***This Week in Bridge***

**(25) Bidding Slam After Partner Opens 1NT**

*©AiB Robert S. Todd*

*Level: 1, 2* *robert@advinbridge.com*

**General**

Trying to decide whether to bid a slam opposite partner’s 1NT opening bid is an enormous topic and we will not cover everything in this introduction. We will examine some of Responder’s general tools for investigating slam and discuss how Opener cooperates or tries to reject Responder’s invitations.

**Quantitative Bids**

*Level: 1*

These are bids that ask Opener how they feel about their hand for slam. These are cooperative bidding processes to see if our side should or should not bid a slam.

**Quantitative: Basic Examples**

1NT 4NT Pass with a minimum hand, bid 6NT with a maximum hand.

1NT 5NT Bid 6NT with a minimum hand, bid 7NT with a maximum hand.

**Quantitative: More Advanced Examples**

1NT 2♦

2♥ 4NT Pass or bid 5♥with a minimum hand, bid 6♥ or 6NT with a maximum

hand.

1NT 2♥

2♠ 4NT Pass or bid 5♠with a minimum hand, bid 6♠ or 6NT with a maximum

hand.

*Note: Over 4NT, a bid of 5NT is* “choice of slams*.” It says “I have a maximum and 3-card support”. Responder can choose between 6♥/*♠ *or 6NT.*

1NT 2♣

2♥ 3♣

3NT 4NT Responder shows 5+♣ and 4♠ (usually, for bidding Stayman.)

Opener’s 3NT bid shows ♦ stoppers and no interest in a ♣ or ♠ slam. 4NT by Responder further invites slam - showing a good hand and wanting partner to make the final decision about slam.

**Quantitative: Single-Suited Slam Tries**

1NT 2♦

2♥ 4♥ Slam try with 6+♥ and no shortness (since no Texas Transfer.)

1NT 2♥

2♠ 4♠ Slam try with 6+♠ and no shortness (since no Texas Transfer.)

**Shortness-Showing Slam Tries (Splinters)**

*Level: 2*

Another important type of auction for bidding good slams and staying out of bad ones is a *Splinter* auction, showing shortness. These auctions allow the Notrump Opener to re-evaluate their hand. If Opener has lots of points opposite partner’s shortness and therefore wasted values, then Opener will decline the slam invite and try to put the brakes on the auction. If Opener has little wasted values and good fitting cards, then Opener will bid slam aggressively. This kind of bidding is far more effective than quantitative bidding – it puts the focus more on “which points does partner have” instead of just “how many points does partner have.”

**Splinters: Single-Suited Hand Slam Tries**

1NT 2♦\*

2♥ 3♠/4♣/4♦ 6+♥, 0-1 in ♠/♣/♦. Slam Interest!

1NT 2♥\*

2♠ 4♣/4♦/4♥ 6+♠, 0-1 in ♣/♦/♥. Slam Interest!

With lots of wasted values opposite Responder’s shortness, the 1NT Opener signs off in 4M (alerting partner to dangerous misfitting points.) With a hand that fits well and has no wasted values, Opener can cuebid Aces or bid Keycard 4NT.

*Comment on Ace Asking Bids*

After partner opens 1NT, we use 4NT as Keycard when we know we have a fit and we use 4♣ Gerber as Ace-asking when we have not found a fit (and if 4♣ is not being used as a natural bid or as a Splinter.)

**Splinters: 2-Suited Hand Slam Tries**

The other kind of slam bidding we should discuss is when Responder has two suits (at least 5-4.) In these auctions Responder shows both suits by:

* Transferring to the first suit and then bidding the side suit OR
* Bidding Stayman and then bidding the side suit.

*Note: Smolen is possible with 5-4 in the Majors – but this discussion is for another time.*

Notice in both cases Responder shows the Major suit interest first and the minor suits later. Let us examine one of these auctions in detail so that we can see how Opener cooperates or rejects (discourages) Responder’s slam try.

*Example*

1NT 2♥\*

2♠ 3♣

With a ♠ fit, Opener must show support. Since 3♣ was a game-forcing bid, the principle of fast arrival applies. So 4♠ shows a hand that is not interested in slam and 3♠ shows a hand that is interested in slam, either with good fitting cards or a decent maximum.

Without a ♠ fit, Opener describes the hand the best they can.

* With a big ♣ fit and a good hand Opener bids 4♣ - a natural slam try.
* With a 5-card ♥ suit, Opener can bid 3♥ (natural), trying to find a 5-3♥ fit.
* 3NT is Opener’s bid to slow down the auction, showing a lack of interest in slam.

This auction is a classic example of two fighting tensions in trying to search for a fit and trying to determine the right level. Fits (especially Majors) are what we search for first and then we determine the level (and the possibility of slam.)

*Note: We did not discuss 3-suited hands. They are similar to 2-suited hands but may require some additional conventions to allow us to show our hand types.*

**Conclusion**

Exploring slam after partner opens 1NT does not lead to simple auctions. Having good agreements and discussions with partner will help you explore slam without getting too high and allow you to bid slam when you each hold the right cards.