

COMMON-SENSE HAND EVALUATION

Lesson 1, 2 May 2019

Bob Boyd

PROBLEM: Flight C players miss a disproportionate number of games for two reasons: 1) as opener and overcaller, they often do not adhere to normal standards, and 2) as responder and advancer, they often focus too much on high-card points (HCP) rather than visualizing how the two hands fit together.

This week we'll focus on standards for opening bids of one of a suit. Next:

- Part 2, 16 May: Non-jump overcalls
- Part 3, 30 May: Responding to opening bids and overcalls

STANDARDS:

- **The most important factor in getting to the right contract is being a reliable partner; agree what it takes and respect the agreement**
- What do you need to open one of a suit?
 - A good overview of various hand evaluation systems is at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hand_evaluation. **Read it for fun only**
 - Goren's 13 points, counting 4-3-2-1 HCP and 3-2-1 distribution?
 - 11 HCP, as in Precision?
 - Some supposed "expert" rule like the Rule of 20? Or maybe 19? 16 anyone?
 - Suit quality? Keep it simple—any 5-card suit is biddable
- My standards for one-level suit bids:
 - Count HCP only
 - Open almost all 12 HCP hands; exceptions:
 - "Quacks"—all or most points are in queens and jacks
 - Lacking at least one ace or two kings
 - With a singleton, reduce the HCP requirement to 11
 - With a void, reduce it to 10
 - **CAUTION: Dangerous to go lower if you play Two-over-One**
- Choose the correct suit
 - Play 5-card majors
 - Open the longest suit
 - With two 5-card suits, open the higher-ranking
 - With two 4-card minor suits, open the lower unless higher is markedly stronger
 - With two 4-card major suits, open your longer minor (may be 3 cards)
 - Don't play a short club—Why?
- **Before you bid, think about your rebid** if partner doesn't raise or bid a suit you can support
 - If your rebid would embarrass you, **don't open**
 - Rebid a 5-card suit? **No big deal**
 - Rebid NT w/a singleton? **Avoid if possible**
 - Reverse w/o strength? **Never!!!**

- If your second suit is higher-ranking, are you strong enough to reverse (i.e., a **2-level** rebid in a **higher-ranking suit** after a 1-level response)? What does it take to do that?
 - A good rule for 5-4 hands is 17 HCP
 - With 6-5 distribution, you can reduce that
- If your second suit is lower-ranking, you can bid it
 - A jump shift into a lower-ranking 4-card suit takes about the same strength as a reverse; with 6-5 distribution, it can be less than 17 HCP
 - With 6-4 distribution, it is usually preferable to bid your 4-card suit before rebidding your 6-card suit—partner will know 9 of your cards rather than 6
- **CAUTION:** Standards for two-suiters assume most of your HCP are in long suits; singleton kings and queens may not be worth their full value
- If you don't have a second suit, it takes 18-19 HCP to jump in NT
- A simple NT rebid shows a balanced hand not strong enough to open a strong 1NT
- Should you open a balanced 15-17 HCP hand with a 5-card major 1NT? Yes, depending on system. It may solve rebid problems but try to avoid it.
- How do you show a 6-card suit?
 - Simple rebid with up to 14-15 HCP
 - With an unbalanced hand, you may have to rebid a 5-card minor, e.g., when you aren't strong enough to reverse into a 4-card major
 - With a balanced hand (no singleton or void), prefer NT to rebidding a 5-card minor
 - Jump in the suit with a strong hand; 16 HCP is a good rule, a good 15 is OK
- When may a reliable partner violate standards?
 - Good texture is often worth a point
 - "Married" honors, tens and nines in long suits
 - Best example: Balanced hand with AK in one suit and A in another is usually worth a bid unless they are your short suits
 - Third seat
 - Open light at favorable vulnerability or with spades
 - How light? Might go as low as 9 HCP or even a shapely 8 if you're playing Drury; if partner's invitational raise is a 3-bid, have at least a good 10 or bad 11

Questions? E-mail me at bobbyd72@aol.com