



Adventures in Bridge

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This Week in Bridge

(509) Vulnerability Tactics

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Level: 6 of 10 (2 of 6)

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General

Vulnerability is an important part of the auction. Many of the decisions that we make should be shaped by the vulnerability of the hand. When we are vulnerable (and especially when we are vulnerable and the opponents are non-vulnerable, or *unfavorable* vulnerability) we need to “behave ourselves” – not do anything too aggressive. When we are non-vulnerable (and especially when we are non-vulnerable and the opponents are vulnerable, or *favorable* vulnerability) we get to have more fun. That means that we get to bid more aggressively and try to make the opponents’ lives more difficult.

Opening Bidding Tactics

There are many opening bidding situations that are much more fun when we have favorable vulnerability. Here are some tactical opening bidding opportunities when we have this situation:

1-Level Openings – 1st and 2nd Seat

- All 12 HCP Hands
- Many 11 HCP hands in first seat
- 1NT Openings
 - Stretch with 5-card suit
 - 3rd seat upgrades
 - The “smaller” semi-balanced hand

Preempting Openings

- Extremely Weak Hands
- Extremely Weak Suits
- Preempt one level higher.
 - 5-card suits at then 2-Level
 - 6-card suits at then 3-level
 - 7-card suits at the 4-level
- 3rd Seat – Anything goes!



Responding

When we are Responder, we also have fun tactical actions we get to do when we are non-vulnerable (and especially when at favorable vulnerability).

- Responding 1♠ with very few HCP.
- Weak Jump Shifts – attack the opponents' bidding space with horrible hands.
- Weak Raises – Show Fit.
- Jumps to Game – Eat up all the bidding space.
- Weak Freaks – Almost any 5-card support is enough.

Interference and Advancer

There is fun to be had even when the opponents open the bidding. At favorable vulnerability, consider attacking even more often!

- Overcalls – Make them more aggressively.
- Jump Overcalls - Make them more aggressively.
- Michaels – Use this more aggressively.
- Unusual NT – Use this more aggressively.
- Make light and shapely takeout doubles
- Jump Raises – Attack.

Other Fun Attacking

There are even some fun “crazy” things that we can try at favorable vulnerability. Some of these things can get us into trouble, but they can also cause the opponents a lot of difficulty.

- Opening light in 3rd seat – Opening 10-11 HCP is extremely reasonable.
- Opening extremely light in 3rd seat – Opening 8-9 HCP might even work.
- 1NT anytime – stretch to open 1NT or even “lie”!
- Responding with a fit – tactical bids
 - We might even lie in a Major when we have a big fit for partner's minor suit, which might mean bidding a 3-card or shorter suit. (Danger, this psyche can backfire!)

Conclusion

Expert players think of favorable vulnerability as permission to misbehave. When we are in this situation, we look for any excuse at all to take some action – passing is not fun! Learning to stretch the truth in these situations and gaining experience with getting away with it (meaning getting the opponents into trouble, not our side) is a bit of an art form. But you won't learn to get better at the tactical part of the “game of bridge” unless you start giving it a try!