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(112) More Competitive Bidding: Dealing with 4-Major Interference

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Level: Intermediate/Advanced

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General

When the opponents jump to 4M over our Opening bid they apply maximum pressure to us (and partner.) These auctions are very difficult! Since we have so little room for error (literally) we need defined agreements about the meaning of each of our bids in each of these auctions. Let's look at these by detailing our agreements and examining several examples.

General Agreements

Let's begin by examining our high level competitive bidding tools:

- Negative Doubles through 4♥.
- Double of 4♠ is penalty-oriented (not a ♠ stack, but values with a relatively balanced hand)
- 4N is Takeout! (We'll have a better idea of how this works when we see some examples.)

Example Auctions

1♣ (4♥)

- Double Negative (usually 4c♠, 11+ points). Sometimes just values, as Doubles need to become more flexible at high levels.
- 4♠ 5+♠, To Play (10+ points, sometimes need to stretch under pressure)
- 4N Usually both minors (5+♦, 4+♣ - often 6-4)
- 5-minor To Play
- 5♥ Pick a Slam w/ 1st-Round ♥ Control and some extra values (mild Grand Slam Try)
- 5♠ Natural, 6+♠, Slam Try
- 5N Pick a Slam



1♦ (4♥)

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- 4N Usually both minors (4♦, 5+♣ - usually 4-6)
- 5-minor To Play
- 5♥ Pick a Slam w/ 1st-Round ♥ Control and some extra values (mild Grand Slam Try)
- 5♠ Natural, 6+♠, Slam Try
- 5N Pick a Slam

1♣ (4♠)

- Double Card Showing, Penalty Oriented – Expecting partner to pass with most hands.
- 4N “At Least Two Places to Play!” – Takeout, usually shapely
 - 3-Suited Hand – usually something like 0-4-5-4 OR
 - 2-Suited Hand -- 5+♦, 4+♣ (longer ♦) OR 4+♥, 5+♣ OR 4+♥, 5+♦
- 5-minor To Play
- 5♥ To Play
- 5♠ Pick a Slam w/ 1st-Round ♠ Control and some extra values (mild Grand Slam Try)
- 5N Pick a Slam

1♦ (4♠)

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- 5-minor To Play
- 5♥ To Play
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- 5N Pick a Slam



1♥ (4♠)

- Double Card Showing, Penalty Oriented – Expecting partner to pass with most hands.
- 4N “At Least Two Places to Play!” – Takeout, usually shapely
 - 2-Suited Hand – Both minors OR long ♦ with some ♥ (correct ♣ to ♦).
- Slam Try in ♥ - If we bid 4N and then bid 5♥ it is a 5.5♦♥ bid (Trying for slam)
- 5-minor To Play
- 5♥ To Play
- 5♠ 1st-Round ♠ Control and some extra values (mild Grand Slam Try) – usually ♥ fit.
- 5N Pick a Slam

Note: Some Partnerships may agree that the 5♠ cuebid is a Grand Slam Try (with 1st round ♠ control agreeing in partner’s opening bid suit - in particular, if partner has opened ♥). This is a good discussion to have with partner before making this bid!

Conclusion

These auctions, where the opponents brazenly attack us with a 4-Major Preempt, can make us face difficult bidding guesses. By having a good understanding of how to use Double (card-showing) and 4N (Takeout), we will at least have a chance to describe our hand to Partner. Responder will frequently have to stretch (“Now or Never!” Situation) in order to compete in the bidding. This will leave us guessing whether to bid more (slam) or settle for only game. In these auctions it is important to cut Responder some slack – occasionally we will miss slam, but we let Partner confidently compete when they have shape and are a little bit light on values. Responder can be the one to stretch for slam when they have both a great hand and excellent shape. Keep these ideas in mind and try to survive these difficult auctions!