

Responder

♠6

♥1098632

♦KQJ103

♣7

Opener

♠9743

♥AK754

♦A5

♣A6

I played this hand recently on BBO. I was opener, and one of my favorite BBO partners, wally, was my partner. Despite the fact that we only have 21 HCP between us, my partner and I bid 6H, which easily makes. Can you come up with a reasonable bidding sequence that gets you to 6H?

Send your answers to me: billpuzzles@bridgesights.com

The Answer

Responder

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♥1098632
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Opener

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Opener Responder

| | |
|----|----|
| 1H | 3S |
| 4C | 4D |
| 6H | |

The bidding sequence illustrated above is the one we actually used to bid the slam. First, I will analyze it, and then discuss alternative sequences that are perhaps even better.

I was fortunate that Wally was responder, because he has outstanding bidding judgment, as illustrated in this hand. The key is for responder to recognize the power of his hand once there is a one heart opener. Although he only has 6 HCP, his hand is actually worth close to a strong jump shift (18+ points). How is that possible? Well, responder can give opener a 4 HCP hand, 5 hearts headed by the Ace and no other high card points, where game is 50%. (For you purists, yes, I know that is impossible, because with 11 hearts between them, opener must have at least AJ of hearts, but that does not change my point.) Since responder has a hand where he wants to be in game opposite 4 HCP, his hand is clearly worth at least 18 points or so.

The 3S bid is a splinter, showing a singleton or void in spades. The 4C bid shows slam interest, with a club control. The 4D bid indicates responder is also interested in slam, and is showing a diamond control. Once opener hears that responder is interested in slam, it is easy to bid the slam, with at least 2nd round control in spades (based on the splinter), and first round control in all the other suits.

One could make a case that responder should simply bid Blackwood over 1H. If opener has 4 key cards, responder can bid 6; if opener has 5 key cards, responder can bid 7. However, the problem with that is there are many hands where 4 hearts is the limit, if opener lacks controls in the non-trump suits. In fact, if you are a pessimist, you can construct hands for opener where 4H does not make! So, responder's 3S bid was well considered.

Opener can just about bid slam once he hears the 3S bid. All responder needs is the Q of hearts (and not even that if responder has 5+ hearts), and either 2 minor suit Kings or KQ in one of the minor suits. Since responder is showing a game forcing hand and spade shortness, and cannot have much in hearts (since opener has the AK), it is virtually certain that responder has minor suit values.

What opener needs to worry about is missing a grand slam if responder has a spade void. At the table, I, as opener, decided that bidding 6 would be a good result regardless, and chose not to worry if we missed 7. However, with a more sophisticated continuation of our control bidding sequence, I might have been able to discover if responder had a spade void, and been able to bid 7 if that were the case.