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This Week in Bridge

(342) Opener's Rebids After Responder's Freebid

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Level: 5 of 10 (2 of 6)

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General

When we open the bidding with a suit at the 1-level and partner responds, it is important for us to make a good decision when it comes to selecting a rebid. Fortunately, we do not have too many choices for how the auction will progress. But if the opponents get involved in the bidding as well, then the number of bidding options (and thus the complexity of the auction) goes up significantly. Here we focus on Opener's rebids in a specific type of competitive auction where our Left Hand Opponent (LHO) overcalls and Responder freely bids a new suit.

Opener's Rebids After Responder's 1-Level Freebids

When we open the bidding with a suit at the 1-level, LHO overcalls a suit at the 1-level, and partner responds with a new suit at the 1-level, then the auction proceeds very similarly to if the overcall did not happen at all.

Example 1

1♣ 1♦ 1♥ P
__?

The 1♥ bid by Responder shows 4+card ♥ and 6+ points and is forcing for one round (just as if the opponent had not overcalled). As Opener we rebid similarly to if the opponent had not bid. We may even rebid 1NT with a balanced 12-14 point hand without a stopper in the opponent's suit.

Example 2

♠ A93
♥ 843
♦ T53
♣ AKJ7

Here, if we have the auction above, we must rebid 1NT because any other bid is worse.



One rebid that is different because of the opponent's overcall is the cuebid of their suit.

Example 3

♠ A98

♥ A5

♦ 754

♣ AKQJ9

1♣ 1♦ 1♥ P

___?

Here Opener rebids 2♦. This rebid shows enough values to insist on game (it is game forcing) but a hand that has no other good action. It will often be a hand that has a long suit (source of tricks) but does not have a stopper in the opponent's suit and thus cannot rebid NT.

There is an auction at the 1-level where Responder's freebid shows additional information.

Example 4

1m 1♥ 1♠ P

—

Here Responder has shown 6+points and a 5+card ♠ suit. With only a 4-card ♠ suit Responder would make a negative double. This means that we can now raise partner with only 3-card ♠ support. With the hand in Example 3 above, we could jump to 4♠.

Opener's Rebids After Responder's 2-Level Freebids

Note: I should mention that not every partnership plays these rebids the way I suggest below. I am giving you an approach which I think is a good agreement and also happens to be easy to remember. Make sure you and your partner discuss these bids and are on the same page about what is forcing and what is not.

When we open the bidding with a suit at the 1-level, LHO overcalls, and partner freely bids a new suit at the 2-level, this shows a 5+card suit and 10+ points. It is forcing for one round. We now need to make use of this information and further describe our hand to partner. With our rebid we must let partner know if we have a fit for them, search for one if we do not have a fit with them, and show our values. With a good hand we must make certain to make a forcing bid and with a bad opening bid we want to offer to play the contract at a low level.

When partner makes a freebid at the 2-level they show invitational or better values, so we want to keep the auction low when we hold only 12-13 points (the worst opening hands) and do something stronger with a good 14+ points (enough to accept game). Let's look at some examples in detail.



Example 5

1♦ 1♠ 2♣ P

___?

Non-Forcing Rebids by Opener (NF)

- 2♦ Minimum values, good 5+card (usually 6+card) ♦ suit, NF
- 2♥ Minimum, 4-card ♥, NF
- 2NT Balanced 12-13 pts, ♠ stopper, not 4-card ♣ suit, NF
- 3♣ Minimum hand, 3+card ♣ support, NF

Forcing Rebids by Opener (GF)

- 2♠ Catch-all Game Force, usually no ♠ stopper
- 3♦ Extra values, 6+card ♦, GF
- 3♥ Extra values, 4-card ♥, GF (usually unbalanced or semi-balanced)
- 3♠ Extra values, Splinter, 4-card ♣ support, GF
- 3NT Extra values, ♠ stopper, balanced 14 pts or unbalanced (semi-bal) slightly better, GF

Example 6 – same auction as above (Example 5)

♠ 854

♥ KQT8

♦ KJ43

♣ A8

We rebid 2♥, showing our 4-card ♥ suit and minimum values. This bid is non-forcing. If we have this same hand and a stopper in ♠, we have a choice between rebidding 2♥ or 2NT. We make our choice based on the location of our honors.

Example 7 – same auction as above (Example 5)

♠ 983

♥ KQT8

♦ AQJ87

♣ K

We rebid 3♥, showing a 4-card ♥ suit and extra values. This bid is game forcing.

Example 8 – same auction as above (Example 5)

♠ Q83

♥ J843

♦ AQJ87

♣ K



Here we rebid 2♦, showing our minimum values and good 5-card ♦ suit. This bid is non-forcing. With this hand we could rebid 2♥, but with a minimum hand, good ♦, and poor ♥, 2♦ is a better choice. Partner can rebid 2♥ on the next round if they have a good hand and a 4-card ♥ suit.

The important things to take away (generalize) from these examples are:

- Opener rebids their suit = NF
- Opener raises responder's suit = NF
- 2NT = NF
- New Suit rebid by Opener = NF
- All Jumps = GF
- Cuebid of Opponent's suit = GF

Note: Some partnerships make things a little more complicated by agreeing that some new suits are forcing even when not jumps. But I suggest playing the above approach as it is effective and easier to remember (jumps and cuebids are the only forcing actions).

Conclusion

When partner's response shows 10+ points and a long suit then we know that the hand belongs to us. We want to describe our hand to partner, but we must balance communicating our shape with keeping the auction low (especially if we open the bidding aggressively). The most important part of this auction is being on the same page with partner about whether our rebid is forcing or if partner is allowed to pass. Discuss these auctions with partner and make sure you have some good, clear agreements.