logic he also "knows" that partner must have the ♦A. Therefore, if declarer leads a diamond from dummy, West can rise with the ♦K to play a spade through. A good defender always tries to prevent his partner from being able to make a mistake!

Julian Foster (many times NSW representative)

## Sunday Funday on 13<sup>th</sup> November AND 27<sup>th</sup> November 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 13<sup>th</sup> November 2022, 1.30pm - 4.30pm
- Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> November 2022, 1.30pm - 4.30pm (parallel with Under Hundred Masterpoints Pairs Final)

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.

## Under Hundred Masterpoints Pairs on Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> November 2022



A special event designed for players with fewer than 100 masterpoints! ALL are welcome, you don't need to have played in any club qualifying event. The only pre-requisite is the masterpoint limit, i.e. you and partner MUST each have under 100 MPs. There will be 4 divisions for players with 0-10, 10-25, 25-50 and 50-100 masterpoints to be scored State wide.

- Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> November 2022, 1.30pm – 4.30pm at Level 1, 162 Goulburn Street, Surry Hills.

\$18 member (\$15 concession member)/\$22 visitor. Refreshment throughout play and join us for a glass at the end of the session.

## Friday Workshop

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 18<sup>th</sup> 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.