

Bidding Theory II

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Captaincy in competitive auctions

In part 1, we explored the idea of captaincy in uncontested auctions. The main idea is that the person that knows more about partner's hand is the captain in the auction and is responsible for naming the final contract. In this lesson, we will extend that idea to competitive auctions. The same notion applies- one person from each partnership is the captain and should make the decisions for that side.

1. Partner opens 1NT, and opponents overcall at the 2 level. Without the interference, responder is the captain. This becomes especially true after interference. Decisions to double the opponents, or to compete should be made only by responder. Now, look at the other side. The opponents open 1NT, and your partner overcalls 2H (natural). Who's the captain for your side? You are since your partner knows NOTHING about your hand and you know something about partner's hand. It's amusing that likely the two weakest hands at the table are the captains of the auction for their partnerships.
2. Partner opens a weak 2 or preempts at the 3 level and opponents double or overcall. Another easy case- the weak 2 opener or preempter is NEVER the captain. Decisions to compete should be made by responder ONLY.
3. Now for some more dicey but common situations:
 - a) Partner opens 1 of a major and opponents overcall:
 - i) You make a negative double. Initially this shows about 8+ points and 4+ cards in the other major or 8-9 points with 5+ cards in the other major (if the overcall was in a minor), or 4 cards in both minors (if the overcall was in the other major). If you've got a minimum hand, then opener should be the captain. If you have extras, or if you've got a long major suit that you weren't strong enough to bid at the 2-level, then you should complete the description of your hand so partner (captain) can make the final decision.
 - ii) You make a simple raise of partner's major. Opener is once again the captain. Your simple raise is limited and not forcing.
 - iii) You bid a new suit. This should show a 5+ card suit, and values (10+ points if you bid a new suit at the 2-level). The bid is forcing. Who's the captain? Nobody yet- with a minimum opening bid, opener should limit his hand next and let responder be captain. With a strong opening hand, opener can bid a new suit (forcing) and retain some control of the auction.
 - iv) You cue-bid the overcaller's suit. This is forcing. It may show a limit raise of partner's suit, or it may show a strong hand with your own suit which you will name next, or a strong balanced hand without a stopper in opponent's suit. Who's the captain? The responder is definitely taking charge of this auction.
 - v) You bid 1NT. This shows 6-10 points, a stopper in opponent's suit, and less than 3 card support for opener's suit. Opener is the captain.
 - b) Partner opens 1 of a minor, and opponents overcall at the 1 level.

- i) Negative doubles now can be 6+ points if you're showing a suit that can be bid by partner at the 1-level. Opener is the captain unless responder has extra values.
 - ii) Single raise of minor is limited (6-10 points or less, at least 4 card support [often 5+ card support]) Opener is captain.
 - iii) You bid a new suit- shows 5+ card suit, at least 8 points, forcing, and captaincy is again uncertain for now. Again, with a minimum hand, opener should limit his hand and let responder be captain. With a stronger and, opener can reverse or cue-bid opponents suit and retain captaincy.
 - iv) Cue bid- again forcing, and responder takes charge of the auction.
 - v) You bid INT- same as above, and opener is the captain.
4. When opponents open the bidding and your partner makes an overcall, the overcaller's partner (called the advancer) is the captain in all cases. If overcaller has a 2-suiter, he might bid the second suit to help out the advancer, but the advancer remains the captain.
5. Interference over partner's 2C opening bid. If opponents overcall, the idea is to let opener remain the captain. I recommend that a double shows a VERY weak hand (no aces or kings, and at most 2 queens). A pass shows a waiting bid, and a new suit shows a 5+ card suit with 2 of the top 3 honors. Opener remains the captain. Same thing is opponents double the 2C opening bid- a redouble shows the very weak hand, and the rest remains the same.

A few examples:

1. 1H-1S-2H-2S

P - P - ?

Opener is the captain. You should usually pass. If you had 4-card support and wanted to compete to 3H, then you probably should have bid 3H initially instead of 2H.

2. 1C-1H-X-2H

2S- 3H-P - ?

You, the advancer, are the captain, so what did partner's 3H bid mean? The overcall shows 8-16 points and 5+ card suit. Here, the overcall should be in the upper end of this range- near 16 points. You remain the captain, and you can reevaluate your hand based on the strength of the overcall. If you end up in game, going down, then blame partner for bidding 3H when he is not the captain and doesn't have suitable values.

1C-1H-X-2H

2S-3H-3S-?

Again, the overcaller has shown a good overcall, but now opponents compete to 3S. The negative doubler was not the captain unless he had extra values (like more than 10 points). But, there are not enough points to go around – everyone is showing strength. Still, you're the captain here, so you've got to make the decision to pass, double, or bid 4H. Your partner better not bid again!!

4. 1D-1H-1NT-2H

P - P - ?

You should pass. You've described your hand- you have 8-10 points, a stopper in H, you don't have 4 cards in spades, and you likely don't have 4 cards in diamonds. Even if

you do have 4 cards in diamonds, you should probably still pass since you are NOT the captain.

1D-1H-1NT-2H

2NT-P- ?

Again, you've shown 8-10 points. What does opener have? The 2NT bid should show 18-19 points, and is invitational to game. It's your decision, captain!

5. 1H-2C-X-P

2H- P -2S-P

?

The negative double here usually shows 4+ card spade suit and 8+ points. Opener denied 4-cards in spades by bidding 2H. When responder bids 2S, he is showing 5+ cards in spades (often 6+ cards), less than 2 cards in H, and 6-9 points. With 10 points, responder would have bid 2S at his first turn. Your decision, captain!

6. 1D-1S-2C-P

2H- P - ?

Your 2C bid showed 10+ points and 5+ cards in clubs, and was forcing for one round. Partner's 2H bid is NOT a reverse here. It shows a minimum opening bid, and at least 4 cards in Hearts (responder might still have a 4-card major). By bidding 2H, opener is not only showing a minimum opening hand, but is helping you, the captain, to figure out where to go next.

7. 1D-1H-1S-2H

3S- P - ?

In this sequence, your 1S bid shows 5+ cards in spades and 6+ points (and forcing for 1 round). Opener jumped to 3S to show 16-18 points with at least 3 card spade support. In most cases, opener's hand will be unbalanced since he did not open 1NT. Now, it's your call, captain!