

LOCATING STOPPERS FOR NO TRUMP

After we agree on a minor, things get trickier. Though game is possible in five of a minor, the partnership should explore no trump first. The reasons are clear. Nine tricks vs. 11 tricks are easier and at matchpoints, 3 NT produces a higher score if overtricks are in play. A side suit bid here still shows game interest, but now shows a stopper in that suit, typically a major this is not a search for an eight-card major-suit fit, because responder has already denied holding a four-card major. It implies no stopper in the other major, with a stopper in both (and sufficient values), we would just bid no trump.

Opener 1 club – responder 3 clubs, limit raise typically showing four-five card support and 10-11 points. Opener bids 3 hearts, shows a heart stopper and asks for a spade stopper. Stoppers in the majors are our greatest concern because the opponents know responder has fewer than four cards in both majors.

Opener 1 spade – responder 2 clubs – opener 3 clubs – responder 3 diamonds shows a Diamond stopper, asks for a heart stopper, 3 hearts would show a heart stopper and ask for a Diamond stopper.

When the opponents bid a suit, you or your partner cue bid that suit, asks for stopper, If you have the suit stopped, you bid no trump. Opener 1 spade, opponent 2 diamonds, Responder 3 clubs, 3 NT shows a diamond stopper, 3 diamonds asks for a stopper.

When there are 2 unbid suits, you cue bid the suit you have a stopper in, opener 1 club, Opponent 2 clubs (Michaels) responder 3 hearts or 3 spades shows that suit stopped, asks for stopper in the other major, interest in NT.

Opener 1 spade, opponent 2 NT unusual, responder, 3 diamonds or 3 clubs should show a Stopper in that suit, (do something intelligent partner).

When we're exploring for NT we want to have a least one stopper in the suit(s) we expect the Opponents to lead, I call these the DANGER SUITS. Danger suits are either a suit bid by an opponent, particularly a major or (when the opponents have not bid), a suit not bid by us, Particularly if we have bid the other three suits, the fourth suit sticks out like a sore thumb and cries to be led. It would be reckless to bid NT without having a stopper in the only unbid suit.

1. Opener 1 spade – opponent 2 clubs – partner 2 diamonds – opponent passes – opener 2 spades (danger suit – clubs, the suit they bid)
2. Opener 1 spade – opponent passes – partner 2 clubs – opponent passes – opener 2 hearts, opponent passes (danger suit is diamonds)
3. Opener 1 club – opponent pass, partner 3 clubs, opponent pass (danger suits hearts & spades)

If the opponents have bid a suit, be concerned about having a stopper in that suit, do not be concerned about a stopper in an unbid suit, suit they bid you expect them to lead.