

## Bid Your Suits

### *I. When you have support for partner*

*By Neil Kimelman*

This column is the first in a series of articles on guidelines for bidding your suit(s) in several common situations.

#### **I. i) When you have your own suit and support for partner**

I often see players with support for partner's suit, usually a major, completely ignore their own suit. The thinking is that "Why show my minor when I know we are going to play in partner's major anyways." This to me is completely the opposite of constructive bidding. It is extremely difficult for partner to make accurate decisions when he is missing a very important aspect of your hand.

*Show your suit, then support partner. He will value high cards in the two suits you bid, and devalue K's and Q's in the other two suits.*

Here is a hand from a recent IMP game in Winnipeg: Vul vs. not vul at teams, you hold as south: ♠4 ♥AQ95 ♦2 ♣KQ109762. The bidding starts:

| West | North | East | South |
|------|-------|------|-------|
| -    | 1♥    | 2♦   | ?     |

What is your plan? (**NOTE:** A jump in a new suit is a splinter; 2NT is a four card limit raise).

Choices, choices... You could bid:

1. 4♥.
2. 4NT asking for aces.
3. 2NT, four card limit raise.
4. 3♣, and see what happens.
5. 4♦, splinter.
6. 3♠, splinter.

Here are my views of each possible bid, in the reverse order of my preferred action:

6<sup>th</sup>: 4♥. This is a nothing bid, and could be made on many hands. It does nothing to help partner decide if slam is making or you are taking a sacrifice.

5<sup>th</sup>: 2NT. This is better, but not by a whole lot. You show values and four card support.

4<sup>th</sup>: 4NT, Keycard ask. At least this simplifies the bidding. If north shows four you bid 7♥ (at matchpoints I would bid 7NT). If partner shows three you would bid 6♥. The downside of this bid is that if partner shows two, you may be too high. If partner shows one you are definitely too high! Partner might even have zero key cards, i.e. ♠KQJx ♥J10xxxx ♦KQx ♣void!

3<sup>rd</sup>: 3♠. At least here you show a four card raise and shortness in spades.

2<sup>nd</sup>: 4♦. This is better than 3♠, as you show a control in the suit the opponents bid.

1<sup>st</sup>: 3♣. This in my view is clearly the best bid. You have the advantage of showing your suit, then listening to what partner does, if anything. Here are a few possible auction continuances with what I suggest you bid in each one:

|    |      |       |      |       |
|----|------|-------|------|-------|
| A. | West | North | East | South |
|    | -    | 1♥    | 2♦   | 3♣    |
|    | 3♦   | pass  | pass | 3♥    |

3♣ creates a game force, unless south rebids 4♣. Therefore 3♥ is game forcing in the above auction. Now partners knows you have clubs with 3+ hearts, and have some slam interest as you didn't simply jump to game.

|    |      |       |      |       |
|----|------|-------|------|-------|
| B. | West | North | East | South |
|    | -    | 1♥    | 2♦   | 3♣    |
|    | 4♦   | pass  | 5♦   | pass  |

Even though 3♣ is not 100% game forcing it is important in my view to treat this auction as a forcing pass situation (*For more information on forcing passes, please read my article in this series.*) Partner's pass over 4♦ shows a hand with nothing to say, usually a minimum. If partner bids 5♥, I would bid 6♥. If partner doubles then bid 5♥, which is a slam try.

|    |      |       |      |       |
|----|------|-------|------|-------|
| C. | West | North | East | South |
|    | -    | 1♥    | 2♦   | 3♣    |
|    | 5♦   | pass  | pass | 5♥    |

The 5♥ bid shows a hand with primary heart support and an offensive game forcing hand. You have now described your hand type and partner can now make the best decision during the rest of the auction.

|    |      |       |      |       |
|----|------|-------|------|-------|
| D. | West | North | East | South |
|    | -    | 1♥    | 2♦   | 3♣    |
|    | 5♦   | dbl   | pass | 5♥    |

Partner has expressed the opinion that your partnership should not bid on. However he doesn't know about your four hearts and extreme distribution. 5♥ tells him exactly this information.

Here is an example of this important principle from a previous Canadian Bridge Championships: As south, Vul., you hold: ♠AKQ109 ♥853 ♦102 ♣J72. Partner opens 1♥ and RHO preempts with 3♣. What do you bid? The full deal:

|           |          |          |
|-----------|----------|----------|
|           | ♠ J8765  |          |
|           | ♥ KJ9742 |          |
|           | ♦ AJ     |          |
|           | ♣ Void   |          |
| ♠ 432     |          | ♠ Void   |
| ♥ A       |          | ♥ Q106   |
| ♦ KQ10953 |          | ♦ 9754   |
| ♣ A1054   |          | ♣ KQ9863 |
|           | ♠ AKQ109 |          |
|           | ♥ 853    |          |
|           | ♦ 102    |          |
|           | ♣ J72    |          |

In our match where my teammates were N-S the bidding continued:

|      |       |      |       |
|------|-------|------|-------|
| West | North | East | South |
| -    | 1♥    | 3♣   | 4♥    |
| 5♣   | Dble  | all  | pass  |

5♣ made six!! At the other table the contract was 5♠ doubled down 1 so we lost 13 IMPs. Even though 3♠ is an overbid in terms of values, it is the right bid. It tells your partner where your length and presumed strength is located so he will be well positioned to make the right decision if the opponents bid at the five level, which is very likely at this vulnerability. Here partner would have an easy time knowing to bid on with five card spade support!

## Lessons to Learn

1. If at all possible show where your values and length are located. In that way partner will be able to better evaluate what to do in competitive auctions.
2. The corollary, and to some extent contradictory, is when partner does bid a suit, they do not necessarily promise that is where their values are located, although it is a good indicator.
3. When partner has shown two suits, value kings and queens (even J's) in those suits, and devalue your *offensive* potential if these honors are in the other two suits.
4. 3♠ might get you overboard in the 2<sup>nd</sup> example hand, but in the long term will serve you better than a bid of 4♥.
5. As a rule it is better to bid a good suit than to splinter.
6. Do not bid Jacoby 2NT with an unbalanced hand and a good suit.