

BRIDGE TIPS FROM ALEX & BARBARA

How would you bid this hand?

North

S A843
H K5
D AQJ6
C AJ5

South (dealer)

S KQ9
H AJ10
D K53
C KQ104

S N
1C 1S
2N 3C (Check-back Stayman, in case S has a 4-cd major)
3D 7NT

The 2NT bid by South showed 18-19 HCP. When partner makes a limited bid, giving an EXACT point range, just add your points and bid.

18+ 19 = 37 HCP. Can your side be missing an Ace? NO because you are only missing 3HCP and an Ace is worth 4HCP. Thus, just bid 7NT.

At our table, South opened 1NT because he thought 15-17...18? What's the difference, it's close? And now that make it very difficult for North to bid the grand slam, since South has anywhere between 15-17 HCP. Be very exact with your NT bidding and you will get to all your games, slams and grand slams.

In that same session, we picked up these cards:

North

S AK87542
H J
D ----
C AKQJ4

This was Alex's hand and his LHO opened 1D - Pass- Pass. What would you bid now? If you Double, partner responds 1H. Now what do you bid? It is a wonderful hand, with enormous "playing strength".

I hope you bid 6S next.

This is partner's hand:

South

S J9
H K9764
D J7432
C 8

East leads Diamond King. You ruff it and what do you do now? Do you pull trump? Or did you stop to count your losers? You have 1 potential S loser, 1 Heart loser and a Club loser.

You cannot do anything about the Heart loser BUT you can play Club Ace and ruff a Club and NOW pull trump. If the trumps do not break 2-2, you will not make it, no matter what. BUT one of the opponents had five Clubs headed by the 10 so if you did not ruff a Club, you would be down.

WORDS OF WISDOM FROM MIKE LAWRENCE

Whatever you choose to bid, do so with an air of confidence. If you ooze uncertainty when you make a bid or an opening lead or during the play, your opponents will know when you are a happy bridge player and when you are in trouble.

Be serene and keep your concerns from your opponents.

Saying things like: "I didn't know how to bid this hand", as you lay down dummy, is just going to alert the opponents that you have a problem. Don't give it away. Don't let the opponents see that your side is in trouble or they will be on high alert. The opponents can find out after the hand that you had a problem but it will be too late for them to profit from this information.

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU HAVE 5-4 IN THE MAJORS & PARTNER OPENS 1NT

If you have 0-7 HCP and 5-4 in the majors (five of one and 4 of the other), you should use a Transfer (since most of the time you need 8 or more HCP to use Stayman). After you transfer, you then pass when Opener completes the transfer.

e.g.

1NT - 2D
2H - Pass

or

1NT - 2H
2S - Pass

If you have 8-9 HCP and are 5-4 in the majors, you should use Stayman. The reason is that you never want to miss a 4-4 fit in a major which plays a lot better than a 5-3 fit (given a choice). If opener responds 2D to your Stayman bid, you now bid 2 of your major. Responder knows that you must have 5 of that suit.

Then why did you not just transfer in the first place? Aha!

You must have had 5 of that major and 4 of the other.

e.g.

1NT - 2C
2D - 2H (I have 5 Hearts and 4 Spades and 8-9 HCP)

or - 2S (I have 5 Spades and 4 Hearts and 8-9 HCP)

With a minimum NT and not liking the 5-cd major, opener now bids 2NT.

With a minimum NT and liking the 5-cd major, he passes 2 of the major.

With a maximum NT and not liking the 5-cd major, opener now bids 3NT.

With a maximum NT and liking the 5-cd major, he bids game in the major.

If opener instead responds 2 of a major after your Stayman bid, then you now invite her to bid 4 by bidding 3 of the major.

e.g.

1NT - 2C
2H - 3H

If opener happens to bid the major in which you have 5 cards, you may well now raise her to 4 of that major and pray.

If you have 10 or more HCP and are 5-4 in the majors, then you should still use Stayman. If partner responds in a major, then you now jump to game in that major.

If opener bids 2D instead (denying ownership of a 4 card major) then you should now show your major at the THREE level.

e.g.

1NT - 2C
2D - 3H shows five Hearts and four Spades and 10 or more HCP

or - 3S shows five Spades and four Hearts and 10 or more HCP

Did you know that you can use Stayman with ZERO HCP also?

If you have 4-4-4-1 (four spades, four hearts, four diamonds & one club)

or if you have 4-4-5-0 (four spades, four hearts, five diamonds & NO clubs.

Some players even use Stayman could even do it if you have 4-3-5-1 or 3-4-5-1 with a really lousy hand.

Naturally, you plan to pass whatever the 1 NT opener bids next.

You should discuss this with your partner. It doesn't come up often.

There is a convention named SMOLEN which deals with what to do when you have 5-4 in the majors. It is a good convention and if you are more experienced, you may want to consider learning this.

PLAN THE PLAY

S A86
H 62
D 104
C A76432

S KQJ103
H K108
D Q5
C J105

S 742
H J973
D K98762
C ---

S 95
H AQ54
D AJ3
C KQ98

S N
1NT 3NT

Tip: When you are responder to a NT opening bid and you have a 5 card suit headed by an Ace or a King, add a point; a 6 card suit? Add 2 points. Do not bid 2S, relaying partner to 3C. Do that only with very weak hands or very strong hands.

West leads the Spade King. How will you play the hand?

Answer: You will have no problem if Clubs divide 2-1. BUT if they break 3-0, the Club suit will block. What on earth can you do about this?

ANSWER:

Duck the Spade lead and duck it twice. Win the Ace Spades at trick three (perforce) and on that card, you must PITCH a low Club from declarer's hand.

NOW play the Club suit and you will have no problem using up the high cards from the short side first.

If you pitched anything else, you are toast!

DISCARDING: WHAT SHOULD I SAVE AS A DEFENDER?

by Jack Brawner

There are four good sources of information:

1) THE DUMMY (Or: what can you see?) If you can SEE the AKQ2 of clubs in the dummy, and you have the J543 (or even 6543!), then this is what you likely should save. Even if it means you have to throw away the Ace of diamonds! Yes, I am serious. There are only two possibilities here -- declarer has the diamond King, in which case you were doomed anyway (a legitimate squeeze), or partner has it, in which case he has the diamonds covered, and it is VITAL that you save that fourth card in the dummy's suit. It is not at all uncommon for it to be necessary to save four cards in a suit, even with no honor.

2) THE BIDDING (Or: what could you see if declarer's hand was dummy?) From the bidding, you can frequently know quite a bit about declarer's shape. Even though you cannot actually "see" his cards, try to see them in your MIND. (For example, if declarer -- playing 3NT -- responded two spades to partner's 2C Stayman auction, you may need to save your spades!)

3) PARTNER'S DISCARDS (Or: what is partner telling you?) In it's simplest form, there is a good principle available here -- if partner is throwing one suit, he must be saving another. Don't save the same suit. Good partnerships use good signaling (and they pay attention!) to help each other. But remember, you can't save everything -- if you can, there is no problem on this hand, right? If you have no idea what to save, it is frequently a good idea to just pick something and throw it so that your partner will know what you are NOT saving.

4) DECLARER'S DISCARDS (Or: what is declarer saving?) Well, if he is throwing one suit, he is probably saving another. You should likely save that one too. Beware of trickery, though. Watch ALL of declarer's discards, not just the first one or the last one.

If faced with a choice, keep parity with dummy's long suit, and hope partner can protect the other.

(These are oversimplified examples to what can be very complex situations. But, recently, I made an extra trick with AJ of diamonds showing on the board because both defenders -- life masters -- saved high hearts.)
