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This Week in Bridge

(466) Corrective vs. Forward-Going Bids

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Level: 5 of 10 (2 of 6)

Robert S. Todd

robert@advinbridge.com

General

One of the costliest mix-ups we have with partner is having a misunderstanding about the intention of partner's bid. First, we must determine if partner's bid is forcing or non-forcing. Most partnerships have some mix-ups on this, but can discuss them with experience and have fewer and fewer misunderstandings about forcing and non-forcing bids as time goes along. This is often because these mistakes are extremely costly, and we are forced to discuss them and get on the same page with partner. More subtle mix-ups can often fall through the cracks of a partnership because they are not so clearly the problem on a hand. One important type of these mistakes that we want to discuss here are bids that are *corrective*, meaning that they are just trying to improve the partscore, versus bids that are *forward-going*, meaning that they are an effort to get to game or more. Let's look at some of these potentially challenging auctions.

Corrective Bids

Some bids made by partner, particularly when they are the Responder, are an effort to improve the partscore and in no way are we expected to bid on or try for game after they are bid. Recognizing some of these bids can be a challenge.

Example 1

1♠ 1NT

2♦ 2♠

This is called a *preference* and it does not show a fit or a good hand. It usually shows 2-card support and 6-9 points (though 3-card support and a very weak hand is possible). Opener passes unless they have a considerable amount of extra values for rebidding 2♦ – something like 16-17 points.

Example 2

1♠ 2♦ 2♠ 3♦

3♠

This 3♠ bid should never be raised to game by the Responder. This bid is strictly competitive, and Opener could be planning to go down already, so raising should not even be a consideration. Opener could make a game try (or maximal double in another auction) if interested in game.



Example 3

1♣ 1♠
1NT 2♠

This is a classic corrective auction. Responder has 5+card ♠ and no interest in game. There is not a hand with which Opener should raise to 3♠. If Responder had any interest in game, they would have used New Minor Forcing (NMF) or found some other call to investigate game.

Example 4

1♣ 1♠
1NT 2♥

Again, this is a purely corrective auction. Responder has at least 5-card ♠ and 4+card ♥ and less than invitational values. Opener should pass or correct to 2♠, whichever seems like the best fit.

Forward-Going Auctions

We can notice that when Opener bids/rebids NT and Responder has a weak, distributional hand, then Responder makes a corrective action to play in a contract where their hand is more useful. Playing a NT contract with few combined HCP and most of them located in one hand (Opener's hand) can be extremely difficult. But not all low-level actions by the Responder are purely corrective.

Example 5

1♣ 1♠
2♣ 2♠

Unlike when Opener rebids 1NT, Opener here has a source of tricks to produce winners. This rebid of 2♠ by Responder is non-forcing but constructive. It shows 6+card ♠ and 8-10 points. (With a poor hand Responder just passes and lets Opener play in 2♣, their long suit.)

Example 6

1♣ 1♠
2♣ 2♥

Again, this auction is not corrective, it is forward-going. Responder does not need to rescue Opener from their 2♣ contract in their long suit. This 2♥ bid shows 8-10 points, 5+card ♠, and 4+card ♥. It is non-forcing (since it is not a convention and not a Responder's reverse).



More Complicated Situations

There are other auctions where the strain and nature of the suit helps us determine if the bid is corrective or forward-going. Sometimes these forward-going bids are even forcing, while these corrective bids are “to play” or “pass or correct”.

Example 7

1♦ 1♠
2♦ 2NT

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- 3♣ Weak opener, 6-card ♦, 4+card ♣. Choice of part scores. 2NT unlikely to make.
- 3♦ Weak opener, 6+card ♦. Hoping that 3♦ has a better chance of making than 2NT.
- 3♥ Accepting Game Invite. 4-card ♥. 1-4-4-4 or 0-4-5/4 shape and a good hand.
- 3♠ Accepting Game Invite. 3-card ♠. Something like 3-1-5/4 and extra values.

Notice that in these auctions, correcting NT to our long suit, especially a minor, is corrective, while bidding partner’s suit, showing a partial fit, or bidding a potential new Major suit fit is forward-going and forcing.

Conclusion

It can be tedious to go through the details of the meanings of these kinds of auctions, but if you are serious about reducing your misunderstandings with partner and want to make your bidding generally more effective, take the time to discuss the ideas of corrective vs. forward-going bids. You and partner should be working together to reach the best final contract, not working against one another!