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This Week in Bridge

(13) Slam Bidding and Fast Arrival in 2/1 GF

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Level: 2

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Slam Bidding in 2/1 Game Forcing Auctions

Slam Bidding in 2/1 Game Forcing auctions is a matter of cooperation from both members of the partnership. We want to make a joint decision about whether slam is a good idea. Before we explore slam, we first want to determine if we have a fit. If we do not have a fit, then our slam exploration will be based solely on quantitative or ace-asking bids. These auctions are relatively simple and do not require many special tools – 4NT *Quantitative* or 4♣ *Gerber*.

The more complex auctions are the ones where we do find a fit and we want to explore slam. Once we have found a fit, both players need to be able to communicate whether they are interested in slam. We also need to know what bids are “normal” and which bids show “slam interest.” 2/1 Game Forcing allows for much of this communication because we do not have to worry about partner passing us below game. This is one of the big advantages that 2/1 Game Forcing has over Standard American.

This document will not be a treatise on slam bidding, but we will explore some of the tools and concepts from 2/1 GF that should help you judge whether to bid a slam.

The Principle of Fast Arrival

This is the single most important principle in all modern slam bidding. The idea is that when you are in a “forcing auction,” jumping to game is the weakest action, and bids below game show extra values (because they leave room for cuebidding.)

Most people are familiar with *The Principle of Fast Arrival* from Jacoby 2NT auctions even if they have not heard the term before:

1♠ - 2NT* - 4♠	No shortness, very weak hand
1♠ - 2NT* - 3♠	No shortness, much stronger hand

In 2/1 Game Forcing auctions, we have lots of opportunities to make use of the principle of Fast Arrival.

Examples

1♠ 2♦

2♠ ___?

3♠ Responder shows slam interest, asks Opener to start cuebidding.

4♠ Responder shows a minimum hand with no slam interest.

In this example, Responder shows support and level of interest by using Fast Arrival.

1♠ 2♦

2♥ 2♠

___?

3♠ Opener shows slam interest, asks Responder to start cuebidding.

4♠ Opener shows a minimum hand with no slam interest.

In this example, Opener shows their level of interest by using Fast Arrival.

Shape vs. Cuebids

Now that we have a fundamental concept (*Fast Arrival*) to base our slam bidding around, we need to discuss what we do when partner does not make a Fast Arrival bid. Partner has left space available for us to communicate more information and decide about bidding a slam. One of the most important parts of good slam bidding is to be able to make most of our slam bidding decisions without going beyond game – that is stopping in 4-Major instead of ending in 5-Major (being in 5-Major down 1 is one of the worst feelings in bridge.)

Major Suit 2/1 GF Auctions

When we are in a 2/1 GF auction and we find a fit at a low level (the 2-level), we need to determine what the rest of our auction means.

Example

1♠ 2♣

2♦ 2♠

In this auction cuebidding doesn't start until the 4-level (above 3♠.) If we make additional bids (other than ♠) at the 3-level, we are showing additional shape. This shape information is often very helpful for partner to determine whether to bid slam.

Some more detailed examples

1♠ 2♣
2♦ 2♠
3♦ This shows 5♠ and 5♦.

1♠ 2♣
2♦ 2♠
3♣ 5-1-4-3 (or 6-0-4-3)

1♠ 2♣
2♦ 2♠
3♠ This asks responder to start cuebidding for slam. This is what we bid if we want to know about specific Aces and are not interested in showing more shape information. *This key is that the 3-level is used for shape and the 4-level is used for cuebidding.*

Conclusion

The *Principle of Fast Arrival* is an effective tool for dissuading partner from bidding on towards slam when you have a minimum game forcing hand. But is also valuable in allowing us to show extra values below game and explore for slam without getting the auction too high. These two combine to allow for effective slam exploration in game forcing auctions.