

WHAT SHOULD YOU BID?

The ABF has a column "What should I bid?" and the first hand comes from a recent offering.

Your partner opens 4♥ (let's say it is vulnerable) and you hold:

♠ A K 8 5 2
♥ A
♦ Q 2
♣ A K J 10 2

At the table, this player bid 4NT. There is a massive flaw with the 4NT bid: you do not have any control in the diamond suit, so even after partner's response, you won't know whether to bid on or not.

Many years ago, playing with Elizabeth Havas, we developed a treatment that after an opening bid of 4-Major (but not after 4-minor), bidding a new suit was not natural. Rather, it showed interest in slam, with all suits controlled apart from the one bid! In effect, it asked partner to bid slam with control in the bid suit.

Therefore, on the above hand, over 4♥ you would bid 5♦ asking for control of the diamond suit.

The responses were created were straight-forward:

5-Major no control of that suit (i.e. there are still two losers in that suit)
6-Major 2nd round control of the suit (i.e. one loser)
7-Major 1st round control of the suit (i.e. no loser)

The full hand was:

♠ J
♥ K Q J 9 6 5 2
♦ void
♣ Q 8 7 5 3

♠ A K 8 5 2
♥ A
♦ Q 2
♣ A K J 10 2

(On the submitted hand, South held a 4-1-3-5, making 5♦ riskier. I would prefer to make the bid with a doubleton at most – i.e. two losers.)

Opposite South's 5♦ bid, North simply bids 7♥. Partner has asked you about the control of diamonds, so you should not be looking at other suits – just the diamonds, as requested.

At the world championships in 2004, I opened 4♥ on a very poor hand (presumably it had to do with the vulnerability being favourable AND my 8-card suit:

♠ 5 4
♥ Q 10 9 8 6 5 4 3
♦ 2
♣ K 2

Partner responded with 5♦, as per our systemic agreement, and I bid 6♥. I certainly had some misgivings about my opening bid, but I bid slam, as asked!

It was with some relief this dummy appeared:

♠ A K Q J 2
♥ A K J
♦ Q J 6 5 4
♣ void

(I was also very appreciative of the screen dividing us, so I couldn't hear any comments about the quality of my heart suit 😊)

Our team-mates asked us how we'd bid the slam with any degree of confidence and we proudly explained the structure. Now I have read Andy Hung's comment: "There is a common treatment that after a 4-Major pre-empt, a new suit at the 5-level is not natural, but asking partner about a control in that suit." At the time, nobody had adopted our 'treatment'!! It's reasonably rare, but should be easy to remember – and spectacular when it comes up.

There was a different submission, relating to opener's rebid on this hand:

♠ A J 8 2
♥ A Q 10 3
♦ A 10 7
♣ K 5

<i>You</i>	<i>Partner</i>
1♦	2♣
?	

Playing Standard, your 'best' rebid is a jump to 3NT, showing 18-19 HCP. If partner has 10-12 HCP they will now pass. If they have more, they can either bid 4NT (invitational/quantitative) or jump to slam in an appropriate denomination (clubs, diamonds or no trumps).

Playing 2 over 1 game forcing, my rebid would be different. I now rebid 2NT with either 12-14 HCP or 18+ HCP, and rebid 3NT with specifically 15-17 HCP (so I will usually have a singleton in partner's 2-level suit). When partner now rebids 3NT, I raise to 4NT with the 18+ HCP hand, so partner can take control.

Bear in mind that 2-Major on these auctions is still a reverse. Whilst you will be indicating your point count more accurately, you will be misrepresenting your shape to partner, given that the reverse shows at least a 4-5 hand shape. Not only that, but you generally assume that partner's 2♣ response has denied a 4-card Major!

One more offering – along the lines of “How Would You Bid These Hands?”

Dealer East

♠ 9 8 6 5

♥ Q J 4 3

♦ J

♣ A Q 6 2

♠ J

♥ A K 6

♦ A Q 7 4

♣ K 9 8 7 5

West

1♥

?

East

1♣

2♦

If you play simple methods are a reverse – 2♦ being a reverse – then West will have to use fourth-suit forcing:

West

1♥

2♠ (1)

4♣ (3)

5♦ (1 key card)

East

1♣

2♦

3♥ (2)

4NT

6♣

- (1) Fourth suit game forcing
- (2) Shape showing – should be a 1-3-4-5
- (3) Setting clubs, showing slam interest

If you play Blackout, you establish the game force earlier, which can make your auction a little ‘easier’. You will still reach 6♣:

West

1♥

3♣ (1)

4♣

5♦ (1 key card)

East

1♣

2♦

3♥ (2)

4NT

6♣

- (1) Playing Blackout, the bid of fourth suit (or 2NT – whichever is lower) is your ONLY weak bid. So 2♠ would be a weak bid, rather than 4SF, whereas all other bids are game forcing. So 3♣ agrees clubs, forcing to at least game
- (2) Shape showing: 1-3-4-5 – or perhaps even a spade void!

Barbara Travis

www.bridgewithbarbara.com