***This Week in Bridge***

**(363) Responder’s Rebids After Opener’s Strong 2-Suited Hand**

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*Level: 6, 8 of 10 (3, 4 of 6)* *robert@advinbridge.com*

**General**

There are two types of auctions where the Opener shows a strong unbalanced 2-suited hand (without a fit) – *Jump Shift* and *Reverse* auctions. Both of these auctions force to at least the 3-level; Opener’s jump shift is game forcing, while their reverse is forcing for 1-round. A jump shift by Opener eats up a lot of bidding space (often getting us to the 3-level immediately), so as Responder in those auctions we will be cramped to find a fit below 3NT. While a reverse usually keeps the auction a bid lower than a jump shift, it gives us more complexity in what subsequent bids are forcing and non-forcing. Let’s look at how we select our rebid as Responder after Opener shows a strong 2-suiter.

**Responder’s Rebid After a Jump Shift**

When Opener makes a strong jump shift to the 3-level, they have shown a good 18+ points and created a game forcing auction. Knowing that we are going to game is helpful, but the auction is now extremely high as we are almost up to 3NT, a point where we have to make a decision to go past or not. Our focus as Responder is on Major suits:

* If we have a 6-card suit (or occasionally a good 5-card suit) of our own, we often rebid it.
* If Opener started the auction with a Major suit and we have 3-card support, we have a fit and are not under much pressure – we know where to play.
* If partner opens with a Major suit and we have 2-card support, we often take a “preference” back to their primary suit (their Major) at the 3-level. This shows what is usually 2-card support.

*Example 1*

1♠ 1NT

3♦ 3♠

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This 3♠ bid usually shows 2-card ♠ support. If Opener has only a 5-card suit they will often offer 3NT and if they have a 6th ♠, they will go on to 4♠. The goal is to search for a fit.

* 3NT Only 5-card ♠, offer to play
* 4♠ 6+card ♠, we have a ♠ fit
* 4♦ At least 5-5 shape, no interest in playing 3NT.

*Example 2*

1♥ 1♠

3♣ \_\_

Responder generally looks for a Major suit fit and falls back on trying to get to 3NT.

* 3♠ 6+card ♠ (occasionally a very good 5-card suit)
* 3♥ 2+card ♥
* 3NT ♦ stopper
* 3♦ Asks for a ♦ stopper or 3-card ♠ support.
* 4♥ *Discuss this with your partner - some partnerships play this as a 3-card limit raise.*

When Opener’s jump shift is at the 2-level, there is more room for the Responder to search for a Major suit fit. In these auctions, Opener’s primary suit will be a minor suit. Also, there is a 2NT bid available for Responder to use.

*Example 3*

1♣ 1♥

2♠ \_\_

* 2NT Stopper in ♦, 6-9 pts (or a very strong hand that will make a slam try later)
* 3NT Stopper in ♦, about 10-12 pts (extra values in a game force)
* 3♦ Asks for a ♦ stopper
* 4♠ 4-card ♠, to play, Fast Arrival
* 3♠ 4-card ♠, slam interest
* 3♥ 6+card ♥
* 3♣ 3+card ♣ and some reason not to be seeking 3NT.

**Responder’s Rebid after Opener’s Reverse**

When Opener starts with a lower-ranking suit at the 1-level and then rebids a higher-ranking suit at the 2-level, this is a reverse – showing about 17+ points and forcing for 1-round. Most partnerships agree this is more than just forcing for 1-round; it is forcing to the 3-level in Opener’s first bid suit.

That means that Responder can rebid at the 2-level, as this is still forcing.

Here is an auction using standard agreements.

*Example 4*

1♣ 1♠

2♥ \_\_

* 2♠ Decent 5+card suit (or 6+card suit), forcing 1-round, still could be 6+ points
* 2NT *Natural, 6+ points, forcing for 1-round, ♦ stopper (see below for better approach)*
* 3♣ ♣ fit, 3+card, 6-7 points, NF
* 3♦ Game Forcing, asking for a ♦ stopper
* 3♥ 4-card ♥, 6-7 point, NF
* 3♠ Good 6+card suit, GF, 8+ points
* 3NT To Play
* 4♥ 4-card ♥, 8+ points, To Play (not slam interest)

Here is an example of hand where we would rebid 2♠ with only a 5-card suit.

*Example 5*

♠ AJT76

♥ J5

♦ Q98

♣ 532

If partner has ♠Qx or ♠Kx, we are happy to play in ♠.

**Lebensohl 2NT over Reverses – Another Approach for Responder**

When Opener makes a reverse at the 2-level, it is extremely unlikely that 2NT is going to be the right place to play – in fact, the reverse is forcing to 3-minor. That means that we will not give much up if we use 2NT by Responder after a reverse as a conventional bid. We will use our same general Lebensohl (or Simplesohl) structure, where 2NT is used as a relay and shows a bad hand and a desire to stop the auction below game. This structure gives Responder multiple ways to bid each suit – to limp their way there, using the 2NT bid, or to bid directly at the 3-level.

*Example 6*

1♦ 1♠

2♥ \_\_?

***Using the 2NT Relay***

Here we use 2NT to show a bad hand, usually 5 to 7- points – not enough to game force opposite a minimum reverse. This 2NT bid asks partner to bid 3♣, a relay. Responder can now show where they would like to play the hand:

* With long ♣, Responder can pass 3♣.
* With a couple of ♦ (2+cards) Responder can relay and then bid 3♦ to sign off in 3♦.
* With a bad hand with a ♥ fit (4-card) Responder can relay and then bid 3♥. Opener will then know about the Major suit fit and could re-evaluate their hand and bid on to 4♥. Danger - if this goes down 1 – it will be Opener’s fault.

***Responder’s Bid Above 2NT***

Since 2NT is used to show all bad hands that want to play at the 3-level, then any bid above 2NT is natural and forcing.

*Example 7*

1♦ 1♠

2♥ \_\_?

* 3♦ 3+♦, GF, 7+ points
* 3♥ 4+♥, GF, Slam Try
* 3♠ 6+♠, GF, 7+ points
* 3NT To Play
* 4♥ To Play
* 3♣ Artificial, GF, Usually no ♣ stopper
* 2♠ Unchanged from above, decent 5+card ♠ suit, 1-round forcing, 6+ points

**Conclusion**

As Responder, when the Opener makes a jump Shift or a reverse they show a strong 2-suited hand (which makes us happy), but they also eat up a lot of our bidding space and make it difficult. When partner makes a jump shift, we know we are going to game and just search for our fit – Major suit first, notrump likely next, minor only when a problem or interested in slam. When partner makes a reverse then we have more room to communicate but need to have good agreements about what bids are forcing and which are not. Using 2NT as a relay in these reverse auctions (Lebensohl over Reverses) is a good agreement. Make sure you and partner are on the same page about the meaning of Responder’s rebids. It is very frustrating when Opener has a strong distributional hand to have a bidding mixup.