



Adventures in Bridge

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This Week in Bridge

(87) Pattern Out Auctions

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Level: 3

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General

In 2/1 GF auctions, we sometimes have the ability to create a forcing auction and show a fit at the 2-level – this is rare, but it leaves us a lot of room to communicate with partner. Normally, when we find a fit below game in a 2/1 GF auction we use the extra space to cuebid our controls.

Example

1♠ 2NT*

3♠ 4♦ ♦ Cuebid.

In a Major suit contract, the cuebidding is done between 3M and 4M. But if we have an auction that allows us to show our fit at 2M then we want to use the room between 2M and 3M to tell partner more about our shape and the room between 3M and 4M to make control-showing cuebids. Partner knowing more about our shape will be very useful for helping them visualize the way our hands may fit together for a slam or alternative games (like 3NT.) Let's look at some of the "pattern out" auctions in details.

Pattern Out Auctions

Let's see how partner can make use of their bidding space to effectively describe their hand. Let's look at an example in detail to help us understand how it works.



Example

1♠ 2♣

2♥ 2♠

___?

- 2NT 5-4-2-2
- 3♣ 5-4-1-3
- 3♦ 5-4-3-1
- 3♥ 5-5+
- 3♠ Good hand, start cuebidding (not wanting to give away information.)
- 3NT Offer to play? (Does Not Really Exist.)
- 4♣ ♣ void, 5-4-4-0 or 6-4-3-0.
- 4♦ ♦ void, 5-4-0-4 or 6-4-0-3.
- 4♥ 5-6, offer to play in 4♥ (or 5-5 with much better ♥.)
- 4♠ Bad hand. Opener can always bid this if they do not want to give way any information and do not have slam interest.

We can also use a similar patterning out concept in 2/1 auctions where we have not yet found a fit. Let's look at a similar example to see how it works.

Example

1♠ 2♣

2♥ 2NT

___?

- 3♣ 5-4-1-3 (or 5-4-0-4 not particularly slammish.)
- 3♦ 5-4-4-0
- 3♥ 5-5+ Majors
- 3♠ 6+-4 Majors
- 3NT 5-4-2-2- or 5-4-3-1
- 4♣ Minorwood or Gerber (depending on agreements.)
- 4♦ 5-4-0-4 (delayed splinter in support of ♣, slammish ♣ support.)
- 4♥ 5-6 usually to play
- 4♠ 7-4 bad hand (possibly 6-4 with very good suit.)

This is all very natural bidding at the 3-level and 4-level jumps are mostly splinters when they can be – notice these jumps are not cuebids. If we want to cuebid we go slow – do not jump to cuebid.



Classic Pattern Out Auction

Another classic pattern out auction occurs, but not in a GF context.

Example

1♠ 1NT*
2X 2NT
___?

If Responder makes an invitational 2NT bid, opener has some choice of what to do. If Opener has more shape he may want to show it. But before doing so, Opener should know what is forcing and what is not. Our general rules in this type of auction is

- Patterning out into a minor is weak and corrective,
- Patterning out into a Major is forcing – looking for the best game.

This is a good agreement because with extra minor suit shape and a good hand Opener would just bid 3NT and not need to show their additional shape, but with extra minor suit shape and a weak hand we want out of 2NT.

Example

1♠ 1NT*
2♣ 2NT
3♣ This shows a bad hand with 5-5 in the black suits.

However, with a good hand with extra Major suit shape, we need to be able to further explore for the right game – we don't know if it is 4M or 3NT. In this case patterning out into a Major is natural, but forcing.

Example

1♠ 1NT*
2♥ 2NT
___?

- 3♣ 5-4-0-4, weak (maybe 5-4-1-3)
- 3♦ 5-4-4-0, weak (maybe 5-4-3-1)
- 3♥ 5+-5 GF
- 3♠ 6+-4 GF



Conclusion

Bidding space is a valuable commodity. Auctions are often jammed (because of our bidding or the opponents) and in the rare case when we have lots of bidding space we should not waste it. Especially in 2/1 GF auctions, we should strive to communicate our shape to partner to help them bid good slams and stay out of poor ones – visualization is important for partner's slam bidding and patterning out helps them do that. So show your shape and help partner out!