

Seminar (by Ed Scerri) Breaking Transfers

I trust that we are all familiar with Jacoby (or Red Suit) transfers, indeed I would hope that you have all incorporated them into your system by now, otherwise you are playing at a huge disadvantage.

Today's topic is about '**breaking the transfer**', i.e. not bidding 2H/S as instructed by partner, but instead making another bid, which shows that you have a maximum (for most of us that means 14 points), and four cards in the suit partner is showing.

There are many different ways of 'breaking the transfer' but I will today show you the structure which I have adopted, and which seems to work as well as any other.

Just to re-iterate, the primary requirements for a '**break**' is that when partner tells you to bid a major, you hold a maximum in terms of points, and 4 cards in the major (although an exceptional 3 card holding such as A K x, or K Q J, is also acceptable).

Given these pre-requisites, let us look at the ways in which we can '**break**' in order to convey as much information as possible to partner.

1. A direct jump to 3H/S (instead of 2H/S), emphasises the quality of your trump suit, and promises two of the top three honours in the suit. This allows partner to bid game on a hand where he/she is worried about trump losers, e.g.

♠ Q 7 6 5 2, ♥ A J 6, ♦ Q J 10 7, ♣ 3

Holding this hand opposite a 12-14 No Trump, the tendency would be to bid 2H (tf) and then pass partners 2S rebid. "*After all, I only had 10 points and lousy trumps partner*".

If however partner bids 3S over our 2H transfer, our hand becomes huge. We now know that partner has a maximum, with 4 spades headed by the A K. Game is now no longer a vague possibility, it has become an odds on favourite to make.

2. A bid of a new suit (rather than completing the transfer) shows that apart from the pre-requisites mentioned, opener has a useless doubleton in the suit bid (J x or worse). This allows responder to revalue their hand accordingly e.g.

♠ K 6 5 3 2 , ♥ A 7 , ♦ 8 6 4 3 , ♣ K J

Take a look at this assortment, I think everybody would agree that this hand is not likely to produce game opposite a 12-14 No Trump opener.

If however, when we make a transfer request, partner instead bids three diamonds, we know that he/she holds a max, with 4 spades, and a small doubleton in diamonds. This means that we only have two diamond losers, and all partners points are placed in the other suits (where we want them), and we must have a pretty good chance of making game.

3. The third way of **'breaking'**, is to bid 2NT which denies two of the top three trump honours , and also denies a useless doubleton.

This is just a general 'maximum with 4 trumps' bid.

Over all these transfer breaks, if there is sufficient space, the responder can re-transfer, thereby allowing the strong hand to play the contract e.g.

1NT, P, 2D*, P, 3C**, P, 3D***, P, 3H*****

Where 2D is a transfer, 3C is a break (showing max, 4 hearts and a useless doubleton in clubs), 3D is a re-transfer, and 3H is the completion thereof.

Responder now passes or bids 4H.

This re-transfer process is not always possible

e.g. 1NT, P, 2D*, P, 3D**, P, now 3H or 4H is to play as we have no room for a re-transfer.

One final point I would mention is in the situation when opponents intervene over our transfer requests.

If opponents have bid a suit, then all breaks still apply if there is room, but in any case, the mere completion of the transfer will always promise a 'super-accept' as it will have to be made at the three level.

If opponents double the transfer request, it allows us much more accuracy, in that all breaks still apply as normal, but additionally, we have pass and simple completion available, and I suggest that you use pass to show a doubleton in partner's major, and completion to show 3 card support.

I hope you find this useful, I certainly have.

Some people argue against transfer breaks on the grounds that if responder has a 'bust' then we are at the three level rather than two, but in that case, it is very likely that opponents have something on, and I would also mention that one is very rarely doubled for penalties after making a 'super-accept'.

Go *break* a leg!