

Disclosure Vs. Concealment

In recent years several articles have appeared concerning the advantages of disclosing a secondary suit after a trump fit has been established. For example, with neither side vulnerable, suppose the bidding goes:

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
2 ♥	2 ♠	3 ♥	1 ♠
			?

And you, South, hold:



♠A Q J 8 2
♥4
♦A K J 5 4
♣4 3

Many experts recommend a bid of 4 ♦, not for the purpose of trying for slam (which is relatively obscure), but to enlighten partner as to the nature of South's hand. The contention is that partner will be in a better position to judge whether to double or bid 5 ♠ in the event that East-West persist to 5 ♥.

I disagree. While the argument of disclosure may have merit, there are arguments in favor of concealment that are more important in my view. The debate is complex and will probably not be solved in this or any other article. Nonetheless, I am a "concealer" and wish to make some points on that behalf.

In the above bidding sequence I recommend a direct bid of 4 ♠. Should South become declarer (certainly likely), this will be to his advantage in the play. The defenders will have no clue as to South's side-suit lengths and the chances of a defensive error are thus increased. Disclosing the diamond suit would tip off the defense.

Another point is that concealing the diamond suit will make it more difficult for the opponents to decide whether or not to sacrifice. The enemy will have less information on which to determine the degree of fit of their hands. Keeping partner in the dark also keeps both opponents in the dark.

A third advantage is that a 4 ♦ bid (or any other new suit bid beyond three of the agreed major) can be recognized as a legitimate slam try. Knowing that your basic strategy is "concealment" makes partner aware you are trying for more than just game.

Of course, the above just touches on the subject. With the myriad of possible auctions, and varying vulnerabilities, the better strategy (disclosure vs. concealment) might vary from situation to situation. In general, though, I believe that concealment is the proper course. I could introduce example deals to illustrate my point, but any such deals would be biased because of the fact I chose them. Indeed, one could make almost any point convincing by choosing the right hands.

Advantages of Disclosure

1. Aids partner in the decision whether to bid further or double if the opponents sacrifice.
2. Aids partner in the defense (sometimes, the opening lead) should your side end up defending.
3. On rare occasions might lead to a slam based on the discovery of a tremendous double fit.

Advantages of Concealment

1. Aids declarer in the play of the hand by giving the enemy no clue as to his side-suit distribution.
2. Avoids aiding the opponents in their decision whether or not to sacrifice.
3. Should you and partner be defenders, avoids aiding the opposing declarer in his play of the hand.
4. Allows the use of a bid in a side suit as a legitimate slam try.

Conclusion

The reader must weigh the considerations and make his own choice which course to follow — and the way you choose should be discussed with your partners to avoid misunderstandings.