



Weekly Wisdom

The Sydney Bridge Centre mini lesson

The Sydney Bridge Centre runs a morning session on Monday in both venues in City and Canada Bay. They play the same hands and we run inter-venue competitions from time to time. Julian Foster (many times NSW representative) will be analysing an interesting hand from each Monday morning session. 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.

“Super accepts” over Major suit transfers

City (Open / Rookie) and Canada Bay – Monday Morning 25th September 2023

19		♠ J3	Dlr: S
		♥ J953	Vul: E-W
		♦ QJT32	
		♣ Q5	
♠ Q9875	♠ AK64	7	
♥ Q2	♥ AT74	8	17
♦ 97	♦ K4	8	
♣ A432	♣ K97		
♠ T2	♠ NT		
♥ K86	N - - - -		
♦ A865	S - - - -		
♣ JT86	E 3 1 2 4 3		
	W 2 - 1 3 2		

Board 19 last week was relatively flat with most pairs making 4♠ East West. But it is worth discussing as it showed the value of super accepts to transfers after 1NT.

Here the auction is likely to start with 3 passes to East who has a normal strong NT opener. West will usually start with a 2♥ bid showing a transfer to spades. The key is what East does in response. He has a magnificent hand for spades:

- A maximum 17 points which are all aces and kings
- Good 4 card spade support
- A ruffing value in diamonds

This is very much a hand that should “super-accept” the transfer to tell partner he really likes spades. This may now enable the pair to bid game – here with some values West should definitely do so. Exactly how East shows the super-accept is subject to partnership agreement. The simplest is for him to just bid 3♠ instead of 2♠. See advanced section for more options.

Of course super accepts can backfire. If West has a really weak hand he will give up in 3♠ but now the partnership is a level higher than they might have been. That’s the trade off for being able to identify the good fit and bid game.

Transfers in general are very useful as they allow responder to show a wider range of hands but they can have another important element to them – they allow the strong hand to be declarer. On this hand that’s very important because with East as declarer the ♦Kx is protected and cannot be led through. It’s in fact the reason why the hand analysis shows that East can make 4♠ but West can only make 3♠.

So let’s next consider the play and defence. If West were playing the hand, North has an easy diamond lead which will mean the defence score two diamond tricks early on. After that if they go passive and give nothing away they will score the ♥K and a club to beat 4♠. After the diamonds either hand could just exit a trump and wait for declarer to open up the heart or club suits.

Now suppose East is declarer. South will probably lead the ♣J but this allows declarer time to lead a low heart towards the ♥Q. South wins ♥K but still cannot play diamonds effectively. Once declarer cashes ♥Q, he can then discard a diamond loser from West on the ♥A. Eventually he will lose ♥K, one diamond and one club. The 4th club in West hand will be trumped in East. The difference is that discarding a diamond on the ♥A is useful to declarer – discarding a club is not because it’s just the 4th round of clubs (which was going to get ruffed in East anyway).

Leading a low heart towards the ♥Q is just like taking a finesse - you are simply hoping South has ♥K instead of North. Running ♥Q from West is something you see players doing regularly but it can’t gain. If North has ♥K he just covers and the ♥J is now a loser. If South has ♥K he wins it and declarer still has no heart available for a discard.

Note I didn't mention drawing trumps. Declarer clearly needs to do that but he needs to be slightly careful with the timing. He should start with ♠Q and then play to the ♠K. If trumps are 3-1 he needs to leave one out at that point and lead towards the ♥Q. See advanced section for why (and why it's right to start the trump suit with the ♠Q and not the ♠A). Hint - suppose trumps were 3-1 and you drew all of them with 3 rounds of trumps. What would then happen after South wins ♥K and exits another club?

Key points to note

- It's very useful to play super accepts of major suit transfers after 1NT. It lets opener show they like the transfer and can allow responder to bid a game they may not otherwise have reached.
- It's also useful to "retransfer" to ensure the strong hand always plays the contract - that may protect a key holding like Kx from being led through.
- Always try and project the play forward to see what will happen and where you may need an entry later.
- When it looks like you have all the tricks in a suit think what will happen if it breaks badly – sometimes you can still pick the suit up but only if you play the right card on the first round.

More advanced

There are all sorts of possibilities for super-accepts and lots of methods used. Some pairs prefer to play that a jump to 3 of the major is actually MINIMUM with 4 card support (the logic being to get to the 3 level with a 9 card fit to make it harder for the opponents to compete).

These pairs then have to play some other bid(s) to show a maximum with 4 card support. I have also seen lots of scientific schemes where pairs agree to bid suits with a source of tricks or suits with weakness to try to help partner judge the hand. The big problem in practice with all of these is the amount of information they give away to the defenders. What I do with my regular partner is just play 2NT as a maximum super accept and that's it. We just don't use any other bids to show super accepts.

After opener super accepts with any bid that isn't the trump suit then it's very useful to play "retransfers." Responder usually continues with the suit below the transfer suit (so 3♥ on this hand) and opener this time must bid the transfer suit. That ensures the strong hand still becomes declarer. If responder was really weak to start with he just passes the retransfer. Otherwise he continues to game.

I said declarer needs to be slightly careful in the play after a club lead. That's because the defenders will probably knock out his other top club honour when they win ♥K. The ♥Q is singleton in the West hand at that point so declarer needs to cash it and then get back to the ♥A in the East hand to discard a diamond on the ♥A. If you project the play forward that entry to East can only be in trumps.

Therefore best overall play is probably win ♠A (preserving ♠K in East), play ♠Q, ♠K (leave a trump out at that point if there is one), then low heart towards ♥Q. If the defence play another club declarer wins, unblocks ♥Q, then crosses back to ♠A (drawing the last trump at the same time if there is one) to take the diamond discard on ♥A. If the defence instead exit a 3rd trump declarer wins that, unblocks ♥Q and this time crosses to East with ♠K.

To see why this matters suppose trumps had been 3-1 and declarer had drawn all of them. He would then be stuck in the West hand after cashing ♥Q. It's no use playing a 4th round of trumps to get back to East because that trump is going to be needed to ruff the 4th club from the West hand. That's why he needs to set up his discard before he finishes drawing trumps. On this hand that's all academic because trumps are 2-2 so he can cross with a 3rd trump and still have one to ruff a club.

There's actually another advanced reason to start with ♠Q. If trumps are, unluckily 4-0 there's nothing that can be done if South has them but if North has ♠J10xx the suit can still be picked up. But only if you start with ♠Q! That's because the ♠AK now remain over the ♠J10 and two finesses can be taken. Starting with ♠A means a 4-0 spade break can no longer be

picked up in either hand. If North did have all 4 trumps then declarer will need clubs 3-3 as he now needs all 4 rounds of trumps to draw them and hence can no longer ruff a club in East.

It may seem strange to play the ♠Q first when we are usually taught to keep a high honour in each hand to be able to finesse against each side. The key here is that declarer is missing the ♠10 as well. If he was just missing ♠Jxxx then it would indeed be right to play the ♠A first to be able to pick up ♠Jxxx in either hand. But ♠J10xx can only be picked up by maintaining two honours over the defender's holding (hence why it can only be picked up with North and not with South).

A lot of the time (like this hand) all this projection of the play or how to handle a bad break makes no difference at all! But every so often one of these nastier distributions does come up. This is where the expert gains because he can still make the contract where the average player will go off.

Julian Foster (many times NSW representative)