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This Week in Bridge

(362) Responder's Rebids After Opener's 2-Suited Rebid

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Level: 5 of 10 (2 of 6)

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General

When the auction begins with a suit opening at the 1-level followed by a 1-level response, and then Opener rebids a second suit (without jump shifting or reversing) then Opener has shown an unbalanced hand with minimum or medium values (about 12 to 17 points). Responder is now in a more challenging situation than when Opener more precisely defines their hand (by rebidding NT or the same suit). As Responder we must continue to search for a Major suit fit (or any fit) and explore bidding game if the combined assets make that a possibility. Just as in the other auctions, we need a tool (artificial bid/convention) to continue the auction and force partner to tell us more about their hand when we have a good hand. In this auction, that will be *4th Suit Forcing to Game*. Let's take a look at some auction and see how we best continue the bidding.

Opener Rebids at 1-Level

There are only a few auctions where the Opener can rebid a second suit and keep the auction at the 1-level:

Example 1

1♣ 1♦

1♥

Example 2

1♣ 1♦

1♠

Example 3

1♣ 1♥

1♠

Example 4

1♦ 1♥

1♠

Here we expect Opener to have an unbalanced hand most of the time. It is reasonable for Responder to assume that Opener is at least 4-5 shape and then proceed. Let's look at Responder's rebid options in one of these examples.



Example 5

1♣ 1♦
1♠ ___?

- Pass 3-4 ♠, no game interest
- 1NT 6-9 points, offer to play
- 2♣ Preference, 6-9 points
- 2♦ Natural, 6+♦, 6-9 points
- 2♥* Artificial, 4th Suit Forcing to Game
- 2♠ Constructive raise, 8 to a bad 10 points, 4-card ♠
- 2NT Natural, invitational, ♥ stopper
- 3♣ Natural, invitational, usually 4-card ♣, often no ♥ stopper
- 3♦ Natural, invitational, 10-11 points, 6+♦
- 3♠ Natural, invitational, 10-11 points, 4-card ♠
- 3NT To play, about 12-15 points with a ♥ stopper

Most of Responder's bidding choices are natural: bidding cheaply with a minimum hand, jumping with an invitational hand. But Responder can use the 4th Suit as a "catch-all" game forcing bid when they want to get more information from Opener.

Note: Some partnerships have some special treatments of the auction 1♣ - 1♦ - 1♥ - 1♠, so this is an auction to discuss with partner. Also, in all of the auctions in Examples 1-4, a partnership can choose to play a sophisticated method called XYZ. This allows Responder a large variety of bidding options in auctions that start with a rebid at the 1-level.

Opener Rebids at 2-Level

When Opener rebids a second suit at the 2-level without reversing, Responder must decide if they should keep the auction low, invite game, or find a forcing bid to continue the auction. One thing about this auction (that differs from the auction above) is that there is less bidding space available to search for a fit, as well as no 1NT rebid for Responder. This will mean that Responder must frequently choose between the Opener's two suits even without an actual fit.

Note: For more details about Responder's rebids after a 1NT Forcing (or Semi-Forcing) auction see an lesson in 2/1 Game Forcing like TWiB 142.



Example 6

1♥ 1♠
2♣ ___?

- Pass 3+♣, To play
- 2♦* Artificial, 4th Suit Forcing to Game
- 2♥ 2-card ♥, 6-9 points
- 2♠ 6+card ♠, 6-9 points
- 2NT Natural, invitational, ♦ stopper usually (5-card ♠ still possible)
- 3♣ Natural, “Courtesy Raise”, good 8-11 points, 4+card ♣, often no ♦ stopper
- 3♦ Natural, invitational, 10-11 points, 6+card ♦
- 3♠ Natural, invitational, 10-11 points, 6+card ♠
- 3NT To play, about 12-15 points with a ♦ stopper

Notice that here, Responder either passes Opener in their second suit or corrects to Opener’s first bid suit even when they do not have a fit. This “preference” is more common when Opener makes a rebid at the 2-level. Responder may also be forced to “keep the auction open” by finding a bid when they have a good 8 to 9 points – see the Courtesy Raise above.

Further Bidding

When Opener rebids a second suit, giving them a wide point count range of 12-17 points, then Responder must make greater accommodations for the possibility of game.

- 6-7 points Minimum with No Game
- 8-9 points Minimum with Game possible if Opener has a max (good 15 to 17)
- 10-11 points Invite game, if partner has a good 13 or 14 points
- 12+ points Game Forcing

Example 6

1♥ 1♠
2♦ 2♥
3♥ 4♥

Responder uses their rebid to take a preference to Opener’s first bid suit, ♥ – showing 2-card ♥ and 6-9 points. When Opener takes a third bid of 3♥, they show a 6+card ♥ suit (confirming that our side has a fit) and a good 15 to 17 points (still game interest opposite our 8-9 points). So with a maximum for our previous bidding (8-9 points) Responder bids on to game.



Conclusion

When you are the Responder, your first bid is often used to look for a Major suit fit. When Opener makes a rebid that does not agree to your suit then you must use your rebid to either stop in a partscore, invite game, or force the bidding. When Opener's rebid is a second suit, their point count range is much wider than when they rebid NT or the suit they opened. This can make Responder's life more difficult. Responder's primary tool in these auctions when they have a good hand is 4th Suit Forcing to Game (similar to New Minor Forcing, or Extended New Minor Forcing). Make sure that as you and partner are on the same page about how to continue the bidding when the auction begins with Opener bidding two different suits.