

FULL TEXT --Howard's lesson on November 18, 2010

BILManager: Thank you very much Howard for this very educative series.

Howard: You are welcome. guess that is my cue to get started Welcome to my fourth lesson on the Fundamentals of Constructive Bidding. The purpose of these lessons is to teach you the principles behind bidding. I have found that most students bid by memorizing the often conflicting and confusing rules about bidding. What I am trying to do in these lessons is explain the principles behind these rules so that you can figure out what to bid, rather than just relying on a set of rules.

This lesson is part 2 of how to bid when your partner opens 1H or 1S In part 1, I talked about how to bid after 1H or 1S when you have 3+ card support. Remember a very important principle is "support with support." That means you should go out of your way to show partner you have support ASAP.

If you have 4+ card support, raise partner immediately regardless of what else you have in your hand. If you bid a new suit after partner opens a major, that denies 4-card support. If you have 3-card support and if you have a weak hand, similarly you should raise to 2. However, because unfortunately there is no good way to show 3 card support with a medium or maximum hand, you have to reluctantly bid a new suit.

Notice I said reluctantly. Whenever partner opens a major and you have support, you should be disappointed when you cannot tell him the good news immediately. Unfortunately, often you do not have support for partner. This lesson is on what you do in that case. A quick note on hand evaluation. In these lessons I use the usual 4-3-2-1 method for counting high card points, with small adjustments for either shortness or length. That is a reasonable method to use when you first learn bridge. However, I strongly recommend you learn the Bergen hand evaluation method once you are comfortable with bidding. It is much more accurate.

For details on that method you can go to my web site [www.hondobridge.com](http://www.hondobridge.com) and look at my slam bidding lessons 1 and 2.

For those who have been attending these lessons, remember, as responder you have one of 3 hand types -- a minimum response contains about 6-8 points, a medium response contains about 9-11 points. and a maximum response contains 12+ points. If you have a maximum response, it is your responsibility to make sure your side gets to game. If you have a minimum response, game is possible but unlikely, unless partner has 18+. The most difficult auctions are those where you have a medium response, because then you have game if partner has 15+.

So, what I am going to do in this lesson is discuss your responses to one of a major based on which type of hand you have as responder. Let's start with when you have a minimum response (6 to a bad 9 or so). This is very easy, if not very informative to your partner. Most of the time, you bid 1N over 1 of a major with a minimum response. You cannot bid a new suit, because that promises at least a medium hand. You cannot raise because you do not have 3+ card support. So, by default, you must bid 1NT. There is one exception. If partner opens 1H, and you have a minimum hand and 4+ spades, you should bid 1S. However, recall that, if you have a minimum hand, if you bid 1S, you only do that with 2 or fewer hearts. With a minimum hand and 3+ hearts, you always raise.

Now, that does not mean that when the auction goes 1H-P-1S, opener should assume you do not have 3 hearts. He does know you do not have 4+ hearts, because, as I said before, you always raise with 4+ card support. But a response of 1S can be made with a medium or maximum hand and 3 hearts, as responder has no way of raising right away. However, if the subsequent auction shows that responder has a minimum hand, then opener knows that responder has at most 2 hearts. So, quite often when it goes 1H-P-1S, responder has 2 or fewer hearts. And if he has 3 hearts, opener will find out the next time responder bids.

Now let's go back to the 1NT response. What does opener rebid after 1NT? I am assuming here that we are not discussing the 1NT forcing convention. If you play the 2 Over 1 Game Force System, 1NT sometimes shows a different hand than a minimum hand with 6-9. But that is beyond the scope of this

lesson. For now, assume 1NT shows a minimum hand with 2 or fewer cards in support of opener's suit, and 6-9. What does opener rebid?

Note that opener cannot have a medium balanced hand, because then he or she would have opened 1NT. Remember that I, and most experts, advocate opening 1NT with a balanced 15-17 even with a 5-card major. So, opener cannot have a medium balanced hand. If opener has a maximum balanced hand, he can bid 3N, or 2N with 17 or a bad 18. If opener has a six-card suit, and a minimum hand, he or she rebids it at the 2-level. With a six-card suit and a medium hand, opener can jump to 3. Note that is not forcing.

With a six-card suit and a maximum hand, opener must show a maximum hand by either jump shifting, occasionally into a 3 card minor, or bidding 3NT or 4 of the major if the suit is good enough to play opposite a singleton. The point here is that once responder bids 1NT to one of a major, the captaincy of the hand shifts back to opener. If opener has a maximum hand, it is his or her responsibility to make sure their side gets to game. Responder has sort of "signed off" by bidding 1NT. If opener feels that 1N is not the best contract, it is her responsibility to change the contract and determine whether or not to bid game.

So, I have now talked about what opener rebids with either a balanced hand or a 6+ card suit. With an unbalanced hand (that means another outside 4+ card suit), opener can bid a new suit. If the new suit is at the 2-level, then responder will usually either pass or, with 2-card support for opener's original major, correct back to 2 of the major. Note that with a minimum or medium hand, opener has to bid a new suit at the 2-level. If opener rebids a new suit at the 3 level, that is a jump shift, which shows a maximum hand, and establishes a game force. Again, when opener rebids a new suit at the 2-level, opener can theoretically have as much as 17 or a bad 18, but in real life usually has less.

There is one special case I need to talk about. If it goes 1H-P-1NT, on occasion opener will have a minimum hand with 5 hearts and 4 spades. In that case, opener cannot show a second suit at the 2-level. Why is that? Because 2S is a reverse (a bid past the original suit at the 2-level). Also, note that because responder bid 1NT, responder cannot have 4+ spades. So, your side cannot possibly have a spade fit. Therefore, if you have a minimum hand, with 5 hearts and 4 spades, and the auction goes 1H-1NT you should pass as opener. Of course, with 5 hearts and 4 spades and a medium or maximum hand, you can rebid 2S as opener, since you can reverse with a medium or maximum hand.

So, to summarize what to do with unbalanced hands with a second suit with a maximum hand, opener must jump shift (or reverse into spades). The jump shift establishes a game force (the reverse does not). With a minimum hand, opener's rebid is a new suit at the 2-level (except if it is spades, in which case opener passes). And with a medium hand (somewhat rare), opener's rebid is still a new a suit at the 2-level, but opener can reverse into 2S when appropriate. That completes what to do when responder has a minimum hand.

Next, let's go on to what to do when you as responder have a medium hand. These are the most difficult auctions, because you, as responder and captain, need to determine both what suit to play in, and whether or not to play in game. Neither suit nor level has yet been determined. If opener has a medium or maximum hand, you want to be in game. But if opener has a minimum hand, you do not want to be in game. Similarly, you do not know which suit the hand will be played in (or if NT is best). So, what can you do?

Well, you have to rely on the fact that a new suit by responder is forcing for one round. Therefore, you must bid a new suit with a medium hand and no support for partner. For example if partner opens 1S, and you have 5 hearts, you can bid 2H. Note that 2H over 1S guarantees a 5 card suit. This is the only new suit bid by responder that promises a 5-card suit. All other new suit auctions only promise a 4-card suit. Remember, I am talking about what to do when you as responder have a medium hand. You cannot bid 2H with a minimum hand, even if you have 5+ hearts. With a minimum hand, you have to bid 1NT. You can only bid a new suit at the 2-level as responder with a medium or maximum hand and if that bid is 2H, it shows 5+ hearts.

Let's take the case where partner opens 1H, you have a medium hand, and 4 spades. In that case, you

have an easy 1S bid. Sometimes responder will bypass a 4 card spade suit but, when you have a medium hand, and 4 spades (or more), it is pretty much always right to bid 1S. If with a medium hand, you have a 5-card minor (and not 5 hearts) you should bid the minor. If you have no 5 card suit, and do not have support for partner, you have to have a 4-card minor, so you bid the 4-card minor.

So, 1 major/2 minor only promises a 4-card suit. Now, those of you who are sharp may ask, what do you do if partner opens 1S and you have exactly 4 hearts and 3 cards in all the other suits and a medium hand.

None of the rules I presented apply. You can't bid 2H as that promises 5 hearts. You can't bid a minor, because that promises a 4-card suit. Well, first of all, that case rarely happens and second of all, there is some good news anyway. You have 3-card spade support, so you know you are going to end up in spades (or occasionally hearts if partner also has 4 hearts). Therefore, in that case, you bid 2C with a 3-card suit, and then show your 3-card spade support on the next round. Bidding 2C with a 3-card suit will not get you into too much trouble because you will correct back to spades.

Once responder bids a new suit, what are the possible rebids by opener? If opener rebids the major at the 2-level, that shows a minimum hand with a six card suit. You, as responder with a medium hand, can invite with a doubleton honor, otherwise pass. Much of the time you will pass. If opener jumps to 3 of their major, that shows a medium hand and 6+ cards in their suit. Since you have a medium hand, that is a game forcing auction. So, if the auction goes 1 major / 2 something / 3 major, that establishes a game force. Responder, by bidding a new suit at the 2-level has shown at least a medium hand. And opener, by jumping to the 3-level has shown a medium hand.

You may recall from the the first lesson, a medium hand opposite a medium hand has enough points for game so that specific auction establishes a game force. When opener rebids their suit, you have a good idea of both their hand strength and distribution and can usually determine whether or not game should be bid. Unfortunately, opener is usually not so co-operative with their rebid. But, if opener rebids the cheapest NT (either 1 major / 2 minor / 2NT) or (1H-1S-1NT) you do have a good idea of what partner has -- a balanced minimum, and game is unlikely, so you often pass.

Now if opener reverses, that shows a medium hand as well and again, if you have a medium hand, your side has enough for game. If your first bid was a 2 over 1 bid (for example, 1H-P-2C-P-2S), then both partners know that a game force auction has been established. That is because you, as responder, have guaranteed a medium hand with the 2C bid and opener has guaranteed a medium hand with the 2S reverse. Therefore, the game forcing nature of the auction is clear, and all that remains is to determine the suit. Similarly, if opener jump shifts, that also establishes a game force.

That leaves the difficult auction, where opener bids a new suit at the 2-level. For example, 1H-2C-2D. That is a case where opener's strength is not fully defined. Many times, opener will have a minimum hand and, if you only have a medium response, game is not likely. But, opener will on occasion have a medium hand, not strong enough to jump shift so, you with a medium hand, should keep the auction open to cater to that possibility.

With 2-card support, you can return to 2 of opener's major. With support for opener's second suit you can raise. Otherwise, you have to bid 2NT or rebid your suit. If at all possible, however, you should bid one of partner's suits. You should only bid NT or rebid your suit if no other suitable bid is available.

Though, responding with a medium hand is the toughest, with a maximum hand things are much better. You, as responder, know that you must bid game, so that issue is resolved. The only thing you have to figure out is which suit to play in. You should keep making forcing bids (new suits), until you figure out where to play. Usually, opener's rebid will clarify things, and you can figure out where to play and, you will always have a new suit available as your second rebid, in case you are not sure what to do.

Therefore, if you have an opening hand opposite partner's opener, the auction is pretty straight forward. So long as you, as responder, remember to keep making forcing bids, until you get to game. The one special case I want to talk about is when partner opens 1H and you have 4 spades and a 5-card minor. In that case, you do bypass your 4 card spade suit and bid your 5-card minor. When you later show your spades, partner will know you have a 5+ card minor, 4 spades, an opening hand, and will have a

good idea what to do. Many people will bid 1S over 1H with an opening hand and a 5-card minor but that is not correct. You should bid your minor first.

Now, let's do some quizzes. For the first set of hands, assume partner opens 1H. I will give you a hand. You should determine

- a) minimum, medium, or maximum
- b) what your bidding plan is and
- c) what your first bid is.

Okay, after 1H you hold: Sxx Hxx DAKxxx Cxxx

- a) This is a minimum hand
- b) No game is possible unless partner has a maximum hand.
- c) Your response is 1NT which is the usual response with a minimum hand.

Partner opens 1H and you hold: SQxxx Hxx DKQxx Cxxx

- a) You have a minimum hand
- b) No game is possible unless partner has a maximum
- c) Your response is 1S.

Partner opens 1H and you hold: Sxxxx Hxx DKQxx CQxx

- a) Once again you have a minimum hand.
- b) Game is unlikely.
- c) Also spades is possible but less likely because you have such weak spades. Remember, when partner opens 1H, he almost never has a 5-card spade suit. So, at best you have a 4-4 spade fit. Even if partner has 4 spades, unless they are very strong, you could have as many as 3 spade losers. Therefore, I would bid 1NT with that hand, although if you chose 1S that would be acceptable.

Next hand is similar but slightly different. Partner opens 1H and you hold Sxxxxx Hxx DAKx Cxxx|PG|| AT|

- a) You have a minimum hand
- b) Game is unlikely. But spades is a possible strain because the 5 card suit overcomes the weak spots.
- c) In this case 1S is the best bid, rather than 1NT.

Partner opens 1H and you hold SAQxx Hxx Dxx CAxxxx

- a) You have a medium hand
- b) Game is possible if partner has a medium or maximum opener
- c) Although you are strong enough to bid 2C, you are not strong enough to bid clubs then spades (that shows an opening hand). Therefore, you must bid 1S on this hand. You must give priority to showing your major.

Partner opens 1H and you hold SAQxx Hxx Dxx CAKxxx

- a) This is a maximum hand
- b) You must force to game
- c) At this point, spades, hearts and NT are all likely contracts. Clubs is possible, but you almost always prefer 3NT to 5 of a minor. You are strong enough to bid 2C followed by 2S. Therefore, you bid 2C. If opener rebids 2D or 2H, you bid 2S. If opener rebids 2NT, you rebid 3S. Remember, opener cannot bid 2S with 4 spades and a minimum hand as that is a reverse. So, 2N by opener does not deny 4 spades.

If partner bids 2S (after opening 1H), that makes you very happy. That establishes a game force. You want to make a slam try. If you bid 4S that is weaker than bidding 3S. That is because, once a game force is established, jumping to game is the weakest bid you can make. That is known as the principle of "fast arrival". Once a game force is established, if you bid to game quickly, that shows little slam interest. On this hand you should bid 3S, not 4S since you are in a game forcing auction, 3S is forcing and stronger than 4S.

Partner opens 1H and you hold SAQxx Hxx Dxxx CAKxx.|PG||AT|

- a) Maximum hand
- b) You must make sure your side gets to game. Spades, hearts, and NT are all possible contracts. You cannot bid 2C and then spades, because that promises 5 clubs.
- c) So, you must bid 1S. If partner rebids 2D, bid 3NT. If partner bid 2H, bid 3C (new suit is still forcing). If partner bids 2S, you could bid 4S. However, sometimes partner might raise to 2S with good 3-card support. 2S by opener tends to show 4-card support, but can be done with 3-card support. Over 2S I would bid 3C. Partner can then bid 3S with 4 spades, or 3NT with diamonds and 3-card support.

Partner opens 1H and you hold SAxx Hxx DKxxx CKxxx

- a) You have a medium response
- b) Game is possible if pard has a medium or maximum opener
- c) Bid 2C (remember, that only promises 4 clubs). If partner rebids 2D, you rebid 2NT. If partner rebids 2H, you can pass, as pard has a min, so game is unlikely. If partner rebids 2NT, you pass. If partner reverses (at least medium hand), or jump shifts (maximum hand), that establishes a game force. So, all bids are forcing until you reach game.

Last hand. Partner opens 1H and you hold SAxx Hxx DAxxx CAKxx

- a) You have a maximum hand
- b) You must force to game
- c) Bid 2C. If partner bids 2D, 2H, or 2N, bid 3N. If partner reverses or jump shifts, slam is possible, and that establishes a game force.

Okay, that concludes this lesson.