



Tuesday Night Tips

The Sydney Bridge Centre mini lesson

The Tuesday Night at City has developed its own vibe – a group of bridge enthusiasts playing a friendly competitive game with Phil Halloran and Martin Clear as the hosts. Phil organises the session to make sure there is no sit-out, and Martin continues to lead the group for bridge discussion after the session. He will pick an interesting hand from the face-to-face session for the Tuesday Tips column.

Setting Up a Side Suit

F2F at City – Tuesday Night 6th June 2023

2		♠ T965	Dlr: E
		♥ 9	Vul: N-S
		♦ AQ9	
		♣ QT642	
♠ J83	♠ AKQ4	8	
♥ QT84	♥ 753	3	14
♦ 832	♦ T5		15
♣ 975	♣ AJ83		
		♠ 72	♠ ♠ ♥ ♠ NT
		♥ AKJ62	N - 3 2 1 2
		♦ KJ764	S - 3 2 1 2
		♣ K	E - - - -
			W - - - -

One of the basic techniques in trick-taking in bridge is ruffing. It is a technique that most learners pick up quickly and are generally then happy to take every ruff they possibly can. One thing they often overlook however is that declarer generally gains a trick by ruffing only when ruffing in the hand that is shorter in trumps. If you have a 5-3 fit with no losers, you are making 5 trump tricks. If you ruff with the long hand you are making 1 ruff plus 4 trump tricks, which still only comes to 5. It is only when you ruff with the shorter holding that you get 1 ruff plus the 5 in the longer holding for a total of 6.

This perception of gaining tricks by ruffing extends to the general plan of playing a hand. In a number of bridge hands, declarer has a choice between taking ruffs in the short suits of a hand, or setting up a long side suit in that hand to discard losers. In far more situations than most players realise, setting up the side suit is the better play.

On Board 2 of the 06-June Tuesday night face-to-face game at the Sydney Bridge Centre, South had 5-5 in the red suits, and most pairs ended up declaring in diamonds. At one table, East opened 1♣, and South bid 2N, an artificial 'Unusual No-Trump' bid, showing 5-5 in the red suits. This meant it was North who bid 3♦ and played the hand. The lead was ♠A, then ♠K, then ♠A, and then a heart. Declarer drew trumps and then was unable to set up any heart tricks, being held to 7 tricks. Declarer should have won ♥A, ruffed a heart (in the short hand!) cashed ♦A, ruffed a spade in dummy, ruffed another heart, ruffed a club in dummy, drawn the last two trumps and cashed the hearts, making 10 tricks. There are safer lines to make 9 tricks as well.

Not only was the failure to set up the heart suit poor declarer play, but the cashing of the three black winners on the opening lead was poor defence. On the bidding alone, it is clear that North (who chose to play in diamonds instead of the higher-scoring hearts) will ruff the heart suit. A trump lead is best, and another one when declarer plays a club to try to force an entry to dummy. This holds declarer to 9 tricks.

Martin Clear (SBC Tuesday Night host)

Upcoming Events (please check SBC website / What's on...)



Sunday 25th June 2023
1.30pm – 4.30pm



Friday 23rd June 2023, 10.00am
Bidding Strong Hands & Slams



Tuesday 20th June 2023, after session
Post-mortem discussion facilitated by Ian Lisle, bring your own lunch.