



Adventures in Bridge

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This Week in Bridge

(23) Lebensohl

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Level: 3

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***Begin by reading the introduction to the concepts of Lebensohl: Simple-sohl. (TWiB 6)*

General: Simplesohl to Lebensohl

In our Simplesohl discussion, we left out one major part of the Lebensohl convention. This is the “stopper-showing” aspect of the 2NT relay. Let’s complete our Lebensohl discussion.

Bidding 3NT

Partner opens 1NT and the opponents interfere with any bid from 2♦ to 2♠. If we have 10 points (a game forcing hand) and no interest in looking for a Major suit fit, we bid 3NT. But we have two ways to get to 3NT:

- Bid 3NT directly (fast)
- Use the 2NT relay to 3♣ and then bid 3NT (slow.)

Example 1

1NT 2♥ 3NT*

Example 2

1NT 2♥ 2NT* P
3♣* P 3NT*

Both bidding sequences show game-forcing values, 10-15 points. The difference in the two sequences relates to showing a stopper in the opponent’s suit.

- “Fast Denies”
- “Slow Shows”

#1 denies a ♥ stopper, while #2 shows a ♥ stopper.

What Does Opener Do with this Stopper Information?

So the next question is how can we make use of this information? If responder bids 3NT (fast), denying a stopper, and Opener has a stopper, then he can pass 3NT. If Opener does not have a stopper in the opponent's suit either, then he pulls 3NT and we try to find another game to play, either a 4-3 Major suit fit or 5-minor.

Bidding Stayman

There is another use of Lebensohl where the 2NT relay gives us two ways to show similar hands: cuebids for Stayman auctions.

Example 3

1NT 2♥ 3♥*

Example 4

1NT 2♥ 2NT* P
3♣* P 3♥*

Both auctions are game forcing and show and ask Opener for 4c♠. Once again, the difference is stopper showing - fast denies a stopper (#3), slow shows a stopper (#4.)

This further use of the 2NT relay gives Lebensohl its complete structure and allows Responder to nicely describe his hand in difficult competitive auctions.

Conclusion

Lebensohl is a sophisticated convention used by Responder to show many aspects of their hand after the opponent has bid over our 1NT-opening bid. The opponents have become more and more aggressive (destructive) after we open 1NT and it is thus important for us to have a good tool with which to describe our hand when this happens.