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This Week in Bridge

(76) Planning Rebids -What to Expect from Responder

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Level: 2

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General

When we have an opening hand, we are generally excited to get the auction started. Often we will jump right into the auction and start bidding before really thinking. This is a bad habit and one that we want to break. We want to build a good habit of planning or thinking ahead to what might (is likely) to happen so that we can be prepared for what to do next. We don't need to know what we are going to do in every situation, but we want to be prepared for the most likely scenarios.

Planning and Conventions

Most of the time we do a good job remembering our conventional agreements and bidding tools when we are faced with the hands that are specifically designed for these conventions. But just as important as knowing how to use our conventional tools is being able to recognize these conventions when we are on the other side of them - when partner tries to make use of them. Forgetting a convention can lead to real bidding disasters. One of the best ways to prepare ourselves and help us remember is to plan ahead before we open the bidding. We want to think about what we might hear from partner and what we will do after each of these likely responses.

Most conventions are designed for specific situations. We can easily prepare ourselves for what we need to look out for by classifying the auctions by the common types of opening bids: 1-minor, 1-Major, and 1NT.

Note: There are also specific things to look out for when partner is a passed hand or in competition. We will discuss these another time.

We should also keep in the back of our mind that as the Opener we are frequently not the Captain. Many of Responder's conventional tools are just questions of Opener and they do not reveal much information about Responder's hand. Thus, as the opening bidder we frequently strive to describe our hand to partner and leave it up to them to make the final decision.

What to Expect When You Open 1-minor

When we open 1-minor we should be thinking about finding a Major suit fit and showing partner our bucket and hand type. Responder will be responsible for looking for these Major suit fits, but we should keep in mind when they are still possible and when partner has denied having one.

- Responder's Priorities -
 - First, Responder will look for a Major suit fit.
 - With no interest in a Major, they will raise our suit with a fit.
 - Otherwise, show their general values.
- Responder's Bidding Tools -
 - Natural Major Suit Bids,
 - Inverted Minors,
 - Weak or Invitational Jump Shifts,
 - 2/1 Game Forcing (but only 1D-2C)
 - Splinters
 - NT bids are natural with no 4-card Major and show point ranges.
 - Other advanced bidding tools are also possible by partnership agreement.
- Responder's Later Conventional Bidding Tools - Things to have our eyes out for:
 - *New Minor Forcing* - If we show a balanced hand (1NT or 2NT rebids) or rebid our minor
 - *4th Suit Forcing* - If we show an unbalanced hand.

What to Expect When You Open 1-Major

When we open 1-Major, partner will begin by looking for a fit in our Major - this will be relatively easy to discover. If we do not have a fit in our Major, we will still want to look for a fit in the other Major. This is likely to be somewhat more difficult if we cannot bid that suit at the 1-level (♥ fit after a 1♠ opening.) Opener should keep their eyes open for this ♥ fit, knowing that it can be a struggle for partner to find.

- Responder's Priorities -
 - First, Responder will show us a big fit immediately if possible.
 - Second, they will bid 1♠ after a 1♥ opening with ♠.
 - Partner will make a 2/1 GF with enough values.
 - Otherwise, partner will show their values.
- Responder's Bidding Tools -
 - Jacoby 2NT
 - Splinters, Mini-splinters

- Limit Raises, Raises (Bergen Raises)
- 2/1 Game Forcing
- Semi-Forcing (Forcing) Notrump
- Responder's Later Conventional Bidding Tools -
 - 3-card Limit Raise after 1NT Semi-Forcing
 - 4th Suit Forcing
 - Finding ♥ fit after 1♠ opening is more difficult

What to Expect When You Open 1NT

When we open 1NT we have already shown our hand type and bucket to partner. Thus, we can turn our focus to two other aspects of our hand – Major suit holdings and size (Max vs. Min.) We want to start with a focus on our Major suit holdings since partner will be using their tools to explore for a Major suit fit, and we should be prepared to help find it.

- Responder's Priorities -
 - Look for 4-4 Major Suit Fit
 - Look for 5-3 Major Suit Fit
 - Show their strength (bucket)
 - Rescue Opener from 1NT
 - Look for Best Game – 5m vs. 3NT, 4M vs. 3NT
 - Investigate Slams
 - Ask Opener Questions
- Responder's Bidding Tools -
 - Stayman (or Puppet Stayman)
 - Transfers (Jacoby, 4-suited, Texas)
 - Invitations in NT (Size Ask, Quantitative Bids)
 - 3-level bids – Minor Suit Oriented Hands (Slam or Best Game)
- Responder's Later Conventional Bidding Tools -
 - Drop Dead Stayman (Garbage Stayman)
 - Smolen
 - Delayed Texas
 - Forcing 3-other Major Raises
 - Splinters (Baze)
 - Quantitative Bids

Conclusion

Planning ahead is an important part of effective bidding. By focusing on what Responder is likely to do, we force ourselves to think about what we want to do next. This is called “The Prepared Rebid” and players that take the time to make this plan make for much better partners. Thinking ahead lets us avoid difficult situations and pitfalls before they are right upon us – it gives us time to try to avoid sticky situations. Before you open the bidding next, think about what Responder

might do, be ready for the most common bids, and know what your plans are for your possible rebid!