

## RealBridge Analysis for 22.01.21 – Harry and Aidan

I was really pleased to see you taking part in the Young Chelsea RealBridge event on Friday. I hope you keep it up – indeed, play in everything you can! So, I've looked through the boards you played on Friday night, and I have some thoughts. Rather than go through it board-by-board and analyse everything that happened and what could have or should have happened, I've boiled it down into a few lessons I want you to take away from this session. I was hoping to just do one or two, but then I remembered there are a couple of other things that can't be ignored.

All in all, you did well in a very unpredictable field; hopefully you enjoyed it. The benefit you'll get from experiencing some of these concepts and knowing them for next time should be really helpful to you next month.

If you can't remember/need to look through any of the things I'm talking about here, the complete hand records (including what was bid and how the cards were played) are available on the Young Chelsea Bridge Club website.

[https://www.bridgewebs.com/cgi-bin/bwoo/bw.cgi?pid=display\\_rank&event=20210122\\_2&club=youngchelsea](https://www.bridgewebs.com/cgi-bin/bwoo/bw.cgi?pid=display_rank&event=20210122_2&club=youngchelsea)

### **Lesson 1: Basic Bidding Stuff**

You guys are on a deadline to agree exactly what system you are playing, and have it submitted. Incidents like Board 6 don't help. Aidan opened 1NT, and Harry bid 2 Diamonds, obviously forgetting that this was a transfer to hearts. Aidan dutifully bid 2 Hearts, and then Harry bid 3 Diamonds. Fortunately, Aidan got the message and passed before any further damage was done.

You need to be able to remember your bids and trust that partner has what they say they have. With my regular partner (Steve), this auction couldn't possibly happen, because if I open 1NT, and it goes 1NT-2♦-2♥-3♦, I will expect and trust my partner to have a Game-Forcing hand with at least 5 hearts and at least 4 diamonds. It would not even cross my mind that Steve has forgotten about transfers; that just doesn't happen. So I say this auction is impossible because I would not pass the 3♦ bid.

That's why you need to remember your conventions and be able to trust that partner does the same.

**Don't forget – after at NT opening or overall we play Stayman and transfers!**

### **Lesson 2: Opening leads**

Another quickish one here. Choosing an opening lead is one of the hardest aspects of Bridge, but I just want to cover the basics. There's a lot of advice about leading, and some of it seems contradictory. For example, you've probably been taught to play "4<sup>th</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> leads", i.e. lead your fourth highest card from a good suit (that you probably want partner to return), and second highest from a bad one.

**E.g. from K752 lead the 2**

**E.g. from 9853 lead the 8**

There were a couple of times where that didn't happen. For example, on Board 15, North leads the 3 of diamonds from a holding of 10763. That's not a good suit – lead the 7. Compare/contrast that with Aidan's lead on Board 12 – Aidan has K75 and leads the 7 here, but this is a good suit. All right, so it is only three cards, so he can't lead 4<sup>th</sup> highest, but he should lead the smallest one. Now, I'll look at two instances where you technically kept to that rule, but shouldn't have.

- (a) Board 2 – Harry leads the 3 of clubs from 10 3 doubleton. If you're leading from a doubleton, always lead the highest, whether the suit is good or bad.

E.g. from 84 lead the 8

- (b) Boards 9, 17 and 18 all have the same problem – one of you led small from a suit that had two touching honours in it, and as a result, Declarer got a chance to make a cheap trick – that is to say, win the trick with a smaller card than he should've been able to. On Board 9, it wasn't even fourth highest; it was just the lowest card. If you're leading a suit that has two touching honours in it (especially AK or KQ), then your opening lead should be one of those honour cards.

E.g. from KQ74 lead the K

Following on from (b), leading an honour card generally promises that you hold a touching honour – although there are some definite exceptions to this.

### **Lesson 3: When to Overcall; when to Double**

If the opponents open the bidding, you MUST have at least a 5-card suit in order to overcall with it. Inconsistency was rife in your overcalling style on Friday.

Let's start by comparing Harry's bidding on Board 3 with his bidding on Board 11. On Board 3, Harry overcalls with a 4-card suit. He shouldn't be doing that in the first place; if you're overcalling, you should have at least 5 cards in your suit. If you want a good example of why, look at Board 7 – another 4-card suit overcall, and South was sitting behind it with King, Jack and five of them. Adam and Wan-Hew have already had it explained to them what they should have done about that.

You were lucky not to get doubled! Don't overcall with four card suits.

Anyway, South supports hearts and Aidan supports diamonds, and when it gets round to Harry, he bids yet again. Why? What is this bid getting across that wasn't conveyed the first time? It's just lying some more – Aidan probably thinks Harry's got six diamonds now. He got the strength of partner's hand the first time. Meanwhile, Aidan's first call of the auction was to Pass, so Game isn't on. This information drastically reduces the odds of 4 Diamonds being a good idea. Besides which, when you don't actually have what you promised the first time, you shouldn't bid again when you don't need to.

Compare this to Board 11. Harry rightly overcalls in Diamonds to start with, but it comes back round to him and... nothing. Here, Harry actually does have a good hand – and he has information that might be useful to partner that partner doesn't know about. This hand is well worth a 4 Clubs bid when it gets back to Harry. It is clear East only has 3 quick losers here, and depending on what partner's got, some of those losers might disappear. I'm not saying this hand is super-strong, but it is clearly a much better hand than your run-of-the-mill semi-balanced 14-point overcall.

In short, Harry doubled down on a lie on Board 3, telling partner more about his hand when he'd already "told" partner about his hand the first time, whereas he didn't tell partner about the whopping good hand he had on Board 11, where he did have unknown information that would have been useful to partner that was safe to bid – and yet he didn't. As you get more experience, you will get a feel for playing in a certain style; when to be aggressive and push the boat out; when to be conservative. But at the moment, try to focus on accurately representing your hand to partner.

So... the above comments focus on what went wrong; now let's look at how to do it right.

When the opponents open the bidding with 1 of a suit, if you want to do something other than Pass, you must have one of the following hand types:

- (a) 12-15 High Card Points and at least 1 four card major (that the opponents didn't bid) - **double**
- (b) 10-15 High Card Points and a 5-card suit (flexible on the HCP if the shape is good) - **overcall**
- (c) 16+ High Card Points – **double then bid again**
- (d) A long suit (6 or more cards) including at least an A, K or Q. –**weak jump overcall**
- (e) A balanced hand, 15-17 points, and cover in whatever suit Opener was showing – **1NT overcall**

With hand type (e), you should overcall 1NT – as simple as that. Your normal methods for replying to 1NT (as if you had opened it instead of overcalled) should apply here – you just need to adjust your calculations accordingly, because it is 15-17 and not 12-14.

Hand type (b) is the hand type you need to make an OVERCALL. You bid your 5-card suit, at the cheapest possible level. This will be one or two depending on whether your suit is higher ranking than the one the opponent bid. Particularly when you are Non-Vulnerable, and your suit is really good, you may overcall at the 2 level even if you fall a little short of the required HCPs. This seems counterintuitive, but keep your 1-over-1 overcalls to the required strength. I'll save the explanation for another time.

If you have hand type (a) or (c), you make a TAKEOUT DOUBLE. Partner will act on the assumption you have hand type (a); if you have hand type (c) they will soon find out when the bidding gets back round to you! In either case, just find the bid that most accurately represents your hand. The cases are too many and varied to cover here, so for now I'll start you off on the right track and hope you can work it out from there.

#### **Lesson 4: Sometimes you don't draw trumps right away!**

This is another of those awkward lessons because it probably directly contradicts what you've been taught so far. When you're Declaring a trump contract, the first thing you do is draw trumps, right? Well... turns out there are some exceptions to that rule, and each of you encountered one on Friday. Let's start with Harry's – Board 5. Harry made 4 Spades here, with an overtrick. So why did it score badly? The answer is that he can and should in fact make 12 tricks.

##### Aidan (Dummy)

♠ J 10 5 3  
♥ A 8  
♦ K J 10 5 2  
♣ A Q

##### Harry (Declarer)

♠ K Q 8 6 2  
♥ 6 4  
♦ A 3  
♣ K 7 6 5

### Discarding losers before drawing trumps

Harry got a heart lead, which is the hardest lead he could've faced. This contract is not in any danger – four spades can be established for the price of losing the lead once, there is one heart trick, at least two diamonds, and three clubs – ten tricks. Harry wins the first trick with the Ace and immediately sets about drawing trumps. The problem here is that he does not have control in spades – and he has a heart loser. South wins with the Ace of spades and cashes the King of Hearts, holding Harry to 11 tricks. This heart trick did not need to be lost – Harry just needs to do something about it before he loses a trick. So, he should cash the Ace and Queen of clubs in dummy, and then cross to hand with the Ace of Diamonds. Play the King of Clubs and pitch the heart – et voila! No heart losers. Then you can draw trumps.

So that's reason number 1 that you might not draw trumps immediately: you don't have control of the trump suit and there is something you need to do first (i.e. get rid of losers). If Harry had held AKQ62 of spades instead of KQ862, then of course he would draw trumps first, because the chance to throw away the heart loser wasn't going away.

The second instance is a bit more common – Board 14. Here, Aidan was in 4 Spades, and came 1 off. To be fair, the defence SHOULD beat this contract, but Aidan had a better line available than the one he took.

#### Aidan (Declarer)

♠ A K Q J 5  
♥ ---  
♦ Q 7 5 2  
♣ 10 8 5 2

#### Harry (Dummy)

♠ 6 4 2  
♥ A J 9 7 5  
♦ K J 9  
♣ Q 6

### Look for shortage in dummy and ruff

Aidan gets a spade lead – which again, is the best defence possible. He wins in hand. A quick trick count reveals a problem: There are 8, maybe 9 tricks. There are 5 spades and a heart, and 2 diamonds can be established. If the diamonds break 3-3, the fourth diamond will be a trick. However, if we now have a look at the losers – there are only three. You must lose two club tricks, and the ace of diamonds – but that's it. Everything else can be ruffed. Unless... unless those trump cards in dummy disappear before you can ruff them. That would be awkward. So this suggests your way forward: you need to ruff a club. Therefore, the first thing to do is play a small club towards the Queen. The defence will win and, seeing what you're up to, play a spade. Win this and play another club. The defence will win again – but with any luck, the player that has won this trick does not have any spades left to play, and can't get their partner on lead! So they play a red suit, you win, (pitch a club on the A♥), get to hand and ruff a club.

So, before you draw trumps, always have a look to see if you need to ruff any losers in dummy. If you do, you may realise that you need to do that first! Sometimes it can wait until after – if you look back at Board 5, you'll see that at most, Harry would only need to ruff 1 club in dummy – and in that case, there would still be at least 1 trump in dummy *after* trumps have been drawn, so he could draw trumps before ruffing the club (just NOT before pitching the heart loser on the K♣!)

Hopefully this all makes sense, and you can take it on board going forward. If there's anything you didn't understand or would like me to explain in greater detail – or if there is something else that has come up since that you would like me to cover - let me know. Dr. Hamilton will, I am sure, be happy to help or advise also.