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This Week in Bridge

(459) Partnership Bidding: Their NT Opening Auctions

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Level: 5 of 10 (2 of 6)

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General

When the opponents open the bidding with NT, they will often buy the contract. We may compete in the bidding to try to win the contract, but we are more likely to be trying to get in the way of the opponents or help partner get off to a good opening lead. Here we look at our options for doing each of these things!

Competitive Bidding

Competing in the bidding after a 1NT opening bid is an art form.

Example 1

1NT 2NT?

What does this 2NT bid mean after RHO opens 1NT?

Most partnerships talk about their “system” after a 1NT opening bid. But often they forget to talk about what a 2NT overcall shows. Most partnerships treat this like the Unusual NT – showing both minors (at least 5-5 shape). This is a valuable destructive bid!

Example 2

1NT P 2♣ X?

What does a double of Stayman show?

This is not a takeout double; it is a lead-directing double – showing good ♣ and a decent hand! We need to be able to defeat the 2♣ contract.



Example 3

1NT P 2♥* X?

What does the double of this transfer bid show?

This double of 2♥ shows a good ♥ suit. It does not need quite as good of a hand as a double of Stayman, because Responder could have a zero HCP for using a transfer bid.

Example 4

1NT P 2♦* 2♥?

What does a 2♥ bid (“completing the transfer”) show?

When Responder shows a ♥ suit, bidding their suit is like a Michaels cuebid – showing a 5+card ♠ suit and a 5+card minor. This is a nice use of “Michaels” in a non-traditional way.

Example 5

1NT P 2♦* 2NT?

What does a direct 2NT bid show in this auction?

This is not a natural overcall. This 2NT is used to show the minors – at least 5-5 and wanting to compete in the bidding. It could be more shape-based than strength-based.

Conclusion

Competing over the opponents’ NT opening bid is complicated. This is especially true when there is other bidding (like when we are in the sandwich seat). We need to make sure that we have good agreements with partner about the meaning of our bids. We will have some difficult judgments to make in these auctions and we need to make sure that we know all of our options for competing in the bidding.