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This Week in Bridge

(288) Dealing with Interference Over Ace-Asking Bids

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Level: 2

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General

On some highly distributional hands when we ask for Keycards (or Aces) using 4NT, the opponents choose to bid over our 4NT bid in an effort to obstruct our communication and “get in the way”. We should be prepared for this type of interference and have agreements for how to communicate with partner (show our number of Keycards or Aces) in this situation. Here we look at how to do this.

Versus Cheap Overcalls – D1P0 (D0P1)

After we bid 4NT to ask for Keycards (or Aces – which is D0P1), if the opponents overcall with a bid that does not take away much of our bidding space, 5♣ or 5♦ (step 1 or step 2 of our responses), then we have plenty of space to describe our hand to partner if we make use of all the calls that are now available to us.

Here is our general approach for how to deal with this type of interference:

Double – Step 1 (D1)

Pass – Step 2 (PO)

Bids - Step 3+

Steps 1 and 2 together spell out the name D1P0.

Example 1

1♠	2♦	3♦	4♦
4NT	5♦	—	

Here 3♦ by Responder showed a limit raise or better in support of Opener’s ♠ suit.

If we play 1430 Keycard, our bidding options in this auction are:

- X 1 or 4 Keycards (step 1)
- P 0 or 3 Keycards (step 2)
- 5♥ 2 w/o the Queen (step 3)
- 5♠ 2 w/ the Queen (step 4)

Note: This step-based approach, starting with double, also applies when using other Ace-asking bids like Gerber, 1430 Gerber, or Minorwood. This is what we use when the opponents overcall with the cheapest or second cheapest bid to interfere.



Versus Higher Overcalls – DEPO

When we bid 4NT to ask for Keycards (or Aces) and the opponents bid at a level that takes away more of our bidding space, 5♥ (original step 3) or higher, then the auction may get too high if we use D1P0 to describe our holding to partner (using D1P0 we may end up bidding with step 3, 2 Keycards w/o the Queen, and this may force us to slam without enough Keycards). In this situation, we simplify things and use a two-step approach so that we do not bid too high. The two steps are double and pass. We use double to show an *Even* number of Keycards (or Aces) and pass to show an *Odd* number of Keycards (or Aces) – this structure is called DEPO (**D**ouble **E**ven, **P**ass **O**dd).

Example 2

1♠ P 3♠ 4♥
4NT 5♥ ___
• X Even number of Keycards
• Pass Odd number of Keycards

One downside of DEPO is that we do not find out about the trump Queen, leaving us to guess sometimes.

Example 3

When we use a gadget like minorwood to ask partner for their Keycards in a minor suit, we do not need to switch to DEPO so quickly. In this case, we often have room to describe our hand and stay below game even versus higher level interference. In this example we continue to use D1P0.

1♣ P 2♣* P
4♣ 4NT ___?

Here 4NT shows a shapely hand with length in ♦ and ♥.

- X 1 or 4 Keycards
- P 0 or 3 Keycards
- 5♣ 2 w/o Queen
- 5♦ 2 w/ Queen

Versus Double of Our Asking Bid

When the opponents interfere with our Ace-asking bid (like 4NT) bid by doubling 4NT, then there are several approaches that can be used.

Ignore the Opponent's Double

The first approach is to ignore the double. The problem with this approach is that it does not allow us to gain space from their interference (using it against them), nor does it give us a chance to punish the opponents for coming into our auction.



R1P0

A more common approach is R1P0 – redouble step 1, pass step 2, bids step 3+. This is similar to D1P0 that we previously used. This style uses their double against them and helps us gain bidding space.

Example 4

1♠	P	2NT*	P
4NT	X	XX	P
5♣	...		

Here, after the opponent doubles our 4NT Keycard, Responder's XX shows 1 or 4 Keycards, and 5♣ by Opener asks for the Queen.

Punishment Methods

These approaches involve giving us the option of punishing the opponents by playing in 4NT (either doubled or redoubled).

Option 1 (Less Punishment)

- XX Offer to Play
- P Step 1 (1 or 4 Keycards playing 1430)
- Bids Step 2+

Option 2 (Most Punishment)

- XX Offer to Play
- P Mild Offer to Play (not as strong of a holding)
- Bids These remain unchanged

One advantage of Option 2 is that it is easy on the memory, not changing the meaning of our responses.

There is no right or wrong in making a choice of what to play versus a double of our Ace-asking bid. The most important thing is for us to be on the same page as partner.

Conclusion

When the opponents interfere with our Ace-asking bids, it can be frustrating. But if we are prepared for such interference it can actually give us more space to describe our hand and provide us an opportunity to punish the opponents for bidding. (This is especially satisfying when we cannot make a slam and collect a large number from defending.) Make sure that you and partner (as part of your slam bidding agreements) take the time to discuss what you play in each of these situations. Be prepared for the opponents' attacks!