



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.

A partscore hand where everybody bids

City and Canada Bay – Monday Morning 2nd January 2023

10	♠ 92 ♥ J65 ♦ K96532 ♣ J7	Dlr: E Vul: All
♠ K83 ♥ T873 ♦ T874 ♣ 65	♠ J754 ♥ AK92 ♦ ♣ KQ984	5 3 13 19
♠ AQT6 ♥ Q4 ♦ AQJ ♣ AT32	♠ ♥ ♦ ♣	NT - 3 - - 1 - 3 - - 1 1 - 2 1 - - - 2 - -

Happy New Year! For the first column this year I'll look at a partscore hand where all 4 players could end up contributing in the auction.

East as dealer has a normal 1♣ opening. With 19 points South is too strong to just overcall 1NT (that usually shows 15-18 or thereabouts) so he should start with a double, intending to rebid NT later. At this point West should pass – as he would have done over an opening bid from partner. North responds to what he, at that stage, thinks is a regular takeout double from partner. Even though he has 6 diamonds he only has 5 points and 2 of those are Jacks so I'd just bid a minimum 1♦. See advanced section for more on the point ranges when responding to a takeout double.

Some Easts might pass now but I would have another go with a takeout double. Even if partner has very few points, if there's a fit for any one of East's other 3 suits the hand will play OK. He also knows at this point that North doesn't have a big hand (if he did he would have done more than just 1♦).

South should continue his original plan and now bid 1NT. This now tells his partner he didn't in fact have a regular takeout double to start with, instead he had a big balanced hand (about 19-21).

Should West bid now? Even though he has a mere 3 points I probably would bid 2♥. Several reasons:

- Partner made a takeout double of diamonds and we have 10xxx in the suit – hence we are unlikely to have any wasted values there.
- The values we do have are useful – partner has implied spades with his takeout double of 1♦ and South has shown a big hand. Therefore the ♠K may well help partner in spades and, even if not, it is likely to be sitting over South's ♠A so will still be of value.
- We probably have an 8 card heart fit.
- 2♥ may make it hard for North as it stops him bidding 2♦.

Today even if West does bid 2♥ I think North should continue with 3♦ anyway. This describes his hand quite well. He's limited when he only bids 1♦ in response to partner's double but, now he knows partner is 19-21 balanced, he should definitely compete further and should nearly always have at least 6 diamonds to offer the suit at the 3 level opposite what could now be a doubleton. 3♦ is likely to end the auction.

What about the play? In diamonds played by North it's normal for East to lead a top heart. He can then continue a 2nd heart and should now switch to clubs. This will set up a club trick to go with 2 hearts and the ♠K which will hold declarer to 9 tricks in 3♦. However the defence do need to time their play carefully – otherwise declarer may be able to discard his loser in one black suit on the other. See advanced section for how East can work out to switch to a club.

A couple of tables did play hearts East West. 2♥ can be made but it's not easy especially as the defence will almost certainly start with diamonds and that will force East to ruff. See advanced section for more discussion on the play.

Some tables also played in NT by South making 7 or 8 tricks. West is most likely to lead a club. South will initially curse he's not in game as it looks like he has 6 diamonds, 2 black aces and a 8th trick in either hearts or a black suit). But when he finds diamonds are 4-0, his 6 diamond tricks reduce to 3! As long as East West are careful and don't allow the ♥J in dummy to be a later entry they should hold declarer to 7 tricks (3 diamonds, 1 heart, 2 black aces and 1 extra trick in a black suit).

Key points to note

- A 1NT overcall shows around 15-18. Hands stronger than that should start with a double and then rebid NT.
- You may have to respond to a takeout double with 0 points so with better hands (about 9+) you must jump to help partner.
- Just because partner passes on the 1st round, don't be frightened to bid again if your hand is shape suitable. Finding a fit make a huge difference!
- Even if your hand is very weak, consider it in the context of what you might have had or have already shown. For example here West has 3 points but they look like they are well placed and he should bid once his partner implies more than just clubs. Likewise when North responds 1♦ initially he has more than he might have and shouldn't be ashamed to bid again even with only 5 points (2 of which are not worth much).
- When defending consider if there are suits in dummy which declarer might be able to discard losers on. If so, you may need to quickly the suit with losers to get your tricks before they run away.

More advanced

After 1♣ X P to North what do his bids show? The key thing to understand is you are being forced to bid – you can't leave 1♣ doubled in unless you have a string of clubs so you may have to bid something on a hand with 0 points. Hence when you do have some values you need to jump to tell partner. This helps him when he's in the 15-17 range where game might be on if you have something but moving any higher could be disastrous if you don't.

A common scheme is a minimum bid by responder shows about 0 to 8 points. A jump in a suit shows about 8-11 and a cue bid of the opponent's suit is 12+ and forcing. [Note this is a similar concept to the Lebensohl convention when partner make a takeout double of a weak two – there 2NT is used as an artificial weak bid and other bids imply values. Here there's more room for responder to show his own suits as well as his strength range immediately.]

Here, after North bids 1♦ initially he should mentally think he is maximum for the bid. He could have had a 3343 hand with 0 points at all and he'd still have had to bid 1♦. Here he not only has 5 points but he has 2 more diamonds than he might have. So when partner shows 19-21 with 1NT, North is closer to bidding game than to passing. However, the two Jacks aren't worth much so he should stick in a partscore.

When defending diamonds I said East needed to switch to a club after cashing two top hearts. Why? Because he can see the threat of the spade suit. If declarer has ♠K he may immediately be able to play spades and discard a club loser but, if he doesn't, then partner will have it. Declarer may guess wrong and play a spade to the Q but he might also guess right and playing a spade to the 10 (which will force partner's ♠K and set up a discard). East doesn't need to take that risk if he sets his club up before partner's ♠K is knocked out. You might think that if East plays a top club, declarer can just win the ♣A and play one back to his ♣J to set up the ♣10 in dummy as a discard for his spade loser. Yes he can but there's a catch – clubs split 5-2 and trumps split 4-0 so he can't draw trumps ending in dummy. Therefore when East wins the ♣Q now he can switch to a spade and declarer is stuck. If he takes ♠A and tries to cash his ♣10 West can ruff it. If he takes ♠A and finishes drawing trumps (by cashing 3 top trumps in South and ruffing a club back to hand to draw the last trump) he can't then get back to dummy at all. So he has to try the losing spade finesse.

The same doesn't work if East switches to spades at trick 3. Assuming declarer guesses right and plays ♠10 he can set up a spade for a discard and even if West now plays a club it's too late – declarer can cash 3 trumps (in case they do break) then cash 2 spades to discard his club loser, then come back to hand to draw the last trump at his leisure. The difference is the defence have to follow to both the spades so declarer can get his club discard.

The play in 2♥ is potentially messy. North South will most likely lead diamonds forcing East to ruff. An initial count of tricks might show:

- 2 diamond ruffs in East
- 2 top hearts
- 1 long heart in West
- 1 club
- ♠K (assuming it's sitting over South's ♠A).

But that's only 7 tricks. So declarer needs to look to set a suit up to make more. He should immediately play on clubs before touching trumps. South wins ♣A and forces with another diamond (leaving East with just the ♥AK). Now declarer cashes his top club and takes a ruffing finesse against South's ♣10 by running his ♣9. There are 2 possibilities now:

- a) If South covers, East's clubs are now winners. West ruffs the ♣10 and North is stuck. If he over-ruffs, he only has 2 trumps left so declarer can draw trumps ending in East. If North discards, declarer returns to a top trump and plays a winning club to discard a loser and North has the same problem again!
- b) If South doesn't cover, declarer discards a diamond from West. Even though North can ruff this, it's with his long trump and again he's left with only 2 trumps. Whilst East's clubs aren't winners now, declarer can still draw trumps in 2 rounds and this means the West hand will later score 2 long trumps instead of 1. That's the 8th trick.

You might think when North gets in he can force again with a 3rd round of diamonds? He can certainly play another diamond but declarer simply doesn't ruff in East (it would be pointless to ruff once that hand is down to just ♥AK). Declarer discards a spade loser instead and that puts South on lead who can't play another diamond.

Julian Foster (many times NSW representative)