

The 2 suited ♣ bidding technique

If we listen to a traditional bidding sequence , we could compare it , with a bit of humour , to a conversation between two distinguished ladies going to the market . “ I got some nice potatoes “ says the first lady . “I bought a couple of pounds of tomatoes” answers the second lady . “ I have some artichokes as well “ adds the first lady .

Just by listening , one can get a pretty accurate idea about both ladies shopping bags content .

We now leave the market place and go back to bridge where , as we all know, it is illegal to show our cards to partner . Let us instead suppose , for a moment , that we are allowed to show cards to partner . If this were true , we can make the following considerations :

1st consideration . When we show our cards to partner , opponents can see it as well .

2nd consideration . Even if we would be allowed to show cards to partner , it would not be necessary for both players to show each other cards . I can see my own 13 cards and if partner shows me his hand , I would be able to see 26 cards and therefore I am expected to have all necessary information to pick the right decision for our side.

3rd consideration. Having a weak hand on one side and a strong one on the other side , if we could choose , which one would we prefer to show ? We would obviously prefer to show the weak one so that the strong hand remains hidden in order to make it more difficult for opponents to organise their defence .

The 2 suited Club bidding technique is actually based on the above mentioned considerations. We therefore avoid to show the content of both shopping bags but , through bidding , only the half empty shopping bag is made known while we keep well hidden the full one.

This happens every time we have a strong opening bid , that is 1♣, or every time that over a normal opening bid , a weak opening bid or an overcall , we bid a forcing relay.

The 1♣ opening bid, that shows 16 + HCP with any shape, is not only a promise of a strong hand but , at the same time , is a request : start describing your hand . Over partner response , opener bids an asking relay to ask for further explanation and goes on this way till responder hand is fully disclosed. At this point opener decides the final contract without partner and opponents having the faintest idea about his hand shape .

The same bidding technique is used in case of 1♦ , 1♥ 1♠ and 2♣ opening bids , all limited to 11-15 HCP . Whenever responder has a strong hand , he will bid a forcing relay and opener will start describing his hand in order to provide to responder all necessary information to decide about final contract. Once again , neither opener nor opponents will know anything about responder hand .

Also on weak openings such as 2♦ , 2♥ ,2♠ and 2NT , all limited to 6-11 HCP, responder with a strong hand will bid a forcing relay with the same scope described above.

Actually the same technique is used even over a 1NT opening bid . Although this bid has a respectable point count of 15-17 HCP , it has , nevertheless, very little to hide from opponents : its strength is known quite accurately and its shape is not mysterious either. In fact it denies a 5th major , denies singletons or voids and could have one doubleton at the most. Whenever responder has a positive hand , that is 8+ HCP, he will start enquiring with a 2♣ asking relay. Opener describes accurately his own shape and responder takes final decision.

Every time we have a strong hand , either opening or responding, we bid an asking relay and that will start a chain of questions and answers that will lead to a final decision made by the relay chain initiator .

It is therefore a matter of one way communication where the strong hand asks questions and the weak hand answers.

Such bidding technique has 3 advantages.

The first advantage is due to the fact that , by using asking relays, that is by bidding the first available step over partner response, there is no bidding space wastage . In this way we can obtain all necessary information at a low bidding level so that controls asking is made at such a low level that allows the bidder, in case of negative response, to comfortably stop at game level.

The second advantage consists in hiding the strong hand distribution from opponents till the very end of the bidding. Opponents listening to this kind of bidding sequence , will not be able to get any information about the strong hand shape and will therefore find it harder to organize their defence.

In building the system architecture , all necessary precautions have been taken so that the weak hand will become dummy.

In the few cases where the opposite happens , nothing is lost because we still preserve the advantage of letting opponents lead in the dark.

The third and last advantage becomes very handy in case of weak hands because all responder bids different from a forcing relay can be passed by opener. This concept allows responder to bid at 2 level a 5 cards suit even with as few as 7 or 8 HCP. If partner opens 1♠ and we happen to hold 0-1♠ with a 5 cards suit in ♥ such as A Q J 9 5 and a total of 7 HCP in our hand we have a problem . To bid a suit at 2 level we normally would need a 5 cards suit and at least 10-11 HCP and that is not our case. We could bid 1NT but we would again be in trouble if partner re-bids his ♠ at 2 level. But if we have at our disposal a forcing relay , in this case 2♣ , any other bid different from 2♣ is not forcing. We can therefore show our nice 5 carder to partner by bidding 2♥ , without any danger of over-bidding and without nourishing unfounded hopes for partner .