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This Week in Bridge

(460) Partnership Bidding: Their Minor 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 a minor suit, we may still have a good chance of competing in the bidding and even winning the contract. Our hope is that we have, and can find, a Major suit fit! To effectively compete in the bidding, we need to have good agreements about what conventions we use and when they apply. Let's make sure we have good agreements in some of these problem auctions.

Competitive Bidding

Let's look at how to compete in the bidding when the opponents open with 1-minor.

When the opponents have "special agreements" that we are not used to playing against, it can lead to misunderstandings between us and partner. This is especially true when the opponents are playing a "could be short" opening bid. Let's make sure we have some good agreements with partner in these auctions.

Example 1

1♣* 2♣?

What does this 2♣ bid mean when the Opener could have only 2 cards?

I like to treat a "could be short as 2" opening bid as natural. Most of the time the opponents will have more than 2 cards and thus we will want to use a cuebid as a Michaels bid – showing at least 5-5 in the Majors. We do not have to play it this way, but we need to make sure that we and partner have good agreements about when Michaels is "on" and when it is "off."

Example 2

What if this 1♣ opening bid could be as short as 1 or even 0 cards? What does this 2♣ bid mean?

In this situation I like to play 2♣ as natural – showing a 5+card ♣ suit and an opening hand. The idea is that when the opening bid could be extremely short then we are more likely to want to bid it naturally.



But if it could be a 2-card suit (only occasionally) then it is much more likely to be natural and we are more likely to need our Michaels Cuebid, showing both Majors.

Example 3

1♣* 2NT?

What does this 2NT bid mean if 1♣ could be as short as 2-cards?

This is another situation where we need to have good agreements with partner. I like to follow the same guidelines here that we do for our Michaels Cuebids. When this could be 2 cards, we treat it as a natural ♣ bid and use 2NT to show ♦ and ♥. But if the 1♣ bid could be 0 or 1-card then I like to treat this as artificial and use 2NT for the minor suits. Make sure we have these situations discussed in detail.

Example 4

1♣ P 1♠ 2♣?

What does this 2♣ bid mean in the sandwich seat?

There are two common treatments there – just make sure we and partner are playing the same way. Some play this bid as natural – showing at least 5+♣ and an opening hand. Others play this as 5-5 in the other 2 suits. I personally like to play this as ♦ and ♥ – at least 5-5 in the other 2 suits and a decent hand. With a bad hand and 5-5 in the other 2 suits I would jump to 2NT to preempt the bidding!

Example 5

1♣ P 1♠ P
1NT P 3NT X?

What does this “out of nowhere” X mean?

This is a classic penalty double asking partner to lead dummy’s first bid suit - ♠. Partner will have a good ♠ suit and an outside entry – and expect to defeat the contract if we make the “right lead.”

Conclusion

When the opponents make “normal bids” there are still some auctions that can be confusing, but most of the time we feel comfortable with communicating with partner – we have experience seeing these bids before. But when the opponents have some unusual agreements, or we make a bid that is “non-normal” then we have a chance of having a misunderstanding with partner. Make sure that you spend some time with partner working on these auctions and getting these potentially confusing minor suit issues under control.