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This Week in Bridge

(377) 2/1 GF Auctions: Slam Tries

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Level: 5 of 10 (2 of 6)

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General Approach

One of the advantages of playing a 2/1 GF system (as opposed to a Standard American system) is that we know that we are going to game when partner makes a 2-level response.   This knowledge allows us to go slow and communicate with partner in a variety of ways (giving us many possible forcing bids to describe our hand). With good agreements we can use these bids to communicate our values to partner (and theirs to us).   In particular, we are able to express slam interest in a variety of different ways and often explore slam while keep the auction at a relatively low level.   The Principle of Fast Arrival (the idea that jumps to game in game forcing auctions show a minimum hand) is one of our tools for communicate slam interest (or lack of) to partner. Let's take a look at our slam try options in these 2/1 GF auctions.

Slam Try Tools

In 2/1 GF auctions we have many of the same slam try bidding tools that we have in other auctions – Quantitative Bidding, Gerber, Keycard, Splinters, and Control Showing Bids.

When Opener rebids 2NT in a 2/1 GF auction, they show stoppers in the two unbid suits and usually a minimum hand, 12-14 points (though 18-19 points is a possibility). This 2NT rebid allows us to declare a notrump contract from the "correct side."

Example 1

1♠   2♦

2NT   __?

In this auction, if Responder has a huge hand, they can either bid 4NT quantitative or 4♣ Gerber. But most of the time when Opener has a balanced minimum hand Responder will sign off in a game like 3NT.

If Responder does try to sign off in 3NT, Opener does not have to let the auction end there if they had more than a balanced 12-14 point hand.

Example 2

1♠	2♦
2NT	3NT
4NT	

This 4NT bid by partner (when Responder offered to play 3NT) is Quantitative and lets partner know that we have the large balanced hand, 18-19 points.

The Principle of Fast Arrival - 4M vs. 3M

In a game forcing auction, jumping to game in a suit contract shows a minimum hand, while supporting partner's suit (especially a Major suit) at the 3-level tends to show extra values and express interest in exploring slam.

Example 3

1♠	2♥
__?	

- 3♥   Extra Values, 3+card ♥, either extra HCP or lots of Keycards
- 4♥   Fast Arrival, minimum values, not many Keycards, 3-4 card ♥, usually 12-13 points

Example 4

1♠	2♦
2♠	__?

- 3♠   Extra Values, 2+card ♠
- 4♠   Fast Arrival, minimum

Example 5

1♥	2♣
2♦	__?

- 2♥   Most hands with 3-card ♥ support
- 3♥   Strong hand with 3-card ♥ support, asks Opener to start making control showing bids
- 4♥   Minimum hand with 3-card ♥ support

Example 6

1♠	2♣
2NT	__?

- 3♠   3-card ♠ support, extra values, very strong since slam interest opposite bal 12-14
- 4♠   3-card ♠ support, no slam interest (wide ranging values)

After any of the 3-level bids that show extra values partner has some options for how to continue the bidding. They can:

- Sign off in 4-Major with no slam interest
- Make a control showing cuebid with some slam interest
- Jump to 4NT to take control of the auction and ask for Keycards with a big hand of their own

Single Suited Slam Tries - Jump Rebid of Opener's Suit
In 2/1 GF Auctions we also have a jump rebid of Opener's suit available to express slam interest.

Example 7

1♥	2♣
3♥	

This jump to 3♥ shows a decent hand (not the worst opening bid hand) and a powerful suit (at most 1 loser opposite a void). This auction asks Responder to make control showing bids, if they have any, and not to worry about the trump suit. Opener has that covered!

Splinter in Support of Partner's Suit
Another way that we can try for slam is to make a jump shift in a 2/1 GF auction. Since new suits are completely forcing, we use simple jump shifts as splinter bids in support for partner's suit – both by Opener and Responder.

Example 8

1♠	2♥
__?	

- 4♣   Splinter, 4+card ♥, 0-1 ♣, not a horrible opening hand
- 4♦   Splinter, 4+card ♥, 0-1 ♦, not a horrible opening hand

Example 9

1♠	2♦
__?	

- 3♥   Splinter, 4+card ♦, 0-1 ♥, not a horrible opening hand
- 4♣   Splinter 4+card ♦, 0-1 ♣, no interest in playing 3NT, not a horrible opening hand

Example 10

1♥	2♦
2♥	__?

- 3♠   Splinter, 3-card ♥, 0-1 ♠, not a horrible hand
- 4♣   Splinter, 3-card ♥, 0-1 ♣, not a horrible hand

3-Level Shows Extra Values - "3L+"

One way to try for slam is to use Opener's rebid of a new suit at the 3-level to promise extra values (about 3+points more than a minimum opening bid).   We can do this because we have can use our 2-Major Waiting rebid when we have the shape for a 3-level rebid, but not enough values to do so.

Example 11

♠ KQT94

♥ A4

♦ 43

♣ AQ65

1♠	2♦
3♣	

Here we have a good hand, so we rebid 3♣.   This shows at least 5-4 distribution and extra values (about 14+ points). We can make this rebid with a variety of different shapes: 5-4, 5-5, even 6-4 or more distribution.

Jumps to 3NT

In 2/1 GF auctions the Principle of Fast Arrival does not apply to 3NT rebids. So a jump to 3NT shows extra values by either the Opener or the Responder.

Example 12

1♠	2♦
3NT	

This 3NT rebid by Opener shows stoppers in the unbid suits, about 15-17 points, and implies a semi-balanced hand or a singleton ♦ (since we did not open the bidding 1NT).

Example 13

1♠	2♣
2♦	3NT

This 3NT bid by Responder shows a ♥ stopper and about 15-17 points (about a King more than the 2/1 GF bid promised).

Conclusion

In a 2/1 GF auction, all our rebids below game are forcing. This gives us a lot of rebid options and we can use those to differentiate hands that are minimum from ones that have extra values.   Our general approach is to "go slow" with extra values and see if partner wants to cooperate. Once we have expressed our extra values, partner can attempt to stop the auction in game, or express interest in slam by making a control showing bid (or even take control of the auction with Keycard).   Make sure that you and partner talk about these slam try auctions and know which bids promise extra values.