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This Week in Bridge

(518) Superaccepting Jacoby Transfers

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Level: 5, 7 of 10

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General

When partner opens 1NT, we as Responder strive to determine if our side has a Major suit game. When we have enough values for game, we begin by exploring for a Major suit fit and if we do not find a fit, then we settle for 3NT. (It is only when we are extremely distributional that we even consider playing in a minor suit game.) Responder uses Stayman to find 4-4 Major suit fits and Jacoby Transfers to find 5-3+ fits. When we have only 8-card fits, we need about 24 pts to make bidding game a good idea, but when we have a 9-card Major suit fit (5-4 fit) we will often be able to make game with fewer HCP – “*The power of the 9-card fit!*” When we have this 9-card fit, we want to have a set of tools to let partner know about our “big fit.” This will let partner know that they should aggressively bid game. After a Jacoby transfer, the tools for letting partner know we have this fit are called *superaccepts*.

Basic Superaccepts of Jacoby Transfers

The most common form of 9-card Major suit fit we find is when Opener starts with 1NT and partner makes a Jacoby Transfer into our 4-card Major. In this situation, we have a 5-4 fit and we need to have a way to communicate this to partner. The first example of this is the basic superaccept.

Example 1

1NT 2♦*

3♥

Partner has made a 2♦ Jacoby Transfer – asking us to bid 2♥. But if we have 4-card ♥ support and a maximum for our 1NT Opener (a good 16 to 17 pts), we show this great hand by bidding 3♥ instead!

Example 2

1NT 2♥*

3♠

Similarly, if partner transfers to ♠ then we can bid 3♠ to show great ♠ support.



Other Superaccepts of Jacoby Transfers

Now that we know how to show “the best” hand for partner we want to discuss what other superaccept bids would mean. Let’s consider the example of when partner transfers to ♠. We know that 3♠ shows a maximum and 4-card ♠ support. But what about the other bids between 2♠ and 3♠? The first key is to know that we won’t bid past 2♠ without having a 9-card fit – since partner might have a 0 HCP. (This is an example of *The Law of Total Tricks* at work.) Thus, all the superaccepting bids promise 4+card support. One approach is to let bids of new suits show a doubleton and 2NT show no doubleton (4333). Additionally, we define these bids to show less than maximum HCP, since we already have a bid to show maximum values.

Example 3 – Medium Playing Strength Hands

1NT 2♥*

___?

- 2NT* 4-3-3-3, 16-17 (maximum values, but flat)
- 3♣* 4-card ♠, doubleton ♣, 15-16 pts (minimum values, but a doubleton)
- 3♦* 4-card ♠, doubleton ♦, 15-16 pts (minimum values, but a doubleton)
- 3♥* 4-card ♠, doubleton ♥, 15-16 pts (minimum values, but a doubleton)

Similar bids apply when transferring to ♥.

Example 4 – Medium Playing Strength Hands

1NT 2♦*

___?

- 2♠* 4-card ♥, doubleton ♠, 15-16 pts (minimum values, but a doubleton)
- 2NT* 3-4-3-3, 16-17 (maximum values, but flat)
- 3♣* 4-card ♥, doubleton ♣, 15-16 pts (minimum values, but a doubleton)
- 3♥* 4-card ♥, doubleton ♥, 15-16 pts (minimum values, but a doubleton)

The reason that showing the doubleton is a useful agreement is that it allows Responder to know where Opener’s ruffing values are located. When we have lots of trump (like in the 9+card fit) it is very valuable to be able to know which suit we can ruff in the short hand.

Example 5

♠ K9742

♥ 85

♦ A653

♣ 75

1NT 2♥*

3♦*

Responder knows Opener can ruff most of their ♦ losers in hand – so they should bid a game!



After the Superaccept

When Opener superaccepts the Jacoby Transfer and shows a doubleton, they have not yet bid “our suit.” We have not properly sided the contract. We still want to the 1NT Opener to play the hand most of the time. We use “re-transfers” to properly side the contract as often as possible. The suit below our suit at either the 3-level or 4-level will be a re-transfer, siding our contract with the strong hand.

Example 6

1NT 2♦*
3♣* 3♦*

This 3♦ bid is a re-transfer and asks Opener to bid 3♥.

Note: If partner bids 3♦ (showing the doubleton right below our suit) we can re-transfer with 4♦ if we are going to bid a game, but if we are going to sign off at the 3-level then we don't have room to re-transfer – and we must settle for playing 3♥ from the wrong side.*

Conclusion

Superaccepts of transfer bids are a great way to communicate that our side has a 9+card fit. By Opener showing Responder that they have a great fit, Responder is in a good position to judge if game is possible with an invitational or even slightly weaker hand. This is particularly true if Responder has a highly distributional hand, like 5-5 shape. Give these superaccepts a try! They will help you be aggressive when you have a 9-card fit and they will also help you be a bit more cautious when you know you don't have a good 9-card fit because partner failed to superaccept.