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This Week in Bridge

(267) Responding to 1-minor with Both Majors

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Level: 2, 3

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General

When partner opens the bidding with 1-minor, our initial job is to search for a Major suit fit. With only one 4-card or longer Major suit, this is straightforward - we bid our suit at the 1-level or make a weak jump shift into our suit at the 2-level with enough length. Describing our hand to partner gets more complicated if we have length in both Major suits. Here we look at how to describe a variety of different types of hands while keeping the auction at a reasonable level.

Showing Our Major Suit Shape - Opener Rebids 1NT

Level 2

When partner opens 1-minor, we can show a variety of different shapes and strengths. We will bid one of our suits, searching for a fit, and when that is not successful, look at how to continue the auction when partner rebids 1NT.

4-4 in the Majors

We start by responding 1♥. After a 1NT rebid from Opener,

- With minimum values (6-9 points), we pass.
- With invitational or better values, we either bid 2♠ (making a Responder's Reverse) or the appropriate amount of NT (2NT with invitational values, 3NT game-going values, or 4NT with interest in slam). Which one to bid depends a bit on our partnership style. If partner can have a 4-card ♠ suit for rebidding 1NT (which I recommend that you do with most balanced hands), then we need to continue to search for a possible ♠ fit by bidding 2♠.

4-5 in the Majors

We start by responding 1♥. After a 1NT rebid from Opener,

- With minimum values, we rebid 2♥, non-forcing, corrective.
- With invitational or better values, we use New Minor Forcing (NMF) to search for either a 5-3 or 4-4 Major suit fit.

5-4 in the Majors

We start by responding 1♠. After a 1NT rebid from Opener,

- With minimum values, we rebid 2♥, non-forcing. This asks Opener to choose between playing in 2♥ or 2♠.
- With invitational or better values, we use NMF to search for either a 5-3 or 4-4 Major suit fit.

5-5 in the Majors

We start by responding 1♠. After a 1NT rebid from Opener,

- With minimum values, we rebid 2♥, non-forcing. This asks Opener to choose between playing in 2♥ or 2♠.
- With invitational values, we jump to 3♥, non-forcing, invitational. This shows at least 5-5 distribution and invites partner to bid game in whichever Major suit they prefer.
- With game-forcing values, we jump to 4♥, non-forcing. This asks partner to pick between 4♥ and 4♠.
- With slam interest, we can use NMF, then bid ♥ to show 5-5 distribution and more values than jumping to 4♥.

6-4 in the Majors

We start by responding 1♠. After a 1NT rebid from Opener,

- With minimum values, we rebid 2♠, non-forcing.
- With invitational or better values, what we do depends on our suit quality. We may want to search for a 4-4 ♥ fit, or we may simply settle for a 6-2 ♠ (or 6-3) fit. With interest in exploring the 4-4 ♥ fit, we use NMF. With a weak 4-card ♥ suit, we simply decide to play in ♠ and rebid 3♠ with invitational values or 4♠ if we want to play game.
- With a strong enough hand to be interested in slam, we start with NMF to get more information about partner's Major suit holding.

4-6 in the Majors

We start by responding 1♥. After a 1NT rebid from Opener,

- With minimum values, we rebid 2♥, non-forcing.
- With invitational or better values, what we do depends on our suit quality. We may want to search for a 4-4 ♠ fit, or we may simply settle for a 6-2 (or 6-3) ♥ fit. With interest in exploring the 4-4 fit, we make a Responder's Reverse into 2♠ (forcing for 1-round). With a weak 4-card ♠ suit, we simply play in ♥ and rebid 3♥ with invitational values or 4♥ if we want to play game.
- With a strong enough hand to be interested in slam, we start with NMF to get more information about partner's Major suit holding.

6-5 in the Majors

We start by responding 1♠. After a 1NT rebid from Opener,

- With minimum values, we rebid 2♥, non-forcing. This asks Opener to choose between playing in 2♥ or 2♠.
- With invitational values, we jump to 3♥, non-forcing, invitational. This shows at least 5-5 distribution and invites partner to bid game in whichever Major suit they prefer.
- With game-forcing values, we jump to 4♥, non-forcing. This asks partner to pick between 4♥ and 4♠.
- With a strong enough hand to be interested in slam, we start with NMF to get more information about partner's Major suit holding.

5-6 in the Majors

Here our first bid is actually shaped by our values and location of honors.

- With minimum values, we treat the hand as if we were 5-5, starting with 1♠, planning to rebid 2♥ if partner rebids 1NT.
- With invitational values, we must use the location of our honors to decide if we want to treat the hand as if we were 5-5 in the Majors (starting with 1♠ and after a 1NT bid from Opener rebidding 3♥) or 4-6 in the Majors (starting with 1♥ and after a 1NT bid from Opener rebidding 2♠, a Responder's Reverse).
- With at least game-forcing values, we can bid naturally. We start with 1♥ and if partner rebids 1NT, we make a Responder's reverse into 2♠. Then if partner does not support either of our suits, we rebid 3♠, to show 5-6 shape.

Showing Our Major Suit Shape - Opener Rebids a Suit

Level 3

If partner opens 1♣ and rebids 2♠, instead of 1NT, then the bidding is mostly unchanged (just they cannot have a 4-card suit). In this auction, Responder can use 2♦ as *Extended New Minor Forcing*, showing invitational or better values. Responder uses many of the same bidding sequences as above.

If partner opens the bidding 1♦ and rebids 2♦ much of the bidding continues as it did above, but 3♣ is used as *Extended New Minor Forcing*, this time showing game forcing values.

The difficult auctions often come when partner open the bidding with 1♦, we respond 1♠, and Opener rebids 2♣. If we have length in both Major suits then it can be difficult to describe our hand because 2♥ is now 4th Suit Game Forcing (artificial), so we do not have a low-level natural ♥ fit available to us.

Example 1

1♦ 1♠
2♣ 2♥*

Here 2♥ is 4th Suit Forcing to game. It is artificial and does not mean anything about the ♥ suit.

Now let's look at how we continue this auction with length in both Majors and a variety of different values.

Example 2

1♦ 1♠
2♣ __?

5-5 in the Majors

- With game-forcing values, we bid 2♥*, creating the game force, and later bid 3♥.
- With invitational values, we jump to 3♥ (just as we did when partner rebid 1NT).
- With minimum values, we cannot show our ♥ suit and must either rebid 2♠ with a great 5-card suit or choose between partner's ♦ or ♣ suits. This can be one of the more difficult situations when we have extreme length in both Major suits and partner shows length in both minor suits.

5-4 in the Majors

- With game-forcing values, we again bid 2♥*, creating the game force, and later search for our 4-4 or 5-3 fit.
- With invitational values, we bid 2NT or support one of Opener's minors at the 3-level. We leave it up to Opener to introduce the ♥ suit if they have a 4-card ♥ suit as well as length in both minors.
- With minimum values, we cannot show our ♥ suit and must either rebid 2♠ with a great 5-card suit or choose between partner's ♦ or ♣ suits.

Note: Because of the difficult with these two-suited hands, some players adopt a convention called Reverse Flannery (particularly after a 1♦ opening bid) to try to solve some of these bidding problems.

Conclusion

When we respond to a 1-minor opening bid (just as we do when responding to a 1NT opening bid), we must plan how to show both our shape and strength when we hold length in both Major suits. Our second action is frequently shaped by our values - if we have a game-forcing hand, we can usually bid comfortably, but with minimum or invitational values, we may be forced to distort our shape somewhat. Our goal is to describe our hand to partner and attempt to locate a fit without letting the auction get too high. If you practice “making a plan” for how to bid your hand before you take your first call, you will frequently save yourself hassles later in the auction and often reach the best final contract.