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This Week in Bridge

(521) Responder's 2♠ Rebid after Stayman

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Level: 7 of 10

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General

When partner opens 1NT and we have a game forcing hand with 5-card ♠ and 4-card ♥, we have two possible Major suit games to explore. We begin by using Stayman to look for a 4-4 Major suit fit in ♥ and then if we fail to find that fit, we show our 5-card ♠ suit (using Smolen if partner responded 2♦ or jumping in our 5-card suit if we do not play Smolen). But when we only have invitational values, and the auction begins

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1NT  2♣  
2♦   __?
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then Opener has denied a 4-card Major suit. At this point, we can bid 2♠ to show an invitational hand with 5-card ♠ and 4+card ♥. This is a valuable auction that allows Responder to invite game but stop at the 2-level if Opener has a minimum hand, even with only 2-card ♠ support. A 2♠ contract usually plays better than 2NT in this situation.

This is a useful bidding sequence as it allows us to stop in 2♠ when Responder has invitational values that are somewhat based on distribution. We would like to be able to use this bidding sequence with distributional hands other than 5-4 in the Majors. Let's look at how we can expand the use of this distributional invite to allow us to use this bid with other shapes.

Stayman then 2♠ - Distributional Invite

When the auction begins

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1NT  2♣  
2♦   __?
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Opener has denied a 4-card Major. That means that if we now bid 2♠ (and it shows 5-card ♠ and 4-card ♥) and if partner does not have a ♠ fit, they will never correct back to 3♥ -- they have denied having a ♥ fit. That means that our 2♠ bid does not need to promise a 4-card ♥ suit.

The modern approach is to use this sequence to show a distributional invite with a 5-card ♠ suit. This is usually a hand that is interested in game if Opener has a ♠ fit, but less interested when Opener does not have a ♠ fit. It could be the traditional 5-4 in the Majors hand, or it could be a hand with a 5-card ♠ suit and length in at least one of the minors.



Example

♠ AT873
♥ 2
♦ K9753
♣ 84

With this hand we want partner to bid 4♠ with a ♠ fit and maximum values, but we do not want to play in 2NT if partner does not have a ♠ fit. We do not want to have this auction:

1NT 2♥
2♠ 2NT
Pass

By playing this extended version of Stayman followed by 2♠, we can invite game with this hand and keep the auction low by having a better bidding sequence when Opener does not accept our invitation.

1NT 2♣
2♦ 2♠
Pass!

Looking at this same example hand, if partner responds 2♠ to Stayman, with the 9-card ♠ fit it is best for us to just bid 4♠.

1NT 2♣
2♠ 4♠

If partner bids 2♥ in response to Stayman, we raise to 3♥ with an invitational hand and 4-card ♥, but we can still bid 2♠ with the “non-♥” hand in the above example.

1NT 2♣
2♥ 2♠

In this auction, 2♠ now shows a 5-card ♠ suit, invitational values, and a distributional hand without a ♥ fit.



Opener's Continuations

Now let's discuss how Opener continues the auction after Responder's 2♠ rebid. With a minimum hand and 2- or 3-card ♠ support, Opener can pass since Responder has already indicated they do not want to play in 2NT.

But Opener can continue to bid and further explore game or the best partscore.

1NT 2♣

2♦ 2♠

___?

- 2NT Scrambling bid. Probably a singleton honor in ♠ and minimum values. Responder passes with 5-4 Majors hand and bids their long minor with the shapely invite.
- 3♣ (rare) Probably to play, a 6-card ♣ suit
- 3♦ (rare) Probably to play, a 6-card ♦ suit
- 3♥ Does Not Exist
- 3♠ Forcing, Choice of Games, maximum with 3-card ♠ - willing to play 3NT or 4♠.
- 3NT To play, maximum with 2-card ♠ support
- 4♠ To play, maximum with 3-card ♠ support

Note: This bidding sequence can have a problem in that it may wrong-side a 4♠ contract, but when Responder is distributional, this is less important than when Responder has a balanced hand.

Conclusion

Using Stayman and Responder rebidding 2♠ is a classic auction for showing an invitational hand with a 5-card ♠ suit and a 4-card ♥ suit. By allowing Responder to have additional hand types for using this bidding sequence, we allow Responder to invite game with distributional hands of many different shapes that are likely to play well opposite a fit. Simultaneously we keep the auction low and insist that we play in ♠, not NT, when Opener has minimum values. Discuss this with your regular partners - it costs very little and will improve your bidding opposite partner's 1NT opening bids.