



Adventures in Bridge

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This Week in Bridge

(102) Raising Responder in Competition

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Level: 2

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General

When the opponents interfere in our auction when we have opened the bidding, they eat up some of our valuable bidding space. But they also give us additional ways to describe our hand – cuebids, doubles, etc. We will examine how Opener's options for supporting partner change in competitive auctions. We will also see that in some cases Opener will actually be able to show their fit more immediately.

Vs. Overcall

We will examine these competitive auctions through a common example.

Example

1♣ P 1♥ 1♠
—?

- 2♥ 12-14 pts, 4-card support (same as no competition)
- 3♥ 15-17 pts, 4-card support (same as no competition)
- 4♥ 18-19 pts, 4-card support (same as no competition)
- 3♠/4♦ *Splinter* (same as no competition)
- 3♦ *Mini-Splinter* (same as no competition)
- X *Support Double*, 3-card support for Responder (3-card ♥). Opener can have any values
since they will usually get another chance to bid before the auction ends. (The opponents have helped us find a 5-3 fit.)

Note: A cuebid of the opponent's suit (2♠) is usually not a fit for partner since we have many other options. This usually shows a very strong hand and asks for a stopper in the opponent's suit (a ♠ stopper.)

Vs. Jump Overcalls

Let's look at another helpful example.

Example

1♣ P 1♥ 2♠

___?

In this auction, the opponent has taken away a lot of our bidding space. We will thus need to stretch to show our fit. Since we cannot bid 2♥ we must stretch to bid 3♥ on some hands. In a non-competitive auction, a 2♥ rebid would show 12-14 points and a 3♥ rebid would show 15-17 points. Now, with 12 or a bad 13 points we will pass. With a good 13 points up to about 16 points we will bid 3♥. With a maximum for the "Extra Values" Bucket (a good 16 or 17 points) or with a strong hand (18+ points) we just rebid 4♥ - we now must cut the bids from 3-buckets into two bids.

Note: Partner will stretch to show support - cut them some slack!

With other hands, we might try a 3♦ bid (a mini-splinter) since we have room to make that bid in this auction.

Since we are above 2♥ we cannot make a support double and force partner to bid with only a possible 4-3 fit. Double in this case shows extra values and is just takeout in modern standard bidding!

Vs. Takeout Double

When the opponents make a takeout double, they only help us. The takeout double takes away none of our bids and gives us new call options of redouble and pass. This helps us further describe our hand. Pass at this point shows a balanced hand with 2-card support and XX shows a 3-card support (a support redouble.)

Conclusion

Raising Responder in competition is done similarly to when the opponents stay out of our way. When the opponents enter our auction we frequently gain the advantage of a support X (showing 3-card support) or pass (usually showing a balanced hand, 2-card support, and no stopper). We also can lose some valuable bidding space. The main difference between a competitive auction and a traditional one is that the Opener will need to sometimes stretch to show a fit as this might be the last chance to show a fit at a reasonable level. Responder needs to adjust their expectations (buckets) in order to allow partner to compete in the bidding -

remember allowing partner to compete with a fit is the most important and common action in a competitive auction!