

24) Opponent opens 1 in a suit, partner doubles and responder passes.

Let us suppose that the bidding goes :

W	N	E	S
1♥	X	p	?

Our partner sitting North has doubled , showing an opening point range and possibly 4♠ . The ideal hand for a double would be a 3 suiter with a ♥ S/V but , as we all know, it is not always possible to have the ideal hand. North could then also have something like a 4=2=4=3 shape. One thing is however clear : we can't pass even if we got 0 HCP. Being forced to bid we should diversify our bids in order to transmit to partner some accurate information about our shape and our HCP range. This can be done using step responses as follows :

W	N	E	S
1x	X	p	1 st step = 0-7 HCP any shape.
			2 nd step = 8+ HCP, one suiter or balanced
			3 rd step = 8+ HCP, 2 LRS 4+4+ (<i>except the opening suit</i>)
			4 th step = 8+ HCP, 2HRS 4+4+ (<i>except the opening suit</i>)
			5 th step = 8+ HCP. 2 ES 4+4+ (<i>except the opening suit</i>)

Where : **LRS** = Lower Ranking Suit
HRS = Higher Ranking Suit
ES = Extreme Suit

Example :

W	N	E	S
1♣	X	p	1♦ = 1 st step, 0-7 HCP any shape
			1♥ = 2 nd step, 8+ HCP, one suiter or balanced *
			1♠ = 3 rd step, 8+ with 4+♦ 4+♥
			1NT = 4 th step, 8+ with 4+♥ 4+♠ .
			2♣ = 5 th step, 8+ with 4+♦ 4+♠ .

balanced * = in these bidding sequences we define " *balanced* " a hand that is exactly 4333.

And conversely :

W	N	E	S
1♦	X	p	1♥ = 1 st step, 0-7 HCP any shape
			1♠ = 2 nd step, 8+ HCP, one suiter or balanced
			1 NT = 3 rd step, 8+ with 4+♣ 4+♥ .
			2♣ = 4 th step, 8+ with 4+♥ 4+♠ .
			2♦ = 5 th step, 8+ with 4+♣ 4+♠ .

W	N	E	S
1♥	X	p	1♠ = 1 st step, 0-7 HCP any shape
			1NT = 2 nd step, 8+ HCP, one suiter or balanced
			2♣ = 3 rd step, 8+ with 4+♣ 4+♦ .
			2♦ = 4 th step, 8+ with 4+♦ 4+♠ .
			2♥ = 5 th step, 8+ with 4+♣ 4+♠ .

W	N	E	S
1♠	X	p	1NT = 1 st step, 0-7 HCP any shape
			2♣ = 2 nd step, 8+ HCP, one suiter or balanced
			2♦ = 3 rd step, 8+ with 4+♣ 4+♦ .
			2♥ = 4 th step, 8+ with 4+♦ 4+♥ .
			2♠ = 5 th step, 8+ with 4+♣-4+♥ .

When response is at the **1st step** , North . over West silence, will bid his best suit and South shall pass with some fit or correct to his best suit if he has only a 0-1 card fit.

When response is at the **2nd step**, showing either a one suiter or a balanced hand, North , over West silence, will bid the 1st available step as asking relay and South will respond NT with a 4333 or bid his 5+ carder if he has a one suiter. In case of a one suiter it is better to bid the suit naturally instead of using the transfer technique. In fact if such suit becomes trump, West will have to lead out of his opening suit thus avoiding the often fastidious East lead into west opening suit.

Let us have a look at one example :

W	N	E	S
1♦	X	p	1♠ = 2 nd step, 8+ HCP, one suiter or balanced
p	1NT	p	2NT= 4333
			2♣ , 2♦ , 2♠ = 5+ cards one suiter.

When South response is NT . showing a 4333 shape, North can bid the 1st available step as asking relay over which South will bid his 4 carder.

When South response shows a one suited hand, North can bid the 1st available step as asking relay to enquire whether South has a 3 cards major on the side with the following responses :

W	N	E	S
1♦	X	p	1♠ = 2 nd step, 8+ HCP, one suiter or balanced
p	1NT	p	2♣ = one suited hand with 5+ ♣.
p	2♦	p	2♥ = promises 3♥ and denies 3♠ .
			2♠ = promises 3♠ and denies 3♥
			2NT= promises 3♥ and 3♠.
			3♣ = denies any 3 cards major with 6♣ .

W	N	E	S
1♦	X	p	1♠ = 2 nd step, 8+ HCP, one suiter or balanced
p	1NT	p	2♥ = one suited hand with 5+ ♥.
p	2♠	p	2NT = denies 3♠ .
			3♥ = promises 6♥ and denies 3♠
			3♠ = promises 3♠.

W	N	E	S
1♦	X	p	1♠ = 2 nd step, 8+ HCP, one suiter or balanced
p	1NT _{relay}	p	2♠ = one suited hand with 5+ ♠.
p	2NT _{relay}	p	3♣ = denies 3♥ .
			3♥ = promises 3♥ .
			3♠ = promises 6♠ and denies 3♥

When response is at the 3rd, 4th or 5th step, showing a 2 suiter, defined as a minimum 4-4 hand, North, over West silence, will bid the 1st available step as asking relay in order to know the longer suit and the possible S/V. Over such relay, South will respond using the Bic Sequence with 7 step responses :

- 1st step = NO S/V, thus 70% 4-4
- 2nd step = longer LRS and LR S/V.
- 3rd step = longer LRS and HR S/V .
- 4th step = Longer HRS and LR S/V.
- 5th step = Longer HRS and HR S/V.
- 6th step = both suits 5+ and LR S/V
- 7th step = both suits 5+ and HR S/V.

Example :

W	N	E	S
1♥	X	p	2♦ = 4 th step 8+ HCP, 4+♦ 4+♠
p	2♥ _{relay}	p	2♠ = 1 st step, NO S/V thus 70% 4-4
			2NT= 2 nd step, 5+♦ 4♠ and ♣ S/V . .
			3♣ = 3 rd step, 5+♦ 4♠ and ♥ S/V .
			3♦ = 4 th step, 5+♠ 4♦ and ♣ S/V
			3♥ = 5 th step 5+♠ 4♦ and ♥ S/V ,
			3♠ = 6 th step 5+♦ 5+♠ and ♣ S/V . .
			3SA= 7 th step 5+♦ 5+♠ and ♣ S/V

North is not however obliged to use the asking relay but he will only do it when additional information is required in order to choose the best trump, the best contract or when there are slam ambitions.

We also have to watch out because if opponent opens 1♠, the Bic Sequence will bring the bidding level higher than 3NT in case responder has a 5+ 5+ 2 suiter with a HR S/V. It is also true that with such a shape, a 3NT contract will not usually be the best choice.