



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.

What to do when the opponents bid your best suit?

City and Canada Bay – Monday Morning 28th November 2022

2		♠ AQJ53	Dir: E
		♥ KT73	Vul: N-S
		♦ J8	
		♣ Q3	
♠ K764	♠ 2	13	
♥ 942	♥ A65	7	14
♦ K953	♦ AQ74	6	
♣ J9	♣ A8754		
		♠ T98	
		♥ QJ8	
		♦ T62	
		♣ KT62	
		♠ ♦ ♥ ♣ NT	
		N - - 2 3 1	
		S - - 2 3 1	
		E 1 2 - -	
		W 1 2 - -	

On Board 2 last week I suspect several North South pairs faced the problem of the opponents bidding their best suit! The auction will most likely start 1♣ P 1♠. When responding West should prioritise the major (he doesn't want East rebidding 1NT with a balanced 12-14 hand with 4 spades as that would miss their spade fit).

North is stuck at this stage. A mistake beginners sometimes make here is to double hoping that it will show spades. But of course partner can't read your mind - double remains what it normally is here - i.e. takeout. Although you do happen to have 4 hearts here it's far more likely partner would bid diamonds, the other suit your double implies! North just has to pass over 1♠. But that's fine as

he will definitely get another bid (West's 1♠ is forcing so East will have to bid something).

Some pairs these days do play transfer responses to 1♣ and that would allow North to show spades - see advanced section for more.

After 1♣ P 1♠ P East now has a rebid problem. One thing he should NOT bid is 2♦. That's a reverse (because it forces partner to go back to his first suit at the 3 level). He is not strong enough to force to the 3 level - after all West might have dredged up a 1♠ response on a 5 count! That leaves East with two options - 1NT or 2♣. Neither is ideal of course - he isn't balanced which 1NT says, and he'd like better clubs for 2♣. Personally I would bid 2♣ as my hand has aces which tend to be better for suit play. West should pass that with only 7 points. So here's an example of an "expert" auction landing up in a 5-2 club fit instead of a much better 4-4 diamond fit!

Today a 2♦ rebid will work out OK because West can raise it. But imagine West was 4333 instead. Now he'd have to bid 3♣ which could easily be too high (losing 1 spade, 2 hearts and 2 trumps).

If 2♣ comes back to North he could now consider bidding. If he bids 2♠ at this point then it's natural. Generally if you pass over an opponents bid the first time and then bid that suit on the next round that's what you are showing. Here it's a bit marginal for North to do that though. His ♣Qx looks pretty useless and he is vulnerable. But it would work out well today - North South can make 3♠ (they lose 1 club, 2 diamonds and ♥A only as they can pick up all the trumps by running the ♠10 from South).

What about the play? Some East West pairs did play in diamonds so let's look at that first. Although the ♠10 lead works well from South, that's unlikely if West has bid the suit and North hasn't been able to show spades. I'd lead the ♥Q which also works quite well. On the face of it declarer has one spade loser, two heart losers and one club loser. However, 4 losers doesn't automatically mean 9 winners! If declarer draws all the trumps (taking 3 rounds) he will run out of tricks. He will need to set up the clubs to make more tricks and that could be hard if he gets forced to ruff spades in his hand. In practice the limit is diamonds is 8 tricks.

Some East West pairs played in NT. Declarer has 6 tricks quite easily (4 diamonds and 2 aces) but not much chance of a 7th. South again is unlikely to lead a spade but the ♥Q should also work although the defence need to switch to spades before South runs out of entries - see advanced section.

Key points to note

- Reverses are rebids which force partner to go back to your first suit at the 3 level. You should have at least 16 points to do this.
- If your right hand opponent bids your best suit you may have to pass at that stage and hope to bid it on the next round (when it would be natural). Double is not an option - partner will think it's takeout!
- Signals in defence are never a command - they are just giving information to partner to help him get the hand right. Sometimes you might deliberately lie to try and get partner to do what you know is right!

More advanced

An increasing number of pairs now use transfer responses to 1♣. A common scheme is something like:

1♦ = 4+ hearts

1♥ = 4+ spades

1♠ = 4+ diamonds or a hand that wants to play 1NT (partner rebids 1NT with a balanced weak NT)

1NT = natural but invitational.

It's also common for opener to complete the transfer at the 1 level to show 3 in that suit (he jumps to 2 major to show 4). That's helpful for responder when he has a 5 card suit.

It's worth making sure you know how to defend against these transfers. Generally the best thing to do is simply pretend responder has bid the suit he has shown (so 1♠ here). That means double is takeout - i.e. what it would be after 1♣ P 1♠. Likewise 2♠ is Michaels. One thing the transfer response does give you that you don't have over natural methods is a bid of 1♠ itself. That can be natural and it's ideal for North here. Note it should normally show a fairly good 5+ card suit because you already know there are at least 4 on your right. On this hand South can raise it and they will probably then outbid East West.

If South leads ♥Q, it's common to play an attitude signal so North can encourage or discourage hearts. But there's more to it than that. In isolation North does like hearts. But he also has beautiful spades sitting over dummy that he needs partner to lead through. So North here would do well to lie about hearts and DISCOURAGE them. That might encourage South to play the spade North wants. Once North wins a spade he can safely play hearts back. A signal by a defender is never a command for partner to do something. It's merely giving information about his hand to help his partner decide the best move on the hand overall. But each defender has different information available. Here, North already knows what the best move is - spades! Therefore he shouldn't just blindly say "yes I like hearts", he should do whatever he can to get partner to switch to spades.

Of course sadly you sometimes see players in the North seat pointedly asking whether West's 1♠ bid is natural. Only for their partner to then miraculously find a spade lead! This is absolutely not allowed - the only legitimate ways to exchange information to your partner when playing bridge are with the bids you make and the cards you play. Not the speed with which you do those things, not with the expressions on your face(!) and not by anything you say. All of those things give "unauthorised information" which partner is not allowed to use. If North does ask pointed questions, an ethical player sitting South will go out of his way NOT to lead spades. He is not allowed to do something his partner's unauthorised information may have suggested.

Julian Foster (many times NSW representative)

Christmas Parties on Friday 9th December AND Wednesday 14th December 2022



A get together for the Sydney Bridge Centre players and friends! There will be TWO Christmas Parties (and Yes! You can join both) on Friday 9th December AND Wednesday 14th December 2022. There will be 2 sessions on each parties – morning 10.00am – 1.15pm and/or afternoon 2.15pm – 5.15pm.

\$50 for members and \$60 for visitors. Same price per person per party (either one session or two sessions). Fees include a festive morning tea, afternoon tea, a 3-course Christmas themed lunch, snack and drinks through the day! Vegetarian options available.

If you are a visitor, join as a member now to enjoy 13 months membership and save \$10 immediately!

Lots of FUN programmes and prizes like Bridge Bingo, Secret Santas and the most Xmassy dressed prizes. Raffle Draw at \$5 each for a Xmas Hamper on each party to support The Smiths Family.

Limited seats. [Booking essential](#) for catering and dealing purposes.

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.