



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.

Think about the Hand Shape rather than following principles blindly

F2F at City – Tuesday Night 16th May 2023

5		♠ 764	Dir: N	
		♥ J54	Vul: N-S	
		♦ 85432		
		♣ J6		
♠ T832		♠ AKJ95	2	
♥ 973		♥ KT	8	17
♦ KQ6		♦ 7		13
♣ K97		♣ AQT42		
	♠ Q	♠ ♦ ♥ ♣ NT		
	♥ AQ862	N - 2 1 - -		
	♦ AJT9	S - 2 1 - -		
	♣ 853	E 5 - - 5 5		
		W 4 - - 4 1		

There are many principles of card play that we adhere to when playing a hand of bridge. One is "second player, play low". This principle makes sense because you don't want to play your high cards on tiny cards: Aces are meant to be used to take Kings, for instance.

However for a defender especially, the principles of card play should always take a back seat to picturing the unseen declarer hand and playing accordingly. On Board 5 of the 16-May Tuesday night face-to-face game at the Sydney Bridge Centre, there was a simple example that I wanted to show you.

All tables on this hand ended the bidding with East playing 4♠, apart from one slightly more optimistic pair who ended up in 5♠, presumably after conducting a Blackwood enquiry and discovering two Aces missing. South, who at most tables had bid Hearts, was faced with a difficult lead decision, and most decided to make a passive lead, in the hope that someone - anyone! - would later lead a heart toward the AQ tenace.

The most common lead was ♠Q, which is not a lead I would make. If your partner's trump holding is Jxx, this lead makes things much easier for declarer. I would rather lead from the tripleton club. In either case, declarer drew trumps in three rounds and ran five clubs to throw away two hearts from dummy, so 11 tricks are cold as a heart can be ruffed later.

However after this, the ♦7 is led ... and two "second hand low" acolytes let this run to the ♦K, and declarer happily claimed 12 tricks. South should not let this happen. Declarer has shown five winners in each black suit and can have only three red cards. Going up with the ♦A and cashing ♥A is going to get all the tricks possible for the defenders no matter what arrangement of suits declarer's three red cards are in.

Thinking about the hand is more important than following principles, and it is not too difficult when there are only three cards to think about! The defenders who cashed their two red Aces got 70% on this very flat hand, the two who failed to get the ♦A scored 10%. .

Martin Clear (SBC Tuesday Night host)