***This Week in Bridge***

**(142) Rebids After 1NT Semi-Forcing**

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**General**

When we open the bidding with 1-Major and partner responds 1NT Forcing, we are forced to bid no matter what our hand is. That means that as Opener we are frequently forced to rebid a “short minor” to come up with the best bid to describe our hand – especially if we have a balanced hand. But when we play 1NT Semi-Forcing, instead of 1NT Forcing, we have an additional option available to describe our hand – Pass.

It may seem like this one additional option is not that useful, but we will see here that the option of pass allows the meaning of all our other bids to become clearer and better defined.

**Passing 1NT Semi-Forcing**

The difference in 1NT Forcing and 1NT Semi-Forcing is simple. Opener is allowed to pass 1NT Semi-Forcing with a balanced, minimum opening bid.

***Example***

1♠ 1NT\*

Pass

This shows a balanced hand, some 5332 shape (any doubleton), and a minimum opening hand, 12-13 points.

What Responder promises for making a 1NT Forcing bid vs. a 1NT Semi-Forcing bid are basically the same – Responder can have a minimum hand, 6-9 points, or an invitational hand, 10-11 points, and almost any distribution.

*Note: If you play 3/1 Invitational then some distributional invitational hands are not in the 1NT bid and thus are not a concern for Opener when considering partner’s possible hands.*

**Rebidding 2-minor after 1NT Semi-Forcing**

Since with a balanced minimum opening hand pass is available to the opening bidder, when playing 1NT Semi-Forcing, if Opener does choose to rebid something over a 1NT response then it shows more information about their hand.

When playing 1NT Forcing, Opener’s rebid of 2-minor usually only promises a 3-card suit, occasionally only 2-cards in ♣. But when playing 1NT Semi-Forcing, a rebid of 2-minor shows a “real” second suit – promising at least 4-cards in that suit. Knowing that Opener’s 2-minor rebid promises a real second suit, Responder can better describe their hand by raising Opener, bidding NT, or bidding a new suit.

**Still a Small Problem Hand for Opener**

One problem hand for Opener is 14 HCP with 5332 distribution. In this one case, Opener has enough values to accept an invitational bid if partner has one, 10-11 points. Thus, Opener cannot pass 1NT, and must find another bid to see what partner shows next. This is the one case where Opener might need to rebid a “short minor” but it is far rarer when playing 1NT Semi-Forcing than when playing 1NT Forcing.

**Other Rebids by Opener**

The other rebids of 2-Major, 2NT, and 3-level are unchanged in these auctions. These rebids show the same shape hands as they would over 1NT Forcing.

*Example*

1♠ 1NT\*

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* 2♥ 5+♠ and 4+♥, 12-17 points – not strong enough to jump shift.
* 2♠ 6+♠, 12-14 points
* 2NT 18-19 points and a balanced hand.
* 3♣/♦ 3+card suits, usually 4-card or long, 18+ points, Game Forcing.
* 3♥ 4+♥, 18+ points, Game Forcing.
* 3♠ 6+♠ 15-17 points, non-forcing
* 3NT Good Hand with lots of tricks. Usually long strong ♠.

**Playing 1NT vs. 3-Major**

One issue when you pass 1NT Semi-Forcing is that partner may have a 3-card limit raise, but if we were going to pass partner’s 3-level invite, then we can pass 1NT. In this case, we end up playing in 1NT when the rest of the field is in 3-Major. This is not a problem, it is blessing! Frequently, we will go plus when they go down. Also, we may take the same number of tricks and actually score better because we are in Notrump. Yes, occasionally we will get a bad result, but more often than not we will get a great board when partner’s hand was a 3-card limit raise.

**Conclusion**

Adjusting to playing 1NT Semi-Forcing does not require many changes from playing 1NT Forcing. Responder’s bids are very similar in that 1NT still shows about 5-11 points, almost any shape. The big advantages come from the occasional ability to play in 1NT, instead of in a suit contract, and from Responder’s knowledge that Opener has two real suits when Opener does take a rebid. This allows Responder to better visualize Opener’s hand and make a better rebid to describe their hand more accurately. Give playing 1NT Semi-Forcing a try and see if these inferences make your follow-up bidding much easier!