

Help Suit Game Tries

This brief is an excerpt from an article that first appeared in Issue #8 (Sep/Oct 1995) of The Bridge Companion.

Consider the auctions that begin $1\heartsuit-2\heartsuit$ or $1\spadesuit-2\spadesuit$. Responder's bid is invitational, showing 6-10 support points and confirming a trump fit. Opener is instructed to pass when game is beyond reach and bid game when it is clearly a game hand. Opener has clear action with both minimum and maximum opening hands. With minimum opening hands (13 to a poor 16) there is no hope for game and pass is the clear choice for rebids. With a maximum strength hand (19 to 21 points), game is assured and opener should bid it directly. It is with medium strength hands (good 16 to 18 points) that the answer to the level question is still unknown. Remember that these hand evaluations are using the recount based upon shortness. It will be the most accurate method now that a trump fit has been determined.

The most obvious and direct way of describing one of these "in between hands" is to re-raise responder ($1\heartsuit-2\heartsuit-3\heartsuit$). That is the only method taught during most beginning classes. However, other methods or ways of describing your medium strength hand are available. Opener has available four other bids, all below the three level in the agreed major suit. Each of the different possibilities allows opener to describe a little more accurately what type of hand would fit best. This whole class of rebids are known as "game tries".

Other than the obvious re-raise, what bids are available for use to opener? Remember that opener's rebid must allow the partnership to get to $3\heartsuit$ or $3\spadesuit$ (whichever is agreed) when game is not in the cards.

Bids available after $1\heartsuit - 2\heartsuit$:

$2\spadesuit$
2NT
 $3\clubsuit$
 $3\diamondsuit$
 $3\heartsuit$

Bids available after $1\spadesuit - 2\spadesuit$:

2NT
 $3\clubsuit$
 $3\diamondsuit$
 $3\heartsuit$
 $3\spadesuit$

Each of these bids would still allow the partnership to get out below game when it is determined that the partnership does have the needed 26 points. Now, opener has five ways of describing a medium strength hand. What meaning could each of these bids have? The denomination question has already been decided (our major suit fit), so what is the message?

Simple! Opener is describing a medium strength hand and also indicating where (in what other suits) that high cards will be the most valuable. You will discover that hands that fit together in more than one suit almost always play above the predicted potential. Hands that do not fit in any suit (usually called misfits) usually play below the predicted potential.

That is fine for the suit bids but what about that 2NT and the re-raise of our trump suit? Opener uses 2NT to describe a balanced (5-3-3-2 shape) without a specific side suit in need of help. That leaves $1\heartsuit-2\heartsuit-3\heartsuit$ or $1\spadesuit-2\spadesuit-3\spadesuit$. Opener should be unbalanced (or why not 2NT?) and does have a side suit to indicate.

Examples

What do you rebid with each hand as South?

West	North	East	South
			1♥
Pass	2♥	Pass	???

#1

♠AJ65
♥AQJ43
♦K5
♣84

#2

♠K5
♥KQJ43
♦QJ6
♣A107

#3

♠73
♥KJ9743
♦A
♣AJ42

Answers

#1 Your hand values 17 points in support of hearts. With a borderline 8 point hand that contained spade honors would you not want partner to accept your invitation to 4♥? Bid 2♠.

#2 Your hand values 17 points in support of hearts. You could have chosen to open 1NT but choose to open 1♥ instead. Describe your game try to partner. Bid 2NT. You will still play the contract in hearts but this more accurate description may help partner decide what to do.

#3 Your hand values 17 points in support of hearts. With a borderline 8 point hand that contained club honors would you not want partner to accept your invitation to 4♥? Bid 3♣.

How does responder use this information?

Remember that you are describing a medium strength hand. Responder should bid the agreed major suit at the three level (or pass if you are already there) with a 6 or 7 point hand. Responder should bid game in the agreed major with a 9 or 10 point hand. The extra information is of use when partner has the borderline 8 point hand. With that hand responder must either round up or round down and take the appropriate action. With values in your "game try" suit responder should round up and bid game. With values outside of your "game try" suit responder should probably round down and bid only a partscore in the agreed major suit.

Gary King