***This Week in Bridge***

**(193) Bidding Over Short Opening Bids – “Short 1♣” (or 1♦)**

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**General**

When the opponents open the bidding with 1♣ that could be as short as a 2-card suit, then we can treat this bid as if it is not a “real” or natural suit. We need to change our agreements about some of our competitive bidding (especially our 2-suited bids) in auctions where the opponents play these methods. What we present here is the modern approach to dealing with a “short ♣” opening bid.

*Note: This is also true if the opponents play an even shorter 1♣ opening bid, though that is not very common.*

**Michaels vs. Short ♣ Opening Bids**

When the opponents play a 1♣ opening bid that “could be short” the common expert agreement is to play most bids unchanged with the following exception:

1♣\* \_\_?

* 2♣\* Natural overcall, usually a 6-card ♣ suit and opening bid values
* 2♦\* Michaels, at least 5-5M (min-max values, if that is your normal approach)

Playing these agreements, we give up a weak bid of the weak jump overcall of 2♦ (the least effective, cheapest one) and in exchange gain a constructive bid of a natural 2♣ overcall – showing values and a long ♣ suit.

**Unusual NT vs. Short ♣ Opening Bids**

Continuing this approach of treating this 1♣ (“could be short”) opening bid as not a real ♣ bid, then we need to have agreements about what suits an unusual 2NT bid (jump to 2NT) shows.

1♣\* 2NT

The most common approach is to play this Unusual NT bid as showing at least 5-5 in the minors (usually a preemptive strength hand), treating the short 1♣ opening bid as not a natural bid and thus making the minors the two lowest “unbid” suits.

*Note: Some players choose to keep this 2NT bid as ♦+♥, but if you change your 2♣/2♦ bid, then it is best to also change your 2NT call as well.*

**Bidding Over a Short 1♦ Opening Bid**

If the opponents open the bidding with a 1♦ bid that “could be short” (as short as 2-cards) then they are likely playing Precision (a Strong Club system). We can use a similar approach to compete in the bidding as we did over a short 1♣ opening. Most bids are natural with no change, except for:

1D\* \_\_?

* 2♦\* Natural, usually a 6+card ♦ suit, at least opening bid values
* 2♥\* Michaels, at least 5-5 Majors, preemptive values (5-11 points), non-forcing
* 2NT\* Both minors, at least 5-5, preemptive values

**Jump to 3♦ as Strong Michaels**

Since 2♥ \*, when used as a Michaels call showing at least 5-5 Majors, is non-forcing then this bid can not be used with a strong hand because partner will often pass with a ♥ fit, no matter their values. With a strong hand with 5-5 in the Majors, Interferer needs another call. This bid is a jump to 3♦. This jump cuebid is often used as a “Strong Michaels“ (instead of a Western Cuebid) when dealing with the opponent’s short 1♦ opening bid.

**Conclusion**

When the opponents play a “short” opening bid we could treat this as a natural bid and continue to bid the way we normally do, but this is not the most effective approach. The modern style is to exchange some preemptive bids for constructive bids – allowing us to bid “their” suit naturally and still show our 2-suited hands. If you play against short opening bids often, then consider adopting this approach to dealing with the opponent’s short opening bids.