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This Week in Bridge

(419) 2/1 GF – Opener’s Pattern Out Auctions

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Level: 7 of 10 (3 of 6)

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General

In 2/1 GF auctions, we sometimes have the ability to create a forcing auction and show a fit at the 2-level. This does not happen that often, but when we do have this type of auction it leaves us a lot of room to communicate with partner. Normally, when we find a fit below game in a 2/1 GF auction, we use the extra bidding space to show our controls. This is true in many 2/1 GF auctions.

Example 1

1♠ 2NT*

3♠ 4♦

Here 4♦ is a control-showing bid, not showing a natural ♦ suit.

In a Major suit contract, the control-showing bids are done between 3-Major and 4-Major. But if we have an auction that allows us to show our fit at 2-Major then we want to use the bidding space between 2-Major and 3-Major to tell partner more about our shape and the room between 3-Major and 4-Major to make control-showing bids. Telling partner more about our shape can be very useful in helping them visualize the way our hands may fit together for a slam or alternative games (like 3NT). Let’s look at some of these “pattern out” auctions in detail.



Pattern Out Auctions

Let's see how Opener can make use of the bidding space to effectively describe their hand.

Example 2

1♠ 2♣

2♥ 2♠

___?

Here we have found a ♠ fit. Opener then uses their 3rd bid to further describe their shape.

- 2NT 5-4-2-2
- 3♣ 5-4-1-3
- 3♦ 5-4-3-1
- 3♥ At least 5-5 in the Majors
- 3♠ Good hand, start cuebidding (not wanting to give away information)
- 3NT Offer to play? Extra values and double stopper in ♦.
- 4♣ ♣ void, 5-4-4-0 or 6-4-3-0.
- 4♦ ♦ void, 5-4-0-4 or 6-4-0-3.
- 4♥ 5-6, offer to play in 4♥ (or 5-5 with much better ♥)
- 4♠ Bad hand. Opener can always bid this if they do not want to give way any information and do not have slam interest.

We can also use a similar patterning out concept in 2/1 auctions where we have not yet found a fit.

Example 3

1♠ 2♣

2♥ 2NT

___?

- 3♣ 5-4-1-3 (or 5-4-0-4 not particularly slammish)
- 3♦ 5-4-4-0
- 3♥ At least 5-5 Majors
- 3♠ 6+♠ and usually 4-card ♥
- 3NT 5-4-2-2 or 5-4-3-1
- 4♣ Minorwood or Gerber (depending on partnership agreements)
- 4♦ 5-4-0-4 (delayed splinter in support of ♣, slammish with ♣ support)
- 4♥ 5-6 usually to play
- 4♠ 7-4 bad hand (possibly 6-4 with very good ♠ suit)

This bidding is all very natural at the 3-level, while 4-level jumps are mostly splinters when they can be, but notice these jumps are not control-showing bids. If we want to make a control-showing bid, we go slow, starting with 3-Major (finding a fit) and then showing our control.



Classic Pattern Out Auction

Another classic pattern out auction occurs but not in a GF auction.

Example 4

1♠ 1NT*
2♥/2♦/2♣ 2NT
___?

If Responder makes an invitational 2NT bid, Opener has some choice of what to do. If Opener has more shape, they may want to show it, but before doing so, Opener should know which bids are forcing and which bids are non-forcing. Our general rules in this type of auction are the following:

- Patterning out into a minor is corrective and non-forcing,
- Patterning out into a Major showing a good hand, is forcing, and is looking for the best game.

This is a good agreement because with extra minor suit shape and a good hand Opener simply bids 3NT, and does not need to show their additional shape. With extra minor suit shape and a minimum hand Opener want does not want to play in 2NT.

Example 5

1♠ 1NT*
2♣ 2NT
3♣

This bid shows a bad hand with at least 5-5 in the black suits.

However, with a good hand and extra Major suit shape, we need to be able to further explore for the right game – we don't know if the best game is 4-Major or 3NT. In this case, patterning out into a Major is natural and forcing.

Example 6

1♠ 1NT*
2♥ 2NT
___?

- 3♣ 5-4-0-4, minimum (maybe 5-4-1-3)
- 3♦ 5-4-4-0, minimum (maybe 5-4-3-1)
- 3♥ At least 5-5 Majors, GF
- 3♠ At least 6♠ and 4♥, GF



Conclusion

Bidding space is a valuable commodity. Auctions are often jammed (because of our bidding or the opponents' bidding) and in the rare case when we have lots of bidding space it is important not to waste it. Especially in 2/1 GF auctions where we find a fit, we should strive to communicate our shape to partner to help them bid good slams and stay out of poor ones. Visualization is important for partner's slam bidding and patterning out helps them do that. Show your shape to partner and give them the information they need in order to make a good decision about further bidding!